

REVIEW OF  
**ARMENIAN STUDIES**  
A Biannual Journal of History, Politics, and International Relations

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Facts and Comments

**Ömer E. LÜTEM**

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for "Armenian Genocide" Recognition

**Brendon J. CANNON**

The Armenian Diaspora in the Netherlands:  
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**Armand SAĞ**

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**BOOK REVIEW**



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## Contributors

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**T**he first article in the 34<sup>th</sup> issue of our journal is “**Facts and Comments**”, which deals with Turkey-Armenia relations during the second half of 2016 and developments on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. While Turkey-Armenia relations were in virtually a frozen state, the Karabakh issue shows signs of flaring up again despite all of Russia’s efforts.

In the article titled “**A Truly Global Crime? Africa and The Campaign For “Armenian Genocide” Recognition**”, Brendon J. Cannon analyzes the campaigns carried out by Armenian groups for the 1915 events to be recognized as genocide, determines that Asia and especially Africa are ignored in these campaigns even though one would expect such campaigns to be carried out globally, and examines why Africa is ignored. The article also indicates that these campaigns carry anti-Turkish and anti-Muslim characteristics and reflect 19<sup>th</sup> century-style racist approaches.

Armand Sağ’s article titled “**The Armenian Diaspora in the Netherlands: Statistics of Education, Residence, and Place of Birth**” indicates Armenia’s and diaspora Armenians’ practice of the creation of the “other” and the formation of a defensive Armenian identity within the process of Armenian nation-building. As can be predicted, the “other” in Armenians’ identity formation is the Turk. Sağ also analyzes an interesting survey on the Armenian community living in the Netherlands that, among other things, reveals Armenians’ defensive identity formation against the Turks. According to Sağ, the survey reveals that Armenians of the Netherlands compare themselves not with the local Dutch people, but with the Turks living in that country.

Maxime Gauin, in his article titled “**Meline Toumani and the Turkic-Armenian Conflict**”, reveals that Meline Toumani’s book titled *There Was and There Was Not: A Journey Through Hate and Possibility in Turkey, Armenia, and Beyond* is constituted of unacademic information and interviews conducted with certain individuals, but that it is a special source of reference for the culture of hate developed by Armenians living in North America.

In 1920, Aram Andonian’s published a book titled *The Memoirs of Naim Bey* that he alleged to contain telegrams sent to certain governors that had Ottoman Minister of Interior Talat Bey’s (Pasha’s) orders to massacre Armenians. For many years, Andonian’s book was shown as the proof of the “Armenian genocide”. However, by publishing the book titled *The Talat Pasha Telegrams: Historical Fact or Armenian Fiction?* in 1983, the archivists Şinasi Orel and



Süreyya Yüca demonstrated that the telegrams within Andonian's book are fake. Afterwards, the reference made to Andonian's book by writings and books on Armenian genocide allegations decreased greatly, and after a while, nearly disappeared altogether.

In his book titled *Naim Efendi'nin Hatıratı ve Talat Paşa Telgrafları ve Krikor Gergeryan Arşivi* (En. *The Memoirs of Naim Efendi and Talat Pasha Telegrams*) that he published in 2016, Taner Akçam attempts to prove that the "Andonian documents" are in fact authentic. The article titled "**An Assessment on Aram Andonian, Naim Efendi And Talat Pasha Telegrams**" reveals in a detailed manner that Akçam's assertions are based on distortions and are thus invalid.

What is the purpose of putting in the effort to prove the authenticity of so-called documents that are clearly fake? It appears that there is a need to boost Armenian genocide allegations' public standing, badly damaged due to the European Court of Human Rights' (ECtHR) Bosnia-Herzegovina and Doğu Perinçek rulings, by introducing to the public some official-looking documents. It can be understood that this was the purpose of publishing Akçam's book that attempts to prove the authenticity of documents that are in fact fake.

Lastly, the 34th issue of journal contains Osman Gün's review of the book authored by Jordis Tezel Gorgas titled *Le mouvement kurde de Turquie en exil: continuités et discontinuités du nationalisme kurde sous le mandat français en Syrie et au Liban (1925-1946)* (En. *The Kurdish Movement of Turkey in Exile: Continuities and Discontinuities in Kurdish Nationalism during the French Mandate in Syria and Lebanon (1925-1946)*). This book explains the "Kurdish-Armenian Federation" that the Kurdish Hoybun Union and the Armenian Dashnak Party in Syria and Lebanon during the French Mandate tried establish in 1925-1946 against Turkey. It is known that extremist Kurdish nationalists and some Armenian groups who view Turkey as the common enemy are in an attempt today to establish an alliance and to move in unison against Turkey. Jordis Tezel Gorgas' book carries importance in regards to it documenting the history of such efforts.

Have a nice reading and best regards,

Editor

# FACTS AND COMMENTS

(OLAYLAR VE YORUMLAR)

**Ömer Engin LÜTEM**

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**Abstract:** *This article studies Turkey-Armenia relations during the second half of 2016, some countries' stance concerning Armenian genocide allegations, and latest developments in the Nagorno-Karabakh issue.*

**Keywords:** *Turkey-Armenia relations, USA, Germany, France, Israel, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Nagorno-Karabakh Issue*

**Öz:** *Bu yazı 2016 yılının ikinci yarısında Türkiye-Ermenistan ilişkilerini, Ermeni soykırımı iddialarına ilişkin bazı ülkelerin tutumlarını ve Karabağ sorunu konusundaki son gelişmeleri incelemektedir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Türkiye-Ermenistan İlişkileri, ABD, Almanya, Fransa, İsrail, Mısır, Lübnan, Suriye, Karabağ Sorunu*

ARTICLES

## 1- TURKEY-ARMENIA RELATIONS

We will analyze relations between the two countries in two sections, namely, statements by state officials and Armenia's demands from Turkey.

### 1.1- Statements by State Officials

The anti-Turkish climate, which was created in Armenian and the Diaspora due to the activities to commemorate the centennial of the Armenian relocation, continued during second half of 2016, and Armenian state officials, including President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan, tried to criticize Turkey on every occasion. On the other hand, Turkey generally remained silent in the field of bilateral relations. We had previously stated that Turkey's relations with Armenia were not even included in the 65<sup>th</sup> Government program of the Turkish Government and these relations were associated with developments in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as it was stated in the government program that Turkey will continue to strive for the cessation of the occupation of Azerbaijani territories and the ending of tensions between Azerbaijan and Armenia.<sup>1</sup>

President Sargsyan's recent interview with Sputnik Armenia on Turkey-Armenia relations was especially attention-grabbing. In brief, Armenia's President stated that until 2009, several friendly nations were saying that Armenia did not want to establish any relations with the Turks and that Armenia had a genocide complex. Mentioning that the Protocols were signed despite opposition from the Diaspora, Sargsyan stated Turkey did not fulfill its obligations and wanted the security zone to be returned to Azerbaijan (the term "security zone" represents the seven Azerbaijani districts/rayons surrounding Karabakh, which is currently occupied by Armenians). Indicating that whether the borders will be closed in case of another conflict does not depend on Armenia, he stated that this issue (the return of the security zone to Azerbaijan) should have been brought up prior to the signing of the Protocols, during the negotiation process. Sargsyan added that after that, there was no relations left between Turkey and Armenia and the officials of the two countries just greeted each other if they come across each other during international conferences.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Ömer Engin Lütem, "Facts and Comments", *Review of Armenian Studies*, Issue 33, p. 18-19.

2 "Serj Sarkisyan, Ermeni-Türk sınırının açılmasını istiyor", *News.am*, 17.11.2016

Repeating his wish for the opening of Armenian-Turkish borders, Sargsyan said: *“I want Turkish youth to understand that they are not to blame for the fact that the Armenian Genocide was carried out in the Ottoman Empire. Because in fact, what is the blame of the Turkish youth?”* Since modern-day Turks, including Turkish youth, are not responsible for the Armenian relocation that took place a hundred years ago, and since no one feels guilty for it, it is difficult to make sense out of Sargsyan’s statements.

A short while after these statements by Sargsyan, President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan gave the following answer to an Azerbaijani journalist’s question about Armenia’s occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh:

*As you know, there are resolutions by the UN Security Council on this issue. Considering all these resolutions, Armenia should abandon Nagorno-Karabakh and leave immediately those rayons that were agreed upon. They should be returned to their original owners, the Azerbaijanis. Azerbaijanis should return to their homes. Nothing can be achieved through occupations, which is the case in these regions. We, as Turkey, are against this occupation. Particularly, the US, Russia and France should finalize the duty that they assumed as soon as possible. It is my wish that this occupation ends and that our Azerbaijani brothers and sisters return to their homes.*<sup>3</sup>

***Since modern-day Turks, including Turkish youth, are not responsible for the Armenian relocation that took place a hundred years ago, and since no one feels guilty for it, it is difficult to make sense out of Sargsyan’s statements.***

Thus, Turkey’s position on the Karabakh conflict was repeated once more in the highest level.

For a long time, MPs of Armenia that have been attending meetings of international organizations are observed to defend their country’s policies in an aggressive manner with statements and questions that aim to provoke their addressees.

For instance, a similar attitude was observed during the 62<sup>nd</sup> annual session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in November. Responding to MP of Armenia Koryun Nahapetyan’s question *“does Turkey support Daesh?”*, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu urged Nahapetyan to

<sup>3</sup> “Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan’dan Ermenistan’a net mesaj: İşgal ile bir yere varılmaz”, *Trend.az*, 23.11.2016.

be honest and said that Turkey was waging the most active fight against Daesh with most terrorist kills, and that Daesh hated Turkey. Çavuşoğlu then reminded that Armenia was occupying 20 percent of Azerbaijan's territories, and that they proposed to open the borders if Armenia withdraws from the occupied territories.

Furthermore, mentioning that Armenia was constantly bringing up the genocide allegations, Minister of Foreign Affairs Çavuşoğlu pointed out that Armenia has said "no" to Turkey's proposal to establish a commission to investigate the genocide allegations, and said: *"You prefer a lie. You do not trust upon yourselves. Since you do not believe in scientific studies, you prefer a lie."* Çavuşoğlu also informed that among the PKK terrorists caught and killed by Turkey were Armenians.<sup>4</sup>

Thereby, the question asked by the MP of Armenia with the aim of putting the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs in a difficult position gave Çavuşoğlu the opportunity to explain Turkey's policies.

## 1.2- Armenia's Demands from Turkey

As it is known, following the failure of the protocols, President Sargsyan, unlike the previous Armenian governments, has begun to bring forward demands from Turkey since 2010. These demands can be summarized as the Turkey's recognition of the "Armenian genocide" and dealing with its consequences (reparations and return of properties). Furthermore, a state commission presided by President Sargsyan that would coordinate the commemoration events dedicated to the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the relocation was charged with preparing the legal justifications for these demands. Although three years has since passed, these justifications remain unannounced, and demands from Turkey are yet to be made.

This situation can be perhaps due to the following reasons:

- a. Following the European Court of Human Right's (ECtHR) decision on the *Perinçek v. Switzerland* case, Armenia's long-standing arguments with regards to the genocide hypothesis, such as that it was similar to the Holocaust, are no longer compelling.

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4 "Ermeni Vekilin Sözleri Çavuşoğlu'nu Çileden Çıkartrt: Dürüst Olun!", *Sondakika.com*, 19.11.2016, <http://www.sondakika.com/haber/haber-disisleri-bakani-cavusoglu-ndan-ermeni-8976314/>

- b. Propounding these demands, which will inevitably cause serious tensions between Turkey and Armenia, may have been deemed inappropriate in this period of clashes in Karabakh. Furthermore, it is possible that these demands are deemed inappropriate by the US, Russia, and even the EU.
- c. As long as the Armenian demands are not supported by the major powers, they will never be accepted, let alone considered. Foremost among these major powers is Russia, which is commonly assumed to ensure the security of Armenia. However, there are several disagreements that are widely known by those who follow developments in the region, but which are purposefully withheld from the public. These can be summarized as follows: Russia's arms sales to Azerbaijan; Russia's apparent support for the return of some of the Azerbaijani rayons occupied by Armenia to Azerbaijan; criticisms by the Muslim members of Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), especially Kazakhstan, against Armenia for the Karabakh conflict; the fact that the CSTO chairmanship did not pass to Armenia although it was supposed to and thus, the extension of the term of office of Russian General Secretary Borodyuzha.
- d. Armenia's joining of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) instead of being an associate member of the European Union (EU) did not provide the expected benefit. Furthermore, Armenia and Russia have failed to cooperate sufficiently in the economic field.
- e. Despite Armenia's objections, Russia has begun to lean towards the idea of Turkey contributing to the settlement of the Karabakh conflict.
- f. Several developments that took place in Armenia's internal politics have been so significant to the degree that it can cause new problems in foreign relations. The clashes that began on 17 June 2016 due to an attack by an armed group opposing the government's Karabakh policy, the resulting death of 3 and injury of 100, and the fact that situation was taken under control by security forces after two weeks can be shown among these developments. As a result of this incident, the Prime Minister was forced to resign and a new government was formed with difficulty.

In short, Armenia is currently facing serious problems. Therefore, there is no suitable grounds to bring forward demands against Turkey, which have no urgency or priority and which are in fact unrealistic. However, Armenia still

persists in these demands. Presently, Armenia appears to prefer not to lay emphasis on the demands.

On the other, Armenians may also be waiting for an anniversary to draw attention to the demands, such as 2018 (the 100th anniversary of the founding of the first Republic of Armenia), 2020 (the 100th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Sevres), and even 2023 (the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Republic of Turkey).

In Turkey, on the other hand, these unserious demands that have almost no chance of being realized are not dwelled upon, and as mentioned above, relations with Armenia are associated with developments in the Karabakh conflict.

### **1.3- The Demand by the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia from Turkey**

In 2015, the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia had appealed to the Constitutional Court of Turkey and demanded the return of properties (church, monastery, etc.) located in Kozan (Sis) in Turkey, which it had previously abandoned during the First World War.

Reaching a verdict on 15 June 2016, the Constitutional Court announced the justification for its verdict on December and found the demand unacceptable due to the Catholicosate not exhausting internal remedies. According to the verdict, the Catholicosate should have applied to the relevant Turkish courts, appealed against their verdicts if necessary, and should have only appealed to the Constitutional Court in the end.

As mentioned above, although Armenia has been preparing to make demands from Turkey, it is yet to declare these demands. Catholicos of Cilicia Aram I, taking advantage of the independent status of the Church and acting upon the urge of being the first Armenian institution to make demands against Turkey, appealed to the Constitutional Court of Turkey without first applying to the Turkish courts, and applied to the European Court of Human Rights following the negative decision of the Constitutional Court.<sup>5</sup>

When looked closely, it is difficult to understand why it took a century to demand the return of above-mentioned properties. The Catholicosate of Cilicia, which is now located in Antelias near Beirut in the best of conditions, does not need the buildings in Kozan. Furthermore, since there is no Armenian

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5 “Les Arméniens Entendent Récupérer Leur Vatican En Turquie”, *Armenews*, 11.12.2016.

population worthy of note in and around Kozan, there is no congregation to benefit from these buildings. Therefore, it is understood that Aram I is acting based on political, not religious motivations. As a matter of fact, in a speech he gave in 2014, Aram I said: *“even if they lose the case it will be a victory since the opening of the case will show the international community that the Armenians are committed to demanding the rights of the Armenian nation no matter how many years may pass since the genocide.”*<sup>6</sup> Moreover, in another speech, he said that he will not accept indemnities in return for these buildings and that these building will be used for religious purposes. As we have mentioned above, it is virtually impossible for those buildings to be used for religious purposes since there is no Armenian population in the region. Yet, Aram I is apparently bent on turning these buildings into a problem.

## **2- DEVELOPMENTS IN CERTAIN COUNTRIES WITH REGARD TO THE ARMENIAN GENOCODE ALLEGATIONS**

### **2.1- The United States**

We will analyze the developments in the United States under four headings, namely, Armenians and the US presidential election, attempts to indirectly recognize the genocide allegations, the pardoning of a terrorist, and freedom of expression in the US state of California.

#### **2.1.1- Armenians and the US Presidential Election**

Before each presidential election, Armenians of the US always try to get a written or public statement from the presidential candidates on their support for the Armenian demands, especially about the “genocide”, in the event that they are elected. As a matter of fact, Barack Obama, although making such a statement prior to his election, had refrained from openly supporting the Armenian allegations in view of relations with Turkey.

The same method was employed during this year’s presidential elections, but neither Donald Trump nor Hillary Clinton made any statements in this respect.<sup>7</sup>

6 “Catholicosate of Cilicia to Sue Turkey Over Historic Headquarters in Sis”, *Armenian Weekly*, 19.09.2014.

7 “Appel Entre le Vice-President Mike Pence et Serge Sarkissian”, *Armenews*, 05.12.2016.



According to one source, Armenians tried to campaign against Donald Trump during the elections.<sup>8</sup> However, immediately after Donald Trump won the elections, Armenian organizations began to passionately congratulate him.

Meanwhile, ANCA (Armenian National Committee of America), which is an extension of the Dashnaks, announced that they will pressure Washington for its support for the recognition of the “Armenian genocide” and Karabakh’s right to self-determination.<sup>9</sup>

Yet, it is seen that the Armenians of the US have not established significant contacts with President-elect Trump and his entourage. As a consequence,

Armenian state officials, since they generally use the mediation of the Diaspora in their political contacts with the US (and other countries), are not well-acquainted with Trump and his team. This has rendered the establishment of contracts with the President-elect and his entourage difficult.

*It is understood from this incident that Trump did not find it necessary to talk with the president of a country that is as small as Armenia with no weight in the international arena, but that the Vice-President called Sargsyan to not cause disrespect.*

Following Donald Trump’s victory in the elections, like numerous heads of state, Presidents Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and İlham Aliyev called and congratulated him and discussed common issues. Although this was

the normal to contact, it came as a surprise that the newly-elected Vice-President Mike Pence instead called Sargsyan. According to one source,<sup>10</sup> Sargsyan requested a conversation with Trump to congratulate him, but failed to talk to him, and after a while, Pence called Sargsyan back. It is understood from this incident that Trump did not find it necessary to talk with the president of a country that is as small as Armenia with no weight in the international arena, but that the Vice-President called Sargsyan to not cause disrespect.

As a result, it is seen that President Sargsyan and other Armenian officials will have difficulties in establishing contacts with the new US government, at least in the first months.

8 Alexander Murinson, “Special Report – The Armenian Lobby’s Tenuous Relations With President-Elect Trump”, *The Armenian Spectator*, 08.12.2016.

9 “Appel Entre le Vice-President Mike Pence et Serge Sarkissian”, *Armenews*, 05.12.2016.

10 Elmira Tariverdiyeva, “Yerevan’s Failed Phone Call or Why Trump did not Respond”, *Trend.az*, 06.12.2016.

### 2.1.2- Attempts to Indirectly Recognize the Genocide Allegations

During the days when the Obama administration was leaving office, US Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Samantha Power, in a speech at a ceremony in memory of famous author and Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel, listed the “Genocide denial against the Armenians” among her examples of injustices against humanity. Since Power is currently is on an important official duty, her statements led to comments such as “Has the Obama administration quietly recognized the Armenian Genocide?”<sup>11</sup> However, upon statements by Mark Toner, US State Department spokesman, and Curtis Cooper, spokesman for Samantha Power, that Power’s statements did not represent a change in US policy,<sup>12</sup> the issue was dropped before it caused tension between Turkey and the US.

A renowned author, Samantha Power won the Pulitzer Prize for her book published in 2004 and titled *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*. This book included a long passage that reflected Armenian views on the “Armenian genocide”. Following the publication of the book, Armenians have always supported Samantha Power, and she made use of this support in the form of votes for Barack Obama.<sup>13</sup>

Contrary to the expectations of Armenians, President Obama, taking into consideration Turkey’s importance in the Middle East and its NATO membership, has never publicly recognized the Armenian genocide allegations. Like his predecessors Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, Barack Obama continued to issue statements on April 24 each year, but never used the term “genocide”. However, he used words synonymous to “genocide” and the term “Medz Yeghernt, which is understood to be one of the Armenian equivalents of genocide. While the Turks were pleased to some extent with this attitude, Armenians were unsatisfied. President Obama’s attitude was criticized especially by the Dashnaks. Meanwhile, both Hillary Clinton, who recognized the Armenian genocide allegations prior to becoming Secretary of State, and her successor John Kerry were obliged to follow Obama’s approach. As a result, no progress was made in terms of Armenian demands during the Obama administration (2008-2016).

It appears that some Armenians hold Samantha Power responsible from this situation. It is possible that Power, whose term is about to end, spoke of the

11 “AP: Has Obama administration quietly recognized Armenian Genocide?”, *PanArmenian.net*, 06.12.2016, <http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/news/227475/>

12 “ABD’nin İkinci En Üst Düzey Diplomatı Ermeni Soykırımı’nı Tanıdı”, *Ermenihaber.am*, 06.12.2016.

13 “Obama’s UN Envoy Refers to 1915 Events As ‘Genocide’”, *Daily Sabah*, 06.12.2016.

“Genocide denial against the Armenians” in order to re-establish better relations with Armenians.

### 2.1.3- The Pardoning of a Terrorist

The murder of Turkish Consul-General to Los Angeles Mehmet Baydar and his Deputy Bahadır Demir on 27 January 1973 in Santa Barbara, California by an Armenian had initiated the terrorist campaign by extremist Armenians against Turkish diplomats.

Nine years later, Turkish Consul-General Kemal Arıkan was also murdered in Los Angeles by an Armenian terrorist. The murderer Hampig Sassounian was caught and as a result of his trial, was sentenced to life imprisonment on 4 January 1984.

Sassounian, who showed no remorse for the murder, became eligible for parole after admitting his guilt and apologizing after twenty years. According to the American legal system, parole is granted by the relevant court following a hearing in which the sides are present and express their opinions. Sassounian has been defended by the best attorneys with the funds of the Armenians of Los Angeles. While Kemal Arıkan’s family did not attend the hearings, attorneys representing the Turkish state have made necessary interventions to prevent the release of the murderer. Sassounian’s previous appeals for parole were rejected in 2006, 2010, 2013, and 2014. However, Sassounian was granted parole in the final hearing on 14 December 2016.<sup>14</sup> In the event that this decision is approved, the decision will be implemented and the murderer will be free after 34 years.

The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs reacted strongly to the decision for the release of the murderer with the below statement:

*No: 322, 15 December 2016, Press Release Regarding the Decision to Grant Parole to Hampig Sassounian Who Assassinated Consul-General of Turkey in Los Angeles, Kemal Arıkan*

*We regret that Hampig Sassounian, who assassinated Mr Kemal Arıkan, the Turkish Consul-General in a heinous attack on January 28, 1982 has been granted parole as a result of a parole hearing held on December 14, 2016 in California. We strongly denounce and reject this*

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<sup>14</sup> “California Issues Parole for Armenian Terrorist Serving Life Sentence for Turkish Diplomat’s Murder”, *Daily Sabah*, 15.12.2016.

*decision which is subject to the approval of the Governor of California and will be open to appeal.*

*This unfortunate decision, which is based on local political dynamics instead of universal principles of justice, is not only unjust but also does not comply with the spirit of cooperation and the fight against terrorism. In order to rectify this mistake before it is finalized, we expect that the US authorities lodge an appeal and the release of Sassounian be averted.*

*During the trial, it was established without any doubt that Sassounian, had acted knowingly and deliberately, and had murdered Consul-General Arikan in coldblood simply because he was a Turkish national. Sassounian, throughout his incarceration, has not shown any remorse for the crime he committed, but also has continued to glorify the distorted ideology which drove him into this terrorist act.*

*It is clear that the release of terrorist Sassounian, will first and foremost hurt deeply the family of our martyred diplomat, as well as the Turkish nationals, and will also lead to public indignation.*

*Consul-General Arikan was a victim of a terrorist mindset targeting not only him but all Turkish diplomats who strive to serve their country. The pertinent US authorities, who suffered similar losses and with whom we cooperate on counter-terrorism, need to assess the gravity and delicacy of the matter thoroughly, as well as what the finalization of the decision would stand for.*

*We hereby remember with respect and gratitude our martyred diplomat Kemal Arikan and all our martyres who fell victim to terrorism.*

FAs it is seen, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs lays emphasis on the fact that the decision does not comply with the fight against terrorism that has gained a special importance at the present time. Furthermore, it is pointed out that Arikan was murdered simply because he was Turkish. The decision is also denounced and rejected, and stated that the decision is expected to be rectified before it is finalized.

#### **2.1.4- Freedom of Expression in California, United States**

California is the state with the most Armenian population in the US. Although Armenians do not have the voting power to have an Armenian elected to the

Senate or the House of Representatives, they vote in such a manner that affects elections in certain constituencies. Furthermore, Armenians, although few, are elected to local parliaments. It should be also reminded that an Armenian by the name of George Deukmejian (Dökmeciyan) served as the Governor of California between 1983 and 1991. It is known that Armenians were appointed to certain important positions in California during Deukmejian's governorship.

The Armenian Church in America is divided into two major parts named as "Prelacy". One of these Prelacies is located in California, and its Archbishop, Moushegh Mardirossian, is a very active person with regard to the "Armenian cause". The Dashnak Party is also powerful in California. The fact that more than 100,000 Armenians held demonstrations in front of Consulate-General of Turkey in Los Angeles for the centenary of the Armenian relocation proves this party's power in the state. As a result, Armenians have the environment in the State of California, especially in Los Angeles, to conduct all kinds of activities for their "cause" by virtue of the liberal system in the US. Furthermore, Armenians believe that they have the right to prevent, by force if necessary, any event they deem unsuitable, and to threaten, even kill, those people whose thoughts and conducts they dislike, and in fact, they act upon this belief.

The above-mentioned murders of Consul-General to Los Angeles Mehmet Baydar and his Deputy Bahadır Demir in 1973, and Consul-General Kemal Arıkan in 1982 can be shown as examples of Armenian acts of killings. Can terrorism perpetrated by such extreme-minded Armenians (Armenian terrorism) be revived? Since anti-terrorism in America has become stronger following the September 11 attacks in 2001, it is difficult to think of a revival in Armenian terrorism.

However, acts or expressions of thoughts contrary to Armenian interests draw the strong reaction of Armenians, especially those of Los Angeles, and are prevented, if necessary, through the use of force. Below are several examples reflecting this situation.<sup>15</sup>

The most recent example is cancellation by the California State University Northridge (CSUN) of Professor Gawrych's lecture on his book titled *The Young Atatürk: From Ottoman Soldier to Statesman of Turkey*, which was

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15 Ferruh Demirmen, "Academic Freedom: Incidents at California University on Atatürk Talk Reminder of Sordid Past", *Turkish NY*, 15.12.2016, <http://www.turkishny.com/english-news/5-english-news/229713-academic-freedom-incident-at-california-university-on-ataturk-talk-reminder-of-sordid-past>

scheduled to take place on 10 November 2016 at CSUN, following demonstrations by Armenian students.

The earliest example, on the other hand, is the case of famous historian Professor Stanford Shaw in 1977, in which he was threatened by Armenian students for his lectures, his house was bombed, and was forced to take an early retirement and to take refuge in Turkey. It should be noted that Consul-General to Los Angeles Mehmet Baydar and his Deputy Bahadır Demir were murdered four years prior to, and Consul-General Kemal Arıkan was murdered five years later from the incidents in 1977 concerning Shaw.

It is possible to give more examples of such cases. We will touch up to one more such incident. In 2006, a lecture by President of the Center for Eurasian Strategic Studies (ASAM) Ambassador (R) Gündüz Aktan and this author (as the President of Institute for Armenian Research (ERAREN)) that was organized by and scheduled to take place at the University of Southern California (USC), was cancelled hours before its start by the university due to objections redolent with threats by ANCA (Armenian National Committee of America), a subsidiary organization of the Dashnak Party.

*The earliest example, on the other hand, is the case of famous historian Professor Stanford Shaw in 1977, in which he was threatened by Armenian students for his lectures, his house was bombed, and was forced to take an early retirement and to take refuge in Turkey.*

These incidents show that freedom of expression is relative in California, and that a politically powerful group can limit this freedom when needed. It is difficult to understand why such incidents that seriously harm the freedom of expression are tolerated in the United States, which is known for its freedom of expression and as a country that takes pride in this.

## 2.2- Germany

As mentioned in the previous issues of this journal,<sup>16</sup> the disagreement which arose between Turkey and Germany due to Armenian genocide allegations has virtually turned into a crisis in recent months. There is no doubt that the increasing Turcophobia and Islamophobia in Germany have a role in this. However, it is unknown how German politicians explain the terrible relations with Turkey, with which Germany for years has alliance ties and has

<sup>16</sup> Ömer Engin Lütem, "Facts and Comments", *Review of Armenian Studies*, Issue 32, p. 69-72; Lütem, "Facts and Comments", Issue 33, p. 24-31.

maintained economic and trade relations, and which is the homeland of more than one million Turks who chose German citizenship. Furthermore, it is not known how they explain Germany's embrace July 15 coup plotters as well as PKK terrorists, which Germany itself lists as illegal. It is seen that these contradictory behaviors are obstructing the traditional friendship and cooperation between Turkey and Germany.

Following the recognition of (once again) the Armenian genocide allegations by the German Federal Assembly on 2 June 2016, a regression is also observed in intercommunal relations between the two countries similar to the one in official relations. While putting forward idealist reasons against Turkey, such as respecting human rights and safeguarding democracy, Germany, in reality, has begun to pursue a policy resulting in discrimination and alienation of foreigners, even if they are its own citizens. For instance, President of Germany Joachim Gauck, who uncommonly meddles in current politics, openly supports the Armenian genocide allegations, and therefore causes tensions between Germany and Turkey,<sup>17</sup> once more caused quite a stir when he received and congratulated a Turkish journalist, who was sentenced by court and therefore fled to Germany, in front of the TV cameras and stated that he was worried about developments in Turkey.<sup>18</sup> Considering the fact that the legal process regarding the journalist still continues, this incident is an insult, going beyond an act of disrespect, towards the Turkish justice mechanism.

Furthermore, Germany was seen to give asylum to certain perpetrators of the July 15 coup attempt and allow activities of PKK and DHKP-C, which are supposedly outlawed in Germany. There is a possibility that this behavior aims to pressure the Turkish government whose policies have been subject to complaints by European counterparts in recent years. Another possible aim could be to prevent these terrorist organizations from committing terrorist acts in Germany by making certain concessions.

According to news reports, Michael Roth, a Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office, in an interview to *Die Welt*, said that Germany was in solidarity with people persecuted and threatened by the current government in Turkey, and that these people can apply for asylum in Germany.<sup>19</sup>

Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu has harshly criticized Germany for allowing the activities of the PKK and DHKP-C.<sup>20</sup> Indicating that

17 Lütem, "Facts and Comments", Issue 32, p. 71-72.

18 "Almanya Cumhurbaşkanı Gauck, Can Dündar ile görüştü", *Hürriyet*, 07.12.2016.

19 "L'Allemagne Prête à Offrir l'Asile aux Personnes Persécutées en Turquie", *Armenews*, 10.11.2016.

20 "Turkish Foreign Minister Lashes Out at Germany over PKK", *Yeni Şafak*, 08.11.2016.

it is not a coincidence that the DHKP-C and PKK are carrying out activities predominantly in Germany, Çavuşoğlu pointed out that Turkey was sustaining bilateral relations with Germany despite a large number of FETÖ terrorists having gone (and welcomed) to Germany following the July 15 coup attempt. Stating that Germany was seeing itself as a first class country and a first class democracy, and Turkey as second class, Çavuşoğlu emphasized that Turkey wanted to be treated fairly as an equal partner.

Çavuşoğlu, probably referring to the German Minister of Foreign Affairs' request to visit Turkey, indicated that that German officials should learn to wait for when the Ankara officials have the available time.

Meanwhile, the German Press also has, for all intents and purposes, launched a smear campaign against Turkey. We will only mention *Der Spiegel's* 13 September 2016 issue, which can also be described as Special Issue on Turkey. In order to describe the content of this issue, we will use Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Tanju Bilgiç's statement in response to a question regarding this issue. The statement is as follows:

*QA-33, 14 September 2016, Statement of the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Tanju Bilgiç, in Response to a Question Regarding the "Turkey Special Issue" dated 13 September 2016 of "Der Spiegel", a Magazine Published in Germany*

*The image of Turkey that was tried to be created by the special issue on Turkey dated 13 September 2016 of "Der Spiegel", a magazine published in Germany, constitutes a new manifestation of the distorted and biased mindset of some media organs in Europe, which aim to damage the public image of Turkey for a long time. The fact that the cover of the aforementioned special issue is extremely provocative and creates negative perceptions about not only Turkey, but also Islam, captures our attention. The use of "A country loses its freedom" sub-heading on the cover reveals the intention to ignore insistently the heroic struggle of Turkish people at the cost of their lives, for democracy, freedom and the rule of law, on the 15th of July during the heinous coup attempt of Fetullahist Terrorist Organization (FETÖ), and to distort the facts intentionally.*

*Likewise, we condemn the efforts to defame by using various definitions the President of the Republic of Turkey, who is democratically elected with the overwhelming support of Turkish people.*



*Depiction of minarets as fired missiles on the cover of the magazine published during the Eid al-Adha holy to Islamic world indicates that a media organ, that claims respectability, may pursue a policy of publication far from responsibility, when it comes to islamophobia, xenophobia and discrimination, and may not hesitate to offend not only the Turkish community in Germany, who do not get involved in radical movements and contribute to the economic, social and cultural progress of the country in a peaceful manner, but also the Islamic world in general, and to associate them with the culture of violence is a clear and latest example of a mainly circulation oriented magazine and its anti-Turkey approach.*

*Despite all the efforts of the circles, who lack common sense and are guided by distorted mindset, Turkey will continue its legitimate struggle resolutely against terrorism, extremism and all forms of discrimination, in line with the rule of law and its international obligations, will always give the answer to the anti-Turkey circles they deserve and will continue to defend its constitutional order, democratic institutions and the rule of law. We call on the media organizations and the circles affecting the formation of public opinion in other countries and first and foremost in our allies and friends, to respect those principles that form the basis of the democratic world, to put an end to the ill-intended and desperately repetitive efforts aiming to insert a negative perception of Turkey into the memory of European public by remaining under the influence of racist, xenophobic and anti-Turkey movements, which are recently on the rise across Europe.*

*Der Spiegel* is the most influential political magazine in Germany. It generally reflects the opinions of leftwing circles, and has made a practice of criticizing Turkey in every opportunity. The above-mentioned issue of *Der Spiegel* virtually broke records in this regard. When analyzed closely, it is seen that criticisms in the issue stem from anti-Turkish, anti-Turkey and Islamophobic sentiments, which are on the rise in Germany, rather than from human rights issues and the safeguard of democracy. Moreover, the issue does not take into account numerous problems, such as discrimination, faced by the Turkish community in Germany. It is also possible that the main purpose is to completely hinder Turkey's membership to the EU, which already reached an impasse.

Yet, it is also seen that Germany pursues a policy of détente with Turkey due to concerns over the cancellation of the permission for Germany to deploy warplanes in İncirlik, and to ensure that German lawmakers be allowed to visit

İncirlik. Turkey responded with the request that a statement playing down the German Federal Assembly's resolution on the Armenian genocide allegations be made by the German government.

It is understood from news reports that this request troubled Germany and that even the possibility of moving German planes to another country was considered.<sup>21</sup> Ultimately, Germany decided to make such a statement. According to a statement by government spokesman Steffen Seibert on 2 September 2016, the German Federal Assembly's resolution is non-binding and is a political declaration, not a legal document.

Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel attempted to prevent criticisms directed at her from the Germany Parliament and the public by stating that she did not reject the Parliament's resolution in its essence.<sup>22</sup>

That the resolution is (legally) non-binding and is not a legal document but a political declaration are actually known facts. However, following this statement, it was seen that numerous German MPs, who thought they won a victory against Turkey, were disappointed to learn that the resolution was legally worthless.

Another problematic incident between Turkey and Germany was the intended performance of the piece titled "Aghet" (En. Mourning) in Turkey in November following its prior performance in Germany in April. "Aghet" is reported to be composed by Marc Sinan, who is introduced as a composer of German, Turkish, and Armenian origin, and be about the Armenian genocide allegations.<sup>23</sup> In April, Turkey withdrew from the "Creative Europe" program which funded the musical project regarding "Aghet" due to the piece's anti-Turkish and anti-Turkey content.

Under normal conditions, "Aghet" should not have been performed in Turkey. Yet, it was learned that the Dresden Symphony Orchestra was scheduled to perform the piece on 13 November in Germany's Consulate-General in Istanbul. Furthermore, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım, Minister of Foreign Affairs Çavuşoğlu, and Minister of Culture Nabi Avcı were invited to the concert. What is important here is the fact that although it is well-known that the Turkish government rejects the Armenian genocide

21 "Ankara Veut Que Berlin Se Dissocie da la Décision du Parlement Sur La Génocide des Arméniens", *Armenews*, 30.08.2016.

22 "Germany Says Armenia Genocide Resolution 'Non-Ninding' after Reports Berlin Keen to 'Satisfy' Turkey", *RT*, 02.09.2016.

23 "Türkiye ve Almanya Arasında Yeni Bir Kriz Daha Kapıda", *Sputniknews*, 14.10.2016.

allegations and opposes “Aghet”, top government officials were invited to the concert as if in an attempt to teach them a lesson. Furthermore, it appears that it was planned that Turkey would cancel the concert, that this cancellation would be declared by the German press as an act against democracy, and that thus a smear campaign against Turkey would be initiated. However, things did not go as planned; the German Ministry of Foreign, realizing that such a concert within the property of the German government would cause another crisis in Turkey-Germany relations, decided to call off the concert. It is understood that the concert will be held in Armenia instead.<sup>24</sup>

Germany is known as a country that attaches special importance to freedom of expression. While this is generally true, it is also seen that the freedom of expression is limited at times in cases which is not in accordance with the policies of Germany or states. We can show the below an incident that is a good example for this.

In order to protest against the July 15 coup attempt, some Turks in Germany organized a rally in Cologne on 31 July 2016 titled “Democracy Rally against Coup” with the participation of more than 30,000 people. President Erdoğan was planned to address the participants via video conference during the rally. However, upon local security authorities’ appeal, the German Federal Constitutional Court took a decision banning President Erdoğan’s address. Upon this unprecedented move by the German authorities, Presidential Spokesperson İbrahim Kalın made the following statement:

*It is unacceptable that authorities which had remained silent in past to the acts and demonstrations of the separatist terrorist organization are now working to bring under suspicion and block an anti-coup rally with such an excuse that “acts of violence might break out”. Security precautions should not be taken against those who organize a democratic meeting, but against terror supporters and anti-democratic provocateurs.<sup>25</sup>*

Ultimately, President Erdoğan’s message was read out during the rally and no violence erupted.

Germany also seems to interpret freedom of expression and hand out legal punishment for its abuse in contradictory ways. Two incidents can be shown as good examples for this.

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24 “İstanbul’da İptal Edilen Konser Ermenistan’da Yapılacak”, *Ermenihaber.am*, 08.11.2016.

25 “Statement by Presidential Spokesperson Ambassador İbrahim Kalın on “Democracy Rally against Coup” in Cologne”, *Presidency of the Republic of Turkey*, 31.07.2016.

Two Turks in Germany were handed fines of 600 and 700 euros by a Berlin court for insulting German Parliament deputies Sevim Dağdelen and Cem Özdemir (the architect of the German Federal Assembly's latest recognizing the Armenian genocide allegations) via the Internet.<sup>26</sup> It should be noted that both of these MPs subscribe to the Armenian genocide allegations and are proponents of the anti-Turkey politics prevalent in Germany.

Meanwhile, on 31 March 2016, German comedian Jan Böhmermann read a poem during a TV program on the channel ZDF insulting President of Turkey Erdoğan. When analyzed, it becomes apparent that Böhmermann's poem's sole purpose was to insult President Erdoğan in the crudest fashion possible. In response, Turkey sent a diplomatic note to Germany requesting the criminal prosecution of Böhmermann in accordance with Article 103 of the German Penal Code that criminalizes insults against foreign heads of state. Following the German government's approval of the request, Mainz Prosecutor's Office launched an investigation into Böhmermann, but later ruled non-prosecution on Böhmermann on 4 October. Furthermore, the objection made by Erdoğan's attorney against the verdict of non-prosecution was rejected on 14 October by the Koblenz Prosecutor's Office.<sup>27</sup> It should be reminded to the reader that Turkey and its President are subjected to constant criticisms and demeaning comments in German media and politics.

*As it is seen, in Germany, freedom of expression and the punishment for its abuse is implemented in a way deemed suitable by the authorities; a Turkish president is prevented from making a speech in a peaceful rally, while people who insult German MPs are handed fines, but a verdict of non-prosecution can be given even though insults against foreign heads of state is subject to punishment according to German law.*

As it is seen, in Germany, freedom of expression and the punishment for its abuse is implemented in a way that is deemed suitable by the authorities; a Turkish president is prevented from making a speech in a peaceful rally, while people who insult German MPs are handed fines, but a verdict of non-prosecution can be given even though insults against foreign heads of state is subject to punishment according to German law.

As mentioned above, the main reason behind this attitude towards Turkey and its officials is, no doubt, Turcophobia and Islamophobia that have been on the

26 "Milletvekillerine Karşı Nefret Mesajına Ceza", Deutsche Welle Türkçe, 03.11.2016.

27 "Başsavcılık Erdoğan'ın İtirazını Reddetti", Deutsche Welle Türkçe, 14.10.2016.

rise in Germany in recent years. However, causing Merkel's CDU/CSU faction to lose votes in the upcoming election in Germany may also be a reason.

Turcophobia in Germany has led the country to lose a significant amount of prestige in Turkey. Turkey is an important strategic partner for Germany, and economic relations between the two countries are at a high level. Therefore, the rising anti-German sentiments in Turkey would produce negative results for Germany.

The tension between the two countries has also shown a tendency to spread. On 7 December 2016, Ayşenur Bahçekapılı, the Deputy Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, was detained by the German police at the Cologne airport for investigation after she was prohibited from traveling with a temporary passport she received from the Turkish consulate in Germany after her bag and diplomatic passport were stolen in Cologne.<sup>28</sup>

This incident drew strong reaction from President Erdoğan. Addressing Germany in a speech, President Erdoğan said: *"You take and host terrorists in your country, but you make the Deputy Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey and her delegation wait for hours at the door. Shouldn't we do the same to them?"*<sup>29</sup>

According to news reports,<sup>30</sup> a similar implementation was launched in Turkey against German diplomats on the same day, and German diplomats leaving the country were held for investigation at airports for approximately two hours.

Probably to ease this tension between the two countries which shows a tendency to increase, and also to repair Germany's deteriorating image in Turkey, Chancellor Merkel became the first foreign statesperson to express her condolences to President Erdoğan over the bombing in Istanbul by the PKK on 10 December 2016 that claimed the lives of 38 people.<sup>31</sup>

### 2.3- France

We have mentioned in previous issues about efforts of Armenians in France, supported by President of France François Hollande himself, for the adoption of a law that criminalizes the rejection of the Armenian genocide allegations.<sup>32</sup>

28 "Alman Polisinden Skandal 'Bahçekapılı' Açıklaması", *Hürriyet*, 07.12.2016.

29 "Türkiye Misliyle Mukabele Eder", *Hürriyet*, 08.12.2016.

30 "4 Alman Diplomat Yapılan Uygulama Sonrası Uçağı Kaçırıldı", *A Haber*, 08.12.2016.

31 "Angela Merkel'den Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan'a Taziye Telefonu", *Habertürk*, 11.12.2016.

32 Lütem, "Facts and Comments", Issue 33, p. 31-33.

The greatest obstacle to the adoption of such a law is the several verdicts by the Constitutional Council of France. As it is known, in 2012, a similar law was annulled by the Constitutional Council on the grounds that it violated the freedom of expression. Furthermore, in its verdict dated 8 January 2016 regarding a case not related to the Armenian question, the Constitutional Council confirmed that only a competent tribunal may decide whether an event or act constitutes genocide. Following this latest decision by the Council, the recognition of the 1915 events, which lacks such decision by such court, as genocide and the penalization of genocide “denial” became even more difficult.

Furthermore, in France, unlike the Jewish Holocaust, there is no need for a law as mentioned above as there is virtually no one that systematically denies, minimizes or trivializes the Armenian genocide allegations. French Armenians’ insistence on this issue derives from their desire to preserve the Armenian identity, which they have been losing due to assimilation, for a little while longer through the adoption of such a law, and to add another problem to the already turbulent relations between France and Turkey.

Finally, a bill drafted with the help of former President of the European Court of Human Rights, Jean-Paul Costa, who was appointed for the task by President Hollande, was submitted to the French National Assembly. On 27 June 2016, the bill was unanimously approved in the National Assembly in a session with very limited participation (only 21 MPs out of more than 500 MPs).

The bill speaks of genocides broadly and does not mention of the “Armenian genocide”. Therefore, there will be a need for an official legal characterization of the 1915 events as genocide, and for this, a competent national or international court decision is needed. However, there is no such decision with regard to the 1915 events.

The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which has closely followed the process in France, issued a statement on 6 July 2016, and indicated that the bill has the potential to pose the risk of limiting the freedom of expression in the event that it is enacted in its present form.<sup>33</sup>

French Armenians have reacted differently to the adoption of the bill by the National Assembly. The Coordination Council of Armenian Organizations of France (Fr. *Conseil de Coordination des Organisations Arméniennes de France* - CCAF), which has closely followed the developments regarding the bill and maintained contacts with President Holland during this process, stated that the

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33 Lütem, “Facts and Comments”, Issue 33, p. 36-37.

adoption of the bill was in accordance with promises made by President Hollande.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, *Collectif Van*, which is a news agency popular among Armenians in France, expressed its disappointment with the bill, indicating that it is not the expected bill after four years that was mentioned in President Hollande's and the French Government's ostentatious statements.<sup>35</sup> Ara Toranian, the administrator of the *Nouvelles d'Arménie*, a monthly magazine published in France, and former spokesman for ASALA, also wrote that this bill offered less protection to the victims of the "Armenian genocide" compared to the victims of the Holocaust and the genocides in Rwanda and Srebrenica.<sup>36</sup> However, it should be noted that the difference between the Jewish, Rwandan, Bosnian genocides and the Armenian relocation is the fact that the latter has not been recognized as genocide by a competent court.

In order for the bill to be enacted, it must also be adopted by the French Senate. Initially, the bill's "punishment" section was cancelled by a special commission established within the Senate as it brought nothing new to the French criminal legislation and contained ambiguous elements incompatible with the criminal law.<sup>37</sup> However, these considerations were disregarded and the bill was ultimately approved with several modifications during the French Senate Plenary Session dated 14 October 2016 with 156 votes in favor of it and 146 against it.<sup>38</sup>

In response to a question regarding the bill, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey made the following statement:

*QA-38, 15 October 2016, Statement of the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tanju Bilgiç, in Response to a Question Regarding the Amendment Proposal to the Law on the Freedom of Press Discussed in the French Senate*

*The amendment proposal to the Law on the Freedom of Press, which was adopted on 6 July 2016 by the French National Assembly concerning the criminalization of the denial of war crime, crimes against humanity and the crime of genocide under certain conditions, was*

34 "Soutien au Oroj de Loi Pénalisant le Négationnisme", *CCAF*, 29.06.2016.

35 "Loi Anti-Négationniste: Le Changement c'est du Vent", *Collectif VAN*, 29.06.2016.

36 Ara Toranian, "Pénalisation du Négationnisme du Génocide Arménien: Le Retour", *La Règle Du Jeu*, 04.07.2016.

37 "A Senate Committee Delays the Article on the Criminalization of Holocaust Denial", *Armenews*, 16.09.2016.

38 For detailed information on the justification and content of the draft law, see: Pulat Tacar, "Fransa'nın Soykırımı Suçunun İnkârını Cezalandırma Yasasının Gerekçesine Yüklenen Virüs", *Ermenni Araştırmaları*, Issue 55.

*withdrawn from the Draft by the Special Commission established within the French Senate in September as it contradicts with the legislation method. However, the said amendment proposal was reintroduced into the Draft during the French Senate Plenary Session dated 14 October 2016 with 156 votes in favour to 146 against.*

*This recent regulation, in contrast to the claims of some circles, does not contain any reference to the events of 1915. Moreover, the events of 1915 is a legitimate matter of debate under the protection of freedom of expression, according to the caselaw of the European Court of Human Rights. Likewise, it is recalled that a denial law, which was previously adopted in France concerning the events of 1915, was subsequently revoked by the French Constitutional Council in 2012 as it contradicts with the freedom of expression and does not comply with legislative power of parliaments.*

*On the other hand, the recent regulation, which was considered against the legislation method by the Special Commission within the French Senate since it brings nothing new to the French criminal legislation and contains ambiguous elements incompatible with criminal law, has the potential to pose the risk of unlawful restriction of the freedom of expression.*

*The fact that this recent regulation, which is problematic with respect to the law and the freedom of expression, is set forth just prior to the upcoming elections to be held in 2017 in France, demonstrates that it is dealt with domestic political motives rather than legal considerations. It also reveals that the political gains to be earned in the elections are prioritized over the law and universal values.*

*We will closely follow the upcoming processes in the near future, regarding the said regulation which has not yet been enacted.*

Because the bill from the National Assembly was approved by the Senate with modifications, the bill had to be voted again in the National Assembly, in which the bill was first introduced, after a final agreement on the text of the bill by a committee consisting of members from the Senate and the National Assembly. Ultimately, the modified bill was adopted by the National Assembly on 23 December.<sup>39</sup> The bill will be enacted after it is signed by the President.

39 "Fransa'da Şok: 'Ermeni Soykırımı' Yoktur Diyenlere Hapis ve Para Cezasının Önü Açıldı", *Artı 33*, 23.12.2016, <https://www.arti33.com/2016/12/23/fransada-sok-fransada-sok-ermeni-soykirimi-yoktur-diyenlere-hapis-ve-para-cezasinin-onu-acildi/>



However, 60 MPs or senators have the right to refer the bill to the French Constitutional Council on the grounds that it is unconstitutional.

Ultimately, despite all efforts and the President's support, a law like the one requested by the Armenians that envisages one year imprisonment and a 40,000 Euro fine for no reason other than rejecting the "Armenian genocide" is yet to be adopted, and the uncertainty on whether the newly adopted law covers the Armenian genocide allegations still continues.

Below is the statement regarding the newly adopted law by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs that closely follows this issue:

*QA-48, 23 December 2016, Statement of the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Hüseyin Müftüoğlu, in Response to a Question Regarding the Amendment to the Law on the Freedom of Press Adopted in the French Parliament*

*The legal amendment for broadening the scope of the crime of genocide denial, which has been adopted at the French Parliament, has the potential to pose the risk of unlawful restriction of the freedom of expression as pointed out in our previous statements. Furthermore, several French parliamentarians and jurists are of the opinion that this amendment contradicts with the legislation method as it brings nothing new to the French criminal legislation and contains ambiguous elements incompatible with criminal law. The fact that significant number of parliamentarians voted against the amendment and its adoption by a narrow margin demonstrate the lack of consensus on the issue.*

*We will closely follow processes in the upcoming period regarding the amendment, which has not yet been enacted.*

## 2.4- Italy

In 2000, the Italian Parliament recognized the Armenian genocide allegations by referring to the European Parliament's resolution dated 1987 on the same issue. However, Italian governments have been careful not to touch upon the Armenian genocide allegations unless deemed necessary, and thus have tried to avoid this issue becoming a problem with Turkey. Yet, several regional parliaments and city councils in Italy have adopted resolutions recognizing these allegations.

Visiting Armenia in November, Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs Paolo Gentiloni, in response to a journalist's question on the Armenian allegations, said:

*Italy has always recognized the extraordinary gravity of the bloody events and acts committed against the Armenian people. However, we believe that the discussions on the legal definition of the term "genocide" should be left to international organizations and should not cause further tension in the region.<sup>40</sup>*

Thus, Gentiloni once again revealed Italy's desire to not interfere in this issue.

## 2.5- Israel

For years, a group within the Israeli Parliament (Knesset) has always labored for the recognition of the Armenian genocide allegations. Although the support for this group has increased following the "Mavi Marmara" incident, they have failed in their quest due to failing to have the support of the Israeli government.

The Israeli government, on the other hand, even when relations with Turkey were most strained, has never considered recognized the Armenian genocide allegations, and thus has acted in an astute manner such as to not add a new problem to relations. However, it was observed that the number of people regarding the 1915 events as "genocide" in and out of the parliament have increased. Contrary to the former President of Israel Shimon Peres, the current President Reuven Rivlin has long supported the Armenian genocide hypothesis. The Speaker of the Knesset Yuli Edelstein's stance on the issue has also been the same. Meretz Party leader Zahava Gal-On has long been an active supporter of the Armenian allegations. In short, although it seems that the majority of Knesset members support the Armenian views, no resolution recognizing the Armenian genocide allegations has been adopted due to lack of government support.

In the face of the difficulty of having a resolution adopted in the parliament, supporters of the Armenian views secured a decision from the Parliament's Education, Culture and Sports Committee on 1 August 2016 recognizing the Armenian genocide allegations and calling the government to do so as well.<sup>41</sup> Since this decision does not bind either the Knesset or the government, it will have no legal and/or political consequences.

40 "İtalya'dan 1915 Açıklaması", *DHA*, 25.11.2016,

41 "Knesset Education Committee Recognizes Armenian Genocide", *The Times of Israel*, 01.08.2016.

On the other hand, since Turkey-Israel relations have returned to normal and both countries have reappointed ambassadors, the possibility of a resolution regarding the genocide allegations are now slim.

## 2.6- Egypt

After the deterioration of Turkey-Egypt relations following El-Sisi's coup in Egypt, several articles in favor of the Armenian genocide allegations have appeared in the Egyptian press.<sup>42</sup>

*There is no question that the fate of this motion lies on the future of Turkey-Egypt relations. In case there is no improvement in relations, there is a possibility that the motion to be adopted. On the other hand, if relations improve as expected, there is a chance that the motion be shelved.*

President El-Sisi, like other head of states, was invited to join the 24 April 2015 ceremonies,<sup>43</sup> but did not accept the invitation. On the other hand, a group of Egyptian Armenians and other Christians went to Yerevan for the ceremonies.<sup>44</sup>

At the end of July 2016, an Egyptian MP by the name of Mustafa Bekri, who was probably under the influence of Egyptian Armenians, submitted a motion that carried the signatures of 337 MPs and asked the Armenian genocide allegations be recognized. Since the absolute majority in the Egyptian Parliament is 298, in the event that the motion is voted and is not opposed by the government, the motion should be adopted.

There is no question that the fate of this motion lies on the future of Turkey-Egypt relations. In case there is no improvement in relations, there is a possibility that the motion to be adopted. On the other hand, if relations improve as expected, there is a chance that the motion be shelved. President El-Sisi's words in his statement on 22 August that "*there is no reason for animosity with Turks*"<sup>45</sup> can be regarded as the sign of normalizing relations between the two countries.

42 Ahmed Magdy Al-Soukkary, "Between Recognition and Denial - the Genocide Question and Turkish-Armenian Relations", *Transconflict*, 06.01.2014; "Erdogan Tries to Ignore Genocide", *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 23.04.2015; "A Date with International Recognition", *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 16.04.2016.

43 "Egypt's Sisi Invited to Attend 'Anti-Turkey Genocide Celebrations'", *MENA News Agency*, 19.03.2015.

44 "Forget Me Not", *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 23.04.2015; "Egypt Sends Delegation for Armenian Genocide Centennial", *Ahram Online*, 19.04.2015.

45 "Türklerle Düşmanlık Gerektirecek Durum Yok", *Hürriyet*, 22.08.2016.

## 2.7- Lebanon

In Lebanon (established on the principle of protecting religious communities), since the Armenian community is represented in the parliament and government, there is possibility that the Armenian genocide allegations are brought up. Lebanese Christians, in principle, also appear to have embraced the genocide allegations. In fact, for this reason, the Lebanese Parliament adopted two resolutions, one in 1997 and another in 2000, that recognized the genocide allegations.

Furthermore, it is observed that several Lebanese politicians have turned the Armenian genocide allegations into a personal issue. For instance, Minister of Culture of Lebanon Roni Arayji, in his speech at a meeting organized by Armenian on 10 May 2016, said that it was the same violence that prevailed in Armenia and Lebanon during the First World War which is now manifested in Syria and Iraq. He further stated that the Armenian people want to be recognized as the victim (the aggrieved party), but Turkey today persists in denying this historical fact and is hiding behind mitigating circumstances to avoid paying compensation for moral and material damages. He also added that there are no extenuating circumstances to justify genocide.<sup>46</sup>

There is no need to say that these are Minister of Culture Arayji's personal opinions and they do not bind the Lebanese government.

Arayji was not included in the Saad Hariri's government that was formed on 19 December 2016.

## 2.8- Syria

Like many other countries, Syria's approach towards the Armenian genocide allegations is contingent upon its relations with Turkey. When relations have been normal or good, Syria has remained silent on the genocide allegations despite the Armenian population of 100,000 in Syria who are the grandchildren of those subjected to relocation and therefore, are known for their anti-Turkey sentiments.<sup>47</sup> However, following the deterioration of relations with Turkey, President Al-Assad told that the current clashes in Syria reminded "*the*

46 "Le Génocide Arménien: Histoire et Droits de L'Homme", *L'Orient le Jour*, 12.05.2016.

47 According to a source dated March 2016, the remaining Armenian population in Syria is 23,000 (*ermenihaber.am*, 10 March 2016). Certainly, the population of Armenians has decreased following the destructive clashes in Aleppo, a city inhabited by the majority of the Armenian population in Syria, that took place in December 2016.

*massacres perpetrated by the Ottomans against the Armenians when they killed a million and a half Armenians and half a million Assyrians.*"<sup>48</sup>

During his speech in 2015 on the Martyrs Day on May 6, President Al-Assad stated that the Ottoman Empire executed Syrian patriots, and also massacred millions of Armenians, Assyrians and members of other groups.<sup>49</sup>

Despite mutual visits between Syria and Armenia, and news that the Syrian Parliament will recognize the "Armenian genocide", there have been no such recognition. Along with concerns to not add a new unnecessary problem to the already tense Turkey-Syrian relations, this might be due to the Syrian Parliament dealing with more urgent matters than the genocide allegations such as the civil war.

### 3- THE KARABAKH ISSUE

In this section, we will analyze the Nagorno-Karabakh issue under two headings, namely, the latest developments and Turkey's contribution to the settlement of the Karabakh conflict.

#### 3.1- Latest Developments

Although the Minsk Group Co-Chairs (US, France, Russia), for more than 20 years have devised several proposals for the settlement of the Karabakh conflict, no progress has been achieved due to opposition from Armenia. As for why Armenia does not want a solution; in Armenia, in which ultra-nationalistic sentiments and views dominate, there are still dreams of realizing "Great Armenia" and therefore, it is commonly believed that Karabakh is Armenian territory. Armenians are aware of the fact that Azerbaijan will not easily give up its rights to Karabakh with the support of Turkey and other Muslim-majority countries. However, based on the view that Karabakh - although unrecognized- is a "state", Armenians have been in the struggle for sustaining this "state", legalizing this de facto situation, in other words, maintaining the status quo in Karabakh.

The governments of the Co-Chairs, which have been close to Armenians for various reasons, seem to be not complaining about the continuation of the conflict. However, a small-scale war broke out in Karabakh in April, in which

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48 "Syrian President Finally Recognizes the Armenian Genocide", *Asbarez*, 28.01.2014.

49 "Bashar al-Assad Mentions Genocide in his Martyrs Day Address", *Armenpress*, 07.05.2015.

Azerbaijan got the edge over Armenia. This development eventually concerned Russia, the only “de facto” major power in the region, leading to a ceasefire. However, Russia, knowing this ceasefire will not be long-lasting, began to work towards a permanent settlement. The latest formula to this end is the complete or partial return of seven occupied rayons (districts) surrounding Karabakh to Azerbaijan and then, the determination of Karabakh’s status. However, Armenia wants the status of the Karabakh region to be determined through a referendum on a pre-determined date. It also wants confidence building measures to be implemented, or in other words, wants to prevent a new war in Karabakh.

Russia has become somewhat of an arbitrator in the settlement process of the Karabakh conflict following Russia’s role in ending the war in April. Russia organized meetings with between Azerbaijan and Armenia in which President of Russia Vladimir Putin himself participated. During the meeting in Vienna and St. Petersburg, according to news reports,<sup>50</sup> the following stages for resolution were discussed: First, five districts currently under Armenian occupation will be evacuated and returned to Azerbaijani control. Then, two more districts will be evacuated. A corridor connecting Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh will be defined. Finally, the status of Nagorno-Karabakh will be decided upon.

Despite Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov’s optimistic statements after the meetings between the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan that the settlement of the Karabakh conflict was closer, Armenian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Shavarsh Kocharyan indicated that the status of Karabakh will be determined by the people of Karabakh, which is mostly Armenian, via a referendum. These statements reveal that Armenia tries to guarantee a referendum that will be participated by a predominantly Armenian population to determine the status of Karabakh.

On the other hand, Azerbaijan, while maintaining that the Armenian people of Karabakh be given as extensive rights as possible, insists that the Karabakh region should remain part of Azerbaijan as in the Soviet Union period. President of Azerbaijan İlham Aliyev, in his interview with the Russian *Ria Novosti* TV channel, made a new important proposal and stated that Karabakh can become an “autonomous republic” within Azerbaijan, while emphasizing that they will never accept an independent Karabakh. Although this means a partial softening of Azerbaijan’s stance, which up until now had always maintained that it did not favor the establishment of a second Armenian state,

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50 “Azerbaycan ve Ermenistan Dağlık Karabağ için Anlaştı”, *Milliyet*, 22.06.2016.

Azerbaijan maintains its core position as it proposes autonomy to Karabakh within Azerbaijan and not independence.

Armenians, on the other hand, expressed their desire for the increase of confidence building measures between Azerbaijan and Armenia and for the implementation of the decisions taken during the meetings in Vienna and St. Petersburg. These decisions are, in a nutshell, the employment of more observers and more cooperation with regards to missing persons.<sup>51</sup>

The CIS (Community of Independent States) summit in Bishkek on 16 September 2016 created an opportunity for President Aliyev and President Sargsyan to come together. CIS, in principle, is not responsible for the settlement of the Karabakh conflict. However, in his statement, President Sargsyan, touching upon the Karabakh conflict, stated that Armenia was for the resolution of the conflict on the basis of international law, norms, and reasonable mutual compromises<sup>52</sup> and that progress with regard to the Karabakh conflict was contingent on the implementation of confidence-building measures.<sup>53</sup> As it is known, these measures are the international monitoring of cease-fire violations and increasing the number of observers in the Karabakh region.

Sargsyan also stated that Armenia's attitude is in line with the attitude of the Minsk Group Co-Chairs. It is not clear what this attitude is. However, it is understood that it is the return of seven Azerbaijani rayons (districts) surrounding Karabakh to Azerbaijan and in turn, the determination of the status of Karabakh with a referendum. Since there no Azerbaijanis in Karabakh and that they will still be in minority even if those who were forced to migrate returned to Karabakh, the result of such referendum is clear. This formula, which can be summarized as "Karabakh's independence in exchange for the return of Azerbaijani rayons", is actually pretty old and has been rejected by Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan's only compromise on the matter is, as mentioned above, Karabakh taking the name of "Armenian Republic" but within Azerbaijan with great autonomy.

At the same meeting, President Sargsyan, touching upon the April clashes in Karabakh, also claimed that Azerbaijan had violated the ceasefire signed in Bishkek in 1994.

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51 "Joint Statement of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Secretary of State of the United States of America and State Secretary for Europe Affairs of France", *OSCE*, 16.05.2016.

52 "L'Arménie Est Prête à Un Compromis Raisonnable avec l'Azerbaïdjan, Selon S. Sarkissian", *Armenews*, 18.09.2016.

53 "Armenia Committed to 'Reasonable Compromise' on Karabakh, Says Sarkisian", *RFE/RL*, 16.09.2016.

In response to Sargsyan,<sup>54</sup> President Aliyev stated that Armenia occupied the territories of a sovereign state (Azerbaijan), violated its territorial integrity, and expelled local Azerbaijani population from Karabakh and seven surrounding districts, making more than one million people refugees. He further stated that Armenia has vandalized or destroyed everything in the occupied lands, including historical, religious, cultural monuments, which was evidenced by the reports of two OSCE missions. Aliyev indicated that Armenia has pretended to engage in the negotiations process for more than 20 years in an effort to maintain the status quo.

Pointing out that the United Nations Security Council adopted four resolutions in early 1990s that demanded the unconditional and immediate withdrawal of the occupant Armenian forces from Azerbaijan's territory, President Aliyev indicated that none of these resolutions were fulfilled. He also pointed out that Armenia also was making administrative changes in Karabakh and that these were illegal and a crime. Indicating that Armenian was misusing the Minsk Group format to make the negotiations continue forever and that it did not want peace, Aliyev stated that Armenia's sole purpose was to keep Azerbaijani territories under control. Mentioning that Azerbaijan did not occupy anybody's territory, he emphasized that it is 20% of Azerbaijan's internationally-recognized territory that has been under occupation, and stated that he deemed it his duty to bring these to attention with reference to the Armenian President's inappropriate complaint (cease-fire violations).

*This event shows that the public's notion about important steps having been taken with regard to the settlement of the Karabakh conflict as a result of Putin's meetings with Aliyev and Sargsyan following the clashes in Karabakh in April is not correct, and that no progress has been made towards a settlement for more than twenty years. To summarize, while Azerbaijan, in accordance with international law, wants the return of its territories, Armenia avoids doing this.*

While Sargsyan stated that "It makes no sense to respond to such lies" in reaction to Aliyev's statements, Aliyev ended the discussion by saying "I have already responded to a lie."

This event shows that the public's notion about important steps having been taken with regard to the settlement of the Karabakh conflict as a result of Putin's meetings with Aliyev and Sargsyan following the clashes in Karabakh

54 "Ilham Aliyev's Solid, Tough Response to Armenian President's Provocative Remarks", *Trend News Agency*, 17.09.2016.



in April is not correct, and that no progress has been made towards a settlement for more than twenty years. To summarize, while Azerbaijan, in accordance with international law, wants the return of its territories, Armenia avoids doing this.

Armenia's uncompromising attitude has led the settlement of the Karabakh conflict to an impasse. Following the clashes in April, US Secretary of State John Kerry, together with Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov, had made efforts for a resolution in Karabakh. In the face of recent developments, Kerry stated that no solution was in sight to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict because Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders were still not prepared for a compromise peace deal.<sup>55</sup> It is understood that Russia share the same opinion. President Putin's aide Yuri Ushakov stated that Russia was not optimistic about a solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, but will continue to work with Yerevan and Baku.<sup>56</sup>

Eduard Sharmazanov, the Vice President of the National Assembly of Armenia, pointed out that no progress is expected in the short-run by stating that no meeting is scheduled between Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents in near future.<sup>57</sup>

On the other hand, Minsk Group Co-Chairs made efforts for the Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers to meet during the annual OSCE Ministerial Council meeting to be held on 8-9 December 2016.<sup>58</sup> However, as predicted, the two ministers did not meet during the OSCE Ministerial Council. The main reason for this is the fact that Azerbaijan's and Armenia's views regarding Karabakh are totally different. Azerbaijan justifiably wants the evacuation of territories occupied by Armenia, including Karabakh. Azerbaijan is willing to accept granting extensive autonomy to Karabakh Armenians as a part of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan also accepts Karabakh being called an "Armenian Autonomous Republic". Armenia, on the other hand, insist on Karabakh being an independent state and endeavors for the recognition of Karabakh's independence in return for the evacuation of seven Azerbaijani rayons.

In a joint statement issued after the Hamburg meeting,<sup>59</sup> Minsk Group Co-Chairs declared the Group's stance and items that will form the basis of the settlement.

55 "Armenian, Azeri Leaders 'Not Ready' for Compromise", *RFE/RL*, 30.09.2016.

56 "Putin's Aide: Moscow Not Optimistic About Karabakh Settlement", *APA.az*, 13.10.2016.

57 "Sharmazanov: Önümüzdeki Süreçte Ermenistan ve Azerbaycan Cumhurbaşkanı Buluşması Gerçekleşmeyecek", *News.am*, 27.10.2016.

58 "Les Ministres Des Affaires Étrangères Arménien et Azéri S'Accusent Mutuellement", *Armenews*, 09.11.2016.

59 "OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair Countries Issue Statement on Karabakh", *Asbarez*, 08.12.2016.

In the statement, the Co-Chairs expressed their concerns “*over continuing armed incidents, including reports on the use of heavy weapons*”, and “*strongly condemned the use of force or the threat of the use of force, stating that there is no military solution to this conflict and no justification for the death and injury of civilians*”. Furthermore, the Co-Chairs appealed to the “*sides to confirm their commitment to the peaceful resolution of the conflict as the only way to bring real reconciliation to the peoples of the region, and urged them to adhere strictly to the 1994/95 ceasefire agreements that make up the foundation of the cessation of hostilities in the conflict zone.*” The Co-Chairs urged “*Baku and Yerevan to honor the agreements reflected in the Joint Statements of the 16 May Summit in Vienna and the 20 June Summit in St. Petersburg.*”

In the statement, the Minsk Group Co-Chairs reminded “*the sides that that the settlement must be based on the core principles of the Helsinki Final Act, namely: non-use of force, territorial integrity, and the equal rights and self-determination of peoples*”. The Co-Chairs also reminded the

*...additional elements as proposed by the Presidents of the Co-Chair countries, including return of the territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijani control; an interim status for Nagorno-Karabakh providing guarantees for security and self-governance; a corridor linking Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh; future determination of the final legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh through a legally binding expression of will; the right of all internally displaced persons and refugees to return to their former places of residence; and international security guarantees that would include a peacekeeping operation.*

Finally, the Co-Chairs proposed a meeting between the presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia.

To sum up, although Russia’s initiative led to the cessation of clashes in Karabakh with a cease-fire agreement, it did not end the conflict between the two sides.

### **3.2- Turkey’s Contribution to the Settlement of the Karabakh Conflict**

Before going into the details of this topic, there is benefit in explaining the reasons for Turkey’s interest in the Karabakh conflict. No doubt, the first reason is Turkey’s very close relations with Azerbaijan. Since the very beginning,

Turkey objects to the on-going occupation of Karabakh -a part of Azerbaijan according to international law- despite UN Security Council resolutions. The other reason is that the Karabakh conflict harms Turkey's interests due to it preventing peace and cooperation in the neighboring South Caucasus region, and leading to intervention from exterritorial countries.

Turkey has long wanted to play an active role in the settlement of the Karabakh conflict. It is for this reason that it became a member of the Minsk Group. However, with the Minsk Group handing over its responsibilities to the United States, Russia and France (Co-Chairs), Turkey became unable to contribute to the process. Furthermore, Armenia has always opposed Turkey playing a role in the settlement of the Karabakh conflict on the grounds that it will not act impartial.

During his visit to Azerbaijan, on 15 July 2016, Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu reiterated Turkey's support for the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict within the internationally recognized borders of Azerbaijan and its territorial integrity. He also added that the normalization of Turkey's relations with Russia will definitely help the settlement of the conflict.<sup>60</sup>

Çavuşoğlu's statements were negatively received in Armenia. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia spokesman Tigran Balayan said that Armenia does not need Turkey's help in its relations with Azerbaijan, and indicated that Turkey should stay away from the issue if it wants to be helpful.<sup>61</sup> That Turkey can help the settlement of the Karabakh conflict by staying away from it has become a saying that is frequently used by Armenian officials in recent times.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Çavuşoğlu also indicated that Turkey was cooperating with the countries of the region via trilateral mechanisms (i.e. Turkey-Azerbaijan-Iran, Turkey-Azerbaijan-Turkmenistan, Turkey-Azerbaijan-Georgia) and that an Azerbaijan-Turkey-Russia trilateral format was also possible as it would benefit the region.<sup>62</sup>

Turkey-Russia relations, which were reduced to a minimal level after the downing of the Russian warplane, gradually returned to normal following talks between President Erdoğan and President Putin in Saint-Petersburg in early

60 "Dışişleri Bakanı Çavuşoğlu Azerbaycan'da", *Haberler.com*, 15.07.2016.

61 "Ermenistan Dışişleri Bakanlığı Sözcüsünden Çavuşoğlu'na Tepki: Türkiye Uzak Dursun", *Ermenihaber.am*, 26.07.2016.

62 "L'Arménie et L'Azerbaïdjan Plus Proches D'une Résolution Pacifiste D'Après La Russie", *Armenews*, 13.07.2016.

August. It is understood that the Karabakh conflict was discussed during these meetings. Speaking to journalists on his flight back to Turkey, President Erdoğan said that it was decided upon to create a trilateral mechanism between Turkey, Russia, and Azerbaijan for the purpose of following the developments in the region (the Caucasus). Also touching upon the Karabakh conflict, President Erdoğan said that different results could have been achieved with regard to this issue that remains unsettled for 23-24 years had Turkey been included in the Minsk Group process (or was among the Co-Chairs).<sup>63</sup>

One day prior to these developments, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Çavuşoğlu said that Russia's proposals with regard to the Karabakh process were in accordance with Turkey's proposals, and touched upon a possible trilateral mechanism between Turkey, Russia, and Azerbaijan.<sup>64</sup>

In an interview with *Trend News Agency* regarding the St. Petersburg talks, Turkish Presidential Spokesperson İbrahim Kalın told that the Azerbaijan-Turkey-Russia trilateral mechanism is an important step regarding relations between the three countries, as well as the settlement of the Karabakh conflict. Stating the Turkey saw President Putin's contacts with both Aliyev and Sargsyan as a positive development, Kalın said that the Armenia's withdrawal from occupied Azerbaijani territories would be for the better and would relieve tensions in the region. Furthermore, he added that the trilateral format will be beneficial for all parties. Kalın also indicated that Armenia will make the most from the normalization of Turkey-Armenia relations, and that Armenians would benefit more in the medium and long terms if it looks through a strategic perspective, adding that the trilateral mechanism will also contribute to this process as well.<sup>65</sup>

*Russia's acknowledgment in the talks to normalize Turkey-Russia relations that Turkey can contribute to the settlement of the Karabakh conflict is an important development, because previously Russia, like Armenia, was against Turkey becoming involved with the Karabakh issue. However, the fact that Russia now disregards Armenia's stance is a significant development in terms of Russia-Armenia relations.*

Russia's acknowledgment in the talks to normalize Turkey-Russia relations that Turkey can contribute to the settlement of the Karabakh conflict is an

63 "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Dağlık Karabağ Sorununun Çözümünde Gelişmeler Var", *Trend Haber Ajansı*, 11.08.2016.

64 "Bakan Çavuşoğlu: Dağlık Karabağ Sorunu Azerbaycan-Türkiye-Rusya Üçlü Mekanizmasında Görüşülecek", *Trend Haber Ajansı*, 10.08.2016.

65 "Kalın: Rusya-Türkiye-Azerbaycan Mekanizması Karabağ Sorununun Çözüm Sürecine Katkı Sağlayacak", *Trend Haber Ajansı*, 10.08.2016.

important development, because previously Russia, like Armenia, was against Turkey becoming involved with the Karabakh issue. However, the fact that Russia now disregards Armenia's stance is a significant development in terms of Russia-Armenia relations.

However, it is difficult to say that Armenia agrees with this opinion regarding Turkey's contribution. Eduard Sharmazanov, the Vice President of the National Assembly of Armenia, who appears to have been tasked with making statements against Turkey, reiterated that Armenia considers Turkey's involvement and mediation efforts on Karabakh unacceptable and justified this argument with the claim that Turkey is "*holding Armenia in a blockade and constantly encouraging Azerbaijan's illegal acts against the people of Nagorno Karabakh.*" He also claimed that during the meeting with Armenian President Sargsyan in Moscow, Russian President Putin said that Russia does not welcome Turkey's participation in the negotiation process.<sup>66</sup>

In this period of impasse in the settlement of the Karabakh conflict, Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Lavrov's statement on 14 October 2016 that Turkey can play positive role in the settlement drew attention.<sup>67</sup> The role Lavrov sees fit for Turkey is the lifting of the blockade of Nagorno-Karabakh and ensuring economic cooperation in the region. However, it is not clear how Turkey, which has no borders with Karabakh and has no trade with the region, will contribute to the lifting of the blockade. Lavrov also stated that Russia will welcome the implementation of the agreement between Turkey and Armenia (the Protocols) without reference to the Karabakh conflict, and that progress in the Karabakh settlement will be crucial for the normalization of Turkey-Armenia relations.

It is understood that Turkey is expected to contribute to the settlement of the Karabakh conflict without being a Minsk Group Co-Chair or having a similar status. However, it is not clear how this will be done. However, in our opinion, what is important is not how Turkey will contribute, but that Russia wants Turkey to contribute despite opposition from Armenia.

Armenia did not delay in its reaction in this instance as well. The Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson reiterated Armenia's opinion that Turkey should stay away from the Karabakh peace process. Hereby, despite all efforts, no progress was made towards the settlement of the Karabakh conflict and how Turkey will contribute to the process was not made clear.

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66 "Sharmazanov: Turkey Has Nothing To Do In Karabakh Peace Process", *News.am*, 11.08.2016.

67 "Lavrov Believes Turkey Can Play Positive Role in Nagorno-Karabakh Settlement", *AzerTac*, 14.10.2016

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# A TRULY GLOBAL CRIME? AFRICA AND THE CAMPAIGN FOR “ARMENIAN GENOCIDE” RECOGNITION

(GERÇEK KÜRESEL BİR SUÇ? AFRİKA VE  
“ERMENİ SOYKIRIMINI” TANITMA KAMPANYASI)

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**Abstract:** *The campaign to gain legislative and other resolutions labelling the events of 1915 as genocide is highly politicized. This is a campaign that demands the world recognize that the forced migration of Armenians occurring during World War I constituted the “Armenian Genocide”. Utilizing a comparative analytical approach, this article looks at the actors, issues, and successes of the campaign, thus highlighting an underexplored issue: the inability or unwillingness of its proponents to actually engage the entire world on the issue. Instead, the data indicates that the campaign focuses on certain continents and states, ignoring both Asia and Africa. By examining the case of Africa, in particular, this article asks and attempts to answer four related questions: 1) What drives the Armenian campaign to engage certain parts of the world and ignore others? 2) What explains the campaign’s level of success?; 3) What are the implications of avoiding and ignoring Africa?; and 4) And what does this reveal about the campaign? This article hypothesizes that the Armenian campaign’s scrupulous avoidance of and non-engagement with Africa and Africans is a reflection less of logistics and more demonstrative of the politicized focus that drives the campaign. Additionally, it reflects the nineteenth century racist foundations of a Western-centric, anti-Turkish and anti-Muslim campaign. In short, in this campaign, certain states and people are prioritized over others. These findings call into question the stated goals of the campaign and relatedly demonstrate that entities choosing to recognize the “Armenian Genocide” have done so not to selectively honor the victims of internecine war, but to legislate a politicized reality informed by racist and flawed readings of history.*

**Keywords:** *genocide, non-state actors, Orientalism, political economy, racism, lobbying*

**Öz:** 1915 olaylarını yasama kararları ve diğer kararlarla soykırım olarak nitelendirilmesi için yürütülen kampanya çok siyasileştirilmiş bir niteliğe sahiptir. Bu kampanya, dünyanın Birinci Dünya Savaşı sırasında gerçekleşen Ermenilerin zorla göçünü “Ermeni Soykırımı” olarak tanımasını talep etmektedir. Karşılaştırmalı inceleme yaklaşımını kullanan bu makale, bu kampanyadaki aktörlere ve konulara ve bu kampanyanın başarılarına göz atmakta ve böylece yeteri kadar araştırılmamış bir konuya vurgu yapmaktadır: bu kampanyanın destekçilerinin “soykırım” meselesi konusunda gerçekten tüm dünyada girişimlerde bulunmak konusundaki yetersizlikleri ve isteksizlikleri. Tam tersine, mevcut veriler bu kampanyanın belli kıtalara ve ülkelere odaklandığını ve hem Asya hem de Afrika’yı göz ardı ettiğini belirtmektedir. Afrika örneğini irdeleyen bu makale, özellikle şu dört bağlantılı soruyu sormakta ve bu sorulara cevap vermeye çalışmaktadır: 1) Ermenilerin yürüttüğü bu kampanyayı dünyanın bazı yerlerinde girişimlerde bulunmaya ancak diğer yerleri göz ardı etmeye iten şey nedir?; 2) Bu kampanyanın başarı seviyesini açıklayan şey nedir?; 3) Afrika’dan kaçınmanın ve onu göz ardı etmenin çıkarımları nelerdir?; 4) Ve bu, bu kampanya hakkında neleri ortaya çıkarmaktadır? Bu makale, Ermenilerin yürüttüğü bu kampanyanın Afrika ve Afrikalılardan dikkatli bir şekilde kaçınmasının ve oraya ve onlara yönelik girişimlerde bulunmamasının lojistik bir gereksinimden ziyade, bu durumun daha çok kampanyanın siyasileştirilmiş odağının bir göstergesi olduğu hipotezini ortaya koymaktadır. Buna ek olarak, bu durum, Batı-merkezli, Türk-karşıtı ve Müslüman-karşıtı bir kampanyanın on dokuzuncu yüzyıl ırkçı temellerini yansıtmaktadır. Bu bulgular kampanyanın beyan ettiği hedeflerin sorgulanmasına sebep olmaktadır. Bununla bağlantılı olarak bu bulgular, “Ermeni Soykırımı” taniyan varlıkların bunu iki taraf için de ölümlerle sonuçlanan bir savaşın mağdurlarını seçici bir şekilde anmaktan ziyade, bunu ırkçı ve çarpık okumalara dayalı bir tarih anlayışından esinlenmiş, siyasileştirilmiş bir gerçekliği yaşamak için yaptığını göstermektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** soykırım, devlet-dışı aktörler, Oryantalizm, politik ekonomi, ırkçılık, lobcilik

## Introduction

The Armenian campaign to gain recognition that the events of 1915 constituted the “Armenian Genocide” is striking for a number of reasons, including its lack of nuance. This would be unsurprising if it self-identified itself as a political campaign, which tend to be characterized by emotive soundbites and hyperbole. Yet, the drivers and supporters of the Armenian campaign view themselves and, indeed, bill the campaign as being apolitical and concerned with closure and dignity.<sup>1</sup> However, the campaign’s explicit and highly political accusation is that Armenians suffered the twentieth century’s first instance of genocide, which, if true, would mean this was a global crime with global implications. Though this claim is misleading and willfully ignorant, and has been critically questioned,<sup>2</sup> this article looks at an under-explored aspect of the campaign: the inability or unwillingness of its proponents to engage the entire world on the issue. Rather, the campaign focuses on certain continents and states and ignores others such as Africa and Asia.

Part I of this article provides a primer of the relevant actors and issues involved in the Armenian campaign. Part II provides an overview of the current campaign in order to lend understanding and context to Part III; the Armenian campaign’s explicit avoidance of Africa and Africans. Part IV explores potential reasons and the rationale behind the campaign’s circumvention of the African continent. Part V highlights and analyzes the implications of such choices with relevant conclusions drawn therefrom.

## I. The Actors and the Issues

The Armenian diaspora and, to a lesser extent, the Republic of Armenia are involved in a protracted, extra-legal campaign to force Turkey to recognize the events of 1915 as a genocide. To do so, it utilizes lobbies, particularly in North and South America, Europe and the Antipodes, to gain the support of politicians, civil society groups, and organizations for *ad hoc* legislation or other types of official commemorations. The campaign’s strategy is to gain as

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1 R. Falk, “Healing Wounds: Seeking Closure for the 1915 Armenian Massacres”, *Foreign Policy Journal*, 14 January 2012, <http://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2012/01/14/healing-wounds-seeking-closure-for-the-1915-armenian-massacres/>

2 See M.H. Yavuz, “Contours of Scholarship on Armenian-Turkish Relations”, *Middle East Critique*, 2011, 20(3), p. 231-251. See also E. J. Erickson, “Armenian Massacres: New Records Undercut Old Blame”, *Middle East Quarterly*, 2006 (Summer), p. 67-75. See also J. McCarthy, *Death and exile: the ethnic cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821-1922* (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1995), p. 291-292.

many resolutions and forms of legislative or governmental recognition as possible. It is hoped that the sheer accretion of states and municipalities recognizing the events of 1915 as the “Armenian Genocide” will force some sort of recognition from Turkey.

The United States has thus far refused to officially recognize the events of 1915 as genocide. As such, an exploration of the actors and issues at play in the US proves instructive vis-à-vis the wider aims, tactics, and strategies of an ongoing Armenian campaign.

*The campaign’s strategy is to gain as many resolutions and forms of legislative or governmental recognition as possible. It is hoped that the sheer accretion of states and municipalities recognizing the events of 1915 as the “Armenian Genocide” will force some sort of recognition from Turkey.*

The two main lobbying organizations in the US are the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA), the American arm of the Armenian National Committee (ANC), and the Armenian Assembly of America (the Assembly). While both the ANCA and the Assembly maintain their national headquarters in Washington, D.C., the ANCA’s structure can be characterized as the more diffuse and international.<sup>3</sup> In the United States, the ANCA maintains well over 50 offices. The Communications Director at the Washington, D.C. offices of the ANC stated that power equals people for the ANCA, hence the large

number of offices and an international presence.<sup>4</sup> These ANCA activists are generally politically active, committed to causes such as recognition of the genocide claims, and depend on the ANCA to provide them with sources of information and strategies that inform their actions.

In contrast, the Assembly maintains its national headquarters in Washington, D.C. and one regional office in Beverly Hills, California. Besides these offices, which handle lobbying efforts, policy issues, relations with the Armenian government, and membership, the Assembly has an office in New York City that liaises with the United Nations.<sup>5</sup>

The ANC outwardly maintains cordial relations with the Assembly and other Armenian diaspora interest groups and they do share at least two overarching

3 The ANC maintains offices in France, the United Kingdom, Italy, and a European Union office in Brussels. It also has offices in Yerevan and Stepanakert, the capital of the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region.

4 Brendon J. Cannon, *Legislating Reality and Politicizing History: Contextualizing Armenian Claims of Genocide* (Offenbach am Main: Manzara Verlag, 2016, ISBN 978-3-939795-67-4), p. 244.

5 Cannon, *Legislating Reality...*, p. 244.

goals: the longevity and survival of the Republic of Armenia and, most importantly, gaining recognition globally that the events of 1915 constituted the “Armenian Genocide”. Both the ANCA and the Assembly call for “increasing US aid levels to Armenia to promote economic and democratic development... ensuring the appropriate commemoration of the Armenian Genocide; and encouraging Turkey and Azerbaijan to lift their blockades and adhere to the international standards for human rights and humanitarian practices.”<sup>6</sup> Yet there are two main differences. “The [the Assembly] clearly mentions U.S. interests, while the ANCA focuses only on Armenia and Armenians; ANCA’s goals are more political and reflect harsher positions. Indeed, when the [the Assembly] focuses on dialogue, information, consensus, democracy etc., the ANCA insists on a ‘free, united, and independent Armenia’”<sup>7</sup> These positions are a reflection of the Armenian Revolutionary Foundation (ARF), an Armenian nationalist organization that dates back to the waning days of the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, as Zarifian aptly notes, the position of the ANCA equals nothing less than the dismemberment of Turkey through the creation of a greater or “Wilsonian” Armenia.<sup>8</sup>

## II. The Current Campaign

As of 2016, the Armenian lobby had succeeded in persuading at least 26 UN member states to recognize the events of 1915 as the “Armenian Genocide”.<sup>9</sup> Also, currently over 40 US states have been persuaded in one form or another to recognize these events as genocide.<sup>10</sup> The ANCA’s parent organization, the ANC, has also pressured governments in Europe and, to a lesser extent, Central and South America. Indeed, the ANC-France lobby was the driving force behind the French Senate’s recognition of the events of 1915 as genocide in 2000 and of the French National Assembly’s attempted criminalization of the “denial of the Armenian Genocide” in 2006 (this move was later on annulled by the Constitutional Council of France for its violation of the French constitution).<sup>11</sup> The Italian parliament, pressured by the Italian ANC chapter,

6 “About the ANCA”, *Armenian National Committee of America*, <http://www.anca.org/ancaprofile.php>

7 J. Zarifian, “The Armenian-American lobby and its impact on US foreign policy”, *Society*, 2014, 51(5), 503-512, p. 507.

8 Zarifian, “The Armenian-American lobby...”, p. 507. See also *Legislating Reality...*, p. 267-68.

9 “Countries that Recognize the Armenian Genocide”, *Armenian National Institute*, [http://www.armenian-genocide.org/recognition\\_countries.html](http://www.armenian-genocide.org/recognition_countries.html)

10 Zarifian, “The Armenian-American lobby...”, p. 509.

11 See ANCA, “French Senate approves Armenian Genocide Recognition,” *Armenian National Committee of America*, 08 November 2000, <https://anca.org/press-release/french-senate-approves-armenian-genocide-resolution/>. See also Thomas Crampton, “French Pass Bill that Punishes Denial of Armenian Genocide”, *The New York Times*, 12 October 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/13/world/europe/13turkey.html>



adopted a resolution in 2000 that overwhelmingly supported recognizing the massacres of 1915 as genocide, calling on Turkey to do the same. “*The success of this effort, in the face of intense pressure from the Turkish government, represents a real tribute to the devotion of the Italian government and people to fairness, human rights, and justice,*” explained ANC of Italy representative Alecco Bezikian.<sup>12</sup> A June 2016 vote by Germany’s Bundestag to recognize the events of 1915 as genocide was encouraged by and heavily lobbied for by such organizations as the International Armenian National Committee and the European Armenian Federation for Justice and Democracy.<sup>13</sup> These are obvious and very public successes. But, beyond the power of the purse and the galvanization by the emotive nature of Armenian identity, what may explain the fecundity and successes of the campaign? In essence, why does the campaign resonate – at least in the West?

A partial answer indicates that efforts at genocide recognition are greatly assisted by many in the West, particularly Europeans, who are often subject to bouts of historical guilt.<sup>14</sup> The historian Joanna Bourke has argued that the emergence of an undifferentiated “victim” culture has arisen precisely because of the pervasive use of trauma discourse in Western societies, and the accompanying abandonment of individual and political accountability.<sup>15</sup> This has informed “*the recent expansion of a culture of apology [and] the unpredictable emergence of pacified ‘Sorry States.’*”<sup>16</sup> While this framework may be welcome on some fronts, and many are keen to make amends for the European excesses – colonialism, genocide, ethnic cleansing, two world wars- that characterized most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, “*appeals for state apology or demands for collective responsibility can also function as an institutional facade for individual irresponsibility.*”<sup>17</sup> In essence, many in the West suffer from what the Germans term *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, or the struggle to overcome the (negative) past. Yet saying sorry -particularly for past events with which

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12 ANCA, “Italian Parliament Calls on Turkey to End Armenian Genocide Denial”, *Armenian National Committee of America*, 17 November 2000,

<https://anca.org/press-release/italian-parliament-calls-on-turkeyto-end-armenian-genocide-denial/>

13 “German Bundestag Recognizes Armenian Genocide”, *Asbarez*, 2 June 2016, <http://asbarez.com/151201/german-bundestag-recognizes-armenian-genocide/>

14 Peter Frost, “The Origins of Northwest European Guilt Culture”, *The UNZ Review*, 7 December 2013, <http://www.unz.com/pfrost/the-origins-of-northwest-european-guilt/>. See also Brendon J. Cannon, “History, cynicism and guilt: A critique of the Armenian campaign”, *Daily Sabah*, 30 September 2016, <http://www.dailysabah.com/op-ed/2016/10/01/history-cynicism-and-guilt-a-critique-of-the-armenian-campaign>

15 Joanna Bourke, “When Torture Becomes Humdrum”, *Times Higher Educational Supplement*, 10 February 2006.

16 O. Savić, “European Guilt: The Rhetoric of Apology”, *Belgrade Journal of Media and Communications*, 2013 (4), 129-146, p. 129.

17 Savić, “European Guilt: The Rhetoric of Apology”, p. 129.

individuals may possess only a peripheral knowledge and connection- may simply assuage one’s guilt while allowing individuals and collective politics the ability to avoid dealing substantively with the actual effects of these excesses. Yet given the ease and comfort, symbolic acts such as the passage of legislation or official pronouncements about the “Armenian Genocide”, for example, are viewed favorably and unquestioningly supported by some.

In North America, US liberals and their Canadian counterparts tend to offer their support for recognition of the events of 1915 as the “Armenian Genocide”. Similar to many Europeans, they do so because it is felt to be the “right” thing to do. The logic of their actions is also informed by the idea that recognition of the “Armenian Genocide” is a magnanimous gesture and one that partially assuages the guilty conscience of many in the West for its centuries-long catalogue of murder, slavery and pillage on that side of the Atlantic. In both Europe and North America, the Armenian diaspora has skillfully relied on exploiting what Vamik Volkan termed “chosen traumas” and “entitlement ideologies.” The first refers to a shared mental representation of an event or series of events in which a large group is victimized

*For the diaspora, the campaign reifies the chosen trauma of 1915 and informs an entitlement ideology that demands Turkey recognize a genocide that never occurred. But as unsuccessful as the campaign may be in regards to Turkey, it finds willing allies in the West, engendered by their own ideology of entitlement and privilege that allows them the illusion of being able to right past wrongs through acts of recognition or yearly commemorations which tend to be beguilingly cheap and easy. This is especially true when all that is required is a piece of legislation or some official proclamation by a politician that the events of 1915 constituted genocide.*

by another group, thus causing it to experience feelings of helplessness and weakness through significant loss and death.<sup>18</sup> An entitlement ideology “provides a shared belief system for the members of a large group in that they have a right to possess whatever they desire.”<sup>19</sup> For the diaspora, the campaign reifies the chosen trauma of 1915 and informs an entitlement ideology that demands Turkey recognize a genocide that never occurred. But as unsuccessful as the campaign may be in regards to Turkey, it finds willing allies in the West, engendered by their own ideology of entitlement and privilege that allows them the illusion of being able to right past wrongs through acts of recognition or yearly commemorations which tend to be beguilingly cheap and easy. This is

18 Vamik D. Volkan, “Large group identity and chosen trauma”, *Psyche. Zeitschrift für Psychoanalyse und ihre Anwendungen*, 2000 (9-10), 931-953, p. 939-940.

19 H. Brunning and M. Perini (Eds.), *Psychoanalytic perspectives on a turbulent world* (Karnac Books, 2010), p. 53.

especially true when all that is required is a piece of legislation or some official proclamation by a politician that the events of 1915 constituted genocide. These *ad hoc* acts are thought, often with the best of (uninformed) intentions, to assist in honoring Armenian victims and survivors of 1915. Yet they also avoid the rather more difficult, expensive, and politically sensitive demands of reparations and rights of return, issues that inherently require addressing in any acts deemed to be genocide by a proper court of law.

The accusations leveled in today's Armenian campaign bear little resemblance to historical realities. But because the campaign attempts to re-fight and re-frame yesteryear's battles, it falls into the trap of resurrecting and perpetuating images of the "terrible Turk," which "otherize" Turks and form the bedrock of Armenian diaspora identity.<sup>20</sup> These stereotypes and images also may explain some of the campaign's success in gaining willing supporters. For in their depictions of Muslims and Turks, diaspora Armenians are certainly not alone and find sympathetic adherents in Russia and much of the West. Indeed, Orientalist depictions of the "terrible Turk" -rapacious, backwards, the Sick Man of Europe- have never disappeared from what can be termed an overarching pan-Western psyche,<sup>21</sup> appearing regularly in popular fiction, which unquestioningly presents Turks as sadistic torturers, pederasts, lechers, and corrupt.<sup>22</sup> Those ruled by the Muslim Ottoman Turks -Bulgarians, Armenians, Greeks, and others- have long been presented in popular imagination as sacrificial victims living under an Ottoman, Muslim "yoke." Similarly, those who avoided such a "yoke" (Austrians, Germans, and Poles) as well as those who eventually threw off the "Turkish yoke" (Greeks and Hungarians, for example), are popularly held to have constituted a European and Christian bulwark against Islam and Asia.<sup>23</sup> The implications of this othering of Turks and Islam is as clear now as it would have been in 1683: Christians are organically European; Muslims are not.<sup>24</sup>

20 Cannon, *Legislating Reality*..., p. 49, 109, 346.

21 I am referring less to a geographic conceptualization of the West here and more to an ephemeral self-versus-other conceptualization of states and individuals that define itself/themselves by what they are not. That is, as being part of the West (whatever that may mean); i.e. not the East. In regards to Orientalist conceptualizations and depictions of Eastern militaries and war, see P. Porter, *Military Orientalism: Eastern War through Western Eyes* (London: Hurst, 2009). Regarding slow adaptation and innovation in the military of the Ottoman Empire, see B. Kadercan, "Strong armies, slow adaptation: civil-military relations and the diffusion of military power", *International Security*, 2014, 38(3), 117-152.

22 For a popular fiction depiction of Turks, see A. Furst, *Night Soldiers: A Novel* (Random House, 2008), p. 25-26.

23 Furst, *Night Soldiers*, p. 373.

24 This narrative categorically ignores the lengthy history of Muslims in Europe, particularly the Balkans and the Black Sea littoral. Constituting the majority of the population in certain regions, these "European" Muslims were systematically cleansed from the Crimea and the new nation-states of Balkans throughout the nineteenth century. See J. McCarthy, *The Ottoman peoples and the end of empire* (Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 38-62.

This bleeds into what some of have termed a larger Islamophobia and pervasive anti-Turkish sentiment in much of the West that are part of an Orientalist discourse that casts “... *Easterners as inferiors: emotive, tribal, irrational, and sensuous, inclined to extremism and violence.*”<sup>25</sup> Given the pervasiveness of such views, some have argued that the timing of Armenian genocide legislations in states such as Germany or Italy were specifically supported in order to punish or humiliate Turkey, thus cementing its status as Europe’s “other.”<sup>26</sup> If this is indeed the case, it is further evidence of the appeal to Western politicians of the Armenian campaign with its unique mix of human-rights, justice and closure-speak as well as its baldly anti-Turkish, anti-Muslim rhetoric.

As alluded to previously, there are inconsistencies at work vis-à-vis the Armenian campaign and the fact that entire continents and peoples such as those in Africa and Asia have either been strategically or tactically ignored. This article will focus on the former given this author’s area studies expertise, as well as limitations of space and time. By doing so, it is assessed that the implications and conclusions drawn from contextualizing and deconstructing the campaign and its modus operandi vis-à-vis Africa will be reliable, valid, and generalizable.

### III. The Armenian Campaign and Africa

A crucial but suspect claim of the current campaign states that what it terms the “Armenian Genocide” must be recognized universally, particularly by Turkey, in order to protect others from a similar fate. There is an unequivocal and inherent understanding in the Armenian diaspora that genocide must not be allowed to occur again, to anyone. As such, Armenian diaspora lobbies and interest groups, to include grassroots civil society groups, work to prevent atrocities that may or may not constitute the crime of genocide, regardless of location or form.<sup>27</sup>

Given the clear, all-consuming focus of Armenian diaspora lobbies and interest groups in gaining recognition that the events of 1915 constitute the “Armenian Genocide” and preventing genocide, the absence of the Armenian narrative of history and its campaign in Africa, particularly sub-Saharan Africa, is not only

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25 Porter, *Military Orientalism*, p. 25. See also E. W. Said, *Orientalism* (Vintage, 1979).

26 Damir Marusic, “Germany to Erdogan: We Will Recognize Armenian Genocide”, *The American Interest*, 2016, <http://www.the-american-interest.com/2016/05/17/germany-to-erdogan-we-will-recognize-armenian-genocide/>

27 Cannon. *Legislating Reality...*, p. 337.

striking but arguably inexplicable. After all, Africa is the earth's second largest continent, covering 11.7 million square miles and covering six percent of its landmass. It also has the second largest population of any continent, with 1.1 billion people as of 2013. That figure is fast-growing and contains the world's youngest median population. Africa's growing importance economically, strategically, and politically is now considered *sine qua non*.<sup>28</sup> Yet, it is in relation to the Armenian campaign that Africa's potential importance becomes most prescient. This is because Africa is one of the most vibrant continents in terms of languages, cultures, religions, social systems, and histories, but it has

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also experienced all of the most traumatic events in the human catalogue. This is particularly the case in sub-Saharan Africa, the vast, varied land mass south of the Sahara Desert and the focus of this paper. The curse of slavery on both the east and west coasts of Africa afflicted populations from present-day Senegal to Ghana to Angola to Kenya for centuries. It was the European and, to a lesser extent, Arab and Ottoman demand for slaves that categorically destroyed social, economic, and political systems across the continent for the five centuries prior to 1900. The burden of European imperialism and colonialism were added shortly after the suppression of slavery in East Africa by the British in 1873, as European powers in Berlin divided up the African "cake" for themselves. Over fifty years of colonial domination and resource extraction followed, further destroying

what were, in some cases, centuries-old systems of governance, trade, and social interaction. Informed by Darwinian notions of racial and intellectual superiority, European powers proceeded to destroy any forms of resistance to their colonial rule, with instances of ethnic cleansing and massacre replete from German Southwest Africa (1903) to German East Africa (1905-07) to British East Africa (1952-60), and French Algeria (1954-62).

Independence for African states came in the generations stretching from 1957 to the early 1980s. Yet, the effects of previous traumas were compounded by the effects of the maintenance of colonially-drawn borders,<sup>29</sup> arguably

28 J. Stevenson, "Africa's growing strategic resonance", *Survival*, 2003, 45(4), 153-172. See also T. Deytch and A. Zhukov, *Africa's Growing Role in World Politics* (MeaBooks Inc., 2016).

29 J. Herbst, *States and power in Africa: Comparative lessons in authority and control* (Princeton University Press, 2014).

neocolonial (if local) leadership,<sup>30</sup> patrimonialism,<sup>31</sup> rentier economies,<sup>32</sup> corruption,<sup>33</sup> and the subsequent reification of tribal affiliations as the main marker of self and other.<sup>34</sup> This article cannot possibly recount the detriments of all of the above nor can it explain why Africa has experienced its share of post-colonial ethnic cleansing and, indeed, one case of legally-recognized genocide in Rwanda. Suffice to say that Africa is still shaped as much internally as externally, particularly in pre-conceived notions and conceptualizations of the continent in the imaginations and writings of non-Africans.<sup>35</sup> Yet, the perceived place of Africa in the world by many non-Africans as well as the listing of historical tragedies is instructive for the purposes of this paper. That is, the litany of grievances should arguably make Africans sympathetic, potential converts to the message encapsulated in the Armenian campaign; an end to genocide, honor for innocent victims of state violence, and an acknowledgement of ostensibly covered-up “historical truths.” However, the exact opposite has occurred. Africa, particularly sub-Saharan Africa, has been entirely ignored by the campaign.

#### IV. Why Africa is Ignored

Contextualizing and deconstructing the reasons for ignoring and avoiding Africa vis-a-vis the Armenian diaspora’s campaign for genocide recognition highlights at least five possibilities involving motivations and logistical contingencies.

*Perceived lack of clout:* In the post-independence period, Africa as a continent has consistently punched below its weight when compared with its landmass, resources, population, and strategic location.<sup>36</sup> The states of Africa, particularly those of sub-Saharan Africa, are perceived by those in the Global North, rightly or wrongly, as having little economic or political clout when compared to the

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30 D. Koter, “King makers: Local leaders and ethnic politics in Africa”, *World Politics*, 2013, 65(02), 187-232.

31 D. C., Bach and M. Gazibo (Eds.), *Neopatrimonialism in Africa and beyond* (Vol. 1) (Routledge, 2013).

32 N. van de Walle, *African economies and the politics of permanent crisis, 1979–1999* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

33 R.H. Bates, *When things fell apart: State failure in late-century Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

34 J. F. McCauley, “The Political Mobilization of Ethnic and Religious Identities in Africa”, *American Political Science Review*, 2014, 108(04), 801-816.

35 See M. Keita (Ed.), *Conceptualizing/Re-Conceptualizing Africa: The Construction of African Historical Identity* (Brill, 2002).

36 D.A. Bräutigam and S. Knack, “Foreign aid, institutions, and governance in sub Saharan Africa”, *Economic development and cultural change*, 2004, 52(2), 255-285.

states of Europe, North America, and East Asia. This narrative, while empirically solid on certain levels, is also arguably informed by latent nineteenth century Darwinian-inspired racialism and colonialism. In short, Africa and more particularly Africans do not matter in the court or world opinion. This commonly-held misconception may also be said to inform - consciously or unconsciously- the strategies and tactics employed by the Armenian campaign. That is, the primary aim of the campaign is to force Turkey's hand in recognizing formally that the events of 1915 constituted the "Armenian Genocide". In doing so, Armenian lobby and interest groups search for powerful allies, allies who possess political, cultural, and economic clout vis-à-vis Turkey. Thus, the states of Europe and North America are prime targets and those in Africa are not.

However, the situation may be changing. Though likely unbeknownst to the Armenian campaign, Turkey is currently enjoying the fruits of its diplomatic and economic charm offensive across the African continent and, in the process, has discovered mutually interested partners in Nairobi and Mogadishu.<sup>37</sup> Yet, it is difficult to imagine a time in the near future when either Kenya or Somalia will have the type of political clout in Ankara possessed by Washington or Berlin.

*Lack of natural allies:* While many Africans possess a litany of remembered traumas, from colonialism to slavery, these generally involve Western European states. Importantly, states in sub-Saharan Africa do not possess traumas -real or imagined- involving Turks and Turkey. Furthermore, African states have generally welcomed Turkey's recent forays into Africa.<sup>38</sup> Turkey, while not viewed perhaps as a natural partner, is viewed as different from more traditional East/West partners such as China and the US. Given its relatively small size geographically and demographically, Turkey's economic and geopolitical strengths are rather less of a threat to African states than say those of China or India. As such, states such as Kenya have explored the terrain of this nascent relationship and found it favorable in multiple arenas, from diplomatic solidarity vis-à-vis mutual refugee crises to economic empowerment.<sup>39</sup>

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37 See M. Özkan, "Turkey's rising role in Africa", *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, 2010, 9(4), 93-105. See also Brendon J. Cannon, "Deconstructing Turkey's Efforts in Somalia", *Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies*, 2016, 16(14).

38 See Mary Harper, "Türkiye ve Somali'nin alışılmadık aşkı", *BBC*, 16 December 2014, [http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2014/12/141215\\_somali\\_turkiye](http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2014/12/141215_somali_turkiye). See also G. Bacik and I. Afacan, "Turkey Discovers Sub-Saharan Africa: The Critical Role of Agents in the Construction of Turkish Foreign-Policy Discourse", *Turkish Studies*, 2013, 14(3), 483-502.

39 Brendon J. Cannon, "Turkey in Kenya and Kenya in Turkey: Alternatives in Diplomacy, Trade and Education to China and the West", *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, May 2016, 10(5)

None of this bodes well for the Armenian campaign – should it choose to engage Africa. That is, while individual Africans may ultimately be sympathetic to Armenian campaign claims -should they one day hear them- sub-Saharan African states possess no strategic or material rationale to “hurt” Turkey by passing *ad hoc* resolutions claiming the events of 1915 constituted the “Armenian Genocide” in the way states in Europe do. As such, given the generally favorable reception of Turkey in Africa since 2000, Armenians will fail to find natural allies in Africa.

*Racism:* The Armenian campaign in its current conception relies on Orientalist images and articles demonizing the “terrible Turk.” These images and conceptualizations -part of scientific racism- were particularly popular at the turn of the last century but were largely discredited following World War II. Indeed, they were part of a concerted propaganda campaign on the part of the Triple Entente powers (Great Britain, France, and Russia) to demonize their Central Powers opponents (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire). Germans and those fighting for Austria-Hungary were portrayed as murderous “Huns” bent on rapine and the massacre of innocents. Ottoman Turks were portrayed even worse, as an animalistic race of Muslim *and* Asiatic deviants; the opposite of all that was considered Christian *and* European. According to Yavuz, “*These depictions of Turkey—the de facto term for the Ottoman Empire in most of Europe—and Islam were not new in 1914, but actually had been current since the mid-nineteenth century, and people assumed them to be authoritative because they were used by respected statesmen...*”<sup>40</sup> These included British Prime Minister William Gladstone and, during and after World War I, John Bryce in Britain, and former US ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Henry Morgenthau. These images were revived and reified in the period after 1915 when the Ottomans made the decision to put into effect a forced migration of all Ottoman Armenians residing on the Ottoman/Russian front lines in eastern Anatolia in 1915 to other parts of the Empire, away from the Ottoman-Russian clashes.

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40 M.H. Yavuz, “Orientalism, the ‘Terrible Turk’ and Genocide”, *Middle East Critique*, 2014, 23(2), 111-126, p. 112.



During this forced migration, many Armenians experienced starvation and epidemics, and hundreds of thousands of them lost their lives, which led to *post-facto* accusations of genocide, accusations that have gained traction in recent decades on account of the Armenian campaign.

It would be folly to describe or depict individual Armenians as racists. Yet, by relying on spurious and antiquated nineteenth century depictions of the world and its peoples as informed by scientific racism, the campaign and the people driving it -wittingly or unwittingly- fall prey to a world view wherein certain regions, races, and religions matter more than others and therefore the opinions and worth of certain humans are superior to others. In this early world view, Europe and Europeans are racially and politically superior now because they had convinced themselves they were in 1915.<sup>41</sup> States colonized by Europe and Europeans – many of which offered a home to Armenians before and after 1915 – are equally important. As such, the campaign has focused on Europe, Russia, North and South America, as well as Australia and New Zealand.

Given the lengthy history of racism and racial exploitation of Africa and Africans, a subject too broad and well-known to warrant coverage here, the campaign's patent ignorance of the continent can be understood in light of the Orientalist and racist imagery on which it is reliant. In this sense, ignoring Africa and Africans is natural today because the continent and its peoples did not matter politically in 1915. Of course, Africa's perceived status as a political non-entity was reified on account of European colonial subjugation, itself justified on stock, racial images of inferior Africans and their inferior civilizations. Indeed, the vocal support of major statesmen for the creation of an independent Armenia and the disappearance of Ottoman Turkey after World War I was inspired and justified by their racism against Turks. Their dismissal of Africans as non-entities or sub-human was even more pronounced. These included Prime Minister David Lloyd George of Great Britain and President Woodrow Wilson of the United States.<sup>42</sup>

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41 See E. W. Said, *Orientalism: Western conceptions of the Orient* (Penguin UK, 2001). See also W. R. Thompson, "The military superiority thesis and the ascendancy of Western Eurasia in the world system", *Journal of World History*, 1999, 10(1), 143-178.

42 See Perin Gürel. "Turkey and the United States after World War I: National Memory, Local Categories, and Provincializing the Transnational", *American Quarterly*, 2015, 67(2), 353-376. See also Justin Fantauzzo. "Ending Ottoman Misrule: British Soldiers, Liberal Imperialism, and the First World War in Palestine", *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, 2015, 6(1), 17-32. See also Jeffrey L. Lauck, "Lost Cause in the Oval Office: Woodrow Wilson's Racist Policies and White-Washed Memory of the Civil War", *The Gettysburg Compiler: On the Front Lines of History*, Paper, 2015 (136). See also Eric Arnesen, "Racism in the Nation's Service: Government Workers and the Color Line in Woodrow Wilson's America", *The Journal of Southern History*, 2015, 80(4), p. 1006.

*Armenians in Africa:* Neither before nor after 1915 did Armenians settle in any significant numbers to sub-Saharan Africa, though a minority established themselves in Ottoman Egypt and Sudan.<sup>43</sup> There appears to be evidence that the then future emperor of Ethiopia, Hailie Selassie, when visiting Jerusalem in 1923, took 40 Armenians with him to Addis Ababa on account of their musical skills.<sup>44</sup> However, most of the small Armenian community in Ethiopia fled the country after the overthrow of Hailie Selassie in 1974 by the Marxist Derg.<sup>45</sup> As such, diaspora Armenians in North America, the Middle East, and Europe possess almost no blood or kinship ties on the African continent. This obviously makes their campaign to recognize the events of 1915 as the “Armenian Genocide” more difficult, but not impossible. Indeed, the successes of the Armenian campaign have rested largely on continuous lobbying efforts of numerically smaller diaspora Armenians who have curried the favor and support of non-Armenians, particularly politicians, academicians, and elements of civil society. As such, numerical superiority is certainly not necessary to prosecute campaign aims Africa. Rather, the campaign’s scrupulous avoidance of the continent seems informed less by the lack of a sympathetic Armenian diaspora and natural allies, and more by latent identity traits and the antiquated, racist, and Orientalist-inspired campaign it has spawned.

*Resource constraints:* Information is scarce on exactly how much the various Armenian diaspora lobbies in France, the U.S., and elsewhere raise and spend annually. Indeed, the literature on the subject is understandably silent on the issue given the lack of publicly-available figures beyond what that declared as part of legal requirements, for example.<sup>46</sup> While they have been less successful in the US with their genocide campaign, the Armenian diaspora in France, Mexico, Argentina, and elsewhere is a formidable political force – even given their small numbers -and can raise large sums of money for causes which they cherish such as the campaign for “Armenian Genocide” recognition. For example, in the US, “*Although there were fewer than 1,000 Armenian-Americans in Kentucky, Armenian-Americans raised nearly US\$200,000 for Senator Mitch McConnell and the Republican Party in Kentucky.*”<sup>47</sup> Individual

43 C. Issawi, *An economic history of the Middle East and North Africa* (Routledge, 2013), p. 77.

44 C. T. Kimberlin, “Diverse Connections as a Model for the 21st Century Yared School of Music 1”, 1185-1198, In *Proceedings of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Trondheim July 2007*, Svein Ege, Harald Aspen, Birhanu Teferra and Shiferaw Bekele (Eds.) (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010), p. 1187-1188.

45 B. Adjemian, “Immigrants and Kings”, *African Diaspora*, 2015, 8(1), 15-33, p. 16.

46 Zarifian, “The Armenian-American lobby...”. See also M.M. Gunter, “Politicizing History”, In *Armenian History and the Question of Genocide*, 75-97 (Palgrave Macmillan US, 2011).

47 D. King and M. Pomper, “The US Congress and the Contingent Influence of Diaspora Lobbies: Lessons from US Policy toward Armenia and Azerbaijan”, *Journal of Armenian Studies*, 2004, 8(1), 72-98, p. 87.

Armenians in the US also give huge sums of money to the cause. For example, over US\$10 million was pledged by two individual Armenian-Americans, Anoush Mathevosian and Gerard L. Cafesjian, or their family foundations, for the building of a permanent “Armenian genocide” museum in Washington, D.C.<sup>48</sup>

*The campaign’s highly politicized message may simply not resonate with Africans. This is because of the campaign’s strategy of reliance on the reification and resurrection of imagined traumas and racist caricatures of the “terrible Turk.” These may resonate with Greeks, Hungarians, Armenians, and Serbs, but they possess little emotive and certainly no mobilizing power with Kenyans, Congolese, and Ivoirians. Second, while Africans undoubtedly possess a multitude of their own historical traumas they surely do not involve Turkey. In other words, Africans have no proverbial axe to grind with Turkey and African leaders, in particular, may ask uncomfortable questions and justifiably wonder what the campaign offers Africans.*

The conclusion is that Armenian lobbies, individuals and groups can raise large sums of money and sustain a lengthy and concerted campaign in multiple locations, from Ottawa to Berlin to Buenos Aires. As such, the campaign’s avoidance of Africa on account of resource constraints should be taken into account but also questioned.

## V. Implications

Explicit in the claims of the Armenian campaign is that Armenians suffered the world’s first genocide or, at the very least, the first genocide of the twentieth century. In making this allegation, the campaign is stating that Armenians suffered the most heinous crime known to humankind.

This accusation necessarily has global implications and therefore one would not be mistaken in assuming a global campaign is in order. Yet this is not the case.

While resource constraints and the lack of a significant Armenian diaspora play their part in inhibiting a fully global campaign, the evidence seems to suggest that the racist and Orientalist imagery and world view inherent in the campaign –one that continues to rely on images of swarthy Turks versus white Armenians– prevent it from fully engaging Africa and Africans. Accordingly, one may infer from the campaign’s absence in Africa that Africans simply do not meet the

<sup>48</sup> All these donations became the source of a court case pitting Cafesjian against the Armenian Assembly of America. THE ARMENIAN ASSEMBLY OF AMERICA, INC., et al., Plaintiffs/Counter-Defendants, v. GERARD L. CAFESJIAN, et al., Defendants/Counter-Plaintiffs. Civil Action Nos. 07-1259, 08-255, 08-1254 (CKK), MEMORANDUM OPINION. (May 9, 2011) UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

(racial) mark when it comes to the aims of the campaign. Additionally, Africans are viewed by the Armenian diaspora and its supporters as potentially unreliable allies for a number of reasons. First, the campaign’s highly politicized message may simply not resonate with Africans. This is because of the campaign’s strategy of reliance on the reification and resurrection of imagined traumas and racist caricatures of the “terrible Turk.” These may resonate with Greeks, Hungarians, Armenians, and Serbs,<sup>49</sup> but they possess little emotive and certainly no mobilizing power with Kenyans, Congolese, and Ivoirians. Second, while Africans undoubtedly possess a multitude of their own historical traumas they surely do not involve Turkey. In other words, Africans have no proverbial axe to grind with Turkey and African leaders, in particular, may ask uncomfortable questions and justifiably wonder what the campaign offers Africans. This then leads to a third point. There are few Armenians in Africa, as noted, so the domestic political benefits and efficacy of such moves would remain obscure to Africa’s elected officials and leaders. In short, there is no political capital to be gained and therefore Africans may legitimately question the efficacy of recognizing century-old events as something termed the “Armenian Genocide” through the passage of politicized and humiliating (for Turkey) legislation. Furthermore, there is a good possibility that some may see the Armenian campaign -reportedly about closure and recognition- for what it really is: an attempt to legislate reality and politicize history in order to dismember Turkey.

Lastly, for a campaign that reportedly aims to gain global recognition for the Armenian Genocide, its absence in Africa necessarily makes it a parochial, regional campaign. This demonstrates that it is, at heart, a campaign aimed at Western, particularly European audiences for blatantly political and politicized reasons. The recognition of the events of 1915 as the “Armenian Genocide” by Europeans -to include their progeny in North and South America- is more important than the recognition by Africans or other non-Europeans. This is natural on one level - or rather this may have seemed natural one century ago. The events of 1915 were the result of a European war (with Turkey very much included in Europe), born out of European grudges and alliances based on a Darwinian-inspired, radical nationalism – no matter how many Asians and Africans fought and died during its duration.

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49 See B. Tafrađjiski, D. Radoeva, & D. Minev, “The Ethnic Conflict in Bulgaria: History and Current Problems”, 209-230, In *Ethnicity and Conflict in a Post-Communist World: The Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China*, Kumar Rupesinghe, Peter King, Olga Vorkunova (Eds.) (1992). See also S. Spyrou, “Education, ideology, and the national self: the social practice of identity construction in the classroom”, *The Cyprus Review*, 2000, 12(1), 61-81. See also Volkan, “Large group identity...”, p. 939-940.

## Conclusion

It is hoped that the preceding discussion and analysis add to the increasingly abundant literature contextualizing and deconstructing the Armenian campaign, thereby illustrating just how little the campaign is about recognition and closure. It also further exposes the racist foundations of the campaign, a campaign attempting to reconfigure and reinterpret the results of an early twentieth century war with dated, jingoistic propaganda tools culled from the yellow press that remain strangely acceptable, even popular, in certain circles today. Given this active (if unspoken) world view, the Armenian campaign sees Africa through antiquated, racialized lenses and therefore eschews engagement with the continent. This is not necessarily a net negative vis-à-vis the campaign. For, as the discussion has demonstrated, it may find a chilly reception and little success in Africa.

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# 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)

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**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.*

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\* 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.

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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

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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,

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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

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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

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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).

proress becomes the glue that holds a nation together. This correlation between glorification of military proress 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.

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### 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.

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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

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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

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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# MELINE TOUMANI AND THE TURKIC-ARMENIAN CONFLICT

(MELINE TOUMANI VE TÜRKİ-ERMENİ UYUŞMAZLIĞI)

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**Abstract:** *This essay analyzes the book authored by Armenian American journalist Meline Toumani. Being a very personal story based on her experiences in the United States, Turkey, and Armenia, based on a significant number of interviews rather than on any research in any archives, or even a real work in libraries, having no footnote, the book is not, at any level, a scholarly one. Written, as a whole, with a sincerity that is not often the most obvious quality of mainstream Armenian-heritage authors in the U.S. after 1965, Toumani's work will remain as an important source for the culture of hate within the Armenian diaspora of North America, as well as on the place taken by the "genocide" claims in the definition of the contemporary Armenian identity. Yet, the author eventually failed in her attempt to completely give up the prejudices and indoctrination she received, particularly in the summer camps of the Armenian Youth Federation. Relying heavily, during her time in Turkey, on ignorant or misinformed individuals who identify themselves as "liberals" and who promote tendentious views, and having not acquired the minimal knowledge on Turkish history and society, still less on the Turkic-Armenian conflict, Toumani remains in the middle of the fork, leaving an unachieved, albeit interesting, work.*

**Keywords:** *Armenia, Armenian diaspora, Armenian Revolutionary Federation, Caucasus, ethnic identity, Iran, racism, Turkey.*

**Öz:** *Bu makale Ermeni Amerikalı gazeteci Meline Toumani'nin yazdığı kitabı incelemektedir. Herhangi bir akademik niteliği olmayan bu kitap; Toumani'nin ABD, Türkiye ve Ermenistan'daki tecrübelerine dayalı olan, herhangi bir arşivde herhangi bir araştırmaya, hatta kütüphanelerde gerçek bir çalışmaya bile dayalı olmaktan ziyade kayda değer sayıda mülakata dayalı olan ve dipnotları olmayan çok kişisel bir hikâyesini içermektedir. Genelinde, 1965'ten sonra ABD'deki ana akım Ermeni asıllı yazarların çalışmalarının en belirgin niteliği olmayan bir samimiyetle yazılmış olan Toumani'nin bu eseri, Kuzey Amerika'daki Ermeni*



*diasporasının barındırdığı nefret kültürünü ve “soykırımın” çağdaş Ermeni kimliğinde işgal ettiği yeri anlamak açısından önemli bir kaynak olarak kalacaktır. Ancak yazar, nihai olarak (özellikle Ermeni Gençlik Federasyonunun yaz kamplarında) kendisine aşılana önyargıları ve maruz kaldığı beyin yıkamasını bir kenara bırakmakta başarısız olmuştur. Türkiye’de geçirdiği zaman sırasında, kendilerini “liberal” olarak tanımlayan bilgisiz veya yanlış bilgilendirilmiş ve taraflı görüşleri destekleyen bireylere yoğun bir şekilde itimat eden ve Türk tarihi ve toplumu hakkında asgari nitelikte bilgiyi edinmemiş olan Toumani (ki Türki-Ermeni uyumsuzluğu konusunda daha da az bilgi edinmiştir), bir yol ayrımında kalmış ve ortaya ilginç olmakla beraber tamamlanmamış bir eser koymuştur.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Ermenistan, Ermeni diasporası, Ermeni Devrimci Federasyonu, Kafkasya, etnik kimlik, İran, ırkçılık, Türkiye*

## Introduction

Meline Toumani's book *There Was and There Was Not*<sup>1</sup> on "hate and possibility" between Turkics and Armenians can be summarized in three words; an interesting failure. Unlike the majority of the books published by Armenian and Armenian-heritage authors in 2014-2015, this one does not pretend to be a historical one. It is a very personal account of the conflict between Turkey, Azerbaijan, and their diasporas on one side; and Armenia and the organizations of the Armenian diaspora on the other side. In addition to the personal story of the author, an Iranian Armenian who arrived in the US as a very young child, the book is also based on her trips to Turkey and Armenia. Yet, *There Was and There Was Not* claims (p. 267) to be the result of a "science project", but there are no footnotes and the bibliography contains only eighteen references, including two from Taner Akçam, one from Donald Bloxham, one from Fuat Dündar, and one from Raymond Kévorkian in spite of the criticism they have been subjected to, even before the publication of Meline Toumani's book.<sup>2</sup>

Such a flaw, regardless, does not diminish the value of the testimony as a printed source. Toumani's book should certainly to be used with precautions, but is nevertheless relevant. The first part, made of six chapters, is about the personal experiences of Toumani in America, as the daughter of educated and

1 Meline Toumani, *There Was and There Was Not - A Journey through Hate and Possibility in Turkey, Armenia and Beyond* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2014).

2 **On Taner Akçam, see, among others:** Ferudun Ata, "An Evaluation of the Approach of the Researches Who Advocate Armenian Genocide to the Trials Relocation", in Mustafa Aydın (ed.), *The New Approaches to Turkish-Armenian Relations* (İstanbul: İstanbul University Publications, 2008), p. 561 ; "Yusuf Halaçoğlu Cevap Veriyor", *Taraf*, 23.06.2008; Hilmar Kaiser, "A Deportation that *Did Not Occur*", *The Armenian Weekly*, 26.04.2008, p. 17-18; Sean McMeekin, *The Russian Origins of the First World War* (Cambridge [Massachusetts]-London: Harvard University Press, 2011), p. 278, n. 75; Erman Şahin, "Review Essay: A Scrutiny of Akçam's Version of History and the Armenian Genocide", *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, XXVIII-2, August 2008, p. 303-319; Jeremy Salt, *The Unmaking of the Middle East* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London: University of California Press, 2008), p. 369-370, n. 76. And more recently: Maxime Gauin, "Review Essay: 'Proving' a 'Crime against Humanity'?", *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, XXXV-1, March 2015, p. 141-157, [http://www.ataa.org/reference/Gauin\\_Akcam\\_JMMA\\_2015.pdf](http://www.ataa.org/reference/Gauin_Akcam_JMMA_2015.pdf); Ragnar Naess, *A Genocidal Age and its Aftermath* (London: Gomidas Institute/Taderon Press, 2015), p. 52-54, 346-365; Kent Schull, "Book Review", *The Journal of Modern History*, LXXVI-4, December 2014, p. 975-976.

**On Donald Bloxham:** Yücel Güçlü, "Mislabeling Genocide?", *The Middle East Quarterly*, XIII-2, Spring 2006, p. 67-68; Jeremy Salt, "Forging the past: OUP and the 'Armenian question'", *Eurasia Critic*, January 2010, [http://www.tc-america.org/scholar/forging\\_the\\_past\\_OUP\\_and\\_the\\_Armenian%20question.html](http://www.tc-america.org/scholar/forging_the_past_OUP_and_the_Armenian%20question.html)

**On Fuat Dündar:** Ahmet Efiloğlu, "Fuat Dündar'ın, Osmanlı Belgelerinde Kaybolan 'Modern Türkiye'nin Şifresi'", *Belleten*, LXXIV/270, August 2010, p. 531-570. Abbreviated version in English: "Fuat Dündar and the Deportation of the Greeks," *Middle East Critique*, XXIII-1, 2014, p. 89-106.

**On Raymond Kévorkian:** Hilmar Kaiser, "Regional resistance to central government policies: Ahmed Djemal Pasha, the governors of Aleppo, and Armenian deportees in the spring and summer of 1915", *Journal of Genocide Research*, XII-3/4, 2010, p. 173-218.

rather wealthy immigrants from Iran, and her relation to Turkey - a country that remained actually unknown, and perceived only through the accusations of “genocide” and the racial hatred such accusations generated. The second (three chapters) and third (five chapters) parts are about the time the author spent in Turkey, primarily in İstanbul and Van. The fourth part (three chapters) describes the shorter period when Toumani was in Armenia. The fifth and final part (four chapters) is made of thematic comments on Turkey and some concluding remarks. These concluding remarks, however, offer no real conclusion in the usual sense of the word.

*There Was and there Was Not leaves a strange impression on the reader, even more if s/he is a specialist of the Armenian issue. The sincerity of the author is remarkable, however, the accuracy of many of her claims and conclusions is much less.*

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### Describing an identity based on hate

The most interesting aspect of Meline Toumani’s book is, far beyond the strictly personal story of the author, her first-hand description of the culture of hatred developed by the main institutions of the Armenian diaspora in the United States, and its impacts on a part of the Armenians who have no close ties with these institutions. The Toumani family is not, according to the author, particularly linked to the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), but she attended events of the ARF, such as the summer camps of its youth organization (Armenian Youth Federation) simply because it was the strongest Armenian group of the neighborhood. This reviewer could not find anything challenging this claim. On the contrary, the critical accounts of Toumani’s book, from the ARF, do not present her as a renegade Dashnak.<sup>3</sup> Yet, this first-hand account is particularly valuable, as, except police records in the archives, such accounts are usually written by members of the party and so have the limits of strictly partisan testimonies.

On the contrary, here, the obsession for identity is clearly exposed (p. 13) with the example of the recurrent use of “odar” (“different”, “other”); “*Armenian friends are different from odar friends.*” Yet, this identity is defined negatively;

3 For example: “BOOK REVIEW: Toumani’s ‘There Was and There Was Not’ Not Recommended”, *Asbarez*, 01.06.2015, <http://asbarez.com/136433/book-review-toumanis-there-was-and-there-was-not-not-recommended/>

“*Hai Tad* is translated as the Armenian Cause (technically the Armenian ‘Case’). We treated it not as two words that somebody had decided to put together, but like a basic truth, as fundamental as gravity or the sunrise” (p. 15), but “we chatted only in English at camp” and the “Armenian cause” is defined solely in terms of territorial and political claims against Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Georgia (p. 16). The obsession for the “genocide,” the fear of “assimilation” is also well described by Toumani (p. 14-15, 228, 280) and the logical conclusion of these obsessions is terrorism, explicitly praised and justified, in 1989, when she was in that AYF camp. The suicide attack of Lisbon, in July 1983 takes a particular place in the glorification of terrorism (p. 17-19) and it shows the sense of “sacrifice” advocated by a speaker from the ARF (p. 16).

However, the limits of Toumani’s book are quickly attained; it is a testimony, but by no means a real work of research, even in the bibliography. Indeed, she does not mention the praise for terrorism beyond the limits of the ARF: for example the massive support enjoyed, in the Armenian community of the US, by Gourgen Yanikian, who assassinated in 1973 the Turkish general consul in Los Angeles and his deputy;<sup>4</sup> in France but also in most of the diaspora, by the ASALA terrorists who had attacked the Turkish consulate of Paris, killed a guard, wounded the general consul and took hostages;<sup>5</sup> and more generally, the stance of Armenian diaspora’s newspapers and political groups toward terrorism.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, if Ms. Toumani rightfully writes that Karekin Nejdeh (also transliterated as “Nzhdeh”), who established the AYF in 1933, was still a reference in 1989 (he still is in 2017, actually), she fails to mention his openly racist, Fascist and Nazi ideology and his move to Germany to be a part of the Nazi war effort.<sup>7</sup>

4 Michael Bobelian, *Children of Armenia* (New York-London-Toronto-Sydney: Simon & Schuster, 2009), p. 141-163. Also see: Christopher Gunn, “Commemoration for the 40th years of the first victims of ASALA”, *Review of Armenian Studies*, Issue #27, 2013, p. 267-273 ; Gaïdz Minassian, *Guerre et terrorisme arméniens* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2002), p. 35.

5 Minassian, *Guerre et terrorisme arméniens*, p. 65-66 ; Jean-Pierre Richardot, *Arméniens, quoi qu’il en coûte* (Paris: Fayard, 1982), p. 209-222. Also see: “Abdallah, connais pas”, *Le Monde*, 17.10.1986.

6 Christopher Gunn, “Eyes Wide Shut: Armenian-American Newspapers and Armenian Terrorism (1973-1985)”, in Tolga Başak and Mevlüt Yüksel (ed.), *I. Uluslararası Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri ve Büyük Sempozyumu/First International Symposium on Turkish-Armenian Relations and Great Powers* (Erzurum: Atatürk University, 2014), p. 139-149 ; Heath Lowry, “Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Armenian Terrorism: ‘Threads of Continuity’”, *International Terrorism and the Drug Connection* (Ankara: Ankara University Press, 1984), p. 71-83.

7 John Roy Carlson (Arthur Derounian), “The Armenian Displaced Persons”, *Armenian Affairs Magazine*, I-1, Winter 1949-1950 ; Mehmet Perinçek, “Garegin Njdeh, Ermeni Milliyetçi Hareketi ve Büyük Güçler”, in Tolga Başak and Mevlüt Yüksel (ed.), *II. Uluslararası Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri ve Büyük Sempozyomu/Second International Symposium on Turkish-Armenian Relations and Great Powers*, Volume I (Erzurum: Atatürk University, 2016), p. 35-53 ; Mehmet Perinçek, “Nazi-Dashnak Collaboration during World War II”, in Center for Eurasian Studies (AVİM) (ed.), *Turkish-Russian Academics. A Historical Study on the Caucasus* (Ankara: Terazi, 2016), p. 199-231.

That having been said, the very personal dimension of the book makes it more interesting to know the depth of racism possessed by Armenian Americans without political affiliation. Speaking about her aunt, Ms. Toumani observes, on p. 222; “*I knew I felt uncomfortable with what I was doing—all the Armenians in my life did, to varying degrees.*” Worse, Toumani writes p. 224; “*Nothing I said could humanize Ertan [the editor of Aras Publishing and Agos newspaper] or his parent for her.*” Yet, according Ms. Toumani, she “*was a generous, gracious person under normal circumstances, and not one to shy away from complex subjects. But when it came to Turkey, nothing I said could move her.*” And Meline Toumani’s aunt is not an isolated case, as “*a terrible but familiar Armenian expression*” says: “*Even if a Turk is made of gold, don’t put him in your pocket*” (sic). Empirical evidence has to be used with precaution, yet the fact that Ms. Toumani could not find a single person of Armenian heritage around her who approved her demarche, and that she calls “*familiar*” the quoted racist expression proves that racism exists beyond the limits of the traditional nationalist parties of the diaspora (ARF, Hunchak, Ramkavar). How representative are these non-affiliated, albeit racist members of the Armenians diaspora is another question. It is important to know Meline Toumani’s book puts forth that they exist and not in insignificant numbers.

Even more remarkably, Ms. Toumani offers -whether she realizes it or not- a rebuttal to those who attribute anti-Turkish racism to “*trauma of 1915*” only. Indeed, “*many Armenians, no matter where they came from, had a tendency to conflate Iranians with Turks, Azeris, Arabs, and all other Muslims, considering them one large and undesirable group*” (p. 40), but there is nothing similar against Russians, in spite of the responsibilities of the Tzarist Russian state in the tragedy of Ottoman Armenians during the First World War.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, her parents testified: “*There was no problem [in Iran]. We were very comfortable with our Muslim neighbors.*” It is true that even the Armenian Revolutionary Federation was “*comfortable*” with the Shahs of Iran as well as with Ruhollah Khomeini (except during the first five years of the Iranian Revolution).<sup>9</sup> But precisely, it shows that if the tragedy of 1915 is used as a pretext for anti-Turkish racism, the mutual killings and plunder between Armenians and Assyrians on one side, and Iranian Muslims (Azeris, Kurds, Persians) on the other side<sup>10</sup> are not.

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8 Sean McMeekin, *The Russian Origins...*, p. 141-171 ; Yusuf Sarıınay, “Rusya’nın Türkiye Siyasetinde Ermeni Kartı (1878-1918)”, *Gazi Akademik Bakış*, 1-2, 2008, p. 69-105; Stéphane Yerasimos, “Caucase, la grande mêlée (1914-1921)”, *Hérodote*, n° 54-55, 4e trimestre 1989, p. 155-159.

9 Gaïdz Minassian, *Guerre et terrorisme...*, p. 23, 80, 251-252.

10 Nicolas Gasfield, “Au front de Perse pendant la Grande guerre — Souvenirs d’un officier français”, *Revue d’histoire de la Guerre mondiale*, II-4, 1924, p. 127-145 ; Émile Zavie, *D’Archangel au Golfe Persique, aventures de cinquante Français* (Paris: La Cité des livres, 1927), p. 173, 203-204, 269-284, 298 and passim.

Toumani's book offers -even if it is not, at least not explicitly, her aim- a part of the explanation for the scope of anti-Turkish racism when she describes the "witnesses" used by Armenian Americans in the 2000s, to perpetuate the memory of the "genocide". That part is probably the most remarkable part of the book. One of the "witnesses" "*was born in 1912, in İzmir*" (p. 23). So, this person was three years old in 1915, and this very young child grew up in a province where 99% of the Armenian population remained at home during the First World War.<sup>11</sup> This kind of fact is, of course, not explained by "the PR consultant" (p. 23) or "the executive director [of the nursing home] Aghavni Ellian" (p. 22). Yet, it is possible that this "witness" was actually referring to the capture of İzmir by the Kemalist forces in 1922. Meline Toumani relays (p. 24) the words of the "witness"; "*The Turks she says to me, pulls my hair; where's your father?*". However, considering the fact that a part of the Armenians of the city took part to the war crimes of the Greek army as early as the day of the Hellenic landing (15 May 1919), the crimes of Armenian volunteers of the Greek army in Western Anatolia until 1922 and, even more, the key role of the Armenian revolutionary committee of İzmir in the fire that partially destroyed the city from September 13 to 16,<sup>12</sup> it is not big surprise if Turkish soldiers were looking for some Armenian they considered dangerous. It is true that the "witness" continues in describing a kind of summary execution, and that such executions of Armenians suspected to be arsonists took place during the fire of İzmir, but the incoherence of the narrative, partially recognized by Toumani herself, the obvious senility of the "witness" (she claimed that she was 51 years old) and her explicit racism (she calls the Turks "the dogs") seriously damages its credibility (p. 24-26).

Meline Toumani also mentions Hingeni Evrensel, who "was one hundred years old" by time she saw Evrensel in 2008, as Evrensel was "born in March 1908 in Ordu". Evrensel began with these words; "*I don't know a single thing, I was just a baby.*" (p. 31). Ms. Toumani makes no secret of the senility of this "witness" and explains that the mental faculties of her daughter, also present,

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11 Yusuf Halaçoğlu, *The Story of 1915. What happened to the Ottoman Armenians?* (Ankara: TTK, 2008), p. 56 ; Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005), p. 204 ; Justin McCarthy, *Muslims and Minorities. The Population of Ottoman Anatolia and the End of the Empire* (New York-London: New York University Press, 1983), p. 80. Also see: Lewis Heck, Report from Berne, Switzerland, dated 7 February 1918, p. 23, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), College Park (Maryland), RG 59, M 353, reel 7 (867.00/813) ; S.R. Marine, Turquie, 16 décembre 1920, Service historique de la défense, Vincennes (SHD), 7 N 3211 ; Letter of Charlton Whittall, dated 10 February 1921, The National Archives, Kew Gardens (London), FO 371/6499/2265.

12 Maxime Gauin, "Victims of their Nationalists: Armenians and Greeks in Western Anatolia, 1905-1922", in *Ermeni Meselesi ve 1915 Olayları* (İstanbul: İstanbul Aydın University Publications, 2015), p. 139-158, [https://www.academia.edu/22746646/Victims\\_of\\_their\\_Nationalists\\_Armenians\\_and\\_Greeks\\_in\\_Western\\_Anatolia\\_1905-1922](https://www.academia.edu/22746646/Victims_of_their_Nationalists_Armenians_and_Greeks_in_Western_Anatolia_1905-1922)

was hardly in a better situation (p. 32). The description finishes with a “witness” born in 1914, who, of course, did not remember anything about the relocation of Ottoman Armenians. Except perhaps one uncle, this “witness” did not say that she has lost any member of her family during the relocation. She herself remained in Turkey until the end of 1970s and claimed that her mother worked for Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (p. 35-36).

Those who quietly hear that a whole people are called “dogs” and who believe that such “testimonies” are evidence for a “genocide” can easily become biased or even racist towards Turks, if they were not previously informed about

*Those who quietly hear that a whole people are called “dogs” and who believe that such “testimonies” are evidence for a “genocide” can easily become biased or even racist towards Turks, if they were not previously informed about objections regarding the Armenians’ genocide claims.*

objections regarding the Armenians’ genocide claims. Ms. Toumani’s description of the kind of “oral history” practiced by the main Armenian organizations of the United States is particularly valuable, as an insider who cannot be suspected of rejecting the genocide charge. Yet, the “oral history” with academic pretensions is, at least in some cases, not fundamentally better than the mainstream ones described by Ms. Toumani. Indeed, the main example in the US is the work of Donald E. Miller and Lorna Touryan Miller, who have described their methodology as follows:

*At the time of the massacre, the interviewees ranged in age from five to fifteen years old. For many interviewees, telling their story was an emotional experience. Interviews were frequently punctuated by tears and sighs. Still, more than one interviewee who began the session reluctantly, looking sickly and tired, ended the several hours in a spirited, energetic, if not crusading frame of mind.<sup>13</sup>*

Correspondingly, Meline Toumani observes that “*the dissatisfaction of the Armenian community with Ararat,*” the unsophisticated, fiercely anti-Turkish movie of Atom Egoyan, “*was short-lived. [...] The Archbishop His Eminency Oshagan Choloyan admitted that it was the first film he’d seen in seventeen years*” (p. 66). In other words, “*We would support this film whether we liked it or not*” (p. 63), because “*the Armenian diaspora’s obsession with genocide had become its raison d’être, that it had become inextricable from a general hatred toward Turks [...]*” (p. 68).

13 Donald E. Miller and Lorna Touryan Miller, “Armenian Survivors: A Typological Analysis of Victim Response”, *Oral History Review*, X-1, 1982, p. 49. Also see: Justin McCarthy, “Book review”, *American Historical Review*, XCIX-2, April 1994, p. 605-606.

However, all these interesting remarks and observations by Toumani are too scattered, and are not included in a wide-ranging, rigorous analysis based on robust references. A key example of weakness is when she touches upon the internal fights in the Armenian diaspora in less than three pages (p. 49-51). She rightfully mentions the assassination of archbishop Leon Tourian by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnak) “during a Christmas Eve service,” but she fails to put it in the context of rivalry for the control of the Armenian diaspora: Murder of an ARF leader in Beirut in mid-1920s, assassinations of anti-Dashnaks leaders by Dashnaks in Lebanon (1929, 1933) and Greece (1926), bloody clashes between Communist Armenians and Dashnaks in Lyon (1926), Paris and Grenoble (1933), assault by ARF members against Tourian himself before his assassination, etc.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, Toumani is right in writing (p. 50) that “*after the murder [of Tourian], Armenian churches began to affiliate as Dashnak or non-Dashnak,*” but the issue was not only about “affiliation.” Indeed, supporters of Tourian murdered at least one Dashnak official in Providence, Rhode Island, tried to kill two historical leaders of the ARF and incited their fellow Armenians to boycott members or supporters of the Dashnak party. The ARF itself made the situation only worse, as “many Dashnaks,” “*voluntarily contributed huge sums of money not only to meet the expenses of the trial but to care for the families of the two men*” sentenced to death for the assassination of Tourian (their sentences were commuted to life imprisonment) and as the ARF and its supporters “*came to define them as heroes.*”<sup>15</sup>

As a result, Meline Toumani stresses (p. 51) an essential point in writing, about the internal divisions of the Armenian diaspora, especially in the US; “*The most important thing was to belong to something, and it only worked when you had something or someone to fight against [...].*” And barely implicitly, she connects the divisions to the anti-Turkish racism and the identity issue in the diaspora; “*the problem of not feeling entirely at ease in either the American world or the Armenian one,*” the “irrational, hostile fragmentation” of identity (p. 48) and its consequence: “[...] *there was only one thing that everybody agreed on: the Turks hated us and we hated the Turks. This trumped*

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14 Rapport du commissaire spécial de Lyon, 3 mai 1926 ; Note sur le comité de secours pour l'Arménie, HOG, 5 mars 1932 ; Rapport du commissariat spécial de Lyon, 14 février 1933; Rapport de la préfecture de police de Paris, 6 mars 1933 ; Rapport du procureur de Grenoble, 4 décembre 1933, Archives nationales, Pierrefitte, F7 13436 ; Astrig Atamian, “Les Arméniens communistes en France, une histoire oubliée”, *Ammis*, n° 7, 2007 ; Kapriel Serope Papazian, *Patriotism Perverted*, Boston: Baikar Press, 1934, p. 61-65, 70.

15 Sarkis Atamian, *The Armenian Community* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955), p. 367-370 (quotation p. 369-370). Also see: Benjamin Alexander, “Contested Memories, Divided Diaspora: Armenian Americans, the Thousand-Day Republic, and the Polarized Response to an Archbishop’s Murder”, *Journal of American Ethnic History*, XXVII-1, Fall 2007, p. 32-59.



*everything.*” Her personal example is interesting in this regard; *“It wouldn’t have occurred to me to call myself anything but Armenian”* (p. 41) but *“little by little I refused to speak Armenian to everyone.”* Regardless, her demonstration would have been stronger with even a minimal research on Armenian nationalism and internal conflicts.

### Meline Toumani in Turkey and Armenia

In spite of the inaccuracies and deficiencies described in the previous part of this essay, it cannot be contested that the author was courageous, and that more than one of her remarks are quite relevant. She understood, and courageously wrote, on p. 69, that *“our obsession with 1915 was destroying us”*. However, when she reached the conclusion that what was needed was *“to understand the Turk”* (p. 70), she made very bad choices at the very beginning by looking at individuals with dubious reputations such as Taner Akçam and Fatma Müge Gökçek. It is true that Ms. Toumani is not a historian but a journalist, yet this is hardly an excuse. She calls Taner Akçam a *“historian”* (p. 67). In fact, Mr. Akçam (like Fatma Müge Gökçek) never got a single degree in history; he graduated in sociology. His doctoral dissertation was written in very bad German (even the title had several errors) and co-supervised by Vahakn N. Dadrian, after Mr. Dadrian was fired by the State University of New York for sexual harassment<sup>16</sup> —in other words, Mr. Akçam’s doctorate degree was obtained in irregular conditions. Moreover, Meline Toumani met Taner Akçam in 2004, when he was working at Minnesota University, claiming the title of *“visiting professor”* without any right to do so. It is true that Toumani confesses, p. 6; *“[...] even if I wanted to believe that the thing in question did not fit the definition of genocide, it would be impossible for me to find my way into that belief”*. Regardless, that prejudice, sincerely expressed, cannot justify that she failed to process the minimal checking about Taner Akçam, as she did with some *“false assumptions”* she had developed in the past (see p. 53-59 for instance). The poor English spoken by Taner Akçam (raising doubts about how he could be a *“visiting professor”* at an American university) should have been sufficient to be cautious about his academic credentials.

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16 *“Geneso Fires Professor for Sexual Harrassment”*, *Times Union*, 25.04.1991, p. B10, <http://albarchive.merlinone.net/mweb/wmsql.wm.request?oneimage&imageid=5599449> . On Mr. Dadrian’s publications, see, among others: Edward J. Erickson, *Ottomans and Armenians. A Study in Counter-Insurgency* (New York-London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), p. 117; Hilmar Kaiser, *“Germany and the Armenian Genocide: A Review Essay”*, *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies*, VIII, 1995, p. 127-142 ; Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres...*, p. 43-128 ; and *“Study the Armenian Genocide with Confidence, Ara Sarafian Suggests”*, *The Armenian Reporter*, 16.12.2008, <http://www.gomidias.org/press/show/14>

Correspondingly, the heavy reliance of Meline Toumani on Fatma Müge Gökçek and her faith in the “Workshop for Armenian Turkish Scholarship” (p. 73-77, 176-177, 282 and passim), which had little to do with any serious “scholarship,”<sup>17</sup> could lead only to deep misunderstandings. A typical example is the very inaccurate way the Viennese Armenian-Turkish platform is described (p. 171). Instead of checking anything, Ms. Toumani took her information from Ms. Gökçek only. As a result, the very basic fact that the platform published a compilation of documents is omitted.<sup>18</sup> For sure, a scholarly publication, under the responsibility of Turkish “official” historians and of a former member of the ARF who kept personal ties in the party (Garabek Krikor Moumdjian) seems anathema to Fatma Müge Gökçek —and Meline Toumani, failing to understand, writes accordingly.

The fact that Meline Toumani met Yusuf Halaçoğlu, when he was still chairman of the Turkish Historical Society (Tr. *Türk Tarih Kurumu*) is somewhat better (p. 173-185). That such a meeting took place at all is by itself important. However, Ms. Toumani’s mental blockade is more than obvious in her account of the conversation, and is exemplified by these words: “*I began to realize how truly confusing it would be to talk to him without a total grasp of both the history and the historiography of the Armenian issue*” (p. 175) and: “*in a match like this, I was bound to be the loser. Certainty is always more powerful than doubt*” (p. 185), as if Ms. Toumani ever expressed any doubt on the genocide claims. Moreover, the meeting with Prof. Halaçoğlu remained unique: She made no attempt to speak with Seçil Karal Akgün, Sina Akşin, Türkkaya Ataöv, Kemal Çiçek, Yusuf Sarıнай or Ömer Turan —and similarly did not attempt to speak with Michael Gunter, Bernard Lewis, Guenter Lewy, Heath Lowry or Justin McCarthy in the United States.

However, Prof. Halaçoğlu has to be praised, as he remains the only person who made Ms. Toumani sensitive to the fate of the Turkish (and more generally Muslim) victims of Armenian nationalists, in mentioning “*the ovens [where] Armenians had burned the Muslims.*” This time, Ms. Toumani “*nodded. This may have been true. That was terrible. I was intent on showing empathy for such a possibility*” (p. 177). Yet, these sentences represent less than two lines in a 287-page book. And it is particularly strange, as the author praises Donald Bloxham (p. 284) for having “added depth to [her] understanding.”

17 Ahmet Kemal Gençtürk, “Book Review”, *Insight Turkey*, XVII-3, Summer 2015, p. 231-233, <http://www.insightturkey.com/a-question-of-genocide-armenians-and-turks-at-the-end-of-the-ottoman-empire/book-reviews/6497>; Jeremy Salt, “History as Theology”, *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, XVII-1/2, Fall 2011, p. 159.

18 İnanç Atılğan and Garabet Moumdjian (ed.), *Archival Documents of the Viennese Armenian-Turkish Platform* (Klagenfurt-Vienna-Ljubljana-Sarajevo: Wieser Verlag, 2009).

Mr. Bloxham's book on the Armenian issue is definitely flawed, but at least it mentions the massacres of Muslim civilians perpetrated in 1916 by the Armenian units of the Russian army, and provides a rather interesting, albeit short, description of the ethnic cleansing policy conducted by the independent Republic of Armenia, against the Muslims, mostly Azeris (1918-1920).<sup>19</sup> Even if these two cases do not constitute the comprehensive list of the crimes committed by Armenian nationalists from 1914 to 1922 (in particular, Donald Bloxham omits the massacres of 1914-15 and underestimates the ones of the Armenian Legion, from 1918 to 1920), they are enough to reach the conclusion that virtual silence on the Muslim victims is no solution for an Armenian who wants to "understand" the Turks (or, even more, the Azerbaijanis).

*Toumani looks more like a victim of circumstances than like a fundamentally dishonest person. She was subjected to the guidance of the professionals of anti-Turkish activism*

Toumani's failure to understand such a basic reality oddly echoes one of her confession (p. 133): "*Whatever the day's lesson [of Turkish in İstanbul], my mind could find a connection to the genocide.*" That having been said, Toumani looks more like a victim of circumstances than like a fundamentally dishonest person. She was subjected to the guidance of the professionals of anti-Turkish

activism: she was brought in an environment where she was "insulated from mainstream Turks" most of the time (p. 130), and, furthermore, had long and frequent discussions with Hrant Dink and other members of *Agos* newspaper staff. As Dink's assassination led to the triumph of a completely fictional version of his life and his unquestioned portrayal as a man of peace and dialogue, it is necessary to remind the reader that Dink totally denied -without any argument- the very existence of the massacres of Turks perpetrated by Armenian nationalists before 1918 (a denial that makes Mr. Bloxham look like a friend of Turkey by comparison) and dismissed the ones of 1918 as simple acts of "revenge" —a kind of half-excuse.<sup>20</sup>

It is also necessary to stress that Dink gave space in *Agos* for the monologues of Taner Akçam, including in July-August 2006, namely after Ferudun Ata had demonstrated, during the contradictory symposium of İstanbul University (April 2006) that the core of Akçam's reasoning (the trials of 1919-1920) is plainly wrong. Dr. Ata did so in front of Hilmar Kaiser and Ara Sarafian, who both support the "Armenian genocide" charge but do not have a high opinion of Taner Akçam. This author also tried to find even a single article by Dink

19 Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) (first edition, 2005), p. 100, 103-105.

20 Statement in the documentary movie *Sari Gelin* (2005).

condemning the terrorism of the ASALA and the JCAG/ARA, or at least acts such as the double bombing in İstanbul by the JCAG, on May 29, 1977, and the Orly attack on July 15, 1983, but it was in vain.

Another legend is the “opposition” of Dink to censorship regarding the events of 1915. Actually, his newspaper, *Agos*, published on 3 November 2006, an article ferociously supporting the Masse bill, a proposal eventually rejected by the French Senate in May 2011, which was designed to ban the “denial of the Armenian genocide”. The author of that article, Vilma Kouyoumdjian (Kuyumcıyan) later moved to France, first as the correspondent of *Agos*, later as a contributor of *Les Nouvelles d’Arménie magazine* (directed by former ASALA spokesman Jean-Marc “Ara” Toranian), the collectif VAN (established at the initiative of Mr. Toranian) and the Dashnak radio AYP FM, where she continued to support censorship, particularly the Boyer bill (annulled by the Constitutional Council of France in February 2012). It bears noting that Ms. Toumani refuses “to entrust historiography to a government body” in the context of diaspora’s claims (p. 239), but is silent on the liberticidal views expressed in Hrant Dink’s newspaper.

Regardless, Meline Toumani offers an interesting, first-hand testimony on the “openness” of the *Agos* daily, on p. 93: “*One of his [Dink’s] younger colleagues came in, a woman my age. [...] ‘Without any contact, the diaspora maintains the image of the Turk as a murderer. They assume that Turks all know about 1915 and deny it; but of the ninety years, it has been eighty years of silence [until mid-1990s].’*” So, this woman, who never set foot in an archive, is kind enough to refrain from calling Turks “murderers” because they know nothing -unlike her- as a result of “eighty years of silence.” That statement is contradicted at the same page, by the one of Baskın Oran, who affirms that silence ended during the 1970s: “*For Turkey the ASALA murders were like being woken up at three a.m. with a hand grenade.*” Both these interpretations are far from the truth —as is usual with *Agos* contributors. In addition to the fact that the three quarters of the first assassinations of Turkish diplomats, drivers, etc., by Armenian terrorists (1973-1979) were not perpetrated by the ASALA (even if Gourgen Yanikian, the ASALA’s main reference, is included) but by the JCAG,<sup>21</sup> before the first of these attacks, the Armenian issue had been discussed in Turkey, including by mainstream

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21 Mehmet Baydar and Bahadır Demir were assassinated by Yanikian in 1973; Oktar Cirit by the ASALA in 1976; Daniş Tunalgil, İsmail Erez and his driver (1975), Taha Carim (1977), Necla Kunalp, Beşir Balcıoğlu and their driver (1978), Ahmet Benler and Yılmaz Çolpan (1979) by the JCAG. And as previously said, it was the JCAG, not the ASALA, which perpetrated the first murderous bombing in İstanbul (1977).

historians, journalists, and politicians such as Kazım Karabekir, Esat Uras, Cemal Kutay, Yusuf Hikmet Bayur, Enver Ziya Karal and Sadi Koçaş.<sup>22</sup> In 1965 only, several hundreds of articles on the Armenian question had been published in Turkish newspapers.

As Toumani has been in such a company —which she preferred over *Jamanak*, the Armenian newspaper of Turkey with the more objective views, and the more informed figures of the Turkish far left and “liberalism” such as Halil Berktaş and Haluk Şahin, it is not a surprise that she practices double standards about Turkey and Armenia. This is not that she hides anti-Turkish racism entirely. In particular, she quotes violent, hateful statements she heard in Yerevan, including calls for murder, with mutilations (p. 213-217), something she never heard in Turkey. However, she does not mention at all the glorification of terrorism in Armenia, for example the welcoming of Mardiros Jamgotchian (murderer of the secretary of the Turkish consulate in Geneva in 1981) and Varoujan Garbidjian (the main perpetrator of the Orly bombing), or the elevation of Monte Melkonian (number one of ASALA from 1980 to 1983, leader of the dissident faction, ASALA-RM, from 1983 to 1985) to “national hero.”<sup>23</sup>

Correspondingly, on p. 193, she writes; “*The war [between Armenia and Azerbaijan] also set off in the early 1990s a de facto population exchange: hundreds of thousands of Armenians left Azerbaijan, and an even larger number of Azeris had to flee Armenia and Karabakh, each group leaving behind generations of history.*” Such a sentence is certainly better than the average narrative heard from Armenian diaspora’s activists, but it is still inaccurate. Indeed, geographically, Azeris were not only expelled from “Armenia and Karabakh”, but also from seven districts of Western Azerbaijan, invaded in 1992-1994, and where there were almost no Armenians before. Chronologically, the expulsions of Azeris began in 1987, not “in the early 1990s”. Furthermore, although there can be no excuse for the short waves of violence against Armenians in Azerbaijan (1988, 1990) that provoked emigration, it was an unorganized and reactionary violence that was triggered

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22 Esat Uras, *Tarihte Ermeniler ve Ermeni Meselesi* (Ankara: Yeni Matbaa, 1950) ; Yusuf Hikmet Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, Ankara: TTK, Volume II-3, 1951, p. 18-100, III-3, 1957, p. 35-59 ; Cemal Kutay, *Karabekir Ermenistan'ı Nasıl Yok Etti?* (İstanbul: Ercan Matbaa, 1956) ; Kazım Karabekir, *İstiklal Harbimiz* (İstanbul: Türkiye Yayınevi, 1960) (first edition, 1951) ; Sadi Koçaş, *Tarih Boyunca Ermeniler ve Selçuklular'dan Beri Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri* (Ankara: Altınok Matbaası, 1967) ; Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Ermeni Meselesi* (Ankara: Dışişleri Akademisi, 1971). Also see: Yervant Çark, *Türk Devleti Hizmetinde Ermeniler, 1453-1953* (Ankara: Yeni Matbaa, 1953).

23 Maxime Gauin, “Remembering the Orly Attack”, *Review of International Law and Politics*, VII-27, p. 113-139.

by the more systemic violence perpetrated by Armenian nationalists.<sup>24</sup> Actually, there are no Azeris anymore in Armenia, but the United Nations estimated the Armenian population of Azerbaijan to be around 30,000 in 2003,<sup>25</sup> nine years after the signature of the cease-fire (1994). Furthermore, there is nothing among the violence perpetrated against Armenian civilians in Azerbaijan (1988-1990) similar to the massacre that took place at Khodjaly, where at least 613 Azeri civilians were methodically exterminated by Armenian forces in February 1992.<sup>26</sup>

Beside these inaccuracies, it is striking that Meline Toumani devotes only a short paragraph to the conflict, does not mention Khodjaly even by name, and completely fails (p. 260) to understand the impact of the conflict on Turkey,<sup>27</sup> exacerbated by the presence of an Azeri minority in that country, as well as by the territorial claims emanating from Armenia and the main organizations of the diaspora toward eastern parts of Turkey (Eastern Anatolia).<sup>28</sup>

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Ms. Toumani also commits inaccuracies when she compares ideology. She criticizes, to some extent, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (and briefly refers to its territorial claims against Turkey), but immediately after that, she calls the Nationalist Action Party (MHP) of Turkey “the Dashnaks’ hardline corollary.” If a comparison is to be made, an analysis of both parties will reveal that ARF is much more hardline than MHP. MHP explicitly refused, even

24 Antoine Constant, *L’Azerbaïdjan* (Paris: Karthala, 2002), p. 329-334 ; Ariel Kyrou and Maxime Mardoukhaïev, “Le Haut-Karabagh, vu du côté Azerbaïdjan”, *Hérodote*, n° 54-55, 4e trimestre 1989, p. 265-267 ; Stéphane Yerasimos, “Transcaucasie: le retour de la Russie”, *Hérodote*, n° 81, avril-juin 1996, p. 186-193.

25 UNHCR, *International Protection Considerations Regarding Azerbaijani Asylum-Seekers and Refugees*, Geneva, 2003, p. 4.

26 Holly Cartner, “Response to Armenian Government Letter on the town of Khojaly, Nagorno-Karabakh”, *Hrw.org*, 23.03.1997, <https://www.hrw.org/news/1997/03/23/response-armenian-government-letter-town-khojaly-nagorno-karabakh> ; Thomas Goltz, “The Successes of the Spin Doctors: Western Media Reporting on the Nagorno Karabakh Conflict”, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, XXXII-2, June 2012, p. 189.

27 Svante E. Cornell, “Turkey and the Conflict in Nagorno Karabakh: A Delicate Balance”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, XXXIX-1, January 1998, p. 51-72.

28 For example: “‘Western Armenia’ return depends on youth, Sarkisian says”, *Hürriyet Daily News*, 26.07.2011, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid=438&n=8216western-armenia-8217-return-depends-on-youth-sarkisian-says-2011-07-26>

during its radical years (1969-1980) to endorse any racist theory, and focuses on Turkish nationalism (without claiming the superiority of Turks) and loyalty to the state. Furthermore, one of the main persons who established the MHP with Alparslan Türkeş is an ethnic Armenian, Levon Panos Dabağyan. On the contrary, the ARF is an openly racist party, which collaborated with Fascist Italy, Aryanist Iran of Reza Shah, and Nazi Germany, not merely by opportunism (common ambitions against Turkey and the USSR), but above all for ideological reasons.<sup>29</sup> MHP does not claim a single square kilometer of Armenia. On the contrary, territorial claims against Turkey (and Georgia) are the core of the ARF's ambitions today.

Once again, it has to be emphasized that Meline Toumani is more a victim of circumstances than anything else. As she explains, *"I also planned to spend time with ultranationalists, military wives, government officials, anyone who would be willing to sit down with me—the greater challenge, the better."* (p. 101). Had Meline Toumani spent more time with the Turkish "ultranationalists," she would have been accurate on MHP and many other subjects. One of her few meetings with a "mainstream Turk" left her "a bit mixed up", as his words on Armenian extremism "weren't so far off from [her] own" (p. 80). Correspondingly, she also states, p. 138: *"learning the language was one pure love in Turkey. Its obvious function was to help me to connect with people—to say to every new Turk I met that I was trying to understand them; that I came in peace."* She "even [came] to feel a certain fondness" for the Turkish national anthem (p. 262) and bordered on integration to Turkish society at one moment of her time in İstanbul (p. 119). All of these prove that the influence of Armenian nationalism repackaged with the Dink label largely explains the partial failure of her project to understand the Turk.

In short, Ms. Toumani did not take profit of her experiences to deepen her knowledge in reading. The result is a too anecdotal and personal book, marred by inaccuracies and inconsistencies, even if some anecdotes are indeed relevant, such as the meeting with a French woman, exasperated by Armenian activism in her country and living in the former house of Enver Paşa (p. 132-133), a good example of many mainstream Westerners. *"And although I probably knew less about Turkey at that point than the average backpacker, I*

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29 Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 388 ; Jordi Tejel Gorgas, *Le Mouvement kurde de Turquie en exil: continuités et discontinuités du nationalisme kurde sous le mandat français en Syrie et au Liban (1925-1946)* (Berne : Peter Lang, 2007), p. 153-154, 226-228, 253 ; Georges Mamoulia, "L'histoire du groupe Caucase (1934-1939)", *Cahiers du monde russe*, 2007/1, p. 55-57 ; Beatrice Penati, "'C'est l'Italie qui est prédestinée par l'Histoire': la Rome fasciste et les nationalistes caucasiens en exil (1928-1939)", *Oriente Moderno*, LXXXVIII-1, 2008, p. 66-69 ; Mehmet Perinçek, *Ermeni Milliyetçiliğinin Serüveni* (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 2015), p. 295-338.

*had a strong urge to seem like I belonged,*” Toumani explains, p. 77. It is the opinion of this author that entrusting people like Taner Akçam and Hrant Dink for developing her knowledge on Turkey is what led to Toumani’s failure in truly understanding this country.

### **The root of the problem: Ignorance**

Correcting all the factual errors committed by Meline Toumani in *There Was and There Was Not* would probably mean writing a 100-page text. The long list of persons, including “scholars” Ms. Toumani thanks (p. 281-284), speaks volumes on their level of knowledge. As a comprehensive analysis would be too long, I have chosen to expose key examples from three topics: the Armenians in Ottoman society; the “genocide” claims themselves; and the history Republic of Turkey.

Meline Toumani repeats classic themes of anti-Turkish, anti-Ottoman literatures, in particular that the Armenians “*were denied the right to bear arms until late in the nineteenth century*” and “*were charged dramatically higher taxes than Muslims.*” (p. 157). Actually, the Ottoman Empire had Christian soldiers and officers from 14<sup>th</sup> to (at least) 16<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>30</sup> and when the Ottoman Ministry of War proposed, for the first time, to enlist the Armenians in the military, in 1869-1870, the Armenian Patriarchate refused. The refusal was reiterated in 1876, and this is not until the Young Turk revolution (1908) that the Ottomanist idea of universal military duty was (for six years only) accepted by the Armenian religious leadership.<sup>31</sup> Regarding the taxes, beside the exemptions for those (Muslims and non-Muslims) who worked for the imperial palace, there is no evidence that non-Muslims (Armenians or any others) actually paid “dramatically higher taxes than Muslims,” because if there actually was (until 1855) a specific tax for non-Muslim males who were not in a state of misery, there was also another one, paid by Muslims only, a representing 88% of the tax on non-Muslims.<sup>32</sup>

Another classical theme is “*the interest of the Ottoman authorities to manipulate the numbers in order to control minority representation in local or*

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30 Dimitri Kitsikis, *L'Empire ottoman* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1991), p. 54-55 ; Metin Kunt, “Transformation of Zimmi in Askeri”, in Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, Volume I (New York-London: Holmes & Meier, 1982), p. 55-67.

31 Odile Moreau, *L'Empire ottoman à l'âge des réformes. Les hommes et les idées du « Nouvel Ordre » militaire (1826-1914)* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2007), p. 41-50, 70-71.

32 André Clot, *Soliman le Magnifique* (Paris: Fayard, 1983), p. 256 ; Gilles Veinstein, “L’empire dans sa grandeur (XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle)”, in Robert Mantran (ed.), *Histoire de l'Empire ottoman* (Paris : Fayard, 1989), p. 21.



*national councils*” (p. 175). If the accuracy of the Ottoman censuses is the subject of various interpretation, there is no evidence for deliberate manipulations by the state, which was concerned by accuracy rather by anything else.<sup>33</sup>

Oddly enough for an author who criticizes the perception of Armenians as victims only, she also writes (p. 156) that they “*were officially deprived of equal rights for much of Ottoman history.*” In addition to the fact that the “official” interdiction was often theoretical, for Armenians as well as for other non-Muslims (particularly Jews in 16<sup>th</sup> century and Greeks by 17<sup>th</sup> century), the legal equality in the Ottoman Empire was secured between 1839 and 1856. By comparison, equality in law was accorded to the Jews by the United Kingdom in 1858, Switzerland in 1874, Russia in 1917, Romania in 1919, and Iran in 1925; to the Protestants by Spain in 1876. Taking the date of legal equality in the Ottoman Empire out of the international context is misleading. Correspondingly, Meline Toumani also mentions only with some regrets the existence of the Armenian elite, p. 156: “*although a wealthy Armenian merchant class inspired envy and suspicion in popular accounts, the majority of the Ottoman Armenians were peasants.*” In fact, the majority of the *total Ottoman population* were peasants, and the Armenian bourgeoisie, who helped her poorer coreligionists, was not only made of merchants and an Armenian middle class emerged during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, largely thanks to the Ottoman reforms.<sup>34</sup> As observed Marc Ferro, there is a general tendency, in the Armenian historiography, to reduce to almost nothing the history of Ottoman Armenian elite as well as of the Armenian terrorism that emerged during the 1890s.<sup>35</sup>

Ms. Toumani, in summarizing the theses of the Workshop for Armenian Turkish Scholarship, indeed obliterates that terrorism (and the rest of the Armenian nationalist activities), calling “pogroms” the events of 1890s and 1909 (p. 176). In fact, the violence of the Dashnaks and Hunchaks during the 1890s, their openly expressed desire to provoke murderous reprisals on their

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33 Stanford Jay Shaw, “The Ottoman Census System and Population, 1831-1914”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, IX-3, August 1978, p. 325-338 ; Meir Zamir, “Population Statistics of the Ottoman Empire in 1914 and 1919”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, XVII-1, January 1981, p. 85-106.

34 Vartan Artinian, *The Armenian Constitutional System in the Ottoman Empire. 1839-1863* (İstanbul, 1988) ; Hagop Barsoumian, “The Dual Role of the Armenian Amira class within the Ottoman Government and the Armenian Millet (1750-1850)”, in Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (ed.), *Christians and Jews...*, p. 171-184; François Georgeon, “Le dernier sursaut (1878-1908)”, in Robert Mantran (ed.), *Histoire de l'Empire...*; Robert Mantran, *Histoire d'Istanbul* (Paris: Fayard, 1996), p. 300-301.

35 Marc Ferro, *Les Tabous de l'histoire* (Paris: Nil éditions, 2002), p. 34-35.

own population by killing Muslims, particularly Kurds, is obvious not only in Ottoman sources, but also in Western ones,<sup>36</sup> which have been analyzed for decades, including by non-Turkish historians.<sup>37</sup> The provocation strategy by Hunchak leader Gueukderelian and Archbishop Mushegh Seropian in Adana in 1908-1909 is also well established, and this time, the repression of criminal elements from the Muslim community was clearly stronger than during the 1890s.<sup>38</sup>

Another aspect of the terrorism carried out by Armenian nationalists is the assassination of Armenians loyal to the Ottoman state, and more generally of all those who opposed the Armenian nationalists favoring revolution. Yet, describing the Akdamar (Akhtamar) monastery in Van (p. 141), Toumani fails to mention the murder of the abbot and of his secretary by the ARF, in 1904,<sup>39</sup> most probably because she never heard about the acts of intra-Armenian terrorism.

Correspondingly, the national security reasons for the forced relocation of 1915<sup>40</sup> are barely touched in one sentence of the book, on p. 176, and when Ms. Toumani mentions the city of Zeytun, which became Süleymaniye (p. 88, 200), she never says that this town was one of the main centers of Armenian nationalism, from 1860s to 1921. Revolts erupted in 1862, 1878, 1895-96, and

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36 Among many others: Gaston Auboyneau, *La Journée du 26 août 1896 à la Banque impériale ottomane, Constantinople* (Villeurbanne: Imprimerie Chaix, 1912) ; R. des Coursons, *La Rébellion arménienne, son origine, son but* (Paris: Librairie du Service central de presse, 1895), <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5801336w> ; Caleb Gates, *Not to Me Only* (Princeton-London: Princeton University Press/Oxford University Press, 1940), p. 108-109, 134-135 ; George H. Hepworth, *Through Armenia on Horseback* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1898), p. 55, 60-63, 341-342, <https://archive.org/details/througharmeniaon00hepw> ; Sidney Whitman, *Turkish Memories* (New York-London: Charles Scribner's Sons/William Heinemann, 1914), p. 10-35, 93-100, 118-123, <https://archive.org/details/turkishmemories00whituoft>.

37 Kâmurân Gürün, *The Armenian File* (London-Nicosia-İstanbul: K. Rüstem & Bro./Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1985), p. 118-162 ; William Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism. 1890-1902* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), p. 155-163 and 321-324 ; Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres...*, p. 11-29 ; Justin McCarthy, Cemalettin Taşkıran and Ömer Turan, *Sasun. The History of an 1890s Armenian Rebellion* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2014) ; Fikretin Yavuz, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Ermeni Terörü: 1896 Osmanlı Bankası Baskını* (Ankara: TTK, 2015).

38 Rapport du vice-consul de France à Mersin et Adana, 23 octobre 1908, Archives du ministère des Affaires étrangères, La Courneuve, P 16742 ; E. Bernier, "La Turquie et la paix — La question arménienne", *L'Europe nouvelle*, 29.11.1919, p. 2176 ; Kemal Çiçek (ed.), *1909 Adana Olayları Makaleler/The Adana Incidents Of 1909 Revisited* (Ankara: TTK, 2011) ; Salâhi Sonyel, "The Turco-Armenian 'Adana Incidents' in the Light of Secret British Documents (July 1908-December 1909)", *Belleleten*, LI/201, December 1987, p. 1292-1338, [http://www.ttk.org.tr/templates/resimler/File/fulltext/Belleleten\\_Makale/bel201-1291\\_1338.pdf](http://www.ttk.org.tr/templates/resimler/File/fulltext/Belleleten_Makale/bel201-1291_1338.pdf)

39 Kapriel Serope Papazian, *Patriotism Perverted...*, p. 68-69.

40 Edward J. Erickson, *Ottomans and Armenians...*, p. 79-222 ; Kâmurân Gürün, *The Armenian File...*, p. 186-210.

1915, in addition to troubles in 1913, 1914, and 1921.<sup>41</sup> The revolt of 1915 was particularly concerning, as it was coordinated with other insurgents of Anatolia and the Armenian nationalist organizations abroad, to facilitate an Anglo-French landing in Mersin and/or İskenderun. On this issue, following his usual habit, Taner Akçam quoted out of context a few parts of one Ottoman document to minimize the importance of the rebellion and neglected the relevant French archives.<sup>42</sup>

The ignorance of Ms. Toumani is even deeper when it concerns the “genocide” narrative itself. In particular, she mentions, “*the large group of intellectuals killed on April 24, 1915*” (p. 35) and once again, she alleges that “*the group of two hundred Armenian intellectuals [was] rounded upon April 24, 1915,*” (p. 277) that musician Gomidas, one of them, “*had watched his peers being executed,*” “*had survived the genocide but had lost his mind.*” Almost everything in this description is false. Out of the 235 Armenians arrested at the end of April in İstanbul (mostly, but not only, on 24), not a single one was killed during that month. 38 had been arrested by error and were released during the following weeks —including Gomidas. Calling the 197 others “intellectuals” is misleading, considering the number of weapons seized in their homes: 19 Mauser guns, 74 Martini rifles, 111 Winchester guns, 3,591 pistols, etc. (as well as 45,221 pistol bullets). 19 were sentenced to death and executed, and only one died in jail, in 1918.<sup>43</sup> Concerning Gomidas in particular, he became insane in 1916,<sup>44</sup> about one year after his arrest, and, according to another Armenian who was him at that time, “*He was always sane. There never were any massacres in Changri [Çankırı] while we were there for several months.*”<sup>45</sup>

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41 Report of vice-consul Fontana (Aleppo) to the British chargé d'affaires, October 21, 1913, The National Archives, Kew Gardens (London), FO 371/1773/52128 ; Aghassi (Garabet Toursarkisian), *Zeitoun, depuis les origines jusqu'à l'insurrection de 1895* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1897) ; Yusuf Halaçoğlu, *Facts on the Relocation of Armenians* (Ankara: TTK, 2002), p. 47-48, 58-59 ; Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London: University of California Press, 1963), p. 67-78 ; Jeremy Salt, “The Narrative Gap in Ottoman Armenian History”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, XXXIX-1, January 2003, p. 32.

42 Maxime Gauin, “Strategic Threats And Hesitations: The Operations And Projects Of Landing In Cilicia And The Ottoman Armenians (1914-1917)”, in *19.-20. Yüzyıllarda Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri Sempozyumu* (İstanbul: Türk Ocakları/İstanbul Üniversitesi, 2015), p. 982-1004, [https://www.academia.edu/24209649/Strategic\\_threats\\_and\\_hesitations\\_The\\_Operations\\_And\\_Projects\\_of\\_Landing\\_In\\_Cilicia\\_And\\_The\\_Ottoman\\_Armenians\\_1914-1917](https://www.academia.edu/24209649/Strategic_threats_and_hesitations_The_Operations_And_Projects_of_Landing_In_Cilicia_And_The_Ottoman_Armenians_1914-1917)

43 Yusuf Sarımay, “What Happened on April 24, 1915? The Circular of April 24, 1915, and the Arrest of Armenian Committee Members in İstanbul”, *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, XIV-1 & 2, Fall 2008, p. 75-101.

44 Halide Edip, *Memoirs of Halidé Edib* (New York-London: The Century C°, 1926), p. 374.

45 Matthew A. Callender, “The Shock of Komitas”, *The Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, 17.10.1959. I express my thanks to Yeşen Dursun for having sent me the PDF of that letter to the editor.

Not surprisingly, what Toumani writes about the relocations is as far from the truth than her claims about the arrests of 1915. Especially, she reproduces (p. 175) two conspiracy theories, developed by Vahakn N. Dadrian and repeated by his student Taner Akçam. Confronted by Prof. Halaçoğlu to “evidence and records,” she indeed comments as follows;

*The government orders for the deportation and extermination of Armenians were known to have followed two tracts: the Interior Ministry issued official, written instructions to deport the Armenians of a given province, citing such reasons as protecting them from unrest; at the same time, unofficial commands—sometimes written but often only verbal—were delivered through party [Committee Union and Progress] secretaries and other trusted messengers, indicating that the goal of the deportation was extermination.*

Nowhere in her book, does Meline Toumani wonder how Minister of Interior Talat could have had the strange idea to send dozens of ciphered telegrams, a minority of which were discovered after the armistice,<sup>46</sup> and the others discovered only between 1970s and 2000s.<sup>47</sup>

In other words, why was it so important for Minister of Interior Talat to mislead future historians?<sup>48</sup> As Ms. Toumani learned Turkish and was educated in the U.S., she possesses the linguistic competences to check herself that the “evidence” for the “dual track system” is made of manipulation of authentic sources, in addition to a reference to Ambassador Morgenthau’s Memoirs that is contradicted by Morgenthau’s own diary.<sup>49</sup>

Meline Toumani continues to repeat the lesson learned from Taner Akçam in alleging that the “extermination” had “*to be effected by a brutal Special Operation that operated the massacres.*” As she can read English and Turkish, she could have checked herself that the claims against the Special Operations

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46 Salâhi Sonyel (ed.), *The Displacement of Armenians. Documents* (Ankara: TTK, 1978).

47 Hikmet Özdemir and Yusuf Sarınoy (ed.), *Turkish-Armenian Conflict Documents* (Ankara: TBMM, 2007).

48 I am not the first to make this purely logical remark: Jeremy Salt, “The Narrative Gap...”, p. 22.

49 Maxime Gauin “‘Proving’ a ‘Crime...’”, p. 152-153.

are entirely based on distortions of sources, and have completely neglected the Ottoman military archives, including the published and translated ones.<sup>50</sup>

An even more deplorable example of ignorance is where the authors affirms (p. 178-179) that the Armenians from the Çukurova plain “*had the comparatively better fate of only walking for weeks to disease ridden refugee camps in the Syrian desert.*” Actually, these Armenians were relocated by train, a part was sent to city of Aleppo and another part to the vilayet (En. province) of Damascus, instead of “the Syrian desert,” and the action of Cemal Paşa (number three of the CUP regime) toward them is proved by Ottoman, German, American, and even Armenian sources—all of which Meline Toumani completely ignores.<sup>51</sup> That error raises the question whether she actually read all the books of her (rather short) bibliography. Indeed, she cites (p. 286) a book of Kurdish nationalist writer Fuat Dündar. In spite of his strong biases, Mr. Dündar admitted the positive action of Cemal, including in the book cited by Ms. Toumani.<sup>52</sup>

If there is a question about the reading (or not) of Fuat Dündar by Meline Toumani, it is out of question that she did not read Raphael Lemkin. Indeed, she alleges that “*Lemkin cited the massacres of Armenians as an example [of genocide] in creating his definition*” of the word (p. 178). Beside the fact that Lemkin’s definition of “genocide” was quite different from the one adopted by the United Nations (it could include any mass violation of human rights), there is not a single occurrence of the word “Armenian” in his book (*Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, Washington, 1944) where Lemkin coined the word “genocide”. Lemkin called the Armenian forced relocation of 1915-16 “genocide” in a few cases, and only after the publication of his book.

Meline Toumani’s remarks on sensitive aspects of modern Turkey’s politics and history are hardly better than the ones on the Ottoman time. Under the influence of Fatma Müge Gökçek (explicitly) and of the staff of *Agos* (likely), she repeats the old claim about a “second-class” status for the Armenians (p. 74), then goes further, alleging (without source) that in mid-2000s like during the Kemalist years, “*Armenians, Greeks and Jews [...] were still living under separate-but-equal rights that were not equal at all*” (p. 89) and in a typically

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50 Edward J. Erickson, “Armenian Massacres, New Records Undercut Old Blame”, *The Middle East Quarterly*, XIII-3, Summer 2006, p. 67-75, <http://www.meforum.org/article/991> ; Maxime Gauin, “‘Proving’ a ‘Crime...’”, p. 146-147; Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres...*, p. 82-88.

51 Yücel Güçlü, *The Holocaust and the Armenian Case in Comparative Perspective*, p. 68-79 ; Hilmar Kaiser, “Regional Resistance...”; Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres...*, p. 191-198, 218-220, 251-252.

52 Fuat Dündar, *Crime of Numbers: The Role of Statistics in the Armenian Question (1878-1918)* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2010), p. 114.

Agos-styled manner, she insists (p. 238) that “*Their [Armenian’s] second-class status in Turkish society was a direct consequence of that society refusing to make an honest account of what they had endured.*”

In fact, Agop Martayan Dilaçar was the first president of the Turkish Language Society (Türk Dil Kurumu), where he worked until his death, in 1979. After having served as general manager of the Ottoman Bank (1914-1927), Berç Keresteciyan was an independent member of the Turkish parliament, representing Afyon (Western Anatolia) from 1935 to 1946.<sup>53</sup> André Vahram (1950-1954), Zakar Tarver (1954-1957), and Mıgırdıç Şellefyan (1957-1960), members of the ruling Demokrat Partisi (DP), served as deputies of İstanbul. Hermine Agavni Kalustyan was appointed as a member of the transitional parliament (1960-1961) by the military regime, and Berç Turan was a CHP senator of İstanbul from 1961 to 1964, testifying that Armenians “enjoy equal rights” in Turkey.<sup>54</sup> Among the Jews, Samuel Abravaya Marmaralı served as an independent deputy of Niğde from 1935 to 1943, A. Galante as a CHP deputy of the same city from 1943 to 1946, Salamon Adato (1946-1954), Işak Altabev (1957-1960) and Cefi Kahmi (1995-1999) as DP deputies of İstanbul. Cefi Kahmi’s father had been one of the most successful businessmen of Turkey, close to several political leaders, including Alparslan Türkeş, the first president of the MHP.<sup>55</sup> Sami Kohen is a pillar of the daily *Milliyet* and Gila Benmayor is one of the best-known columnists of *Hürriyet*, one of Turkey’s most popular newspapers. Several Greeks also served as members of the Turkish National Assembly, such as Nikola Taptaş or Nikola Fakaçelli. Ariana Ferentinou is a columnist for *Hürriyet Daily News* and teaches at Bilgi University.

Moreover, “separate-but-equal” is a former jurisprudence of the U.S. Supreme Court that allowed segregation from 1896 to 1954.<sup>56</sup> There has never been in Turkey anything comparable to the American laws separating white and black people in schools, trains, and buses and banning interracial marriages.

The influence of Dink is even clearer when she repeats a famous allegation of his: that Sabiha Gökçen, an adopted daughter of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, was

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53 Semi Ertan, *An Armenian at the Turkish parliament in the early republican period: Berç Türker-Keresteciyan, 1870-1949*, master thesis, Sabancı University, İstanbul, 2005.

54 Statement to *Hürriyet*, 09.04.1965, translated in *Realities from Turkish Armenians* (İstanbul, 1980), p. 9.

55 Jak Kahmi, *What I’ve Seen What I’ve Experienced* (İstanbul: Bahçeşehir University Publications, 2013).

56 André Tunc, “L’abolition par la Cour suprême des États-Unis de la ségrégation raciale dans l’enseignement public”, *Revue internationale de droit comparé*, VI-4, 1954, p. 816-824, [http://www.persee.fr/doc/ridc\\_0035-3337\\_1954\\_num\\_6\\_4\\_9099](http://www.persee.fr/doc/ridc_0035-3337_1954_num_6_4_9099)

of Armenian heritage. Dink's goal in making such an allegation presented without any evidence, and against all the available sources,<sup>57</sup> was most probably an attempt to describe Turkish society as an intolerant one, where Armenian roots have to be hidden. It is unfortunate that, against her desire to understand the Turk, she repeated one of the most unsophisticated lies spread against Atatürk in the last 15 years.

*There Was and there Was Not is a quite unachieved book. The quality is extremely variable from a chapter -not to say a page- to another. Good intentions are fundamental, but not enough. Meline Toumani courageously challenged the culture of hatred and sincerely tried to understand Turkey, but in most of the cases, she did not meet the right persons.*

### Conclusion

*There Was and there Was Not is a quite unachieved book. The quality is extremely variable from a chapter -not to say a page- to another. Good intentions are fundamental, but not enough. Meline Toumani courageously challenged the culture of hatred and sincerely tried to understand Turkey, but in most of the cases, she did not meet the right persons. The book raises many good questions, but does not provide always the right answers, far from that. Regardless, she finishes by a last, essential moment of lucidity, on p. 280; “And if we move on from genocide recognition, with or without Turkey’s olive branch, what holds*

*us together then? If there is no better answer to this question, maybe the answer is simply, nothing. [...] We become individuals.” This reviewer wishes to see the “individual” Toumani emancipating herself for good —regardless of whether she believes in “the genocide” or not, improving her knowledge and writing a better, second volume in the future.*

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# AN ASSESSMENT ON ARAM ANDONIAN, NAİM EFENDİ AND TALAT PASHA TELEGRAMS

(ARAM ANDONYAN, NAİM EFENDİ VE TALAT PAŞA TELGRAFLARI  
ÜZERİNE BİR DEĞERLENDİRME)

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**Abstract:** *In his book titled “Naim Efendi’nin Hatıratı ve Talat Paşa Telgrafları” (En. “The Memoirs of Naim Efendi and Talat Pasha Telegrams”), Taner Akçam argues that the telegrams and documents that were published 96 years ago by Aram Andonian and which are attributed to several high-ranking Ottoman officials are in fact real and authentic. Akçam’s main argument is based on the claim that the book “Ermenilerce Talat Paşa’ya Atfedilen Telgrafların Gerçek Yüzü” (En: “The Talat Pasha Telegrams: Historical Fact or Armenian Fiction?”) by Şinasi Orel and Süreyya Yuca that puts forward concrete arguments on the forged nature of the above-mentioned documents, is full of errors and that the authors’ accusations with regard to the documents are unjustified. However, throughout his book, when presenting and summarizing the findings of Orel and Yuca in their studies about Andonian’s documents, Akçam distorts these findings, and attributes to Orel and Yuca false assertions that were never made by them. Then, Akçam attempts to refute these assertions that he claims were made by Orel and Yuca, and based on this, he concludes that the studies by Orel and Yuca are unreliable and full of mistakes. With such manipulations, he asserts that claims about the forged nature of Andonian’s documents are claims that can be “easily refuted”. Although it is possible that readers, who have no prior knowledge on the issue and who learn about the claims put forth on the forged nature of these documents only from erroneous representations by Akçam, might be influenced by Akçam’s allegations, those who personally read Orel’s and Akçam’s work will see that many of Akçam’s assertions are invalid. Analyzing these subjects, this article aims to provide readers with a more balanced perspective.*

**Keywords:** *Şinasi Orel, Süreyya Yuca, Taner Akçam, Naim Efendi, Aram Andonian, forged documents*

**Öz:** *Taner Akçam, “Naim Efendi’nin Hatıratı ve Talat Paşa Telgrafları” kitabında bundan 96 yıl önce Aram Andonyan tarafında yayınlanmış olan ve bir dizi üst düzey Osmanlı memuruna atfedilen telgraf ve belgelerin esasen gerçek ve sahih olduğu tezini işlemektedir. Akçam’ın temel tezi 1983 yılında Şinasi Orel ve Süreyya Yuca tarafından yayınlanan ve bu belgelerin sahte olduğu yönünde ciddi tezler öne süren “Ermenilerce Talat Paşa’ya atfedilen Telgrafların Gerçek Yüzü” başlıklı çalışmanın hatalarla dolu olduğu ve belgelere yönelttikleri ithamların esasen haksız oldukları üzerine kurulmuştur. Akçam kitabı boyunca Orel ve Yuca’nın Andonyan belgelerini inceleyen çalışmalarındaki bulgularını sunarken ve özetlerken bunları çarpıtmakta ve Orel ve Yuca’nın hiç ileri sürmedikleri iddiaları kendilerine atfetmektedir. Daha sonra da Orel ve Yuca tarafından iddia edildiğini öne sürdüğü bu yanlış iddiaları çürütmeye kalkmakta ve bundan hareketle de Orel ve Yuca’nın çalışmalarının güvenilmez ve yanlışlarla dolu olduğu sonucuna varmaktadır. Bu tür manipülasyonlarla Andonyan belgelerinin sahte olduğu yönündeki iddiaların “kolaylıkla çürütülebilecek” iddialar olduğunu iddia etmektedir. Konuya ilişkin ön bilgileri olmayan ve belgelerin sahteliği yönünde ortaya konan iddiaları sadece Akçam’ın yanlış aktarmalarından öğrenen okurların Akçam’ın iddialarından etkilenmesi mümkünse de; Orel ve Yuca’nın çalışmasını bizzat okuyanlar Akçam’ın birçok iddiasının geçersiz olduğunu görecektir. Bu makale bu hususları inceleyerek okuyucuya daha dengeli bir bakış sunmayı hedeflemektedir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Şinasi Orel, Süreyya Yuca, Taner Akçam, Naim Efendi, Aram Andonyan, sahte belgeler*

### Introduction

In his book titled *Naim Efendi'nin Hatıratı ve Talat Paşa Telgrafları* (En. *The Memoirs of Naim Efendi and Talat Pasha Telegrams*) (İletişim Yayınları, 2016), Taner Akçam argues that the telegrams and documents that were published 96 years ago by Aram Andonian and which are attributed to several high-ranking Ottoman officials, particularly Minister of the Interior (Tr. *Dâhiliye Nazırı*) Talat Pasha, are in fact real and authentic. Akçam's main argument is based on the claim that the book *Ermenilerce Talat Paşa'ya Atfedilen Telgrafların Gerçek Yüzü* (En. *The Talat Pasha Telegrams: Historical Fact or Armenian Fiction?*) by Şinasi Orel and Süreyya Yuca, which was published in 1983 and puts forward concrete arguments on the forged nature of the above-mentioned documents, is full of errors and that their accusations with regard to the documents are unjustified.

According to Akçam, contrary to Orel's and Yuca's claims, there was an Ottoman official by the name of Naim Efendi, it was him who provided Andonian with the documents, and the memoirs published by Andonian was personally written by Naim Efendi. Accordingly, Akçam claims that an official by the name of Naim Efendi is spoken of in three documents that he claims to be Ottoman archival documents. Furthermore, Akçam publishes in his book memoirs that he found in the personal papers of Krikor Guerguerian and which he claims to have been written by Naim Efendi. According to Akçam, Krikor Guerguerian found these memoirs in the Nubarian Library located in Paris.

At this juncture, let us state that there is no evidence (name, signature, initials, date etc.) indicating that these memoirs were actually written by Naim Efendi. Furthermore, even if the memoirs were in fact written by Naim Efendi, there is no information on whether changes were made on the text or whether the text was subsequently edited by someone or some people. In objective sources for which there is no dispute, there are no samples of the handwriting of the so-called Naim Efendi, and therefore, there is no possibility to compare them with the handwriting in the published memoirs. Also, the text of the supposed memoirs does not resemble the texts of classically what we know as "memoirs". The said memoirs do not provide a narration of Naim Efendi's role during the events, his dialogues with others, and the chronology of events. It provides texts that is alleged to be official correspondences and includes occasional commentaries on these correspondences. The aforementioned events are presented in a convoluted manner and the text does not follow a chronological narration. For instance, telegrams dated September 1915 are provided following telegrams dated January 1916, and this continues to be the case throughout the text of the memoirs. Again, a telegram dated February

1917 is followed by other telegrams dated 1915 and 1916. Moreover, throughout the text, there is no indication on what Naim Efendi's duty was and where he served. In this respect, as mentioned above, the text does not resemble texts of standard memoirs, and gives the impression that it was written per order.

The text published by Akçam is also glaringly different from the text of the memoirs published by Andonian in 1920. For instance, while the text published by Andonian contains statements about the places where and position in which Naim Efendi served, no such statements are contained in the text published by Akçam. Thus, the first suspicion that comes to mind is that the text might have been changed by Andonian for his self-interests (and by the Armenian Bureau in London and the Armenian National Delegations in Paris who made changes on the text as mentioned by Andonian in one of his letters). However, Akçam, who is completely convinced of the authenticity Andonian's narrative and his published documents, does not consider and discuss this possibility. Akçam, who puts Andonian on a pedestal and insists on the authenticity of Andonian's narrative, explains this situation with the assumption that there must be another sample of the memoirs other than the ones published by Andonian. In other words, according to Akçam, another text exists besides the memoirs published by him; it was this text that was published by Andonian, and this is the reason why there are two different texts. However, Akçam is unable to provide any evidence or indication supporting this possibility. As a matter of fact, it is actually this approach by Akçam that constitutes the book's main problem. In fact, in cases where there is no evidence to prove the authenticity of these documents, Akçam tries to dispel inconsistencies and suspicions by making an assumption on top of another assumption.

It must be noted that Andonian's explanations and comments on different dates about same events and people contradict with each other, and therefore it is quite problematic to accept Andonian's statements as fact in terms of historiography. For instance, Andonian depicted the so-called Naim Efendi as a kind-hearted and charitable person, and wrote that Naim Efendi, despite his poor financial situation, provided him with these documents without expecting anything in return simply to ease his own conscience.<sup>1</sup> However, in a letter he wrote in 1937, he describes Naim Efendi as "*an alcoholic and gambler*" and "*an entirely dissolute creature*", and states that the documents were acquired from Naim Efendi in return for money.<sup>2</sup>

1 Şinasi Orel ve Süreyya Yuca, *Ermenilerce Talat Paşa'ya Atfedilen Telgrafların Gerçek Yüzü*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1983), p. 7.

2 Orel ve Yuca, *Talat Paşa'ya Atfedilen Telgrafların Gerçek Yüzü...*, p. 8.

Similarly, Andonian, in his letter dated 1937, claims that the authenticity of the documents he published were confirmed by the German Court in Berlin in 1921 during the trial of Soghomon Tehlirian who had assassinated Talat Pasha. However, when the proceedings of the court are checked, it can be seen that this is not the case. According to the court proceedings, despite Tehlirian's attorney's request to submit five documents from Andonian to the court, it is seen that he dropped his request following German prosecutor's objections. According to the prosecutor, it was not for the court to decide whether Talat Pasha was guilty or not, and such determination necessitated a historical research. This effort necessitated the examination of materials different from those that were present. According to the prosecutor, the fact that the accused Tehlirian had been convinced of Talat Pasha's guilt was sufficient in terms of revealing Tehlirian's intention to murder him. In the face of these objections, Tehlirian's attorney Adolf von Gordon abandoned the request to submit the documents to the court.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, during the trial in Berlin, the prosecutor had a distanced and reserved approach towards these documents, and had taken into consideration the possibility that they could be forged:

*The use of the forged documents cannot also lead me into error... I am familiar with the history of how, in the chaos of the revolution, we came to possess documents bearing the signatures of high ranking individuals, and how it was subsequently proved that they were forged.*<sup>4</sup>

At this juncture, it should be stated that these comments by the prosecutor were legitimate observations. Indeed, at the end of the First World War, several groups, including foreign intelligence services, ambitiously embarked on a quest to find documents in order to accuse and try the Union and Progress Government. As mentioned by a British intelligence officer, this state of affairs had created "a very large market" of salable documents and had resulted in the "regular production of forgeries for the purposes of sale."<sup>5</sup>

Ultimately, the documents were not in any way verified by the Court.

It could be concluded from these examples that Aram Andonian did not always tell the truth. Therefore, it would be fitting for serious historians to approach Andonian's words with suspicion and caution. The direct acceptance of Andonian's allegations without making any verification is problematic in terms

3 Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey: A Disputed Genocide* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2007); Orel ve Yuca, *Talat Paşa'ya Atfedilen Telgrafların Gerçek Yüzü...*, p. 18

4 Orel ve Yuca, *Talat Paşa'ya Atfedilen Telgrafların Gerçek Yüzü...*, p. 19.

5 Lewy, *A Disputed Genocide*, p. 49.

of historical methodology. However, as it can be seen, Akçam, in his book, accepts the claims of the Naim-Andonian narrative without any questions and forms his arguments based on a set of assumptions.

According to Akçam, Orel and Yuca are also wrong in claiming that the cipher telegrams published by Andonian did not match with the ciphering technique and number groups used by the Ottoman Ministry of the Interior, and that therefore these telegrams should be false. Additionally, Akçam asserts that the objections by Orel and Yuca about the type of paper used in Andonian's documents are completely groundless. Giving several examples about these

*Although it is possible that readers who have no prior knowledge on the issue and who learn about the claims put forth on the forged nature of these documents only from erroneous representations by Akçam might be impressed by Akçam's allegations, those who personally read Orel's and Akçam's work will see that many of Akçam's assertions are invalid.*

objections, Akçam concludes that the ciphered telegrams published by Andonian are "congruent with the cipher telegrams in the Ottoman Archive and that there is no discrepancy among them, and that therefore these could be original documents."

Following these examples, Akçam claims that several incidents and persons mentioned in the memoirs of the so-called Naim Efendi and in documents published by Andonian can be also encountered in Ottoman archival documents, and thus concludes that these documents are authentic.

Akçam's claims will be analyzed in detail below. However, there is an important issue that must be mentioned before reviewing Akçam's book. Throughout his book, when presenting and summarizing the findings of Orel and Yuca in their studies about Andonian's documents, Akçam distorts these findings, and attributes to Orel and Yuca false assertions that were never made by them. Then, he attempts to refute these assertions that he claims were made by Orel and Yuca, and based on this, he concludes that the study by Orel and Yuca are unreliable and full of mistakes. With such manipulations, he asserts that claims about the forged nature of Andonian's documents are claims that can be "easily refuted".

Although it is possible that readers who have no prior knowledge on the issue and who learn about the claims put forth on the forged nature of these documents only from erroneous representations by Akçam might be impressed by Akçam's allegations, those who personally read Orel's and Akçam's work will see that many of Akçam's assertions are invalid. Analyzing these subjects, this article aims to provide readers with a more balanced perspective.

## The Existence of Naim Bey

Akçam, at the very beginning of his book, refers to arguments about whether the documents published by Aram Andonian are authentic and whether Naim Bey who is claimed to have provided these documents to Andonian was a real person. According to Akçam, the claims by Şinasi Oral and Süreyya Yuca may be summarized as follows:

*The authors [Oral and Yuca] base their claims on three important arguments: 1) there was no Ottoman official by the name of Naim Efendi, 2) There cannot be a memoir by non-existent person, thus, there are no such memoirs, 3) The documents claimed to belong to Talat Pasha are distorted, fake documents.<sup>6</sup>*

The obvious problem here is the presentation of the arguments of Oral and Yuca in an extremely inaccurate and shallow manner. First of all, Oral and Yuca do not in any way bring forward a claim that “there was no Ottoman official by the name of Naim Efendi.” According to Oral and Yuca, there might be different possibilities on this subject, but that, given the limited knowledge at hand, it is not possible to arrive at a definitive judgement. In the relevant chapter of their book, Oral and Yuca discuss the matter in the following way:

*...it can be said that there are three possibilities regarding Naim Bey:*

*a) Naim Bey is a fictitious person.*

*b) Naim Bey is an assumed name.*

*c) Naim Bey is an actual person.*

*In these circumstances, it seems impossible to make a definite judgement on whether Naim Bey was an actual person or not. The only point which can be made with certainty is that if Naim Bey actually existed, he was undoubtedly an unimportant official. Indeed, Andonian confirms this in his letter of 26 July 1937, where he writes: ‘Naim Bey was an entirely insignificant official...’<sup>7</sup> [underlines have been added]*

As it can be seen above, Oral and Yuca clearly state that in the light of all this information, it is not possible to arrive at a definitive judgement on the subject. However, if an official by the name of Naim Bey indeed existed, they reach

6 Taner Akçam, *Naim Efendinin Hatıratı ve Talat Paşa Telgrafları*, Krikor Gergeryan Arşivi (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2016), p. 8.

7 Oral ve Yuca, *Talat Paşa'ya Atfedilen Telgrafların Gerçek Yüzü...*, p. 23-24.



the conviction that he was a low ranking official who would not have had access to these secret documents.

After distorting the arguments of Orel and Yuca, Akçam then proceeds to invalidate the claims he attributed to them. By referring to three different documents (which he presents as “Ottoman Documents”) that mention an official by the name of Naim Bey, Akçam tries to arrive at the conclusion that one of the basic arguments of Oral and Yuca is incorrect.

It is quite problematic to present these three documents as “Ottoman Documents”, since one of these documents is among the documents published by Aram Andonian -the authenticity of which is under doubt. The other two documents referenced by Akçam are two pieces of Naim-Andonian documents that are part of the Andonian Collection contained in the Nubarian Library of Paris. These are not Ottoman archival documents. It is quite apparent from the facsimiles of these documents that Akçam provides in page 52 of his book, that the signature which allegedly belongs to the Governor (Tr. *Vali*) of Aleppo Mustafa Abdülhalik Bey is the exact same as the fake signature attributed to Mustafa Abdülhalik Bey in the documents published by Andonian. Since signature issue will be further elaborated below, it will be sufficient to briefly mention at this point. The said fake signatures are quite different from the authentic signature of Mustafa Abdülhalik Bey contained in the Ottoman archival documents. Thus, Akçam makes use of one batch of Naim-Andonian documents for substantiating another batch of Naim-Andonian documents, and presents these documents as “Ottoman Documents”.

Another source employed by Akçam to prove that Naim Bey was a real person is a document -in volume 7 of the collection published by the ATASE Department of the General Staff (Tr. *Genel Kurmay ATASE Dairesi Başkanlığı*) in the year 2007 under the title of *Armenian Activities According to Archive Documents* (Tr. *Arşiv Belgeleriyle Ermeni Faaliyetleri*)- that makes reference to an official by the name of Naim Efendi. In the document collection in question, it can be seen that the testimony of a former dispatch officer named Naim Effendi was taken for the corruption that was taking place in the region and that he was made to sign his testimony.

In the document in question, the official named Naim Effendi is described as follows: “*This is the testimony of Naim Efendi, son of Hüseyin Nuri, married, 26 years old, from Silifke, Former Meskene [Maskanah] Dispatch Officer, currently municipal grain warehouse officer [Tr. hububat ambar memuru]. (14-15 November 1916).*”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> T.C. Genelkurmay Başkanlığı, *Arşiv Belgelerinde Ermeni Faaliyetleri*, Cilt VII, Genelkurmay Askeri Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt (ATASE) Başkanlığı Yayınları (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 2008), p. 94.

Aram Andonian mentions in his book that the individual whom he introduces as Naim Bey could have been present at Meskene. For this reason, there is the possibility that the Naim Efendi in the document that has been published by ATESE could be this person. However, as Orel and Yuca touch upon, serious question marks exist as to how an individual who was a civil servant in a small district (Tr. *kaza*) like Meskene and who had been dismissed shortly after from his duty could have gotten his hands on written top secret communications between the Minister of the Interior and the Governor.<sup>9</sup>

According to Akçam, Naim Efendi served as the head clerk of the Aleppo Dispatch Director General (Tr. *Sevkiyat Genel Müdürü*) Abdülhad Nuri Bey, and it was through this position that he might have obtained the documents. However, besides the narrative of Naim-Andonian, there is no other evidence in our hand regarding Naim Efendi having served in this position. The only source about this is the sentence attributed Andonian to Naim Efendi: “*I have been appointed to the head clerk position of Abdülhalad Nuri Bey*”, allegedly uttered by Naim Efendi after he came to Aleppo. Apart from the narrative of Naim-Andonian, there has not yet been any findings to verify this sentence. The memoirs text published by Akçam also does not contain any statement or information in this direction.<sup>10</sup>

Serious problems arise even if we assume that the Naim-Adonian narrative is accurate, since according to the document published by ATESE, as of November 1916, the individual named Naim Efendi's duty was that of a municipal grain warehouse officer. The explanation based on this assumption would have made sense to a certain extent if the documents published in the Naim Efendi collection covered events only before this date. However, the Naim-Andonian documents and the Naim Efendi Memoirs correspondences stretch until February 1917. The critical question about the individual named Naim Efendi is how, as a Municipal Grain Warehouse Officer, could he have obtained the alleged top secret communication between the Governor and the Minister of the Interior? This question becomes even more critical when one considers that Naim Efendi's testimony on allegations of corruption was taken during the dates in question. Starting from November 1916, Naim Efendi served in a position in which, unequivocally, he could not have reached the said correspondences. Also, due to the allegations of corruption, he must be viewed as someone whose statements was quite difficult to be believed in. We must accept that, under normal circumstances, it would not be expected for such an official to have access to the said correspondences. However, Akçam,

9 Orel ve Yuca, *Talat Paşa'ya Atfedilen Telgrafların Gerçek Yüzü...*, p. 11-12.

10 For the text of the memoirs, please see: Akçam, *Naim Efendinin Hatıratı ve Talat Paşa Telgrafları...*, p. 154-223.

based on the narrative of Naim-Andonian and making assumption upon assumption without relying on any objective finding, accepts it as fact that Naim Efendi had access to these documents during aforementioned dates and that his memoirs are authentic.

As a result, first of all, Akçam wrongly presented here Orel and Yuca's arguments and attributed claims to Orel and Yuca that were not put forth by them. Afterwards, by mentioning about the existence of an official named

*Akçam wrongly presented here Orel and Yuca's arguments and attributed claims to Orel and Yuca that were not put forth by them. Afterwards, by mentioning about the existence of an official named "Naim Efendi" in Ottoman archive documents, Akçam attempted to refute false claims never put forth by Orel and Yuca. In this way, by way of deception, Akçam arrived to the conclusion that the conclusions of Orel and Yuca are wrong.*

"Naim Efendi" in Ottoman archive documents, Akçam attempted to refute false claims never put forth by Orel and Yuca. In this way, by way of deception, Akçam arrived to the conclusion that the conclusions of Orel and Yuca are wrong. When the books of Orel and Yuca are examined, these allegations (which may affect readers who do not know the subject matter) are rather trivial and insignificant. In addition to these issues, Akçam, by accepting all the information given by Andonian about the official named Naim Efendi as being correct, assumes that the official named Naim Efendi was in a position that enabled him to reach all relevant information. Given the above-mentioned problems, it becomes apparent that these assumptions of Akçam are based on very weak premises.

### Ciphering Techniques

A significant part of Akçam's book is devoted to the ciphered telegrams used by the Ottoman Minister of the Interior. In their books, Orel and Yuca argued that the number groups used for ciphering in Naim-Andonian telegrams did not conform to the number groups used in the telegrams of the Ottoman Archives, and that these number groups were constantly changed at certain time intervals for security reasons. In the relevant part of his book Akçam, contrary to the claims of Orel and Yuca, claims that the ciphers formed with binary, ternary, quaternary, and quinary number groups were used at the same time and in a mixed way throughout the war. Akçam, for Orel and Yuca's claims, arrives at the conclusion that "*these arguments are completely wrong and do not have any material basis*".<sup>11</sup>

11 Akçam, *Naim Efendinin Hatıratı ve Talat Paşa Telgrafları...*, p. 70.

On this subject, Akçam provides reference to a number of archive documents, and afterwards gives place in his book to facsimiles of some of these documents. Orel and Yuca claimed that in the documents they found in their research, the two, four, and five digit numbers were changeably used at different times during the war. In this respect, the telegrams using three digit numbers found by Akçam is new information.

As it is known, in the book of Aram Andonian, the documents he published and provided facsimiles for use two and three digit ciphers. Based on the existence of two and three digit numbers amongst the documents used by him, Akçam arrives at the conclusion that the documents published by Andonian and the Ottoman Archive documents are in full harmony and that there is no discrepancy between them.<sup>12</sup>

Despite this new piece of information provided by Akçam, there is an important issue that needs to be taken into consideration here. Documents utilized and the facsimiles of which have been published by Orel and Yuca are composed of telegrams sent from the center to the provinces (Tr. *vilayetler*). However, all documents referenced by Akçam in his book (he uses the facsimiles of some of them as well) were sent from the provinces and various commissions in the provinces to the center, thus to the Ministry of the Interior.<sup>13</sup> This situation will only gain clarity if all the numbers used in ciphered telegrams to the Aleppo Province from the Ministry of the Interior are analyzed in their entirety. Furthermore, as can be understood from the filing numbers in the archives, the telegrams sent from the provinces to the Center and used in Akçam's book had not yet been classified at the time of Orel and Yuca's work, and were documents that were classified and made available to the readers later on. That is to say, during the time in which Orel and Yuca conducted their research, they might not have had the opportunity to examine these documents. As such, this issue should not be overlooked when criticizing Orel and Yuca's work.

Besides these, the only source of suspicion about the falsity of the ciphered telegrams contained in Naim-Andonian documents is not just the difference between the number groups used in the ciphered telegrams in the Ottoman archives and those used in Naim-Andonian telegrams. In Naim-Andonian documents, in a quite strange manner, "binary" and "ternary" number groups are used in the same document. For example, although the telegram dated 29 September 1915 attributed by Andonian to Minister of the Interior Talat Bey was written with cipher composed of three digit numbers, two digit numbers

12 Akçam, *Naim Efendinin Hatıratı ve Talat Paşa Telgrafları...*, p. 97.

13 Akçam, *Naim Efendinin Hatıratı ve Talat Paşa Telgrafları...*, p. 85-94.

exist in the first, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh lines of the telegram.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, the telegram dated 26 December 1915 that is attributed to Abdülhad Nuri Bey ciphered with two digit numbers contains three digit numbers in the first, eleventh, fourteenth lines.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, the telegram dated 20 March 1916 attributed again to Talat Bey, although consisting of three digit numbers, contains two digit numbers in its sixth line.<sup>16</sup>

The usage of mixed number groups necessitates two separate cipher keys for the deciphering of a telegram. Yet, as Orel and Yuca underlines, the opening of such a document is not possible due to ciphering technique. In none of the authentic telegrams for which Akçam gives examples (he supplies the facsimiles of some of them) in his book based on the Ottoman Archive is there a similar case, meaning the mixed usage of different number groups in the same text. Akçam ignores this evident and striking difference between the authentic documents in the Ottoman Archive and the Naim-Andonian documents, argues that there is no contradiction and difference between them, and claims that Naim-Andonian documents could be authentic. Interestingly, there are simply no examples of number groups with different amount of digits being used within the same text in the Ottoman Archive documents the facsimiles of which were provided by none other than Akçam in his book. It is thus revealed that there is a serious difference between the Naim-Andonian Documents and the Ottoman Archive documents.

### Lined Paper Issue

According to Akçam, one of the assertions as to the falsity of Naim-Andonyan documents is “*related to the papers that the documents were written on. Orel and Yuca presents the fact that one of the documents was written on a lined paper as the evidence of its falsity.*”<sup>17</sup> According to Akçam, this is a quite nonsensical and bizarre situation:

*Authors’ judgements like lined papers “cannot be expected to have been available in Ottoman state offices” and their utilization of this judgement as the proof of the falsity of a document is inapprehensible. In the period that we are dealing with, lined papers were used by the Ottoman bureaucracy.*<sup>18</sup>

14 Orel ve Yuca, *Talat Paşa’ya Atfedilen Telgrafların Gerçek Yüzü...*, p. 74-75.

15 Orel ve Yuca, *Talat Paşa’ya Atfedilen Telgrafların Gerçek Yüzü...*, p. 59.

16 Orel ve Yuca, *Talat Paşa’ya Atfedilen Telgrafların Gerçek Yüzü...*, p. 65-66.

17 Akçam, *Naim Efendinin Hatıratı ve Talat Paşa Telgrafları...*, p. 94.

18 Akçam, *Naim Efendinin Hatıratı ve Talat Paşa Telgrafları...*, p. 94.

Following this, Akçam mentions that lined papers were used quite often in the Ottoman Archives and even gives quotations from some archive documents. After all these arguments, Akçam arrives at the following ostentatious conclusion:

*As it can be seen, Orel and Yuca's argument on the falsity of one document of Naim Bey for being written on lined paper is completely false. The rule in ciphered correspondence was not the use of plain paper; but the use of lined paper. The fact that the document that Naim Efendi gave is written on lined paper is not a proof for its falsity, on the contrary, it is a proof of its authenticity. What I would like to add as the final note to this section is that the twelve points that Orel and Yuca put forward to prove the falsity of Naim Efendi's documents, most of which are the lined paper argument type, are arguments that are easy to disprove.<sup>19</sup>*

However, Akçam here distorts another important objection of Orel and Yuca against the claimed authenticity of Naim-Andonian documents by again resorting to a trickery. In their books, Orel and Yuca in no way claim that “one telegram having been written on lined paper” is “the proof of its falsity”. As shall be demonstrated in more detail below, Orel and Yuca's main objection is based on the fact that this document was written on a “double lined paper” that “bears no official inscription”.

*Akçam here distorts another important objection of Orel and Yuca against the claimed authenticity of Naim-Andonian documents by again resorting to a trickery. In their books, Orel and Yuca in no way claim that “one telegram having been written on lined paper” is “the proof of its falsity”. As shall be demonstrated in more detail below, Orel and Yuca's main objection is based on the fact that this document was written on a “double lined paper” that “bears no official inscription”.*

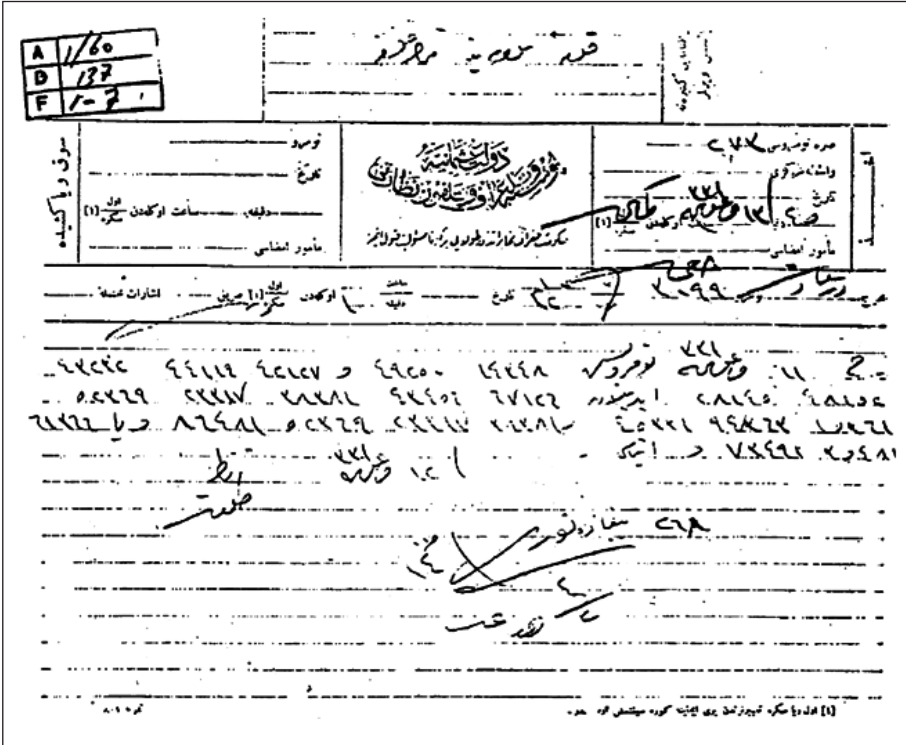
Orel and Yuca raise no objection to the standardly used single lined papers. When the documents used in Orel and Yuca's book (they also give place to these documents' facsimiles) are examined, Akçam's assertion turns out to be absurd, placing Akçam in a comical position. This is so because, it is clearly apparent that the ciphered telegrams that Orel and Yuca took from the archive (and produced exact photos of) are written on single lined papers.

In line with this, telegrams dated 26 August 1915 and 11 December 1915 that were sent by the Minister of the Interior Talat to certain lieutenant governorships (Tr. *mutasarrıflık*) that were published by Orel and Yuca in their books should be viewed:

<sup>19</sup> Akçam, *Naim Efendinin Hatıratı ve Talat Paşa Telgrafları...*, p. 94.

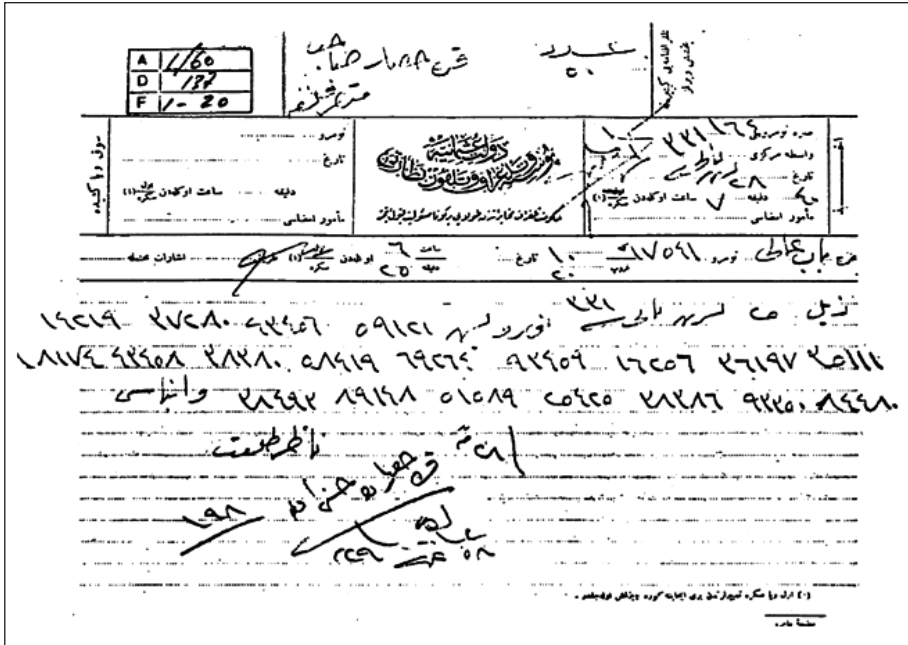
Document 1

The copy of the ciphered telegram which was written on official “single lined” paper dated 26 August 1915 that was published by Şinasi Orel and Süreyya Yuca in page 77 in their book. This telegram was sent by Minister of the Interior Talat Bey to Lieutenant Governorship of Çanakkale.



Document 2

The copy of the ciphered telegram which was written on official “single lined” paper dated 11 December 1915 that was published by Şinasi Orel and Süreyya Yuca in page 78 in their book. This telegram was sent by Minister of the Interior Talat Bey to Lieutenant Governorship of Karahisar-1 Sahip (Afyon).



As it can be seen in authentic telegrams that are replicated above, Orel and Yuca themselves published documents containing telegrams that were written on single lined papers. The objection of Orel and Yuca on this issue is not about the papers being single lined. The objection of Orel and Yuca is as follows:

*Among the “documents”, the one numbered 76 was written on double lined paper that contains no official sign. It cannot be expected that a paper that rather looks like the papers used in writing (calligraphy) classes in French schools to be present in Ottoman bureaus as official papers.<sup>20</sup>*

First of all, the objection of the authors is to the fact that the paper is “double lined”, and more importantly, to the paper’s “lack of any official sign” in

20 Orel ve Yuca, *Talat Paşa'ya Atfedilen Telgrafların Gerçek Yüzü...*, p. 60.



contrast to Ottoman Archive documents. Akçam completely ignores the objection to the paper published within Naim-Andonian documents due to its lack of any official sign and makes no comment on this point. In addition, by distorting Orel and Yuca's objection to "double lined paper", Akçam argues that they, instead, claimed that "lined paper" was not used by the Ottoman bureaucracy. Only by distorting the arguments of Orel and Yuca is Akçam able to arrive at the conclusion that their arguments are "inapprehensible" and "completely false." Not only that, Akçam further states that Orel and Yuca's arguments as to the falsity of the documents are all lies and wrong, and that they can be easily disproved.

However, as can be seen in the copies of the telegrams presented above, Orel and Yuca do not object to the single lined papers, and even published documents written on single lined papers. Akçam here again first distorts Orel and Yuca's arguments, then attempts to disprove the false arguments that were not advanced by Orel and Yuca. Within such confusion, Akçam overlooks and tries to hide away Orel and Yuca's objections about the papers being "double lined" and about the absence of official inscriptions on these papers unlike authentic Ottoman Archive documents.

### Telegram Numbers

In the work that they published in 1983, Orel and Yuca drew attention to the fact that the telegrams amongst the Naim-Andonian documents are different from the Ottoman Archive documents in terms of filing numbers as well. According to Orel and Yuca, there is absolutely no connection between the filing numbers used for the Naim-Andonian documents and the filing numbers of the authentic telegrams (contained in the Ottoman Archive) that were sent in the same date, and the filing numbers that are used in the Naim-Andonian documents contain great discrepancies. Furthermore, no record exists for the Naim-Andonian documents in the incoming-outgoing documents log of the Aleppo Province. Amongst the telegrams that are present in the Ottoman Archive, even though from time to time one comes across telegrams that were sent during the same time as the Naim-Andonian telegrams, it is seen that (both in terms of the telegram filing numbers and their contents) these two sets of telegrams are completely different from one another.

According to Akçam, Orel and Yuca are wrong with their assertions on this subject. According to Akçam, Ottoman Minister of the Interior had had installed a telegram machine in his own house, and from time to time communicated with governors through it and sent telegrams to provinces from

his house. Again, according to Akçam, it is impossible to know what kind of filing numbering was used in these telegrams that were sent from the house of the Minister of the Interior.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, according to Akçam, the incongruence exhibited by the Naim-Andonian documents' filing numbers with that of the archive documents is not a proof for the Naim-Andonian documents being forgeries.

First of all, again showing no evidence, Akçam makes the assumption that all Naim-Andonian documents were sent from the house of Minister of the Interior Talat Bey. Both in the explanations made by Andonian about the documents, and in the text of the “memoirs” that Andonian alleges belong to the Naim Efendi, there is simply no indication that the telegrams were sent from the Minister of the Interior's house. On the contrary, it is clearly indicated that these documents were sent from the Ministry of the Interior. Additionally, it is clearly (without leaving room for doubt) indicated in the Naim-Andonian documents that the telegrams from Aleppo to the center were sent to the Office of the Ministry of the Interior (Tr. *Dâhiliye Nezareti Celilesine*), and they give no space to personal remarks such as “Addressed to Minister of the Interior Talat Bey” (Tr. *Dâhiliye Nazırı Talat Beyefendi'ye*).

In such circumstances, the argument about the aforementioned correspondences having been carried out from Talat Bey's house comes across as being a contrived interpretation.

Additionally, the inconsistency regarding the filing numbers given to the telegrams are not solely present for the ones alleged to have been sent from the Ministry of the Interior to the Aleppo Province. The same inconsistency is also present in the telegrams alleged to have been sent from Aleppo to the center, meaning the Ministry of the Interior. Contained amongst the Naim-Andonian documents, the telegram attributed to Adbülâhad Nuri Bey numbered 76 and dated 7 March 1332 (20 March 1916) is the most striking example. According to the Rumi Calendar used by the administrative system of the Ottoman State, the new year starts at 1 March 1332 (14 March 1916). According to this, for the telegram attributed to Adbülâhad Nuri Bey to be numbered 76, he would have had to send 76 ciphered telegrams to İstanbul between the dates 1-7 March 1332 (14-20 March 1916), meaning in just seven days.<sup>22</sup> In this respect, the inconsistency about the numbering in the Naim-Andonian telegrams is revealed to be present for both the telegrams sent from Ministry of the Interior to Aleppo, and the ones sent from Aleppo to the center.

21 Akçam, *Naim Efendinin Hatıratı ve Talat Paşa Telgrafları...*, p. 66-68.

22 Orel ve Yuca, *Talat Paşa'ya Atfedilen Telgrafların Gerçek Yüzü...*, p. 60.

In the section of his book touching upon this subject, Akçam has overlooked this as well and does not provide any explanation.

### Similarity with Ottoman Documents

An important section of Akçam's book has also been allocated to his efforts to prove the presence of similarities between the memoirs alleged to have belonged to Naim Efendi and the Ottoman Archive documents. In this respect, the author gives ten different examples in order to showcase the argument that

*The inconsistency about the numbering in the Naim-Andonian telegrams is revealed to be present for both the telegrams sent from Ministry of the Interior to Aleppo, and the ones sent from Aleppo to the center. In the section of his book touching upon this subject, Akçam has overlooked this as well and does not provide any explanation.*

there are great similarities between what is being told in the memoirs of Naim Efendi and the events that transpired according to the Ottoman Archive documents. For this reason, the author arrives at the conclusion that the Memoirs and the Documents must be true. It is not possible to reach a judgment on the veracity of Akçam's arguments without examining one by one the documents Akçam gives as examples. However, even if we were to accept that all his allegations are true, the similarity between the Ottoman Archive documents and the Naim-Andonian materials is not a proof for the authenticity of these documents. If the person producing the forged documents is above a certain level of intelligence, that person will anyhow attempt to

make the documents and the memoirs resemble real events.

Hence, concerning another forged document prepared for the Armenian Question and generally known as the "Ten Commandments", Canadian historian Gwynne Dyer has likened it to a document construction effort that would be congruent with events that had already transpired.<sup>23</sup>

In a similar way, as drawn attention to by Dutch historian Erik Jan Zürcher as well, it should come as no surprise that the contents of forged document resemble and coheres with actual events. According to Zürcher, if some members of the bureaucracy are to produce forged documents in order to earn money, they would put the effort to make the contents of forged documents resemble actual events as much as possible.<sup>24</sup>

23 Gwynne Dyer, "Correspondence", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Volume 9, 1973, p. 377.

24 Erik Jan Zürcher, "Ottoman Labour Battalions in World War I", Hans-Lukas Kieser (ed.), *The Armenian Genocide and the Shoah* (Zürich: 2002), p. 194 n. 1.

Examples similar to this are not confined to the Armenian Question. To give the impression of being authentic, it is not unusual for forged documents produced for various topics to contain a certain amount of true information about actual events and people. The most striking example for this is the so-called “Hitler Diaries” that created quite a sensation in the 1980s. In the diaries, Hitler’s various speeches, notes, and meetings are contained in a way that is similar to the actual ones. Moreover, the said forged diaries give place to texts of certain works or newspaper pieces about Hitler exactly as they appeared in those works and pieces. This was enough to mislead some historians; taking into account all the similarities, the details, and the variety of the materials, some historians such as Hugh Trevor-Roper and Gerhard Weinberg in the beginning expressed the view that these diaries were authentic. However, at the end of the examination conducted by German forensic experts, it was revealed that the “Hitler Diaries” were fake and that certain ingredients of the diaries such as the papers, bindings, adhesives etc. were not yet in use during the period when Hitler lived.<sup>25</sup>

If the verification logic employed by Akçam for the Naim-Andonian documents were to be applied to the “Hitler Diaries”, it would result in the bizarre and erroneous conclusion that the fake diaries are real. This is so because, under Akçam’s logic, the text contained in the diaries being verified by the exact same texts in other sources would point to the authenticity of the diaries. As indicated above however, as a result of the examination of German forensic experts, it has been revealed -leaving no room for doubt- that the diaries are fake. It is therefore clearly revealed that forged documents relaying information close to the truth about topics concerning some actual events, speeches etc. does not directly mean that such documents are authentic.

What is essentially needed, concerning the dispute of whether or not the documents are authentic, is not explaining the similarities, but explaining the inconsistencies. In the dispute over the Hitler diaries, historians, while drawing attention to the similarities they have with actual speeches and some sources written about Hitler, come to the conclusion that the diaries are fake by pointing to a series of contradictions and rather absurd errors within the diaries.<sup>26</sup> Akçam’s work is essentially quite weak on this point. Below, a more balanced picture will be drawn for the readers by examining the points ignored by Akçam.

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25 Robert Harris, *Selling Hitler: The Story of Hitler Diaries* (London: Arrow Books, 2010).

26 For an analysis of the content of the fake diaries, please see: Josef Henke, “Revealing the Forged Hitler Diaries”, *Archivaria*, Volume 19, 1984, p. 21-27.

## The Points Ignored by Akçam

Akçam remains completely silent on subjects for which no explanation can be given: the chronological discrepancies of the Naim-Andonian documents, the signature attributed to the Governor of Aleppo being different from the actual one that is contained in the Ottoman Archive, Mustafa Abdülhalik Bey's signing of some documents with the title "Governor" before he had actually been appointed as a governor, and also both Mustafa Abdülhalik Bey'in and Abdülahad Nuri Bey adding notes to the documents and signing them during

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dates when they were still in İstanbul and had not yet reached Aleppo. A similar situation is present for the letters attributed to Bahaettin Şakir Bey, which were allegedly sent from İstanbul to Adana in February and March 1915, despite the fact that in the said dates he was not in İstanbul but in Erzurum. Additionally, while the Ottoman Archive documents used by Akçam as examples are all written on papers bearing official inscriptions, the papers on which Naim-Andonian documents are written do not, which has been completely ignored by Akçam.

It must be underlined that the signatures attributed to the Governor of Aleppo Mustafa Abdülhalik Bey occupy a special place in the dispute

over whether or not the documents are authentic. This subject will be touched upon in more detail below. Before moving forward to this subject however, it must be indicated that there are errors and inconsistencies in the Naim-Andonian document that are ignored and never mentioned by Akçam.

All the telegrams belonging to the Ottoman Archive used by Akçam as reference (he provides facsimiles for some of these telegrams) have been written on letterheads bearing official inscriptions.<sup>27</sup> However, the telegrams and documents in the Naim-Andonian documents are different in this respect. Some of them have been written on blank papers bearing no official inscription whatsoever and which are different from the ones used by the Ottoman

27 Akçam, *Naim Efendinin Hatıratı ve Talat Paşa Telgrafları...*

bureaucracy. Akçam makes no comment on and remains silent about this blatant inconsistency between the papers on which the Ottoman Archive documents and the papers on which the Naim-Andonian documents are written.

Again, in Akçam's book, the cipher number groups used in all the ciphered telegram texts are constituted of the same amount of digits. For example, in a telegram using four digit ciphers, all number groups are four digits and number groups with different amount of digits are not used in the text. The same is true for telegrams using two, three, and five digit numbers, and number groups with different amount of digits were not confused with each other within the telegrams.

As previously indicated, however, in the telegrams of the Naim-Andonian Documents, both two digit and three digit numbers are used in a mixed manner within the same telegram texts. As explained above, this is quite ill-advised in terms of ciphering techniques because it will require two different cipher keys for the telegrams to be solved and create great complications and pointlessness.<sup>28</sup> This clear inconsistency between the Ottoman Archive documents and the Naim-Andonian documents is yet again ignored by Akçam throughout his book and this problem is thus evaded with silence.

The inconsistencies in the Naim-Andonian documents are not limited to this. In the said documents, a telegram is sent on 3 September 1331 (16 September 1915) by Minister of the Interior Talat Bey to the Governor of Aleppo, and on 5 September 1331 (18 September 1915) Mustafa Abdülhalik Bey writes some notes on the telegram paper and puts his signature underneath it as the Governor.<sup>29</sup> Mustafa Abdülhalik Bey addresses Abdülahad Nuri Bey as he writes the said notes. However, in the dates during which those telegrams were sent, the notes were written, and the signature was put, the Governor of Aleppo was Bekir Sami Bey, not "Mustafa Abdülhalik Bey".<sup>30</sup> Mustafa Abdülhalik Bey was only appointed as the Governor of Aleppo by 10 October 1915. This means that if the documents were actually authentic, it should have been Bekir Sami Bey, and not Mustafa Abdülhalik Bey, who signed the telegram sent on 16 September 1915. Also, despite the note dated 18 September 1915 having been written to address Abdülahad Nuri Bey, Abdülahad Nuri Bey had not yet been appointed to his position in Aleppo by that date. According to the Ottoman Archive records, in a telegram he sent on 14 October 1915, Minister of the Interior Talat Bey mentions to Director of Settlement for Tribes and Migrants

28 Orel ve Yuca, *Talat Paşa'ya Atfedilen Telgrafların Gerçek Yüzü...*, p. 59, 65-66, 74-75.

29 Aram Andonian, *Documents Officiels Concernant les Massacres Arméniens* (Paris: Imprimerie H. Turabian, 1920), p. 109.

30 Orel ve Yuca, *Talat Paşa'ya Atfedilen Telgrafların Gerçek Yüzü...*, p. 54.

(Tr. *İşkân-ı Aşairin ve Muhacirin Müdürü*) Şükrü Bey about Abdülahad Nuri Bey being considered for appointment to Aleppo and asks Şükrü Bey about his thoughts on Abdülahad Nuri Bey.<sup>31</sup> In other words, as of the date of 14 October 1915, Abdülahad Nuri Bey had not yet been appointed to his position in Aleppo, and the decision process about him had been still ongoing, and other bureaucrats had been asked about their opinions on him.

Thus, in this so-called document, there is a correspondence between a governor and a civil servant, both of whom had not yet been appointed to their posts. This chronological inconsistency regarding the posts and the terms of office of these individuals is one of the serious evidences that prove these documents being fake. However, Akçam never touches upon this issue and in fact remains silent with regard to these inconsistencies throughout his book.

As indicated above, Mustafa Abdulhalik Bey was only appointed as Governor to Aleppo by 10 October 1915. Therefore, it can be argued that the signatures attributed to Governor of Aleppo Mustafa Abdulhalik Bey in the Naim-Andonian documents after 10 October 1915 (27 September 1331) are rather less suspicious. There is another document in Naim-Andonian documents sent from the Ministry of the Interior in 29 September 1331 (12 October 1915). Similarly, four days after this telegram on 3 October (Teşrin-i Evvel) 1331 (16 October 1915), Mustafa Abdulhalik Bey seemingly noted down his name as Governor of Aleppo and signed the document.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, since Mustafa Abdulhalik Bey was appointed as Governor six days before this telegram, this document seems comparably less suspicious.

On the other hand, when one looks at the Ottoman Archive registries, although Mustafa Abdulhalik Bey was appointed as Governor on 10 October 1915, it can be seen that he was in İstanbul until 1 November 1915, and that he only arrived to Aleppo on 8 November 1915. The same applies to Abdülahad Nuri Bey as well. Newly appointed Governor of Aleppo Mustafa Abdulhalik Bey and Abdülahad Nuri Bey left İstanbul together for Aleppo on Monday, 1 November.<sup>33</sup> A telegram stating that the two officials would arrive to Aleppo on 8 November was sent to İstanbul.<sup>34</sup> Thus, it is impossible for Mustafa

31 BOA DH DŞR 56-385. Telegram dated 13 October 1915 sent from Directorate of Public Safety (Tr. *Emniyet-i Umumiye Müdüriyeti*) to Şükrü Bey.

32 Andonian, *Documents Officiels*, p. 110.

33 DH ŞFR 57/191. In the telegram dated 31 October 1915 sent from the Directorate of Public Safety to Şükrü Bey, it is requested that “since Governor of Aleppo and Abdülahad Nuri Bey will set out for their journey on Monday, be present at Aleppo on their arrival.”

34 BOA DH ŞFR 496/53. Telegram dated 8 November 1915 from the Director of Public Safety (Tr. *Emniyet-i Umumiye Müdüriyeti*) İsmail Bey to the Ministry of the Interior.

Abdulhalik Bey and Abdülhad Nuri Bey to have written down notes or to have signed documents in Aleppo as of September and October 1915. This is so because they had arrived to Aleppo only by 8 November. This is another serious evidence that the documents are fake.

One part of Akçam's book is also dedicated to Naim Bey's place and term in office. In this chapter, Akçam touches upon the Ottoman documents that we present above on when Governor of Aleppo Mustafa Abdulhalik Bey and Abdülhad Nuri Bey were going to leave for Aleppo. These documents clearly prove that Mustafa Abdulhalik Bey and Abdülhad Nuri Bey were not in Aleppo and did not assume their posts before 7 November 1915. Based on this information highlighting the fact that the Naim-Andonian documents are fake, Akçam again remains silent and completely ignores the inconsistency between the Ottoman Archive Documents and the Naim-Andonian Documents.

The same inconsistency can be found in a letter attributed to Bahaettin Şakir Bey and which was supposedly sent by the Union and Progress Central Committee (Tr. *İttihat-Terakki Merkez Komitesi*) to the party's Adana delegate Cemal Bey on 2 March 1915.<sup>35</sup> On the date in which the letter was sent, Bahaettin Şakir Bey was not in İstanbul but in Erzurum, and remained in Erzurum until 13 March 1915.<sup>36</sup> Thus, this is another indication that the Naim-Andonian documents are fake.

### **On What Basis Did Aram Andonian Argue For The Authenticity Of The Documents?**

Andonian based his claim about the authenticity of the documents that he claimed were given to him by Naim Bey on the signature of Governor of Aleppo Mustafa Abdulhalik Bey. According to Andonian, after Naim Bey gave the documents to him, the documents were analyzed for their authenticity. Andonian stated that the signatures on the documents attributed to Mustafa Abdulhalik Bey were compared with Mustafa Abdülhalik Bey's signature documents that belonged to him, and it was concluded that the signatures belonged to the Governor:

*There is no doubt that these documents were taken out of the files of the Assistant Directorship of the Deportation Office in Aleppo. The*

35 Andonian, *Documents Officiels*, p. 96-98 ; Aram Andonian, *Memoirs of Naim Bey*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1920), p. 49-51.

36 Ali İhsan Sabis, *Harp Hatıralarım: Birinci Cihan Harbi*, Cilt II (İstanbul: Nehir Yayınları, 1990), p. 378.



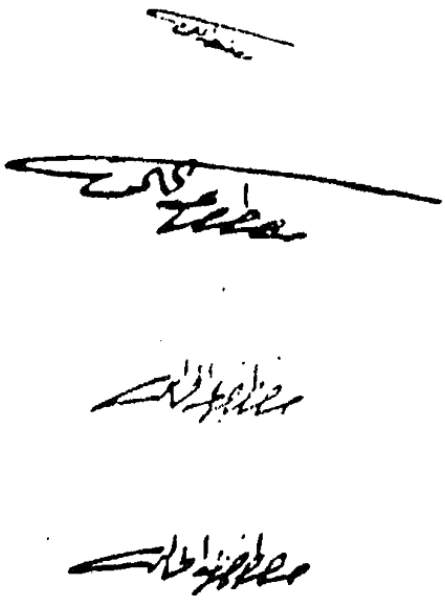
*Governor of Aleppo, after having had the orders he received from the Minister of the Interior (Talât Pasha) concerning the Armenians deciphered, appended a note with his signature to them in which he referred them for implementation to the Assistant Directorship of the Deportation Office where Naim Bey was a secretary.*

*When Naim Bey agreed to provide us with these documents, the Aleppo Armenian National Union, which was an official organization, had the handwriting and signatures (appended to the documents in question), examined. This examination lasted exactly one week. Other documents to which the Governor Mustafa Abdülhalik Bey had appended notes and his signature were examined, and even the smallest details were subjected to comparison. Finally, it was determined without any possibility of doubt that the handwriting and signature in the notes added to the documents belonged to the Governor Mustafa Abdülhalik Bey. This erased even the slightest suspicion as to the authenticity of the documents...<sup>37</sup>*

As it can be clearly seen from this excerpt from a letter by Andonian, the main basis for the authenticity of the documents in question is the assumption that the signature on the documents attributed to Mustafa Abdukhalik Bey is genuine. However, a comparison of the genuine signatures that can be found in two letters from the Ottoman Archive that belong to Governor of Aleppo Mustafa Abdülhalik Bey with those in the Naim-Andonian documents reveal that the two groups of signatures are completely different. The said signatures are compared in the below chart.

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37 Şinasi Orel and Süreyya Yuca, *The Talât Pasha Telegrams – Historical fact or Armenian fiction?* (Lefkoşa (Nicosia): K. Rustem and Bro., 1983), p. 13. The Turkish translation of this can be found at: Orel and Yuca, *Talat Paşa'ya Atfedilen Telgrafların Gerçek Yüzü...*, p. 13.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Forged signature attributed to Aleppo Governor Mustafa Abdulhalik Bey in the Naim-Andonyan document dated 18<sup>th</sup> of November 1331 (1<sup>st</sup> of December 1915)</li><li>2. Forged signature attributed to Aleppo Governor Mustafa Abdulhalik Bey in the Naim-Andonyan document dated 12<sup>th</sup> of December 1331 (21<sup>st</sup> of December 1915)</li><li>3. Original signature by Mustafa Abdulhalik Bey in a document found in the Ottoman archive dated 8<sup>th</sup> of December 1331 (21<sup>st</sup> of December 1915)</li><li>4. Original signature by Mustafa Abdulhalik Bey in a letter found in the Ottoman archive dated 25<sup>th</sup> of January 1331 (7<sup>th</sup> of February 1916)</li></ol>
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**Table 1 – Two sample signatures that are attributed to Mustafa Abdulhalik Bey in the Naim-Andonian Documents and two original signatures from the letters in the Ottoman Archives**

In Table 1, sample number 1 and 2 are the signatures from Naim-Andonian documents attributed to Mustafa Abdulhalik Bey. Throughout the book, all the signatures attributed to Mustafa Abdulhalik Bey are exactly the same as these two fake signatures. However, taking into account Mustafa Abdulhalik Bey's genuine signatures in sample number 3 and 4 that are taken from two letters dated 21 December 1915 and 7 February 1916 in the Ottoman Archive, it will clearly be seen that the signatures in the Naim-Andonian documents are undoubtedly fake. Therefore, it is revealed that Andonian's most basic claim to prove the documents are authentic is in fact baseless and that the documents are indeed fake. Akçam again brushes aside this issue and provides no explanation for it.

## Conclusion

As the detailed analysis given above shows, Akçam's arguments on Naim-Andonian documents are based on the oversimplification and furthermore distortion of Orel and Yuca's previous findings. In order to bring credibility to his claims, Akçam presents Orel and Yuca's findings in a distorted manner and ignores these writers' most basic objections. Akçam, who then answers the objections presented in an oversimplified and distorted manner, attempts to

*Taking into account Mustafa Abdülhalik Bey's genuine signatures in sample number 3 and 4 that are taken from two letters dated 21 December 1915 and 7 February 1916 in the Ottoman Archive, it will clearly be seen that the signatures in the Naim-Andonian documents are undoubtedly fake. Therefore, it is revealed that Andonian's most basic claim to prove the documents are authentic is in fact baseless and that the documents are indeed fake. Akçam again brushes aside this issue and provides no explanation for it.*

prove the authenticity of the Naim-Andonian documents by resorting to various manipulations. However, as has already been showed, while listing his allegations, he bases his arguments on serious logical errors and obvious distortions. Apart from these, in his book, Akçam remains completely silent on issues for which no explanation can be given, such as: the chronological discrepancies in the Naim-Andonian documents, the signature attributed to Governor of Aleppo being different from the genuine signature of the Governor contained in the Ottoman Archive, Mustafa Abdülhalik Bey's signing of some documents with the title "Governor" before he had actually been appointed as a governor, and also both Mustafa Abdülhalik Bey'in and Abdülhad Nuri Bey adding notes to the documents and signing them during dates when they were still in İstanbul and had not yet

reached Aleppo. Unable to present credible evidence to explain the inconsistencies and discrepancies of the Naim-Andonian documents, Akçam begins from various assumptions that he most of the time does not provide any evidence for to prove that the documents are authentic.

On top of this, Akçam does not present convincing explanations for the most basic objections (fake signatures, the type of paper used by the Ottoman bureaucracy, chronological discrepancies etc.) directed by Orel and Yuca towards the Naim-Andonian documents and ignores many of these objections. For these reasons, it becomes apparent that Akçam's book cannot be treated as a credible source in the discussion concerning the authenticity of the Naim-Andonian documents.

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# BOOK REVIEW

(KİTAP TAHLİLİ)

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**(“THE KURDISH MOVEMENT OF TURKEY IN EXILE:  
CONTINUITIES AND DISCONTINUITIES IN KURDISH  
NATIONALISM DURING THE FRENCH MANDATE IN  
SYRIA AND LEBANON (1925-1946)”)**

**(“TÜRKiYE’NİN SÜRGÜNDEKİ KÜRT HAREKETİ:  
SURİYE VE LÜBNAN’DAKİ FRANSIZ MANDASI  
SIRASINDAKİ KÜRT MİLLİYETÇİLİĞİNDE DEVAMLILIKLAR  
VE KOPUKLUKLAR (1925-1946)”)**

**Author:** Jordis Tejel Gorgas

**Title:** *Le mouvement kurde de Turquie en exil: continuités et discontinuités du nationalisme kurde sous le mandat français en Syrie et au Liban (1925-1946)*

**Published:** Bern, Peter Lang, 2007

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**Language:** French

**Number of Pages:** 387

**L**e mouvement kurde de Turquie en exil: continuités et discontinuités du nationalisme kurde sous le mandat français en Syrie et au Liban (1925-1946) (En. *The Kurdish Movement of Turkey in Exile: Continuities and Discontinuities in Kurdish Nationalism during the French Mandate in Syria and Lebanon (1925-1946)*), written by historian and sociologist Jordis Tejel Gorgas, was published in 2007. In the book, the author analyzes the ties between Khoyboun Union, an organization with Kurdish ethnic nationalist ideology that was active in Syria and Lebanon under the French Mandate, and the Armenian Dashnak Party between the years 1925 and 1946.

As Jordis Tejel Gorgas mentions in his book, the Kurdish ethnic nationalist Khoyboun Union was established in Bhamdoun, Lebanon, on 29 October 1927, with the aim of uniting all Kurds under a single roof regardless of their religion, language, or social status. The most distinctive feature of Khoyboun was the importance it attached to diplomatic relations with various countries (Iran, France, United Kingdom, Italy, and the Soviet Union) and foreign organizations such as the Dashnak Party. Although it would be a far-fetched claim to say that this Kurdish organization originated from an Armenian initiative, due to its close relations with the Dashnak Party, the Khoyboun Union is presented as being the result of the efforts of Armenian groups.<sup>1</sup> Gorgas, through the sources he provides, confirms that the meetings between nationalist Kurdish and Armenian groups began in 1926 in Marseille with the initiative of the Dashnak Party. The symbol of this closeness and the one who acted virtually as a bridge between the two organizations was Vahan Papazian, a Dashnak Party official who was a former deputy of Van in the Ottoman Empire. Papazian attended the founding congress of the Khoyboun Union and later took part in the cadres of the organization. Later Khoyboun congresses also saw participations from the Dashnak Party. Together with Papazian, a leading Dashnak Party member Ador Levonian also participated in the congress that took place on 29 March 1928 in Aleppo.<sup>2</sup> It should be indicated that the names of Dashnak Party members, such as Rifat Menlazande and also Vahan Papazian, have been frequently mentioned among the cadres of the Khoyboun Union.

How does Gorgas explain the rapprochement between the Dashnak and the Khoyboun organizations?

According to the author, the main aim of the cooperation between the two organizations was to establish a Kurdish-Armenian confederation in Southeast Turkey via an insurrection in 1927. The preparations for this cooperation between the two organizations had begun in the 1920s. The nationalist Kurdish historical narrative denies the Kurdish responsibility for the massacres the Armenians were subjected to, and shifts the blame on the Ottoman government and the Turks. The massacres in 1894, 1895, 1915, and 1916 against the Armenians have become a taboo in the nationalist Kurdish historical narrative, and this narrative that puts the blame on others has become unquestionable. Meanwhile, the Dashnak Party, which always held the Turks responsible for everything negative that has happened to Armenians, has facilitated this process

1 Jordis Tejel Gorgas, *Le mouvement kurde de Turquie en exil: continuités et discontinuités du nationalisme kurde sous le mandat français en Syrie et au Liban (1925-1946)* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007), p. 121.

2 Gorgas, *Le mouvement kurde de Turquie en exil...*, p. 138.

and propagated that while the Turks were “Christian-killers” and “barbarians”, the Kurds were “victimized” and “civilized” people.<sup>3</sup>

According to the sources pointed out by Gorgas, via an agreement signed between the Dashnak and the Khoyboun organizations in 1927, the Dashnak Party informed the Khoyboun Union that it would provide monetary assistance to support the insurrection to be launched at Ağrı Mountain. Vahan Papazian was involved in significant efforts within the context of the cooperation between the two organizations. During the first days of cooperation between the organizations, Papazian provided a monetary assistance of about 20,000 dollars (a serious amount considering the inflation throughout the years),<sup>4</sup> and ensured additional significant amounts of money from the Italian government to support the publication of nationalist Kurdish journals. Again, through Papazian, the American Armenian Red Cross Society provided an aid of 7,000 dollars to Khoyboun Union.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, Papazian promised that further monetary aid from many governments would be available if nationalist Kurdish leaders and intellectuals put an end to their disagreements. Papazian was also active in France. Upon a call from Şerif Pasha, the Khoyboun representative in France, Papazian sent an amount of 500,000 francs that had he collected from wealthy Armenians in Nice for the provision of arms and ammunition for the Kurds.<sup>6</sup> Papazian, who was blamed for the murder of Hunchak Party member Sarkis Kaderian Dikhrouni in 1929, with all the things he had done up until then, had shown how important he was for the cooperation between the Khoyboun and the Dashnak organizations. Following Papazian’s arrest, no money transfer took place between the two organizations for a couple of months.

In the book, besides the monetary aid given by the Dashnak Party to the Khoyboun Union, Gorgas also mentions the features of the military cooperation between the two organizations. The Dashnak Party requested Armenians living in Europe and the US to support the “Kurdish-Armenian cause”. Within this context, in 1930, the Dashnak organization located in US provided the Khoyboun Union with 125,000 rifles, 4 million bullets, and 50,000 grenades. The transfer of these arms and ammunitions was done through the Persian Gulf in a period of three months. Furthermore, the French branch of the Dashnak organization sent 30,000 rifles via small Greek cargo ships.<sup>7</sup>

3 Gorgas, *Le mouvement kurde de Turquie en exil...*, p. 183. In this respect, Dr. Dargus Kurdistani, in his article published in the *Raja Nû* journal, stated that the Armenian press witnessed the Kurdish-Armenian friendship that was formed within the last twenty years.

4 Gorgas, *Le mouvement kurde de Turquie en exil...*, p. 225.

5 Gorgas, *Le mouvement kurde de Turquie en exil...*, p. 225.

6 Gorgas, *Le mouvement kurde de Turquie en exil...*, p. 225.

7 Gorgas, *Le mouvement kurde de Turquie en exil...*, p. 226.



Due to the ending of the 1936 agreement foreseeing the withdrawal of the French from Syria with the establishment of the Vichy regime, as well as the agreement between Turkey, Britain, and France, nationalist Kurdish groups started to approach Germany.

According to British Major Elphinstone's report, which is presented in Gorgas' book, German officials contacted Kurdish groups at the beginning of the war. German officials offered Kurds to follow the policy of the Axis Powers, underlining that the Kurds would not benefit from an alliance with the Allied Powers due to Turks being allied with the French and the British. With the surrender of France to Germany, the German Commission in Syria, presided over by W.O. von Hentig, contacted Khalil ibn Ibrahim Pasha, who was a Syrian deputy and a close friend of Baron Max Oppenheim, and requested a new alliance between Kurds and Armenians.<sup>8</sup> Within this context, at clandestine gatherings with the Kurdish and Armenian nationalists, von Hentig and Rudolf A. Roser requested them to incite riots and revolts in Turkey. In return, if Germany emerged victorious in the war, the German Commission promised that Germany would assure the "independence of Kurdistan and Armenia". According to the P. de Rudden, the head of the German mission in Al-Jazira, for the Kurds and Bedouins, the Allied powers represented Christianity, while the Nazis represented irreligiosity. In this regard, according to de Rudden, the Nazis were the most suitable ally against the common enemy, the Christians.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, for the oriental elites, Nazism was the ideal form of nationalism, therefore, a political model that should be achieved.

No official agreements between nationalist Kurds and Germans has been found. However, according to French intelligence, nationalist Kurdish and Armenian representatives such as Djeladet Bekir Khan and Hratch Papazian came to terms with the Germans and planned to incite revolts in Turkey in 1942.<sup>10</sup> While the sources presented in the book confirms the authenticity of these information, they also indicate that it was verified by the French intelligence that the Germans made contacts with Şerif Pasha who was in France at the time.<sup>11</sup>

The Dashnak Party also tried to get support from Iran in order to carry out the insurrection in Ağrı Mountain. Within this context, in order to avoid damaging possible "diplomatic" relations with Iran, the Dashnak Party and the Khoyboun

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8 Gorgas, *Le mouvement kurde de Turquie en exil...*, p. 153.

9 Gorgas, *Le mouvement kurde de Turquie en exil...*, p. 154.

10 Gorgas, *Le mouvement kurde de Turquie en exil...*, p. 154.

11 Gorgas, *Le mouvement kurde de Turquie en exil...*, p. 154.

Union took the decision to not act against Iran.<sup>12</sup> Iran, which sought to avoid any direct confrontation with Turkey, stipulated conditions to the Khoyboun Union. With the support of the Dashnak organization members in Iran, Djeladet Bekir Khan traveled to Tehran to establish contacts with Iran. Nationalist Kurds and Armenians, as part of their “Aryan Race”<sup>13</sup> principle, tried to recruit Iran to their cause.

Gorgas states that the idea that Kurds and Armenians descended from the “Aryan Race” had been addressed in the past.<sup>14</sup> However, the intention or idea to establish a political union between the two groups as part of a common ideology was a first in history. The end goal of these efforts was to ensure the founding of an “Aryan Confederation” consisting of Kurds and Armenians. Iran was offered to lead and protect this union. However, this project was never made official; Iranian officials told Djeladet Bekir Khan that this project was “interesting, but unrealistic”.<sup>15</sup> The strategic aim of this association between the Dashnak Party and the Khoyboun Union was to provide the insurrectionists in Ağrı Mountain with the support of an influential foreign state. In any case, Iran, which deemed an Aryan Confederation that included Iran as unrealistic, allowed members of the Dashnak Party and the Khoyboun Union to establish contacts with the insurrectionists in Ağrı Mountain. Iran’s relations with Turkey was harmed due to Iran sending representatives to Ağrı Mountain until the 1930s. According to Nader Entessar, in that period, the Shah of Iran used the “Kurdish card” to put pressure on the Turkish government in its border issues with Turkey.

As stated by Gorgas, although ties between the Dashnak Party and the Khoyboun Union was later broken off, both sides continued to argue that they descended from the “Aryan Race”. In the Khoyboun Union, the Bedir Khan Brothers propagated in the brochures of the organization that, unlike “the Mongol or the Tatar Turks”, the Kurds were “Aryan”.<sup>16</sup> In parallel with this, in the Dashnak Party, Roupen Ter Minassian defended the “Aryan Union” principle and the “Kurdish cause” in the party’s official journal.<sup>17</sup>

12 Gorgas, *Le mouvement kurde de Turquie en exil...*, p. 227.

13 Gorgas, *Le mouvement kurde de Turquie en exil...*, p. 227. In their statement on 5 April 1925 towards the League of Nations and the Western countries requesting the “independence of the Kurdish state”, nationalist Kurds indicated that the “Aryan” Kurds had absolutely no common features (language, ethnic origin, culture) with the “Mongolian” Turks.

14 Gorgas, *Le mouvement kurde de Turquie en exil...*, p. 227.

15 Gorgas, *Le mouvement kurde de Turquie en exil...*, p. 228.

16 Gorgas, *Le mouvement kurde de Turquie en exil...*, p. 228.

17 Gorgas, *Le mouvement kurde de Turquie en exil...*, p. 228.

Today, despite tensions between them, Kurdish ethnic nationalist movements and several Armenian groups that demand reparations and territories from Turkey, seeing Turkey as a common enemy, have formed an alliance of sorts. Trying to put aside past conflicts and the blood spilt between Armenians and Kurds, and trying to blame Turks for all past negative events, these groups seek to find ways to act together against Turkey. The importance of Jordis Tejel Gorgas' book manifests itself at this juncture: the book concretely puts down the fact that a similar alliance had already formed and was active in the early period of the Republic of Turkey.

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