The Past as the Gravedigger of the Present: Collective Memory and the Impact of Genocide in Armenian-Turkish Relations

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Abstract

This project concerns Turkish-Armenian relations and the impact of the collective memory of the Armenian Genocide on this relationship. Contested memories of these events have come to form important parts of both Turkish and Armenian identity. The research focuses on why the Armenian Genocide is such a salient feature of relations, and whether it is a grass-roots concern or elite-cultivated issue. For Armenian society, the Genocide is a key concern which political elites would prefer to ignore. In Turkey, the strictly controlled state narrative of the Armenian Genocide means there is little debate on this part of Turkish history. A small but growing segment of Turkish intellectuals and civil society is moving to challenge this state-imposed memory, however, leading to challenges of official history, and the potential for pressure from below to normalise Turkish-Armenian relations in Turkey.

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List of Acronyms

AGBU- Armenian General Benevolent Union

AKP- Justice and Development Party

ARF- Armenian Revolutionary Federation

ASALA- Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia

CUP- Committee of Union and Progress

ASSR- Armenian Soviet Social Republic

JCAG- Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide

EU- European Union

IR- International Relations

NATO- North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

NKAO- Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Oblast

NKR- Nagorno Karabakh Republic

OSCE- Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe

PKK- Kurdistan Worker's Party

USSR- Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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Chapter One: Introduction

Memory and perception play an important role in conflict, especially modern conflicts with historical roots. How each side in a conflict sees the other has an impact on attitudes towards relations between states, on both a grassroots and elite level. Nowhere is this trend more evident than in the south Caucasus. An ethnically diverse region with a past filled with war and ethnic cleansing, memories of the past continue to dominate discussions of the present and the future. The Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Armenia are two prime examples of states in the region with a complex history which colours their contemporary relations. Indeed, the past in many ways defines the modern Turkish-Armenian relationship. Major disputes over what Turks have come to call "the events of 1915" and is known by many in the West as "the Armenian Genocide" have proved a barrier to the establishment and normalisation of relations, despite repeated attempts to reach some sort of compromise and move beyond the stalemate that has persisted for the past 20 years. Initial attempts at normalising relations in the early part of the 1990s became increasingly complicated, in part due to Turkey's involvement in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The most important of these attempts occurred in 2009. After months of negotiations, Turkey and Armenia signed a protocol aimed at normalising relations between the two countries which had been frozen since the outbreak of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia in the 1990s. The culmination of months of secret negotiations in Switzerland, the process was made public after the so-called "football diplomacy" in the fall of 2008 Between the Turkish and Armenian

presidents. At the last moment, however, suspicion over whether Turkey would ratify the Protocols in Armenia, as well as statements linking the process to the unrelated conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh between Armenia and Azerbaijan, led to a halt in the ratification of the protocols by both parties. Attempts to restore relations between Turkey and Armenia have not been attempted since. While there was speculation over the reasons for the failure, issues related to the Armenian Genocide were most salient. Turkey's insistence on the establishment of a "historical commission" to objectively investigate the two countries' past, as well as its insistence that Armenia drop the issue of genocide recognition from its foreign policy agenda, were both major stumbling points.

Armenia, a small, landlocked country in the south Caucasus, has suffered greatly from the economic and social impact of the blockade imposed on it by Turkey since the 1990s relating to the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. By putting this pressure on Armenia, Turkey also suffers from the regional destabilisation that this policy causes, as well as the international damage to its reputation. For both states, but Armenia in particular, it would seem in their best interest to try to move beyond the Genocide issue and normalise relations. Yet it persists in the bilateral relations of both countries, as well as in their foreign policy. This project intends to address the issue of the Armenian genocide from both a historical and political perspective, examining the role it plays in identity formation for Armenians and Turks, as well as the impact this has in the political sphere, particularly in foreign relations.

Section 1.2: Literature Review

Contemporary scholarship in the field of Armenian Studies has mainly focused on the issue of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, as well as the genocide (Kotchikian, 2006, 304). The available academic literature on Armenian-Turkish relations is dominated by these two main themes. The first is the debate, often between Armenian and Turkish scholars, on the historical fact of the Armenian genocide. Predictably, the Armenian side seeks to promote the fact of the genocide and seeks recognition. The academic debate in many ways is coloured by an "orientalist" presentation (sometimes present in Western scholarship as well) of "the Turk", characteristic of nineteenth and early twentieth caricatures (Beachler, 2011, 105). Arguments focusing on religious and ethnic motivations for the Genocide, such as the discriminatory nature of Islam, and the inherently violent nature of Turks, are common among Armenian scholars such as Peter Balakian, who focuses on the Turkish role exclusively in his work *The Burning Tigris*.

In Turkey, discourse on the Armenian genocide is of a much different nature. There is no real open discussion in the country. The state defines policy on the "debate" and that policy is one of denial. As such, academic debate within the country on this era has been almost non-existent, and challenges to the Kemalist historiography were often prosecuted as criminal acts under article 301 of the Turkish penal code outlawing insults to the Turkish state and "denigrating Turkishness". The Turkish side minimises the extent of the Armenian casualties, denies the applicability of the term "genocide" and often claims there were an equal or greater number of Turkish and Muslim casualties due to Armenian partisans during World War I.

There is, however, a growing group of outspoken Turkish scholars challenging the state-mandated narratives of the Armenian genocide. Led by Tanner Akcam and his

book *A Shameful Act* (2006), these scholars have begun exploring the genocide from a Turkish perspective, and challenging the foundational myths of Turkish historiography and the cult of personality surrounding Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The structured nature of Turkish historiography and the integral part that this narrative in Turkish identity plays a large role in the denial which characterises Turkey's attitude towards the Armenians. Indeed, Fatma Gocek has attempted to address this attitude in Turkey by communicating ideas to Turkish society that contradict the state history, and attempting to "start a dialogue" and move to "a new post-nationalist Turkish historiography" (2007, 339).

Taner Akcam, in writing about the scholarship on this issue, makes an excellent point when he draws connections beyond mere policy and scholarship, but points to broader societal misconceptions between Turks and Armenians. In Turkey, a distinction must be drawn between the collective memory of Turkish society, and the state policy of denial (Akcam, 2004, 229). Thus, the debate in the literature is not simply one revolving around history, but relates directly to contemporary problems in relations between Turks and Armenians, and modern perceptions both groups have of one another (Ibid). In discussions of the Genocide, Akcam notes, there is no communication as individuals—Turks and Armenians discuss the events as if they are not a historical event that occurred almost a hundred years ago, but rather an ongoing process which somehow precludes the possibility of relating to one another as individuals (Ibid, 246). This leads to the issue of why exactly this is, which has been less extensively explored in the literature.

Outside of the debate over historiography, literature on Armenian genocide centres on the impact of the genocide in identity formation in the Armenian diaspora. Indeed, this fact is underscored by Razmik Pannosian, when he states with particular

reference to the diaspora that "it is impossible to understand 20th century Armenian identity ... without situating the genocide at its very core" (2002, 136). Scholarship on post-Soviet Armenia and its development exists, though it deals mainly with democratisation and the conflict with neighbouring Azerbaijan. International organisations such as the OSCE have released reports on the state of relations between Armenia and Turkey, though scholarly attention has been minimal.

A Yerevan-based think tank—the Caucasus Institute—is one of the few sources of scholarly research on Turkish-Armenian relations, particularly in the context of normalisation and the Protocols. Even here, however, the focus of their work has been limited to elite level views and interactions between high-ranking government officials and diaspora groups. Alexander Iskandaryan (Director of the Caucasus Institute) and Sergey Minasyan, when discussing obstacles to Armenian-Turkish relations reference the impact of the diaspora, stating that it follows the trend established in the political activism of other diasporas in their kin-states, mainly as a radicalising factor (2010, 20). In Armenian foreign policy towards Turkey, then, the genocide is seen as the defining factor influencing relations (Goshgarian, 2004, 54). While this is referenced in passing in much of the literature on the subject of Armenian politics, it is never directly addressed and analysed as a decisive issue in Armenian identity that has important implications for Armenian politics.

The other side of this is the literature on Turkey, and Turkish identity deals peripherally with the Armenian Genocide. Obviously, those sources dealing with the issue are, as a general rule, not written by Turks. The key issue here is that Turkish nationalism in the literature is articulated in the twilight of the Ottoman Empire, often

connected to ideas of pan-Turanism. The modern State of Turkey is founded in many ways in a similar fashion as that of the first French republic: a secular state, based on a single identity (Ergil, 2000, 123). In this conception of the state, national minorities, both past and present, had little presence. Thus, the Turkish state was established by denying its own social reality—that of a multi-ethnic state comprising not just Turks, but Alevis and Kurds among others (Ibid, 124)— but also the historical reality of the ethnic cleansing and genocide which had removed many Christian minorities during World War I (Akcam, 231). A key theme in the literature on Turkish identity surrounds the so-called "Sevres Syndrome" which explains in some ways the mistrust and insecurity that characterises Turkish identity. Relating to the Treaty of Sevres in 1921, this frame of mind relates to the fear of a partition and carving up of Anatolia at the hands of the victorious Great Powers following World War I.

Section 1.3: Importance

The implications of understanding these controversies and difficulties have relevance not just for the Armenian-Turkish case, but for many states whose bilateral relations are poisoned by unresolved historical grievances around the world, from China and Japan, to India and Pakistan, and Israel and Palestine. By offering the victims of mass suffering a sense of historical justice and reconciliation, we can remove the potential for future conflict and promote regional stability (Michalski, 2007, 498). Through a better understanding of how complex historical factors and the collective memory of these events influences both national identity and relations between states, we can potentially

arrive at new and innovative solutions to long-lasting conflicts and promote regional stability and reconciliation based on mutual understanding and trust.

Section 1.4: Research Question and Aims

The aims of the project are two-fold. The first is to establish the salience and importance of the Armenian Genocide within the Republic of Armenia and Armenian identity. While much study has been done on the relevance of the Armenian Genocide for the diaspora, which in large part was formed as a result of this event, there is comparatively little study done on the genocide *within* Armenia itself. It is difficult to understand the complexities of Armenian-Turkish relations without a consideration of how these events impact Turkish national identity as well. To that end, consideration will also be given to Turkish national identity, to the extent that it has been impacted by the Armenian Genocide. The second aim of this project is to examine how and why the issue of the Genocide manifests itself in the foreign relations of both Armenia and Turkey, and is the dominant factor in their bilateral relations. As mentioned before, there are numerous reasons for both states to move beyond historical grievances and attempt reconciliation for the future benefit of both states, as well as the south Caucasus region generally.

Thus, the primary research question of this project is *why does the Armenian Genocide occupy such a central position in Armenian-Turkish relations*? Collective memory of this event has an important impact on identity formation in both states. Importantly, however, the collective memories of Turks and of Armenians on the "events of 1915" are different, though play a key role in the identity of both groups. What factors

facilitate the emergence and salience of this memory? In an effort to address this question, the project will look at two levels of society to determine where the dialogue of genocide is strongest. The first is at the grassroots domestic level, in the media and the opinions of ordinary Armenians and Turks. In this area in particular there is comparatively little research done. The second level to be considered will be the elite level. It will look at how the genocide is treated in both government policy as well as statements by government officials, and the way in which it has manifested historically in Armenian-Turkish relations, from both a Turkish and Armenian perspective, since Armenia's independence in 1991. By considering both of these levels, I will clarify whether the Armenian Genocide is a factor in relations between Turkey because of pressure from society and a deep resonance of the issue for Armenians and Turks, or if it is simply a memory framed by elites and mobilised for political gain.

Section 1.5: Theoretical Underpinnings

Questions of identity and perception are ideally suited to a constructivist frame of analysis. In understanding identity formation and perception among actors (in this case Armenians and Turks) constructivism offers the best framework for this analysis, and compliments the literature on collective memory very well.

At its most basic, constructivism posits that the world is socially constructed, and that actors shape this world by creating shared intersubjective meanings (such as culture, norms, and common understandings) through their interaction in a community. In turn, they receive their identities from these interactions (Green, 2002, 47). In this sense, constructivism differs fundamentally from realist and liberal IR approaches which are

much more focused on material factors and the physical world. The focus here is on norms and ideational factors, and the intersubjectivity of their meanings. From this we derive four general principles of constructivism, as pointed out by John Hobson: The primacy of ideational factors, the fact that agents are derived from identity construction, which is in turn constituted in the course of social interaction, that communicative action and moral norms specify "appropriate behaviour" and finally, the importance of historical international change (Langenbacher, 2010, 47). None of these factors are exogenous, then, or primordial. They are constantly changing and shifting based on the attitudes and interactions of the actors which constitute the "system" or "structure".

Identity and identity formation are in large part based in history and memory. National history is often written as a narrative of suffering and victories (Frank & Halder, 2011, 2). Within different societies, historical events serve as the focal points for the reproduction of collective representations which shape the contemporary understanding of their own identity and the relationship to the past (Roudometof, 2002). The interpretation of these histories, however, are not uniform, particularly as the territorialisation of nations and nationalisation of territories throughout the last two-hundred years has resulted in overlapping claims—a one of the key problems in Turkish-Armenian relations. Disputed territories producing overlapping histories can produce long surviving conflicts, especially when this results in conflicting historiographies (Frank & Halder, 12). For Armenians, this historiography involves a particular colouring of the Turk and the fate of "Western Armenia" (now Eastern Turkey) during the early twentieth century. Turkish historiography, as we will see, in large part draws upon a

"tabula rasa", starting in 1923. The key role of the Armenian Genocide and the twilight of the Ottoman Empire for both groups will be extensively explored later.

Collective memory as a defining factor in many cases, as in the Armenian case, often comes from a traumatic event. An event becomes a 'collective trauma' when it appears to threaten or seriously invalidate one's usual assessment of the social reality—integration of the event into the orderliness of daily life is problematic (Neal, 2005, 7). Two types of trauma can be differentiated: an acute crisis which causes a sudden and dramatic disruption. The second is a chronic, more long-lasting trauma (Ibid). In the Armenian case, we can note both types of these trauma present in the national memory. The first would be the actual event of the Armenian genocide in 1915. The second, more chronic type could be seen in Turkish denial and the impact this has had on the Armenian psyche, in the diaspora and in the homeland. The potential for this interpretation is present in the old Armenian saying "to have the genocide denied is to die twice", reflecting the continued national trauma that Armenians feel through denial of the genocide and their suffering.

These collective memories of a traumatic event go on to play a constitutive element in national identity and impact the process of identity formation thereafter, as was the case with the Jews and Israel, and with the Armenians and Armenia. The memory of these events forms an integral part of a nation's cultural heritage and traditions, and has an important impact on how it self-identifies and relates to others (Roudometof, 7). This memory is expressed through a variety of mediums—from holidays and press articles, to monuments, art, and various other visual mediums. In many ways, however, these physical manifestations of the memory, and indeed the

collective memory generally, are dependent upon and framed by the current political regime and its agenda. Not only do these issues matter for Armenia, but Turkey in particular historically has had an elite which plays a very prominent role in creating the collective memory of the nation.

The objectivity of the collective memory here seems to be a red herring—collective memory is continuously in flux. Its establishment and understanding requires negotiating between the available historical records, which can often be in dispute or open to various interpretations, as we will see with the record on the Armenian genocide, and the current social and political agenda (Zerubavel, 5). This difference in collective memories is further complicated by the fact that the discourse around the history is not settled—Armenians and Turks have seemingly established two completely separate and unrelated histories, as though scholars on each side and politicians are writing about and discussing completely separate events (Libaridian, 2004, 184). What is seen by Armenians as a memory of victimisation is framed by Turks in terms of the national liberation. At the same time, Turks also see themselves in the period of the Genocide as victimised at the hands of interventionist Great Powers such as Russia and Great Britain.

Section 1.6: Methodology

In terms of methodology, this project will utilise a variety of approaches. Secondary sources included an extensive literature revolving around the debate on the Armenian Genocide, as well as identity formation in both states will be consulted. For chapter two, this will comprise the main method of analysis, as well as utilising some primary documents relating to the historical events of 1915. Chapter three will utilise

secondary sources as well as an examination of government releases and speeches by officials such as the President of Armenia, the Prime Minister of Turkey and the Foreign Ministers of each country. Research on public opinion and societal attitudes in Armenia towards the issue of the genocide is rather sparse. Groups such as the Armenian Sociological Institute and the International Republican Institute have published some data on Armenian public opinion and attitudes towards the Genocide, which will be examined in Chapter Four.

Thus, the fourth chapters which deal with these issues of public opinion at a grass-roots level will rely on content analysis and some survey work done in the Republic of Armenia to probe the extent to which memory of the Genocide occupies as salient a place in contemporary Armenian society *within* Armenia, as it does in the Diaspora. Consultation with secondary sources as well as some media on the Turkish side such as the prominent *Hurriyet* online newspaper, as well as *Today's Zaman*, a more left-wing and controversial media outlet, will also assist in illustrating the Turkish perspective on the issues to be addressed. In order to test attitudes towards the 2009 Protocols, content analysis of the Armenian Russian-language newspaper *Golos Armenii* was undertaken to examine the attitudes towards the Protocols expressed in the media, and the concerns in Armenian society about the process. An important part of this chapter is an analysis of survey work done in Yerevan in the summer of 2012, aimed at examining the salience of the Genocide memory in Armenian society, as well as how this is connected to the idea of normalising with Turkey. In order to make up for the lack of concrete data on Turkish attitudes towards the Armenian question, an analysis of reactions to key events which

have raised the profile of the Armenian question in Turkey will be undertaken in order to probe attitudes.

Section 1.7: Outline of Project

Chapter One will consist of the historical background and context of Armenian-Turkish relations. It will consider the history of the Armenians within the Ottoman Empire, and Armenian-Turkish relations from the late-19th century up until the First World War. The rise of the Young Turk movement and its relevance to the Armenians of the empire and events such as the Hamidian Massacres of 1894-96, the Adana Massacres of 1909 will be examined. As well, the oscillation between Ottomanism and Turkish nationalism by the Young Turk regime will be taken into account, and its effect on attitudes towards the Armenians by the Empire. The second part of this chapter will cover the Armenian Genocide. It will present the events of 1915-22 from the Armenian perspective as well as a Turkish perspective, in an attempt to illustrate the differences in the collective memory of these events that has been created by historians and nationalist groups in both states.

The second part of chapter two will be an evaluation of Armenian and Turkish national identity. The first part will cover the theoretical perspectives on national identity and historical memory, and how the two impact one another. The second part of the chapter will consist of an empirical examination of the identities of both Turks and Armenians. The foundational elements of their nationalisms will be considered, before turning to identity formation in both groups in relation to the Armenian genocide. It will address the role that the genocide plays in identity formation for Armenians, while at the

same time examining the foundational myths of the modern Turkish republic and Kemalism and how the genocide claim is a threat to the Turkish national identity and the foundational myths of the Modern Turkey. This chapter will address the important issues of the role of the genocide in the *formation* of the national identity and national myths of both Armenians as well as Turks. While Turks and Armenians both relate to the memory of the genocide as a key feature of their identities, the key difference is in the memory of these events.

The third chapter will consider the elite role in framing the memory of the Armenian Genocide. Often issues of memory and identity are seen as top-down processes, where educated or powerful elites play a key role in shaping how events and identity are perceived by everyday people. In Armenia and Turkey especially, the elite level warrants special attentions, particularly because we are examining bilateral ties between the two countries. By default, interaction at this level will be dominated by political elites. The changing political circumstances and the post-Cold War will serve to contextualise the regional situation in which Turkish-Armenian relations were to develop. In this chapter, particular attention will be paid to Armenia and *changes* in the elites from the Levon Ter-Petrossyan government in the 1990s, which was much more open to negotiations with Turkey, and later governments under Robert Kocharyan and Serzh Sargysyan which placed a much stronger emphasis on preconditions, particularly genocide recognition—before normalising ties with Turkey. The reasons for this change in policy after the 1990s and why the genocide suddenly came to dominate relations between the two groups will be addressed. As well, the liberalisation of Turkey, the rise of the Justice and Development Party, and challenges to Kemalism will explain the

changes which also occurred in Turkey, and set the stage for rapprochement in 2009. The content of presidential speeches, and official releases and statements from government members and bodies will be examined to see how exactly elites are framing these issues.

Secondly, it is important to consider the Turkish state's policy towards the Armenian Question. Thus, a segment of this chapter will consist of an evaluation of the history and nature of Turkey's policy of denial of the genocide and how the issue of the Armenian Genocide and Genocide recognition is treated by Turkish public officials in state discourse, both within Turkey and in its foreign policy. There are two outside factors which impact domestic policy in Armenia, particularly with respect to attitudes and policies related to genocide and genocide recognition. The first of these is the Armenian diaspora, whose influence and presence in the some state through political as well as philanthropic organisations is substantial and fairly well discussed and addressed in existing literature. In many ways, however, one may see Armenian reactions and interpretations of the past are very much related to these same actions by the Republic of Turkey. There is an element of reaction to Turkish official statements in Armenia's positions towards the genocide issue, particular as relates to the 2009 Protocol. In as much as Turkish denial fuels the debates around the genocide (Akcam, 250) it is important to consider the nature of the cycle of denial and counter-reaction.

Chapter four will be an examination of the genocide issue from a new perspective. While the diaspora influence as well as elite level theories have all been explored in previous academic work, there is one field that has remained relatively unexplored with respect to the Armenian Genocide—the grassroots perspective. Do Armenians in their everyday lives live with the memory and burden of the genocide in the same way that the

diaspora, which is largely a product of the genocide, does? How do Armenians perceive the genocide, and does this colour their perception of and attitude towards relations with their Turkish neighbours? In order to answer these questions, I will utilise a variety of data. First, I will examine the reactions surrounding the Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission, the first unofficial attempt to foster ties between the two peoples. Next, data gathered by various groups in Armenia in the early 2000s on the question of the Genocide in Armenia, and the political priorities and concerns of Armenian voters will be considered. This will help clarify attitudes towards Turkish relations and establish that there is a history of mistrust and suspicion in Armenian society towards Turkey, relating to the Genocide. The second part of this chapter will focus on the period surrounding the 2009 Protocols and beyond. Content analysis of Armenian newspapers and media, specifically the thrice-weekly *Golos Armenii* was selected. Each issue from the year 2009, during which the Protocols were being negotiated, was examined. In particular, references to both the Armenian genocide and to Armenian-Turkish relations were sought. The expectation would be that the discourse on these issues, as well as various op-ed pieces submitted to the paper, would give an insight into the grassroots perspective of Armenian-Turkish relations and the relevance of the genocide in that relationship.

Secondly, an examination of a small survey done in Yerevan in the Republic of Armenia in the summer of 2012 will be done. The questions the survey probed were again related to the genocide and attitudes towards it, as well as how frequently it appeared as an issue in everyday life, from memorialising the event, to visits to the Tsitsernakaberd genocide memorial in Yerevan. Through these methods I hope to gain a greater understanding of the salience and importance of the Armenian genocide for

everyday Armenians. Finally, an examination of events in Turkish civil society, such as the academic conference in Istanbul on the Armenian question, as well as the "I apologise" campaign and reactions to these efforts will give insight into Turkish opinions on the Armenian question in Turkey.

The fifth and final chapter will conclude my analysis by drawing together the concepts addressed in the previous two chapters, comparing the elite versus grass roots factors. It will seek to answer the broader question of whether the importance of the genocide is an elite phenomenon with little everyday relevance for Armenians, or whether the issues of genocide and the collective memory of the event permeate Armenian society generally, and the prominence of this issue in relations with Turkey is a result of elites reacting the broader trends within Armenian society. It will conclude be considering the importance of apology and acknowledgement in the Turkish-Armenian relations and the increasing prominence of such "official apologies" in international relations. The final part of this section will attempt to address the broader implications of the conclusions of this project for understanding identity formation and collective memory in the context of Armenian-Turkish relations.

Chapter Two: History and National Identity

The conflict between Armenians and Turks finds its roots first and foremost in history, namely the period around the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries during the waning years of the Ottoman Empire. Armenian-Turkish relations, however, go back much further and it is important to consider the pre-1915 history of these peoples. It should be noted that I am equating "Turkish" with "Ottoman" in the pre-1924 period, before the Caliphate was dissolved by Turkish nationalist forces, and will be using the two terms interchangeably from here on.

For both Armenians and Turks, Anatolia is seen as the cradle of their civilisations, an idea which conveys some primordial attachment to the land and a natural right to rule it. National histories, always seeking to validate their unique claim to the land, often overlap, in terms of geography as well as in the events they cover. In these circumstances, what is seen as a major victory for one nation must obviously come at the expense of another national group, for whom the event will be inevitably seen as a national tragedy (Frank & Halder, 3). The importance of this tension can result in drastically different interpretations of similar events, as is the case of histories of the late-Ottoman period, particularly with regard to what would become known as "The Armenian Question". These long-term competing historical memories can lead to inter-ethnic or local conflicts which play an important part in modern politics (Ibid, 12).

In both Armenian and Turkish historiography, there is a key theme of victimisation. Though the Armenian victimhood is much more entrenched and goes back further than that of the Turks, this sense of victimhood through which Turkish

nationalism emerged in the early twentieth century should not be underestimated. As scholars have pointed out, "peoples who believe themselves to be victims of aggression have an understandable incapacity to believe that they also committed atrocities" (Chirwa, 1997, 481). Indeed, collective memory as a concept largely came out of a need to remember traumatic events which marked the twentieth century (Weedon & Jordan, 2012, 144). More than just a method of remembrance, it can constitute a key aspect of identity formation and act as a "battleground" of sorts between competing discourses—"they offer a useful way of thinking the relationship between groups and specific articulations of the part that inform the cultural politics of the present" (Ibid, 146). When the collective memory that is being discussed—in this case that of the Armenian Genocide—is so integral to the national identities of both the major groups involved, the stakes become much higher and the politicisation of history dominates relations between the two, as we see in the Republic of Armenia and the Turkish republic.

Section 2.2 The Ottoman Empire and Modernisation

While the history of the Armenian Genocide and the two competing narratives of this event is integral to the broader question of what role this plays in national identity for Turks and Armenians, as well as why it is still such an important factor in the relations between Turkey and Armenia, some background information on the communal history of Turks and Armenians within the Ottoman Empire prior to the developments of the late-nineteenth century is important.

Emerging from Seljuk Turkic tribes in Central Asia, in the eleventh century, the Ottoman Empire was for four centuries the dominant power in the Caucasus, Middle

East, North Africa, and much of South-Eastern Europe. Given the ethnic and religious heterogeneity of the Empire, and the fact that its Sunni-Muslim Turkish rulers did not constitute a majority, Ottoman state and society were uniquely organised. Ethnicity as such was not recognised in the early Ottoman Empire—its subjects were divided based upon membership of a particular religious community. Thus, Muslims constituted one group, Jews another, as well as two recognised Christian "millets"—the Greek Orthodox and Armenian Apostolic (Kia, 2008, 2). As a theocratic Muslim state ruled as an Islamic Caliphate under Sharia law, non-Muslim groups were categorised as *dhimmi*—protected peoples of the book under the Sultan, but inferior to Muslims in all aspects of the law, unable to bear arms or serve in the military. Despite this second-class status, many Christian peoples managed to flourish within the Ottoman Empire, and some Armenians in particular became a wealthy merchant class.

Extensive decentralisation and failed modernisation combined with the threat from European imperialism (namely from Habsburg Austria and Tsarist Russia) steadily eroded Ottoman holdings, starting in the mid-eighteenth century (Hanioglu, 2008, 7-8). Centrifugal forces within the Empire, extensively resisting administrative reforms aimed at centralising and restructuring the Empire, contributed to the problems of the Empire. More than any of these, however, the emergence of modern European nationalism, primarily among the Empire's Christian subjects, would dominate Ottoman affairs for much of the nineteenth century, until its end in 1924 (Ibid, 51). The rise of nationalism and attempts by the Empire to reassert control over its internal affairs were met with increasing resistance by the European powers. Starting with the Greek rebellion in 1821, public opinion in Europe began to swing in favour of protecting the rights of the

Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire (Ibid, 69). The internationalisation of rebellions against Ottoman rule would become a common theme in the nationalist movements within the Sultan's realms.

For much of the mid-nineteenth century, Ottoman affairs would be dominated by attempts by elites to modernise along European lines, and resistance by the Muslims masses and religious elites who opposed measures promoting equal rights for all the Empires subjects, regardless of religion and favoured continued Muslim supremacy (Ibid, 75). The *Tanzimat* (meaning reform, or reorganisation) period, as it was known, came to an end in 1876 with the rise of the Young Ottoman movement and the first Ottoman constitution. In reaction to the major territorial losses in the Christian parts of the Empire over the preceding century, as well as a rejection of the secular nature of *Tanzimat*, the Young Ottomans emphasised a pan-Islamic approach in their modernisation reforms (Kia, 132-133). This period, lasting from the first Ottoman constitution in 1876, to 1909, was overseen by Sultan Abdul-Hamid II. It also marks the beginning of the "Armenian Question" and the persecution of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire.

Section 2.3: The Emergence of the Armenian Question

The Armenian Question came to be an important factor in Russo-Ottoman relations. It is important to note here the territorial division of the land that was known as Armenia in the 19th century. Western Armenia had been under Turkish rule since the seventeenth century, and Eastern Armenia, which fell under the Persian Empire, and later in 1828 the Russian Empire following the Treaty of Turkmen-Chai (Walker, 1990, 37, 57). Soon after, however, Russian designs in the Caucasus would shift to Ottoman lands

in Eastern Anatolia (or Western Armenia). In 1878, following the Russian victory in Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, the regions of Kars and Ardaham, with significant Armenian populations, came under Russian rule (Hanioglu, 121). As well, special provisions were given for reforms favouring and protecting the Armenians the six reorganised Armenian *vilayets* (provinces) of the Ottoman Empire—Van, Bitlis, Diyarbakir, Erzurum, Sivas, and Mamuret-ul-Aziz or Kharput (Walker, 122).

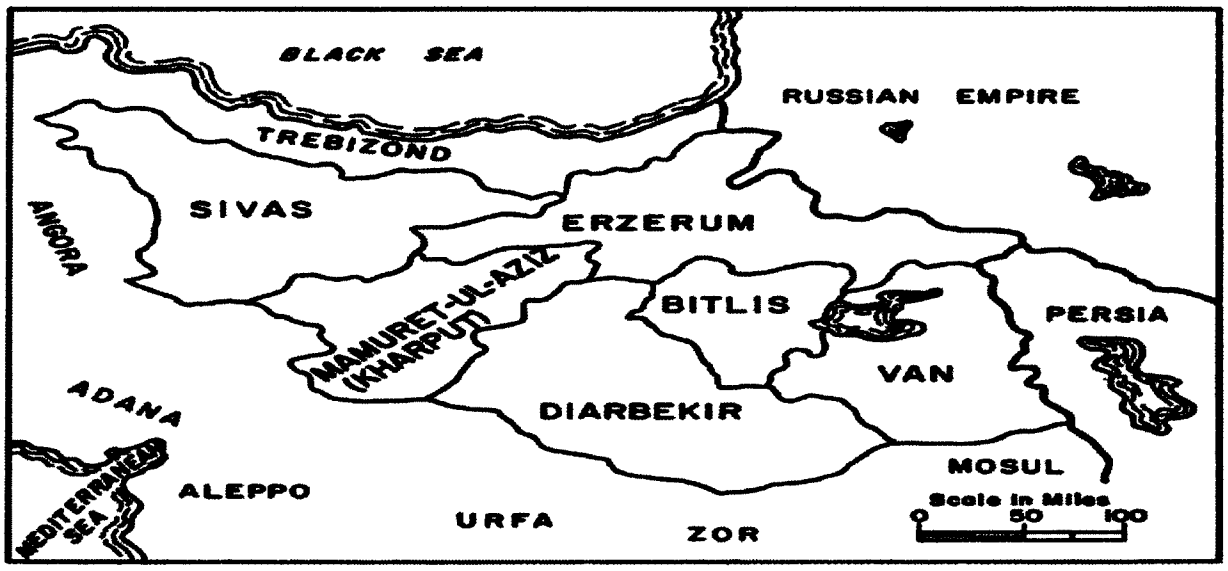

Figure 2.1: The Six Armenian Vilayets of the Ottoman Empire. Source: *Armenia on the Road to Indepndence: 1918,* 1967, University of California Press, pp. 35

The Congress of Berlin thus marked a definitive internationalisation of the Armenian Question and a marked feeling of Russophobia in Ottoman Empire, particularly regarding its intervention in the Empire's internal affairs on behalf of the Armenians.

Despite these promises of reform none were carried out and the experience of Armenians in the Empire actually worsened. In response to their plight, Armenian intellectuals and others began organising political and revolutionary organisations aimed at gaining autonomy or independence within the Ottoman Empire. These groups for the

most part proliferated across the border in Russian Armenia. Interestingly, though these Armenians suffered similar (though less harsh and violent) repression under the Tsar, their agitation was aimed exclusively at the Ottoman Empire (Ibid, 68). The political activities of Armenian revolutionary groups inevitably permeated the Ottoman-Russian border. Influenced by Socialist-Revolutionary thought prominent in Western Europe at the time, a group of Russian Armenians formed the first Armenian political party—the Hnchaks in 1887 (Walker, 129). In 1891, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaktsutsyun) was formed, though on decidedly more nationalist policy agenda than the Hnchaks (Ibid, 131). The Hnchaks drew much of their ideological foundation from populist, Marxist parties in Russia. An ideologically orthodox group, their aims were liberation through revolution against the Ottoman state, and the eventual establishment of an independent socialist state (Hovannisian, 2004, 214). The Dashnaks were a much more pragmatic party, drawing on Balkan and other nationalist movements. Initially aiming for reform of the Armenian provinces *within* the Empire, the Dashnaks and Hnchaks clashed frequently, especially following the Young Turk Revolution of 1908. While the Dashnaks viewed the CUP as a potential partner for reform and cooperated with them (until 1915), the Hnchaks were much more cautious and critical of this nationalist Turkish group (Libaridian, 2011, 93). These differences would play out in the First Armenian Republic and beyond. Both parties persist to the current day, as do the ideological divisions between them, most clearly seen in the Diaspora, and attitudes towards the Armenian SSR.

Section 2.4: Radicalisation and Pre-1915 Massacres of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire

The development of Pan-Islamism and strict authoritarianism under Abdul-Hamid II and the emergence of Armenian nationalism, were to have a decisive impact on Turkish (or more broadly, Muslim)-Armenian relations. It is also at this point, I would argue, where the collective memories of Armenians and Turks begin to radically diverge, mainly over the role and relation of the events of the period from roughly 1894-1914 to the Armenian Genocide. The period would be marked by a cycle outlined by Walker which, while lengthy, is worth quoting here:

> an empire rules part of its dominion by injustice, corruption, and terror; the downtrodden people, emerging into political awareness, begin to ask for improvements. Nothing is done; political organisations spring up, and as nothing is still done, they become terrorist. The empire then reacts violently, believing that it can destroy the challenge by destroying the people themselves, or whittling them down until only a cowed remnant is left (172)

As we have seen, unmet political aspirations following the Treaty of Berlin led to the formation of the ARF and Hnchak political parties. Throughout the 1890s they became increasingly desperate to either pressure domestic reforms by the Sultan or attract the attention of the Great powers for intervention, most notably Britain which under the Berlin treaty had assumed special responsibility for the Armenians (Ibid, 124).

Provocative acts by Armenian revolutionaries against the Sultan's autocratic regime led to increasingly harsh repressions. These culminated in what have come to be

known as the "Hamidian Massacres". Repressive taxation measures and attacks by roving bands of Kurdish irregulars (known as the *Hamidiye*) against Armenian peasants, and state inaction to stop such attacks, led to Armenians in the region of Sassoun in 1894 to organise in defense of their communities. In the summer of that year thousands of Armenians were murdered by *Hamidiye* cavalry units on orders of the Sultan. Massacres would follow in various other Armenian regions (Kia, 145). In 1895-96, the historically autonomous Armenian Zeitun region was targeted by the Sultan—Hnchak revolutionaries organised a defense of the town, bringing mediation by the Great powers. It was these revolutionary moves and the massacres they provoked which would call into question the tactics of the Hnchaks, and lead to the increasingly political power of the Dashnaks within the Ottoman Armenian community.

Similarly in June of 1896 the Armenian community of Van in response to raids by *Hamidiye* and Turkish forces rebelled against the Sultan who sent the army against them. Great Power mediation resulted in the escort of the defenders to the Persian border, where they were massacred by the Ottoman Army (Dadrian, 1995, 127, 131-137). The total number of Armenians killed during these two years varies, but is generally agreed estimates have varied been between 80,000 and 300,000 (Akcam, 2006, 42). Despite great public sympathy for the Armenians in Europe and Great Power involvement in mediating in Zeitun and Van, no substantial action was taken, as in Bulgaria in 1876. These uprisings have been categorised by some as tactical attempts to gain Western intervention on behalf of the Armenians, known as the "provocation thesis" which will be explored later. Libaridian disputes this, arguing the turn to armed violence in various forms, from rebellion to terrorism and assassination (including an attempt on the life of

Abdul-Hamid II himself in 1906 by the Dashnaks) was more an act of desperation that a coherent strategy which the revolutionary parties pursued (2011, 100-101). Nevertheless, these attempts to assert political rights and gain protection from external actors would come to be seen by many as examples of the "disloyalty" of the Armenian community, a major motivating factor behind justifications of the decisions which would follow in 1915.

Section 2.5: The Committee of Union and Progress and the Birth of Turkish Nationalism

It was not only the Armenian community, however, which had grievances against the despotic rule of Sultan Abdul-Hamid II. The suspension of the constitution in 1878 after only two years was an unpopular move for reformers. Consequently, Turkish underground organisations against the autocratic Sultan sprung up alongside Armenian ones. Led by the Young Turk movement, several oppositional groups were brought together under the umbrella of the "Committee of Union and Progress" united in their opposition to the rule of Abdul-Hamid, and desire for a parliamentary regime with a constitution, based on rule of law (Altunisik & Tur, 2005, 7). Following the Macedonian Crisis in 1908, led by a group of disgruntled army officers, the Young Turks seized power in a bloodless coup, and forced the Sultan to restore the constitution. They were hopeful that the restoration of a more "liberal" regime would gain support for the territorial integrity of the Empire among European powers—indeed, this was a key part of their goal of preserving the unity of the Ottoman state (Kia, 138). This was a difficult aim to achieve in the face of the religious and ethnic diversity of a state with an institutionalised *millet* system.

An attempt was made to shift towards civic "Ottomanism" and to bind different nationalities and religious groups to the state on the basis of universal Ottoman citizenship, as well as standardise the use of the Turkish language (Akcam, 2004, 128). There were, however, divisions within the Young Turk movement. Debates between decentralising federalists who favoured autonomous rights for national and religious minorities on one hand, and centralising nationalists who more and more were under the sway of emergent Turkish nationalist sentiment, were manifesting (Lewis, 2002, 213). For the nationalists, a decentralised state catering to minority demands would destroy the unity of the already truncated Ottoman state they sought to preserve. By the same token, however, Armenians and other Christian minorities, while initially supportive of the Constitutional Revolution, would find little to attract them to an Ottoman federation given the proliferation of separatist nationalism among these groups (Ibid, 202). Turkish sociologist Zia Gokalp would play an important role in promoting Turkish nationalism. For Gokalp, the Turkish nation of the future would be comprised of Turkish speaking Muslims—non Muslim minorities such as Armenians, Jews, and Christians would be Turks in citizenship, but not nationality. Kurds would be assimilated into the Turkish nation (Walker, 190). Gokalp believed that Ottomanism had done more harm than good for the Ottoman Empire and it was a mistake to try to promote full equality (Akcam, 2004, 138).

Events outside the Empire would provide the definitive answers to this debate. Shortly after the revolution, Crete declared its union with Greece, Bulgaria declared independence, and Bosnia was annexed by Austria-Hungary. Ottomanism had clearly failed, and attempts at universal citizenship rights had done little to attract the Christian

population of the Empire. From 1909 onward, a secularist and Turkish stream of thought would clearly dominate the Young Turk regime (Worringer, 2004, 216). In April 1909, Islamist forces opposed to the centralising and secularising Young Turk regime staged a counter-coup aimed at restoring the Sultan to power which failed (Lewis, 216). This period of governmental upheaval sparked off yet another round of anti-Armenian pogroms, though in the province of Adana, far from the political rumblings in the capital of Istanbul. Between 15,000 and 20,000 Armenians were killed in this latest round of massacres (Akcam, 2006, 69-70).

Ultimately, there was a fundamental contradiction in the CUP platform—it could not reconcile the differences between the Turkish core and the non-Turkish peoples of the Empire for whom Turkish nationalism (as the ideologically incoherent concept of Ottomanism had quickly become) had little appeal (Hanioglu, 161, 166). The final nail in the coffin of the Ottomanists was the disastrous outcome of the 1912-1913 Balkan Wars for the Empire which saw it defeated by its former subjects, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Greece. Reduced to a sliver of territory on the other side of the Bosporus and inundated with Muslim refugees who faced atrocities at the hands of victorious Christian armies, the geographic focus of the Empire was forever turned from Europe (Ibid, 173). Forced to look eastward for a new, Anatolian heartland, the CUP more than ever became dominated by Turkish nationalism aimed at preserving the unity of the remnants of an empire which once spanned three continents. The coming European war would thus take on a zero-sum character for the debate between Turks and Armenians over a homeland in Anatolia (Findley, 2010, 211).

Section 2.6: The Second Phase of CUP Leadership, World War I, and the Escalation of Tensions

Following the events of the Balkan Wars, a military coup d'état in January 1913 overthrew the government and brought the CUP into complete control, forgoing any attempt at democratic legitimacy and maintaining power until 1918. The new government was led by the so-called "three Pashas"—Minister for War Enver Pasha, Minister of the Interior Talaat Pasha, and Minister of the Navy Cemal Pasha (Findley, 2010, 198). It was this regime which would lead the Ottoman Empire it into the First World War, with disastrous consequences for both the Empire as an entity and its Armenian subjects. Again, agitation by Armenian Dashnaks (with Russian support) for reforms of the Armenian *vilayets* roused the suspicions of the CUP of Russian designs on eastern Anatolia (Findley, 205). This agreement would see the six Armenian *vilayets* united into two provinces with administrative centres at Van and Erzurum, under the supervision of two European inspector generals. The object of this attempt was a resolution of the Armenian issues in the eastern part of the Ottoman Empire. For the Young Turk authorities this agreement was seen, perhaps correctly, as the beginnings of an independent Armenian state to be carved out of Anatolia (Akcam, 2012, xviii).

This was the political situation in the Ottoman Empire at the dawn of the First World War. Armenian nationalist forces had secured major concessions to their demands, with the support of the Russian Empire and other Great Powers. The CUP had been thoroughly overtaken by a Turkish nationalism which sought the preservation of the Ottoman heartland at any cost, and was increasingly paranoid about Western attempts to further partition the Empire to the benefit of its non-Turkish, non-Muslim minorities.

While interpretations of the nature of the CUP and causes of the pre-war violence directed against the Armenians are the subject of some debate, it is the events which occurred during the First World War and the following five or so years which have roused the strongest passions, and where the national histories and collective memories of Armenians and Turks most radically diverge. At this point I would like to outline the events of the Armenian Genocide as they occurred, attempting to avoid interpretations of events from either a Turkish or Armenian perspective—that will come later, when addressing the narrative each group has constructed and through which they interpret and remember the events of 1915.

Aware that the Empire would not long survive without the protection of a Great Power, the Ottoman Empire in the year preceding the outbreak of the First World War began seeking an ally among the European Powers. Rebuffed by Austria, as well as Britain and France due to their agreements with Russia, the Ottomans and the Germans came to an agreement. It was this step which led the Ottoman Empire into WWI. In August, a secret treaty was signed between Germany and the Ottoman Empire, guaranteed Ottoman security, but obliging the Empire to declare war on Russia if the latter attacked Germany (Reynolds. 2011, 111). For the Ottomans, the primary theatre of war would be against the Russians. The war would be fought along the only common land border between the two empires—Armenia. For the Ottoman Empire, however, this would not be an easy fight. After the disastrous experience in the Balkan Wars the Ottoman Army was woefully unprepared for a war on several fronts.

Tensions between Muslims and Armenians continued to grow inside Turkish border regions (Ibid, 119). The loyalty of the Empire's Armenian subjects was

understandably in question—would they rise in rebellion in support of the advancing Russian army, which itself contained some Armenian troops? Near the end of December 1914, the Ottoman Third Army went on the offensive against the Russians in Sarikamish. As a result of a drastic change in weather conditions which incapacitated many Turkish soldiers, and a subsequent Russian counter offensive, the Third Army under Enver Pasha was completely routed—not until 1918 with the Russian collapse would the Ottomans be on the offensive in the Caucasus (Ibid, 124-125). The loss in the battle attained mythical proportions in the Ottoman Empire. Though Enver Pasha ostensibly praised the valour and bravery of his Armenian troops, they came to be widely blamed for his defeat, in addition to partisans behind the lines in the Armenian provinces, who were seen as constituting a "fifth column" in support of the advancing Russians (Hovannisian, 2007, 7; Gilbert, 1994, 142). It was this view of the Armenians as a security threat which would play a large role in the radicalisation of CUP policy towards the Armenian community.

Section 2.7: The Security Dilemma and a Policy of Genocide

Following the defeat at Sarikamish, persecutions of the Armenians *en masse* started in earnest. Armenians within the Ottoman military were forcibly disarmed and conscripted into labour battalions where they were worked to death, or just massacred outright (Walker, 2004, 245). In mid-March Armenians from the Mediterranean coast in Cilicia were deported to the West. It was events in Van which, while not necessarily government directed, would prompt the CUP into decisive action against the Ottoman Armenians. Starting April 8th, the governor of Van *vilayet*, Cevdet Pasha, unleashed ill-disciplined irregular soldiers in the villages surrounding the city leading to killings of their Armenian populations. By the 19th, approximately 50,000 Armenians had been

killed (Bloxham, 2011, 266; Gilbert, 142). Armenians militias within the city, who had secretly armed themselves, rose in revolt. Ottoman force besieged the city, but its Armenian defenders held out until May 18th when a Russian Army under General Yudenich relieved them, an event which, it is important to note, was not coordinated.

These events seemed to confirm every suspicion the Young Turks had about the Armenians. They had risen in rebellion against the Empire, and received direct support and assistance by the Russians. Reynolds characterises the cyclical nature of these Ottoman suspicions and Armenian acts of resistance as part of a broader security dilemma in the East. In the conditions of anarchy which characterised the wartime environment, both sides found themselves assuming the worst about the intentions of the other (146). Consequently, actions taken by one side would be interpreted in the most negative possible context. This perception of the Armenians as a deadly threat was exacerbated by external intervention. Likewise, Armenian actions in self defense (as we have seen, they had good reason to fear massacre) were to be seen by the CUP as validating their paranoia.

On April 24th, 1915 the CUP rounded up approximately 250 Armenian religious figures and intellectuals in Istanbul and executed them, thus decapitating the leadership of the Armenian community. News of these events and the massacres in Van reached the Entente Powers, who on May 29th released a joint statement declaring that the Sublime port would be held accountable for "these new crimes of Turkey against Humanity and civilisation" (French Foreign Office, 1915) Following this international indictment, with nothing left to lose, regulation of the deportations and massacres was to come on May 30th with the *Tehcir,* or deportation law (Walker, 2004, 252). This law empowered the

military and other organisations to suppress armed resistance and deport populations suspected of treason or espionage, giving a façade of legality to events already occurring throughout the Empire.

While initially restricted to the borderlands in Eastern Anatolia, by the summer of 1915 the law had been expanded to include all Armenians in the Empire outside of the cities of Istanbul, Edirne, and Izmir, thus losing any claim to "wartime necessity" (Reynolds, 149). Armenians regardless of age or gender were rounded up and deported on foot in massive columns to the deserts of Syria, specifically the areas around Diyarbakir, where they were left to die of exposure or killed in mass graves. While wartime necessity was the stated reason for the deportation of the Armenians, as figure 2.2 illustrates, Armenian populations deep within Western Anatolia far from the fighting were also deported from their homes.

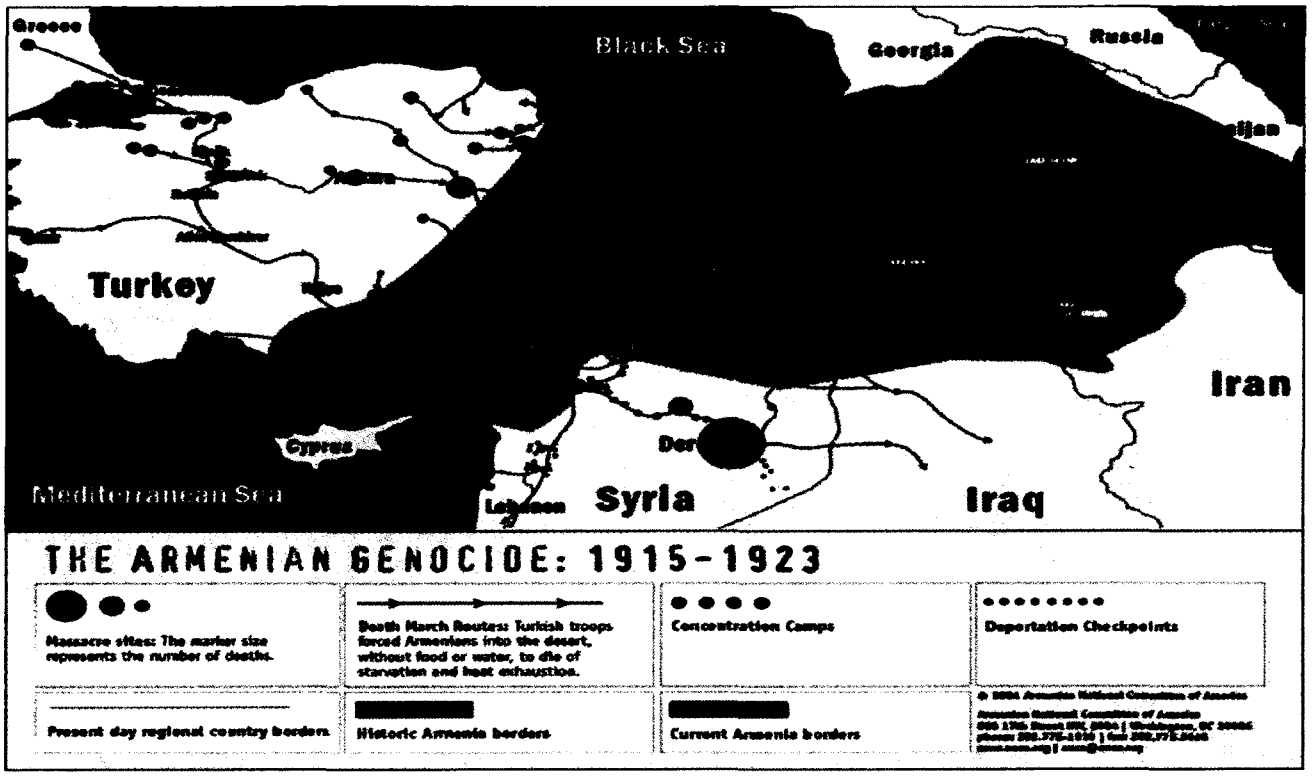

Figure 2.2: Deportation Routes and Sites of Massacres. Source: Armenian National Committee of America. Available online at http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/mapping_armenian_genocide3.php [Accessed 5 May 2013].

Oftentimes these massacres were facilitated or aided by state officials, as well as local tribesman, many of whom were refugees of the Balkan Wars resettled in the region and interested in revenge (Chalian & Ternon, 1983, 36). By the end of the war in 1918, it is estimated that about one million Armenians had been killed throughout the Empire, and more still would fall victim to the inter-state warfare and massacres of 1918-1921 between the first Armenian republic and the Turkish nationalist forces under Attaturk (Melson, 1992, 147).

Section 2.8: The Collapse of the CUP and Turkish War of Independence

In October of 1918, the CUP regime collapsed, and the Sultan had regained power. For various reasons, among them appeasement of the Great Powers and a disdain

for the Young Turks in general, the Sultan commissioned a military tribunal to investigate the excesses and crimes committed during the war under the CUP. A parliamentary committee and Administration's Inquiry Commission came into being in November 1923 with broad investigative powers, and by the end of 1918 had compiled files on 130 suspects, mostly high-ranking members of the CUP (Ibid, 150). The main suspects, among them the three Pashas, as well as other founding CUP members, fled to Odessa in Russia in a German submarine (Umit Ungor, 2011, 300). The principle charges laid against the CUP were its destruction of the Armenian population, as well as the entry of the Ottoman Empire into the war. These trials, however, did not go very far. As Turkish nationalist forces took power throughout the country, these court-marshals were dissolved, their verdicts overturned, and in some cases had their salaries reinstated (Avedian, 2012, 815).

For some scholars there is a degree of continuity between the Young Turks CUP regime and the Kemalist nationalists that would replace them by 1923. This is evident in the "social engineering" as Ungor terms Turkish nationalist actions in Anatolia from 1913-1950 (288), which would continue in Anatolia in the Turkish-Armenian War of 1920. Turkish occupation of much of Armenia in 1918 led to more violence in the course of warfare between the two states (Hovannisian, 2004, 303). An important part of this era is the broader context of the Treaty of Sevres. Signed in August of 1920, it created a sizeable Armenian Republic, Kurdistan, assigned large parts of the Aegean Coast to Greece and divided much of Anatolia into various British, Italian, and French zones of influence (Ibid, 333).

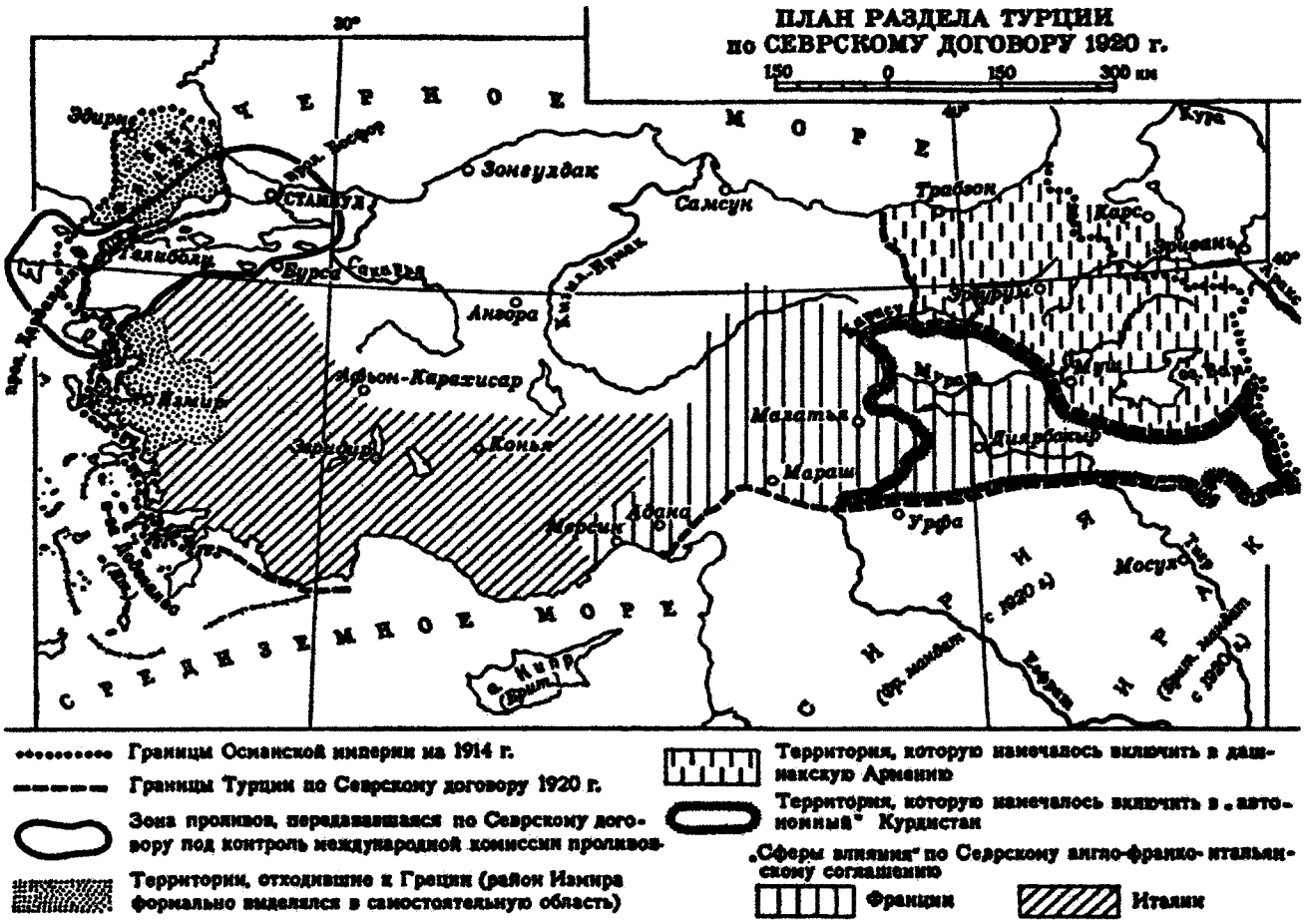

Figure 2.3: Turkey According to the Treaty of Sevres, 1920. The marked area in the top right was assigned to an independent Armenia. Source: Sevrskii Mirnii Dogovor http://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/sie/15734/СЕВРСКИЙ

For Turkish nationalists, intent as we have seen on preserving the integrity of the Empire, this was anathema. The Turkish War of Independence, which followed, rolled back Greek and Armenian gains and invalidated the Treaty of Sevres, replacing it with the Treaty of Lausanne (Gilbert, 530). The borders of the state which emerged from this war in 1924 correspond more or less to the current borders of the Republic of Turkey. Following the population transfers with Greece, as well as the extirpation of other, non-Muslim minorities throughout Anatolia in the course of the war, the state which emerged was much more homogenous.

Section 2.9: The Genocide in Armenian Historiography

The Armenian narrative of the genocide is very similar to the one outlined above, though there are some more contested claims made regarding the motivations and intent of the Young Turk regime. The Genocide emerged during the First World War, but is often seen as a continuation of previous policies under Abdul-Hamid of persecuting Armenians (Hovannisian, 2007, 5). The roots behind these persecutions often take a rather simplistic view of the very complicated state of affairs that led to the Armenian Genocide. Oftentimes, as seen in the works of Vahakn Dadrian (1994, 2007) and Peter Balakian (2004), themes of banal Turkish nationalism, combined with the brutality and exclusivity of Islam are defining features of this narrative. Dadrian points to the "disdain, if not contempt, that multitudes of Turks felt towards them [the Armenians", a contempt which "erupted into hatred and enmity with the advent of the era of the Armenian reforms" (1994, 378). The Ottomans, ahistorically as is pointed out by Beachler, are depicted as uniquely brutal. A stereotype arises in the works of Balakian, then of the innocent Christian and the evil Turk (109). Thus, the Armenians are but passive victims who targeted for elimination by an aggressively and religiously xenophobic Turkish nationalism.

Drawing on this idea of the "innocent Christian" Armenian historiography holds that, as the historically "loyal millet" they largely remained neutral in the coming conflict and the acts of resistance against the central government which did occur were the result of self-defense in the face of repressive measures (Valensi, 2001, 51). Deportation occurred in two stages, from April-June 1915 and winter 1915-1916 led by the three pashas and working through paramilitary organisations. Numbers of Armenian deaths are

often quoted as over one million, with 1.5 million as the most commonly cited number (Ibid). Recent studies included those referenced here by Libaridian and Hovannisian among others have focused on long-term trends and placed the escalating community tensions between Armenians and Turks in their larger context of both domestic events as well as external pressures.

Section 2.10: Turkish Historiography and the "Treacherous Armenians"

Turkish historiography takes a drastically different perspective. As the fact of the massacres is difficult to deny, the Turkish narrative attempts to both reduce the scope and severity of the depredations faced by the Armenians, as well as justify their actions, either as "military necessity" or punitive actions against a treacherous population in wartime. Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, writing about the period of the Armenian Genocide, refers to the obligation of state forces to protect deportees, though some succumbed to exposure, disease and hunger, as well as local bandits (2005, 33). Citing a figure of 600,000 Armenian deaths from various causes, he also states that over 1,000,000 Muslims died during this time, sometimes accounting for 60% of the population of a province, and denies any state conspiracy to eliminate the Armenians (Ibid, 34).

Another common theme in Turkish historiography is to blame the victims. Thus, the Armenian political parties are extensively assigned responsibility for the tragedy which befell the Armenians during the First World War—"It is the political descendants of these Dashnags, who, still today propagate Armenian claims of 'genocide' There can be little doubt that their intent in doing so is partially designed to cover the enormity of

their own crimes against their fellow Armenians" (Izgi, 2001, 20). Valensi points to the obvious and outright holes and blind spots in Turkish narratives, and refers to the "revision" that punctuates these histories, even drawing parallels to Holocaust denial, citing "... the similarity of procedures used in the Turkish arguments to those denying the extermination of the Jews and the existence of the gas chambers during WWII" (53-54). In this sense there is no Turkish narrative as such; it is more a mirror image of the Armenian arguments, refuting them point by point.

Fatma Gocek has written extensively on historiography and the events of 1915. Key for her is the fact that Turkish historiography on the Armenian issue is also heavily influenced by the ideology of Turkish nationalism (2007, 339). Turkish historiography, structured extensively by Mustafa Kemal Attaturk in his "nutuk" speech, thus went to pains to emphasise the suffering of the Turks, while at the same time legitimating what happened to the Armenians (Ibid, 341) The hegemony of Turkish nationalism as well as the centrality of 1915 within the narrative have served to limit the extent to which there is any objective or scholarly debate on the history of Turkey in this period—the only acceptable version of history is the state version. The exclusion of minority experiences from the official history have, according to Gocek, makes it impossible to, empirically and methodologically, to gain any new insights into this key period in the formation of the modern Turkish state (2011, 52).

It is not simply domestic Turkish historiography which is subsumed into this official state narrative. Nazan Maksudyan discusses issues of censorship in Turkish history on the Armenian genocide, but in the context of Turkish language translations of *English* sources. Examining a variety of sources which cover the Armenian Genocide, but

are not written specifically about it, he looks at how these translations are whitewashed in a variety of ways to conform to the Turkish history (2009, 637). Three methods are identified as being utilised by translators: censoring en-masse, euphemistic translations, and denying the author's authority (Ibid, 640-644). Notably, it is not the use of the word "genocide" (as is often claimed by Turkish nationalists) and thus an issue of terminology which often motivates this censorship. Maksudyan notes that the most heavily censored works he looks at do not even use the word genocide. Instead, it is direct references or mention to the act of killing itself, or the victimisation of the Armenians which is silenced (Ibid, 648).

Section 2.11: Situating the Armenian Genocide in Armenian National Consciousness

When attempting to explain the role of the Genocide in Armenian national consciousness, it is important to point out an important distinction: for much of the twentieth century (1921-1988) Armenian national identity was defined by life in the Diaspora. In the Soviet Union, expressions of national consciousness were repressed by the Communist authorities, though the Armenian SSR in 1965 became an unusual exception to this rule.

The last independent Armenian state disappeared in 1375, and Armenians lived under foreign empires—Persian (later Russian) and Ottoman. In these conditions, lacking a state of their own, religion in the form of the Armenian Apostolic Church as well as a unique language with its own alphabet aided in preserving a distinct identity which would serve as the basis for Armenian national consciousness which would emerge in the late

nineteenth century within the Ottoman Empire. It is generally well accepted in scholarly writing that the modern "Armenian nationality", as with most European nationalities, developed in second half of the nineteenth century as the result of the work of intellectuals, writers, and revolutionaries (Panossian, 2002, 122). The fact that the Armenians had their own language, as well as alphabet, went a long way towards preserving their identity, especially in the Ottoman Empire, dominated as it was by variants of the Turkish language (Abrahamian, 2007, 180). The cornerstone of what it meant to be Armenian, however, and something enshrined in the Ottoman legal system, was being a Christian—specifically a member of the Armenian Apostolic Church (Panossian, 126).

National identity, however, is not fixed, but fluid (Ibid, 120). Consequently, to understand twentieth century Armenian national identity, the role of the Genocide is essential. Indeed, the Genocide ought to be placed at the very centre of modern Armenian national identity (Ibid, 136). This notion of victimhood, so important to Armenian identity historically, again became core point of reference in the post-1915 identity. With the complete destruction of the homeland (Western Armenia) and no hope of return, diaspora became a fact of life for Armenians. Political activism by Armenians, and identity politics, came to revolve around reclaiming the homeland and gaining recognition of their suffering by the Turkish Republic (Ibid, 137). More so for Diasporan Armenians than those living in the truncated homeland that Soviet Armenia would become, the genocide was not simply an event in the past—it became a part of daily life.

The Armenian nation in the 20th century came to be comprised of two "poles" as a result of the genocide: the Diaspora and the homeland (Safran, 2007, 35). While there

was an Armenian diaspora in the pre-1915 era, it was intimately connected with the homeland, represented by the core Armenian *vilayets* of the Ottoman Empire. With the destruction of this ancient homeland, and the relative inaccessibility of Soviet Armenia, two distinct Armenian identities began to emerge. In the diaspora, the revolutionary Dashnak and Hnchak parties, since exiled from Soviet Armenia, became the basis for political organisation (Mirak, 2004, 403). They key difference between these two parties, and thus Diasporan political thought, was the attitude towards Soviet Armenia. Non-Dashnaks (mostly Hnchaks and smaller organisations) viewed it as the best possible outcome, and a way to preserve some form of autonomy in the face of a hostile Turkish neighbour. The Dashnaks, the governing party in the pre-Soviet First Armenian Republic were ardently opposed to the Soviet Union. Many came to view the anti-Soviet stance of the Dashnaks as a major contributing factor to the first republic's downfall (Suny, 1993, 130).

Despite these differences of opinion over the homeland, all parties were united in their desire to gain recognition of the Armenian Genocide. Mobilisation in pursuit of the cause of Genocide recognition did not occur until the 1970s. Throughout this period, stories about the villages and cities of Western Armenia had taken on mythical status within the collective memory of the diaspora (Azarian-Ceccato, 2010, 107). At this time, Diasporan Armenian organisations taking cues from groups in the Middle East such as the Palestine Liberation Organisation, most prominent among them the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) and the Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide (JCAG), began a campaign of terror against Turkish diplomats and other officials of the Republic of Turkey.

The aims of these groups were recognition of the genocide by Turkey as well as reparations and land in Eastern Anatolia (Wilkinson, 1983, 346). As these attacks became more indiscriminate, targeting not simply Turkish officials but also third party countries (France, Canada, Switzerland) and those who prosecuted ASALA and JCAG terrorists, support for these groups lessened. Combined with Turkish measures to track down and dismantle these terror cells, their activities lost support they previously enjoyed in the Western Diaspora and dropped off in the early 1990s. At this point political lobbying by diaspora groups for individual state recognition to put pressure on the Turkish government became the preferred method of attracting international attention to the Armenian cause which, prior to the terrorist campaigns against Turkey in the 1970s and 1980s, was largely unknown.

Section 2.12: A Unique Case: Armenian Nationalism in the Armenian SSR and the Armenian Genocide

Interestingly, a separate Armenian national movement developed in Soviet Armenia. Half the population of this truncated Armenian republic (720,000 in 1921) were refugees from the massacres occurring across the border in Turkey (Suny, 2004, 347). Nationalism in the Soviet Union was a taboo topic; outright displays of national sentiment in the constituent republics were suppressed. The policy of *korenisatsiya*, or nativisation or the elites of republics in some ways ran contrary to this policy, however. In the Armenian SSR, devastated and largely agrarian at the time of its incorporation, *korenisatsiya* and subsequent modernisation efforts resulted in an entirely transformed Armenia, much more urban and industrial, with complete adult literacy by 1940 (356).

These changes resulted in an influential intelligentsia very interested in exploring Armenian history.

In some ways, the Soviet Union tolerated, and occasionally encouraged this nationalist sentiment among its Armenian population. Following the Soviet victory in WWII (which saw sixty Armenian generals and four Armenians reach the highest rank of Marshall of the Soviet Union) the buoyed Soviet Union began making territorial claims on Eastern Turkey in Kars and Ardahan (relinquished to Turkey in the Treaty of Kars in 1921), in the name of moral claims of the Armenian SSR to the region (Suny, 1993, 166). While geopolitical concerns associated with the Cold War quickly necessitated the shelving of these claims, it is noteworthy that the Soviet Union would entertain Armenian nationalist notions of irredentism towards Turkey 25 years after the matter was seemingly settled.

By the 1960s, however, new nationalisms began to spring up in the Soviet Union. For Armenia, an increasingly affluent and homogenously *Armenian* republic following the Stalinist period, limits of national expression which challenged the repressive state apparatus became increasingly common. Armenian nationalist movements, unlike those of Georgians at the time, were more tolerable to the Soviet authorities. Chief among reasons for this was the fact that Armenian nationalist sentiment was not anti-Russian or anti-Soviet—it was anti-Turkish (Suny, 1993, 186). The year 1965 would prove a pivotal test of this tolerance. On April 24th, the 50th anniversary of the arresting of Armenian intellectuals in Istanbul (and commemorated unofficially by many in memory of the Armenian Genocide) public officials were having a small gathering to commemorate the Genocide. Outside, a huge crowd of 100,000 people gathered in central Yerevan at the

Opera House demonstrating in favour of official Soviet recognition of the Armenian Genocide and demanding land from Turkey—a public demonstration unprecedented in the Soviet Union (Brodsky, 2003, 120).

The demonstration was broken up, bloodlessly, and the party chief in Armenia replaced. By 1967, Soviet authorities would construct the Tsitsernakaberd Memorial Complex in honour of the genocide in Yerevan (Suny, 2004, 377). The site remains a major pilgrimage to this day. Various other Soviet concessions to Armenian nationalism would be given, like memorials to Armenian nationalist leaders and a complex on the site of the Battle of Sardarabad, largely credited with saving the nascent Armenian republic from annihilation by the Turks in 1918 (Ibid, 376). At this same period, the openly separatist (at this time a new sentiment in Armenian nationalism in the Soviet Union) National Unity Party would be formed in Yerevan, demanding secession from the Soviet Union, as well as union with historical Armenian lands in Turkey (Brodksy, 122). Thus it can be seen, in both the Diaspora as well as in the Republic of Armenia, Armenian national identity to a very large extent depended on the memory of the genocide and the impact this had on subsequent developments in the Armenian nation.

Section 2.13: The Emergence of Turkish Nationalism and Turkish National Identity

No less than for Armenians, however, the memory of the Genocide factors very prominently in Turkish national identity and history. The Turkish position is different than the Armenian perspective, and functions as part of a larger narrative of victimisation and insecurity of the Turkish nation surrounding the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire.

The prominent role of the Armenian Genocide in Turkish identity comes from two sources. The obvious first aspect is the role of Turkish nationalism in the decision to ethnically cleanse Anatolia, as well as the nationalist interpretation of these events in Turkish history as established by Mustafa Kemal Attaturk. This history was subsequently institutionalised throughout the new republic. The second source is the *reaction* of Turkey to the Genocide accusation. As these claims challenge the founding myths of Turkish history, as well as some key aspects of Turkish nationalism, official denial and the prominent role this plays in contemporary Turkish identity and discourse (at least officially) is a direct result of the cyclical dialectic between Armenian claims and Turkish rebuttals.

As was previously discussed, Turkish nationalism emerged in the beginning of the twentieth century as a reaction to the historical circumstances surrounding the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the rejection of Ottomanism. In large part, though Attaturk attempted to distance himself from the CUP, the foundations of Turkish nationalism, both ideologically and institutionally, come from this era (Roshwald, 2001, 58). Without the ideological groundwork laid by the CUP between 1908 and 1920, as well as the effects its policies had on Anatolia's demography, Turkish nationalism and the modern Turkish state would not exist. It is to this formative period which we now turn.

CUP policy, as mentioned, was not initially overtly Turkish nationalist or exclusivist. As a liberal movement aimed at restoring the constitution, it had (at least among its more liberal members) always envisioned a degree of plurality within the reformed Ottoman state towards which they aimed. This is clearly evidenced in the fact that the Dashnaks were willing partners with the CUP, at least initially. The central

debate in this period was over the degree of centralisation of the Ottoman state. While originally Ottomanism was pursued, more and more this gave way to Turkish nationalism as minority groups turned to their own nationalist movements (Davidson, 1998, 128). Turkish nationalism was slow to articulate itself then, as the ruling elite which would promulgate it took time to turn to "Turkishness" as the binding element of the vast territory over which they ruled came to realise accommodation with minority groups would prove difficult.

Nationalist historiography around this time began to emerge, focusing on Anatolia as the Turkish homeland. The emergence of the 'scientific field' of Turkology, Turkish nationalist currents in Russia, Turkish historians and linguists, and the general trend of nationalist ideological movements within the Ottoman Empire all contributed to the ideological coalescence of Turkish nationalism by 1908 (Akcam, 2006, 83). By 1913, the CUP had fully embraced it as a political movement as well. Key in the death of cosmopolitan Ottomanism was the defeat in the Balkan Wars. After this, the thoroughly Turkish nationalist regime of the three Pashas assumed dictatorial powers and implemented a program of Turkification in many aspects of Ottoman society. In 1913 Turkish was made the only language of instruction in Ottoman high schools and various actions were taken in the economy of the Empire favouring ethnic Turks specifically and Muslims more broadly, which had the deliberate effect of forcing Christians (Greeks and Armenians, who typically formed the backbone of upper-class merchants and financiers in the Empire) to the margins of Ottoman economic life (Cagaptay, 2006, 8).

As previously mentioned, Ziya Gokalp was pivotally important in the articulation of the ideology of Turkish nationalism, reflected in the fact that he is considered by many

to be the father of Turkish nationalism (Roshwald, 61). In understanding Turkish nationalism, as well as the actions taken by the CUP which laid the foundations of the modern Turkish state, a brief consideration of the tenants of Turkish nationalism he espoused is relevant. It is important to note that for Gokalp, the nation was not a racial or inborn ethnic characterisation—in this sense he comes close to the theoretical positions of scholars such as Anthony D. Smith.

Nationality was a learned trait—from early childhood, the religious, moral, and linguistic acquisitions of a person defined their nationality (Gokalp, 1959, 137). For Gokalp, a person's mother tongue defined their nationality (Ibid). The aims of the Turkists (or Turkish nationalists) were thus to establish secular movement, based on a populist appeal where Turkish (defined as the language of the masses, specifically the Istanbul dialect) would be the national language (Ibid, 289, 305). Importantly was negative view taken towards Ottomanism and the idea of different cultures coexisting under one state—"a state that is not based on shared consciousness cannot survive" (Gokalp, quoted in Akcam, 2006, 88). This pseudo-rationalist political philosophy which was adopted by the Young Turks came to be used to justify an autocratic approach to the exercise of power and legitimise an organisicst conception of the nation (Roshweld, 61). There was no room for pluralism or troublesome minorities in this conception of the state.

It is in this ideological context that the actions of the CUP during the First World War must be viewed. In this period, extensive "demographic engineering" occurred in Anatolia that affected not just Armenians, but Greeks as well as non-Turkish Muslim groups. Various tactics from massacre to planned resettlement of refugees, population

exchange, and genocide "were utilised by the Young Turk regime to homogenise Ottoman society and fit it into their ideological template of the Turkish nation-state" (Umit Ungor, 2011, 289). The intent of Turkifying Anatolia is evident in the "5 to 10% Rule". Under this rule, Kurds, Greeks, and Armenians who were not outright massacred were to be resettled in areas where they would not constitute more than 5-10% of the native population. Additional evidence of the systematic nature of this resettlement and deportation is seen in the fact that even Muslim refugees were not allowed to settle where they wished but were instead sent to preselected destinations (Akcam, 2012, 81). The homogenous Turkish state which emerged from the Turkish War of Independence was no mere accident—Ataturk and the political legacy he would leave behind (Kemalism) owed much to this state-led CUP social and political engineering.

Section 2.14: Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the Institutionalisation of Denial, and Turkish National Identity

The ideological continuity between the Young Turk regime and early Turkish Republic under Mustafa Kemal Ataturk is important in understanding both the importance of the Genocide in Turkish historiography and national identity, as well as the divergence with Armenian accounts. Recently, challenges to official histories and re-examinations of the myths surrounding the foundation of Turkey have emerged. One key element of Turkish nationalism and national history that must be considered is the role that Mustafa Kemal Ataturk played in establishing an official history of formative years of the Turkish republic from 1918 to 1924.

His role and memory in Turkish history and identity cannot be understated—"history, civics, and education have all been organised around his life and ideas" (Bakiner, 2013, 7). In the early years of Turkey, Ataturk set about establishing justifications and excuses for the war time excesses committed against non-Muslim populations in the Ottoman Empire, including justification, minimising the extent of their suffering, and emphasising equal or great suffering on the part of Turkish Muslims during the war (Zurcher, 2011, 312). The most important document of this period establishing the official history of Turkey and the lens through which all subsequent examinations of this period would occur is found in the text of a speech given by Ataturk to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey in October of 1927. Presented over six days to a congress of the Republican People's Party, the speech, known as the "Nutuk" took thirty-six hours to deliver. This story, which established Ataturk as the founder of the Turkish republic and established the uniqueness of the Turkish experience, "became sacralised by the state" (Gocek, 2011, 43). This historiography built around denial and established by Kemal is at the centre of understanding the Turkish mentality towards the Genocide and the role this plays in Turkish identity.

In Ataturk's *Nutuk,* Armenian atrocities against Muslims committed after 1917, well after the main phases of deportation and extermination had been carried out against the Armenians, are retroactively used as justification for the actions taken in the Ottoman period and are at the centre of denial theses. Many of the stereotypes associated with Armenians in Turkey of the period as "opportunistic barbarians" with "innate hostility" come from Ataturk (Gocek, 2010, 380). In the text of *Nutuk,* within the first few pages of this 600 page document, the Armenian deportations are referenced. The people (that is,

the Turkish nation) is absolved of any involvement in the "mistreatment committed by some instigators and agitators" (Ibid, 385). The role of Christian elements in the devastations wrought by the First World War, and the atrocities committed by Armenians in French-occupied Cilicia and the territories of the first Armenian Republic are the only other mentions of the Armenian population in the speech (Ibid, 387, 389). Thus in the *Nutuk* the narrative of Turks as victims of Western imperialism and the mutual suffering of Armenians and Turks in the tragic upheaval during the final years of the Ottoman Empire is established. Any other role for Armenians (and indeed other minorities) within the Turkish state is erased and censored from public view.

Also important Turkish denial and identity is the attempt to establish that there is a clear lack of continuity between the late Ottoman Empire and the modern Republic of Turkey. In the Kemalist narrative, the Turkish nation's modern history the republican Turkey begin only in May 1919, with the beginning of the Turkish War of Independence. Contrary to what has been already discussed, Kemalism attempts to cleanly dichotomise the historical Ottoman-Islamic era as wholly unrelated to the Republic of Turkey. In other words, none of the attitudes, cadres, or programmes of the Ottoman Empire (that is, the pre-1919 government) belongs to legitimate Turkish history (Colak, 2006, 590). The religious and ethnic pluralism which characterised the Ottoman Empire had no place in a homogenised Turkish identity. As the Armenian Genocide occurred within the polity of the Ottoman Empire, an entity whose legacy is not part of the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in the Kemalist narrative, Turkey bears no responsibility for the genocide. This argument became common in the last quarter of the 20th century when Armenian claims against Turkey became increasingly salient.

Section 2.15: Armenian Claims and Challenges to Turkish National Identity

Denial then, as we have seen, comes to play an important role in Turkish national identity due to the nature of the official history surrounding the events of 1915 and the Kemalist cult of personality which still permeates Turkish civic and political life. In a rather cyclical fashion, Armenian claims to Genocide strike up a vociferous response in Turkey. The contemporary understanding of Turkish history and the importance of this for Turkish identity combined with official denial which is enforced by the state in both media and official discourse (see chapter 3 and 4) contributes to extremely defensive reaction in Turkey towards these claims. This is entirely understandable—aside from challenging the collective identity of Turks and the foundations of their state, the charge of genocide carries a heavy burden—"to attribute genocide to a particular nation is to accuse it of the worst possible crime" (Beachler, 9).

Also important to note is the context in which the Armenian question re-entered Turkish affairs. The recourse of some radical Armenian groups to terror against Turkish officials and innocents within the country has only served to further entrench this denial and fear towards Armenian claims (Oke, 2005, 12). The association of Armenians with terror, even with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) within Turkey, served to further isolate Turkish society from sympathising with the Armenian position (Ibid, 16). This only served to heighten state sensitivity to genocide claims and provoke an active campaign of denial internationally, and increased censorship prohibiting debate within Turkish society on the "Armenian Question".

For both Armenians and Turks, then, the genocide plays a pivotal role in national identity. In Armenia and the diaspora community worldwide, the importance of this traumatic event, combined with challenges to its legitimacy, serve to keep the memory in the forefront of Armenian political life and identity. In Turkey, Armenian claims to an event largely expunged from official histories and which challenge the foundational myths of the Turkish republic and indeed Turkish identity result in denial and counter-claims of victimisation. The historical memory of the Armenian Genocide is evidently an important aspect of both groups, though for different reasons.

Chapter Three: Political Elites and the Politics of Genocide

Since Armenia declared its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, official policies towards Turkey and the issue of genocide recognition have varied immensely. Turkey, for its part, has remained fairly consistent in its policy of official denial of the Genocide, evident through official statements and public discourse on the matter, as well as various constitutional and legal methods through which denial is enforced. In recent years, however, there have been important changes occurring in Turkey which have led to a more open discussion of the country's history. This chapter will examine the official discourse on the Armenian Genocide in both Armenia and Turkey from government and public officials to discern the role of these groups in politicising and promoting the Armenian Genocide as a policy issue.

In particular, changes in Armenian foreign policy towards the issue in the Ter-Petrosyan government and the Kocharian government will be examined. The emergence of the Justice and Development (AKP) Party in Turkey and weakening of the political hegemony of Kemalism will be covered as setting the stage for attempts at reconciliation. Finally, the Turkish-Armenian Protocol of 2009, considered a landmark in attempts to normalise relations between the countries, will be contextualised within this official discourse. Reasons for its failure at the government level will be considered, as well as the role that discussions of history and the genocide played.

Section 3.2: Post-Cold War Changes and Shifting Domestic and Geopolitical Priorities

The end of the Cold War brought important changes to the Caucasus region specifically, but also resulted in important changes both internationally and within Turkey and Armenia. Internationally, the end of the Cold War and the rise of international human rights regimes free of the strategic concerns related to Cold War politics resulted in important normative shifts. A shift in Turkey's foreign policy as a result of the end of the Cold War (given it was no longer a pivotal southern flank against the Soviet Union) and political changes domestically, as well as the emergence of an independent Armenia would have important consequences for both states. The collapse of communism and the end of the global tensions that accompanied the nuclear stand-off between the Soviet Union and the United States resulted in the spread of democracy and its associated values, such as human rights. It was hoped that in the absence of East-West antagonism, a global consensus could be reached on the implementation of human rights protections (von Bernstorff, 2008, 917). While no such agreement with legal enforcement was definitively reached, human rights and democracy assumed a central role in the discourse of the West, and importantly, in the European Union through the Copenhagen Criteria.

This development had important implications for Turkey, which had been seeking membership in the European Union since the 1980s. Turkish democracy was very fragile, punctuated by military coups in 1960, 1971, and 1980. As well, problems within its borders with regard to the Kurdish question prompted serious criticism from the EU and other international organisations concerning minority rights in Turkey

(Verney, 2007, 216). External pressure from the EU meant that Turkey would have to work towards consolidating its democracy and improving domestic freedoms and human rights. This required allowing more open discussion on two topics that had remained skeletons in the closet of Turkish political discourse: the Armenian and Kurdish questions. A violent terrorist campaign waged by the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) would force a confrontation with the question of Turkey's Kurdish minority. Long ignored as "mountain Turks", increasing the rights of Turkey's Kurdish minority became an important topic in negotiations with the EU.

Important domestic changes also played a role in setting the stage for defining the relationship Turkey was to have with its new neighbours. In the Cold War era and before, Turkey had followed a relatively isolationist foreign policy, cutting ties with the Turkic peoples of Central Asia. Internally, Turkey was seen as a homogenous state for the Turks, ignoring minority groups (Kosebalaban, 2009, 90). This narrative, a staple of Kemalism, was increasingly challenged in the 1980s and 1990s, owing not only to domestic issues, but also an increasing awareness of the cultural and ethnic affinities with the newly independent Turkic speaking peoples to the East. With the end of the Cold War, Turkey's important role as a NATO ally was diminished, and the leadership of the country began looking to assert a more proactive foreign policy in the region (Ersen, 2013, 25). The emergence of an independent Armenian state, however, would also have important implications for Turkey.

Section 3.4: Turkish-Armenian Relations: Regional Conflict and a Rocky Start

Relations between Turkey and Armenia were re-established on 16 December 1991 when Turkey recognised Armenia's independence, though formal diplomatic ties were not yet established. With the emergence of a new Armenian state on its border, the dynamics of Turkish-Armenian relations took on a whole new tone. For one, the Genocide debate was now an international relations issue, and would come to define relations between the Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Armenia (Libaridian, 2004, 192). The increasing scrutiny Turkey was to be subjected to regarding its human rights record, as well as Armenian claims for recognition of the Genocide, would make this issue of paramount importance between the two countries. Initially, the relationship between Armenia and Turkey was cordial, with both sides seemingly willing to start fresh. Indeed, Armenia sold electricity to Turkey, and Turkey in turn served as a transit route for supplies of grain coming into the economically struggling Armenia. A protocol secretly negotiated between the two to establish diplomatic relations was almost signed but for issues over border recognition (Ibid, 269). Quickly however, in this crucial early period of dialogue, a third factor would serve to complicate a relationship already heavily burdened by historical and psychological factors.

Conflict regarding the Armenian-majority Azerbaijani region of Nagorno-Karabakh would spill over into Armenian-Turkish relations. While sporadic hostilities between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces had been ongoing in the region since 1988, prompting periodic Soviet interventions, full scale fighting erupted in 1992, shortly after both Armenia and Azerbaijan had secured their independence from the Soviet Union.

Armenia scored early successes in the war over the breakaway region, but was in a difficult position economically owing to a blockade of its territory by Azerbaijan. Turkey, for reasons of ethnic and linguistic affinity with the Azeris, openly sided with Azerbaijan in the conflict after Armenian victories carried their forces to occupy the regions of Kelbajar outside of Nagorno-Karabakh, and closed the border with Armenia (De Waal, 2010, 3). Armenia's victory in the war pushed Azerbaijan out of almost all of the former NKAO, and led to the establishment of the independent Nagorno-Karabakh Republic which also incorporated large tracts of Azerbaijan proper, a major cause of concern for Azerbaijan.

Figure 3.1: Armenia and Azerbaijan. The unrecognised "Nagorno-Karabakh Republic" or "Artsakh" in Armenian, is located between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Source: *RFE/RL*

This closure of the Turkish-Armenian border, and the concurrent Turkish blockade of the border, remains in effect to this day. This was the regional context in which Armenian-Turkish relations were situated.

Section 3.5: The Politicisation of the Genocide Question in Armenia: From Ter-Petrosyan to Kocharian

The Armenian Genocide almost immediately became a politicised issue, deeply ingrained in the politics of the nascent Armenia, even before recognition of its independence. In the country's founding document, the Armenian Declaration of Independence, the genocide was in the forefront of the Declaration's drafters. Article 11 of the declaration (which until 1995 served as the country's constitution) explicitly stated that "The Republic of Armenia stands in support of the task of achieving international recognition of the 1915 Genocide in Ottoman Turkey and Western Armenia." (Supreme Council of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic, 1990). Article 2 would provide full citizenship rights to Diasporan Armenians. From the outset, then, the Genocide was a primary factor in the state's politics, and the inclusion of diaspora elements in the political life of the state would ensure this. Despite this, Ter-Petrosyan would hold his ground on this issue—for the President, the key foreign policy aim of the embattled state was to secure the survival of its territory and population (Papazian, 2006, 237).

As the war with Azerbaijan dragged on, and attempts to establish relations with Turkey floundered, *realpolitik* came into play and the administration of the first president of Armenia, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, attempted a more conciliatory, pragmatic approach to relations with Turkey. Despite what was written in the declaration of independence, the

official policy of Ter-Petrosyan's Pan-Armenian National Movement was that the genocide was a non-issue in terms of establishing relations with Turkey (Libaridian, 2004, 194). Antagonising Turkey with historical claims and an emotional foreign policy would do little to further the interests of Armenia.

> Today, Armenia and Turkey, as neighbouring states, have to establish mutually beneficial trade and economic links. We have to overcome historical controversies and re-establish the mutual trust between our peoples through friendly relations [...] (Ter-Petrosyan, 2006, 480)

The decision by Ter-Petrosyan to ban the opposition Dashnak party, an decidedly anti-Turkish whose base of support was in the Diaspora, was likely rooted in this desire to ground Armenian policy in the realities which the state faced, instead of national romanticism (Papazian, 2006, 242). Many politicians within Armenia were sceptical of the role these parties attempted to play in the Armenian political landscape. Most importantly, it was perceived that they were ill-equipped to understand the realities of the situation in Armenia, and the rather hard-line position that the Dashnaks took on issues related to the Genocide and Turkey were seen as unnecessarily complicating an already tense situation.

Thus, the position that relations should be established with pre-conditions was fairly consistent throughout the administration of the President, until his resignation in 1998 amid anger over proposed concessions to Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The realism of Ter-Petrosyan and his willingness to make territorial concessions in order to normalise relations with Armenia's neighbours led to his downfall and

replacement in April 1998 by Robert Kocharyan, a former president of Nagorno-Karabakh. Compared to his predecessor, Kocharyan took a much harder line on the issue of the Genocide, pledging to integrate it into Armenia's foreign policy discourse (Libaridian, 2004, 271). Kocharyan came to power promoting genocide recognition and establishing a more consensual discourse with the Diaspora, including ending the ban on the Dashnak party (Papazian, 2006, 243). In large part, Kocharyan's shift was in relation to Turkey's policy of tying a normalisation of relations with Armenia to progress towards resolution of the Karabakh issue.

This move also secured Kocharyan the support of diaspora groups—by pleasing these groups, he would increase their investment in Armenia and further the economic development of a country struggling under a double blockade (Libaridian, 2004, 275). Despite the fact that Kocharyan was willing to push the genocide issue in relations with Turkey and internationally, this did not mean he subscribed to some of the more outlandish demands of Diaspora groups like the Dashnaks. In an interview with a Turkish journalist in 2002, the President stated that "Armenia will not present any legal claim after Turkey admits having committed genocide... Genocide recognition will never lead up to the issue of lands... Armenia has no legal grounds for that" (Kocharyan, 2001). The policy of relations with no preconditions, combined with international lobbying for genocide recognition, continues to be a key of the ruling Republican party.

Section 3.6: State Denial and The Politics of History in Turkey

Within Turkey, the politics of genocide have followed a consistent pattern since the issue became salient in the 1980s. Discussion on the events of 1915 has been heavily

muted, and bureaucratic and political elites have emerged which set the official state narrative over the past thirty years. Key government bodies, including the National Security Council, Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the Interior, and the National Education Ministry, have largely been responsible for defending this official history (Dixon, 2010, 468). This conglomerate of elite figures, as well as the military, is alleged to be at the heart of an anti-democratic coalition within Turkish politics known as the "deep state" (Freely, 2007). This clique of ultra-nationalist secularists is seen by many as working to preserve the secular nature of the state and perpetuate Kemalism as the guiding ideology of Turkey. In support of these goals, they are often seen as leading the campaign of denial.

In many ways, this is what makes the Turkish case so unique. It is not uncommon for a state to forget past atrocities or crimes against its own citizens—Turkey is hardly alone in this regard. What is remarkable about the Turkish case is the active enforcement of denial (Bakiner, 2013, 6). Dixon points to five strategies pursued by the state to enforce denial. The first of these is centralising control over the narrative and its subjugation to the National Security Council and the MFA. Publishing defenses of the official narrative and marshalling evidence for the narrative via selective opening of Ottoman archives comprised the second and third aspects of this strategy. Finally, the official narrative on the Armenian question was to be taught in schools, and international support for the official narrative was pursued (Dixon, 2010, 471-473).

External attempts to secure support for Turkey's narrative have met with little success. Internationally, over the past twenty years 21 countries have passed resolutions in their parliaments declaring the events to be genocide (Armenian Genocide Museum

Institute, 2013). Some of these countries, France and Switzerland, have criminalised denial of the Armenian Genocide, in a move echoing similar legislation regarding the Holocaust. In the United States, 43 states, as well as the House Foreign Relations committee have all passed resolutions recognising the events of 1915 as Genocide (Armenian National Institute, 2013). On several occasions Congress has come close to passing a resolution, though intense pressure from Turkish government and lobbyists stopped these efforts. Indeed, the Turkish embassy in Washington has taken on pushing the government's narrative as a full-time job—by some accounts some 70% of the embassy's time is spent lobbying the US government on the issue (Minasyan, 2010). The fact that there is such intense diplomatic effort by Turkey to stop recognition of the Genocide speaks to the importance of this issue not simply for the Armenian government, but also for Turkey.

Within Turkey there has been a large degree of success in suppressing discussion on the Genocide. Owing to censorship and anti-democratic practises aimed at stifling a critical discourse on the issue, debate within Turkey on the Armenian issue has been extremely limited. Legal coercion plays a very important role in the insulation of the official narrative of the Armenian genocide. Importantly, the nationalism and ideology of Ataturk are enshrined in Part I Article 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, which declares the state is "loyal to the nationalism of Atatürk" (Constitution of the Republic of Turkey). Thus, it is unconstitutional to oppose this ideology. As a large part of Turkish history is steeped in Kemalism, this makes it very difficult to raise the Armenian issue in any context that contravenes the principles and official narrative of Kemalism. Pursuant to this objective, Article 301 of the Turkish penal code deserves

special mention as a tool of state denial. Article 301, which took effect in June 2005 with the new penal code, is defined as follows:

> 1. Public denigration of Turkishness, the Republic or the Grand National Assembly of Turkey shall be punishable by imprisonment of between six months and three years.
> 2. Public denigration of the Government of the Republic of Turkey, the judicial institutions of the State, the military or security structures shall be punishable by imprisonment of between six months and two years.
> 3. In cases where denigration of Turkishness is committed by a Turkish citizen in another country the punishment shall be increased by one third.
> 4. Expressions of thought intended to criticize shall not constitute a crime. (Amnesty International, 2006, 1).

This law, which sparked concerns over censorship in the EU as well as major human rights organisations, has been used numerous times to mute critical opinions of the state line which attempt to draw attention to the Armenian Genocide. The most famous example of this was the case brought against Turkish Nobel laureate Orhan Pamuk. In 2005 in an interview with a Swiss newspaper, Pamuk went on record as saying 30,000 Kurds and one million Armenians had been killed in Turkey (BBC News, 2005). For this he was to face up to 2 years in prison for "insulting Turkishness" as mentioned in Article 301. Pamuk was eventually acquitted on a technicality, as Article 301 had not been in effect at the time his statements were made. Despite this, however, numerous other attempts have been made to silence prominent journalists and academics.

Section 3.7: Political Shifts in Turkey and Moves to Rapprochement

Two important events, however, have brought about subtle but important changes in the nature of debate on the Armenian Genocide within Turkey. The first of these concerns a dramatic shift in the political landscape of Turkey. The 2002 general election saw the sweeping victory of the Justice and Development (AKP) party, led by Recep Tayyip Erdogan, which attained a majority of seats in the Turkish Grand National Assembly, repeating this in the 2007 and 2011 elections. Unlike previous parties, the AKP is a centre-right party with a social-conservative agenda inspired by Islam (Hurriyet, 2007). This places it in stark contrast, as well as conflict, with the Kemalist foundations on which the Turkish state and its politics have rested since its establishment. During the AKP's ten year rule, the Kemalist memory framework relating to the history of the War of Independence and the exclusion of minority groups from the national memory has increasingly lost its hegemonic position (Bakiner, 2013, 8). This willingness to operate outside the traditional confines of Kemalism means that the AKP has taken a more pragmatic approach towards politics.

This shift in Turkish politics under the AKP has come to be known as "neo-Ottomanism" (Bakiner, 2013, 8). The etymology of this term is particularly poignant in foreign policy and clearly evident in the "zero problems policy" with regard to its neighbours. Building on increasied regional involvement following the end of the Cold War, this policy sees Turkey trying to work as a constructive power regionally, and more of a problem solver than problem maker (Ersen, 2011, 119). This pragmatism distinguishes the AKP from the ultra-nationalism of previous governments, not to mention periods of military rule. Turkey's growing economic power and role regionally

are largely responsible for this shift (Ibid, 116). Domestically, efforts towards increased democratisation in accordance with the Copenhagen criteria for EU membership (an important goal of the AKP) are evident. Attempts to increase civil rights, including an expansion of freedom of expression and religion, as well as major anti-corruption measures and arrests of military officials suspected of plotting a coup to return the secularists to power (in line with the deep state theory) have characterised its rule (Dixon, 476). These challenges to Kemalism have extended into the realm of memory and discourse as well. Over the past ten years, there has been an increasing willingness to engage with the past critically, though within limits. A subtle but noteworthy shift occurred in 2006 when Prime Minister Erdogan ordered government officials to replace "so-called Armenian genocide" with the more neutral "events of 1915" (Ibid, 477). While subtle, this small shift in official attitudes is indicative of a Turkey more willing to engage with Armenia on historical issues, albeit cautiously.

Turkey's EU accession negotiations also played an important role in changing domestic attitudes towards Armenia, which the EU had pegged as an important issue. As early as 1987, before independence was even a possibility for Armenia, the European Parliament recognised the events of 1915 as genocide. In 2005 the EP passed a resolution stipulating recognition of the genocide by Turkey as a condition of membership in the EU, much to the ire of Turkish politicians (Acar & Ruma, 2007, 451). The growth in discussion on the Armenian question was seen as a test of the progress of liberalisation and democratisation in Turkey, both by Turkish elites and EU officials (Iskandaryan & Minasyan, 2010, 34). Many voices within Turkey began to share this view. A number of moderate and left-wing political actors began pushing for dialogue and normalisation of

ties with Armenia, with support from a growing segment of civil society actors (Ibid, 36). Not just in relations with the EU, but also the United States and other countries the genocide debate and aggressive denial by Turkey was seen as tarnishing the country's image internationally, and for little benefit (Bengur, 2009, 48). The Armenian question was more and more coming to be seen as a liability for Turkey, making politicians much more willing to open discussion on the issue.

The second event of importance for settling the state for Armenian-Turkish rapprochement was the assassination in 2007 of Hrant Dink, a prominent Turkish Armenian journalist and editor-in-chief of the Turkish-Armenian weekly *Agos*. Hrant Dink was an outspoken critic of the progress of reforms in Turkey, as well as the silence within the country on the issue of the Armenian Genocide (Human Rights Watch, 2007). He had been prosecuted numerous times under Article 301. In Turkey, however, his murder provoked a massive outpouring of public sympathy and outrage. Though controversial for his positions on the Armenian Genocide, he was well respected for his efforts to promote dialogue between Armenians and Turks.

His assassination by a seventeen year old Turkish nationalist shocked Turks and Armenians alike. Protests and vigils were held throughout the country, with marches in Istanbul reportedly numbering in the tens of thousands (De Waal, 3). Marchers carried signs expressing solidarity with the Armenian community, stating "We are all Armenians" (Ibid). Turkish president Erdogan promised explicitly condemned the killing, stating on television that "The dark hands that killed him will be found and punished (CNN News, 2007). The outpouring of support and widespread revulsion at the killing in Turkish society was indicative of an increased willingness and desire to confront the past

and attempt some sort of dialogue with Armenia. Importantly, the assassination served to bring the poor state of Armenian-Turkish relations into the national consciousness of Turks.

Section 3.8: Football Diplomacy and Turkish-Armenian Rapprochement

Developments in 2008 in Armenia, combined with the previously mentioned easing of restrictions and increasing discourse on the Armenian question led to the beginnings of high level talks between Turkish and Armenian officials for the first time in fifteen years. The fall from power of the more hardline President Kocharyan led to the election of Serzh Sargsyan. While his positions were essentially the same as Kocharyan on key issues (Karabakh, Genocide recognition), there were to be no preconditions. On April 24th, the year he assumed the presidency, during a statement commemorating Genocide Memorial Day Sargsyan stated "While keeping the memory of the innocent victims alive, presently we are ready to establish normal relation with Turkey without any preconditions" (Sargysyan, 2008). Pursuant to this new attitude, during a meeting with the Moscow Armenian community on June 22nd, the president explicitly mentioned Armenian-Turkish relations as an important aspect of his goals as president, particularly opening the border between the two countries. "In the future I intend to undertake new steps to further the normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations. Most probably, I will invite Turkey's President Abdullah Gul to Yerevan to watch the match between the national football teams of Armenia and Turkey" (Sargsyan, 2008a). This would mark the beginning of a close and personal friendship which would develop between the two presidents during the following two years of negotiations.

These overtures were well received in Turkey, where the "zero problems" policy meant the AKP government very receptive. On September 6th Turkish President Gul became the first Turkish head of state to ever visit Armenia—a landmark event in relations between the two neighbours (BBC News, 2008). This high-level visit between the two leaders marked an important thaw in relations. Media in Turkey reported favourably on the event, and pointed to the potential it had to remove psychological barriers in the Caucasus and how it could serve as catalyst for a normalisation of relations (Phillips, 2010, 43). Combined with aftermath of the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, the regional atmosphere had moved in a direction which prompted an increase in attempts to stabilise the region. Most importantly, Turkish-Armenian reconciliation was seen as an area where the interested of three global powers—Russia, the United States, and the European Union, coincided, providing important international backing for these efforts (Iskandaryan & Minasyan, 18). As American and EU pressures factored importantly into the discourse over the issues in Turkey, this support was invaluable.

Section 3.9: The 2009 Turkish-Armenian Protocols: From Progress to Preconditions

This high-level rapprochement set the stage for the beginnings of secret negotiations in Zurich, Switzerland, between Armenian and Turkish officials aimed at normalising relations and opening the borders. For both countries expectations were high—for Turkey the potential to end genocide recognition campaigns and assert its influence in the Caucasus region, for Armenia an open border with its 5th largest trading partner (De Waal, 3). On 22 April 2009, the foreign ministers of both countries announced an agreement on a provisional roadmap for normalisation. These documents

represented a roadmap for the normalisation of relations between the two countries without preconditions. The "Protocol on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Turkey" called for the establishment of "good neighbourly relations and to develop bilateral cooperation in the political, economic, cultural and other fields" and emphasised "their [Armenia and Turkey] decisions to open the common border" (News.am, 2009). The second document, the "Protocol on Development of Relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Turkey", most importantly, stated that the parties would

> 1.Agree to open the common border within 2 months after the entry into force of this Protocol,
>
> 2.Agree to conduct regular political consultations between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the two countries; implement a dialogue on the historical dimension with the aim to restore mutual confidence between the two nations, including an impartial scientific examination of the historical records and archives to define existing problems and formulate recommendations; (Ibid)

The reaction in both countries was immediate and controversial. In Armenia, the Dashnaktsutsyun withdrew from the ruling coalition in protest (Iskandaryan & Minasyan, 12). While public opposition was not fierce, there was little enthusiasm. Most importantly, President Sargsyan faced anger throughout the diaspora in France and the United States, which he visited that summer in an attempt to sell the Protocols (De Waal, 3). In Paris, the President's visit even led to civil unrest when the French Armenian community rallied against rapprochement with Turkey (Iskandaryan & Minasyan, 21). Much of this controversy arose over the agreement to establish a historical commission to

investigate 1915, which many saw as validating Turkish denial and compromising what, as has been seen, is an important aspect of Armenian identity, with little public input.

Importantly in Turkey, debates emerged over linkage of the signing of the protocols to a resolution of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict had long been connected by Turkey to normalising ties with Yerevan. As Armenian foreign minister Vartan Oskanyan stated in a 2002 speech "relations between Turkey and Armenia are being held hostage to Armenia's own conflicts and tensions with Azerbaijan." (Osakian, 2002). The "zero problems with neighbours" policy clearly had some caveats, given the strong relationship between Turkey and Azerbaijan. The visit by President Gul to Yerevan was not well received in Azerbaijan, and the announcement of the Protocols provoked major protest. Contrary to the previous position of the Turkish government and the content of the Protocols, Prime Minister Erdogan in a speech to the Azeri parliament in May of 2009 stated that the borders with Armenia would remain closed until the Karabakh issue was resolved (Phillips, 2010, 49). This was done without the prior knowledge of the Turkish foreign minister nor the team negotiating the for Turkey (Chatham House 2012, 3). Thus, even before the Protocols had been signed by both parties, in Turkey they became mired in debates over making progress on the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh a pre-condition to opening the Turkish-Armenian border.

There were important differences in leadership and splits among elites in Turkey, primarily between the President and Prime Minister. Erdogan was much less enthusiastic about the Protocols. This explains his rather public attempts to undermine them through preconditions which were obviously unacceptable to Armenia, which would have made concessions on the Karabakh issue by now, had they the mandate to do so (Minasyan).

Azerbaijan, through cultural ties which could manipulate nationalist sympathies in Turkey, as well as economic ties (Azerbaijan supplies much of Turkey's natural gas, and at a discounted rate), was effectively able to stall Turkish involvement. For Turkey, the relationship with "brotherly" Azerbaijan (and the economic benefits it entailed) was more important that normalising ties with tiny Armenia (Ersen, 2011, 129). Erdogan would not ratify the protocols (as required) unless there was movement on the Karabakh issue.

Despite these difficulties, however, both governments moved forward with signing to Protocols. At the signing ceremony for the Protocols in October 2009, further complications arose due to disputes arose over the nature of the speeches the foreign ministers of each country would give. The signing ceremony was delayed by three hours and almost didn't happen. In the end, a US-brokered compromise in which neither side made any remarks saved the day (Iskandaryan & Minasyan, 13). The difficulties leading up to the signing of the Protocols, though, spoke to the different priorities of both parties. For its part, the issue was one of national security for Armenia, economically harmed and politically isolated by the closed border. Turkey took a much different view of the Protocols, which were seen as helping to mitigate a historical liability and improve Ankara's image internationally (Ersen, 2011, 127). Tellingly, however, both parties saw the Protocols as related to historical issues and the genocide. In Armenia, much of the opposition centred on the proposed historical commission, and felt Yerevan was making major concessions and getting little in return. For Turkey, the potential to put an end to international campaigns for genocide recognition was a major motivating factor.

Section 3.10: Two States, One Nation: The Azerbaijani Factor?

It would be negligent to ignore the role that Azerbaijan plays in Armenian-Turkish relations, particularly as a barrier to normalisation. Owing to the close ties between Azerbaijan and Turkey, the prominence of this issue in Armenian-Turkish relations is unsurprising. To what extent, though, does it matter as a precondition for negotiations? As we have seen, the prime obstacle to Turkish ratification of the Protocols has been the backlash that the process caused in Azerbaijan, which views the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict as a zero-sum game where gains for Armenia means losses for Azerbaijan. When considering the negotiations between Armenia and Turkey, it is important to consider the importance of the Azerbaijani-Turkish relationship. However, what utility is there for Turkey expected from imposing this precondition in its normalisation process with Armenia?

As we have seen, there were divisions within Turkish elites over this decision. Prime Minister Erdogan's (who never really believed in the rapprochement with Armenia) move linking normalisation with Armenia to Karabakh undermined the efforts of President Gul in negotiating with Armenia (Phillips, 2010, 51). In Armenia, from the outset it was important that the two processes—normalising relations with Turkey, and a resolution of the Karabakh conflict—could not be related to one another. The expectation in Ankara was that through its increased connections with Armenia, it could potentially facilitate negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan concurrently and attain sufficient political capital at home so that by the time the Protocols had been signed and ratified, there would be some progress on Karabakh, thus placating Azerbaijan.

Unfortunately, Turkey overestimated the impact it would have on Armenian policies. As we have seen, Nagorno-Karabakh is a red line for Armenian politicians. When Ter-Petrosyan attempted to compromise on the issue, he was forced from office amid massive protests in Armenia. Thus, it was unlikely that there would be any such move made by the current Armenian government, especially when the Protocols themselves were controversial enough. Simply put, if Armenian politicians had the political capital to make concessions on Karabakh, they would have done so before (Iskandaryan and Minasyan). It is also worth considering the situation in the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR) itself. While closely integrated with Armenia economically and militarily, it is a *de-facto* independent state. Thus, even if there was some will within the Armenian establishment to make concessions to Azerbaijan, this idea would be almost impossible to sell to Stepanakert, which sees the entire territory of the NKR as vital to the security of the entity, including the occupied regions outside the boundaries of the former boundaries of Karabakh which are legally part of Azerbaijan.

It is important to note that the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict is not mentioned in the text of the Protocols, which were signed by both Armenia and Turkey. Clearly, for Turkey there are some benefits to normalising relations with Armenia (Markedonov, 2009). Thus, for Turkish government and society, the precondition related to Karabakh would seem to have little relevance (Iskandaryan & Minasyan, 8). Given that Armenia and Turkey are still trading, albeit through neighbouring Georgia, the efficacy of the blockade can be questioned. While strategically it may be relevant to Turkey, it does not stir the same debate and controversy that the preconditions related to the Armenian Genocide do. It also runs quite contrary to the "zero problems with neighbours" policy which has

served to increase Turkish influence regionally. By basing its regional policy around the NK issue, Turkey is making its policy dependant on another actor (Azerbaijan) and not reflective of actual priorities (Ibid, 11). According to some analysts, this is simply a way for Turkey to avoid addressing the more complicated issue of the Genocide (Ibid, 27). Turkey willingly entered into the negotiations on the Protocols with Armenia and President Erdogan subsequently tied normalisation with Armenia to the Karabakh conflict after intense criticism from Azerbaijan. This indicates that while Karabakh matters as a factor in Armenian-Turkish normalisation, it is not out of a direct concern on the part of Turkey, but rather a regional policy held hostage to Baku.

Section 3.11: Post-Protocol Stalemate and Future Prospects

Following the signing of the Protocols, the important step of ratification remained. This allowed both parties to submit the normalisation process to some form of public scrutiny through parliamentary approval. In Turkey, because ratification had been tied by the Prime Minister to progress on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, no move was made. In Armenia, the Protocols were submitted by President Sargsyan to the Constitutional Court to ensure they were in line with Armenia's constitution. In its decision issued on 12th January 2010, the Court ruled that

> The obligations stipulated by the Protocol on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations Between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Turkey and by The Protocol on the Development of Relations Between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Turkey are in conformity with the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia (Constitutional Court Of the Republic of Armenia, 2010)

The court did, however, stipulate that the 'Protocol on the Development of Relations Between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Turkey' could not be interpreted or applied in a way which "would contradict the provisions of the Preamble of the RA Constitution and the requirements of Paragraph 11 of the Declaration of Independence of Armenia" (Ibid.) What this meant, was that the Protocols could in no way infringe upon the obligation of the government to seek international recognition of the Armenian Genocide. Following this ruling, Erdogan and Turkish Foreign Minister Davutoglu voiced strong objections, stating that it placed preconditions on the process of normalisation and hinted at territorial claims (Phillips, 69).

On the Armenian side, as well as the American, the Court's ruling was seen as a positive—the Protocols were in accordance with the Constitution and thus there was no reason not to ratify them. In the end, however, the Protocols were not ratified. There are a number of reasons for this, but journalist Yigal Schleifer summarises it as "a combination of Turkish buyer's remorse, Azeri bullying and Armenian naiveté" (Schleifer, 2012). For Turkey, an opportunity to resolve a long-time issue and potentially make progress in EU negotiations and improve its image internationally unexpectedly became a costly liability in relations with one of its closest regional partners. Azerbaijan used its leverage with Turkey to bring about a change in opinion towards the Protocols, making them contingent on the Karabakh issue. Armenia, preferring simultaneous ratification of the Protocols, would no longer find willing partner in Turkey.

In an address to the nation on April 22nd, President Sargsyan, citing Turkey's unwillingness to continue the process and the unacceptably long delay in ratification, announced that Armenia would be suspending ratification procedure, though not

withdrawing from the Protocols entirely (Phillips, 77). Following this suspension of the ratification process, no progress has been made on normalising relations, and no further high-level talks have taken place between Turkish or Armenian politicians. Despite the failure of this very high-level attempt at reconciliation, it does tell us some important things about the attitudes of political leaders on both sides.

The fact that the negotiations largely took place at a high level and behind closed doors speaks to the uncertainty both sides faced with regard to how the Protocols would be received at home. While there was clearly some will on both sides, particularly on the Armenian side, to follow through on normalisation, both sides had differing reasons for doing so. The inclusion of provisions on a commission to explore the historical facts in dispute between the two countries indicates the importance of the Genocide issue for politicians on both sides.

Both governments, however, faced strong pressure from below on normalisation, as well as from external sources. In Armenia, a lack of strong public support for the Protocols, as well as extensive campaigns against them in the diaspora, made it increasingly difficult for the government to find the political capital at home to push onwards with ratification. The Armenian reluctance to ratify the Protocols out of a belief that Turkey would not follow, as well as the Turkish fears about Armenian irredentist claims on Eastern Turkey, is also relevant. While both sides were willing to attempt negotiations, there was clearly a lack of trust between them. The linkage of the process to Karabakh by Turkey further undermined Armenian confidence in the process generally, and faith in Turkey as a negotiating partner.

This, however, cannot be entirely blamed on Turkey. It is clear that Turkey itself was subject to strong pressures both domestically and from Azerbaijan to force more concessions on Armenia. Given its stronger negotiating position and the fact that the Protocols were much more valuable to Armenia than to Turkey, the latter was less inclined to take major risks for what would amount to little benefit, and damage relations with a close partner, Azerbaijan. International support from three regional actors—the EU, US, and Russia—was also important in getting the process going, but insufficient to continue momentum in the face of controversy regarding the Genocide. The importance of this issue is seen in the fact that a large part of the Protocols involved the establishment of a historical commission. For Turkey, this was an important move to opening dialogue on the Genocide. In Armenia, however, the government faced strong opposition to this move, which was seen as compromise international recognition of the genocide. Both governments engaged on this important issue and faced strong criticism regarding their positions domestically. Thus, while clearly an elite-led process, grass-roots attitudes clearly played an important role in deciding the fate of the Protocols. In the next chapter, I will examine Armenian-Turkish relations at the grass-roots level, focusing on track-two diplomacy, public opinion in both states, and Armenian attitudes towards the genocide.

Chapter Four: The View From Below

To a certain extent, official attitudes towards the Genocide play an important role in making the Genocide and history an issue in relations between Turkey and Armenia.

As we have seen, politicians were willing, to a certain extent, to push through rather unpopular measures aimed at establishing ties between Turkey and Armenia. The primary opposition to this seems to have come from below. At the grassroots level there is clearly much interest in the genocide issue, and it still provokes intense debate, particularly in Armenia. For people in both states the historical memory is an important consideration, and there is some expectation that politicians will defend the "honour" of the nation by preventing these foundational elements of national identity from being challenged. In Armenia, this means the promotion and defense of the genocide narrative, as well as attempts to attain recognition and sometimes compensation for historical wrongs. In Turkey, slowly emerging discourse on this issue has led to increased public awareness of the Armenian Question, though its politicisation internationally provokes heated opposition to Armenian claims, which challenge Turkish society's image of self and state.

This chapter will examine the issue and relevance of the Armenian Genocide at the grassroots level, from the perspective of media and ordinary people in Armenia to discern how important the genocide is as a factor in their lives and identities. As well, I will examine the Turkish perspective on bilateral relations and the Genocide issue. The importance of this perspective has been noted elsewhere. As Tchilingirian states, "The least heard voice in the current discourse on the Genocide is the views of the public in both Armenian and Turkish societies" (2005). Arguably, it is this voice which matters more for the relevance of the genocide between the two countries. I will begin by examining the first "unofficial" contacts between the two countries— the so-called process of "track-two" diplomacy and the Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation

Commission. I will then examine the attitudes of Armenians and Turks towards reconciliation and the genocide issues. To do this I will utilise data available on public opinion in Armenia regarding relations with Turkey, and various secondary sources. Finally, using the period during which the Turkish-Armenian Protocols were being negotiated (2009) I will conduct an analysis of Armenian media attitudes towards Turkey, reconciliation, and the genocide. This will be followed by an examination of some survey work done in Armenia in the summer of 2012, relating to the question of Turkish-Armenian relations and the Armenian genocide.

The previous chapter, in examining the role of elites and official contacts in promoting relations between Turkey and Armenia, showed that while there is a political desire in Armenia to go beyond issues of history and pursue a more *realpolitik* approach to relations with Turkey, there was a strong backlash against these attempts within Armenian society. In looking at public opinion and societal attitudes, I will demonstrate that the Armenian Genocide is indeed a salient issue for Armenians, and strongly associated with their national identity. Attempts to compromise on Genocide recognition are unacceptable to the vast majority of Armenians. In Turkish society, the relative lack of debate on the Armenians means that, for the most part, the opposition to Genocide comes from officials and the state, who seek to defend the official narrative, as seen in chapters two and three. Increasingly, however, as connections between the two countries increase and debate in Turkey becomes more open, Turkish society has become more willing to engage critically with its history, particularly the Armenian issue.

Section 4.2: Relations at the Unofficial Level—Academic Links and Track Two Diplomacy

In large measure, the difficulties of Turkish-Armenian reconciliation are related to an almost complete lack of contact between the two societies. This lack of contact, combined with the complicated history, leads to a naturalised atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust. This was evident in the debates in Turkey and Armenia that surrounded the negotiations over the Protocols (see chapter 3). Politicians were vulnerable to this pressure, and faced difficulty legitimising normalisation. The opinions of Turks and Armenians of one another are rooted not in experience through interaction, but in old stereotypes based on prominent events. Armenian irredenta and the terrorism in the 1970s and 1980s was for Turks the main identifier of Armenians (Terzi, 2010, 88). As well, Diaspora campaigns for genocide recognition in the 1990s (many of them successful) caused a defensive reaction and increased rhetoric from Ankara, polarising public opinion in Turkey against Armenia (Gorgulu, 2009, 22). In Armenia, this perception was more directly related to the Genocide. Turkey was widely seen as the perpetrator of the massacres and deportations, despite attempts by Turkey to deny continuity between it and the Ottoman Empire. For Armenians, the genocide, denial, and Turkey's support for Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh were the main factors that affected attitudes towards Turkey (Ersen, 2011, 125-126). Based on these cues, and without official contacts between the two states, Turkey was a hostile entity and not a neighbour. These ideational factors were important in affecting perceptions on both sides.

In an attempt to deal with this lack of contact between the two sides, before officials from either country would make any attempt to normalise ties, "second-track"

diplomacy became increasingly important. While entirely unofficial, the Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission (TARC) would attempt to connect Turks and Armenians at the grass-roots level. The US state department played an important role in promoting this dialogue. Importantly, these unofficial contacts meant that the parties involved were free of the public image constraints that politicians were subject to, which inhibited the freedom of movement and expression of political figures on these sensitive issues (Phillips, 2005, 47).

The crowning achievement of this process was the TARC. As with most initiatives relating to Turkish-Armenian relations, TARC faced difficulties from its inception. These related to the issue of genocide recognition. In the fall of 2000, debate began in the US House of Representatives on passing a bill relating to genocide recognition. Turkey (as well as many of the potential Turkish members of TARC) was adamantly opposed to this, and would refuse any support for the process unless the resolution was abandoned. As the resolution was about to come to a vote, President Clinton stepped in and had the measure dropped, paving the way for a beginning to the process (Ibid, 34). This would not be the first time that debates over the relevance of the genocide issue in Turkish-Armenian reconciliation would emerge, even at this unofficial level.

Despite these difficulties, in July 2001 TARC was officially established with ten members—six Turkish and four Armenian. All scholars and former diplomats, while none had official positions in government, their connections and former positions as foreign ministers and ambassadors gave them important insight into the issues from both an official and grass roots level (Kasim, 2001). TARC lasted four years, from 2001 to

2004. There were hardliners from both sides involved in the talks, in an effort to expose each party to the major grievances and claims of the other on a more personal level. It was hoped this would foster understanding and provide the framework through which to find common ground to approach the more controversial issues between the two sides—mainly the genocide (Phillips, 2005, 63).

Government reactions to TARC were varied, but generally positive. Both Turkey and Armenia were receptive to the idea of TARC, though neither side officially sanctioned it. Opinion in Turkey was particularly receptive of TARC. A public opinion survey conducted in August 29th, 2001 revealed that 38.5% of respondents were in favour of reconciliation, 36.9% were opposed, and 24.7% had no opinion (Ibid, 57). Elite intellectuals and business groups also approved of TARC. Within Armenian society, while there was also broad support for the committee, a very vocal minority voiced strong opposition. Particularly in the Diaspora, there was controversy, echoed in some political circles in Armenia hoping to undermine support for President Kocharyan. Detractors mainly focused on the fact that TARC would result in a negotiation over the fact of the genocide, which was not in dispute for Armenians (Ibid, 61).

While frequently an issue that cropped up in discussions between its members, TARC never tried to negotiate over the genocide or Nagorno-Karabakh—sensitive issues were left off the agenda in favour of more palatable topics. Opening borders and re-establishing a visa regime between the two countries were the primary issues. Business officials as well strongly supported TARC for the potential economic gains it would bring to the poorer regions of Eastern Turkey as well as Armenia (Ibid, 87). Overall, despite these minor successes, TARC was generally considered a failure (Acar & Ruma,

2004, 464). Its one major success, however, was related to an issue that it was never actually envisioned as addressing. In a move initiated by *Turkish* members of the committee in November, 2001, TARC requested that the International Centre for Transitional Justice ICTJ) conduct an analysis on the applicability of the 1948 UN Genocide Convention to the Armenian Question (Phillips, 2005, 99). Soon after, the Turks reversed their position and unilaterally asked the ICTJ not to proceed. The Armenian side subsequently withdrew from TARC and it seemed that the initiative was dead. Eventually both sides were brought together, and the ICTJ proceeded with its work. In its ruling, the ICTJ stated that while Turkey could not be held retroactively responsible for the events of 1915 (thus relieving it of any legal obligation to compensation), the events as interpreted under the convention did in fact constitute genocide (International Centre for Transitional Justice, 2004, 8, 17). Both sides could find something in the ruling—Turkey could not be held to reparations, while for Armenians, the Court ruled that the events did constitute genocide as defined by the 1948 UN Genocide Convention.

TARC is relevant to understanding the role of the genocide in Turkish-Armenian relations for several reasons. Firstly, as it was unrelated to official diplomatic channels, the opinions and concerns expressed by TARC members are indicative of the perspectives of Armenians and Turks independent of their governments. Certainly, they would be wary and considerate of government pressure, but as a good faith attempt at reconciliation which was well received in both countries, their freedom of expression was substantial. It is telling, then, that to primary obstacles which emerged throughout related to the Armenian Genocide. In both countries, while there was support for the initiative and broad support for dialogue (Cooper & Akcam, 2005, 90) there was reluctance, at

least in this early stage of contact, to engage of the issue at the heart of Armenian and Turkish identity—the memory of the genocide. For Turkey in particular, this explains much. Given that there is little public knowledge of the Genocide in Turkey and government-sanctioned censorship of discourse on the matter, intellectuals and scholars such as those involved in TARC play an important role in introducing society to the issues at hand. That the Turkish members of TARC placed so much emphasis on the Genocide and its controversial status shows the difficulty these issues would have in gaining broad acceptance in Turkish society generally.

Section 4.3: Armenian Attitudes towards the Genocide

Despite these informal links and TARC's attempts to promote dialogue, opinions remained extremely polarised. Various organisations have conducted survey work in Armenia in the period before 2009 to examine societal attitudes towards a variety of issues, the genocide and Turkey among them. It is important to understand the genocide in particular in Armenian society. As we have seen, diaspora groups and politicians are all interested in making noise about the genocide. Though it is a constitutive element of diaspora identity, the Genocide also has important resonance within Armenia. Armenians are generally aware of the genocide from a young age, with 59.5% having heard of it before age 17, and 38.6% not remembering (Armenian Centre for National and International Studies, 2005, 4). The general facts such as location (Western Armenia) and number of dead (1.5-2 million being the most common responses) are also known by 68% and 75% respectively (Ibid). The overwhelming majority of Armenians have

participated in Genocide commemorations, 87.2%, and 63% of them consider it "a duty to respect the memory of the martyrs.

Slightly less than half of Armenians reported that their direct ancestors were victims of the massacres of the twentieth century. This in itself makes sense given that approximately half the population of the current Republic of Armenia are descendants of refugees from the Ottoman lands (see chapter 2). Despite this, however, there is still broad identification with the genocide within Armenia. A majority (58.1%) of Armenians think that the memory of the genocide is a significant aspect of Armenian identity, and almost all (95%) think it is important to mark the occasion with a national commemoration. Progress on attaining recognition of the genocide internationally is also important for many Armenians.

From these data, then, it is clear that the memory of the genocide is significant for Armenians, and forms a primary consideration in national identity. Importantly, it seems that this memory informs attitudes towards Turkey. The attitude towards Turkey is one of suspicion and hostility, shunting blame for the Armenian Genocide not on the historical Ottoman Empire and Young Turk leadership, but rather contemporary Turks. 81% of Armenians see today's Turkey as responsible for the Armenian Genocide, with 61% believing "A Turk Remains a Turk, always capable of committing genocide." Turkey's stance on Karabakh, as well as attitude towards opening the border with Armenia all reinforce Armenian perceptions of Turkey as heir to the Ottoman Empire (Iskandaryan, 2011, 181). Because of this, 93.5% believe that Armenia should claim reparations from Turkey, in the form of return of territories (20.3%), official acknowledgement and apology (27.3%) or all of these (40.4%). These figures convey some important

sentiments within Armenia. The vast majority of Armenians have a mentality which is stuck in the past—Turkey is not simply a neighbour, but it *is* the modern day Ottoman Empire, and continues these policies of persecution of the Armenians. The Genocide in this context carries an important resonance—denial constitutes not simply a refutation of a core aspect of Armenian identity, but carries with it the connotation that the events of 1915 could happen again.

This expectation of reparations and claims on Turkey, however, does seem to validate the fears voiced by Turkish politicians over territorial claims. Despite these attitudes, however, Armenians seem generally open to establishing diplomatic ties with Turkey. A plurality (39%) of respondents believes that Armenia should have no preconditions for relations but continue international advocacy for recognition, with a focus on "establishing relations without forgetting the past" (Armenian Centre for National and International Studies, 14). In light of this, separate data on Armenian perspectives on opening the border shows that 63% of Armenians supported this, while only 51% of Turks did (Angus Reid, 2005). In terms of their concerns with issues facing the country more generally, unemployment and the socio-economic situation ranked far higher (40% and 32%) than concerns over recognition of the genocide, with only 10% (Armenian National Study, 2008, 18). It can be argued that this reflects an important pragmatism on the part of Armenians—the economic prosperity of the Armenian state is obviously a primary concern. The Genocide, while clearly important to Armenians, should in theory not inhibit the establishment of relations and development of economic ties.

Despite this, however, other data suggests that the opposite is true. A Gallup poll conducted with the assistance of the Armenian Sociological Association in 2006 of 1,200 Armenians randomly surveyed stated that 57% were *against* reopening the border without Turkey acknowledging the Armenian Genocide (Angus Reid, 2006). Relations with Turkey are seen as poor by 90% of respondents, while it is seen as a threat by 56% (International Republican Institute, 2008, 29-30). Thus, even before the announcement of the Protocols, Turkey was viewed with scepticism and as a threat by the majority of Armenians. The closed border, as well as unqualified support for Azerbaijan created mistrust towards Turkey in Armenia. Particularly during the period of negotiations over the Protocols, this mistrust and suspicion would be an important part in the lack of public enthusiasm and support for the rapprochement with Turkey.

Section 4.4: Attitudes in Armenian Media Towards the Genocide and Relations with Turkey and the 2009 Turkish-Armenian Protocols

While the data previously examined gives hints towards Armenian attitudes, little work has been done on opinion and attitudes in Armenia in the period since the Protocols were announced. As these Protocols represent a very important and public move, it is important to consider attitudes towards this landmark attempt at reconciliation. Media has a very influential role in impacting public opinion as well as indicating general moods and attitudes within a given society. This section will attempt to investigate contemporary Armenian attitudes on Turkish-Armenian relations and the Protocols on normalisation as reflected through news media. The Armenian Russian-language newspaper *Golos Armenii* (Voice of Armenia), released 3-4 times weekly in the capital Yerevan, was analysed. from the months of January to December 2009. This time frame was chosen as

it represents the key year for the Turkish-Armenian Protocols, from reactions to the football diplomacy which started negotiations to the signing and subsequent stalls in progress. Issues of *Golos Armenii* were examined for references to three key interrelated issues: Turkish-Armenian Relations, the Protocols, and the Armenian Genocide. Both news articles as well as op-ed pieces were considered in the analysis. Given that Armenians seem to have a broadly favourable opinion of the country's media (ANS, 36), it would seem a suitable way to gauge opinion in the country.

Throughout the year of 2009, during which the Protocols were both announced and signed, there was much discussion and various reactions surrounding this important document. The main themes dominating the discourse surrounding the Protocols were optimism at the prospect of normalising relations, with a focus on the economic benefits this would bring. A key concern throughout the year, though, was recognition of the Genocide. Particularly, attempts in the US Congress to pass a resolution recognising the Genocide received much coverage in Armenian press (31 Jan 2009, no.7). As well, the issue of Israeli recognition of the Genocide, long a muted subject due to the close strategic partnership that country enjoys with Turkey, became relevant in discussions of Turkey and the Genocide. Generally, attempts were made to differentiate these attempts for *international* recognition of the Genocide, from pressure on Turkey to recognise the Genocide. Relations with Turkey were to be established without preconditions, including genocide recognition, though it was recognised that "recognition of the Genocide by foreign governments is an obstacle to normalising Armenian-Turkish relations (11 April, no.38).

These attempts to gain recognition by the US in particular were an important topic. It was felt that Turkey was very threatened by these moves to recognise the genocide, and the "US threat to recognise the genocide in April" was a major motivating factor in its willingness to negotiate with Armenia (24 March, no.31). This underlying suspicion of Turkey belies a very palatable lack of trust in Armenia towards Turkey. There was a lot of optimism following the initial announcement of the roadmap—hopes were expressed that the border would be opened by mid-April (4 April, no. 34). Many felt that the normalisation of Turkish-Armenian relations would lead the White House to block a resolution recognising the Genocide in the lead up to April 24th, and that this was the primary aim for Turkey participating in the normalisation process.

Very early in the negotiating process, before statements made by Erdogan connecting the Armenian-Turkish normalisation process to the Karabakh, conflict, this possibility was in the minds of Armenians. The belief that "Turkey should put aside the issue of Karabakh, which is a problem of Azerbaijan" is clearly and regularly articulated (5 Feb 2009, no.10). The question of whether the strategic interests of Ankara and its relationship were a concern in Yerevan—raising concerns over the sincerity of Turkey in negotiations (10 Feb 2009, no.12). There was however, optimism regarding the potential of Turkey to be a regional energy partner and not an enemy. As the negotiations became more public, however, the Karabakh question more and more came to be a central feature of the discussions surrounding the normalisation process. These disputes all contributed to the suspicious attitude towards Turkey— it was believed that "Turkey seeks not to normalise relations with Armenia, but is using the Protocols to for denial of the Genocide

and to promote the position of Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh settlement" (15 April, no.39).

The question of the Genocide, however, was a constant factor. While international recognition attempts were salient in the early part of the year, debates on question of Genocide recognition by Turkey and discussions over history became prominent after the announcement of the roadmap. Politicians, particularly President Sargsyan, found themselves constantly having to defend the validity of the process and reassure an anxious public that they were in Armenia's interests. While many feared that Turkey would use to process to legitimate its denial, Sargsyan was adamant that "We are not going to in any format make the fact of the Genocide a subject of discussion" (Ibid).

Discussions over the issue of compensation also arose. This compensation took two forms. The first was considerations arising from the Genocide—many believed that Armenia has a right to request territorial compensation from Turkey (20 April, no.41). Discussions of these issues in Armenian media fed Turkish fears that their neighbour fostered irredentist claims to eastern Turkey. As well, payment for the blockade, which had inflicted enormous economic damage on Armenia, was raised. The blockade itself became an important issue—the opening of the border was the primary reason for supporting normalisation. At the same time, though it was often emphasised that the border is not closed on the Armenian side. The blockade is a one-sided Turkish imposed measure and Armenia has not closed the border or made any efforts towards this (12 Sept, no.97). This was seen as a hostile "act of war" to assist Azerbaijan, related to what was seen as pan-Turkist attitudes in elite circles in Turkey and Azerbaijan (Ibid; 8 Sept, no.95).

Section 4.5: The Ottoman Legacy and Genocide in Discourse on the Protocols

Noticeably, comparisons and references to the Ottoman Empire were frequent. In keeping with the previously mentioned association of Turkey as the heir to the Ottoman legacy, comparisons between the two arose in Armenian media. This is indicative of the mistrust and scepticism on the Armenian side. The most apt manifestation of this is in references Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan, as well as Turkish actions generally, and the Ottoman Janissaries—infantry units which from the fifteenth to the early nineteenth century forced the personal guard of the Sultan (Kinross, 1977, 456). In a particularly scathing indictment, Prime Minister was characterised as giving lip service to normalisation "[speaking] normal Turkish, but under his trousers—a Janissary's shalwar." (25 May, no.56). Pointing to Turkish history and plunder of Armenia, the motivations for wanting the border are questioned, and the perspective that the "Turk" has changed is mocked in no uncertain terms. Turks and Armenians will never have normal relations due to a "civilizational incompatibility" (Ibid).

The accusation is clear—while Erdogan may pursue European Union membership and portray a progressive attitude, Turkey of 2009 is the same as the Ottoman Empire of the nineteenth century—"If anyone noticed from under the expensive European tailored suit of Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan the Shalwar of a Janissary peeking out" (Ibid). Erdogan's Ottoman ambitions meant that he Protocols were simply a strategic and tactical move to increase Turkey's influence in the region, International "praise" for Turkey's steps to sign the Protocols was also met with scepticism in Armenia. Little change was seen in Turkey's attitude towards Armenia—"... in reality Turkey didn't do

anything differently, she simply stated her agreement and then went ahead, with circumlocutions, to speak with Armenia in civilised language, and not the language of Janissaries (5 Sept, no.94). This suspicion of Turkish motivations belies the lack of trust between the two sides rooted in their historical experience, as summarised by Ruben Margaryan, who states that "Modern Turkey is the right carrier and the successor of the Ottoman Empire, and in spite of the typical fawning smile of the president and the head of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Turkey, Armenia is seen as the enemy side, and not as an equal partner in the region." (3 December, no.132). External observers and scholars have said Armenia took the process much more seriously than Turkey (see chapter 3), and attitudes such as these questioning the sincerity of Turkey which were common place in Armenian press, seem to indicate that many Armenians shared these fears.

In the fall of 2009, the lead-up to the signing of the Protocols caused major debates centring on the question of the Genocide as well as whether they would actually be ratified by Turkey. The topic dominated news—from the beginning of September to November 5th, there were only two days where the papers lacked any mention of either the normalisation process with Turkey, or the Armenian Genocide. A month before the actual signing of the Protocols, protests broke out in Republic Square in Yerevan, led by the Dashnak party, against the signing of the Protocols and Turkish historical revisionism (15 Sept, no.98). Even non-Diaspora opposition parties such as the Republican Party stepped into the debate, insisting that the Protocols would not and could not impinge international Genocide recognition efforts (26 Sept, no.103). The opposition parties united around their shared opposition to the Protocols. Diaspora groups in Lebanon

protested the President's visit, which was widely covered in Armenian press (1 Oct. no.105; 8 Oct, no.108). On the eve of the signing, President Sargsyan against reiterated the necessity of relations without preconditions, but with three caveats:

> "1. No relations with Turkey can question the reality of the dispossession and genocide of the Armenian people 2. Question existing between Armenia and Turkey borders must be resolved in accordance with international law. 3. This relationship does not touch and can not relate to the settlement of the Karabakh conflict" (13 Oct, no.110).

These statements were intended to assuage fears related directly to these issues which had been raised in the Armenian press ever since the announcement of the roadmap months before. These concerns all contributed to the belief that there just was no will to ratify the Protocols in Turkey (14 Nov, no.124).

The tone in Armenia, then, was one of hopeful optimism, though heavily coloured by suspicion of Turkey. The early connection of the Karabakh issue, as well as focus on a historical commission between the two countries to investigate the "events of 1915" provided the main stumbling blocks. Besides these concrete issues, however, attitudes and perceptions, at least on the Armenian side of the border, were critical of both the intentions and sincerity of their Turkish partners. Heavily coloured by the historical experience of the Genocide, Armenian media portrayed a suspicious account of Turkish intentions and motivations. By drawing on nineteenth century stereotypes of Turks, and equating modern Turkey and the Ottoman Empire as essentially the same entity, Armenians were bound to be wary of any agreement brokered with what was perceived as an age old enemy.

Section 4.6: Grass Roots Perspectives on Armenian-Turkish Relations Since the Protocols

This section comprises a qualitative analysis of data gathered in Yerevan, Armenia on the question of Armenian-Turkish relations and the Armenian Genocide during the summer of 2012. Consisting of a short questionnaire involving both open and closed ended responses, the objective was to test the salience of the memory of the Armenian Genocide for individual respondents and to see how this memory was connected to Armenian-Turkish relations. A total of 26 individuals participated. While these numbers are certainly not large enough to give generalizable results on the attitudes of Armenians, they do have some utility. Little intensive work has been done on attitudes in Armenia in the period following the intense discussion over the Protocols. The aim here, then, is to see if the opposition to relations with Turkey and prominence of the Genocide in these discussions was only stirred due to these discussions, or whether it is a constant undercurrent in Armenian society. When considered in combination with the larger studies previously examined, as well as the content analysis, they can give some insight into the priorities Armenians have and the value they attach to normalising relations with Turkey, and how the Genocide factors into these considerations.

The respondents came from households in the Armenian capital of Yerevan, in the months of August and September of 2012. The surveys were administered face to face in Russian as well as Armenian. Of the 26 respondents, seven were men and nineteen were women, with the majority being under 33 years of age. Most followed politics, with 18 of 26 respondents doing so frequently or very frequently. The most important questions asked related to two main issues—the Armenian genocide and

person experience or memory of it, and the issue of Turkish-Armenian relations. The assumption is that if the Armenian Genocide is a prominent issue in the memory and opinions of respondents, it will be reflected in their attitude towards developing relations with Turkey.

Every respondent commemorated the Genocide at least once a year by going to the Tsitsernakaberd Genocide Memorial in Yerevan on April 24th, while 18 of those who participated visited Tsitsternakaberd on a date other than the 24th, usually a date relating to family history, or when friends from out of town were visiting. This importance attached to both annual commemoration of the Genocide in keeping with Armenian tradition, as well as the tendency among most to visit this important site for the memory of the Genocide at other points throughout the year indicates the importance of this memory. For those who did not commemorate the Genocide other than on April 24th, seven out of eight of them were not descendants of Genocide survivors. The memory for these Armenians may not be as strong, as it comes from school and society, rather than direct family connections and stories, as with members of the Diaspora. The desire to expose others to this site of mourning is also in keeping with the support many Armenians give towards attempts to gain international recognition of the Genocide. For others, visiting the memorial was done as an act of personal reflection and thought. Introducing others to this site is a testament to both the importance of commemorating the Genocide for Armenians, as well as their desire to have this event recognised and accepted. The relevance of the Genocide memory is thus something that for many goes beyond the national commemoration on April 24th.

The next part of the questionnaire addressed relations with Turkey and attitudes towards the Turkish-Armenian Protocols. A 2010 survey done in Armenia found that only 36.3% thought the Protocols were good for Armenia, with the rest saying they either opposed or were undecided on the matter (Ararat Centre for Strategic Analysis, 2010). Similar results are evident in the data gathered for this project. Twenty-five of the respondents were familiar with the Protocols, but numbers were almost evenly split on support for normalising relations with Turkey with eleven agreeing with normalisation, and 12 disagreeing with normalising relations. This is fairly congruent with the results of previous studies, which showed split opinions on normalisation. While establishing relations in and of itself it was generally a desired process, there is little support for normalisation at any cost.

Reflecting this, most respondents thought there should be some preconditions for normalising relations with Turkey. Sixteen believed in preconditions, while eight did not. Those who believed there should be preconditions for normalising relations with Turkey voiced sentiments common to those expressed in the media, as well as by politicians. The primary precondition that respondents mentioned was recognition of the Armenian Genocide by Turkey. As one respondent put it, "Possible economic benefits should not be reached at the sake of recognition of the Genocide". The Genocide issue is thus a constant in all facets of Armenian society—at the political level as well as grassroots, and a prominent topic in media.

Interestingly, the second most mentioned precondition related to the issue of returning Armenian lands in Eastern Turkey, historically known as Western Armenia. While political figures in Armenian government have made it a point to emphasise that

Armenia has no territorial claims to Turkey (see chapter 3), this does not seem to be the opinion generally shared in Armenian society. The question of returning Armenian lands is a concern for many Armenians. Many of those who believed that Turkey should return Armenian lands in Eastern Turkey were relatives of Diasporans, or descendants of survivors. Barring the return of these lands, others stated that Armenia should receive compensation from Turkey, in much the same manner that the State of Israel received monetary compensation from the Federal Republic of Germany. As well, an official apology for the Genocide was another common condition many Armenians considered appropriate.

A few people stated conditions unrelated to the Genocide, such as opening the border with Armenia *first*, and disentangling the process of normalisation from the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict. These answers, however, were always given in conjunction with demands for Genocide recognition. The position of Armenians on this issue explains not only Diaspora objections to the Protocols, but also the harsh reaction that President Sargsyan faced at home over the proposed historical commission to investigate 1915. It is evident that the Armenian Genocide plays a role in Armenian-Turkish relations due to the concerns and priorities of everyday Armenians. Despite the best efforts of politicians to sell the Protocols to their own public as well as the Diaspora, there were objections based on the fear that Turkey would attempt to dispute the fact of the Genocide via the proposed "historical commission".

This attitude towards the importance of the Genocide, then, is fairly constant throughout Armenian society. From the period before the Protocols to the controversy surrounding them, and then two years after the fact, recognition of the Genocide by

Turkey in particular is a priority for Armenians. Though the government is reluctant to impose this precondition on Turkey, as we have seen it is susceptible to pressures from below regarding the matter. Almost all respondent to the questionnaire examined here, twenty two in total, were supportive of the government's attempts to gain international recognition of the Genocide. Acknowledgement and apology of this painful chapter of Armenian as well as Turkish history is thus an important aspect of Armenian society, and will factor into any future relations, official or otherwise, between the two peoples.

Analysis conducted during the negotiations showed peaked interest and concern vis-à-vis Armenian-Turkish relations. The importance of this data is that it comes two years after the fact, when the process of establishing ties between the two states has come to a halt and official discussions are essentially non-existent. In this period of lessening political salience regarding normalisation, we see that the same concerns that were registered during the negotiations persist. The desire to establish relations is present, however Armenians generally seem unwilling to proceed down this path without gaining some form of closure with regard to the Genocide, and acknowledgement of the historical wrongs they suffered at the hands of the Ottoman Empire. As an event that is present in their daily lives, and openly commemorated at least annually (and for some Armenians, more frequently than this), the Genocide as a formative element of Armenian identity and factor in relations with Turkey is likely to be a permanent feature of Armenian attitudes towards Turkey.

Section 4.7: Contemporary Developments and Turkish Civil Society Engagement on the Armenian Question

While the attitudes on the Armenian side of the border are well documented and consequently easier to gauge and study, the same is not the case in Turkey. Unfortunately for the future of Armenian-Turkish rapprochement, there is still reluctance to discuss the Armenian question in Turkey. For these reasons, as well as official obstruction, reliable data on Turkish society's opinions towards the genocide as an event and how this period of history matters to their identity is lacking. The discourse in Turkish politics may indicate an increasing desire to address the issue, but concrete steps have yet to be taken. Despite the failures at official levels, in recent years different civil society groups in Turkey have shown an increasing willingness to engage on Turkey's Armenian question, and demonstrated an interest in discussing issues relating to relations with Armenia, and the two peoples' disputed past.

The internal dynamics of Armenia are often ignored by the Turkish press, giving rise to a lack of understanding in Turkey of Armenians and Armenia as a whole (Amberin Zaman, 2009). The three main dimensions of the Armenian Genocide—legal, moral, and political, are tangled and misconstrued, particularly in the discourse on the matter in Turkish society (Tchilingirian). As we have seen, apology and recognition are important aspects of the Genocide question in Armenia. In Turkey, these issues are almost absent from discussions on the Armenian Genocide. There were two notable unofficial attempts and reconciliation and acknowledgement within Turkey however, which are worth discussing here. These are the 2005 Conference organised solely by Turkish academics to discuss the fate of the Ottoman Armenians in 1915, and the online

2008 "Armenian Apology" campaign started in Turkey. Reactions domestically to these two events shed important light about attitudes towards the Genocide in Turkey in the absence of other data.

The first example of this "thaw" regarding the Armenian question in Turkey occurred in 2004, with the announcement by organisers to host a conference entitled "Ottoman Armenians During the Demise of the Empire: Issues of Democracy and Scientific Responsibility" at the public Bogazici University in Istanbul. It was the first conference on the Armenian issue in Turkey not organised by the government or any other official organisation, according to the organisers. The conference raised much controversy in Turkey, with the Justice Minister at the time calling it a "stab in the back of the Turkish nation" and its organisers traitors (Shahnazarian, 2009). Amid comments like these and threats from various nationalist groups, the conference was postponed due to pressure from government officials as well as challenges by the courts, but finally held in September at a private university. This conference was accompanied by protests, however, indicating public opposition to the event (Ibid). The conference indicated a definite shift within academic circles in Turkey, as well as among the general public to consider this unspoken chapter of Turkish history. More than simply an engagement with the past, press and government officials hailed the success of the conference as a victory for freedom of speech in Turkey.

The second major example of changes to Turkish opinion on the Armenian question is the Armenian apology campaign, launched in 2008. While this campaign, organised by a group of intellectuals, did not use the word "genocide" as such, the text of its apology read "My conscience does not accept the insensitivity showed to and the

denial of the Great Catastrophe that the Ottoman Armenians were subjected to in 1915. I reject this injustice and for my share, I empathize with the feelings and pain of my Armenian brothers and sisters. I apologize to them (özür Diliyorum Website). As of 2013, it had garnered over 32,000 signatures within Turkey. Reactions within Turkish media were not warm. Prime Minister Erdogan stated ""I neither accept nor support this campaign. We did not commit a crime, therefore we do not need to apologize," (Hurriyet News, 2008). Even within Turkish society, reactions were very negative. Baskin Oran, one of the organisers of the campaign, received numerous pieces of hate mail from the public, many accusing him of insulting the Turkish people (Spiegel Online, 2009). Despite this opposition from right-wing groups and nationalists, the role of these academics and intellectuals in challenging the state narrative and provoking debate in the memory arena cannot be underestimated. Efforts such as these are critical to providing momentum to the movement for dialogue and recognition of the past (Gellman, 2012, 17).

From both of these events, then, we can see that while within academic and intellectual circles there is a desire to confront the past, within the public at large Turkish nationalism and the government line of denial and of the genocide and blame of the Armenians still holds. There are, however, small signs that public groups are changing their minds. The murder of Hrant Dint in particular served to galvanise the Turkish public in support of the Armenian community and open a new chapter in public debate on the issue. For the past four years there have even been memorials held in Istanbul on April 24th to commemorate the Armenian Genocide, organised by DurDe, an anti-racism and nationalism group in Turkey, as well as IHD, a Turkish human rights organisation. The

most recent example of this, in 2013, attracted hundreds of mourners to Istanbul's central Taksim Square (Armenian General Benevolent Union, 2013). Similar vigils were held in several other Turkish cities. While these numbers may be small and the event relatively new, when considered in the context of increasing official dialogue, as well as steady academic discourse on the matter, it is indicative of a slow but steady momentum within Turkey to engage in a sort of Turkish "Vergangenheitsbewältigung." This German word, referring to a process of "coming to terms with the past" could serve as a useful model for Turkish society. While it is unlikely there will be as institutionalised a response on the part of the Turkish government as there was in Germany, these steps serve to bring the hidden Armenian past into Turkish political discourse.

For Armenians, the Genocide is a central aspect of identity. Attitudes towards Turkey and relations with Turkey are heavily coloured by the experience of the Genocide. Ever since independence, the recognition of the genocide has been at the forefront of Armenian discourse on normalising relations. TARC, while attempting to deal with smaller issues which could serve as confidence building measures, became mired in controversy between academics and intellectuals relating to the Armenian Genocide. As seen in the previous chapter, compromise on this issue is not acceptable for the Armenian public. The desire to open the border and improve Armenia's political situation is a priority for politicians in Armenia, as evidenced by the lengths to which President Sargsyan went to try to sell the Protocols to Armenians both in Armenia, as well as in the Diaspora. Despite their best efforts, however, they were not successful. On the Armenian side, then, the Armenian Genocide is a factor in Armenian-Turkish

relations because it is an issue for the Armenian public. It has relevance to their daily lives and is a central marker of what it is to be Armenian.

In Turkey, there is limited discussion of the issues surrounding the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire. Politicians control the discourse over this event, and shape how 1915 and the formative years of the Turkish Republic are taught in Turkey. Increasingly, however, there is a desire by various intellectual and civil society groups to interact with both Armenians across the border and within Turkey, as well as engage in a debate over these issues within Turkey. This challenge to the official narrative, while currently small, has the potential to develop into a broader discussion over the history between the two nations and set the stage for pressure from below to spur changes in the official narrative and allow for a fuller and more critical examination of Turkish history.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Collective memory is an integral part of identity formation and maintenance. When this memory is of a traumatic event, it is all the more important. The experience of suffering can have a powerful effect on the self-image and identity of an entire ethnic group. It becomes the focus of their identity and the key lens through which their history, present, and future is interpreted. These memories, however, are not universal truths or completely accurate historical records. Collective memory differs from history in that it involves a personal and a shared emotional connection and consciousness among members of a group (Chirwa, 1997, 482). It is this connection which binds those who share a collective memory to a national identity and feeling of affinity with a group.

These memory issues in turn have important political effects. While they can remain dominant for long periods of time, open wounds can quickly become hot-button topics and dominate political discussions (Langenbacher, 2010, 13). The salience of the memory in Armenian-Turkish relations is clear. For both society and state, concerns of collective memory and contested memory regimes are an important issue for both countries.

Section 5.2: Collective Memory of the Armenian Genocide in Turkish and Armenian Identity

As we have seen, collective memory of the Armenian Genocide has played an important part in the history of both Armenians and Turks. Living for hundreds of years together on the Armenian Plateau under the rule of the Ottoman Sultans, there was a long history of peaceful cohabitation between the two peoples. Historical circumstances

surrounding the rise of nationalism in Europe and the concurrent decline of the Ottoman Empire led to a situation in which the Armenian minority of the Empire became increasingly viewed with suspicion and mistrust, and for reasons discussed in chapter 2, culminated in the Genocide of the Armenian population of Anatolia.

This simple telling of events, however, glosses over the complicated relationship that both Turkey and Armenia have with this period of their respective histories. For Armenia, the murder of 1.5 million innocent Armenians and the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of others from a historic homeland which they had inhabited for two thousand years would come to form the defining feature of their identity in the twentieth century. The shared experience and memory of this trauma bound Armenians in Diaspora as well as in the small Armenian republic together in a sense of solidarity. For Turkey, this period was one of external attempts to carve up the Ottoman Empire and ethnic cleansing and massacres of Muslims in the Balkans as well as Eastern Anatolia during the First World War. The Turkish War of Independence became a desperate struggle to prevent the Turkish homeland from being carved up among the Great Powers as envisioned by the Sevres Treaty.

The difference in collective memories of 1915 between Armenians and Turks became further complicated by the legacy of Kemalism. Modernisation through Turkification and the exclusionary memory framework established in the formative years of the Turkish Republic meant that the Armenian minority and its fate during World War I and the Turkish War of Independence were expunged from the public memory in Turkey. Only during the ASALA terrorist attacks of the 1970s and 1980s did the Armenian question again enter the public eye of a state that was unwilling to address

minority concerns or the historical legacy of the Young Turk era of the Ottoman Empire. This unitary, monoethnic vision of the Turkish state, as well as the foundational myths dictated by Ataturk and enshrined in national history became the cornerstones of the Turkish state, and consequently the Turkish nation which it shaped.

Armenian claims to genocide directly challenge the narrative of history constructed by elites in Turkey. Both narratives contain accusations of violence and victimisation. Within the literature on this topic, it is stated that "collective identity strengthens in the aftermath of identity-targeted violence, and even more so when collective memories of the violence, perceived as memorials to the victims, are challenged" (Gellman, 8). The challenge in this case is cyclical. As Armenians press the claim for Genocide, Turkish identity, increasingly threatened by this accusation, turns to the official denial policy which has been so institutionalised since the 1980s. Turkey, by asserting its narrative of the events of 1915 directly challenges the Armenian Genocide, a central pillar of Armenian identity. In both national identity as well as politics, we can see the role that the Armenian Genocide plays for both Armenians and Turks.

The Genocide has thus come to define relations between Armenia and Turkey. Turkish denial serves to freeze the Armenian memory framework. In this context, "memory has become a regressive function of locking people into imprinted perceptions of brutality and injustice of the past (Gellman, 470). Many Armenians are still incredibly suspicious of Turkey, perceiving it as the Empire which slaughtered their fellow countryman and could just as easily do so again—"once a Turk, always a Turk". This same fear has come to characterise Turkey. Again, drawing on wartime experiences and the fear of victimhood, international pressure for Genocide recognition combined with

territorial claims by some groups within Armenia and the Diaspora threaten the Turkish state's official history and the even the territorial integrity of the Republic. This provokes an extremely defensive reaction, stemming from the Sevres Syndrome and fear of external intervention in the Turkish psyche.

As has been shown, however, the source of the Genocide memory is different for Armenians and Turks, and this in turn has a significant impact on why the Armenian Genocide is such an important issue in relations between Turkey and Armenia. For Armenians, as we have seen, the Genocide is a collective memory held by everyday Armenians, through their experiences as survivors of the Genocide, and is a vital part of their national identity. Despite their best efforts, Armenian politicians have come up against strong opposition from civil society when attempting to push through the Turkish-Armenian Protocols. Large segments of Armenian society still want acknowledgement of the Genocide by Turkey and some acceptance of responsibility.

In Turkey, while there is slow change, the Armenian Genocide is still largely an issue that is not discussed. The history of the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the formative years of the Republic of Turkey are steeped in the myth of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, and the legacy of his teachings, Kemalism, is still a cornerstone of Turkish political and social life. The ideological tilt in Turkish historiography and the importance of this narrative to Turkish national identity is fiercely protected by political elites in the country. With minority groups exercised from official histories, there is little public knowledge of the Armenian question, and debate on the matter is muted by the government as an offence to Turkishness and Turkish identity.

There is an important cyclical effect here. Armenian claims for acknowledgement and acceptance of the Genocide challenges the history and legitimacy of the Turkish Republic and the war it fought for its own independence in the aftermath of the First World War. When Armenians assert this aspect of their identity, they are implicitly challenging Turkish self-identity. The Turkish response to this has been denial of the fact of the Genocide—Turks are simply not capable of such an act, and indeed suffered as well during the period in question. Thus, the collective memory of both peoples is challenged by the other's narrative. This is the reason the Genocide features prominently in the both Turkish and Armenian identity, and occupies such a salient position in relations between the two countries.

Section 5.3: The Way Forward and Potential for Official Genocide Recognition

Collective apologies and acknowledgement of past atrocities between neighbours in periods of conflict is not a new phenomenon. The two most prominent examples of these processes in contemporary politics are obviously those between Israel and Germany, and Japan and China. Even within states, official apologies for crimes against minorities have been catching on, as in Canada and Australia for crimes against indigenous peoples, and even Great Britain for its role in the Irish Potato Famine (Gellman, 2011, 12). While it may seem trivial, there is an importance to this acknowledgement. As has been seen with the Armenian case, Turkish denial has essentially frozen Armenian attitudes towards Turkey. It is still perceived as the hostile Ottoman Empire which massacred hundreds of thousands of Armenians. Denial distorts

the truth of the events of 1915. Without the ability to recount their experiences and not face vociferous from critics in Turkey, descendants of victims will remain traumatised and shattered, thus impacting their perception of society (Chirwa, 479).

The benefits of such a reconciling with the past and acceptance of history will have important benefits for both Turkey and Armenia. For Armenians, it will allow them to have their suffering acknowledged so they can begin the process of finally putting the past behind them, and focusing on the future. Such an honest confrontation of the past would also help to change attitudes in Armenia towards Turkey, and facilitate closer links between the two societies, which would further help in challenged the stereotypes both Turks and Armenians have regarding one another. Assuming that this process led to an opening of the border, Armenia would find itself opened to economic opportunities in Eastern Turkey and have a new, more secure trade route to the outside world. This would in turn increase regional stability, something Turkey would also benefit from.

Beyond regional stability, Turkey would also gain influence in the region, and by normalising relations with Armenia, would potentially be able to operate more effectively as an honest partner in the process of resolved the frozen conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. Finally, there are important domestic benefits for Turkey. Truth and reconciliation efforts and commemorative events have become central means to construct a democratic political culture and civil society (Langenbacher, 16). Turkey, as a consolidating democracy would benefit greatly from these processes. The importance of improving the strength of Turkish democracy and civil society goes beyond domestic development, and could also favourably impact future prospects at European Union membership. Turkey's process of coming to terms with its past, however, cannot imposed

by external actors. As has been seen, efforts at challenging Turkey's narrative by Armenia and other actors do little more than complicate the process and generate nationalist reactions (Akcar and Ruma, 449).

For both states coming to terms with the past is necessary, and will have important benefits both domestically and regionally. The increasing engagement of Turkish civil society on the question, and the potential this brings for breaking mutual stereotypes on both sides of the border, combined with the upcoming centennial of the Armenian Genocide, means that the potential for reconciliation remains. The onus for this, however, is on Turkey and the Turkish government. Whether they will capitalise on this opportunity and follow the undercurrents of recognition bubbling to the surface in Turkish society remains to be seen.

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