

# FACTS AND COMMENTS

(OLAYLAR VE YORUMLAR)

**Ömer Engin LÜTEM**

Ambassador (Ret.)  
Director, Center for Eurasian Studies  
oelutem@avim.org.tr

**Abstract:** *This article studies the developments occurring in the last six months (June to December 2012) in Turkey-Armenia relations, United States policies concerning these relations, US elections and the Armenians, France and the Armenian Question, Armenian genocide allegations in French textbooks, Armenia's relations with the Russian Federation, Armenian genocide allegations in Israel and the upcoming Armenian Presidential elections.*

**Keywords:** *Turkey, Armenia, United States, France, Russia, Israel, Azerbaijan, Armenian genocide allegations, textbooks in France, Russian natural gas prices, Abdullah Gül, R.T. Erdoğan, Ahmet Davutoğlu, Serge Sarkisian, Edward Nalbandian, Gagik Tsarukian, Levon Ter-Petrosian, Vladimir Putin, Barack Obama, Mitt Romney, François Hollande, Laurent Fabius, Zehava Gal-On.*

**Öz:** *Bu yazıda 2012 yılının son altı ayında gerçekleşen şu olaylar hakkında bilgi verilmektedir: Türkiye-Ermenistan ilişkileri, bu ilişkilere ilişkin ABD politikaları, ABD seçimleri ve Ermeniler, Fransa ve Ermeni Sorunu, Fransız okul kitaplarında Ermeni soykırım iddiaları, Ermenistan'ın Rusya Federasyonu ile ilişkileri, İsrail'de Ermeni soykırım iddiaları ve Ermenistan'da yapılacak olan başkanlık seçimleri.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Türkiye, Ermenistan, A.B.D, Fransa, Rusya, İsrail, Azerbaycan, Ermeni soykırımı iddiaları, Fransa'da okul kitapları, Rus doğal gazı fiyatları, Abdullah Gül, R.T. Erdoğan, Ahmet Davutoğlu, Serj Sarkisyan, Edward Nalbantyan, Gagik Tsarukyan, Levon Ter Petrosyan, Vladimir Putin, Barack Obama, Mitt Romney, François Hollande, Laurent Fabius, Zehava Gal-On.*

## I – TURKEY-ARMENIA RELATIONS

### 1. Some Recent Developments

During the period under observation, the stagnation or rather the lack of any positive development seen in Turkey-Armenia relations has continued. It has been observed that compared to Turkey's approach of continuing relations although with small steps, Armenia has preferred to have as few contacts as possible with Turkey. It is believed that the main reason for this is due to being frequently criticized for the Turkey-Armenia protocols and in order to gain votes, Sarkisian adopts a harsh policy against Turkey before the Presidential election to be held in February 2013 or at least tries not to lose votes because of Turkey.

This negative stance of Armenia against Turkey has been displayed several times. The most important of these is President Sarkisian, despite being invited, not attending the Summit of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC) held in Istanbul for its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, not sending Foreign Minister Nalbandian or any other minister there and Armenia being represented in the meeting by Deputy Foreign Minister Aşot Hovakimyan. According to an Armenian source, President Abdullah Gül who chaired the meeting, in response to the journalists' questions, has indicated that Armenia's membership to the organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation is a result of Turkey's positive disposition in the past, that many problems of the region must be settled in the same spirit and that he attaches great importance to Armenia's participation in this summit, as it is necessary to also hear their opinion<sup>1</sup>.

It could be seen that in spite of Armenia's approach of keeping away from Turkey, projects of cooperation in the Southern Caucasus have developed. On 8 June 2012, the Foreign Ministers of Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia have met in Trabzon and signed a "Regional Cooperation Declaration" (in short, the Trabzon Declaration). In his speech delivered for this occasion, Foreign Minister Davutoğlu has said that the cooperation of the three countries will establish a great bridge between the Black Sea, Caspian Sea and the Mediterranean and that just as with the Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan pipeline, this time there will be the opportunity to further develop the steps taken in the areas of transportation, energy and economy with more concrete foundations through these trilateral mechanisms<sup>2</sup>.

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1 "This Time Turkey's and Azerbaijan's Expectations Connected with Armenia Didn't Come True", *Yerkirmedia.am*, 27 June 2012

2 "Trabzon Deklarasyonu!" (Trabzon Declaration!), *Medya Trabzon*, 8 June 2012.

On the other hand, the “Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline” Agreement which foresees Azeri natural gas being transported to Europe through Turkey has been signed between Azerbaijan and Turkey on 26 June 2012<sup>3</sup>. This project, which is called TANAP in short, will allow Azeri gas to pass through Georgia and sold and transported through Turkey. The first stage of the four stages foreseen for this project will be completed by 2018 with the first transfer of gas and it is expected that the annual capacity, which will approximately reach 16 billion cubic meters in 2020, to increase up to 23 billion in 2023 and to 31 billion by 2026.

Despite it being necessary for Armenia to cooperate with its neighbors within the economic field due to its serious problems with Turkey and Azerbaijan and for having occupied 20% of Azeri territories, Armenia has remained outside the trilateral cooperation being adopted in Trabzon. For the same reason, the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline passing through Armenia, although it would be a much shorter route, has been strictly out of the question. Thus, Armenia has been left devoid of transit fees which will be an important source of income in the future. In short, Armenia’s policies pursued against Turkey and Azerbaijan have also harmed the country in the economic field.

It could be seen that this situation, despite being important, has almost never been discussed in Armenia and within the Diaspora. On the other hand, Armenian Prime Minister Tigran Sarkisyan, without referring to the Trabzon Declaration and TANAP at all, has said that there are a few countries in the world which are in such a difficult situation as Armenia is, that Armenia has no access to sea and no diplomatic relations with its two neighbors Turkey and Azerbaijan, but that the country should use all its features to provide maximum integration with Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Iran and taking into consideration the fact that the settlement of the relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan is quite a difficult problem, Armenia should therefore focus on the country’s internal resources and on the better organization of the “Armenian World” (Diaspora) potential<sup>4</sup>.

It is clear that Armenia, which lacks valuable natural resources like natural gas and petroleum, which does not expect high increases in the aid provided by the Diaspora and which has a significant number of persons who migrate abroad each year for economic reasons<sup>5</sup>, will not achieve a rapid development

3 “Trans Anadolu Boru Hattı’nda imzalar tamam!” (Signatures are Complete for the Trans-Anatolian Pipeline), *Star*, 28 June 2012.

4 “The Armenian Development Potential is the Armenian Nation Spread All over the World”, *Armenpress*, 31 July 2012.

5 It is understood that in the first six months of 2012, 56.000 people have migrated from Armenia (“More People Emigrate from Armenia in First 6 Months Of 2012”, *News.am*, 17 July 2012).

through the method expressed by the Prime Minister. For Armenia, its development is linked to establishing peace with its neighbors and closely cooperating with them. However, it is understood that Armenia is not yet ready for this.

It could also be understood that there has been no change in Armenia's stance in their relations with Turkey from Prime Minister Tigran Sarkisyan's words

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that they have offered Turkey to establish diplomatic relations and to open borders without delay<sup>6</sup>. This approach bears unreal qualification that relations will normalize without the existing problems being resolved. On the other hand, in response to a journalist's question posed during the Turkey-Azerbaijan Strategic Partnership Council meeting held on 11-12 September 2012 in Baku, Prime Minister Erdoğan has said that it is out of the question for Turkey to open its border unless solutions are found to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and also that the Armenian forces must withdraw from the regions under occupation. On another occasion, Erdoğan has stated that "Armenia, the Armenians and anyone supporting them, whether inside or outside, should know that

there will be no change in Turkey's stance unless the rights of their Azeri brothers are fulfilled"<sup>7</sup>.

As to the genocide allegations, Foreign Minister Davutoğlu has said that Turkey is ready for negotiations with Armenia regarding the 1915 events, that he is against the politicization of historical events and that Turkey proposed setting up joint commissions (Commission of Historians) since 2005, but Armenia did not respond favorably. Furthermore, he has expressed that if history is mixed with politics, no solution could be obtained from it<sup>8</sup>.

On the other hand, it could be seen that President Sarkisian has gradually started talking more about the "genocide" issue. In a speech delivered at the World Armenian Congress, an organization of the Armenians in Russia, which convened in Yerevan, Sarkisian has said that the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of

6 "Armenian PM Offers Turkey to Establish Diplomatic Relations and Open Borders", *News.am*, 7 September 2012.

7 "İsrail ve Ermenistan'a Rest Çekti" (Expressed Final Opinion in Scathing Terms to Israel and Armenia), *Radikal*, 1 October 2012.

8 "Davutoğlu Reacts Against Islamophobia", *Turkish Government News*, 24 September 2012.

the Armenian genocide is drawing nearer and the crime committed against the Armenian people is still to be assessed as it deserves<sup>9</sup>. On the other hand, in an interview given to the Italian *Quotidiano Nazionale* magazine, he has indicated that the Armenian genocide continues to be a forgotten calamity, that a thick curtain has been pulled over the extermination of the Armenians while everything is known about the Jewish Holocaust, and that this is a double standard. He has then asked how many people in the world truly recognize this reality<sup>10</sup>. In another one of his speeches, he has said that sooner or later Turkey will be compelled to accept the genocide truth and that this is probably the minimum of what's needed for having relations with Europe<sup>11</sup>. It could be understood that the Armenian President believes Turkey's EU membership will play an active role in pushing Turkey to recognize the genocide allegations.

Regarding the Protocols, Sarkisian has told *Quotidiano Nazionale* that Armenia started the process of normalizing its relations with Turkey, but Ankara conditioned this process on unacceptable terms and that today, together with the EU, US, and Russia, Armenia expects Turkey to change its stance<sup>12</sup>. Through this statement, Sarkisian has wanted to indicate that Armenia accepts the Protocols, but Turkey links their ratification to the Karabakh conflict and the concerning parties (the EU, US, Russia) supports Armenia and anticipates for Turkey to change this stance.

## 2. Ahmet Davutoğlu's Proposals

While travelling to the Syria Summit in Paris in the beginning of July, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu has provided information and has expressed his views to some journalists on the airplane concerning significant issues of foreign policy. Within this framework, his statements on the Armenian Question are especially important. We are quoting these as they were published in a newspaper<sup>13</sup>:

*We are doing three things. First of all we are trying to re-vitalize the Caucasus dimension. If only the protocols were implemented... We always wanted that. Rather than the factors in Turkey, the balances abroad and in the Caucasus prevented this from happening. If only Armenia had withdrawn from one of the 7 rayons it had occupied in*

9 "The Armenian Genocide Should be Assessed As it Deserves, Armenian President Says", *Mediamax*, 15 October 2012.

10 "Armenia Awaits Turkey to Change its Stance – President Sargsyan", *News.am*, 25 October 2012.

11 "Serge Sargsyan: Sooner or Later Turkey Will be Compelled to Accept the Truth", *Armradio.am*, 16 November 2012.

12 "Armenia Awaits Turkey to Change its Stance – President Sargsyan", *News.am*, 25 October 2012.

13 Ali Bayramoğlu, "Karşılığında 1915'te Hiçbir Şey Olmamış Diyen Bir Dışişleri Bakanı Yok" (They Are Not Facing a Foreign Minister Who Says Nothing Happened in 1915), *Yeni Şafak*, 7 July 2012.

*Karabakh the border would have opened. I had spoken to Aliyev and convinced him. The Azerbaijan border would have also opened. I am still at pain; we could have done this very easily. It did not take place due to psychological factors. Back then I had told Sarkisian ‘withdraw from this rayon, we will make Yerevan the region’s most beautiful city within two years. As a neighbor to Turkey, it is an advantage’. He was not able to (withdraw) because of internal balances. But this formula and issue is still on the table. Conditions for opening the border and implementing the protocols could still be realized. This is what we seek. We are not only doing this from a 2015 perspective, but we know that it will be important and alleviating the burden for 2015.*

*Second of all, we are establishing new and different relations with the Diaspora. I had told at the conference of (Turkish) ambassadors<sup>14</sup> whose comrades were massacred by Armenians the following: ‘The concept of Diaspora has changed. Everyone emigrating from these territories are our Diaspora...’. Not only the Turks, but everyone emigrating from these lands are Diaspora including Armenians, Jews, Greeks, El Turcos, including also the Arabs and Muslims in Brazil, in Argentina. They are our people. They are people whose culture and language is similar to ours.*

*Rather than political decisions, psychology is the new instrument of communication. You will sit down and talk. Our goal is to melt the ice. We are seeking for a new means of communication. Now there is someone sitting across the Armenians and listening to them. I am not a foreign minister who confronts them and says nothing happened in 1915. But they should also not constrict the entire Turkish-Armenian relations to 1915... We do not deny their pain, we understand them. We should work together to do what is necessary. But it is not a one-sided declaration of guilt<sup>15</sup>.*

*Our third preparation is, towards 2015, about the messages we will convey regarding 1915. Within the context of a ‘Just Memory’, we must develop a new language. Concerning this issue I am also preparing to write a book about Ottoman history. I would not use the term genocide, but for those who do I would say it reflects their view. Just memory is partly this: We are not Germans. For us and in our history the idea of ethnic cleansing does not exist, ghetto does not exist. In fact, we are a nation who has also suffered greatly during the same period. In the*

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14 Forth Ambassadors Conference, 23-30 December 2011, Ankara-Edirne.

15 The last sentence has been taken from another source on the President’s statement. Aslı Aydıntaşbaş, “El Turco Açılımı” (The El Turco Opening), *Milliyet*, 7 July 2011.

*Balkans and the Caucasus there are the fears and losses the Muslims have suffered. There have been events experienced which created the paranoia that the Muslims will also be expelled from Anatolia... In order to defend their own land, mistakes, massacres and illegal acts have taken place. But if you compare the (Turkish) soldiers' psychology to the Nazis, no way, if you present them as the killer race, no way. First one must refrain from the ideological reflex facing them which is considering your opponent as evil.*

Based on the Foreign Minister's statements, it could be understood that concerning the Armenian Question, Turkish diplomacy is still working in three areas.

#### **a. Turkey's Relations with Armenia and the Karabakh Conflict**

The Minister has combined these issues under the "Caucasus" heading. From his statements, it is understood that the goal is to achieve a progress in the Karabakh conflict and for the Turkey-Armenia border to be opened based on this progress. This policy is not a new one. It has also tried to be pursued following the failure of the protocols. Concerning this issue, information which could be considered as a new one is the proposal that the Turkish border will be opened if the Armenians withdraw from only one of the seven "rayons" (districts) which surround the Karabakh region and which are occupied by the Armenians. Another point which is as important is that this proposal has also been embraced by Azerbaijan which has accepted to open its borders. While the goal was for Armenia to withdraw from all of the territories (Karabakh + 7 rayons), both countries accepting to open their borders on the condition of withdrawing from only one rayon, although as the first step, is an important concession made to the Armenians. As the withdrawal from one of the rayons is accepted, it does not seem possible henceforth to link the opening of the borders to the total Armenians even partially withdrawing from the territories they have occupied. This is also what the Armenians want who insist on the borders being opened without being linked to any conditions.

The Minister links this approach to "psychological factors" and "internal balances". What is meant by "psychological factors" is the public opinion of Armenia and especially the Diaspora opposing any settlement which is not to Armenia's full advantage or which is not considered as some kind of surrender to Turkey and Azerbaijan. However, on that matter, the country which is in a difficult position is not Turkey or Azerbaijan, but Armenia. However, an initiative to explain to public opinion the truth cannot be seen

in neither the Diaspora nor in Armenia. This means that an agreement to be reached in the future with Turkey and/or Azerbaijan will be very difficult to be embraced by the Armenian public opinion. In fact, as could be recalled, in September 2009 before the protocols were signed, President Sarkisian had conducted meetings in France, the US, Lebanon and Russia in order to convince the Diaspora and was not much welcomed.

Concerning “internal balances”, presumably the Turkish Foreign Minister is referring to the period of elections which Armenia is in. With unrealistic beliefs and expectations dominating Armenia’s public opinion, it is not possible for the Armenians to conclude an agreement with Turkey or Azerbaijan during the election period. Therefore, if some developments towards the settlement of issues the two countries have with Armenia are to take place, it is necessary to wait for the presidential elections to be held in February 2013. On this point, it is noteworthy to recall that presidential elections will also take place in Azerbaijan in the fall of 2013. In short, next year might also not entail the appropriate conditions necessary for the settlement of Azerbaijani problems with Armenia.

On the other hand, Turkey’s attempts to contribute to the resolution of the Karabakh conflict are continuing. During the Summit of Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States taking place at the end of August in Bishkek, Foreign Minister Davutoğlu has said that the Karabakh conflict is an obstacle standing in the way of stability in the South Caucasus, Karabakh and the other occupied territories of Azerbaijan must be liberated, that they are seriously concerned about unsuccessful negotiations on Karabakh, and that it will be difficult to achieve peace, stability and tranquility in the South Caucasus unless the Karabakh conflict is settled peacefully within the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan<sup>16</sup>, Shavars Kocharyan, the Deputy Foreign Minister of Armenia, has replied that Davutoğlu zeroed out his knowledge in the sphere of international law and has said that territorial integrity does not eliminate people’s right of self-determination<sup>17</sup>. This way, he has tried to push the fact that Azeri territories are under Armenian occupation to the background.

In face of the Minsk Group’s attempts continuing for years but never being able to create any results, Foreign Minister Davutoğlu has proposed for Azerbaijan and Armenia to meet in Istanbul and to seek a settlement for the Karabakh issue on a bilateral level<sup>18</sup>. Armenian Foreign Minister Nalbandian

16 “Ahmet Davutoğlu: Liberation of the Azerbaijani Territories Main Direction of Our Foreign Policy”, *APA*, 23 August 2012.

17 “La Réponse de la Diplomatie arménienne au Ministre Turc”, *Armenews*, 3 September 2012.

18 “Turkey, Nagorno-Karabakh and the South Caucasus”, *Today’s Zaman*, 28 August 2012.



has rejected Turkey's mediating efforts and has directed a pointless question of whether the meetings held over Karabakh in various countries including Russia failed just because they were not held in Istanbul. Moreover, he has propounded that Turkish attempts to mediate issues concerning its neighbors (most likely referring to Syria) have never produced positive results, but rather the opposite<sup>19</sup>. It could be seen that whether intentionally or unintentionally, the Armenian Foreign Minister has overlooked Turkey's proposal for Armenia and Azerbaijan to directly hold negotiations without the Minsk Group.

### b. Diaspora

Second of all, Davutoğlu has put emphasis on establishing new and different relations with the Diaspora.

Within this framework, he has said that the concept of Diaspora has changed and that everyone emigrating from Ottoman/Turkish territories (Armenian, Greek, Jew, Arab etc.) are our (Turkey's) Diaspora. He has linked this idea to the culture of these nations being similar to that of Turkey and has expressed that in order to melt the ice, it is necessary to speak to them. It is true that in general, the Christians who have migrated either during the Ottoman or Turkish Republic periods, although to different extents, do not possess positive feelings towards Turkey and the Turks. Although at a very low level, the Turks, as a reaction, also have the same feelings against this group. However, as many years have passed since the events which caused these people to emigrate, it is undoubtedly beneficial to bring forth mutual values rather than issues which separate us and to continue the contacts on this basis.

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By indirectly referring to an issue which the Armenians are the most sensitive, about the view that not significant losses have taken place during the forced migration in 1915, the foreign minister has emphasized that he "is not a foreign minister who says that nothing happened in 1915", but that the Armenians should also not expect Turkey to issue a "one-sided declaration of guilt" regarding these events. Moreover, by saying "we do not deny your pain, we understand them. We should work together to do what is necessary", he has conveyed his desire to conduct research together on the 1915 events. This statement brings to mind Turkey's proposal of a "Commission of Historians" in 2005.

19 "Yerevan Rules out Ankara's Mediation of Karabakh Conflict", *Interfax*, 4 September 2012.

### c. Actions to Be Taken Towards 2015

Concerning this issue, the Minister has spoken about the idea of a “just memory”. Just memory could be defined as not only considering the sufferings of only one side regarding a specific event, but also taking into consideration the pains endured by the other concerning parties. In general, it could be seen that concerning their own history and especially the 1915 events, the Armenians only take into account their own pains and either ignore or undervalue what the others have suffered. This “unjust memory” prevents the events from being addressed and researched in an impartial and scientific manner.

From the Minister’s statements it could be understood that he is in the process of writing a book on Ottoman history and that he will also mention those who support the genocide view; moreover, that the Ottomans are different than the Germans in regards to the genocide allegations and that he will touch upon for instance that ethnic cleansing and ghetto do not exist in Ottoman history. On the other hand, the Minister explains the 1915 Armenian relocation as a result of the concern of the Ottomans for the probability of also being expelled from the last remaining region, Anatolia, remembering the events which took place in the Caucasus and the Balkans before 1915 which caused great sufferings for the Ottomans and many losses. The Minister has said that the attempt to hold on to this last piece of land (Anatolia) has led to some mistakes, massacres and illegal acts to take place. In short, at the origin of the 1915 relocation lie self defense. This is completely different than the “racist hatred” which caused the deaths of six million Jews.

Davutoğlu’s statements are very important and although in few numbers, some negative reactions have been received from the Diaspora. Let us provide some examples: Turkey’s attempt to make contacts with the Armenian Diaspora is a dangerous dialogue, a strategy to divide the Armenians and reduce their national struggle. The Armenians’ national aims entail compensation being paid and amends for the victims of genocide (returning of properties, paying compensation)<sup>20</sup>. Opening of the borders, the utilization of the Trabzon port, returning of Armenian religious monuments to the Istanbul Patriarchate, giving compensation to the victims of genocide and the returning of their ancestors’ properties are small gestures. The Armenians will not accept anything which does not recognize the Armenian genocide allegations. Turkey does not have a Willy Brandt who will kneel down on his knees and beg for forgiveness<sup>21</sup>. Davutoğlu’s statements will

20 Ara Khachatourian, “Davutoğlu’s Revisionism Targets the Diaspora”, *Asbarez*, 13 July 2012.

21 “An Open Letter to Aslı Aydıntaşbaş” *www.armenianlife.com*, 2 August 2012.

not make a positive impact in Armenia and within the Armenian Diaspora. It must not be expected from the Armenians to empathize with the Turks. The Armenians and Armenia are not responsible for the tragedies the Ottomans experienced in the Balkans, Çanakkale and the Middle East. The Armenians expect an apology or at least a deep empathy<sup>22</sup>.

No direct reaction has been received from Armenia towards Davutoğlu's statements. On the other hand, Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian, in a press conference held together with OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier, has responded to a question concerning this issue in the following way<sup>23</sup>:

*You know, unlike such kind of combinations proposed by Turkey, the international community is proposing another combination of three steps: ratification of the Armenian-Turkish protocols without any preconditions; implementation of the reached agreements, again without any preconditions; and refraining from the attempts to link the normalization of the Armenian-Turkish relations with the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue and not meddling in the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue...*

*Turkey failed to undertake serious efforts towards that direction over 97 years. Turkey was unable to face its own history. If Turkey intends to work in the same way in the next three years and proposes 'a combination of some steps' which lead to nowhere, the result is obvious.*

Nalbandian has also displayed his negative stance towards Turkey on another occasion. In a statement made after the signing of the Trabzon Declaration which we mentioned above, by referring to the Karabakh conflict, Foreign Minister Davutoğlu had said that he is concerned about the recent tension arising on the occupied territories and that he has especially been deeply hurt for the martyring of five Azeri soldiers during the latest conflicts<sup>24</sup>. In answer to a journalist's question on what he thinks about Davutoğlu's statement during a press conference held several days later by Nalbandian and OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Eamon Gilmore, Nalbandian has said that his statement sounds racist, that he never heard Davutoğlu being concerned about the killings of Armenian soldiers by the Azeri side and that these sorts of Turkish statements in fact encourage Azerbaijanis' new subversive acts<sup>25</sup>. At

22 "Attempt of Turkey To Repackage Armenian Issue Likely To Fall Short", *Armenpress*, 21 July 2012.

23 "Press conference: The address and answers of the Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs Edward Nalbandian during the joint press conference with Lamberto Zannier, the OSCE Secretary General" [http://mfa.am/en/press-conference/item/2012/07/12/osce\\_sg\\_st/](http://mfa.am/en/press-conference/item/2012/07/12/osce_sg_st/)

24 *TRT Turkish News Center*, 8 June 2012

25 "Press conference: Foreign Minister Nalbandian's address and answers to questions during the press conference with Eamon Gilmore, OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the Republic of Ireland" [http://www.mfa.am/en/press-conference/item/2012/06/12/osce\\_cio\\_perss/](http://www.mfa.am/en/press-conference/item/2012/06/12/osce_cio_perss/)

a conference in which Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Memmedyarov was also present, it is quite normal for Davutoğlu to express his sorrow for the Azerbaijani soldiers who were killed a short while back. However, it is without doubt that accusing Davutoğlu of racism for not mentioning the Armenian soldiers who were killed in the conflicts is not a normal behavior.

In conclusion, the stances of the journalists of both the Diaspora and Armenia and especially that of Armenian Foreign Minister Nalbandian towards Davutoğlu's views are very negative and this negativity prevents the normalization of Turkey-Armenia relations. On the other hand, the rejection of the proposals made openly indicate that the side striving to reach a settlement is Turkey, while the side refusing a settlement is Armenia. When considering that Armenia has great interests in resolving the problems with its neighbors and with Turkey in particular, it is difficult to understand these persistent rejections.

## II – THE US AND TURKEY-ARMENIA RELATIONS

The US shows great effort both in the normalization of Turkey-Armenia relations and developing their own relations with Armenia. However, the reasons for such efforts are not quite clear.

The importance the US attaches to Turkey-Armenia relations could be explained as the desire to resolve the issues between the two countries in order to prevent a crisis from developing, since Turkey has now become the US's most important partner in the Middle East. Concerning this issue, the US Government is playing an important role, constantly warns the sides to settle the problems between them, makes some suggestions to this event or even encourages some persons to bring forth proposals<sup>26</sup>.

Among the reasons for the US wanting to develop its bilateral relations with Armenia, the desire to have a say in this country which neighbors Iran and to create the opportunity for Armenia, which is more under the influence of Russia each day, to achieve a balance in its foreign relations could come to mind.

The importance attached to Armenia by the US has caused Foreign Minister Hillary Clinton to visit Armenia twice in the last two years<sup>27</sup>. By most likely taking into consideration the reactions she received from Turkey for her visit

26 For information see: Facts and Comments, Efforts to Revive Turkey-Armenia Relations, *Review of Armenian Studies*, No. 25, pp.168-176.

27 Hillary Clinton's first visit to Armenia took place on 4 and 5 July 2010. See: Facts and Comments, *Review of Armenian Studies*, No. 22, pp. 40-42

in 2010<sup>28</sup>, she has not visited the Genocide Memorial in Yerevan this year, but has tried to create some kind of a balance by giving awards to the Armenians who contributed to the development of human rights.

The part of this year's visit which concerns Turkey-Armenia relations could be summarized as follows.

In the press conference held by Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian with Hillary Clinton, he has said the following in regards to Armenia's relations with Turkey:

*More than once we have expressed our common approach on the normalization of the Armenian-Turkish relations. That position has been and remains the normalization of relations without preconditions. You have made an exclusive contribution to this process. Thank you very much. Unfortunately, the ball continues to remain in the Turkish court.*

On the other hand, Hillary Clinton has responded in the following way:

*We also discussed ways to improve Armenia's ties with its neighbors and increase stability and security throughout the region. To that end, we are committed to seeing Armenia and Turkey normalize relations, because we think this is a path forward to a better future for the citizens of both countries and we strongly support ratification of the Turkey-Armenia protocols without preconditions. We commend Armenia and President Sarkisian for the leadership they have shown on this issue<sup>29</sup>.*

In response to a question on what the US is doing to develop the relations between the countries of the Caucasus, especially considering that Armenia does not trade with Turkey or Azerbaijan, Clinton has said that their greatest interest is to see Armenia and Turkey move together toward normalization, that they strongly support the efforts made in this direction, that they want the ratification of the protocols without preconditions and that as she had said two years ago, the ball still remains in Turkey's court. Furthermore, she has stated that she is encouraged with more public discussion taking place in Turkey and Armenia about these issues, because honest, open, constructive conversations are important for both sides to move forward<sup>30</sup>.

28 Facts and Comments, *Review of Armenian Studies*, No.22, pp 97-98

29 "Remarks With Armenian Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian" by Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary of State, Presidential Palace, Yerevan, Armenia, June 4, 2012, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2012/06/191781.htm>

30 Ibid

Moreover, the US Foreign Minister has indicated that there is no linkage between the protocols process and the Karabakh negotiations and that these are separate issues. By saying that the US will be actively involved in the resolution of both these issues, she has expressed that these countries (Azerbaijan, Turkey, and Armenia) should have open borders, should work together, should trade, and have people-to-people exchanges, because it would be mutually beneficial to all concerned parties<sup>31</sup>.

During the same press conference, in response to the question of Dashnak prone newspaper Yerkir “here are claims on the highest level from Turkey that some negotiations are conducted on the Armenian-Turkish normalization. Are those claims corresponding to reality?”, Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian has said that “negotiations are neither conducted, nor could they be conducted, as the negotiations are over and they resulted in the signing of the protocols, which Turkey refuses to respect and implement by putting forward preconditions” and that “Turkey has no right to put forward any preconditions. It is also the approach of the international community”<sup>32</sup>.

This press conference is particularly important for clarifying what the US and Armenia thinks about Turkey’s policy towards Armenia (its approach towards the protocols).

In order to make the protocols gain functionality, Turkey expects a significant development to take place regarding the Karabakh issue. On this issue and on the other aspects of Turkey-Armenia relations, Turkey is prepared to carry out negotiations with Armenia. However, since Armenia regards Turkey drawing a linkage between the protocols and Karabakh as a precondition, it is unwilling to conduct negotiations with Turkey on this issue and on other issues relating to relations between the two countries.

With the press conference mentioned above, the US Foreign Minister’s stance towards this issue known all along has been confirmed. In summary, Clinton has put forward:

- a. That they support the normalization of relations without preconditions and urge the ratification of the protocols without preconditions,
- b. That there is no linkage between the protocols process and the Karabakh negotiations and that they are separate issues,

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31 Ibid

32 Press conference - Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian’s and US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s statements and answers during joint press conference - 04.06.2012 - <http://www.mfa.am/en/press-conference/item/2012/06/04/clinton/>

- c. That “the ball continues to remain in the Turkish court”, in other words, the steps from now on must be taken by Turkey.

This way, it is clear that Clinton has fully embraced Armenian views; in other words, does not accept Turkey’s approach towards this issue.

The view that the protocols should be ratified and implemented without being linked to the Karabakh issue not only belongs to the US, but also to the European Union. In fact, during an interview held on July 3<sup>rd</sup> just before his visit to Yerevan, President of the European Council (European Union President in short) Herman Van Rompuy has said that “the European Union encourages Armenia and Turkey to normalize their bilateral relations without preconditions”<sup>33</sup>. By trying not to address this issue, it is known that Russia’s stance is also the same. In short, Armenia’s views on the protocols is accepted in general.

*The view that the protocols should be ratified and implemented without being linked to the Karabakh issue not only belongs to the US, but also to the European Union.*

Therefore, Armenia’s approach which rejects the protocols being linked to the Karabakh issue, wants the immediate ratification of these documents, refuses to re-negotiate with Turkey and criticizes Turkey in a very harsh language at every opportunity must be explained by the support it receives concerning the protocols.

Another point which must be addressed is despite there being no doubt that the US supports Armenia regarding the protocols, whether it truly attaches great importance to these documents being ratified by the Turkish Grand National Assembly. Three days after her visit to Yerevan, Hillary Clinton has visited Turkey on 7 July 2012 to attend a conference on combating terrorism and has also arrived a second time on 11 August to discuss the Syria issue. In the press news as regards to these visits, there have been no indications that the Turkey-Armenia relations have been addressed. In this context, it is noteworthy to point out that it was quite normal for Turkey-Armenia relations to remain in the background while issues such as Syria and the Middle East in general were on the agenda.

However, the US’s desire for the protocols to be finalized is also a reality. Although it has not distinctly pressured Turkey on this issue, it is apparent that the US is working in this direction. In fact, with the encouragement and even financial aid of the US, after the protocols reached a deadlock, rather

33 “The Exclusive Interview of Armenpress With President of the Council of Europe, Herman Van Rompuy”, *Armenpress*, 29 June 2012.

intensive contacts have been and continue to be made between the journalists, students and businessman of both countries. Detailed information on this subject has been provided in our previous Journal<sup>34</sup>.

The most recent American initiative on this issue has been made by US Ambassador to Armenia John A. Heffern. In an interview delivered to a Turkish newspaper<sup>35</sup>, Heffern has noted three ways for normalizing relations between Turkey and Armenia. These include the ratification and implementation of the protocols, opening the Kars-Gyumri railroad to service which is not used due to the border remaining closed and cross-border exchanges between the journalists, students and businessman of both countries.

Among these, the opening of the Kars-Gyumri railroad is a new proposal. However, since a railroad transports both passengers and goods, if this proposal is accepted then it will mean that the Turkey-Armenia border will have opened de facto. In other words, opening of the Turkish border which is Armenia's greatest request will be fulfilled before the implementation of the protocols. It is unclear how this "by-pass" operation will benefit Turkey. On the other hand, Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia are constructing a railroad from Kars to the city of Ahalkelek of Georgia which will be opened next year. Turkey will be using this railroad for its transport to the Caucasus and beyond. The importance of the railroad opening on time has also been indicated in the declaration concerning the cooperation between Turkey, Georgia and Azerbaijan whose Foreign Ministers have adopted on 8 June 2012 in Trabzon<sup>36</sup>.

The US Ambassador in Yerevan have noted these proposals by putting emphasis on 2015, which is the 100th anniversary of the genocide allegations and the year in which Armenia and the Diaspora are planning on organizing large activities to push Turkey to recognize these allegations. By expressing that this year is a good opportunity to bring the two countries together, the Ambassador has said that a win-win situation should develop for both countries and not a situation where one country will lose and the other will win. These quite vague statements may mean that if Turkey-Armenia relations are normalized and the border is opened, then the activities planned on being carried out in 2015 against Turkey will be cancelled or will decrease. We believe that Armenia, which has officially undertaken some commitments for 2015 towards its public opinion and the Diaspora, will not

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34 *Review of Armenian Studies*, No. 24, pp.41-44

35 "2015 Will Be Opportunity To Normalize Ties With Armenia", *Today's Zaman*, 8 June 2012.

36 "Trabzon Declaration Of The Ministers Of Foreign Affairs Of The Republic Of Azerbaijan, Georgia And The Republic Of Turkey, 08 June 2012, Trabzon" [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/trabzon—declaration-of-the-ministers-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan\\_-georgia-and-the-republic-of-turkey\\_-08-june-2012\\_-trabzon.en.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/trabzon—declaration-of-the-ministers-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-azerbaijan_-georgia-and-the-republic-of-turkey_-08-june-2012_-trabzon.en.mfa)



be willing to abandon these activities and will also not be able to influence the Diaspora, who anyhow will commemorate 2015 in a dashing way.

Turkey normalizing its relations with Armenia and opening the border by ignoring the fact that an important portion of Azeri territories have been occupied by Armenia and approximately one million Azerbaijanis was obliged to abandon these territories, will only be to Armenia's advantage. Such a development will not only leave Azerbaijan on its own against Armenia, but will also lead to negative developments to take place between Turkey and Azerbaijan, creating the conviction among the Azerbaijanis and most of the Turkish public opinion that Turkey has favored the Armenians over the Azerbaijanis. However, the US fails to see these drawbacks or disregards them, but these points are very important for Turkey and only working towards normalizing Turkey-Armenia relations by putting aside Azerbaijan's problems under today's conditions is not to Turkey's benefit. Instead, also taking Azerbaijan into consideration and trying to resolve the issues of the three countries together or in parallel processes seems more likely especially following the Armenian presidential elections.

### III – US ELECTIONS AND THE ARMENIANS

On 6 November 2012, US Presidential Elections, House of Representatives Elections and elections for 33 seats of the 100 seats in the Senate were held.

Elections in the US, where the world's oldest and most rooted democracy exists, extend to a broad area. Besides the US President, the Senate, members of the House, state governors, state senates and house of representatives of states or members of organizations equivalent to these, mayors in cities, members of municipal councils, sometimes judges and prosecutors, police commissioners, and even some school principals are appointed through elections.

In general, Armenians show interest in all elections and actively participates in election campaigns by taking office and/or giving donations. One of the other reasons causing the Armenians to act this way is its dependence on the assistance and support of other states since neither Armenia nor the Diaspora has the strength to achieve their claims from Turkey and Azerbaijan, which is why it is necessary to assist candidates who support Armenian views.

#### 1. Possible Number of Armenian Voters

Diaspora Armenians argue that 1.5 million Armenians live in the US, but

they fail to prove this through documents. However, based on the 2010 population census, the number of Armenians is 474.509<sup>37</sup>. Since censuses are made through declarations, this number represents those who still consider themselves Armenian and officially declare this. There are also those who are Armenian in origin but as a result of assimilation or integration consider themselves to be entirely American; their numbers is not exactly known but is assumed to be not that low.

In determining how many Armenians voted during the elections, it is normal for these votes to come from the 474.509 individuals who declared their selves to be Armenian. It is presumed that a significant number of them have voted by mainly taking into consideration Armenian claims such as the recognition of the genocide allegations, claiming territory and compensation from Turkey, and annexing Karabakh to Armenia or making it an independent state. Within this framework, it could be said that as a round sum, the number of militant Armenians in the US is 400.000. Taking into consideration the children and elderly, this number decreases further. However, since around 239 million electors exist in the US, the number of Armenian electors is not important. It is obvious that Armenians do not have nationwide influence and this influence is felt in places where the Armenian population is denser, especially in areas like Los Angeles.

The stance of the Armenians in US elections will be addressed under three separate sections of ethnic Armenian candidates, members of Congress which the Armenians support and the Armenians' attitude in the Presidential Elections.

## 2. Ethnic Armenian Candidates

Despite all attempts, no Armenian has been elected to the US Senate or the House of Representatives until now. However, it has been indicated in some sources that Ana Eshoo and Jackie Speier, who were elected from California to the federal House of Representatives, are Armenian in origin<sup>38</sup>. Although these individuals have voted in favor of the Armenian views, they are not very active in the recognition of these views.

On the opposite, there are Armenians who have been elected to State Assemblies. During the elections on November 6, the number and names of the Armenians being elected to the State Assembly are provided below<sup>39</sup>.

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37 "2010 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates: Total Ancestry Reported", *United States Census Bureau*.

38 "Elections Bring Broad Bipartisan Victories for ANCA Endorsed Candidates", *Asbarez*, 7 November 2012.

39 Garen Yegparian, "2012 Election: The Aftermath", *Asbarez*, 9 November 2012.

- 2 persons to the California State Assembly (Khacho Achadjian, Adrin Nazarian)
- 1 person to the Idaho State Senate (Al Shoushtarian)
- 1 person to the Iowa State Senate (Tim Kapucian)
- 1 person to the Kentucky State House of Representatives (Marie Lou Marzian)
- 2 persons to the Massachusetts State House of Representatives (James Miceli, John Fresolo)
- 1 person to the Minnesota State House of Representatives (King Banaian)
- 2 persons to the New Hampshire State House of Representatives (Charlene Takesian, Gary Azarian)
- 2 persons to the Rhode Island State House of Representatives (Jared Nunes, Katherine Kazarian)



Apart from these individuals, the Armenian press also attaches importance to the election of Armenians to some seats that are few in numbers. At the top of these is Scott Avedisian being re-elected as mayor of the city of Warwick, Rhode Island. In this context, the others being elected are as follows: Brad Avakian as the Oregon State Labor Commissioner, Peter Koutoujian as the Middlesex County sheriff in Massachusetts, and Linda Arzoumanian as the Superintendent to the Pima County School in Arizona<sup>40</sup>.

Since the number of members in State Assemblies are reflected in thousands, the election of only 12 Armenians to these assemblies is not significant in number. On the other hand, some Armenians being elected to assemblies in states where the Armenians are few in numbers, such as Idaho, Iowa and Kentucky, give the impression that they have won not for being Armenian, but for their personal abilities. Lastly, it will be correct to view the non-election of Armenians to states like New York or New Jersey, in which it is known that quite a number of Armenians live, as a failure.

### 3. Senate and House of Representatives Elections and Armenians

Concerning Senate and House of Representative candidates who are not Armenian in origin but are supported by the Armenians, ANCA (Armenia National Committee of America), a Dashnak organization that is followed by a majority of the American Armenians, had made suggestions to the Armenians before the election on which candidates to vote for. For this, as it will be explained further below, it had sent a questionnaire to the candidates for them to answer and taking these responses and the past conduct of the candidates into consideration, each candidate was given a grade on supporting “Armenian cases”<sup>41</sup> while a list of candidates to be voted for was announced<sup>42</sup>. When studying this list, it could be seen that Armenians were called to vote for a total of 145 candidates from 31 states, including 15 senators and 130 House members. However, there are 50 states in the US and the total of the 33 senators and the 435 House members who have to be voted is 468. According to this, ANCA has not made any suggestions for the remaining 19 states and has failed to indicate on who to vote for the remaining 2/3<sup>rd</sup> seats of the total 468. This situation is another indicator that the Armenian votes are low in the US.

At the end of the elections, it was declared that 12 of the 15 ANCA endorsed senators and while 118 of the 130 endorsed House members emerged

40 “Harut Sassounian: Armenian-Americans Score Major Gains in US Elections”, *Armenian Weekly*, 3 November 2012.

41 These grades of A, B, C, D range from good to bad and each of these letters are evaluated as a plus (+) or minus (-). Based on this, A+ is the highest grade.

42 “ANCA Announces 2012 Congressional Endorsements”, *Asbarez*, 23 October 2012.

victorious<sup>43</sup>. Therefore, there has been a decrease of approximately 10% in the number of those in the Congress expected to support Armenian views. However, this decrease is not so important to diminish the influence of the Armenians within the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Meanwhile, as a result of joining some electoral districts in California, Howard Berman and Brad Sherman, who are both members of the Democrat Party and have shown great efforts to support Armenian claims, have become opponents after ending up in the same electoral district. Brad Sherman has won the election. Therefore, there is now one person less in the number of those being very active in the House of Representatives to support the Armenians. Berman was the Chairman of the House Committee on Foreign affairs until 2010. It had drawn attention by utilizing the privilege of his chair for the adoption of resolutions regarding the recognition of the Armenian genocide allegations. In this context, Berman acting out of the ordinary, had took position in favor of the adoption of a draft resolution in 2010 which foresaw the recognition of the genocide allegations, had granted an above-normal time limit for the voting and had even left his seat to search for members in the corridors who could vote in favor of the draft and at the end, causing the bill to be adopted<sup>44</sup>.

*Berman acting out of the ordinary, had took position in favor of the adoption of a draft resolution in 2010 which foresaw the recognition of the genocide allegations, had granted an above-normal time limit for the voting and had even left his seat to search for members in the corridors who could vote in favor of the draft and at the end, causing the bill to be adopted.*

#### 4. Presidential Election

As mentioned above, ANCA prepares a questionnaire before each election and sends them to all candidates, including presidential candidates, asking them to respond to some questions.

This year's Questionnaire entailed 28 questions. These questions are divided into the following sections: US Recognition of the Armenian Genocide, US Support for Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, Conditions on US Aid to Azerbaijan, the Turkish Blockade of Armenia, Self-Determination for Nagorno-Karabakh, Presidential Visitations, Armenian American Participation in Government and Darfur.

43 "Elections Bring Broad Bipartisan Victories for ANCA Endorsed Candidates", *Asharez*, 7 November 2012.

44 *Review of Armenian Studies*, No. 21, p. 35.

In order to give an idea about their content, we are providing the questions in the “US Recognition of the Armenian Genocide” section below:

- As President, will you officially and publicly recognize the Armenian Genocide as a genocide?
- What are your views on Congressional legislation affirming the Armenian Genocide?
- What steps will you take to help end Turkey’s denial of the Armenian Genocide?
- Will your ambassadorial nominees to Armenia and Turkey recognize the Armenian Genocide?
- Will you oppose “commission” called to determine if there was an Armenian Genocide?

If candidates respond positively to these questions, they will be giving their written commitments beforehand regarding these issues, in particular working towards the Armenian genocide allegations being recognized, supporting Armenia’s policy towards Karabakh and trying to obtain financial aid for Armenia and Karabakh. It is quite normal for those candidates, whose polling districts have a sizeable number of Armenians living there, to respond positively to these questions. On the other hand, rather than responding to the questions, some candidates, in order to avoid commitments, prefer sending a letter which entails more general statements.

While the Republicans’ candidate John McCain had refrained from making certain promises during the 2008 elections, Barack Obama had made an explicit promise to recognize and work towards the recognition of the Armenian genocide allegations and had repeated this stance verbally several times. However, after being elected, by taking into consideration Turkey’s importance for US foreign policy, he had abandoned his promises made to the Armenians and consequently was strongly criticized by them. Hillary Clinton had also responded positively to Armenian claims during the period in which she tried to be the presidential candidate from the Democrat Party, but again after becoming Foreign Minister, had characterized the genocide allegations as a historical debate and was also criticized by the Armenians. On the other hand, despite all their attempts, representatives of the Armenian community have not been able to meet with President Obama and Hillary Clinton within the last four years.

This year before the elections, ANCA, by a letter sent to President Obama<sup>45</sup>, asked him to discuss with Armenian Americans' leaders the Administration's policies on Armenian issues and on this occasion, had indicated that since Obama became President, they have requested for such a meeting which has not yet taken place. Furthermore, it has put forth that the absence of a direct dialogue between the President and Armenian American constituents is unhealthy both for American democracy as well as for diplomacy.

By also sending a letter to the other presidential candidate Mitt Romney, ANCA had asked him to publicly outline the policies and priorities that he would pursue as President on issues of special concern to voters of Armenian heritage and also invited him to hold a meeting with the representative group of the Armenian community, clarifying his priorities and explore ways in which they can work together in the months and years to come<sup>46</sup>. On the other hand, opposite to President Obama, they asked Romney to respond to the questionnaire mentioned above.

However, neither President Obama nor Mitt Romney have responded to these letters. This unexpected situation has created great surprise among the Armenians and has caused them to believe that they are not paid much attention and are even disdained.

No explanation has been provided on why the two presidential candidates have not replied to these letters. However, it is not difficult to guess what the reason could be. Although both were aware that it could lead to a loss of votes, neither of the candidates wanted to listen to exaggerated Armenian claims and let alone to make commitments beforehand. On the other hand, when examining the issue more closely, it could be seen that the two candidates do not need Armenian votes for different reasons.

Since it was foreseen that President Obama will win the election in California and in states on the east coast like New York, New Jersey and even Massachusetts in which the Armenians are great in numbers, he is not dependent on the votes of Armenians.

As for Republican candidate Mitt Romney, it could be understood that he might not have attached importance to Armenian votes since he expects to win votes from states in which there are few Armenians. Despite serving as governor of Massachusetts in which the Armenians are relatively great in numbers, Romney is known as not being much interested with Armenian issues.

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45 "ANCA Again Calls on President Obama To Meet With Armenian American Leadership", *ANCA Press Release*, 16 August 2012.

46 "ANCA Invites Romney to Share Views on Armenian American Issues", *ANCA Press Release*, 17 August 2012.

On the other hand, it is also possible that the staff of the candidates agreed not to respond to the questions or to receive an Armenian delegation in order to prevent the bargains on who the Armenians will vote in favor of.

On 15 October 2012, 20 days to the elections, ANCA has indicated in a declaration that none of the presidential candidates have earned the formal support of the Armenian Community for presidential elections and therefore has no plan to issue an endorsement in the race for the White House<sup>47</sup>.

ANCA's stance has almost left those Armenians on their own who had always voted until now for those candidates taking Armenian claims into notice. Therefore, it could be seen that the Armenians voted in the presidential election not as militants, but as ordinary American citizens, according to the candidates' policies regarding economic, social and foreign policy issues.

Following the election, ANCA and the great Armenian organization, the AAA (Armenian Assembly of America), have congratulated President Obama through statements they have published.

In its statement, the AAA has said with the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 'genocide' nearing, the Assembly expects that President Obama will be more explicit in acknowledging the genocide recognition, work to reconcile Turkey with its past and thereby help in the cause of genocide prevention around the world<sup>48</sup>.

On the other hand, ANCA, in more general statements, has indicated that they look forward to getting to work right away with the Obama Administration and the incoming Congress to make progress on the Armenian American community's public policy priorities<sup>49</sup>.

As was the situation before, it is again not expected that well known Armenian claims such as the recognition of the genocide allegations, Turkey giving compensation and making territorial concessions to Armenia, recognition of Karabakh as a separate state and providing aid to Armenia and Karabakh, will be welcomed in the White House since this will create serious problems for the US. On the opposite, it could be possible to receive support in the Congress to a certain degree for some of these claims. However, this again depends on the composition of the Congress and the balances of power in the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate. Regarding this issue, it will be possible to obtain an idea following the elections for committees in the Congress.

47 "ANCA Withholds Support For Presidential Candidates", *Asbarez*, 15 October 2012.

48 "Armenian Assembly Congratulates President Obama on Re-Election", *Armenian Assembly of America*, 7 November 2012.

49 "ANCA Issues Statement on 2012 Elections", *Asbarez*, 7 November 2012.



## IV – FRANCE AND THE ARMENIAN QUESTION

France is a country which has shown special effort to maintain friendly relations with the Republic of Turkey. Truly, no significant problem has existed between the two countries during the sixty year period from the 1920's until the 1980's, where even the Alexandretta Affair was easily resolved in 1939. But, a military coup taking place in Turkey in 1980 and the Socialists coming to power in France, who attach great importance to human rights, have caused tensions to arise between the two countries for some time. Moreover, Armenian terror, which targeted Turkish diplomats, being most active in France during that period and the particular unwillingness among the French to combat Armenian terrorism had further effected relations negatively. Since free elections took place in Turkey at the end of 1983 and Armenian terror targeted other nations besides the Turks including the French in the same year, the main areas of dispute were eliminated and some improvement was observed in the relations between the two countries.

### 1. The Punishment of Those “Denying” the Armenian Genocide Allegations

Fifteen years later in 2001, the adoption of a law in France which recognized the Armenian genocide allegations had caused tension in the relations between the two countries for some time. However, the essential issue has arisen after France started objecting since 2005 to Turkey's membership to the European Union. In order not to have two important disputes with Turkey, the French Governments have found it appropriate to push one of them to the background and in order that the Armenian Question would not upset Turkey, they have prevented the adoption of a law in the French Parliament which foresaw the punishment of those denying the Armenian genocide allegations.

President Nicolas Sarkozy has also adopted this policy and implemented it for some time. However, when public opinion polls in 2011 have shown that it will not be easy for him to be re-elected as President and that his opponent François Hollande has a real chance, he has started taking some initiatives and introducing new policies. One of them has been to ensure the adoption of the draft law penalizing those denying the Armenian genocide allegations which was prevented until then. Sarkozy has also attempted to establish close relations with Armenia.

With the President exerting his authority, the draft law delayed for about six

years, has been adopted on 23 January 2012. However, numerous parliamentarians within both assemblies of France are against “memory laws”, this law has been submitted to the Constitutional Council and on 28 February 2012, the Council has found the law to be contradictory to the French Constitution and has repealed it. While on the one hand President Sarkozy has expressed that he will draft and submit a new bill to the Assembly, on the other hand he has continued his efforts to gain Armenian votes through some uncommon gestures like receiving the Armenian representatives at the Elysée Palace, delivering a speech at the genocide memorial in Paris on April 24 and visiting the Armenians in Marseille.

*Unlike Sarkozy, France’s new President aspires for the Armenian issue to be addressed in tranquility and through negotiations and for relations with Turkey to be strengthened.*

However, none of these have produced any results and he has lost the elections. Apart from the Armenian votes not being that many which could influence the results of the elections, François Hollande, although not making as imposing gestures as Sarkozy, but embracing Armenian views as much as Sarkozy has, also plays a role in this outcome<sup>50</sup>.

Unlike Sarkozy, France’s new President aspires for the Armenian issue to be addressed in tranquility and through negotiations and for relations with Turkey to be strengthened. A short while after being elected, during the NATO Summit in which he has met with President Gül, Hollande has said that they should not waste time with past misunderstandings, that it is also his desire to bring relations to their former level and that Turkish and French ministers should come together often<sup>51</sup>.

Prime Minister Erdoğan has met with President François Hollande at the United Nations Rio G20 Summit on 21 June 2012. In this meeting, they have agreed to open a new page in bilateral relations, to contribute to Turkey’s EU membership bid and to especially boost economic relations. Erdoğan has also invited Hollande to Turkey, while the President has indicated that this will be privilege for him<sup>52</sup>.

The most important result of the Hollande-Erdoğan meeting has been the elimination of some measures which Turkey took against France. Upon the adoption of the bill in the French National Assembly which punishes those denying the Armenian genocide allegations, Prime Minister Erdoğan, without

50 For the developments before and after the law adopted on 23 January 2012 regarding the punishment of those denying the genocide allegations see: *Review of Armenian Studies* No. 24, pp.7-62 and No. 25, pp.192-201.

51 *Review of Armenian Studies* No. 25, p.200.

52 “Turkish PM Meets French President”, *AA*, 21 June 2012.

waiting for the bill to be adopted in the Senate and become a law, had declared on 22 December 2012 that some measures would be taken against France<sup>53</sup>. Turkey continued to enforce these measures even after the French Constitutional Court found this law to be contradictory to the Constitution, because the Constitutional Court's decision did not bring any change to the approach of the French Government and it was indicated that the bill would be submitted to the National Assembly once again. Removing the taken measures following the Hollande-Erdoğan meeting could be explained by Prime Minister Erdoğan's conviction that the new French Government has changed its stance towards Turkey.

By visiting France on 5 July 2012, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu has met with French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius. In the press conference organized after the talks, in response to a question on whether or not a new bill would be prepared for the punishment of those denying the Armenian genocide allegations, Fabius has said that this is a sensitive issue for French politicians, that the law adopted earlier was repealed by the French Constitutional Council and that if the same path is followed (if the same law is adopted) then it is evident that the Constitutional Council will also repeal it, therefore it is not possible to follow the same path, because the result will be the same. Furthermore, he has indicated that they hope for reconciliation to take place between Turkey and Armenia, they will support efforts in this direction and wants discussions to take place in Turkey or France to reduce the tensions. On the other hand, by pointing out that Turkey proposed in 2005 for this matter to be addressed by historians, Davutoğlu has said "we are ready for all forms of cooperation without politicizing history" and "we are against all forms of exploitation of the people's pains with a one sided approach by politicians"<sup>54</sup>.

It is crucial to emphasize Laurent Fabius's statements made in this press conference.

We believe that the most important statements of the French Minister are the following:

- a. That they hope reconciliation will develop between Turkey and Armenia that they will support all efforts made in this direction. This statement is suitable to Turkey's stance which argues that some kind of an agreement should be reached with Armenia. But, it contradicts the position of Armenia which is not willing to negotiate unless the protocols are ratified without being linked to any preconditions.

53 *Review of Armenian Studies*, No.24, pp.35-36

54 "“Ermeni kartını” geri çektiler” (They Withdrew the Armenian Card) <http://www.gercekgundem.com/?p=472302>, 5 July 2012 and <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/diplomatie-tv/> published on the same date

- b. The French Minister has said that whether in Turkey or France, they want discussions to take place in order to reduce the tensions. This statement is close to Turkey's proposal for the 1915 events to be discussed by historians and other specialists. In fact, Davutoğlu has reminded in the same press conference that he had proposed for this issue to be addressed by historians. However, as known, Armenians are against the genocide, which they believe is true, to be discussed in any way.
- c. Laurent Fabius's statements regarding the law which foresee the punishment of those denying the genocide allegations has drawn great attention in Turkey and particularly in France. The French Minister has said that since this bill had been repealed by the Constitutional Council, then "following the same path"; in other words, attempting to reintroduce the bill which was rejected once again would create the same result, being rejected again by the Constitutional Council. While this statement has caused some concerns for the Armenians that France had given up on punishing those who deny the genocide allegations, it has led to the emerging of some hopes in Turkey. The point to pay attention to here is that the French Minister has not addressed the essence of the issue, but has referred to its form. The essence is the punishment of those denying the genocide allegations. The Minister has not said that they have abandoned the essence, but has only said that trying to turn this bill into law to reach this aim will not yield any results.

As could be presumed, Laurent Fabius's statements have quite been received adversely by the French Armenians. Apart from some articles which criticize Fabius, the Co-ordination Council of Armenian Organizations of France have issued a declaration on the same day the Turkish and French ministers met and in summary, have stated<sup>55</sup> the following: that they greatly disapprove Fabius's statements, the French citizens of Armenian origin feel they have been betrayed, that François Hollande had guaranteed while he was presidential candidate to submit a new text to the Parliament regarding the punishment of those denying the Armenian genocide allegations, but that recently the Foreign Minister adopted an opposite approach to the President, and that the Armenians of French origin want an explanation. Moreover, questions like whether France has easily submitted to Turkey's "commands", whether François Hollande has betrayed the Armenians who had supported him and whether the President decided to sacrifice the French of Armenian origin due to the pressures and threats of Turkish authorities. The declaration

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55 Communiqué du CCAF, "Pas de Nouvelle Loi Sur le Genocide armenien d'Après Laurent Fabius", *Armenews*, 6 July 2012.

asked at the same time for President Hollande to receive the Co-ordination Council of Armenian Organizations of France without delay.

Articles have also been published in the Armenian press in France which describe the Fabius-Davutoğlu meeting as a betrayal<sup>56</sup>, allege that the Armenians have been deceived<sup>57</sup>, argue that Ankara interferes in the internal affairs of France<sup>58</sup>, and indicate that France has not kept its promise and has abandoned the Armenians<sup>59</sup>.

This outcry has created the desired results. By phoning Franck Papazian, the Co-Chair of the Co-ordination Council of Armenian Organizations of France, President Hollande has said that he is devoted to his promise, a bill on punishing the genocide allegations will be put to vote and that he will receive Committee members in July to discuss the preparation of this text<sup>60</sup>. Immediately issuing a statement, Papazian has expressed that he never had doubts about President Hollande's sincerity and that he will meet next week with the President of the Socialist Group in the National Assembly Bruno Le Roux to discuss the phases of the adoption of the denial law<sup>61</sup>. Following these developments, Papazian has indicated that a new bill would be submitted to the Assembly by the French Government in autumn<sup>62</sup>. On the other hand, President of the Council of Armenian Associations of Europe Alexis Govdjian has said that the new bill would be presented to the French Parliament in November at the latest, but this has not taken place<sup>63</sup> and at the end of the year, Hollande has not received any Armenian delegation to discuss that matter.

First of all, although it is expected that the new bill will be easily adopted in the National Assembly, it is not possible to say the same for the Senate. The bill could be prevented there.

Secondly, in order for the bill to be reviewed by the Constitutional Council, it must be submitted to the Council by 60 deputies or 60 senators. If these numbers are not reached and the bill fails to be submitted to the Council, it will be considered as approved even if its text is exactly the same as the bill which was repealed on 23 January 2012. However, since the number of

56 "Fabius-Davutoğlu: La Dernière Trahison", *Armenews*, 6 July 2012.

57 "Hollande-Fabius Mème Combat? Bienvenus au Royaume de la Tromperie", *Armenews*, 6 July 2012.

58 "Ankara Décidera de la Politique Intérieure da la France", *Collectif VAN*, 6 July 2012.

59 "La France Abandonne Ses Promesses et Lâche les Arméniens", *Armenews*, 7 July 2012.

60 "Loi Anti-Négationniste", *Communiqué du CCAF*, 7 July 2012.

61 *Armenews*, 8 July 2012.

62 "Lé Génocide Arménien: Projet de Loi à l'Automne Selon CCAF", *Armenews*, 10 July 2012.

63 "Ermenilerin İddiası: İnkâr Yasası Kasım'da Hazır" (The Armenians' Allegation: Law of Denial is Ready in November), *Hürriyet*, 6 August 2012.

deputies and senators who oppose “memory laws” are quite high, we believe that it is possible to reach the required number of 60 deputies or especially 60 senators objecting to it.

In this situation, a text has to be prepared which the Constitutional Council will not be able to oppose. It is difficult to predict how this will be done. Based on the point that the Constitutional Council has not rejected the Armenian genocide thesis and attaches importance to freedom of expression, it could be presumed that a bill will be prepared which does not harm freedom of expression or a bill which is a repetition of the European Union Framework Decision being submitted to the Assembly could come to mind. However, since Armenians put emphasis on punishment and freedom of expression will highly limit the scope of penalties, it is very doubtful that these formulas will please the French Armenians.

François Hollande, wanting to keep distant, for the time being, from the bill on punishing those denying the genocide allegations, has also become apparent during President Sarkisian’s visit to France on 12 November 2012.

The chapters of the textbooks which address this issue entirely embrace Armenian views. It could be seen that only Armenian or Armenian advocating sources have been used, while no references have been made to any Turkish/Ottoman source or document and furthermore, there has been no mention that there are many historians, including French ones, who put forth that the 1915 events are not genocide. It is understood that these textbooks will be taught in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade in France (8<sup>th</sup> grade according to the Turkish education system).

Moreover, photographs have also been included in the chapters. Some of them depict images of cadavers, hangings of Armenians, and Armenian children being killed. It is understood that most of the pictures belong to a German officer named Armin T. Wegner who served in the Ottoman Army. It has been known all along that this person was against the Ottomans and it has never been proven that the depictions in the pictures actually belong to the Armenians.

Meanwhile, there is no consensus on the number of Armenians who have been murdered. Although the number of 1.5 million has been used, numbers such as 650.000, 800.000 and 1.200.000 have also been expressed in the textbooks.

Similarly, it could be seen that an objective style has also not been used in the texts and sometimes the most extreme statements or entirely fabricated sources have been used. Let us provide two examples:

Title of the Book: Histoire-Géographie 3e

Author: Martin Ivernet & Benjamin Villemagne

*The telegraph dated 15 September 1915 which Talat Pasha sent to the Aleppo Governorate: "As was informed before, the Government has decided to exterminate all Armenians living in Turkey... Regardless of them being women, children, disabled... it is necessary to put an end to their existence".*

*A testimony of an Armenian named Nvart Mahokian: ...the ground was full of heads that were cut and human body parts... The Euphrates was dragging corpses... We were not allowed to drink water, those who wanted to drink was shot down by the gendarme".*

Title of the Book: Histoire- Géographie 3e

Author: Christine Dalbet and Danielle Le Prado-Madaule

*In the beginning of 1915, a secret meeting of the Committee of Union and Progress was held to organize the genocide to which Talat Pasha also attended and instructions were sent to governors on this issue. The 5<sup>th</sup> article of this instruction is as follows: the killing of all men under age fifty, all priests and teachers, allowing young girls and children to adopt the religion of Islam.*

In this current format, these chapters in French textbooks only reflect Armenian propaganda and aims to convince French students to embrace this propaganda. From this aspect, these chapters of the books are not in any way scholarly, but political.

Describing the Armenian genocide allegations in French textbooks in this manner and style will create some consequences.

First of all, these statements and tragic pictures will create trauma in some of the youngsters.

Secondly, some of these chapters induce hatred against the Turks. This in effect will increase traditional Turkish hostility among the youth which originates from discrimination and also xenophobia and Islamophobia which is viewed to have started spreading recently. Another consequence of this situation is that it will further increase the tendency within French public opinion where the majority is against Turkey becoming a member of the European Union.

It could be seen that those who will be affected the most are the students of Turkish origin in French schools. They will necessarily be swept by feelings of guilt and most of them will have difficulty in adapting to the French community. It is also possible that some of them will object and/or rebel and will also be encouraged by their parents in this direction. As a matter of fact, instances of this already exist. While a lesson was being given on the Armenian genocide, a Turkish student in Lyon had left the classroom despite the teacher's threats that he would be punished severely and could even be expelled from school. The school administration was not able to punish the student, instead complaining to his father who approved his son's behavior which created surprise<sup>64</sup>. This is a single incident. But, increase in these kinds of Turkish reactions could constitute a serious problem for the French.

*It is possible for the Turks, who have acquired French citizenship, to resort to jurisdiction on the grounds that these sections of the books offend them as a community.*

In terms of what could be done towards these books, official demarches could be made for the removal or amendment of these sections and most likely they have already taken place. However, it is difficult to obtain any results from these actions, because France

has officially recognized the Armenian genocide allegations with the law in 2001.

On the other hand, it is possible for the Turks, who have acquired French citizenship, to resort to jurisdiction on the grounds that these sections of the books offend them as a community. It is still remembered that nearly twenty years ago, the Armenian associations in France had filed a lawsuit against well-known American historian Bernard Lewis following his statements which casted doubt on the existence of such a genocide, on the grounds that that these statements offended the Armenian community and in the end had won the case.

### 3. The Telegrams Attributed to Talat Pasha

In some of the French textbooks, it is indicated that the instruction to annihilate the Armenians was given by Talat Pasha, the Minister of the Interior of that period. These telegrams, which do not actually exist, were for many years provided as evidence for the Armenian genocide and were accepted in that way. Then, when it was proved that they were fake, the references made to the telegrams had disappeared, but started to emerge again

64 "Hani Okuldan Atılırdı?" (Wasn't He Going to Be Expelled from School?), *DHA*, 5 November 2012.



recently as seen in the French textbooks mentioned above. Therefore, it is noteworthy to separately address these fake telegrams.

In 1920, an Istanbul Armenian named Aram Andonian has published a book entitled “The Memoirs of Naim Bey: The Turkish Official Documents Relating to the Deportation and Massacres of Armenians”<sup>65</sup>. The French version of this book was also published in the same year<sup>66</sup>.

The author of the book Aram Andonian asserts that Naim Bey, who he said was a civil servant working in the Resettlement Office in Aleppo, had given him some telegrams in exchange for money which were presumed to be signed by Talat Pasha who demanded that Armenians be killed. Andonian published the texts of these telegrams in his book.

Years later, two Turkish scholars Şinasi Orel and Süreyya Yüce conducted research in the Ottoman Archives on these telegrams and they published a book entitled “Ermenilerce Talat Paşa’ya Atfedilen Telgrafların Gerçek Yüzü” (The Real Story to the Telegrams Attributed to Talat Pasha by the Armenians)<sup>67</sup>. Shortly after, the English and French versions of this book were also published<sup>68</sup>.

Şinasi Orel and Süreyya Yüce have proved the falsity of the documents based on the following points:

1. Official documents usually entail a date and a registration number. In the research conducted in registers of the Ministry of Interior, it has been discovered that the dates do not match the registration numbers in the document and the correspondence of that date do not belong to the Armenian question.
2. It has been found that these telegrams also do not exist in the Archives of the Ministry of Interior.
3. It has been seen that the signature of the Governor of Aleppo Mustafa Abdülhâlik Bey, who had responded to some of the telegrams, is fake and that the Governor of Aleppo during that date was Bekir Sami Bey.
4. Except for two of them, the documents have not been written on paper

65 Aram Andonian, comp., *The Memoirs of Naim Bey: The Turkish Official Documents Relating to the Deportation and Massacres of Armenians*, Hodder & Stroughton, 1920.

66 *Documents officiels concernant les massacres arméniens*. Imprimerie H. Tourabian, Paris, 1920.

67 Şinasi Orel; Süreyya Yuca *Ermenilerce Talat Paşa 'ya Atfedilen Telgrafların Gerçek Yüzü*, Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu, 1983

68 *The Talat Pasha Telegrams. Historical Fact or Armenian Fiction*, K. Rustem & Brother Publishers, Nicosia, 1986; *Affaires Arméniennes, Les “Télégrams” de Talat Pacha, Fait historique ou Fiction*, Triangle, Paris, 1986.

with official letterhead, but on plain paper whereas government correspondences must be made on paper with letterhead.

5. The language and expressions used in the documents do not resemble official Ottoman correspondences.
6. There are inaccuracies in the Gregorian and Rumi calendars used in the documents and the basmala (name of Allah) has been written incorrectly. These and the points indicated in the 5<sup>th</sup> point create the belief that these documents were written by a non-Muslim.
7. According to Andonian, Naim Bey was a civil servant working in the Resettlement Office. However, in the Ottoman “salname” (official yearbook about the administration) and other Ottoman sources (recordings of official decrees, the *Ruzname-i Ceride-i Havadis* daily newspaper and “düstur” [collection of laws and decrees]) there was no mention of a civil servant in Aleppo named Naim Bey. If Naim Bey was a low ranking official, he might not be mentioned but it is not possible for such important and confidential documents to be received by such a minor official.

Since the publication of this book conveys the falsity of the Talat Pasha telegrams, which formed the basis of the genocide allegations, and thus shows that the genocide allegations are groundless, it has drawn the reactions of the Armenians and attempts to verify the authenticity of the telegrams have started<sup>69</sup>. The points brought forth by Şinasi Orel and Süreyya Yüce (the dates and numbers not matching, forged signature, confusion of calendars, letterhead etc.) are concrete faults which are not possible to refute. Therefore, it has started being asserted that the “content” of the Andonian documents are correct. However, this way of thinking is irrational. The events mentioned in the Andonian documents also existing in other documents does not render the Andonian documents authentic; they will remain fake.

This book has most likely been written to influence the peace negotiations in Paris to be to the Armenians advantage. Andonian was working with

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69 Two authors draw attention on this point:

The first is Vahakn N. Dadrian who has written a long article in the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (No.18, 1986, p. 311-360) entitled “The Naim – Andonian Documents on the World War I Destruction of Ottoman Armenians: The Anatomy of a Genocide”.

The second is Yves Ternon who has dedicated a long section (pp. 25-73) of his book entitled “*Enquête sur la Négation d'un Génocide*” (Editions Paranthese, Marseille, 1989) to this subject. This author also supports the idea that the content of the Andonian documents are correct, but about ten years later he has said in another one of his articles that it would be appropriate to abandon bringing forth the Andonian documents as evidence to the Committee of Union and Progress’s intention to commit a crime (*L’Actualité du Génocide des Arméniens*, Edipol, Créteil, 1999). The title of Ternon’s article in his book is “La Qualité de la Preuve. A Propos des Documents Andonian et de la Petite Phrase d’Hitler”, p. 138.

Boghos Nubar Pasha, the Armenian delegate to this conference. Concerning the allegation that the points mentioned in this book are also written in other documents, it could be possible to think that if there are genocide rumors somewhere, the Andonian documents have been fabricated to create the belief that these rumors also exist in official documents.

Despite arguments that the Andonian documents are authentic or at least are based on real events, it has been observed in time that Armenian authors and their advocates no longer refer to the “Talat Pasha Telegrams”. As the reason for this, it has been put forth that it would not be correct for them to use the Andonian documents since they do not have the originals and that for instance, these documents will not be accepted by courts for this reason. This argument is directed towards creating the conviction that the Andonian documents truly exist, but the Turks are not revealing them. However, the reasons mentioned above have already presented the falsity of the Andonian documents. There are no originals to fraudulent documents.

Another important point on this issue is that Andonian himself has indirectly accepted that the documents are fraudulent. In a letter sent in 1937 to a person who had made several criticisms to his book, Andonian had written that the book is not a historical study, is for propaganda purposes and that obviously these kinds of publications entail inadequacies<sup>70</sup>.

It has been observed that recently the Andonian documents, which were not mentioned for a long time, have started being referred to again. The French textbooks are the most recent example to this. The reasons of this situation could be explained as follows:

- Turkish historians and authors have not referred to the Andonian documents much, perhaps for finding them to be total nonsense, and have also not replied to the Armenian allegations that these documents are authentic. Therefore, the belief that the documents are fake has started being forgotten over time.
- On the other hand, despite the Turkish, English and French versions of Şinasi Orel and Süreyya Yüce’s book being already sold out, these books have not been printed once again.

In conclusion, these documents, whose falsity has nearly not been mentioned at all recently, have been reawakened and started being used again.

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70 *Justicier du genocide des Arméniens, Le Procés Tehlirian*, Paris 1981, p. 232.

## V – RELATIONS BETWEEN ARMENIA AND RUSSIA

As the Soviet Union entered a phase of disintegration, Armenia has attempted to annex the autonomous region of Karabakh in Azerbaijan and when this was not possible, has shown effort to make Karabakh an independent state. Azerbaijanis have been forced to evacuate Karabakh and the surrounding regions as a result of the Armenian occupation of their land. These Azerbaijani-Armenian combats could be considered as an Armenian-Azerbaijani war.

*Despite Russia trying to convey the image that it was neutral during the Karabakh conflicts, it has aided Armenia by providing armaments, giving military education and also preventing decisions to be taken against Armenia in international organizations.*

Turkey has been on Azerbaijan's side during these events. Moreover, Armenia's "open" claims on Turkey to recognize the genocide allegations and its "implicit" claims for Turkey to give territory have prevented diplomatic relations from developing between the two countries.

On the other hand, the attempts of the Armenians in the Ahalkalak region of Georgia to be attached to Armenia and the close relations between Armenia and Russia have resulted in Georgia not to trust Armenia.

Although rapprochement had taken place between Armenia and its fourth neighboring country Iran, due to Iran being against Azerbaijan, close cooperation with this country could not go beyond statements of good will.

In conclusion, since during the years following its independence Armenia was in conflict with one of its neighbors, failed to establish diplomatic relations with its other neighbor whose border remained shut, and also was unable to establish close relations with its other two neighbors Georgia and Iran, Armenia was merely isolated in the region and this situation had caused a great concern for security to emerge.

### 1. Russia's Dominance in Armenia

This concern is the main reason for the close relations existing between Armenia and Russia. Despite Russia trying to convey the image that it was neutral during the Karabakh conflicts, it has aided Armenia by providing armaments, giving military education and also preventing decisions to be taken against Armenia in international organizations. Furthermore, in return for the services it provided, Russia has gained a military base in Armenia in

1995 following the signing of a cease-fire in 1994. This military base established near the city of Gyumri which is very close to Turkey, is Russia's only military asset in the Southern Caucasus.

The main reason for Armenia to allow the establishment of this military base is the belief that it will protect the country especially against Turkey in time of war or that Turkey will abstain from militarily intervening in Armenia since this base exists. Meanwhile, we should note that apart from this military base, Armenia's borders during the period of the Soviet Union; in other words, its borders with Turkey and Iran are also protected by Russian Forces. In conclusion, this "Russian Shield" has given Armenia the opportunity to operate freely against Azerbaijan and Turkey and even to carry out policies which could be characterized as aggressive.

These close relations between Armenia and Russia are not only confined to the military field. Armenia, which has failed to establish any cooperation in the economic area with its two neighbors and does not have much contact with the other two, has also come to be dependent on Russia economically. Since the national economy of the country was in a quite poor situation in the nineties, more than one million Armenians had gone to Russia to seek jobs and the money sent to their families constituted a great source of income for Armenia. On the other hand, Armenia has also become fully dependent on Russia in the area of energy. The preferred prices which Russia applied to natural gas and petroleum have also stimulated this dependence. Apart from international organizations like the World Bank, Russia has also become one of the main countries which Armenia has applied to for credit.

On the other hand, Russia is in a dominant position within Armenian economy due to the investments it has made. Currently, 80% of Armenia's energy lines, 70% of its airways and its entire railroads are in the hands of Russian public corporations. Russia also controls the majority of mining operations and the telecommunications sector in Armenia<sup>71</sup>.

Russia being in the position of not only controlling Armenia's security, but also its economy, makes us question to what extent Armenia is independent de facto. As stated in a report prepared by a well known research institute, "Russian influence in Armenia is so great that lack of sovereignty should be Armenia's number one concern"<sup>72</sup>. However, apart from the Dashnaks, there is practically no such concern in Armenia.

71 "The long Goodbye: Waning Russian Influence in the South an Central Asia", *Chatham House, Briefing Paper*. July 2012

72 Ibid

In this context, we should note that Armenian public opinion is also in favor of Russia. A public opinion poll organized by Gallup in 2011 has shown that approximately 75% of the Armenians support the policies pursued by Russian administrators (back then President Medvedev and Prime Minister Putin)<sup>73</sup>. Although a Dashnak source<sup>74</sup> confirms this, but puts forth that the support has decreased because it was 90% before, the attachment Armenia feels towards Russia is one of the important elements of the country's dominance over Armenia.

## 2. Armenia's Integration Initiatives with Western Countries

While Armenia have become dependent on Russia for both security and economic reasons, it has tried to improve its cooperation in all areas, particularly in the area of economy especially with Western countries, by taking into consideration that Turkey and Azerbaijan have more close contact and cooperation with these countries and by taking account of its historical ties and the economic power of these Western countries. The majority of the Armenian Diaspora living in Western countries has also played a role in that matter.

On the other hand, while seeking to develop bilateral relations with the main Western countries, it has also shown attention to establishing cooperation with the EU and NATO. Within this framework, a Cooperation Agreement has been signed with the EU in 1999. Currently negotiations for a Partnership Agreement which could replace the existing agreement are still continuing. Following its independence, Armenia has participated in various programmes of NATO and in 2009 and 2011 it has signed an "Action Plan" with this organization.

Besides maintaining close relations with Russia, cooperating with Western countries and also the European Union and NATO is named "Complementary Policy" in Armenia. As an Armenian newspaper has expressed, while Armenia is trying to get security from Russia, it attempts to economically integrate with Europe<sup>75</sup>. The implementation of such a policy firstly depends on Russia's consent before anything else. It is quite doubtful that Vladimir Putin, who was re-elected in May as the President of the Russian Federation, will accept this policy. In principle, the Eurasian Union project which Putin had actually brought forth while he was Prime Minister in October of last year, does not allow for this kind of policy to be conducted.

73 "Global Pool Finds Strong Pro-Russian Sentiment in Armenia", 8 August 2011.

74 "The Sunset of Russophilia", *Largir.am*, 16 August 2011.

75 Naira Hayrumyan. "Complementary Maneuver: Armenia Trying To Get Security From Russia, While Economically Integrating With Europe", *ArmeniaNow*, 23 May 2012.

### 3. Eurasian Union Project

Putin's Eurasian Union Project was inspired from the European Union and foresees an advanced economic integration of the countries which formed the Soviet Union. The Eurasian Union will materialize once certain phases like a free trade zone and customs union are passed. However, it could be understood that since these stages do not take a very long time, Russia foresees the Union to be established some time in 2015 if possible. Already a Eurasian Commission has been established by taking inspiration from the European Union. Kazakhstan and Belarus have declared that they will be members of this union. It is expected that Kirgizstan and Tajikistan will also follow them.

The greatest difference of the Eurasian Union from the European Union in the political field is that this union, if established, will be under the dominance of Russia due to this country's capacity and power; in other words, some kind of a Soviet Union will be established through the Eurasian Union. Another important point is that the widespread integration foreseen by the Eurasian Union will prevent members of this Union to become full or associate members of the European Union and this is not suitable with the "Complementary Policy" mentioned above which Armenia is trying to implement. Therefore, it is possible that in the near future, Armenia will have to make a choice between the Eurasian and European Unions. However, when considering Russia's influence and even dominance over Armenia, it is obvious that Armenia will not really have a choice.

Concerning the development of events, as Prime Minister Tigran Sarkisyan has said that this project has brought a new perspective, Armenia's first reaction to the Eurasian Union project has been positive<sup>76</sup>. On the other hand, the Armenian Prime Minister has supported a free trade zone wanted to be established between members of the Commonwealth of Independent States<sup>77</sup> and in the end Armenia has signed the treaty regarding this issue. However, approximately two months later, Tigran Sarkisyan has stated that Armenia will not participate in the customs union between Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus which is considered as the Eurasian Union's most important step and as a justification for it, has said that Armenia has no common border with Russia<sup>78</sup>. It could be understood that entering the free trade zone will not contradict EU membership, whereas Armenia joining the Customs Union will not be in accordance with its partnership relations with the EU. German Ambassador in Yerevan Hans-Joegen Schmidt has expressed in an interview

76 "Yerevan Mulls Pro and Cons of Putin's Eurasian Union Vision", *EurasiaNet.org.NY*, 31 October 2011.

77 "Treaty Establishing A Free Trade Zone in CIS Creates a "Unique Opportunity", *Medimax*, 20 October 2011.

78 "L'Arménie Prend Distance Avec la Russie", *Armennews*, 9 December 2011.

that Armenia's integration into Europe will not coincide with its membership to the Eurasian Union<sup>79</sup>.

#### 4. Emerging Problems in Armenia-Russia Relations

Vladimir Putin has been elected as President of the Federation of Russia on 7 May 2012 and the Collective Security Treaty Organization Summit has been held on 15 May in Moscow. President Sarkisian has also gone to Moscow since Armenia is a member country. Putin has refrained from making contacts with Sarkisian while holding bilateral talks with other statesmen outside of the meetings<sup>80</sup>, but Sarkisian has been able to meet with Prime Minister Medvedev.

The reasons for Putin's approach which is almost humiliating for President Sarkisian could be explained as follows:

- a. As mentioned above, it is quite clear that Armenia does not want to join the Eurasian Union and the Customs Union which is one of its stages. However, Putin wants all members of the Commonwealth of Independent States to become members of the Eurasian Union.
- b. Armenia has signed the Partnership Action plan with NATO during Sarkisian's period and has sent soldiers to Afghanistan.
- c. During Sarkisian's term, Armenia has started the Associate membership process with the European Union.
- d. Sarkisian's relations with the US are quite friendly, compared to his predecessor Kocharyan. In fact, US Foreign Minister Hillary Clinton has visited Armenia twice.

The common ground to the reasons mentioned above is that Armenia has adopted an opposite approach to some of the policies pursued by Russia. While Russia expects Armenia to closely follow in its steps just as the former Soviet Republics have, Armenia has started drifting towards the West regarding some issues except for its own security. This in effect has angered Putin.

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79 "The U.S. Demonstrates Total Support of President Serzh Sargsyan's Policy Line", *The Noyan Tapan Highlights*, No. 22, 11 June 2012.

80 "Armenian President Seen As Getting Cold Shoulder From Putin", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 9, Issue 100, 25 May 2012.



## 5. Russia's Instruments for Pressure against Armenia

Russia owns some instruments of pressure in order to compel Armenia to accept the policies it pursues.

- a. One of the most important of these is natural gas prices. We will address the issue of natural gas as a separate topic. But we should note in advance that if the price of Russian natural gas sold to Armenia reaches free market level as Russia wishes, it will negatively affect Armenia's economy and in particular the expenses of middle and low income Armenians. In effect, this could jeopardize Sarkisian being re-elected in February.
- b. Armenia needs credit to trigger its economy which is currently stagnant. European sources are unwilling to provide this credit; they at least expect the upcoming presidential elections to be held without frauds and infraction of rules. Russia has no such concern. However, it is difficult for it to provide this credit (one billion dollars is mentioned) at a time when Armenia tends to diverge from the path drawn by Russia.
- c. It is stated that Robert Kocharyan, who was president from 1998 to 2008 and had established special relations with Putin during his term, wants to be re-elected as president. If Russia supports Kocharyan in the elections, although not impossible, it will be difficult for Sarkisian to win the elections (During the parliamentary elections, the Armenian Republican Party of which Sarkisian is the chairman has gained the majority although with a small difference. The Prosperous Armenia Party, which was in the coalition government for approximately four years and is said to be under the influence of Robert Kocharyan, although has highly increased its votes, has only gained half the votes of the Republicans<sup>81</sup>. In this situation, if an unexpected development such as a large increase in natural gas prices do not take place until February 2013, it is not quite likely for Kocharyan to be elected).
- d. Surely the greatest pressure could be exerted in the area of defense. It is impossible for Armenia to tolerate some restrictions put by Russia on providing Armenia with arms and military equipment. But since this kind of restriction will also mean that Azerbaijan will be supported, it could lead to an atmosphere against Russia being formed within Armenian public opinion. Therefore, it is not expected for Russia to apply important pressure concerning military issues.

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81 For the results of the Armenian Parliamentary Elections see: *Review of Armenian Studies* No. 25, pp 201-208.

## 6. Putin-Sarkisian Meeting

While away on summer holiday, Serge Sarkisian has been invited to Moscow for a business visit. During this visit which took place on 8 August 2012, the presidents of the two countries have delivered statements before the press. When examining these closely, it could be seen that the parties have not address significant issues and there have been some issues which one of the presidents have emphasized, but the other has not referred to at all. This creates the idea that various differences of opinion and even some disagreements exist between the two sides.

It has been observed that none of them have referred to the main subject of dispute which is the Eurasian Union and the Customs Union which is regarded as the first concrete step to be taken by this Union. This signifies that the parties have not been able to come to an agreement on this issue and at the same time could mean that the talks will continue. Although no statement has been made which shows that the talks will continue, a Russian newspaper<sup>82</sup> has written that the presidents agreed on establishing a special commission which will consider the opportunities of Armenia's participation in the Customs Union.

Concerning the statements made by both Presidents, Putin's statement has been shorter than Sarkisian's and he has mainly referred to the following issues<sup>83</sup>:

- a. The intergovernmental Commission will start work very soon (in autumn) and Russian Transport Minister Maxim Sokolov will be the new co-chairman of this commission and the commission will draft a roadmap for developing economic relations between the two countries. However, Sarkisian has not referred to this commission in his statement.
- b. Economic relations between the two countries have generally developed well, trade turnover has reached 1 billion dollars and an increase of 32% was seen in the first half of this year. However, Sarkisian has mentioned in his statement that Russia is Armenia's greatest economic partner and more than 50% of all foreign investment in Armenia belongs to Russia.
- c. The amount of approximately 1 billion dollars which the Armenians

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82 "Results of Moscow Meeting Displease Armenia", *Vestnik Kavkaza*, 14 August 2012.

83 "Vladimir Putin held talks with President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan, who is in Russia on a working visit." <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/4273>

working in Russia send home is a considerable support for Armenia and accounts for a sizeable part of the country's national income. However, Sarkisian has not referred to this point in his statement.

To sum it up, Putin has only referred to economic issues in his statement. The money the Armenians in Russia send home is also an economic matter, but it is likely that Putin has addressed this issue in order to emphasize the extent of Armenia's dependence on Russia.

On the other hand, Sarkisian's statement is much more detailed<sup>84</sup> and apart from economic issues, the Armenian President has addressed some points which President Putin has not referred to at all. These could be summarized as follows:

- a. A strategic partnership exists between Armenia and Russia,
- b. A complete mutual understanding has been reached regarding issues of foreign and internal policies,
- c. It is necessary to have more frequent exchanges and consultations, including at the highest level, to take place (with this statement Sarkisian has implied that few contacts have been made with Russia on the highest level).
- d. Russia is playing a leading role in the South Caucasus concerning security matters,
- e. Russia has taken constructive steps towards the resolution of the Karabakh problem and therefore, Armenia is thankful to Putin,
- f. Armenia supports further strengthening of the CSTO<sup>85</sup> and this organization will hold military exercises in September in Armenia,
- g. Cooperation in the military and military-technical areas is developing successfully, the term of the Russian military base in Armenia has been

*The money the Armenians in Russia send home is also an economic matter, but it is likely that Putin has addressed this issue in order to emphasize the extent of Armenia's dependence on Russia.*

84 "Introductory Remarks by President Serzh Sarkisian at the Joint Press Conference With the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin" <http://www.president.am/en/interviews-and-press-conferences/item/2012/08/08/President-Serzh-Sargsyan-RF-Vladimir-Putin-Press/>

85 CSTO, Collective Security Treaty Organization is an organization established on 15 May 1992 in Tashkent with the purpose of cooperating in the area of defense and entails some republics which formed the USSR. Currently its members are Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan. Countries which were once a member but then left the organization are these: Azerbaijan (1999), Georgia (1999) and Uzbekistan (2012)

extended in 2010, the presence of this base emanates from Armenia's security interests, and that the protocol on the extension has also expanded the scope of involvement of the base in case Armenia's security is threatened<sup>86</sup>,

- h. Russia's economic presence in Armenia reflects the strategic interests of Armenia as well as Russia, Russia is still Armenia's leading trade partner, and Russia accounts for over 50% of all foreign investments in Armenia,
- i. Establishment of long-term economic ties is reflected in the joint implementation of major programs such as the construction of the new units of the Metsamore nuclear power station,
- j. Sarkisian has said that they have also spoken about the price for natural gas imported to Armenia and that they have reached an understanding regarding the price formation principle. Based on this, the following points will be addressed. The real market price for natural gas, Armenia's expediency to preserve the efficiency of its economy and the necessity to provide natural gas to Armenia at the price which is comparable to the tariffs existing in the region. The issue of natural gas will be addressed separately in another section of our article.
- k. Sarkisian has invited Putin to conduct a state visit to Armenia.

As mentioned above, although the statements delivered by Putin and Sarkisian before the press at first sight does not create such an impression, when examining them closely it shows that differences of opinion and disagreements exist between the two sides. How these will develop will be understood better in the upcoming months.

## 7. Russian Natural Gas and Armenia

Armenia imports as much as 75% of its energy it uses and 80% of this import

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86 This military base near the city of Gyumri which is very close to the Turkish border was established in 1995. With a protocol signed between the two countries in 2010, the term of the military base was extended from 2020 to 2044. News published in the Armenian press in that period said that with this protocol, the military base would also provide security to Armenia together with Armenian armed forces. This point was expressed by President Sarkisian during a press conference delivered together with the Russian Federation's President of that period Medvedev that the protocol would at the same time "extended the scope of the geographical and strategic responsibilities of the military base". However, Russian officials have carefully refrained from making any statement that would mean that this military base would protect Armenia when necessary. Whether the military base has such a function or if it does, what kind of attribute this function carries has not been understood since the text of the protocol has never been made public. For detailed information on this issue see: *Review of Armenian Studies*, No. 22, pp. 105-114.

is from Russia<sup>87</sup>. This proportion shows that Armenia is fully dependent on Russia within the energy sector. Although Armenia has been connected to Iran through a natural gas pipeline in 2007, the role of Iranian gas within Armenian consumption is not significant.

There are some economic and political consequences of Armenia being dependent on Russian gas.

Economically, it is necessary for Armenia to accept the natural gas prices of Russia, because there is no other source of energy which it could substitute for Russian gas. Armenia's energy production through its own resources is only 25%. This production is made from water resources and a nuclear power plant (the Metsamor Power Plant) on the Turkish border very close to İğdir. Significantly increasing this amount of 25% does not seem possible in the short or medium term. In fact, if the Metsamor Power Plant, which works with an old technology, seems to have lived out its economic lifespan and is closed each year for maintenance and in case of this plant being deactivated or the closing time extended for restoration or security, it could be expected for the amount of 25% to further decrease and this could cause an increase in the importation of natural gas from Russia.

Dependence on Russian gas to such an extent and no alternative to this source of energy existing at the moment or at a presumable time in the future actually reinforces Russia's current influence and even dominance over Armenia (hereby, it comes to mind that Armenia's neighbor Azerbaijan is a very prosperous country due to natural gas and petroleum, but because of the expansionist policy Armenia pursues it is unable to benefit from Azeri energy resources and these resources, although would be cheaper if exported through Armenia, "by-pass" this country and are exported through Turkey).

Just as the price of Russian natural gas constitutes a problem for Armenia, it also constitutes a problem for the former Soviet republics importing this gas. During the Soviet Union, natural gas was provided to Soviet republics and the Warsaw Pact countries with very cheap prices due to political reasons and the Soviets were making losses from this. Attempts to increase natural gas prices had started all the way back during Gorbachev's period and this policy has continued during the period of the Russian Federation. Although the goal was to attain world prices for natural gas, there was such a great difference between world prices and the Russian sales prices to these countries that in order not to create an economic crisis within the former Soviet republics or Warsaw Pact countries who import from Russia, price increase

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87 *Poverty and Distribution Impact of Gas Price Hike in Armenia*, The World Bank Policy Research Paper, (WPS6150) July 2012

had risen gradually. However, even this method was not able to prevent problems from arising between countries importing natural gas and Russia.

For Armenia, the great increase in Russian natural gas took place in 2006. In this year, the price of Russian natural gas increased by 100% where it increased from 55 dollars to 110 dollars per 1000 m<sup>3</sup><sup>88</sup>. This incident created tension between Russia and Armenia. Apart from the burden this price would bring to Armenian economy, Russia applying, due to political purposes, different prices of natural gas according to countries (for instance, 46 dollars was wanted from White Russia and 230 dollars from Ukraine for 1000 m<sup>3</sup> of gas) has also caused objections among the Armenians. Chairman of the National Assembly of that period Artur Bagdasaryan has said that against this price increase, Armenia should also ask for rent for the Russian military base in Gyumri. On the other hand, Foreign Minister of that time Vardan Oskanyan has said that the price increase will create negative consequences for Russia and Armenia in the region and that the development of Armenia's economy could seriously be prevented. As for the Minister of National Defense of that period and the current President Serge Sarkisian, he has indicated that the matter is not only economic and a problem of trust also exists, but that the price increase cannot be a reason for the contract of the Russian military base in Armenia to be reviewed. Despite the President of that period Robert Kocharyan's quite friendly relations with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Russia had not taken a step back and the price of Russian natural gas had increased as much again<sup>89</sup>.

Meanwhile, the interesting point is that due to the great admiration towards Russia, 76% of those responding to a public opinion poll concerning the increase in the price of Russian natural gas have indicated that they do not believe Russia will further increase the prices. By reflecting this price increase on "small consumers" (consuming less than 10000 m<sup>3</sup> per month) by 53%<sup>90</sup>, the Armenian Government has attempted to restrain the displeasure. As one research clearly displays, the increase in the prices of natural gas has caused poverty in Armenia to increase further<sup>91</sup>.

Since Russia's aim is to sell natural gas from world prices, increases have also taken place in the following years. The price which was 110 dollars in 2006 had reached 154 dollars in 2009 with a 40% increase and 180 dollars

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88 Ibid

89 For the increase in 2006 prices of Russian natural gas and the reactions it has drawn see: *Ermeni Arařtırmaları* No.19, pp. 32-37

90 *Poverty and Distribution Impact of Gas Price Hike in Armenia*, The World Bank Policy Research Paper, (WPS6150) July 2012, s.3

91 Ibid

in 2010 with a 17% increase<sup>92</sup>. However, since the Armenian government had almost never criticized these increases opposite to 2006, reactions among public opinion have also been few.

Before Sarkisian's meeting with President Putin on 8 August 2012, there was news in the press that Russian natural gas prices would increase<sup>93</sup>. According to this, Russian natural gas where 1000 m<sup>3</sup> still cost 180 dollars would increase to 220 dollars in April 2013. This means an increase of 22%. On the other hand, some other sources<sup>94</sup> have drawn a much darker portrayal of the price increases with reference to Russian gas company Gazprom and have mentioned that Russian gas will increase to 280 dollars on 1 October 2012 and to 320 dollars on 1 January 2013. Compared to 180 dollars, this again shows large increases of 55% and 78% respectively.

In the press conference held together with President Putin which we mentioned above, Sarkisian has said that they have also spoken of the price of natural gas that Armenia imports and that they have reached an understanding regarding the price formation principle. This will be based on the following: the real market price for gas, Armenia's expediency to preserve the efficiency of its economy and providing natural gas to Armenia at the price which is comparable to the tariffs existing in the region<sup>95</sup>. On the opposite, President Putin has not referred to natural gas prices at all. Therefore, the understanding reached on the price formation principle as Sarkisian has indicated should be accepted more as Armenia's view. Concerning what the understanding of this principle means, it is possible to recognize it as a price cut on the market price of natural gas in a way which will not endanger Armenia's economy and will take into consideration the sales prices of natural gas in the region. It is unclear whether Russia will accept to make a price cut that is desired by Armenia. On the path drawn by Russia, if Armenia chooses to enter an integration process with Russia instead of with Europe in the economic area, it could obtain significant price cuts in natural gas prices.

## VI – ISRAEL AND THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE ALLEGATIONS

For apparent reasons, the issue of genocide concerns Israel and the Jews very closely.

92 Ibid

93 "Expert: Natural Gas Price in Armenia May Leap to 220 dollars Per One Cubic Metter by April 2013", *ARKA*, Yerevan, 7 August 2012.

94 "Sarkisian, Putin Discuss Gas, 'Eurasian Union', *Vestnik Kavkaza*, 9 August 2012. "Money to Choose", *Asbarez*, 8 August 2012.

95 "Introductory Remarks by President Serzh Sarkisyan at the Joint Press Conference With the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin" <http://www.president.am/en/interviews-and-press-conferences/item/2012/08/08/President-Serzh-Sargsyan-RF-Vladimir-Putin-Press/>

Although the idea that only the Jewish Genocide existed during the years following the Second World War was dominant among the Jews, this thought was abandoned over time and the existence of other genocides started being recognized. However, the Jewish Genocide was still tried to be distinguished from other genocides by putting forth that it had unique properties and this has been conveyed in the names given to it. “Jewish Genocide” has no longer been used in Israel and among other Jewish circles and this incident has been called “Holocaust” for some time and is currently called “Shoah”. These names indicate great massacres or tragedies. However, these terms are not valid in terms of international law and only the term genocide is used.

After it was accepted within Israel public opinion that other incidents could also be called genocide, some writers under the influence of Armenians in the country have started using this term for the 1915 events and then have strived for a resolution to be adopted in the Israel Parliament (Knesset) regarding this issue. With the support of the majority in the Knesset, the Israel governments, which attach great importance to relations with Turkey, have not found it difficult to prevent the adoption of these kinds of resolutions. However, Turkey starting to strongly support the rights of the Philistines more and more and as a result, some events that have been experienced between the two countries (such as the dispute in Davos between Prime Minister Erdoğan and President Perez, attempts of Deputy Foreign Minister to humiliate the Turkish Ambassador to Israel, and the Mavi Marmara event) have highly changed Knesset’s approach towards the Armenian genocide allegations and the same change has been observed in the approaches of the Jewish Community and organizations in the US towards Turkey.

The most important of the events that have been mentioned is without doubt the one concerning the Mavi Marmara ship. The seizing of a Turkish ship named Mavi Marmara with the use of force outside the territorial waters of Israel on 31 May 2010 and nine people losing their lives and approximately fifty people getting injured in this event have created a serious crisis in Turkey-Israel relations. Turkey had made some requests such as apologizing for this event and punishing those responsible, had also reduced diplomatic relations with Israel to a second secretary level and had suspended military agreements. In response, Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman had prepared a “Plan to Punish Turkey”, but as a result of Prime Minister Netanyahu opposing it, such a plan failed to be implemented although actions against Turkey in Israel continued to take place. Among these, Knesset discussing the recognition of the Armenian genocide allegations on 17 May 2011 through the initiative of the Maretz Party, referring this proposal to the Committee of Education and Culture, referring another proposal for the Armenian genocide allegations to be included within the curriculum of Israeli



schools to the same Committee and also political negotiations taking place for the first time in Yerevan on 25 July 2011 between the foreign ministers of Israel and Armenia could be mentioned<sup>96</sup>.

The Israeli Government has tried to prevent the official recognition of the Armenian genocide allegations, but by taking into consideration the negative atmosphere towards Turkey within public opinion created by the events experienced with this country, the Israeli Government has not opposed this issue being discussed within Knesset or various organizations and in fact has not opposed some Ministers or pro-government deputies from accepting the Armenian genocide allegations on their own behalf. As a matter of fact, Minister of Religion Yakov Marki, who had attended the Knesset's session on 17 May 2011, has said that he personally recognizes the Armenian "genocide". Minister of Infrastructure Uzi Landau, who had attended the talks regarding the inclusion of the Armenian genocide allegations in the curriculum of Israeli schools, has said that as a Government they find the resolution of the genocide issue to be the task of Armenia and Turkey and that they are not against this issue being submitted to the Committee of Education and Culture. While these issues were addressed by the Committee of Education and Culture in December 2011, Speaker of the Knesset Reuven Rivlin, by attending the meetings of the Committee in an unusual manner, has said that Israel has a moral and historic obligation to recognize the Armenian genocide allegations, that it is his duty as a Jew and Israeli to recognize the tragedies of other peoples and that diplomatic considerations, important as they may be, should not deter them from recognizing a tragedy experienced by other people.

*The Israeli Government has tried to prevent the official recognition of the Armenian genocide allegations, but by taking into consideration the negative atmosphere towards Turkey within public opinion created by the events experienced with this country, the Israeli Government has not opposed this issue being discussed within Knesset or various organizations and in fact has not opposed some Ministers or pro-government deputies from accepting the Armenian genocide allegations on their own behalf.*

During these discussions, Coalition government representative Zen Elkin also spoke in favor of adopting a bill on the genocide issue. On the opposite, a representative of the Foreign Ministry Irit Lillian has said that recognition of this kind can have very grave strategic implications and that Turkey-Israel relations today are so fragile and so delicate that there is no place to take

96 See: "Olaylar ve Yorumlar" (Facts and Comments), *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, No. 39, pp. 57–60

them over the red line<sup>97</sup>. On the other hand, the Committee of Education and Culture has closed the hearing without taking any action in regards to this issue<sup>98</sup>.

Despite not making a statement this time, it is known that President Simon Perez and Prime Minister Netanyahu are against the Israeli Parliament adopting a bill which recognizes the Armenian “genocide” and that Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman also thinks this way. By clearly expressing his views on this issue following the aforementioned Committee meeting, Lieberman has said that since its establishment, Israel has opposed the application of the term Holocaust to another war or tragedy, that the tragedy of the Jewish people during World War II is beyond comparison with any other tragedy and that today historical incidents have turned into political disputes, therefore he does not consider it right for Israel to face this problem<sup>99</sup>.

Through the efforts of Zeheva Gal-On, Chairman of the Maretz Party which has given the impression that it has assumed the defending of Armenian views in Israel and the support of Speaker of the Knesset Reuven Rivlin, the issue of the recognition of the Armenian genocide allegations has been re-addressed in the Knesset on 12 June 2012. It could be understood that State Comptroller Lindenstrass to explain his report regarding the Mavi Marmara incident the following day has played a role in this date being chosen; in other words, it has been reckoned that this report, assumed to be to the Government’s disadvantage, will weaken the Government’s resistance to the adoption of a bill in the Knesset regarding the Armenian genocide allegations.

During the talks being held on this issue, after indicating that they have an obligation to spiritually (ethically) remember the murder of more than a million Armenians, but that this issue should not be turned into a political dispute and the accusations are not towards the government of Turkey of today, Speaker Reuven Rivlin has said that “We cannot forgive nations who ignore our disaster and we cannot ignore the disasters of others”. On the other hand, Chairman of the Maretz Party Zehava Gal-On has spoken of the same issue saying that the Jewish people who have experienced the worst Holocaust have an obligation to show sensitivity to the disasters of others and has called on the Israeli Government to recognize the Armenian genocide and to restore relations with Turkey by agreeing to apologize for the deaths of nine Turks during the raid of the Mavi Marmara vessel. Arie Elad from the National Union Party has called on Turkey to recognize its responsibility

97 “Israel’s Foreign Minister Opposes Genocide Recognition”, *Asbarez*, 7 February 2012.

98 “Genocide in Armenia is Not For Israel to Decide”, *New Jersey Jewish News*, 11 January 2012.

99 “Israel’s Foreign Minister Opposes Genocide Recognition”, *Asbarez*, 7 February 2012.

for its “historical crime” and has alleged that this crime included children being put into cellars and gassed. (Such an allegation is heard for the first time) The only person speaking against the recognition of the Armenian genocide allegations by Israel has been Robert Tibayev from the Kadiam Party. He has said that Israel should not interfere in the issue, but rather let historians, or an international body decide if there was an Armenian genocide<sup>100</sup>.

Israeli Minister of Environmental Affairs Gilad Erdan, who was also present during the talks, after saying “I think it is definitely fitting that the Israeli government formally recognize the Holocaust perpetrated against the Armenian people”, has indicated that the Israeli Government had not formally changed its policy on the past tragedy of the Armenians and that Israel should definitely support an open and thorough discussion analyzing the data and facts<sup>101</sup>. Although the Minister’s statements, particularly the one on the Israeli Government formally recognizing the Armenian Holocaust to be fitting, has been considered by some people as the Israeli Government recognizing the Armenian genocide<sup>102</sup>, when taking into consideration that the Minister had first spoken on his own behalf and then had said that the Israel Government’s policy had not changed, it could be seen that there is no recognition being made.

It could be understood that at the end of these discussions, the issue has been submitted to the Knesset’s Committee on Education and Culture once again.

Turkey has not shown any official reaction to the talks held in the Israeli Assembly. According to one newspaper, a Turkish diplomatic source had said that parliaments dealing with this issue do not bring any benefit, does not contribute to the process (to the process of normalizing Turkey-Armenia relations) and undermines the work of historians of both countries<sup>103</sup>.

Another point worth mentioning is the efforts of the Israeli Government to improve its relations with Armenia after a serious disagreement had arisen with Turkey. As mentioned above, political consultations had taken place for the first time between the diplomats of both countries last year. Also this year in April, Israeli Minister of Agriculture Orit Noked had visited Armenia to “discuss ways of promoting cooperation between the agricultural sectors of the two countries” and had stood in silence at the Genocide Memorial<sup>104</sup>.

100 Gil Hoffman “Knesset Discusses Genocide Recognition”, *Jerusalem Post*, 12 June 2012.

101 “Knesset’s Political Debate on 1915 Event Does Not Alter Facts, Turkey Says”, *Today’s Zaman*, 13 June 2012.

102 Israel W. Charny, “Israel Government Officially Calls on Knesset to Recognize the Armenian Genocide”, *GNP (Genocide Prevention Now)*, Issue 10, spring 2012.

103 “Knesset’s Political Debate on 1915 Event Does Not Alter Facts, Turkey Says”, *Today’s Zaman*, 13 June 2012.

104 “Israel Minister Visits Armenia”, *Asharez*, 16 April 2012.

Minister of Public Diplomacy and Diaspora Affairs Yuli Edelstein had also visited Yerevan on 24 August 2012 and had gone to the Genocide Memorial. Edelstein, who had written in the notebook there that there are many similarities between the histories and destinies of both nations and that no one in Israel denies the existence of the Armenian genocide<sup>105</sup>, had also issued a statement expressing that the 1915 mass killings and deportations of Armenians in Ottoman Turkey are widely recognized as genocide in Israel<sup>106</sup>.

It could be understood from readers' comments to news item regarding this issue that these initiatives of the Israelis to develop close relations with Armenia<sup>107</sup> have especially not been found to be sincere among the Diaspora. For instance, in the comments made following Yuli Edelstein's visit, it is mentioned that the widespread recognition of the 1915 events as genocide is not sufficient, that the Knesset must adopt a resolution in regards to this issue and the rest is just nonsense and hypocrisy and with these comments, it is tried to be conveyed that the Armenians are wasting their time. Another comment has indicated that apart from a resolution being adopted in the Knesset, a memorial should also be erected in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv for the Armenian "Genocide". In short, it is not possible to say that these attempts have left a positive impression within Armenian public opinion. However, concerning Turkish public opinion, the stance against Israel is continuing and no one has been concerned with the visits of the Israeli Ministers to Armenia.

On the other hand, when taking into consideration Israel's close relations with Azerbaijan and especially Israel's selling of weapons to Azerbaijan, it is not expected for Israel-Armenia relations to significantly develop.

In conclusion, to understand the reason for the discussions held in the Knesset for the recognition of the Armenian genocide allegations in which some statements against Turkey were made, the tense relations presently existing between the two countries must be kept in mind. Speaking against Turkey and accusing Turkey with genocide only pleases Israeli public opinion which is not able to accept the Palestinians. Different views conveyed on the Armenian "genocide" issue is the result of the Israeli government being composed of many political parties which did not agree at all on the subject. However, on that matter, the stance of the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister is primordial, and being aware that the recognition of the genocide allegations by the Knesset will have a heavy impact on relations with Turkey, which are already on poor terms, they are trying to prevent this from taking place and is seen to be successful so far.

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105 "En Israel Personne Ne Nie L'Existence du Génocide Arménien", *Armeness*, 25 August 2012.

106 "Genocide 'Widely Recognized in Israel' Says Israeli Minister", *Asbarez*, 24 August 2012.

107 Ibid

## VII – PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN ARMENIA

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of February 2013, the presidential election will be held in Armenia.

The Armenian Constitution grants great powers to the Presidents and therefore, the roles and influences of parliaments and Government in politics is of secondary importance. Looking from this point of view, the Presidential election is the most important political event in Armenia.

Before the Parliamentary election held last May, almost everyone joined in on the opinion that Sarkisian would easily win the Presidential election. However, following the Parliamentary election, despite the Armenian Republican Party, chaired by Sarkisian, winning the election and even gaining the majority in the Parliament, a significant development took place in internal politics. The Prosperous Armenia Party withdrew from the coalition.

The Party has been established shortly before the 2008 elections. In terms of the policies it proposes, apparently it is no different than the Republican Party. The Party's Chairman Gagik Tsarukyan and the prominent figures of the party are mostly politicians who are close to businessmen or to business circles. Therefore, according to a frequently mentioned speculation, this party has been established upon the advice of former President Robert Kocharyan and has close contacts with Russian business circles.

The Prosperous Armenia Party has increased its votes by more than a hundred percent (from 14.7% to 30.12%) and its total number of 24 deputies has risen to 37. The votes of the Republican Party, which is the Government's great partner and as mentioned above, has gained the absolute majority on its own, have increased from 32.8% to 44.02%, but this increase is lower than that of the Prosperous Armenia Party in terms of ratio. This situation clearly shows that the rising party in Armenia is Prosperous Armenia. As a result of this, the Party has asked for more shares from the government and according to some speculations, it has been requested for the Prime Minister to be from this party. However, the Republican Party has not made any concessions concerning this matter and the Government has been formed without the Prosperous Armenia Party. Since the Republicans hold the majority in the Assembly, this did not seem that inconvenient back then.

As the Presidential election neared, the idea that there could also be candidates from the Prosperous Armenia Party came to the agenda. Normally Chairman of the Party Tsarukyan should have been a candidate. However,

although not rejecting this possibility, Tsarukyan had also not announced his candidacy; while at the same time had not refrained from implying that he could become a candidate. Similarly, Armenia's second President Robert Kocharyan, who was said to control the Prosperous Armenia Party from the background, had also not made a statement on his candidacy, but also did not stand as a candidate until now (the end of November 2012). Therefore, it was said that Vartan Oskanyan, who served as Foreign Minister for ten years during Kocharyan's term, would be candidate, but the Civilitas Foundation which he established was sued on grounds that the donations sent from abroad were misappropriated and going further, Oskanyan's reputation was tried to be reduced by lifting his legislative immunity. However, this initiative has especially been criticized in Western countries.

Serge Sarkisian is the first politician to announce that he will become candidate for Presidency.

Levon Ter-Petrossian, who is Armenia's first President and the Chairman of the Armenian National Congress, which is still the greatest political party after Prosperous Armenia, has not stood as candidate. During the 2008 elections, he had gained 21.5% of the votes against Sarkisian who had received 52% of the votes. Since his Party was only able to receive 7.8% of the votes during the Parliamentary election in May, he almost has no chance to be elected as President. Therefore, it is presumed that this is the reason for him not standing as candidate.

On the other hand, Chairman of the Heritage Party Raffi Hovanissian has declared that he will stand as candidate. Hovanissian is an American Armenian whose Party has close contacts with the Diaspora. However, this is a small party. It has gained 6% of the votes and 7 deputies in the last Parliamentary election<sup>108</sup>. Hovanissian attempts to draw the attention of public opinion through his extreme statements and behaviors. For instance, a while ago, he had staged a hunger strike on one of Yerevan's squares in the middle of winter for reasons unknown. Recently, he has visited Azerbaijan, whereas all other Armenian statesmen are careful not to visit, and has attended an international conference in which he has strictly criticized Azerbaijan due to the Karabakh conflict and has accused Turkey of occupying Western Armenia. Asking to take the floor when he had no right to and when was denied to do so, he tried to occupy the platform. Although these kinds of demagogic behaviors are appreciated by some Armenians, it is not enough to be elected as President.

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108 By receiving 6% of the votes and gaining 7 deputies in the 2008 election, this party has obtained relative success. The Heritage Party was able to enter the Parliament by receiving 5.7% of the votes and gaining 5 deputies during the previous elections.

The Dashnak Party otherwise known as the Armenian Revolutionary Federation is much more extreme than the Heritage Party in its statements and actions. Despite its strength within the Diaspora, it has not obtained a strong political place in Armenia. Although it has increased its votes after entering the Government during Kocharyan's Presidency, it has withdrawn from the coalition as a reaction to the signing of the Turkey-Armenia Protocols and it has been seen during the parliamentary election this year that this party has lost most of its votes<sup>109</sup>.

Arthur Bagdasarian, Chairman of the Rule of Law Party, which is known as Orinats Yerkir in Armenian, is presumably at the front of the individuals who the European Union countries want to see as President. However, although being in the Government Coalition, this party, by only receiving 5.5% of the votes and gaining 5 deputies in the last election, has no chance in the Presidential election.

What is the tendency of Armenian public opinion at a time when about 2 months remain until the Presidential election? According to a public opinion poll published on this issue<sup>110</sup>, the percentage of votes the potential candidates could receive is as follows:

President Serge Sarkisian.....	%28
Chairman of the Prosperous Armenia Party Tsarukyan.....	% 19
Second President Robert Kocharyan.....	%11
Chairman of the Heritage Party Raffi Hovanissian.....	%4
Chairman of the Armenian National Congress Levon Ter-Petrossian.....	%3
Former Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanyan.....	%3
Chairman of the Rule of Law Party Arthur Bagdasarian .....	% 1
Head of the Dashnak Party Vahan Hovanissian .....	% 1

Meanwhile, it has been seen in the last few months that the Armenian President election also has an international dimension. Following Vladimir Putin's re-election as President, Russia's initiatives to form a bloc together with the countries separating from the Soviet Union have increased. When considering the special conditions of Georgia and Azerbaijan in the Southern Caucasus, the sole country that could join this bloc is Armenia. Armenia's

109 The Dashnak Party had received 13% of the votes and gained 16 deputies in the 2008 Parliamentary election. However, it has only been able to receive 5.7% of the votes and gained 6 deputies in this year's Parliamentary election.

110 "Si les Elections Présidentielles Avaient Lieu Dimanche Prochain, Serge Sarkissian Arriverait en Tête", *Armenews*, 12 November 2012.

border with Iran and Turkey being defended by Russian forces, a large Russian military base existing near Gyumri, Armenia's membership to the Commonwealth of Independent States and the CSTO<sup>111</sup>, Russia's special place within Armenian economy, Russian investments, and Armenia's dependence on Russia for petroleum and natural gas have almost made this country an ideal candidate for the bloc wanted to be established under Russia's guidance.

The Armenian Government favors the continuation of these rather privileged relations with Russia and it does not hide that especially with security considerations, Russia is highly needed.

*The Armenian Government favors the continuation of these rather privileged relations with Russia and it does not hide that especially with security considerations, Russia is highly needed.*

However, particularly for economic and political reasons, Armenia also desires to have close relations with Western countries and their organizations in Europe such as the EU, NATO and the Council of Europe. A problem emerges at this point. It could be understood that although Russia finds it normal for Armenia to have cooperation to a certain degree with some Western countries and organizations, it wants this cooperation to have a limit and does not want integration

taking place especially in the economic area. Therefore, as we explained in detail before, it insistently does not want Armenia to become a member of the Eurasian Union. On the other hand, it wants the contact and cooperation with NATO to be restricted. It could be understood that regarding this matter, Russia could use prices of natural gas as an instrument of pressure on Armenia. However, it is also apparent that Armenia is resisting. Prime Minister Tigran Sarkisyan has openly stated that becoming a member of the Eurasian Union will not be to Armenia's advantage. It has been expressed in the press that this situation has negatively influenced President Putin and he has indefinitely delayed his visit to Armenia<sup>112</sup>.

On the opposite, it could be seen that interest in Armenia has increased in European Union countries and organizations and in connection to this, visits conducted to this country have also increased. There is a serious rise in the high status visits of EU member countries conducted to Armenia which creates the belief that they are almost acting according to a pre-defined plan. The same increase could be seen in the EU, NATO and Council of Europe officials. This year, the Secretary General of NATO Rasmussen, Special

111 CSTO, Collective Security Treaty Organization

112 "Putin Not Planning to Visit Armenia", *Haykakan Zhamanak*, 10 November 2012.



Representative for the Caucasus Appathurai, NATO Commander-in-Chief, Commander of American Forces in Europe and many other high ranking NATO officials have visited Armenia. The level of visits conducted by officials of EU organizations is much higher. Within this framework, President of the European Council Herman van Rompuy and President of the European Commission Baroso have come to Armenia. Furthermore, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe has conducted a visit. There have been many high ranking bilateral visits from the countries of EU and NATO to Armenia. The intensity of the visits, which was not seen before, forms the evidence for the increased interest in Armenia and the desire to maintain close relations with Western countries.

It is doubtful whether Serge Sarkisian is the Armenian President wanted by Russia. However, for reasons such as still being the person to be able to receive the most votes and his influence over all security forces in Armenia, it is very difficult to remove Sarkisian from power. It is difficult to determine from now how this personal struggle between Russia and the Western countries regarding Armenia will end.

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