

# THE FACTORS AFFECTING THE SUCCESS OF THE ARMENIAN LOBBY IN THE UNITED STATES

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## ABSTRACT

The Armenian policy network was organized very well and chose lobbying strategies in place. In 2007, the Armenian lobby and policy network worked effectively in bringing the Armenian genocide bill to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives. The Armenian lobby and its political network are focused on achieving outstanding success, such as moving the bill to the upper stages of the legislative processes. Nevertheless, while failing this goal in 2007, it partially succeeded in 2010 and achieved outstanding success in 2019. As a result, the lobbying strategies of the Armenian policy network have reached the goal of passing the Armenian genocide bill through both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

This study argues that the Armenian policy network chooses the right lobbying strategies. The limited success in 2007, the relative success in 2010 and the outstanding success in 2019 can be explained by the dynamics of American domestic and foreign policy, as well as the sensitivity of implementing appropriate lobbying strategies. In this context, the aim of the study is to explain the factors that affect the success or failure of the Armenian lobby and policy network in the United States in the context of the Armenian genocide proposals.

**Keywords:** Armenian-American Lobby, Policy Network, Lobbying Strategy

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## AMERİKA BİRLEŞİK DEVLETLERİ'NDEKİ ERMENİ LOBİSİNİN BAŞARISINI ETKİLEYEN FAKTÖRLER

### ÖZ

Ermeni politika ağı çok iyi örgütlenerek yerinde lobicilik stratejileri seçmiştir. 2007'de Ermeni lobisi ve politika ağı, Ermeni soykırımı tasarısının Temsilciler Meclisi'nin Dışişleri Komitesi'ne getirilmesinde etkin çalıştı. Ermeni lobisi ve politika ağı, tasarımı yasama süreçlerinin üst aşmalarına taşıma gibi daha üstün başarılar elde etmeye odaklanmıştır. Buna rağmen bu hedefinde 2007'de başarısız olurken 2010'da kısmen başarılı olmuş ve 2019'da ise üstün başarı elde etmiştir. Sonuçta Ermeni politika ağının lobicilik stratejileri, Ermeni soykırımı tasarısını Kongre'nin hem Temsilciler Meclisi'nden hem de Senato'dan geçirebilme hedefine ulaşmıştır.

Bu çalışma, Ermeni politika ağının doğru lobicilik stratejileri seçtiğini savunmaktadır. 2007'deki sınırlı başarı, 2010'daki göreceli başarısı ve 2019'daki üstün başarısı, uygun lobicilik stratejilerini uygulamadaki hassasiyetleriyle olduğu kadar Amerikan iç ve dış politikasındaki dinamiklerin sınırlandırılmasıyla da açıklanabilir. Bu bağlamda çalışmadaki amaç, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'ndeki Ermeni lobisi ve politika ağının Ermeni soykırımı tasarımları bağlamındaki başarılarını veya başarısızlıklarını etkileyen faktörleri açıklamaktır.

**Anahtar Kavramlar:** Amerikan Ermeni Lobisi, Politika Ağı, Lobicilik Stratejisi

### INTRODUCTION

The Armenian policy network has been well organized and working like a charm in implementing precise lobbying strategies. In 2007 and 2010, the Armenian lobby and policy network have been efficacious in conveying the "Genocide Resolution" to the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee. This lobby suppressed to gain further achievements (i.e. to bring the issue to the upper echelons of the United States legislation). However the policy network achieved limited success in 2007 and 2010; it accomplished much better level in 2019. Consequently the policy network and its strategies achieved one of the primary goals by passing the recognition of the "Armenian Genocide Resolution" from the House of Representatives and Senate.

In this study, it will be hypothesized that the Armenian policy network opted the right lobbying programs in all three cases of 2007, 2010 and 2019. The restricted attainment in 2007, relatively advanced achievement in 2010 and perfectly advanced achievement in 2019 were the outcomes of their persisting exertions in employing proper lobbying tactics as well as other dynamics regarding the United States foreign and domestic policies.

The aim of this study is to explain the factors influencing the relative successes or failures of the Armenian lobby in the United States in the context of the genocide resolutions.

In order to test the hypothesis, the subsequent phases will be followed: Initially, reviewing the literature will come as a first step. In this part, scientific-neutral and objective-comments will be selectively picked. Secondly, the stakes and stakeholders will be tried to identify as main concerns. Furthermore, the lobbying strategies in 2007, 2010 and 2019 will be scrutinized and illustrated cautiously. As a final point, the findings will be analyzed and a concise appraisal will be inscribed.

## **I. OVERVIEW OF THE ARMENIAN LOBBY IN THE UNITED STATES**

The Armenian diaspora in the United States operates as a systematic organization. Membership in parties such as the Dashnaktsutyun and Ramkavar, which have been established over hundred years, is possible for all Armenians regardless of the country in which they live. There are branches of these parties in many states. In this respect, the Armenian Assembly of America, the Armenian National Relief Alliance, the Armenian American Economic Council and the Armenian National Committee are particularly notable. The Armenian National Aid Alliance is concerned with financing the political activities of the diaspora. The Armenian diaspora's social activities are carried out by the Armenian Assembly of America and the Armenian American Economic Council in the United States. The United States media and the Armenian National Committee work collaboratively. The committee has a special branch that develops relationships throughout the world. The committee also has a dedicated telephone line providing free service every day of the week. With this line, any Armenian living in the United States can connect to any channel in the North American continent; he can express his own opinion and protesting views that are contrary to Armenian interests (İbrahimli, 2001, s. 476).

There are three factors that make the Armenian diaspora successful in the United States. The first is that there are schools teaching in the Armenian language and they have their own churches. The second is the publication of numerous books, magazines and newspapers in the Armenian language (Üstün, 2019, s. 712-713). The third is to broadcast television in the Armenian language. In short, no matter where they live, each Armenian individual works for Armenia and does something for his/her own state.

The Armenian lobby in the United States has been well-organized and equipped by the support of local Armenian American communities which have been very persuasive in local elections and also nation-wide Congress elections

in the United States. Their particular attention is to focus on lobbying activities towards the Congress. The lobby has been dealing with many issues related to international politics. Two of them are their top agendas: obtaining the recognition of the so-called Armenian genocide by the United States and Turkey, and pushing the United States to support Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh financially and on the international scene (Zarifian, 2014, s. 509). They would like to surge United States financial aid to Armenia. Predominantly, their attention is concentrated on the issues concerning with Turkey and Azerbaijan.

Generally, some of the scientific studies indicate their strength. One of the studies included interviews about the success of the Armenian lobby. It is clear from the policy making interviews that the Armenian lobby has established itself as one of the most influential of the ethnic lobbies; and policy makers perceive the lobby as very organized and active in the policy-making process. Jewish Americans and Armenian Americans are absolutely the best around. They are the best motivated, the best mobilized and the best managed ones. Policy makers credited Armenian Americans with being very interested in foreign policy; and their organizations as being very good at mobilizing Armenian Americans to contact their members of Congress staffers (Paul and Paul, 2009, s. 143). Another study indicates their achievements by giving concrete examples from the policy-making processes. While all ethnic lobbies have an understandable tendency to exaggerate their strength in order to increase their membership and their influence in Washington, the assessment of the 104th Congress by Aram Hamparian, the executive director of the Armenian National Committee of America, was close to the mark: the Armenian lobby enjoyed unprecedented success during the 104th Congress. The Radanovich-Bonior, Visclosly, and Porter Amendments sanctioning Turkey for their ongoing denial of the so-called Armenian genocide, continued blockade of Armenia and rights abuses each passed by an overwhelming margin (Smith, 2000, s. 70).

The successes of the Armenian lobby have been quoted above mentioned studies by giving statistical data. Their accomplishment has been assessed by their access to policy makers, principally Congressmen and Congresswomen. The most significant indicator in the attainment of the Armenian lobby is its capacity to propound the so-called genocide assertions in every possible instance. The most frequently mentioned example was the attempts by the Armenian lobby to persuade the executive branch to officially recognize the so-called 1915 Armenian genocide, an issue discussed by 36,6 percent of policymakers (Paul and Paul, 2009, s. 144). The analysis of their ongoing activities deserve to pay attention to further qualitative studies.

## **A. THE CHALLENGE TO THEIR STRENGTH**

Although the literature indicates their successes, there are certain restrictions on their final achievements. Nonetheless, while respondents did in general view the Armenian lobby as quite influential, many policy makers offered evidence that the lobby is not unstoppable. Other policy makers noted that despite their very active and well-organized campaign, the Armenian-American lobby has failed to change United States policy and achieve its top priority: The United States government still does not recognize the so-called Armenian genocide claims. Other policy makers, who see the Armenian lobby as influential, argued that the lobby only has an effect on issues related to Armenia. For example, one State Department careerist noted that Armenian Americans have lots of way with issues connected to Armenia, but with nothing else (Paul and Paul, 2009, s. 145). Their finalized achievements have been limited to the issues such as the United States aid to Armenia. However, it does not mean that they quit bringing the genocide resolutions in every possible case.

## **B. STRATEGIES AND TACTICS OF THE ARMENIAN LOBBY**

Armenian-American activists have organized a handful of grass-roots lobbying groups and Political Action Committees to advance their cause for more than two decades. Modeling themselves after the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, groups such as the Armenian Assembly of America and the Armenian National Committee of America sprang up in and around Southern California, New York City, Detroit, Boston and a few other places where the country's Armenian Americans are concentrated. The Armenian Political Action Committees have been very successful in gathering considerable campaign money (Findik, 2002, s. 42-44).

The Armenian lobby has long used very sophisticated direct formal lobbying strategies. They visited Congressman and Congresswomen frequently. The special interest groups related to Armenian Caucus work not only to inform Congress (via documentary shows in Congress, seminars and panels) about their views, but also to keep score of the lawmakers' voting records (Beriş and Gürkan, 2002, s. 10).

## **C. THE STRATEGIES OF THE COALITION FORMATION**

The Armenian lobby has been cooperating with its traditional allies. Especially, the Greek lobby has been one of the most important allies of the Armenian lobby. The Greek and Armenian-American lobbies have solidarity based on having distinctive religious bases in their Orthodox Churches. Their common cause is related to historical and deep emotional fears to Turkey (Smith, 2000, s. 115).

The Armenian lobby has also been very active to form coalitions with some human rights groups. They are taking examples of successful human rights groups in the United States. For instance, the Armenian National Committee works with non-Armenian group to recognize and stop human rights abuses and genocide such as working with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and other groups to bring the attention to the crisis of Darfur. Working on Darfur and other similar issues may increase the capability for the Armenian National Committee to position itself as a credible expert on genocide and human rights; by broadening the scope of their focus, they may better address the issues that are more central to the Armenian community, like the so-called 1915 Armenian genocide (Paul and Paul, 2009, s. 98). This indicates the Armenian lobby's success in picking a very strategic coalition partner to increase its perceived image as one of the most legitimate lobbies in the nation.

## **II. THE LIMITED SUCCESS OF THE ARMENIAN LOBBY IN 2007**

The well-organized Armenian lobby groups had been activated in Washington DC to achieve their political objectives. One of the most important objectives of the Armenian lobby was supposed to work for the genocide resolutions. The main claim was about the allegations of the mass killings of Armenian population during the Ottoman State in 1915.

Their lobbying efforts have been successful in general. However, the efforts in 2007 have not resulted in expected outcomes. The limited success of the Armenian lobby can be explained by some factors. Firstly, local politics is much more crucial and determining in United States politics. Therefore, any lobby has to take care of the necessities of local politics. The structure of the election system is an important imperative to lead the lobbies work properly. Thus, the Armenian lobby took these realities very seriously and has implemented proper lobbying strategies. Secondly, in general, the counter-lobbying activities to defeat the Armenian claims have stayed relatively poor and underdeveloped. However, in some instances, some additional aspects can temporarily contribute to Turkey's cause. It happened when the United States administration had seen a strategic interest to support the Turkish side. The requirements of the United States foreign policy and security interests lead the United States administration to support Turkey's side.

### **A. IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL POLITICS AND ELECTORAL IMPERATIVE**

The Armenian lobby has been spending huge energy for such resolutions both in the House of Representatives and the Senate for years. For some years, they have been activated by more efforts. Besides, one of the most important

aspects of the Armenian lobby is its strength in local politics. They are very active in states and district levels by the support of grassroots as well. Their preparation for the resolution in 2007 deserves special attention. One of the important grass-roots groups is the Armenian Assembly of America. It had ten thousand members and a budget of about four million dollars in 2006. This group tried to get support from the Congress by calling the members to convince. The organization has engaged with 53 non-Armenian ethnic groups, such as Jewish groups, to support the resolution (Kessler, 2007). The amount of the resources reserved for the success of the 2007 bill shows the degree of preparedness of the Armenian lobby.

The reason why so many sponsors support the Armenian cause is related to the United States domestic political situation. The local politics in districts requires largest possible support for any cause. In the case of 2007 bill, the bill was supported by 211 co-sponsors. Although some of them did not believe that it was a true decision, due to the strength of the Armenian lobby in the districts a congressman should prioritise the demand of the local population for his/her political carrier (Kessler, 2007). Thus, the constituency in the districts has had a strongest connection with the cause of local politicians. Since the Armenian origin politicians or those who depend on the votes of Armenian communities have been very much organized in forming the strong constituency connections which help them in Congressional elections.

## **B. THE FACTORS RELATED TO UNITED STATES NATIONAL SECURITY AND FOREIGN POLICY**

Since the counter lobbying activities of Turkey to defeat the so-called Armenian genocide claims have remained relatively destitute and lagging, Turkey's position has been supported by other variables. These factors are related to United States national security and foreign policy requirements. The interests are twofold. Firstly, Turkey has been an important strategic ally of the United States in the Middle East, Central Asia and Caucasus. In case of a threat to the United States interests in the Middle East, Central Asia and Caucasus, the United States administration prioritize United States national security stakes to domestic politics. The policy makers can easily override the domestic challenges so that regional allies such as Turkey may help them. Secondly, Turkey is a prominent and strategic member of North Atlantic Treaty Organization for the United States. The United States foreign policy imperatives may occasionally drive the United States policy makers to ally with Turkey. In such cases, they also prioritize United States national security and foreign policy to domestic politics. In both cases, Turkey gained the support of the United States administration to counter the claims of the Armenian lobby. Nonetheless, this support does not stand forever; instead it is strategic and temporary.

The United States Executive Branch acted as a lobbyist during the course of 2007 legislation on the House of Representatives Resolution 106. The George Walker Bush administration put more emphasis on the strategic security relations between the United States and Turkey. The efforts by the George Walker Bush administration to defeat the passage of House of Representatives Resolution 106 can be considered as a good case in point of how the executive branch can successfully lobby the Congress after evaluating the risks in United States foreign policy issues. The United States Executive Branch unleashed a concerted lobbying effort against the bill. In this context, the identical letters of Condoleezza Rice and Robert Gates as the Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense to the important names of House of Representatives are the good examples of this effort. These letters issued on 7 March 2007 aimed to highlight the danger posed by this bill to the national security. On 15 March 2007, the assistant secretary of state Daniel Fried also gave a letter to the members of the subcommittee. In this letter he tried to convince these critical actors that the acceptance of this bill would have caused the American military operations in the area, especially in Afghanistan and Iraq (Vorpagel, 2008).

In the same case, President George Walker Bush himself appealed to the members of the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee not to pass the bill. He stated that the passage of this resolution would create serious trouble in the relations with an important North Atlantic Treaty Organization ally, Turkey (House Panel OKs Armenian "Genocide" Bill, 2007). In spite of the efforts of the President George Walker Bush, the Armenian lobby found its way to reach one of the most prominent politicians in the United States such as House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi. Due to the significant Armenian population in her election district and the support of Armenian National Committee, she asserted that the bill should have been considered and asked Chairman of the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee Tom Lantos to schedule a vote in committee (Vorpagel, 2008).

Some politicians have been supportive of the Armenian cause, but they had to change their attitude after considering the foreign policy risks of the pending resolutions. One of these politicians was Tom Lantos. Although Tom Lantos, the Chairman of the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee, was supporting the bill he voted against it. According to his opinion, passing this bill would have created a great danger for American servicemen (House Panel OKs Armenian "Genocide" Bill, 2007). The consideration of the subcommittee and the lobbying struggles of the United States administration indicate that executive body, namely the United States Presidency, could afford to strike down the efforts of the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee (Vorpagel, 2008). As a result, the limited success of the lobbying efforts of the Armenian lobby can be explained by the risk evaluation of the



United States administration and its foreign policy pursuance over the subcommittees and the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee.

### **III. THE RELATIVE SUCCESS OF THE ARMENIAN LOBBY IN 2010**

The efforts of Armenian lobby produced a relative success during the legislation activities in 2010. The Armenian lobby has successfully implemented the right lobbying strategies as they did before. They utilized capital and other resources to conduct necessary lobbying activities. In addition to successful lobbying activities of the Armenian lobby, the relative weakness of the Turkish lobby and the failure of the alliances of Turkey's side have contributed to success of Armenian side. From the perspective of Turkey, the efforts of Turkish lobby have stayed unsuccessful due to some factors. The first of these factors was the losing support of the Israeli lobby to Turkey's cause. The second factor is the changes of the United States' domestic politics as well as the requirements for security and foreign policy interests.

#### **A. THE LOSS OF SUPPORT BY THE ISRAELI LOBBY TO TURKEY'S CAUSE**

Although the Armenian lobby has traditionally enjoyed an asymmetrical grassroots lobbying advantage, the growing relationship between Turkey and Israel, and the subsequent efforts on the part of some Jewish Americans grassroots support for Turkey, may supply a mechanism to offer a countervailing grassroots force to Armenian American organizations. However, due to the deteriorating relations between Israel and Turkey after 2009, the supports of Israeli lobbies have dramatically declined. The Mavi Marmara incident and the Gaza Flotilla case has put much strain on Israeli-Turkey relations and incited the Israeli lobby in the United States against Turkey. Some additional developments in Turkish foreign policy have disrupted the support of the Israeli lobby. Especially, Turkey's close relations with the President of Iran, Mahmud Ahmedinejad, have had a very negative impact on the attitude of the Israeli lobby.

Turkey has been supported by the defense lobby in the United States. The United States defense lobby supports anti-genocide resolution. The chief executives of defense contractors Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, United Technologies and Northrop Grumman have also weighed in, writing in a letter to Chairman of the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee Howard Berman that the resolution risks "alienating a significant North Atlantic Treaty Organization ally and trading partner." The Armenian National Committee of America blasted the letter as morally reprehensible (Eggen, 2010). However, the

strategic alliance of the defense lobby with Israeli lobby has created problems after the loss of confidence to Turkey side.

## **B. THE CHANGES IN DOMESTIC POLITICS OF THE UNITED STATES**

Another component is the changes in the United States' domestic politics towards Turkey. Some of the conservative political elites have changed their attitudes towards Turkey. The natural coalition between the supporters of Turkey's cause in the United States had broken down due to the recent changes in understanding of Turkey's political alignment. Those who changed their attitudes started to think that Turkey has changed the axis. Turkey has preferred the eastern axis which may eventually harm the Western interests led by the United States and Europe.

However, recent developments in the Middle East (widespread uprisings and overthrow of the Tunisian and Egyptian leaderships), under the name of Arab Spring, have opened up new windows of opportunities for Turkey. In the meantime, the United States President Barack Hussein Obama and his administration started to conduct foreign relations with Turkey directly on bilateral basis, not virtually through the United States-Israeli route. Since the United States interests will be much more dependent on maintaining good relations with Turkey in the Middle East, the similar resolutions cannot easily come to the United States legislative agenda soon.

Another factor which temporarily delays or obstructs the resolution is the success of Republicans in the Midterm Elections of November 2010. The Republicans would not have risk the United States security and national interests. Therefore, some political observers claim that if the Republicans win the elections, it is hard to expect another successful genocide resolution in the United States legislative agenda.

## **IV. THE OUTSTANDING SUCCESS OF THE ARMENIAN LOBBY IN 2019**

The United States House of Representatives adopted Resolution 296 recognizing the so-called Armenian genocide on 29 October 2019. The bill, presented in April by the Democrat deputy Adam Schiff of the United States House of Representatives, passed through parliament with 11 "no" votes against 405 "yes" votes. Later on, on 12 December 2019, the United States Senate unanimously adopted the simple decision numbered 150 to recognize the so-called Armenian genocide. These non-binding resolutions are symbolic as they reflect the approach of the Congress on this matter.

With the Senate's recognizing the so-called Armenian genocide after the United States House of Representatives, the Armenian lobby in the United States reached its target in 2019, that it did not achieve in 2007 and 2010. The outstanding achievements of the Armenian lobby in the United States, led to a destruction that is hard to eliminate on the United States relationship with Turkey. On the other hand, by these decisions of the United States House of Representatives and the Senate, use of the Armenian genocide bills that have been an effective threat against Turkey for years by the Armenian lobby in the United States, was also abolished. Along with the outstanding success of the Armenian lobby in the United States, there are two factors behind the decisions to recognize the so-called Armenian genocide in the House of Representatives and the Senate: deterioration of relations between Turkey and the United States, and conflicts in American domestic politics.

#### **A. INCREASING DETERIORATION OF RELATIONS BETWEEN TURKEY AND THE UNITED STATES**

The relations between Turkey and the United States have started to deteriorate since 2012. In particular, the Barack Hussein Obama administration had made very serious mistakes in the United States relations with Turkey. The first was seen in the United States policy towards Syria. Despite the use of chemical weapons, United States has changed its position against the Syrian regime and left Turkey alone. Secondly, it directly supported the activities of [Fethullahist Terrorist Organization](#) (FETO), which carried out the coup attempt on 15 July 2016. Thirdly, it recognized the [Kurdistan Workers' Party](#) (PKK)/[Democratic Union Party](#) (PYD) as an legitimate actor in the north of Syria. The fourth, it led Turkey to purchase S-400 by not selling the Patriots. During the Barack Hussein Obama era, this issue was completely blocked. Therefore, Turkey was headed to the Russian Federation. During the Barack Hussein Obama era, this kind of negative issues between the administrations and created the problem of insecurity (Erhan, 2019). It can be said that this situation deepened the problems experienced in the relations between the two states since 2017.

As of 2017, the tension in the United States relations with Turkey has reached its zenith with the S-400 missile defense system purchase of Turkey. After the "Operation Peace Spring" carried out by Turkey in Syria, recognition of the Armenian genocide bill began to be discussed with a serious propaganda against Turkey led by a group within the Congress. First, on 29 October 2019, Resolution 296 was adopted at the United States House of Representatives to recognize the so-called Armenian genocide. Then, on 12 December 2019, the Senate unanimously adopted the simple decision numbered 150. The factor behind the decisions was confirmed by the words of Steve Cohen, a member of the United States House of Representatives: "I was always against the Armenian

genocide resolution bill, but I voted for it this week. Because Turkey does not seem to respect the United States (Cohen, 2019).”

## **B. CONFLICTS IN AMERICAN DOMESTIC POLITICS**

The dismissal crisis of United States President Donald Trump emerging with the allegations regarding the presidential elections directly affected the United States relationship with Turkey. For the past two years, none of the Armenian genocide drafts submitted to the United States Congress on issues such as the S-400, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Operation Peace Spring have been able to get as much support as the last vote. Democrat Party members of the House of Representatives, who were "hunting witches" with the words of United States President Donald Trump, demonstrate their resentment against the President of the United States by opposing every issue he approaches positively. But the problem is not only in the attitude of the Democratic Congress members. The majority of Republican members who belong to the same party as United States President Donald Trump, gave a positive vote on the decision to recognize the Armenian genocide targeting Turkey. Likewise, The Republican senators took a similar stance in the vote in the Senate. The most of the members of Congress of the United States, have three pillars of attitudes on the decision to recognize the so-called Armenian genocide and Turkey. First, Turkey has broken up terrorist state project with The Operation Peace Spring. The discomfort is so great that they make their utmost to take revenge from Turkey and have entered into cooperation with the Armenian lobby in the United States. As the second, until the FETO coup attempt on 15 July 2016, the groups targeting President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his close circle took the same hostile attitude towards the entire Turkish nation, which prevented the coup since the attempt. Third, the members of Congress were so devoid of strategic reasoning ability that has never seen in the history of the United States. In a period that the challenges against the global power of the United States has increased, the number of people is largely diminished who can calculate that; what is the cost of the decisions taken at the expense of losing an ally like Turkey, to the United States foreign policy in the following years.

## **C. LEGAL BINDINGNESS OF THE SO-CALLED ARMENIAN GENOCIDE RECOGNITION DECISIONS**

Considering these two factors, it is necessary to clarify the decisions of the Congress on recognizing the so-called Armenian genocide by both the House of Representatives and the Senate. Due to these decisions taken by both the House of Representatives and the Senate, the Congress showed its feelings about the official recognition of the so-called Armenian genocide. First of all, it should be noted that these decisions are not legally binding in the American domestic law. Such decisions are referred to as decisions that do not require the approval

of the President of the United States, that is not sanctioned. The Congress can make such decisions about its internal functioning or to determine its non-binding attitude (United States Senate, t.y.). Therefore, these decisions do not have a binding feature neither for the United States government nor Turkey. After the decisions were taken, the spokesperson of the United States State Department, Morgan Ortagus, said that the management's attitude has not changed and that the President's definition in last April continued to reflect his views (Ortagus, 2019). However, the 24 April speeches that are mentioned in the statement of the United States State Department Spokesperson Morgan Ortagus, and which are repeated traditionally every year, are quite problematic. The fact that these events, which should be evaluated in the light of objective history and science, have become domestic policy factors by the heads of state, are also the preparers of such parliamentary decisions. As a matter of fact, in the explanation of the spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about the decisions to recognize the so-called Armenian genocide, it was emphasized how the history could be politicized with these decisions of the Congress (T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı, 2019). On the other hand, the timing of the Senate decision was not a coincidence. Because the decision taken in a process where important developments have occurred both in the domestic politics of the United States and in the Eastern Mediterranean due to hydrocarbon resources, is a reflection of the retaliation and image of power that Congress wants to emphasize. The coincidence of the agreement signed on jurisdiction of Turkey and Libya's in eastern Mediterranean, cannot be considered accidental. Just as in the decision of House of Representatives after the Operation Peace Spring, this time the United States Congress, which is trying to prove its power over domestic and foreign policy of Turkey, wanted to send a message through the Senate. Thus, it was revealed that the Congress would throw the longstanding alliance and friendship relations between the United States and Turkey aside due to ambition.

Returning to the statement of the House of Representatives Steve Cohen about again, it would be appropriate to mention that this issue is bilateral. Indeed, the decision to recognize the Armenian genocide resolutions of the United States Congress and also the decisions that foresees the implementation of sanctions against Turkey, were considered as disrespect for the sovereign decisions regarding national security by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey (T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı, 2019). So, the problem here is not the disrespect of Turkey to the United States Congress; the problem is the disrespect of the United States Congress to the decisions taken by a sovereign state in accordance with its own interests.

It is also necessary to mention the high success of the Armenian lobby in the United States regarding the decisions to recognize the so-called Armenian genocide at the Congress. It can be said that the Armenian lobby in the United States reached the desired outcome transforming the tension between the United

States and Turkey to an opportunity. However, it can also be said that the United States Congress used the Armenian case in line with its own interests. The United States Congress who wants to show the power and retaliation against Turkey, has taken the decision to recognize the so-called Armenian genocide by choosing bad timing. These decisions show that, the accusations of so-called genocide against Turkey were made by political calculation rather than seeking historical justice. In addition, the United States Congress, taking these decisions has further strained the relations with Turkey, an ally which has key importance for the United States. As a result, the United States Congress damaged the United States' interests, it has weakened the United States relationship with Turkey and highlighted the outstanding achievements of the Armenian lobby in the United States.

## CONCLUSION

The Armenian lobby in the United States has traditionally and inevitably been vigorous. It has been implementing effective lobbying strategies both at the federal and state level. One of the activities of the Armenian-American lobby is passing the resolution related to so-called genocide allegations. They have become successful in passing the legislation from the subcommittees. In some cases, they have become more successful than the other instances. This study has tried to investigate the factors influencing the relatively high or low success of the Armenian lobby in different cases. In this study it is suggested that both domestic politics and foreign policy related factors of United States have been determining the outcomes of the lobbying success of the Armenian lobby. Although the Armenian lobby in the United States has implemented successful lobbying strategies (coalition formation, tactics etc.) in most of the cases, other factors had a real impact on the relative success or failure. Those factors are as in the following: importance of local politics and electoral imperative, the factors related to United States national security and foreign policy, the loss of support by the Israeli lobby to Turkey's cause and the changes in the United States domestic politics. Some of the factors provided relatively high success to the Armenian-American lobby and some others did the opposite.

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