

# THE ‘OTHER’ CITIZENS: ARMENIANS IN TURKEY BETWEEN ISOLATION AND (DIS)INTEGRATION

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More than a century after the Armenian Genocide, extreme “othering” and demonization of the “other” continues in Turkey today. Anti-Armenian public rhetoric, misrepresentations, false rumors, and assumptions are commonplace in print and broadcast media, among government officials, public figures, and the general public. Indeed, being an Armenian in the post-Genocide Republic of Turkey has meant going through a continuous process of state imposed and societal minoritization in virtually all aspects of communal and individual life. The Armenian community is “an ever-precarious entity in Turkey,” as Lerna Ekmekçioğlu describes in her study of the community during the early republican period.<sup>1</sup>

Over the decades, the Turkish state has institutionalized segregation and discrimination against the Armenian and other Christian communities in particular and violence against the minorities in general.<sup>2</sup> Whether it is through the illegal seizure and appropriation of community properties in 1936,<sup>3</sup> intimidation and social humiliation in the 1940s, 50s and 60s, extreme othering and demonization in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s, and physical threats and lethal collective targeting in the 2000s, the state has increasingly tightened the boundaries of the Armenian community. In the republican period, as Fatma Müge Göçek argues, “instances of violence did not have to be as physically destructive” as it was towards the end of the Ottoman period. As a community much reduced in numbers, the Armenians did not pose a serious threat, “instead, symbolic violence took over to destroy what was left of them in the cultural fabric as they were forced to speak Turkish, were identified as traitors

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<sup>1</sup> Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, *Recovering Armenia: the limits of belonging in post-genocide Turkey* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 15.

<sup>2</sup> For a comprehensive study of the issue of minorities in Turkey see Baskin Oran, *Türkiye’de Azınlıklar - kavramlar, teori, Lozan, iç mevzuat, içtihat, uygulama* (Minorities in Turkey - concepts, theory, Lausanne, domestic legislation, jurisprudence, implementation) (Istanbul: İletisim, 2004) and Ayhan Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi ve ‘Türkleştirme’ Politikaları* (Capital Levy and ‘Turkification’ Policies) (Istanbul: İletisim, 2000). See also Bahar Rumelili and Fuat Keyman, “Enacting multi-layered citizenship: Turkey’s Armenians’ struggle for justice and equality.” *Citizenship Studies* (2015): 1-17, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13621025.2015.1107027> (accessed March 2, 2016); Füsün Üstel, Günay Göksu Özdoğan, Karin Karakaşlı, Ferhat Kentel, *Türkiye’de Ermeniler: Cemaat-Birey-Yurttaş* (Armenians in Turkey: Community-Individual-Citizen) (Istanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2009); Laurent-Olivier Mallet, *La Turquie, Les Turcs et les Juifs: Histoire, Représentations, Discours et Stratégies* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2008), especially chapter 5 (“La fondation de la République et les non-musulmans”) and chapter 6 (“La Turquification des non-musulmans”). For census data on minorities, see Fuat Dunder, *Türkiye Nüfus Sayımlarında Azınlıklar* (Minorities in Turkish Censuses) (Istanbul: Doz yay, 1999). Journalist Amberin Zaman provides a glimpse of some of the problems faced by remnants of Armenians in Turkey in “A Shameful Sight in Tokat,” *Taraf*, July 10, 2008. See also Ayşe Karabat, “Tackling hate crimes can no longer be postponed.” *Sunday’s Zaman*, 29 June 2008, [http://www.todayszaman.com/national\\_tackling-hate-crimes-can-no-longer-be-postponed\\_146117.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/national_tackling-hate-crimes-can-no-longer-be-postponed_146117.html) (accessed March 2, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> The notorious *Beyanname*, which “put all religious and community institutions under strict control of the state and specifically froze their wealth, including whatever part of it was dedicated to philanthropy and culture” (Speros Vryonis, *The Mechanism of Catastrophe: the Turkish pogrom of September 6-7, 1955, and the destruction of the Greek community of Istanbul* (New York: Greekworks.com, 2005), 15; cf. Talin Suciyan, “Treatment of foundations in Turkey threatens the survival of non-Muslim communities”, *The Armenian Reporter*, December 1, 2007; Hrants Dink, “The Taste of Being a Minority” in *Contrasts and Solutions in the Caucasus*, ed. Ole Höiris and Sefa Martin Yürükel (Aarhus-Oakville: Aarhus University Press, 1998), 436-42.

in history textbooks, and witnessed the systematic destruction of almost all their churches and cemeteries.<sup>4</sup> Under these circumstances the community had become reclusive, silent and fearful.<sup>5</sup>

"Devletimize sadık ve dirayetli olacağım. Sizlerin dualarınıza ihtiyacım var. Allah hepimizin yardımcısı olsun" (I will be loyal to our state and discerning. I am in need of your prayers. May God be our helper).<sup>6</sup> This was the pledge that a 42-year-old, young clergyman declared upon his election as the 84<sup>th</sup> Patriarch of the Armenians in Turkey on October 14, 1998.<sup>7</sup> One might ask why should the Patriarch of a Christian Church pledge loyalty to a *state* at the time with staunch secular or "militant" secularist credentials? Why loyalty to the Turkish State and not, for instance, the Turkish nation (*millet*) or the country (*vatan*)? The interference and heavy-handedness of the Turkish state in the election process of the Armenian patriarch of "Istanbul and All Turkey" and the state's implicit displeasure at the time with Archbishop Mesrob Mutafyan's candidacy was the context in which the newly elected young Patriarch made his pledge of loyalty. The Patriarch continued his acceptance speech affirming that a "new era" would begin in the life of the Armenian Church and Community in Turkey. "A new page has been opened," he told the assembly of delegates optimistically.<sup>8</sup> In reality, however, it was only an illusion of a turning of a new page in the state's relationship with the Armenian Community.

<sup>4</sup> Fatma Müge Göçek, *Denial of violence: Ottoman past, Turkish present and collective violence against the Armenians, 1789-2009* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 21.

<sup>5</sup> For example, in 1943 the Varlık Vergisi (wealth or capital tax) imposed disproportionately on non-Muslims, who had dominant role in trade and business, wiped out the wealth of the minorities and caused extreme hardships. In 1955 tensions in Cyprus led to orchestrated riots in Istanbul that targeted minorities, especially Greek (largely) and Armenian businesses and homes. It caused further exodus of Greeks and decline of the Greek population in Istanbul. For the most comprehensive study of the 1955 events and pogroms, see Vryonis, *The Mechanism of Catastrophe*, and Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi*. For prevalent issues in the 1950s and 60s from an Armenian perspective, see "Mkrtich Shelefiyan: former Parliamentarian in Turkey," in *Nor Gyank*, June 28, 2007, 32. For a brief discussion of the pressures put on the Armenian community and non-Muslim minorities since the establishment of the Turkish republic, see Ayşe Kadioğlu, "The Pigeon on the Bridge is Shot", *Middle East Report Online*, February 16, 2007, <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero021607> (accessed March 2, 2016) and Ekmekçiöğlü, *Recovering Armenia*. In the 1970s, there were riots between Sunnis and Alevis in Kahramanmaraş and Sivas, followed by continued clashes and civil disorder, which precipitated the military coup of 1980. In 1993, an Alevi festival taking place in a Sivas hotel was attacked by arsonists, which resulted in the death of 35 mostly intellectuals, known as the "Sivas massacre." In 1995, there were riots in Istanbul, which then spread to Ankara and İzmir, protesting against the lack of police action over drive-by shootings of Alevi coffeehouses. In 1997, during the Gaziantep Book Fair a bomb was detonated at the stand of Mujde Yayincılık (Good News Press) for selling Bibles. Mujde Yayincılık belonged to Turkish converts to Christianity. In this atmosphere, many at times Christians camouflaged their religious identity by using names or nicknames that are religiously neutral or even Muslim. Even some men had sought non-religious circumcision to avoid being bullied or humiliated during military service.

<sup>6</sup> The full statement: "Türk Ermeni Patriği seçilmemle birlikte yeni bir dönem ve sayfa açılmıştır. Mesleğimin yükselmesi için benim alçalmam gerekir. Bunu yapmaya mecburum. Devletimize sadık ve dirayetli olacağım. Sizlerin dualarınıza ihtiyacım var. Allah hepimizin yardımcısı olsun." See "Mesrob Mutafyan," <http://www.biyografi.net/kisiyrinti.asp?kisiid=996> (accessed October 22, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> During his first official visit to Ankara as the new Patriarch, after the customary visit to Ataturk's mausoleum, Mutafyan assured Parliament Speaker Hikmet Çetin that "We are defending the integrity of our [Turkish] motherland and nation.[...] I want to reiterate my attachment to this country and this nation." See "Armenian patriarch meets top officials in Ankara," *Turkish Daily News*, December 17, 1998, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/armenian-patriarch-meets-top-officials-in-ankara.aspx?pageID=438&n=armenianpatriarch-meets-top-officials-in-ankara-1998-12-17> (accessed March 2, 2016).

<sup>8</sup> See "Mesrob Mutafyan," <http://www.biyografi.net/kisiyrinti.asp?kisiid=996> (accessed October 22, 2007).

The entire apparatus of the Turkish state is involved with running the affairs of minorities, in this case the Armenian community, which numbers less than 0.1 percent of the population. This includes the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministries of Interior, Justice, Culture, National Education, and, interestingly, the Foreign Ministry, the National Intelligence Agency (MIT), the military intelligence agencies, the national and Istanbul police agencies, and scores of local government bodies.<sup>9</sup> As Hrant Dink, the assassinated editor of *Agos* newspaper had expressed with frustration: "It is difficult to understand why every time a member of a minority has contact with a state agency, they come face-to-face with security forces, that is to say, with the police."<sup>10</sup>

In the early republican period, an "unofficial security organization" was established by the state to monitor the minorities. Minorities law expert Murat Cano explains that "in the 1930s a security unit consisting of representatives for the foundations general directorate, the ministry of interior, the intelligence office undersecretary and the foreign ministry was established." The sole function of this unit was to monitor the activities of minorities, "especially the Greeks and Armenians." It set out state policies regarding properties owned by minority communities and had responsibility for a range of controls, including "how much property minorities could own to delegating the supervision of their commercial transactions within the state."<sup>11</sup> In 2013, it was revealed that since 1923 the Turkish state has been illegally profiling its citizens by using secret "race codes" assigned based on a person's ethnic identity—citizens with Greek origin are coded with "1", Armenians "2", Jews "3", Syriac "4", other non-Muslims "5."<sup>12</sup>

The Armenian Patriarch's meeting in June 2007 with the Chief of the General Staff, General Yasar Buyukanit, the top military man in Turkey, is perhaps the most noteworthy of such a tortuous relationship. At the end of an hour-long meeting with the General, the Patriarch said:

We had an outstanding consultation. I expressed my condolences over our soldiers who died serving the Turkish State in the southeast. We also exchanged ideas on several topics that are of concern to our society. The Chief of the General Staff received me in a highly cordial

<sup>9</sup> This applies to the Greek community as well. See, for example, "Patriarch Bartholomeos meets ministers," *Agos*, November 9, 2007, [http://www.agos.com.tr/eng/index.php?module=news&news\\_id=1080&cat\\_id=1](http://www.agos.com.tr/eng/index.php?module=news&news_id=1080&cat_id=1), [http://www.agos.com.tr/eng/index.php?module=news&news\\_id=1080&cat\\_id=1](http://www.agos.com.tr/eng/index.php?module=news&news_id=1080&cat_id=1). Cf. "Patrik ekümeniklik iddiasında" (The Patriarch claims ecumenism), *Akşam*, November 15, 2007, <http://www.aksam.com.tr/haberprn.asp?a=98482,5>.

<sup>10</sup> Dink, "The Taste," 439.

<sup>11</sup> "Lawyer Cano: 'The state withholds documents from its courts,'" *Turkish Daily News*, 10 February 2001, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/lawyer-cano-the-state-withholds-documents-from-its-courts.aspx?pageID=438&n=lawyer-cano-the-state-withholds-documents-from-its-courts-2001-02-10> (accessed March 2, 2016).

<sup>12</sup> The codes were used for admittance to minority schools, when performing military service, or when an application for public service positions was made. See Orhan Kemal Cengiz, "Turkey's Secret 'Ancestry Codes' Track Non-Muslim Minorities," *Al Monitor Turkey Pulse*, August 8, 2013, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/08/turkish-ancestry-codes.html#> (accessed March 2, 2016). In February 2016, Ahmet Sarıcan, General Directorate of Population and Citizenship Affairs Director, had orally informed MP Garo Paylan, who had raised the issue in parliament, that the procedure of profiling has been ostensibly "removed from their system." See "Race code abolished 'orally,'" *Agos*, February 25, 2016, <http://www.agos.com.tr/en/article/14473/race-code-abolished-orally> (accessed March 2, 2016); Uygur Gültek, "National Race Affairs Ministry," *Agos*, January 29, 2015, <http://www.agos.com.tr/en/article/10385/national-race-affairs-ministry> (accessed March 2, 2016); "Race code procedure in court again," *Agos*, February 26, 2015, <http://www.agos.com.tr/en/article/10698/race-code-procedure-in-court-again> (accessed March 2, 2016); "Race code' to be abolished in education," *Agos* June 2, 2015, <http://www.agos.com.tr/en/article/12032/race-code-to-be-abolished-in-education> (accessed March 2, 2016).

atmosphere. I can say that I left his office feeling more comforted and much happier and hopeful. I am thankful for his gracious reception.<sup>13</sup>

In any democracy, the idea of a religious leader being “comforted” by the top military man of the country would sound preposterous. But Turkey is a country of “exceptions.” When asked why the Patriarch wished to meet with the military head rather than the Prime Minister, he said there were allegations that Hrant Dink was assassinated by the security forces and, therefore, he wanted to ask the army chief “the necessary question: What would you advise the Armenians? What should we do?”<sup>14</sup>

Since the establishment of the Turkish Republic, the state has continued, arguably, a “republicanized” version of the *Millet* system. Where it serves the interest of the state, elements of the *Millet* system are preserved—such as having a religious ethnarch as the head of the community—while virtually all the significant rights pertaining to the internal life of the minority community, including elections and administration of endowments (*vakfs*), have been systematically undermined, banned, or tightly monitored. Even some of the rights given under the Treaty of Lausanne have shrunk over the decades and, many at times, completely ignored.<sup>15</sup>

With this brief introduction, I shall now present the two main schools of thoughts within the Armenian community in Turkey and highlight several sociological concepts that are useful to the understanding and analysis of the Turkish state’s and society’s treatment of the Armenians in Turkey today—or what the economists would call the stresses and distortions in the system. My research and thinking have greatly benefited from six trips to Turkey between 2000 and 2015, during which I had interviews, conversations, and discussions with community religious and civic leaders, intellectuals, school principals, trustees, academics, journalists, and members of the community.

It is important to note at the outset that—at least until recently—on the micro-cultural and micro-social level, “cultural differences” between Armenians and Turks are not defining markers of minority-majority interaction in Turkey. But on the macro and collective levels, language, religion, and cultural production especially, are elements that set the minority apart from the majority. From the perspective of the minority group, the right to use and be educated in their ethnic language and religion, preservation of their community assets and properties, and opportunities for cultural production are seen as the litmus test of their collective rights. However, for the Turkish state—which theoretically is entrusted with the duty to respect and provide such rights, least of which by the Treaty of Lausanne (a “dirty word” for nationalists)—the administration of language, religion, education, and culture has

<sup>13</sup> “The Patriarch Meets with the Chief of the General Staff,” [www.lrapr.org](http://www.lrapr.org), June 25, 2007, see <http://www.lrapr.org/main.aspx?Action=DisplayNews&NewsCode=N000001966&Lang=ENG>.

<sup>14</sup> “Armenischer Patriarch in der Türkei: ‘Die Armenier sind wieder allein,’” *Der Spiegel*, June 1, 2007, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/armenischer-patriarch-in-der-tuerkei-die-armenier-sind-wieder-allein-a-485472.html> (accessed March 2, 2016).

<sup>15</sup> For instance, the provisions of Articles 40 and 43 of the 1923 Lausanne Treaty, where the Turkish state is to ensure that non-Muslim Turkish citizens are not discriminated against based on their religious affiliations, is not fully implemented or generally ignored. For more on this, see Rumelili and Keyman, “Enacting multi-layered citizenship,” 5ff. The Treaty of Lausanne is available at [http://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Treaty\\_of\\_Lausanne](http://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Treaty_of_Lausanne) (accessed March 2, 2016).

been yet another instrument to homogenize the population of the country.<sup>16</sup> Neither the provisions of the Lausanne Treaty nor “equal civic rights are being adhered to in the Turkish Republic today,” observed Hrant Dink. He noted that at the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the Armenian community of Turkey numbered 300,000 among a population of approximately 13 million. Seventy-five years later, the population of Turkey had increased to 70 million, but the Armenian community had declined to 60,000. Dink attributed this vast disparity to “the fact that democracy has not yet eventuated in Turkey, together with the fact that there are those trying to gain from this delay.”<sup>17</sup>

#### ISOLATION VS INTEGRATION

The main schools of thought within the Armenian Community about the status of being a minority in Turkey could be divided into two groups: those who believe in preserving the existing status of being a minority, however “imperfect”—that is, *isolation* without integration—and those who advocate *integration* without assimilation. The current leadership in the Patriarchate, community church, school and charitable trusts—generally the organizations that are part of the “platform” of community trusts, known as VADİP (*Vakıflar Arası Dayanışma ve İletişim Platformu'nun*)<sup>18</sup> as well as Armenian-language newspapers, such as *Marmara* and *Jamanak*, are proponents of “isolationism.” Rober Haddejian, a well-known intellectual, author and editor of *Marmara* newspaper is perhaps one of the best articulators of this school of thought. He argues the case: “I might astonish you a little,” he told an Armenian journalist from the US, “I am in favour of isolation (լիզիւացում). I would have preferred a thousand times that our community had stayed in its former isolation.”<sup>19</sup> Haddejian expresses concern about, for instance, the growing number of mixed marriages and the gradual decline of the Armenian language in Turkey. Indeed, for this school of thought, the core of Armenian identity is the use and preservation of language and literature.<sup>20</sup> A 2007 survey of Armenian youth opinion in Turkey confirms these concerns.<sup>21</sup> Hrant Kasparyan of “Nor

<sup>16</sup> The “Treaty of Peace with Turkey,” signed in Lausanne on July 24, 1923, between the Government in Ankara and the Entente Powers, constituted the foundation of the Turkish Republic, wherein the protection and rights of minorities were spelled out in Articles 37-44.

<sup>17</sup> Dink, “The Taste,” 436-37.

<sup>18</sup> Among the prominent foundations are the Holy Savior Armenian Hospital (Surp Pirgiç Ermeni Hastanesi Vakfi, headed by Bedros Şirinoğlu); the Karageozian foundation (Karagözyan Vakfi), headed by Dikran Gülmezgil; St. Hagop Hospital (Surp Agop Hastanesi, headed by Bernard Sarıbay).

<sup>19</sup> Interview in Armenian, broadcast on the internet, see “Robert Haddejian, editor of Marmara Armenian newspaper published in Istanbul, Turkey,” the interview was conducted in Istanbul on July 14, 2007 by Khajag Megerdichian, editor of the Boston-based *Hairenik* weekly newspaper, see [https://youtu.be/8LayG\\_IOqc](https://youtu.be/8LayG_IOqc) (accessed March 2, 2016). See also “Ռոպէր Հաստէճեան. Կես դար «Մարմարա»-ում” (Rober Haddejian, half-century at ‘Marmara’), Civilnet.am, June 26, 2013, <http://goo.gl/URdMNg>.

<sup>20</sup> See, for instance, the remarks of Rober Haddejian and Archbishop Aram Ateshian, the Grand Sacristan of the Patriarchate, in “Տառնակնիւնը ու գրասէր հասարակութիւնը մեծաբեղին Ռ. Հաստէճեանի գրական վաստակը” (Dadyan school [community] and literature-loving society honoured R. Haddejian’s literary legacy), *Marmara*, November 19, 2008.

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.norzartonk.org/en/?p=33> (accessed March 2, 2016). Ferhat Kentel, “The Study ‘Being a Minority in Turkey’ and ‘thinking about oneself,’” *Agos* (online English version), December 7, 2007, points out some of the methodological problems of the survey conducted by Armenian NGO “Nor Zartonk,” for example, that it used a snowball approach rather than random sampling, and as such it is more a reflection of the opinion of young Armenians rather than the entire Armenian community in Turkey, see <http://www.norzartonk.org/en/?p=15> (accessed March 2, 2016).

Zartonk” (New Renaissance), an Armenian NGO which sponsored the survey, commented: “There are funerals but no weddings.” In 2015 there were 253 baptisms against 569 funerals in the community.<sup>22</sup> Another contentious issue is mixed marriages, which Kasparyan believes are not generally successful. “When they have children, they are discussing if the child will be circumcised or baptized [...]. It has been proven that such marriages often come to an end within 18 months.”<sup>23</sup>

Those who favour isolation believe integration would further erode the identity of the community. Even as they have “issues with the government” and enormous limitations and legal hurdles, Haddejian provides the rationale for this thinking:

We, as a minority, due to the Treaty of Lausanne, in addition to the Mother Constitution [*Anayasa*] of Turkey, have such rights that they give us special privileges; they give us certain rights of being a minority. In my view, saying you are not a minority means, naively, giving up the responsibility of upholding those rights.[...] Obviously, we have issues with the government, we have limitations and, until recently, many injustices, confiscation of our properties, all these exist. But, first of all, we should protect what we already have.[...] We have an enormous heritage, it is both historical and living heritage, both above the soil and under the soil. We are the preservers of all these by remaining here. Of course, along these treasures and rights, we have limitations.[...] For instance, we have endowments [*vakfs*] [...] but the Turkish *vakfs* have thousand-and-one liberties, they work freely, do fundraising, open branches, so on; but the same rights are denied to us.[...] We have major difficulties in preserving our national institutions.<sup>24</sup>

While the isolationists argue on the basis of ethnic identity and a conservative worldview conditioned over many decades living under the tight watch of the state, the integrationists argue based on the concept of citizenship and equality of rights and aspirations for all citizens. Hrant Dink was the most prominent figure of the integrationist school, which includes largely left-leaning, progressive or liberal intellectuals, such as Etyen Mahçupyan, Sevan Nişanyan, Hayko Bağdat, Rober Koptaş, Aris Nalçı, recently elected MP Garo Paylan (HDP, *Halkların Demokratik Partisi*), and others in the *Agos* and Nor Zartonk circles. Patriarch Mesrob Mutafyan personally had a certain integrationist outlook, but did not agree with the lay proponents on methodology and strategy. The integrationists believe that the rights of the Armenian community should be based on democratic norms and equal citizenship rights rather than the articles of Lausanne Treaty on “Protection of Minorities.” This is a critical and necessary divergence. As Baskin Oran explains, the “positive rights approach [in the Lausanne Treaty] founded on international guarantee isolates the minority, sterilizes it in a milieu where it cannot protect its

<sup>22</sup> “Մանրաբերուած Օրակարգ” (Heavy Agenda), *Jamanak*, October 27, 2015, 1.

<sup>23</sup> “Armenian youth complain elders imposing ‘chosen trauma’ on them,” *Sunday’s Zaman*, November 7, 2007.

<sup>24</sup> An ongoing injustice and legal contention is a Government decree issued in 1936 in which the authorities demanded that minority foundations submit to the state a declaration of their properties and assets. While back then this was considered simply an inventory of assets owed by the minorities, Hrant Dink explains that “the state has now [1998] chosen to regard this declaration as a Deed of Trust and no permission has been given to add further land or properties to the already existing ones. Therefore any real-estate acquired by the minorities after 1936 has been taken away, one by one, through lawsuits brought by the General Directorate of Foundations and given back to former owners. As a result of this, minority institutions can neither accept donation of a property or piece of land, nor can they purchase them,” Dink, “The Taste,” 441.

identity either, and identifies them as a target. Democratic rights founded on the ‘guarantee of Turkish public opinion’ are more secure.”<sup>25</sup>

One of the main contentions of the integrationists is why should the Patriarch or the clergy represent the entire community? Why not lay, secular representatives that would deal with community issues with the government? The Armenian community is recognized as a religious community in the laws of the land and, as such, integrationists demand “a civilian delegation, which should be formed within the Armenian society, to represent us.”<sup>26</sup> Etyen Mahcupyan, who briefly succeeded Dink as editor of *Agos*, calls this process the “civilianization of the community.” Mahcupyan believes, as other integrationists and Hrant Dink did, that having a church hierarch as the head of the community “takes the community farther away from being a democratic community.”<sup>27</sup> There are indications that the majority of the new generation of Armenians in Turkey are in favour of ending the isolation and moving further towards integration, openness, and full participation in society, even as they value and preserve their Armenian identity. The founding of *Agos* was the beginning of this “new thinking” and “movement,” which has become more dominant in the community, especially after the assassination of Hrant Dink in January 2007. It should be noted that there are important differences of opinions and strategies among the intellectuals within both the integrationist and isolationist schools of thought. At times political differences are played out in the public and sometimes to the “delight” of Turkish media, for instance, over the issue of support for Erdoğan and the AKP government.<sup>28</sup>

More than any other issue, the public discourse on the Genocide vis-à-vis the Turkish state and society is where the isolationists and the integrations diverge. Even as all sectors in the community are aware and acknowledge what happened to the Armenians in 1915-1922, they differ in the way the acknowledgement is made or affirmed, especially in public. In an editorial on “the centenary of 1915,” Haddejian sums up the common understanding in the wider community:

History is known and does not need to be written again. The Armenian people know what happened [during WWI]. And beyond the Armenian people, all peoples know what happened, how it happened and why it happened. And what happened afterwards. If some will still say that historians should clarify as to what happened, historians have already clarified a long time ago.<sup>29</sup>

Nevertheless, the isolationists, in a self-censored way, accommodate the expectations of the official Turkish position by referring to the Genocide as “the incidents of 1915” (1915-ին դեպքերը), or as in *Jamanak* newspaper headline, “1915 condemned

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<sup>25</sup> Baskin Oran, “The Reconstruction of Armenian Identity in Turkey and the Weekly *Agos*,” *Nouvelles Armenie*, December 17, 2006, [http://www.armenews.com/article.php?id\\_article=27696](http://www.armenews.com/article.php?id_article=27696).

<sup>26</sup> “Armenian youth complain elders imposing ‘chosen trauma’ on them,” *Sunday’s Zaman*, November 7, 2007.

<sup>27</sup> David Barsamian, “An interview with Etyen Mahcupyan,” *Armenian Weekly On-Line* 73.28, July 14, 2007.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, “Armenian intellectuals divided over support for Erdogan,” *Today’s Zaman*, September 25, 2014; Armağan Çağlayan, “Hayko Bağdat: Etyen Abi hep sağcı bir adamdı,” *Radikal*, 7 December 2014, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/yazarlar/armagan-caglayan/hayko-bagdat-etyen-abi-hep-sagci-bir-adamdi-1246521> (accessed March 23, 2016); “Kim bu gazeteci Hayko Bağdat,” *OdaTV.com* June 11, 2013, <http://odatv.com/kim-bu-gazeteci-hayko-bagdat-1106131200.html> (23 March 2016).

<sup>29</sup> Rober Haddejian, “Ճիշդ Հարիւր Տարի Առաջ” (Exactly One Hundred Years Ago), *Marmara*, April 24, 2015, <http://normarmara.com/240415lu.html> (accessed March 2, 2016).

during 2015 commemorations” (2015-ի ոգեկոչումներուն ընթացքին դասապարտած են 1915-ը).<sup>30</sup> *Marmara* newspaper is equally careful about terminology, where one would read statements such as, “One hundredth anniversary of 24 April 1915” (24 Ապրիլ 1915ի հարիւրերորդ տարելից), “the 1915 incidents” (1915ի պատահարները), “the 1915 deaths” (1915ի մեռեալները), “the 1915 victims” (1915ի զոհերը) or “Armenians around the world marked the memory of hundreds of thousands through memorial events” (Աշխարհասփիւռ հայրերինը սուգի ձեռնարկներով ոգեկոչեց յիշատակը հարիւր հազարաւոր զոհերու), “24 April related announcements” (24 Ապրիլի կապակցութեամբ կատարուած յայտարարութիւններ), etc.<sup>31</sup> While *Agos* newspaper, for instance, uses the term Genocide (*soykırım*) widely and without inverted commas, *Jamanak* and *Marmara* use the Armenian term ցեղասպանութիւն only when reporting or referring to someone or an institution that has used the term.

The terms of public discourse on the Genocide issue is dictated by Turkish officialdom. Indeed, any deviation from the official “terms of reference” is not tolerated and dealt with quickly. Etyen Mahcupyan, the first ever Armenian in Turkey to serve as senior advisor to the Turkish Prime Minister, described what happened to the Armenians as *genocide* in an interview: “If accepting that what happened in Bosnia and Africa were genocides, it is impossible not to call what happened to Armenians in 1915 genocide, too.” The fact that Mahcupyan “retired”—or was forced to retire—soon after making that statement is telling in terms of the explosive effect the characterization has in the relationship between the official Turkish position and those who disagree with it.<sup>32</sup> In this regard, the clergy and church trusts have been ever more accommodating to the state authorities and wider society. On April 24, 2015, Archbishop Aram Ateshian, the Patriarchal Vicar, delivered a sermon in Armenian and Turkish in the presence of Minister for EU Affairs Volkan Bozkır, officially representing the Turkish Government at the first-ever “Commemoration” Divine Liturgy, and in the presence of respective representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Culture. The service was held at the Armenian Patriarchal Cathedral in Kumkapı. Archbishop Ateshian’s characterization of what happened to the Armenians in 1915 was in line with the message of President Erdoğan delivered in the church, which paid respect to “the memory of all Ottoman Armenians who lost their lives during World War I.”<sup>33</sup> The

<sup>30</sup> See “ԵՄԿ 1915 Թուականի Դեպքերը Ճանչցաւ Որպէս Ցեղասպանութիւն” (EPP [European People’s Party] recognized the events of 1915 as Genocide), *Jamanak*, March 5, 2015; “Պախարակում էւ Զգուշացում” (Rebuke and caution), *Jamanak*, April 15, 2015; “Պատգամներ էւ Սպասում” (Messages and expectation), *Jamanak*, May 9, 2015. “Աննախընթաց Զայրոյթ” (Unprecedented Anger), *Jamanak*, April 20, 2015, <http://www.jamanak.com>.

<sup>31</sup> See for example, “Երեկուան Վեհախորհուրդ Արարողութիւնը Ծիծեռնակաբերդի մէջ” (Yesterday’s symbolic ceremony in Tsitsernakaberd), *Marmara*, April 25, 2015, <http://normarmara.com/250415lu.html> (accessed March 2, 2016), “Այս Առաւօտ Ծիծեռնակաբերդի մէջ” (This morning in Tsitsernakaberd), *Marmara*, April 25, 2015, <http://normarmara.com/240415lu.html> (accessed March 2, 2016).

<sup>32</sup> “Adviser to Turkish PM ‘Retires’ After Describing Armenian Genocide as ‘Genocide’,” *Breitbart.com*, April 16, 2015, <http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2015/04/16/adviser-to-turkish-pm-retires-after-describing-armenian-genocide-as-genocide> (accessed March 2, 2016).

<sup>33</sup> Birinci Dünya Savaşı şartlarında hayatını kaybeden tüm Osmanlı Ermenilerini bir kez daha saygıyla anıyor, çocuklarına ve torunlarına taziyelerimi sunuyorum, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/sayin-cumhurbaskanimiz-in-24->



Patriarchal Vicar said from the altar: “The years of World War I are among the tragic pages of history, especially the year 1915. The children of our people lost their lives on the way of deportations and elsewhere, they carried heavy losses. Their good (բարի) memory has gathered us in this holy cathedral.”<sup>34</sup> He then went on to express the expected “loyalty” to the authorities. In paraphrasing Romans 13:1-6, he said: “Naturally, we also adhere to the words of the apostle who instructs [us] to obey and be subject to authorities and states and be ready to do all kinds of good works, not to be belligerent, but gentle and with a sweet attitude towards all people.”<sup>35</sup> In order to please the government, Archbishop Ateshian, in a veiled reference to lobbying efforts in the Diaspora, said: “Numerous states announce that, in the name of justice, they are in solidarity with our wounded people. Our pain would quadruple if one day there would be people who would turn the pain of our people into a political playing card.”<sup>36</sup> This was consistent with the position of Patriarch Mutafyan, who in 2001 in Ankara had assured the Chairman of the Turkish Grand National Assembly that “the interests of the Turkish Armenians are in line with the interests of the State and the place where the problems of the Community are ought to be discussed is the [Parliament].”<sup>37</sup>

A culture of fear, at least subconsciously, is part of the isolationist perception of collective Armenian identity in Turkey. In the context of her excellent analysis of undercover political and economic relations involving representatives of the state and criminal elements, Yael Navaro-Yashin provides further insight: “A political culture of fear and unknowing [in Turkey] is embodied, to the point when the state is carried in the bodies, habits, and internalized reactions of its subjects, whether they be within the borders of Turkey or abroad.”<sup>38</sup> This also explains the complicity of the wider Turkish society, over which the state holds a constant threat of retribution and fear.<sup>39</sup>

The isolationists believe that by cooperating with and accommodating the expectations of the state they have a better chance of securing their community rights, however diminished they may be—such as churches and schools—than by confrontation and public demands. Bedros Şirinoğlu, the Chairman of Surp Pırgiç Hospital Trust, one of the largest and richest community trusts in Istanbul, is among

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nisan-2015-gunu-istanbul-ermeni-patrikhanesi\_nde-yapilan-dini-torene-gonderdigi-mesaj.tr.mfa (accessed March 2, 2016).

<sup>34</sup> Պատմութեան դժբախտ էջերէն է Ա. Համաշխարհային աշխարհաւեր պատերազմի տարիները եւ յատկապէս 1915 թուականը: Մեր ժողովուրդի զուակները դժխեմ քաղաքականութեան սը կիրարկումով տարագրութեան ճանապարհներուն եւ այլուր իրենց կեանքերը կորսնցուցին, ծանր վնասներ կրեցին: Անոնց բարի յիշատակը այսօր համախմբած է մեզ այս սուրբ տաճարին մէջ, see “Պատրիարքական Ընդհանուր Փոխանորդ Սրբազան Հօր Պատգամը – 24 Ապրիլ 2015” (The Message of His Eminence the Patriarchal General Deputy – 24 April 2015), [www.turkiyeermenileripatriklikligi.org](http://www.turkiyeermenileripatriklikligi.org) (accessed March 2, 2016).

<sup>35</sup> Բնականաբար մենք ականջ կուտանք նաեւ առաքելական խօսքին, որ կը թելադրէ “հնազանդ ըլլալ եւ հպատակիլ իշխանութիւններուն ու պետութիւններուն եւ պատրաստ ըլլալ ամէն բարի գործի համար, չըլլալ կռուարար, այլ հեզահամբոյր, բոլոր մարդոց հանդէպ վերաբերիլ քաղցրութեամբ, *ibid*.

<sup>36</sup> Բազում պետութիւններ կը յայտնեն թէ յանուն արդարութեան կը զօրակցին մեր վիրաւոր ժողովուրդին: Մեր ցար պիտի քառապատկուի, եթէ օր մը մեր ժողովուրդի ցար քաղաքականութեան խաղաքարտի սը վերածողներ գտնուին, *ibid*.

<sup>37</sup> “Patriarch Meets Top Officials in Ankara,” *Lraper Church Bulletin*, February 14, 2011.

<sup>38</sup> Yael Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey* (Princeton-Chichester: Princeton University Press, 2002), 181.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Göçek, *Denial of violence*, 21ff.

those who advocate a more “subtle” and cooperative approach: “In order to maintain our achievements and to secure the future of the community, we should strive to increase the general trust the public has towards the Armenian community and based on the state’s positive treatment [of the community].”<sup>40</sup> This has been a long held view and position, especially by the Armenian religious establishment. For instance, back in 2001, in reaction to discussions in the French Parliament on the Armenian Genocide, an assembly of 90 lay representatives (“*cemaatlerinin sivil temsilciler*”) of Turkey’s Armenian Apostolic, Armenian Catholic, and Armenian Evangelical communities, chaired by Patriarch Mesrob Mutafyan, issued a communiqué articulating the position of the Armenian community. The communiqué distanced itself from such political efforts outside Turkey for the recognition of the Genocide and reiterated that Armenians as individuals do not have problems in Turkey. While acknowledging that there are some issues regarding the community, which have been “brought to the attention of the authorities for resolution,” they underlined that the Turkish National Assembly is the only place where issues pertaining to Armenians, as to all Turkish nationals, are resolved.<sup>41</sup> Two weeks later, Patriarch Mesrob presented to President Ahmet Necdet Sezer during his official visit to Ankara a copy of the letter to the French President signed by the 90 delegates of the church communities.<sup>42</sup> Over many decades of pressure, fear of and loyalty to Turkish officialdom and societal expectations “has to some extent been internalized as a part of communal identity,” and the price of this loyalty has been silence on “contentious issues” in wider Turkish politics.<sup>43</sup> This has been done through what Ayda Erbal expansively calls “the internally colonizing, ethnoreligiously extractive and distributive capabilities of the postcleansing state.”<sup>44</sup>

One could imagine the world of the Armenian community living in Turkey today as concentric circles of boundaries and limitations drawn by the state in particular and society in general. The collective life of the community, in at least the last 50 years, has been a constant struggle to move from an inner circle to an outer circle. But this desire to be “normal” has been pushed back all the while to the core of the “encirclement.” An Armenian book publisher in Istanbul lamented: “We have lived with Turks for about 1000 years, but the Turks do not know much about our literature or our culture in general.”<sup>45</sup> Ayşe Hür captures the essence of what happened to the Armenians since the establishment of the Turkish Republic:

In the 85-year history of our Republic, we saw only four Armenians deserving to enter the Parliament [and three new ones only in 2015]. It was not possible to see Armenians in the public and military sectors. We tried to forget the Armenian place names, Armenian authors, artists, architects and statesmen. We converted Armenian cultural institutions and churches into mosques, military buildings, and otherwise, into animal stables, and if that did not work, we destroyed them. With the Capital Tax of 1942, then during September 6-7,

<sup>40</sup> Ara Koçunyan, “Մարտահրավերներ և Հնարավորություններ” (Challenges and opportunities), *Jamanak*, February 29, 2016, 1.

<sup>41</sup> “Türkiye Ermenileri’nden Bildiri,” (Communiqué of Armenians in Turkey), simultaneously released in Armenian as well, “Թուրքիոյ Հայերուն Յայտարարութիւնը”, *Lraper* 1 (2001): 4. See also “Türkiye Ermeni Patrikliği’nden Fransa’ya tepki” *Hürriyet*, 30 January 2001, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/turkiye-ermen-patrikliginden-fransaya-tepki-39221187> accessed (March 2, 106).

<sup>42</sup> “Patriarch Meets Top Officials in Ankara,” *Lraper Church Bulletin*, February 14, 2011.

<sup>43</sup> Rumelili and Keyman, “Enacting multi-layered citizenship,” 8.

<sup>44</sup> Ayda Erbal, “The Armenian Genocide, AKA the Elephant in the Room,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 47 (2015): 786.

<sup>45</sup> Interview in Istanbul, August 7, 2000.

1955, we ruined the Armenian businessmen with wholesale plunder. After 1974 we repossessed the assets of Armenian charitable foundations. Finally, we succeeded in reducing their numbers to 70,000 souls [in Turkey].<sup>46</sup>

Such burdens, humiliations, moral defeats and anger over many decades have had their impact on the shaping of the identity of the Armenian community, where concern for physical, psychological and material *security* takes precedent over all other issues. Patriarch Mesrob had on numerous occasions spoken about these “burdens.” In his address at a conference held in April 2006 at Erciyes University, he addressed the problem of extreme othering head on:

Fanatical nationalism claims that its own country and race are chosen, that its language is perfect, and that its culture is unsurpassable, but this is nothing other than collective narcissism. These kinds of baseless claims serve no purpose other than to cause similar narcissism in others. To count the other as nothing, to see in the other a foreigner or enemy or potential saboteur not only creates a chaotic condition in the country but, because such an approach always needs to create windmills to fight, it also leads to uneasiness because it hatches speculation about which group of citizens will be the next victims.<sup>47</sup>

By the 1990s, given the indiscriminate trampling of the rights and dignity of the minorities, virtually every Armenian in Turkey was *tired of being Armenian*. It is tiring to be reminded who and what you are on a daily basis. To illustrate this point, when during fieldwork in Karabakh I asked an elderly man what is the most important aspect of independence, he responded without hesitation:

The most important thing for me today, even if I go hungry, is the fact that today I do not feel Armenian, I feel human. The Azerbaijanis used to constantly remind us that we are Armenian. [...] ‘You are Armenian, Armenian, Armenian...’ and used to see us as second-class citizens. I am free of this heavy burden. I am a human being.<sup>48</sup>

The Christian minorities in Turkey are not regarded as equal citizens of the majority’s state, but defined by the majority state as the “other.” In 2007, for instance, when President Ahmet Necdet Sezer vetoed an amendment to the law concerning minority foundations, he justified the move on the basis of his view that minority foundations are “foreign foundations” and that they were “very dangerous.”<sup>49</sup> Ironically, a few years earlier, during a meeting with Patriarch Mesrob

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<sup>46</sup> 85 yıllık Cumhuriyet tarihinde sadece dört Ermeni’yi parlamentoya layık gördük. Sivil ve askeri bürokraside ise Ermenileri görmek mümkün olmadı. Ermenice yer isimlerini, Ermeni yazarlarını, sanatçılarını, mimarlarını, devlet adamlarını unutturmaya çalıştık. Ermeni kültür varlıklarını camiye, okula, kışlaya olmadı ahıra çevirdik, olmadı yıktık. 1942’de Varlık Vergisi’yle, 6-7 Eylül 1955’te yağma ile Ermeni işadamlarını belini doğrultamaz hale getirdik. 1974’ten sonra Ermeni vakıflarının mallarına el koyduk. Sonunda nüfuslarını 70 bine indirmeyi başardık, Ayşe Hür, “Türk Ermenisiz, Ermeni Türksüz olmaz!” (“The Turk without Armenian, the Armenian without Turk cannot be”), *Taraf*, 31 August 2008, <http://www.taraf.com.tr/yazar.asp?mid=1747>.

<sup>47</sup> “‘The Art of Living Together in Ottoman Society: The Example of Turkish-Armenian Relations’, the speech of Patriarch Mesrob II’s delivered at Erciyes University’s First International Social Research Symposium (EUSAS), 20-22 April 2006.” *Lraper Bulletin Online*, Armenian Patriarchate, Kumkapi, April 27, 2006.

<sup>48</sup> Interview in Stepanakert, September 6, 1995.

<sup>49</sup> Formulated as “Türkiye’de gayrimüslim azınlıklar dışında ‘cemaat vakfı’,” see “Vakıflar Kanunu Tasarısı,” BİLKA, January 15, 2007, <http://www.webeditoru.com/yedek/derneksite/vakiflarkanunu.htm> (accessed November 12, 2015); also Özlem Ertan, “Foundations in search of justice,” *Agos*, November 16, 2007.

in February 2001, President Sezer had assured the head of the Armenian Church that “citizens of the Turkish Republic should not feel any discomfort about negative international political developments”—alluding to the lobbying efforts of the Diaspora. Yet, the designation of minorities as “foreign” is institutionalized and structured. The State Supervisory Council (*Devlet Denetleme Kurulu*), attached to the Office of the Presidency of the Republic, lists Turkey’s minority foundations among foreign legal entities, that is, non-Muslim citizens are classified as if they were foreigners. This is “a Constitutional offense,” explains minority law expert Kezban Hatemi.<sup>50</sup> In a 2006 report, the State Supervisory Council reported that the Armenian foundations—what are viewed as “foreign entities”—have a total of 510 immovable properties.<sup>51</sup> As recently as 2011, “the Republic of Turkey declare[d] that no community exists on its territory that can be deemed an ‘indigenous people’ under the [UNESCO] convention.”<sup>52</sup> The social control of the state is the heavy burden of being the “other.” As *Agos* columnist Bercuhi Berberyan put it: “Why should we look for the definition of hell in holy books or the other side? ‘Hell’ may best be defined as our loneliness and isolation, as a place where the fire that burns us is our pain which is left unshared and which has turned into rage; or a place where total awareness freezes the blood in our veins.”<sup>53</sup>

#### DEMONIZATION OF THE “OTHER”

One of the understudied aspects of the existing reality in Turkey is the discourse and impact of othering in minority-majority relationships. Beyond the restrictions and limitations instituted within the state structures, the ideological and social discourse of othering presents the most formidable problem to the resolution of the socio-political conflicts faced by the minorities. Indeed, the persistent demonization of the “other” prevalent in Turkey today puts the whole prospect of ultimate “reconciliation” into question.<sup>54</sup> As Ronald Suny argues in the context of the Transcaucasus, inter-ethnic violence or cooperation and tolerance are based on narratives, “tales of injustice, oppression, or betrayal” told by “tellers of tales” who have considerable influence and power to shape, edit and reshape “their stories, and therefore to promote a future of either violence or cooperation.”<sup>55</sup> Government officials, intellectuals, and the media in Turkey are the main exponents of such “tales.”<sup>56</sup> In November 2008, Defense Minister Vecdi Gönül in a speech at the Turkish Embassy in Brussels justified the catastrophic treatment of minorities in the

<sup>50</sup> Tolga Korkut, “State Regards Own Citizens as ‘Foreigners,’” BIA News Center, August 14, 2006, <http://www.info-turk.be/336.htm> (accessed March 2, 2016).

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> That is the “Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions,” see Tulay Cetingulec, “Does Turkey care about cultural diversity?,” *Al-Monitor Turkey Pulse*, August 17, 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/07/turkey-unesco-is-not-ratifying-cultural-diversity-convention.html> (accessed March 2, 2016).

<sup>53</sup> Bercuhi Berberyan, “I know that suitcase!,” *Agos*, November 16, 2007.

<sup>54</sup> For instance, as Christopher de Bellaigue observes: “Since the Turkish Republic was set up in 1923, no Turkish statesman has shown the necessary combination of courage and imagination to resolve the question of how the country’s ethnic Kurds, who are now estimated to number fifteen million people, should be treated” (“The Uncontainable Kurds,” *New York Review of Books*, January 31, 2007).

<sup>55</sup> Ronald G. Suny, “Constructing Primordialism: Old Histories for New Nations,” *The Journal of Modern History* 73.4 (December, 2001): 864.

<sup>56</sup> See, for example, Ayşe Karabat, “Tackling hate crimes can no longer be postponed.” *Sunday’s Zaman*, June 29, 2008, <http://www.sundayszaman.com/sunday/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=146117>.

late Ottoman and early Republican periods as an outcome of Turkey's nation-and state-building processes. Gönül rhetorically asked: "If there would be Greeks in the Aegean region and Armenians in many regions in Turkey today, then could there be today's national state?" The Defense Minister believed that religion—Islam in this case—was a "bonding factor" in the region's nationalist current. Commenting on the Minister's statements, Cengiz Aktar of Bahçeşehir University noted that, indeed, the Unionists and later the Republicans had Islam in mind as the "basis" of the Turkish nation. "None of the other qualities that make a nation—language, race, culture and economy—had existed in this region at the time of the invention of the Turkish nation." As religion was a significant aspect of nation-building, those groups that did not share the religion of the majority were considered outsiders. As such, the Armenian, Greek, and Jewish minorities, Aktar adds, "become the natural other, the natural enemy of the nation."<sup>57</sup> Gönül's "threatening" and "racist" statements—as characterized in the media—caused a stir among the elite circles in Turkey. One vocal group, the Global Peace and Justice Coalition (Global BAK) demanded Gönül's immediate dismissal as Minister of Defense "for presenting the minorities living in Turkey as the enemy."<sup>58</sup>

For the militant groups in Turkey, the othering discourse is rooted, for instance, in the sense that "foreign powers" are "planning" to break up Turkey into multiple entities; that there are "military threats" from neighbors near and afar, as well as overall frustration with the EU membership processes. In this brand of Turkish nationalism, Kerem Öktem explains that "the EU is reduced to a 'club of Christian nations' trying to dismember the territorial unity of Turkey, Kurds appear as the most significant internal 'other,' overshadowed only by what is usually referred to as the 'Armenian diaspora'."<sup>59</sup> Öktem suggests that, in addition to the issue of Kurdish "separatism," denial of the Armenian Genocide "has become one of the central crystallization points of a reaction to the European project and the source of conspiratorial scenarios" that aim to dismember the country. These perceived threats and nationalistic political discourse provide powerful emotional and political bases of othering. Revealingly, the accused killers of five Christians in Malatya claimed to police "they were acting to protect Turkey against a plot to undermine Islam and divide the country."<sup>60</sup>

Of course, conversely, the Armenians in the Diaspora and Armenia demonize the Turks as well. The Armenian discourse of othering is primarily rooted in the sense of national victimhood, loss of properties and historic lands. The memory and fear of genocide, both in history and modern times, form the basis of the othering process. The point here is not whether the othering discourse is justified or not, or whether there are legitimate reasons for such discourse, but rather its sociological implication. The strict "us-them" divide, as well as the process of projection of individual acts or particular events on entire populations, render efforts toward reconciliation

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<sup>57</sup> "Defense Minister Admits the Ethnic and Religious Cleansing, but Takes no Lessons," *Bia*, November 17, 2008, <http://bianet.org/english/kategori/english/110898/defense-minister-confesses-the-ethnic-and-religious-cleansing-but-takes-no-lessons> (accessed November 19, 2008).

<sup>58</sup> "Global BAK Demands Removal of the Defense Minister," *Bia*, November 17, 2008.

<sup>59</sup> Kerem Öktem, "Return of the Turkish 'State of Exception'," *Middle East Report Online*, June 3, 2006, <http://www.merip.org/author/kerem-%C3%B6ktem>.

<sup>60</sup> Sarah Rainsford, "Turks in Christian Murder Trial," *BBC News*, 23 November 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/europe/7108607.stm>; cf. "Syriac Monk Kidnapped in Mardin," NTVmsnbc, November 30, 2007, <http://www.bianet.org/english/kategori/english/103255/syriac-monk-kidnapped-in-mardin> (accessed December 18, 2007).

ineffective. On the contrary, the extreme othering discourse in Turkey has led to more militancy in society.

The Turkish media has a large share in the othering process. Anti-Armenian insinuations, false rumors, assumptions, and misrepresentations are commonplace in both print and broadcast media, which endanger the Armenian community in Turkey and make the lives of individual Armenians difficult. “Minorities as individuals have been made to feel they are ‘different’ in the derogatory sense of the word,” wrote Hrant Dink almost a decade before his assassination. “Because of this negative approach, their basic weapon of defense has been to live timidly and, regretfully, in fear.”<sup>61</sup> As in history and in other cases around the world, one radical outcome of the othering discourse is *ethnic cleansing*—i.e., the complete elimination or physical distancing of the “other”—whether through lethal means, forced transfers of population, or by compelling migration.

#### FRAMING AND LABELLING

And this brings us to two sociological concepts that I believe are useful in understanding and analyzing the situation in Turkey: framing and labelling. Framing—how we understand something to be a problem—is used, consciously or unconsciously, in Turkey to represent issues that have implications for policy and public discourse. Once the problem is framed, it is labelled and “consumed” accordingly. In sociology, labelling refers to the process of how people are named or categorized (by themselves and others). Labels, as subjective perceptions, inform “how people fit into different spaces in the social order and the terms on which society should engage with them in varying contexts and at different points in time.”<sup>62</sup> The Turkish state has had a major role in such labelling processes, which has laid out the parameters of power relations. Indeed, powerful actors, within the state and outside, have used frames and labels to influence or enforce viewpoints as to how particular issues and categories of people are to be treated. It is a well known, unofficial fact in modern Turkey that the state operates on two levels: a parliamentary democracy with a constitution and regular elections and, until recently, a “deep state” (*derin devlet*)—a secret government within the state made of “ultra-nationalists in the security forces and state bureaucracy who are ready to subvert the law for their own political ends.”<sup>63</sup> Today, the “deep state” has been

<sup>61</sup> Dink, “The Taste,” 438.

<sup>62</sup> Joy Moncrieffe and Rosalind Eyben, eds., *The Power of Labelling. How People are categorized and why it matters* (London & Sterling, VA: Earthscan, 2007), 2.

<sup>63</sup> See “Turkish nationalists charged with plotting,” *Reuters*, January 27, 2008; cf. Joshua Treviño, “Turks and Tolerance. Putting Islamist victory in Turkey in context,” *National Review*, July 27, 2007, <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/221677/turks-tolerance-jamie-e-brown>. Andrew Finkel, “Turkey: torn between God and state”, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, May, 2007, 2, in the context of the murder of Hrant Dink, suggests that “the ultra-right in Turkey has become a collection of ideologically committed cells more inspired by a sense of malaise than ordered by any rogue intelligence officer in green-tinted glasses. An al-Qaida-like quality of diffusion is implied.” Some 80 ultra-nationalists were on trial accused of “plotting to overthrow the government and block democratic reforms. The prosecutor, in a massive 2,455 page-long indictment, claimed the group—known as Ergenekon—planned a campaign of murder and violence. It was meant to create chaos—and force the military to step in and take control!” (*BBC News*, November 19, 2008), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/7737413.stm>, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/7737413.stm>. See also “Operation takes ‘deep state’ under the spotlight,” *Turkish Daily News*, January 25, 2008; “Turkish nationalists plotted to kill Nobel winner,” *AFP*, January 23, 2008; “Ümraniye soruşturmasında 33 yeni gözaltı,” *CNN Türk*, January 23, 2007, <http://www.cnnturk.com/2008/turkiye/01/22/umraniye.sorusturmasinda.33.yeni.gozalti/421754.0/index.html>. Overturning previous judgements,

replaced with other yet to be defined but clearly labelled entities. President Erdoğan has created a new label: “Parallel State” or “Parallel Structure” to refer to his opponents, especially the followers of Fethullah Gülen, and their machinations.<sup>64</sup> Former allies became foes after Erdoğan blamed Gülen’s followers on orchestrating the 2013 government corruption scandal. The “Fethullahist Terrorist Organization” (FETÖ), as the AKP and its pro-government media would insist, is ostensibly “organized clandestinely among the judicial and security system of the country” and uses “dirty means to realize its goals.”<sup>65</sup> This kind of labellism is not exclusive to internal politics, but extends to populist pronouncements as well. In 2012 Erdoğan puzzled Turkish and foreign economists by blaming the “interest-rate lobby” for allegedly stifling the country’s economic growth. While he did not specify who the “lobby” is, it was commonly understood that he was referring to foreign banks, economists, and journalists, who had asserted the common economic view that lower rates stoke price gains. Erdoğan labelled this as “treason against this nation.”<sup>66</sup>

A case of this process of framing and labelling is the Turkish state’s project of the renovation of the church on an island in Lake Van. The 10<sup>th</sup>-century Armenian church building was to be renovated as a “historical building” paid for by the Ministry of Culture. It was to be referred to as the “The Church of *Akdamar*” (“white vein” in Turkish), not Akhtamar as it has been known throughout the years; that it should not be called by its proper historical designation: The Holy Cross Church of Akhtamar. The renovated “building” was not to be introduced as the “Armenian Church” nor used for religious services, except once a year with state permission. This was framed as a Turkish State Project, the symbols of which were the large Turkish flags and an enormous portrait of Atatürk adoring the front of the Church on the opening day in September 2007.<sup>67</sup> Another case is former Minister of Culture Atila Koc’s controversial change of the name of the city of Ani to *Anı*, for which he was criticized in Parliament. After months of bickering, in November 2007 a “Commission of Experts” set up by the Ministry of Culture to resolve the issue—whether it should be called Ani or Anı—concluded that both versions are equally valid to refer to the historic town.<sup>68</sup> This policy of cultural and historical

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in April 2016, Turkey’s top court of appeal ruled that “the alleged ‘Ergenekon Terror Organization’ did not exist at all and that the convictions meted out in the case were the result of trumped-up charges brought and pursued by supporters of the Gülen group within the judiciary,” *Hurriyet Daily News* April 26, 2016, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/the-silver-lining-in-the-ergenekon-ruling.aspx?PageID=238&NID=98324&NewsCatID=416> (accessed May 3, 2016).

<sup>64</sup> Erdoğan declared the “Gülen movement,” which is inspired by Islamic scholar Fethullah Gülen, his number one enemy following corruption investigations in December 2013 that implicated people in his inner circle. Erdoğan alleges that Gülen sympathizers in the judiciary and the police are planning a coup against his rule. The corruption charges were dropped after Erdoğan replaced the prosecutors of the case.

<sup>65</sup> Saadet Oruç, “Zaman daily as a tool for a criminal group and press freedom,” *Daily Sabah*, March 7, 2016, <http://www.dailysabah.com/columns/saadet-oruc/2016/03/07/zaman-daily-as-a-tool-for-a-criminal-group-and-press-freedom> (accessed March 7, 2016).

<sup>66</sup> Joe Parkinson, “Dismay Over Turkish Rates,” *The Wall Street Journal*, January 12, 2012, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970204124204577154353478071244> (accessed March 2, 2012). “Turkey’s Erdogan says high interest rate ‘lobby’ guilty of treason,” *Reuters*, February 28, 2012, <http://mobile.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN0LW0Y520150228> (accessed March 2, 2012).

<sup>67</sup> Originally the Ministry of Culture had scheduled the opening of the church on April 24, 2007 in an attempt to counter Genocide recognition by showcasing the “goodwill” of the Turkish government. But due to international outrage by Armenians in the Diaspora, the Ministry postponed it, first, to April 11 (which corresponds to April 24 in the old calendar) and, finally, to September.

<sup>68</sup> “What should the ruins of Ani be called? The Answer is Strange,” *Marmara*, November 5, 2007. Exactly a year after the “Commission of Experts” had made its decision, Murat Belge wrote about his visit there: “[...] Orayı gezdiren rehber “Anı” diyerek anlatıyor, doğrusunun bu olduğu konusunda ısrar

“reconstruction” goes back to earlier decades. In 1983, for instance, the Ministry of Public Education (*Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı*) issued a directive regarding the “Abridged Historical Atlas,” edited by Faik Resti, used in high schools and lycées in Turkey:

The words ‘Armenia’ and ‘Ermenistan’, which are found in pp. 10, 11, 15 of the aforementioned atlases, and which probably are reprinted on the different pages of the various editions of these works, are to be wiped.[...] Moreover, the same procedure is to be followed in the case of other atlases carrying the drawbacks specified in the annexed circular.<sup>69</sup>

Along the same lines, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry removed and changed all Armenian and Kurdish references in the names of animals in the Latin nomenclature of subspecies. A wild sheep called *Ovis Armeniana* was renamed *Ovis Orientalis Anatolicus*; roe deer *Capreolus Capreolus Armenus* became *Capreolus Cupreolus Capreolus*. The clear purpose of the change was explained in a statement issued by the Ministry: “Unfortunately there are many other species in Turkey which were named this way with ill intentions. This ill intent is so obvious that even species only found in our country were given names against Turkey’s unity.”<sup>70</sup>

Socially derived knowledge shapes framing and labelling, which influence social, political, and economic power relations. Moncrieffe and Eyben argue that framing and labelling “are critical for securing hegemonic meanings and values,” which is relevant to Turkey.<sup>71</sup> Case studies in other parts of the world suggest that “the intensely political relations that underpin [framing and labelling] can remain unexposed for considerable periods of time.” While there are various motivations for labeling—such as policy framing which “is a way of selecting, organizing, interpreting and making sense of a complex reality to provide guideposts for knowing, analyzing, persuading and acting”—in Turkey it is primarily used to stigmatize groups and individuals.<sup>72</sup> This is evident, for instance, in the formal state discourse on Armenians in Turkey, who are variously referred to as a “community” (*cemaat*), “citizens” (*vatandaş*), “minority” (*azınlık*), but in school textbooks prepared by the Ministry of National Education, as well as in the radical nationalist discourse, they are characterized as “traitors,” “unpatriotic,” “dangerous” people, and “collaborators” with foreigners “who aim to break apart” Turkey and the Turkish

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ediyormuş. Ama zaten bu adın geçtiği her yerde, her yazıda, “Anı”yı görüyoruz. Belli ki bu “resmî politika” haline gelmiş: “Anı” diye bir yer yok, hiç olmadı. Olduğunu düşünür, iddia ederseniz cahilsiniz ya da aptalsınız ya da kötü niyetlisiniz ya da vatan hainisiniz. Türk milliyetçiliğinin o andaki ihtiyacı veya o andaki sözcüsünün keyfine göre yukarıda sayılanlardan biri olabilirsiniz” ([...] The tour guide who shows around that place narrates it as ‘Anı,’ insisting on the correctness of [the term used]. But, after all, we see ‘Anı’ almost in every place, in every text. Obviously this has become an ‘official policy,’ [as if] there is no place called ‘Anı’ and has never been. If you think and claim that it had been in the past, you are either naive or an idiot or bad-intentioned or a traitor. You may be one of the above depending on the need of Turkish nationalism at the given time or its spokesperson’s pleasure), see “Anı / Anı,” *Taraf*, November 11, 2008.

<sup>69</sup> Ministry of Public Education of the Turkish Republic, Department of Education and Training Circular No. 140, July 1, 1983. *Official Bulletin*, publication date August 29, 1983, cited in Israel Charny, ed., *Genocide: A Critical Bibliographic Review*. 2 (London: Mansell Publishing, 1991), 129.

<sup>70</sup> “Turkey renames ‘divisive’ animals,” *BBC News*, March 8, 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/4328285.stm> (accessed March 2, 2016)

<sup>71</sup> Moncrieffe and Eyben, *The Power of Labelling*, 2.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 2, 9.



state.<sup>73</sup> In his eulogy at Hrant Dink's funeral, Patriarch Mesrob Mutafyan lamented the "enmity against the Armenians" created in society and said efforts to eliminate such characterizations should "begin with our school textbooks and our schools to change the attitude, mentality, and practices that are behind the perception of Armenians as enemies, so that our government and people accept us not as foreigners and potential enemies but as citizens of the Republic of Turkey, who have lived for thousands of years on this soil."<sup>74</sup>

One recurrent label and derogatory characterization is the expression *Ermeni pic* (Armenian bastard) to refer to the Kurds. Not only does the expression equate one "undesired" minority with another "unwanted" minority, but it transfers hatred towards one group towards another. It is telling that the Imam officiating at the funeral of Turkish soldiers killed by Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) militants, referred to the Kurds as "*Ermeni picler*" (Armenian bastards) in his eulogy.<sup>75</sup> Yet, he was not charged for "denigrating" a minority group.<sup>76</sup> Only "denigrating Turkishness" is punishable by law under the controversial Article 301 of the penal code.<sup>77</sup> Habitual portrayal of Kurds as hidden Armenians or "bastards of Armenians" is widespread in political circles and society in general. For instance, in late 1994 a campaign of false accusations, fanned by the Turkish media, trumpeted that Armenian clergymen were supporting PKK terrorists in their secessionist struggle against the Turkish state. A photograph allegedly depicting an Armenian priest in the company of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan, widely distributed on posters, was a key instrument of these accusations. At the time all the accusations were categorically refuted by the Patriarchate. However, over two decades later, today such false and slanderous associations of Armenians with the PKK continue to be made by government officials, including the Prime Minister and other political and public figures and discussed in the Turkish media.<sup>78</sup> On April 28, 2015 the pro-government *Vahdet* national daily on its front page heralded that 300 PKK leaders were crypto-Armenians and claimed that they were baptized in churches. In March 2016, the Mayor of Askale (Erzurum) Enver Basaran, at a public ceremony sponsored by the municipality where children re-enacted the "atrocities committed by Armenians

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<sup>73</sup> Taner Akcam, "Textbooks and the Armenian Genocide in Turkey: Heading Towards 2015," *The Armenian Weekly*, December 4, 2014, <http://armenianweekly.com/2014/12/04/textbooks> (accessed April 28, 2016). Interestingly, Hülya Adak (2007:156) in her analysis of Talat Pasha's memoirs, points out how he portrays the Armenians as "rebels, traitors, and secessionists; as a race, they [Armenians] are barbaric, uncivilized, inhumane, inferior, and hypocritical." Hülya Adak, "Identifying the 'Internal Tumors' of World War I: Talat Paşa'nın Hatıraları [Talat Paşa's Memoirs], or the Travels of a Unionist Apologia into 'History'," in *Raeume des Selbst: Selbstzeugnisforschung transkulturell*, ed. Andreas Bähr, Peter Burschel and Gabriele Jancke (Köln; Weimar; Vienna: Böhlau, 2007), 156.

<sup>74</sup> "The eulogy delivered by His Beatitude Mesrob II, Armenian Patriarch of Istanbul and all Turkey at the funeral service of Hrant Dink. He was brave, emotional, and indomitable," *Agos*, Special Issue, February 2007, 4.

<sup>75</sup> "Cenazede müftü 'Ermeni p...leri dedi'" (At the funeral the müftü said 'Armenian b[astard]'), *Radikal*, October 10, 2007; *Agos*, No. 601, October 5, 2007, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=235315>; [http://www.agos.com.tr/index.php?module=news&news\\_id=5290&cat\\_id=2](http://www.agos.com.tr/index.php?module=news&news_id=5290&cat_id=2).

<sup>76</sup> Article 216 of the new Turkish Penal Code (2005) states: "A person who openly denigrates part of the population on grounds of social class, race, religion, sect, gender or regional differences shall be sentenced to imprisonment for a term of six months to one year."

<sup>77</sup> Article 301 entered into force on June 1, 2005. See "Turkey's new penal code touches raw nerves," EuroActiv.com, <http://www.euractiv.com/en/enlargement/turkey-new-penal-code-touches-raw-nerves/article-140266> (accessed November 30, 2007).

<sup>78</sup> See, for example, "The prime minister's poisonous populism," *Today's Zaman*, March 1, 2016, [www.todayszaman.com/columnist/joost-lagendijk/the-prime-ministers-poisonous-populism\\_413700.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/columnist/joost-lagendijk/the-prime-ministers-poisonous-populism_413700.html); "Relations between Armenia and PKK Terrorism," *The Journal of Turkish Weekly*, October 29, 2007.

against Turks,” remembered with “gratitude [their] glorious ancestors who extirpated the Armenians, whose history is filled with blood and treason from these lands,” declared that “Armenian gangs” continue to “carry out separatist activities” in Turkey through the “terrorist organization PKK.”<sup>79</sup> The accusatory tone of such pronouncements and articles amounts to hate speech, “a problem that runs prevalent in the Turkish press, in which the term ‘Armenian’ is used as a curse word.”<sup>80</sup> Similar derogatory references to other minorities are prevalent, such as the epithet “*korkak Yahudi*” (cowardly Jew) in popular parlance.<sup>81</sup> In December 2007, the Turkish Protestant Union submitted a complaint to Turkey’s Radio and Television Supreme Council and the Istanbul Chief Prosecutor against the makers of the TV series “*Kurtlar Vadisi Pusu*” (Valley of the Wolves Ambush), which portrays Christians as “terror organizations.” One episode broadcast on Show TV on November 8, 2007, showed Christian missionaries involved in “organ trade, mafia, prostitution [...] and other anti-social activities.”<sup>82</sup> Indeed, as reported in a 2015 human rights report, “hate crimes committed against Protestant Christians” continue in Turkey, “as well as physical attacks” against Protestants and churches and “wide spread threats through the internet and social media.”<sup>83</sup> Such asymmetries in power has influenced the framing and, by extension, the labelling process in Turkey. The

<sup>79</sup> Turgay İpek, “Kurtuluş töreninde canlandırılan Ermeni katliamı çocukları korkuttu” (The Armenian massacre scared the children at the liberation ceremony), *Doğan Haber Ajansı* (DHA), March 3, 2016, [http://www.dha.com.tr/kurtulus-torende-canlandirilan-ermeni-katliami-cocuklarikorkuttu\\_1154936.html](http://www.dha.com.tr/kurtulus-torende-canlandirilan-ermeni-katliami-cocuklarikorkuttu_1154936.html) (accessed March 3, 2016). Uzey Bulut, “Turkish Mayor: Our ‘Glorious Ancestors Extirpated Armenians,’” *Clarion Project*, April 5, 2016 <http://m.clarionproject.org/analysis/turkish-mayor-our-glorious-ancestors-massacred-armenians> (accessed April 8, 2016). For a video report of the re-enactment of “atrocities committed against Turks” see “Erzurum Aşkale Ermeni İşgalinden Kurtuluşu” (The Liberation of Erzurum Aşkale from the Armenian Occupation) (accessed March 3, 2015), YouTube video <https://youtu.be/-eS6oY86-Tk> (accessed April 8, 2016).

<sup>80</sup> “Turkish media, government plagued by hate speech” *Today’s Zaman*, May 2, 2015, [http://www.todayszaman.com/national\\_turkish-media-government-plagued-by-hate-speech\\_379493.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/national_turkish-media-government-plagued-by-hate-speech_379493.html) (accessed May 2, 2016). For a catalogue of equating Kurds and Armenians, see Pinar Tremblay, “Armenian animosity rekindled through PKK terror,” *Al Monitor Turkish Pulse*, March 7, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/03/turkey-armenia-akp-insults-of-kurds-armenians.html> (accessed March 8, 2016).

<sup>81</sup> The following posting at [jewcy.com](http://www.jewcy.com) discussion page is revealing:

“The derogatory term that Ron [...] mentions is ‘*korkak Yahudi*,’ literally translated it means ‘cowardly Jew.’ I grew up with Turkish as my first language, and I learned that phrase early in life and used it all the time as I was growing up. Of course, I didn’t even know its literal meaning. When I came to America and learned English, I simply used ‘fraidy cat’ as the English version. Not until I grew up and learned that there are different religions did I realize its literal meaning. I actually remember asking my dad why are Yahudis (Jews) cowardly, and I’ll paraphrase his answer: that’s the way Jews are viewed in Turkey, because they will never fight back. You can beat them all you want, they will not fight. Of course, he did not view this as a positive quality, because he was raised to believe that such characteristics were shameful. I am told that this is still how it is in Turkey. Violence at the slightest provocation is a sign of valor and courage as opposed to a sign of ignorance and intolerance,” under “Comments” 11/15/2007, 3:38 pm, [http://www.jewcy.com/cabal/turkish\\_jews#comment-15278](http://www.jewcy.com/cabal/turkish_jews#comment-15278).

<sup>82</sup> “They are targeting Churches,” *Agos*, 14 December 2007. In an unrelated interview, Behnan Konutgan of the Bible Society in Turkey says: “When I am preaching [Christianity] people think I’m an enemy of the country. Another Christian Turk, Isa Karatas, the spokesperson of evangelical Protestant churches in Turkey, explains that fellow Turks often ask him “If there is a war, whose side are you going to fight on? I just couldn’t get them to understand that even though I’m a Christian, my feeling for my country is the same. The just don’t understand this,” Treviño, “Turks and Tolerance.”

<sup>83</sup> See Protestant Kiliseler Derneği, “2015 Human Rights Violations Report,” <http://www.protestankiliseler.org/eng/?p=819> (accessed March 2, 2016).

state constructed frames and labels have become imprints of power and “are central to the production of hegemonic meaning” in society.<sup>84</sup>

In an insightful article spelling out the contradictions of “Being Armenian in Turkey,” Vahan Isoağlu explains that when someone who knows you well introduces you to a third person, they will say: “He is an Armenian friend,” and immediately add, “but he is really a good chap.”<sup>85</sup> Even well-meaning people or friends unconsciously adopt or adapt to the state-framed “social script” in everyday interactions. The editor of the Armenian section of *Agos*, Pakrat Estukyan observes that when a member of the community is involved in a common crime or theft, the media spread the news by using terms such as the “Armenian criminal” or “Armenian robber.” But if an Armenian is successful in other areas, they would write: “The Turkish scientist” or the “Turkish artist.” A recent example of this is the case of Sevan Bıçakçı, the Armenian jewellery designer, who had created a special bracelet-ring-watch combination for the actress Whoopi Goldberg for the Oscars night that received international notice. A prominent headline on the front page of the English-language *Hurriyet Daily News* heralded: “Whoopi wears Turkish jewellery to big show.” In the story inside on page 14, Sevan Bıçakçı was presented as a “Turkish jewellery designer,” and not once was it mentioned that he is ethnically Armenian.<sup>86</sup> Another is world-renowned MIT economist Daron Acemoğlu, who at best is presented as a “Turkish-American economist” in the Turkish media.<sup>87</sup>

Under such circumstances, the integrationists are determined to express the indignation and resentment they experience as citizens of the Republic of Turkey. In fact, they believe, as did Hrant Dink, that the resolution of the problems of the Armenian community in Turkey is intimately related to the progress of tolerance, democracy, and freedom in Turkey. Dink described the “taste of being a minority” to an audience at Aarhus University:

If you are free and you feel your freedom (we have never felt that way [in Turkey]), it is a taste as sweet as honey. If you are not free and if you feel you are a captive, it is a very bitter taste. If you are free in certain areas but do not feel free in others, then it is a sour taste (this is the taste we usually experience).<sup>88</sup>

The scepticism of the isolationists in the Armenian community—that as a minority they would never be accepted as equal citizens in Turkey—is not baseless. The perennial legal and administrative harassment of the community, along with discriminatory social and public attitudes towards the Armenians living in Turkey since the establishment of the Republic do not inspire hope for the future. As Sevan Nişanyan put it, “the Armenian who openly defies the Turkish state is something

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<sup>84</sup> Kevin M. Carragee and Wim Roefs, “The neglect of power in recent framing research,” *Journal of Communication* 54.2 (2004): 226.

<sup>85</sup> Türkiye’de ermeni olmak, seni tanıyan birinin üçüncü bir şahısa senden bahsederken. “ermenî bir arkadaş” dedikten sonra “ama iyi çocuktur gerçekten” diye bahsetmesidir [...], Isoağlu, “Türkiyede Ermeni Olmak,” Vahan Isoağlu, “Türkiyede Ermeni Olmak” (Being an Armenian in Turkey), January 30, 2007, [http://www.helezon.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=515&Itemid=109](http://www.helezon.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=515&Itemid=109).

<sup>86</sup> *Hurriyet Daily News*, March 2, 2016, Front Page; see also [www.sevanbicakci.com](http://www.sevanbicakci.com).

<sup>87</sup> *Radikal* newspaper described him as “Nobel alabilecek isimler arasında gösterilen Acemoğlu” (Acemoğlu is among the names who might be awarded the Nobel Prize), see “Prof. Dr. Daron Acemoğlu: Çözüm süreci biterse ekonomi için felaket olur” (Prof. Daron Acemoğlu: It will be a disaster for the economy if the resolution process ends), *Radikal*, August 4, 2015, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/prof-dr-daron-acemoglu-cozum-sureci-biterse-ekonomi-icin-felaket-olur-1409311> (accessed March 2, 2016).

<sup>88</sup> Dink, “The Taste,” 441.

they cannot tolerate.”<sup>89</sup> For that matter, it is not just the Armenian, “anyone deviating from the accepted mode of Kemalist Turkishness,” Joshua Treviño writes, “is liable to harassment or worse.”<sup>90</sup> US-educated Nişanyan, who has authored a number of popular travel and linguistic reference books, is charged for allegedly breaking the law by renovating and adding to his boutique hotels in Şirince, an old Greek village in Izmir. However, it is widely believed that he is being punished for his political views—especially for his critique of Kemalism and advocacy for freedom to follow no religion—which is “made graver by the fact that he is an ethnic Armenian.”<sup>91</sup> In this kind of a stifling socio-political environment, intentional isolation (կղզիացում) provides the isolationists a certain sense of security, even if it is false or limited security, whereby the *raison d'être* of communal life is reduced to the preservation of identity (religion and language) and the management of institutions that serve that purpose. The enormous loss and decline of Armenian cultural production over the decades, especially in the literary field, is largely due to the state-imposed restrictions and limitations that have forced the community to envelop in itself and silently accept its second-class citizenship. No wonder, in a 2007 survey of 459 predominantly young Armenians conducted by Nor Zartonk, 97.6 percent of the participants said they are not active in politics and 97.4 percent said they do not belong to any political party in Turkey.<sup>92</sup> The Church, the Patriarchate, is the leading institution of the isolationist school and the role of the clergy in the management of community affairs is at times controversial even within isolationist circles—for instance, regarding the issues of the election of a new Patriarch and reception of Islamized Armenians.<sup>93</sup>

PLUS ÇA CHANGE, PLUS C'EST LA MÊME CHOSE

The emergence of Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* or AKP) as a leading political force in Turkey in the early 2000s gave breathing space to the Armenian community—and generally to the minorities—and raised hopes for better days ahead. Patriarch Mesrob Mutafyan was excited that “the Erdoğan government has an open ear for us,” and had enthusiastically said that “at the next election we choose the AKP.”<sup>94</sup> Unlike other parties, the AKP was able to garner

<sup>89</sup> Nanor Barsoumian, “In Defense of Turkey’s Imprisoned Armenian Maverick,” *Armenian Weekly*, February 29, 2016, <http://armenianweekly.com/2016/02/29/turkeys-imprisoned-armenian-maverick>.

<sup>90</sup> Joshua Treviño, “Turks and Tolerance.”

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.* For a documentary about his life and projects, see “Sevan” (Sevan Nişanyan belgeseli), 2012, <https://youtube/c-VRrjuQTwe> (accessed March 2, 2016). In January 2015, the Constitutional Court confirmed Nişanyan’s sentence, preposterously “attributing to him a crime that [the Court] itself found to be in violation of the Constitution in its nature.” Since January 2014, Nişanyan is “the only person in Turkey who is serving a prison sentence in a closed prison” for the construction “crimes” he has committed. This is in a country where the Presidential Palace itself is built illegally on protected land and where tens of thousands of buildings are constructed without proper licences.

<sup>92</sup> “‘Being a Minority in Turkey’ Survey Results in English,” <http://www.norzartonk.org/files/survey2007.pdf> (accessed March 2, 2016).

<sup>93</sup> See, for example, a public dispute between the Patriarchal Vicar and an executive of community organization at a banquet, “Անակնկալ Վիճաբանութիւն” (Surprise dispute) *Jamanak*, October 26, 2015; “Ծանրաբեռնուած Օրակարգ” (Heavy agenda) *Jamanak*, October 27, 2015. For an extensive discussion of Islamized Armenians and the issues related to their “return” into the fold of the Armenian Church, see the respective issues of *Jamanak*, August 12, 14, and 15, 2015.

<sup>94</sup> “Armenischer Patriarch in der Türkei: ‘Die Armenier sind wieder allein,’” *Der Spiegel*, June 1, 2007, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/armenischer-patriarch-in-der-tuerkei-die-armenier-sind-wieder-allein-a-485472.html> (accessed March 2, 2016).

support and voters among much of the left-leaning liberals, the urbanized poor, the young, the informal proletariat crowded in cities, provincial capitalists, and the pious small bourgeoisie in Anatolia. Within a short time, the party was able to shift from the dogmatic inflexibility of Islamist politics to EU-oriented conservative democracy.

In the 1970s Islamist politics had been relegated to the realm of provincial small politics against the background of the state's industrial and rapid Westernization policies. After the 1997 "Memorandum" of the military that precipitated the Islamist Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan's resignation, who was the founder of the Welfare Party, the new Islamist political leadership, prominently led by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Abdullah Gül, and Bülent Arınc, adopted a free-market oriented, "moderate Muslim" position, with a pro-business agenda. "This new generation of political entrepreneurs was far more receptive to cooperation with the West."<sup>95</sup> By the early 2000s, as part of their strategy for EU-mandated reforms, the AKP government brought about a critical change in the relationship between the civilian government and the military, which until then had the upper hand in Turkish politics. Considering itself as the "guardian" of the Republic, the military had staged three coup d'états and three quasi-coups since 1960. The military was seen as a major barrier for reforms. Against the background of what Amnesty International called "the legacy of impunity for mass human rights violations in Turkey in the wake of the 12 September 1980 military coup and through the 1990s,"<sup>96</sup> the AKP succeeded in reducing the involvement of the military in civilian politics and gradually castrated the power of the armed forces in party politics, through new appointments, arrests, and legal cases against hundreds of high-ranking generals, officers, and soldiers. In the wider context, the AKP not only embraced secularism to enhance Islamist participation in democracy, but also embraced nationalism for pragmatism and adaptability to wider expectations in society.

The Armenian community's cautious embrace of the AKP is understandable in view of its decades-long torturous relationship with all levels of government. The AKP Government initially provided a relative relief from the shackles of the "Deep State"—as it has been revealed through the so-called Ergenekon trials—which had terrorized and subdued the community through constant court cases, administrative restrictions and penalties and psychological pressures. While the deep state's hand in taunting Hrant Dink through legal cases and the courts are well known,<sup>97</sup> the targeting of individual Armenians and the community collectively in the 1970s and 1980s are less discussed or overlooked. Property expropriations by the state are among the most contentious issues. For instance, one morning in 1974 bulldozers entered the land belonging to Surp Pırgiç Hospital in Zeytinburnu and confiscated

<sup>95</sup> Cihan Tuğal, "NATO's Islamists. Hegemony and Americanization in Turkey," *New Left Review* 44 (March-April 2007): 7.

<sup>96</sup> "Turkey. The Entrenched Culture of Impunity Must End," *Amnesty International*, July 5, 2007, AI Index: EUR 44/008/2007.

<sup>97</sup> Even after Hrant Dink's assassination, the Turkish state, through the General Directorate of Police Intelligence Department, had tried to dig into his killer's "origins"—checking family records from as far back as 1899—to see if he had any "dönme" or non-Muslim (read Armenian) roots and, if so, to blame the Armenians for the murder. See, Uygur Gültekin, "Devlet, Dink cinayetinin faillerinde 'Ermenilik' aramış" (The State searched for 'Armenianness' in the [perpetrator's] records of the Dink murder), *Agos*, March 10, 2016, <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/14632/tetikcinin-soyunda-ermenilik-aramislar> (23 March 2016). In fact, *Tercüman* and *Türkiye*, in their January 21, 2007 issues, under the headline of "Katil Ermeni" (Killer [is] an Armenian) declared that the assassin from Trabzon is "an Armenian by origin."

the valuable piece of real estate on “the ground that it has no registered owner.”<sup>98</sup> The land was grabbed by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. It was given back in 2014 following a long court case, but the Municipality appealed to take it back in 2016. The case is pending.

Long before Hrant Dink’s entrance into public life, in the late 1980s there were steady public campaigns through the media and the courts against a number of clergymen—the religious leadership of the community—among them Bishop Mesrob Mutafyan, when he was the outspoken young Chancellor of the Patriarchate. Headlines like “The Game of the Black Priest” (*Hürriyet* January 23, 1988) or “See what this Armenian Priest is doing” (*Sabah*, January 23, 1988) were common. Mutafyan was accused of supporting, predictably, “terrorist acts against Turks.”<sup>99</sup> Among a host of preposterous court cases brought against him in the same period are two notable ones. In 1987 Bishop Mutafyan appeared in a Turkish Criminal Court in Istanbul to face charges for violating the country’s statutes on the preservation of historical buildings. A state prosecutor had charged him of being guilty of covering the leaking roof of a balcony of the Armenian Patriarchate with rubber-based tiles (“eternite”). The prosecutor asked the court to sentence Mutafyan to two to five year prison term for the offense. Another one was in 1986 when the Turkish Court prosecutor accused Mutafyan of sending two Swedish “spies” to Anatolia to collect stories from old people on the Armenian massacres (*Güneş*, July 20, 1986).<sup>100</sup> A confidential report, revealed during Hrant Dink’s trial, showed that Mutafyan was under surveillance by the police and intelligence services “for his Armenian nationalist inclinations”—as labeled by the state agencies.<sup>101</sup>

The arrest of a young priest a month after the 1980 military coup caused a heart attack to the Armenian community collectively. The “show trial” of Father Manuel Yergatian, the 33-year-old, Turkey-born priest from Jerusalem, who was falsely charged with “anti-Turkish activities,” became headline-grabbing news. This was at the height of various acts of political violence against Turks by diaspora Armenians, especially terrorist operations by ASALA. In October 1980 Fr. Manuel was arrested at Istanbul airport while en route to Jerusalem, where he was the dean of the Armenian Seminary. For a long time after his arrest, his whereabouts were not known and no one was able to contact him. During the first month of his arrest, as Fr. Manuel said after his release, “I was beaten—heavily beaten—every day. Those people had no conscience.”<sup>102</sup> The Turkish press had a field day reporting on the trial of the “priest who is Turkey’s enemy.” Most humiliating for the community, the Patriarch at the time, Archbishop Shnork Kalustian, was called to testify before the

<sup>98</sup> Baruyr Kuyumciyan, “The largest property return might remain unfulfilled,” *Agos*, April 14, 2016, <http://www.agos.com.tr/en/article/15022/the-largest-property-return-might-remain-unfulfilled> (accessed April 15, 2016).

<sup>99</sup> See *Marmara*, January 23, 25, and 28, 1988 issues.

<sup>100</sup> For Bishop Mutafyan’s refutations of these and other false accusations against the Patriarchate from 1983 to 1988, see his article “Մեղաւք Աստուծոյ” (Sinning against God), *Marmara*, January 28, 1988, 2.

<sup>101</sup> “Confidential Document Targeting Hrant Dink back in 1990s Exposed,” *Mirror Spectator*, March 7, 2016, <http://www.mirrorspectator.com/2016/03/17/confidential-document-targeting-hrant-dink-back-in-1990s-exposed>.

<sup>102</sup> Hratch Tchilingirian, “A Tortured Priest Rests in Peace; In Memory of Fr. Manuel Yergatian,” *Armenian Reporter International*, February 21, 2004, 22, <http://oxbridgepartners.com/hratch/index.php/publications/articles/353-in-memory-of-fr-manuel-yergatian> (accessed March 2, 2016). See also “Teröristlerin ‘Din adamı’ dedikleri iki Ermeni kim” (Who are the two Armenians of the terrorists’ priest about whom they are talking), *Hürriyet*, September 25, 1981.

military court.<sup>103</sup> Misinformation was fed to the public through sensationalist headlines that demonized Fr. Manuel and generally the Armenians: “They are taking blood drinking oath in the Jerusalem Seminary” (*Kudüs Ruhban Okul’nda kan içme yemini ediyorlar*) and subheadings like “Confessions of the Priest revealed the Armenians’ bloody plots” (*Papazın itirafları, Ermenilerin kanlı hazırlıklarını ortaya döktü*) (*Hürriyet*, October 3, 1983), “Terrorists were trained in the seminary” (*Ruhban okulunda terrörist yetiştirdi*) (*Hürriyet*, March 3, 1985). The theatrics of the trial played out against the background of the coup d’état, headed by General Kenan Evren, the Chief of the General Staff. Fr. Manuel was made a scapegoat as the military government wanted to give the impression that they were tough on “Armenian terrorism.” The priest was unjustly convicted and sentenced to 15 years in prison, to be followed by four and a half years in a labor camp. After nearly seven years in Turkish prisons, where daily ill treatment by prison guards and inmates were common, he was released through a general amnesty. Once released, he was allowed a one-way exit from Turkey to Europe, where he generally remained silent about his painful ordeal and died at the age of 50 in the Netherlands.<sup>104</sup> As one blogger described, this is a “forgotten story of victimization.”<sup>105</sup>

Another clergyman, whose show trial over trumped up charges of “training militants” splashed the front-pages of Turkish newspapers, was Armenian Protestant preacher Hrant Güzelyan (known as Küçükgüzelyan in the Turkish media). Güzelyan was the pastor of the Armenian Protestant Church in Gedikpasa and the founder of the church’s orphanage known as “Badenagan Dun” (*Çocuk Evi*) as well as the now well-known Camp Armen in Tuzla. Like a few other clergymen, such as Patriarch Shnork Kalustian and Father Giragos Tokatlian at the time, Güzelyan had over the years saved many Armenian children from Anatolia from total assimilation by bringing them to Istanbul. Among the children he had saved were twenty Varto clan children, among them Rakel Yağbasan (future wife of Hrant Dink) who was brought to Istanbul in 1968 by Güzelyan at the age of 9, along with her two brothers.<sup>106</sup>

Güzelyan was arrested on February 25, 1981 and charged with “training Armenian militants” at Camp Armen. The government sealed off the camp and closed the church in Gedikpasa. The military prosecutors indicted Güzelyan for “bringing orphaned Turkish children to Istanbul and vaccinating them with Armenian nationalism.”<sup>107</sup> As expected, this was an “unfair accusation,” recalled Hrant Dink, who worked in the camp for 20 years, “[n]one of us had been raised as Armenian militants.” Dink and his friends, who tried to run the camp while Güzelyan was under arrest, were served a government notice that “minority institutions did not have the right to acquire property! We were confronted by the state,” said Hrant Dink.<sup>108</sup> His wife, Rakel, recounts that Güzelyan “built up the orphanage and [the] camp from nothing,” and adds that when he “was thrown into prison after the

<sup>103</sup> “Patrik, Türk düşmanı papazı savundu” (The Patriarch defended the priest [who is] enemy of the Turk), *Hürriyet*, September 3, 1982.

<sup>104</sup> Tchilingirian, “A Tortured Priest,” 22.

<sup>105</sup> “12 Eylül’den Unutulan Bir Mağduriyet Öyküsü: Manuel Yergatyan” (A forgotten ill-treatment story of 12 September: Manuel Yergatyan), <http://team-aow.discuforum.info/t19539-12-Eyl-l-den-Unutulan-Bir-Ma-duriyet-yk-s-Manuel-Yergatyan.htm> (accessed March 14, 2016).

<sup>106</sup> “Hrant Dink—Early Life—Rakel Yağbasan, Childhood Friend, Future Wife,” [http://www.liquisearch.com/hrant\\_dink/early\\_life/rakel\\_ya%C4%9Fbasan\\_childhood\\_friend\\_future\\_wife](http://www.liquisearch.com/hrant_dink/early_life/rakel_ya%C4%9Fbasan_childhood_friend_future_wife) (accessed April 8, 2016).

<sup>107</sup> “Doğu Anadolu’da outran öksüz Türk çocuklarını İstanbul’a getirerek kendilerine Ermeni milliyetçiliğini aşıladığı,” see “Hrant Küçükgüzelyan’ın yargılanmasına başlandı” (The trial of Hrant Kucukguselyan has begun), *Cumhuriyet*, October 3, 1981, 8.

<sup>108</sup> Hrant Dink, “They regarded us as strangers,” *Agos*, Special Issue, February 2007, 9.

September 12 coup, our terrified Armenian community abandoned him.”<sup>109</sup> Having served for more than eight months in prison, Güzelyan was released on November 6, 1981 and soon after left for France in early 1982. He died in 2007 at the age of 86.

Earlier in the 1960s and 1970s the “celebrity Armenian” who grabbed the headlines was Mıgırdıç Şelefyan (1914-1987). Born in Adapazar, he was a successful businessman and Armenian community leader, who had moved to Istanbul as a child with his family after surviving the Genocide. Şelefyan was the chairman of the Community Central Council from 1953, the highest lay body in Turkey, until it was banned after the 1960 coup. He served as advisor to the Patriarch and later as the chairman of the prestigious Surp Pırgic Hospital trust. In 1955 Şelefyan was elected to the Istanbul Municipal Council and in 1957 a Member of Parliament on the Democratic Party (*Demokrat Parti*) list, led by Adnan Menderes. During the 1960 coup d'état he was arrested, along with some 600 deputies and government officials, tried and sentenced to four and a half years in prison. Upon his release, he left national politics, although he kept private relations with politicians such as Prime Minister Suleyman Demiral and others, which were useful in resolving many of the community's difficulties with the government. In 1970 he took his family for safety to Geneva, but could not return. Two days after he left Istanbul, rumors were spread in the media accusing Şelefyan of escaping with enormous amounts of money. In 1983, his “file” was re-opened for other allegations by the military government and Şelefyan was accused of “anti-Turkish activities.” He did not return to face the false charges and the government stripped him of his Turkish citizenship by a decree in 1984. All the while, like Fr. Manuel Yergatian, Şelefyan's case was paraded in the media with sensationalist headlines in the circus of public opinion.<sup>110</sup> This is another “forgotten story of victimization.”

Such brutalization and humiliation of the Armenians by the state had made the community retreat into its inner shell and remain silent for a long time. The campaign and process of Patriarchal elections in 1990 and 1998 provided opportunities for the community to become active again and engage with government and politics. This new activism was led by the young, charismatic Bishop Mesrob Mutafyan, who mobilized a group of young and progressive Armenians and engaged them in community affairs. Among them was Hrant Dink, who became a spokesperson of the Patriarchate in the early 1990s and whence the idea for *Agos* germinated. The hunger to speak out and the desire to address the “existential” problems surrounding the Armenian Church and community institutions in general, sparked the creation of the bilingual weekly newspaper in April 1996. The five initial founders of *Agos* were: Hrant Dink, who at the time owned a stationary shop; Diran Bakar, a lawyer; Luiz Bakar, also a lawyer and later the

<sup>109</sup> See Chapter 13 of Tuba Candar, *Hrant Dink: An Armenian Voice of the Voiceless in Turkey* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2016). For the story on how Güzelyan started Camp Armen, see “Hrant Güzelyan, Kamp Armen'in nasıl kurulduğunu anlatıyor,” *Agos* May 2, 2015, <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/11675/hrant-guzelyan-kamp-armen-in-nasil-kurulduğunu-anlatıyor> (accessed April 8, 2016); and his memoirs: Hrant Güzelyan, *Kamp Armen'e Giden Yol. Artakalanların Hikâyesi* (Istanbul: Hrant Dink Foundation, 2016).

<sup>110</sup> See, for example, “Bir yılda 4 defa döviz alan D.P. Mebusu” (The D.P. MP who bought foreign currency four times in a year), *Milliyet*, June 25, 1960; “Müfettişler Yahya Hacı Ali Demire ve Şelefyanlar için savcılığa başvurdu” (Inspectors applied to prosecutors for Yahya, Hadji Ali Demire and Şelefyan), *Milliyet*, September 29, 1979; “Mobilya İhracı olayı” (The furniture export incident), *Milliyet*, September 20, 1975. Ruben Melkonyan “Մկրտիչ Շելեֆյան. Վերջին Հայ Պատգամավորը Թուրքական Խորհրդարանում” (Mgredich Shelefyán. The last Armenian deputy in the Turkish Parliament), *21rd Dar 5* (2011), [http://www.noravank.am/eng/journals/detail.php?ELEMENT\\_ID=6063](http://www.noravank.am/eng/journals/detail.php?ELEMENT_ID=6063) (accessed March 14, 2016).



spokesperson of the Patriarchate; Harutiun Sesetian, a businessman; and Anna Turay, a public-relations professional. The founding members were to have their differences in subsequent years, but at its heart, *Agos* and Hrant Dink in particular, remained consistent in the effort to open channels of communication and dialogue between the reclusive—and at times isolated—Armenian community and Turkish society.

Armenian voters were supportive of the AKP as they saw a possible alternative to their arduous relationship in preceding decades. Pakrat Estukyan of *Agos* explains this phenomenon of voting for an “extreme right party” in light of the fact that the AKP itself had seen deprivation and injustice at the hands of the state, an experience that Armenians could sympathize with. The AKP capitalized on this “shared experience” of the various disenfranchised segments of society and promised justice and democracy to everyone. However, after securing the majority of the vote in successive elections, gradually the AKP became overconfident and arrogant. Confident of holding on to power for a long time, the party started to speak about “grand projects for the next 60 years,” and started to deviate from its original promise of freedom and justice. Nevertheless, according to Estukyan, most Armenians voted for the AKP again during the June 7, 2015 election, as the community was politically charged and even though the party had become “too Islamist in its outlook.”<sup>111</sup> What was new in Turkish politics was the election in November 2015 to the Parliament of three token Armenians on the list of three opposing parties. For the first time in over 50 years, Armenians are in the Grand National Assembly: Markar Esayan (AKP), Selina Doğan (CHP), Garo Paylan (HDP). Previously, the last MP was Mkrtich Şelefyan, who served from 1957-1960. But as Paylan put it, they “act as symbols. They are not really seen as equals. It allows [a given] party to say, ‘See, we also have an Armenian in our party.’ However, they are not really part of the politics; they are only Armenians at the table.”<sup>112</sup>

At the beginning of the AKP decade, the party and its leadership were hailed for their pro-EU and reformist policies, but gradually much of the early policies and political “openness” were reversed. The transparency and public scrutiny that was a hallmark of the early years of the AKP turned into arbitrary decision-making and a self-serving style of governance, especially since December 2013, when the public became aware of corruption, wide-reaching graft, and bribery on the highest levels of government and AKP affiliates. The epitome of consolidation of power in the hands of the party in a single leader is the proposed Constitutional change in Turkey from a parliamentary to a presidential system of governance, which has become Erdoğan’s disputed cause célèbre. This has taken precedence over long-neglected legal and economic reforms, declining economic indicators, rampant corruption, and the weakening of the rule of law.<sup>113</sup> Paylan explains that in 2002 “the AKP was willing

<sup>111</sup> Pakrat Estukyan, “Ո՞վ ի զորոն է խօսելու?” (Who is entitled to speak?), *Agos*, October 7, 2015, <http://www.agos.com.tr/am/hvotvadzi/12940/vov-i-zoru-e-khosyelu> (accessed March 2, 2016).

<sup>112</sup> Nanore Barsoumian, “The Road Ahead: An Interview with Garo Paylan,” *The Armenian Weekly*, July 1, 2015, <http://armenianweekly.com/2015/07/01/the-road-ahead> (accessed March 2, 2016).

<sup>113</sup> Interestingly, in a recent survey of 2000 people, respondents identified the causes of corruption as “immunities and corruption cases that go unpunished,” “the lack of public awareness,” “the lack or inadequacy of anti-corruption agencies,” and “social acceptance of corruption.” See “42 pct of Turks’ votes not swayed by corruption: Survey,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, March 10, 2016, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/42-pct-of-turks-votes-not-swayed-by-corruption-survey.aspx?pageID=238&nID=96273&NewsCatID=341>.

to change the system. They said the conservatives and the Muslims are suffering because of the Kemalist system. [...] After the 2011 election, [it was clear that] they were not the ones to change the system. They were in charge, in power, but they didn't change it.<sup>114</sup>

More concerning for the Armenian community is the increasing nationalist and racist discourse of top government officials and AKP politicians, who use insult and racial slurs for self-serving political purposes. If in the past it was the Kemalists state which engaged in framing and labeling the Armenians and the minorities, in recent years it is the AKP, as it is shaped in the "image and likeness" of President Erdoğan. While Erdoğan has spoken about "expansion" of the rights of the minorities enshrined in the Lausanne Treaty and publically stated that "whatever rights I have the minorities should possess the same rights,"<sup>115</sup> the word "Armenian" has become a dirty word in public again under the AKP. In an interview on NTV in August 2014, Erdoğan complained: "They have said even uglier things [about me]—they have called me Armenian, but I am a Turk, from my grandfather's, my father's and all sides."<sup>116</sup> Before him, President Abdullah Gül took CHP deputy Canan Aritman to court in December 2008 for "false allegations" about his mother's "Armenian origins," and therefore, her public slander of his position as a statesman. In another court case two years later, Cem Buyukcakar, director of the online news website HaberinYeri.net received an 11-month prison sentence for simply publishing a comment by a reader who accused Gül of being Armenian.<sup>117</sup>

The seemingly "more diplomatic" Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu is not so diplomatic when it comes to his views on Armenians. He has on a number of occasions publically made derogatory associations between the pro-Kurdish HDP and Armenians. In February 2016, at a meeting in Bingöl, a conservative majority Kurdish city, while blaming the HDP for taking advantage of the unrest in the southeastern border towns of Sur and Silopi, Davutoğlu said: "They are collaborating with Russia like the Armenian gangs used to do,"<sup>118</sup> implying that Armenians were traitors during the Ottoman Empire. This kind of extreme othering has become routine. In this sense, the juxtaposition of Sultan Abdülhamid with Davutoğlu by his supporters is telling. In December 2014, a large banner, prepared by the AKP Eskişehir Provincial Women's Branch, on the occasion of Davutoğlu's first visit to their city as Prime Minister, shows Davutoğlu on the left and Sultan Abdülhamid on

<sup>114</sup> Nanore Barsoumian, "The Road Ahead: An Interview with Garo Paylan," *The Armenian Weekly*, July 1, 2015, <http://armenianweekly.com/2015/07/01/the-road-ahead> (accessed March 2, 2016).

<sup>115</sup> "Lozan'ın daha da güncelleştirilmesi ve ülkemizde ben hangi haklara sahipsem azınlıkların da aynı haklara sahip olması lazım," see Aysel Alp, "Erdoğan'ın Lozan sözleri tartışıldı," (Erdoğan's Lausanne statement discussed) *Hurriyet*, May 21, 2016, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/erdoganin-lozan-sozleri-tartisildi-40106940> (accessed May 21, 2016).

<sup>116</sup> "Erdoğan: Bana çok daha çirkin şeyler söyleyenler oldu, Ermeni dediler!" (Erdoğan: they said even uglier things to me, they said [I am] Armenian!) *Cumhuriyet*, August 6, 2014, [http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/video/video/102247/Erdoğan\\_Bana\\_cok\\_daha\\_cirkin\\_seyler\\_soyleyenler\\_oldu\\_Ermeni\\_dediler\\_.html#](http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/video/video/102247/Erdoğan_Bana_cok_daha_cirkin_seyler_soyleyenler_oldu_Ermeni_dediler_.html#) (accessed March 2, 2016).

<sup>117</sup> "CHP deputy Aritman unapologetic as Gül denies Armenian roots," *Today's Zaman*, December 22, 2008, [http://www.todayszaman.com/national\\_chp-deputy-aritman-unapologetic-as-gul-denies-armenian-roots\\_161910.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/national_chp-deputy-aritman-unapologetic-as-gul-denies-armenian-roots_161910.html) (accessed March 2, 2016); <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gul-files-suit-against-aritman-10624092> (accessed March 2, 2016). "Cumhurbaşkanı Gül'ün annesi Ermeni mi, değil mi?" (Is President Gül's mother Armenian or not?) <http://odatv.com/cumhurbaskani-gulun-annesi-ermeni-mi-degil-mi-1812081200.html> (accessed March 2, 2016).

<sup>118</sup> Pinar Tremblay, "Armenian animosity rekindled through PKK terror," *Al Monitor Turkish Pulse*, March 7, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/03/turkey-armenia-akp-insults-of-kurds-armenians.html#ixzz42JnNZZ8z> (accessed March 7, 2016).

the right with the caption: “My Padishah, my Sultan, my Abdülhamid, my trust is in safe hands, you can sleep peacefully” (Padişahım, sultanım, Abdülhamid’im, emanetim artık emin ellerde rahat uyuyabilirsiniz.)<sup>119</sup> While ostensibly the target of the offense is the Armenian diaspora, such instrumentalization of ethnic origin affects Armenians living in Turkey on many levels, politically, socially, culturally and even economically. In May 2015, referring to HDP co-President Selahattin Demirtaş, Davutoğlu said, “I wonder what bargains he has made that he is acting in tandem with the Armenian Diaspora that claims a right over the lands on which the [Kurdish] Solution Process focuses.” Only a few months before that he had magnanimously declared that the Armenian Diaspora “is our Diaspora.”<sup>120</sup> Davutoğlu’s ethnic profiling negates and is in sharp contrast to what he has said to the representatives of minorities themselves. In January 2015 at an official dinner he had hosted at the Dolmabahçe palace for the religious leaders of minorities, Davutoğlu had said, “Our main watchword will continue to be the principle of equal citizenship,” adding, “We must raise our voice in unison against Islamophobia and discrimination against different faiths.”<sup>121</sup> In the “New Turkey” that the AKP party is supposedly building, Davutoğlu assured his audience that even as in “certain international legal documents and in the Treaty of Lausanne,” there is reference to minorities in Turkey, “we are determined to eliminate the concept of minority from social life.”<sup>122</sup> While the government has stated its intention to lift or ease the legal barriers for minorities, on the other hand, socio-political discrimination and profiling remains in place, most visibly in the public discourse of politicians. What is given by one hand is taken by the other hand. Another case is AKP Ankara Mayor Melih Gökçek, who is well-known in Turkey as a prolific Twitter user. He continually insults his political rivals, opposition voters, journalists, and anyone not to his liking by calling them “Armenian” as a derogatory term.<sup>123</sup>

This hegemonic political discourse permeates and is echoed in public gatherings, demonstrations, and other spaces. Among the well-known examples of these is the slogan “You are all Armenians, you are all bastards” (*Hepiniz Ermenisiniz hepiniz piçsiniz*) shouted and written on placards in a pro-Azerbaijan rally and in the presence of government officials<sup>124</sup> or by the police in Cizre to the supposed PKK

<sup>119</sup> “AKP Eskişehir Kadın Kolları’ndan Abdülhamid’e: Rahat uyu, emanetin emin ellerde” (AKP Eskişehir Women’s arm to Abdülhamid: Sleep well, your bequest is in safe hands) *Bir Bün*, December 7, 2014, <http://www.birgun.net/haber-detay/akp-eskisehir-kadin-kollari-ndan-abdulhamid-e-rahat-uyu-emanetin-emin-ellerde-72232.html> (accessed March 2, 2016).

<sup>120</sup> “Davutoğlu’s transformation: From ‘The Diaspora is our Diaspora’ to ‘Those who claim a right over our lands’,” *Agos*, May 25, 2015, <http://www.agos.com.tr/en/article/11683/davutoglus-transformation-from-the-diaspora-is-our-diaspora-to-those-who-claim-a-right-over-our-lands> (accessed March 2, 2016).

<sup>121</sup> “This is a family dinner,” *Agos*, January 2, 2015, <http://www.agos.com.tr/en/article/10133/this-is-a-family-dinner> (accessed March 2, 2016).

<sup>122</sup> “Davutoğlu: Azınlık Kavramını Sosyal Hayatta Ortadan Kaldırmaya Kararlıyız” (We are determined to eliminate the concept of minority from social life), *Haberlar.com*, February 12, 2015, <http://www.haberler.com/davutoglu-azinlik-kavramini-sosyal-hayatta-ortadan-6958422-haberi> (accessed March 2, 2016); see also “Davutoğlu’s transformation.”

<sup>123</sup> Mesut Hasan Benli, “Armenian-origin columnist fined for ‘insulting’ Ankara mayor,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, December 7, 2015, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/Default.aspx?pageID=238&nID=92174&NewsCatID=339>.

<sup>124</sup> “Hepiniz Ermenisiniz hepiniz piçsiniz” (You are all Armenian, you are all bastards), *Taraf*, February 27, 2012, <http://arsiv.taraf.com.tr/haber-hepiniz-ermenisiniz-hepiniz-picsiniz-87511/>; “O pankarta’ yargı kararını verdi!” (The court gave decision about that banner), *Haber Turk*, April 20, 2012, <http://www.haberturk.com/yasam/haber/735569-o-pankarta-yargi-kararini-verdi>.

members in the population.<sup>125</sup> These slogans are perverted allusions to “We are all Armenians, we are all Hrant” motto of hundreds of thousands of mourners during Hrant Dink’s funeral. Meanwhile, anti-Armenian textbooks, full of hateful remarks targeting Armenians and minorities, continue to be published under the AKP government. In September 2014, a group of academics, intellectuals, artists and journalists publically condemned the practice of “open hatred and hostility” towards Armenians in Turkish schoolbooks.<sup>126</sup>

Some piecemeal legal and administrative relief has been granted by the government, which seem to be more of a public relations measure rather than a genuine desire to right the wrongs of past policies. Regarding admission to Armenian schools, the government has dropped its mandatory “verification of identity” to determine the eligibility of students to study in Armenian schools. While non-Armenians are still not allowed to study in Armenian schools, the eligibility of students will no longer be determined by the Ministry of Education and its various divisions. Under a new law (as of June 28, 2015) that right is reserved to the principals of Armenian Schools. Henceforth, the school principals solely have the responsibility of registering a student.<sup>127</sup> The Ministry of Education announced that it will no longer engage in “verification” based on the “ethnic code” that the government had secretly compiled over the decades. Yet, the new laws present other problems internal to the community. The determination of identity of children of mixed marriages has posed a challenge to the Armenian community leadership. So too do the offspring of those who have gone through religious or denominational conversion and Islamized Armenians who wish to reclaim their Armenian identities. These concerns appear in the background of the enormous decline of Armenian schools, all located in Istanbul, over the last few decades due to state-imposed restrictions and systemic problems. For example, during the 1972-73 school year there were 32 functioning Armenian schools with 7,336 students, but by the 1999-2000 school year, the number of schools had gone down to 18 with 3,786 students. Within three decades, the number of schools had been reduced by 50 percent and the number of students by 60 percent.<sup>128</sup> While speaking Armenian among students in Armenian schools is in decline, one school principal hoped that at least the “Armenian spirit” will be preserved. “It is hard to say what kind of Armenians we’ll have in Turkey in the future,” she wondered.<sup>129</sup> While the Armenian language is allowed to be taught under the Lausanne Treaty, Armenian religion and Christianity are taught as substitutes to the required state-curriculum classes on “culture of religion and knowledge of morality.” But restrictions have also included “extra-curricular” spaces. One former Armenian school principal recalled that he was not allowed to hang a portrait of 18<sup>th</sup>-century troubadour Sayat Nova in

<sup>125</sup> “Polis’ten Cizre’lilere ‘Hepiniz Ermenisiziz,’” (The Police to the Cizre residents: ‘You are all Armenians’) September 11, 2015, <https://youtu.be/xnCQCF2BKSo>.

<sup>126</sup> “Group of intellectuals condemn anti-Armenian statements in textbooks,” *Today’s Zaman*, September 26, 2014, [http://www.todayszaman.com/anasayfa\\_group-of-intellectuals-condemn-anti-armenian-statements-in-textbooks\\_359935.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/anasayfa_group-of-intellectuals-condemn-anti-armenian-statements-in-textbooks_359935.html) (accessed March 2, 2016) also at <http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/news/182878/>. See also Uygur Gültekin, “Education in Turkey: more religious, more nationalist,” *Agos*, January 10, 2015, <http://www.agos.com.tr/en/article/12883/education-in-turkey-more-religious-more-nationalist>.

<sup>127</sup> “Վարկածներու Ամփոփում” (Summary of conjectures) *Jamanak*, August 19, 2015, 1, 4.

<sup>128</sup> Gunay Gokisu Ozdogan and Ohannes Kilicdagi, *Listening to the Armenians of Turkey: Their Problems, Demands and Proposed Solutions* (Istanbul: TESEV, 2011), 43, quoted in Taner Akçam, “Textbooks and the Armenian Genocide in Turkey: Heading Towards 2015,” *The Armenian Weekly*, December 4, 2014, <http://armenianweekly.com/2014/12/04/textbooks> (accessed April 28, 2016).

<sup>129</sup> Interview in Istanbul, September 26, 2014.

the school. “The Ministry of Education sent a letter asking to remove the picture. Months of correspondence ensued over this one portrait.”<sup>130</sup>

Despite the changes ushered by the emergence of the AK Party as a dominant political force, the situation today is such that, in the words of Selina Doğan, an Armenian attorney who was elected to Parliament on the CHP list, “none of us feel safe in such an atmosphere of violence,” particularly “as Turkey drifts toward authoritarianism.”<sup>131</sup> Arguably, the lobbying efforts of the Armenian Diaspora around the world for the recognition of the Genocide has created a backlash in Turkey, but the condition and treatment of the Armenian community in particular and other minorities in general—in at least the first 50 years of the Republic—are hardly mentioned in public discourse in Turkey. At best, they are described as “problematic” or “controversial” issues.<sup>132</sup> Long before the backlash of the activism of the Armenian Diaspora starting in the mid 1960s and the more recent lobbying efforts in the West, the state-imposed difficulties on the Armenian community (and the non-Muslim communities) have had institutional, legal, and political implications. Indeed, the two main defining institutions of the Armenian community in Turkey, the church and the school, are in dire situation. Both institutions face enormous administrative and financial problems and occasional targeting by nationalists.<sup>133</sup> Neither the state nor successive governments in Turkey have seriously addressed the problems imposed on the community, despite promises made to the Patriarch and community leaders during formal or informal meetings in Ankara.<sup>134</sup>

Having three Armenian Members of Parliament among their ranks since 2015, the integrationists in the Armenian community have attempted to shift the focus of the discourse from “narrow” parochial issues to the larger issue of democratization in Turkey. Rumelili and Keyman suggest that “by locating demands for equal national citizenship at the center of their negotiation of minority and national citizenship rights, Turkey’s Armenians are making significant contributions to the

<sup>130</sup> Interview in Istanbul, September 26, 2014.

<sup>131</sup> Gülten Üstüntağ, “CHP deputy: Everyone, including minorities, feels less safe as Turkey drifts toward authoritarianism,” *Today’s Zaman*, 20 February 2016, [http://www.todayszaman.com/interviews\\_chp-deputy-everyone-including-minorities-feels-less-safe-as-turkey-drifts-toward-authoritarianism\\_413344.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/interviews_chp-deputy-everyone-including-minorities-feels-less-safe-as-turkey-drifts-toward-authoritarianism_413344.html); also at <http://turkishpost.net/trending-stories/chp-deputy-everyone-including-minorities-feels-less-safe-turkey-drifts-toward-authoritarianism>.

<sup>132</sup> Hratch Tchilingirian, “Recognition or Reconciliation? Turkish-Armenian relations need untangling,” *Armenian Weekly/Aztag Daily* (Special Edition), 24 April, 2006, <http://goo.gl/fzMHL1>.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Hratch Tchilingirian, “Hrant Dink and Armenians in Turkey” in *Turkey: Writers, Politics and Free Speech, Open Democracy Quarterly* 1.2 (2007), <http://goo.gl/qhJ0W3>. For instance, in May 2007 the Armenian Schools in Istanbul—Esayan, Tibrevank and Getronagan high schools, and Vartuhyan, Karagoezyan, Dadyan, Yesilkoy and Tarkmanchats primary schools—received threatening letters, entitled “Last Warning” (Son Uyari ve Ikaz). The message said: “We will mercilessly shoot [...] it will be obvious how many Turks and how many Armenians there are, and you will be the ones to count the coffins,” signed someone calling himself “Temel Malatyali.” The letter ends with Atatürk’s words: “We would like to see the reaction against these separatist groups and terror organizations as soon as possible,” a call Mustafa Kemal issued for action to the Armenians in Turkey to show their loyalty to the state by combating the efforts of dissident factions, “We know where you are,” *The Armenian Reporter*, May 19, 2007; see also “*Acimasızca vururuz*” (We would beat mercilessly), *Yeni Şafak*, January 29, 2010, <http://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/acimasizca-vururuz-238396> (accessed March 2, 2016).

<sup>134</sup> See, for instance, “Armenian patriarch meets top officials in Ankara,” *Turkish Daily News*, December 17, 1998, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/armenian-patriarch-meets-top-officials-in-ankara.aspx?pageID=438&n=armenian-patriarch-meets-top-officials-in-ankara-1998-12-17> (accessed March 2, 2016); “Patriarch Meets Top Officials in Ankara,” *Lraper Church Bulletin* (Istanbul), February 14, 2001, or “Une journée à Ankara. Sa Béatitude, Mesrob Mutafian reçue par les autorités turques,” *Nouvelles D’Arménie*, Février 1999; “Cumhurbaşkanı Sezer Patrik Hazretlerini Kabul Etiler” (President Sezer received His Beatitude the Patriarch), *Lraper* 1 (2001): 3.

democratization and pluralization of Turkish politics.”<sup>135</sup> But there is a price to be paid for such “significant contributions,” which generally does not figure in the discourse of those liberal and progressive circles in society who support and are the beneficiaries of such “contributions.” The costs for Armenians have ranged from coercive measures to lethal consequences. On the other hand, the isolationists struggle—through perennial petitions to the government and state agencies or legal action where possible—to maintain what little has been left to the Armenian minority. Although dozens of properties that were confiscated by the state have been returned, there are still hundreds of cases that remain unresolved and ever buried in oceans of bureaucracy and legal disputes. The integrationists see the resolution of their community problems in the context of the larger Democratic Project in Turkey. As such, they see themselves as agents of democracy and freedom in Turkey rather than solely representatives of an ethnic community and its comparatively “small issues.” Paylan explains: “We are radical democrats and we have everyone sitting at our table. This is why we have to struggle for LGBT rights, for the Armenians, the Kurds, and the Alevis. We have to offer equality to every identity.”<sup>136</sup> It is claimed that *Agos* is not viewed just as an Armenian newspaper in Turkey, but as a newspaper promoting democracy. Its editorial policy includes attention to “issues of democratization, minority rights, coming to terms with the past, the protection and development of pluralism in Turkey.”<sup>137</sup> And this is where the two schools of thought diverge: the isolationists believe such an “opening to society” and the herculean task of carrying out a Democratic Project in Turkey by members of a minority group is not only not realistic, but is also risky as it exposes the community to a nationalist backlash with lethal consequences. As Murat Mıhçı, a member of the HDP cautioned: “There is always danger, especially for us Armenians there has always been danger. We know well the road we have travelled and history.”<sup>138</sup> The case of conscript Sevag Balıkcı is case in point. He was killed on April 24, 2011, by a fellow soldier, Kıvanç Ağaoğlu, while serving his mandatory military service in Kozluk province in Batman. The incident was presented as an “accident” and Ağaoğlu received a sentence of a mere 4 years and 5 months in prison. However, Sevag’s parents, Garabed and Ani Balıkcı, have appealed the case in an effort to reveal the truth that this was not an accident. “We feel uneasy about the fact that there is no justice,” said his father, expressing frustration that “with the dragging on of the case, we began to think that there is a hidden catch.”<sup>139</sup>

For the isolationist Armenians there is an element of political *déjà vu*. Erdoğan seems to be following the path of his predecessors like Adnan Menderes (1950-1960) and Turgut Özal (1983-1993), who came to power with wide popular support but, within a decade, “became more autocratic and began to rely on an ever-narrowing circle of advisers.”<sup>140</sup> Once considered the champion of reforms, Erdoğan

<sup>135</sup> Rumelili and Keyman, “Enacting multi-layered citizenship,” 14.

<sup>136</sup> Nanore Barsoumian, “The Road Ahead: An Interview with Garo Paylan,” *The Armenian Weekly*, July 1, 2015. <http://armenianweekly.com/2015/07/01/the-road-ahead> (accessed March 2, 2016).

<sup>137</sup> See “About US” at <http://www.agos.com.tr/en/home> (accessed March 2, 2016).

<sup>138</sup> Murat Mıhçı, “Թուրքիոյ մէջ Հայերս միշտ ալ վտանգի տակ ենք” (In Turkey we are always in danger), *Ararat* (Beirut) September 11, 2015, 2.

<sup>139</sup> Vartan Estukyan, “My home where my son is: Şişli Armenian Cemetery,” *Agos*, February 3, 2016, <http://www.agos.com.tr/en/article/14561/my-home-where-my-son-is-sisli-armenian-cemetery> (accessed March 2, 2016).

<sup>140</sup> Hugh Pope, “Erdoğan’s Decade,” *The Cairo Review of Global Affairs*, March 29, 2012, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/europe/turkey-cyprus/turkey/op-ed/pope-turkey-erdogans-decade.aspx> (accessed March 2, 2016).

has “entered his third term in power ill and ill-tempered, his absolute majority in parliament fighting yesterday’s sectarian battles,” observes Fiachra Gibbons.<sup>141</sup> The AKP’s original promise of “justice and equality of citizenship” a decade ago has been turned into a messianic “duty” of governance entrusted to the party by “God, history and the nation,” as Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu told AKP supporters in Denizli province during the run up to the June 2015 general elections (“*Allah, tarih ve millet bizden yanadır*”).<sup>142</sup> Doğu Ergil argues that there is a “new nationalism” in Turkey, which is very different from the nationalism of the founding Republic. “It is not Western-oriented, but rather traditional, isolationist and supports a role for religion in public life.[...] It puts the state in the center of social life as the provider and protector as well as the source of political power.”<sup>143</sup> And this, exactly, puts the integrationists in the Armenian community in a nearly impossible position and the isolationists in a continuous cycle of loyal accommodation.

### CONCLUSION

I would like to conclude by reiterating three critical issues in this discussion. First, state discrimination against the Armenian community and the non-Muslim minorities in Turkey is as old as the Republic and has been institutionalized and structured over the decades. There are legitimate grievances and difficulties imposed by the state and zealous politicians and officials which remain largely in place. The slow and piecemeal return of properties and restoration of certain rights are made for political gains rather than as a result of a genuine intention or policy on the part of the state to give back what it has taken from the community at least during the last five decades. That includes, for instance, the opening of the Patriarchal seminary where future priests could be trained, the legal status and independence of community schools, freedom for church and community organizations to hold elections without government interference, enhancement and simplification of relations with government agencies, and a host of other existential issues. As it is, the community in Istanbul has been reduced to a tiny fraction of its former status as the center of the Western Armenian cultural renaissance.

An ongoing problem is the return of properties to Armenian trusts that are worth millions of dollars. This is essential for the future vitality of the community, not only to assure the survival of community institutions, but to help them develop and modernize. In the absence of any state assistance, Armenian community institutions and structures are maintained by heavy reliance on individual donations and major fundraising efforts. In recent years donations have gone down considerably due to the global economic downturn and regional conflicts. Thus, the income the community would receive from the potential return of hundreds of confiscated properties would provide a more secure financial future. The other side of this issue is its impact on the internal dynamics of the community. So far there is no centralized management or oversight in the community to keep an eye on funds

<sup>141</sup> Fiachra Gibbons, “Turkey’s enlightenment languishes, like the journalists in its prisons,” *The Guardian*, March 13, 2012, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/libertycentral/2012/mar/13/turkey-enlightenment-journalists-prisons> (accessed March 2, 2016).

<sup>142</sup> “Davutoğlu: Her Müslüman için cihad farz-ı ayndır” (Davutoglu: Jihad is a *Fard al-Ayn* for each Muslim), *Yeni Akit*, February 1, 2015, <http://m.yeniakit.com.tr/haber/davutoglu-her-musulman-icin- Jihad-farz-i-ayndir-50176.html> (accessed March 2, 2016).

<sup>143</sup> Doğu Ergil, “Identity Crises and Political Instability in Turkey,” *Journal of International Affairs* 54.1 (Fall 2000), 58-59.

generated through the properties that have already been returned. Due to a government ban on elections and other administrative restrictions, currently only a small group of trustees in each trust have the legal right to decide as they please about what to do with the large funds they have. For instance, reportedly millions were wasted on the school in Topkapı. “We are spending these community funds, but we should be the guardians of those funds,” lamented Bedros Şirinoğlu, a prominent community leader and Chairman of the Surp Pirgic Hospiat Trust, warning that “under the current circumstances, the community is seriously decaying.”<sup>144</sup> An editorial in *Jamanak* was even more alarmed about “the internal struggles for influence” among different groups and institutions that “pose a serious threat to the community” and even “create threats of dismemberment of the community.”<sup>145</sup>

Second, on the socio-political level, the Armenian community in Turkey for a century now has not only lived as the constant “other,” reinforced through state-imposed restrictions, administrative hurdles, and arbitrary treatment, but has been forced to participate in the state and societal denial of the Genocide, at least through their silence and loyalty to the state. Sevan Deyirmenchyan, a writer, teacher, and newspaper editor, is not optimistic about the coming years: “Since the denial is continuing, since coming to terms [with history] is delayed, we will continue to hear [hate-mongering] utterances; we will still witness many threats and sometimes their execution” in Turkey.<sup>146</sup> Denialist and anti-Armenian discourse continue to be published in school textbooks, disseminated through public-opinion shaping outlets, and heard through official government platforms and in society at large.

Third, a decade ago, many had thought, including minorities lawyer Murat Cano, that “the process of destroying the non-Muslim minorities in Turkey has ended.”<sup>147</sup> However, such hopes have dissipated. Turkey seems to be returning to its earlier hegemonic political system, a system where education, media and political processes are controlled, and “the state’s tight grip on society is legitimized by rallying people around the nation-state.”<sup>148</sup> As in the past, crime and politics remain entangled in public life. Navaro-Yashin observes that the social panic caused by media stories of various unresolved incidents and events, “remains submerged in the bodies, psyches, habits, and unconsciousness of subjects of the Turkish state only to be recalled with the emergence of fresh anxieties.”<sup>149</sup>

Finally, as long as the state and the political establishment speak about what are the basic rights of the community as if they are handing out “privileges” or “favors,” the isolationists in the community will continue to remain silent and loyal in order to “protect” what they have. The price of illusive physical, psychological, and material *security* is being the “other” in one’s own native land. As such, the community would most likely remain “ideologically” divided as the integrationists would not accept such a humiliating reality. A hundred years after the Genocide, thanks to the

<sup>144</sup> “Ծանրաբերուած Օրակարգ” (Heavy agenda) *Jamanak*, October 27, 2015, 1.

<sup>145</sup> “Հայախօսութեան հետամուտները կը պիտակաւորուին՝ որպէս ազգայնականներ, տկարացած է մամուլ-դպրոց կապը, ազդեցութեան պայքարները անդամալուծութեան վտանգ կը ստեղծեն համայնքին առջեւ” (Those who advocate speaking Armenian are labelled nationalist, media-school link is weakened, the struggles for influence generate threat of disability for the community), *Jamanak*, February 12, 2016, 1.

<sup>146</sup> Sevan Deyirmenchyan, “Նոյն Սպառնալիքը՝ 101 Տարի Անց” (The same threat 101 years later), *Nor J arach*, March 5, 2016, 4.

<sup>147</sup> “Lawyer Cano: ‘The state withholds documents from its courts’,” *Turkish Daily News*, February 10, 2001.

<sup>148</sup> Ergil, “Identity Crises,” 46.

<sup>149</sup> Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State*, 183.



Turkish state and society, the Armenians in Turkey find themselves somewhere between isolation and dis/integration. As one young Armenian academic in Istanbul surmised: “The future of the Armenian community in Turkey is bleak, not only because of the political and legal environment, but because social and career opportunities are not satisfactory.”<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Interview in Istanbul, September 22, 2014.