



Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences

Department of International Relations

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PERCEPTIONS OF
ARMENIANS IN TURKEY AND ARMENIA REGARDING
1915 *MEDZ YEGHERN***

Diana YAYLOYAN

Master's Thesis

Ankara, 2015

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KABUL VE ONAY

Diana Yayloyan tarafından hazırlanan "A comparative study of perceptions of Armenians in Turkey and Armenia regarding 1915 *Medz Yeghern*" başlıklı bu çalışma, 10.07.2015 tarihinde yapılan savunma sınavı sonucunda başarılı bulunarak jürimiz tarafından Yüksek Lisans tezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.



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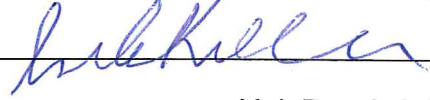
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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the 100th Anniversary of Medz Yeghern and to the memory of my great grandparents Sirvard and Khachik Aslanians from Van, survivors of 1915 events.

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And in the very end I would like to thank all anonymous readers who will have a look at this thesis – I hope, that at least partially, it will satisfy some of their questions, helping them to understand better the experiences, sentiments, and expectations of the Armenians living in Turkey and Armenia.

ÖZET

YAYLOYAN, Diana, 1915 *Medz Yeghern*'e İlişkin Türkiye'deki ve Ermenistan'daki Ermenilerin Algılarının Karşılaştırmalı Bir Analizi. Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara, 2015.

Bu çalışma, Türkiye'de ve Ermenistan'da Ermeniler arasında 1915 *Medz Yeghern* algısı ile ilgilidir. Araştırma konusunu ayrıntılandırmak için, geniş bir akademik literatür ile otuz derinlemesine yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler değerlendirilmiştir. Tezin amacı Türkiye ve Ermenistan'da Ermeniler ile yapılan görüşmelerden çeşitli veriler toplayarak zaman boyunca algı dönüşümünü anlamak ve bunun yanı sıra ana faktörleri incelemek, 1915 *Medz Yeghern* algısını oluşturan faktörleri ve Ermeni tarafının Türkiye'den beklentilerini (hükümet ve sıradan vatandaş bazında) ortaya çıkartmaktır. Tez, sadece akademik literatüre Ermenilerin *Medz Yeghern* algısına ilişkin bir katkı sunmakla kalmayıp; aynı zamanda Türk okuyuculara Ermeni-Türk ilişkileri konusunda, karşı tarafın kaygıları ve beklentileri üzerine derinlikli bilgi edinebileceği bir kılavuz rolü görecektir.

Anahtar Sözcükler

Medz Yeghern, Algı, Tarihsel Batı Ermenistan, Travma.

ABSTRACT

YAYLOYAN, Diana, *The Comparative Study Of Perceptions of Armenians in Turkey And Armenia Regarding 1915 Medz Yeghern*. Master's Thesis, Ankara, 2015.

This study deals with the perception of 1915 *Medz Yeghern* among Armenians in Turkey and Armenia. To elaborate the research topic, thirty in-depth semistructural interviews along with the wide academic literature were utilized. The thesis is multifaceted: by collecting various data from interviews conducted with Armenians in Turkey and Armenia, it aims to illuminate the transformation of their perception throughout the time, to examine the main factors, that shape the perception of 1915 *Medz Yeghern*, as well as to reveal the expectations of Armenians from the Turkish side (both from the government and ordinary citizens). This thesis is not only an additional contribution to the academic literature on *Medz Yeghern* perception by the Armenian side, but at the same time it is a specific guideline for the Turkish readers to get acquainted with the concerns and expectations of the Armenians living in Turkey and Armenia regarding the Armenian-Turkish relations.

Key Words

Medz Yeghern, Perception, Historical Western Armenia, Trauma.

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METHODOLOGY

Along with academic research the thesis is constructed around in-depth semistructural interviews, which constitute the cornerstone of the study. Thirty oral interviews provide a comprehensive base for better understanding of Armenian people trauma, feelings and dissappointments, and finally expectations and vision on future Armenian-Turkish relations.

The absence of diplomatic relations and sealed Armenian-Turkish border exacerbates the existing hostile perceptional boundaries between Turks and Armenians. In such conditions the researchers from Turkey and Armenia mostly were examining the existing Armenian-Turkish literature by making analyses based on the theoretical sources, not having opportunity to talk to the other side, to understand their psychological perceptions and opinions regarding various topics shaping this long-lasting dispute of the conquering memories. The lack of people-to-people contact does not let the academic studies to have a holistic view of the other side's perceptions, what creates misperception and misinterpretation of the situation. For that reason the oral histories and interviews are one of the most important sources which can contribute to the comprehensive analyses of the conflict.

The interviews were conducted both in Turkey and Armenia between August 2014 and June 2015. Speaking about the structure of interviews, the number of respondents was the same both in Turkey and Armenia, between 21 to 35 years old, with minimum requirements of Bachelor Degree. The table below provides detailed information regarding the approach in conducting interviews for the study.

Table.1. Profile of the respondents in Turkey and Armenia.

Fieldwork in Turkey, Istanbul	Fieldwork in Armenia, Yerevan	Total
MA and PhD students 21- 35 years old – 15	MA and PhD students 21 - 35 years old – 15	30

The respondents in Turkey are Christian Armenians with Armenian parents from both sides. The important criteria for selecting the respondents in Turkey is to be graduate from the Armenian primary school, as the connections with other members of Armenian community play a significant role in forming the perception of the Turkish Armenians. In case of the Armenians in Armenia an important criteria was to be the citizen of Republic of Armenia and to have in Armenia at least three generations.

The interviews were conducted in informal atmosphere in order to let the participants to feel comfortable and unstressed. The names and personal information of the respondents are not included in the thesis. The respondents are identified according to the first letter of name, gender, and age (Ex. D, female, 25).

Apart from the research group, several experts on Armenian-Turkish relations both from Turkey and Armenia were interviewed, with aim to examine the opinions both from ordinary citizens and social activists and experts. After the interviews were completed, the analyses of collected data was organized.

STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

In the social and political sciences, comparative cross-national and cross-cultural studies occupy importance in terms of questioning the old data and investigating the new dimensions of the research topic. The human social existence is subject to the dynamic changes thereby the comparative studies are representing big importance in terms of providing updated information based on the comparative conducted research. The similarities and differences observed in the perceptions of compared research groups may stream from specific historical, social, cultural or psychological aspects. Thereby the identification of the main reason of the perceptions' differences is very meaningful, representing the cornerstone of comparative study.

The thesis is divided into four chapters. However, before passing to the main chapters, the main issues explaining the research question of the study, the relevance of this study to the international relations field are provided.

The first chapter is dealing with the theoretical framework which is the theory of social perception and the constituting parts of the concept such as the forming mechanisms of perception process. Taking into the consideration the traumatic memory and perception

of 1915 events by the Armenian people, the concept of Transgenerational transmission of trauma was also examined.

The second chapter is devoted to the historical review of the Armenian community's life in Ottoman Empire before 1915 events, as well as the Armenian-Turkish relations in that time. The post-1915 life both in Turkey and Armenia are examined – the historical scope in Armenia is grasping the Soviet period to the present, and in Turkey the historical review is focusing on the life experiences of Turkish Armenians after 1915 stretching it to our days. It should be noted that the thesis does not set a goal of reconstructing the 1915 events through the oral stories and personal interviews, but to show the importance of 1915 *Medz Yeghern* in the life of today's Armenian generations in Turkey and Armenia.

The third chapter is dedicated to the findings from the conducted interviews in Turkey and Armenia. The questions are divided into four sectors: the general perception of *Medz Yeghern* and the importance of 1915 memory; the perception of historical Western Armenian lands and position to the territorial claims; the claims and expectations from the Turkish side, and the fourth sections consists of the perspectives on the Armenian-Turkish reconciliation and normalization of relations.

The final chapter summarizes the findings of interviews, while analysing the similarities and differences in the perceptions of two research groups.

INTRODUCTION

The devastating events of 1915 left innermost imprint on the lives and consciousness of the Armenian people, so that even after several generations its wounds are still not healed. In the Armenian language the specific term *Medz Yeghern*¹ (verbatim *Big Catastrophe*) is used to describe the terrifying events in Ottoman Empire with the culmination of events in 1915. Thereby the term *Medz Yeghern* concludes the national tragedy of exclusively Armenian people, and is related to the destruction of Ottoman Armenians in the early twentieth century, loss of nation, historical homeland and cultural heritage.

For a long period of time the survivors of *Medz Yeghern* did not share their memories with the young generation, protecting them from the psychological trauma and not willing themselves to refresh the horrible memories of atrocities. However, being unable to heal the trauma by themselves, the survivors were transmitting it to the subsequent generation, with a hope that the young generation will find the solution to the unresolved issue and bring the final consolation.²

1915 *Medz Yeghern* not only led to the massive physical destruction of Armenian people in their historical homeland, but also as Turkish Armenian columnist Etyen Mahçupyan mentioned,

“...to their deterritorialization and rapid change of the used lifestream, and being suddenly thrown into the midst of the modern world from a patriarchal tradition, they were confronted with a danger of losing their culture, being alienated from

¹Barack Obama uses the term *Medz Yeghern* in his annual statements to the Armenian people, on 24 of April, calling it “*the first mass atrocity of the 20th Century*”. The full texts of President's statements are available at White House Presidential official page <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/04/23/statement-president-armenian-remembrance-day>. To read more on *Medz Yeghern* polemics see Vartan Matiossian, “The ‘Exact Translation’: How ‘Medz Yeghern’ Means Genocide”, The Armenian Weekly, from <http://armenianweekly.com/2013/05/15/the-exact-translation-how-medz-yeghern-means-genocide/>

²The sociologists Kai Erikson argues for two kinds of events that breakdown the “tissue of communities.” The first kind is caused by natural disasters, whereas the second, and most significant for this study, is caused by “another group of people, the enemy, often a neighboring one.” Researchers Neal Knight and Harold Bare were working with Navajo Indians in 1992. Because the Navajo had experienced such a severe tragedy through the “Long Walk” in the late 1800s, they were “doomed to pass down the memory of the tragedy and their feelings about it to their descendants, as if later generations could carry out the mourning and adaption that their ancestors could not.”

*their own community in the process of individualization and getting lost within an alienating cultural atmosphere”.*³

It is enough to bring the numbers of Armenian population in Turkey before and after World War I, in order to understand the scale of tragedy and devastation. If in 1914 the Armenian population in Ottoman Empire made 7% of the overall population, according to the census in 1927 they constituted only 0.5% of the population.⁴ Left alone in the devastated and empty Western Armenia, the number of Armenians, who survived the deportations and massacres and continued the life in Turkey after 1915 and started to move from Anatolia to Istanbul, which was the only place where they could preserve their Armenian identity, due to the existence of the Armenian community and Church in Istanbul. Interestingly, there are numbers of Armenian families, which are divided between the Christian and Muslim relatives, only due to the fact that those members of family, who could move to Istanbul just after 1915, were able to preserve the Armenian identity and religion, and the rest of family members, who stayed in the hometown, in Anatolia, were forced to convert to Islam in order to preserve their lives. Surprisingly, it is possible to see in the same Armenian family both Priest and Imam. Moreover, though many Armenians were forced to convert to Islam in order to escape the persecution, it was still mentioned in their ID card that they are *mühtedi* which means *convert*.⁵ This was the tragic fate of post-1915 devastated Western Armenia.

The Eastern Armenia, which was under the control of Russian Empire since 1828, proclaimed its independence in 1918, establishing Armenian Republic. Thousands of Ottoman Armenian refugees fled from the Ottoman Empire and settled in Armenia. Armenian Holy Apostolic Church in Echmiadzin organized camps for the refugees, providing them humanitarian aid. The catastrophic state of the starving survivors affected the Caucasian Armenians, who despite the difficult conditions in new born Armenian Republic were providing all possible assistance to their compatriots.

This thesis represents the voices of Armenians in Turkey and Armenia on this event, which had and still has an overwhelming impact in the making of the national consciousness of Armenians. The aim of the study is to create a platform where the perceptions of *Medz Yeghern* among the Armenian people from neighbouring Turkey

³Mahcupyan Etyen, “What do Armenians want now?”, published in *DailySabah* on May, 2015, available at <http://www.dailysabah.com/columns/etyen-mahcupyan/2015/05/09/what-do-armenians-want-now#>

⁴Günay Göksu Özdoğan, Ohannes Kılıçdağı, *Hearing Turkey's Armenians: Issues, Demands and Policy Recommendations*, TESEV Publications, May 2012, p.16.

⁵Ferda Balancar, *The sound of silence: Diarbakir's Armenians speak*, Hrant Dink Foundation Publications, Istanbul, 2015, p.77.

and Armenia will be discussed, to demonstrate what place does the narrative of 1915 occupy in their daily life, what transformation occurred to their perceptions, what are their expectations for the future Armenian-Turkish relations, and what makes the new generations, to remain sensitive about this topic. Thereby, the question of whether, and to what degree, the perception of *Medz Yeghern* is comparable and equivalent among Armenians living in Turkey and Armenia constitutes the main research question of the thesis.

The study pays great attention to the social context of the respondents, as the perception as a social product, is shaped by the various aspects of human beings' life, thereby it is not strictly an individual phenomena. Especially this is true regarding the traumatic perception and memory, since the grieving individual is unable to cope with trauma, he or she inevitably transmits it to the subsequent generation. For that reason the historical context of 1915 events occupies a significant place in this study.

The questions such as "Why is the memory of 1915 that only helps enflame the frustration among Armenians is still so alive?", "What are these Armenian groups waiting for from the Turkish government and the Turkish society?", "What is their perception of the historical lands of Western Armenia and how do they relate to the possible territorial claims for Turkey?", "What are their perspectives on the solution for the long lasting dispute and misunderstandings?" are shaping the main course of this research.

Besides the strict statistics and official documents there are always human voices full of pain and despair, which unfortunately remain unheard and unnoticed. This thesis gives a space for the human voices and stories and creates an opportunity to fill in the missing gaps with the perceptions of ordinary people instead of using the official rough numbers and statements.

CHAPTER 1.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF PERCEPTION PROCESS

"We do not first see, then define, we define first and then see".⁶

Walter Lippmann

The aim of this chapter is to provide the theoretical framework, which would contribute to the better understanding of the formation process of perception and the analysis of the factors, that shapes the perception. The social perception of the individual is affected by the social and cultural environment in which the individual is inhabiting. For that reason the social matrix which affects the individual or group should be examined.

The theoretical framework of this study along with the utilised methodology is borrowed from the social-psychological field of research. Even though, some may doubt the relevance of the social-psychological approach used for this particular international relations study, the research carries benignant information which can contribute to further perspectives between Armenians and Turks.

Recently, more scholars of international relations and political science advocates for the applicability of interdiscipline approaches to the various IR problems. The implementation of social-psychological approaches in the IR field is significant in terms of enriching the IR studies and encouraging eminent scholars to approach problems from a variety of angles. Both IR and non-IR scholars benefit from the mutual cooperation which let them "to fill in the missing gaps into areas they had not been trained, to gain knowledge they lacked, supporting their conceptual models".⁷

Political science scholars J. M. Goldgeier and P. E. Tetlock analyzed the main schools of IR in relation to the psychological approaches. They offered psychological literature, which can be beneficial for different IR researches. When there is a lack of approaches in analysing different IR issues, which leads to the explanatory shortcomings, it can be corrected by using other psychological approaches.⁸ As Robert Jervis puts it, "political

⁶Cited in Snyder and Uranowitz, 1978.

⁷Herbert C. Kelman, *Social Psychology and The Study of Peace: Personal Reflections*, p.365, in Linda Tropp (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Intergroup Conflict*.

⁸J. M. Goldgeier and P. E. Tetlock, "Psychology and International Relations Theory", *Annual Reviews of Political Science*, 2001. 4:67–92, p.68.

psychology searches for explanations, descriptions, and predictions at the individual level of analysis".⁹

In the academic study called "Social-Psychological Approaches to the Study of International Relations" Herbert C. Kelman defended the relevance of non-IR approaches to IR field. Kelman proposed two different kind of IR researches to which social-psychological approach has contributed - the study of the international behavior of individuals, and the study of international politics and foreign policy.¹⁰ The study of the international behaviour of individuals fits to the research of *Medz Yeghern* perception, which has implications for the Turkish side, manifesting the Armenian public opinion about this issue, which in its turn leads to the corresponding behaviour by the Armenian side.

The study and measurement of specific groups' perceptions on the different issues is very significant and useful in terms of providing an insight of the public opinion which in many cases shapes the foreign policy of the states, contributing to the mapping of IR field. The signing of Zurich protocols on Armenian-Turkish rapprochement between the Ministers of foreign Affairs of Turkey and Armenia in 2010 provoked a strong wave of criticism both in Turkey and Armenia; warning the governments of both countries to be cautious and sensitive to the public opinion. The *Track One* diplomacy between the Turkish and Armenian decision makers ran too fast thus, leaving the public opinion behind.

The research conducted on intracommunal perceptions represents a significant milestone in interpreting research groups' behaviour and expectations from the governments. In analyses of individual and collective perception the synthesis of cognitive, depth psychological and behavioural approaches in psychology are utilised. These concepts were used by scholars Philip Tetlock or Robert Jervis, as explanation of foreign policy decisions, leading to further contiguity of psychology and international relations.¹¹

⁹Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1976, in Elif Erişen, "An Introduction to Political Psychology for International Relations Scholars, Perceptions", Volume: 3, Issue: 17, 2012, p.10.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Cengiz Erişen, "Yanlış Algılama Perspektifinden Türk Dış Politikasının Değerlendirilmesi", in Ertan Efeğil and Rıdvan Kalaycı (eds.) *Dış Politika Teorileri Bağlamında Türk Dış Politikasının Analizi*, Ankara, Nobel Yayınevi, 2012, pp. 529-551, in Elif Erişen, "An Introduction to Political Psychology for International Relations Scholars", Perceptions, Volume: 3, Issue: 17, 2012, p.19.

The research of social perceptions on important issues led not only to the exposition of the public mass sentiments and reasoning, but it also made their expectations from the government apparent. At individual or group levels of analysis, political psychology can contribute to the study of international relations, improving the explication of the individual and social cognitive and emotional mechanisms. With larger democratization process, public perceptions research gains significant importance for IR studies, shaping the political decisions of the people in charge.

How can social perception be defined and measured? Which factors participate in the perception formation? It is difficult to give a certain answer, as the perception itself is a socially constructed subjective phenomenon. Nevertheless, it is possible to follow the main factors shaping the individual perception, as the individual perception constitutes a significant part of the social matrix, and is affected by its various layers. Everything which is social is dynamic and the social units are not fixed, such as social identities, what make the social perception a subject to constant change. The history provides hearty examples of the dramatical changes, when the whole nations were changing their social identities and perceptions under the auspice of governments' new lines of policy.

The concept of social perception is representing an umbrella term which includes various phenomena such as the formation of impressions and attitudes, social cognition, stereotypes, prejudice, social categorization, and social comparison.¹² The social perception belongs to the research field of cognitive and social psychology, that "deals with the psychological mechanisms that mediate the individual's responses to the social environment".¹³ There are multiple methods that can be used to measure and assess the social perception, such as projective tests, questionnaires, multistructural interviews. Age, gender, economic, social and cultural environment shape the social perception.

The concept of social perception is related to the social interactions and the individuals ability to understand the social cues coming during these interactions from their environments. During the social interactions the individuals interpret the perceived cues and make judgments about the objects they perceive. These judgments are based both

¹²For more information see Jenifer B. Teiford (ed.), *Social Perception: 21st Century Issues and Challenges*, Nova Publishers, 2008.

¹³Kimberly A. Quinn, C. Neil Macrae, Galen V. Bodenhausen, *Social Cognition*, p.66, in *The SAGE Handbook of Social Psychology: Concise Student Edition*, Michael A Hogg, Joel Coope (ed.), 2006.

on sensory and stored information, gained from the previous experiences. Thereby, due to the social perception the human beings are able to make judgments about various objects.

Perception is a mental process of gathering, selecting, and understanding information in order to make a sense of the environment. Whereas perceiving the physical environment is relatively objective and testable, information about people is oftensubjective and open to interpretation. This makes the social perception rather subjective than objective process.

Researchers are widely recognizing the role of the social-cultural environment in the formation of human perception, as well as its impact in the changes occurring in perception. The analyses of the social and cultural circumstances play significant role in understanding the phenomenon of perception, as the person interprets the stimuli coming from his environment into something meaningful using the prior experiences rooted in the social and cultural context.¹⁴

1.1. THE IMPACT OF CULTURE ON PERCEPTION

This chapter provides a review of the role of culture in shaping the individual perception, which in its turn shapes the human behaviour. The utilised theoretical framework of social perception represents a basis for analysing the existing perceptual similarities and differences on 1915 events among the Armenian communities in Turkey and Armenia. The research of the social-cultural environments in which these two communities exist provides an explanatory mechanism for the differences observed in communities' perception and cognition. The main finding of this chapter is that the human perception is shaped by the socially shared worldviews – so-called cultural biases that determine the individuals' perceptions.¹⁵ This lets to speak about

¹⁴Jeffrey Pickens, *Attitudes and perceptions*, St. Thomas University, Florida, 2005, p.52.

¹⁴Wildavsky and Dake, 1990, p. in Susanne Rippl, "Cultural Theory and risk perception: a proposal for a better measurement", *Journal of Risk Research* 5(2), Carfax Publications, 2002, pp. 147-165.

¹⁵Wildavsky and Dake, 1990, p. in Susanne Rippl, "Cultural Theory and risk perception: a proposal for a better measurement", *Journal of Risk Research* 5(2), Carfax Publications, 2002, pp. 147-165.

the culturally conditioned perceptions, what confirms that different cultural contexts prescribe different imperatives for individuals.¹⁶

Shavitt claimsthat culture includes “shared elements that provide standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating, communicating, and acting among thosewho share a language, a historical period, and a geographical location.”¹⁷ Culture includes behaviour, norms, values, and assumptions associated with a certain group, transmitted from the generation to generation. The schemas for various situations and events are greatly influenced by the cultural environment.¹⁸ The human behaviour and attitudes are forged within the socio-cultural context. Misunderstandings among societies are sometimes a natural result of different cultural environments and it`s outcomes. Since, each individual comprehends the world through his or her perception of relaity, thathas been predominantly shaped by the place of birth or education,divisions might automatically become chronic. Examination of cultural influence on perception can assist in finding out the reasons of the differences laying in the roots of cross-cultural perceptions. Thereby, the structured review of the role of culture in shaping individual perception, which in turn affectsthe processing of information from the surrounding environment, is provided.¹⁹ The cross-cultural differences and similiarites in the perceptions across the nations and communities should be investigated in order to understand their origins and specific dimensions.The analysis of social-cultural context demonstrates how cultural elements such as norms and values affect individual perception and eventually lead to the perceptual and behavioral differences.

¹⁶ Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995, quoted in “Culturally Contingent Situated Cognition: Influencing Others Fosters Analytic Perception in the U.S. but Not in Japan”,Yuri Miyamoto and Brooke Wilken, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Available at: <http://psych.wisc.edu/Miyamoto/CACL/Miyamoto&Wilken.pdf>

¹⁷Shavitt, S., Lee, A., & Johnson, T. P. (2008). *Cross-cultural consumer psychology*. In C. Haugtvedt, P. Herr, & F. Kardes (Eds.), *Handbook of consumer psychology* (pp. 1103–1131), quoted in Minas N. Kastanakis, Benjamin G. Voyer, “The effect of culture on perception and cognition: A conceptual framework”, *Journal of Business Research*, April 2013, p. 426.

¹⁸Adair, W.L.Taylor, M.S., and Tinsley, C.H. (2009), *Starting out on the rightfoot: Negotiation schemas when cultures collide*.*Negotiation and Conflict Management Research*, 2(2), pp.138-163.

¹⁹Minas N. Kastanakis, Benjamin G. Voyer, *The effect of culture on perception and cognition: a conceptual framework*, p.4.

Psychologist Moskowitz asserts that the social context has a clear effect on social perception.²⁰ Comprehensive research on cultural influence on the perception process can be applied in conflict situations, offering the objective explanation for the various perceptions of the conflicting sides' on the similar issues. Perception and cognition occupy a decisive place in subjective human experience²¹ and thus studying differences in these two domains is crucial to understand cross-cultural behavior. Nisbett is also supporting the idea of social context's importance²² – the way we perceive the world depends on our environment.

Jeremy Bruner is one of the most prominent figures who made significant contribution to the understanding of perception process and its relevance to the socio-cultural environment. From the early stages of his career, Bruner has been interested in the notion of culture - how culture shapes the mind.²³ The psychologists noticed that the findings on perception formation were limited as they were underestimating the role of the need and social influence on perception. He wrote, "though it is obvious that the child is born into a culture and formed by it, it is not plain how a psychological theory of cognitive development deals with this fact".²⁴ His experimental findings paved a way to the explanation of the important role that culture and experience play in the perception process.

Bruner's findings were documented in two important experiments. In the first experiment, conducted with Cecile C. Goodman and published in "Value and Need as Organizing Factors in Perception",²⁵ Bruner focused on perception using a group of children and how they perceived the size of coins. The research showed that poor children were more likely to overestimate the size of coins in comparison with rich

²⁰Moskowitz, 2005, quoted in Yael Schaffer, Yuri Rassevsky, "Social perception in borderline personality disorder: the role of context", *Journal of personality disorders*, 29(2), The Guilford Press, 2015, p.276.

²¹Minas N. Kastanakis, Benjamin G. Voyer, *The effect of culture on perception and cognition: a conceptual framework*, p.4.

²²Yuri Miyamoto, Richard E. Nisbett, and Takahiko Masuda, "Culture and the Physical Environment: Holistic Versus Analytic Perceptual Affordances, *Association for Psychological Science*", Volume 17—Number 2, 2006, p.13.

²³Keichi Takaya, "Jerome Bruner's Theory of Education: From Early Bruner to Later Bruner", *Tokyo Women's Medical University, Interchange*, Vol. 39/1, 1–19, 2008, p.2.

²⁴Jerome S. Bruner, *Toward a theory of instruction*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966, p. 6., quoted in Keichi Takaya, "Jerome Bruner's Theory of Education: From Early Bruner to Later Bruner", *Tokyo Women's Medical University, Interchange*, Vol. 39/1, 1–19, 2008, p.2.

²⁵Jerome S. Bruner, Cecile C. Goodman, "Value and Need as Organizing Factors in Perception", in *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 1947, 42, 33-44.

children. He assumed that the poor children's "need" for money affected and increased the real size of the coins in their perception.²⁶

In next academic study with Leo Postman, Bruner focused on the impact of expectations on perception.²⁷ His main argument was that individuals perceive in difficult way the things that do not fit their imagined expectations. Moreover, in most cases the new perceived objects are rejected, and it takes a certain period of time, through verifying the adequacy of perceptions, to accept them.²⁸

Bruner noticed that culture, being consisted of various multiple layers of subcultures, shapes the environment in which we live, and it embodies "a set of values, skills, and ways of life."²⁹ He also noticed that culture is the "toolkit" for sense-making and communicating.³⁰ So, the Bruner supports the concept of *cultural view*, claiming that "nothing is culture free",³¹ and the events and actions should be interpret within the cultural context, meanwhile the individuals do not merely reflect the cultural imprint. He views the culture as a dynamic and constantly modifying phenomena - what it means is the meanings and values defined within the specific cultures are not unambiguous and immutable, but exposed to the change throughout the time, during the social negotiations. Education and learning are the processes of constant social interactions, what makes the individuals active learners instead of merely passive recipients of the information coming from the environment.³²

Arguing for the inevitable impact of the socio-cultural environment on the individual's perception, Bruner at the same time showed a concern in regards to the overimpact of culture on the perception. He wrote:

"education must also seek to develop the process of intelligenceso that the individual is capable of going beyond the cultural waysof his social world, able to innovate in however modest a way sothat he can create an interior culture of his own".³³

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Jerome S. Bruner and Leo Postman, "On the Perception of Incongruity: A Paradigm", in *Journal of Personality*, 1949, 18, 206-223.

²⁸Jerome S. Bruner, *From Spades to Spirals*: Jerome S. Bruner and Constructivism, available at: <https://moniacal.wordpress.com/jerome-s-bruner-final-project/>

²⁹Keichi Takaya, "Jerome Bruner's Theory of Education: From Early Bruner to Later Bruner", Tokyo Women's Medical University, Interchange, Vol. 39/1, 1-19, 2008, p.2.

³⁰Ibid, p.3.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

³³Keichi Takaya, "Jerome Bruner's Theory of Education: From Early Bruner to Later Bruner", Tokyo Women's Medical University, Interchange, Vol. 39/1, 1-19, 2008, p.5.

The solution Bruner sees in the provision of alternative knowledge:

“but education, by giving shape and expression to our experience, can also be the principal instrument for setting limits on the enterprise of mind. The guarantee against limits is the sense of alternatives. Education must, then, be not only a process that transmits culture, but also one that provides alternative views of the world and strengthens the will to explore them.”³⁴

Bruner’s study formed the basis of the theory of constructivism, which occupies an important place among the IR theories. His argument that the individuals actively construct the knowledge and understanding of the world around them made the cornerstone of the constructivism theory.

1.2. PERCEPTION OF HISTORICAL TRAUMA AND TRANSGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION

“The essence of the trauma is precisely that it is too horrible to be remembered, to be integrated into our symbolic universe. All we have to do is to mark repeatedly the trauma as such”.

Slavoj Žižek³⁵

Although the scope of the thesis is the social perception and its formation, the research seems incomplete without the brief review of a concept of historical trauma. Consistent with the hypothesis that the individual’s social perception is formed within specific social-cultural environment and the person thereby is strongly affected by that environment, the study of historical trauma concept enables to understand the strong psychological impact which the trauma of 1915 *Medz Yeghern* had left and continues to leave on the Armenians throughout the world. The unhealed trauma is creating a strong frustration and anxiety among the first and second generations of survivors, who being unable to heal it, is transmitting the traumatic experiences and memories to new generations, hoping that they will end the grief and bring the long awaited sedation. The notion of transgenerational grief³⁶ can be used while describing the traumatic perception of 1915 events and its consequences in daily life.

³⁴Ibid, p.6.

³⁵Slavoj Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*, (London: Verso, 1991), 272-273.

³⁶See Paul Valent, *Transgenerational Transmission of Grief: Using the Holocaust as an example*, Nalag Conference, 20th October 1999.

When the event is too tremendous in order to bear or forget it leads to trauma.³⁷ This may be related to such events as rape, war, massacres or genocide. Judith Lewis Herman in her book *Trauma and Recovery* refers to trauma as follows:

"The ordinary response to atrocities is to banish them from consciousness. Certain violations of the social compact are too terrible to utter aloud: this is the meaning of the world unspeakable... The conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud is the central dialectic of psychological trauma".³⁸

Jeffrey C. Alexander together with Ron Eyerman bring the concept of cultural trauma, which occurs when horrendous events is experienced by the large group:

"Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways".³⁹

Alexander pays attention to the fact that trauma does not mean the group is experiencing pain, but the result of discomfort which becomes permanent element of their own identity.⁴⁰

Thereby, the cultural trauma represents a threat to a culture with which the specific group is identifying itself, at the same time presenting a threat to their personal identities.⁴¹ Here Alexander speaks about the traumatization of entire community, as the traumatic event necessarily carries the negative affect for the whole group (such as national tragedy, national catastrophe, national shame).⁴²

As the result of loss of people, land and culture, a systematic transmission of trauma to subsequent generations took place. The researchers Braveheart and Whitbeck studied the perception of historical trauma among the indigenous American people.⁴³ Specifically, the traumatic events suffered during previous generations creates a pathway that results in the current generation being at an increased risk of experiencing mental and physical distress that leaves them unable to gain strength

³⁷Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, M.D. New York, 1997, p.1.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ron Eyerman, Jeffrey C. Alexander, Bernard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser, PiotrSztompka, *Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma*, University of California Press, 2004,Chapter 1.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid, p.40.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Brave Heart, M., Chase, J., Elkins, J., and Altschul, D. B. (2011), "Historical trauma among indigenous peoples of the Americas: Concepts, research, and clinical considerations", *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs*, 43(4), 282–290, in Kathleen Brown-Rice, "Examining the Theory of Historical Trauma Among Native Americans", *The Professional Counselor Volume 3, Issue 3*, 2013, p. 123.

from their indigenous culture or utilize their natural familial and tribal support system.⁴⁴ There is comprehensive academic literature on the traumatic memories of 1915 *Medz Yeghern* and transgenerational transmission of trauma among Armenian people, where in some cases the research is conducted as a comparative study with the transgenerational transmission of Holocaust memories.⁴⁵

Amongst the scholars there are supporters of the view that collective trauma being perceived as a threat to a society's existence can revitalize and activate the traumatic memory throughout the history in case if again any threat will overhang the traumatized community. Armenian scholar Harutyun Marutyan showed the activation of the Armenian collective memory of 1915 events during the Karabakh conflict.⁴⁶ Alla Alayarian also mentioned that the historical trauma can be revitalized prepossessing the traumatized in past individuals to respond the later traumas. This has been the case in *Medz Yeghern*, where traumas have been transmitted and re-enacted in the disputed situation between Armenian and Turkish authorities (ongoing Karabakh war).⁴⁷ As an example of trauma revitalization the war in Yugoslavia in 1990s can be mentioned, when the collective memory was reactivated, by bringing back the images of "Ustase" and "Chetniks" to the Serbs and Croats, and at the same calling the Muslims "Turks", in order to associate them with the invasion of the Ottoman Empire in the 14th century. The similar patterns of trauma reactivation had been present during the genocide of Bosnian Muslims, where many Serbs believed they were defending themselves against aggression caused by the "Turks".⁴⁸

Cultural trauma has damaging effect for the community it exposed as each culture suggests the continuity and sequence, implying the cultural traumas to be considered

⁴⁴Big Foot, D., and Braden, J. (2007, Winter). "Adapting evidence-based treatments for use with American Indian and Native Alaskan children and Youth", *Focal Point*, 21(1), 19–22, in Kathleen Brown-Rice, "Examining the Theory of Historical Trauma Among Native Americans", *The Professional Counselor* Volume 3, Issue 3, 2013, p. 123.

⁴⁵See more at Dr. Anie Kalayjian and Ms. Marian Weisberg, "Generational Impact of Mass Trauma: The Post-Ottoman Turkish Genocide of the Armenians"; Gregory John Garavanian, "The Transgenerational Effects of the Armenian Genocide", California School of Professional Psychology, Alameda, 2000.

⁴⁶Harutyun Marutyan, "Can Collective Memory of Genocide Lead to Reconciliation? A View from Yerevan", Yerevan, 27 November 2010. Marutyan has a whole book on the subject: Harutyun Marutyan, *Iconography of Armenian Identity: The Memory of Genocide and the Karabagh Movement*. Yerevan: Gitutyun, 2009.

⁴⁷Aida Alayarian, *Consequences of Denial: The Armenian Genocide*, Karnac Books Publisher, 2008, p.49.

⁴⁸Arlene Audergone, "Collective Trauma: The Nightmare Of History", in *Psychotherapy and Politics International*, 2(1), 16-31, Whurr Publishers Ltd, London, 2004, p.23.

the most difficult to be healed”, as culture obtains a particular inertia, and once the cultural equilibrium is broken, it is most difficult to restore it”.⁴⁹ Duran suggested that:

*“historical trauma becomes embedded in the cultural memory of a people and is passed on by the same mechanisms by which culture is generally transmitted, and therefore becomes ‘normalised’ within that culture”.*⁵⁰

Speaking about the shared trauma and transmitted traumatic memories, the reference to the academic works of scholar Vamik D. Volkan has to be done, who used the concept of chosen trauma which author considered to be one of the components of large-group identity. Volkan described the chosen trauma as a “shared mental representation of a massive trauma that the group’s ancestors suffered at the hands of an enemy”.⁵¹ According to his theory, the experience of catastrophe by the large group of people leads to the emergence of similar (not necessarily identical) traumatized self-images among the members of the group, and later due to the transgenerational transmission of those images to young generations, the strong connection is bounding the members of the traumatized group:

*“As these hundreds, thousands, or millions of individuals deposit their similarly traumatized images into their children, the cumulative effects influence the shape and content of the large-group identity. Though each child in the second generation has his or her own individualized personality, all share similar links to the trauma’s mental representation and similar unconscious tasks for coping with that representation. The shared task may be to keep the “memory” of the parents’ trauma alive, to mourn their losses, to reverse their humiliation, or to take revenge on their behalf. If the next generation cannot effectively fulfill their shared tasks-and this is usually the case-they will pass these tasks on to the third generation, and so on. Such conditions create a powerful unseen network among hundreds, thousands, or millions of people”.*⁵²

Bringing this statement to 1915 perception it can be observed that despite the fact that the modern Armenian communities did not experience *Medz Yeghern* directly, the memories of survivors who passed through massacres and deportations are still central to their attempts to forge a collective identity out of remembrance.⁵³

⁴⁹Piotr Sztompka, “The Trauma of Social Change: A case of Postcommunist Societies”, in Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser, and Piotr Sztompka, *Cultural Trauma and Identity*, 2004, p.162.

⁵⁰ Duran et al., 1998; Muid, 2006; Queensland and Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

⁵¹Vamik D. Volkan, *Transgenerational Transmissions and Chosen Traumas: An Aspect of Large-Group identity*, Sage Publications, Mar.1, 2001, p.79.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ron Eyerman, *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity*, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p.1.

The traumatic memory does not recognize time and geographical dimensions. For instance, the Armenian communities, being concentrated in the different parts of the world, despite the existing differences among them which is natural and understandable in regard to the different socio-cultural environment they were exposed to, still share the common pain and trauma. Vamik Volkan points out the fact that despite the existence of different traumas throughout the life of this community, only certain memories that were probably the most disruptive remain alive over a prolonged period of time.

1.3. SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM THEORY

"Constructivism is the philosophical and scientific position that knowledge arises through a process of active construction."

Mascolol & Fischer, 2005

The social constructivism approach in IR gives special emphasis to the study of social perception. The term constructivist epistemology was first used by Jean Piaget in his famous 1967 article *Logique et Connaissance Scientifique* where he pointed out:

*"The essential problem of a theory of knowledge is: How is new knowledge constructed? Is it, as empiricism contends, always derived from observing reality, or is it preformed in the human mind, and thus innate?"*⁵⁴

He rejects the empiricist and behaviorist stance that knowledge derives directly from sense experiences. He also rejects the rationalist or preformist view that knowledge is innate and develops more or less biologically as we grow and mature. His whole life program consists of showing how both these views are insufficient.⁵⁵

Another constructivist Papert in contrast, focuses more on the art of learning, or "learning to learn", and on the significance of making things in learning.⁵⁶ As Edith Ackermann noticed, "Papert is interested in how learners engage in a conversation with artifacts, and how these conversations boost self-directed learning, and ultimately

⁵⁴Piaget 1980, p.3, quoted in Svein Sjøberg, *Constructivism and learning*, University of Oslo, Invited contribution to Baker, E.; McGaw, B. and Peterson P. (Eds.), *International Encyclopaedia of Education*, 3rd Edition, Oxford, Elsevier, 2007, p.4.

⁵⁵Svein Sjøberg, *Constructivism and learning*, University of Oslo, Invited contribution to Baker, E.; McGaw, B. And Peterson P. (Eds.), *International Encyclopaedia of Education*; p.4.

⁵⁶ See Edith Ackermann, *Piaget's Constructivism, Papert's Constructionism: What's the difference?* Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2002.

facilitate the construction of new knowledge". The scholar emphasized the important role of tools, media, and context in human development.⁵⁷

Prominent Soviet constructivist Lev Vygotsky emphasized the role of language and culture in cognitive development and how human beings perceived the world, claiming that both language and culture provides frameworks through which individuals experience, communicate, and understand the world. Vygotsky rejected the assumption made by Piaget that it was possible to separate learning from its social context. He argued that all cognitive functions originate in, and must therefore be explained as products of social interactions and that "learning was not simply the assimilation and accommodation of new knowledge by learners; it was the process by which learners were integrated into a knowledge community".⁵⁸

Constructivists view the international relations as socially constructed, thereby it is not a natural and pre-given reality, but a product of social interactions emerged within the particular culture. This approach views the political and other relations as exclusively constructed by the individuals, what makes the human beings responsible for the changes rather than perceiving the changes as dictated by the nature of the anarchic system, as political realists prefer to do.⁵⁹ The human beings and relations between them depend on the interpretations they give to the material environment, what stresses the importance of ideas, beliefs and assumptions. "The actors themselves are the result of continuous interaction" – demonstrates Wendt.⁶⁰

Social constructivism emphasizes the importance of culture and context in understanding what occurs in society and constructing knowledge based on this understanding.⁶¹ This perspective is closely associated with many contemporary theories, most notably the developmental theories of Vygotsky and Jeremy Bruner and Bandura's social cognitive theory.⁶² Therefore, the perception and learning processes

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Vygotsky, Lev, (1978). *Mind in Society*. London: Harvard University Press, available at: <http://www.simplypsychology.org/vygotsky.html>

⁵⁹Robert Jackson and Georg Sorenson, *Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003.

⁶⁰Alexander Wendt, *A Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge Studies in International Relations, 1999, p. 314.

⁶¹Kim, B., *Social constructivism* in M. Orey (Ed.), *Emerging perspectives on learning, teaching, and technology*, 2001, available at <http://www.coe.uga.edu/epltt/SocialConstructivism.htm>

⁶²Ibid.

are also influenced by personal experiences within particular cultural contexts.⁶³ Constructivists require that we understand: “meaning is not given to us in our encounters, but it is given by us, constructed by us, each in our own way, according to how our understanding is currently organized.”⁶⁴

1.4. CONCLUSION TO THE CHAPTER

The social perception theory occupies an important place in the multidisciplinary psychological, social and in recent period political studies. Scholars are seeking to understand how the individuals ascribe the meaning to the information incoming from the social world. This chapter supports the argument that the social perception is a subjective process, which is based on the personal experiences of the individuals. At the same time, based on the findings of psychologists, the study shows that the perception is culturally conditioned, where the social environment of the individual plays a significant role in shaping the perception of the world. The similar findings of the several psychologists on social perception suggest that social and cultural context is a gateway through which external stimuli are received.⁶⁵

Unfortunately, the academic direction and limits of the study did not allow to provide the detailed focus on the psychological process of perception formation, as well as broader research of the socialization process, and the role which the agents of socialization (such as family or religious institutions) play in perception formation. These factors should be taken into the consideration for perception researchers, in order to have a more comprehensive view point of this concept.

As the purpose of the paper is to examine the perception of 1915 *Medz Yeghern* which is a traumatic event, the brief evaluation of the historical trauma concept was provided, as 1915 *Medz Yeghern* represents a historical trauma for every Armenian, despite the existing intercommunal differences.

⁶³Chang Zhu, Martin Valcke and Tammy Schellens, *Cultural differences in the perception of a social-constructivist e-learning environment*, British Journal of Educational Technology, Vol. 40 No 1, 2009.

⁶⁴ Duckworth, 1987, p. 112, quoted in Margaret Richardson, Ed. D., Suny Cortland, *Constructivism in Education: An overview of contributions to the literature and to the JPACTe annotated bibliography*, 2007.

⁶⁵Minas N. Kastanakis, Benjamin G. Voyer, “The effect of culture on perception and cognition: A conceptual framework”, *Journal of Business Research*, April 2013, p.429.

CHAPTER 2.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE ARMENIAN COMMUNITY'S LIFE IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE BEFORE 1915

Today's perception and attitude towards Turkey and Turkish people by Armenians were developed under tragic events, which took place at the end of nineteenth and the beginning of twentieth centuries in the Ottoman Empire. To better understand today's perception of the 1915 *Medz Yeghern*, the brief historical overview of the events that eventually led to that tragedy will be evaluated, in terms of having overwhelming effect on the perception of Armenian people, which is impossible to detach from the context.

The research question of this chapter is the following – what happened to the Ottoman Armenians during the period the Young Turks were in power? The historical background is divided in two periods – the first one is dedicated to the history of Armenian-Turkish relations until the emergence of the Armenian question in the nineteenth century; and the second period relates to the emergence of oppositional political parties, the overthrow of Sultan Abdul Hamid II, and the Ittihad ve Terakki (Young Turks) Party's rise to power and their policy towards the Armenian issue. The second period is extremely important in terms of understanding the clue changes between the Young Turks' early and late visions of the survival of Ottoman Empire in general, and perception of Ottoman Armenians and their place in the country in particular. The role and contribution of the Ottoman Armenians to the life and heritage of Ottoman Empire are examined as well.

The study provides a chronological overview of the Armenian community's life, focusing only on two important geographical areas of the Empire – that is the Western part of historical Armenian Highlands, known in that period as Western (Turkish) Armenian provinces (today's eastern Anatolia), and two cities, famous for their spirit of cosmopolitanism and concentration of the wealthy Armenian class called amiras – Constantinople (Istanbul) and Smyrna (Izmir). Thereby, the life of Armenians before 1915 in the Eastern Armenia, which was governed by the Russian Empire and later became the independent Republic of Armenia, remains outside the scope of research. The chapter only outlines the information regarding the resettlement of Ottoman Armenians in Russian Armenia after the devastating post-1915 period along with the economic and social conditions inherent to Russian Armenia in that time.

2.1. THE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL LIFE OF THE OTTOMAN ARMENIAN COMMUNITY

As Lord Kinross rightly remarks,

“If the homeland of an empire is where it puts down its deepest roots during its formative years, then the homeland of the Ottoman empire was western Anatolia and Balkans. The first lands which the Ottomans were granted were near Angora; from there they expanded westwards to Nicomedia and Nicea, and later to the Gallipoli peninsula. A large part of the Balkans was in their hands by 1362, and in 1368 Adrianople (Edirne) became the Ottoman capital. None of Armenia was yet conquered by them”.⁶⁶

The Ottoman Empire contained the historical lands of former Armenian royal principalities and kingdoms that dated, from antiquity to the Middle Ages. These regions contain the following Ottoman provinces (according to 19th century data): Erzurum (the Armenian name is Karin),⁶⁷ Van, Bitlis, Diyarbakir (the Armenian name is Tigranakert),⁶⁸ Harput, and Sivas. This whole geographical area was also known as Armenian Highlands.

Only after 150 years the Ottomans moved far enough east, capturing part of Armenia, which was under the rule of Byzantine Empire in that time. In 1453 the Byzantine capital Constantinople was conquered, what put the beginning to the Armenian settlement in the city. The Armenian merchants and craftsmen were resettled from the different parts of Empire to Constantinople with the aim to contribute to the development of city's economy.⁶⁹ By the end of the 15th century the number of Armenian households in Constantinople constituted 1000, and as a result of political turmoil in the East the new wave of Armenian migrants fled to the city and its vicinity.⁷⁰

According to the traditional accounts, Mehmed II established the millet system of religious communities. In 1461 he appointed the Armenian archbishop of Bursa

⁶⁶Lord Kinross, *The Ottoman Centuries*, London, 1977, pp. 46-56.

⁶⁷ Parsegian V.L. *Armenian Architecture*, Volumes I – VII, A documented photo-archival collection on microfiche with 42,000 photographs for the study of early and late-Medieval Christian architectural arts of Transcaucasia and the Middle East, Inter Documentation Company, The Netherlands, 1990, p. 8.

⁶⁸See Richard G. Hovannisian (ed.), *Armenian Tigranakert / Diarbekir and Edessa /Urfa*, UCLA Armenian History and Culture Series. Historic Armenian Cities and Provinces, Mazda Pub, 2006.

⁶⁹Simon Payaslian, *The history of Armenia: from the origins to the present*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2007, p. 105.

⁷⁰Payaslian, *History of Armenia*, p. 105.

Hovakim to Constantinople.⁷¹ The new established Armenian patriarchate's supremacy overrode the establishments, created by the Church itself – the catcholicosates in Sis and Aghtamar, and the patriarchate in Jerusalem, demonstrating the political character of the appointment made by the Ottoman Sultan.⁷²

Each community (millet) was representing through self-governing entities, with its own institutions. The personal issues were controlled within each community, without external Turkish involvement in it. The community had its own schools, hospitals, and even the prisons.⁷³ The only thing that was required from them was to pay the taxes and not to create any disturbances in the empire.⁷⁴ The non-Muslim communities were called as rayahs, or flocks (derived from the Arabic *ra'a*),⁷⁵ “not because they were known as ‘human cattle’, as some writers would interpret, but because they were ‘the protected ones’, as sheep by a shepherds”.⁷⁶

As discussed above, according to the millet system, the non-Muslim communities possessed their own institutions, including courts and prisons, resolving the disputes and conflicts among themselves, with rarely any external interference, and where the members of community could be assured of fair hearing.⁷⁷ However, in case of conflict with a Muslim the opportunity of a fair outcome for the court decision was extremely low, as the Muslims were appealing for their case to be heard in the religious court mahkeme, where the non-Muslims were forbidden to give the testimony.⁷⁸ [The testimony of a non-Muslim could be accepted if it was extracted by torture!]

Another disadvantage of the millet system was the prohibition to bear arms, which was especially dangerous for the residents of the eastern parts of the empire, where the nomadic Kurdish tribes were inhabiting. In addition, the members of non-Muslim

⁷¹Christopher J. Walker, *Armenia, The Survival of a Nation*, Revised Second Edition, Routledge, 1991, p. 86. See, however, Kevork Bardakjian, “The Rise of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople,” in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, 2 vols., eds. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1982), vol. 1, pp. 89-100.

⁷²Walker, *Armenia, The Survival of a Nation*, p. 86.

⁷³Hagop Barsoumian. “The Eastern Question and the Tanzimat Era,” in *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times, Volume II: Foreign Dominion to Statehood: The Fifteenth Century to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997, pp. 182-85.

⁷⁴Walker, *Armenia, The Survival of a Nation*, p. 87.

⁷⁵Barsoumian. “The Eastern Question and the Tanzimat Era,” p. 194.

⁷⁶Christopher J. Walker, *Armenia, The Survival of a Nation*, Revised Second Edition, Routledge, 1991, p. 87.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*

⁷⁸Taner Akçam, *A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility*, New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006, p. 24.

communities were exempted from the military service, which meant that no officer class could emerge among them (in contradiction to the Russian Empire, where a large number of prominent Russian officers and generals were of Armenian origin).⁷⁹

Besides the above mentioned inequalities and injustice that existed in the millet system in all the non-Muslims communities, there was one disability practiced only with the Armenian community and which was especially resented. That was the obligation to provide free winter quarters (kishlak) to the nomadic Kurds and their flocks, often for period from four to six months each year, what obviously required large expenses in providing food and animal foodstuffs.⁸⁰

This and other discriminations bearing by the Armenian community in Western Armenian provinces would later form the basis of the Armenian question, which instead of taking out the burden from the Armenians' shoulders, exacerbated the situation, increasing the sufferings.

Arshag O. Sarkissian also mentions four general reasons of Armenians' complaint and dissatisfaction with the conditions of life in Empire, that is "the non-acceptance of non-Mohammedan testimony in the courts; the abuses connected with the matter of taxation; oppressions and outrages committed by government officials, such as forced conversions, rapes, assaults, etc.; and oppressions and outrages committed by civilians and brigands."⁸¹ Astourian and many other scholars also describes the dispossession of the Armenians of their land by the Kurdish aghas as a very important source of Armenian unhappiness, leading to the revolutionary movement.

2.2. THE ARMENIAN CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE OTTOMAN HERITAGE. ISTANBUL AS A CULTURAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CENTER FOR ARMENIANS

⁷⁹Walker, *Armenia, The Survival of a Nation*, p. 86.

⁸⁰Stepan Astourian. "The Silence of the Land: Agrarian Relations, Ethnicity, and Power," in *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire*, eds. Ronald Grigor Suny, Fatma Müge Göçek, and Norman Naimark. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 63.

⁸¹Arshag O. Sarkissian, *History of the Armenian Question to 1885*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1938, p. 37, cited in Michael M. Gunter, *Armenian History and the Question of Genocide*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2011, p.2.

The Armenian population in Ottoman Empire could be divided into four fairly distinct groups⁸² the rich men in Constantinople or Smyrna known as amiras; the second group included the traders and artisans in the towns; the third group consisted of the peasants, who were earning for life out of the soil and from their flocks. The people from this class, as a rule, were frequently heavily in debt to local Turks or Kurdish beys; and the fourth group was represented through mountaineers, known for their bold, brave character and semi-independent existence, untouched by the Ottoman tax-collectors. The mountaineers were inhabiting Zeitun, Cilicia, and Sasun – a consideration of about fourty Armenian villages (in today's Batman).

According to the Armenian patriarchate of Constantinople statistics in 1882, the total number of Armenian population in Ottoman Empire numbered 2.600.000, of whom 1.630.000 lived in the six provinces of Turkish Armenia – Sivas, Harput, Diyarbekir, Bitlis and Van.⁸³

Typical positions held by the Armenians were inspectors of forestry, municipal engineer, provincial translator, and assistant to the deputy of governor. The first telegraph was owned by an Armenian. Also they were famous in medicine sector, often appearing as doctors and pharmacists.⁸⁴

Apart from a strong middle class, there was a class of prosperous and influential class of Armenians – amiras, who made considerable contributions into the empire. During the 19th century, the Armenian community of Istanbul became the economic, political and cultural center of Armenians throughout the Ottoman Empire.⁸⁵ At the beginning of the century, the population of Istanbul was counting approximately 150,000 Armenians.⁸⁶ In 1844 their number reached to 220.000.⁸⁷ Due to the favourable business conditions in Istanbul, the Armenian merchants from the different parts of

⁸² Christopher J. Walker, *Armenia, The Survival of a Nation*, Revised Second Edition, Routledge, 1991, p. 94.

⁸³Ibid, p. 95.

⁸⁴See Mesrob K. Krikorian, *Armenians in the Service of the Ottoman Empire, 1860–1908*, Boston, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978.

⁸⁵On the history of Istanbul see, Avedis Berberian, *Patmutyun Hayotc' Eskesiali 1772 ame P'erkch'in Minchev Hamn 1860 Handerc Karevor Teghekut'iamb ew Zamanakagrut'iamb Erewelilratc'*, (*History of Armenians, beginning from in the year 1772 of four Saviour until the year 1860 with important information and chronology of significant events*), Istanbul, published by Boghos Kirishidjian, 1871. See also Siruni (Hagop Choleolean), *Polis ew ir Dere*, (Polis and its role), 4 Vols. Beirut, Press of the Catholicosate of Cilicia, 1965-1988.

⁸⁶Mermerian, *Masnakan Patmut'iwn Hay Metsatuneru*, (Partial history of wealthy Armenian families), p. 49.

⁸⁷Ma Ubicini, *Letters on Turkey*, London, John Murray, 1856, Vol. I, p.24.

Empire were settling there, which increased the Armenian population in the second half of 19th century to 250.000 and 300.000.⁸⁸

From 1757 to 1880, with the exception of a thirteen-year-gap, the Armenian family of Duzian (or Duzoglu) held the position of superintendent of the Ottoman mint, moreover, the records were kept in Armenian language.⁸⁹

The few factories which were established before the Crimean War almost all were funded by Armenian capital. The most prominent family in this sector was Dadian family. The Dadian family had monopoly on the empire's gunpowder industry for more than a century.⁹⁰ Moreover, they operated industrial complexes, mines, ranches, and farms during the formative stages of the Imperial projects such as the Herek and Izmit ventures. The Dadians were also well prominent in the Ottoman banking system and industry.⁹¹

Another prominent Armenian merchant Krikor Chatalian, whose private papers were recently analysed, was one of the most influential merchants of Sirvhisar⁹² (Ankara) at the end of 19th century trading in wool and cloths.⁹³ In the private transactions with other merchants Chatalian used the Ottoman language for communication, whereas in his private notes he was using the Armeno-Turkish.⁹⁴ Another prominent Armenian family Kavafian built and managed a shipyard in Constantinople.⁹⁵

⁸⁸ Arevelian Mamoul, 1878, p.283, cited by Ghazarian, *Arevmtahayeri Sots'ial-Tntesakan ew K'aghak'akan kats'utiwnere 1800-1870 t't'*, p.168, in Bedross Der Matossian", 39, 2007, pp.147-174.

⁸⁹ Der Matossian, pp.147-174.

⁹⁰ Der Matossian, *The Armenian Commercial Houses And Merchant Networks in the 19th Century Ottoman Empire*, pp.147-174.

⁹¹ On the history of the Dadian family see Eprem Boghosian, (Dadian family), Vienna, Mkhitarian Press, 1968.

⁹² On the history of the Armenians of Sirvhisar in the 19th century see Krikor Der Hovannesian, Hayots' Teghagrakan, Patmakan ew Azgagrakan [History of the Armenians in Sirvhisar: Topographic, Historical and Ethnographic], Beirut, Meshag Publication, 1965.

⁹³ Chatalian brothers used to buy sheepflocks in large quantities from the villagers. They used to make a deal with the villagers whereby they would obtain the wool from the sheep and the villagers would obtain the milk. The Armenian phrase for this was "*Burdeintsi kat' e k'ez'i*" (*the wool is mine and the milk is yours*), quoted in Bedross Der Matossian, "The Armenian Commercial Houses and Merchant Networks in the 19th century Ottoman Empire", pp. 147-174.

⁹⁴ Armeno-Turkish was the Ottoman language written in Armenian letters. The Greeks had a similar language which was called Karamanli (Ottoman in Greek Letters); Der Matossian, "The Armenian Commercial Houses and Merchant Networks in the 19th century Ottoman Empire", pp. 147-1

⁹⁵ Hagop Barsoumian, "Economic Role of the Armenian Amira Class in the Ottoman Empire," *Armenian Review*, Vol. 31, March 1979, pp. 312-313.

However, due to the impact of the Tanzimat reforms on the one hand, and the transformations of power within the Armenian community, the influence of amiras diminished after the second part of 19th century, being replaced by rising Armenian bourgeoisie represented by the middle class, the Armenian esnafs (artisans), and Armenian merchants, who were dissatisfied with the power monopoly by amiras. The Crimean War (1854-1856) brought large economic success to the Armenian esnafs, and by 1860 there were a dozen of Armenian manufacturing houses in Istanbul, Izmir, Bursa, Edirne, Izmit, and Kayseri.⁹⁶ Armenian merchants expanded their businesses to the European countries, establishing branches in London, Manchester, Livorno, and Paris. Also they were importing goods to Ottoman Empire from Italy and France, selling a portion of the goods in country and the rest were re-exported to Iran, Arabia, and Russia.⁹⁷ The good connections of Armenian merchants from Ottoman Empire with the Armenian merchantry in abroad played a big role in the development of Armenian bourgeoisie and flow of foreign capital.

Besides being successful merchants and occupying important place in the Empire, the Armenians had considerable cultural contribution to the Ottoman heritage. Especially they were distinguishing in theatre and architecture.

The most outstanding contribution to the Ottoman architecture belongs to the Balian dynasty, and the most prominent member was Krikor Balian (1764-1831), who was awarded the title 'architect of the Empire'.⁹⁸ Among Balian family's masterpieces can be mentioned the Nusretiye mosque in Top-khana district, Dolmabahche palace (1853), as well as one factories belongs to Dadrian family, Chiragan palace (1874), Beylerbey palace on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus can be mentioned.⁹⁹

The pioneer of theatre in Turkey was an Armenian, Hagop Vartovian, a man, truly dedicated to his mission, known among Turks as 'Gullu Agop'.¹⁰⁰ From 1868 to 1882 Hagop owned a company based in Gedikpasha. The most notable among his

⁹⁶ On the names of the Armenian merchants and their activities, see Haroutiun Mermerian, T'r'k' hayotc' Hin Vacharakanut'iwn ew Vacharakank', 1740-1890, pp. 66-68, quoted in Bedross Der Matossian, "The Armenian Commercial Houses and Merchant Networks in the 19th century Ottoman Empire, pp. 147-174.

⁹⁷ Bedross Der Matossian, "The Armenian Commercial Houses and Merchant Networks in the 19th century Ottoman Empire", p. 151.

⁹⁸ Christopher J. Walker, *Armenia, The Survival of a Nation*, Revised Second Edition, Routledge, 1991, p. 98.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ See Ali Budak, "The Contributions of The Armenians Over The Constitution of A New Social Life And Literature in 19th Century," *Ozean Journal of Social Sciences* 1(1), 2008.

productions was Namik Kemal's *Vatan yahut Silistre* (Fatherland of Silistria; 1873), a historical play based on an episode from the Crimean War. The play was colored with Ottoman patriotism, and received such a high appreciation and enthusiasm that the government sent the author into provincial exile.¹⁰¹ Vartanian's venture led to the creation of theatre-going public, which included Muslim women, as well as establishment of a stage-craft tradition. Due to the repressive political climate during Abdul Hamid era the theatre was closed, eventually moving to Tbilisi (Tiflis), thereby strengthening the Tiflis Armenian theatre, which operates to this day, now named after Stepan Shahumian.¹⁰²

The prosperous Armenian class, who sometimes had close ties with the Sublime Porte, in fact had little or no contact with their fellow nationals in the eastern part of Empire, calling the latter ones *kavaragan*, or provincial. It is important to mention that despite the fact, the rich Armenians in Constantinople and Smyrna were enjoying prosperity and relative freedom, the Armenian provincial class, living in the eastern provinces of the empire, was in a state of difficult political and economic oppression by nomadic Kurd and Circassian tribes, as well as local Turkish authorities.

2.3. FROM THE ARMENIAN QUESTION TO ARMENIAN DESTRUCTION

"If a man killed in a Paris, it is an issue; ten thousand throats are cut in the East, and it is a question".

Victor Hugo

By the end of the 19th century the crisis of the semi-feudal system intensified in the Ottoman Empire that led to the rise of antagonistic contradictions. These conditions contributed to the emergence of nationalist movements of the non-Turkish nations of Ottoman Empire, which sought to break away from the empire and created the foundation for the establishment of independent national states. That movement appeared as a result of stormy social and national development.

In the second half of the 19th century the conditions of Armenian peasantry grew increasingly worse due to the increase of tax burden and the exacerbation of relations with the Kurds, who started to pass from nomadic to sedentary life. Due to the lack of unoccupied lands in the Armenians populated provinces, the Kurds started to displace

¹⁰¹Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, London, 1961, p.15

¹⁰²Walker, *Armenia, The Survival of a Nation*, p. 98.

the local Armenian population and expropriate their lands.¹⁰³ The Ottoman government, willing to assert control over militant and semi-independent Kurdish tribes, strongly encouraged that process, implanting the Kurdish feudalism.¹⁰⁴

The difficult conditions in Turkish Armenia formed the basis of Armenian Question, which emerged after the Russian-Turkish War of 1877-78, which was based on the various reports, proving the oppressive conditions of life for local Armenians, and fixing the numerous cases of injustice implemented towards them. The aspirations of the Russian Empire to seize the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits were covered by slogans of the struggle for the liberation of Christians from the Muslim yoke.¹⁰⁵ According to Article 16 of the San-Stefano agreement, the Sublime Porte agreed to start the reforms in Armenian provinces, along with the presence of Russian army in the region prior to the reforms' final implementation.

That attempt of Russia to increase influence over Turkey was thwarted by her main rival in the Middle East – England. The British prime-minister Disraeli during the Berlin Congress in 1878 managed to insist on the replacement of Article 16 to Article 61.¹⁰⁶

The new article confirmed the Ottoman Empire's obligation to implement reforms in the Turkish Armenia, but the control over the reforms passed from solely Russia to all six Great European Powers, participants of the Berlin Congress. Both the Eastern Question, and constituting the Armenian Question were the means in the hands of European Powers to interfere Turkey's domestic affairs, providing own economic and political interests in the region.¹⁰⁷

The resolution, adopted at the Berlin Congress, created hopes among the Armenian masses. Armenians from Turkish Armenia used to cross the Russian border in spring time, in order to work during the summer and earn some money and return back to

¹⁰³O. Y. Shmidt, "Armenian Question", article in Great Soviet Encyclopedia, Moscow, 1926, re-published in Gurko-Kryazhin, Baku, 1990 (in Russian).

¹⁰⁴Stephan Astourian, "On the Genealogy of the Armenian-Turkish Conflict, Sultan Abdülhamid, and the Armenian Massacres," *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* 21 (2012), pp. 172-84.

¹⁰⁵Shmidt, "Armenian Question".

¹⁰⁶Indifference to the fate of the Armenians and negligence to their reforms was evident even from the artificial replacement of the numbers 16 to 61 of the Armenian Question.

¹⁰⁷Meri Qochar, *Armenian-Turkish Social-Political relations and Armenian Question in the end of 19 – beginning 20th centuries*, Yerevan State University, Yerevan, 1988, p.17.

their families in winter. Those trips to Russian Armenia opened their eyes to the striking difference in the conditions between two communities.¹⁰⁸

The political terror in the country led to the emergence of various oppositional parties, which were forbidden in Ottoman Empire, whereupon the parties expanded their activities from Europe. Since 1890, first the party Hnchak (Bell), then the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF or Dashnaktsutyun) started their activities in the territory of the Ottoman Empire. Each of these organizations, by trying to discredit one another, vied to lead the national liberation struggle of the Turkish Armenians.¹⁰⁹ Armenian nationalism, first appearing in a form of a cultural awakening, later was transformed into armed revolutionary struggle, as a reaction to Abdul Hamid's despotism.¹¹⁰ The Armenian intellectuals, most of them obtaining education in Europe, were heavily influenced by the European Enlightenment, various French and Russian revolutionary thoughts. Moreover, it is important to mention that the Armenian revolutionaries were acting in both parts of Armenia– Turkish Armenia and Russian Armenia. In Russian Armenia Tsar, Nikolai II, fearing the rise of revolutionary struggle, not less than Abdul Hamid, was arresting the oppositional parties, and Dashnakcutyun was also among them, that shows the existence of political persecution on Dashnaks both in Turkey and Russia. The arrests of ARF were made throughout the Caucasus.¹¹¹

Along with the Armenian parties struggling for the reforms and their rights, the Turkish and other intellectuals were also pursuing their path for changes. The Tanzimat reforms contributed to the further development of the Turkish national consciousness, which tried to stand out from the Arab-Persian cultural community.¹¹² The leader of the group, Namik Kemal, was inspired by the Italian society Carbonari.¹¹³ The members of

¹⁰⁸ John Kirakosian, *Young Turks before the court of history*, Hayastan Publishing House, Yerevan, 1986, p. 7.

¹⁰⁹ See Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement: The Development of Armenian Political Parties through the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963); Gerard Libaridian, "What Was Revolutionary about Armenian Revolutionary Parties in the Ottoman Empire," in *A Question of Genocide*, eds. Göçek, Suny, and Naimark, pp. 82-112.

¹¹⁰ See Fatma Müge Göçek, *Rise of the Bourgeoisie, Demise of Empire: Ottoman Westernization and Social Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 134-137. On Armenian identity, see Razmik Panossian, *The Armenians: From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), in *Ibid*, p.117.

¹¹¹ L. I. Karapetyan, *From the history of Armenian political parties at Kuban in the beginning of XX century*, (in the Russian language), p. 91.

¹¹² On the Tanzimat reforms, see Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963).

¹¹³ Peter Balakian, *Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America's Response*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2003),, p.135.

the group called themselves as Jeunes Turques or Yeni Osmanlilar (Young Ottomans).¹¹⁴

Young Turks, being deprived from the opportunity of acting legally, concentrated their activities in France, where some of the members were living in exile. The party published its own newspaper, Hurriyet (Freedom), severely criticizing Abdul Hamid's regime and his rule. The Young Turks put into circulation the notion of the *Turks as dominant nation*, using it constantly in their articles.

By the late 19th century the intensification of the national struggle for liberal reforms in the Balkans on the one hand, and in historical Armenia on the other, along with other Turkish oppositional groups, sowed the seeds of nationalist chauvinism, paranoia, and mutual hostilities.¹¹⁵ As a result, in 1896 the government organized wholesale massacres in the Sasun region. The infamous Hamidiye regiments, recruited from the Kurds and named after the sultan, officially were organized to protect the Ottoman-Russian border, but in fact they were recruited to eliminate the local Armenian population. Sasun massacres took away the lives of thousands of inhabitants, 24 villages were destroyed.¹¹⁶

The difficult conditions of Turkish Armenians contributed further to Dashnak-Young Turk cooperation, which was based on the common interests of protesting the existing political regime and protecting the rights of their communities.¹¹⁷

In Paris, in 1907, with the Dashnaks' initiative, the Congress of all opposition parties took place, where the plan of state coup was developed.¹¹⁸ The Congress urged all nations of Ottoman Empire to raise against the the ruling regime.

As the result of the coup in 1908, the Young Turks came to power, forcing Abdul Hamid from the throne. In the general atmosphere of enthusiasm and excitement the Armenians were also expressing the joy of the liberation from Abdul Hamid's repressive regime. In Erzurum, a huge demonstration was held, which was attended by both the Armenians and Turks. All political prisoners were released from the local

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, p.20, in Walker, *Armenia, The Survival of a Nation*, 1991.

¹¹⁶Smidt, "Armenian Question", p. 9.

¹¹⁷Walker, *Armenia, The Survival of a Nation*, p. 98.

¹¹⁸Smidt, "Armenian Question", p. 9.

prison, and the building was destroyed by demonstrators.¹¹⁹ Similar demonstrations took place in Van, Erzincan, and many other cities.

In the end of July 1908, a new manifestation was organized in Istanbul. Here is how one Istanbul newspaper described the event:

*"It was an amazing and unprecedented procession... the people occupied the large avenue, which stretches from the church of the Holy Trinity to Taksim Park. Armenians and Turks together walked along the avenue with the military band, holding the flags and shouting the slogans: 'Long live the Constitution!', 'Long live freedom!', 'Long live fraternity!', 'Long live the army!'".*¹²⁰

For a certain period after the Young Turks' rise to power, the concept of peaceful coexistence and common Ottomanism identity was strongly propagated by the government, who claimed that: *"Henceforth we are all brothers; there are no longer Bulgars, Greeks, Romanians, Jews, Moslems; under the same blue sky we glory in being Ottoman!"*.¹²¹

In September the 1908 Dashnaks published their program of activities at the upcoming parliamentary elections. In the document they claimed:

"We are sure of the fact, that for such a multinational country as the Ottoman Empire, the best form of political organization is federal decentralization, where all parts of the Empire, having economic-geographical and ethnographically specific identity, will receive the internal administrative and legislative autonomy, which would enhance and strengthen the state system in general".¹²²

Turkish Armenia was perceived as an integral part of the Ottoman Empire.¹²³ This program is very important in terms of proving that the aim of the political parties before Young Turks' policy change was democratic reform, and not partition. Moreover, Young Turk authorities allowed their Armenian allies to invite Armenian revolutionaries from Russia to establish themselves in Constantinople and organize their plots against the Tsarist regime from there.¹²⁴ As it would turn out later, Young Turks took that step with

¹¹⁹Qochar, *Armenian-Turkish Social-Political relations*, pp. 17, 155.

¹²⁰Byuzandion, N3, 1908, in Meri Qochar, *Armenian-Turkish Social-Political relations*, p.155.

¹²¹G.S. Graber, *Caravans to oblivion: the Armenian Genocide 1915*, New York, Wiley, 1996, in Chrystan Maria Skefos, "The Armenian Genocide and WWI," *The Concord Review*, 2002, p.29.

¹²²Qochar, *Armenian-Turkish Social-Political relations*, p.159.

¹²³Ibid., p.160.

¹²⁴Thomas de Waal, *Great Catastrophe. Armenians and Turks in the shadow of Genocide* (Oxford University Press, New York, 2015), p. 29.

further plan to use the Russian Dashnaks in order to organize disturbances across the Russian frontier.¹²⁵

In the Armenian political cycles the only party that expressed mistrust to the Young Turks slogans was the Hnchak Party. The Hnchakists established links with Albanian leaders, who had come to a mutual agreement with Young Arabs, Syrians, and held a joint meeting with them. They became a dangerous force, an obstacle to the implementation of the Young Turk policy.¹²⁶

The № 3 edition of the newspaper Hnchak in 1913 wrote:

"The Turkish nationalists, who hold the leadership of the country today, will not hesitate to ruthlessly exterminate the Armenians, seeing it as the implementation of its historic goal. And this time even more violently than in the years of 1895-1896, with more force than it was during the massacre in Adana."¹²⁷ In the fall of 1913 the Young Turks banned the distribution of Hnchak in Turkey.¹²⁸ In May 1914, the Armenian Hnchakist Paramaz wrote, that "Armenian fedayi [were] mistake. Whenthey put down their arms, believing the assurances of the constitution and the Young Turk leaders".¹²⁹

In 1909 in the Cilician town of Adana a new anti-Armenian bloodshet erupted, during which more than 20.000 Armenians were killed. The new government failed to punish the perpetrators, what increased the antagonism between the Young Turks and ARF.

In 1912 and 1913 the Ottoman Empire experienced a new wave of political problems in two Balkan wars, which registered as a deep shock for the Young Turk government, as they lost regions that had constituted core parts of the Empire for 500 years.¹³⁰ Thousands of Muslim refugees – muhajirs – resettled in the Anatolian part of Turkey,¹³¹

¹²⁵On July 23 – August 2nd, 1914, in Erzerum, the Dashnaks held Eight General Congress, where the representative from Ittehad Party, BehaeddinShakir, the chief of the Teshkilat-i Mahsusa (Special Organization), sought guarantees from the Dashnaks, that, in case if Turkey entered the war, the Dashnaks would mobilize Armenians in the Caucasus to rebel against Russia and thereby facilliate Turkish advances across the Russian frontier. The Dashnaks rejected this strategy, instead proposing Turkey to stay neutral. Quoted in Richard H. Hovannisian, "The Historical Dimensions of the Armenian Question, 1878-1923", in *The Armenian Genocide in Perspective*, ed. Richard G. Hovhannisian (New Brunswick, Transaction Books, 1986).

¹²⁶John Kirakosian, *Young Turks before the court of history*, Hayastan Publishing House, Yerevan, 1986, p. 96.

¹²⁷Kirakosian, *Young Turks before the court of history*, p.97.

¹²⁸Ibid.

¹²⁹Article *The claims of an Armenian*, published by Paramaz in *Hnchak* newspaper, in May 1914, in John Kirakosian, *Young Turks before the court of history*, Hayastan Publishing House, Yerevan, 1986, p.98.

¹³⁰De Waal, *Great Catastrophe*, p.29.

¹³¹Ibid.

which affected the life of local Armenians, already suffering from Kurd and Circassian depredations.

In January of 1913 the control over the Empire passed to the three most radical Young Turks – “Three Pashas” – Enver, Cemal and Talat.¹³² When in the end of June 1914, WWI erupted, Turkey first declared its neutrality.

In October 1914, the Ottoman Empire entered the war, in alliance with Germany. As later one of the members of triumvirate Cemal Pasha would write in his memoirs, *“We declared ourselves neutral only to win time and were waiting for the moment until our mobilization will be completed and we will be able to participate in the war”*.¹³³

The order of Armenian deportations was issued in February 1915 by Talat Pasha, the Minister of Interior. On the 24 of April, 1915, around 250 Armenian intellectuals in Istanbul were arrested and deported from the Haydar Pasha Train station to the interior of Anatolia, and later most of them were murdered.¹³⁴

Armenian scholar Raymond Kevorkian provides a great deal of information on how the arrests were implemented. In the beginning of May the secret information arrived at the Patriarchate from the provinces, where it was mentioned that the large scale arrests already have been started.¹³⁵ Krikor Zohrab, the Armenian member of Parliament, who wasn't deported yet (until the 2nd of June) wondered, “What date has been reserved for the massacre of the Armenians?”¹³⁶

Contrary to the government's claim, that only Armenians suspected of disloyalty were arrested, the correspondent of the major German Newspaper Kölnische Zeitung, in a confidential report mentioned the procedure of Armenians liquidation from Istanbul, noting that:

“The most harmless people are being deported in a very systematic way, such as the two care-takers of my household; they just disappeared after being taken in custody... I have authentic information that the arrests are being carried out absolutely at random. The cautious procedure is due to the presence of

¹³²Ibid, p.30.

¹³³See Cemal Pasha, *Memoirs 1913-1919*, Tbilisi, 1923, pp. 101-102.

¹³⁴Krikoris Balakian wrote the most detailed and reliable account of the April 24 arrests in Constantinople. One of the 250 arrested on that night, he was sent to prison in the interior, escaped, and spent the next four years outwitting CUP officials. His memoir, *Armenian Golgotha*, is a vivid account of those four years. Quoted in Peter Balakian, *Burning Tigris*.

¹³⁵Raymond Kevorkian, *The Armenian Genocide: A complete history*, I.B. Tauris, New York, 2006, p. 254.

¹³⁶Zohrab, *Complete works*, op. cit., IV, Diary, 1 May 1915, p. 432, in Raymond Kevorkian, *The Armenian Genocide: A complete history*, I.B. Tauris, New York, 2006, p. 254.

*ambassadors; once the measures in the interior are brought to a completion, then it will be the turn of the capital. This is the general impression among the pro-Turkish Germans".*¹³⁷

The order to arrest the Armenian intellectuals was followed by another order of ordinary citizens deportations. The deportation decision touched the Armenians from all over the Empire – cities in Bursa, Eskişehir, Konya, Istanbul, and others.¹³⁸ The Great Catastrophe of the Armenian people had begun.

One month later, Britain, France, and Russia condemned the Ottoman government regarding its policies towards the Armenian population, for the first time using the formulation *crime against humanity*.¹³⁹ In their declaration to the Ottoman Empire they “warned, in view of these new crimes of Turkey against humanity and civilization, the allied Governments announce publicly to the Supreme Porte that they will hold personally responsible for these crimes all members of the Ottoman Government and those of their agents who are implicated in such massacres”.¹⁴⁰

This statement escalated the deportations of Armenians. As Winston Churchill famously wrote:

*“In 1915 the Turkish government began and ruthlessly carried out the infamous general massacres and deportation of Armenians in Asia Minor... the clearance of the race from Asia Minor was about as complete as such an act, on a scale so great, could well be... There is no reasonable doubt that this crime was planned and executed for political reasons. The opportunity presented itself for clearing Turkish soil of a Christian race opposed to all Turkish ambitions, cherishing national ambitions that could be satisfied only at the expense of Turkey, and planted geographically between Turkish and Caucasian Moslems”.*¹⁴¹

Department II of the Turkish War Office operated a secret propaganda campaign against the Armenians to label them ‘as national traitors’ in order to take the responsibility for the elimination plan from the Ottoman government.¹⁴² One of the Turkish naval captains, attached to the office, wrote:

¹³⁷The correspondent was Ersnt von Nahmer, whose two reports, September 5 and 6, comprise 22 pages. The quotations are from pages 3-4, in Vahakn Dadrian, *The History of Armenian Genocide*, Berghahn Books, Oxford, 1995, p.229.

¹³⁸Dadrian, *The History of Armenian Genocide*, , p. 219.

¹³⁹De Waal, *Great Catastrophe*, p.32.

¹⁴⁰Fuat Dündar, *Crime of Numbers: The Role of Statistics in the Armenian Question (1878-1918)*, New Brunswick, Transaction, 2010, p. 283, quoted in Thomas de Waal, *Great Catastrophe. Armenians and Turks in the shadow of Genocide*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2015, pp. 32-33.

¹⁴¹W. Churchill, *The World Crisis: The Aftermath*, London, 1929, p.405, cited in Dadrian, *The history of Armenian Genocide*, p.220.

¹⁴²Ibid, p.220.

"In order to justify this enormous crime (bu muazzam cinayet) the requisite propaganda material was thoroughly prepared in Istanbul. It included such statements as: 'the Armenians are in league with the enemy. They will launch an uprising in Istanbul, kill of the Ittihadists leaders and will succeed in opening up the Straits (to enable the Allied fleets to capture İstanbul).' These vile and malicious incitements could persuade only people who were not even able to feel the pangs of their own hunger".¹⁴³

On the next day of Armenian arrests in Istanbul, on the 25th of April, 1915, the famous Gallipoli campaign started. The official Turkish historiography never speaks about this very significant fact – that the Armenian soldiers were fighting in the Ottoman army during Gallipoli.¹⁴⁴ One of the most prominent figures of that campaign was an Armenian captain Sarkis Torossian, who fought in the Gallipoli campaign and was the first person to sink a British battleship.¹⁴⁵ For the successful deeds in the Ottoman army captain Torossian was awarded with the Osmanlı Devleti harp madalyası (Ottoman State War Medal) by Enver Pasha. His long service in the army and loyalty did not save Torossian's family from the death – his father Ohannes and mother Vartuhi were murdered, and only his sister Bayzar survived.¹⁴⁶

The fate of other Ottoman Armenians was not different. Michael Mann concludes that "only about 10 per cent of the Armenians living in Turkey in 1914 remained in the country in 1922 – the most successful murderous cleansing achieved in the 20th century".¹⁴⁷ As Talat Pasha told Ambassador Morgenthau:

It is no use of you to argue, we have already disposed of three quarters of the Armenians; there are none at all left in Bitlis, Van and Erzeroum. The hatred between the Turks and Armenians is now so intense that we have got to finish with them. If we don't, they will plan their revenge.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³A. Refik (Altınay), *İki Komite İki Kital*, (Two Committees and Two massacres), Istanbul, 1919, p. 40, cited in Dadrian, *The history of Armenian Genocide*, p.220.

¹⁴⁴According to author Ayhan Aktar, who edited and published Torossian's memoirs into Turkish, the Turkish official history erased Torossian's name from records and ignored his successes in the Gallipoli Campaign due to his Armenian origin. See Ayhan Aktar's article "Yüzbaşı Torosyan'ın hikâyesi (The story of captain Torosyan)," *Taraf*, 22 of March, 2010, Available at <http://arsiv.taraf.com.tr/yazilar/ayhan-aktar/yuzbasi-torosyanin-hikayesi/10566/>

¹⁴⁵In his memoirs, Sarkis Torossian also claimed that he sunk a total of three English battlecruisers in the fighting between February 19 and March 18 as well as one submarine in April, which might possibly have been, according to him, the HMS E15 of the British Royal Navy. See Torossian, Sarkis (1947). *From Dardanelles to Palestine: A True Story of Five Battle Fronts of Turkey and her Allies and a Harem Romance*. Boston: Meador Pub. Co. p. 219.

¹⁴⁶"Çanakkale'nin unutturulan kahramanı Sarkis Torosyan". Agos (in Turkish). August 10, 2012. Retrieved 3 January 2013. Available at <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/2179/canakkalenin-unutturulan-kahramani-sarkis-torosyan>

¹⁴⁷Michael Mann, *The Dark side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing*, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 140, cited in De Waal, *Great Catastrophe*, p. 35.

¹⁴⁸Henry Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* (New York, Cosimo Classics, 2010), pp. 231-232.

Less known fact is that besides being massacred in the death marches, or dying of starvation in the Syrian deserts, in 1915-1916, with the consent and agreement of the directorship, the Turkish doctors experimented on Armenians in the hospitals in Erznka city. A Turkish doctor, being an eye-witness of that horrible event, shared his experiences, by telling that:

"In 1915, many Armenians, hidden in Erznka, were caught and placed in the central hospital of the city, with aim to hold over them bacteriological tests, which are usually carried out on guinea pigs and rabbits".¹⁴⁹

The members of the Ittihad triumvirate, especially Talat Pasha and Enver Pasha, kept notes of the Armenian population statistics during the war, as a part of what is now described as *demographic engineering*.¹⁵⁰ The reason to speak about the controlled ethnic engineering was Talat's diary dating to 1917, published by the Turkish historian Murat Bardakçi, after keeping it for 20 years. The book contained detailed information of the numbers of Armenian population (he puts it all at 1.5 million, excluding Protestant Armenians) and the numbers of deported Armenians. Recently, Murat Bardakçi accused the former Head of Turkish History Society, Yusuf Halaçoğlu, in hiding very important documents on the 1915-1917 events regarding the Armenians, adding that those documents currently are missing from the institute.¹⁵¹

Ara Sarafian, who later analysed Murat's Black Book, mentioned the vast difference and discrepancy between Talaat's record of the number of Armenians, who were deported in 1915, and the far smaller number still alive in 1917:

"...As his 1917 report shows, although over a million Armenians were deported, around 60.000 were counted in the resettlement zone outlined by the Ottoman government, another 50.000 were found dispersed along deportation routes, and around 100.000 were within their homes provinces. Practically all of these survivors in the provinces were treated as captives and pressured to assimilate as Muslim-Turks".¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ *Les persecutions contre les medecins armeniens*, Pendant la guerre generale en Turquie, Constantinople, 1919, p.24, in Nersisyan M.G and Sahakyan R.G, *The Genocide of the Armenians in Ottoman Empire: the collection of documents and materials*, 2nd additional edition, Hayastan Publisher, Yerevan, 1982.

¹⁵⁰ See Fuat Dündar, *Crime of Numbers: The role of Statistics in the Armenian Question (1878-1918)*, New Brunswick, Transaction, 2010,

¹⁵¹ See 1915'in belgesini sümen altı etmişler, AGOS Newspaper, 17 December 2014 <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/9974/1915-in-belgesini-sumen-alti-etmisler>

¹⁵² Ara Sarafian, *Talaat Pasha's Report on the Armenian Genocide*, London, Gomidas Institute, 2011, p.10.

German ambassador Metternich called Talaat Pasha the ‘*soul of the Armenian persecution*’.¹⁵³ The vast majority of documents and testimonies prove the information that Talaat Pasha was the main architect of the destruction of the Armenians.¹⁵⁴

Apart from the enormous number of the records of the annihilation of the Armenians, there are also records of the heroism of brave people, who despite the threat to the life, resisted the deportations order, trying to protect the Armenians.¹⁵⁵ The German council in Erzurum Scheubner-Richter in his report to Ambassador Wangenheim on 28th of July 1915 wrote:

*“...Supporters of local Mayor Tihsin Bey frankly admit that the ultimate goal of their activities is the destruction of the Armenians in Turkey. Since this objective can not be achieved by using different kinds of beatings, they are hoping that deprivation during long way to Mesopotamia and unusual climate will complete everything. Turkish people strongly disagree with such decision of the Armenian issue and already feel difficult economic needs arising in this part of the country as a result of the expulsion of the Armenians”.*¹⁵⁶

In recent years more Armenian and Turkish academicians started the research on brave Turkish officials, who opposed the deportation order. One of them was the Governor of Aleppo Mehmet Celal Bey, who served as a Governor of Erzurum, Edirne and Izmir in past. He was discharged from the position after he refused to implement the deportation order. The same scenario repeated when he was appointed as Governor of Konya (as it was believed to be dangerous to send him to Istanbul) – Mehmet Celal Bey was dismissed from the post in Konya for his unwillingness to deport the Armenians.¹⁵⁷ Along with Mehmet Celal Bey among the valorous rescues

¹⁵³PA/AA/R 14089, Report by Ambassador Metternich of 7 November 1915, in Taner Akçam, *From Empire to Republic Turkish Nationalism and the Armenian Genocide*, Zed Books, P.174.

¹⁵⁴Taner Akçam, *From Empire to Republic Turkish Nationalism and the Armenian Genocide*, Zed Books, p.174.

¹⁵⁵To read more on the Turks and Kurds, who rescued Armenians, see Burçin Gerçek, Taner Akcam and Ömer Türkoglu, “Report on Turks who reached-out to Armenians in 1915”, The International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, 2015;

George N. Shirinian, Ermenileri kurtaran Müslümanlar: Soykırım günlerinde insanlık arayışı, in *Ermeni Soykırımı'nda Vicdan Ve Sorumluk. Kurtulanlara dair yeni araştırmalar*, Hrant Dink Vakfı Yayınları, İstanbul, Mart, 2015.

¹⁵⁶From the report of the German consul Sheybner-Richter to Ambassador Wangenheim, 28 July, 1915, Ezrum, translated from the German, published in Nersisyan M.G, *Genocide of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire: collection of documents and materials*, 2nd Edition, Hayastan Publishing House, Yerevan, 1982, p.295.

¹⁵⁷Ari Şekeryan, “If you are sending me there to deport the Armenians, I can’t do that”, article at AGOS newspaper, published in April, 2015, Available at <http://www.agos.com.tr/en/article/11243/if-you-are-sending-me-there-to-deport-the-armenians-i-cant-do-that>

can be mentioned Kütahya Governor Faik Ali Ozansoy, originally from Diyarbakir,¹⁵⁸ Ali Batte, a Heverki tribe leader, and Vehbi Efendi, former Diyarbakir and Dersaadet [Istanbul] Post and Telegram Director.¹⁵⁹

The 1915 events were a departure from the previous life for the whole Armenian population. In each city, and each province, the scenario was the same – arrests, imprisonment, tortures, separations of adult males from the rest of the population, deathmarches through the inner deserts of Syria and Iraq.¹⁶⁰ Many of those Armenians who could reach Syria died in typhus-ridden camps.¹⁶¹

The Turkish researcher Uğur Umit Üngör mentions three main phases of radicalization, which eventually developed the Young Turks' plan of Armenian deportations and massacres.¹⁶² The first phase is related to the security perception and the perception of “threat by the invasion of British in the west and Russians in the east”, what worsen the position of the Armenian people, inducing the persecutions and arrests – “in the winter of 1914–15 all Armenian civil Servants were dismissed from their position.”¹⁶³ The second phase was the outcome of exaggerated fear from the Armenian rebellion, which exacerbated when the Allied Powers launched the Gallipoli campaign on the night of 24 April 1915 - that same day that the Armenian elite were arrested. And the third phase is related to the general deportation of remained members of community to the Syrian desert.¹⁶⁴ The most striking and significant feature of 1915 *Medz Yeghern* is that the killings were not implemented towards the specific target group, but to the abstract group of people without any clarification if they had relation to the revolts or

¹⁵⁸Ari Şekeryan, “Since I won’t commit these murders, please accept my resignation!”, article at AGOS newspaper, published in March, 2015, Available at <http://www.agos.com.tr/en/article/11046/since-i-wont-commit-these-murders-please-accept-my-resignation>

¹⁵⁹Burçin Gerçek, “Those who defied orders in Diyarbakir”, article at AGOS newspaper, published in March, 2015, Available at <http://www.agos.com.tr/en/article/10958/those-who-defied-orders-in-diyarbakir>

¹⁶⁰Richard Hovhannisian, *Genocide and independence, 1914–21* (Chapter 5), pp. 92-93, in *The Armenians: Past and present in the making of national identity*, Edmund Herzig and Marina Kurkchian (ed.), Routledge, 2005.

¹⁶¹Elif Shafak, “There is no us and them: Remembering the lost Armenians, 100 years,” *New Statesman*, 24-30 April, 2015, p.48.

¹⁶²Uğur Ümit Üngör, “Orphans, Converts, and Prostitutes: Social. Consequences of War and Persecution in the Ottoman Empire, 1914–1923”, *War in History* 19(2) 173–192, Sage Publications, 2012, p.174.

¹⁶³*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴*Ibid.*

not.¹⁶⁵ As the result of *Medz Yeghern*, “2900 Anatolian Armenian settlements (villages, towns, neighbourhoods) were depopulated and the majority of the inhabitants dead”.¹⁶⁶

Before 1914, there were 2,471 Armenian churches, 427 monasteries, 1,391 schools, 82 cemeteries, and various other institutions in the empire – the overall number of Armenian cultural heritage constituted 4470, the overwhelming part of which became the target for destruction. By 1916, virtually all of Anatolia was erased from Armenian traces.

Medz Yeghern produced innumerable orphans across the Ottoman Empire. In early June 1915, the government issued an order “to collect and place in orphanages Armenian children younger than 10”. On July 12, 1915 the similar decree was issued: “Children likely to become parentless during the transportation of Armenians’ were to be placed in government-run orphanages as soon as possible”. Next year, in April 1916, a new order was issued, according to which the age of children taken to the orphanages was raised to 12 years, and the orphans had to be “raised and assimilated’ (*terbiye ve temsil*) according to Muslim traditions”. Beside the physical and cultural destruction of the Armenian community, the Young Turks policy continued the Turkification policy, what was explicitly seen in the policy of Young Turks government towards the Armenian orphans.

The 1915 *Medz Yeghern* not only erased the Armenian presence from its historical homeland, but also halted the rich artistic productivity of the whole generation. Armenian properties were confiscated, forming the basis for the new-born Turkish national capital, concentrated in the hands of ethnic Turks.¹⁶⁷ Those Armenians who survived 1915 were forced to assimilate into a homogenous Turkish society, being deprived of the opportunity to mourn the greatest tragedy of their history, which left an indelible imprint on the lifestyle and perception on whole subsequent generations.

It will be accurate to state that 1915 is a black watershed in Armenian national history. Existed more than several thousands years Armenian civilization was destroyed, the biological reproductivity of nation decreased, Armenian people became refugees

¹⁶⁵Ibid, p.178.

¹⁶⁶Ibid.

¹⁶⁷To read more on the confiscated Armenian properties during and after 1915, see Uğur Ümit Üngör and Mehmet Polatel, *Confiscation and Destruction: The Young Turk Seizure of Armenian Property*, Continuum International Publishing Group, London and New York, 2011;

“The process of the Armenians’ wealth seizing in Turkey”, Research paper prepared by International Center for Human Development (ICHHD), supported by USAID, Yerevan and Ankara, 2012.

stretching throughout the world and forming later diasporas, which would carry the traumatic imprint of 1915 *Medz Yeghern* until nowadays. *Medz Yeghern* did not only resulted in the physical and cultural destruction of the Armenians in their historical homeland, but also in the forced assimilation, when the Turkification policy targeted the survived remnants of Armenian community, leading to the large numbers of assimilated and converted orphans and other members of Armenian community, mainly women, who were taken as slaves or wives and Islamized. As the result, in just a couple of years, Armenians became a historical rarity in their own homeland. Only by understanding the enormous scale of tragedy the Armenian people experienced in 1915 and after, the impact of *Medz Yeghern* on the consciousness of entire post-1915 Armenian generations can be adequately inferred.

CHAPTER 3.

POST-1915 IN ARMENIA: FROM 1918 DASHNAK ARMENIA, SOVIET ARMENIA and 1991 REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

At the onset of the 19th century, the eastern part of the historical Armenia which was under the Persian rule, after the defeat in the war passed to Russia. Being divided between the Ottoman and Russian Empires, the Armenians were affected by the different social, economic, cultural, and political environments, spoke in different dialects and had different lifestyles.¹⁶⁸ Yet, despite the existing differences, divided by border Armenians from both sides of the homeland were attached to the common nationality and common destiny. The Armenian intellectuals in Russia were supporting through their writings of fellow brothers' struggle against the oppressive regime to protect their families, properties and goods.¹⁶⁹ Armenians both in Russia, and Turkey were experiencing the rise of national feelings and awakening, first expressed the literature, and later transforming the cultural awakening into the political struggle for the rights, by establishing political oppositional movements.

Similar to their compatriots in Ottoman Empire, the Armenians in the Russian Empire were playing a leading role in the economic, professional and administrative life of areas not only in Armenian Plateau, but also out of its borders - in the 19th century the Armenian mercantile class of traders and craftsmen were leading the economic sphere in two main cities of the region – Tbilisi and Baku.¹⁷⁰

Since the beginning of 20th century the Russian Empire champions Ottoman Armenians efforts to implement the reforms plan into the Armenian vilayets, securing the Armenian population from the Kurdish and Circassian attacks and enhancing their rights. The Russian Armenians were full of optimism, believing that finally the western part of *Yerkir*¹⁷¹ will be liberated.¹⁷² On the contrary, the Ottoman Armenians did not share this enthusiastic sentiments, being terrified by the upcoming war, that would put

¹⁶⁸Richard G. Hovannisian, *Genocide and independence, 1914–21*, p.89, in *The Armenians: Past and present in the making of national identity*, edited by Edmund Herzig and Marina Kurkchian, Routledge, 2005.

¹⁶⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰Thomas de Waal, *Great Catastrophe*, p.23.

¹⁷¹*Yerkir* means country in the Armenian language.

¹⁷²Richard G. Hovannisian, *Genocide and independence*, p.90.

the Russian and Ottoman Empires in the opponent camps, transferring the Armenian Plateau into major field of battle.¹⁷³

The *Russian Armenia* was full of hungry, panic-stricken and skinny Armenian refugees, survived from the massacres in Ottoman Empire. As the result of 1915 *Medz Yeghern*, around 300.000 Ottoman Armenians became refugees in the Caucasus across the Russian border. By 1916, only 300.000 refugees had converged in Alexandropol (today's Gyumri) alone,¹⁷⁴ showing the local Russians and Armenians the whole scale of the tragedy. As the local Armenian clergy to Catholicos Gevorg V Seurenycat at Echmiadzin claimed, the region was impoverished and could not provide the basic necessities for sustaining life.¹⁷⁵ The Armenian Apostolic Church in Echmiadzin organized humanitarian aid to the refugees, providing food and shelter to ten of thousands.

On 28th of May 1918, driven by the difficult conditions in Transcaucasia, the Dashnak Armenia had no other choice but to proclaim its independence, following next after Menshevik Georgia on the 26th of May, and Musavatist Azerbaijan on the 27th of May.

The first leader of the independent Armenian Republic Simon Vratsian described the situation in the country:

*"...The conditions were truly horrifying and independence seemed ironic in those conditions. A tiny piece of land, twelve thousand square kilometers, was left in the hands of the Armenians. A poor and semi-destroyed country squeezed between arid mountains, in a forsaken corner of the World, overloaded with migrants and orphans, surrounded by teeth-grinding enemies, looting and ravage, tears and misery, massacre and terror".*¹⁷⁶

In 1918, there were 35 orphanages in Armenia, with total number of 2.250 children, and 27 orphanages were located in Georgia, with 1.950 orphans under their care. According to the data, in 1919 the approximate number of orphans in Armenia

¹⁷³Ibid.

¹⁷⁴Simon Payaslian, *The History of Armenia*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2007, p. 145.

¹⁷⁵Hayastani Hanrapetutyun, Arvesti, Grakanutyanev Mamuli Pastatghteri Petakan Kentronakan Arkhiv [Republic of Armenia, State Central Archives of Art, Literature, and Media], Vaveragr Hay ekeghetsu patmutyan, Girk G: Artak Episkopos Smbatyants: Hogeavor, grakan, patma-banakan gortsuneutyune ev gndakaharutyune, 1876–1937 tt.) [Documents of the History of the Armenian Church, Book 3: Bishop Artak Smbatyants: His Spiritual, Literary, Historical-Philological Works and Execution (1867–1937)], comp. Sandro Behbudyan (Erevan: Anahit, 1999), Doc. 67, pp. 126–30, in Simon Payaslian, *The History of Armenia*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2007, pp. 145-146.

¹⁷⁶Tatul Hakobyan, *Armenians and Turks*, p.21, in Thomas de Waal, *Great Catastrophe*, p.73.

constituted 40.000.¹⁷⁷ In Alexandropol Near East Relief ran “Orphan city”, the largest orphanage in the world, counted around 25.000 Armenian survivors.¹⁷⁸ The poor conditions in the country could not provide maintenance to the refugees. In 1919 Time correspondent compared Armenia with “the land of stalking death”.¹⁷⁹

Armenian refugees were avoiding from taking citizenship, and were concentrating around societies, that carried the names of their native towns in *Turkish Armenia*, cherishing hope to go back to their fathers' land. For instance, the Armenian refugees from Sasoon settled in the Talin region (where they still live), close to the Turkish border, waiting for the day they could return to their homeland. Sad and touching song “Qele lao” is the child of homesick Sassouni Armenians' sentiments.¹⁸⁰

Rememberance and talks of 1915 *Medz Yeghern*, which dramatically changed the flow of Armenian history, inputting the whole nation into deep psychological trauma, were virtually halted with the arrival and establishment of Soviet ideology in Armenia. The iron curtain, that felt later between Soviet Armenia and a NATO member Turkey eventually deprived the Armenian survivors from the opportunity to return their homes. But also the question was – where to return and was there anything left for them in their historical homeland?

3.1. SOVIET ARMENIA AND LOSS OF MEMORY

After the establishment of Soviet rule in Armenia on December 2, 1920, talks about recent 1915 events gradually stopped, and any discussion on nationalist topics was not encouraged.¹⁸¹

The official Soviet propaganda was supporting the only right path for the Soviet citizens which was the strong attachment to the common communist conscious and refuse from

¹⁷⁷Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, 4 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), vol. 2, 302.

¹⁷⁸Thomas de Waal, *Great Catastrophe*, p.76.

¹⁷⁹Ibid, p.75.

¹⁸⁰“*Qele lao, qele ertanq mer ergir, Ertanq mir Van, Ertanq mir Muş u Sasun, Qelelao, qele ertanq mir ergir*” - “Come, my child, let's go to our land, Let's go to our Van, Our Muş and Sasun. Come my child, let's go to our land”.

¹⁸¹As early as August-September 1920, the Soviet government provided assistance in gold and armaments to the Kemalist movement gaining strength in Turkey, which was followed by an attack that caused the fall of the first Republic of Armenia (May 28, 1918–December 2, 1920). On March 16, 1921, a treaty was signed between Soviet Russia and Kemalist Turkey, of “Friendship and Fraternity.” Turkey was seen as progressive and a friendly country of the USSR. In those circumstances, any anti-Turkish manifestations were perceived as anti-state activities.

any kind of national propaganda, which was perceived as unacceptable for the official Soviet ideology.

The Soviet censorship strictly controlled any kind of literature work, and the writers who tried to evoke the bitter events of the collective memories were facing brutal suppression (this was the case in every Soviet Republic). In such suppressed conditions the only way to transmit the memories were the oral stories. As Richard Hovhannisian had mentioned,

*"...even if the officially accepted norms of proletarian literature did not allow the Armenian writers of the 1920s to write about the very recent memory of painful displacement, suffering, and death, the stories of this human ordeal were being told by the survivors within the confines of their family"*¹⁸²

After getting acquainted with the Soviet policy on the national issue, it becomes obvious why Armenian diaspora becomes the only hearth of 1915 memories. In this realm ARF party becomes one of the most significant preservers of Armenian culture and history abroad, creating hundreds of educational centres, keeping the collective memories of 1915 events alive and transmitting that memories to later generations. Thereby, in contrary to the Soviet Armenia, where the survivors of *Medz Yeghern* were deprived from an opportunity to heal their pain and sufferings through the literature and other means due to the Soviet regime, and to the Turkish Armenians, who also were deprived from that opportunity because of Kemalists' regime, the Armenian writers of diaspora began the mass transmittion of 1915 memory through the Art. Analysing the Armenian literature and art works, one can easily observe the deep trauma as the main component of the works.¹⁸³

Given the fact, that the official Soviet doctrine was propagating *scientific atheism*, the role of Armenian church as a spiritual leader and protector of Armenian nation throughout the centuries was limited to the minimum. The Communist Party was percieving the Armenian Apostolic Church as an institute representing the interests of bourgeoisie and cooperating closely with Dashnak party, which was active abroad, with the aim to bring the religious life back to the Republic. Secret Memorandum, prepared on the 10th of August 1923, identified a number of clergy in Iran, among them Bishop Nerses Melik-Tangyan, as cooperating closely with the Dashnakists to

¹⁸² Richard G. Hovhannisian (ed.), *The Armenian Genocide: Cultural and Ethical Legacies*, Transaction Publishers, 2007, p.98.

¹⁸³ More on the reflection of shared experiences of Armenians in Turkey in the art of American Armenians see Nishan Parlakian (ed.), *Contemporary Armenian American Drama, An Anthology of Ancestral Voices*, Columbia University Press, 2001.

undermine the proletarian revolution.¹⁸⁴ In Armenia, the memorandum noted, nearly 1.115 clergy in 850 churches remained under the influence of the Dashnakist ideology and sought to revive Christian life in the republic'.¹⁸⁵ In addition, Memorandum was suggesting that 'the Communist leadership find the means to exploit the existing economic hardships and ideological divisions within the church, systematically and scientifically to challenge the church hierarchy and its followers, and to employ various propaganda strategies through the press and local committees to undermine the church'.¹⁸⁶

For that reason Armenian Church abroad continued to remain the main protector and guarantee for the sustainability of Armenian cultural and historical heritage.¹⁸⁷ The Soviet regime did not eliminate the Armenian Church but instead preferred to impose total control over the Catholicos' seat at Echmiadzin.¹⁸⁸

The Sovietization of Armenia brought dramatic changes to the whole system – not only political, but the cultural and moral values as well became target for the changes according to the official Soviet ideology, which was "national in form, socialist in content". It was impossible to deviate from the official line. The government controlled virtually all publications.¹⁸⁹ Generations were educated with less emphasis on Armenian history, literature, and culture, and obviously, no emphasis on the traumatic experience of their forefathers.¹⁹⁰ The Armenian secret police was not only arresting and liquidating the writers, moreover it was organizing raids to their houses and the archives of Armenian Writer's Union, destroying the manuscripts of the arrested writers.¹⁹¹ Richard Hovhannisian brought as an example the interview conducted in 1988, with Sero Khazdadyan, where he spoke about the total control in Stalin era over people's mind and words: "*It was forbidden to mention the names 'Western Armenia',*

¹⁸⁴ Simon Payaslian, *The History of Armenia*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2007, p. 177.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ The Armenian communities in the Western countries were much easily assimilating and losing the cultural ties, especially the third and fourth generations, experiencing high number of mix marriages. The Armenian Church is unable to prevent those processes, since there is no external barrier in face of Islam, as it is the case in the Middle East countries. William Saroyan has mentioned about that tendencies in his play "The Armenians", where the pastor of Armenian Apostolic Church in California is complaining to the another pastor on the low rate of visits to the Church by the Armenian youth and that most of them do not really speak Armenian language.

¹⁸⁸ Simon Payaslian, *The History of Armenia*, p. 178.

¹⁸⁹ Richard G. Hovannisian (ed.), *The Armenian Genocide*, p.99.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p.101.

*‘Armenian Karabakh’, ‘Armenian Nakhijevan’. They shout our mouth to the word ‘Eghern’ (Event, meaning genocide)’.*¹⁹²

This was the official Soviet approach towards the national issue of Armenians, thereby any talks and remembrance of 1915 *Medz Yeghern* was excluded from the state’s policy. This was the case until the middle of 1950s, in which the death of Stalin characterized the turning point in the perception of official Soviet doctrine and principles.

3.1.1. The Thaw And The First Commemoration

In March 1953 the Soviet Union was shocked by the death of Joseph Stalin. Millions of citizens of the vast Soviet empire gathered in streets to commemorate the death of “the father of the nation”. As R.G. Suny writes,

*“...the worst aspects of political terror ended, and though the monopoly of Communist Party power remained, there was a significantly greater degree of social and cultural freedom in the years that Nikita Khrushchev ruled the Soviet Union”.*¹⁹³

Thaw era brought by Khrushchev led to the revival of Armenian nationalistic literature.

In 1940 the first wave of *Medz Yeghern* survivors from Lebanon and Syria repatriated to Soviet Armenia (among them was the family of the first president of independent Republic of Armenia Levon Ter-Petrosyan). The Armenian repatriates brought to Soviet Armenia the Western Armenian culture. A number of districts were named after the historical cities of Western Armenia such as Kilikia, Malatya, Sebastia, Zeytun. Some of the repatriators went back to their host countries, as the Soviet system with the *Rusification policy* was very alien to them. One of the repatriators in his interview claimed, that “They (*the Soviet Armenians*) became Russians. We are Anatolian”.¹⁹⁴

The contacts with the survivors of 1915 events, whose minds were not indoctrinated with the Soviet propaganda and were not exclusively exposed to the Soviet total censorship, represented big importance for the Soviet Armenians, especially for the writers and artists of the Armenian SSR. Among those who were affected by the

¹⁹²Ibid, p.102.

¹⁹³Ibid, p.120.

¹⁹⁴On the perception of Russia and Soviet Armenia by the Western Armenians see Nona Shahnazarian, “Letters from the Soviet ‘Paradise’: The Image of Russia among the Western Armenian Diaspora”, Center for Independent Sociological Research in St. Petersburg, 2012.

stories of survivors, was a famous Armenian writer named Hovhannes Shiraz,¹⁹⁵. Affected by the minutes of these revelations about the tragic experiences, Shiraz put his emotions on the paper, and that is how one of the Armenian masterpiece *Hayotc Danteakan* (The Armenian Dante-esque) was written.¹⁹⁶

During the Soviet period, the school education program included strictly controlled subjects that had been confirmed by the Soviet censorship, and neither the classes of history, nor the Armenian language classes included the 1915 *Medz Yeghern* in their program. Armenian turkologist Artak Shakaryan shared his memories of Soviet history classes, by telling:

“...The first time I learnt about Armenian genocide when my parents took me to the Genocide memorial, though I was too small and didn’t understand a lot in that time. But the real information I got during the class of Armenian literature at school, when we were learning about Armenian composer Gomidas. Actually, our teacher didn’t speak much about 1915 events, she just mentioned the horrible death of Gomidas, what made almost all of us to sit with wet eyes during the class. During the Soviet period there were not that much talks about the 1915 events, and that were the teachers of Armenian language and literature, that were speaking about that bitter page of history.”¹⁹⁷

Despite the strong Soviet control over the content of education, as another spheres of life, the memories of *Medz Yeghern* were inherent to the collective memory of Armenian people, but suppressed by the ruling regime.

The 50th anniversary of *Medz Yeghern* was different from the previous years. For the first time, since the sovietization of Republic, people mobilized, demanding recognition of 1915 *Medz Yeghern* and reparations. An agreement between the three historical political parties, - the Social-Democratic Hunchaguian Party, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF, Dashnagtsutiun), and the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADLP, Ramgavar), in the diaspora provided the ground for massive rallies in almost all Armenian communities in the world, claiming recognition and reparation for the crime committed by the Ottoman government.¹⁹⁸

The official commemoration of *Medz Yeghern* took place on the 24th of April 1965 in Yerevan Opera House. At the same time thousands of citizens organized mass demonstrations without permission in the streets of Yerevan. Armenian

¹⁹⁵ Richard G. Hovannisian (ed.), *The Armenian Genocide: Cultural and Ethical Legacies*, Transaction Publishers, 2007, p.99.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, p.103.

¹⁹⁷ Interview with Artak Shakaryan, August, 2014.

¹⁹⁸ Khatchik Derghougassian, “The Armenian Genocide on the International Agenda: The case for Diplomatic Engagement”, *Haigazian Armenological Review*, p.231.

nationalism which was suppressed for many years finally broke out. Besides the demands to recognize 1915 events as the systematic state-organized destruction of Armenian people by the Young Turks government, people were addressing the Kremlin demands to return back the lost homeland of Western Armenia – “Don’t let Ararat to remain in hands of Turks!”. The situation became incandescent to the extent that for almost three days it went out of the government’s control and could lead to the military intervention by Moscow to restore the situation and suppress the precedents. Even the involvement of Vazgen I, the Catholicos of All Armenians, did not help people to calm down. In response to the protests in Yerevan Kremlin reacted by removing the head of Armenian Communist Party.

The Communist Party decided partially to satisfy the demands of Soviet Armenians, and in 1976 the *Medz Yeghern* memorial was constructed.¹⁹⁹ Since 1967 and afterwards on each 24 of April thousands of Armenians from diaspora come to Yerevan to commemorate the devastating events of 1915, walking in a long march to the Memorial.

3.2. INDEPENDENT REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA AND ARMENIAN-TURKISH RELATIONS

For Ankara, that did not have direct contacts with Yerevan throughout 70 years, the emergence of independent Armenian state right near its border was an unexpected reality. Turkey was among the first countries to recognize the independence of Armenia,²⁰⁰ though without establishing the diplomatic relations. Nevertheless, both sides showed bids to normalize the relations, and active connection between Turkish and Armenian representatives was established. The first president of Armenia, Levon Ter-Petrosian, realized that young Armenian Republic needed to start the diversification policy for further development, as well as to diminish the influence of Russia. The Armenian government officials supported the no-preconditions policy in

¹⁹⁹ Before the construction of the memorial, the Armenian citizens had been honoring the memory of the victims of the Armenian Genocide by visiting the Pantheon in the Komitas Garden.

²⁰⁰ In 1918, when the Russian Armenia under the rule of Dashnaks proclaimed its independence, Turkey again was the first to recognize it. The reason is to confirm the territorial integrity of Armenia within the existing borders.

normalizing relations with Turkey on all occasions.²⁰¹ As for Turkey, it was an opportunity to gain dividends from establishing good relations in the region, which was remote area for her due to the former communist regime. Turkish side expressed desire to normalize relations with Armenia, however she put some preconditions: Armenia had to contribute to the peaceful resolution of Karabakh conflict; to recognize the legitimacy of Treaty of Kars,²⁰² which is defining the current Armenian-Turkish border; and to put an end to the genocide recognition policy.²⁰³ Armenia's Minister of Foreign Affairs of that time, Vardan Oskanian, claimed that Armenia has never put any preconditions to Turkey for establishing the diplomatic relations. Nevertheless, the current official stance of Armenian Republic is that *the Young Turks policy towards the Ottoman Armenians constituted a genocide*, which had to be internationally recognized.²⁰⁴

When in March 1990 the Armenian Patriarch to Constantinople died during his visit to Armenia, the Turkish ambassador to Moscow Volkan Vural arranged the return of religious leader's body to Turkey, moreover he organized the service for Patriarch. Later in his interview he spoke about the astonishment from the Armenian side regarding his action:

*"They were surprised. They didn't expect that the Turkish ambassador would be present. They were filming me throughout the process, the religious ceremony... And, after the funeral, according to their tradition, they hosted a lunch, and they asked me whether I will attend. I said, "Yes, of course". We went together with some clergy, some people from Armenia and so forth, we had a discussion there, a very friendly conversation. And I said: "Of course the time has come to develop our relations". They said they all agreed that something has to be done. They were very enthusiastic about that. And I said I will visit Armenia on my own initiative, as I can because I was accredited to all the republics. So, that's why I decided to visit Armenia".*²⁰⁵

After long debates and many drafts over the text of Declaration of Independence, finally it was decided not to make reference to the 1921 Treaty of Kars, thereby refusing from the territorial claims to Turkey. However, despite Ter-Petrosian's rejections, the

²⁰¹Armenia has no preconditions to normalize ties with Turkey."International Herald Tribune Newspaper (June 25, 2007) (<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2007/06/25/europe/EU-GEN-Turkey-Armenia.php>), in *Turkey-Armenia dialogue series: Breaking the vicious circle*, Tesev-Caucasus Institute Joint Project, Aybars Görgülü, Sabiha Senyücel Gündoğar, Alexander Iskandaryan, Sergey Minasyan, Tesev Publications, 2009, p.7.

²⁰²Armenia does not recognize the legitimacy of Treaty of Kars, as it was forced by a Soviet Russia as a result of a secret deal with Kemalist Turkey.

²⁰³Rachel Goshgarian, "Breaking the Stalemate: Turkish-Armenian Relations in the 21st Century", *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 4, Winter 2005, p.2.

²⁰⁴Rachel Goshgarian, *"Breaking the Stalemate"*, p.2.

²⁰⁵Interview with Volkan Vural, September 27, 2013, in Thomas de Waal, *Great Catastrophe*, p.201.

Declaration called to recognize the 1915 events as Armenian genocide.²⁰⁶ Since the first days of independent Armenian state up to present days Levon Ter-Petrosyan did not deviate from his position on Armenian state's policy on 1915 events – not to press for genocide recognition.²⁰⁷

Karabakh war, which started as peaceful demonstration and later transformed to the armed conflict, undermined the already fragile post-Soviet South Caucasus. After Armenian forces took control over 20 percent of Azerbaijan's territory, Turkey as the gesture of solidarity with Azerbaijan closed its border with Armenia, just 20 km from Kars, and then-president of Turkey Süleyman Demirel called for a trade embargo for Armenia.²⁰⁸ Since that time the Armenian-Turkish border is closed for trade and tourism, and the only overland route is passing through Georgia and Iran. Karabakh factor is an inseparable factor in the Armenian foreign and domestic policy, it has consensus regarding a common vision of the prospects for Karabakh.²⁰⁹ Armenian-Azerbaijani war interrupted the ongoing process of establishing good neighbouring relations between Armenia and Turkey, cutting the trade relations as well.²¹⁰

3.2.1 Track 2 Diplomacy – TABDC And TARC

It should be briefly mentioned about the first brave attempts to establish the dialogue and cooperation on non-official level, which marked in the activities of two Track II Diplomacy organizations, working on Armenian-Turkish rapprochement. The first organization is the Turkish-Armenian Business Development Council (TABDC),²¹¹ established on May 3 1997, where Kaan Soyak and Aram Vartanyan were named co-chairmen.²¹² TABDC was organized under the framework of the Organization of the

²⁰⁶Tatul Hakobyan, *Armenians and Turks*, p.217-219, in Thomas de Waal, *Great Catastrophe*, p.202.

²⁰⁷ When the President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan published Pan-Armenian Genocide declaration on the eve of Armenian Genocide 100 Anniversary, Levon Ter-Petrosian published his own draft, where he criticized the Pan-Armenian declaration, calling the government to stop put pressure on Turkey. "How many times should be it said that recognition of the Armenian genocide is a matter for the Turks, rather than us, the Armenians?". See *Ter-Petrosian Blasts Armenian Genocide Declaration*, available at <http://www.horizonweekly.ca/news/details/61550>

²⁰⁸Rachel Goshgarian, *Breaking the Stalemate*, p.4.

²⁰⁹Sergey Minasyan, *Internal political dimension of Armenian foreign policy. Karabakh conflict and Armenian-Turkish relations*, Caucasus Institute, Yerevan, May 2012, pp. 2-3.

²¹⁰David L. Phillips, *Diplomatic history: Armenia-Turkey protocols*, Columbia University, New York, 2012, p.15.

²¹¹To see more on TABDC visit the official page <http://www.tabdc.org/>

²¹²David L. Phillips, *Diplomatic history*, p.15.

Black Sea Economic Cooperation, aiming to establish direct trade and cooperation between Turkey and Armenia.²¹³

The Vice Chairman of TABDC Noyan Soyak, who visited Armenia in 1996 shared his impressions from the first visit to Armenia:

*“It was our first experience in Armenia. We all had our past experiences and business in Russia, but Armenia, from the psychological point of view, was different. But we all felt fine and relaxed after the first meetings. They were very much surprised to see our two companies Alyans (Turkish) and Apaven (Armenian) already established relations and cooperating since 1994 in the whole region. Armenian part was very much interested to establish direct contacts with the Turkish business people, as at that time, they did not know each other but always using Georgian middle brokers. So the first important decision was to invite Armenian Business Delegation (Under UMBA Organization) to Istanbul and we arranged a nice reception and 2 days Business Forum for Armenian and Turkish business people to meet and know each other”.*²¹⁴

The second organization happened to be the Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Committee (TARC), which was established on July 2001 in Geneva, with the aim “to promote mutual understanding and good will between Turks and Armenians and to encourage improved relations between Armenia and Turkey”.²¹⁵ Winner of the Nobel Peace Prize and a professor at Boston University, Elie Wiesel, welcomed the initiative commenting on the significance of TARC: “I see this event as a miracle. If Turks and Armenians can meet and talk, that means others can do it, too”.²¹⁶ The Turkish newspaper Milliyet called TARC a “historic breakthrough”.²¹⁷ Six months after the establishment of TARC, Ankara made payment for the visa entry for the Armenian citizens 15 USD, and to get the visa upon arrival.²¹⁸

In November 2001, TARC applied to the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) which is a New York based NGO, that has a reputation for legal expertise on issues of genocide and the reconciliation of deep-rooted conflicts.²¹⁹ ICJT was asked to organize independent legal investigation on the most sensitive topic, which is the cornerstone of Armenian-Turkish hostility and misunderstanding – whether the 1915

²¹³Kyureghian and Heboyan, 2004, p.2, in Ali Valigholizadeh, Yashar Zaki, Kazem Zoghi Barani, “An analytical study of geopolitical consequences of normalization of Turkish–Armenian relations”, *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 4 (2013), 197–206, p. 199.

²¹⁴Interview with Noyan Soyak, June 15, 2015.

²¹⁵Moorad Mooradian, “Reconciliation: A Case Study of the Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission”, Working Paper No. 24 March 2004, George Mason University, p.5.

²¹⁶New York Times, On Line July 10, 2001: 2, in Moorad Mooradian, “Reconciliation”, p.5.

²¹⁷David L. Phillips, *Diplomatic history*, p.16.

²¹⁸The same visa procedures are applied to the Turkish citizens (with the exception of green passport holders, who has to apply for visa beforehand).

²¹⁹Moorad Mooradian, “Reconciliation”, p.18.

mass killings and deportations in the Ottoman Empire can be applicable to the United Nations Genocide Convention.²²⁰ The results of legal analysis were present to TARC on February 4, 2003:

*"International law generally prohibits the retroactive application of treaties. The Genocide Convention contains no provision mandating its retroactive application. To the contrary, the text strongly suggests it was intended to impose prospective obligations only on the states party to it. Therefore, no legal, financial, or territorial claim arising out of the events could successfully be made against any individual or state under the Convention".*²²¹

At the same time, ICTJ concluded, that:

*"the term genocide may be applied to many and varied events that occurred prior to entry into force of the Convention", and "at least some of the perpetrators knew that the consequence of their actions would be the destruction of, in whole or in part, the Armenians of eastern Anatolia, as such, or acted purposefully towards this goal, and therefore, possessed the requisite genocidal intent. The Events, viewed collectively, can thus be said to include all the elements of the crime of genocide as defined by the Convention, and legal scholars as well as historians, politicians, journalists and other people would be justified in continuing to so describe them."*²²²

After the author David Phillips publicly wrote about the TARC's response from the ICJT, the Turkish members asked TARC to refrain from further investigation.²²³ The Armenian members accused the Turkish members of nonfeasance and withdrew from the organization.

3.2.2. Changing The Current Status Quo In Armenian-Turkish Relations –From Stalemate To Thaw

Newly elected, the president of Armenia Robert Kocharian²²⁴ brought the change in the Armenian stance on Armenian-Turkish relations, revitalizing the historical dispute over 1915 events and internationalizing the genocide recognition in 1998.²²⁵ In his speech on September 2000 to the United Nations Millennium Summit, Kocharian spoke about Armenian Republic's responsibility to carry the problems of the Armenian people from

²²⁰Ibid,p.19.

²²¹David L. Phillips, *Diplomatic history* p.17

²²²Ibid.

²²³Ibid,p.19

²²⁴Robert Kocharian was elected as President of Armenia for the first time in 1998 and then reelected

in 2003. Prior to 1998, he served as both Prime Minister (from 1992 to 1994) and President (1994 to 1997) of the Republic of Nagorno-Karabagh. Kocharian was born in Stepanakert, Azerbaijan and lived there until 1997 when he was appointed Prime Minister of Armenia.

See in Rachel Goshgarian, "Breaking the Stalemate: Turkish-Armenian Relations in the 21st Century", *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 4, (Winter 2005), p.3.

²²⁵Nigar Göksel, *Turkey and Armenia Post-Protocols: Back to Square One*, TESEV, October 2012, p.1.

past century into the new Millennium.²²⁶ He called Turkey to recognize the events of 1915 as a genocide, which will pave the way to further world wide reconciliation.²²⁷ Due to the internationalization of 1915 *Medz Yeghern* recognition, today around 26 countries already passed the genocide resolution. Despite Kocharian's speech and pushing for genocide recognition, he never raised the territorial demands to Turkey.²²⁸

In 1998 Kaan Soyak from TABDC for the first time proposed the idea of joint Armenian-Turkish historical commission to then President of Turkey Süleyman Demirel.²²⁹ On April 10, 2005 Prime-Minister of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan sent a letter to Kocharian, in which he proposed to establish a joint historical commission to investigate the contested events in the history.²³⁰ On April 25 Kocharian answered, emphasizing the readiness of Armenia to establish good relations with Turkey without any pre-condition, mentioning that the intergovernmental commission can meet and discuss all necessary issues with the aim to find the resolution and normalize the relations. Erdoğan, on contrary, was insisting on the work of historical commission first, and after that to pass to the intergovernmental issues. Both of them had oppositional views on how the normalization process prerequisites should be organized. Such approach did not lead to any result.

In February 2008 Serzh Sargsyan was elected as the new President of Armenia. The then President of Turkey Abdullah Gül and Prime-Minister Erdoğan were among the first officials to send the congratulation note to Sargsyan.²³¹ The new appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey Ahmet Davutoğlu proposed a new doctrine called *Zero problems with neighbours* - maximizing cooperation with the neighbours while minimizing problems in its surrounding regions by offering peaceful settlement of the

²²⁶Robert Kocharian's Speech at the Millennium Summit of the United Nations, available at the official page of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia <http://www.mfa.am/en/speeches/item/2000/09/07/rk/>

²²⁷Ibid.

²²⁸In 2001 in a television interview Robert Kocharian was asked a question regarding Armenia's territorial demands to Turkey, to what Kocharian's reply was "The Republic of Armenia will not have the legal basis for making such demands". In Thomas de Waal, *Great Catastrophe. Armenians and Turks in the Shadow of Genocide*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2015, p.208.

²²⁹David L. Phillips, *Diplomatic history*, p.21.

²³⁰Letter from Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to Robert Kocharian, April 10, 2005, in David L. Phillips, *Diplomatic history*, p.21.

²³¹Alexander Iskandaryan, Sergey Minasyan, *Pragmatic Policies vs. Historical Constraints: Analyzing Armenia-Turkey Relations*, Caucasus Institute, Yerevan, January 2010, p.9.

disputes and finding the common points for the constructive cooperation.²³² Armenia was on the waiting list as well.

Five Day war in 2008 between Russia and Georgia changed the entire status quo in the region,²³³ affecting Armenian-Turkish relations as well. In the beginning of 2010 World Football Cup, when Armenia and Turkey were put in the same group, the famous Football Diplomacy took place, and raised hopes among the different groups of interest that the frozen relations between Yerevan and Ankara will move from the stalemate (before the official football diplomacy started, the secret Armenian-Turkish negotiations took place in Switzerland during two years). President Sargsyan invited Gül to Yerevan to watch football match. In Turkey, oppositional parties such as Republican People's Party and the Nationalist Action Party, criticized Gül's visit to Armenia.²³⁴ In Armenia it was Dashnaktcutyun Party that opposed the Armenian-Turkish convergence.²³⁵ Later Abdullah Gül would comment on his trip to Armenia:

*"I believe my visit has demolished a psychological barrier in the Caucasus. If this climate continues, everything will move forward and normalize. The visit will create a good opportunity to improve bilateral relations."*²³⁶

In October 2009, Turkey and Armenia signed two protocols in Zurich aiming to break the seventeen years deadlock.²³⁷ For Turkey the rapprochement with Armenia means to put the end to the seeming endless dispute with Armenia and gain extra points in face of the US and European Union. From the Armenian perspectives to maintain good relations with Ankara and to have open border is far more necessary as the on-going confrontation with Azerbaijan restricted Armenia's opportunities to develop. Unfortunately, the protocols are still not ratified, waiting in the Turkish Parliament. In February 2015 President Sargsyan applied to the National Assembly of Armenia, asking to withdraw the Turkey-Armenia protocols.²³⁸

²³²Joshua W. Walker, "The Sources of Turkish Grand Strategy - 'Strategic Depth' and Zero-Problems' in Context", *The Washington Quarterly*, Winter 2007-2008.

²³³See more in Ronald D. Asmus, *A little war that shook the world*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2010.

²³⁴Bülent Aras and Fatih Özbay, "Turkish-Armenian Relations: Will Football Diplomacy Work?", SETA Publication, September 2008, No 24, p. 4.

²³⁵*Ibid.*

²³⁶Emil Danielyan, "Armenia, Turkey Ease Tensions After Historic Yerevan Summit", in David L. Phillips, *Diplomatic history*, p. 43.

²³⁷Alexander Iskandaryan, Sergey Minasyan, *Pragmatic Policies vs. Historical Constraints: Analyzing Armenia-Turkey Relations*, Caucasus Institute, Yerevan, January 2010.

²³⁸Sarkisian Withdraws Protocols from Parliament", February 16, 2015, available at <http://armenianweekly.com/2015/02/16/sarkisian-withdraws-protocols/>

There can be mentioned two main reasons, which contributed to the failure of protocols ratification. From the Armenian side it was the strong perturbation by Armenian Diaspora, which perceived the protocols as the betrayal and sale of the historical memory. Nevertheless, despite the strong reaction from Diaspora, the main reason of dragging out a process without a result is the pressure from Azerbaijan, which makes every effort to cut Armenia's receiving of dividends, what would increase her political and economic weight in the region, as well as position regarding Karabakh issue.

It seems that the possibility of protocols's ratification is extremely low, at least now they are frozen, though the Turkish ambassador to the EU claims that they are still considered of current interest.²³⁹

3.3. TURKEY IN 1915 LEGACY: ARMENIAN IDENTITY IN THE REPUBLICAN ERA

The Mother's admonition to Ismail Aga: "I ask you, my son, if you go to this settlement, don't accept a house or field left after Armenians.

One couldn't take refuge in a house of a master forced to escape.

Ruined bird's nest couldn't be a nest for its destroyer.

In the field of zulüm (Eng. violence, injustice) only zulüm can grow".²⁴⁰

The Republican era is characterised by the intense Turkification policy towards the minorities, massive homogenization of society, aiming to put the end to the multiculturalism existed in the country. The minorities – both religious, and ethnic, - became the target of that policy. In this subchapter an attempt to explore the main pillars of Turkification policy that were implemented during the Republican era, evaluating its affect on the life of Armenian community in Turkey.

Noteworthy, for post-1915 Armenian generations the memory of 1915 is not so much alive as much as their sufferings and discriminations they faced in the early Republic era. According to the statistics information, the number of Armenians in Turkey make

²³⁹Çengiz Aktar, "The fate of Protocols, in Briefing: Armenian-Turkish Relations, Policy Department DG External Policies", 2 October 2013, p.7.

²⁴⁰"Annesi İsmail Ağa'ya şöyle öğütler: "Bir de senden dileğim, oğlum, o kasabaya gidersen, Ermenilerden kalma evleri, tarlaları kabul etme. Sahibi kaçmış yuvada, öteki kuş barınamaz. Yuva bozanın yuvası olmaz. Zulüm tarlasında zulüm biter." Yaşar Kemal, Yağmurcuk Kuşu, p. 95.

up 70,000.²⁴¹ Large number of the survivors of *Medz Yeghern* from a number of different Anatolian provinces moved to Istanbul, which was the only city where they could preserve their identity.²⁴²

In 1923, the modern Turkey emerged from the ruins of Ottoman Empire. Even though, the Treaty of Lausanne,²⁴³ granted minority rights to all non-Muslim communities, the Turkish government gave the status of religious minority only to three groups – Armenians, Greeks, and Jews.²⁴⁴ The other non-Turkish minorities, such as Assyrians, Kurds, Arabs, Laz, Cherkez, and many others, were deprived from any special rights, considered as Turks.²⁴⁵ The recognized minorities were granted the right to maintain their ethno-cultural identity. In fact, even this maintenance of cultural identity was strictly controlled by the government, still perceiving the minorities as foreign elements in the society.

In his speech to mark the tenth anniversary of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, congratulated the nation on the amount of progress it had made in a such a short period of time, closing with the famous words: “How happy is one who can say I am Turk” (*‘Ne mutlu Türküm diyene’*).²⁴⁶ These words eventually became the symbolization of citizenship (*vatandaşlık*) concept in Turkey.

Speaking about the Turkification policy, implemented in early Republican era, it is important to mention that the roots of this policy dates back to Young Turks policy. Rifat Bali examined the Turkification policy during the Republican People Party period from 1923- 1950. He made an attempt to describe the methods of implementing the Turkification policy, pointing on the “hidden face of the Turkification Project, which was

²⁴¹ Tessa Hofmann, *Armenians in Turkey today: A critical assessment of the situation of the Armenian minority in the Turkish Republic*, Bruxelles, 2002, p.6.

²⁴² The daily newspaper *Hürriyet* reported in June 1989 about the incident taken place with the Turkish candidate for the Justice Ministry post, Niyazi Gösker from Gohta, Adiyaman district. Niyazi Gösker was denied a post after it became known that he was a converted Islamized Armenian. From: Marmara, 30.06.1989, in Tessa Hofmann, *Armenians in Turkey today: A critical assessment of the situation of the Armenian minority in the Turkish Republic*, Bruxelles, 2002, p. 18.

²⁴³ The full text of Treaty of Lausanne at the official page of Turkey’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/lausanne-peace-treaty.en.mfa>

²⁴⁴ Günay Göksu Özdoğan and Ohannes Kılıçdağı, *Hearing Turkey’s Armenians: Issues, Demands and Policy Recommendations*, Tesev Publications, Istanbul, 2012, p. 18.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Basak Ince, *Citizenship and Identity in Turkey: From Atatürk’s Republic to the Present Day*, B.Tauris, June 15, 2012, p.1.

the Turkification of economy".²⁴⁷ According to him, the term Turkification means the "Turkish Republic's Project to create a state of citizens with equal rights, who will define themselves first and foremost as Turks, their religion being a private matter"²⁴⁸

Another definition of Turkification policy was given by Ayhan Aktar who views it as:

"strictly imposed Turkish ethnic identity as a hegemonic identity in every sphere of social life, from the language spoken in public to the teaching of history in public schools; from education to industry; from commercial practices to public employment policies; from the civil code to the re-settlement of certain citizens in particular areas".²⁴⁹

Ayhan mentions the following preconditions of Turkification policy as

"the emergence of Turkish nationalism as a well-structured political ideology, the recognition of this ideology by the great majority of the political elite in power, and the existence of an international political conjuncture favourable to the implementation of these policies domestically".

In 1922 the government declared its decision to abolish the arrangements made by Istanbul government in January 1920 regarding the properties of the deported Armenians. Moreover, it also proposed to gather the remaining Armenians and "send them to Yerevan".²⁵⁰

The productivity of Armenian culture was halted during the Republican era, number of Armenians dramatically diminished, what led to the collapse of the social, cultural and economic life in the towns like Malatya, Diyarbakir, Sivas, Yozgat, Harput, Bitlis, Adana, and many others, where the Armenians once lived and created a rich culture,²⁵¹ The displacement of Armenian from the different aspects of social life led to the dissolution and invisibility of the Armenian community within the homogenized Turkish society.

The activities of Armenian people, as in the case with the other non-Muslim minorities, were restricted to the religious, social and educational life under the control of religious

²⁴⁷Rifat N. Bali, "Politics of Turkification during the single party period", in Hans Lukas-Kieser (ed), *Turkey Beyond Nationalism*, London, 2006, p.1.

²⁴⁸Rifat N. Bali, *Politics of Turkification*, p.1.

²⁴⁹Ayhan Aktar, "Turkification" Policies in the Early Republican Era", in "Turkish Literature and Cultural Memory. 'Multiculturalism' as a Literary Theme after 1980", (ed. Catharina Dufft), Wiesbaden, 2009, p.29.

²⁵⁰Taner Akçam, *İnsan Hakları ve Ermeni Sorunu: İttihat Terakki'den Kurtuluş Savaşı'na, İmge Yayınları*, Ankara, 1999, p. 531, 552, in Günay Göksu Özdoğan and Ohannes Kılıçdağı, *Hearing Turkey's Armenians*, p. 17.

²⁵¹Günay Göksu Özdoğan and Ohannes Kılıçdağı, *Hearing Turkey's Armenians*, p. 18.

authority of the Church.²⁵² But even this did not guarantee the independent self-governance to the religious institutions, properties of which were again exposed to the confiscation, along with the interference of the government in church elections.²⁵³

The further reforms, directed to the non-Muslim minorities, implemented during Ismet İnönü government, exacerbated the desperate condition of the Armenian community, increasing the trauma of 1915 and creating the feeling of detachment. The following subchapters are dealing with the four main reforms, implemented during the Republic era towards the non-Muslim minorities.

3.3.1. Language Reform “Citizen, Speak Turkish!”

One of the first cornerstone of Turkification policy was the language campaign with garish name “Citizen, speak Turkish!” (“*Vatandaş, Türkçe konuş!*”). These campaigns began during the single Party period, and were repeated on various occasions up through the middle of 1960s.²⁵⁴

Speaking Turkish was promoted as a significant part of belonging to the Turkish nation and of being “a real Turkish citizen”, therefore people who did not speak Turkish were called *fake citizens*.²⁵⁵ The Turkish association “Turkish Hearths” (*Türk Ocakları*) played a significant role in spreading the language reform among the minorities. In one of the speeches the head of Turkish Hearths, Hamdullah Suphi drew the boundaries of Turkification policy, where the perception of Armenians as *foreign agents* is brightly expressed, contributing to the demonization of all Armenian people:

“...The citizens of the state and the Turkish Republic are completely Turkish. On the other hand, the government is struggling to isolate those Greeks and Armenians who had been working for foreigners; it is trying to take out the Greek and Armenian (elements) who are working for the institutions that foreigners had established...The word citizenship is not sufficient to remove this desire (to isolate these elements) which is present in their minds and hearts....But there is one truth. They cannot be Turks; even the Assembly cannot make the fugitive Greeks and Armenians Turks....A friend of mine asked me: “What should I be doing to be a Turk?”.... I told him that it was possible for him to be a Turk. The Jews who had been expelled from Spain and came to this country with their Spanish will be Turks after they accept the language of the country, and consider Turkish schools their own.... But if he comes here while keeping the language of the country that had

²⁵²Tessa Hofmann, *Armenians in Turkey today: A critical assessment of the situation of the Armenian minority in the Turkish Republic*, Bruxelles, 2002, p.6.

²⁵³*Ibid.*

²⁵⁴Ayhan Aktar, “Turkification” Policies in the Early Republican Era”, in “*Turkish Literature and Cultural Memory. ‘Multiculturalism’ as a Literary Theme after 1980*”, (ed. Catharina Dufft), Wiesbaden, 2009, p.47.

²⁵⁵Basak Ince, *Citizenship and Identity in Turkey*, p.60.

expelled him, remains Jewish in the middle of Anatolia, reads the Jewish language, has private schools, would the law forbid them from being a Jewish?'.²⁵⁶

Despite the fact that Article 88 carried clear definition of Turkishness principles, still some deputies did not express the support to the idea of erasing the boundaries between citizenship and nationality for some minorities.²⁵⁷ Armenians and Greeks were still perceived as outside groups to the nation.²⁵⁸

Another opinion during the same session was expressed by Celal Nuri (İleri): "Our true citizens, Muslims, who belong to the Hanafi sect²⁵⁹, and who speaks Turkish".²⁶⁰ Speaking about the relation of Turkification process to minorities, he mentioned:

"Not all the children of the Turkish Republic are Turks or Muslims. What are we going to do with those...If we do not extend Turkishness to them...how are we going to call them?...I am asking Hamdullah Suphi Bey...Do we have an option in our hands (other than calling them Turks)?".²⁶¹

The words of Celal Nuri represent importance in terms of his reference regarding to "Hanafi Muslims, speaking Turkish", what showed the watershed existed between the Turkish and Kurdish population, in regard to the fact that Kurds are Shafi Muslims, who did not speak Turkish.²⁶² The policy of Turkification led to the tensions between two people, the culmination of which was expressed in Sheikh Said's rebellion of February-April 1925²⁶³, after what the government decided to give firm response to any action of disobedience.²⁶⁴ After the harsh repression of rebellion, Prime Minister İsmet İnönü made a declaration to the delegates of Turkish Hearths: "Our immediate duty is to make Turks all those who live in the Turkish fatherland. We will cut and throw away the minorities who are opposing Turks and Turkism".²⁶⁵

During his visit to Adana in 1931, Mustafa Kemal did the similar statement, stressing the importance of speaking in Turkish:

²⁵⁶Yeşim Bayar, *Formation of the Turkish Nation-State 1920-1938*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, p.129.

²⁵⁷Ibid.

²⁵⁸Ibid.

²⁵⁹The Hanafi sect is one of the four religious SunniIslamic schools of jurisprudence. It is the fiqh with the largest followers among Sunni Muslims.

²⁶⁰Yeşim Bayar, p.130.

²⁶¹Ibid.

²⁶²Kirişçi and Winrow, 2003, p.96, in Yeşim Bayar, *"Formation of the Turkish Nation-State 1920-1938"*, Palgrave Macmillan,2014, p.129.

²⁶³For more information on the Kurdish rebellion under Sheikh Said see Robert Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880-1925*, University of Texas Press, 1989.

²⁶⁴Ibid, p.130.

²⁶⁵Vakit,27 April 1925 quoted in Füsün Üstel, *"İmparatorluktan Ulus-Devlete Türk Milliyetçiliği Türk Ocakları1912-1931"*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları), 1997, p. 173.

*“One of the most obvious, precious qualities of a nation is the language. A person who says he belongs to the Turkish nation should first and under all circumstances speak Turkish. It is not possible to believe a person’s claim that he belongs to the Turkish nation, to the Turkish culture, if he does not speak Turkish”.*²⁶⁶

The Language reform of Atatürk shapes the idea of linguistic influence on the worldview. For him each language as Arabic, Persian, represented a particular view of the world. By purifying Ottoman Turkish from Arabic and Persian he wanted to see the emergence of a different worldview among Turkish-speaking people. Atatürk’s language-reform theory suggested that the influence of Arabic and Persian on Turkish was detrimental to progress and were classified as undesirable for the progress and health of Turkish social life.²⁶⁷

The language reform and large propaganda of dominant Turkish culture and suppression of other ethnic cultural elements in the public sphere led to the strengthening of the inner – ethnic identity - by the non-Turkish minorities, which could be expressed strictly within the borders of own community and in home. Such a displacement from the public sphere of non-Turkish elements led to the accumulation of internal resentment, that in contrary, increased the patriotic sentiments among the members of suppressed and discriminated communities.²⁶⁸

3.3.2. Surname Reform (Soyadı Kanunu)

Another strategy of enhancing the Turkification policy was the Surname Reform (Soyadı Kanunu), according to which everybody had to turkify their family names. The Surname Law was accepted in 1934 and prevented the adoption of names of tribes, foreign race and nations as family names.²⁶⁹ For instance, the Greeks of Turkey would Turkify their names by dropping the “-dis” and “-pulos” suffixes.²⁷⁰ Most of the Jews would Turkify their names and surnames by finding a Turkish equivalent for each Jewish name.²⁷¹

²⁶⁶Mustafa Kemal’in Adana Türk Ocağı’ndaki nutku”, *Vakit*, 19 February, 1931.

²⁶⁷Jacob M. Landau, *“Atatürk and the Modernization of Turkey”*, Westview Press, 1984, p.133.

²⁶⁸For instance, during the Republic era the Kurdish people were hiddenly listening to the famous Yerevan Radio, based in Yerevan, which possessed (and still possesses) the collection of more than 1,500 Kurdish songs.

²⁶⁹Rifat N. Bali, *Politics of Turkification*, p.5.

²⁷⁰*Ibid.*

²⁷¹*Ibid.*

In the research conducted by Helin Anahit, one of the Armenian respondents expressed an opinion:

*“Why this concept is used in Turkey? There is such an understanding that in order to be a “good citizen” you should have Turkish name, be a Muslim. What’s that?”.*²⁷² In order to be ‘better citizens’, her father had adopted another surname. Soyadı Kanunu as part of the Turkification process required all citizens to adopt surnames in 1934.²⁷³ Until nowadays, many of those Turkish Armenians, who was given a Turkish name in order to escape any discrimination and inconvenience, still have the Armenian names, which are used in home and within the Armenian community.

3.3.3. Wealth Tax (Varlık Vergisi): The Property Tax For Non-Muslims 1942-1944 – A Violation Of Articles 39 And 40 Of The Lausanne Treaty²⁷⁴

*“One of the darkest events in Turkish history was the Wealth Tax, Levied discriminatorily against non-Muslims in 1942, Hobbling Armenians with the most punitive rates.”*²⁷⁵

On 12 of November 1942, the Wealth Tax law was adopted by the government. If one is to judge the Law exclusively based on the document, no sign of ethnic or religious discrimination can be traced. However, virtually it was an economic disaster for the minorities and a plan that contributed to the establishment of Turkish Bourgeoisie.²⁷⁶ Rıdvan Akar opens the content of reforms towards the minorities by explaining:

“Minorities became the litmus paper of state policies in the Republican History. The consciousness of democracy, the respect for pluralism, and the ideological

²⁷²Helin Anahit, *He is Armenian but he was born that way; there isn't much he can do about it': exploring identity and cultural assumptions in Turkey*, Routledge, 2014.

²⁷³Ibid.

²⁷⁴The name of the subchapter is adopted from Tessa Hofman's academic work *Armenians in Turkey today: A critical assessment*

²⁷⁵Smith, Thomas W., "Constructing A Human Rights Regime in Turkey: Dilemmas of Civic Nationalism and Civil Society", draft paper presented at the American Political Science Association annual conference hold in San Francisco, August 29 - September 2, 2001. p. 4, in Tessa Hofman, *Armenians in Turkey today: A critical assessment of the situation of the Armenian minority in the Turkish Republic*, Bruxelles, 2002, p.16.

²⁷⁶Rıdvan Akar, *Aşkale yolcuları: varlık vergisi ve çalışma kampları* (On the road to Aşkale: the capital levy and the labour camps), 2006, Istanbul Mephisto Publications, 2006, p. 15.

homogenization, the nation-state project of building a homogeneous Turk-Muslim and Sunni society was tested on this laboratory".²⁷⁷

Wealth Tax was used to transmit the control over the economy from the hands of minorities to the ethnic Turks²⁷⁸. Those, who were unable to pay the tax, were sent to the 'Turkish Siberia' - Aşkale near Erzerum, where 21 forced labourers died.²⁷⁹ One of the Armenian respondents shared the heavy psychological effect of Wealth Tax on his grandfather, who survived the Armenian exterminations of 1915 from Tokat, by saying that "After the Tax and Revenue my grandfather did not speak a word until the end of his life."²⁸⁰

Prominent Turkish businessman of Jewish origin, Ishak Alaton,²⁸¹ shared his bitter experiences of Wealth Levy in a new two-volume biography. The father of Ishak, Hayim Alaton, was among those who was sent to Aşkale in Erzurum, after he failed to pay two separate taxes that were imposed on him. Alaton marked the period under the rule of İsmet İnönü as *black days*:

"Two tax payment notices came simultaneously.' One was from the Hocapaşa tax office. They wanted him to pay TL 16,000 in taxes. The other was from the Eminönü tax office, which wanted him to pay TL 64,000. Two separate tax offices wanted him to pay TL 80,000 in total".²⁸²

As Ishak's father could not pay the second tax within 15 days, the taxpayers confiscated everything the Alaton family had, and Hayim Alaton was taken from the house to the labour camp:

"Everything in the store and the goods in stock were sold at auctions. They came to our home. Our house was sold. All of the items at home, including our bed frames, were sold. Even the kitchen utensils were sold. Our lamps were dismantled and sold. Only our mattresses were left behind. It was a horrible incident. My mother and her four children could do nothing but just stand there."²⁸³

²⁷⁷Ibid, p.13.

²⁷⁸Enis Kosal, *Role of the Wealth Tax Law in the Turkish National bourgeoisie formation process*, TED Ankara, 2009.

²⁷⁹Committee for Monitoring Minority Rights, op. cit., p. 1, in Tessa Hofman, *Armenians in Turkey today*, p.16.

²⁸⁰Ferda Balancar, *The sound of silence: Turkey's Armenians speak*, Hrant Dink Foundation, Istanbul, 2012, p.12.

²⁸¹Ishak Alaton, chairman of the Alarko Group, is one of Turkey's most respected businessmen and head of an energy to contracting conglomerate with a 2011 net income of \$60.117 million on assets of \$1.094 billion.

The source is available at: http://www.dunya.com/mobi/news_detail.php?id=181930

²⁸²Ibid.

²⁸³Ibid.

The Wealth Tax showed explicitly that the non-Muslim citizens were not perceived equally with the Turkish citizens. That perception can be revealed through the glance on the discussion on the 1924 Constitution:

*“On the one hand, we say citizens of (the state)... are completely Turk. On the other hand, the government is struggling to make sure foreign companies will dismiss Greek and Armenian workers. When we attempt that... (and)...if we are told that ‘No, in line with the law passed by your parliament they are Turks’ what would your answer be? The word citizenship would not be enough to abate a desire which is in the mind and heart...there is one reality, they cannot be Turk...there is no possibility”.*²⁸⁴

Thereby, non-Muslims could be Turks only de-jure, on the paper; meanwhile de-facto they were perceived as the suspicious ‘untrustworthy’ foreign segments and excluded from the Turkish majority. The Land Registry Law (*Tapu Kanunu*) referred to the minorities with humiliating appeal as ‘the foreigners whose existence was recognized by the government of the Turkish Republic’.²⁸⁵ As the Head of Government of Turkey at that time, Şükrü Saracoglu, mentioned, “The tax did not aim to finance war costs, but to help Turkify the economy, as only 8,000 of the 19,000 firms registered in Istanbul at the time belonged to Turkish Muslims”.²⁸⁶ The Wealth tax was abolished on 15 March 1944 after collecting more than six billion current Turkish pounds.²⁸⁷

3.3.4. Violence Against The Minorities As The Result Of 6-7 September 1955²⁸⁸

The discrimination policies towards the minorities proved once again that those people are still perceived as elements of threat.²⁸⁹ The existence of the Minorities Sub-Commission (Azınlıklar Tali Komisyonu) is an another manifestation of such policy and

²⁸⁴Derya Bayir, *Minorities and Nationalism in Turkish Law: Turkification of Economy*, London: Ashgate, 2010, p. 142; Sevgi Kuru Açıkgoz, “Kemalism and Post-Kemalism: Turkish State in Search of Palatable Citizen Forever”, *Turkish Journal of Politics* Vol. 5 No. 2 Winter 2014, p. 43.

²⁸⁵*Ibid.*

²⁸⁶The information comes from the Turkish historian, Ridvan Akar, who wrote a two-volume book about happiness tax. From: Hermann, Rainer: Auweia, unsere Perlen rollen in den Gully. „Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung“, 29.12.2001, in Tessa Hofman, *Armenians in Turkey today*, p.16.

²⁸⁷Hartunian Hambarsum, Vom Lausanner Friedensvertrag bis heute, pogrom. Zeitschrift für bedrohte Völker“, Jahrgang/ set of issues 11, No. 72/73, May 1980, p. 34, in Tessa Hofman, *Armenians in Turkey today*, p.16.

²⁸⁸The Istanbul pogroms also referred in Greek as *Septemvriana*. Scholars Alfred de Zayas and Tessa Hofman bring the paralel between the September pogroms and German *Kristallnacht*, launched on 9 November 1938 in Germany, perpetrated by the Nazi authorities against Jewish civilians. The September pogroms consists in the fact that their political initators sought to intimidate and drive out the respective victim groups through organized mass violence in which terror was supposed to be limited to material damage.

²⁸⁹Günay Göksu Özdoğan and Ohannes Kılıçdağı, *Hearing Turkey’s Armenians*, p.18.

perception. The Commission²⁹⁰ was composed of members representing National Intelligence Organization (Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı) and the General Staff,²⁹¹ is proving the inherence of mistrust among the Turkish government towards its own citizens, perceiving them the similar way as Young Turks did during World War I.

Both Armenian and Greek minorities are very sensitive in terms of being under the shadow of the events, taking place between Turkey and Greece and Armenia, as it was the case in 6-7 September pogroms and later Karabakh war, and carrying responsibility for the actions implemented by their compatriots in abroad, as it was the case with ASALA.

During the exacerbation of Turkish-Greek conflict over Cyprus issue, On 6 September 1955, after Turkish press reported about the explosion of building in the courtyard of the Turkish Consulate in Thessalonik, in neighbouring to the house where Kemal Atatürk was born, angry Turkish mob destroyed the Greek, Armenian and Jewish districts of Istanbul.²⁹² Thirty seven Greeks were killed²⁹³, their houses, places of worship, businesses were destroyed. The police, instead of controlling the mob and preventing it from the destructions, did not take any initiative.²⁹⁴ Later the 1960-1961 Yassıada trial against Prime Minister Adnan Menderes and Foreign Minister Fatin Zorlu showed that the explosion was carried out by the Turkish agents, who implemented the order of the Turkish government.²⁹⁵

²⁹⁰For the Minority Subcommission and Minority Issues Review Committee, see: http://www.illeridaresi.gov.tr/default_B0.aspx?content=130

²⁹¹Günay Göksu Özdoğan and Ohannes Kılıçdağı, *Hearing Turkey's Armenians*, p. 18.

²⁹²Zayas, Alfred, "The Istanbul Pogrom of 6–7 September 1955 in the Light of International Law", *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal*: Vol. 2: Iss. 2: Article 4, 2007, p. 138.

²⁹³Vryonis, *Mechanism of Catastrophe*, 581–82 (Appendix B, "List of the Dead in the Pogrom"). Thirty victims were identified, three unidentified bodies were dug out of destroyed shops, and three burned bodies were found in a sack in Besiktas. Leonidas Koumakes, *The Miracle: A True Story* (Athens: n.p., 1982), 54–55, speaks of the death of more than twenty people. Lois Whitman lists fifteen deaths in *Denying Human Rights and Ethnic Identity: The Greeks of Turkey* (New York: Helsinki Watch/Human Rights Watch, 1992), 50. Quoted in Zayas, Alfred, "The Istanbul Pogrom", p. 138.

²⁹⁴The American consul-general telegraphed the US State Department that "the destruction was completely out of hand with no evidence of police or military attempts to control it. I personally witnessed the looting of many shops while the police stood idly by or cheered on the mob." Helsinki Watch, *Greeks of Turkey*, 1992, p. 7. Quoted in Zayas, Alfred, "The Istanbul Pogrom", p. 138.

²⁹⁵The agent provocator in Thessalonikê, the student Oktay Engin, was acquitted at Yassıada, and subsequently held high positions in the Turkish state. Quoted in Zayas, Alfred (2007) "The Istanbul Pogrom of 6–7 September 1955 in the Light of International Law," *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal*: Vol. 2: Iss. 2: Article 4, p. 138.

As the result of pogroms, the overall numbers of damages were the following: looting of 4,000 Greek, Armenian and Jewish businesses, the arson, looting and desecration of 24 Greek and 4 Armenian churches; the desecration of numerous cemeteries; the destruction of 32 Greek and eight Armenian schools; and over 300 casualties. The total constituted around \$270-360 million dollars.²⁹⁶ After 6-7 September pogroms of 1955 many Armenians left Turkey, what again led to the decrease in Armenian population.

3.3.5. Istanbul As The Only Place To Preserve Armenian Identity

Being in past concentrated throughout the Ottoman Empire, having thousands of churches, schools, art centres, workshops, and actively contributing to the development of the country, today the Armenian community in Turkey is represented by a handful of people, concentrated in Istanbul which is the only center where the Armenian culture can be preserved.

While interviewing Istanbul Armenians, those whose ancestors were from Anatolia, told that the main reason of moving from Anatolia to Istanbul was destruction of Armenian cultural centres in their hometowns.

There are 16 Armenian schools in Istanbul, all of them are private, financed exclusively by the Armenian Apostolic Church and funds provided by the members of community. Only ethnic Turks can be appointed on the post of Deputy Headmaster of the Armenian schools.²⁹⁷ The schools curriculum is also strictly defined by the Ministry of Education. Moreover, the compulsory classes such as Turkish History, Geography and Citizenship Education are taught again only by the Turkish teachers, appointed by the Ministry of Education. Armenian schools are facing various difficulties, such as lack of teachers, reduction in Armenian language instruction, what obviously affects the number of active schools.

Apart from the schools, there are thirty eight Armenian Churches and chapels in Istanbul as well as its surroundings, though the religious service is held only in thirty of

²⁹⁶Hartunian, op. cit., p. 34; Die antigriechischen Tumulte vom 6./7. September 1955 in der Türkei. Ed. The Journalists' Union of the Athen's Daily Newspapers. Reprinted in: "pogrom". Zeitschrift für bedrohte Völker, Jg. 11, Nr. 72/73, May 1980, p. 86, in Tessa Hofman, *Armenians in Turkey today*, p.18.

²⁹⁷Tessa Hofman, *Armenians in Turkey today*, p. 26.

them,²⁹⁸ two hospitals in Istanbul (the Surp Pirgiç Armenian Hospital in Yedikule, and the Surp Agop Armenian Hospital in Elmadağı); two orphanages, three newspapers with 2 dailies in the Armenian language (Jamanak and Nor Marmara) and one weekly in Turkish and Armenian languages (Agos).²⁹⁹

3.3.6. Thaw in The Turkish Society

Armenians in Turkey do not accept the term Diaspora, which is used by many academicians and researchers. The reason for rejecting the applicability of the term to describe the Armenian community in Turkey is their long lasting historical presence in these lands; the proximity to the historical homeland of Western Armenia, and virtually Turkish Armenians never left their homeland. On the contrary, to some extent the Armenians living in Republic of Armenia whose ancestors fled from the historical Western Armenia in 1915 share common elements of the typical diaspora community, as they possess strong nostalgia towards their ancestral lands, cherishing the hope to come back one day and settle in their fathers' land. Another reason for not accepting the term Diaspora by the Turkish Armenians is that they do not want to be identified with the Armenian diaspora, which is still perceived as a troublemaker for Turkey, and the fact that whatever happened in abroad in the result of Armenian diaspora actions, - such as ASALA activities in 75-80 or genocide recognition campaigns, - the Turkish Armenians were the target for hate speech and exasperation. In such conditions any comparison of Turkish Armenians with the Armenians in abroad is unpleasant and even provocative.

The hate speech in media targetting the Armenians is continuing to present days. The state officials are actively continuing the tradition of insulting the local Armenians, as if they are not the equal and 'real' citizens of this country, but the foreigners who were granted the opportunity to settle here and live. The negative stereotype of the Armenian identity is so strong, that as soon as someone learns that the certain person is Armenian, all his other identities are automatically disregarded.

There is a wide use of the word Armenians as an insult, especially in the politics: during the political conflict between the groups, the politicians can accuse each other in having Armenian origin, which is equal to insult for the Turkish person. This was the case in 1997, when the Minister of Interior of the time, Meral Akşener of the True Path Party

²⁹⁸Ibid.

²⁹⁹Günay Göksu Özdoğan and Ohannes Kılıçdağı, *Hearing Turkey's Armenians*, p. 20.

(DYP), used the expression *Ermeni dölü* (Armenian spawn) to insult the PKK Leader Abdullah Öcalan.³⁰⁰ That expression is still remembered and applied to the Armenians in general by the ordinary citizens. Such examples of hate speech towards the Armenians by high level Turkish politicians can be brought on the numerous occasions, and this fact does not contribute to the peaceful coexistence of those people in Turkey, making them a vulnerable group. One of the recent examples was the publication in the Turkish newspaper "Vahdet" dated to May 2015, declaring that "*300 leaders of the outlawed Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) are crypto-Armenians and claimed that they were baptized in churches*".³⁰¹ Vahdet along with several other Turkish newspapers often promotes racist propaganda against the minorities. Another hate speech targeting the Armenians belongs to the head of Kars Ülkü Ocakları (Nationalist Hearths in Kars), who, after the concert of prominent Armenian jazz pianist Tigran Hamasyan given in the ruins of historical Armenian city Ani, threatened the Armenians, "who feel so free in Turkey. What should we do now? Should we start a hunt for Armenians on the streets of Kars?".³⁰²

In 2013 Hrant Dink foundation published a report scanning more than one thousands national and local newspapers published between September and December 2012. According to the survey, Jews and Armenians were on the top of hate speech in the Turkish media. Three Turkish newspapers were mentioned among the top "hatred promoters": Yeni Akit, Milli Gazete and Yeni Mesaj.³⁰³

One of the surveys, conducted with the ordinary Turkish citizens, revealed their knowledge on the Turkish Armenians. Thirty percentage of the respondents answered that "Armenians living in Turkey today came to Turkey after the disintegration of the Soviet Union", and another 30% have no idea about "where Armenians come from".³⁰⁴ Considering that the Armenian existence in Anatolia goes back to at least the

³⁰⁰Cited in Günay Göksu Özdoğan and Ohannes Kılıçdağı, *Hearing Turkey's Armenians*, p. 26.

³⁰¹Turkish media, government plagued by hate speech", article at Today's Zaman, May 2, 2015, available at http://www.todayszaman.com/anasayfa_turkish-media-government-plagued-by-hate-speech_379493.html

³⁰²"Hate speech freely targets Armenians", article at Today's Zaman, July 7, 2015, available at http://www.todayszaman.com/columnist/orhan-kemal-cengiz/hate-speech-freely-targets-armenians_393063.html

³⁰³The full report is available here http://nefretsoylemi.org/rapor/may-august2013_reportfinal.pdf

³⁰⁴Cited in Aktaran, Özdoğan et. al. 2009, p. 443. Pages 442-446 in the same book include the statements made by participants of a focus group meeting with some Turks. These citations are quite typical and summative in terms of showing how Armenians are viewed. In Günay Göksu Özdoğan and Ohannes Kılıçdağı, *Hearing Turkey's Armenians*, p. 23.

6th century BC or even earlier, the ignorance of this sixty percentage of respondents is better understood.³⁰⁵

Compared to the previous fifteen years, there are positive changes that can be observed in the Turkish society. Turkey's path to the EU membership led to some legislative arrangements, which to some extent relieved the tension to minorities. In 1993 the Aras Publishing House (Aras Yayincılık)³⁰⁶ was established in Istanbul, which continued the legacy of Armenian literature, interrupted in 1915. The chief of Aras Publishing House, well known as *Tomo of Istanbul* Yetvart Tovmasyan, in one of his interviews named his mission as 'to help bring together Turks and Armenians to solve the 100-year-old elephant in the room:

*"We know about the genocide... We were all affected, one way or another. But the public in Turkey is unaware. It is our duty to teach the public about our history, our literature, and our culture. I'm often asked, 'Where have you Armenians come from?' and I tell them that we've been on these lands for thousands of years. I don't blame them. They don't know about us. They have never been taught the truth."*³⁰⁷

Since the day of establishment Tomo's Publishing Center have presented about 150 books: forty in Armenian and one hundred and ten in Turkish. Some have even been translated into other languages, including Kurdish.³⁰⁸

Another groundbreaking organization, that raised the awareness of the Armenian people's problems was Agos newspaper, established in 1996 by Hrant Dink. In one of his interviews, given to California local Armenian TV program, one year before he was assassinated, Hrant Dink mentioned the main reason that pushed him to establish Agos, which was to write about the injustice done by the state, to have opportunity to say everything in a loud voice, to claim own rights, which Armenians were rejected, and to point on the mistakes and disadvantages of the system:

*"That was our first aim – to fight and to defend. The word "Armenian" became an insult. Everyday on TV, in the newspapers you could observe the hate speech and disrespect towards the Armenian people. There was a Kurdish issue in Turkey, the Kurdish issue would make the Armenian issue, and would disrespect the Armenianness. And we were forced to stand up and say: "No, we are not the Armenians you are talking about. We should be the Armenians we really are".*³⁰⁹

³⁰⁵Ibid.

³⁰⁶The official page of Aras Publishing House <http://www.arasyayincilik.com/>

³⁰⁷Rupen Janbazian, "Tomo of Istanbul", December 12, 2014, published in Armenian Weekly, available at: <http://armenianweekly.com/2014/12/12/tomo-of-istanbul/>

³⁰⁸Ibid.

³⁰⁹Hrant Dink's interview in Glendale, California, November 2006, (in the Armenian language), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oAwDPfkuqEI>

Dink also mentioned the legislative procedure which is creating the problems for everyone who wants to raise questions about taboos:

"I would never defend the insult of any national or religious identity, it is simply a racism. It doesn't suit to us. But in Turkey, whatever comes against their point of view they would claim "you disrespected my Turkishness". If until nowadays there is insult and disrespect towards nationality, its not insult of Turkishness, but the Armenianness, and also other minorities are insulted".³¹⁰

Hrant was shot on January 19, 2007, by the Turkish seventeen years old nationalist Ogün Samast. Hrant's funeral turned into an unprecedented march of thousands of the Turkish, Armenian, Kurdish and other ethnicity citizens, holding the posters 'We are all Hrant, we are all Armenians'. One of the Turkish respondents mentioned that "with his absence, Hrant [is] was now more alive."³¹¹ That was the beginning of the changes.

Hrant became an inspiration for thousands of Turks, his death was a watershed in the Turkish society, transforming Armenian issue perception before and after Hrant Dink. There are tens of academic researches and art work, dedicated by the Turkish academicians and social activists to the memory of Hrant Dink, continuing to raise awareness towards the Armenian cause, which for many of them became their own cause too, the cause for democracy and human rights issue.

3.4. CONCLUSION TO THE CHAPTER

This chapter aimed to present the parallel historical, political, social and cultural development in the neighbouring Armenia and Turkey, by focusing on the events, that shaped the Armenian-Turkish relations after 1915. First the historical overview of post-1915 Armenia was evaluated, by constructing the chain through the Soviet Armenia until nowadays. Those Ottoman Armenians, who escaped after 1915 to Armenia, did not have opportunity to visit their homeland in historical Western Armenia. Such deprivation from their culture created strong nostalgic attachment and mystification of the historical Western Armenia. The prohibition to raise the 1915 *Medz Yeghern* in the Soviet Armenia led to the accumulation of resentment by the Armenian people, which eventually burst out, leading to the protests in 1956. The examination of Armenian-Turkish rapprochement attempts was also implemented, with special

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Anonymous video testimony recorded February 2010; Anahit, Talking Openly/Açık Açık Konuşmak. In Helin Anahit, "He is Armenian but he was born that way; there isn't much he can do about it: exploring identity and cultural assumptions in Turkey", *Patterns of Prejudice*, Routledge, Vol. 48, No. 2, 201–222, May 2014, p. 221.

emphasize of the public perception of Zurich protocols, signed between twocounterparts.

The second part of the chapter was dedicated to the life of post-1915 Armenian community in Turkey with all its problems and experiences. 70 years of Soviet power, followed by the Karabakh conflict and the sealing of border by Turkey contributed to the further estrangement of Turkish Armenians with their kin in Armenia. The Turkification policy, which strictly restricted the visibility of non-Muslim elements to their communities, led to the silent mourning of the tragic past within the families and community.

CHAPTER 4.

THE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF 1915 *MEDZ YEGHERN* PERCEPTION AMONG THE ARMENIANS IN THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA AND IN THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

This final chapter is representing a platform where the voices of Armenians from Turkey and Armenia are presented. The study is composed of thirty in-depth semistructured individual interviews, conducted in Armenia and Turkey. The research group is representing mixed gender group from twenty one to thirty five years old, with Armenian parents from both sides. All fifteen interviewees from Armenia are the citizens of Republic of Armenia, with at least three generations living in Armenia. The Armenian respondents from Turkey are the Christian Armenians, graduates from the Armenian primary schools. All respondents were born in Istanbul, though the parents and grandparents of most of the respondents moved to Istanbul from the eastern Anatolia.

The decision to choose as a research group Armenians from Turkey and Armenia for the comparative study is determined by the lack of research, studying the psychological impact of 1915 trauma on the Armenian people. The Turkish academia is focusing mostly on the Armenian Diaspora, while the Armenians in Armenia are staying beyond the scope of academic research. Hrant Dink always used to repeat that two nations – Armenians and Turks – do not know each other. Paradoxically, the long years of invisibility and exclusion of the Turkish Armenians from the public sphere in Turkey led to the lack of understanding of their viewpoint of history. The focus of the Turkish academia on such topics as Armenian diaspora and Armenian terror contributed to the demonization and dehumanization of Turkish Armenians, who virtually had nothing to do neither with diaspora, nor with Armenian terror. The psychological impact of 1915 events on the daily life of those people was totally ignored. Moreover, even if some academicians conducted researches about the Armenians, they were always detaching the Armenians from the social-political context those people were living in, ignoring the causal relationship between past and present.

The chapter is divided into two sections, dealing first with the separate findings in Armenia and then Yerevan, and in the concluding part bringing the parallel between the

findings of both research groups', analysing the differences and similarities in their perception of 1915 *Medz Yeghern*.

4.1. 1915 MEDZ YEGHERN AS A VITAL COMPONENT OF ARMENIAN COLLECTIVE MEMORY

The negative image of Turkey is formed under four aspects of social life – historical, political, cultural, and as the result of three previous aspects the routine aspect. Karabakh conflict and Turkey's sealing of Doğu Kapı border in 1993 as the gesture of solidarity with Azerbaijan enhanced the negative perception of Turkey's image, enhancing Armenians' belief in Pan-Turkistic aspirations both from Turkey and Azerbaijan. Absence of diplomatic relations and communication between two countries does not let the negative image of Turkey to be transformed, what strengthens the mistrust and negative stereotypes among the Armenian people, still viewing modern Turkey through the image of Ottoman Empire in the beginning of twentieth century. Thus, the perception of most of the Armenian citizens in Armenia did not experience radical transformation, containing the features it had one hundred years ago.

4.1.1. Medz Yeghern: Reasons And Implications

It is impossible to underestimate the importance of *Medz Yeghern* and its attachment to the Armenian identity. All respondents from Armenia during the interview shared the similar opinion – “it is indispensable component of our Armenianness”. The respondents ascribed the similar notions to 1915 events, constructing the chain – pain, loss, survivals and rebirth. The physical elimination of Ottoman Armenians, heavy losses of historical homeland and cultural heritage at the same time were intertwined with the strong spirit of the Armenian nation, who despite the devastation, could find strength to continue the life, by establishing strong communities throughout the world:

“...It is the pain of my nation, the worst days of our history, and at the same time the chance to start a new beginning after the survival”. (L, female, 24).

Speaking of the reasons of *Medz Yeghern*, the respondents mentioned the religion of Armenians and the Pan-Turkism plans of Young Turks. All respondents mentioned, that Young Turks used the war and the uprisings of some segments among the Armenians as a convenient reason to exterminate the whole nation. Also some respondents pointed out on the hard-working and successful Armenians in Ottoman Empire, what made the local Turks and Kurds to be jealous of their merchantile skills. One of the respondents mentioned:

“...I think the main reason for the Armenian Genocide was the weakness of the Ottoman Empire and their loss of the Balkan wars, so they turned their eyes to the east and dreamt of a pan-Turkic empire by uniting all the Turkish people of the east, and in their way were the Armenians, which were Christians and the true owners of that lands. So in order to solve two problems unification and getting rid of the Armenians a Genocide was done”.(H, male, 27).

Another respondent mentioned the ideological foundations of Young Turks policy:

“...One of the main reasons, as to me, was a well elaborated state policy of converting a multi-national Ottoman Empire into a Unitarian state, the policy of religious intolerance and radicalism, as well nationalistic ideas that domineered the Turkish political elite of those days, aimed to unify all the Turkic tribes and nations into one superpower. Eliminating the first obstacle of the great plan would be destroying the Armenian population which was a majority in Eastern Anatolia and to prevent their future existence on those territories”.(A, female, 21).

Artak Shakaryan mentions economic factor as the important reason to empty the Empire from the Armenian residents:

*“...The economic factor was very important. The new emerging Turkish bourgeois needed a capital which it didn't possess – later we can see that Turkey paid for the military support with money gained from the seizure of Armenian property”.*³¹²

One respondent, who had large experience of communicating the Islamized Armenians, living in Turkey, rejected the argument of Armenians being exterminated because of Christianity. The respondent explained, that though many Armenians were forced to convert to Islam in order to save their families and own life, still their neighbours knew very well ‘who is converted in the village’, constantly accusing them in being *dönme* – converted Muslims, and continuing humiliate them. The respondent stressed, that it was “not religious, but national problem”. Another respondent also emphasized the national problem, rather than the religious one, bringing the Kurdish problem as an example.

As for the pre-1915 Armenian-Turkish relations, none of the respondents had mentioned the positive aspects of these relations, rejecting the Turkish official thesis of 500 golden years. All of them stressed the unequal conditions, brought by the millet system, for the Christian population of Empire, and though there was a rich class of Armenian elite, close to the Ottoman sultan, the ordinary people were discriminated under the Ottoman yoke:

“...Armenian rights (like all of the Christians) were strongly limited in the Ottoman empire. They didn't have the same privileges and freedoms as Turkish or Muslim people. Those restrictions and inequality were economical, judicial, educational etc.”(A, female, 27).

³¹²Interview with Artak Shakaryan, August 2014.

Among the respondents was consensus regarding three main indicators of Armenians, being discriminated in Ottoman Empire – they were not allowed to carry weapon; their testimonies in the court in trial with a Muslim were not counted; and they were wearing the clothes of specific colour to indicate their ethnic identity (as Greeks and Jewish did).

In regards to the consequences of 1915 events, the respondents mentioned, besides heavy territorial and physical losses, the interruption from the previous ordinary life and rapid dramatic change of lifestyle and whole history:

“...A whole nation was ripped from its roots and tossed away to rot and die, families scattered, half killed half lost never to be found, many Armenians converted to Islam just to save themselves. But the moral damage that they did to the Armenians is far worse than just the massacres”.(S,male,24).

One respondent noticed with sorrow, that the Turkish people lack the right information and do not possess proper knowledge on Armenian issue, adding that *“...They don't know anything about the Armenians life in country before 1915”.*(H, male, 27).

To the question, when they learned about 1915 events for the first time, those respondents who had ancestors from historical Western Armenia replied that they were told about 1915 narrative since very early age, and the talks in their family were quite frequent. On the other hand, the respondents who did not have roots from historical Western Armenia were comparatively later told the narratives, as usual, as the result of children's own curiosity, arisen during the school classes. In this terms, the school textbooks and curriculum can be mentioned as the first step, arising the question mark regarding 1915 events in Armenian children in Armenia. Washington based Armenian journalist Emil Sanamyan has mentioned: *“...among the major perception forming factors I would define education - formal and informal - and then you have new experiences, influences”.*³¹³

With reference to the place, which *Medz Yeghern* occupies in respondents' identity, all of them had noted, that 1915 trauma is still very deep, and constitutes the important part of their identity, however it can not be perceived as the axis of their identity. This argument develops the idea that the identity of Armenians in Republic of Armenia had also been shaped by the Soviet legacy, as well as Karabakh war. Nevertheless, the memory of the victims of 1915 events remains sacred for every Armenian, and to the question “Will you transfer the narratives of 1915 to your children?”, all respondents

³¹³Interview with Emil Sanamyan, June, 2015.

answered affirmatively, mentioning about the transgenerational transmission of *Medz Yeghern* memory as a duty: “...My duty as the heir of a Genocide surviving family to tell as much people as I can what really happened to my family and my nation”. (H, male, 27).

The sociologists, examining the transgenerational transmission of trauma, emphasize the importance of healing the trauma, which, otherwise, is being transmitting from generation to generation, with a hope, that they will eventually bring the solution to the issue. The same patterns are observed among the Armenians, who perceive the transmission of 1915 tragic narratives as a part of their duty, an important component of complete Armenianness, because otherwise to consign to oblivion the 1915 memory is equal to the betrayal of the memory of 1915 martyrs.

One of the respondents pointed to the importance of *Medz Yeghern* memory, however,

“...The Armenian genocide memory is inseparable part of my identity, nevertheless I find it very wrong to focus on it and perceive everything through the victimization. The most important and main aim should be the development of today’s Armenia”. (A, female, 22).

Prominent academician Vahram Ter-Matevosyan shares his outlook on the importance of 1915 tragedy for the Armenian people, claiming that, nor the heavy Soviet ideological propaganda, neither any other factor can decrease the importance of *Medz Yeghern* among the Armenian citizens in Armenia:

*“...The Armenian Genocide, either as a history or as a memory, lives in the minds and genes of the citizens of Armenia. Even the heavy ideological machine of the Soviet Union could not erase the tragic history of individuals and families. Each Armenian internalized the Genocide differently. The year of 1965 came to be the watershed between the past and future. After 50 years, Armenian Genocide as a tragedy and as a sense of injustice kept many identities alive, now, in the year of 2015, the perception of the Genocide became more mature and institutionalized. Perceptions and interpretations of the Armenian Genocide of course have many shades but one thing is certain, the Armenian Genocide, both as a legacy and tragedy still defines many identities both in Armenia and abroad”.*³¹⁴

4.1.2. Historical Western Armenia and Territorial Claims

Most of the Armenians in Armenia, similar to the Diaspora Armenians, have the feeling of incompleteness – Armenia for them is split into two parts – the historical Western Armenia and the current Republic of Armenia. Contrary to the current political borders, the imagination of Armenians in Armenia (as in Diaspora as well) still considers the

³¹⁴Interview with Vahram Ter-Matevosyan, July, 2015.

provinces of historical Western Armenia as the part of homeland. This feeling of inevitable loss and incompleteness creates endless sorrow and frustration among the Armenian people.

The current Republic of Armenia or *Hayastan* is perceived as a part of the Armenian homeland, it is a place, where Armenian is spoken everywhere, the streets are positioning the national pride full of flags and national posters, the place, where the survival and development of Armenian culture is guaranteed. Meanwhile the largest part of the historical Armenia, which is now within the Turkish border, is the center of Armenian glory and cultural Renaissance. The one century year old deprivation from the historical homeland led to the fetishization of Western Armenia by its descendants, who still perceive the native towns as they had been one hundred years ago.

One of the respondents explained his vision of Western and current Armenias:

“...Western Armenia is Home of my Ancestors, my real Home. But The RA is part of Armenia, I would say 30% of what we had, but nevertheless this is also our home, and I’m proud of my nation that after undergoing so much pain, wars, destruction and genocide, we were able to found ourselves a new country”.(H, male, 27).

Today, the state educational system in Armenia is serving as one of the most significant and critical mechanisms in rearticulating the historical memories and visions.³¹⁵ The school curricula and textbooks heavily emphasize the historical roots of Armenian civilization, which originated in the lands of historical Western Armenia. The text books also make frequent reference to the symbolic places in historical Western Armenia. The images of Mount Ararat are irreplaceable parts of the Armenian textbooks. Mount Ararat is the central symbol in the Armenian national consciousness, which is related to its religious and historical place it occupies in the national Armenian narrative. According to the Armenian reading of biblical history, Ararat is the mountain, on which Noah’s Ark landed. And for the Armenians, as successors of the first Christian state in the world, this affiliation of the Biblical Ararat has a sacred importance. The numerous songs and art compositions of Ararat transmit that strong anguish and romantic attachment to the Mount. As one of the interviewees from Yerevan explained,

“...The Mount Ararat is seen from our window very clearly. It seems so close, that when I was a child, me and my sister wanted to reach there on foot. This visibility and proximity to the Mount creates a psychological trauma in you, as it reminds of the tragic pages from your history, of heavy territorial and cultural losses. Our roots

³¹⁵Apple and Christian-Smith, 1991, Gellner, 2006, in “Constructing ABD”.

are stemming from there, and now we have to look at this mountain from the far, as foreigners, while people beyond the border do not even understand, how precious Ararat to us".(S, male,28).

Another respondent told the story of his Italian friend, who was not aware of Ararat's current location:

"...Armenia is located at the piedmont of Ararat, which untiringly looks at us, reminding of being capted by the Turks. Once my Italian friend, visiting Yerevan, asked me if he can see Ararat, and he was quite surprised to learn that it is located in the Turkish territory. It was very surprising for him, after meeting numerous images of Ararat Mount in Yerevan starting from the posters in the streets finishing with the famous Armenian cognac brand Ararat".

Another responded added, that "For instance, some Russians don't even know that Ararat is in Turkey, they are sure, it is in Armenia".(A, female, 27).The mount of Ararat is considered as: *"the holy place for any Armenian, it is the part of soul and identity. Of course there are the ancient capital Ani, and Van. All of them represent the part of our history, which no one can erase".(M, male, 28).*

Those of the respondents, who visited historical Western Armenia, were deeply disappointed by the striking difference between their imagined *Hayastan* and the real lands:

"...It is my dream to see my ancestors homeland. But whenever I see the photos of half destroyed churches with no single Armenian in that lands – I can't explain what a devastating storm of emotions is evoking in me. The fact that this was the centre of your history, where throughout 3000 years the Armenian culture was cultivating, and then you are kicked of from your homeland, you lose everything, your past is rejected, and this is not enough moreover you see the half-dead land. How can I describe the palette of feelings with one word? Well, I think it's being helpless, loss of strenght. You understand that you can do nothing with that situation, and that causes big pain". (A, female, 30).

Another respondent, who had never been to historical Western Armenia, said that such visit will cause only pain:*"...I never visited Western Armenia. But I have seen many videos, and I am afraid nobody would be happy to see it for real".(M, male, 30).*

Another respondent shared the similar idea: *"I feel extremely uncomfortable visiting the actual Western Armenia. Abandoned places, reminders of massacres are not what it should be like today".(L, female, 24).*

Almost all respondents rejected the term Anatolia while speaking of historical Armenian lands, suggesting that it was *artificially label-coined for Western Armenia in the last century*. Instead they preferred to use the term *Western Armenia*. As another respondent added,

“...I would not use it describing the land of my ancestors, but to mark a geographical territory it is precise. Either to call it Western Armenia or Eastern Anatolia, what really matters is that Armenians have been the indigenous ancient population of this geographical territory”.(A, female, 21).

Another respondent was rejecting the term eastern Anatolia, by referring to it as following: *“...Western Armenia is the bulk of historical Armenia where the Armenian nation was formed. No, it is not eastern Anatolia, it is the Armenian Highland”.*(G, male, 27).

The images of native towns in Western Armenia are still very alive among many Armenian citizens, as if they were born there. Most of the respondents spoke of the places in Western Armenia in a highly idealized way, telling about the *“cold and fresh water of Van Lake, full of delicious tarekh³¹⁶ or beautiful nature of Bitlis”.*

Artak Shakaryan claims that there is no need to fix on Western Armenian lands, as such approach does not have practical implications, however the Turkish government could make a small gesture to the Armenian side, what would be highly important for the further reconciliation:

*“...There is no practical need to fix on the Armenian lands; yes it's important for us in terms of being a cradle of Armenian civilization. Nevertheless, there is no practical meaning in it anymore. If one day Turkey decides to give back – let us just imagine for a minute – the Armenian lands, the 3 maximum 5 million Armenian population isn't enough to populate that much territory. However, it would be a very important symbolic step from the Turkish government's side if they granted a small part of the historical Armenian land, such as Ararat mountain or Ani city in Kars or if they created special conditions for an opportunity to buy on special conditions the lands in Western Armenian native towns of their ancestors. That would be a very important and meaningful act symbolizing its respect to the past and to the Armenian people”.*³¹⁷

Two respondents agreed that Western Armenia is the inseparable part of their history; at the same time they do not consider it anymore the part of their homeland, as they live in Republic of Armenia, which is their current Homeland, and would prefer to focus on the development and flowering of current Homeland, rather than on the unreachable Western Armenia: *“...It is not ours anymore and we should accept it. I think that one should keep something which belongs to him, if he can't then accept and live with it”.*(A, female, 22).

³¹⁶*Inci kefali* in Turkish.

³¹⁷Interview with Artak Shakaryan, August 2014.

A similar opinion was expressed by another respondent, for whom the historical Western Armenia is a historical homeland – *“exactly historical, which was in history. But not anymore”*.(L, female, 24).

Another respondent, who had already visited the historical Western Armenia, claimed that most of the Armenians, being deprived from these lands for a long period of time, are mystifying them, without understanding that in fact the situation in today eastern Anatolia is not favorable enough to go and settle there: *“...the local residents prefer to move to Istanbul and settle there, as Istanbul provides much more opportunities for the personal development”*. (S, female, 24).

Some Armenians, though still possess the belief one day to go back to the lands of their ancestors, still realize that the current political status quo can hardly satisfy their desire. Some respondents mentioned about the Kurds, living now in the towns of their ancestors. Moreover, most of the respondents to the question “Would you agree to go and live in the town of your ancestors, if the Turkish government one day provide the dual citizenship to the descendants of 1915 events’ survivors”, replied that they will go back to live there only in case if these lands are independent from the Turkish rule, otherwise they do not imagine themselves living there, as they will constantly live with the feeling of insecurity, waiting for new massacres:

“...The Armenians are still hated in that land; we all remember well what happened to Hrant Dink. How can we go and settle there after all? To wait until they massacre us again?”.(H, male, 27).

The insecurity factor is directly stemming as the result of 1915 traumatic perception. The academician Ervin Staub suggests that trauma creates strong feeling of vulnerability, as the victims think that if once they were exposed to such brutal act of violence, then it can happen again.³¹⁸

In Armenia and abroad, several touristic companies organize the tours to the Western Armenia, calling them pilgrime tours. One of such young participants of the tour to the Western Armenia shared her experiences from the tour in the article, where the author is claiming that seeing the current conditions of historical Western Armenia provoked her pain and deep disappointment. And similar feeling share other Armenian pilgrims:

³¹⁸Ervin Staub, *Healing and Reconciliation*, p.264, in Richard Hovhannisian (ed.), *Confronting the Armenian Genocide. Looking backward, moving forward*, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, 2003.

“...What happens when the idealised memory is facing the material reality? Disappointment, anger, frustration. The Armenians say that the memories of Armenian Genocide are integral part of their life. Even if some traumas were not transmitted from elder generations to the youngest ones, the stories told by the survivors to their children are always alive in the Armenian collective memory. And they feel a direct responsibility to continue the fights against the injustice that was done to their ancestors. But what makes them to do that pilgrimic trip and why, if it hurts their pride? They want to see how much is the homeland perception that is living in their imaginary world is correspondending the reality. They are coming to find the Armenian steps, the steps of Armenian culture, and if it's possible – the house of their ancestors, from which they were deprived by force. And when they see the lands without any trace of Armenian culture, moreover, the picture of Ani city with that humiliating monument, telling 'how the Armenians entered the city and killed local Muslim population' or Van Akhtamar with the Turkish flag in the middle of the island is increasing the trauma more and more. I think the Turkish government should form a more sensitive approach to this issue and understand that those people are still experiencing the trauma, and each time they see the historical Armenian lands full of anti-Armenian symbolics, that increases their trauma and makes it deeper. In this case no conversation about the genuine healing can take place. Moreover, even if the Armenian pilgrims meet an Armenian there, they turn out to be the Islamized Armenians, and what should they feel in this case?”³¹⁹

If the idea of giving back the Armenian historical provinces to their true owners – descendants of survived Ottoman Armenians, seem fantastic to some respondents, the idea of financial restitution seems very real and significant:

“...It's not real, no country will do so. Turkey should pay the financial compensation. People lived there for centuries, cultivated life, which was barbarously halted and devastated. The crime should be recognized, the devastating cultural and economic losses compensated, and the justice should be restored”. (M, male, 28).

As the findings show, the Armenians in Armenia (similar to Diaspora Armenians) possess the images of historical Western Armenia, formed under narratives transformed within the family, what creates deep psychological trauma. From the other hand, they understand that it is necessary to focus on the current Republic of Armenia, which is their virtual Homeland.

4.1.3. The Domestic Stereotypes And Concerns

The traumatized perception of 1915 events and Turkey's blockade of Armenia after the Karabakh conflict worsened the negative stereotypes and mistrust to Turkey. Despite the absence of any reference to Karabakh factor in the interview questions, most of the respondents mentioned Turkish-Azerbaijani cooperation against Armenia as one of the main factors leading to mistrust to Turkey. Though none of the respondents perceived

³¹⁹Article of the Lebanese Armenian Araz Kojayan, who visited the historical Armenian with Armenian Youth delegation, “Guidance on visiting Western Armenia”, published on 12 December 2014, in Armenian language, available at <http://akung.net/am/?p=42212>

Turkey as a military threat, the fact that she is constantly supporting Azerbaijan strengthens many Armenians' belief in Pan-Turkism ideology implemented by both countries against Armenia.

One of the respondents mentioned that Turkey should not interfere into the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, letting both sides to regulate their own affairs, on bilateral format:

"...In my opinion before talking about any retributions Turkey should firstly forget the so called Pan-Turkism and their aspirations of expanding to the east in an effort to establish a Caliphate; they should acknowledge the fact that we Armenians have the right to live on our land and never threaten our national security by closing borders and trying to suffocate us. Secondly,. Turkey should never interfere in the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict; which should only be settled by these two countries by peaceful means".(H, male, 27).

Another respondent brings parallels between Turkey's 1915 policy towards the Armenian population and today's regional isolation of Armenia by Turkey:

"...The difficult economic situation in Armenia because of the, blockade by Turkey is a consequence of the frozen Turkish-Armenian relations and, accordingly, has a connection with the genocide. Turkey has to pay for the material damages to Armenians. The responsibility is laying on Turkey as well, because of its economic pressure on Armenia". (S, female, 24).

Turkey's foreign policy in the South Caucasus region strengthens the belief in anti-Armenian conspiracy theory among the Armenian citizens; Turkey-Azerbaijan-Georgia trilateral regional energy projects bypass Armenia, leaving her behind the opportunity to benefit from the regional cooperation, what enhances the negative perception of Turkey by Armenians, hence, the speeches of the Turkish officials in favor of Armenian-Turkish rapprochement are perceived as insincere: *"...Their words and actions are not coinciding, this proves once again that Armenians are right in not trusting the Turkish people".(S, male, 26).*

4.1.4. About The Responsibility Of Turkish Citizens And Importance Of Progressive Turkish Intellectuals

The responses from Armenians to the question "Whether the new generation of Turkish people is guilty for *Medz Yeghern*", can be divided into three main groups.

The first group of respondents think that the new generation, though not being guilty in terms of not being the direct perpetrators, still is guilty in terms of being indifferent to the truth, denying what happened and even justifying it:

"...They are guilty as much as they reject the Armenian sufferings, lost and broken destinies, caused by the brutal violence of their ancestors, and to justify the crime

of the perpetrators is equal to being perpetrator themselves, even from the legal point of view". (S, female, 28).

The second group of respondents think that the new generation is not guilty as they never had an opportunity to learn the truth:

"...New generation is not guilty for Armenian genocide, but it was brought up in hate speech and intolerance against Armenians, though it is not directly their fault but that of the government. Turkish people are unaware, truth is deliberately concealed of them, and this is the most serious reason of misunderstanding between our nations" (A, female, 22).

And the third group of respondents expressed their disturbance over the alarming situation of human rights in Turkey, intolerance towards other ethnic and religious minorities, and hatred towards Armenians, concluding that they believe 1915 events can repeat themselves one day:

"...No, they are (new generation) not guilty, but I think if there is an opportunity to repeat Armenian genocide, again they will do it. We can see what happens in Syria, there are so many Islamist Turks going and joining the war against Christians, and they haven't any tolerance towards the other ethnicities and religions" (M, male, 28).

The Turkish human rights activists and intellectuals, who are fighting for the violated rights of the Armenians, are perceived with sympathy by the most of the respondents. Some respondents were skeptical regarding the possible changes, that the Turkish liberals can bring:

"...They (the liberal Turkish citizens) are still marginal and cannot contribute to the qualitative changes. It means little to me. They will bring little positive change". (G, male, 27).

For other respondents, Turkish people of liberal background should always be appreciated as they constantly seek to create a difference:

"...only Hrant Dink alone raised so many question marks, broke so many taboos and barriers, those people should never give up fighting for justice, and we, Armenians, should appreciate their courage and attachment to the humanist ideas". (A, female, 27).

Among the respondents were people, who already had contacts with the Turks, whom expressed the hope that the situation will slowly change due to the progressive members of society, who are the real patriots of their country, as they want to live in peace with history:

"...I think nowadays many Turkish intellectuals and the new generation know about the Armenian Genocide and feel ashamed for what their ancestors had done and they want to wipe that mud from their face and don't want to live in contempt anymore, so I think yes in time they would bring positive change". (H, male, 27).

To the question, what does the recognition of Armenians' sufferings by Turkey mean for them, *the restoration of justice* was common in the responses of all participants. Some of the respondents also mentioned that it is the only path to true democracy in Turkey:

"...Until the Turkish people are resisting facing the black pages from the history, permanently covering up them with artificial white sheets, the country will never be democratic. People should know what their ancestors did in order to prevent the repetition of such cases in the future. With mutual respect and tolerance the democratic path will be reached". (K, female, 28).

Another respondent connected the progress of the Turkish society to the Armenian question with larger access to the alternative information, different from the official propaganda:

"...In recent years, Turkish youth were more likely to explore alternative history, access to Internet, studying abroad, and many others. That is what has given some positive results among the Turkish youth in terms of recognition of their past. They are not so much. It's a long process, but the main thing is to start that process. Recognition of the genocide is inevitable". (S, male, 24).

Regarding the question whether Turkey fails to recognize 1915 events as genocide because of the Armenian people' territorial claims, the overwhelming majority agreed, but at the same time added the presence of strong psychological barrier to admit the shameful act of the past, to admit that the past was not always full of glory and victories:

"...Just imagine for a moment, that you learn that the stories you were told are false, that in fact there were so many false stories you were taught about, and you were perceiving as an enemy the people who were in fact the victims of brutality by your own ancestors. The cultural values that those people throughout three thousand years were cultivating in these lands were destroyed and the people were killed. How are you going to cope with that feeling? That is a difficult psychological process, even in some instances I feel bad for them". (K, female, 28).

From fifteen respondents, three of them pointed out the necessity of the Armenian side to stop the territorial claims; moreover, one of the respondents mentioned that Armenia has to specify her claims to the Turkish side, as *"we want everything and at once, which does not lead us to any consensus. We should be more specific and realistic". (A, female, 22).*

None from the respondents expressed doubt that after 100 Anniversary the 1915 traumatic memory among the Armenian people will subside. Moreover, about five respondents are sure, that the campaigns for 1915 recognition will rise to a new level. The main reason for the continuation of pushing for recognition is the fact, that justice

is not restored yet: “...I think it will intensify, as long as justice is not done there will be the Armenian cause and Armenians are resilient people, we will continue”. (H, male, 27).

Another respondent mentioned the interrelevance between the denial and enhancement of the importance of 1915 memory among the Armenians, claiming that if one day the Turkish government recognizes the Armenians’ sufferings, the antagonism of *Medz Yeghern* may slow down:

“...The hatred and enmity caused by the Armenian Genocide will not decline after a century if the Turkish government will continue to reject it. When the truth is recognized, and Turkey apologize for the committed crime, the wounds of million Armenians would get healing and people would commemorate Armeniagenocide without frustration, as they do today, everytime trying to remind to Turkey about its responsibility to speak the truth, first of all to her own people”. (S, male, 26)

4.1.5. Expectations From The Turkish Side And Path To Reconciliation

The prominent psychologist Judith Lewis Herman mentions the importance of trauma healing for recovery both the individual victims, and restoration of social order. Only when the truth is recognized, the healing process can be started. That is the only path to the genuine reconciliation.³²⁰

Armenians, similar to other traumatized groups, whose trauma until nowadays stay unhealed, are transmitting their traumatic memory, speaking about the painful past and they want the whole world to acknowledge the injustice done towards them; but the only medicine, as Hrant Dink used to mention, “can only be given by Turks”.³²¹

“...Recognition does not necessarily mean material compensation, but mostly a moral one. It is the resettlement of justice, end of century-long hatred and hostility, chances of normalization, awareness of Turkish people of their own history and the maturity of the society to face the past”. (A, female, 21).

Armenians believe that the genuine reconciliation can only come with the trauma healing, brought by Turkey’s recognition of *Medz Yeghern*. The pre-requisite of opening the border by Turkey was mentioned by all respondents. And the third pre-requisite is the neutrality of Turkey in Karabakh conflict:

³²⁰Judith Lewis Herman, “*Trauma and Recovery*”, M.D. New York, 1942, p.1.

³²¹Hrant Dink, *Two close peoples, two far neighbor (İki Yakın Halk İki Uzak Komşu)*, Hrant Dink Foundation Publications, 2009. The English edition of the book was published in October 2014 by Gomidas Institute.

“...The first step to reconciliation is to refuse the prerequisites. Firstly, Turkish government should take responsibility and acknowledge the evident facts of the genocide, as its denial is more of a shame for a 21st century civilized country. The Turkish-Armenian normalization should not be tied up to Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In response to this, Armenia may go to certain compromise such as not bringing up the question of territorial claims or at least not setting them as a pre-requisite of normalization. As far as I know, Genocide recognition was not a pre-requisite of 2009 protocols. Thus, Turkey should take similar steps of avoiding pre-requisites, if it is really interested in settling peace between two countries”.(A, female, 30).

The reconciliation is a psychological process; people should be ready to accept each other. This should be done through acceptance, forgiveness, retribution and mutual understanding. For the overwhelming part of Armenian people it is extremely difficult to imagine themselves living in peace with their Turkish neighbors, to get rid of entrenched negative stereotypes and establish good relations based on mutual trust. The hostility is lasting so long, that the emancipation from the traumatized perception seems a hard task to be achieved. Moreover, the continuing insultings of the Armenians by Turkish politicians and the Turkish radicals is strengthening the apprehensions of the Armenian side.

One of the respondents expressed assurance that Armenians are actually ready and, moreover, want to forgive the Turks, but first Turkey should stop denying the Armenian people's sufferings:

“...but how to forgive one, who does not want to be forgiven? Moreover, he blames you in the crime, which is insane! I am against establishing bilateral relations without the genocide recognition. For instance, as for me, I could never trust to Turks.” (A, female, 27).

According to another respondent, by recognizing 1915 events and coming in terms with the past, Turkey will glorify herself, putting the country on a new level:

“...I do not understand the reason to deny, as the recognition will definitely raise the prestige of Turkey and emancipate her from constant pressure from the outside. As for me, both sides should start negotiations and understand the demands of each other, coming to the common conclusion”. (S, male, 26).

Some respondents assumed that the communication between the two sides, even without the immediate recognition of the Armenian claims for genocide may also bring two nations closer to each other, increasing their chances to reconciliation. Artak Shakaryan brings as an example the case of Armenian migrants from Gyumri, working in Turkey, asserting that the people-to-people contact helps to mitigate the mistrust.³²²

³²²Interview with Artak Shakaryan, August 2014.

Journalist Emil Sanamyan claimsthat Turkey's assistance to Armenia may affect people's attitude towards the country: *"If Turkey never apologizes but instead begins to assist Armenia in various fields that too would change attitudes in Armenia and make genocide less relevant"*.³²³

One respondent emphasized the importance of knowing each other first and then only to start speaking of reconciliation. Both Armenians and Turks do not know each other, the contacts are taking place only between the limited number of people, as a rule, between social activists, involved in various projects organized by NGO's, meanwhile most of the ordinary citizens do not benefit from that contacts. That is why firstly it is nessecary to bring people to dialogue, to "make themget used to each other", and then the talks on reconciliation canbe started:

"...Since old times it passed that Turks are bad and Armenians are bad. The diplomatic relations should be established, the border should be opened. After that slowly two nationswill start to know each other. Everyone is going forward with the stereotypes, and stamped ideologies, there should be contact and dialogue, first to know each other, to understand each other, and then later to start to talk about the main issues. This psychological barrier should be broken, it is important to see in each other a 'human being', who has similar troubles and anxieties, not different from ours". (M, male, 30).

Another respondent, who had an experience of communicating with Turkish people before, suggested separating the Armenian-Turkish relations at state level, and ordinary people-to-people relations. The geographical proximity to each other one day will lead to the inevitability of economic and other cooperation:

"... For instance, Greece is leading free trade with Turkey, though none of the Greeks question the Pontus genocide. The territorial issues, genocide recognition issue should not be related to the normalization process between two countries. There can be negotiations regarding the economic and other strategic issues, but I am against the negotiations over Armenian issue. The genocide is not the subject to negotiations, we have nothing to prove, it was proved long time ago, it's now up to Turkey to have the courage to recognize it. Speaking of ordinary people, for Armenians in Armenia the Turkish people are associated solely with 1915 events, and it shouldn't be surprising, as they didn't have any contact with the Turks in their everyday life, and the only image they have about the Turks is the image of 1915 perpetrators". (S, female, 24).

For some respondents the recognition of Medz Yeghern alone does not have any importance, if it does not lead to the change in the Turkish system, putting the end to the pressure and insults towards the Armenian identity: *"The words without actions have no significance for me. Turkey could restore the Armenian churches in Western*

³²³Interview with Emil Sanamyan, June 2015.

Armenia; open the sea ports what would help our economy to develop and many other points can be listed. (S, male, 26).

Some respondents suggested that Turkey could make a gesture of good will for the beginning, what would reduce the hostility while contributing to the building of reliable relations between two countries. As a scholar of International Relations, Vahram Ter-Matevosyan suggests that Turkey could return the city of Ani which would be a symbolic step, expressing Turkey's good will and sincere intentions. The city Ani in Kars³²⁴ has been abandoned since late-Middle ages to Armenia. It has neither strategic nor symbolic importance for Turkey, however, its significance for the Armenian nation is beyond words. It could pave the way for some constructive steps. Later, the churches and worship sites could be returned to the Armenian Apostolic Church.³²⁵

Ter-Matevosyan believes that Armenia should keep thinking about producing a comprehensive strategy, which can make Turkey to accelerate the revision of its history. To do that, Armenians, Turks and others should not only keep producing high quality scholarly works, but also insist Turkish government to radically change its handling of the affair. He also mentioned the failure of Turkey to react appropriately to the Armenian gesture for relations normalization, what increased the desire of the Armenian side to continue the campaign for recognition:

"For the past six years, the Armenian government, with the support of the international community, created an opportunity for Turkey to ease possible tensions that reconciliation could bring. Armenia gave an opportunity to Turkey to proceed with the normalization of the bilateral relations without necessarily recognizing Armenian genocide at first. Turkey did not appreciate the favorable circumstances and now it has to pay for that. Armenia along with the Diaspora institutions should file legal cases and demand Turkey to pay compensation for each lost, stolen property according to the market price".

4.2. TURKISH ARMENIANS SPEAK: THE PERCEPTION OF 1915 MEDZ YEGHERN AMONG THE TURKISH ARMENIANS

This chapter is dedicated to the perception of 1915 events among the Turkish Armenians, exploring the social and psychological effect of it on their daily life, as well as the main factors that revitalize the 1915 memory, keeping it alive. What does it

³²⁴The city Ani is known in the Armenian history as the 'City of 1001 Church', which was a capital of Armenian kingdom during the Bagratids Dynasty (10-11th centuries).

³²⁵Interview with Vahram Ter-Matevosyan, June, 2015.

mean to be an Armenian in post-1915 Turkey, and how do people reconcile with their tragic past and continue their life in Turkey? Those are the main research questions that has been evaluated in this chapter. Every Turkish Armenian might be regarded as a living document, and those people were deprived for a long period of time from the opportunity to speak in a loud voice their stories, there was only a silence from their side, as they were staying invisible in this society. The wounds of 1915 were still too recent in order to recall them, and there was no time to fix it, as they had to continue their lives.

The recently emerged thaw in the political environment in Turkey brought the profuse publications by both Turkish and Armenian researchers on the Armenian-Turkish relations and the perception of Armenian people. If in past the Turkish publications were exclusively focusing on the Armenian Diaspora and Karabakh conflict issues, following the strictly outlined nationalistic contours of the research, and never touching the taboo topics, today the large number of academic works conduct the research of Armenian identity as their primary topic. Some Turkish civil activists and intellectuals perceive the Armenian cause as their own cause, feeling guilty before the Armenian people, and believing that only by raising their own voices for the sake of solidarity can they restore the ethics and contribute to the democratic future of Turkey.

Besides the fifteen interviews, the oral stories from the various academic publications were utilized. As some of the respondents did not feel comfortable to speak on the audiotape, I had to write down their answers. The interviews for the Turkish Armenians were repeating the questions composed for the Armenians in Armenia with the difference of including the sector, dedicated to the socialization process in Turkey, their life experiences and impact of political environment and the perception of Turkish political discourse towards the Armenians. The special emphasize was put on to the role of media in representing the Armenian image.

What can give the research of *Medz Yeghern* perception, generally speaking – the perception of past? The past is defining everything – from the perception of Armenians of the Turkish people and finishing with their self-perception towards the nationalistic political discourse. 1915 *Medz Yeghern* is the axial barrier which the Turkish Armenians probably could overcome by time, however the constant and repeated

discrimination continued after 1915 did not let them to bury the traumatic past.³²⁶ The case of Turkish Armenians has significance in terms of understanding how can the victims reconcile with their past and continue to cohabit after such a devastating event as 1915 *Medz Yeghern*.

4.2.1. Life In Post-1915 Turkey: How Does It Feel To Be An Armenian In These Lands?

This subchapter introduces the main factors that shape the perception of 1915 among the Turkish Armenians while revitalizing the traumatic memory of past.

Almost all respondents had survivors from 1915. It should be mentioned, that if for the Armenian Diaspora, as well as the Armenians in Armenia, the last period of communication with Turks was 1915-1917, after that the link is interrupted until nowadays. All respondents mentioned the term displacement while speaking of the conditions of Armenians in the Turkish society in comparison with today situation:

“...How should people feel, living in their own country, where their ancestors lived, their civilization was flourishing, yet being perceived as foreigners and moreover, enemies? Hardly calming down after the horror of Armenian massacres, later they were exposed to the ‘economic genocide’ – Varlık Vergisi, and continuing assimilation. Armenians still have to fight for their identity preservation, proving that they are not less equal citizens as other Turks. Why should we bear all that discriminations in the lands, where we always lived?”. (S, female, 25).

Some of the respondents mentioned that their grandparents came from Anatolia after *Medz Yeghern*, as there was no point to stay in the town, where no Armenian church or schools was left. One of the respondents told that his grandfather came to Istanbul from Diyarbakir, but there were some Armenians who converted to Islam in order to be able to continue their life. He added, that if his grandfather wouldn't leave in time, most probably he also would convert. The Armenian writer Mıgırdiç Margosian published the book called *Gâvur Mahallesi*, what literally means the district of infidels—was a district in Diyarbakir, where the Armenians lived, and the local people were calling them ‘infidels’.

As one of the respondents mentioned in his interview,

“...My grandfather was from Sasson, he escaped to Diyarbakir and stayed there for a while. When he wanted to come back under the Law, that allowed the

³²⁶For more information on the meaning of past for post-1915 Armenian-Turkish relations see Nikolaus Schrodtt, *Modern Turkey and the Armenian Genocide: An Argument About the Meaning of the Past*, Contribution to Political Science, Springer International Publishing, Switzerland, 2014.

Armenians to return to their settings, my grandfather was put behind the conditions – in case if he wants to come back to his home town, he has to sign the paper giving up all the property he had in the town, from his house to land. And that was the fate of many Armenians in that time. The Turkish refugees from Balkans were settled in the place of Armenians, and those people had to start their life from the very bottom”. (I, male, 35).

Among the reasons that led to 1915 events, most of the respondents mentioned the economic success of the Armenians and the jealousy to their property. One of the respondents mentioned that:

“...even today some Turks still think that the Armenians are the richest ones in Istanbul. Recently one of the high ranked officials during the meeting did the same statement. Such expressions are creating the tension in the society and there will always be some ignorant people, who would perceive such expressions in a perverted way”. (I, male, 35).

One of the respondents along with the economic reasons mentioned the existing mistrust between the Young Turks and Armenian Dashnaks Parties. At the time he mentioned that if the Armenians would not be Christians, they would not be exposed to the process, leading to destruction, as they would be already assimilated:

“...I wouldn't claim that the Armenians were exterminated because of religion only; however, the constantly mentioned superiority of the Armenians in the economic field, and their contributions to Art and other fields also had their contribution for the destruction plan implementation”. (B, male, 28).

One of the respondents, speaking of the vitality of 1915 memory among the young generation, mentioned that:

“...Our first and second generations were more sensitive about 1915 events, but young generation is slowly getting out of the 1915 shadow. I can say that today's young Armenian generation is more sensitive about the human rights situation in country, the ongoing discrimination against the Armenians is intolerable, and they want to change it. People here until nowadays still perceive the Armenians as guests – you are a guest here, and they can kick you out of this country in every moment”. (S, female, 33).

Most of the respondents mentioned that their family members almost never spoke in home about 1915 events. Only when there were some gatherings in house with other relatives, the elders were sharing their tragic stories with each other. One of the respondents told the following about his childhood memories:

“... Though my family is from Tunceli, where they experienced the horrible days, my father never spoke about it. Sometimes, during the family gatherings, when he was relaxed after some rakı, I could get some information from him about his past, the things he told me left a strong imprint on me”. (A, male, 27).

Two respondents of fifteen mentioned the internet and TV as the primary source of learning about 1915 events, what shows that this topic had never been spoken in some Armenians' families:

"...For the first time I learnt about such a thing as 1915 from the TV news, when the French Parliament was discussing the Law of punishment for the Armenian genocide denial, and Turkish media was harshly criticizing it". (G, male, 25).

The Armenian social activist, head of *Nor Zartunq (New Awakening)* movement, based in Istanbul, Sayat Tekir shared his first memories of learning the truth about 1915:

"...Though Armenians are allowed to study in the Armenian schools, there are specific classes such as History or Geography that can be taught only by the Turkish teachers. For that reason, for the Armenian children it was impossible to learn anything about 1915 events during the History school. We had a class of Armenian Literature, and our teacher would frequently write the dates of birth and date of the Armenian writer on the blackboard, and we would always be curious – Why did so many Armenian writers die in 1915? And that 1915 date would stuck in my head, until I didn't learn the truth from my family".³²⁷

All respondents perceive the existing discrimination in the society as the continuation of 1915 events. The murders of Hrant Dink and Armenian soldier Sevag Balıkcı during his military service in Batman (on the anniversary of 1915 *Medz Yeghern* on 24 of April) awakened the Armenian identity; moreover, many Armenians began to research their past after the murder of Hrant Dink. One of the respondents mentioned:

"... The constant violations and humiliation of the Armenian identity in media are awakening our desire to stand up for our rights. The Turkification process always made the minorities to feel the whole tragedy of being a minority. All laws in the country are protecting the rights of majorities – Turks. Who will protect our right? When Hrant Dink was murdered, the police took the photo with his murderer holding the Turkish flag, as if he was a national hero; he cleaned the Turks from the bad Hrant! But can you show me someone more peace loving than he was? ". (K, female, 24).

Many respondents used the collocation "*Biz buraliyiz*", (We are the local people), while sharing their perceptions of 1915 events. The fact that the Armenians were emptied from the lands where they were autochthonous inhabitants is causing a big pain to the Armenians. The frequent usage of the collocation "*Biz buraliyiz*" also reveals the mistreatment to Armenians in the Turkish society, who does not perceive the Armenians as the local people, what increases the feeling of frustration among them. As one of the respondents mentioned, the Turkish educational curriculum, while mentioning about Anatolia, does not include any information on the ancient Armenian presence in these lands.

³²⁷Interview with Sayat Tekir, June, 2015.

The respondents, replying to the question regarding the consequences of 1915 events, mentioned the similar patterns – the deprivation from the previous life, which stayed in the ruined splinters of past, the inability to continue the productivity in social, cultural, economic and political aspects of life, loss of both material and spiritual heritages.

4.2.2. The Perception Of Historical Western Armenia And Position To The Territorial Claims

“Evet, biz Ermenilerin bu topraklarda gözümüz var.

Var, çünkü kökümüz burada. Ama merak etmeyin. Bu toprakları alıp gitmek için değil.

*Bu toprakların gelip dibine gömülmek için”.*³²⁸

Hrant Dink

Noteworthy to mention, that though most of the respondents’ ancestors came from Anatolian towns to Istanbul, the young generation does not feel a specific spiritual attachment to that lands. The first and second generation of survivors from the Armenian towns in Anatolia was sustaining that spiritual connection, but the third generation of young Armenians, being born in Istanbul, feels that Istanbul is their homeland, though they realize very well where their roots are coming from.

An interesting evidence of the strong connection existed between the historical Western Armenia and the Armenians, who were forced to leave it can be presented through the perception of Homeland of prominent American Armenian dramatist and author William Saroyan, born in the family of Armenian immigrants from Bitlis. Though William Saroyan was born in Fresno, he still could not feel that he belongs to that territory. When his uncle died, and they buried him in the graveyard, and returned home, Saroyan said: “Now we became Americans”.³²⁹

The Armenians living in Turkey do not have such strong attachment to their lands – they never left these lands, they see the ‘today’ condition of these lands, which are erased from the traces of Armenian physical and cultural presence. As one of the respondents explained,

³²⁸Yes, we, Armenians, have our eyes on these lands. Because our roots are there. But we do not want to take these lands from you, but to be buried there”. Hrant Dink.

³²⁹Tomo of Istanbul, interview of Yervart Tomasyan, given to Armenia Weekly newspaper. December 12, 2014.

“... My family is from Kayseri, but I didn't have an opportunity to visit our hometown yet. I think that we, the Turkish Armenians, do not have such strong nostalgia as Diaspora Armenians do, because these lands are very close to us, we live in this country, and we do not need a visa to get there, waiting at the border. I have an Armenian friend from Paris, her parents are from Yozgat. She said that when her family came to Turkey to visit the homeland, all that visa procedures and the feeling that they are coming as guests to their hometown hurted them a lot. This may be the reason why we are not so sensitive about the territories issue”. (K, female, 24).

Another respondent also mentioned that long disconnection with the native lands created fetishism among the Diaspora Armenians, who still has a belief to go back, while the local Armenians are very well aware of the current conditions in historical Armenian homeland, and none of the young generation would prefer to live there:

“...There is nothing left from the Armenians anymore; the churches are converted to mosques, the Armenians vineyards are destroyed, schools are used as the governmental buildings”. (I, female, 23).

With regards to the question of territorial claims, none of the respondents supported the idea of Turkey giving back the historical Western Armenian province. One of the interviewers noted that:

“...even if on the theoretical level one's imagine such a thing, in practice it will lead to the conflict. Nobody will ever give its lands, and Turkey is not an exception. The territorial integrity of Turkey is an important issue related to its national security”. (S, female, 33).

Anatolia is perceived as an inevitable part of Armenian history, the cradle of Armenian civilization. Despite that fact, the Turkish Armenians do not prefer to speak about any territorial claims, first of all, as the citizens of Turkey; they do not want to be perceived as separatists, the second reason is the constant presence in these lands, well awareness of the social, economic and political situation in the country, what led them to be more realistic, assessing all risks of such claims for them.

4.2.3. Perception of Educational System in Turkey. Claims and Expectations From the Turkish Side.

The findings of the interviews showed that the main concern of the Turkish Armenians is the ‘restoration of damaged identity’. The expression done by Tomo of Istanbul can be used as the best definition of Armenian communities’ perception: The more visible you live, the more restful and peaceful you are. Otherwise, you suppress your identity. And it is very hard.³³⁰ Starting from the education system and finishing with media

³³⁰Tomo of Istanbul, interview of Yervart Tomasyan, given to Armenia Weekly newspaper. December 12, 2014.

coverage – all these aspects of social life are still continuing to displace the Armenians, as well as other minorities, from the official discourse.

The expression *“The more visible you live, the more restful and peaceful you are”* is explaining the strong desire of the Armenian generation to raise the awareness about their existence in this society by different means (the same may be applicable to the Kurdish issue).

The overwhelming part of the respondents criticized the existing education system, which is still demonizing the Armenians, and representing them as the source of all problems in Turkey. Taner Akçam made a brief overview of the Turkish schools textbooks³³¹ and the image of the Armenians that the books include, and the findings were indeed very saddening. The books characterize the Armenians as people “who are incited by foreigners, who aim to break apart the state and the country, and who murdered Turks and Muslims.”³³² The 1915 *Medz Yeghern* is described as a “a lie perpetrated in order to meet these goals, and is defined as the biggest threat to Turkish national security. Another threat to national security is missionaries and their activities”.³³³ The book continues with the statement, that in fact, the Ottoman Empire not only deport the Armenians because they were collaborating with the Russians, but also it did so to provide the safety of Armenians, deporting them to the “safe Syrian deserts”:

“Since the Armenians who engaged in massacres in collaboration with the Russians created a dangerous situation, this law required the migration of (Armenian people) from the towns they were living in to Syria, a safe Ottoman territory.”³³⁴ Despite being in the midst of war, the Ottoman state took precautions and measures when it came to the Armenians who were migrating. Their tax payments were postponed, they were permitted to take any personal property they wished, government officials were assigned to ensure that they were protected from attacks during the journey and that their needs were met, police stations were established to ensure that their lives and properties were secure.”³³⁵

³³¹The textbooks can be downloaded at the following link: See www.meb.gov.tr/2014-2015-egitim-ogretim-yiliinda-okutulacak-ilk-ve-orta-ogretim-ders-kitaplari/duyuru/7013, Introduction: Sept. 12, 2014.

³³²Taner Akçam, *Textbooks and the Armenian Genocide in Turkey: Heading Towards 2015*, December 4, 2014, Armenian Weekly Newspaper, Available at <http://armenianweekly.com/2014/12/04/textbooks/#prettyPhoto>

³³³Ibid.

³³⁴Commission (ed) Orta ogretim Turkiye Cumhuriyeti Inkilap Tarihi ve Ataturkculuk, (Middle School Education Republic of Turkey History of Turkish Revolution and Principles of Ataturk), 23, in Taner Akçam, *Textbooks and the Armenian Genocide in Turkey: Heading Towards 2015*, December 4, 2014, Armenian Weekly Newspaper.

³³⁵Commission (ed) Orta ogretim Turkiye Cumhuriyeti Inkilap Tarihi ve Ataturkculuk, (Middle School Education Republic of Turkey History of Turkish Revolution and Principles of Ataturk),

According to one of the respondents, *“The reason why do the Turkish school books do not mention the Armenian historical presence in Anatolian lands is obvious – in this case the logical question mark is arising in the head: if those lands were the historical homeland for more than three thousand years of the Armenians, where are the Armenians then?”*.(B, male, 28).

All respondents expressed a firm confidence, that the discrimination against the Armenian people in Turkey may be halted with the change of the educational system. The fact that the Turks are constructing their perception of the Armenian people since the very early age under the impact of school books, from which they learn that the Armenians are enemies and betrayers of the Turks, is explaining the existing discrimination towards them, as many Turks still perceive the Armenians based on the negative stereotype, constructed by the curriculum system. Moreover, Armenians themselves are learning the history about themselves from these books, what is contributing to the psychological trauma. As one of the respondents mentioned:

“...First we learn from the Turkish history books, what an ungrateful nation we are, and how many problems we created for the Turks in that time, who, despite the fact that we revolted, still were so much caring us that did their best to protect us, by deporting from all over the country to the safe zones such as the Syrian and Iraqi deserts. Then we come back home and learn the other side of history, understanding what a huge disparity between what we had been told in the school and what did our parents experienced”. (S, male, 32).

Beside the change of the educational system, the participants also mentioned the hate speech against the Armenians, promoted by Media and used by the politicians: *“If the high ranked person humiliates the Armenians in front of the whole nation, what should we wait from the ordinary citizens? Of course they will followsuit”*. (E, female, 23).

The respondents also expressed the sympathy towards the Turkish intellectuals and human rights activists, struggling for the minorities' rights in the country. By the other hand, from the fifteen participants five questioned the sincere intentions of that progressive group, as many of them 'only speak, but do not act'. As one of the respondents suggested,

“If, for example, any of them would really do something in practice for the Armenians, such as ensuring the return of any confiscated property to the Armenian community, it would increase the faith of Armenian people in the sincere intentions of those Turkish progressive minds. But still the fact that they are raising

their voices despite being threatened by the Turkish nationalists is already very meaningful". (R, male, 24).

For most of the respondents, the most vital claim is the qualitative change in the Turkish society, which will reconsider the previous principles and policies towards the minorities, putting an end to the continuing discrimination of its own citizens, as well as letting the Armenians to be visible in the different spheres of life, possessing all equal rights as other ethnic Turkish citizens do. Most of the respondents mentioned the importance of teaching the Turks the history of ancient Armenian presence in these lands, thereby once and for all cutting the entrenched stereotypes of Armenians being foreigners in this country.

For those Armenians, whose grandparents survived the 1915 massacres, to *'disappear from the society means to betray and disrespect the memory of their ancestors'*. Noteworthy to mention, that Armenians in Diaspora as well as in Armenia possess the same feeling – for them to preserve and continue their Armenianness is perceived as a duty, transmitted to them by their suffered ancestors.

The genuine reconciliation between Armenians and Turks can be reached only through apologize:

"...The government should apologize for the wrongdoings done to Armenians. There is still a street, named after the murder of Armenian people Talat Pasha; he is still considered a hero in this country. Turkey slowly is becoming more open to the dialogue, to the acknowledgment of the previous mistakes. Only by apologizing and changing the previous policy towards the minorities the government can ensure its citizens that they will not be discriminated anymore because of their non-Turkish identities. So it is very important not to apologize alone, but to bring the real change in the society. I do not say that this process will happen overnight, but I do believe that the day will come, and all ethnic and religious minorities will live in Turkey as members of a big family. That can be possible only when the government faces the past, and instead of hiding the black sides of history it will start to openly discuss them, in order to prevent their possible repetition in the future". (M, male, 28).

Concluding the chapter, the expression from one of the interviews, mentioned in Turkey's Armenians speak book, can be mentioned..."*And that would be the beginning of Great Turkey*".³³⁶

³³⁶Ferda Balancar, *The sound of silence: Turkey's Armenians Speak*, p.56.

4.3. CONCLUSION

The thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter is representing the theoretical framework which is the composition of theory of social perception and transgenerational transmission of trauma, which is borrowed from the social-psychological field, whereupon the relevance of the approach to the field of IR was also provided. The theory of social perception enables us to understand how the perception is constructed and what factors are shaping it, while taking into consideration the fact that 1915 *Medz Yeghern* is the historical trauma which is yet to be healed.

Besides the massive academic research, the cornerstone of the study represents thirty qualitative interviewees, fifteen of which were conducted in Istanbul and the rest in Yerevan, respectively. The utilized theoretical framework was used to analyze the interviews' findings.

The second chapter is an attempt to reconstruct the historical picture of pre-1915 Armenian community's life in Ottoman Empire and its coexistence with the Turkish people. The important role of the Armenians as well as their numerous contributions to the Ottoman heritage is provided.

The third chapter is dedicated to the evaluation of post-1915 political, social, economic and cultural conditions in the new established Turkish and Armenian Republics. The chapter is examining the political discourses and the important historical dates in both countries that shaped the perception of 1915 events and Armenian-Turkish relations.

And the final chapter is representing a platform, where the findings of conducted interviewees both in Turkey and Armenia are presented. By comparing two research groups' perceptions of *Medz Yeghern*, as well as expectations from the Turkish side, the general perceptual patterns of Turkish Armenians and Armenian citizens in Armenia are concluding the study.

4.4. MAJOR FINDINGS

Individuals' perception is strongly affected by the various factors, stemming from the social-cultural environment. The utilized theories of social perception argue that the social-cultural environment plays a significant role in shaping the individual's perception; from the other hand his own experiences represent a meaningful aspect in

shaping the perception. Thereby, the social perception is constructed under the impact of the current social context the individual exists and as soon as this social context is staying stable, the perception is also not exposed to any dramatic changes. In accordance with this argument, the historical, social, political and cultural environment of both Armenians in Turkey and Armenia were comprehensively examined.

Based on the findings of conducted interviewes, the study concludes that the perception of *Medz Yeghern* is constructed under the effect of discources of negative meanings, stemming from the bitter experience as the result of 1915 events. For the Armenians in Armenia the beginning of 20th century marked the last period of Armenian-Turkish active intercourse, what means that the traumatic memory of 1915 and negative perception of Turks did not experience any significant change and still is very strong; the negative perception was strengthened after 1993, when Turkey closed the border during the Karabakh war as a sign of solidarity with Azerbaijan. The sealing of the border and support to Azerbaijan in its isolation of Armenia from the regional projects are perceived by the citizens of Armenia as continuation of 1915 policy of Turkey, this time through political isolation.

Regarding the respondents of research in Turkey, first their childhood background was examined – in this terms the studying in Armenian primary school and keeping contacts with the other members of Armenian community was important. The Turkish Armenians did not speak much about the tragedy of past, still being afraid of the regime and unwilling to put their children under the danger. As usual, the conversation about the tragedy of 1915 started with the curiosity of children. Many respondents mentioned also, that such conversation was frequent during the family gatherings on holidays. Noteworthy, that some of the respondents even mentioned, that they learn for the first time about *Medz Yeghern* from TV news or internet. In case of the Armenians in Armenia, in some families whose ancestors were survivors of 1915, the traumatic past was frequently spoken. As the school textbooks in Armenia are emphasizing the importance of historical Western Armenia for the Armenian culture and history, the children are taught since the fifth grade the history classes, where they already obtain the first knowledge on 1915 events. However, the Armenian children in Turkey did not have an opportunity to study the history of their ancestors since the Ministry of Education of Turkey strictly controls the curriculum of the history classes.

To the question of reasons behind the *Medz Yeghern* many Armenians in Armenia mentioned Islamic religion as the main reason, as well as plans of Panturkism

realization by the Young Turks government and the Armenian properties confiscation with the aim to concentrate the capital in hands of Turks. Meanwhile the Armenians in Turkey did not mention the Christianity as the main reason, perceiving it as a mean, which was used against the ignorant masses in order to create the hatred towards the non-Muslim Armenians. The Turkish Armenians emphasized the economic and territorial issues as the main reasons leading to the 1915 events, as well as Armenian people's numerous successes in the various spheres, which provoked jealousy among the others. The jealousy as the reason was also mentioned by some respondents from Armenia.

The respondents in Turkey and Armenia ascribe different attributes to the image of historical Western Armenia. For the respondents in Armenia the historical Western Armenia (the term Anatolia is perceived in a negative way as an attempt of the Turkish historiography to cover up the past, by erasing several millennial presence of the Armenian people in that lands) is perceived as a vital and indispensable part of Armenian history. The Armenian culture is taking the roots in these lands, their ancestors were founding the cities and kingdoms in these lands – everything is still very alive and strongly present in the Armenian mindset. While speaking of historical Western Armenia, which is perceived as unite and collective value, the respondents usually mystify, by perceiving it as the wonderland, where one day they believe they will go back. Despite the fact that most of the respondents did not visit the historical Western Armenia, they have very strong spiritual attachment to these lands, which their imagination is still portraying as the past of Armenia. On contrary, the Turkish Armenians, though they are very well aware of the value and importance of historical Western Armenia (the respondents used the term Anatolia while speaking of these lands), they do not possess such spiritual connection as the Armenians in Armenia and Diaspora do.

The unhealed trauma of 1915 is heavily affecting the perception of Turkish people by the Armenian side. For many Armenians today's Turkey is not only the virtual neighbor, but also the continuation of the Ottoman Empire mentality. For that reason, the positive political development in Turkey and emergence of the progressive intellectual segment in the Turkish society are still perceived with suspicion and mistrust. The current regional isolation of Armenia by Turkey is deepening and strengthening the existing negative discourse among the Armenian citizens (two respondents used the term *economic genocide* while referring to Turkey's policy towards Armenia). As the result of

the sealing of the border, absence of diplomatic and people-to-people contacts the negative perceptions in Armenia are strengthening (the same is true about the Turkish negative perception of the neighbouring Armenia). The Turkish Armenians, on contrary, do not have such a collective negative image of whole Turkish nation as they live side by side with Turks, what let them to construct their perception not exclusively on the historical legacy of 1915, but on their daily experiences, gained from the social interactions with Turks. From the other side, the discrimination of the Armenians in Turkey and humiliations by the nationalist Turkish groups add to the traumatic perception of the Turkish Armenians.

All respondents in Armenia, while explaining the meaning of recognition of 1915 events as genocide by the Ottoman government, used the notion of *triumph of justice*. For them, the recognition means the victory of truth and restoration of historical justice, which is distorted for so many years by Turkey. To consign to oblivion the memory of *Medz Yeghern* is perceived by them as the betrayal and disrespect to the memory of Armenian martyrs of 1915. The prominent psychologists Judith Lewis Herman wrote:

"...Folk wisdom is filled with ghosts who refuse to rest in their graves until their stories are told. Murder will out. Remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims".³³⁷

With regards to the question, what are the claims and expectations to the Turkish side besides the 1915 *Medz Yeghern*, the respondents in Armenia mentioned the importance of moral and financial compensation to the descendants of 1915. Some respondents mentioned that it would be enough to return all confiscated properties to the Armenian Church and Armenian community. For the Turkish Armenians, the recognition of 1915 should lead to the change of attitude to the Armenians in the country. Respondents mentioned that merely recognition on words without any change in the society will still not change anything. For the Turkish Armenians the recognition of Armenians' sufferings is perceived as the pledge of democratic future of Turkey and the only path to effective reconciliation. One of the most significant preconditions for the healthy reconciliation should be the total change of the education system, which is still propagating the hatred towards the Armenians.

Some Armenians in Armenia are convinced that the dialogue with the Turks can be implemented only after the Turkish side apologize for *Medz Yeghern*, thereby the

³³⁷Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, M.D. New York, 1982, p.1.

contacts with the Turks without the initial apologize is not welcomed and encouraged. Meanwhile, some Turkish Armenians are criticizing such an approach, explaining it by the fact that the Turks first should know what happened in 1915 and then apologize. The problem is, according to them, that the Armenians in Armenia and Diaspora are boldly criticizing the Turks for being indifferent to the Armenian sufferings, while they do not understand that the Turkish educational system does not provide them with the eligible knowledge, representing the distorted version of history.

As pointed out before, the constant usage of hate speech towards the Armenians in media, as well as large usage of the word Armenian as equivalent to “undignified” by some Turkish politicians provides justification for many ordinary Turkish people to insult and discriminate the Armenian identity. The murder of Hrant Dink, Sevag Balıkcı, and constant threats by the Turkish nationalists “to continue the path of Ogün Samast”, who was the murder of Hrant Dink – all these contribute to the insecurity among the Turkish Armenians. Thus, if the Turkish Armenians have the perception of insecurity in Turkey on the individual level, the Armenians in Armenia have the perception of consternation by Turkey connected with Turkey’s support to Azerbaijan, who is perceived as the potential violator of truce.

The comparative study of the attitude towards 1915 *Medz Yeghern* contributed to the literature about the psychological impact of traumatic perceptions on the daily life of the Armenian people in Turkey and Armenia. Based on the argument that the social judgement is shaped by the social and cultural environment of the perceiver, the analysis of the social and political conditions of the Armenians both in Turkey and Armenia helped to identify the factors, which determines the *Medz Yeghern* perception. For the case of the Turkish Armenians it is the family and the community members who keep the memory of *Medz Yeghern* alive, as well as constant hate speech towards the Armenians in the country does not let the Turkish Armenians to forget the tragic past of 1915. In Armenia from the one hand it is the educational system with its strong emphasis to the historical legacy of 1915, as well as the family narratives of the Armenian citizens that keeps the memory viable, and from the other hand the military confrontation of Armenia with Azerbaijan and Turkey’s sealing of Doğu Kapı border in conjunction with constant connection of the Armenian-Turkish relations with Karabakh conflict contribute to the exacerbation of Turkey’s negative image, perceiving her policy as the continuation of anti-Armenian policy since 1915.

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APPENDIX 1

SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

**TABLE 2. SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF THE
RESPONDENTS AT YEREVAN**

	Age	Gender	Birthplace	Education	Current place of living
M	28	male	Yerevan	Bachelor Degree	Yerevan
H	27	male	Yerevan	Bachelor Degree	Yerevan
S	24	female	Yerevan	Bachelor Degree	Yerevan
S	28	female	Yerevan	Master Degree	Yerevan
A	22	female	Yerevan	Bachelor Degree	Yerevan
G	27	male	Yerevan	Bachelor Degree	Yerevan
A	27	female	Yerevan	Master Degree	Yerevan
K	28	female	Yerevan	Master Degree	Yerevan
S	24	male	Yerevan	Bachelor Degree	Yerevan
S	28	male	Yerevan	Master Degree	Yerevan
A	21	female	Yerevan	BachelorDegree	Yerevan
A	30	female	Yerevan	MasterDegree	Yerevan
M	30	male	Yerevan	Master Degree	Yerevan

L	24	female	Yerevan	Master Degree	Yerevan
K	27	male	Yerevan	Master Degree	Yerevan

TABLE 3. SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF THE RESPONDENTS AT ISTANBUL

	Age	Gender	Birthplace	Education	Current place of living
S	25	female	Sasoon	Bachelor Degree	Istanbul, Samatya
I	35	male	Sasoon	Degree	Istanbul, Samatya
B	28	male	Istanbul	Bachelor Degree	Istanbul, Kurtuluş
S	33	female	Istanbul	Master Degree	Istanbul, Bakırköy
G	25	male	Istanbul	Bachelor Degree	Istanbul, Samatya
K	24	female	Istanbul	Bachelor Degree	Istanbul Osmanbey
S	26	female	Istanbul	Master Degree	Istanbul,

					Samatya
S	32	male	Istanbul	Master Degree	Istanbul, Kurtuluş
I	23	female	Istanbul	Bachelor Degree	Istanbul, Kurtuluş
R	24	male	Istanbul	Bachelor Degree	Istanbul, Samatya
M	28	male	Istanbul	Bachelor Degree	Istanbul, Bakırköy
A	35	female	Istanbul	Bachelor Degree	Istanbul, Samatya
G	29	male	Istanbul	Bachelor Degree	Istanbul, Kurtuluş
J	35	male	Istanbul	Bachelor Degree	Istanbul, Samatya
K	28	female	Istanbul	Bachelor Degree	Istanbul, Osmanbey

APPENDIX 2

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR INTERVIEWS IN YEREVAN

I. General Information

1. Birth place
2. Birth date
3. Gender
4. Occupation
5. Current address

II. The perception of 1915 *Medz Yeghern*

1. What does *Medz Yeghern* mean for you?
 - 1.1. Can you define *Medz Yeghern*?
2. What do you think were the main reasons for it?
 - 2.1. Do you think that Armenians could stay alive if they were not Christians?
3. What do you know about the Armenian-Turkish relations under the Ottoman rule? How would you define these relations – friendly or hostile from the very beginning? Do you believe that Armenians were discriminated during the whole history of living together with Turks?
4. How could you describe the consequences of 1915 *Medz Yeghern*?
5. Where did you learn about *Medz Yeghern* for the first time?
 - 5.1. How old were you when you learnt about it?
 - 5.2. What was your first reaction?
6. Were the talks about 1915 events frequent in your family?

7. Have you ever read any alternative information apart the one you got from your family/school? If yes, what kind of information it was? (Book, article, movie).
8. Which fact/story from 1915 tragedy did affect you the most?
9. Do you participate in the commemoration on the 24 of April every year?
10. Will you transfer your knowledge about *Medz Yeghern* to your children?
11. Can you say that *Medz Yeghern* is a central component of your national identity?

III. Historical Western Armenia and territorial claims

1. Do you have Anatolian roots? If yes, from which city?
 - 1.1. Did your ancestors escape during the 1915 events? How did they manage to do so?
 - 1.2. Have you ever visited your ancestors' home? If no, would you like to do so? If yes, what was your impression? Did you imagine the homeland of your ancestors in that way?
2. What do you know about the historical Western Armenia?
 - 2.1. Where did you hear about it for the first time?
3. Do you perceive the historical Western Armenia as a part of your Homeland?
4. Do you accept the term Anatolia while speaking of the lands of your ancestors?
5. Do you think that Turkey should give back the historical lands of Western Armenia to Armenian people? Yes/No, explain why.
6. If Turkey decides to give back the lands to Armenians, would you go back to live in the land of your ancestors? Yes/No, explain why.
7. If Turkey does not give the land back, but creates conditions (such as giving dual citizenship, returning the confiscated properties) for Armenian people to settle again on these lands but under the rule of Turkey, would you go back to your ancestors' lands?

8. Do you think that the territorial claims of Armenians may be the main reason of Turkish denial to recognize the 1915 *Medz Yeghern*?

II. IV. Expectations and Hopes: the perspectives for Armenian-Turkish reconciliation

1. Could you formulate your claims to the Turkish government and to the ordinary Turkish citizens?
2. Do you think that today's generation of Turkish people are still guilty for *Medz Yeghern*?
- 2.1. Have you ever met a Turk? If yes, tell about your experience.
3. Do you think Turkey should give financial compensation or is the recognition of *Medz Yeghern* is enough?
4. Do you know that today many liberal Turkish people recognize *Medz Yeghern*? Does it make any sense for you? Do you believe that they can bring positive changes into the society?
5. Are you familiar with the Turkish stance regarding *Medz Yeghern*?
6. What does the recognition of *Medz Yeghern* by Turkey mean for you?
7. How do you see the reconciliation path? In your opinion, what should be done by the Turkish side in order to solve the conflict?

APPENDIX 3

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR INTERVIEWS IN ISTANBUL

III. General Information

1. Birth place
- 1.1. Birth date
- 1.2. Gender
- 1.3. Occupation
- 1.4. Current address

IV. The perception of 1915 *Medz Yeghern*

2. What does *Medz Yeghern* mean for you?
3. 2.1. Can you define the *Medz Yeghern*?
4. What do you think were the main reasons of it?
- 4.1. Do you think that Armenians could stay alive if they would not be Christians?
5. What do you know about the Armenian-Turkish relations under the Ottoman rule? How would you define these relations – friendly or hostile from the very beginning? Do you believe that Armenians were discriminated during the whole history of living together with Turks?
6. How could you describe the consequences of 1915?
7. Where did you learn about *Medz Yeghern* for the first time?
- 7.1. How old were you when you learnt about it?
- 7.2. What was your first reaction?
8. Were the talks about 1915 events frequent in your family?
9. How did your history teacher explain the topic of 1915 in school?

10. Will you transfer your knowledge about *Medz Yeghern* to your children?
11. Can you say that *Medz Yeghern* is a central component of your national identity?

V. Historical Western Armenia and territorial claims

12. Do you have Anatolian roots? If yes, from which city?
- 12.1. Did your ancestors manage to escape during the 1915 events? How did they do so?
- 12.2. Have you ever visit your ancestors' home?

Do you perceive the historical Western Armenia as a part of your Homeland?

13. Do you think that Turkey should give back the historical lands of Western Armenia to Armenian people? Yes/No, explain why.
14. If Turkey one day give back the lands to Armenian people, do you think people would go back to live in the lands of their ancestors? Yes/No, explain why.
15. Do you think that the territorial claims of Armenians may be the main reason of Turkish denial to recognize the destruction of Armenian people in 1915?

VI. Expectations and Hopes: The Perspectives for Armenian-Turkish Rapprochement

16. Could you formulate your claims to the Turkish government and to the ordinary Turkish citizens?
17. Do you think that today's generation of Turkish people are still guilty for *Medz Yeghern*?
- 17.1. Had you ever any experience of meeting with Turkish people? In case if it yes, tell about it.
18. Do you think Turkey should give financial compensation or the recognition of *Medz Yeghern* is enough?

19. Do you know that today many liberal Turkish people recognize the *Medz Yeghern*? Does it make any sense for you? Do you believe that they can bring positive changes into the society?
20. Are you familiar with the Turkish stance regarding *Medz Yeghern*?
21. What does mean the recognition of *Medz Yeghern* by Turkey for you?
22. How do you see the reconciliation path? In your opinion, what should be done from the Turkish side in order to solve the conflict?



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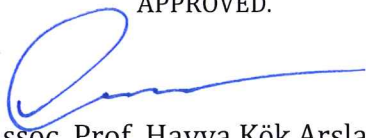
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Program: International Relations

Status: ☒ Masters ☐ Ph.D. ☐ Integrated Ph.D.

ADVISOR APPROVAL

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18/08/2015

Date and Signature

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ADVISER COMMENTS AND APPROVAL

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