

The Social Functions of Memory and the International Politics of Recognition:  
The Case of the Armenian Genocide

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## **Abstract**

Turkish denial of the Armenian Genocide is the most persistent case of institutionalized genocide denial in recorded history (Stanton, 2010). Through conducting a multimodal critical discourse analysis based on Foucauldian theories of power and exploring the socio-political dimensions of cultural trauma, memory, and photography, this thesis examines genocide denial in the case of the Armenian Genocide and seeks to understand why the ways in which we choose to remember the past matters. Genocide denial provides a compelling case for identifying how discourses legitimize power, politically, judicially, and globally. By applying a highly theoretical lens, I will consider how history is a highly political project of memory upheld by systems of power, while considering the role of eyewitness narration and documentation. It is in this tension between postmodern conceptualization of the regulatory function of discourse and the existence of historical fact that my thesis situates itself. My research will be informed primarily by Foucauldian (1982, 1995, 2003) theories of power and discourse; the unique role of witness photography in times of atrocity (P. Balakian, 2015; Batchen & Prosser, 2012; Clarke, 1997); and theories of trauma and memory (Alexander, 2004; Halbwachs & Coser, 1992; Herman, 1997; Wertsch & Roediger III, 2008).

*Keywords:* Armenian Genocide, Genocide denial, Witness, Photography, Collective Trauma, Memory, National Identity

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## Introduction

*The best that can be achieved is to know precisely what was, and to endure this knowledge, and then to wait and see what comes of knowing and enduring.”*

-Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*

I first became interested in studying genocide in 2017 while travelling across Poland studying representations of the Holocaust. From the impeccably preserved Auschwitz-Birkenau to

Holocaust survivor Marian Kołodziej’s haunting installation *Negatives of Memory: Labyrinths*,



Figure 1: “Canvas with Tattooed Numbers” Charcoal on Paper by Marian Kołodziej (Marian Kołodziej, n.d.)

depicting the psychological split of having two selves, one rooted in his past experiences in the camps, and the other in the present, displayed in the basement of a monastery in Harmęże, Poland (figure 1), I was struck by the ways in which people try to make sense of the most

horrific aspects of human history and preserve its memory. During his physical therapy following a devastating stroke in 1993, Kołodziej began drawing scenes from his experiences in the camps, a period he has never before talked about (Tomaszewski, 2011). Kołodziej described his labyrinth as “not an exhibition, nor art. These are not pictures. These are words locked in drawings... I propose a journey by way of this labyrinth marked by the experience of the fabric of death. It is a rendering of honour to all those who have vanished in ashes” (Tomaszewski, 2011). Kołodziej’s work seemed to confront the refrain about the inadequacy of language to describe horror of this magnitude and highlighted the multimodal nature of representations and acknowledgement of trauma. After several years, Kołodziej had amassed more than 300

drawings of skeletal bodies, each with an individual face and features recalling the people not as a mass, but as individual human beings with their own features. It became increasingly apparent how difficult it is to conceptualize the intentional destruction of human life on such an immense scale and how this difficulty results in the rendering of such atrocities as little more than depersonalized myths. After returning from Poland, I began studying genocide more deeply and theoretically, perhaps to try to make sense of it for myself.

My interest in researching the Armenian Genocide stems from the paradox of its importance in modern genocide scholarship while remaining denied by the perpetrator state a century later. More specifically, it was two polar opposite pursuits precipitated by the annihilation of the Armenians, first by Adolf Hitler, and then by genocide scholar, Raphael Lemkin. Hitler's 1939 Obersalzberg speech, where, in presenting and rallying support for his plans for the extermination of European Jewry he proclaimed: "who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?" (Lochner, 1943, p. 2) In 1921, Lemkin, then a university student, was perplexed by the lack of legal processes for holding perpetrators of genocide to account, questioned "why was killing a million people a less serious crime than killing a single individual" (Lemkin & Frieze, 2013, p. 371). More than a hundred years after the Armenian Genocide took place, the perpetrators remain firm in their refusal to so much as acknowledge their premeditated mass murder of 1.2 million Armenian men, women, and children (Alayarian, 2008). By Dr. Gregory Stanton's (2013) oft-cited theorization of the ten stages of how genocide unfolds, the genocide of the Armenian people by the Ottoman Turks has persisted for over a century. Denial inhibits healing, expands the impact of the violence, and reiterates the power and impunity of perpetrators (Israel Charny, 2001; Stanton, 2008). Furthermore, the implications of denying such a gruesome and heinous crime against humanity are far-reaching and long-lasting.

My thesis does not seek to reaffirm that the slaughter of the Armenians was, in fact, genocide; but rather, uses the Armenian Genocide to examine the socio-political functions of memory and recognition.

Memory and being remembered are fundamental aspects of the human experience (Margalit, 2003). Further to that, processing the past is equally fundamental, laying the foundation for how we define ourselves and understand our place in the world. Memorialization, which is distinct from but related to memory is defined as “the process of preserving memories of people or events” (Waite, 2012, p. 62). It can take the form of petition, address, or a ceremony of commemoration. The desire to honour our dead and the violent struggles which claimed their lives is as strong as the survivor’s desire to repress and move on (Barsalou & Baxter, 2007). Spaces and works of recognition and memory play an important role in preserving memory as well as providing the space for people to conceptualize feelings of seemingly inconceivable loss (Leydesdorff, 2017). Memorialization is a constant balancing act between the processes of reflection, honour, and political positioning. It “represents a powerful arena of contested memory and offers the possibility of aiding the formation of new national, community, and ethnic identities” (Barsalou & Baxter, 2007, p. 4). Memory work at large presents the possibility for accessing, understanding, and addressing the lasting impacts of genocide denial as well as the relationship between the construction of identities and representation (A. Assmann & Conrad, 2011). In the case of the Armenian Genocide, memorialization is complicated by the inability to access the genocide in terms of a material, historical, or political site of discourse as a result of its continued denial by the modern Turkish state. It then follows that memory is an essential part of genocide studies, and moreover genocide denial studies. Memory, while being the process

through which the past is represented in the present, is also constitutive of the discursive formations of the present.

The Armenian Genocide is regarded as the first modern genocide, that is, genocide enacted by the bureaucratic state apparatus based on national ideology (Maier, 2014). In the evolution of atrocity and war photography, 1915 marked the shift from the curated and posed photographs of war to images of “unprecedented kinds” (P. Balakian, 2015, p. 2). This study explores a collection of photographs taken by German soldier, Armin Wegner, that demonstrate the ethical commitment and performative conventions inherent to most photography of atrocities and war, in an attempt to examine the role and function of these largely unknown and understudied photographs (Sontag, 2003). Photo theorist and activist, Susan Sontag (2004, p. 75) famously wrote: “one can feel obliged to look at photographs that record great cruelties and crimes. One should feel obliged to think about what it means to look at them, about the capacity actually to assimilate what they show.” Heeding Sontag’s call, I seek to consider what it means to look at Wegner’s relatively unknown and understudied photographs considering his purpose when taking and circulating the pictures. These photographs provide a fascinating case for understanding how genocide denial functions regardless of evidence. These photographs, whose existence highlight the tension between concrete elements of archival evidence and the discourses of power which govern the political world that perpetuates institutionalized denial and the existence of ‘factual truth’. Through conducting a multimodal critical discourse analysis based on Foucauldian theories of power, and exploring the socio-political dimensions of cultural trauma, memory, and the contingent role of photography here, this thesis seeks to uncover and examine the ways in which socially constructed narratives of history inform politics and

reverberate across time and space using the case study of the continued institutional denial of the Armenian Genocide.

## **1. Methodology and Theoretical Framework**

The structure of this thesis is both historical and thematic. The methodological approaches used in this thesis are both discursive and social, crossing disciplinary borders through incorporating photographic theory to a combination of Foucauldian and multimodal discourse analyses to provide insight into the power structures and implications of both the physical and conceptual manifestations of memory and recognition. As Antonio Gramsci (1971) posited, power can be enacted hegemonically through naturalizing and normalizing carefully crafted ideologies that serve to perpetuate particular interests, in this case those of the Turkish state and other complicit nation states. I do not process this study through a single methodology, but instead, examine the implications and contributions of their intersections to understandings and functions of institutions and texts. Through a combination of methods, my study aims to articulate the nebulous relationship between genocide denial, witnessing, photography, and history, extending not merely to photographs or texts themselves as representations, but to the political context of their production, reproduction, and meaning. Applying this set of methods allows me to gain insight into the significance of history as a diachronic system that should be *read* and not simply *known*.

### *1.1 Foucauldian Discourse Analysis*

Foucauldian theories of ideologies and structures of power guide my analysis of representations of atrocity. Ideologies are assemblages of widely shared beliefs, values, goals, and perceptions that shape the collective consciousness and memory. Visual representations and visual texts can

be understood as documents within this thesis' understanding of the archive. In the book "The Archeology of Knowledge" (1969/1982), Michel Foucault presents his theories about how to study history, likening the study of the archive to archeology wherein remnants of the past can be examined in order to reconstruct, or in the Armenian case, recover the structures of power and ideologies buried below the surface. Foucault (2003, p. 24) explains how "relations of power are indissociable from a discourse of truth," meaning that the very concept of truth is a social construct, the result of the hegemonic ideologies reproduced until legitimized and widely shared. Writing in a postmodern context rooted in the unreliability of notions of 'truth' about competing national notions of 'truth' poses a challenge, but also a compelling point of inquiry about the very nature of discourses of history. Discourse, as posited by Foucault (1982), describes systems of beliefs, ideas, attitudes, and practices that establish the subjects and the realms they describe. Discourses, in any form, carry assumptions, judgments, views, and inform how a topic is viewed and acted upon by different actors in various settings. In a post-modern sense, there is no absolute truth; discourses are ideological and construct systems of meaning, imposing the title of 'truth' upon hegemonic understandings/narratives legitimized by those in positions of power (Foucault, 2017).

Foucauldian discourse analysis focuses upon societal power structures and their relationship to the meanings of discourse and the interplay among them. Kendall and Wickham (1999, p. 129) break the process of Foucauldian discourse analysis into five general steps:

1. the recognition of a discourse as a corpus of 'statements' whose organization is regular and systematic.
2. the identification of rules of the production of statements;

3. the identification of rules that delimit the sayable (which of course are never rules of closure);
4. the identification of rules that create the spaces in which new statements can be made;
5. the identification of rules that ensure that a practice is material and discursive at the same time.

Foucault (1982, p. 80) employs the concept of the statement to locate the “elementary unit” or the “atom of discourse.” In a Foucauldian (1982, p. 107) sense, what are referred to here as “statements” can be understood as “the modality of existence proper to that group of signs: a modality that allows it to be something more than a series of traces, something more than a succession of marks on a substance, something more than a mere object made by a human being.” Foucauldian Discourse Analysis is valuable in examining how texts are accepted, maintained and legitimized in society. Moreover, discourse establishes and orders understandings of the world and uncovers the ways that hegemonic discourses privilege those versions of ‘truth’ that legitimize and perpetuate the existing power relations and social structures.

In addition to focusing on the meaning of a certain discourse, this approach is characterized by the emphasis on power relationships, and how the social world is affected by various sources of power. In the context of this study, Foucauldian discourse analysis will be used to unpack how discourses of denial are legitimized and how power has been legitimized by discourses of denial.

### *1.2 Multimodal Discourse Analysis*

One of the key topics of my discussion is Armin Wegner’s photography archive, which comprises “the core of witness images of the Genocide.” (P. Balakian, 2015, p. 258). In conjunction with theories of atrocity photography (Batchen & Prosser, 2012; Didi-huberman &

Lillis, 2012; Rancière, 2009), a multimodal analysis will examine the importance of visual texts and how they can be unpacked and examined in an “integrated” way, to examine the interplay of semiotic systems (Cameron & Panovici, 2017). A multimodal discourse analysis builds on the principles of semiotics to analyze the multiple symbolic models within a text. The contemporary theoretical basis of multimodal discourse comes from linguist M. A. K. Halliday’s (2004) conceptualization of system-functional linguistics, which examines text, sound, and picture as a series of interrelated systems and structures. Cultural theorists and linguists, Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen’s (2008) social semiotics analysis of multimodal discourse is based on Halliday’s (2004) functional linguistics theory, which divides the function of language into ideational, interpersonal, and textual “metafunctions.” Kress and Van Leeuwen’s (2008) multimodal approach focuses specifically on image and visibility using a bottom-up, inductive method of contextual analysis, applying the three metafunctions of language in functional grammar to the understanding and analysis of non-linguistic symbols. Kress and Van Leeuwen’s (2008) application of Halliday’s (2004) functional linguistic theory thus enables the systemic examination of texts such as photographs through how it constructs representations of the world, the “ideational metafunction”; the social purposes and relations present, the “interpersonal metafunction”; and how the text is the result of intentional decisions of the textual system (photography in this case) for the purpose of a larger system of social practices, the “textual metafunction.” From a multimodal perspective then, “language and visual communication can both be used to realize the ‘same’ fundamental systems of meaning that constitute our cultures, but that each does so using its specific forms, does so differently, and independently” (Kress & Leeuwen, 2008, p. 228). The image then is a social symbol that can be analyzed and described by Halliday's social semiotics theory. According to the three metafunctions of the language,

Kress and Van Leeuwen create the “visual grammar of the analytical image with the representational meaning, the interactive meaning and the composition meaning as the core content,” thus providing the theoretical basis and method of analysis for the interpreting the photos (Bi, 2019, p. 1036). Such “meanings” of visual grammar will be examined more closely and specifically in the sections that deal primarily with the meaning and importance of photographs in the context of genocide denial and the archive.

The importance of multimodal research lies in its treatment of the study of extra-linguistic modes as inevitable rather than accidental, central to communication, not simply supplemental to language research. The most important aspect of multimodal analysis is that meaning is derived from culture rather than linguistics, which echoes the underlying principles of photographic visual analysis. Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (2008, p. 177), posit that discourse is multimodal if, “its meaning is realized through more than one semiotic code.” In that sense, Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2008, p. 177) work begs the question of “whether the products of the various codes should be analyzed separately or in an integrated way; whether the meanings of the whole should be treated as the sum of the meanings of the parts, or whether the parts should be looked on as interacting with and affecting one another.” That is to say, looking at multiple modes at once elicits a more nuanced and complex analysis.

### *1.3 Photographic theory*

Photographic theory is one of the main interpretive paradigms employed in this study due to the unique and seemingly evidentiary nature of these photographs. The eyewitness photographs included in this study depict the genocidal apparatus of deportations, death, and dying.

Photographic theorists have consistently highlighted the connection between the photograph and traumatic experience (Lieberman, 2008). While the alleged indexical clarity carries with it

presumptions of ontological status that seem to ground images in reality, the artificiality inherent to the means of attaining such ‘transparency’ have been highlighted by the discursive production of knowledge, by notable photographic theorists as Roland Barthes (1989), Sigfried Kracauer (1960), and Walter Benjamin (1935/1968). Photo theorist, Graham Clarke explains that photographs can be actively read as texts through the semiotic system he calls the “photographic discourse” (Clarke, 1997, p. 30). Furthermore, Clarke (1997, p. 33) describes how the photograph’s “literalness” reflects the “re-presentation of our way with the world—the site (and sight) of a series of other codes and texts, of values and hierarchies which engage other discourses and other frames of reference.” The central tension of documentary photography as it is understood within the postmodern or contemporary era in visual culture is a precipitate of this alternation between the indexicality of the image and the ambiguity of its meaning.

Graham Clarke (1997, p. 27) explains how looking at a photograph is to “engage in a series of complex readings,” and that “rather than the notion of looking, which suggests a passive act of recognition, we need to insist that we read a photograph, not as an image but as a text.” Clarke (1997, p. 28) posits that the meaning of a photograph is achieved through the “photographic discourse,” comprised of a codified language involving its own grammar and syntax. It is in this context, that I believe discourse analysis rooted in an understanding of photographic theory will be useful in guiding the analysis of this study, as over a hundred years after the Armenian Genocide, it remains denied by the perpetrators. Victor Burgin (2013, p. 144) describes how the “photographic text, like any other, is the site of a complex intertextuality, an overlapping series of previous texts ‘taken for granted’ at a particular cultural and historical conjunctive,” highlighting the central tension of photography as a discourse to be understood as well as an artifact of the Real imbued with objectivity. This tension reiterates one of the principal

paradigms of this study, that discourses engage one another contributing to a larger system of meaning as a result of individual, cultural, and institutional experiences. To read photography, then, is to understand the invisible, but active, relationships and forces at play within the visual semiology. These considerations for the forces exerted upon photography by the photographer as well as the political context in which they are thrust will be used for a more in-depth understanding of the photographs included later in this paper. Reading photography, according to Clarke (1997, p. 35), follows two base assumptions:

1. We must remember that the photograph is itself the product of a photographer. It is always the reflection of a specific point of view, be it aesthetic, polemical, political, or ideological. One never 'takes' a photograph in any passive sense. To 'take' is active. The photographer imposes, steals, re-creates the scene/seen according to a cultural discourse.
2. However, the photograph encodes the terms of reference by which we shape and understand a three-dimensional world. It thus exists within a wider body of reference and relates to a series of wider histories, at once aesthetic, cultural, and social.

It is in this sense that the photograph, like history books, should not be understood as a mirror or a discourse of neutrality, but pieces of a wider assemblage of a discursive archive. In selecting several of Armin Wegner's photographs for this study, I am trying to formulate an understanding of how these photographs of the Armenian Genocide enable a particular knowledge about the genocide. If history is written by the victors, then it is solidified and accepted into wider socio-cultural narratives through ideological and repressive state apparatuses to serve the ruling class, which oftentimes is synonymous with the perpetrators of genocide and colonialism.

Despite its ability in identifying valuable patterns and structures, the process of conducting a discourse analysis is quite murky, and the inherent complexity can act as a deterrent, and therefore requires a degree of “learning by doing” (Waite, 2005, p. 179). Frameworks for considering the interactive and compositional meanings of texts in a multimodal analysis has been criticized for their highly subjective nature (Forceville, 2016). I have attempted to combat this hyper-subjectivity by conducting an extensive review of the relevant literature and rooting this study in critical theory from disciplines across the social sciences and humanities. Discourses and the ideologies, identities, and histories of which they are comprised are dynamic and therefore require varying approaches of analysis. This medley of theoretical methods only begins to indicate the degree to which photographic media construct social identities, inform collective understandings, and contribute to emotional responses. In the sections that follow, I hope to unite the methods I have just outlined with the consideration of social practices around the media object in the context of genocide and conflict studies. In this way, I seek to examine how visual media produces the testimonial encounter, forms witnessing publics and why this complex, moral and social attention in the arena of international human rights politics remains significant and worthy of deeper consideration. It has been argued elsewhere that photography has been essential to “moral progress” and ultimately, the history and development of human rights as photographs draw us “close to those experiences of suffering in ways that no other form of art or journalism can” (P. Balakian, 2015; Linfield, 2012, p. xv). Viewing photographs of atrocity and human suffering and by extension, attempting to see and acknowledge the people – the (in)humanity – in them is a political and ethical act that binds us to the history of violence and its lasting impact.

This methodology applies analytic strategies using a highly theoretical background to study the political and ideological relationships between genocide, recognition, and memory. Through applying a multimodal Foucauldian methodological approach, I hope to provide a unique and interdisciplinary approach to studying genocide and the social functions of memory work and the political dimensions imbued within them and how they are converged through witness photographs of the atrocities which provide some evidentiary status of the oft-negated genocide in the face of, and despite the postmodern frame that surrounds the reading of photographs.

## **2. Historical Background and Context**

### *2.1 Armenian-Turkish Relations*

As a Christian minority, the Armenians were in a vulnerable position in the Islamic Ottoman Empire for centuries (Robertson, 2015) The Republic of Armenia has existed in the South Caucasus region of Eurasia since the sixth century BCE under the Orontid dynasty of the Achaemenid Persian Empire; and in 301 CE, the Kingdom of Armenia became the first state to adopt Christianity as its official religion (P. Balakian, 2003; Encyclopedia Britannica, 2019). The Armenians took pride in the preservation of their faith through centuries of imperial domination, long after the abolition of the independent Armenian state in 1375 (R. G. Hovannisian, 2003). Throughout the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire repeatedly went to war with Russia, a Christian empire, and lost much of its territory, including Bosnia, Herzegovina, Bulgaria, and the Balkans—largely Christian populations (Riasanovsky, 2005). In response to mounting European nationalism and insistence of self-determination by previously Ottoman-ruled territories, the previously tolerant Ottoman government began to frame Christians as its enemies, placing the Armenians, the largest non-Muslim population in the empire, under suspicion (Jones, 2006).

While historically excluded from mainstream society and politically and economically marginalized due to religious differences, the Armenians nonetheless found “niches in the economy and halls of power” (Jones, 2006, p. 102). Suspicions were heightened by the “Armenian Renaissance” that took place in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century, marked by “the development of the Armenian press in major cities, and the establishment of numerous schools in provincial towns and even villages” (Jones, 2006, p. 104). This proliferation of Armenian representation in politics and figureheads led to the Armenians demanding “full equality” within the empire and requesting support and civil protections from outside powers in the 1860s, which would prevent the intentionally overlooked looting and murder by Kurds and Circassians, as well as the “improprieties during tax collection, criminal behaviour by government officials and the refusal to accept Christians as witnesses in trial” (Akçam, 2007, p. 36). The perceived threat of both foreign intervention and Armenian nationalism/autonomy resulted in the Armenians losing their “millet” (recognized minority) status in the empire in the final years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and subsequently being viewed as a subversive insurgent population aligned with the historic enemies of the Ottomans (Akçam, 2007).

Next, the steady decline of the Ottoman Empire by the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century humiliated the empire and its would-be modernizers (Jones, 2006, p. 268). The final decades of the Ottoman Empire consisted of “an almost unbroken string of humiliation,” with utter collapse on the



Figure 2: Dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, 1807–1924 (Ottoman Empire, 2019)

horizon at the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Jones, 2006, p. 103). Taner Akçam (2016, p. 137), one of the first Turkish academics to acknowledge and openly discuss the Armenian Genocide, notes how

"the slow but continuous disintegration" of the empire and repeated military defeats and loss of population resulted in “a society whose dignity was scorned along with the constant loss of self-worth, overwhelmed by the imagery of a great history, fantasies about recreating the past, the terminal bursting of these dreams, and the inability to absorb and integrate these numerous contradictions.” The empire was desperate to assert dominance both territorially and ideologically.

On top of resulting in the territorial losses and general weakening of the Ottoman Empire, the Russo-Turkish war elicited hope for the Armenians that Russia might soon rule the Armenian territory (Akçam, 2007; Jones, 2006). From this hope came a renewed sense of restiveness; the Armenians sent a delegation to the 1878 Congress of Berlin to advocate for their aforementioned requests for civil protections (Akçam, 2007). The 1878 Treaty of Berlin’s primary aim was to

formalize the independence of newly sovereign principalities and recent Russian gains from the Ottoman Empire, but article 61 specified the undertaking of “improvements and reforms demanded by local requirements in the provinces inhabited by the Armenians, and to guarantee their security,” (Hertslet, 1875, p. 2796). The Sultan had no intention of relinquishing any power and spent much of the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century forcefully endorsing the pan-Islamic state ideology. Believing the Ottoman Armenians to be an extension of the “endless persecutions and hostilities of the Christian world,” Hamid-led Ottoman authorities fanned anti-Armenian sentiments among neighbouring regions (Akçam, 2007, p. 43). Punitive measures such as double taxation and civil asset seizure persisted in Armenian villages. In 1896, when the Armenians in the Sasun region refused to pay the oppressive tax, Ottoman authorities and Kurdish insurgent troops murdered thousands of Armenian residents and burned the villages.<sup>1</sup>

After the Berlin treaty went unenforced, in 1895, the Great Powers (Russia, France, and Britain) pressured the Sultan to sign a new (equally unenforceable) reform package designed to stop the unlawful attacks on the Armenian villages, to which the Sultan was quoted as responding: “this business will end in blood.” (Eliot, 2006, p. 407). The 2,000 Armenians who gathered in Constantinople to push for the implementation of the reforms were met with violence by the Ottoman police who forced them to disperse (P. Balakian, 2003). Massacres and pogroms ensued across much of the Armenian-inhabited regions, targeting men of battle age (R. Hovannisian, 1992). An associate of the sultan recalls how the Sultan "decided to pursue a policy of severity and terror against the Armenians... he ordered that they absolutely avoid negotiating

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<sup>1</sup> In 1890, the Ottoman Empire was too disorganized and weak to stop gangs who attacked and pillaged the historically insecure Eastern provinces, so Hamid gave these bandits “semi-official status.” Made up mainly (but not exclusively) of Kurds and armed by the Sultan’s government, they became known as the *Hamidiye*. They were given free rein to attack Armenians, take whatever they pleased without reproach as they were accountable only to military courts (Klein, 2011)

or discussing anything with the Armenians and that they inflict upon them a decisive strike to settle scores." (Dadrian, 2004, p. 161). In 1887, with an estimated 200,000-250,000 Armenians dead, Hamid declared the Armenian question closed (Jones, 2006). In addition to men of battle age, the vast majority of Armenian intellectuals, revolutionaries, and leaders were killed or escaped to Russia. The pre-World War I massacres tested the "political feasibility, if not acceptability" of the state-organized premeditated massacres of an allegedly dissonant population, ultimately proving effective and without consequence or intervention (Dadrian, 2004, p. 74). The events were widely publicized across Europe and North America, spurring plenty of thoughts and prayers but little else ("ANOTHER ARMENIAN HOLOCAUST," 1895; Cambon, 1940). Armenian representatives petitioned Ottoman courts once again for civil guarantees and fair treatment, marking the first time in the history of the Ottoman Empire that a non-Muslim subject minority confronted central authorities (Dadrian, 2004; Forsythe, 2009, p. 93). The petitions served to reiterate the carefully manufactured stereotype of the uppity and oppositional Armenian (Jones, 2006, p. 104). Promised action and reforms by the Great Powers never materialized due to conflicting political and economic interests, foreshadowing precisely what was to come.

The final factor which significantly shaped the Armenian Genocide was the Ottoman Empire's alignment with Germany and the central powers at the outset of World War I (WWI). In 1908, the secular Young Turk Revolution overthrew the absolute monarchy of the Ottoman Empire and the nation underwent a process of modernization known as "Turkification" (P. Balakian, 2003, p. 235). The transformations were welcomed by many, including the Armenians, as the non-Muslim minorities were now granted full constitutional rights (P. Balakian, 2003). Unfortunately, the new government, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), was split

between liberal-democratic and authoritarian poles, with the authoritarian pole pushing for a renewed nationalistic vision of the empire. In January 1913, the radical pro-centralization wing of the CUP seized power with a coup known as the Raid on the Sublime Porte (Balakian, 2003). A “de facto dictatorship” was erected led by Talaat Pasha, Minister of Internal Affairs; Enver Pasha, Minister of War; and Jemal Pasha, Minister of the Navy (Jones, 2006).<sup>2</sup> In 1914, the CUP passed legislation making them the only legal political party in the empire. The new rulers set out to not only reclaim territories the empire has previously lost but also to conquer more than ever before (Akmeşe, 2005; Graber, 1996). In August 1914, the Ottoman and German governments signed a secret alliance to bring the Ottomans into WWI as well as assist in the Ottoman plans for conquering the Caucasus, the Balkans, and central Asia (Karsh & Karsh, 1999). In an effort to sway public opinion in favour of the war, the CUP deployed “Special Organizations” to agitate Russia, who, after unsuccessfully trying to ignore the provocations, declared war on November 2, 1914. (Karsh & Karsh, 1999, p. 117). On November 5, France and Britain declared war on the Ottoman Empire; and on November 11, the empire’s top religious leader, Sheikh-ul-Islam Mustafa Hayri Bey declared a jihad against Russia, France, and Britain (Karsh & Karsh, 1999). World War I had officially begun in July and was raging across much of Europe by November (*World War I*, n.d.).

## 2.2 *The Genocide*

The empire began preparing for a total war from the time of the 1908 coup. The CUP’s finance minister at the time, Mehmet Cavid Bey, noted: “Everything possible was done at the time to act in a way that would violate our neutrality towards the Entente countries.” (Akçam,

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<sup>2</sup> The term “Pasha” is an honorific title for especially distinguished men, not a surname. As such, these three Pashas were not related.

2007, p. 126). Entering the war and enacting a genocide against the Armenians were means to the same end goal of the new and improved unified Islamic empire. In January 1915, the New York Times reported on Talaat Pasha's "unequivocal" stance that "there was no room for Christians" and advised them to "clear out of the country" (New York Times, 1915a). Under the guise of the chaos of war, the Ottoman Turks began implementing their plan for the systematic eradication of the Armenian population, as well as other small, Christian populations such as Assyrians and Greeks, (R. G. Hovannisian, 2003). In April 1915, as the Allied troops were preparing to invade the Turkish narrows of Dardanelles, the Ottoman army launched an attack on the Armenian province of Van which the Armenian resistance was able to fend off for nearly three weeks (Jones, 2006). The resistance was quelled and subsequently used as the fodder for the "infliction of full-scale holocaust against the Armenians" (Jones, 2006, p. 105). The Ottoman rulers were firm in their stance that the Armenians were aligned with their other Christian rivals who, as mentioned, had dealt repeated blows to the empire in recent years and it was therefore only a matter of time before the Armenians betrayed the government.

The genocide officially began on April 24, 1915, when Armenian intellectuals, as well as community and religious leaders first in Constantinople, and then in the six eastern provinces with large Armenian populations, were rounded up for interrogation, torture, and execution (Akçam, 2016). Armenian men were first enlisted as "pack animals to transport Turkish supplies," but this was soon deemed "too dignified an existence for the traitorous Christians" (Power, 2002, p. 2). Mass killings began, targeting Armenian men of battle age, which paired with the previous killing of leaders, effectively stripped the Armenian population of all those likely to defend it (Dadrian, 2004). The genocide quickly moved from forced labour to murder, and by July 1915 roughly 200,000 Armenian men had been killed (Akçam, 2007). Official

policies were enacted in the form of the civil Tehcir Laws, in English meaning "deportation" or "forced displacement", which were published in newspapers and public spaces stating:

3. With the exception of the sick, all Armenians are obliged to leave within five days from the date of this proclamation....
4. Although they are free to carry with them on their journey the articles of their movable property which they desire, they are forbidden to sell their land and their extra effects or to leave them here and there with other people. (Davis & Blair, 1989; Power, 2002)

The three Pashas advanced the narrative of the restive and traitorous Armenians to justify their mass deportation program as necessary to suppress revolt. The deportations took a consistent shape wherein Armenian populations were called to assemble, where they were then informed of their impending exile and given no more than a week to prepare for their deportation to the refugee camps in the Syrian desert. In actuality, no such camps had been prepared; these were simply death marches. American Ambassador Henry Morgenthau (2000, p. 309), known for his vocal opposition to the Ottoman Turks' policies and subsequent activism, noted how:

The real purpose of the deportation was robbery and destruction; it really represented a new method of massacre. When the Turkish authorities gave the orders for these deportations, they were merely giving the death warrant to a whole race; they understood this well, and, in their conversations with me, they made no particular attempt to conceal the fact.

Ottoman archives and Turkish Marita Court documents from 1919 confirm not only that the intended outcome of the deportations was the death of as many Armenians as possible, but that there was an intentional disconnect between the outward, public-facing policies and the inward, surreptitious plans of the CUP (Krikor, 2018).<sup>3</sup>

The myriad of new laws subsequently legalized the seizure of Armenian land, homes, and churches on the pretext that they had been abandoned (Krikor, 2018). The Turkish perpetrators, from the rulers to the laypeople, benefitted immensely from the spoils of the genocide. These material benefits contributed to the foundation of the modern Turkish state. The rulers mobilized bands of violent criminals, known as “chétés,” to help with the mass killing (Power, 2002, p. 104). This particular strategy has been used in many other state-sanctioned massacres and genocides, such as in the Bosnian war and Palestine, as they provided the government with the ability to shirk responsibility and blame out of control extralegal gangs for the violence (P. Balakian, 2003). The pillaging and theft were just the beginning of what became a resolute campaign to destroy the cultural heritage of the Armenians in the empire (Davis & Blair, 1989). One survivor described his horror at the total disregard for human life when local populations would be offered: “whoever wants a woman or child, come and get them;” with many people accepting the offer (Miller & Miller, 1999, p. 110). In a conversation with the US Ambassador to Turkey at the time, Henry Morgenthau, Talaat described how he wished that Morgenthau “would get the American life insurance companies to send us a complete list of their Armenian policy holders. They are practically all dead now and have left no heirs to collect the money. It of course all escheats to the State. The Government is the beneficiary now. Will you do so?”

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<sup>3</sup> For more information and to access Fr. Guerguerian Krikor’s extensive personal archive of court documents, testimony, and other information on the Armenian Genocide see: <https://bit.ly/2VTSx9x>

(Morgenthau, 2000, p. 339) Morgenthau's despondence and impotence became too much and he quit and returned to the United States in early 1916 (Morgenthau, 2000). The genocide provided material gains to populations well beyond those in the halls of power while simultaneously erasing any evidence of the very existence of the Armenians in the region.

Armenians who were not abducted along the way were forced to continue on death marches, which functioned exactly as intended with conveyors of 18,000 people arriving at the refugee camps in the Syrian desert, which could hardly be considered camps, with less than 200 people (Jones, 2006, p. 107). At this point, the killing was indiscriminate; in June 1915, Soghomon Tehlirian, recalls being marched out of his hometown with his five siblings and mother by Turkish forces (Power, 2002, p. 3) Hours later, Tehlirian witnessed the Turkish gendarmes rape his sisters, split his little brother's head with an axe, and shoot his mother (Power, 2002, pp. 3–4). After being knocked unconscious, 19-year-old Tehlirian was left in the field, presumed dead, and believed himself to be the only survivor of his caravan (Garibian, 2018). What was referred to as deportations was the genocide of all Armenians that the state could find.

In July 1916, Talaat Pasha was furious when he was informed that there were signs of Armenian survivors around Der Zor and therefore ordered another wave of mass killing in the region (Akçam, 2012). Estimates show that nearly two-thirds of Ottoman Armenians had been exterminated by the start of 1917, but large-scale massacres persisted where Ottoman forces occupied Armenian areas of Russia (Jones, 2006). Vahakn Dadrian describes how it was at this point in 1917 that “the genocidal engine of destruction unleashed by the Young Turk Ittihadists was once more activated to decimate and destroy the other half of the Armenian population



Figure 3: Historical divisions of Armenia (Armenia, 2019)

living beyond the established frontiers of Turkey” (Israel Charny, 2001, pp. 127–128). The land inhabited by the Armenians for thousands of years became eastern Turkey; villages were renamed in

Turkish and traces of Armenian society were destroyed (P. Balakian, 2003; R. G. Hovannisian, 2003). Some survivors fled eastward to what is now the Republic of Armenia—then under the protection of the Russian Empire and soon to be part of the Soviet Union—while the majority escaped and attempted to assemble the remains of their families and villages in communities scattered across the Middle East, Europe and North America (R. G. Hovannisian, 2003). In late 1917, an estimated 1.2 million Armenians murdered by means of murder, death marches, and systemic privation. (Armenian National Institute, 2019; R. G. Hovannisian, 2006; Robertson, 2015). See Appendix A: Map of massacre locations, deportation centres, and extermination centres for a visual reference of where deportation and exterminations took place.

### 2.3 The Aftermath and International Response

Following the end of WWI, the Ottoman Empire was partitioned and soon after a civil war erupted resulting in the end of the Ottoman Empire and the beginning of modern-day Turkey under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal (Dadrian, 1999; Gürpınar, 2016). In 1918, the independent Republic of Armenia was declared in the Russian-held South Caucous region; and in 1920, with help from U.S President, Woodrow Wilson, parts of historic Ottoman Armenia were included in the boundary (see figure 3) (Dadrian, 2004; Encyclopedia Britannica, 2019). Acting

unilaterally and in a defiance of international law, Turkey's new leader, Mustafa Kemal, renounced the Treaty of Sèvres and swiftly reconquered six formerly Ottoman provinces the treaty had granted to the newly independent Armenia (Akçam, 2012; Alayarian, 2008). The remainder of the republic was absorbed by the Soviet Union in 1921 and Armenia remained a constituent republic until 1991 when official sovereignty was declared just before the fall of the Iron Curtain (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2019).

The massacre of the Armenian people was reported on around the world as it unfolded. In particular, Britain and France reported widely on the atrocities as they were at war with the Ottoman Empire (Jones, 2006). Reports of the mounting number of Armenians killed were published, but it became increasingly difficult for reporters to access the caravans of displaced people, confirm numbers, and fact-check sources. Perhaps realizing the brewing international awareness and potential for backlash, Turkish officials quickly enacted a coordinated campaign of misinformation and minimization in the news. Turkish consul Djelal Munif Bey painted a picture of the traitorous Armenians to the media, explaining how “the Armenians have only themselves to blame” (New York Times, 1915c). In November 1915, Talaat wrote an official order to the Prefecture of Aleppo, explaining how: “It is most important that foreigners who are in those parts shall be persuaded that the expulsion of the Armenians is in truth only deportation... For this reason, it is important that, to save appearances, a show of gentle dealing shall be made for a time, and the usual measures be taken in suitable place” (George R. Montgomery, 1921, p. 554). As was made clear when deciding to enact policies of systemic extermination during a world war, the perpetrators understood the importance of controlling the narrative in both political and journalistic arenas.

World leaders were made aware by their ambassadors, expatriates, journalists, religious leaders, and witnesses (P. Balakian, 2003). On May 24, 1915, the Allied governments delivered a joint declaration condemning “crimes against humanity and civilization, warning the Turkish government of their culpability, but just as the Ottoman government intended, the Allies were generally preoccupied fighting the Germans across Europe (New York Times, 1915b). Henry Morgenthau attempted to leverage his position as ambassador to put a stop to the genocide. At first Morgenthau believed Talaat’s assurances that the extraordinary violence was the result of out of control mobs that would soon be contained (Morgenthau, 2000). In the spring of 1915, around the time the large-scale massacres began, Turkish authorities began censoring Morgenthau’s communication with his consuls making it next to impossible to fact check potential reports to send back to the US (Power, 2002, p. 6). After receiving an alarming number of reports of wanton violence against the Armenians across the empire, Morgenthau sounded the alarm to his colleagues in Washington, but his pleas for any form of assistance did not supersede the perceived principles of sovereignty and the American’s decided position of non-involvement in the war (G. Balakian, 2010; Jones, 2006). In April 1917, when the US finally entered the war, President Wilson “refused to declare war on or even break off relations with the Ottoman Empire,” and remained firm in this stance until the Ottoman government severed ties on their own accord (Power, 2002, p. 13). The United States provides a snapshot of the overarching prioritization of principles of sovereignty over intervention in times of humanitarian crisis—upholding and strengthening a system in which politics are prioritized above human lives.

At the 1918 Paris Peace Conference, Russia, France, and Britain attempted to hold German, Ottoman, and Austrian authorities accountable and began organizing an international war crimes tribunal, the Turkish courts-martial of 1919-20, to try key figures, including the

Three Pashas. In spring 1919, the court declared that “the disaster visiting the Armenians was not a local or isolated event. It was the result of a premeditated decision taken by a central body... and the immolations and excesses which took place were based on oral and written orders issued by that central body” (Bass, 2002, p. 127). Over a hundred former Ottoman officials were indicted and transferred to British custody; Talaat and Enver Pasha were convicted and sentenced to death (Bass, 2002). Germany refused to extradite Talaat who was living as a private citizen in Berlin at this point. The reactionary nationalism from losing the war, as well as Kemal’s push for a unified Turkish nation precipitated widespread opposition to the trials, calling it “pandering” to the Allies (Jones, 2006, p. 113). As I will highlight in the sections that follows, such rhetoric is common in discourses of genocide denial by perpetrators following the genocide. Soon, “sentences grew weaker, as the court refrained from handing down death sentences, finding most of the defendants only ‘guilty of robbery, plunder, and self-enrichment at the expense of the victims’” (P. Balakian, 2003, p. 141). When Turkish forces imprisoned 29 British soldiers, it was “the final straw” for Britain (Bass, 2002, p. 136). In late 1921, Kemal terminated the international tribunal by negotiating a prisoner trade, swapping the 29 British for all of the Turkish suspects, and adopted a strict policy of denial (Bass, 2002). In 1923, the Treaty of Sèvres was supplanted by the Treaty of Lausanne (1923), defining the much tighter borders of modern Turkey that would be internationally recognized in exchange for Turkey’s surrender of any claims to the rest of the Ottoman Empire. It contains absolutely no reference to the slaughtered Armenians previously guaranteed at Sèvres. The architects and enforcers of the genocide, the Three Pashas, who never faced any legal consequences for their roles, were eventually killed by Armenians in the years following. Enver Pasha was killed in Turkestan by an Armenian Bolshevik officer in 1922, Jemal Pasha by Armenians in Tiflis in 1922, and Talaat

Pasha in Berlin by Soghomon Tehlirian, the previously mentioned sole survivor of his city's deported population (Fromkin, 2009). Conceptualizations of 'justice' are beyond the scope of this thesis, but extrajudicial killings are often seen during the denial stage of genocide, as surviving victim populations feel isolated without channels for healing and acknowledgement of suffering (Alayarian, 2008).

#### *2.4 Coming to Terms*

The twentieth century was one of extreme violence across the entire planet, referred to by many scholars as "the century of genocide," (Carmichael, 2005; Shaw, 2012; Totten & Parsons, 2013; Weitz, 2006). Genocide has been described as being "among history's defining features," at the crossroads of many "central historical processes: war, imperialism, state-building, class struggle," but remained a nebulous, unnamed concept until the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Jones, 2006, p. xxi). With the increased mechanization of warfare, repeated state-sanctioned mass murder, the ease of access to information in an increasingly globalized and a wider flow of information on a global scale, the twentieth century also saw the proliferation of civilian protections, international conventions, and "a thick web of institutions designed to implement them" (Weitz, 2008, p. 1). It was perhaps the occurrence of the atrocities themselves that inspired the development and expansion of human rights and humanitarian protections by concerned parties.

It was the massacre of the Armenians that first inspired Raphael Lemkin, who coined the word genocide and was a monolithic figure in the establishment of the international genocide convention (Lemkin & Frieze, 2013). More specifically, it was the trial of Soghomon Tehlirian, the Armenian survivor who assassinated Talaat Pasha in Berlin that plagued Lemkin (Lemkin & Frieze, 2013). Samantha Power (2002, p. 17) notes how Tehlirian "knew little of international

treaties or geopolitics, only that his life had been empty since the war, that Talaat was responsible and would never stand trial.” Tehlirian’s trial was widely publicized, complete with details of Talaat’s role in orchestrating the genocide as Minister of Internal Affairs. Lemkin, studying linguistics at the University of Lvov at the time, approached one of his professors inquiring as to why the Armenians hadn’t had Talaat arrested (Lemkin & Frieze, 2013; Power, 2002). His professor informed him that no law existed to have him arrested under, explaining: “consider the case of a farmer who owns a flock of chickens, he kills them and this is his business. If you interfere, you are trespassing” (Power, 2002, p. 17). Lemkin refused to accept that state sovereignty could protect perpetrators of such a heinous crime, “sovereignty implies conducting an independent foreign and internal policy, building of schools, construction of roads... all types of activity directed towards the welfare of people. Sovereignty cannot be conceived as the right to kill millions of people” (Lemkin & Frieze, 2013; Power, 2002, p. 19). Upon reading about the bungled efforts to hold the Turkish perpetrators accountable, he realized that the pursuit of justice alone was insufficient. As Lemkin saw it, political pressure, appealing to strategic interests, and/or harm to one’s citizens was the necessary impetus for casting away the shielding cloak of state sovereignty.



universal repression,” advanced the idea “that an offender can be brought to justice in the place of where he is apprehended (*forum loci deprehensionis*), independently of where the crime was committed and the nationality of the author” (Lemkin, 1933). His proposed law banned two specific practices: “barbarity,” defined here as “the premeditated destruction of national, racial, religious and social collectivities,” and “vandalism,” defined here as “destruction of works of art and culture, being the expression of the particular genius of these collectivities” (Lemkin, 1933; Power, 2002, p. 21). (See Annex A for the full proposed legislation.) Lemkin believed that by making it an international crime, punishable anywhere to attempt to exterminate ethnic, religious, or national groups, the possibility for protection by state sovereignty would disappear and the threat of punishment would prevent future perpetrators.

Lemkin, a Polish Jew, was refused the permit necessary to travel to Madrid in October of 1933 by Joseph Beck, Poland’s sycophantic foreign minister looking to score points with Hitler’s administration (Becker, 2018). Lemkin’s proposal was read in his absence but received little support due to the heightened isolationism and pressing economic concerns facing interwar Europe.<sup>5</sup> His proposal, which drew parallels between the new German Chancellor Adolf Hitler’s ascent to power and the Ottoman Turks’ campaign of extermination in WWI was seen as radical. The Armenian massacres were considered “an eastern phenomenon,” unthinkable in the ‘civilized’ west, based on the racist and incorrect Orientalist ideologies prevalent in the colonial governments at the table, as well as “too rare” to legislate according to the lawyers representing 37 nations at the conference (Power, 2002, p. 19). Twenty-eight days later, on November 12,

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<sup>5</sup> Lemkin claimed elsewhere to have been present at the conference but the record has been verified and corrected in William Korey’s *Epitaph for Raphael Lemkin* (2001).

1933, Germany officially withdrew from the League of Nations and Jews began fleeing the country in fear of persecution (Nohlen & Stöver, 2010).

In late August 1939, in Obersalzberg Germany, Hitler, infamous for his impassioned speeches issued this rallying cry to his Supreme Commanders:

Genghis Khan led millions of women and children to slaughter—with premeditation and a happy heart. History sees in him solely the founder of a state. It's a matter of indifference to me what a weak western European civilization will say about me.... Our war aim does not consist in reaching certain lines, but in the physical destruction of the enemy. Accordingly, I have placed my [special SS military formations] in readiness... with orders to them to send to death mercilessly and without compassion, men, women, and children... Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?

(Lochner, 1943, p. 2).

Less than a month later, Nazi Germany invaded Poland and Lemkin, unable to convince his family to go with him, fled, collecting all the documentation of Hitler's decrees and ordinances (Lemkin & Frieze, 2013). By 1941, Lemkin was teaching at Duke University and was hired as a consultant to the US government, wearing down every person necessary until he was able to meet with President Roosevelt (Lemkin & Frieze, 2013). After explaining his much more refined and meticulously researched proposal, Lemkin realized he was following the wrong path, that "Statesmen were messing up the world, and when it seemed to them that they were drowning in the mud of their own making, they rushed to extricate themselves. They lived in perpetual sin with history" (Lemkin & Frieze, 2013, p. 115). Perhaps recalling Winston Churchill's description, Lemkin set out to combine his extensive knowledge of international law and linguistics to develop a word for the "crime without a name" (Eade, Charles, 1942, p. 248).

In his 1944 book, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, Lemkin decided on the word “genocide” (Lemkin, 2008) Modeling his process after George Eastman’s naming of the Kodak camera, Lemkin picked a word that was short, incapable of mispronunciation, and lacked any previous associations (Lemkin, 1946). Genocide comes from the Greek *geno*, denoting “race” or “tribe”, followed by the Latin *cide*, derived from *caedere*, which means “killing” (Power, 2002). Lemkin defined his new word as the “coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves,” describing how genocide has two phases: “one, destruction of the national pattern of the oppressed group; the other, the imposition of the national pattern of the oppressor” (Lemkin, 2008, p. 79). For Lemkin, genocide was not limited to physical extermination, including a consideration for the destruction of culture and identity.

### 2.5 *The Genocide Convention*

After World War II ended in May 1945, it appeared as though the horrors of the Holocaust provided the unfortunate impetus for world leaders to consider the necessity for more robust international legal conventions and protections of human rights. Giving genocide a name was only the first step towards preventing it. Lemkin set his sights on the newly formed United Nations in order to overcome the issue of state sovereignty in adopting his law. Citing international laws surrounding drug trafficking, and piracy, Lemkin reasoned that “certainly human beings and their cultures are more important than a ship and its cargo” (Power, 2002, p. 48). Lemkin was critical of the continued emphasis upon state sovereignty at the Nuremberg trials, skeptical that it would do little to deter future perpetrators from committing genocide within their own nations. His goal was to see perpetrators of genocide treated in the same way as pirates; using the principle of universal repression, any nation would be able to try the suspect,

regardless of where the genocide took place (Lemkin, 2008). Lemkin, who was described as a “nag” by the prosecutors at the Nuremberg trials, was disappointed when “genocide” did not appear in the Nuremberg judgements but quickly got back to work in hearing that the United Nations general assembly was putting the autumn agenda together (Becker, 2018; Power, 2002, p. 50).

Lemkin knew that the UN, with its powerful member states, novelty, and financial clout was the best channel to establish an international law that overcame the barrier of sovereignty when outlawing such a heinous crime. Lemkin was an experienced lobbyist at this point, understanding how to tailor his message to specific audiences (Power, 2002). In December 1946, the UN general assembly passed a resolution condemning genocide as “a denial of the right of existence of entire human groups,” which “shocks the conscience of mankind, results in great losses to humanity... and is contrary to moral law and to the spirit and aims of the United Nations” (United Nations General Assembly, 1946). Lemkin, unimpressed by a resolution alone, was encouraged by the promise of a UN committee tasked with creating a full treaty, which if passed by the general assembly and ratified by two thirds of member states, would become international law (United Nations, 2015). In 1948, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide settled on the following definition of genocide, which remains the most authoritative and widely accepted definition in law and academia:

genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- a. Killing members of the group;
- b. Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;

- c. Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- d. Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- e. Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. (Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 1951)<sup>6</sup>

There has been much debate by human rights activists, academics, and legal experts around the definition of genocide since it began growing as an independent discipline in the 1980s, “but so far no adequate alternative has won wide acceptance” (Cox, 2017, p. 5). The underlying tension of this debate is whether the definition should be more broad and inclusive, running the risk of “stripping the term of its power;” or narrowed and exclusive, potentially generating “an unseemly competition for victimhood” (Cox, 2017, p. 8). For the scope of this paper and to avoid debating semantics, I adhere to the UN definition and echo the sentiments of Adam Jones (2006, p. 15) in favouring the Rwandan genocide tribunals formulation of protection should be accorded to “any stable and permanent group.”

For the resolution to become international law, 20 UN member states were required to ratify the treaty domestically. Lemkin wrote personalized letters in six languages to the influential politicians, pundits, journalists, and activists of member states (Lemkin & Frieze, 2013). In October 1950, the 21 states officially ratified the convention, making the “attempted destruction of national, ethnic, and religious groups” an international crime; the convention officially entered into force in January 1951 (United Nations, 1951). Notably absent from this list of signatories was the UN’s host country, the United States, where there were fears that the “expansive language” of the genocide convention would be used to “target Americans,” with

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<sup>6</sup> See Annex B: “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide” for complete convention

senators specifically worrying about retribution for the eradication of Native Americans across the country throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century as well as for their policies of slavery and segregation (Power, 2002). Unsurprisingly, these concerns fell under the umbrella of the alleged infringement upon state sovereignty. Nearly two decades later, the US ratified the convention (United Nations, 1951). Most nation states around the world are built upon the violent legacies of colonialism, genocide, and tyranny that are swept under the rug in order to maintain the systems of power which govern them. This thesis does not attempt to clarify any record or present any official record, but instead underscore the necessity of rejecting the blind acceptance of hegemonic narratives and consider what is lost in this process.

Raphael Lemkin was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1950, 1951, 1952, 1955, 1956, 1958, and 1959 (The Nobel Prize Organization, 2020). When he died of a heart attack on August 28, 1959, his funeral was attended by just seven people (Power, 2002, p. 78). New York Times reporters recalled being fond of the “wild-eyed professor with steel-rimmed glasses and a relentless appetite for rejection,” from whom “correspondents on a deadline used to run,” who possessed nothing aside from “himself, his briefcase and the convictions burning in him” (Power, 2002, p. 51; Rosenthal, 1988).

## *2.6 Genocide as a Process*

Beginning in the 1980s, genocide studies became increasingly popular as an independent discipline. More recently, there has been a re-emergence of interest in studying genocide in terms of its role as a broader, societal phenomenon rather than discrete occurrences (See Kiernan, 2007; Provost & Akhavan, 2011; Rosenbaum, 2009). Genocide is not the product of ignorance nor is it spontaneous; it is the result of specific ideology and carefully planned, top-down,

centralized policy, which is why it must be distinguished from murder. As Sheri Rosenberg (2012, p. 17) explains, “genocide is a process, not an event,” and an overemphasis on semantics and rigid definitions obfuscates the fact that genocide is a “fluid and complex social phenomenon, not a static term.” The processual perspective is central to the development of indicators for the detection and prevention of genocide, which has become a central pillar of genocide studies. The pedagogical imperative of genocide studies calls for the application of honouring and remembering the past to develop modes of genocide prevention. Founder and president of Genocide Watch and renowned genocide scholar, Dr. Gregory Stanton, developed a broad ten stage model that captures the progression and mechanisms of genocide by examining 50 incidences of genocide that he posts occurred in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Stanton, 2016).<sup>7</sup> It is important to note that while the stages occur in a linear order, all stages function at differing levels continuously throughout the process.

*Table 1: Stanton's 10 Stage Model with Definitions*

<b><u>Stage</u></b>	<b><u>Definition</u></b>
<b>1. Classification</b>	Members of a society are divided into “us” and “them” categories as a result of ethnic, racial, religious, national, cultural, or linguistic differences, intensifying existing tensions between groups.
<b>2. Symbolization</b>	Stereotypes are exaggerated, derogatory symbols or names are applied to the targeted group, distinguishing them from the general population.
<b>3. Discrimination</b>	The dominant group employs legal and political power, as well as customs and norms to deny rights, freedoms, and privileges of the targeted group to monopolize and expand power
<b>4. Dehumanization</b>	Targeted group is denied their humanity, removing the guilt and revulsion of persecution and murder through equating the targeted group to pests or disease often through propaganda campaigns by the dominant group
<b>5. Organization</b>	Top-down policies enacted by formal or informal militias and special police spy on, torture, arrest, and murder those suspected of opposing dominant group
<b>6. Polarization</b>	Propaganda and extremist groups intensify offensives on the targeted group to isolate them and motivations are indoctrinated to the wider

<sup>7</sup> Stanton first presented this model as eight stages in his 1998 briefing paper, but added two additional stages in 2016, which is the model referenced in this thesis.

	public. Targeted groups are disarmed and stripped of rights to intermingle with out-group members
<b>7. Preparation</b>	Plans are developed to separate the targeted group from the populace to be murdered, resolving the targeted group “question,” often using euphemisms in the delivery. Armies are trained and armed, and the populace is indoctrinated with the fear of the targeted group
<b>8. Persecution</b>	Targeted groups are identified and separated for mistreatment, abuse, arrest, torture, and murder. They are often forced into camps, ghettos, and deportation caravans; deprived of survival essentials. Children are forcibly removed from parents and programs of forced sterilization are implemented.
<b>9. Extermination</b>	The culmination of previous stages: the targeted group is murdered. Cultural and religious artefacts are destroyed to erase the targeted group from history.
<b>10. Denial</b>	Perpetrators insist no crimes have been committed, destroying evidence, burn the bodies, intimidate witnesses, and assign blame to the targeted group. Investigations of the crimes are blocked, and perpetrators maintain power and governing authority unless forcibly driven out, then fleeing into exile.

The first four stages of Stanton’s model target, identify, and marginalize the targeted group of people to eliminate them from society through the next three stages, where power is enacted from the top-down in a systematic fashion. The stages of genocide need not be quick, and oftentimes classification and symbolization can be established over time. In the Armenian case, stage one was the result of the historical ethnic and religious differences in the region and was concretized through various propaganda campaigns, most notably the “deceptively simplistic” slogan “Turkey for Turks” (Üngör, 2011). Such forms relegated non-Turk ethnic groups outside of the mainstream, dominant group as well as escalating violence towards the ‘other’ (Burlison et al., 2016, p. 42). Stage two, symbolization, in this case, can be seen through the amplification of the stereotypes of the traitorous and violent Armenians, breeding mistrust and fear from the general populace. Discrimination, stage three, can be seen in the aforementioned excessive and targeted taxation programs of Armenian regions of the empire, as

well as the extralegal searches, seizures, and destruction of Armenian businesses and homes. The fourth stage, dehumanization, in this case, is a cumulative effort of the previous steps and the effortful divisive strategies employed by the state along with the stripping of rights through the confiscation and expropriation laws. The government-issued deportation orders, and more generally, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP)'s well-documented plans to rid themselves of the Armenians, are the most obvious examples of the fifth, organizational, stage. At this point, there was great polarization (stage six) between the Armenians and dominant Turkish society, which the government continued to fuel. American consul, Leslie Davis noted how fervent local populations were to exploit the misery faced by the Armenians: "The scene reminded me of vultures swooping down on their prey," (P. Balakian, 2003, p. 234). Stage seven, preparation, is evident in the Armenian case through cumulative and increasingly concerted efforts by the CUP to identify and murder all Armenians. The persecution and extermination of the Armenians was swift, involving the horrific conditions of the deportation caravans and death marches, as well as the brutal violence and cold-blooded murder by chétés, soldiers, and laypeople. Most important for this thesis is stage ten, as the denial of the Armenian Genocide persists today, over one hundred years after the initial violence.

The establishment of stereotypes is an intrinsic part of the human experience, created to mediate and order the world around us starting at about five months of age (Gilman, 1985). Stereotypes do not always lead to genocide, but genocide is always predated by the establishment of stereotypes (Aronson et al., 2013; Stanton, 2016). Imaginary lines are drawn between the self and the 'Other', with the 'Other' oftentimes imbued with negative characteristics to which the source of cultural fears and insecurity can be attributed. Recalling Stanton's (2010) stages of genocide, the second of which directly relates to the exaggeration of

stereotypes of the targeted group, it is clear that stereotypes born of threat and insecurity are dangerous and a precursor to the physical violence of genocide. Stereotypes, and the models drawn upon to shape them, are protean and respond to “any alteration of the sense of order (real or imagined) between the self and the ‘Other’ (real or imagined)” (Gilman, 1985, p. 14). The models from which stereotypes are constructed are cherry-picked from the social world, rooted in the ideological history and culture that perpetuates them and selected based on their ability to reflect the anxieties of a given time (Gilman, 1985). In turn, this often establishes a self-fulfilling prophecy where the behaviour of the ‘Other’ serves to reiterate the stereotype. When faced with disorder and loss of control of the “internalized world it has created for itself,” the self projects that anxiety onto the stereotyped ‘Other’, externalizing the loss of control (Gilman, 1985, p. 17). For example, the stereotypes of the rich, gloating, insurgent Armenian population at the time of the genocide reflects the economic and political anxieties of the Ottoman Empire and projects it onto the Armenians due to their religious difference, education, and business acumen as a result of conditions unrelated to the causes of the actual insecurity (Alayarian, 2008). Moreover, placing demands on society, as the Armenians attempted to do in order to achieve equal treatment in the empire, produced status anxiety for an already failing regime facing repeated losses in recent years and thus translated to a loss of control.

Psychoanalyst and critical race theorist, Sander Gilman (1985 p.28) describes how the articulation of the perceived sense of control (i.e., religious mission, geographic or economic domination, or political power) assigns an “appropriate vocabulary for the sense of difference.” The resulting image of the ‘Other’ exists in a self-referential system that produces patterns of association and mythical mental heuristics. Following the social-psychological supposition of the innate human desire to classify and categorize the world around us, when widely shared and

perpetuated, these stereotypes structure representations and experiences of a group in the same manner as the overall structure of the world and legitimizes the stereotypical image/discourse (Aronson et al., 2013). Stereotyping may be an attempt at coping with cultural anxieties and insecurity to regain a semblance of control but cannot be left unexamined and unchecked. Classifications of difference and dichotomies of self: 'Other' often appear fixed and absolute but are entirely social constructs and entirely protean. In every case of recorded genocide, stereotyping takes place and it is necessary to unpack and expose the ideologies underpinning the systems that govern our world.

### *2.7 Armenian Genocide Denial*

Turkish denial of the Armenian Genocide is as old as the genocide itself. Despite the labelling of the killings as a crime against humanity, the failed attempts to bring key perpetrators to justice, and that the Armenian Genocide provided the initial impetus for the development of the word genocide, Turkey remains adamant, more than one hundred years later, that no genocide took place. Denial is the last stage of genocide, as it is “a continuation of the genocide through the continued attempt to destroy the victim group psychologically and culturally;” and moreover, denying “members even the memory of the murders of their relatives” (Stanton, 2008). Deniers are “accessories after the fact of genocide,” who prevent any international political and legal process from affirming the genocide and implementing reconciliatory measures (R. G. Hovannisian, 2003, p. 242). Furthermore, not only does genocide denial cauterize potential reconciliatory efforts, but as Peter Balakian (2004, p. 383) explains, it “strives to reshape history in order to demonize the victims and rehabilitate the perpetrators;” and ultimately, prevents the genocide from entering the “global collective memory” (R. G. Hovannisian, 2003, p. 2).

The very foundation of the modern Turkish state's foreign policy is Armenian Genocide denial. The Turkish campaign of denial has been described by sociologist Stanley Cohen as "the most consistent, strident, and elaborate state-organized attempt to conceal a record of past atrocities" (2001, p. 134). The facts establishing the happenings as genocide have been documented through a century of scholarship, Ottoman archives, testimony from the trials outlined earlier, and witness testimony, but according to Turkey, their "memory does not support the Armenian narrative on the events of 1915, [but] it is only Turks and Armenians who can effectively address their issues together and work jointly to find ways forward. Turkey is ready to do its part" (Akkoc, 2015). The suggestion that the historical record is unsettled is not only damaging for survivors and their descendants but sets a dangerous precedent on a global stage.

According to the Turkish version of the events of 1915, the Armenians, ungrateful of their "privileged" position in the empire, betrayed the Turks by allegedly joining Russian forces in fighting against the Turkish army (Askin, 2006, p. 40). The story continues that the Armenians had been hoarding arms and conspiring against the Turks in preparation for establishing an independent Armenian state within the borders. The presence of Armenians in halls of financial power fanned the flames of resentment towards the "rich, gloating, fifth column," ignited by the genocidal trademarked propaganda campaign, which, when coupled with the outbreak of WWI, laid the foundation for the refusal to acknowledge, and subsequent denial of, the premeditated massacre of 1.2 million Armenians (Alayarian, 2008; Askin, 2006; Jones, 2006). In this sense, the devastation of the Armenian people was not a genocide, but rather a justified response to the traitorous Christian insurgents in the empire. British High Commissioner, Admiral Calthorpe explained how supporters of the Ottoman government regarded the executions ordered by the aforementioned British-led trials as a "necessary concession to Entente rather than as punishment

justly meted out to criminals” (Bass, 2002, p. 126). In 1943, Talaat Pasha’s remains were returned to Istanbul and he was hailed as the martyred father of the modern Turkish state (Olson, 1986). Turkey has maintained its denial through an effortful and resolute campaign, stretching from domestic policy and education systems to foreign policy and diplomatic relations, which will be examined in the sections that follow.

### *2.8 Strategies of Denial*

Genocide denial is often a fringe perspective, condemned or simply ignored by the mainstream, but when practiced by the government of a powerful nation, it cannot be ignored. The Turkish government uses what Dr. Stanton (2008) describes as, “predictable” strategies of denial. These strategies can be broadly sorted into five general categories: minimizing and questioning statistics; attacking the motivations of the counter-hegemonic narrative, blaming “out of control” forces instead of official military forces; arguing semantics and definitional qualification, and the fifth and final strategy is to prioritize present and future peace and civility over placing blame and dwelling on the past (Stanton, 2008). Minimization and questioning tactics most often take aim at death tolls and the number of targeted group members alive prior to the genocide. It is worth noting that the designation of genocide does not require a certain number or proportion of casualties intentionally, but oftentimes conventional wisdom and comparative perspectives attempt to minimize the severity and disqualify killing as genocide by the numbers. Unlike terrorism, which is characterized by the actions of non-state actors, the violence of genocide is backed by the state (Ali, 2004). Uniquely, the Turkish perpetrators have remained in power and the destruction of much of the 3,000 years’ worth of Armenian cultural artifacts paired with their institutionalized denial makes this claim more powerful over time. The second strategy, attacking motivations, is clear in the perpetuation of the stereotypes of the greedy and traitorous

Armenians as well as the more recent contention that the genocide is used to “blackmail” Turkey (Aljazeera, 2016). The Ottoman Turks intentionally employed extralegal gangs and chétés whenever possible for the grisliest murders and terrorizing of the deportees in anticipation of invoking out of control forces. The fourth is the claim that the killing does not constitute genocide as per the legal definition, which is achieved by means of victim-blaming, wherein any killing was committed either in self-defence or inadvertent (i.e. lack of food and water), as well as Turks claiming to be victims themselves (Cooper & Akcam, 2005; Gürpınar, 2016; Stanton, 2008). Finally, subsequent Turkish governments since 1919 have been determined in their perpetuation of the fifth strategy, advancing a ‘forgive and forget’ perspective and prioritizing moving forward peacefully over holding perpetrators accountable for a past genocide using many of the first four strategies to diminish the significance of the genocide and ‘move on.’

Many of these same strategies of denial have been employed by Japanese, Serbian, Hutu, and West Pakistani genocidaires (Jones, 2006). As the official designation of genocide hangs on the premeditation of the killing, the Turkish government’s denial works to counter the copious evidence of the plans and intentions of the deportations and massacres by advancing the notion that there are competing official perspectives of what happened. The persistent, militant campaign of denial seeks to trivialize and minimize the barbarity of the genocide over time. Copious evidence exists, corroborated by Ottoman officials, diplomats, eyewitnesses, and survivors affirming that there was a premeditated plan to indiscriminately exterminate the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire. There is virtually no evidence of Armenians killing Ottomans, especially by the elderly, women, and children who were killed in the genocide. Moreover, genocide and war are not mutually exclusive, and the Ottoman deaths are attributable to the war they were fighting alongside the Germans. Denial does not require proof but instead

offloads the responsibility and burden of proof onto the victim group, especially as survivors die and time goes on.

Hitler's complimentary reference to the Armenian Genocide in Obersalzberg was indicative of the dangerous and instructive precedent set by the Ottomans 20 years before. The "reluctance" to adequately address the genocide and the severity of such a crime "came back to haunt" the world (Bassiouni in Dadrian, 1999, p. 33). International legal experts and genocide scholars have linked the Holocaust and the Armenian Genocide, some even suggesting that the Holocaust was "conditioned, if not preconditioned, by the first genocide, on account of it having remained unpunished," highlighting an alarming trend of genocides and crimes against humanity being inspired and modelled after one another when seen as "successful" (Dadrian, 1999, p. 33).<sup>8</sup> International human rights lawyer, David Matas describes how "nothing emboldens a criminal so much as the knowledge he can get away with the crime," (1989, p. 17). It is the impunity enabled by denial of wrongdoing and concealment of the facts that "renders the crime debatable" and exposes the particular insidiousness of the adage that history is written by the victors (Dadrian, 1999, p. 33). I am uninterested in presenting a comparative study but do believe that modern genocides are not discrete entities, and conceptually should be treated as interrelated processes.

### *2.9 International Implications of Armenian Genocide Denial*

Currently, 30 countries formally recognize the historical factuality of the Armenian Genocide and numerous large international organizations including the International Association of Genocide Scholars, the International Centre for Transitional Justice, religious organizations, and even the Kardashians (Bryant, 2016; *Countries That Recognize the Armenian Genocide*,

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<sup>8</sup> Most notably, the influence of Canadian residential schools upon South African Apartheid (Saul, 2010)

2020; International Association of Genocide Scholars, 2019; International Center for Transitional Justice, 2011; Jewish Council for Public Affairs, 2015; World Council of Churches, 2015).<sup>9</sup> While the Turkish and Azerbaijani governments are the only governments that directly deny the factuality of the genocide, they attempt to silence recognizers to ensure a tacit erasure of the crime globally. Until the later 1960s, what is often referred to as the “conspiracy of silence” shrouded the issue internationally, made possible by the Turkish campaign of denial as well as the wide dispersion of the surviving Armenians living on both sides of the Iron Curtain at the peak of the cold war and dealing with the loss of nearly three-quarters of their population (Ben Aharon, 2019). Turkey’s militarily valuable geographic location and their importance on the world economic and political stage has assisted in maintaining international complicity in the tacit erasure and denial (Robertson, 2015). They are a crucial NATO member state, economic partner, and home to critically important military bases in the region, which, when combined with their aggressive and well-funded domestic campaign of denial, makes foreign governments wary of antagonizing them.

Each time a country or large institution acknowledges the Armenian Genocide, Turkey is quick to retaliate—breaking diplomatic ties, tearing up trade deals—as well as issuing stern denouncements and sometimes threats. After the French senate rejected a 2006 bill criminalizing the denial of the Armenian Genocide, which has been officially recognized as genocide by France since 2001, a more comprehensive bill was brought forth in 2011 criminalizing the denial of any officially recognized genocide in an attempt to appear less targeted at Turkey (Atwill, 2012; “France Passes Genocide Bill, Angry Turkey Cuts Ties,” 2011). The Turkish government responded by suspending diplomatic ties, and banning French military vehicles from Turkish

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<sup>9</sup> For a full list of countries see [https://www.armenian-genocide.org/recognition\\_countries.html](https://www.armenian-genocide.org/recognition_countries.html)

docks and airspace while threatening further retaliation (“France Passes Genocide Bill, Angry Turkey Cuts Ties,” 2011). Although the 2011 bill became law in France, it was soon overturned by France’s Constitutional Council on the grounds of violating freedom of expression and communication (Atwill, 2012). In 2016, a new bill criminalizing denial of the Armenian Genocide was passed by the French National Assembly but was struck down again by the Constitutional Court less than a year later for the same reasons (Asbarez Post, 2017). In 2019, President Emanuel Macron made April 24<sup>th</sup> the national Armenian Genocide commemoration day (News.am, 2019).

Incomprehensibly, the very nation that pushed for justice following the Armenian Genocide, Great Britain, does not formally recognize the genocide as genocide. The British government chooses its word carefully, showing some degree of awareness of the recension of their previously firm position. Freedom of Information requests procured 54 documents regarding Britain’s position on the genocide, many using the same language around the “tragic” and/or “regrettable” events and “massacres” in 1915, but clarify explicitly that they no longer believe a genocide took place and reiterate almost exactly the Turkish phrasing around the apparent necessity to focus on moving forward and strengthening ties between the countries (*FOI Release*, 2014). The official position can be summarized best by the following statement, which appears with minor alterations in several documents from press releases to briefing notes: “neither this Government nor previous British Governments have judged that the evidence is sufficiently unequivocal to persuade us that these events should be categorized as genocide as defined by the 1948 UN Convention on Genocide” (*FOI Release*, 2014). Furthermore, a forty-four-page report by former UN War Crimes Court President and international law expert, Geoffrey Robertson, provides a damning account of the utter failure of British policy in this

regard. He concludes that not only does “the treatment of the Armenians in 1915 answers to the description of genocide,” but also that the British parliament “has been routinely misinformed, by ministers who have recited [Foreign & Commonwealth Office] briefs without questioning their accuracy. [Her Majesty's Government]’s real and only policy has been to evade truthful answers to questions about the Armenian Genocide, because the truth would discomfort the Turkish government” (Robertson, 2009, p. 40). Turkey boasts several excerpts of the British government’s responses to “questions about Armenian claims” in a subsection of their official foreign policy web pages to lend ethos to their position (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.).

Turkey places particular pressure on the United States to prevent official recognition and has been “greatly assisted” by the two countries’ alliance (Jones, 2006, p. 114). Since the first invocation of the word genocide by the United States in their advisory opinion to the International Court of Justice in 1951, there have been repeated debates and failed attempts to officially recognize the events as genocide up until a few months ago (International Court of Justice, 1951). In 1952, Turkey joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Turkey was a crucial ally to the United States throughout the Cold War, contributing personnel to the proxy war in Korea, favouring the US in the Turkish Straights crisis, and supporting the overall American Soviet containment strategy (Huston, 1988). Multiple official documents since the 1970s have described the events as genocide, including a speech by President Ronald Raegan in 1981, making him the last US president to do so (*Proclamation 4838 - Days of Remembrance of Victims of the Holocaust*, 1981). In 2007, the U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs approved a bill condemning the Ottoman Empire for the genocide, but support crumbled in light

of the Bush administration highlighting the likely Turkish restrictions on the military ground and airspace access, which was vital for American action in Iraq at the time (Knowlton, 2007).

President Barack Obama, who not only routinely condemned the Armenian Genocide during his senatorial tenure, but explicitly promised official recognition during his presidential campaign, avoided ever using the “g” word during his presidential term (*The Importance of US-Armenia Relations*, 2008; Cerava & Jacobson, 2016). The Trump administration all but copied the previous administration’s speeches on the topic, but in December 2019, the House of Representatives, and subsequently, the Senate, passed a resolution to officially recognize the Armenian Genocide (*S.Res.150 - 116th Congress*, 2019). The Erdogan administration responded by threatening to close the Turkish-based Incirlik airbase, which hosts US nuclear warheads, as well as recognize the slaughter of Native Americans by European Settlers as genocide (Ensor, 2019; *The New Arab*, 2019; Wood, 2019). President Trump, a self-proclaimed “big fan” of Erdogan, was quick to issue a statement indicating that his administration’s position remained unchanged, regardless of resolutions passed in the legislative branch (BBC News, 2019).

Within academia, there has been significant gatekeeping in Armenian Genocide scholarship, which can be traced back to the seemingly never-ending well-funded Turkish denialist campaign (Quataert, 2006). Political theorist Ayda Erbal (2015, p. 784) explains how the lack of “moral, ethical, or political repercussions” renders denialist discourses rooted in “dehumanization, callousness, and neglect,” downplaying the extent of criminality and/or power asymmetry, not accepting the subaltern’s sources as legitimate. In the absence of universal recognition of the Armenian Genocide, Turkey has the ability to oppress and denigrate Armenians at home and abroad with minimal resistance, guilt, or international scrutiny and

outrage. Furthermore, Erbal highlights the wars, deportations, pogroms, and massacres that occurred after the Armenian Genocide, and how those same strategies of denial and both the explicit and tacit silence domestically and abroad enable the continued state-sanctioned violence (Ayda Erbal, 2015). The Institute for Turkish Studies in the United States, funded by the Turkish government, awards grants to academics and subsequently requests their involvement in political action preventing genocide recognition (P. Balakian, 2003; R. G. Hovannisian, 1997). Israel has been a strong Turkish ally, regurgitating the Turkish version of the Armenian Genocide and refusing to officially use the word genocide.

Turkey's continued repression of journalists, academics, writers, and activists stifles alternative voices, witnesses, and inevitably, memory. Turkish writers who acknowledge the genocide are regularly punished, such as Nobel prize-winning writer, Orhan Pamuk who was charged under Article 301 of the Turkish criminal code which outlaws the denigration of "Turkishness" (BBC Europe, 2005; *Turkish Criminal Code*, 2004). More concerning was the multiple charges and subsequent assassination of Hrant Dink, a vocal Armenian activist and editor-in-chief of the Turkish-Armenian newspaper, *Agos*, by 17-year-old Turkish nationalist, Ogün Samast, in 2007 (BBC Europe, 2005). Dink's murderer was hailed as a patriot and national hero by many and photographs of Samast flanked by smiling Turkish authorities in front of the Turkish flag appeared, garnering widespread outrage and perhaps inciting the "we are all Armenians" and "we are all Hrant Dink" chants and rallying cries at Dink's well-attended funeral (D'Orsi, 2018; *World Briefing / Europe*, 2007). In 2008, Turkish journalists, politicians, and professors launched the "I Apologize" (in Turkish: *Özür Diliyorum*) campaign calling for a collective apology for the Armenian Genocide which garnered 30,000 signatures in seven months (Shahnazarian, 2012). The now non-existent campaign resulted in outrage by many,

including the president, and was criticized by many Armenians as being one-dimensional; not to mention that the campaign did not ever use the word genocide, describing the events as catastrophic and tragic (Shahnazarian, 2012; Tait, 2008). Turkey consistently ranks first or second in the world for the most journalists imprisoned since the Committee to Protect Journalists began reporting in 1994, and the declining number in recent years is only reflective of Erdogan's mission to shut down independent news outlets and critics (*Committee to Protect Journalists – Defending Journalists Worldwide.*, 2019; McCarthy, 2019). Currently, Turkey is rushing a bill through parliament that seeks to expand censorship laws in the country, this time targeting social media, requiring any platform with over a million users to have offices in Turkey, store user data locally, and block any content the government requests (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

Turkey continues to enjoy the spoils of the genocide, from the immense wealth and private property pilfered to the land once inhabited and the resulting regional power made possible by the elimination of a once strong Armenian community. The Armenian Genocide is an important part of history that is prohibited from being treated as such—continually shaping the present-day Armenian and Turkish consciousness in a multitude of ways. Turkey is at a crucial political moment, with a failed coup in 2016 and an increasingly authoritarian government holding power (Yılmaz & Turner, 2019). The factuality of the Armenian Genocide by the Ottoman Turks in 1915 remains. No amount of lies, omission, repression, and propaganda can change that. Instead, what are alterable are the aspects of a nation's past that are brought into the present and how they are framed.

We are currently seeing a re-emergence of the politics of recognition and national memory on a global stage, with reactionary movements calling for the refusal to perpetuate systems built on oppression and atrocity. Navigating the social and political imbrications of history and how it is written, the voices that are prioritized, that which is preserved and commemorated is of the utmost importance in establishing a fair and just world. We cannot rely on the common-sense fallacy of history taking the shape of an imaginary arc towards good, because these are perpetuated by the very systems build to maintain themselves and the structures of power that built them. In a Foucauldian (1982) sense then, history is discourse and genocide denial is a concerning example of the function of discourse when perpetuated by institutionalized power enacted from the top down.

### **3. Photographing Atrocity, Positionality, and Witnessing**

*"Photographs state the innocence, the vulnerability of lives heading toward their own destruction, and this link between photography and death haunts all photographs of people"*  
 -Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of 'Other's*

Few, if any, objects are associated with memory more than the camera, and by extension, the photograph. The thousands of words contained within a photograph appear to tell a story in response to our gaze, producing memory in a representational sense (Clarke, 1997). Calls for recognition, responsibility, and reparations following genocide rely on judicial systems and evidence of what has happened. Legal frameworks rely on the assembling of an archive to tell a story, because “there can be no recognition without victims, no responsibility without perpetrators, and no justice without reparations” (Motha et al., 2016, p. 16). In the Armenian case, recuperation, recognition, and recollection are enacted through material acts of remembrance (assembling photographs, writings, and testimonies to yield evidence of the violence), as well as endeavours seeking official recognition for the Armenian Genocide as

genocide in political and institutional spheres. Photographic evidence of the Armenian Genocide continues to “accrue weight” insofar as they present a visual record of the events which are continuously and “aggressively” denied and falsified by the perpetrators (P. Balakian, 2015, p. 91).

Contemporary art theorist, Thierry De Duve’s (2008, p. 6), describes how in viewing photographs of atrocity, such as genocide, “first, we have the photos, second, the facts; third, we have the problem.” Using the Cambodian Genocide pre-execution portrait photographs, which were exhibited in France at a photography festival as his focus, De Duve explores how this problem is the blurring borders between the evidentiary status and the aestheticization and exploitation of suffering in artistic contexts. Photography is uniquely situated, being a “unanimously acknowledged” art form, but also “practiced by professionals with no interest in claiming the title of artist,” with ever-changing boundaries between art and non-art on both ideological and aesthetic levels (Duve, 2008, p. 5). It is perhaps the multiplicity of forces and actors at play paired with its interdisciplinary nature that makes photography an interesting and valuable site of inquiry. Photographs of atrocity are not valuable only in their ability to shock and disturb, and as queer theorist and cultural icon, Judith Butler (2005, p. 824), remarks: “the photograph does not merely refer to the acts of atrocity, but also builds and confirms these acts for those who might name them as such.” Photographic evidence, both historical and contemporary, remains valuable and necessary in developing political consciousness centred around the fragility and mortality of human life.

For this study, I will use Armin Wegner’s collection of photographs of the death marches and deportations in 1915-16 as a primary example of personal witness testimony (See figures 5-

10). Wegner's photos provide an interesting case study, as they are not staged, nor are they taken by journalists resulting in a marked absence of the intention and professional gestures inherent to most war photography, as well as the simple fact that they predate much of the photography that has previously been studied (P. Balakian, 2015; Sontag, 2004). Moreover, these photographs are little known and little studied, even by specialists in the field. These photos will help to understand how photography has been intrinsic in the development of human rights in what is often referred to as the "century of genocide" (Fehrenbach & Rodogno, 2015; Hammarberg & Europarat, 2012; Linfield, 2012; Weitz, 2006).

### 3.1 The Archive

Scholars agree that the archive, personal or official, is the most significant way of collecting, storing, and preserving memory and historical knowledge (Foster, 1999; Motha et al., 2016). The archive is distinct from a library or collection, constitutes a "repository or ordered system of documents and records, both verbal and visual, that is the foundation from which history is written" (Merewether, 2006, p. 10). Much of our ability to recall the past relies on archival documents, especially images, because as Susan Sontag (2004b) asserts: "the Western memory museum is mostly a visual one." The question then remains, how do we represent and recognize the memory of such a complicated and traumatic event that remains a marked feature of modern history over a century after its occurrence? The archival "impulse" or "fever" to preserve remnants of life lost is the "archeology of knowledge," revealing the production of historical meaning as well as our relationship to the past (Foucault, 1982). Following the Foucauldian (1982) conceptualization then, the archive is a governing system or structure of society of "statements", which shapes the values and ways of thinking of its people through its power in determining whom, and under what conditions, a history can be written. Political philosopher

Giorgio Agamben (1998, p. 143), building upon Foucault, described the archive as the system of relations between the said and the unsaid, the “mass of the non-semantic inscribed in every meaningful discourse as a function of its enunciation; it is the dark margin encircling and limiting every concrete act of speech.” Studying the past in a diachronic way, considering how understandings are shaped and developed over time is valuable as it is inextricably linked with the present.

For the Armenian Genocide, archival evidence is particularly interesting and important because of the disputed nature of this genocide. The archives are split up between the Armenian National Institute in Washington, DC; the national archives in Armenia’s capital city, Yerevan; the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem archives; the Vagharshapat Armenian Apostolic Church’s archives; the Tashnag Party’s archives in Boston, Massachusetts; and the Zoryan Institute archives in Toronto. Many of the archival artefacts are shared among the aforementioned organizations and lent to other human rights institutions. The vast majority of these archives are comprised of documentation and reports confirming the intention to exterminate the Armenian population and reports from notable pundits such as foreign ambassadors and secretaries of state. While maintaining that the Ottoman and Turkish archives are readily accessible, the Turkish state-run media launches frequent attacks against the archives which document the genocidal intent of the Ottoman Turks (Ikbal Arslan & Baykan, 2019). Scholars have written about the usefulness of the archive in destabilizing hegemonic narratives when necessary and providing necessary context and evidence, which is precisely the case in Turkey’s falsification and re-writing of history (Merewether, 2006; Motha et al., 2016). When studying archival texts, oftentimes the criticism arises that the archive is ideological, composed by agents with inevitable subjectivities and views (Foucault, 1982; Maier, 2014). In choosing

these photos, which were hidden in a descendant's storage for decades and do not hold iconic status, I believe that these criticisms do not apply and instead highlight the possibility for a decentralized, non-hierarchical understanding of the archive in this particular case.

Wegner's positionality highlights the possibility for the archive to act as what Hal Foster (2004, p. 4) describes as a "gesture of alternative knowledge." There are relatively few photographs of the genocide in existence, and those that do, cannot be considered as a significant part of the collective visual conscience or memory. Historian, Jean-Marie Carzou (2006), aptly describes the Armenian Genocide as the perfect genocide, because in many ways it never seemed to have occurred. The historical precedent of the absence of photographic representations is a direct result of the "politics of extermination," which, in any instance, underscores the impunity of perpetrators (Baronian, 2016, p. 304). The intentional destruction of the Armenian people has thus continued in the form of active policies of negation, resulting in the constant need for visual evidence to validate the, now inherited, past. In answering her question of how "one visually [speaks] about this Genocide without having to prove that it took place," Marie-Aude Baronian ultimately acknowledges how "Images are the necessary detours for remembering a culture that lacks any of its own and that, as a result, has been weaving for generations its own tapestries and textures of memory." (Baronian, 2016, p. 311) Wegner's photographs are thus central to this study, not only for what they depict, but also for their role in highlighting the complex rhizome of geopolitics, nationalism, personal witness testimony, and genocide denial.

### *3.2 Armin Wegner: Witness, Intermediary, Activist*

At the outset of World War I, Wegner volunteered as a medic in Poland and following the 1915 military alliance between Germany and Turkey, Wegner was transferred to a region of the

Ottoman Empire (now Iraq) with the Ottoman Sixth Army, where he travelled east to west within the empire (Payne, 2012). It was on these trips in early 1916 that Wegner encountered the deported Armenians (Payne, 2012). In November 1915, Wegner wrote from the camp in Ras-el-Ain:

I have just returned from a round of inspection of the camps: hunger, death, disease, desperation on all sides. You would smell the odour of feces and decay. From a tent came the laments of a dying woman. A mother identifying the dark violet badges on my uniform as those of the Sanitary Corps, came towards me with outstretched hands.... Taking me for a doctor, she clung on to me with all her might, I who had neither medicines nor bandages, for it was forbidden to help her. But all this is nothing compared to the frightful sights of the swarms of orphans which increase daily. At the sides of the camp, a row of holes in the ground covered with rags, had been prepared for them. Girls and boys of all ages were sitting in these holes, heads together, abandoned and reduced to animals starved, without food or bread, deprived of the most basic human aid, packed tightly against the other and trembling from the night cold, holding pieces of still smoldering wood to try and get warm. (Wegner, 1996, p. 61)

Wegner, disobeying orders that intended to mask the reality of the deportations and massacres, took meticulous notes, collected letters from the victims, and took hundreds of photographs of Armenian people on death marches and in deportation camps in Deir Ez-Zor, Ras-el-Ain, Rakka, Meskene, and Aleppo (P. Balakian, 2003, 2015). Recruiting the help of foreign consulates and various embassies, most notably Henry Morgenthau, Wegner was able to send some of his photographs “that horrify and indict” to the United States and Germany (Hoffman, Tessa &

Koutcharian, 1992, p. 54). Upon intercepting a letter detailing the genocide of the Armenians underway, the Turkish Command ordered his arrest, but not before he hid as many negatives as he could in his belt (Armenian National Institute, n.d.-b). Nineteen of the photographs survived and were donated by Wegner's daughter Sybil to be preserved by the Armenian National Institute in Washington, DC and are available for viewing on their website (Armenian National Institute, n.d.-a). The photographs show the bodies of Armenian people dying in the streets, orphaned children, families in tents, and discarded corpses.<sup>10</sup>

Wegner's subject position as a soldier-resistor-anti-war activist while he was in uniform and the significance in terms of the history of war photography is central to this study. Wegner understood that the photos he had taken of the forced deportations did not speak for themselves, nor did he want them to. Shoshana Feldman and Dori Laub (1991, p. 204) assert that "to testify is thus not merely to narrate, but to commit oneself, and one's narrative, to others... to take responsibility for the truth of an occurrence." Wegner began using his platform and his photographs to promote reconciliation between not Germany and Armenia, but to "humanity in its entirety" within academia, law, and humanitarianism, and beyond (Payne, 2012; Wegner, 2000a). In the years following the genocide, Wegner became increasingly vocal about the slaughter of the Armenian people, achieving widespread notoriety first from his "Open Letter to the President of the United States of America, Woodrow Wilson, On the Expulsion of the Armenian People into the Desert" in the *Berliner Tageblatt* in February 1919 (Wegner, 2000a). Wegner's unwavering commitment to shedding light on the recent genocide against the Armenians and petitions for recognition cost him his position as editor of a foreign affairs

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<sup>10</sup> All 19 photographs are available for viewing on the Armenian National Institute's website [here](#)

publication in Berlin as well as his contract with publishing company, Fleischel Verlag (Rooney, 1984, p. 288).

Between 1919-1921, Wegner endeavoured to use his personal collection of reports and pictures of what he had witnessed in the desert as the basis for a lecture series. The directors of the host institution, the Urania Society, were unenthused and were skeptical of attracting an audience for the lecture they had agreed to, as “the events that you depict have for some time now receded into the background” (Urania Berlin, 1918). The testimonial encounter’s socially transformative potential is situated within a “discursive terrain” of political objectives paired with rhetorical devices to articulate an otherwise unknowable “truth” of the events to which the witness testifies (McBride, 2001, p. 151). This lecture saw Wegner shift from the first-person address of the open letters to an intermediary witness:

When, we finally ask, will the conscience of humanity rise up with such power that a crime will ultimately disappear from the earth, a crime, which for the last twenty-five years has tarnished the earth for the eyes of Europe. It is Europe’s duty to assist earnestly and lovingly in this relief work so that the fate of Armenia does not take second place to the self-centred goals of large states. All of Europe, and not in the least Germany, adopted in the Berlin Agreement of July 1878 the most sacred guarantee to protect the peace and security of Armenia. Seduced by self-centered politics, it has to this day not honored this vow. (Wegner quoted in Payne, 2012, p. 41)

Wegner appeals to the morality of his audience, attempting to dismantle the Turk:Armenian and Christian:Muslim dichotomies, emphasizing the facts of state-sponsored violence against its

citizens and the dangers of such. Nevertheless, violent protests by the Turks in the audience ensued causing the directors to remove the “most disturbing slides.” (Payne, 2012, p. 40). News media at the time focused on the clashes precipitated by the lectures and very little on the content itself and the host institution complained of being used as a “stomping ground for political oppositions and opinions” (Urania Berlin, 1918). It is in this sense that a multimodal analysis of photography and its function as a text is valuable, both at the time at which they were taken—the event—as well as how the photos are used thereafter (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2008). The interpersonal metafunction of the language of photography seems to apply equally to its reception, in this case as a politically charged text. The ideational metafunction of presenting these photographs represents the selection of meanings available in the context of their existence. The textual metafunction continues to evolve from the moment of their creation to today through their role in the larger system of social practices (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2008).

During the 1921 trial of Soghomon Tehlirian, the aforementioned man responsible for the assassination of Minister of the Interior and Genocidaire, Talaat Pascha, Wegner served as an expert witness for the trial due to his personal experience as an eye witness to the violence (Alloa, 2016; Payne, 2012). Wegner wrote the foreword to the stenographic report of the trial, later published as a book entitled *Justicier du génocide arménien: le procès de Tehlirian*.<sup>11</sup> Wegner’s (1921, p. 1) commentary puts the trial into an international political context, noting how the trial “sent the eyes of the whole world... to the bloodiest page of the world war,” with a “verdict of world historical significance.” Wegner makes clear distinctions between the Young Turk government and its supporters and Turkish and German people as a whole, once again

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<sup>11</sup> The trial proceedings became known as the “Talaat Pasha Trial” and are referred to as such in transcriptions despite it being Tehlirian on trial.

emphasizing the shared humanity of people regardless of nationality (See Appendix D for full transcript).

Wegner's activism was rooted in a commitment to international cooperation and humanitarianism. Wegner's push for reconciliation was based upon his pacifist proclamation of "a new law for the human" that entailed the rejection of the centuries-old "law of violence" upheld by European political leaders, and the "complete and unconditional abolition of violence" as outlined in the manifesto of the *Bund der Kriegsdienstgegner* (Association of War Resisters) he founded with Robert Pohl, G.W. Meyer and Magnus Schwantje in 1919 (Kurt Hiller, 1920, p. 143). Wegner attempted to humanize those who have died and create a "cultural memory of the atrocities," which remained obfuscated and denied as either unfounded or externalities of the war, as a way to "confer public recognition upon the dead as belonging to an imagined human community" (Payne, 2012, p. 29). Wegner appealed to a "broad sense of suffering and re-inscribing notions of victims and perpetrators within a framework that cast matters in terms of international regimes of humanity and inhumanity" instead of imposing moral judgment and blame upon the entirety of the Turkish and German populations (Payne, 2012, p. 31). Wegner, in the same way as Raphael Lemkin, understood the need for concrete demands with clear outcomes in the political realm. Wegner sought to ameliorate the continued suffering through the establishment of a sovereign Armenia, compensation for expropriated property, and state-sponsored care for the tens of thousands of orphaned Armenian children (Payne, 2012; Wilson & Brown, 2009). Wegner saw these measures as a way to expand reconciliation and recognition beyond specific national interests to establish a wider, global "recognition of our common guilt for the atrocities" (Wilson & Brown, 2009, p. 145). Wegner saw the matter of genocide as something larger than the attribution of blame. It was the matter of shared histories and the

fallibility of humanity which shrouded the global regime of distinct nation-states and the prioritization of national sovereignty. It is through these photos that Wegner sought to reintegrate the dead into the collective consciousness of the living.

### *3.3 The Photography of Armin Wegner*

In *The Burden of Representation*, John Tagg (1993, p. 5) applies a semiotic and Foucauldian lens to the work of photographs in meaning-making and social regulation throughout history, examining how the evidentiary power of photography “rests not on natural or existential fact but on a social semiotic process based upon techniques and procedures, concrete institutions, and specific social relations.” It is in this way that I believe Wegner’s photographs should be studied. Wegner’s photos enable us as viewers to confront photographs that are not the result of self-conscious photography replete with the typical motivations and careful construction of such; but rather, the result of the sense of horror elicited by the sudden witnessing and the compulsion to document it. The photographs constitute multimodal Foucauldian statements not only as representations of events that continue to be denied but also through the formation of a group of related statements in the larger assemblage of a memory project and archive, which is a constituent aspect of statements and the discursive formations they form. Foucault (1982, P. 92-95) emphasized that statements do not occur randomly, but always in “particular relation with a subject: and “because the position of the subject can be assigned.” The photographs as statements make a claim about the broader context and positions subjects concerning itself, insofar as the statement is “a function of existence that properly belongs to signs and on the basis of which one may then decide, through analysis or intuition, whether or not they ‘make sense,’ according to what rule they follow one another or are juxtaposed, of what they are the sign, and what sort of act is carried out by their formulation (oral or written)” (Foucault, 1982, p. 86)

These photographs offer a glimpse into the historical moment, illustrative of the genocidal process and the representative dimension of photography in atrocity. As we will see, there are recurrent signifiers throughout the photographs that comprise the multimodal statements that weave the discursive formation together, as they provide a freeze-frame of the genocidal process occurring across the region at the time.

The first image (figure 5) focuses on a man slumped against a pile of belongings with his clothing over his head in the centre of the shot, only the silhouette of his nose and mouth visible, sleeping in the sand under the sun. His limp posture appears almost collapsed, with his head falling to the side, arms limp, and legs at different angles. In the background one can see various other deportees sitting and standing, some in clusters, others alone, including a child squatted in the sand. The child's eyes are focused on the ground at his feet. This picture provides a snapshot of the barely survivable conditions of the desert marches as well as the lack of shelter or anything resembling a camp for the deportees, connoting a sort of liminal existence, or the closeness to death that these people face laying in the desert sun with virtually no provisions.

The second image (Figure 6) is taken at close range in a street and is comprised of three distinct parts, showing three dead children. The first part is comprised of the foreground to the left where two children rest, one of them dead, laying on their side on the curb with their legs in the gutter and the second crouched on the curb with their arms resting on their knees pulled to their chest staring in the direction of the camera. The viewer is unable to ascertain the crouched child's expression as only the vague shape of their face is discernible. The next part of the photo is comprised of the naked dead child laying on their back where the road meets the gutter with their legs flat, right arm bent to touch the side of their face that is facing upwards, and the left

arm stretched straight out from their small frail body. The third part of this photograph is the furthest perspective, the background on the right side where one can see another child seated in the gutter turned to look at the three barely adults, assumedly deportees on their way to the desert or a fate similar to the children strewn on the ground, walking out of the shot with their suit-clad backs turned to the camera.

The third photograph (Figure 7) shows a child crouched beside a murdered man who has been cast into a rubble covered ditch. The corpse is dirty and naked except for the remnants of a sleeve on his right bicep, emaciated, his skin stretched over bones. Laying on his back, his face appears to be contorted in a grimace of pain, his arms bent to his chest with hands curled under, and legs bent at the knees with his feet touching. The child's face is dirty, head shaved, wearing a crumpled stained shirt and pants with no shoes on his feet. The boy is crouched down at the edge of the ditch with his gaze averted towards the camera, but his eyes are darkened with a shadow. In the background of the photograph, there are at least two other visible corpses laying on the road.

In the fourth image (figure 8), eight decapitated heads are photographed, charred to varying degrees of unrecognizability but all positioned with their faces pointed towards Wegner's camera. On the right, the head's features are discernible, with their mouth ajar, as if crying out. The pile of heads sits atop a pile of dirt and ash on the ground. Emblematic of the desecration of the deceased, the pile of heads is a visceral and unforgettable image, echoing the violence to bodies, living and dead, not captured by Wegner's camera.

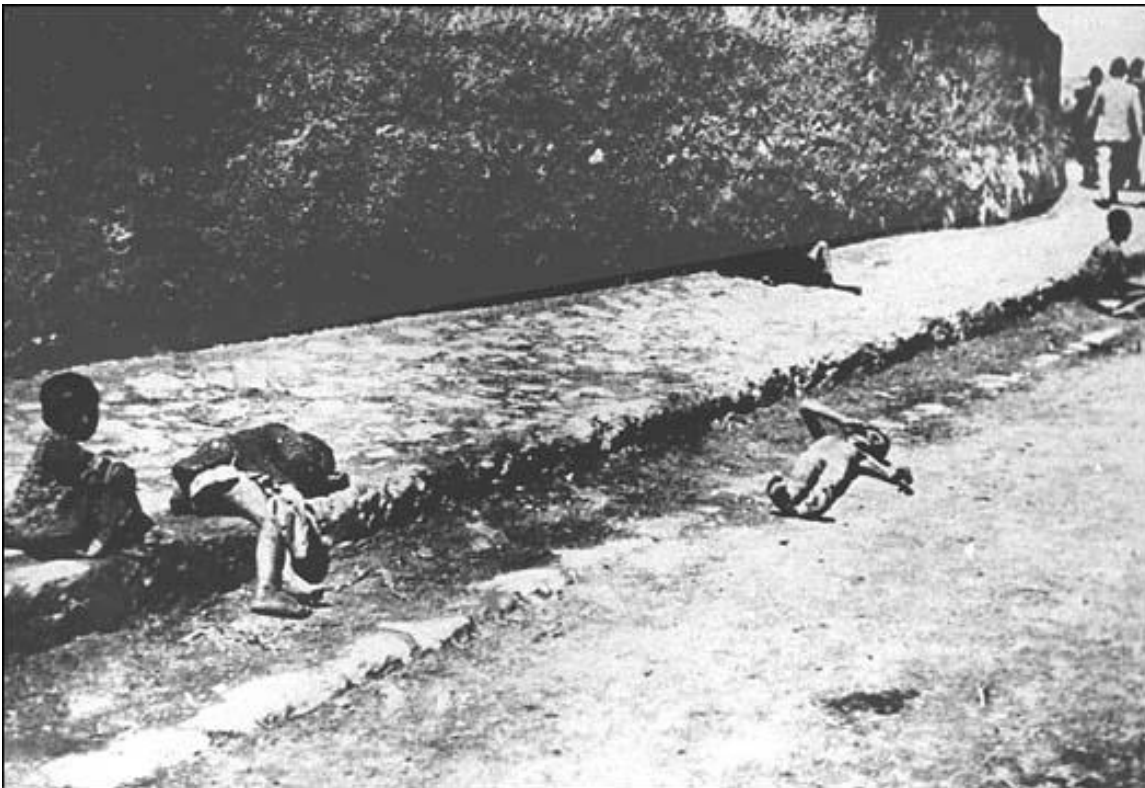
In the fifth, and final, photo included in this study (figure 9), a woman is walking in the centre foreground with a bundle in her arms that, based on the way she is carrying and looking

down at it, appears to be a small child. Seven other people are present in the photograph, two other Armenian women, two young children, one guard on horseback, and two soldiers in uniform with packs and rifles. The soldiers look onto the deportees and the guard on horseback looks in the opposite direction, marking a clear difference between the persecuted and persecutors. Based on the few individuals present, all of whom are women and children except for the soldiers/guards, paired with the knowledge of the true nature of these deportations, it seems plausible that what is pictured is the tail of what was once a large group of deportees. The photograph captures the movement of the woman at the front, her stride appears strong, with quite literally one foot in front of the other in the barren desert, with nothing but mountain wilderness in the background.

Between the deceased left in the gutters and the people marched through the desert to their deaths, the plight of the persecuted Armenians is palpable in the photographs, even without depicting wanton violence itself. There is something particularly jarring and insidious about the absolute vulnerability of a naked child in a ditch. These photographs allow “the picture not only to represent but be representative” (Tagg, 1993, p. 18). The corpses, and the clear disregard for the lives they once held, express more than a series of dead individuals, these photographs embody the various forms of death and the millions of lives lost at the hands of the Ottoman Turks policies of extermination. I chose to include these photos for my study because of the lack of scholarship or general acknowledgement of them in the vast arenas of genocide studies and recognition. As mentioned, Wegner himself attempted to use his photographs as proof of what he witnessed in an attempt to publicize and educate people about the systematic annihilation of the Armenians by the Ottoman Turks.



*Figure 5: Resting under the desert sun.*



*Figure 6: Abandoned and murdered small children of the (Armenian) deportees*



*Figure 7: Murdered man cast in ditch*



*Figure 8: Skulls of deportees*



*Figure 9: Family of deportees on the road*

The photographic situation is comprised of three distinct aspects: the photographer, the subject, and the viewer, but photography cannot be reduced simply to the sum of these parts. The event of photography has the potential to produce a strongly affective situation beyond what is visually *there*. The feelings, emotions, and affect elicited by the photographic situation should themselves be considered events. As John Tagg notes in *The Burden of Representation* (1993, p. 28), “denotation, or the appearance of denotation, is powerless to alter political opinions: no photograph has ever convinced or refuted anyone (but the photograph can 'confirm') insofar as political consciousness is perhaps non-existent outside the logos.” In this regard, the tension of the evidentiary status of photographs becomes apparent, wherein Wegner’s photographs, as with most any photographs, are not self-explanatory but do serve to confirm the other evidentiary modes such as Ambassador Morgenthau’s testimonies, the writings of scholars from Lemkin to

Taner Akcam, and of course Wegner's own writing and presentations. By considering the role of Wegner's photographs in a multimodal context, through the aforementioned ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions of the text, the photographs can be understood as evidentiary (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2008). The textual metafunctions of the photographs is realized by Wegner's choice to take the photographs in order to express the ideational metafunction of the genocide taking place and the interpersonal metafunction of the power dynamics at work. The interpersonal metafunction, here underscores the social purposes and relations present, depicting a clear victim and perpetrator dynamic. The photographs of the death marches, women and children being marched barefoot on a dirt road in the desert, survivors huddled around what few belongings they had left without shelter, naked corpses left strewn in the gutter, and charred skulls taken by a German medic sent to oversee deportations who disobeyed direct orders and fought against the censorship of the German-Ottoman authorities because he was horrified by what he saw connote the larger genocidal machine.

The broader context functions as the "anchorage" to provide meaning to these images, because it is "thanks to its code of connotation the reading of the photograph is thus always historical; it depends on the reader's 'knowledge' just as though it were a matter of a real language, intelligible only if one has learned the signs" (Tagg, 1993, p. 28). The photographs on their own horrify, and the text explains, but the photographs also humanize and provide a referent to the evil described in words. One of the main conditions that qualify statements according to Foucault (1982, p. 30) is the idea of "rules of formation," and statements should thus be interpreted "not as fixed components, but only via the rules which govern their formation" (McHoul & Grace, 1997, p. 38). The rules of formation, therefore, relate to the basic tenets of Foucauldian theory by ordering how meaning is made within an ideological system that

governs the context in which the statement is produced. In the context of Wegner's photographs, the rules of formation are controlled by the prohibition of their very creation and the subject-position of Wegner himself. The rules guide both the purpose and effect of the statement, including what can be known by who and how it can be used. Peggy Phelan (2012, p. 54) notes how by their representational force, "photographs that document historical atrocities function in the manner of constative speech acts; they describe and document actions that have if not quite ended, nonetheless become attached to narratives, however contested." By applying a Foucauldian lens to the principles of multimodal discourse analysis, the importance of Wegner's photographs can be understood as a multimodal discursive formation that finds meaning both in what they depict and the conditions under which they were captured. Employing a multimodal consideration through the metafunctions of language to the text, in this case the photographs and their subsequent usage, allows for a deeper understanding of the interplay identified through a Foucauldian lens.

### *3.4 Photographing Atrocity*

Photographic evidence of such suffering incites hopelessness and simultaneously the possibility of hope, because as Walter Benjamin (1986a, p. 356) so aptly put it, "it is only for the sake of those without hope that hope is given to us." For this reason, photography is a perfect starting point for encountering the painful labour of facing responsibility to others and the world. It is impossible to look at photographs of suffering without considering the role of the viewer. Photography remains the most memorable and impactful way of portraying the "pain of others" through its indexical and iconic representational function (Batchen & Prosser, 2012; Sontag, 2004). Wegner's photos, while avoiding the reductive and sensational qualities that have become

the marked feature of war and atrocity photography, depict the “limits of [the photograph’s] expressive terms of reference” (Clarke, 1997, p. 159). In a theoretical sense, the Armenian Genocide, and the photos of it, exist in a liminal space between understandings of early war photography, marked by novelty and propagandization, and contemporary theories of photography ushered in by WWII and the Holocaust and perpetuated by the forever war situation beginning in the late 21<sup>st</sup> century (Modelski, 2014; Robinson, 2008; Tim Blackmore, 2005). By reintegrating the photograph into the complex context in which it was taken, I hope to avoid the subjugation of a distant, suffering ‘other,’ especially considering the extreme vulnerability depicted in this case. Looking at photographs of atrocity differ from most other modes of looking, as it “urges a response from us” (Batchen & Prosser, 2012, p. 9). This is why reading photography and understanding its role in the larger process of recognition and memory is imperative, because “atrocity photographs are not self-evident and thus require this kind of close reading” (Batchen & Prosser, 2012, p. 10). Atrocity photographs featuring people, whether alive or deceased, provide the human victim behind the incomprehensible violence inherent to genocide, “so as to identify, name and condemn an inhumane act,” but also speak to the larger process of genocide and its political and ideological underpinnings (Batchen & Prosser, 2012, p. 11).

Cultural memory and national identity expert, Marita Sturken, explains how the camera is ultimately an apparatus of memory, a “mechanism through which one can construct the past and situate it in the present,” and that photographs have the “capacity to create, interfere with, and trouble the memories we hold as individuals and as a nation... often providing the material evidence on which claims of truth are based.” (Sturken, 1997, p. 20). Wegner’s photos depict a kind of non-place, an in-between space occupied by what Agamben (1995) describes as “bare

life.” Drawing from the Foucauldian (1990) concept of biopower, Agamben (1995) applies the Ancient Greek differentiation between *bios*, the circumstances of, and mode in which, life is lived, and *zoë*, the basic biological fact of life. Bare life errs on the side of *zoë*. Agamben posits that bare life is defined and controlled by political and legal institutions, and the authority to distinguish bare life from political beings (read: citizens) has remained with these institutions. This authority is the defining feature of state sovereignty and an intrinsic aspect of the process of genocide, as I have attempted to highlight. Stanton’s (2016) framework for how genocide progresses, referenced in section one of this study, can also be viewed as a framework for reducing citizens to bare life. Judith Butler (2009, p. 5) makes a distinction between recognizing and simply apprehending a life, proposing that there are “categories, conventions, and norms that prepare or establish a subject for recognition.” Wegner’s photographs depict how genocidal processes reduce the target population to bare life— an ‘Other’ so removed from the Self that they are rendered ungrievable (Butler, 2006).

Graham Clarke (1997, p. 12-3) explains how “photographs of the body imply a larger politics of power and representation,” but is it “not so much what is depicted as the relationship between photographer and subject that is significant.” It is precisely this dynamic that I find most interesting. Wegner was not a deportee, an Ottoman guard, nor a photojournalist; therefore, these photos cannot be understood in the same way as iconic photographs of atrocity, such as the Sonderkommando photographs or *Accidental Napalm Attack*. Similarly to George Rodger’s photographs of the liberation of Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp and the London Blitz, Wegner’s photography is “committed to the history, and to the difference,” insofar as they are “the observer, not the interpreter, of the scene” (Clarke, 1997, p. 158). They are not perpetrator photographs, but rather witness, legal evidence, and protest photographs. Sharon Sliwinski

(2004, p. 157) examines the ethical tension of the connection between photography and responsibility, describing how: “photography offers a unique kind of psychic encounter for the spectator – an encounter between self and a kind of otherness. Photographs record a trace of the presence of the other, but this must, of course, be distinguished from the actual presence of the other.” In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes captures the difficulty of this encounter when sorting through photographs of his late mother. Barthes describes the “painful labour” of responding to the photographic other thus illuminating the spectator's inability to respond to the knowledge of suffering, and the helplessness that ensues. Art historian Andrea Fitzpatrick (2007, p. 85) notes how “vulnerability is a complex condition centrally tied to agency, to the subject's ability to exert or extend itself in the world and to be recognized by others.” Wegner’s photographs are thus an acknowledgement of the vulnerability of the Armenian people and culture, at risk of erasure, as well as of the vulnerability of the individual human lives pictured. The helplessness and horror of bearing witness to atrocity demand a response, but any possible response to photographs seems inadequate. It is important to distinguish between the initial recognition of an ‘other’ whose suffering is represented in the image, and the inability to respond to that suffering – it is precisely this duality that characterizes the difficulty of this situation.

Any form of collective memory cannot prevent the suffering it displays, but “this heroic wish – that one could somehow prevent suffering – has in fact been made possible by the apparatus itself” (Sliwinski, 2004, p. 160). Wegner refused to succumb to the paralysis of encountering such suffering and believed he could influence others to do the same through looking at the photographs. In April 1933, Wegner (2000b) denounced the persecution of German Jews in his “Open Letter to Adolf Hitler” and four months later was arrested and tortured by the Gestapo before being imprisoned in various concentration camps. (Paldiel, 2000).

He moved to Italy upon his release in 1934, never returning to Germany before his death in 1978, describing how “Germany took everything from [him]” (J. Michael Hagopian, 1976). Wegner was awarded several honours, notably Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem and the Order of Saint Gregory the Illuminator by the Catholicos of All Armenians (Charny, 1999). His epitaph reads: “I loved justice and hated iniquity. Therefore I die in exile” (Yad Vashem, n.d.).

#### **4. Memory, Trauma, and Identity**

*‘We ask the witness not just to tell us what he has seen, but that he has seen and experienced. It is in this sense that memory makes claims that history does not. In fact, memory and history make different claims. History asks for explanation; memory asks how we were transformed.’*

*-Charles S. Maier, *Recounting, Retrieving, Rereading: Approaches to the History of Genocide**

Genocide leaves communities devastated, and in this case, left with little more than the memory of what once was—a “memory shot through with holes” (Raczymow & Astro, 1994). To remember is to engage in an ethical act reaching beyond the traumatic historical event into the present for purposes of the future. It is to heed to call of ‘never again. In the case of the Armenian Genocide, the ethical charge of remembrance is especially important due to the reclaimative nature of memory and testimony in saving a history threatened with erasure. Memory and identity are often tied together in genocide studies; in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, John Gillis (2018, p. 3) writes: “the core meaning of any individual or group identity, namely, a sense of sameness over time and space, is sustained by remembering; and what is remembered is defined by the assumed identity.” Identity and memory are fluid, and in a postmodern sense, socially constructed based on the systems of power and ideologies of a given time and therefore subject to the prescription of socially construed history. That fluidity is often obscured by the fact that “we too often refer to both as if they had the status

of material objects--memory as something to be retrieved; identity as something that can be lost as well as found.”(Gillis, 2018, p. 4). In this section, I examine the importance of the construction and preservation of memory and identity in the paradigm of a historic but persistently denied genocide.

#### *4.1 Cultural Trauma and Identity-Making: Consequences of Denial*

Genocide, the greatest crime against humanity, scars entire nations and beyond long after the actual violence takes place. When studying genocide, there is an inextricable link between psychological trauma and memory which hinges on one’s ability to process the original event(s). From a clinical psychological perspective, trauma is damage to one’s mind as a result of an overwhelming degree of stress that exceeds the ability to cope or integrate the emotions involved with that experience (CAMH, 2020). Trauma involves the maladaptive response following a shocking event and results in “a crisis of meaning in the personal lives of individuals. Restructuring a self-identity and re-establishing one’s place in the broader scheme of human affairs become necessary” (Neal, 2018, p. 3). Recalling Barthes’s (1982) contention that photography is a first-order sign, atrocity photography is perhaps best understood as “activating a trauma that has not yet been coded or decoded” (Phelan in Batchen & Prosser, 2012, p. 55). Dr. Judith Herman notes how studying psychological trauma is to confront the “capacity for evil in human nature” and that siding with the perpetrator requires nothing of bystanders, unlike the demand for “action, engagement, and remembering” by the victims (Herman, 1997, p. 2). Herman’s contention that “to hold traumatic reality in consciousness requires a social context that affirms and protects the victim and that joins victim and witness in a common alliance” frames my understanding of genocide can be understood, acknowledged, and represented from

the event to the memory of trauma (Herman, 1997, p. 4). In both a neurological and psychological sense, memory and selfhood are “intrinsically linked” (Stone, 2013, p. 2).

Trauma is often conceptualized on an individual level, but scholars have theorized about the existence of cultural trauma, which leaves “indelible marks upon a group’s consciousness... and it is this trauma that implores humanity to cognitively identify the existence and source of human suffering” (Alexander, 2004, p. 12). Concerning the Armenian Genocide, what began as national trauma can also be understood as cultural trauma, as the nation and culture are ideologically dovetailed following the decimation of the physical Armenian nation (Mangassarian, 2016). National trauma taps into the very moral fabric of the nation, and calls for some sort of recourse – as the “degree to which a nation dwells upon a trauma depends on the degree of closure that is achieved” (Neal, 2018, p. 6). In turn, cultural trauma, such as that enacted by genocide, intermingles the personal and national identities in a very political way, often drawing lines between “us” and “them” (Alexander, 2004; Eltringham, 2014; Neal, 2018). Culture is socially constructed and therefore constantly renegotiated by the systems and ideologies of the world around us, a network of values, ideas, imagery and symbols. The violence of genocide stretches beyond the physical destruction of a people as perpetrators seek to establish a strengthened national ‘self’ through the destruction of the targeted ‘other’. In this sense, genocide is primarily the destruction of identity through any means necessary.

Trauma experienced on such a mass scale is passed from one generation to the next, and this is especially distressing when said trauma has been left unaddressed (Alexander, 2004). Negation thrusts the genocide back upon victims, re-imposing the power of the genocide and emphasizing the impunity of its authors and executors (Dadrian, 1999). The psychological harm

of denial is not limited to survivors, extending as well to subsequent generations of Armenians. The genocide was a collective attack on Armenians, aiming to exterminate the group through an intertwined obliteration of the familial, cultural, political, economic, religious institutions, social relations, and identity. Even though later generations of Armenians did not suffer the violence of the genocide firsthand, they have lived with the full consequences of its devastation and disruption of Armenian families, communities, and nationality in general (Alayarian, 2008). Subsequent generations recalling how stories of the brutal execution of their ancestors and a hatred for the Turks are instilled in them from the time they are born. Internalized in Armenian culture, “family dynamics, and social structures, the shared trauma has dramatically affected and even shaped the psychologies of later generations, as recent research on the intergenerational transmission of genocidal trauma describes” (Alayarian, 2008, p. 30). Under the best conditions, with survivors supported in rebuilding their group and universal recognition of their suffering, the shock of these losses would have nevertheless strongly reverberated in the Armenian world for decades—genocide denial exacerbates psychological reaction in later generations in much the same way it does with survivors. In a sense, it drags post-survivor Armenians back to the genocide, despite the increasing distance in time and the fact that they did not live through it.

#### *4.2 Collective Memory and Memorialization*

The trauma of genocide becomes culturally significant because it is derived from a shared experience and draws upon a collective memory. Influenced by Emilie Durkheim’s sociology of collective representations and Henri Bergson’s philosophy of subjectivity, Maurice Halbwachs advances the idea that a collective memory of society is possible but is careful to note that it is through individual strands of memory – negotiated and shared by groups —that collective memory is composed. A concrete definition evades Halbwachs’ work, but his central proposition

is that “there are no recollections which can be said to be purely interior... preserved only within individual memory,” and it is only through social frameworks that memory becomes meaningful (Halbwachs & Coser, 1992, p. 169). Collective memory is not a metaphysical belief in a shared mind, nor does it advance any conceptualization of societies being a homogenous whole. Yadin Dudai notes that collective memory refers to three distinct, but inter-related entities: “a body of knowledge, an attribute, and a process” (Dudai, 2008, p. 51). Originating from shared experiences, comprising the body of knowledge, which in this case is the genocide, Armenians are forced to reckon with the remnants of the near-total annihilation of their homeland, culture, and population. Collective memory must be understood as socially constructed, wherein society is the filter or framework which imbues meaning to the individual memory of those who exist in a social setting (Alexander, 2004). In post-modern terms, Jan Assmann (1998, p. 9) explains how “the past is not simply received by the present. The present is haunted by the past and the past is modelled, invented, reinvented, and reconstructed by the present.” Collective memory therefore simultaneously constructs, and is constructed by, narratives about the past and its importance in the present. History can, and should, be understood as the discourse of collective memory, upheld, like all discourse, by institutions of power.

The core tenet of the study of collective memory is promoting a shift from the emphasis on neoliberal methodological individualism, which atomizes social phenomena, towards a methodological holism, which emphasizes the study of structures and their relations in context. Knowingly turning a blind eye to the brutal murder of 1.2 million people at the hands of a state sends a message to both survivors as well as the rest of the world. Studying collective memory provides the opportunity to consider the carefully curated, negotiated, and present-oriented nature of historical representations and narratives that are presented as an objective set of facts.

In the context of this study, collective memory is a useful lens for considering how “memory’s imbrication with cultural narratives and unconscious processes is held in tension with an understanding of memory’s relation, however complex and mediated, with history, with happenings, or... from a postmodern perspective, with ‘events.’” (Radstone, 2020, p. 10). In order for the Armenian diaspora to heal and move forward, international recognition of genocide as part of the fabric and culture of humanity based on shared historical memories is necessary. Recognition of the Armenian Genocide not only pays respect to victims and their descendants but is a core feature of genocide prevention. Diplomacy and sovereignty should not be the contingent factors in recognizing genocide, especially considering the existence of a clear definition set out by the United Nations.

Many theorists have emphasized the importance of memory, recognition, and memorialization; notably, Pierre Nora (1989), whose conceptualization of *lieux de memoire* (realms of memory) describe the space, both physical and non-physical, that hold particular significance in terms of the heritage of a community or nation. Nora makes a clear distinction between the historical and the memorial, arguing that historical memory is brought upon by the “acceleration of history,” which “confronts us with the brutal realization of the difference between real memory – social and unviolated... and history, which is how our hopelessly forgetful modern societies, propelled by change, organize the past,” (Nora, 1989, p. 8). Realms of memory for the Armenian Genocide are complicated by the negation of the suffering they experienced, their native homelands having been stolen and reappropriated, and the wide global diaspora of people who often feel connected only through a traumatic past (Alayarian, 2008). Armenian memory scholar, Marie-Aude Baronian (2016, p. 311) explains:

Remembering the Armenian Genocide is a displacement in itself: to remember it outside the original and natal locus, and to remember it outside its original historical time.... The construction of a memory of the Genocide binds Armenians in diaspora together, and this is expressed by archival desires, refracted in the production and preservation of certain visual lexicons and iconographies. In other words, the image replaces and incarnates, so to speak, the original territory. The diasporic condition is defined by a need to anchor and to root the existence of the origin in a certain memorial representation.

This displacement of realms of memory raises an important point about the relationship between memory and power and how memory is politicized in the public sphere and the power of photography unique to the Armenian Genocide. Wegner's photographs, while traumatic, are meaningful for their evidentiary status and provide one of the few ways of vindicating loss and outrage for the communities directly affected. Memory is entirely inseparable from history. The very "bedrock" of history is memory, the main difference being that history is instilled with ideological power and subsequently disseminated as 'truth' by those with the means to do so (Ricoeur, 1996). It follows, then, that studying the relationship between genocide and memory is to also study how collective memories are mobilized and sustained over time.

For surviving Armenians and their descendants, research has shown that the genocide is the central feature of their identity, marking their relationship with their cultural origins and ancestry with feelings of loss, anger, and rage (Aghanian, 2007; Jones, 2006; Ziemer, 2010). One study describes the genocide as the "overarching cultural narrative" of the Armenian identity and notes the difficulties that arise from limited cultural knowledge of identity due to genocide (Manoogian, Walker, & Richards, 2007). Ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Armenian

communities in Russia echoes the significant impact of the genocide upon Armenian identity, both within the personal/family narrative as well as the diaspora's collective identity (Ziemer, 2010). 'Other' studies highlight the juxtaposition between the imaginary golden age, pre-genocide, Armenia and the current "impoverished, post-Soviet Republic of Armenia" (Schwalgin, 2004, p. 82). As a result of the Turkish denial, restorative justice for the Armenians has been virtually non-existent and the development of Armenian culture and nation, cauterized (Avedian, 2019).

There is widespread agreement in genocide scholarship around the necessity for independent bodies for the official establishment of "truth" in which the perpetrators cooperate and participate (Brounéus, 2007; Brounéus & Sida, 2003; Helmick & Petersen, 2002; Stanton, 2008; Staub & Bar-Tal, 2003; Stein et al., 2008; SUNY, 2009). Reconciliation is defined as "a societal process that involves mutual acknowledgment of past suffering and the changing of destructive attitudes and behaviour into constructive relationships toward sustainable peace," (Brounéus & Sida, 2003, p. 11). Reconciliation is a fundamental aspect of post-conflict peacebuilding, as behaviours and attitudes are not altered the minute peace is declared. Most importantly, reconciliation is an ongoing process beginning with affirmation of the violence that has occurred (Brounéus, 2007). Following cases of genocide, reconciliatory programs such as truth commissions and forms of restorative justice often precipitate some form of community healing which would otherwise be impossible (Maier, 2014). Evidence from notable examples of restorative justice efforts including the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Rwandan Gacaca Courts illustrate varying degrees of reported success in establishing reconciliation, but a sharp reduction in feelings of shame and cultural isolation (Brounéus, 2007; Rimé et al., 2011; Stein et al., 2008; Vora & Vora, 2004). At the root of these commissions is the

establishment of an agreed-upon ‘truth’ with acceptance of wrongdoing by the perpetrating group. At stake is more than just the perpetrators’ status in history, although this plays an important role in contemporary Turkish self-conceptualization and the resulting political relations.

Not only does acknowledgement help victims, but instead reduces the likelihood that members from the former perpetrator group feeling victimized by the condemnation of guilty people among them. In the same way that Armenian identity is trapped in a sense of victimhood, Turkish identity is trapped by the need to perpetuate the denial and the general Turkish population would benefit from mourning the events of the genocide, as a starting point for reconciliation (Blunt, 2014). Studies by genocide scholars prove that the single best predictor of future genocide is the denial of a past genocide paired with impunity for its perpetrators, and deniers are three times more likely to commit genocide again than other governments (Stanton, 2008). Stanton (2013) argues that denial is best overcome by public trials and truth commissions, followed by years of education about the facts of the genocide, particularly for the children of the group or nation that committed the crime. Acknowledgment, empathy, and support of the group’s suffering by the perpetrators as well as the rest of the world is an important starting point in the reconciliation process. Establishing accountability and recognizing the disaster is intrinsic to the healing process, as people respond powerfully to an affirmation of what has happened. This tells survivors that what they have experienced is not normal, that the world does not view it as tolerable or acceptable.

The emphasis on “truth” has become ubiquitous in genocide scholarship, which seems to stem from the end of the final stage of genocide, denial. For this reason, it is difficult to omit the

language of truth when studying genocide. In this thesis, I have argued for a post-modern approach which negates the existence of any absolute truth, and instead frames narratives in a Foucauldian (1982) sense which examines the interplay of power and discourse to establish legitimacy. Commissions for truth and reconciliation therefore focus on the acknowledgement of the suffering of the targeted victim group using the language of ‘truth’ to reject prioritizing the narrative of the perpetrator. Affirming what has happened using archival evidence and witness testimony is important, but as this study situates itself in discourse analysis, I am more interested in the ways in which power can be exerted to inform the hegemonic narratives of history.

At the intergovernmental and international levels, any understanding of a right to memory is located within the development of transitional justice processes, as it arises from concerns regarding the role of communication and culture in establishing identities and citizenship within a peaceful transition after conflict, dictatorship, and genocide (Lee & Thomas, 2012). Memory plays an important role not only in terms of identity and belonging, but also for justice, conflict, and social change (Hein & Selden, 2000; Sandwell, 2006). The preservation and persistence of cultural and collective memories are intrinsic in the process of nation-building. During periods of colonialism, war, and genocide, regimes use repressive state apparatuses to inhibit the connection of individual experiences into a collective to encourage the “repressive erasure”, or the annihilation and cultural editing of the past, which is then followed by “prescriptive forgetting”, which comes in the form of the ruling class establishing a narrative for the conflict and enacting some form of amnesty for perpetrators (Connerton, 2008). A 1996 United Nations report on the Right to Reparation highlights the need for commissions of enquiry with safeguards for victims and witnesses. It advances the argument for collective measures of reparation that include collective symbolic measures to assist in the restoration of dignity and

transition to peace through a duty of remembrance (van Boven, 2010). Despite the numerous examples underscoring how memory is institutionalized, formalized, and protected, they cannot be interpreted as instances of individuals and groups gaining (re)claiming powers or establishing mechanisms to influence communal, national, or global memory processes.

Memory, especially in the context of genocide and genocide memorialization, is often tied to physical spaces. In the case of the Armenian Genocide, the Ottoman Turks made a concerted effort to destroy and pilfer as much of the Armenian homelands and property as they could, reiterating how the violence genocide extends beyond the murderous act; or as Jacques Semelin (2007, p. 49) explains: “identity supplies the framework within which the process of violence will take shape.” The genocidal process first strips the targeted group of “primary identity markers,” such as language, names, religion, and history (Holslag, 2016, p. 260). This unique destructiveness of genocide can only be successful with the help of widespread complicity, which continues to be the case for the Armenian Genocide. It is in this context that the evidentiary status of photographs, such as Wegner’s, is crucial for the diaspora as well as the much-reduced Armenian state. Elizabeth Lunstrum (2010, p. 132) considers how the “thoroughly spatial” nature of memory renders it “inextricably political,” and therefore how we spatially inscribe and understand the past is important because of the material consequences. As I have argued earlier, the legitimization of certain narratives become history and political record that establish borders, economic ties, and geopolitical power in general at the expense of targeted populations. Memorability and commemoration are not an inherent feature of events but depend on the memory and articulation of individual and collective experiences into a cohesive text. Images, language, monuments, and art are vessels employed to translate and disseminate narratives of the past. Three-quarters of the Armenian population was killed during the genocide

and, left with one-sixth of their pre-genocide, pre-World War I landmass, the surviving Armenian state and its population lost vast amounts of the physical aspects of their thousand-year-old culture and heritage (Ember et al., 2005).

## 5. Conclusion

*“The fact of enormous suffering does not warrant revenge or legitimate violence, but must be mobilized in the service of a politics that seeks to diminish suffering universally, that seeks to recognize the sanctity of life, of all lives”*

-Judith Butler, *Prearious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, p. 104

History does not exist in a vacuum, and as the adage goes: those who do not remember it are doomed to repeat it. Through the suppression of certain facts and the exaggeration and distortion of others, denialist claims are convincing—and increasingly so when upheld and echoed over time. To allow for the denial of any genocide proven by historical fact is to allow for the denial of them all. Selective memory is the cornerstone of nearly every nation across the world, with colonial legacies and genocide often embedded within doctrines of progress and the hegemonic historical narratives. Turkish denial of the Armenian Genocide is as old as the genocide itself and remains deeply embedded in Turkey’s social structure, history, politics, international relations, educational systems, and popular culture (Dadrian, 1999).

Following World War II, genocide studies swelled in popularity and the resulting scholarship emphasizes the necessity of acknowledgement and reconciliation, as well as the danger of denial. The staging of all genocide and by extension, genocide recognition and memorialization, is aporetic. Understanding the grievability and precarity of human lives and the separate contexts of their death in situations of genocide is imperative (Butler, 2006). Tempting as it may be to posit perpetrators of genocide as fanatical evil-doers certain of their superiority

determined to exterminate those deemed inferior, it is steeped in the colonial social Darwinism and, to borrow Karen and Barbara Fields's (2014) term, racecraft.<sup>12</sup> It has been repeatedly proven that genocide is the result of some combination of national, political, and economic crisis resulting in insecurity, scarcity (whether perceived or real), and a general sentiment of impending threat (Jones, 2006; Rosenberg, 2012; Shaw, 2012; Stone, 2013). Historian A. Dirk Moses (2011, p. 576) considers these conditions in a social psychological sense: "by externalizing internally experienced feelings of worthlessness, they are rendered manageable, and a positive self-image is maintained." In other words, genocide cannot be prevented through the liberal principles of tolerance and acceptance, as the ideological hatred of the 'other' is mobilized in response to the fear of wider, complex socio-political conditions.

Throughout this study, I have highlighted the actions of key individuals such as Raphael Lemkin, Soghomon Tehlirian, the Three Pashas, Henry Morgenthau, and Armin Wegner in an attempt to emphasize how genocide is a process that requires the collusion and participation of a multiplicity of actors and it is only through the widespread, global acceptance and refusal to act that genocide is successful. This concept is not novel and has been studied extensively, from Hannah Arendt's (1963/2006) theorization of the banality of evil to Christian Gerlach's (2006) seminal work on the phenomenon of "extremely violent societies", it is clear that genocide requires some degree of complicity on every level from local to global. Following Judith Butler's (2006) assertion that all lives are precarious, my point of inquiry then centres around an understanding of the loss of life of the distant 'other'. The precarity of life is not uniform;

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<sup>12</sup> The term racecraft, created by Karen Fields and Barbara J. Fields in their 2014 book *Racecraft: the soul of inequality in American life*, describes how race has no biological basis and therefore cannot be the starting point for any understanding of oppression and inequality. Instead, persistent systemic racist practices repeated widely produce the general belief in race.

precarity is born of social, political, geographical, economic differences. Recognizing such differences also means recognizing the hierarchical valuation of lives and what Braidotti (2010) terms “ways of dying.” This means eliminating the reductive and orientalist lens that conceals the material reality of situations of atrocity and state violence, which can often be traced back to legacies of colonialism and Western intervention. Pedagogically and academically, this means complicating the Machiavellian narratives of good versus evil and the de-centring of the prototypicality of the Holocaust. While it remains important to understand the importance of every life, it is essential to reformulate this understanding outside of the misguided individualistic discourses of neoliberalism and colonialism and instead consider the structural implications and political formations that rendered lives particularly precarious and ‘othered’.

The case of the Armenian Genocide serves as a warning of the dangers of appropriating certain memories at the expense of others. If history is any indication, genocide is a global issue and as economic power is concentrated, climate change worsens, and warfare is increasingly mechanized, the material conditions enabling genocide are only becoming more common. To formulate measures for preventing genocide, we must expand our academic, affective, and interpretive frameworks for studying genocide beyond conceptualizations of good and evil and the emphasis on the locality to consider the religious tensions; land ownership; political unrest and corruption; famine and drought; economic uncertainty that almost always underly genocide.

### *5.1 Present Situation: Armenia in Crisis*

In October 2019, the US House of Representatives voted on legislation regarding the acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide, highlighting how a genocide that took place 100 years ago remains relevant and contentious (Schiff, 2019). Such a vote was prevented from

taking place previously due to the possibility of damaging the important relationship between the US and Turkey. Nevertheless, Turkish President Erdogan’s communications director explained how “those who voted for this resolution will be responsible for the deterioration of a critical strategic relationship in a turbulent region” (Devranoglu, 2019). Two months after the US House vote, Erdogan’s administration made headlines by threatening to recognize the slaughter of Native Americans by European Settlers as genocide (Ensor, 2019; The New Arab, 2019; Wood, 2019). Soon after, President Trump himself assured Erdogan that his administration, just as his predecessors, does not consider the 1915 killings of the Armenians as genocide.

More recently, in September 2020, armed conflict erupted in the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh, internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan, but governed by the ethnically Armenian breakaway state of Artsakh (BBC Europe, 2020a). The region has been in a



*Figure 10: Map of the region surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh*

cold war since the end of the Nagorno-Karabakh War in the 1990s when Soviet Armenia attempted to reclaim territory from Soviet Azerbaijan as a result of lasting territorial disputes following the end of the Ottoman Empire (Magdalena Grono & Olesya Vartanyan, 2017). Azerbaijan’s motives for heating the conflict remain unclear, but heavy

military support was provided by Turkey with additional arms provided by Israel (Ben-Ephraim, 2020; Carlotta Gall, 2020; Michael Kofman, 2020). Based on Turkey’s history, both recent and historic, this conflict is widely thought to be an attempt to extend Turkish influence and territories (Carlotta Gall, 2020; Michael Kofman, 2020).

The conflict is a proxy war between Turkey and Russia, who both stand to gain from the ceasefire that ultimately ended the conflict (The Economist: Europe, 2020). Following the Azerbaijani capture of the Shusha settlement in Nagorno-Karabakh as well as several broken Russian, American, and French brokered ceasefires, a ceasefire was signed in November 2020 and has been upheld at the time of writing with BBC's correspondent for the region, Orla Guerin, noting that the deal “should be read as a victory for Azerbaijan and a defeat for Armenia.” (BBC Europe, 2020b). Turkey and Azerbaijan have enduring cultural and historic ties, describing their relationship as “two states, one nation,” (Suzan Fraser, 2020). Elsewhere, Turkey’s military support has been described as one of many “neo-Ottoman” policies; seen elsewhere in Iraq, Syria, and Greece (Wastnidge, 2019). In this case, the ceasefire granted Turkey access to the economically invaluable trade access to China’s Belt and Road Initiative as well as Central Asia in general (The Economist: Europe, 2020). Moreover, due to the lack of any official recognition or reconciliatory efforts by the Turkish government, anti-Armenian and denialist sentiments were emboldened and put in the spotlight once again, over 100 years since the genocide began.

### *5.2 Future Research*

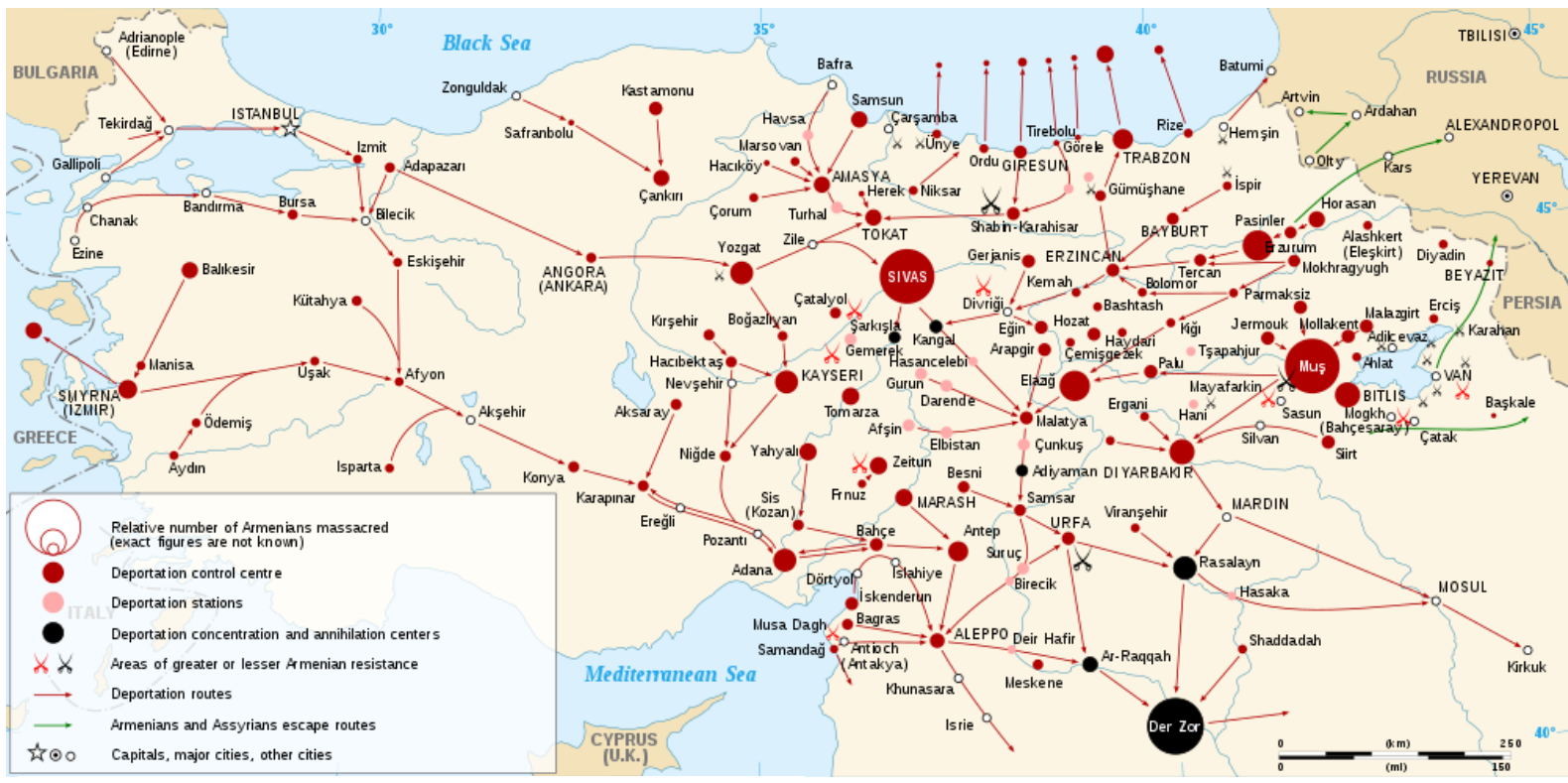
The genocide of the Armenian people by the Ottoman Turks persists, weaponizing history and memory to establish legitimacy through temporal, social, and geographical bindings and maintained by a rigorous campaign of denial. The findings of my study suggest that there is more research needed to be done on the lasting impacts of genocide denial and revisionist history across the world and how this is exemplified through how humanity chooses to remember—or forget. Further research on the physical forms of memorialization, especially in the Armenian homelands is necessary. My findings highlight the need for further study into the processes and

implications of the sharing and endurance of memory across time and space beyond the current paradigm of simple, linear consumption of heritage as memorialization. International conventions provide a compelling starting point for establishing a more comprehensive formulation of recognition and framework for reparations. Moreover, additional research is necessary for establishing frameworks for reparations of historically recognized genocides and atrocities. The Armenian Genocide set the stage for the Holocaust, but my research suggests that it remains an understudy to the Holocaust's prototypicality and foundationalism across genocide scholarship. Future research should be informed by decolonial genocide studies, an emergent field which is largely underrepresented in the research outside of the inherent considerations for the indigeneity of the Armenian people in the region. Theoretical frameworks and conceptualizations of justice should be developed through a decolonial lens. Conceptualizations of justice are beyond the scope of this paper and provide a compelling point of future inquiry, especially surrounding transformational and restorative justice.

The nation-state and by extension, the principles of sovereignty and related legacies of colonialism, remain the most powerful system of ordering and regulating the social and political world, and while it remains unrealistic to conceptualize a world without arbitrary borders, perhaps it is worthwhile to consider the ties that bind us and recognize our shared humanity rather than erecting physical and figurative walls in the name of security and sovereignty. My findings suggest that photographs of atrocity, while traumatic, provide the opportunity to respond to an 'Other' in a more specific way, through the visualization of their suffering, but also their humanity and embodiment.

Although Turkish denial of the Armenian Genocide provides a unique case study, this phenomenon is not confined to Turkey. We continue to witness the rise of ultra-right rhetoric and violence across the globe, replete with the same tactics of denial and whataboutisms that have long enabled political violence and abuses of power. The plethora of unrecognized and underacknowledged genocides and crimes against humanity have lasting impacts and continue to subjugate and tyrannize populations in order to concentrate wealth and power for the few. From the systemic anti-black and anti-brown racist violence rampant across the United States to the humanitarian disaster occurring in Yemen to the ongoing Palestinian genocide occurring at the hands of the Israeli state, the need for pragmatic preventative measures, meaningful acknowledgement, and suitable reparations is clear. State-sponsored genocide is repackaged as civil war, state violence is sold as national security, proxy wars claim the lives of innocent people, victims are recast as instigators, and revisionist narratives or “alternative facts” are presented as news (Jones, 2006). If this is allowed to stand, this will not just be a post-truth world, but one lacking a moral compass. Otherwise, we are doomed just as *Angelus Novus* (Klee, 1920), with our wings forced open by the storm, propelled into a future to which our back is turned, all while the mountain of wreckage before us grows (Benjamin, 1986b).

### Appendix A: Map of massacre locations, deportation centres and extermination centres



(Hewsen & Salvatico, 2001, p. 224)

## Appendix B: Raphael Lemkin's 1933 Proposed Legislation

This document was originally published in 1933 in French as Les actes constituant un danger general (interétatique) consideres comme delites des droit des gens by Paris law publisher A. Pedone. Here it appears for the first time in English, translated by Education Director Jim Fussell, with the assistance and review of Prevent Genocide International volunteers.

In this report to an international conference held in Madrid, Raphael Lemkin (1900-1959) first proposed the creation of a **multilateral convention** making the **extermination of human groups an international crime**, paralleling slavery, piracy and other universally recognized "offences against the law of nations." In 1933 he called the crime "**Acts of Barbarity**."

### PROPOSED LEGISLATION

**IN VIEW OF** the above-mentioned considerations, I have the honor of proposing to the 5th Conference for the Unification of Penal Law the following project of legislative text for the above-mentioned offenses, which were approved by the President of the Polish Commission for International Legal Co-operation, Professor E. St. Rappaport.

### PROPOSED TEXT

**Art. 1)** Whoever, out of hatred towards a racial, religious or social collectivity or with the goal of its extermination, undertakes a punishable action against the life, the bodily integrity, liberty, dignity or the economic existence of a person belonging to such a collectivity, is liable, for the **offense of barbarity**, to a penalty of . . . unless punishment for the action falls under a more severe provision of the given Code.

The author will be liable for the same penalty, if an act is directed against a person who has declared solidarity with such a collectivity or has intervened in favor of one.

**Art. 2)** Whoever, either out of hatred towards a racial, religious or social collectivity or with the goal of its extermination, destroys works of cultural or artistic heritage, is liable, for the **offense of vandalism**, to a penalty of . . . unless punishment for the action falls under a more severe provision of the given Code.

**Art. 3)** Whoever knowingly causes a catastrophe in the international communication by ground, sea or air by destroying or removing the systems which ensure the regular operation of these communications, is liable to imprisonment for a period of . . .

**Art. 4)** Whoever knowingly causes an interruption in the international postal, telegraph or telephone communication by removing or by destroying the systems which ensure the regular operation of these communications, is liable to a penalty of . . .

**Art. 5)** Whoever knowingly spreads a human, animal or vegetable contagion is liable to a penalty of . . .

**Art. 6)** The instigator and the accomplice are subject to the same punishment as the author.

**Art. 7)** Offenses enumerated in Articles 1 - 6 will be prosecuted and punished independently of the place where the act was committed and of the nationality of the author, in accordance with the law in force in the country of the prosecution.

**PROPOSAL WITH REGARD TO A CONVENTION**

**IT IS DESIRABLE AND NECESSARY** that an **International Convention** is concluded to ensure the repression of all the above-mentioned offenses.

## Appendix C: Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide

### **Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide**

**Approved and proposed for signature and ratification or accession by  
General Assembly resolution 260 A (III) of 9 December 1948  
Entry into force: 12 January 1951, in accordance with article XIII**

The Contracting Parties,

Having considered the declaration made by the General Assembly of the United Nations in its resolution 96 (I) dated 11 December 1946 that genocide is a crime under international law, contrary to the spirit and aims of the United Nations and condemned by the civilized world,

Recognizing that at all periods of history genocide has inflicted great losses on humanity, and

Being convinced that, in order to liberate mankind from such an odious scourge, international co-operation is required,

Hereby agree as hereinafter provided :

#### **Article I**

The Contracting Parties confirm that genocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war, is a crime under international law which they undertake to prevent and to punish.

#### **Article II**

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

**Article III**

The following acts shall be punishable:

- (a) Genocide;
- (b) Conspiracy to commit genocide;
- (c) Direct and public incitement to commit genocide;
- (d) Attempt to commit genocide; (e) Complicity in genocide.

**Article IV**

Persons committing genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in article III shall be punished, whether they are constitutionally responsible rulers, public officials or private individuals.

**Article V**

The Contracting Parties undertake to enact, in accordance with their respective Constitutions, the necessary legislation to give effect to the provisions of the present Convention, and, in particular, to provide effective penalties for persons guilty of genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in article III.

**Article VI**

Persons charged with genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in article III shall be tried by a competent tribunal of the State in the territory of which the act was committed, or by such international penal tribunal as may have jurisdiction with respect to those Contracting Parties which shall have accepted its jurisdiction.

**Article VII**

Genocide and the other acts enumerated in article III shall not be considered as political crimes for the purpose of extradition. The Contracting Parties pledge themselves in such cases to grant extradition in accordance with their laws and treaties in force.

**Article VIII**

Any Contracting Party may call upon the competent organs of the United Nations to take such action under the Charter of the United Nations as they consider appropriate for the prevention and suppression of acts of genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in article III.

**Article IX**

Disputes between the Contracting Parties relating to the interpretation, application or fulfilment of the present Convention, including those relating to the responsibility of a State for genocide or for any of the other acts enumerated in article III, shall be submitted to the International Court of Justice at the request of any of the parties to the dispute.

**Article X**

The present Convention, of which the Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish texts are equally authentic, shall bear the date of 9 December 1948.

**Article XI**

The present Convention shall be open until 31 December 1949 for signature on behalf of any Member of the United Nations and of any non-member State to which an invitation to sign has been addressed by the General Assembly.

The present Convention shall be ratified, and the instruments of ratification shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

After 1 January 1950, the present Convention may be acceded to on behalf of any Member of the United Nations and of any non-member State which has received an invitation as aforesaid.

Instruments of accession shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

**Article XII**

Any Contracting Party may at any time, by notification addressed to the Secretary General of the United Nations, extend the application of the present Convention to all or any of the territories for the conduct of whose foreign relations that Contracting Party is responsible.

**Article XIII**

On the day when the first twenty instruments of ratification or accession have been deposited, the Secretary-General shall draw up a procès-verbal and transmit a copy thereof to each Member of the United Nations and to each of the non-member States contemplated in article XI.

The present Convention shall come into force on the ninetieth day following the date of deposit of the twentieth instrument of ratification or accession.

Any ratification or accession effected subsequent to the latter date shall become effective on the ninetieth day following the deposit of the instrument of ratification or accession.

**Article XIV**

The present Convention shall remain in effect for a period of ten years as from the date of its coming into force.

It shall thereafter remain in force for successive periods of five years for such Contracting Parties as have not denounced it at least six months before the expiration of the current period.

Denunciation shall be effected by a written notification addressed to the Secretary General of the United Nations.

**Article XV**

If, as a result of denunciations, the number of Parties to the present Convention should become less than sixteen, the Convention shall cease to be in force as from the date on which the last of these denunciations shall become effective.

**Article XVI**

A request for the revision of the present Convention may be made at any time by any Contracting Party by means of a notification in writing addressed to the Secretary General.

The General Assembly shall decide upon the steps, if any, to be taken in respect of such request.

**Article XVII**

The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall notify all Members of the United Nations and the non-member States contemplated in article XI of the following:

- (a) Signatures, ratifications and accessions received in accordance with article XI;
- (b) Notifications received in accordance with article XII;
- (c) The date upon which the present Convention comes into force in accordance with article XIII;
- (d) Denunciations received in accordance with article XIV;
- (e) The abrogation of the Convention in accordance with article XV;
- (f) Notifications received in accordance with article XVI.

**Article XVIII**

The original of the present Convention shall be deposited in the archives of the United Nations.

A certified copy of the Convention shall be transmitted to each Member of the United Nations and to each of the non-member States contemplated in article XI.

**Article XIX**

The present Convention shall be registered by the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the date of its coming into force

## Appendix D: Foreword to Talaat Pasha Trial, 1921

### FOREWORD

The misfortune of the Armenian people is an unprecedented event in this war, and, perhaps, in the entire history of mankind. The crime committed here was so monstrous that its echo, which shook even during the war, penetrated all countries of the world, but not in the heart of Germany. Even when after the armistice the witnesses of these unprecedented events tried to appeal to the latter's conscience, she, still blinded and deafened by her own pain, remained deaf to these horrors, of which she unconsciously became an accomplice, even an innocent one. She defeated the former Turkish Minister of Internal Affairs, and the related trial once again sent the eyes of the whole world, and for the first time the eyes of the German people, to the bloodiest page of the world war, and the truth became obvious - the systematic destruction of an entire people by the Young Turkish government. In an amazing turn of events, it so happened that the accused - suffering under the weight of the facts behind his back and the silent victim - unwittingly became the prosecutor himself, and there is no longer Soghomon Tehlirian in the dock, but there is the shadow of a dead man stained with blood, a deep confirmation of the mysterious situation when not the killer, but the murdered man is to blame! But even the figure of Talaat Pasha does not allow comprehending the whole meaning of this trial. Both - a fragile Armenian student and a broad-shouldered Turkish statesman - recede into the background in the face of the terrible misfortune of an entire people, almost half destroyed, a people that rises from its graves and stretches out its rotten hands against the horror of war.

This is what makes this trial one of the most memorable ever in Germany. For the power of the events investigated in this trial has such a staggering effect that the jurors, in spite of the obvious violent killing, pass an acquittal, and he, despite all efforts to make him non-political, destroys the barriers that stretch to the rostrum of humanity, and his verdict becomes a verdict of world historical significance.

Soghomon Tehlirian himself is only a symbol, an atom, in which the pain of a mistreated race is concentrated, making its own retribution in desperate self-defence. His fate is inherent to the fate of his comrades in misfortune, it is one of hundreds of thousands, repeating in the same way, with the same torment and suffering. If the author of these lines were also invited as a witness to this process, if he were given the opportunity to speak, he would confirm all the events described in this process; they are only a fraction of what he saw with his own eyes and what really happened. I have no desire to repeat the description of these facts here. This has been done quite often by others, myself included, and is clearly stated on every line of this message.

The role played in these tragic events by the former Minister of Internal Affairs of Turkey was not so detailed. The court, which was not state-owned, in order to decide on the Armenian issue as such and on its instigators, could not set itself the task of expanding the judicial investigation more than was required to make a fair decision regarding Tehlirian's act. Thus, the investigation into the question of whether Talaat is objectively guilty was not completed, since the judge and jury stated that they were already convinced that Tehlirian considered the former Turkish minister responsible for the crimes. But this time, too, it was obvious that the truth was

struggling to make its way. The testimony of the Armenian Bishop Palakyan alone sheds such an unkind light on Talaat's behavior that it can be said that during the trial enough material was presented that Talaat was well aware of the significance of his orders. There is no doubt about that after a full study of all verifiable facts! The defense presented very strong evidence for direct investigation; among the invited witnesses were high-ranking German officers who were supposed to give extremely important evidence against Talaat. Their testimonies, as well as the most important telegrams from Talaat, the main ones of which were presented in the original during the trial, are summarized in the appendix to this communication. Based on these telegrams, everyone can judge for himself whether Talaat personally wanted the destruction of the Armenians. But even if these documents did not exist, the very fact that Talaat was the Minister of Internal Affairs at the time of these events would be sufficient. As the executive body of the Young Turkish government, he was in the foreground to implement the well-known decisions taken by the Turkish Ministry of Internal Affairs and implemented by the "Unity and Progress" committee aimed at the annihilation of the Armenians. The executive power was in his hands, and already on this basis it cannot be argued that Talaat was not personally responsible for the destruction of the Armenians. that Talaat was the Minister of the Interior at the time of these events. As the executive body of the Young Turkish government, he was in the foreground to implement the well-known decisions taken by the Turkish Ministry of Internal Affairs and implemented by the "Unity and Progress" committee aimed at the annihilation of the Armenians. The executive power was in his hands, and already on this basis it cannot be argued that Talaat was not personally responsible for the destruction of the Armenians. that Talaat was the Minister of the Interior at the time of these events. As the executive body of the Young Turkish government, he was in the foreground to implement the well-known decisions taken by the Turkish Ministry of Internal Affairs and implemented by the "Unity and Progress" committee aimed at the annihilation of the Armenians. The executive power was in his hands, and already on this basis it cannot be argued that Talaat was not personally responsible for the destruction of the Armenians.

Therefore, it cannot be said that fate was unfair to the Turkish statesman, forcing him to die for his share of the guilt before the Armenian people. For his crime was so terrible that even the act of a murderer, which we naturally reject as a bloody crime and which we regret, like any violent act, seems to us a deliverance through which a desperate nature freed itself by its own strength. Yes, I am inclined to believe that if there is supreme power over the peoples, then we must believe that it was the will of history itself, which killed Talaat by executing him by the hands of one of his victims.

It is humanly understandable that both Turkish and German supporters of the former Ottoman government not without excitement met the acquittal. However, this in no way justifies their savage insults against German justice, which has proven to be highly objectivity. It is also incomprehensible when, perverting circumstances, they call Tehlirian's act "cowardly," although by his act he proved that he was filled with a heroic desire to sacrifice his life for the sake of saving his people, while the minister really does not need any courage to leave his cabinet with one stroke of the pen, send a whole people into the desert!

Nor can the terrible injustice towards the Armenian people be belittled by all those harsh accusations that are brought before them in order to find the cause of these horrors in their own

behavior. It may be true that the Armenians on the Russian front reported about the movements of the Turkish troops or that the Armenian soldiers fled to the enemy. After all, this is quite understandable after tens of years they were subjected to brutal exploitation by their masters and were forced to do this because of shameless, inexorable measures right up to the outbreak of the world war. Something similar happened in the Central European powers with the Polish and Czech regiments, but it never occurred to us to punish the innocent and, say,

Thus, one can never forgive a crime committed against the Armenian people in general.

For a civilized country, excessive torture of the exposed Assassin would be perceived as barbaric cruelty. How much worse it is when this is done to hundreds of thousands of innocent old people, women and children! But they were the sons, mothers and fathers of the very Armenian people, whose soldiers Enver Pasha declared a few months ago that they distinguished themselves to the highest degree on the battlefields and their loyalty and courage aroused great admiration in the Turkish army. Still all over and over again; Even after the acquittal, attempts are being made to justify the perfect injustice by saying that the deportation of the Armenian people was a measure caused by "military necessity", for the implementation of which the authorities were not responsible. But have they forgotten that Asia Minor is part of the world, which in length is far greater than the German state? And how to explain the forced deportation of the Armenian population from the vilayets of Western Anatolia, where its number was too small to pose a danger, and which peacefully and flawlessly worked at a distance of hundreds of miles from the theater of military operations. Turkey's people Isn't the fact that the Turkish government rejected this proposal enough to show that the so-called need for military action was usually a pretext for a "desert settlement", a paltry formulation to cover up the bloodiest crime of this century, the purpose of which is the complete destruction of the industrious and highly cultured race?

No one will blame the religion of Islam for this, and those who claim that this was done by the friends of Armenia are mistaken. On a par with the teachings of Christ, Buddha and Lao Tzu, there is also the teachings of Muhammad, and if this religion actually played any role in these events, it was only because the religion of Islam was abused for these purposes. Did they act differently with the teaching of Christ when the states of Europe misused his sayings in order to wage treacherous predatory wars on his behalf against the defenseless peoples of their colonies? But in this case, the court delivered its verdict not regarding two religions, although the problem on which the decision was made was ultimately ethical, not political, but regarding two forces,

It is a lightening spectacle - the triumph of justice, when we see how here, in spite of the bloody atrocity of a person, an acquittal is pronounced despite the contradiction contained in this. Since this acquittal means, first of all, a complete and stunning protest against the policy that has arrogated to itself the right to treat an entire people like slaughter cattle, even worse - like insensitive stones. This was vividly expressed in the thrilling speeches of the defense, and if, despite the rare unanimity with which the press greeted this verdict, there were objections that the judges and jury were influenced by their feelings, then in the offensive nature of this statement was a sad lack of understanding of human nature. After all, the fact that they gave place to feelings in their breasts, worthy of high praise, since during all those terrible events we

constantly heard that everything was decided from a position of strength, in the interests of the state, from the point of view of military necessity, but never with a human heart! Politics or law, not dictated by the human heart, are just false names for shamelessness and lust for power. Even if Talaat was convinced that his thoughts were directed only for the good of his country - "love for the fatherland", which thinks itself has the right to commit such terrible atrocities - then this has nothing to do with the real interests of the peoples; it is not only an ignoble feeling, it is a bloody fetish, a crime. from the point of view of military necessity, but never with a human heart! Politics or law, not dictated by the human heart, are just false names for dishonesty and lust for power. Even if Talaat was convinced that his thoughts were directed only for the good of his country - "love for the fatherland", which thinks itself has the right to commit such terrible atrocities - then this has nothing to do with the real interests of the peoples; it is not only an ignoble feeling, it is a bloody fetish, a crime. that his thoughts are directed only for the good of his country - "love for the fatherland", which thinks itself has the right to commit such terrible atrocities - this has nothing to do with the real interests of the peoples; it is not only an ignoble feeling, it is a bloody fetish, a crime. that his thoughts are directed only for the good of his country - "love for the fatherland", which thinks itself has the right to commit such terrible atrocities - this has nothing to do with the real interests of the peoples; it is not only an ignoble feeling, it is a bloody fetish, a crime.

This is in no way a condemnation of the Turkish people. The Turkish nation as a whole cannot be held responsible for the extermination of Armenians. She not only did not want these horrors, but many of her representatives did not approve of them to the highest degree. This is evidenced by the official documents of the German consuls, in which there is a lot of evidence that Turkish officials refused to carry out the orders of their government, the terrible consequences of which they clearly understood. But they are friends of the Armenian people on the same basis on which they are friends of the Turkish people, whose vital needs and spiritual wealth they feel no less; and they would cease to be friends of the Armenian people from the moment when they considered themselves entitled to commit such horrors as Talaat To did, that their sympathy for the Armenian people at the moment is stronger, is explained only by the fact that the injustice that this people suffered in the war was greater. Yes, this injustice was so immeasurable that I can say without hesitation that if it is true that suffering sanctifies a person, then the Armenian people, even if they did not possess stubborn diligence, profound giftedness and culture, which distinguish them, even if he had that despicable character of which his enemies accuse him, and even if he had done lower deeds than those attributed to him, I declare that even then this people would have been sanctified for all time - under the indestructible power of that the endless pain he endured! that the injustice that these people suffered in the war was greater. Yes, this injustice was so immeasurable that I can say without hesitation that if it is true that suffering sanctifies a person, then the Armenian people, even if they did not possess stubborn diligence, profound giftedness and culture, which distinguish them, even if he had that despicable character of which his enemies accuse him, and even if he had done lower deeds than those attributed to him, I declare that even then this people would have been sanctified for all time - under the

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**Armin T. Wegner**

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