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The Armenian Genocide was the mass extermination of Armenians, committed by the Ottoman Empire in 1915. Despite Turkish claims of “ethnic relocation” of the Armenian people, the primary causes of the Armenian massacre by the Turkish government were a mixture of ethnic cleansing due to fear of Armenia allying with Russia in World War I, and Turkish nationalism. The brutal slaughtering of Armenians has been well documented throughout history, and even during the onslaught of the Genocide, people were calling for the aid of Armenians. First-hand accounts of the extermination of the Armenians were even recorded in reports such as “Doctor Lepsius, President of German-Orient Mission which maintains six Armenian orphan asylums in Turkey, has information from a reliable source that Armenians, mostly women and children, deported from the Erzerum district, have been massacred near Kemakh between Erzinghan and Harput” (Report from a German Missionary). The Turkish alliance with the Central Powers during World War I led the Turkish government to fear that their neighbor Armenia would ally with Russia against them. This fear, coupled with the rise of the Young Turks, (the nationalist governmental group set on regaining Turkish dominance in the Caucasus region), eventually led to the brutal massacre of 1.5 million Armenians. Additionally, during the fall of the Soviet Union, the newly independent countries of Armenia and Azerbaijan, both laid claims to the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. Nagorno-Karabakh, which has been a part of Armenia for over a thousand years and is still ethnically Armenian, was given as an autonomous oblast to Azerbaijan in 1923 by the Soviet Union. During the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, a

war between Armenia and Azerbaijan broke out over the disputed territory. In this paper, I will discuss the Armenian Genocide and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to answer the two-pronged question: why does Turkey continue to deny the Armenian Genocide, and why is it important to Armenians that the rest of the world recognizes their grief? In addition, why does Armenia fear the genocide repeating due to the conflict in the Nagorno-Karabakh region with Azerbaijan?

From my research, I will conclude that the reason for Turkey's continued denial of the Genocide is that its denial has become engrained within their culture; by accepting the Armenian Genocide, many Turkish people are at risk of dishonoring their culture. Additionally, I will show how Armenians need recognition for the atrocities committed during the Armenian Genocide to heal psychologically. Finally, I will show how the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh is following a similar path of Genocide and rewriting of history, which strikes fear into Armenians concerning a repeat Armenian Genocide.

On October 7th, 1915, former British Ambassador to the United States, Viscount Bryce, reported in the House of Lords, ““The death of these people," said Lord Bryce, "resulted from the deliberate and premeditated policy of the gang now in possession of the Turkish Government. Orders for the massacres came in every case directly from Constantinople. In some instances local Governors, being humane, pious men, refused to carry out the orders and at least two Governors were summarily dismissed for this reason” (800,000 Armenians Counted Destroyed). Bryce's recognition of the genocide is something that Armenians still thirst for today. After over 100 years, the Turkish government still refuses to take accountability for the Armenian Genocide. By not taking responsibility for the Armenian Genocide, Turkey faces, “isolation on the world stage in wake of its constant refusal to refer to the tragedy as genocide, which has resulted in its abysmal relations with modern Armenia. It has also strained ties with the Caucasus

region, and many Western nations, heavily impacting its bid to be accepted into the European Union and to be viewed as a modern state on par with Western democracy” (Dodging History). Not only does Turkey’s refusal to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide cause strife in the Caucasus region, but it is also having lasting negative implications on their relationships with the rest of the Western world.

Why then does Turkey continue to deny the Armenian Genocide? Not only would taking accountability help to ease the tensions in the Caucasus region, but it would also improve the Turkish image. In the aftermath of World War I, the Allied Powers helped to broker the Treaty of Sevres, which not only called for the re-drawing of borders in Armenia but also provided provisions for Armenians who had suffered during the deportation and the Genocide. Additionally, the Treaty of Sevres called for Turkish acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide and made the Turkish government pledge to help reintegrate those who suffered back into society, equipping them with their full civil and cultural rights. Former United States Secretary of State, William Jennings Bryan even documented the Allied Powers' intent to help the Armenians in his telegram to the United States Embassy in Constantinople. He wrote, “in view of these new crimes of Turkey against humanity and civilization the Allied governments announce publicly to the Sublime Porte that they will hold personally responsible these crimes all members of the Ottoman government and those of their agents who are implicated in such massacres” (Report of Allied Warning to Ottoman Empire). In his telegram, Bryan makes clear the Allied Powers’s intention of condemning those responsible for the Armenian Genocide. The Treaty of Sevres was supposed to make this happen.

However, the nationalist party within Turkey would not submit to the demands made within the Treaty of Sevres, and eventually overthrew the Ottoman government, placing

themselves in control. Ultimately because the Ottoman government was overthrown, the Treaty of Sevres was never ratified, and later on in 1923 was replaced by the Treaty of Lausanne. After the Turkish victory over Greece in the Greco-Turkish war, the Turkish nationalist party instilled the Treaty of Lausanne, which did not call for the recognition of Armenians who suffered in the Genocide. With the new nationalist Turkish government and entirely new Turkish identity, a new “official national history” was implemented, “where the atrocities against Armenians and other Christian minorities [were] considered as necessary means to defend the empire from ‘internal enemies’ in the course of a ‘liberation war’”. This portrayal of Armenians as ‘national traitors’ mobilized and supported by Russia – thus legitimizing their annihilation and eviction from their homeland, while at the same time denying a genocidal intent behind the atrocities (...) Armenians are still the projection surface of everything that threatens the alleged unity of the Turkish nation” (Dealing with the Armenian Genocide p.4).

This new “national history” adopted by the Turkish government, takes the victims of the Genocide and repositions them as enemies of the Turkish nation. The nationalist movement within Turkey has re-educated its people to view their neighbors, not as victims of the Turkish government's atrocities, but as enemies of the state. In other words, the Turkish stance on the Armenian genocide, has transcended the Turkish identity complex, and is now completely a part of their culture and more importantly their education. One scholar describes "Turkey's main problem" as “comprehension” (The G-Word p.11). Furthermore, he writes, “Turkey seriously needs an alternative study of history and for this, a democratic environment. . . . The society is defending the truth it knows” (The G-Word p.11). The Turkish government’s approach to the matter of the Armenian Genocide is one of complete re-education and denial. The government’s denial of the genocide not only strips Armenians of recognition but also robs the Turkish people

of their own history. This is problematic because, “[a] people[s] knowledge of the history of its oppression is part of its heritage and, as such, must be ensured by appropriate measures in fulfillment of the State’s duty to preserve archives and other evidence concerning violations of human rights and humanitarian law and to facilitate knowledge of those violations” (Dealing with the Armenian Genocide p.6). Therefore, the Turkish denial of the Armenian Genocide extends beyond stigmatizing Armenians—it erases history.

The reason for the denial of the Armenian Genocide has now become a topic of Turkish national identity. Due to the government's rewriting of history, the Turkish public is at risk of offending their heritage and national pride if they acknowledge the Armenian Genocide. An Armenian scholar and priest named Father Ghevont Alishan once said, ““those who deny their nation will also deny God”” (Armenian-Turkish Relationships p.15). This sentiment perfectly captures the fundamental reason why the Turkish people cannot accept the events of the Genocide. In sum, “those personalities, who participate in this struggle might be viewed by their compatriots with suspicion, and seen as disloyal to their nation (...) such allegations are [hurtful] for the feelings and honour of Turks and Armenians in particular, and people of the Middle East in general. Hence, (...) those intellectuals speak on behalf of the genuine interests of their country, of their nation, of their people, because they respect and love them, and aim to support the democratic advancement of Turkey” (Armenian-Turkish Relationships p.15). The issue of denial is now engrained in Turkish culture and education. But, if a Turkish citizen accepts what the rest of the world knows to be true, this would be looked upon by their countrymen as disgraceful. As aforementioned, due to re-education of the events of the Genocide, Turkish identity has shifted to that of denial. To reject said denial would not only be a blatant disregard for the Turkish education system but would also be dishonorable to the Turkish identity.

Armenians today feel as if they need recognition to be at peace and to move on from the atrocities that their ancestors faced. Armenianologist, Bogos Levon Zekiyan describes Armenians needing catharsis, meaning that there needs to be a process of emotional and psychological healing to take place, for Armenians to truly move on. Zekiyan says, “manner, I can say that a catharsis is necessary to be ‘liberated’ from the past and its wounds...[l]et us not forget that healing these wounds is not possible without remembering the past, without facing history, without coming clean with collective memory and its consciousness. Such a catharsis, such a coming clean is inevitable for the healing process”(Armenian-Turkish Relations p.13-14). By withholding catharsis, Armenians are stripped of their potential to heal, which fuels a strong push on the Armenian front for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide. Not only are Armenians needing catharsis to move forward in their healing, but the present events that are being undertaken in Nagorno-Karabakh are yet another reminder of the lack of healing and validation the Armenians are unable to attain.

Nagorno-Karabakh is a region in the southern Caucasus that has been ethnically Armenian for thousands of years. In the early 19th century, the Soviet Union gained control of the Caucasus region and established Armenia and Azerbaijan as separate socialist soviet states. In doing this, the Soviet Union then placed Nagorno-Karabakh under the administration of Azerbaijan. Soviet Russia, in this case, did not have concern for the ethnic or cultural makeup of Nagorno-Karabakh; instead, the reasoning for placing the territory into the administration of Azerbaijan was purely for the sake of organizational convenience. In the early 1990s, during the fall of the Soviet Union, the majority Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh sought to reunite with their Armenian kin, however, they were met with fierce resistance from Azerbaijan.

This resistance later ended up being a full-scale war between Azerbaijan and Armenia from 1991-1994 and ended in a ceasefire between the two nations.

The events that unfolded in the early 1990s between Armenia and Azerbaijan, reignited in 2020, leading to massive military spending by both nations. Again Armenia found itself proportionally disadvantaged to Azerbaijan, which received military aid from various allies, including Turkey. While Azerbaijan is already equipped with significantly more military infrastructure, they were also given new technology from Russia. To be more specific, “Azerbaijan’s military is nowadays using – as was demonstrated in the recent clashes – the ultra-modern Russian TOS-1 ‘Solntsepyok’ system as well as weaponized Orbiter-2 drones.” (Black Garden p.3). While Russia had previously pledged to help Armenia’s cause in securing a pivotal piece of culturally significant Armenian land, (Nagorno-Karabakh), they have instead aided Azerbaijan and Armenia has found themselves outmatched.

The correlation between the events of the Armenian Genocide and the events unfolding in Nagorno-Karabakh gives Armenians a glimpse of what happened during the Armenian Genocide. Although there is not a deliberate ethnic cleansing of Armenians in the region, the blatant disregard for centuries of Armenian history and cultural claim to the land is the driving force of uneasiness amongst Armenians. The military domination of Azerbaijan has not only led to numerous deaths of Armenians but also aided in wiping out cultural monuments that Armenians cherished. Reports have shown that “the war not only resulted in the death of thousands of Armenians protecting their homeland, but it also was a major blow to the cultural heritage of Artsakh and its infrastructure...According to a detailed January 2021 report by the Artsakh Human Rights Defender's office, 161 churches and monasteries have come under Azerbaijani control. Vandalism or destruction of Armenian monuments has become the norm”

(Ambivalence to Things Armenian). The destruction of culturally Armenian monuments by Azerbaijan forces is similar to the rewriting of history that is seen in Turkey. Destroying semblances of Armenian heritage in the Caucasus region not only negates Armenian presence in the area but also rids Armenians of the territorial claims that they have on one of their historic regions.

The Turkish denial of the Armenian Genocide and the current war in Nagorno-Karabkh are closely intertwined. Both Turkey and Azerbaijan are seeking to rewrite history to make claims over disputed land or to promote the Turkish national identity. The falsification of history robs Armenia of the validation that they are still seeking in the aftermath of the Genocide. Bedross Matossian, in his article, “Ambivalence to Things Armenian in Middle Eastern Studies and the War on Artsakh in 2020” shows the intertwined nature of both the Turkish government’s denial of the Armenian Genocide and the conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh when he wrote, “[i]n addition to being preoccupied with their futile efforts at the dissemination of (mis)knowledge about the Armenian Genocide, they [Turkey] also are currently embarking on new projects to write a revisionist history that denies the historical ties of Armenians to the land of Karabagh and undermines their quest for self-determination” (Ambivalence to Things Armenian).

The Turkish national identity is directly linked to the denial of the Armenian Genocide. Turkish denial of the Armenian Genocide, and thus the re-writing of history has become essential to Turkish identity, and to refute this re-education would villainize Turkish people in their homeland. Additionally, the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh is essential to the understanding of the Genocide denial. Armenians are once again fearing for their lives, as Azerbaijan and Turkey seek to refute thousands of years of Armenian history in the Nagorno-Karabakh region and continue to dominate Armenia with their military superiority. Fear and survival have been

well-documented among the Armenian people. In the article “100 Years of Trauma: the Armenian Genocide and Intergenerational Cultural Trauma” Selina Mangassarian writes, “This tragic event has influenced the psyche of the Armenian people, and as a result, the theme of survival is a major aspect of today’s Armenian culture” (100 years of Trauma). The fear of a repeat Genocide in Nagorno-Karabakh is real, as Armenians are seeing history re-written by their opposers. Denying the Armenian Genocide has become so ingrained in the culture of Turkey that if they were to recognize the events of the Genocide, this would be seen as shameful and anti-Turkish. Additionally, Armenians are being robbed of emotional and psychological healing by Turkish denial of the Armenian Genocide. Azerbaijan’s efforts in reclaiming Nagorno-Karabakh, rewriting important Armenian history, as well as destroying monuments vital to Armenian culture and history, sparks fear of another ethnic cleansing amongst Armenians today.