

Competitive Identity Formation in the Turkish Diaspora

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by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the politics of narrative control, and how it relates to the formation of diasporic consciousness among Turkish migrants in the United States. It asks how Turkish diasporic identity is formed and shaped by discourses that frame Turks, and that interrogate who or what a 'Turk' is? This thesis suggests that this process of continual construction and re-construction of diasporic consciousness should be investigated as a matter of competitive identity formation, meaning that there is competition between multiple actors to impose a definition or label on a diasporic group and to achieve broad-based support for that label or definition. This also implies the attribution of specific values, ideas, and political agendas to that group.

The thesis examines the roots, motivations and activities of Turkish American activists in Washington DC. Based on an analysis of their political orientations and internal fissures, it focuses on the current political debate over official recognition of the deportations and massacres of Armenians by Ottoman forces as a genocide. It argues that Turkish American activists have coalesced on the defensive around this issue, framing it as a matter critical to the identity of Turks. Their manifold activities to prevent the further institutionalisation of the 'genocide' label in American political discourse do not, however, always resonate with the passive majority of Turkish Americans.

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FORWARD NOTES

Real names are used everywhere but in Section 6.3.

All translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

This thesis contains a profusion of references to media sources. To avoid cluttering the text I have used standard, in-text citations for academic references and lettered endnotes for media sources.

American spellings have been changed to conform to the rules of British English.

This thesis contains many Turkish words. I have included the following partial pronunciation key taken from Göksel and Kerslake (2005) to ease reading them.

c *j* as in ‘jam’

ç *ch* as in ‘chip’

ğ lengthens the sound of the vowel preceding it

ı pronounced as *a* in ‘among,’ ‘alone.’

ö resembles the sound which is produced when *e* as in ‘bet’ is pronounced with the lips rounded, as in the German sound ‘ö’

ş *sh* as in ‘sheep’

ü resembles the sound which is produced when *i* as in ‘bit’ is pronounced with the lips rounded, as in the German sound ‘ü’

Chapter 1

Introduction

In 2006, several years before I began work on this thesis, my brother-in-law did himself no favours when he told my vivacious Turkish wife that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, was a fascist. She promptly tried to throw him out of the house. What had happened? In the space of a breath, a political comment from one had become a personal insult for the other. This thesis is, in many ways, an attempt to understand that initial altercation, a journey which has now far outlasted the relationship that prompted it. Why did this garner such a passionate response? Why was to insult Atatürk to insult my wife? In short, how did it become so personal? My wife, like many of her compatriots living in the United States, grew up in Istanbul and first moved overseas for university. While there she found work, married an American, and received a green card, but none of this tempered her fiercely nationalistic Turkish identity. In this she was not unique. The population of Turks abroad is some 170,000 strong in the United States and roughly 4-6 million world-wide, and many of these individuals retain a strong interest in and identification with their country of origin – loosely stated, a diasporic consciousness. I wrote this work to find out what makes that identity, that diasporic consciousness, tick.

I am centrally concerned in this thesis with the politics of narrative control, specifically regarding those narratives which impact the identities of Turkish migrants living in the United States. I argue that a political contest is currently taking place to define through discourse and rhetoric what it means to be Turkish in

an overseas context. I further suggest these competing narratives affect the formation and nature of diasporic consciousness among Turkish migrants, briefly defined as their identification and desire to engage with Turkey and Turkish issues. Thus the central research question of this entire thesis is as follows: How is Turkish diasporic identity formed and shaped by discourses that frame Turks, and that interrogate who or what a 'Turk' is? This question is based on the underlying assumption that the nature of Turkish diasporic identity affects the political battles they choose to fight, the vigour with which they pursue their goals, and the political alliances and rivalries that emerge.

To delve into these questions I first examine the genesis of the Turkish American activist community of Washington DC. I then link those findings with the community's activities and rhetoric regarding the current political debate over official recognition of the deportations and massacres of Armenians by Ottoman forces in 1915 as a genocide (hereafter, the events of 1915). I argue that Turkish American activists have coalesced around defending this issue, framing it as a matter critical to the identity of Turks. Their manifold activities to prevent the further institutionalisation of the 'genocide' label in American political discourse do not, however, always resonate with the passive majority of Turkish Americans.

...

This study of Turkish migrant identities and discourses is situated primarily in the diaspora studies literature, and I make my major original theoretical and empirical contributions to scholarship in this area. Secondly, by virtue of my chosen case study I make distinct contributions to discourse studies, Turkish studies, as well as the study of American ethnic lobbies.

I advocate in this thesis for a constructivist model of diaspora formation, as opposed to primordialist and instrumentalist models (see Sheffer, 2003:17-19 for a good summary of the different positions), which forefront biological and (solely) rational self-interest considerations. I argue that diasporas do not exist *a priori*, but are made. They are created through the inculcation of *diasporic consciousness* in the identities of individual migrants by political entrepreneurs for political ends. These ends can be identity formation itself – a deeply political process – but also in specific

political projects. Diasporic consciousness is best understood as an identification with and a political orientation toward a certain country of origin, often (problematically) referred to as a 'homeland' in the literature (see, *inter alia*, Safran, 1991:83).

My approach treats diasporas as distinct from migrant groups, in that they strongly identify with their country of origin or heritage and take active interest in that country's affairs and well-being. This identification, known as a diasporic consciousness, is what constitutes diaspora as a distinctly political practice and project. I answer to the call to study diasporic discourses as a proxy to gauge diasporic consciousness (see Sökefeld, 2006:267) and analyse the discourses that frame 'Turkishness' in the United States. That said, I argue that it cannot be taken for granted that these discourses resonate with the overall Turkish migrant population to the United States.

The major theoretical contribution of this thesis is to offer a new way of looking at how diasporic consciousness, and thus diaspora, is produced. I suggest that the process of continual construction and re-construction of diasporic consciousness is best understood as a matter of competitive identity formation. By this I mean that there is a competition between multiple actors to impose a definition or label on a diasporic group and to achieve broad-based support for that label or definition. This also implies the attribution of specific values, ideas, and political agendas to that group.

I study this competition in the realm of formal politics and public media, although the contest also takes place in other fora such as artistic productions and informal coffee house discussions, among many others. Unlike these other arenas, however, formal politics and public media are especially well-suited for examining power relations and the interactions between the different groups in competition. They are also important for understanding the interface between the agendas of ethnic interest groups and the broader political systems within which they are situated. So far, the study of diasporic politics has largely focused on attempts to shape the foreign policy of the receiving state to somehow benefit, at least in the eyes of the diasporic activists, their country of origin. In contrast, there are few

studies on transnational political issues primarily situated in the domestic politics of the receiving state. I fill this gap by exploring the production of diasporic political identity in the context of a distinctly domestic political debate – rival American interest groups debating American domestic policy – that nevertheless contains a highly emotive, transnational dimension with distinct foreign policy implications. Thereby, I demonstrate the autonomous development of diasporic political activism, which is influenced but certainly not controlled by the political leadership of the country of origin.

I further argue that, in this context, diasporas are better conceptualised as a certain type of political movement than as particular subset of a migrant group – that they are better understood by their agendas and practices than their national origins. This is because ‘diasporic politics’ – meaning the activities and influence of transnational, diasporic networks on the politics of the country of residence – is not exclusively pursued by members of the original migrant group. While it may be true that migrants from a single country or birth/heritage make up the bulk of the leaders as well as the rank and file of diasporic projects, and that the agenda is closely related to that country of birth/heritage, diasporic political projects attract and absorb other interested individuals as well. These individuals often serve crucial roles in the project, and the only reason that they would not qualify as ‘core diaspora members’ is because they do not come from the country about which they advocate. When outsiders may do more for a diasporic political project than the vast majority of migrants with the requisite lineage, definitions and analytical categories must be reevaluated.

My study of Turkish Americans and the political contest over the designation of the events of 1915 also offers several empirical contributions to the diaspora studies literature and related areas, namely research in American (ethnic) lobbies and, more broadly, Turkish Studies. First, Turkish Americans comprise a distinctly under-researched group that has, to date, garnered little attention from scholars (see page 61 for a list of works). Studies on post-World War II Turkish migration to the United States are predominantly demographic overviews, micro-ethnographic studies, and encyclopaedia articles. After repeatedly canvassing the literature I have

identified a very limited number of authors who engage with questions of Turkish American identity or politics. These works are valuable and inform this work, however these authors focus on expressions of diasporic identity rather than upon its construction. In other words, their starting assumptions are precisely the points which I interrogate.

The Turkish American example is also an excellent case study through which to see diasporic identities being constructed, reinforced, and shaped by competing actors and interests in formal politics. The United States is a conducive environment for migrant political activism, with its entrenched system of special interest groups and its legislative sensitivity to the demands of small but vocal voter constituencies. The case I have chosen thereby provides fertile ground for exploring the political opportunity structures afforded to diasporic activists in a context that allows for ample access to the formal political system of the state. This responds to the call issued by a number of authors to acknowledge and better account for this structural dimension of transnational politics (see Bauböck, 2010:296; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003b:770). The United States is also one of the primary stages within which Armenians seek recognition of the events of 1915, and exemplifies par excellence how identity politics can become a global issue. This quest has drawn in myriad competing interests. Focusing on the Turkish perspective in this struggle, I trace the intense opposition it has kindled in some Turkish Americans as a battle over Turkish identity, and argue it has fundamentally shaped the construction of Turkish American diasporic consciousness.

Furthermore, the study of Turkish Americans and the construction of diasporic consciousness adds to the small store of knowledge on the dynamics and mechanics of ethnic lobbies in the United States. Ethnic interest groups and lobbyists are widely acknowledged as a powerful force in the United States. However, apart from one study on the Cuban lobby (see Haney and Vanderbush, 1999), most in-depth research has focused on the Armenian (see Gregg, 2002; Paul, 2000; Tölölyan, 2000) and Israeli lobbies (see Goldberg, 1990; Mearsheimer and Walt, 2006). These are also, perhaps not surprisingly, the two paradigmatic victim diasporas. By studying Turkish Americans, I am able to map the 'creation' of a more fractured diasporic

consciousness in a community with a less compelling collective memory and myth to bind it together.

My critical examination of Turkish nationalist discourse and the rhetoric of the debate over the term 'Armenian Genocide' results in two further original contributions relevant to both diaspora studies and discourse studies. To my knowledge these discourses have not been studied by other scholars, even though the issue is a long-standing and recurring one in American politics with strong foreign policy implications. A dedicated, in-depth study of the Turkish and Turkish American positions, and the mechanics of their opposition, is thus long overdue. It is my hope that readers of this thesis will come away with a better understanding of the roots of the contra-genocide position in the Recognition debate; the symbols, rhetoric and knowledge used to support that position; and the motivations of people who choose to champion it.

I furthermore draw on the discourse studies literature in order to conceptualise the battle over genocide recognition as a multiplicity of actors with competing ideologies working to police or challenge the boundaries of a particular discursive field – that which can and cannot acceptably be said. One ideology, which is dominant in America but not in Turkey, is that the events of 1915 constitute genocide. The other, which is dominant in Turkey but not America, is that the events of 1915 were an unfortunate but necessary response to a seditious segment of the population in a time of war. I combine this discursive field framework with the ideas of Norman Fairclough (1995) regarding the naturalisation and the depoliticisation of speech – or as Roland Barthes (1972) would put it, the creation of myths – to argue that the Recognition debate is fundamentally about establishing and resisting lexical hegemony of a particular ideology in the discursive field regarding the events of 1915. By lexical hegemony, I mean the naturalisation of a once-contested word to the point where it is no longer openly or seriously questioned, to solidify it within the boundaries of the discursive field to the exclusion of all other possibilities. With this study I have endeavoured to record the final opposition to the creation of a myth – that the events of 1915 constitute a genocide – in which Turkish American activists fight to *maintain* the political and

contested nature of the idea and *prevent* it from becoming de-politicised, naturalised, commonsensical background knowledge. I have called this ‘preventing lexical hegemony.’

• • •

This thesis primarily follows a group of dedicated Turkish American activists in Washington DC as they attempt to stop the events of 1915 from being labelled a genocide. I assess their actions, unpack their motivations, and expose their internal divisions. In the final empirical chapter, I expand the scope of my analysis to examine the broader Turkish American population in Washington DC, their interests and concerns, and the (largely unsuccessful) efforts of the activists to recruit this population to their cause. In addition to this interview and documentary research, I also analyse national press coverage and group communiqués in order to gauge, on the one hand, the space allowed for the dissemination of Turkish American activist messages, and on the other, the nature and content of those messages.

Following an exposition of the key conceptual, theoretical, and methodological building blocks upon which this thesis stands in **Chapter 2**, I begin **Chapter 3** by sketching an outline of the Turkish American population in the United States generally and the Washington DC area specifically. I look at the spectrum of Turkish American activist organisations that were operating in Washington DC during my fieldwork in the summer of 2011, examine their political orientations and internal fissures, and introduce some of the key Turkish American activists who are the central characters of this thesis. I argue that Turkish American politics is largely focused on questions of identity. Turkish American organisations formed in reaction to events in the 1970s and 1980s – namely the Turkish military invasion of Cyprus in 1974 and a rash of attacks on Turkey-related targets by Armenian militants during this period – and are now largely occupied with defending against perceived insults to Turks and Turkish dignity. This agenda is being promoted and pursued by individuals whose lived experiences during that time were formative to their characters, political ideas, and sense of Turkishness. In this chapter I also introduce Turkish Americans’ major political opponents – namely the Greek American and

Armenian American lobbies – and use official statistics to demonstrate their relative strengths. I argue that the Turkish American population is substantially outnumbered and outgunned when it comes to political clout on Capitol Hill, the site of Congress in Washington DC. I end the chapter with a few of the ways Turkish American activists seek to broaden their base and garner support from the broader American population.

In **Chapters 4 and 5**, I dig deeper into one of the Turkish American activists' primary areas of activity: opposing efforts in the United States to officially recognise the deportations and massacres of Armenians by Ottoman forces during World War I as 'genocide.' I frame this 'Recognition debate' as a contest between two competing ideologies rather than a matter of relating historical fact to internationally-accepted definitions of genocide. One ideology, which is dominant in the United States but not in Turkey, states that the massacres and deportations do indeed constitute genocide. The alternative ideology, which dominates in Turkey and is strongly imbued with Turkish nationalism, rejects this conclusion. In **Chapter 4**, I examine the evolution of the Recognition debate and the creation of the official Turkish narrative regarding the deportations and massacres. I demonstrate why myriad Turkish groups in the United States, for their own reasons and agendas, find common cause in opposing the genocide label. I argue that their activities seek to prevent lexical hegemony of the genocide narrative in the American discursive field. To this end I detail the major strands of counter-narrative proffered by Turkish American activists to undermine the dominant narrative in the United States and replace it with an interpretation of events more sympathetic to the Turkish position.

In **Chapter 5**, I investigate the major arenas in which the Recognition debate is fought, as well as many of the activities undertaken by Turkish American activists to prevent the spread and normalisation of the term 'Armenian Genocide' in the United States. In the first half of the chapter I detail several legal battles fought to this effect in the fields of insurance, education, and personal defamation. In the second half I trace the birth, life, and eventual death of one effort in the US Congress to officially recognise the 'Armenian Genocide,' known as House of Representatives Resolution 252. I analyse the Congressional discourse that

accompanied this proposed resolution, and the activities undertaken by the organisations to prevent its passage. I further examine the coverage of this resolution in the American press. I argue that while Turkish American groups have achieved some success in the legal arena, they are comparatively minor players in their opposition to Congressional resolutions. They are attempting to increase their capacity and efficacy in their dealings with Congress, but are currently surpassed in their efforts by more powerful interests, such as the Turkish state itself. I further argue that the discourse of these groups contains strong appeals to the notions of Turkish pride and freedom of expression, particularly to express minority views. However, these groups suffer from perceived problems with their credibility and are rarely given space to disseminate their ideas in the American print media. That they remain active despite their relative ineffectiveness corroborates my main hypothesis. These activists are competing to defend and shape the identities of Turks and Turkish Americans on principle, and believe this to be a battle worth fighting despite the low chances of success.

The activists discussed in these chapters constitute a minority within a minority – they are a dedicated but markedly small group of people. The majority of Turkish migrants living in the United States today constitute a ‘silent majority’ which *does not* strongly engage in activism or the Recognition debate. In **Chapter 6**, the final empirical chapter of this thesis, I look at attempts by Turkish American organisations to generate more support for their causes and broaden their grassroots base. I argue that in doing so they work to shape the diasporic consciousness amongst the silent majority in accordance with their agenda and identity-based politics. I then analyse the coverage of Turkish American activist organisations in the Turkish and American presses. I show that while they have a negligible presence in American press reports, they receive much greater coverage in the Turkish press. I argue that this latter coverage serves as an echo chamber, taking Turkish American news out of the United States, amplifying it and imbuing it with a strong Turkish nationalist bias, and then sending it back over the Internet for consumption overseas.

I finish this chapter by analysing the perspectives of the ‘passive majority’ of Turkish Americans. I argue that while their experiences in America have given them a heightened sensitivity to the Turkish aspect of their identities, and to perceived insults to Turkey and Turks, many see diminishing returns to the current agenda of the Turkish American organisations that purport to represent ‘the community.’ This is especially true amongst the younger Turkish Americans that did not live through the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 or the rise of Armenian militancy in the 1970s and 1980s. Thus, disillusioned with the current trend of defensive, largely genocide-centric Turkish American activism, they have chosen not to engage on this plane. I further argue that some of these individuals are searching for new ways to articulate a Turkish identity in the United States that does not use the events of 1915 as a touchstone, preferring instead to recast a more positive notion of Turkish identity.

...

In the following pages, I will peer into the messy reality of migrant life from various angles. I will explore the complex network of Turkish American organisations, with their overlapping missions and bases of support. I will introduce and give voice to seasoned activists, world-weary elders, disaffected youth, and a handful of change-makers determined to breathe new life into what it means to be a ‘Turk’ abroad. Above all, I will demonstrate how discourse knits together the patchwork social fabric of the migrant experience – how discourse about Turkey and Turkish issues affects migrants socially and psychologically; how news of events in the United States boomerangs through cyberspace and the Turkish press before returning, somewhat coloured by the experience, to be consumed by migrants. I will further argue that despite the salience of Turkish nationalism in migrants’ world-views, being ‘Turkish’ is not the only, or necessarily the most important, facet of Turkish migrants’ identities. Much like any other social classification, Turkish migrants and their descendants do not form a single, monolithic community. Thus, it is not a given that they constitute a diaspora or will eventually coalesce into one, and I will put forth the proposition that the ties that bind them together are not necessarily any stronger than the forces splitting them apart.

Chapter 2

Theory and Methodology

This chapter is broken into four main parts: theory, methodology, fieldwork methods, and a background discussion on major Turkish migration patterns. In the first part, I construct my theoretical framework by drawing on four main bodies of literature: identity, nationalism, diaspora, and discourse. In Section 2.1 I discuss background concepts from the first two areas of literature as they pertain to this thesis. In Section 2.2 I relate these ideas to my main discussion of the diaspora studies literature and other scholars' conceptions of diaspora creation. In Section 2.3 I further combine ideas and theories from these literatures to develop my own notion of competitive identity formation in a diasporic context. In Section 2.4 I discuss the relevance of a discourse perspective on the study of diasporic consciousness and introduce my concept of lexical hegemony. Following these theoretical discussions, in part two of this chapter (Section 2.5) I lay out my methodology, including my approach to critical discourse analysis, my positionality in this interpretive and reflexive research, and the implications of mediation and mediated realities to this thesis. In part three (Section 2.6) I detail my fieldwork, data-gathering methods and data evaluation. Part four (Section 2.7) further contextualises my case study in the broader history of Turkish migration.

2.1 BACKGROUND CONCEPTS

Diasporic consciousness is a specific type of constructed identity inextricably imbued with nationalism. Thus, while the main literature I interact with is the diaspora studies literature, I will first address certain key features of social identity and nationalism and then relate them to my discussion of diaspora in Section 2.2.

2.1.1 Identity

The heart of this thesis is an examination of the formative influences on Turkish American identity. Mainstream academic thinking on identity today follows a social constructivist view. I lean heavily on the works of theorists such as Stuart Hall, Fredrik Barth, and especially Richard Jenkins' (2008) book *Social Identity*, to inform my own work. Such authors hold that both individual and group identities, including 'core' or 'primary' identities such as kinship, ethnicity and nationality, are not essential but continuously produced, revised, and ordered in response to both context and outside influences (Jenkins, 2008, specifically Chapter 4, see also Hall, 1990, 1991; Nagel, 1994). "To insist that identity is not fixed, immutable or primordial, that it is utterly sociocultural in its origins, and that it is somewhat negotiable and flexible, is the right place to begin if we are to understand how identification works" (Jenkins, 2008:19). That said, these group identities are 'real' and meaningful to the extent that they are constituted through peoples' choices to believe in them, self-ascribe to them, and act on behalf of them or in their name (Barth, 1969; Jenkins, 2008, c.f. Brubaker and Cooper, 2000).

Much of the existing theory on the topic is concerned with how individual and group identities are shaped by different contexts, a dynamic otherwise known as situational identity construction (see, among others, Hall, 1990; Nagel, 1994; Okamura, 1981; Stets and Burke, 2000). This literature also highlights that identity construction is fundamentally the juxtaposition of the 'self' with 'others.' However, it is vitally important to note that the same operation performed by said 'others' affects the 'self.' "What people think about us is no less significant than what we think about ourselves. It is not enough simply to assert an identity; that assertion must also be validated, or not, by those with whom we have dealings. Identity is never

unilateral” (Jenkins, 2008:42). Basing his writing on the work of Charles Cooley and George Mead, Jenkins (2008:40) describes identity formation as taking place in an “internal-external dialectic,” meaning “selfhood [is] an ongoing and, in practice, simultaneous synthesis of (internal) self-definition and the (external) definitions of oneself offered by others.” Hall describes this same idea when he writes that selves and others are mutually constitutive, stating that identity exists in the nexus of one’s view of oneself, one’s view of the other, the other’s view of oneself, and one’s perception of the other’s view of oneself. “This doubleness of discourse, this necessity of the Other to the self, this inscription of identity in the look of the Other finds its articulation profoundly in the ranges of a given text” (Hall, 2000:147). As I will show throughout the course of this thesis, this process of mirroring oneself in the other is a core dynamic of how Turkish diasporic consciousness is constructed.

2.1.2 Nationalism

Nations and nationalism are two of the most powerful, hegemonic identity constructs of modern times. They draw their power from the widespread belief that national identity is somehow primordial, a notion which Jenkins (2008) and many other well-known scholars repudiate (e.g. Anderson, 1991; Bayart, 2005; Brubaker, 1998; Gellner, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1992; Kedourie, 1993). Mainstream academia today regards nations as ‘imagined communities,’ to use Benedict Anderson’s (1991) well-known phrase, in the sense that individuals imagine themselves to be more closely related to some unknown individuals than to other, equally unknown individuals. Scholars have determined two main methods used to delineate nations: the French ‘civic’ model and the German ‘ethnic’ model (Brubaker, 1992). The first denotes national inclusion by territory (the concept of *jus soli*), while the second describes national membership through ethnicity, blood, and a common culture (the concept of *jus sanguinis*).

The study of nationalist ideologies has ebbed and flowed in academia, although since the start of the 1990s it has experienced a resurgence (Brubaker, 1998). Nationalism is a “theory of political legitimacy” (Breuilly, 1983:1) which divides the world into these allegedly natural groups, promotes their self-determination, and

pursues their supposedly unified interests.¹ Within a nation-state the primary producer and defender of a collective, national identity is the state. This often takes place through the educational system, the military, and other forms of public spectacle (see, among others, Bourdieu, 1994; Gellner, 1983; specifically on Turkey, Navaro-Yashin, 2002). Given that the reach of the state is limited in a diasporic context, I focus on the attempt to foster collective identities by a host of different actors. In the US context, I argue that the identity-production functions of the Turkish state are partially replicated by core diaspora members and the cultural and political organisations they establish.

Some, especially in migration studies, have called for the social sciences to move beyond the nation-state paradigm in research (see, for example, Miyoshi, 1993; Robinson, 1998). While this is certainly necessary in order to properly conceptualise the triangular relationship that exists between diaspora, sending-state and receiving-state, the continued force of the nation-state and nationalism should not be dismissed. Primordial groups may be fictive, but as noted earlier the belief and self-ascription to such groups gives them a certain reality at least in consequence. Thus, I treat belief in and strong attachments to nationalism and nationalist discourses seriously even while not subscribing to their underlying premises. Many scholars have found cause to do the same. Eagleton (1990:24), for example, notes that these types of categories, “ontologically empty though they may be, continue to exert an implacable political force.” Likewise, Madianou (2005:525) argues that “to address essentialist discourse is not the same as endorsing essentialism,” and Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2003) state:

While it is important to push aside the blinders of methodological nationalism, it is just as important to remember the continued potency of nationalism. Framing the world as a global marketplace cannot begin to explain why under specific circumstances not only political entrepreneurs, but also the poor and disempowered, including immigrants, continue to frame their demands for social justice and equality within a nationalist rhetoric” (2003:600).

1. For a discussion on Turkish nationalism and the Turkish state’s role in its propagation, see Section 4.2.1.

As Sökefeld (2006:266) nicely sums up, “the fact that nations are imagined communities does not mean that they are fictitious and unreal. Imagined communities – nations, ethnic groups or others – are real because they are imagined as real, because they are taken as real and because they therefore have very real effects on social life.”

2.2 DIASPORA

Diaspora, and belonging to a diaspora, is one type of identity construct that is related to but also transcends national identity formation. Since the early 1990s the concept of ‘diaspora’ has received new purchase in academic debates. Studies prior to this date largely focused on the Jewish experience, which meant that the concept was associated with a traumatic exile, existential longing for home, and feelings of alienation and cultural exclusion in their new country (Cohen, 2008:1-4). In contrast, the scholarship of the 1990s initiated by Safran, Cohen, and a few others, sought to liberalise and define a general concept of diaspora beyond the Jewish case. Safran (1991) broke new ground when he defined diasporas as possessing a series of characteristics that largely involved a homeland-orientation, including: an original dispersion; a collective memory and longing for a homeland; feelings of alienation; a desire to maintain and protect the homeland; and communal solidarity grounded in the relationships of individuals to the homeland. Cohen (2008) further developed and broadened the conception of diaspora, suggesting that to the classic ‘type’ of a victim diaspora should be added trade, labour, imperial, and de-territorialised types. Many of these early authors, including Safran (1991), Vertovec (1997), and Sheffer (1986:1), emphasised that a crucial component to any conceptualisation of diaspora is the triangular relationship that is formed between the diaspora, the homeland, and the host country.

Because this triadic relationship sits at the heart of definitions of diasporas, they are commonly considered in the literature to be one type of transnational social formation. Indeed, in a now-famous quote Khachig Tölölyan (1991:5) declared diasporas to be “the exemplary communities of the transnational moment.” The academic re-discovery of diasporas coincided with what has been termed ‘the

transnational turn' in migration studies that took place in the early 1990s. Faist (2010:11) explains that the transnational lens was designed "as an approach that brought migrants 'back in' as important social agents ... in contrast to large organisations such as multinational companies and political parties that had been the object of earlier research of a transnational vein." It was also, in the words of its founders, Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc, an attempt to move away from a paradigm that attributed a permanent shift to the word 'immigrant' and toward a more fluid concept that could cope with the realisation that "today, immigrants develop networks, activities, patterns of living, and ideologies that span their home and host society" (Basch *et al.*, 1994:4). They defined migrant transnationalism "as the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relationships that link together their societies of origin and settlement" (1994:7). According to Glick Schiller (2003:121) "the paradigm change spawned the development of other related fields of study: transcultural studies, diaspora studies, and globalisation studies." This explains the intellectual trends that drove Safran, Cohen and others to expand on classic conceptualisations of diaspora at the same time.

Many authors distinguish diasporas from other transnational social formations in terms of their explicit social and political organisation. Diasporas are thus transnational social formations but not all transnational social formations are diasporas. It is a one-way entailment, as the type of simultaneous presence in multiple countries that is conceived of in the transnationalism literature can, for example, take place entirely in the personal sphere (i.e. cross-border, family decision making; the myriad 'social remittances' popularised by Levitt [1991]). As Sheffer (2006:124) explains, "The fact that migrants retain their connections to families in their homeland and participate in transnational social fields does not also mean that in their new hostland they automatically organise as a diaspora, or that they create and support institutions that represent them culturally and politically." Diasporas are thus conceived as explicitly political transnational formations, as diasporans must not only identify with their country of origin/heritage, but they must also take a strong, active interest in that country's affairs and well-being.

As the study of diasporas has gained popularity over the past 25 years, in both public and academic discourse, it has been applied to an ever-widening variety of groups. In some circles it has been extended to cover practically any geographically-dispersed or emotionally-distant category of people, even those for whom the original qualification of a homeland-orientation is not possible; unless one can conceive of homelands for the gay (Garland, 2013; Nasirzadeh, 2011), or Muslim (Hamel, 2002), or even middle-manager diasporas (Johnson, 1994). As more and more groups were thrown onto the diaspora bandwagon scholars began to warn that 'diaspora' was in danger of being watered down to the extent that it would lose all analytical value (Cohen, 2008:8-9). In short, "if everyone is diasporic, then no one is distinctively so" (Brubaker, 2005:3).

This led to a seemingly endless stream of attempts throughout the 1990s and 2000s to delineate diasporas from migrants from transnational social formations and vice versa. Faist (2010:12-13), writing 20 years after this discussion of definitions began, finds broad consensus among scholars regarding three primary characteristics: 1) diasporas are the product of migration or dispersal; 2) diasporas are part of cross-border experiences (i.e. they are a node in the triadic relationship between country of origin, country of residence, and the diaspora); and 3) diasporas maintain a cultural distinctiveness to the majority society in which they live. Interestingly, Faist delineates between 'older' and 'newer' conceptions of each of these characteristics. Older notions, which were heavily influenced by the paradigmatic victim diaspora of the Jews, were generally speaking more morose. The dispersion was traumatic; the cross-border experience was a longing from exile; the cultural distinctiveness was isolating (Faist himself was operating completely on this definition when he published his [1998:222] paper 12 years earlier). In contrast, newer notions are more positive: the dispersal can be, and often is, a result of voluntary migration; the cross-border experience is synergistic transnationalism and multi-locality; and the cultural distinctiveness is celebrated as cultural hybridity resulting from successful integration and tolerant multiculturalism.

My own conceptualisation of diaspora is modified from Safran's (1991) original list, but I incorporate into it these newer, more positive notions of diasporic identity

explained by Faist (2010). I see diasporans as analytically distinct subset of migrants that maintain an active interest in the affairs, well-being, and people of their country of origin or heritage. I do not use the term 'homeland' here, and would suggest that including notions of 'return' in the defining characteristics of diaspora is obsolete and no longer appropriate, because some diasporans may see their primary home as their country of residence (especially those of the second generation) yet still be emotionally attached to and actively involved with their country of heritage. Diasporans maintain cultural distinctiveness but not necessarily cultural exclusivity, and this can as easily manifest itself as a celebration of cultural hybridity as it can a feeling of alienation in both societies. Finally, diasporans maintain a type of collective memory and myth about their country of origin – which keeps the country alive, current, and present in their imaginations and is greatly helped by modern telecommunications – but they do not need the fire of extraordinary trauma to fuse them together.

Importantly, diasporas are only as big as the number of migrants from a common country of origin who express such an identity and are never as big as the migrant population itself. This conception meets the criticism expressed by Anthias (1998:563) that some scholars of diaspora “[assume] there is a natural and unproblematic ‘organic’ community of people without division or difference, dedicated to the same political projects,” which there never is. It is also, in many ways, a more honest depiction of a situation already well-recorded in the literature, and corrects what I see as a type of ‘false positive’ problem prevalent in both public and scholarly conceptions of diaspora today (see, *inter alia*, Itzigsohn *et al.*, 1999; Portes *et al.*, 2002; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003a). Whether due to residual primordialism or to a desire to maximise the potential impact of the diaspora concept, many scholars declare an entire migrant population to be a diaspora and then delineate between its active and inactive members rather than setting the threshold for entry at maintaining an *active interest* in the affairs and well-being of a country of origin.

Shain and Aharon (2003:452), for example, distinguish three component groups of a diaspora – core members, passive members, and silent members. They accept,

however, that “members of the third group [silent members] are mostly part of an ‘imagined community,’ to use Benedict Anderson’s expression, often existing only in the mind of diasporic political activists, as well as home or host governments.” Sheffer (2003:100), likewise, decomposes a diaspora into core, marginal and dormant parts, the last of which is comprised of “those persons who have assimilated or fully integrated, but know or feel that their roots are in the diaspora group; under certain circumstances those persons will identify with the diaspora and can be mobilised by its leaders and organisations.” Tölölyan (1996:18) as well acknowledges that “many more people are ‘just’ ethnics ... they occasionally write a check, rarely turn out for a parade or rally, and may be prepared to put a proud-to-be-X sticker on their car. But they live out their lives, in the main, as Americans with few or no diasporan concerns.”

I agree with Brubaker’s (2005:11) critique of this position, when he says that “the very notion of ‘dormant members’ of a diaspora is problematic; if they are really dormant ... then why should they count, and be counted, as ‘members’ of the diaspora at all?” That the silent, or dormant, or ‘just ethnic’ members do not generally believe themselves to be part of the diaspora, that they do not imagine themselves to be part of the diasporic community, means that they are not part of that imagined community regardless of what the diasporic political activists imagine. This does not mean that they cannot become part of the diaspora, but they should not be considered as always, somehow, part of it. This is important, as it provides a reality check for scholars and diasporic political activists regarding the numeric size, and thus the political capacity, of our object of study and their actual (but not potential) network.

While automatically including the ‘dormant parts’ in a conception of diaspora is highly problematic, the differentiation between core and passive diaspora members is productive. It helps to delineate those from whom social and political activism in the name of a diasporic group constitutes a core preoccupation from those who are largely inactive but may support these activities in one way or another. In this thesis I examine both the role of core activists and passive members, and explore to what degree their activism actually resonates with the overall migrant population.

Diasporas maybe be smaller than their parent migrant groups, but it is important to note that they attract actors from outside the migrant group as well. As such, I agree with Brubaker (2005:11) when he says “ancestry is surely a poor proxy for membership in a diaspora.” I suggest however that this equation goes both ways: not only is ancestry insufficient to qualify someone as part of a diaspora, but some people who lack the requisite ancestry may be as committed to a diasporic political project as ‘*bona fide*’ diasporic activists. These individuals are by no means always peripheral actors. As the empirical chapters in this thesis attest, these non-diasporans are central to the political project of the Turkish American activists. They do more for the project than most Turkish Americans, and would certainly qualify as ‘core diaspora members’ if only they were of Turkish heritage.

While the claim to a specific ancestry may be key to a diasporic identity, *diasporic political projects* do not depend on all of their proponents to possess such a claim. In light of this, I argue that while diasporic political projects remain ‘diasporic’ because of the country-of-origin-centric agenda, they are, in reality, pursued by a more broadly defined ‘transnational community.’ This type of transnational social formation allows for all interested parties to participate, regardless of their background, and operates within ‘transnational social fields’ or ‘transnational social spaces.’ The latter, defined by Faist (1998:216), are “combinations of social and symbolic ties, positions in networks and organisations, and networks of organisations that can be found in at least two geographically and internationally distinct places.”

Even though the role of these actors is not explicitly acknowledged by authors focusing on conceptions of diaspora, some of them do make their integration conceptually possible. Rogers Brubaker and Martin Sökefeld have each argued that diasporas could be more fruitfully studied if one moves away from conceptualising them as communities (diasporas as social form, in the language of Vertovec [1997]). Brubaker (2005:12) claims that “to overcome these problems of groupism ... we should think of diaspora not in substantialist terms as a bounded entity, but rather as an idiom, a stance, a claim. We should think of diaspora in the first instance as a category of practice.” Sökefeld (2006:268), for his part, suggests that we can

“effectively [counter] primordialist and essentialising approaches” by using the toolbox of social movement theory and focusing the microscope on aspects of mobilisation (see also Adamson, 2008).

If we take diaspora as a social form ... that is contingent on the imagination of a transnational community and upon the self-identification of actors as members of this community, we must ask how actors are mobilized for such identification. The social movement approach suggests that there must be opportunities, mobilizing structures and practices, and frames that enable this mobilisation (Sökefeld, 2006:268).

Building on these assumptions, I argue in this thesis that the Turkish American diaspora is a partial, fractured group that is constituted by only a small portion of the broader Turkish American population, but its political projects are bolstered by outside actors and allies. It is a similar notion to what Sheffer (2006:129) describes as an “incipient” diaspora, indeed the Turks are one of his examples of such a formation, although once again I shy away from the term as it implies significant further growth and this may not prove to be the case. That said, a central goal in this study is to examine how diasporas do in fact grow. As Sökefeld (2006:266) says, “As identities become politically effective only when they are employed and endorsed by a certain number of people, we have to ask how these people are *mobilised* for such an identity, how they are made to accept and assume it” (Sökefeld’s emphasis). Accordingly, I seek to understand how migrants acquire and express the above-described identity, their diasporic consciousness, and to lay bare at least some of the mechanisms by which Turkish American migrants have been turned into members of the Turkish American diaspora.

2.2.1 Diasporic Consciousness and Discourse

The term diasporic consciousness centres on the identity constructions that create diasporas and hold them together. Like diaspora, understandings of diasporic consciousness have evolved over the past 20 years away from pain, loss and longing. Clifford (1994), who was writing at the start of these debates, epitomises these older

conceptualisations when he says, somewhat melodramatically, that diasporic consciousness:

‘makes the best of a bad situation.’ Experiences of loss, marginality and exile (differentially cushioned by class) are often reinforced by systematic exploitation and blocked advancement. This constitutive suffering coexists with the skills of survival: strength in adaptive distinction, discrepant cosmopolitanism, and stubborn visions of renewal. Diaspora consciousness lives loss and hope as a defining tension (Clifford, 1994:312).

By now, the broader conceptions of diaspora are also reflected in the different renderings of diasporic consciousness. As Stuart Hall so eloquently sums it up:

Diaspora does not refer us to those scattered tribes whose identity can only be secured in relation to some sacred homeland to which they must at all costs return, even if it means pushing other people into the sea. This is the old, the imperialising, the hegemonising, form of ‘ethnicity’. ... The diaspora experience as I intend it here is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of ‘identity’ which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference (1990:235).

What is the difference between diasporic consciousness and diaspora? Vertovec (1997) distinguishes between conceptualisations of diaspora as a social form – meaning “an identified group characterised by their relationship-despite-dispersal” (1997:278) – and diaspora as a type of consciousness, which exhibits an “awareness of multi-locality” (1997:282) that ties someone to both countries of origin and residence. In addition to entailing a sense of simultaneity, so to speak, authors highlight the political nature of diasporic consciousness. Vertovec notes that “diaspora consciousness is further considered to be the source of resistance through *engagement with*, and consequent *visibility in, public space*” (1997:283, emphasis in original). Similarly, Adamson (2008:27) argues that diasporic consciousness is a

political identity, defined on national, ethnic, or religious grounds, that “can be taken up by groups as a source of empowerment.”

Martin Sökefeld (2006:267), whose work is of seminal importance to my own project, argues that diasporic consciousness is central to the very existence of a diaspora community. Unlike Vertovec, who sees the diasporic community (social form) and diasporic consciousness as separate concepts, Sökefeld argues that “there can be no diaspora community without a consciousness of diaspora.” In other words, *diasporic consciousness is the imagination* that wills the imagined community of diaspora into being. Rainer Bauböck (2010:299) echoes this position entirely, when he says “diaspora should be understood as a politically mobilised claim about transnational citizenship ... diasporas are created through discourses about transnational belonging to a political community.”

Clifford highlights that the discourses that are particularly salient to the production of diasporic consciousness concern insult and pride. Diasporic consciousness is “constituted negatively by experiences of discrimination and exclusion ... [and] is produced positively through identification with world historical cultural/political forces.” (Clifford, 1994:311-12). In the current case study we see both currents of discourse at work. On the one hand, Turkish American activists attempt to rally people to the cause by telling them they should fight back against insults to Turkishness and the labelling of Turks as *génocidaires*. On the other, they inform people that they are from an illustrious heritage in which they should feel pride and community.

But how is it possible to gauge such consciousness? Sökefeld argues that while consciousness itself is a slippery concept, a suitable proxy more available to researchers is diasporic discourse. “As ‘consciousness’ is a category that is notoriously difficult to ascertain in empirical research I propose replacing it with ‘discourse’, because consciousness needs to be expressed in discourse in order to produce social and political effects” (2006:267). Furthermore, in an earlier, co-authored article, Sökefeld calls on scholars to better understand diasporic discourse and its constructive consequences by paying closer attention to the agents and institutions that produce it.

In order to explore how this common imagination is produced and disseminated ... we should look for institutions and agents which produce, reproduce and spread the imaginations in question. Becoming a diaspora community requires the production of a particular mode of consciousness ... created through and again embodied in particular discursive and non-discursive practices, pursued by individual and/or collective agents (Sökefeld and Schwalgin, 2000:3-4).

Bauböck (2010:299) repeats this call several years after Sökefeld's own: "a third aspect should be added to the study of institutions and practices: discourses. ... we therefore need to trace as well the public discourses that construct transnational citizenship not merely as legal statuses and rights, but also as a significant way of belonging to a political community." I will elaborate on my specific conception of discourse in Section 2.4. Here, I will simply point out that a focus on diasporic discourses is indeed helpful as a basic approach for empirical research that seeks to gauge diasporic consciousness. Nevertheless, it can never be taken for granted that diasporic discourse resonates with any particular migrant. In line with calls to focus more attention on the role of discourses, my research has shown just how important discourse is in the ability of a diasporic community to form, thrive, and replicate itself across generations. As such, I employ a discourse framework over other possible research lenses, such as economic interest, and focus my attention on the agents and institutions of the Turkish American diaspora that produce diasporic discourses.

My aim in this thesis is to look at: a) how certain Turkish Americans first acquired diasporic consciousness; b) how core members used diasporic discourse first to identify and communicate with other migrants similarly inclined towards diasporic consciousness, and later to reach out to other migrants less so inclined; c) how this leads (or does not lead) to the creation and enlargement of a Turkish American diasporic community; and d) how discourse is used to mobilise diasporic consciousness in the service of a political project.

The production of diasporic consciousness takes place through many avenues, including culture and art (e.g. Werbner, 2000), marriage and family ties, and myriad social remittances (e.g. Levitt, 1998). Involvement in the sending and receiving

contexts may also be important, e.g. through hometown associations (e.g. Çağlar, 2006) and the creation of migrant-produced media (e.g. Georgiou, 2005; Kosnick, 2007; Milikowski, 2000). In addition to these routes, consumption of global media broadcasts from the sending country may result in a passive or “benign” sense of national belonging (Aksoy and Robins, 2000; Karim, 1998; see also Billig, 1995). Finally, diasporic consciousness may also be encouraged through political engagement in the receiving country. I focus on this last avenue of production of diasporic consciousness by examining the political activism of the Turkish diaspora in the United States. The preoccupation of Turkish American activists with the Recognition debate is a particularly striking case study that puts into question many strongly held beliefs about diasporas and how they function. They challenge the conflation of diaspora with migrant group as well as assumptions about internal diasporic homogeneity with regard to beliefs and motivations, as well as the overall success rate of attempts to produce diasporic consciousness in the broader migrant population.

2.2.2 Diasporic Politics

There is a disjuncture between research into diasporas and research into diasporic politics. The former is a variant of identity and cultural studies – analysing what it means to ‘be’ a diaspora – while the latter *a priori* assumes the existence of a diaspora motivated for a particular project and discusses specific forms of political activism on this assumed basis (recall Anthias’ [1998] criticism of this assumption on page 18). This thesis tries to bridge that gap by combining the study of diasporic politics and diasporic identity construction. Instead of taking diasporas’ existence and lobbying potential as givens and then studying *if* they ‘work’, I step back and study why and how a diaspora lobby might form and exist in the first place, and how – rather than if – it works.² I unravel historical context and the changing relations in the triadic relationship to examine the home-grown, autonomous

2. I do comment on the efficacy of Turkish American activist organisations, however this is not my primary aim.

production of diasporic consciousness and lobbying activity among Turkish migrants.

The empirical study of diaspora politics arguably began with the publication of Sheffer's (1986) edited collection *Modern Diasporas in International Politics*. This field has largely revolved around diasporas' roles in conflict (e.g. Orjuela, 2008; Smith and Stares, 2007, see also Pirkkalainen and Abdile, 2009), the (potential) export of Western political and cultural norms, especially 'democracy' (especially, Shain, 1999, see also Levitt, 1998), and diasporas' efforts to lobby *explicitly* for foreign policy matters (e.g. Akgün, 2000; Diraor, 2009; Gamlen, 2008; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003c, 2004). The last of these has also been discussed under the rubric of ethnic lobbying, and comes closest to the object of my study here.

Diasporic interest groups, or ethnic lobbies, are widely acknowledged as an active, albeit intermittently effective, political force in the United States (see Mathias, 1981; McCormick, 2012; Shain, 1994). There are two major strains of literature regarding US-based ethnic lobbies. One is normative, and discusses whether the influence of ethnic interest groups is *good or bad* for America. This issue, with which I do not engage, asks questions regarding cohesive national interests and identities, divided loyalties, pluralistic democracies, etc. (for both sides of this debate see, among others, Huntington, 1997; Lindsay, 2002; Mathias, 1981; Shain, 1994, 1999; Walt, 2005).

The other strain of literature largely focuses on how effective ethnic interest groups are at influencing foreign policy (e.g. Ambrosio, 2002; McCormick, 2012; Nye Jr *et al.*, 2012; Paul and Paul, 2009; Shain, 1994). Most of these works use a select few of the most visible ethnic lobbies in the American political landscape to make their arguments. Some attention has been given to Irish-Americans within the context of a 19th-century drive for Irish autonomy and 'The Troubles' of the 1960s-90s (e.g. Erie, 1990; Guelke, 1996); the Cuban-American and Eastern European lobbies within the context of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union (e.g. Haney and Vanderbush, 1999; Mathias, 1981; McCormick, 2012); the Greek American lobby within the context of the 1974 invasion of Cyprus by the Turkish military (e.g. Garrett, 1978; Kitroeff, 2009; Legg, 1981; Watanabe, 1984).

Based on this type of literature, in Section 3.3 I outline one typology created by Haney and Vanderbush (1999) that can be used to gauge the strength and efficacy of a ethnic interest group.

What is largely missing from this literature are studies of the autonomous formation of diasporic political agendas *in the country of residence* such as the one that I investigate here. There are comparatively few case studies that use foreign policy as a backdrop to focus on an ethnic lobby's formation and its inner-workings as the primary subject of inquiry. Aside from one study on the Cuban lobby in the 1980s (see Haney and Vanderbush, 1999), most detailed case studies have focused, perhaps not surprisingly, on the two paradigmatic victim diasporas: the Jewish and Armenian lobbies (see Gregg, 2002; Mearsheimer and Walt, 2006; Paul, 2000; Safran, 2012; Tölölyan, 2000). By studying Turkish Americans, I am able to map the creation of a more fractured diasporic consciousness in a community with a less compelling collective memory and myth to bind it together.

At a more theoretical level, many insights into diasporic politics can be gained from the broader literature on transnational politics. First, it allows us to conceptualise diasporic politics as a subset of transnational politics. Eva Østergaard-Nielsen provides a fine working definition of transnational politics, although she, like many authors, includes an unnecessarily limiting 'country of origin' clause into her definition:

I operate with a rather wide definition of 'political transnational practices': various forms of direct cross-border participation in the politics of their country of origin by both migrants and refugees ... as well as their indirect participation via the political institutions of the host country (or international organisations). In the latter case, the transnational element includes the way that political participation in one country, such as voting patterns or lobbying, is informed by political events in another (2003b:762).

Sökefeld and Schwalgin (2000:25), writing about Alevi politics in Germany, also find that politics related to a country of origin but carried out in a country of residence are a type of transnational politics. "Alevi politics of identity in the diaspora is clearly inscribed into a transnational political field. It is always related to

developments in Turkey.” In this same vein, the debate over the events of 1915, the primary example used in this present study, is a type of transnational politics even though I focus exclusively on the Recognition debate in the United States. It is part of a world-wide conversation over the events of 1915 that is taking place in many different states today and is inextricably linked to Turkish domestic discourses on the events of 1915.

Second, some authors question the *a priori* equation of migrant group with diaspora. According to Bauböck (2003:706), “transnational political practices are, in most cases, a concern of the first generation only, and they are quite exceptional even among these population.” This reflects previously discussed theoretical insights that delineate between members of the diaspora, especially core members, and other migrants from the same country of origin or heritage.

Third, certain authors highlight the ambivalence of diasporic activists with regard to their countries of origin. They show that diaspora politics, while always influenced by the country of origin, is not dictated or controlled by it. Indeed, state involvement is often reactive, rather than proactive, to instances of diasporic activism. “Instead of creating transnationalism for strategic reasons, sending states will more often modify their strategies in response to changes in the migrants’ orientations” (Bauböck, 2003:710, see also Portes, 1999:466-67). Other scholars have noticed not only this, but also that migrants often bristle at attempts to control them by the country of origin. De Haas (2006:92) finds that attempting to “steer” diaspora engagement as a “fatal mistake”, and stresses that “it is important to recognise that many migrants *are* already mobilised for development in their own force.” Likewise, Sheffer (2006:138) notes that oftentimes “connections with homelands and their interventions in the affairs of the diasporas are not welcomed by diasporans. Most organised state-linked diasporas and their core members prefer to maintain their collective and individual autonomy in determining their strategies and actions.”

I pick up on all of these arguments of the transnational politics literature. In contrast to many existing studies on diasporic politics, I focus on political activism regarding a predominantly domestic issue in the receiving country which is

channelled through domestic political institutions. I also show that diasporic political activism is not only fractured, but represents an extremely small part of the overall Turkish American migrant population. Finally, I strongly argue in this thesis that not only has the production of diasporic consciousness amongst some Turkish Americans been an autonomous process, but so has the creation of the political agendas they pursue. Autonomy is not the same as isolation, and while the Turkish state does not dictate to the diaspora activists, it does manage to exert some influence over activists in Washington DC, in part because it participates directly in the Recognition debate as well.

2.3 COMPETITIVE IDENTITY FORMATION

In this section I synthesise elements of the three above literatures into a conception of competitive identity formation in a diasporic context. By this I mean *that there is competition between multiple actors to impose a definition or label on a diasporic group and to achieve broad-based support for that label or definition. This also implies the attribution of specific values, ideas, and political agendas to that group.* Given that there is little theoretical discussion on the role of politics in constructing diasporic consciousness, I synthesise this conception from my fieldwork as well as the scattered remarks of various authors that point in this direction.

Diasporic consciousness is not inherent to emigrant groups but is produced through a particular type of identity politics. As diasporas coalesce, often around nationalist appeals and imagery, their politics often remain intensely identity-focused. Shain and Aharon (2003) argue that “because of their unique status, diasporas – geographically outside the state, but identity-wise perceived (by themselves, the homeland, or others) as ‘inside the people’ – attach great importance to kinship identity.” Furthermore, “diasporas are among the most prominent actors that link international and domestic spheres of politics. Their identity-based motivation should therefore be an integral part of the constructivist effort to explain the construction of national identities” (2003:451).

I identify two major genres of identity-based diasporic politics. Diasporic identities can be constructed, harnessed, and then instrumentalised in order to

influence events overseas and host-country policies toward countries of origin, especially during times of conflict, in what Anderson (1998) termed ‘long-distance nationalism.’ Diasporic politics may also revolve around the issue of identity itself, and take the form of a debate or competition between groups – an internal-external dialectic (see page 13) – to define or label a group in a certain way. As Shain and Aharon (2003) argue:

Identity does not always determine interests, as constructivism posits; sometimes identity is the interest. For some diasporas, the people’s identity is not the starting point to be captured in order to influence interests, practices, and policies; identity is both the starting and the end point (2003:455).

I look at both types of identity-based diasporic politics in this work. On the one hand, I examine how the identities of Turkish migrants are competitively negotiated in the American political sphere. On the other, I look at how Turkish identity is harnessed to pursue domestic and foreign policy goals by political entrepreneurs. Crucially, these two types of diasporic politics overlap, at times to the extent where they are functionally identical.

2.3.1 From Emigrant to Diaspora: Creating Diasporic Consciousness

Diasporic consciousness is not inherent to emigrant groups: it requires people, groups and institutions to be produced. Adamson (2008) argues that diasporic consciousness is a specific type of transnationalism and transnational identity that is created by ‘political entrepreneurs,’ whom Sheingate (2003:185) defines as “individuals whose creative acts have transformative effects on politics, policies, or institutions.” One function of political entrepreneurs is to mobilise or otherwise activate potential group members. Shain and Aharon (2003) make a similar argument. They delineate, as I mentioned above, between three component groups in any diaspora – core members, passive members, and silent members – with the first category matching Adamson’s (2008) ‘political entrepreneurs.’

In turn, Shain and Aharon’s (2003) core/passive and silent members match up with a second distinction offered by Adamson (2008): that between networks and categories of people. Networks are groups of people that have been activated along

national, ethnic or religious lines, whereas categories are merely individuals who share a commonality, in this case country of birth or heritage. As noted earlier, on page 19, Shain and Aharon (2003:452) acknowledge that silent members “are mostly part of an ‘imagined community,’ ... often existing only in the mind of diasporic political activists, as well as home or host governments.” In sum, it is only when networks are activated, symbolic ties are sustained, and a diasporic consciousness is produced that migrants become a definable diaspora with the *potential* to be politically transformative.

In this present work I study competitive identity formation and the creation of diasporic consciousness in the formal political arenas of the United States, with regard to that part of their populations which share the commonality of a current or ancestral relationship with the geographical territory of modern-day Turkey. I argue that within the worldwide population of Turkish migrants an imperfectly formed diaspora has emerged. This global, if imperfect, Turkish diaspora is heterogeneous, with different waves of migration and host-country contexts creating sub-groups with different characteristics.

2.3.2 Competitive Identity Politics

The formation of diasporic identities in interaction with various ‘others’ is a deeply political process. Authors such as Jenkins (2008:43) highlight “the centrality of power, and therefore politics, in identity maintenance and change. Asserting, defending, imposing and resisting collective identification are all definitively political” (Jenkins, 2008:43).

The application of an alternative or re-defined identity imposed by an ‘other’ is known as ‘labelling’ or ‘stigmatisation’ (see Goffman, 1968; Lemert, 1951). Popular in the 1960s, labelling theory posited that an individual may modify her self-perception and behaviour in response to the negative views of others by either conforming with or resisting the label, especially when the label is applied by an authoritative or institutional source. Labelling theory fell from grace in the 1970s when some authors began to claim that labels *determined* future behaviour (Petrunik, 1980). While I believe these authors go too far, the dynamic of labelling is still a

useful concept for the purposes of this thesis. A more compelling argument is that through labelling, identity construction becomes politicised and competitive. “Identification is often a matter of imposition and resistance, claim and counterclaim, rather than a consensual process of mutuality and negotiation” (Jenkins, 2008:95). This dialogic evolution of a group’s identity is what is generally described as identity politics.

Perceived threats of labelling and stigmatisation to national identities are fertile ground for political entrepreneurs, all the more so in overseas settings where migrant groups are not in the majority and are more vulnerable to a greater variety of competing interests. The acts of asserting, defending, imposing, and resisting labels instil positive and negative reactions into individuals self-associating with a particular migrant group. This process, in which different political actors compete to garner the broadest acceptance of *their* preferred definition (label) of the migrant group, contributes to the formation of those migrants’ identities. This can lead, with the help of political entrepreneurs and nationalist rhetoric, to the creation of diasporic consciousness.

2.4 DISCOURSE AND LEXICAL HEGEMONY

I have argued in this chapter that the production of diasporic consciousness through competitive identity formation is fundamentally a political process. In turn, politics, and particularly identity politics, are always discursively constituted. My perspective on discursive politics draws on the ideas of theorists including Michel Foucault, who suggested that it is wrong to suppose that “all operations are conducted prior to discourse and outside of it, ... that discourse, consequently, is no more than a meagre additive, an almost impalpable fringe surrounding things and thought; a surplus which goes without saying, since it does nothing else except say what is said” (1991:61–63).

There are many strands of theorising around this basic notion. In this thesis, I mainly build on the understandings and discussions of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Accordingly, I interpret discourse as “a means of talking and writing about and acting upon worlds ... which both constructs and is constructed by a set of

social practices within these worlds, and in so doing both reproduces and constructs afresh particular social-discursive practices” (Candlin, 1997:iix). As such, a discourse possesses a “self-perpetuating constitutive power in ... society through its ability to frame and mould what people think and do” (Howard, 2013:104). In other words, discourses can be understood as relatively stabilised, recurring narratives about particular aspects of society that are shaped by and have the power to shape those aspects of society.

This shaping necessarily includes the shaping of individual subjectivities, understood as the ways in which individual subjects conceive of themselves and the world. These subjectivities recursively enact and reproduce discourse. As Howard (2013:106) explains, “ways of thinking about reality intertwine with institutionalised practice within reality to form individual subjects who then think about and recursively enact that reality.” For this thesis, this implies that discourses about Turkish identity abroad (can) serve to structure individual subjectivities, which recursively enact and reproduce that discourse.

In this regard, it is important to note that a broad conception of discourse such as this is not limited to the textual dimension. In contrast, it stresses the *materialisation* of discourse, or what Laclau and Mouffe (2001:108) have termed “the material character of every discursive structure”, as embodied, for instance, in institutions and practices. The actions of social institutions or the implementation of legislation are thus *also* discursive acts. “The term discourse, then, refers in the first place to the entire process of social interaction around a text, that is, discursual action. However, discourses also operate beyond and through texts; they are indications of particular interpretations of social reality” (Sewpaul and Holscher, 2004:9-10). This means that actions and entities, as much as words, are discursive phenomena and may be analysed as such.

This interpretation necessarily involves the question of power. The first element of this is implicit in the discussion above – that of *productive* power, whereby discourses work to produce subjectivities which then reproduce discourse (Foucault, 1980:119). Crucially, however, this notion of productive power should not be read as implying the existence of agents who are structurally pre-determined. Far from it.

As has been noted, although discourse is productive, it is not a ‘monolithic, anthropomorphised Subject that bludgeons its way through history leaving only hegemonic subjects in its wake’ (Ferguson, 1990:92). Discourses leave space for agency, and many individual agents challenge or reject them. This creative aspect constitutes the second dimension of power implicit in discourse theory.

In his seminal discussion of CDA, Fairclough elaborates:

‘The power to control discourse is...the power to sustain particular discursive practices with ideological investments in dominance over other alternative (including oppositional) practices ... Power is conceptualized both in terms of asymmetries between participants in discourse events, and in terms of unequal capacity to control how texts are produced, distributed and consumed (and hence the shape of texts) in particular sociocultural contexts’ (1995:1-2).

Discourse creation is thus not always and everywhere equal – the discursive terrain may be contested, and different actors, be they individuals or institutions, will draw on different resources and stratified potentials for meaning-making in order to create and sustain such discourse.

There are thus two interlinked notions of power implicit in discourse theory, as interpreted in CDA frameworks, which are important for this thesis. One is that of productive power. The other is the more unidirectional ability of actors to shape and control discourses. Both forms of power should not be seen as total and encompassing, but as fragile, relative and temporary. In this thesis, I will examine a) the differential power of specific institutions and individuals which seek to shape and control the discourse about Turkey and Turkish identity abroad; and b) the power of this discourse to shape the subjectivities of Turkish Americans. While in chapters 4 and 5 I primarily focus on the attempts of Turkish American activists to shape and control the narrative of Turkishness, chapter 6 begins to explore the resonance of such discourses among Turkish Americans.

As for the conceptual space of my research, I utilise Foucault’s notion of the discursive field. The discursive field consists of all possible utterances that not only *can be said* linguistically (i.e. regarding grammar and pronunciation) but also *may be*

said politically and socio-culturally (see Foucault, 1991, also Spivak, 1992). In line with CDA's critique of Foucault as neglecting the question of agency, I do not only focus on the effects of what is said with regard to Turkishness in the United States, but also on the active role of institutions and individuals in shaping this discourse. I thus conceive of the discursive field as a setting for, as well as an expression of, political action. This corresponds with many studies of nationalist discourses, which not only highlight their functions but also their producers (with regard to Turkey and the Arab world, e.g. Davis, 2005; Massad, 2001; and Navaro-Yashin, 2002).

Within nation-states like Turkey, the discursive field is actively policed by the government and its core institutions, including its schools, military, and state-controlled media (see Section 4.2.1). In an overseas context, where the reach of traditional state institutions is absent or limited, the rules on what can be said in public are fuzzier and more porous. Groups, Turkish or otherwise, have more room to test the boundaries of acceptable speech. I put forth the proposition that Turkish groups compete with others to control the discourse about what it means to be 'Turkish' in the United States. Within this competitive arena of ideas, Turkish groups have emerged as a force that inadvertently replicates the functions of Turkish state institutions in propagating Turkish nationalism as a core theme of Turkish identity overseas. Thus, when I make the claim that the boundaries of acceptable speech regarding Turkey and Turks are contested, fuzzier and more porous outside Turkey, I am saying that there are more challenges within the Turkish discursive field *outside Turkey* and that its boundaries are less taken for granted. I argue that competitive identity formation occurs within the dynamics of challenging and policing the Turkish discursive field in the diaspora.

2.4.1 Lexical Hegemony

Throughout this thesis I examine the politics of narrative control. Many different sub-disciplines within the social sciences study this idea, with scholars often developing their own terminology for similar underlying concepts. For the remainder of this section I look at a number of scholarly approaches to the study of

narrative contestation and dominance, and then lay out my own combined take on this work under the rubric of ‘lexical hegemony.’

As suggested by the discourse theory discussed above, the social construction of reality takes place largely, if not entirely, through communication (Nimmo and Combs, 1990:4; see also Fairclough, 1995:4). It is through communication that actors from divergent positions debate ideas, and it is through communication that some of these ideas gain more acceptance than others. One way to describe this competition between ideas is through the metaphor of ‘framing.’ This has a double meaning, and can refer to the idea of drawing interpretive boundaries, as in a picture frame, or to the idea of organising and structuring interpretations of information, as in the framing of a house (Gamson *et al.*, 1992:385). The common point of both metaphors is that framing serves as a fundamental lens through which information is processed. “Actors deploy frames to help fix meanings, organise experience, alert others that their interests and possibly their identities are at stake, and propose solutions to ongoing problems” (Barnett, 1999:25). Certain ideas or frames become so widely accepted that they, in the ideal case, cease to be debated and become hegemonic. Various authors have referred to this *competition for ideational hegemony* as ‘persuasion’ (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998:897) or ‘symbolic contests’ (Gamson and Stuart, 1992), and *the ideas that achieve hegemony* as ‘norms’ (Payne, 2001), ‘background knowledge’ (Fairclough, 1995), or ‘myths’ (Barthes, 1972).

Symbolic contests over frames are a core part of modern politics, and they are often fought through the articulation of divergent narratives. Complete narrative dominance exists when the use of a *particular* narrative becomes so natural and commonsensical that it is no longer questioned: the narrative (the frame) achieves complete dominance or hegemony. At a smaller scale, this happens when the use of a particular word, descriptor or definition precludes all other possible word choices. Political communicators often aspire to this sort of hegemony but, as they so rarely reach this goal in practice, it remains an ideal case.

That such aspirations often fall short is, in part, due to the symbolic and material benefits which might be gained from supplanting one narrative with another. This tends to increase the level of competition around establishing and maintaining

dominant frames. Yet it is also due to a function of the inherent instability of meanings (see Yanow, 1996). Individuals interpret statements differently, depending on their unique contexts, and even carefully selected words do not convey the same meaning to all people. Saussure labelled the difference between ‘that which is said’ and ‘that which is understood’ as the signifier and the signified, respectively (Saussure, 1966:65–79). Signifiers and signifieds combine to form signs (meanings), signs that may differ between people. This is no truer than when the speaker and the listener differ politically, and in my analysis I am sensitive to statements which could be interpreted in multiple ways, and thus to what a particular statement says about the politics of the speaker. My study of the use of the term ‘genocide’ to describe the events of 1915 is an excellent example of the interpretive quality of political communication. Depending on the speaker or listener’s point of view and political ideology, the statement ‘the events of 1915 were a genocide’ could be interpreted as a statement of fact, an admission of guilt, a criminal accusation, or even treason, among others.

In spite of this basic instability of meanings, some can become more powerful than others. Thompson (1984:132), for example, argues that “what may [seem] like a sphere of effective *consensus* must in many cases be seen as a realm of actual or potential *conflict*. Hence the meaning of what is said ... is infused with forms of power; different individuals or groups have a differential capacity to *make a meaning stick*” (emphasis in original). Fairclough (1995) expands on this, arguing that meanings can ‘stick’ – meaning they are able to suppress the word choices of alternative ideological positions – to greater and lesser extents. “A lexicalisation becomes naturalised to the extent that ‘its’ IDF [ideological-discursive formation] achieves dominance, and hence the capacity to win acceptance for it as ‘the lexicon’, the neutral code” (1995:37). Stated differently, words which seem ‘natural’ may once have been contested, and may still be, but appear otherwise because one frame/ideological position has achieved dominance.

Roland Barthes equally explores what it meant for language to become naturalised or hegemonic. For this he uses the concept of myth, which he defines as meanings which have stopped being contested and have thereby become ‘givens’

(Barthes, 1972). Myth is “depoliticised speech,” Barthes argues, meaning that, “myth does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them; simply, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact” (Barthes, 1972:143). To mythify something is thus to take a contested idea and naturalise it to the point where it is no longer openly or seriously questioned, to solidify it within the boundaries of the discursive field to the exclusion of all other possibilities. At its most extreme it means to take the idea all the way to the point where nobody would even think to question it. In other words, complete hegemony.

In this thesis I deal with the symbolic contest over a specific word: ‘genocide.’ Combining the ideas of Fairclough and Barthes described above, I refer to this as a competition over *lexical hegemony*. To my mind, to mythify, as Barthes uses the term, and to achieve lexical hegemony are nearly synonymous ideas. However, I have opted for term ‘lexical hegemony’ in this piece over ‘myth’ because, as Saussure explained, words carry different meanings for different people. Myth, as Barthes well knew, is not just a term of art but carries a common meaning as well, one that is often used to denigrate or dismiss a position as fantasy. This thesis deals with some highly controversial topics and highly sensitive actors, and I do not want this work to be read as a value judgement on any party’s position. The term lexical hegemony, in contrast to myth, more adequately allows me to both demonstrate my respect for the different positions and grasp analytically the processes under study.

In the empirical chapters that follow I examine numerous mechanisms by which various actors seek to influence the discourses around Turkishness, specifically those relating to the events of 1915, in the United States. Such mechanisms necessarily include both narrative content and a delivery system which introduces and sustains the narrative in the public discourse. In Chapter 4 I focus primarily on the content of these counter narratives, which primarily focus on: a) the role of due process in prosecuting a crime under the law; b) that Ottoman Armenians were targeted for their subversive activity and not for their ethnicity; and c) that in the context of World War I the suffering of Armenians was horrendous but unexceptional.

In Chapters 5 and 6 I focus on the strategies through which these narratives are disseminated, including: a) various types of legal action regarding personal defamation, insurance claims, and educational curricula; b) public opposition to recognition bills in the US Congress; c) e-mailing lists to organisational members; and d) media outreach activities. These strategies both actively seek to propagate competing narratives regarding the events of 1915 in the United States, and to prevent the deeper institutionalisation and normalisation of the narrative that the events of 1915 constitute a genocide into American social institutions and legal frameworks. While these mechanisms are specific to the political setting in the United States and the specific case of diasporic activism that I study, they can further our understanding of the narratives and strategies of diasporic politics more broadly.

2.5 METHODOLOGY

Self-understanding is a core tenant of modern methods of reflexive research, which acknowledges and emphasises the active role and the influence of the researcher on the research process. Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009:8) describe the two basic characteristics of reflexive research. First, “all references ... to empirical data are the *results of interpretation*.” Second, reflexivity incorporates the researcher’s own context into the analysis and makes transparent how that context affects that same analysis. It is “the *interpretation of interpretation* and the launching of a critical self-exploration of one’s own interpretations of empirical material (including its construction)” (2009:9, emphasis in original). Thus, to fully understand the research one must know something of the researcher: his background, his goals, and his core assumptions on epistemology and ontology. Accordingly I provide a short account reflecting on the ways in which my previous training and methodological choices have affected my research.

This D.Phil has been my first foray into the interdisciplinary study of migration and international development. My studies prior to this were not situated in a specific social science discipline. I have a bachelors degree in journalism and economics from Indiana University Bloomington and a masters in Middle Eastern

studies from the University of Texas at Austin. Thus, I came to Oxford with specialised regional knowledge and a great respect for language and communication, but I was not steeped in the theory and research methods of a specific discipline. This was compounded by the fact that International Development is interdisciplinary by nature and does not have a consistent body of theory within which to place myself. This is particularly true with regard to the sub-field in which I found myself: migration studies.

While this first served as a handicap, requiring me to read much further afield than my original project design required in order to ground myself in *applicable* theory, it turned out to be a blessing in disguise. This project was originally conceived as a typological, taxonomic project broadly modelled on Gamlen's (2006) "Diaspora Engagement Policies: What are they, and what kinds of states use them?". My intent was to catalogue the transnational political practices of the many Turkish American activist groups I had identified at work in the Washington DC area. However, when I landed on the ground in Washington to begin my fieldwork I discovered there was a far more exciting story to tell. The Turkish American diaspora was preoccupied with the politics of identity, imported political polarisations from Turkey, and an internal demographic transition. These preoccupations were undermining group cohesion and with it Turkish American influence on American politics, and preventing the formation of a pro-active agenda.

I thus approached my research without disciplinary preconceptions or a desire to confirm or reject a particular theoretical argument. This approach fits with the tenets of grounded theory, which stresses the primacy of the field experience and the need to allow the data to generate the theory (Corbin and Strauss, 1990; Kelle, 2005). Even though I do not utilise its methodological toolkit, grounded theory's strongly inductive approach corresponds with my research process. I have thus written a thesis on identity and discourse which I believe contributes to debates found in international development and migration research, but is firmly grounded in the literature on diasporas, discourse and identity formations. Below I present my use of critical, interpretive, reflexive hermeneutics and discourse analysis, my approach to mediated realities and mass communication, and my position as a field researcher.

2.5.1 Critical Interpretive Frameworks

To study competitive identity formation I have turned to the study of discourse and texts, otherwise known as hermeneutics, as my primary methodology. Many varieties and schools of hermeneutic analysis exist. I draw most heavily on the theory, concepts and vocabulary of critical discourse analysis (CDA), especially the work of Chilton and Schäffner (2002), Chouliaraki (2000), Wodak and Meyer (2009), Wodak (2002) and Fairclough (1995). CDA utilises core arguments of Foucault regarding what discourses are and how they function. Epistemologically, CDA recognises that the social world is constructed, in large part through discourse.” The implication of this for CDA is that “the socially constructive effects of discourse are thus a central concern” (Fairclough, 1995:4). However, in contrast to classic Foucauldian notions of discourse, CDA highlights the questions of agency and power relations in their creation and maintenance. Furthermore, CDA seeks to contextualise discourse by “includ[ing] more or less systematically the historical, political, sociological and/or psychological dimension” (Weiss and Wodak, 2003:22). This makes it theoretically permissible to acknowledge the actors and agencies that play a seminal role in shaping the discourses I analyse in this thesis, factors with which Foucault himself did not fully engage (see also Section 2.4).

CDA is also methodologically skeptical of myths, in Barthes’ sense of the term, with the goal of demonstrating both their existence and their constructions. “Adopting critical goals means aiming to elucidate such naturalisations, and more generally to make clear social determinations and effects of discourse which are characteristically opaque to participants” (Fairclough, 1995:31). Therefore CDA is not only appropriate for the theoretical conception of this study but is also sufficiently robust to serve as a practical guide for research. CDA researchers are not detached, omniscient analysts; however they may offer unusual interpretations of statements that seem common-sensical to participants. This links CDA to the basic stance articulated in reflexive methodologies, which advocate novel interpretation over claims to objective answers, and emphasise empathy and linguistic nuance as core elements of high-quality analysis (e.g. Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009). By explicitly leaving behind the position of a detached, seemingly objective (discourse)

analyst, the oft-made charge of objectivism in discourse analysis may be tempered to a degree (see Burman, 2003).

To examine challenges to and defences of the borders of discursive fields, and to elucidate the construction and (once-) contested nature of myths and instances of lexical hegemony that sit solidly within discursive fields, it is useful to examine them from the margins. “[Margins are] the zones of unpredictability at the edges of discursive stability, where contradictory discourses overlap, or where discrepant kinds of meaning-making converge” (Tsing, 1994:279). The Turkish diaspora lives on multiple sets of margins, and from their vantage point I look at two different “edges of discursive stability.”

The first is that of Turkish nationalism. Near hegemonic inside Turkey, the tenants, propositions and narratives of Turkish nationalism are subject to myriad challenges overseas, where the diaspora lives. Migrants thus live on the margins of that field, and often resemble isolated outposts of Turkish nationalist thought. From here we are better able to see how Turkish nationalism is constructed, as well as which aspects of Turkish nationalism resonate with whom and why. I attempt to demonstrate in this work why *some* Turkish Americans have chosen not only to ground themselves in Turkish nationalistic discourses, but also to defend these discourses on the marginal battlegrounds *in place of the state*.

The second “edge of discursive stability” is that of the dominant discourse in the United States that the events of 1915 do indeed constitute genocide. Unlike the previous edge, where Turkish American activists stretch the discursive field to maintain the legitimacy of Turkish nationalism overseas, here they are at the forefront of maintaining the instability at the edges of the discourse on the events of 1915, at preventing the ‘Armenian Genocide’ from becoming the established and *exclusive* lexicon. This is the opposite of Fairclough’s goal to expose ‘myths’, as Barthes (1972) calls de-politicised knowledge. I have instead endeavoured to record the final opposition to the creation of a myth: the de-politicisation and naturalisation of the idea that the events of 1915 were a genocide.

2.5.2 Positionality

A critical part of reflexive research is acknowledging and understanding one's positionality vis-à-vis the subject matter and interview subjects (Mikecz, 2012). One's positionality affects access to interview subjects, interpretations of data, and fundamental biases and framing. I arrived at my fieldwork site in Washington DC without prior connections to the Turkish American community or activist groups there, however I went with two aces up my sleeve. In the summer of 2011 I was partner to a Turkish woman, and divulging this 'familial' connection to Turkey without doubt helped pave my way. I had also spent many years learning and speaking Turkish, and this helped me endear myself to people, for a lack of a better term, especially with non-elite members of the Turkish American community. As one informant said, "You know Turks. Just say *merhaba* (hello) and they'll love you for life."

Furthermore, on my first day of fieldwork I had an encounter that greatly facilitated access to the people who would become my interview subjects. Entirely by chance, I met a Turkish reporter on the street who took it upon herself to inform me of all that was going on in the Turkish American community, to introduce me to organisational leaders, and take me as a guest to parties and official events by the Turkish government. This proved invaluable for this research, as it allowed me to meet many of my key informants socially and 'with references,' prior to asking them for an interview. This reporter, however, also inadvertently shaped my access. She pointed me more toward the young and secular rather than the elderly or more religious. I attempted to counter this by opening other access routes into the community, however reflecting back on my data her influence is palpable.

These close connections left me in danger of being overly sympathetic to what I was told, and it was important for me to constantly assess my level of critical distance from the subject matter. In my view both sympathy for and forced critical distance from *all sides of the issues* gave me space to understand *why* my informants said what they said even when their positions were severely at odds with mainstream thinking.

There can be no greater example of this than the Recognition debate itself. As I mentioned in the introduction to this work, the dominant narrative in the United States, where I was born and raised, is that the massacres of Armenians by Ottoman forces during World War I constitute genocide. However, the Turkish American activists whom I interviewed spoke from a different ideological position which rejects the genocide label. During this research I was thus required to balance my own American socialisation and (admittedly incomplete) historical knowledge with the imperative to treat my interview subjects seriously and my above-mentioned personal sympathies. This was oftentimes a difficult circle to square, however it has been done before. Anna Tsing, for example, describes her philosophy of how to approach narratives which the researcher herself regards with a certain amount of scepticism:

The best legacies of ethnography allow us to take our objects of study seriously even as we examine them critically. To study ghosts ethnographically means to take issues of haunting seriously. If the analyst merely made fun of beliefs in ghosts, the study would be of little use. Several other steps would be needed: a description of ghost beliefs; an examination of the effects of ghost beliefs on social life; and, in the spirit of taking one's informants seriously, a close attention to the questions that ghosts raise, such as the presence of death and its eerie reminders of things gone (Tsing, 2000:351).

This is not to say that the beliefs of Turkish American activists regarding the events of 1915 are akin to believing in ghosts, however Tsing's philosophy gives a playbook for tracing the history and consequences underlying a certain narrative or position *even if* the researcher does not intuitively subscribe to it herself.

2.5.3 Mediated Realities

I would like to emphasise the role of communication and mediated realities in this present work and their implications. Mediated realities are the world as it is communicated to us rather than as we experience it first-hand (Nimmo and Combs, 1990:2). As noted above (see page 41), social reality is constructed in large part through discourse and communication. Within this process, mediation refers to the

filtering of facts and events, which inevitably leads to the construction of partial, perspective-based realities. It thus follows that, depending on the mediators involved, “communication creates multiple realities ... [and] any means of communication that intervenes in human experience is a potential mediator of reality” (1990:4). Here I would like to highlight three especially important mediators (filters/prisms) in this present work. These are: elites as interlocutors, mass media as information curator, and second-language as interpretive colorant.

Elites as Interlocutors

Much of this work hinges on the narratives of Turkish American activists in the Washington DC area. These individuals are a type of community elite, not only socio-economically but also in the sense that they assume a position whereby they claim to speak for ‘the community.’ They fit Lilleker’s (2003:207) definition of elites “as those with close proximity to power and policymaking,” vis-à-vis Turkish American organisations, interested third parties (e.g. the media or myself), and the American political establishment. This elite status allows them to portray themselves as accessible and legitimate spokespersons for the community. “They are the group most strategically placed to convey ‘indigenous’ meanings to outsiders, [and thus] their interpretations are especially significant. This is what is meant by the production and negotiation of meaning in the context of unequal power” (Li, 1996:514). However, authors like Tania Li (1996) and David Mosse (2005:75-102) have written extensively on the limitations of using elites to gauge the characteristics and opinions of the ‘rank-and-file,’ as there are often political gains to be made from presenting them in certain ways.³ Salisbury (1984:66) further argues that even though membership-based organisations, several of which are represented in this thesis, utilise democratic mechanisms to bolster their representational claims, “we may charge the group with oligarchical tendencies, or in other ways suspect that the leadership is not representative of rank-and-file opinion.”

3. Both Li and Mosse are writing on the development context and with an eye to the representations of small, rural communities. However, this is equally applicable to my research context.

Many authors have written on the complications of interviewing elites (e.g. Cochrane, 1998; Lilleker, 2003; Ostrander, 1993; Thomas, 1993; Welch *et al.*, 2002). The thrust of this literature points to problems of gaining and maintaining access, dealing with perceived power distance and the role reversal of ‘who is the expert’, as well as not allowing the interview subject to ‘use’ the researcher. Regarding the last of these problems, it should also be remembered that many of the people I was speaking with were professional political communicators, loosely defined as somebody who propagates political speech as a core part of their occupation, and thus were adept at steering and dominating interviews (Fitz and Halpin, 1995). Not only are these individuals paid to speak from certain viewpoints to anyone who might be interested, but as a graduate student writing a thesis at a prestigious university, I was likely viewed as a new avenue of message transmission. Thus, I was careful to always maintain critical distance and attempt to verify and triangulate as much of their narratives as possible. This was most salient when organisational leaders described the scale, impact, and relative importance of their work and the Turkish American community in what, at times, appeared to be overly glowing terms.

Mass Media as Information Curator

In several sections of this thesis I analyse the coverage of certain events and Turkish American groups that was published in the American and Turkish national print media (see also Section 2.6.2). I did this in order to better understand the public representations of groups, as well as the wider discourse that surrounds Turkish American groups and their activities.

Gurevitch and Levy (1985:19) characterize the media as “a site in which various social groups, institutions, and ideologies struggle over the definition and construction of reality.” Thus the media is a core area for symbolic contests over framing and narrative. Gamson and Stuart (1992) further argue that success in the media is used as a barometer for overall success in these contests. “Participants in symbolic contests read their success or failure by how well their preferred meanings and interpretation are doing in various media arenas. Prominence in these areas is an

outcome measure in its own right, independent of evidence on the degree to which the audience is being influenced” (1992:56).

The formal, mass media is not an open forum or a commons where all voices may be equally heard; it is selectively produced and curated by journalists. It is subject to many sources of bias, including selective use of sources, with a strong reliance on official sources (Sigal, 1973), as well as corporate, ideological, and political considerations. Horkheimer and Adorno (1972) describe the mass media as the ‘culture industry,’ and Adoni and Mane (1984) nicely summarise this position:

The function of the ‘culture industry’ is to perpetuate the existing social order and to provide the ideological basis for its legitimation. As a result, the portrayal of objective social reality in these symbolic contents is distorted. They express the ideology of the ruling classes (1984:332).

An updated strain of this Marxist argument takes the form of current worries over the increasing consolidation of media outlets under the ownership of a few multinational corporations. There is something to this. Gamson *et al.* (1992), among others, give examples of journalistic organisations deferring to the interests of their corporate parents and advertisers in their coverage of the news. In the Turkish context, several authors have convincingly argued that the news media biases its coverage for political and corporate reasons (Alemdar, 2013; Bayram, 2010; Çarkoğlu and Yavuz, 2010). Thus in utilising media sources, researchers must account for and acknowledge the factors influencing media production, even if these cannot be completely counteracted.

A further theoretical question important to this thesis is the position of the media vis-à-vis identity formation. Madianou (2005), in summarising the relevant literature, argues that while some theories stress structure (media-determinism) as the primary force in identity creation, others emphasise the role of agency and active, critical consumption that shapes media output as much as media reception. “On the one hand, there are theories that assume the powerful role of media in shaping cultures and identities; on the other, there are those who contend that it is national, ethnic or local cultures that shape media and their consumption” (2005:523). I adopt Madianou’s middle-ground approach, which treats the media as

influential factors and a forum for identity debates but stops short of suggesting the media are the ultimate arbiter of identities. “Although media do not determine identities, they do contribute in creating symbolic communicative spaces that either include or exclude, thereby affecting audiences’ media experiences and discourses about their identities” (2005:522).

Second-language as Interpretive Colorant

I conducted all of my interviews for this thesis in English. However, I not only drew upon Turkish-language reference material, but I also engaged in the textual analysis of Turkish-language media and public speeches. Thus the ramifications of working across languages are pertinent to this work. While my comprehension of Turkish is good, it is nevertheless a learned language for me. Thus, while *all linguistic understanding* is interpretative, as Saussure showed, the connotations of interpretation are all the more apparent for those researching in a second language.⁴ My interpretations of Turkish-language material, even though I checked innumerable questions of nuance with native speakers during the course of this research, are still different from those of a native Turkish speaker. This is compounded by the fact that I am a foreigner in the Turkish context and do not see many situations through the same lens or interpretive frame that a native of Turkey might. This does not necessarily make my interpretations or conclusions less valid. Indeed, my position as an informed outsider hopefully makes them more interesting and original.

2.6 FIELDWORK AND DATA-GATHERING

In this section I discuss my main fieldwork site and my method for sampling large news websites. In addition to these major aspects of my data collection, I draw on many other information sources to flesh out, contextualise, and augment this data. During my research I made extensive use of the Turkish legal archives and the government *Official Gazette* (*Resmi Gazete*), NGO tax filings in the United States,

4. For a good treatment of many of the problems encountered in cross-cultural/linguistic research, see Ryen (2001), specifically pp. 341–45.

and many online news sites and archives, as well as myriad organisational websites and library collections.

2.6.1 Fieldwork: Washington DC

My field research took place in Washington DC during the summer of 2011. I went with a starter list of Turkish American organisations that I had identified on the Internet prior to my departure, and added to this list as I uncovered new groups. I endeavoured to interview one or more key members of as many organisations as possible and, when appropriate, attended their events. In all I conducted 18 key informant interviews from 13 groups (see page 71 for a complete list), and these individuals constitute the majority of the voices found in this work. These interviews were taped and generally lasted between one and three hours, with one exception running to nearly six hours. They were loosely structured, and I allowed the answers given to direct subsequent questions. In one instance I requested a second interview, but much more frequently relied on email to ask followup questions. Thus, as Khachig Tölölyan said of his work on Armenian diasporic elites and institutions, “unfashionably, I will emphasise the role of the communal elites and the institutions they develop in the precarious conditions of diasporic existence” (2000:108). That said, my study revolves around the major point of contact between Turkish American activists and formal American politics, and formal politics in the United States is an elite endeavour. The relatively small number of organisational interviews I conducted accurately reflects the minute sub-population of ‘core’ diaspora members engaging with these issues today.

I balance the stories of these ‘communal elites’ with 41 interviews that I conducted with ‘lay’ members of the Turkish American community in Washington DC. These constitute the silent and passive majority of the Turkish American population in the United States (see page 30). Unlike my interviews with the community elites these were not taped, as I found through experimentation that many people I approached were put off by the request. I instead relied entirely on handwritten notes to record their thoughts. These interviews were also loosely structured and I allowed the respondents’ answers to steer the discussion. Obviously, an American-born, ethnically Turkish lobbyist, an ethnically Kurdish waitress and a

visiting journalist speak from very different reference points. Simply asking the same questions does not mean the same issues will be discussed, and vice versa, sometimes to discuss a single issue different questions must be asked for each interview subject. Thus acknowledging our co-roles in shaping each interview, why the interview subjects might have chosen those particular answers, and reflecting on why interviews took the course they did became important for the conclusions. The interviews usually lasted between 30 minutes and one hour. In addition to being interviewed, each respondent also filled out a 65-question survey regarding socioeconomic/demographic characteristics, political participation, and media consumption habits.

I discovered these individuals using snowball or chain referral sampling. First developed in Goodman (1961), chain referral sampling accesses ‘hidden,’ sensitive, or otherwise hard-to-reach populations by picking an initial entry point, asking questions, have the respondent refer you to another individual within the sampling frame, and so on. It is often considered to be a sampling method of last resort, and suffers from numerous weaknesses, including: unrepresentativeness/non-randomness, entry point bias, a reliance on cooperativeness, and the vetting of potential referrals by referees (Heckathorn, 1997, see also Erickson, 1979). While fully acknowledging these weaknesses, and thus the limited extrapolative value of my data, chain-referral sampling was necessary given the constraints of the field and sufficient vis-à-vis the goals of this project.

The *entire* Turkish American population of Washington DC is without doubt elusive, even if it is often hiding in plain sight. Many are either students or white-collar professionals, and the population is not overly concentrated in any discernible geographic or occupational area. Furthermore, not all attend ‘Turkish’ events or belong to Turkish American organisations, so sampling from the membership lists of the local organisations – to which, in any case, I was denied access – would not have resulted in a random sampling of the population as a whole. I did, however, attempt to mitigate for ‘entry-source bias’ by starting referral chains at many different points in town, accounting for differences in politics and religiosity. These included: the main Turkish mosque, a Turkish American father’s day picnic put on

by one organisation, a think tank event on Turkish American relations, and two Turkish-run hair salons. In sum, the use of snowball sampling techniques is not overly problematic as long as I do not portray my data as statistically representative and do not overstate the scope of my claims.

One major difference between the interviews I conducted with the ‘communal elites’ and the ‘lay’ Turkish Americans is the degree to which I promised the respondents confidentiality. The lay members enjoy full anonymity and I have given them pseudonyms. For the elite and organisational interviews, however, I use their full names and titles. I did this because a) many of them speak frequently to the press and are thus already ‘public figures’; b) given their public stature amongst Turkish Americans, guaranteeing anonymity would have been difficult and of limited value; and, c) I wanted their comments to be on record, so to speak, as many of the topics discussed are so loaded and susceptible to exaggeration that increasing their responsibility for their words seemed a reasonable position to take. Wanting people ‘on record’ only caused me problems once during my fieldwork. A high-ranking official at the Turkish Embassy refused to have his comments put on record or tape recorded, preferring to remain the ‘anonymous government source’ now so common in press reporting.

2.6.2 Media Sampling

There are several places in this thesis where I examine the American and Turkish print media in order to better understand the public discourse on the topics discussed in this thesis. I surveyed six Turkish national newspapers and five American newspapers (summarised in Table 2.1). This created two datasets, one in each language, for the topics of genocide recognition and Turkish American activist organisations.

TABLE 2.1: SURVEYED MEDIA SOURCES

American Papers	Turkish Papers
New York Times	Zaman
Wall Street Journal	Hürriyet
USA Today	Sabah
Washington Post	Haber Türk
Washington Times	Milliyet
	Posta

For the American press this is a relatively straightforward process, as powerful tools such as Factiva and LexisNexis allow researchers to conduct keyword searches on vast databases of published material. The same cannot be said for the papers of countries *not indexed* by these services, such as Turkey. Thus, while I used Factiva to gather my English language material, I leveraged technology in innovative ways to gather and analyse large quantities of web-based text from Turkish-language websites. In short, I used purpose-written software to exploit the patterns with which these websites serve content to automatically acquire and sort all the ‘hits’ returned in a keyword search. My scripts interacted with the front end of the web and thus did not require special access or expensive software to operate. They therefore circumvented the problem of researching material not indexed by subscriptions services. Furthermore, they incorporated a depth of reach and methodological rigour more common to quantitative studies into what is essentially a qualitative enterprise. It did this by systematically accessing years of online archives in a single sweep and, through the use of keywords and computer algorithms to collect and filter data, minimised human selection bias.

This method casts a broad net and each round of collection returned hundreds, if not thousands, of new articles. Faced with this, I decided to design a method that would a) reduce the total amount of text to a manageable amount; b) provide an overview of an entire dataset; and c) make visible possible inlets for productive, focused analysis. I created a statistical ‘map’ of the text at the word level, in essence a matrix displaying which articles contained which words and how often (see the example below). In collaboration with two programmers at Indiana University, I designed and built such a tool in MATLAB which suited my specific needs and accommodated for the nuances of the Turkish language. While doing so I found similar techniques, which use sophisticated algorithms to identify linguistic and topic similarities in disparate texts, in the fields of informatics and data mining under the rubric of ‘topic models’ (see Lin and Wilbur, 2007; Blei and Lafferty, 2009). I have used insights found in this literature to guide how I approach data-mining and to improve upon my own software. These word maps were critical in the identification of possible secondary keywords that I used to target subsets of data for hermeneutic analysis, as without such maps the datasets I collected were simply too

large to be viable for analysis. To give a sense of scale, the dataset which underpins my analysis of the American coverage of the Recognition debate (Section 5.3) spans 32 years, contains 952 articles, and comprises nearly 1 million words. The word map was able to re-represent this data as a frequency chart of less than 40,000 words, a 96% reduction.

FIGURE 2.1: AN EXAMPLE WORD MAP

All words in complete dataset ↓	Number of instances of each word in each article			Totals ↓
	First Article	Second Article	Third Article	
Armenia	7	3	2	12
Genocide	3	0	4	7
Deniers	8	1	0	9
Totals	18	4	6	28

I was able to use this table in many ways. I determined when the names of individuals and groups first appeared in the news and when they disappeared, uncovering many new ‘characters’ along the way. I traced the world news agenda, saw where spikes in coverage existed, and focused my attention there. I also traced linguistic trends in this manner, for example noting the path of key rhetorical words like genocide ‘denialist’ or ‘terrorism’, and ‘watched’ how the discourse shifted over time. I also performed these same operations in Turkish, which helped to greatly increase my reading speed and research focus in a second language.

I want to emphasise that *this table was conceived and used solely to grapple with and explore a large data set*. It was a personal aid during the research process, and while it has the potential to be used for statistical content analysis, I do not present the numeric data generated by this tool in the thesis. I describe it here for its value as an innovative tool for dealing with large amounts of text, and especially for mitigating the problems of conducting such an enterprise in a second language.

2.7 BACKGROUND TO THE CASE STUDY: TURKISH MIGRATION HISTORY

Beyond detailing the practicalities of fieldwork and data collection, it is also necessary to contextualise my case study in the broader history of Turkish migration. This better allows the reader to understand why they were chosen over other possible areas of inquiry, and to identify ostensibly similar cases in which migrant identities and competitive politics collide (e.g. the Palestinian diaspora). This information is presented in much greater detail in later chapters.

Emigration out of first the Ottoman Empire and then the Turkish Republic (est. 1923) can be roughly separated into three waves (Karpas, 2008). The first wave took place under the Ottoman Empire prior to, during, and immediately after World War I. What started as a trickle in approximately 1820 rapidly increased in pace, and by the outbreak of war in 1914 hundreds of thousands of predominantly Ottoman-Christians had exited the Empire for the United States, the Caribbean, and South America. They did so for many reasons, including structural changes in agricultural markets, political instability, and the inclusion of Christians in military conscription practices (Karpas, 1985). After 1914, wartime hostilities and the targeted persecution of Greeks and Armenians may be added to this list. Most but not all of the Ottoman-Armenian population were deported and massacred by Ottoman forces in 1915-16, and the competing narratives around this series of events lie at the heart of this thesis. Zürcher (2005:126) also reports widespread harassment of Greek Orthodox villages during wartime. In addition, Hirschon (2003:14) estimates that 1.2 million “Christians” entered Greece alone in 1922-23, as the combined result of a failed invasion attempt of Anatolia by the Greek Army and a subsequent official exchange of populations between the two countries. A portion of those Greeks and Armenians who escaped or were otherwise dislocated travelled to the United States and, in combination with the pre-war migrants, form the nuclei of two of the three migrant groups around which this thesis revolves.

The second major wave of Turkish migration began in the 1950s, but largely took place in the 1960s and 1970s. It entailed of two main ‘types’ of migration. The first type, which could be described as a migration of elites, consisted of some 10,000-15,000 doctors, engineers, and other highly trained individuals who travelled

to the United States in order to pursue advanced degrees, white collar employment, and permanent settlement overseas (see Karpat, 2008, also page 73). The second, much larger type of migration at this time involved the exportation of labour to other countries. Beginning with Germany in 1961, the Turkish government signed labour transfer agreements with many of the European countries that were rebuilding and re-industrialising after the Second World War. While the bulk of labour migrants went to Europe, this was not their only destination. Turkey signed a labour transfer agreement with Australia in 1967 and, in the 1970s, channelled workers into the quickly growing oil-rich countries of the Arab Middle East and North Africa (İçduygu and Kirişci, 2009:3).

These workers were originally intended to be temporary sojourners, and many did indeed return to Turkey after these agreements were cancelled during the 1970s. Others chose to stay, however, and were facilitated in doing so by the institution in some (mostly European) countries of family reunification policies. In this way they became the basis of many of the permanent Turkish populations now found in European countries. Today, the largest Turkish heritage population by far is found in Germany, with approximately 2.95 million people according to the German Statistical Bureau, but substantial populations exist in the Netherlands, France, and Austria as well (see Table 2.2).

The third major ‘wave’ of Turkish migration is more of a catch-all category than a wave, and is not as easily demarcated by time, destination, or migrant characteristics as the preceding two. It begins roughly in the 1970s and spans to the present day. For the United States, Karpat (2008:182) estimates that more than 200,000 such individuals have emigrated over the past 40 years.⁵ He characterises the bulk of these newer migrants as being relatively lower down on the socio-economic scale than the elite migration of the 1950s and 1960s. This flow has been complemented in recent times by a revolving population of about 10,000 to 13,000

5. Migration statistics exhibit substantial variation as different sources choose their own parameters to quantify the populations and flows, hence the notable difference between this estimate and that given in Table 2.2.

Turkish students in American schools and universities since at least 2000 (IIE, 2013).

Like the United States, European countries continue to receive Turks seeking employment and higher education, as well as those who are emigrating because of family and marriage ties. In addition to these flows, during the 1980s and 1990s Europe received a large number of refugees as military operations designed to suppress Kurdish separatism in Turkey's eastern provinces precipitated the mass dislocation of the civilian population there. "Turkey ranked third among source countries for asylum seekers to Western Europe between 1985 and 1994, producing 9% (nearly 300,000) of the region's asylum applications. In the same period, Western Europe received more than 500,000 migrants overall from Turkey" (İçduygu and Keyman, 2000). America also accepted some Kurdish asylum seekers and refugees, but to much lesser extent. Migration also continues to the Middle East and now ex-Soviet countries, driven largely by the expanding presence of Turkish construction and engineering firms there (İçduygu and Kirişci, 2009:5). Thus in contrast to the two preceding waves, which were more limited in scope and motivations, this third wave is characterised by its greater diversity of migrants, their reasons for emigrating, and their intentions upon arrival in the receiving countries.

TABLE 2.2: TOP DESTINATION COUNTRIES FOR MIGRANTS BORN IN TURKEY

Country	Population*	Country	Population*
Germany	1,506,000	Saudi Arabia	79,000
France	192,000	Greece	77,000
Netherlands	182,000	Belgium	70,000
Austria	126,000	Switzerland	65,000
Bulgaria	93,000	Great Britain	57,000
United States	92,000	Serbia/Montenegro	45,000

*Population figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand. Note this data is by place of birth, and countries with much longer migration histories have much larger populations of Turkish heritage.

Source: *The 2007 Global Migrant Origins Database*.

From these many movements I chose to focus on those that went to the United States, with a particular interest in the legacy of the second-wave migrants in today's politics. I conducted my fieldwork among the Turkish American community in

Washington DC, focusing primarily but not exclusively on the various groups of activists engaged in politics there.

2.8 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I reviewed key concepts of the identity, diaspora and nationalism literatures that contribute to the overall theoretical and methodological framing of this thesis. I used these elements to critically position myself within the field of diaspora studies. I further combined concepts taken from within these literatures into a notion of competitive identity formation in a diasporic context. In short, I argued that the politics of resisting the labelling or framing of Turkey, Turks, and Turkish Americans by competing actors may lead, with the aid of political entrepreneurs, to the formation of diasporic consciousness. I followed this with a discussion of the critical position of discourse and rhetoric in the social construction of reality, identity, and diasporic consciousness. Within this discussion I focused on the politics of narrative control and framing, with the goal of elucidating the central question of my case study: how is Turkish diasporic identity formed and shaped by local discourses that frame Turks, that interrogate who or what a 'Turk' is? In the United States this is most prevalent within the context of Armenian American pressure for the US Congress to officially recognise the massacres of Armenians by Ottoman Forces in 1915 as specifically 'genocide.'

In the second half of this chapter I laid out my use of critical discourse analysis as my primary mode of research, as well as my incorporation of reflexive and interpretive principles of analysis into this work. I discussed my positionality vis-à-vis the subject matter, and investigated several types of mediator that colour the data and my interpretations of that data, including: the use of 'elite' interview subjects, the media, and conducting research in a second language. I finished with an explanation of my fieldwork methods.

In the following chapters I draw on this theoretical discussion as I conduct my empirical investigations. I trace the origins of political activism in the Turkish American diaspora and the influence these origins have had on the evolution of Turkish American identities. I focus on the efforts of elite 'political entrepreneurs' to

influence the discourse surrounding what is commonly referred to as the Armenian Genocide, a discourse which they perceive as negatively impacting the identity of Turkish Americans. I argue these core members of the Turkish diaspora largely frame Turkish American identity in opposition to the narratives of rival ethnic groups in American politics, principally the Armenians and the Greeks. In doing so they draw heavily on nationalist discourses produced in Turkey and replicate them in the United States, modifying them as they go to make them more persuasive in the American context. I further demonstrate that concurrent with these conflicts is a parallel contest *internal* to Turkish Americans on the nature of Turkish Americanness. This second debate reflects cleavages found in domestic Turkish society. A new generation of leaders is in the process of emerging, and I explore how the secular, republican identity which so strongly defined the first wave of Turkish immigrants to the United States is now coming into conflict with fundamentally re-conceived, alternative conceptions of what it means to be a 'Turk.' On this basis, I further elaborate on how the outreach efforts of Turkish American activists resonate with the 'passive majority' of Turkish American migrants and on other influences that shape the latter's sense of Turkishness, crucially among them the Turkish media. Through this study I seek to discover how diasporic consciousness develops autonomously but always in interaction with the myriad social forces and actors surrounding emigrants.

Chapter 3

‘We are Not...’: Reactive Politics and Identity Formation in the United States

Happy is he who calls himself Turk.

—*Mustafa Kemal Atatürk*

A Turk's only friend is another Turk.

—*Turkish Proverb*

I landed in Washington DC in early May, 2011. Jet lagged but eager to start, I spent my first afternoon on a walking tour of the different Turkish American organisations I had located while in England. I left one office carrying a re-print of a *Foreign Policy* article. On the cover was a photograph of Fethullah Gülen, a divisive figure in Turkish politics who, depending on who you ask, is either an inspiring and moderate Islamic teacher or the coy leader of an Islamist conspiracy to undermine the Turkish state.⁶ A woman passing me on the street saw the picture of this bald and ageing man in my hand, and it surprised her to such an extent that she flagged

6. A complete description of Fetullah Gülen and the Gülen movement is well beyond the scope of this paper. It is an international, spiritual movement which emphasises good works, interfaith dialogue, and education. Followers are not controlled by Gülen but ‘inspired’ by him, as many of my interviewees expressed the affiliation. For good treatments of the movement see Avcı (2005), Ebaugh (2010), Yavuz and Esposito (2003), and Yavuz (2013).

me down to ask me where I got the pamphlet and why I had it. She turned out to be the Washington correspondent for one of Turkey's national television channels and a writer for another online newspaper, a woman that has since become a good friend and an invaluable in-road into the Turkish American community. Later that day I was once again confronted with the name of Gülen when I asked a staffer at an organisation where I might find a Turkish grocery store. Her response was that there were two Turkish grocery stores in town, but one was owned by followers of Gülen and I should not give them my custom. Twice in one day, on the streets of Washington DC, I interacted with one of the most politically polarising issues in Turkey and my fieldwork had not even officially begun.

Several days later I went to interview Günay Evinch, at the time the out-going president of the Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA). Evinch, a private practice lawyer who specialises in Turkey-related litigation, took issue with the wording of the release forms I had prepared in accordance with the University of Oxford's code of research ethics. In particular, he was unhappy with the sentence "Government officials and officers of Turkish/Kurdish-American organisations will be identified by their full names, occupational titles and affiliations in all publications deriving from this research." He was not perturbed by being 'on record', as one might expect, but with my distinguishing between Turk and Kurd. From my point of view the wording was innocent; an honest attempt at political correctness that I had borrowed from Østergaard-Nielsen (2003a), when she wrote "At times, this book will use the term 'Turkish citizens' to refer to both Kurds and Turks, but mostly it will simply use the latter terms alongside each other to acknowledge that not everyone in Turkey sees himself or herself as a Turk" (2003a:10–11).

However, as it turned out being politically sensitive in one area ran me afoul in another area. Evinch refused to sign the forms until the dichotomy was removed, on the grounds that if we were to speak in ethnic terms it would be necessary for the sake of completeness to list the dozens of ethnic affiliations existing in Turkey today. The only way to speak precisely and completely, in his argument, was to use 'Turk' as a de-ethnicised national label. But the word 'Turk' is not, in fact, a de-ethnicised national label. Evinch was exploiting the term's dual nature as both an ethnic and

national identifier to make a political statement about (in his view) the validity of Kurdish politics and identity, a highly divisive issue in Turkey today. We compromised. “Government officials and *officers of organisations representing immigrants from Turkey...*” he hand wrote on the form. We both placed our initials next to the change.

These experiences, and many others like them, demonstrated to me the salience of *domestic Turkish politics* in the American capital, a transfer that not merely replicates what exists in Turkey but also translates it into something peculiarly American at the same time. These experiences also exposed the importance of identity to the conflicts. With each additional interview this became clearer and the same issues appeared and reappeared at the forefront of these conversations. Armenia, Cyprus, Kurdish separatism, Islamism, American prejudice: none of these themes was ever far away.

Most researchers with an interest in the politics of the Turkish diaspora have focused on the much larger Turkish population of continental Europe and thus relatively few have felt the need to study Ottoman/Turkish migration to the United States. What does exist is not particularly relevant to my central research questions of political activism. Some authors have focused on Ottoman-era migration (see Acehan, 2009; Ahmed, 1993; Balı, 2006; Bilgé, 1994; Ekinçi, 2008; Grabowski, 2005, 1999; Karpat, 1985; Şahin, 2008). This was generally a Christian migration composed of ethnic Armenians, Greeks and Syrians who left the Ottoman Empire. Few Muslim, ethnic Turks made the crossing at this point and the majority of those who did returned after the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923 (see specifically Gordon, 1931; Halman, 1980; İpek and Çağlayan, 2008; Karpat, 2008).

Literature on contemporary Turkish Americans largely consists of demographic overviews (e.g. Akçapar, 2009a; Bilgé, 1996; Saatçı, 2008; Şenyürekli, 2008), ethnographic micro-studies (e.g. DiCarlo, 2008b; DiCarlo, 2008a; Güler, 2008; Karpat, 2005; Şenyürekli and Menjivar, 2012; Şenyürekli and Detzner, 2008, 2009), and encyclopaedia articles (e.g. Bilgé, 1997; Ertan, 2002; Halman, 1980). The demographic studies are broad in nature, providing basic indicators of the Turkish American population, while the ethnographic micro-studies are tightly focused on

the social interactions of specific, local communities. Both types of research have limited applicability to my research questions of how and why Turkish Americans engage *politically*. However, I have identified nine works which speak to the *themes and arguments* of the present study, namely Akçapar (2009b), Karpas (2008), Kaya (2003; 2004; 2009), Micallef (2004), Şenay (2013) and Yılmaz (2004). I will return to these works throughout this chapter.

In the remainder of this chapter I discuss how the politics of Turkish American identity – collective action vis-à-vis rival ethnic groups, internal divisions within the community, and the re-creation of Turkish domestic politics – have dominated the agenda of Turkish American activist groups and shaped the experience of everyday Turkish Americans. In the first section I lay out the formative influences on the development of political consciousness in the Turkish diaspora. Following that I discuss the history of Turkish migration to the United States, internal schisms within the diaspora, and a ‘changing of the guard’ that has taken place over roughly the last quarter century. In the third section I compare the size and concentration of America’s Turkish population to their larger political rivals, the Greek American and Armenian American communities. I finish with several Turkish American efforts to counter this by boosting their numbers and appealing to the broader American public for support.

3.1 THE SEEDS OF POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

More than a dozen Turkish American groups exist in the Washington DC metro area and more than one hundred have been founded across the United States. The first organisations were started by the 10,000-15,000 doctors, engineers and other trained professionals that came for advanced study and employment shortly after World War II. Most of these organisations started off as cultural clubs and many have stayed that way. However, since the 1970s some Turkish Americans and associations have become more political. While Turkish Americans have always been conscious of being an ‘other’ in America, it was not until the 1970s that they

began to engage in sustained political activism.⁷ The germination of this more widespread political consciousness can be traced back to two formative phenomena. One of these events is the invasion of Cyprus by Turkish forces in 1974 and the subsequent and unprecedented US arms embargo of a NATO ally during the Cold War on 5 February 1975. The second is an escalation of Armenian activism in conjunction with a global rash of attacks perpetrated by Armenian militants against Turkish businesses, diplomats, and civilians, as well as third-country firms doing business with Turkey.

After the Turkish military landed troops on the island of Cyprus, Greek American groups orchestrated effective grassroots protests, established permanent advocacy groups, and put forth punitive legislation for consideration in Congress.⁸ “The new organisations sought to mobilise support for the Greek position from a wider ‘attentive’ public including academicians and other opinion leaders. They also sought support from other ethnic groups ... with traditional anti-Turkish biases” (Legg, 1981:120). Arguably the most influential of the groups founded in reaction to the Cyprus invasion was the (Greek American) American Hellenic Institute (AHI). I met with the director, Nicholas Larigakis, who explained that the embargo remains AHI’s biggest accomplishment. “The most important piece of legislation that we were successful on was really in the early days, in 1974,” Larigakis said. “We were able to place an arms embargo on Turkey for the invasion of Cyprus. That was no small feat at the time to be able to do that.”

AHI accomplished this by drafting and pushing through a bill which did not condemn the invasion outright but rather focused on enforcing a legal prohibition against using American-made weapons in an offensive capacity. Thus by understanding, working within, and exploiting the American system, all without an

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7. Akgün (2000) and Şimşir (2001) place the start of the Turkish American lobby to 1924, when the Turkish Welfare Association petitioned Congress to restore diplomatic relations with Turkey following the First World War. However, this was a one-off initiative and does not amount to a general or sustained political awakening.
 8. Why Turkey chose to invade Cyprus is a long and complicated story that cannot be told here. It involves several international treaties, an attempted coup d'état, and inter-communal violence stretching back at least a decade. See Bölükbaşı (1993), Legg (1981), and Uslu (2003), among others, for more information.

effective opposition from Turkish Americans, the Greek American lobby was able to accomplish its aims in the Mediterranean. This highlights the importance of institutional knowledge and speaking ‘as Americans first’, a refrain I heard from many of the groups I interviewed. In Larigakis’ words:

The goals, in a nutshell, since then - now 37 years since the organisation was founded - are to promote US-Greek US-Cyprus relations, *as in the best interests of the United States*. We are not a foreign lobby. We don't lobby, we don't get money from Greece or Cyprus to lobby for these issues. *We lobby as American citizens, yes of Hellenic descent*, to promote and strengthen these bilateral relationships between Greece and Cyprus and the United States. *But always underscoring the point of what is in the best interests of the United States. We will not go counter to what we perceive to be, or what should be perceived as US interests* (Larigakis, my emphasis).

One action begets another. Just as AHI was created in reaction to Turkish military action in Cyprus, the Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA) was created in reaction to Greek American protests regarding Cyprus. As Günay Evinch, the out-going president of ATAA whom we met in the introduction of this chapter, explained it to me, in the early days Turkish Americans had little cause or inclination to engage with the American political system. This changed after 1974, when an *uncontested* Greek American reaction to the Turkish invasion proved to be highly effective in accomplishing Greek American aims at the expense of Turkish American concerns. The experience taught them the importance of providing a counter-narrative not only to American policymakers but also the broader American public.

We realised that we needed to have a stronger voice to explain better what's happening on that island. Especially when the Greek American lobby was so successfully able to present it as purely an act of aggression. No one knew that Turks were the victims of ethnic cleansing since 1963 on that island and that Turkey was actually patiently trying to negotiate stopping of those massacres, of the ethnic cleansing and the persecution and oppression of Turkish Cypriots on the island (Evinch).

Other research has uncovered similar narratives. Akçapar (2009b) asked ATAA board member Oya Bain a question similar to what I asked Evinch. She responded that Turks only spoke up after suffering multiple setbacks in the 1970s.

At that time, in the mid-1970s, we became sensitive to the political issues. Everybody was united and felt that we should do something about this, but there was a lot of shyness and fear in the Turkish community. The Turkish community in the US then wanted to be out of any political involvement. ... First, we started to respond by writing letters to editors of newspapers but politically we were very weak. Then the movie *Midnight Express*⁹ came out and it made a huge damage to the Turkish image in the USA and we started to be on the defensive. We were also attacked by Greeks and Armenians and they accused us of committing genocides (2009b:178).

Such accusations became more powerful after 1972 with the establishment of the Armenian Assembly of America, one of the two main Armenian groups in Washington DC today, to coordinate lobbying efforts (Yılmaz, 2004). However, not all of the attacks Bain refers to were verbal. ASALA, the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia, was one of several militant organisations at that time to target Turkey, Turks, and businesses that dealt with Turkey.¹⁰ Their motivations were primarily to exact revenge and heighten public awareness of the mass killings of 1915–16¹¹ through the use of violent spectacle (Kurz and Merari, 1985). Internecine

9. *Midnight Express* is a 1978 film that portrays an American who was placed in a Turkish prison after being caught smuggling marijuana. Needless to say, Turks and Turkey do are not sympathetically portrayed.

10. Most authors refer to these groups as ‘terrorist’ organisations. I am within the context of the ‘war on terror’, a context which makes the use of the word problematic. I have chosen to use ‘violent militant’ or ‘extremist’ in order to avoid any imputation of bias or blame toward any party. The term terrorism will only appear within quotations.

11. This thesis is largely about the debate over *which language* should be used to refer to deportation and massacres of Armenians by the Ottoman Empire in 1915 and 1916. This is widely referred to by Armenians and scholars as the Armenian Genocide, while Turkey and Turkish Americans largely refute this definition. In order to research the dynamics of the debate while abstaining from questions of right and wrong – see Tsing’s analogy with haunting on page 44 – I have chosen the most neutral language possible. Henceforth I will simply refer to the historical events as the ‘events of 1915’ and the argument over which term to use as the ‘Recognition debate.’ Referring to the ‘events of 1915’ mirrors other attempts at neutral language found in ICTJ (2002; 2003)

politics and rivalry amongst Armenian groups also played a role. Their actions, alongside the conflict in Cyprus, arguably constitute the most salient influences both in activating the Turkish American diasporic political consciousness and setting it, from the very beginning, on a strongly defensive footing.

While the complete history of these groups is well beyond the scope of this study, some context is necessary in order to understand both the *status quo* and the motivations of many of the women and men I interviewed. The Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), a core Armenian political party with strong roots in the diaspora, first sought revenge against Ottoman officials in 1919, eventually assassinating all but one of the individuals the ARF identified as “architects of the genocide” (Tölölyan, 1992:15). These methods were revived in 1975 when ASALA, a rival group incubated in Lebanon and mentored by the PLO in the midst of the Lebanese civil war, turned to extremist acts in seeking vengeance and publicity for what they viewed as a forgotten genocide. The ARF responded to ASALA’S violent tactics by forming the Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide, a rival militant group with similar aims and tactics as ASALA (1992:20).¹² Collectively, the two groups bombed the Turkish Consulate in Los Angeles, occupied the Turkish Embassy in Paris in 1981, and attacked at least 30 Turkish diplomats or their families, in addition to dozens more acts (Kurz and Merari, 1985). This violence was always, in part, about repoliticising and re-energising a discourse, and reframing a certain aspect of World War I history. “ASALA’s acts of violence have undeniably revived the Armenian problem in the eyes of the world. This development would not have taken place had ASALA not taken the terrorist direction – however limited in scope – and herein lies its main, and most striking achievement” (1985:3–5). The salience of this discursive goal is visible in the court documentation of two cases of particular relevance to this study.

On 27 July 1973 Gourgen Yanikian, then in his 70s, shot and killed Turkish Consul General to Los Angeles Mehmet Baydar and Vice Consul Bahadır Demir at the Biltmore Hotel in Santa Barbara. Yanikian was sentenced to life imprisonment

12. The Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide were later renamed the Armenian Revolutionary Army.

but was paroled in January 1984 by Armenian American governor George Deukmejian, Jr., only to die one month after being released. According to the court opinion:

[Yanikian] retained a consuming interest in focusing world attention upon the great injustice which he believed had been committed against his people by the Turkish government....His decision was to accomplish this by killing two Turkish government officials, thereby to 'destroy two evils' and precipitate, through his trial, a public examination of the subject of the massacres of Armenians to the end that all people would benefit by the knowledge (People v. Yanikian, 1974).

On 28 January 1982, nine years almost to the day after Yanikian's double assassination, two armed men shot another Turkish consulate general in Los Angeles.¹³ Kemal Arikan was killed during his morning commute by two armed men from the Justice Commandos for the Armenian Genocide, the ARF-affiliated militant group. One man was never apprehended. The other, Harry Sassounian, a Lebanese-Armenian who had come to America six and a half years earlier, was tried, found guilty of first-degree murder with the "special circumstance that the killing was because of the victim's nationality or country of origin", and given a sentence of life imprisonment without parole (People v. Sassounian, 1986). During the trial, jurors heard testimony from one of Sassounian's inmates. "He then stated that the reason why he did it was a political (*sic*) - it was a revenge....He said he wanted to get publicity so he would get revenge on what the Turkish people did to his people" (1986).

Ergün Kırlikovalı, the incoming president of the ATAA at the time of my fieldwork and a longstanding activist vis-à-vis the Armenian issue, had coincidentally moved to Los Angeles in 1982, several months prior to Arikan's death. He recalled the day he learned the news:

I'm driving to work, you know, radio is on, I'm happy, and then they stopped the music to announce, 'we're sorry to interrupt, but we have grim news. The Turkish

13. Los Angeles is the centre of the Armenian population in the United States and thus had a unique attraction for Armenian militants at this time.

consulate general, Kemal Arikan, was shot dead by some assailants, while he stopped for red lights on Wilshire Blvd, and right now he is lying there in his own pool of blood, and police are investigating.' That was '82. To me, that was strike three, because I knew the man. Very nice man. So, I started shaking, cause I knew the man. You know? A few days before we had tea, so I knew the man. Somebody died. So, I couldn't control the car anymore, so I pulled into a gas station to calm down. And I'm listening to the radio, and on the radio they're talking to, that's KFWB, I'll never forget, holding the microphone to a person who happens to be an Armenian priest. 'So, what do you think about it?' 'Well, we don't condone terrorism but this guy on the floor, he deserved it, because he's part of the Turkish government who did this dah-da-da-da-' ... So then KFWB guy goes to another one, who's a baker, and he says, 'well, these guys deserve it. They're devils, this and that.' And then he went up to another one, who happens to be Armenian also. Obviously, it looks like the Armenians came to the event somehow, close by, they heard it, they came, whatever. But Armenian, Armenian, Armenian. And this kind of accentuated the pain in me, and frustration. So I started calling, first, the radio station. I said look, I want to talk too (Kırlıkovalı).

Kırlıkovalı started talking. As he recalls events, shortly after Arikan's death he, on his own initiative, held a press conference that was later broadcast on television. According to his recollection the ensuing publicity made him a minor celebrity within the local Turkish community and led to his election shortly thereafter as the president of the American Turkish Association of Southern California. "I was all over the TV, saying this, banging the table, saying 'these murderers should go back to Lebanon where they came from. We don't want assassinations in this country. We're sick of their lies, and misrepresentations, and falsifications, and so on.' So, all of a sudden, this jolted the Turkish American community," Kırlıkovalı said.

I met Kırlıkovalı initially in Washington in 2011 and I caught up with him at his offices in Irvine, California again in January 2013. A successful businessman and chemical engineer, his office was lined with books on the Armenian topic and there was a big pile of similarly-themed acquisitions in his warehouse. He told me he had decided long ago that he could not do everything so he would devote himself to this

one topic. “Here I am, a polymer scientist, not even a historian, ... it’s not my job!” he exclaimed. “Armenians created me. ... Now they have to deal with me.” The salience of these attacks in shaping the Turkish American consciousness was something I heard often during my fieldwork. Güler Köknar, vice president of the Turkish Coalition of America (TCA), another Turkish American advocacy group in DC, called my attention to the fear circulating within the Turkish American community at the time.

When Turkish diplomats were murdered, the threat was so tremendous that they withdrew completely. You have to keep in mind, that in the course of the 70s and 80s, [being] a Turkish American, in this country, could make you a target, and did. I mean the honorary consul general who was a Turkish permanent resident, not a citizen, but Turkish American businessman having lived in Boston for decades was murdered, because he was the Turkish honorary consul general. So imagine what kind of chilling effect that can have on the community and the community’s positioning on these very sensitive issues (Köknar).

Some people withdrew, but others like Evinch, Kırlikovalı and Köknar, decided to speak up and help other Turkish Americans to do the same. In doing so, they have approached American politics in a defensive posture and with an acute focus on questions of Turkish identity in the United States.

3.2 UNREALISED POTENTIAL

The Turkish presence in Washington DC has a long history. As the nation’s capital, Washington DC has naturally attracted Ottoman and Turkish attention over the years. Rather romantically, we can trace efforts to encourage and enhance Turkish American relations, an oft-recurring sentiment in the mission statements of the groups under study in this piece, as far back as 1854. In that year Ottoman Sultan Abdülmecid donated a marble plaque to the Washington Monument, then under construction, which was inscribed with the simple words “so as to strengthen the friendship between the two countries” (White House, 2009). The Turkish Republic (est. 1923) and early Turkish Americans also indirectly left an enduring

mark on the capital's landscape, as it was the death in 1944 of the Turkish Ambassador that prompted the construction of Washington DC's first mosque. It is a beautiful white building a few doors down from the Turkish embassy, built with the funds of numerous donors including a gift of \$320 from the Turkish American Benevolent Association in January 1946 (Abdul-Rauf, 1978:12–17). The Turkish American organisational presence in Washington DC, however nascent, was there even at this early stage.

These are but early tracings, and the greater DC area is now home to some 8,000 Turkish Americans (see Figure 3.4) and their many organisations. I met with representatives of 13 of these groups (see Table 3.1). While some of them have similar functions and overlap in mission, membership, or both, there is nevertheless great diversity within the groups when taken as a whole. Two are federations of other groups: the Assembly of Turkish American Associations is comprised of 31 local chapters and the Turkic American Alliance represents 218 component organisations according to their websites.¹⁴ The others include business, cultural, religious, and political organisations, some grassroots-oriented and some 'elite.' Their common denominator, broadly speaking, is their two main functions: they provide services to the Turkish American community and/or work to 'promote' Turkish American interests and Turkish American relations. Table 3.1 includes a column delineating 'old' and 'new' guard organisations, a distinction which will become clear in the next section.

Given their diversity, these organisations have the potential to form quite a comprehensive net of pressure points on Turkey-centric issues. However, in my fieldwork I saw little sign of cooperation or synergistic efforts amongst the groups at a meaningful level. On the contrary, polarisations, fissures, political infighting, and tertiary goals have all served to limit the efficacy of these groups and thus much of their potential influence remains unactualised. Halman (1980) came to similar conclusions in the *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* more than 30 years ago. The lack of forward progress despite the passing of three decades suggests

14. ATAA's online presence is at www.ataa.org and the TAA is at www.turkicamericanalliance.org (Accessed: 28 February 2013).

a stultified activist community stubbornly resistant to change - a diagnosis with which many of my interviewees readily agreed. That said my research also uncovered a few nascent attempts at collaboration and moving beyond the *status quo*.

TABLE 3.1: ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS INTERVIEWED

Organisation	Acronym Used	Old or New Guard	People Interviewed*
Grassroots Umbrella			
Assembly of Turkish American Associations	ATAA	Old Guard	Günay Evinch, <i>Outgoing President</i> Ergün Kırlikovalı, <i>Incoming President</i> Demet Cabbar, <i>Vice President Capital Region</i> Yenal Küçüker, <i>Civil Engagement Director</i>
Turkic American Alliance	TAA	New Guard	Faruk Taban, <i>President</i>
Think Tank / Policy / Lobby			
Turkish Coalition of America	TCA	Old Guard	Lincoln McCurdy, <i>President</i> Güler Köknar, <i>Vice President</i> Beril Unver, <i>Congressional Liaison Officer</i>
Turkish Coalition USA Political Action Committee	TC-USA PAC	Old Guard	Lincoln McCurdy, <i>Treasurer</i>
Rumi Forum, Centre for Policy Studies	Rumi Forum	New Guard	Sıtkı Özcan, <i>Director</i>
Community/Cultural			
American Turkish Association - DC	ATA-DC	Old Guard	Demet Cabbar, <i>President</i>
Turkish American Community Centre	TACC	New Guard	Elif Enis
Turkish Cultural Foundation	TCF	Old Guard	Güler Köknar, <i>Executive Director</i>
Business/Trade			
American Turkish Council	ATC	Old Guard	James Holmes, <i>President</i>
Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists of Türkiye	TUSKON	New Guard	Hakan Taşçı, <i>TUSKON DC Representative</i>
Legal			
Turkish American Legal Defence Fund	TALDF	Old Guard	David Saltzman, LLC
Other			
American Hellenic Institute	AHI	-	Nicholas Larigakis, <i>President</i>
American Kurdish Information Network	AKIN	-	Kani Xulam, <i>President</i>
Independent Lobbyist	-	-	Lydia Borland
*These individuals and their positions are accurate as of my fieldwork in Summer 2011. Some individuals have changed organisations or positions since then.			

3.2.1 Mutual Suspicion and a Changing of the Guard

The socioeconomic and political profiles of Turkish migrants in the United States have undergone a marked shift in the last three decades that parallels a similar change in the power structure in their country of origin. As Hakan Taşçı, the DC representative of TUSKON, a business development organisation, told me:

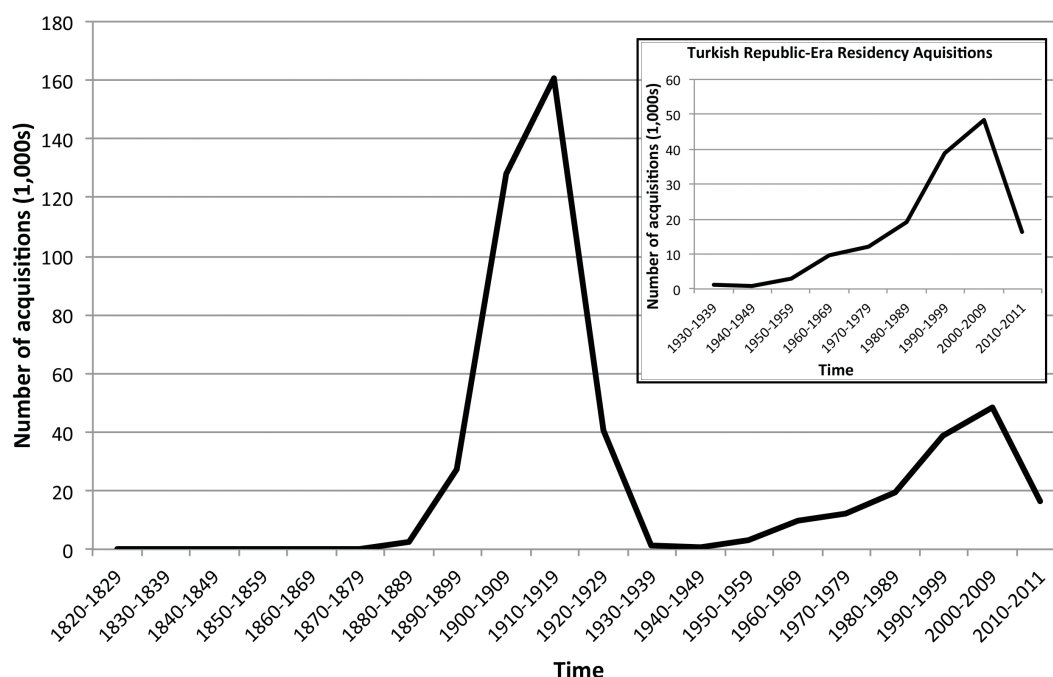
ATAA has the old guys, and TAA, they are the new guys. The same story in Turkey. Look at AK Parti. They are the new guys. And Gülenists, they are the new guys. And on the other side you have quite secularists. Ultra-nationalists. ... [The old guys] are trying to transform themselves but they are not sure of where to go. They have a kind of identity problem in Turkey and the same here. ATAA, they have that identity problem (Taşçı).

In short, both the Turkish Republic and the Turkish diaspora are experiencing a changing of the guard. This change can be traced back to January 1970, when Necmettin Erbakan founded the National Order Party (*Millî Nizam Partisi*) following his publication of *Millî Görüş*, a manifesto critical of Atatürk's policies (Atacan, 2005; Avcı, 2005). The National Order Party was the first of Turkey's many Islamist political parties, and since that time secular, nationalist elites have gradually but inexorably lost power to a new class of individuals that combines a pro-business mind-set and political savvy with a peculiarly Turkish strain of religious conservatism. The extent of this change is seen in the rise of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the Justice and Development Party (AK Parti, est. 2001). Elected in 2003, Erdoğan is Turkey's first prime minister to embrace his own religious identity and to seek an increased role for religious mores to influence public policy. Reverberations of these broad changes in Turkey can be seen in Turkey's emigration profile to the United States. Starting in the 1970s Karpas (2008) notes that a new 'type' of Turkish migrant started to arrive in the United States; one poorer and less educated as well as more community-oriented, conservative, and religious. Since 1970 more than 200,000 immigrants from Turkey have settled in the US. In addition to this population, Turkey has had a revolving population of about 10,000 to 13,000 students in American schools and universities since at least 2000 (IIE, 2013). To

understand this shift and its consequences, we must first understand the nature of Turkish migration to the United States.

Karpat (2008) breaks Ottoman/Turkish migration to the United States into three broad ‘waves.’ Ottoman-era migration was overwhelmingly Christian. Predominantly ethnic Armenians, Greeks and Syrians, these individuals chose migration in response to myriad social, economic and political forces that impacted the Ottoman Empire over the course of the 19th and early 20th centuries (e.g. structural changes to agricultural markets, the inclusion of Christians in military conscription, and wartime persecution of Christians) (see Gordon, 1931; İpek and Çağlayan, 2008; Karpat, 1985). Few Muslims or ethnic Turks made the crossing, and the majority of those who did returned after the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923 (Halman, 1980:993). According to the US Office of Immigration Statistics (OIS), slightly less than 360,000 Ottoman/Turkish immigrants received permanent residence between 1820-1930, a time period which covers both the late Ottoman period and the aftermath of World War I (see Figure 3.1).

FIGURE 3.1: ACQUISITIONS OF US LEGAL PERMANENT RESIDENCE, TURKEY AS COUNTY OF LAST RESIDENCE (1820-2010)



Source: 2011 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, (Washington DC: Dept. of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics).

Akçapar (2009b:170) reports that, largely due to American immigration quotas, migration to the United States during the early years of the Turkish Republic remained low. OIS statistics reflect this, with 100-300 people per year gaining permanent residency between 1930 and 1959. However, migration rates picked up substantially after America liberalised its immigration quotas in 1965 (2009b). The second wave, which occurred during the 1950s and 1960s, was comprised of 10,000-15,000 members of Turkey's secular, nationalistic elite: doctors, engineers, and other highly trained individuals (Karpat, 2008). They came primarily to pursue advanced degrees and white collar employment in the United States. US Immigration statistics record more than 12,000 people from Turkey obtaining permanent residence during these two decades (OIS, 2012).

The Turkish Republic had been founded a mere three decades earlier, in 1923, so these individuals were true 'children' of Atatürk's secular revolution, "rejecting any links to the Ottoman past except to bolster national Turkish pride, they became spokesmen for everything Turkish in the political and ideological, rather than historical and cultural, sense." (Karpat, 2008:177).¹⁵ As Evinch, who is a second generation Turkish American that grew up in just this sort of household, explained to me, "in the 50s, these are children of the young Turkish republic, very strictly dedicated to those principles for which Atatürk stands. And, also, cautious about any sacrifice from those principles, or anything that can be interpreted as a movement away from those principles. Very cautious."

As upperclass professionals they encountered few obstacles to assimilating into American society, with success stories like Yalçın Ayaslı, the patron of the Turkish Coalition of America who made his fortune in microwave science, and Atlantic Records founder Ahmet Ertegun, the son of the Turkish Ambassador whose death prompted the construction of Washington DC's first mosque (see page 69). They spread out across the United States as their private and professional lives required.

15. Atatürk instituted major reforms with the founding of the new republic with the twin goals of irretrievably reorienting Turkey toward the West and detaching it from its Ottoman and Islamic past. These were largely, but not completely, successful. The personalised ideology underlying these reforms is known as Kemalism or Atatürkism. For a complete discussion of the reforms and the ideology underlying them see Ahmad (1993), Casier and Jongerden (2011), Ciddi (2009) and Zürcher (2005).

This lifestyle gave them no particular need to coalesce as an ethnic community except for nostalgic or cultural occasions. Thus they formed cultural clubs, often under the American Turkish Association banner, such as Washington DC's local chapter ATA-DC or the ATA of Southern California, to which Ergün Kırlikovalı was elected president in 1982. Many of these first organisations eventually collected under the umbrella ATAA, the Assembly of Turkish American Associations.

For Turkish Americans, being out there as a Turkish American was always more of a cultural issue. So you see Turkish Americans doing wonderful things in terms of promoting their heritage and culture, with local associations having festivals, social events, cookouts, but that's where it really stops for them, because the politics, except for the Armenian issue, has never been, has never really touched their lives (Köknar).

This lack of political engagement, coupled with geographic dispersion and other legacies of the post-WWII migrants' elite status, were recurrent themes throughout my interviews and the literature. James Holmes, former ambassador to Turkey and executive director of the American Turkish Council, explained:

[Turks] have a propensity to organise to a degree but not sufficiently. First of all they are scattered around the United States. ... These were people who are, for the most part, pretty well educated, and were able to acclimatise within the community. They didn't set up ghettos, and I don't think they ever constituted a sufficient, self-contained gravity to be a community of their own, perhaps not any place in the United States (Holmes).

One can find almost identical language to Holmes' a decade earlier in two *Insight Turkey* articles featuring former organisational leaders.¹⁶ The old guard had little impetus to organise for purposes of community and ethnic *solidarity* until they were faced with Greek narratives on Cyprus and the verbal and bodily attacks from

16. These articles consist of an interview with former ATAA president Orhan Kaymakçalan and an essay by former Federation of Turkish American Associations president Egemen Bağış. This latter group is a New York-based, Turkish American umbrella group that was excluded from this study for geographical reasons. Egemen Bağış has since gone on to become the Turkish Minister of European Union Affairs and Chief Negotiator. For the articles see *Insight Turkey* (2001), Volume 3, Issue 1.

Armenian activists and militants. This galvanised some Turkish migrants on the defensive, drawing them into the Washington DC milieu as Turkish political entrepreneurs. As Evinch explained:

The local organisations during my college years and teenage years didn't interest me much, because they were strictly cultural. For many reasons. One is that they were mostly engineers heading these local organisations, and the engineers ... weren't very political. And they just said, you know, through positive promotion of our culture – may that be food, folk dances, and our good nature – we will win the hearts of our neighbours, our communities. That was right, to some extent. But you got to be politically interested, because [politics] – may that be local, state or federal politics – [affects] not only US-Turkish relations *but how Turks may view themselves. And how your children will view themselves.* How textbooks with refer to Turks. ... ATAA was a natural for me if I wanted to persuade local organisations to be more politically active (Evinch, my emphasis).

Meanwhile, an entirely different socioeconomic category of people began to arrive. Starting in the 1970s, “the overwhelming majority [of new migrants] are semi-skilled or unskilled workers, who compete with immigrants from other groups for employment in the lower-level service sector” (Karpas, 2008:182). This is largely due to the closure of Germany's labour import programme in 1973. This third ‘wave’ of Turkish migration has reportedly brought some 200,000 Turkish migrants to America's shores, by Karpas's (2008) estimation. Official immigration statistics list 134,973 Turkish-born individuals obtaining greencards between 1970-2011. Many have come from rural areas, and studies such as Güler (2008) and DiCarlo (2008a, 2008b) demonstrate that chain migration from specific villages to the US exists along with community-based transnational social networks. Indeed, this sense of communal bonds is what demarcates this group from preceding waves.

The most outstanding characteristic of the Turkish migrants arriving in the United States during the last 20 years has been their ability to create their own communities. The internal cohesion and solidarity of these communities are not ideal, but certainly go beyond the bonds created by informal gatherings and a few formal associations. They are based on the

immigrants' consciousness of sharing a common grassroots culture, language, history, and national ethos and thus are grounded in a natural identity that is more durable than those that are acquired by indoctrination (Karpát, 2008:182).

This new constituency gave rise to a new type of diasporic organisation. The Turkic American Alliance, an umbrella group of 218 local groups, follows a different agenda often inspired by Gülen's teachings. Strong on community centres, interfaith dialogue, private schooling, and worship, they engage with headline issues like the Armenian Recognition debate, but this is not their main focus.

I question, however, the idea that this difference is due to a stronger 'natural identity' amongst later migrants, as Karpát suggests in the above quote. Instead, I would suggest it is more a result of shared socio-economic backgrounds, class positions, religious practices, as well as common social and economic integration difficulties. After all, the older, elite migrants also shared a common culture, language, history, and 'national ethos' – an indoctrinated quality if there ever was one. Instead, the main difference between the two waves, apart from sheer size, was that later migrants were more likely to come as part of a chain migration scenario (and thus entered a small 'local' network upon arrival), required more integration support (e.g. with employment), and desired greater religious infrastructure (e.g. Turkish-language mosques). None of this can be said for the small cohort of elite migrants who came in the 1950s and 1960s, attended graduate school, and then dispersed throughout the United States for work.

As previously mentioned, in addition to these two major waves there are more than 10,000 Turkish students in the United States at any one time (IIE, 2013). During my fieldwork I met many students who had since stayed on for employment. Immigration statistics for the decade 2002-2011 show an average of 4,227 new greencard holders and 2,490 naturalisations per year for those born in Turkey (OIS, 2012). We will return to this population in the following chapters where I discuss how the younger generation is impacting the leadership and priorities of existing organisations.

3.2.2 A Diaspora Divided Shall Not Stand

This bifurcation – between the elite, children-of-the-revolution, old guard on one side of the line, and the more conservative, less well-to-dos on the other – has caused a lot of social tension in both Turkey and the Turkish diaspora. Recall the anecdote at the beginning of this chapter in which I was warned of the politics of grocery stores (see page 60) to get a sense of the degree to which these divisions are embedded in normal life. “Turks don't trust people. They don't trust themselves, they don't trust each other. But, they do find comfort in being with one another,” Holmes told me. “If Turks don't like a particular organisation or the way a particular organisation is going they don't try to fix it within. They leave and start their own. You constantly see these fissures within the American Turkish community here.” Holmes is not alone in this assessment. “Turks, unfortunately, are very skeptical of each other,” Demet Cabbar, the president of ATA-DC, told me over lunch.

In a way there is a tribal approach. I mean, people like to hang out with people who come from their tribes and they're always a bit suspicious of the other tribes...Given that cultural heritage, I think added with this kind of divide in the Turkish American community, you have a very educated group of individuals who were running these organisations and other newcomers kind of felt like outsiders and they didn't blend in (Cabbar).

This is not the last time in this thesis that my interview subjects will blame ‘Turkish culture’ for a problem they face. Culture is a powerful scapegoat. It is a multipurpose self-indictment which recognises a common denominator and heritage, highlights and reinforces the divisions, acknowledges a problem, and disregards it as an insurmountable ‘given.’

On the other side of the fence the ‘new guard’ was growing up quite separately. It established private schools and, most importantly in terms of fostering group cohesion, mosques for the Turkish-speaking population of the United States. These function much more like community centres than the mosques in Turkey. They provide a space to gather, celebrate and ‘be’ Turkish. These mosques are “the nuclei of what later became full-fledged Turkish communities, ... [enabling] everybody who

shares the same culture and language to meet each other, exchange views and information and celebrate holidays as a group” (Karpas, 2005).

I experienced this myself at the Turkish American Community Centre (est. 2003), located on the outskirts of DC in Landham, Maryland. When I visited the Centre in 2011 it was nothing more than a prefabricated shell and a few picnic tables. However, at the time of this writing it had broken ground on a project to become a major mosque in the classic Ottoman style. One sunny weekend I attended a family picnic there, which had been scheduled to coincide with an important Turkish football match. As children played in an adjacent lot, adults chatted under the trees, shouted at the referees on a big screen television, and periodically made their way inside to pray. The composition of this group was markedly different than the more secular Turks I met later at a picnic put on by ATA-DC. Tellingly, several of my ‘old guard’ interviewees professed to have never been out to the Centre or to not know of its existence.

Across town in Fairfax, VA, a DC suburb, the American Turkish Friendship Association (est. 2003) has installed itself in a new \$1.15M building containing classrooms, a community centre, and a prayer hall. TUSKON (est. 2005), a business development group for Turkey’s small and medium-sized enterprises, the so-called ‘Anatolian Tigers’, now maintains an office alongside the old-guard American Turkish Council (ATC, est. 1991)¹⁷ and the Turkish Industry and Business Association Industrial Union (TÜSİAD, est. 1971). The new guard has now established their own umbrella organisation, the Turkic American Alliance (see Page 77). This divergent growth caused a reaction of distrust and contempt amongst many of the secular elites from the second wave of migration, the result of which was further separation and division within the broader Turkish American population. As Hakan Taşçı, the DC representative for TUSKON, explained it to me:

Many people [within the old guard] criticize
Gülenists ... Why? Because [the Gülenists] do their
own job. They form their own institutions, they do

17. The ATC, which was established in 1991, looks comparatively new. However, it was spun out of the American Friends of Turkey (est. 1974) and thus has a much longer overall history.

their own lobbying activities. There are many criticisms, but in one way that is what the criticism is. But on the other side, three years ago, [the old guard] all forget that they are lobbying against [the Gülenists]. They are going to the Congress and telling them, these guys are fundamentalists, radicals, Islamists, this and this and that. Don't talk to to them. ... And now [the old guard] is criticising [the Gülenists] for not becoming their partner. And when they attempt to be their member, they are going to say, 'hey, Gülenists are invading our institution.' Exactly similar story you see in Turkey (Taşçı).

Taşçı qualifies as a member of the 'new guard' and his description of the problem highlights the dilemma in which this group finds itself. To stay on the margins of existing institutions is to invite suspicion of conspiracy to outflank the old guard, yet to join with existing institutions gives 'proof' the suspicions were justified (the new guard is succeeding at undermining existing institutions and old guard hegemony). Demet Cabbar, as president of ATA-DC and vice president of ATAA, described the situation similarly but from the opposite viewpoint.

All of a sudden, the Turkish American community became more diverse and it had different, it developed different needs for people who came, for instance, they didn't speak English well. They didn't necessarily have masters degrees or Ph.Ds,... whereas these organisations were established for very highly educated, intellectual individuals. At one point, a reaction grew toward the organisations as elitist, hierarchical, whatever, stuck up organisations. It was a big challenge and I think we are still going through that transition. Because it's, uh, for maybe 10 years or so this feeling became very strong, very powerful, and it kind of embedded in the society, in the Turkish American communities (Cabbar).

The elitism Cabbar points to runs the gamut from blithe dismissal to, as Taşçı pointed out, protest and blatant bigotry. One example of particular interest to this thesis comes from a 2002 article published by Uğur Akıncı in the ATAA's (now discontinued) paper *The Turkish Times* titled "The 'Germanification' of Turkish Americans." The Turkish population of Germany, because of its unique immigration history, has a socioeconomic profile more similar to the 'new guard' than to the elites

that came to the United States in the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁸ This has led to the creation of negative stereotypes regarding the German-Turkish population in Germany, Turkey and the rest of the Turkish diaspora. Akıncı is expressing dismay that the Turkish American population is looking progressively less and less like the old guard elites, which Akıncı describes as the “cream of [Turkey’s] intelligentsia.”

Akıncı is not alone in expressing such sentiments. Indeed, when I first met Evinch he described Turkish Americans to me by juxtaposing them against those in Germany with identical language to Akıncı’s, boasting that both the United States and Turkish governments are “looking to ... Turkish Americans, as they call [them] the *crème de la crème* of the immigrants, [the governments] want Turkish Americans to be examples for Turks in Germany, and Holland and Belgium. So, Turkish Americans are ... a key heritage community in the world for Turks abroad.” Hubris aside, Evinch’s language reveals how strongly he still identifies with the old-guard social status, despite readily acknowledging later in our interview that newer Turkish arrivals have lowered the average socioeconomic indicators of the Turkish American population.

There are some signs of overcoming these divisions, though many appeared relatively superficial. I saw these mainly in the second-generation Turkish Americans and more recently, younger immigrants who are well removed from the early days of strict Kemalism. “We are still challenged with this feeling, to some extent,” Cabbar admitted. “But I think the new generation is more open-minded. And I would say that if you look at our board average age, it would be early 30s. So it’s a big shift from, you know, the average board member age of 60 towards 30. And I think [the shift toward a younger generation] also reflects on everything we do. You see that with the younger people there’s less of a concern of status.”

Evinch, as a second-generation Turkish American deeply interested in Turkish and Turkish American affairs, is an especially interesting figure in this context.

18. For various reasons many of the German-Turkish population have had difficulty integrating into German society and over the years they have been the subject of myriad studies pointing this out (see, for example Engelen, 2006; Faas, 2007; Faist, 1993; Münz and Ulrich, 1998; Mandel, 1989; Ross, 2009; Sahin and Altuntas, 2009; Schiffauer, 2006; Söhn and Özcan, 2006)

“There can be discourse in the community that separates ATAA from FTAA, the Federation of Turkish American Associations, or the Fetullah Gülen-following umbrella organisation the Turkic American Alliance,” Evinch told me when we first met. For this reason, he continued, “One principle I promoted, which has now been accepted by all sides, is ‘solidarity within diversity’ in the Turkish American community. It’s another way of saying, we can be unified, but we don’t have to be uniform. ... Secondly, we will not import Turkish politics to America, because that’s polarising.” As I will argue throughout this thesis, polarising Turkish politics have most definitely been imported to America, but I heard from multiple interviewees on both sides of the ‘fence’ – without prompting – that Evinch is sincerely trying to increase the level of cohesion between Turkish American groups. The limited progress that has been made so far are the first steps in a long and uphill battle.

“Günay [Evinch] and I talk a lot, and we kind of agree on a lot of the things, that our community should come together. That we should focus more on the issues here in the US, as Americans. As opposed to letting the Turkish politics divide us,” Cabbar, vice president of ATAA and herself a first-generation Turkish immigrant, said. “He married a Turk, like real-Turkish Turkish woman. And his parents are the older generation Turk, like the republic kids, as he calls them. You know, they feel very strongly about the reforms that Atatürk did. ... So he can understand [the original immigrants’] perspective, [and] he can understand the [modern] Turkish American perspective.” In this attempt of invigorating the broader Turkish American *esprit de corps* Evinch has initiated several joint endeavours and the umbrella organisations often sign letters or host public figures jointly. Hakan Taşçı, the DC representative of TUSKON, also felt it appropriate to highlight not only Evinch’s efforts in this regard but the importance of his American birthplace. “Günay [Evinch], for example, I think he’s a very visionary man. Quite secularist, but he was born here, raised here, so it’s going to be very hard for him as well to understand what’s going on in Turkey,” Taşçı said. Evinch’s organisation not only has to deal with the challenge of bridging the gap with the ‘new guard’, but it must also contend with an old guard establishment that is resistant to change “That mind-set,

that ideology. He tried to change it, but it's very hard. The establishment [children of the revolution] is down there [at ATAA]. And the mind-set is there."

According to both Evinch and his counterpart at the Gülenist Turkic American Alliance (TAA), Faruk Taban, members have reacted well to both sides' willingness to cooperate. "We noticed that the moment we started to act in solidarity, the people who we serve commended us. They didn't want fighting amongst the groups," Evinch said. "They were in a way thirsting for, starving for, harmony. And that is a very good signal to Turkish American leaders today. That, you know, if we are going to be effective we have to be in cooperation with one another and respectful to one another." For his part, Taban noted that at the moment this rapprochement, for lack of a better term, is limited in many respects to the leadership of the umbrella organisations. But, he says, it is a start. "I think [in the] last two or three years, there was a great initiative to get all the groups together ... we have a great communication, at least I think that itself is crucial, a starting point," Taban said. "In many ways it's a great deal for the Turkish community because when they see we all got together, we all do any kind of good to the community in a general manner that gives a strong message to all Turkic Americans in US to see that there is no fight." We will return to the second generation and moving beyond old priorities and prejudices in Chapter 6. There we will see that much of this has to do not so much with building community cohesion but moving beyond that great influence on the Turkish American community: the legacy of 1915–16. In the next section I give some background on how ethnic interest groups function in the United States. Then, in Section 3.3, I examine the hypothesis that Turkish Americans are severely outmatched on Capitol Hill vis-à-vis their main political rivals, the Greek- and Armenian Americans, by comparing their relative sizes and distributions across the United States.

3.3 UNDERDOGS ON CAPITOL HILL

The ongoing fight for influence was portrayed by several of my interviewees and other authors as a 'David and Goliath'-type story, in which the scrappy but outmatched Turkish Americans take on two more powerful and savvy ethnic groups

(see Yılmaz, 2004:180–95). Lincoln McCurdy, a long time promoter of Turkey and current president of the TCA, put it succinctly. “The two things in American politics that I’m sure are true, it’s about votes and money ... The Turks cannot provide the votes.” This brings us back to the geographic dispersion and political weakness of the early migrants that was discussed earlier. Turkish American activists are at a disadvantage because they cannot use even localised numeric superiority to ‘make themselves heard.’ To wit, as we will see in this section Turkish Americans are outnumbered by at least one of their two main political rivals in *every* major area of concentration.

I have already discussed the literature on diasporic politics in the United States in Section 2.2.2. While it largely regards lobbying for foreign affairs rather than domestic politics, and is therefore only of limited relevance to this case, it contains some insights on assessing the strength and efficacy of (ethnic) interest groups that are valuable for my analysis.

Most comparative studies of ethnic lobbies, and indeed lobby groups themselves, use the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) – i.e. the Jewish lobby – as a point of comparison for gauging the relevance of any other group (Goldberg, 1990; Gregg, 2002; Haney and Vanderbush, 1999; Mearsheimer and Walt, 2006). Many commentators have deemed it the most effective lobby operating in Washington DC today, and one can see many aspects of the ‘AIPAC model’ in the structures of the Turkish lobby as well as its adversaries, the Greek and Armenian lobbies. In addition to this, the literature on ethnic lobbying provides several typologies with which to assess a group’s effectiveness.

Haney and Vanderbush (1999), in their review of the literature, distil several core factors which determine the effectiveness of an ethnic interest group (either as a whole, or as a specific organisation) (see Esman [1994] for an alternative typology). I will return to many of these themes or qualities in this study of Turkish American activist organisations. These are: 1) “*organisational strength*,” including professional discipline, lobbying networks, and financial means; 2) “*membership unity, placement, and voter participation*,” referring to the benefits of having active, same-minded voters concentrated in certain districts; 3) “*salience and resonance of message*,” to both

the government and the broader public; 4) *concordance between governmental and organisational objectives*; and 5) *“permeability of and access to the government.”* To these qualities I would also add *intra-group organisational diversity*, meaning that an ethnic interest group will be more effective if it has many different organisations and types of organisation, which can mount, so to speak, a multi-pronged attack in several arenas simultaneously. This is a quality that Haney and Vanderbush emphasise as part of AIPAC’s success, yet they do not include this idea in their list.

Turkish Americans learned during the 1974 Cyprus crisis that messages cannot be heard unless there is a critical mass of people and a voting constituency to give it volume. As former ATAA president Kaymakçalan put it back in 2001, “The strength of an ethnic organisation does not come from its Washington office, but from the number of citizens in the country *it can rally* around a certain issue” (Insight Turkey, 2001). TCA Vice President Köknar took this sentiment one step further when I interviewed her a decade later, arguing that a small ethnic group can ‘punch above its weight’ if it is organised, energised, and more committed than the rest. “When you compare the weight of the pro-Israel lobby, in terms of their stamp on many foreign policy issues, it’s certainly beyond their numbers,” Köknar said. “In America ... the better organised you are, the more effective you are. It’s not really necessarily all about numbers. It’s really how much your community is galvanised about these issues.” In saying this Köknar enforces much of what Haney and Vanderbush (1999) argued regarding the efficacy of ethnic interest groups above.

Galvanising the masses is easier said than done, and I will explore attempts to activate the ‘passive majority’ of Turkish Americans in greater detail in Chapter 6. I first want to investigate McCurdy’s idea that “Turks cannot provide the votes.” Opinions on the actual size of the Turkish population in the United States differ, but even the most generous estimates from sources like Turkish American organisational websites and news sites do not place the number at more than 500,000, although such claims are never backed up with verifiable information. Micallef (2004), citing the Voice of America: Turk, placed the number at approximately 200,000 almost a decade ago. While accepting that there is an undocumented Turkish population in the United States today, the most relevant

numbers in terms of voting power remain the official statistics from the US Census Bureau, the most current and comprehensive of which are the 2006-2010 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates.

The ACS offers two methods of categorising populations: ‘country of birth’ and ‘ancestry group,’ the latter being tantamount to ethnicity.¹⁹ Totals for all three groups are collected in Table 3.2. These data demonstrate that while ‘Turks’ constitute a slightly higher population than Armenians by place of birth, all three groups gain absolute numbers from operating on a ethnic definition of group membership. However, the use of an ethnic or ancestral definition of membership greatly disadvantages Turkish Americans in relative terms to their two main political rivals, as both the Armenian and Greek ancestry groups are several times larger than the Turkish ancestry group.

TABLE 3.2: POPULATION BY PLACE OF BIRTH AND ANCESTRY GROUP

	By Place of Birth	By Ancestry Group
Turkey/Turkish	97,108	177,841
Armenia/Armenian	76,455	447,580
Greece/Greek	143,419	1,337,511
<i>Source: 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Margins of error less than ±4%</i>		

Not only are their numbers far greater when measured by ‘ancestry group’ – all three groups have all been in the United States long enough to bear multiple generations – but country of birth, as a public relations tool, has limited value. Not all first-generation immigrants are able to vote, so highlighting a foreign birthplace is hardly optimal. ‘Ancestry group,’ on the other hand, potentially possesses far more political capital. It is politically useful to ‘speak from an American perspective,’ and many interviewees took the time to emphasise their American credentials.

Thus, it makes far more sense to use ‘ancestry’ figures in comparing the strength of the Turkish, Armenian, and Greek constituencies, and in the following section I use these numbers exclusively. However, these definitions are not neutral. In the

19. ‘Ancestry Group’ is based on self-ascription. The creation of these statistics are one topic of Section 3.2.

Turkish case especially they have political as well as pragmatic implications. I will return to this notion in Section 3.3.2.

3.3.1 Outmatched, Any Way You Count It

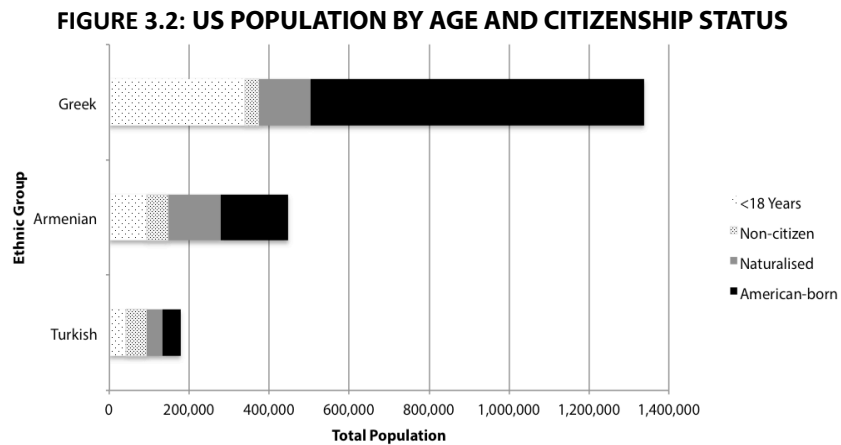
Figure 3.2 breaks down the data from Table 3.2 by age and citizenship status. It is immediately obvious from this data that the level of establishment and potential voting power is substantially disproportionate between the three groups. While all have similar child-adult ratios, only 83,924 (61.68%) of those with Turkish ancestry that are old enough to vote are able to vote, as non-citizens are ineligible. Compare this with 301,016 (84.69%) of the Armenian ancestry group and 963,448 (96.51%) of the Greek ancestry group. Thus we can say conclusively that those of the Turkish ancestry group are at a disadvantage both in terms of sheer numbers and in terms of formal access to the American political system.

Köknar responded to McCurdy's assertion that "Turks can't provide the votes," by arguing that while some congressional districts are simply locked up by a preponderance of numbers most are open for contestation. This conversation, which I had with McCurdy and Köknar at the same time, continued:

McCurdy: California is a good example. The Armenians have sufficient amount of numbers there that can swing elections

Köknar: In a couple of [Congressional] districts, not even that many ... so you are right. There always are, you will always have a handful of members of Congress who cannot do anything else but support them. But the rest of the country is fair game.

Köknar's comment can be interpreted in different ways. One idea is that the broader American public can be approached to support Turkish American goals in any area which is not overwhelmingly dominated by another group. In this sense it is not about having Turkish voters in 'fair game' areas but instead about generating sympathy and support from the general population. This is crucial, and it is through such sympathies amongst Christians that the Israeli lobby (primarily the American Israel Public Affairs Committee - AIPAC) draws much of its power.



Source: 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates for 'ancestry groups,' Margins of error less than $\pm 6\%$

A different interpretation is that only a few Congressional districts are impregnable, whereas the majority of districts could possibly be affected by a strong, passionate Turkish constituency. This brings us back to the question of scattering. Everyone agrees that the original migrants in the 1950s and 1960s spread out across the United States, and this fact is used today as a primary explanation for Turkish Americans' current political weakness. However, a half century has passed since then. As we have seen, later migrants have had a greater tendency to stick together. Generations have changed, people have moved, students have come and some have left. How does the perception of diffusion stand up to current reality?

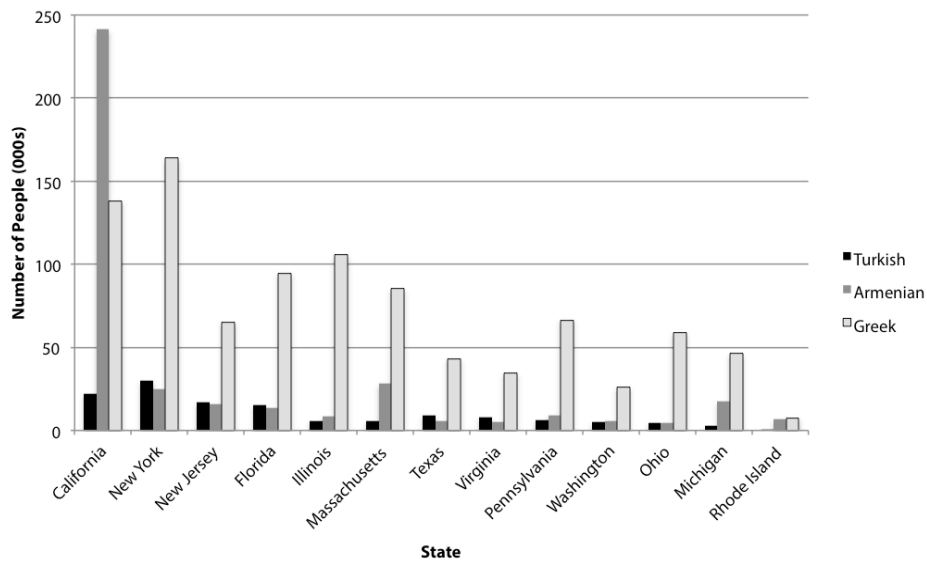
Ancestry group data is not available at the Congressional district level. Thus we must use two proxies to examine voter concentration, specifically the populations of states and metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs). For those unfamiliar with the American bicameral legislature, states, as wholes, elect senators. States are also subdivided into districts, which elect individuals to the House of Representatives. Roughly speaking then, by looking at the composition of major population centres in conjunction to state totals, we can determine whether or not a state containing a large population of a specific ethnic group *also* has that group concentrated in just one or two voting districts. However, MSAs are not a direct stand-in for Congressional districts as MSAs often cross state borders and thus the populations of MSAs are spread across multiple state-level totals. The Washington DC MSA is a perfect example of this, as it spans the District of Columbia and three states: Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia. These methodological limitations

notwithstanding, state and MSA measures of population in conjunction with each other give a good picture of the geographical distribution of Turks, Armenians, and Greeks across the United States. It is also important to remember that this is the *potential*, not active or existing, size of the Turkish, Armenian, and Greek pressure groups when activated along ethnic lines.

Figure 3.3 contains the distribution of the 10 most populous states for each group and Figure 3.4 the 10 most populous MSAs for each group. In total the top 10 most populous states and MSAs of each ancestry group yields just 13 unique states and 14 MSAs, out of a possible 30 for each category, showing substantial geographic overlap in the populations.

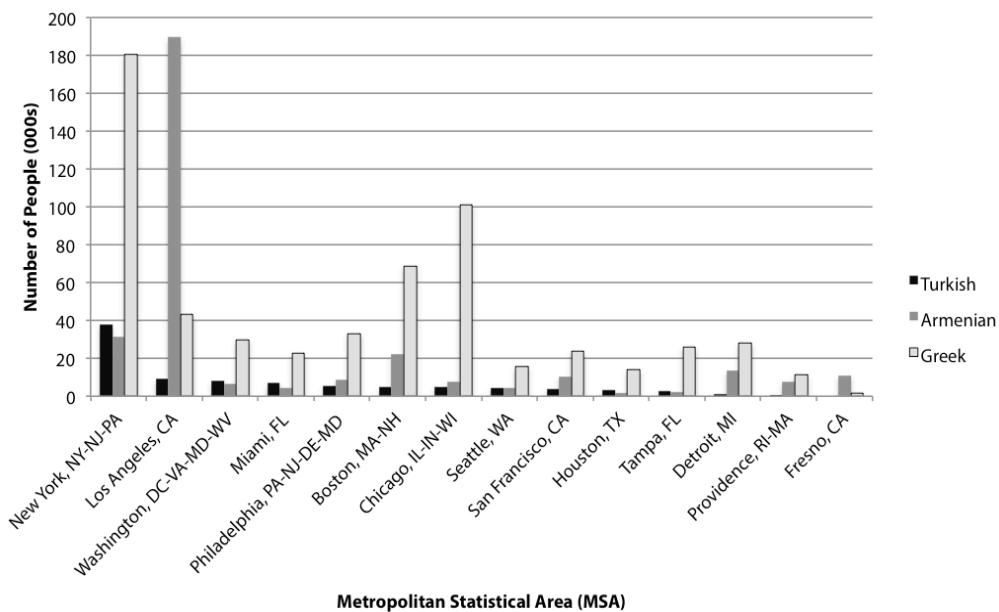
According to this data, Turkish migrants are comparatively dispersed across the United States: more than 50% of Turks reside outside of the ‘top-10’ Turkish American MSAs, and only 74.1% of Turkish Americans live in *any* MSA. However, like other immigrant groups, they have clustered in a few specific places. Only 29.3% of the overall American population lives in the top-10 Turkish American MSAs, compared with 49.9% of Turkish Americans. More importantly, as shown in Figures 3.3 and 3.4, each of these Turkish American population centres is also home to a much larger Greek and/or Armenian population. Thus, from this data we can say that Turkish interest groups command less “membership unity, placement, and voter participation” – one of the core aspects of ethnic interest group success according to Haney and Vanderbush (1999) – than their main political rivals: the Greeks and the Armenians. In other words, there appears to be truth to the claim that the Turks are outmatched.

FIGURE 3.3: TEN MOST POPULOUS STATES – SELECT ANCESTRY GROUPS



Source: 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, margins of error less than $\pm 15\%$

FIGURE 3.4: TEN MOST POPULOUS MSAS – SELECT ANCESTRY GROUPS



Source: 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, margins of error less than $\pm 19\%$

3.3.2 Searching for Support

The preceding section has demonstrated that Turkish Americans are unable to compete with their political rivals in terms of numbers. They are smaller in number and more dispersed, and their major concentrations of population substantially

overlap with concentrations of both Armenian Americans and Greek Americans. This has given Turkish American activists cause to reach out to other groups. Their most powerful political ally in Washington has traditionally been the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), unquestionably the most powerful lobby in the United States today (Yilmaz, 2004, Unver interview). This alliance can largely be attributed to Turkey and Israel's long-standing diplomatic and military ties (although these have been strained as of late by a series of incidents) and thus has little to do with genuine fraternity between two diasporic groups. More important in terms of this thesis, the Turkish American groups I interviewed have also been seeking support from both other 'Turkic' groups and the broader American population.

Despite the many internal fractures in the Turkish American community, a common tactic across the sociopolitical divide has been to instrumentalise a common 'Turkic' heritage to broaden its base of support. Umbrella organisations have reached out along ethnic lines, allying with Azeris, Turkmen, Kazakhs, and Uzbeks, among others, to appear greater than merely 'those coming from Turkey' would permit. This strategy is as political as it is pragmatic. While it draws in peoples from other countries, it is also a prime example of how domestic Turkish political polarisations are replicated in America. Kurdish separatism and the Gülen movement are two of the greatest points of polarisation in Turkey today. Ethnic Kurds sympathetic to the cause of Kurdish separatism tend to reject the label 'Turk' (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003a). With little Kurdish presence in America, the mainstream, ethnically-Turkish worldview tends to prevail. Old-guard and new-guard institutions alike oppose the Kurdish separatist agenda in subtle and not-so-subtle ways. One such way is to emphasise 'Turkic' ethnic heritage over a link to territorial Turkey.

I will discuss three such endeavours below. The first is a partnership between ATAA and the US Census Bureau to encourage individuals self-identifying in one way or another as Turkish to state as much on the 2010 census. The second is a series of grants, scholarships and programmes run by the Turkish Coalition of

America (TCA) to members of other relevant groups. The third is the annual Turkish American festival in downtown Washington DC.

The 'Say Türk' campaign and the US Census

In the months preceding data collection for the 2010 census ATAA started the 'say you count yourself a 'Turk', (and) happy is he who calls himself Turk' campaign, which encouraged anyone identifying, in one way or another, as a 'Turk' to provide it as a write-in answer for the census question on 'race.' This was an explicit attempt on behalf of ATAA to bolster the size of the visible Turkish American population in an effort to amplify their influence.

Our program was for question number nine under the census form, write that you are a Turk. Or Turkic. Or any other form where the root is Turk. ... This was very successful and it brought out some interesting debate from within the community, was the term Turk ethnic? Or was it linguistic, like Turkic, like Hispanic, and our response was, throughout the nation to everybody was, however you think of yourself, write it down in question number 9. You want to call yourself a Turkish-Macedonian, go ahead. If you are going to call yourself Turkic, go ahead. Or Turkish-speaking, go ahead. But know this, the more number you are together, the stronger you will be. And, in that respect, we did not employ a particular definition in order to be more inclusive, the major definition we applied was Turkish nationality, meaning a heritage, common heritage from common geographical area. And so that was interesting, we turned a somewhat difficult situation into a positive situation for everybody (Evinch).

In essence, Evinch and the ATAA are suggesting a) 'Turk' can refer to a race; b) other Turkic groups, an ethno-linguistic designation, should self-identify in some way with this race; c) for those that see themselves as possessing more complex identities, 'Turk' can serve as a common or unifying umbrella identity. The US Census Bureau's method of tabulation helps to maximise the impact of such a strategy. According to the documentation, if 'Turk' is written anywhere in the box, be it alone or as part of a hyphenated pair, it will be counted under the race 'Turk' (as well as under any other race if multiple designations were given).

We cannot know for sure how many from the Turkish American community responded to the ‘Say Türk’ campaign, nor from America’s other ‘Turkic’ populations from Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan, among others. They may have written any number of possible answers, for example ‘other.’ However, we are able to determine that other Turkic groups did not, on the whole, write in their own countries of origin in response to the question on ‘race.’ As a write-in question the Census Bureau accepted any possible answer and it lists the vast majority of unique responses in its documentation. They number in the several hundreds and some are positively outlandish, such as Bushwacker, Rainbow and Moor, which suggests it only took a small number of people to warrant a separate category. However, of all the Turkic groups only Azerbaijani is listed as a separate ‘race’ category, even though more than 40,000 people from Uzbekistan alone currently reside in the United States.²⁰

Thus, we can conclude by saying that the Say Türk campaign was an explicit attempt to exploit the dual national/ethnic nature of the word ‘Turk’ as well as American statistical methodology to increase the apparent size of the Turkish American population.

TCA Grants, Scholarships and Programmes

The Turkish Coalition of America (TCA) is unique among the Turkish American organisations I interviewed. Created in 2007 with a large endowment (see page 171), TCA is an elite group designed to influence with its money rather than its manpower. To this end it has, among other activities, sponsored academic publications, funded legal battles, and administered political action committees (legal structures for funnelling money to America’s politicians). These activities will be discussed in much greater detail in later chapters. What is important for the current section is TCA’s grants and scholarships programmes. The TCA has repeatedly given grants to old guard umbrella organisations the ATAA and New York-based FTAA. However, in 2010 TCA also gave \$50,000 to the United Macedonian Diaspora, \$26,758 to the Bosniak American Advisory Council of

20. According to the 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, and smaller funds were distributed to the Azerbaijan Society of America and the Council of Turkish Canadians. According to TCA's annual report, they made these donations because of heritage, friendship and to help these groups speak more loudly on Capitol Hill.

To highlight the historical heritage and contemporary bonds of friendship of the Turkish people with its kin and neighbours, TCA has established special partnerships with the Bosniak and Macedonian communities in the United States. ... The TCA funds have been designated to support the organisational capacity of these national ... organisations and support their efforts to establish their communities' voice in Washington, DC (TCA, 2010).

Without denigrating this support, the strategic value of these grants vis-à-vis TCA's broader mission to "promote and advance the interests of the Turkish American community and Turks" is clear (2010:2). Like the 'Say Türk' campaign, establishing co-ethnic networks of friendship, cooperation, and patronage serves to broaden the potential base of support for issues important to the TCA.

This idea is also operationalised at the individual level with a minority scholarship programme for study-abroad opportunities to Turkey, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, or Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 2010 the TCA gave out 69 such scholarships to African American, Hispanic American and Native American university students. Perhaps most surprising in the context of this thesis is another programme for *Armenian American* college students to study abroad in either Turkey or the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Five such scholarships were given to Armenian Americans in 2010. Once again, without lessening the value of sponsoring students to see the world the strategic value of these scholarships is palpable. As Beril Unver, a project manager at TCA, explained it to me the TCA is trying to shift from a defensive to an offensive footing. This means instead of simply vocalising their objection to negative comments and perceptions, the TCA is attempting to combat the foundation of support and ignorance upon which these negative images stand.

I think more than the president and prime minister talking it's people to people diplomacy. That's the only way we're going to educate Americans and Turks. And

that's the only way to fix the relationship, more than even policy. You have Americans coming back from Turkey saying what a great place it is, saying how hospitable Turks are, how they were so interested in learning about the culture. It's a way of reaching out, and in that way the African American community, Native American community, Hispanic community cannot think Turks are scary and you know, the stereotypical thing (Unver).

In other words TCA is targeting the broader American public in the hope that by exposing them to Turkey these students will have more sympathy for Turkey's prerogatives and narratives in the future. By sending them to places like the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, which only Turkey recognises as a legitimate country, it hopes to build soft support amongst non-Turkish Americans for its territorial claims. In short, its programmes work to undermine stereotypes, negative images and narratives of 'otherness,' while at the same time bolstering the validity of Turkish nationalist framings.

ATA-DC and the Annual Turkish American Festival in Washington DC

This same logic underlies ATA-DC's annual Turkish festival in Washington DC. Established in 2003, the DC festival is one of many Turkish cultural events held throughout the year in the United States. The longest-running of these, which takes place in New York City under the auspices of the Federation of Turkish American Associations, began in 1981 as a protest march against attacks by Armenian extremists (Micallef, 2004). These gatherings have since evolved into multi-day celebrations with little political immediacy, but I argue their core function and *raison d'être* remain the same. Through spectacle and fun the organisers of these events hope to combat stereotypes and negative perceptions of Turkey and Turkish Americans. In doing so they seek to undermine what they perceive to be the foundations of Armenian and Greek strength: an ignorance and 'othering' of Turks as well as solidarity and identification with Armenians and Greeks as both Americans and as Christian 'co-religionists' (Insight Turkey, 2001). Thus organisers of the ATA-DC Turkish Festival and the TCA study abroad programmes seek to

engender sympathy through familiarity and foster a more reflective public less confident of what it does and does not 'know.'

Most of the participants [in the festival] are Americans [and] it's [when] the most number of Turks come together. I mean, even the Turks who don't go to any Turkish organisation would go to that. And even Turks who don't want to volunteer in any organisation would like to volunteer for the Turkish festival because they think it's the one event that makes a difference. ... We invited all organisations to be a part of it, whether they have come or not, we invited them. And we invited, also, people who covered their head, or they don't cover their head, or they are wearing miniskirts, or long skirts, or whatever. You see, when you come to our festival, people of all perspectives, all types, all walks of life (Cabbar).

Cabbar made a point of the fact that most participants at the festival are non-Turkish Americans. When they come they eat Turkish food. They see the religious as well as the secular dancing and laughing, speaking English yet interspersing it with Turkish. Cabbar's description of the participants' diversity reflects both the changing composition of the Turkish American population and ATA-DC's attempts to adapt to this. Such mixing of secular and religious individuals, which Cabbar highlights as a positive aspect of the festival, is new. "Up until now public performances of Turkishness have emphasised the secular, well-educated segments of Turkish society" (Micallef, 2004:240). However, as these older groups have adapted, younger generations have come of age, and conservative Turks have become more visible in society. There have been some signs of change in this regard. That said, the goal of presenting a whole or partial cross-section of the Turkish American population in such a public manner remains the same: to leave visitors with a positive impression of the Turkish community in the United States. This festival works in the opposite direction as well, to invigorate ethnic-Turkish individuals to see themselves as Turks, take pride in their Turkish heritage, and come together *as Turks*. Micallef (2004:240), studying past calls for participation, notes they are "a call for unity for all of the Turks, a call to unite in front of the stranger and to show a strong presence." Such spectacles thus serve to enliven the Turkish diasporic consciousness on a positive, rather than defensive, basis.

3.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have shown that diasporic identity is not a given. It is constructed, produced. I have further shown that this identity construction is political and takes place in a competitive context. Many different individuals and groups, acting from divergent positions and pursuing their own agendas, compete to attribute specific values, ideas, and political agendas to Turkish Americans: to define and label them in a certain way.

I have shown how Turkish Americans were first moved to action by Greek responses to Turkey's 1974 invasion of Cyprus and the rise of violent Armenian extremism in the 1980s. This triggered the formation of a reactive, oppositional Turkish American political consciousness which, among the old guard at least, has not decreased in fervour. This attitude is encapsulated by the title of this chapter. "We are not..." illegal invaders or *génocidaires*, they argue, there is another side to the story which has not been heard. Although the Cyprus issue largely fell off the agenda with Cyprus' accession to the European Union in 2004, the efforts to prevent the recognition of the events of 1915-16 as 'genocide' have only increased over the years. In pursuing their agenda – defending against perceived insults and anti-Turkish prejudice, arguing positions similar or identical to those of the Turkish government, and promoting Turkishness and Turkish nationalism in the United States – these organisations replicate many of the functions of the Turkish state overseas and thus extend the state's reach into the diaspora. All this is discussed in much greater depth in the following chapters.

I have also shown that the Turkish American diaspora is currently experiencing a 'changing of the guard' in parallel to a similar change to Turkey's domestic power structure. Since 1970 more conservative immigrants, often starting lower down on the socioeconomic ladder, have come to greatly outnumber the original elite migrants of the 1950s and 1960s and present a separate, substantive challenge to the identity of these 'children of the revolution.' These new migrants were often unwelcome in existing Turkish American organisations. They responded by founding their own organisations which focused more on community and religion and were less consumed with the political preoccupations of the old guard. In recent years

these groups have taken steps to increase their own political standing separate from, but not in direct competition with, old guard institutions. This bifurcation, which obstructs the possibility of political unity amongst the Turkish American population, weakens the Turkish American activist community even as it continues to battle the larger, more established Armenian and Greek communities. It has prevented Turkish Americans from maximising and actualising their potential political impact.

To counter this Turkish American activists have looked to both the broader American public and Turkic co-ethnics for support. In doing so some activists, such as Günay Evinch of the ATAA, utilise the ambiguity of the word ‘Turk’ in order to maximise its appeal and elide opposing identities for political ends. “Do we have to have an ethnic definition of our citizenship? ... can we not say ‘happy is he who calls himself Turk’ in terms of citizenship, pure citizenship?” Evinch argued to me. This is an elegant statement, but it invites question when juxtaposed with Evinch’s efforts in the Say Turk campaign. In the above quote, he erases Kurdish identity and subsumes it under the ambiguous term Turk, while in the Say Türk campaign he appealed explicitly along ethnic lines in asking fellow Turkic peoples to “count themselves a Turk.”

This demonstrates the fluid construction and instrumentalisation of Turkish American identity, as well as the power-laden and political nature of these processes. In short, Evinch exploits the dual nature of the word ‘Turk’ as both an ethnic and national identifier without changing the vocabulary involved. He papers over the ATAA’s opposition to Kurdish separatism by speaking in nationalist language and downplays political differences with Gülenists and the new guard by simultaneously appealing for ethnic unity. In this manner he is able to pursue ATAA’s Kemalist, anti-Armenian, anti-Kurdish-separatist agenda while still presenting the appearance of a united front to the power brokers on Capitol Hill, the passive majority of everyday Turkish Americans, and potential sympathisers in the broader American population. In short, Evinch, in his capacity as ATAA’s president, is deliberately attempting to control the discourse about what it means to be a Turk in the United States in pursuit of ATAA’s political agenda.

This chapter has focused on the makeup of a small group of Turkish American activists working in Washington DC, their history, and the internal fissures and variations of the Turkish American community. In the following two chapters I look at one of the activists' main areas of operation, particularly for the old guard: their opposition to efforts within the United States to declare the massacres and deportations of Armenians by Ottoman forces during World War I as 'genocide.' Following this, in Chapter 6, I will look at organisational efforts to reach out to the broader Turkish American community in order to strengthen their base of support. Most Turkish Americans I met during my time there, while certainly aware of the issues cited above, have chosen not to engage full-time with these debates. I will consider how the organisations' messages of commitment, solidarity and mobilisation were received by *less* prominent, wealthy and connected members of the Turkish American community. Finally, I will look at the media coverage of these organisations' activities in both Turkey and the United States, and how this might serve as an echo chamber and amplifier for the rhetoric of Turkish American activism.

Chapter 4

Debating Genocide I: Constructing the Counter-Narrative

A long habit of not thinking a thing wrong, gives it a superficial appearance of being right, and raises at first a formidable outcry in defence of custom.

—Thomas Paine, Common Sense

On April 23rd, 2011, US President Barack Obama gave a speech to commemorate the massacres and mass deaths of the Armenian population in the Ottoman Empire in 1915 (hereafter, the events of 1915).²¹ He found many ways to describe what happened, including “horrific events,” “one of the worst atrocities of the 20th century,” and “1.5 million Armenians were massacred and marched to their death.” He even referred to the *Medz Yeghern*, the ‘catastrophe’, which is the Armenian descriptor for the events of 1915 and is used in the same way that Jews refer to the Jewish Holocaust as *shoah* and the Arabs refer to the 1948 Arab-Israeli

21. As explained in Chapter 3 (see footnote 11, page 65), this thesis engages with the debate over *which language* should be used to refer to deportation and massacres of Armenians by the Ottoman Empire in 1915 and 1916. This is widely referred to by Armenians and scholars as the Armenian Genocide, while Turkey and Turkish Americans largely refute this definition. In order to research the dynamics of the debate while abstaining from questions of right and wrong – see Tsing’s analogy with haunting on page 44 – I have opted for the most neutral language possible. Henceforth I will simply refer to the historical events as the ‘events of 1915,’ and the argument over which term to use as the ‘Recognition debate.’ Referring to the ‘events of 1915’ mirrors other attempts at neutral language found in ICTJ (2002; 2003)

war as *an-nakba*.²² Obama did not, however, utter the word ‘genocide.’ In abstaining from this all-important word he broke a promise made on the 2008 campaign trail while he was a sitting US senator.

The Armenian Genocide is not an allegation, a personal opinion, or a point of view, but rather a widely documented fact supported by an overwhelming body of historical evidence. The facts are undeniable. An official policy that calls on diplomats to distort the historical facts is an untenable policy. As a senator, I strongly support passage of the Armenian Genocide Resolution (H.Res. 106 and S.Res. 106), and as President I will recognise the Armenian Genocide.^a

House Resolution 106, the Armenian genocide resolution to which Obama referred, did not pass in 2008. Since Obama entered office he has, in the face of strong pressure from the Turkish government and pro-Turkish lobby groups, not recognised the events of 1915 as a case of ‘genocide’ and his administration has actively worked against the passage of similar resolutions in both houses of Congress.^b This is not aberrant behaviour on the part of the Obama administration, and every president in the past 25 years has found reason to avoid the term (ANCA, 2001; Clinton, 2000; H.Res. 252). Indeed, the introduction of a Congressional resolution calling on the president to use ‘genocide’ in his annual commemorative address, the subsequent reaction from the Turkish government and Turkish American activists, and its eventual non-passage has become a recurring dance in Washington DC with no hint of stopping in the near future.

Many scholars have endeavoured to address the empirical question of whether or not the events of 1915 constitute genocide (see, among many others, Akçam, 2006; Dadrian, 1995; Lewy, 2005; Suny *et al.*, 2011). This will also be the task of the Joint History Commission that was established as part of the (now suspended) 2009 Turkey-Armenia Protocols, if it is ever allowed to form. It will entail the opening of archives, the exchange of academics, and a thorough review of the available evidence. However, further inquiry into the historical evidence will do little to solve the

22. Both *shoah* and *an-nakba* translate to ‘catastrophe’ from Hebrew and Arabic, respectively.

Recognition debate in American politics, because at its heart this debate is not about facts and evidence, which are comparatively well-established in this case. Rather, as I shall argue, this debate is about politics, identity, and discursive control.

The literature is largely silent on the political dynamics of this debate, specifically with regard to the American domestic political conflict over whether or not to recognise the events of 1915 as genocide. In this and the following two chapters I analyse these dynamics, which I refer to collectively as the ‘Recognition debate,’ as a matter of political discourse rather than as a matter of ‘truth.’ Furthermore, I examine the Recognition debate’s implications for the construction and form of Turkish diasporic consciousness.

I suggest that the current political debate on what to call the events of 1915 has little to do with relating the historical record to the internationally accepted definition of genocide put forth in the United Nations (1948) *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*. This is partly because the facts themselves are largely not in dispute, and in part because the parties engaging in the discourse are more concerned with the political ramifications than with a neutral historical inquiry. It is more accurate to describe this debate as a competition between two opposing ideologies for control of the discursive field, i.e. for defining what can and cannot be said regarding the events of 1915. By ideologies, I mean ways “of representing aspects of the world ... that contribute to establishing or sustaining unequal relations of power” (Fairclough, 1995:9). One ideology, which is dominant in America but not in Turkey, is that the events of 1915 constitute genocide. The basic narrative is that “massive deportations and massacres of a peaceful, unthreatening people were ordered by and carried out by the Young Turk authorities” (Suny, 2009:932). The other, which is dominant in Turkey but not America, is that the events of 1915 do not constitute genocide, as they constitute “an understandable response by a government to a rebellious and seditious population in time of war and mortal danger to the state’s survival” (2009:932).

I argue that the Recognition debate is fundamentally about establishing and resisting lexical hegemony of a particular ideology in the discursive field regarding the events of 1915. Lexical hegemony exists when “the unwritten and unspoken conventions for

the use of a particular word or expression in connection with particular events or behaviours” (Fairclough, 1995:37), in this case ‘genocide,’ becomes the exclusive term to the extent that it precludes all other possible word choices. Lexical hegemony is thus achieved when the use of a certain word or way of describing something becomes incontrovertible, uncontested and normal (see also the discussion on page 35). The Recognition debate is not about the facts: it is about narratives, identities, myths, and what is ‘known,’ without need of verification, to be true.

The Turkish American activists featuring in this chapter speak from a different ideological position than that of Armenian Americans and their allies, one that is powerful *within Turkey* but at odds with the dominant narrative in the United States. Mainstream thinking in America is that the events of 1915 do in fact constitute a genocide. According to the Armenian National Committee of America, 42 states have “by legislation or proclamation, recognised the Armenian Genocide” (ANCA, 2013). Nevertheless, the President of the United States continues to avoid using the term. The House of Representatives passed a bill recognising the events as a genocide in 1975 and 1984, but these bills never passed the Senate and thus were not enacted (H.Res. 252). Bills similar to these have been periodically introduced over the past quarter century, and lately with increasing frequency, but all have so far failed to pass. Thus the Turkish position, albeit a minority stance, seems just powerful enough to prevent the term ‘Armenian genocide’ from attaining complete lexical hegemony.

The contest I have just described is the central topic of this chapter as well as the one that follows. I begin with some background on the events of 1915, as well as a short history of the Recognition debate itself. I then look at the roots of the Turkish official position by examining the Turkish historiography of the events of 1915, its relationship with Turkish nationalism, and the world events that brought about its synthesis. Following this, in the second half of the chapter, I return to my research in Washington DC. I demonstrate that opposing Recognition is an area of common cause for many of the Turkish American activists featured in this thesis, and then analyse the major strains of counter-narrative they put forth in the debate. I argue that Turkish American activists strive to retain their small opening against lexical

hegemony by promoting counter-narratives that: a) emphasise that genocide is a crime for which Turkey has not been convicted in a court of law; b) shift the motive for targeting the Ottoman-Armenian population from that of ethnicity – a genocidal offence – to that of enemy within a context of war; and c) focus on shared suffering and the general brutalities of war, thereby demonstrating that what happened to the Ottoman Armenians is unexceptional even in its cruelty.

4.1 THE EVOLUTION OF THE RECOGNITION DEBATE

The Recognition debate has been going on for decades. The first resolution recognising the events of 1915 as genocide appeared in 1975, when Turkish Americans were already reeling from the American reaction to the Cyprus invasion and the rise of Armenian extremist violence (see Section 3.1). House Joint Resolution 148 designated April 24, 1975 – the 60th anniversary of the commonly cited ‘start’ of the events – as the National Day of Remembrance of Man’s Inhumanity to Man. It called on the president to “issue a proclamation ... of remembrance for all the victims of genocide, especially those of Armenian ancestry who succumbed to the genocide perpetrated in 1915” (H.J.Res. 148). It was passed in the House but died in committee in the Senate, and thus never came into force. Since that time at least 20 resolutions including the term ‘Armenian Genocide’ have been introduced, and defeated. The last president to use the term genocide in reference to the events of 1915 was Ronald Reagan on April 22nd 1981, when he said, “like the genocide of the Armenians before it, and the genocide of the Cambodians, which followed it – and like too many other persecutions of too many other people – the lessons of the Holocaust must never be forgotten” (H.Res. 252).

Only the most basic historical facts are necessary to give the reader some context before moving on to a more thorough discussion regarding the narratives of the events of 1915. In 1914, following more than a century of territorial losses, the geography of the Ottoman Empire encompassed present day Turkey, the Arab countries west of Iran and east of Egypt, and most of the Arabian Peninsula. What is now the Republic of Armenia was part of the Russian Empire; however, Armenian-speaking Christians also lived throughout the Ottoman Empire, with

concentrations in the southern and eastern Anatolian provinces. Politically, the Ottoman Empire was under the leadership of a small group of military officers known as the Young Turks and their associated political party, the Committee for Union and Progress. The Young Turks and their sultan predecessors had been clashing with Armenian nationalism since at least the 1870s. The Armenian nationalist movement was part of a larger wave of ethno-nationalism that swept over Europe after the French Revolution and had taken root among the Christian populations of the Ottoman Empire.

When war came in 1914 the Ottoman Empire entered on the side of the Central Powers. They quickly found themselves incurring heavy losses as Allied forces invaded Egypt and Palestine, landed near the Ottoman capital Istanbul at Gallipoli, and the Russian Army opened a front against the Empire in the northeast Caucasus region.²³ As these world events unfolded, relations with the Armenian population only got worse. Some Armenians took up covert arms against the Ottomans, there were pockets of rebellion, and some fought openly alongside the Russian army when it invaded. “When in the first year of war the empire suffered a series of defeats in the east, its principal leaders became convinced that Armenians presented an existential threat to their power. Sometime in March 1915, they decided to carry out a vicious policy of deportation, combined with selective killing, to clear the region of Armenians” (Suny, 2011:40).

These basic facts are largely non-controversial. There is consensus on all sides that starting in 1915 Armenians were singled out for deportation to the Syrian desert and many were killed along the way. There is strong disagreement on the number of deaths, with estimates ranging from a few hundred thousand to the commonly-quoted, 1.5 to 2 million. However, all scholarly sources and sides of the debate agree that the number of deaths is well above *one*, which is the minimum

23. See Fromkin (1990) for a full treatment of the Allied war effort in the Ottoman theatre.

number of deaths required for genocide under the UN Convention.²⁴ Thus, while “statistics have always been a crucial propaganda aspect of the Armenian question” (Salt, 2003) they have no legal bearing on whether or not a genocide occurred. As a 2008 legal analysis from the International Centre for Transitional Justice points out, this common ground covers three of the four points necessary to label the events of 1915 genocide. “The only relevant area of disagreement is on whether the Events were perpetrated with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such” (ICTJ, 2002). And *intent* is where it all breaks down. While the vast majority of scholars argue that the events of 1915 constitute genocide, that intent has been demonstrated, the Turkish government and some dissident scholars argue otherwise.²⁵ As noted on page 103, these scholars stress the idea that Armenian nationalists provoked a beleaguered country at war, which then took the necessary steps to remove the internal threat to its security (see Suny, 2009:932, also Erickson, 2011). Melson (1992) has appropriately labelled this line of reasoning as the “provocation thesis.”

The events of 1915 have played a formative role in the national identity constructions of both Turks and Armenians. They quite literally helped create the Armenian diaspora by scattering the Armenian population. The Republic of Armenia made recognition of the events of 1915 a part of its *raison d'être* in its 1990 declaration of independence, and it was the motivation for violent Armenian extremists in the 1970s and 1980s (see page 65). As de Waal (2010:2) succinctly put it, “for the Armenian diaspora, most of whom are grand-children of surviving Anatolian Armenians, this tragedy defines their identity.” Bloxham (2005:207) makes a similarly strong statement for the Turkish side as well: “Denial has also

24. Article 2 of the United Nations' (1951) Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide states: “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.” (my emphasis)

25. These are primarily Bernard Lewis (1968), Stanford Shaw (1977, 2008), Justin McCarthy (1995, 2006), Heath Lowry (1990) and Guenter Lewy (2005).

grown to serve a vital function in the process of myth-making about the origins of modern Turkey, and therefore in the formation of Turkish national identity.” Suny (2011:41) argues similarly, noting that “the connection between ethnic cleansing or genocide and the legitimacy of the national state underlies the desperate efforts to deny or distort the history of the nation and the state’s genesis.”

What, precisely, is being denied here, and why, is something of an issue. As I posited earlier, the Recognition debate – meaning the political debate for recognising the events of 1915 as genocide in the United States – is not a debate over the evidence. Very few of those engaged in the debate are trained historians and thus nearly everyone active in this conflict is acting on received information. Activists and government officials do not take this received information and compare it to the definition of genocide put forth in the UN Genocide Convention and make their arguments from there. As previously stated, the Recognition debate is not about the facts: it is about narratives, identities, myths, and what is ‘known,’ without need of verification, to be true. Thus, for the purposes of this chapter it is not so much the historical background that is interesting but the *historiography* of the events of 1915. Who and what are the sources of this knowledge? Where does the received wisdom come from, and what were the motivations, world views, preconceptions and bases of analysis of those who created it? It is to these questions that I now turn.

4.2 TURKISH HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE EVENTS OF 1915

The corpus of literature on the events of 1915 is large but of dubious quality. This is true for both sides of the debate. Gwynne Dyer assessed the situation in the mid-1970s, saying “the great majority of Turkish and Armenian historians remain frozen on this issue in the attitudes their predecessors had already adopted by 1916. ... There have been perhaps as many as a thousand books and articles published on the subject ... but there has been little new and respectable research” (1976:100–02). The situation has improved somewhat since then, but in reviewing the literature on the events of 1915 one is struck by the unashamed bias of many authors. It is not surprising that in the same article Dyer was moved to write, regarding an article

published in *Armenian Studies*, that “one would have to go far to find a richer blend of polemic, distortion, ideological cant, exaggeration, vituperation and illogic” (Dyer, 1976:102). Thus this has typically not been a field characterised by the marked detachment of its authors, even with regard to the work of professional historians. The state of this scholarship makes it extremely difficult for the average reader, including those working at the Turkish American organisations in DC, to find balanced works on the topic.

This thesis does not focus on Armenian narratives and thus I do not cover them here.²⁶ The origins of the official Turkish narrative, on the other hand, lie very much within the themes that run throughout this thesis. This narrative was formed on a primarily nationalist and defensive footing with the intent to protect the legitimacy and reputation of the nascent Turkish Republic. Since the 1970s, when the Recognition debate in the United States began, the Turkish state has used the myriad tools at its disposal to propagate its official account of the events of 1915 within broader nationalist discourses. For these reasons, in this section I first give some brief background on Turkish nationalism and the State’s role in its production. Following this I discuss the construction of the official narrative of the events of 1915 and its place within the overall nationalist rhetoric.

4.2.1 ‘Turkishness’ and Turkish Nationalism

Turkish nationalism, known as Kemalism after Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey and its president until his death in 1938, is a hybrid of the *jus soli* and the *jus sanguinis* models of national belonging. On the one hand the Turkish state has accepted, with few exceptions, that everybody born in Turkey is ‘Turkish,’ while on the other hand it has historically cast a more favourable eye on those it deems ethnically Turkish, regardless of where they were born (Yeğen, 2004). Under Kemalism the word ‘Turk’ and the concept of ‘Turkishness’ thus simultaneously serves as an ambiguous identifier of citizenship, ethnicity, and religious/linguistic/cultural community. In other words, one’s ‘Turkishness’ is a

26. Examples and analyses of the Armenian narrative include: Barseghyan (2007), Panossian (2002, 2003), Suny (2001) and Suny *et al.* (2011).

matter of degree. Çağaptay (2002) argued that in the 1930s – the period known as High Kemalism – Turkishness had three “concentric zones ... an outer territorial one, a middle religious one, and an inner ethnic one. ... The further away a group was from the centre, the more unaccommodating was the Turkish state towards it” (2002:77). Yeğen (2004), who analysed the many iterations of the Turkish constitution and the accompanying parliamentary record, reported similar findings, further arguing that this differential perception has not disappeared over time. Likewise İnce (2012:11) argued that “in Turkey, being a Turk has tangible benefits, since only Turks are full members of the nation and considered loyal citizens. Furthermore, not being regarded as a Turk leads to the stigma of being an imperfect citizen.”

That said, ethnicity and place of birth are in a sense proxies for gauging potential Turkishness, but they do not offer definitive proof. Çağaptay (2006) and Yeğen (2004), among others, have pointed out that ‘Turkishness’ has been conceptually understood as something that may be ‘acquired’ by certain groups of non-ethnic Turks, and the government has historically engaged in projects of ‘Turkification’ (see also Yeğen, 1996a, 1996a; Zeydanlıoğlu, 2008). Thus, rather than ethnicity or place of birth, the supreme characteristic of ‘Turkishness,’ according to Kemalist ideology, is *loyalty* to the Turkish state and the (imagined) Turkish nation (İnce, 2012:9). Aydıngün and Aydıngün (2004) argue that Atatürk and Ziya Gökalp, the 19th-century ideologue commonly cited as the ‘father of Turkish nationalism,’ expressed similar sentiments. Loyalty, as these authors use the term, connotes something more than acceptance of Turkish governmental authority. Instead, loyalty means internalised acceptance of and adherence to the state ideology of Kemalism, three of the six tenants of which are reverence for the state, the nation, and the republic. Kemalism is a touchstone of modern political life in Turkey and thus adherence to its principles is the ultimate barometer of Turkishness.

Kemalism in contemporary Turkey is a public philosophy that embraces almost every topic and serves as a fundamental legitimizing norm and myth. Indeed, it is frequently utilized to evaluate the various ideas and actions that gain currency in Turkish public life (Ulgen, 2010:375).

The institutions of the Turkish state are powerful producers of Turkish nationalism and conceptions of ‘Turkishness.’ Foremost among these are the educational, military, and official media apparatuses. The Turkish state engages extensively in the production of official history, which it disseminates through school curricula and textbooks (Ersanlı, 2002), and ‘Atatürkism/Kemalism’ is one subject included in national, standardised testing. In addition to this the Turkish military practices universal male conscription, which serves to further indoctrinate half the population with a certain set of values and a world view. The Turkish military has historically viewed itself as the ultimate defender of secularism and Kemalism in the Turkish Republic (Dixon, 2010; Navaro-Yashin, 2002), and so the vigour with which this indoctrination is carried out should not be underestimated. Many studies on Kemalism and Turkish nationalism, their construction, and their prominent roles in current-day Turkish politics exist, and there is no need to repeat all their findings here (see, among others, Casier and Jongerden, 2011; Ciddi, 2009; Kadioğlu, 1996; Navaro-Yashin, 2002; Yeğen, 1996b; Yerasimos *et al.*, 2000). Of these, Navaro-Yashin (2002) offers an especially trenchant analysis of the Turkish state’s use of everyday events, public spectacle, symbols, and Atatürk’s legacy to maintain and construct a specific, nationalistic Turkish identity.

Turkish law also plays a major role in institutionalising the reification of Atatürk and Turkish national identity while discouraging dissent and alternative narratives in public speech and the media. It is illegal to “insult Atatürk’s memory,” and one section of the Turkish penal code deals with “crimes against symbols of state sovereignty and the reputation of its organs.”²⁷ This makes it a custodial offence to insult the president, national anthem, republic, justice system, military, government, or parliament, as well as to damage or insult the flag. The most notorious and far-reaching of these provisions is Article 301, which prior to 2008 made it a crime to

27. Law 5816 (est. 1951) protects Atatürk’s memory (*Atatürk’ün hatırasına alenen hakaret eden veya söven kimse ... cezalandırılır*). Law 5237 § 4.3 (the Turkish Penal Code, est. 2004) regards the protection of state symbols and reputation. Article 301 of law 5237 was modified in 2008 by law 5759. Insulting Turkishness was also criminalised in the previous criminal code, which was in force from 1926 to 2005 (Karcıoğlu, 2008). Law 5651 extends defamation protection to the Internet, allowing the government to block sites which insult Atatürk.

insult ‘Turkishness’ (*Türklüğü aşağılayan kişi*), and after 2008 penalised insults to ‘the Turkish Nation’ (*Türk Milleti*).²⁸ These laws are actively used as a basis for charges, and “Article 301 ... has been used to punish journalists who state that genocide was committed against the Armenians in 1915, discuss the division of Cyprus, or criticise the security forces.” (Freedom House, 2012). While the vast majority of cases are dismissed, some go through and a number of high profile intellectuals and journalists – Elif Şafak, Can Dündar, Ahmet Şık and Orhan Pamuk among them – have been tried under its provisions. These regulations combine with a raft of other legal provisions, as well as with other forms of government soft-power (see Alemdar, 2013), to censor and self-censor the Turkish media. This results in a government with strong control over public discourse and the production of knowledge (see Freedom House, 2012).

4.2.2 The Creation of the Official Turkish Position on the Events of 1915

For much of the 20th century the Turkish government was largely silent on the issue of the events of 1915, save for a handful of publications published immediately following the war, such as the memoirs of key Turkish officers and official reports from Ottoman records. Göçek (2011:45) reports that “none of these works ... question the occurrence of the Armenian ‘massacres’ (‘genocide’ did not yet exist as a term)” and Zürcher (2011) confirms these findings.

Turkey’s official line on the events of 1915 can, like so many things, be traced to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. In October 1927 Atatürk gave a speech (*Nutuk*) to his party’s congress. It lasted 36 hours and 31 minutes (over six days of session), and in it he gave his version of the Turkish War of Independence and the formation of the Turkish Republic. It has been described as the “master-narrative of official Turkish historiography” (Ulgen, 2010:372) and as having “a monopoly ... over the narrative of the Turkish nation ... through which the definition and parameters of the national myth in the Turkish context is outlined” (Adak, 2003:512). Ulgen (2010), who analysed The Speech in reference to the events of 1915, points to what might be

28. Freedom House (2012) regards this as one of several cosmetic changes to the law with no salient repercussions.

described as ground-zero for the official ideology. I can do no better than to quote her at length here:

At the very beginning of [The Speech] – literally within the first few pages of the approximately 600-page document – Kemal discusses the Armenian deportations and defines the violence [towards Armenians] in the eastern provinces as ‘cruelties and murders’, stressing that ‘the [Turkish] people’ (*millet*) were never involved in the ‘mistreatment’ committed by some ‘instigators and agitators’ (2010:385).

...

While the 1915 deportations are usually restricted to being ‘some unfortunate events’, ‘incidents’ or ‘mistreatment in which the people had taken no part’, the violence *Turks* suffered at the hands of the Armenians is reified as a policy of *extermination and savagery* [against the Turks] unique in history in the context of an ongoing narrative of the oppressed [Turkish] nation (*mazlum millet*) (2010:390, my emphasis).

While acknowledging that Armenians did suffer in isolated incidents, Atatürk frames the conflict as one in which Armenians exterminated and oppressed Turks, rather than the other way around. It is through this narrative that the official Turkish history and interpretation of the Great War, was, for all intents and purposes, set. Dissent was not tolerated in the infant Turkish Republic. It was a one party system and the press was subject to draconian controls. “With alternative accounts of the history of the period silenced, for decades [The Speech] monopolised the writing of the history” of this period (Adak, 2003). With regard to the events of 1915, “the almost unanimous Turkish reaction [was] to try to forget the whole episode” (Dyer, 1976:99), and practically nothing was published on the matter until the 1960s (Göçek, 2011).

The Armenian diaspora, which had been distracted by the Sovietisation of Armenia and had also published little on the events of 1915, itself only began to remember ‘the forgotten genocide’ with the passing of its 50th anniversary. “In an unprecedented way, in the following decades public expressions, political demands, and new scholarly interest in the events of 1915 created among diverse elements of

Armenian communities a more coherent sense of Armenian identity and purpose” (Suny, 2009:22). This galvanisation of the Armenian identity around the events of 1915 and the concomitant sense of injustice gave some in the Armenian diaspora a desire for revenge and recognition. The Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) and the Justice Commandoes of the Armenian Genocide (JCAG) were born.²⁹

Recall ATAA president’s Ergün Kırlikovalı’s formative experience in early 1982 when JCAG assassins killed his friend Kemal Arian, the Turkish Consulate General in Los Angeles (see page 67). This radical act radicalised him, turning him into a life-long activist *against* the demands of the Armenian extremists and, almost by default, a staunch supporter of the only other narrative then available: that of the Turkish government. This narrative, despite having roots in Kemal’s speeches, was actually newly formed. The rise of Armenian militancy and the revival of Armenian activism in the 1960s and 1970s had caught the Turkish Government by surprise as much as it had Kırlikovalı. “So ingrained was the mythicised version of the past ... that when some of the Armenian perpetrators of the attacks were later tried in Western courts, the Turkish Foreign Ministry did not possess a single English-language text to send to the Western public prosecutors to inform them of the Turkish state position on 1915” (Göçek, 2011:45). The Turkish state was thus forced onto a defensive footing in the 1970s with new demands for recognition – remember, the first US recognition bill was passed in 1975 (see page 105) – and it decided to push back.

This current of events outside of Turkey coincided with a domestic political event which, in my estimation, cannot be overemphasised when analysing the evolution of the Turkish official position. On the 12th of September, 1980, the Turkish military seized power in Ankara. As already noted, the military has historically held a large role in Turkish politics and, especially among devout Kemalists, it is a revered and hallowed institution. The military is also a deeply

29. These and similar groups were also active outside the United States, and many attacks by Armenian militants took place throughout the world during this time (see Kurz and Merari, 1985).

conservative institution with strong ties to the Republican Peoples Party (CHP), the political party Atatürk founded and the bastion of the old guard. Thus, just as Turkey's reputation came under attack, the devoutly Kemalist military, with connections to the Kemalist CHP, took absolute control in the capital.

Starting in the 1980s the military leaders went on the offensive with regard to the events of 1915. They did so in a climate of martial law not unlike that of the early republic, i.e. one of severe repression and intolerance of dissent (see page 113). "The [military junta] issued decrees which suspended the constitution, dissolved parliament [and] closed down the political parties ... Without opposition in parliament or from the press, and with the extraordinary legislative powers of the [military junta] behind it, the government implemented virtually any measure it wished" (Ahmad, 1993:182-83). In analysing the military response to the birth of the Recognition debate, Dixon (2010:471) identified a five-pronged strategy:

1. Centralising control over the official narrative
2. Publishing defences of the official narrative
3. Marshalling evidence to support the official narrative
4. Teaching the official narrative to Turkish students
5. Gaining international support for the official narrative

To this end the military rulers commissioned works and mined the archives with the express aim to prove a genocide never occurred. Beginning in 1983 universities began teaching this newly-formed official narrative (Dixon, 2010:473). It stressed pre-war intercommunal harmony and the role of outside agitators in provoking Armenian nationalism, while at the same time downplaying Ottoman culpability by emphasising the inevitable brutalities of war, the suffering of Muslim and Christian alike, and Armenian insurrections (Sunny, 2011). "At the same time, the Armenian question was also introduced in Turkish secondary school textbooks. High school history textbooks, which had previously been silent on the topic, now dedicated several pages to the Armenian question" (Dixon, 2010:473).

Thus, the Turkish school system underwent a curious and extremely rapid transition from not learning anything about the events of 1915 – an absence to

which Kırlıkovalı testified in our interview – to studying an official curriculum carefully, albeit hastily, crafted to reject all accusations of genocide. Other state mechanisms jumped in to support the new narrative. The Turkish ambassador to the US at the time approached academics and Jewish-American organisations, and worked to increase the presence of Turkish American associations, all with the hope of increasing support for the official Turkish narrative. The Turkish government also hired its first lobbyists on Capitol Hill and established the Institute for Turkish Studies in Washington DC with these goals in mind.

Not much has changed in the following three decades. The Turkish government has only hardened its position over the years in response to the many attempts to pressure it into accepting the events of 1915 as genocide. These include the numerous bills in America as well as resolutions from the European Community (1987) and the European Union (2005) that conditioned Turkish membership on recognition (Açar and Rüma, 2007; Mango, 1989). Many Turks in the diaspora and Turkey who lived through this period, such as Kırlıkovalı, had their positions solidified long ago and newer arrivals are products of this re-tooled education system and curriculum. There are, however, some cracks in the edifice. In 2006 Taner Akçam became the first Turkish historian to openly acknowledge that ‘genocide’ had occurred in his book *A Shameful Act: the Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility*. In this work Akçam, who was born in Turkey but now lives in the United States, attempts to pry the lid off the Turkish discussion of the events of 1915 through a re-direction of the symbolic power of Atatürk, arguing that Atatürk himself said the events of 1915 were “a shameful act” (cf. Ulgen, 2010, see also Akçam, 2006). A handful of other Turkish scholars have recently joined Akçam in probing this section of history. Fatma Göçek names this strain of inquiry “post-nationalist critical narrative,” (2011:49) and Göçek herself certainly counts among their number (see also Adanir, 2001; Berktaş, 1990; Dündar, 2001; Suny *et al.*, 2011).

This is the course of events which have brought us to the position we find ourselves in today. The vast majority of the Turkish American activists who are at the heart of this story were brought up in a Turkish education system that emphasised

the Turkish narrative. While the Turkish government remains active in defending the narrative, the Turkish American activists are sincere in their own beliefs and continue to defend this narrative for their own reasons.

4.3 POLITICAL ENTREPRENEURIALISM AND COMMON CAUSE

“The Armenians will always tell you ‘the forgotten genocide’,” ATAA President Ergün Kırlikovalı told me. “Do a Google on it. If you do it today it’s 7-8 million [hits], ... how can you call that forgotten genocide? You never let me forget!” The Recognition debate is a constant in the operations of the Turkish American groups in Washington DC, and it is one area where the interests and aims of many Turkish American groups, especially those of the ‘old guard,’ overlap. Despite their various specialities and audiences, they find, for their own purposes, common ground in the overarching goal of preventing the spread of recognition of the events of 1915 as ‘genocide.’ This common cause extends to, overlaps with, and is influenced by the long-standing policies of the Turkish state regarding the events of 1915. However, I suggest that while soft influence exists between the state organs and Turkish American associations, the Turkish American associations pursue their agenda for reasons independent of the Turkish state.

Cultural, grassroots organisations like the Assembly of Turkish American Associations ostensibly exist to promote Turkish culture and provide a forum for its members to express themselves. When it comes to the Recognition debate these organisations not so much promote Turkish culture as defend it, and there is without doubt strong and genuine popular support for contesting the dominant Armenian narrative. This defensive posture is based on a perception that *all* current-day Turks and the Turkish Republic are being labelled as *génocidaires* because of the actions of the Ottoman Empire, which provokes strong defensive emotions. “I think the burden of a false accusation or an accusation that ... has been motivated within a political context is something that no person should have to put up with. No person should carry that burden,” former ATAA president Günay Evinch told me. “For Turkish Americans, I say, you should defend fiercely, and ask for an objective resolution of this matter. ... The more binding effect of a non-binding resolution is

the forever tattooing, branding of genocide. And I say, that should not be accepted lightly.” I reported in Chapter 3 that the major umbrella organisations have, in recent years, made some attempts to cooperate on areas of common interest (see page 81). The Recognition debate is one topic where they have presented a united front.

The American-Turkish Council (ATC) is one of the two main business advocacy organisations in the capital that focuses on the Turkey-US business relationship. Because the Turkish government credibly and consistently threatens to retaliate in the event of formal recognition – it followed through on this threat when France passed a similar bill in 2011^c – ATC finds it best serves its corporate members by opposing recognition resolutions. “We speculate, but our speculation has always been based upon a conviction on the part of the American Turkish Council leadership, our board, and many of our members that the government of Turkey and the people of Turkey would find some way to get back at the United States for this,” ATC President James Holmes told me.

[France] passed a resolution and the consequence has been that business interests which were identified with France and which sought to compete for government-managed contracts have never been treated as competitive since. We had at the time last year probably something on the order of \$18-22 billion worth of pending deals, which we were confident would not be approved on behalf of American companies if the resolution was passed (Holmes).

The Turkish American Legal Defence Fund, a legal organisation owned by the Turkish Coalition of America, is extremely active in the Recognition debate. Its litigation record in 2010, according to the organisation’s annual report of that year, was entirely Recognition-related, as were its other activities. These included: a) its education outreach programmes; b) a report arguing the Armenian National Committee of America was a hate group; and c) opposing efforts to silence the “contra-genocide viewpoint” (TALDF, 2010). The sole exception to this trend was a letter drafted to Royal Caribbean International in protest of its travel warning to Turkey. The 2010 annual report states that the organisation’s ultimate goal is “to help

develop a national network of Turkish Americans vigilant to attack witting or unwitting bigotry, stereotyping, or discrimination against persons of Turkish heritage or a warping of Ottoman or Turkish history.” Furthermore, “TALDF chooses cases to establish precedents that assist the Turkish American community in general” (2010). Its choices in 2010 suggest that in TALDF’s estimation, the most pressing and effective way to benefit the Turkish American community and protect it from prejudice is by maintaining space to oppose the dominant genocide narrative.

The Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA) and the Turkish Coalition of America (TCA), even apart from its TALDF subsidiary, also stand out for their activity in the Recognition debate. They are tightly linked, and the overlapping roles of several key players within these organisations create a strong, symbiotic, albeit informal, unity of purpose in this matter. This web of relationships is shown in Figure 4.1.

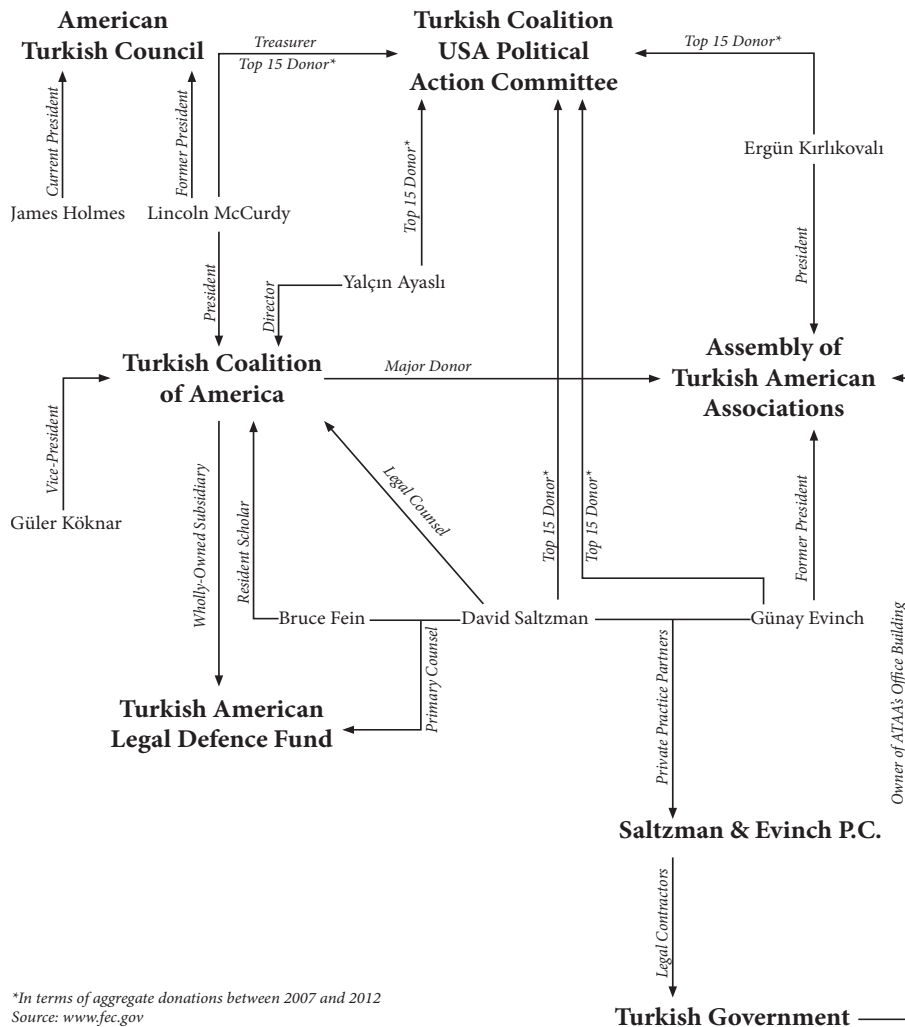
This network is important to consider, as it creates a shared space and a permeability of organisational borders through which ideas and knowledge circulate. While legal firewalls keep different aspects of this milieu officially separate, it is both common and accepted in Washington policy and advocacy circles for one person to hold several titles across different organisations. A confluence of interests and beliefs brings these different actors into the same room with a high degree of frequency.

It is also important to note the links to the Turkish government. As already discussed on page 116, the Turkish state’s early counter-strategy involved encouraging diasporic organisations, hiring lobbyists, and establishing academic posts. The Turkish government continues to explicitly support the activities of diasporic organisations because of their lobbying potential, in addition to hiring professional lobbyists (Bilgili and Siegel, 2011, see also Şenay, 2013, 2012). ‘Emigrant relations’, for lack of a better term, falls under the remit of several departments within the ministries of interior, foreign affairs, labour, and religious affairs. In March 2010 a new Directorate of Turks Abroad and Related Communities was established in an effort to bring coordination to previously disparate efforts. Its functions include: a) determining the official position vis-à-vis

migrant-state relations; b) promoting the retention of Turkish culture overseas; c) outreach to other Turkic groups; d) and supporting the efforts of NGOs in the diaspora. Of this last function, and referencing internal government reports, Bilgili and Siegel (2011) write:

From a governmental perspective, supporting the non-governmental Turkish organisations abroad positively affects the recognition of Turks living abroad, the resolution of their problems and demands. Moreover, it enhances their abilities and capabilities with regards to integration, and also creates the lobby and cooperation power for Turkey abroad. The department will in accordance, finance, coordinate and support projects which are related to these objectives of diaspora engagement (2011:11).

FIGURE 4.1: NETWORK MAP



The Turkish embassy in Washington DC maintains relations with all the groups mentioned in this thesis, and in fact I first met TCA Vice President Güler Köknar and many others at an embassy reception. Ambassador Namık Tan played on ATAA's football team some ten years ago, according to former ATAA President Günay Evinch, and for a nominal fee the embassy provides the building on 18th Street in which ATAA is based.³⁰ David Saltzman, one of two primary counsels associated with TALDF, and Evinch have also worked as direct legal counsel to the Turkish government in their capacities as private-practice lawyers. They have designed their firm, Saltzman and Evinch P.C., as a niche legal practice focused on Turkey – their website is located at *www.turklaw.net* – and they have defended the Turkish government on a variety of fronts. These include suits regarding the claims of Armenian Americans and the continued Turkish military presence in Cyprus.³¹

When I asked about ties with the Turkish government all of my interview subjects stressed that while they do endeavour to maintain relations with Turkish officials, they remain organisationally and financially independent of the Turkish state. Yenil Küçük, the civil engagement officer at ATAA, was the only person to acknowledge the soft influence of these relations, although he denied any direct control of ATAA's activities by the Turkish government as well. The organisations are understandably sensitive to charges of collusion with the Turkish state and the frequent claims (see Holthouse, 2008; Jaschik, 2011) that there is an anti-Recognition 'conspiracy' (e.g., a concerted effort orchestrated by the Turkish government). Not only would this undermine their position in their debate and their rhetorical use of Americanness, but it would leave them open to criminal charges as foreign agents.

30. According to the ATAA's 990 tax filings it incurred \$11,468 in occupancy expenses in 2010, far below any conceivable commercial rent for the size and location of their offices.

31. See *Davoyan v. Republic of Turkey et al.*, F.Supp.2d (C.D.Cal. 2011); and *Crist, et al. v. the Republic of Turkey*, 995 F.Supp.3 (D.D.C. 1998), respectively.

I make no such claims here, and I argue throughout this thesis that the activists at the centre of this story are *independently motivated* to articulate their opposition in the Recognition debate. As Köknar puts it:

I know that when doing research you come across the same names plastered all over the place, all over the rest of the organisations. ...Armenians will take that and make it look like a sinister plot. But the reality is that there's a very small group of Turkish Americans, and friends of Turkey, who really know what's going on and how they can be part of it. It's the same people, who have reached that kind of level of awareness who are contributing to *all* organisations (Köknar).

I largely accept Köknar's explanation, though I remain sceptical of its implied innocence. As is so often the case, the reality is somewhere in between. While the ideologies and beliefs of the Turkish American activists are for the most part the result of formative experiences, their close relationships with current Turkish state officials mean that they are subject to influence by these officials' actions and rhetoric. They also draw on the counter-narratives available to them, many of which are found in the Turkish official position on the Recognition debate.

Figure 4.1 and Köknar's statement also serve to underline the small number of core activists combatting the dominant genocide narrative. They are a vocal, dedicated group and their efforts entail one of the two major forces currently at work against the pro-Recognition narrative (the other consists of the formal, diplomatic manoeuvres of the Turkish government). Because the anti-Recognition side of the debate is largely fuelled by a small cohort of activists, we must be careful about unwarranted extrapolation. The positions of these organisations and their leaders cannot automatically be imputed onto the broader Turkish American community.

Finally, the people found in Figure 4.1 are, regardless of their personal convictions, elite individuals who have made combatting Recognition a large and often lucrative part of their profession. In doing so these activists, facilitated in some respects by the Turkish government, replicate the functions of the Turkish state overseas. They extend the reach of Turkish nationalist ideologies to the United

States, not only reproducing such ideologies within the diaspora but also promoting Turkish nationalist narratives to the wider American public.

4.4 CONSTRUCTING THE COUNTER-NARRATIVE IN AMERICA

It was difficult to conduct an interview during my fieldwork without eventually reaching the Recognition debate. Aside from the more visceral reactions which I will detail later in Section 6.3, such as the feeling of being *personally* found guilty of genocide and of the extreme discontent generated by being compared with the Nazis, I detected three notable strands of counter-narrative which these professional activists utilise to displace and/or undermine the dominant narrative in the United States. They reflect ideas found in official and Turkish mass media discourses, and are the substance of both their educational outreach and their direct lobbying efforts on Capitol Hill. I describe them as: due process, shared suffering, and ethnicity *vs.* enemy.

4.4.1 Due Process

One strain of reasoning, which is strong in the rhetoric of both former ATAA president Günay Evinch and beyond, is legalistic. Genocide is a crime defined by law, crimes are adjudicated by courts not legislatures, and no court has found Turkey or the Ottoman Empire guilty of this crime. Thus a genocide has not been committed by Turkey Q.E.D. Açar and Rüma (2007) found this same argument being used among nationalist commentators in the Turkish press. Evinch, who favoured this argument and emphasised it both times we spoke, customised it to the American context by layering it with pleas to the 'American values' of honesty, fair play, and innocent until proven guilty.

That's why the debate is necessary, a balanced debate is necessary, because you don't want to judge *a people* of committing this crime without their fair day in court. You don't want to do this in an ethnically motivated legislature, because that's not American, that's not fair, that's not justice, that's not separation of powers, separation of the branches of government. And you don't want to do this as America. We signed the UN Convention on Genocide on purpose and accepted the jurisdiction of the [International Court

of Justice] on purpose, and reserved for the federal court the decision of whether or not something has been committed, of whether something constitutes genocide, not the legislature. So, in many respects, I think the debate is necessary to remind people of our values. Remind people of values such as due process and principles such as fairness (Evinch, my emphasis).

The Turkish state also makes strong use of the fact that genocide is a legal crime – for which it has not been found guilty by any court – to justify not only its umbrage but also its argument that the label is inappropriate. It used the term ‘crime’ in conjunction with genocide eight times in its 28-page supporting argument (*amicus* brief) to the court in *Movsesian v. Victoria Versicherung AG*, an insurance claims case. This brief was prepared by David Saltzman of Saltzman and Evinch P.C., who also represents TALDF. In the brief the Turkish state expressed its unequivocal objection to being judged a criminal.³²

But genocide is a crime defined by law and solemnised by a treaty [the UN Convention on Genocide] to which both Turkey and the U.S. are party ... and Turkey resents having any U.S. legislature or other official formulate its own definition of genocide specifically to declare that Turkey or its predecessor state is guilty of this crime (Republic of Turkey, 2011).

Former Turkish Ambassador to the US Nabi Şensoy also sent a letter to the court regarding this case. It was included as an exhibit in the *amicus* brief and reiterated this position.

The U.S. administration apparently understands that the events of 1915 remain a genuine historic controversy and that neither Turkey nor the Ottoman government has ever been tried or convicted of the crime alleged by an authorised neutral arbiter affording the accused the basic protections equivalent to due process. ... Of course, we believe that when Turkish Americans and others in the various states oppose such resolutions on the grounds that they are inappropriate both legally and historically, we agree (Republic of Turkey, 2011).

32. *Movsesian v. Victoria Versicherung AG* is further discussed on page 139.

Evinch twists this strain of legal reasoning somewhat to achieve his goal of fomenting a counter-narrative. When he says, “You don't want *to judge a people* of committing this crime *without their fair day in court. ...*” (my emphasis), he invokes the authority and objectivity of international law, while artfully obfuscating precisely *who* would be on trial. This allows him to suggest rhetorically *that if a trial before the International Court of Justice took place it would be the Turkish people in the defendant's seat*. This of course cannot possibly happen in reality. “An entire people” cannot be put on trial at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), or anywhere else for that matter. In fact, in all likelihood not even the *Turkish state* could be brought to trial at the ICJ.³³ According to an independent legal analysis commissioned by the Turkish Armenian Reconciliation Commission and conducted by the International Centre for Transitional Justice, the UN Genocide Convention “does not give rise to individual criminal or state responsibility for events which occurred during the early twentieth century or at any time prior to January 12, 1951” (ICTJ, 2002:9). It concluded that “no legal, financial or territorial claim arising out of the Events could successfully be made against any individual or state under the Convention” (ICTJ, 2002:5).

Evinch blends the literal and the figurative to his advantage: he appears to be speaking literally (in suggesting that it is inappropriate to use the word genocide until after a guilty verdict is handed down from the ICJ), yet his words only make sense when taken figuratively (it is not possible for the ‘Turkish people’ to have their day in court). But if his words are taken figuratively, they lose the weight of their legal rationale – if it is not actually possible to put the ‘Turkish people’ on trial then they are not the ones standing accused of a crime. Yet Evinch’s argument is intuitively appealing – he reaches the literal conclusion (one ought not to use the term ‘genocide’) by replacing the literal accused (the Ottoman Empire) with the warm, sympathetic concept of ‘a people.’ Furthermore, since nobody can be tried

33. The UN Genocide Convention was originally written to punish individuals, be they “constitutionally responsible rulers, public officials or private individuals” (Genocide Convention, 1951). Finding *states* guilty under the Convention is a relatively new legal innovation (2007) that came about within the context of the Balkan War trials at the ICJ (see *Bosnia v. Serbia*, 2007; Quigley, 2007; Schabas, 2007).

under the law, then a court verdict cannot be the litmus test for deciding whether or not the events of 1915 constitute genocide. It simply means that nobody can be legally found guilty of genocide in the ICJ.

The conflation of nation, state, and people, when it comes to guilt, is not confined to Turkish American activists and the Turkish government. This is apparent from the German and Japanese cases after World War II, while the *denial* of collective or national guilt for historic crimes can be found (among other places) in certain strains of anti-affirmative action arguments in the United States. It is also not new, and the spectre of collective guilt has been a long-standing theme in the Turkish narrative. I have already given several current examples of this sentiment from my interviews, but it can also be found in the work of Turkish scholars from the 1970s when the (current) debate was first gaining steam. Sonyel (1972) for example, who is quoted in Dyer (1976) and described by Dyer as a more scholarly “Turkish apologist” of the 1970s, concluded his article by saying “to hold the Turkish nation responsible ... is a travesty of justice” (1976:101).

Thus, despite the logical fallacies of Evinch’s ‘day in court’ argument, the feeling of being judged *as a people* and being held *personally responsible* for the events of 1915 is very real. It is partially cultivated by activists and the Turkish government, partially autonomously created (recall that Armenian militants in the 1980s did not confine their wrath to Ottoman officials), and partially naturalised within the Turkish national identity construct.

4.4.2 Ethnicity vs. Enemy

A second major strain of counter-narrative addresses the crucial question of intent. As everybody agrees a horrendous number of Armenians were killed, the point of conflict with regard to genocide is *why* they were killed. The counter-narrative posits that the Armenians were not deported and killed because of their ethnicity, nationality or religion (a requirement for genocide), but because they were a hostile enemy. This is known as the provocation thesis (see page 107). This is the core of the official Turkish narrative and it is the argument which most closely speaks to the UN Genocide Convention.

Nobody disputes that the Ottoman-Armenian population was possessed of a general antipathy toward the authorities and that Armenian nationalists had been agitating for decades prior to World War I (Suny, 2011). These activities were raised to a new level with the foundation in 1890 of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation in the Russian Caucasus, which “actively urged the use of terrorist tactics against government officials and pro-government Armenians as a means of coercing them toward the concession of greater rights and privileges for the Armenians in eastern Anatolia” (Dennis, 2011:274). This is the same ARF which hunted down Ottoman officials after the war in 1919, founded the Justice Commandoes of the Armenian Genocide in the United States in 1975, and killed Kırlikovalı’s friend Kemal Arian, the Turkish consulate general for Los Angeles, on 28 January 1982 (see page 66).³⁴

This internal conflict persisted even as World War I increased in ferocity, and the most ardent proponents of the counter-narrative emphasise it by referring to a “civil war” (Suny, 2011:25). The last instance of Armenian resistance before the general deportation orders were issued took place in the eastern city of Van. This is important, as the Van Rebellion, as the counter-narrative titles it, is used as the proof that the Ottoman authorities were justified in declaring *all* Armenians hostile (Kieser, 2011:141). Scholars who accept the events of 1915 as genocide argue that the resistance was not large or widespread enough to justify a general deportation order (see, among others Suny, 2011). In contrast, scholarship sympathetic to the Turkish narrative see the events at Van as being pivotal, as described in Justin McCarthy’s (2006) *The Armenian Rebellion at Van*.

The internal conflict in the pre-WWI Ottoman Empire occupies a special place in the motivation, discourse and intellectual interests of both Evinch and Kırlikovalı. As a law student at Washington & Lee University in the early 1990s Evinch researched and wrote a 100-page report titled “The Armenian Case under the UN Genocide Convention.” After receiving his *Juris Doctor* he went on to study the Van

34. In the pre-war period this fighting reached its height in 1894-96, when Ottoman forces and Kurdish irregulars retaliated against ARF and Armenian nationalist attacks with a series of pogroms against the Armenian population in what are commonly known as the Hamidiye massacres (Lewy, 2005:16). Of course, the exact death toll is contested.

rebellion as a U.S. Congressional Fulbright scholar. Kırlikovalı, who is a remarkable single-track autodidact, has literally dozens of books detailing Armenian resistance to Ottoman rule. The pride of this collection is a large coffee-table book published in Glendale, CA by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation for its centennial (see ARF, 2006). It details with laudatory maps, photographs, and text how militants and arms entered Turkey from the Caucasus and where each skirmish or raid took place. “Even its name tells it all, how double-faced these people are, because the book is called ‘Epic Battles.’ But excuse me, weren’t you killed by the Turks? Weren’t you wiped out by the Turks? ... I take this as a grand confession,” he said. As I sat with Kırlikovalı in his office, he flipped through this book page by page, reading out headings, becoming more agitated as he went.

I'm not saying this, Armenians are saying this. That's why it's important. See, in the West, in London, in New York, in Paris, the people are drinking their coffee and they're reading ‘poor Armenians, they have (sic) no arms, no armies.’ Look at what's really happening (banging on table)! That is what frustrates the hell out of me. Look at this, all the clashes. How come you don't read anything about this in the western press? Not even one. It is incredible. 1890-1986, way before 1914. This is what we're trying to tell the world (Kırlikovalı).

The argument that Armenians were a wartime enemy, as opposed to a hated ethnicity, has a second strain. Some parties argue that outside agitators, specifically American missionaries, maliciously stirred up Armenian nationalism in an effort to destroy the inter-communal harmony of the Ottoman social fabric. Lincoln McCurdy, the president of the Turkish Coalition of America, said:

The US government should foster an environment that should encourage Turks, Armenians to look at the history together, because if you look at the history between the Turks and Armenians, a 1000-year history, 950 years were peaceful co-existence, it was 50 years of violence stirred up by American missionaries and by the European powers. And if you don't include that, that's misleading people. This is exactly how I talk when I'm at these fundraisers (McCurdy).

The historical record on this matter is mixed. On the one hand, there is some evidence that missionaries did indeed work to foster Armenian nationalism (see Fildis, 2012), and it is not difficult to believe this affected the social fabric. On the other, as Suny (2011:25) convincingly points out, the idea that the *status quo* was peace and harmony prior to the rise of Armenian nationalism and World War I is more a construction of the dominant class than a reflection of the reality at the time. Regardless, the themes of treason, betrayal, and conspiracy are potent and palpable elements in Turkish narratives on the events of 1915.

4.4.3 Shared Suffering

The idea that Turkish and Muslim deaths in and around World War I are even *more forgotten* than the ‘forgotten genocide’ is simultaneously the most emotive of the counter-narratives and the least effective. The argument does little to refute allegations of genocide, as long as one subscribes to the idea that two wrongs do not make a right. It is perhaps better viewed as an attempt to debase the ‘specialness’ of the events of 1915 by arguing that, as atrocious as the events of 1915 were, they were unfortunately par for the course and do not deserve special treatment. It may also be viewed as a retort, and it perhaps goes the farthest to explain the visceral, emotive response underlying much of the Turkish and Turkish American resistance in the Recognition debate.

The Ottoman Empire was doing poorly even before World War I. It had been bleeding territory for most of the century 19th century, with some provinces falling under Russian control and others, such as Greece, becoming independent states after protracted conflicts.³⁵ The 1912-13 Balkan War, which immediately preceded World War I, caused “the loss of practically all of ‘European Turkey’” (Adanir, 2001:113), resulting in the deaths and dislocations of hundreds of thousands of Muslims. The Great War itself included many disastrous campaigns and unimaginable civilian suffering. Mere months after WWI ended the Turkish War of Independence began, which sought to restore Turkish territory surrendered by the Ottoman sultans and occupied by foreign armies at the conclusion of WWI. This

35. The Greek Revolution lasted from 1821-1929.

third conflagration ravaged the Anatolian heartland from 1919-1922 and widespread atrocities were committed against the civilian population by both the Turkish and Greek armies (Zürcher, 2005:163).

After ten years of almost continual warfare [Turkey] was depopulated, impoverished and in ruins to a degree almost unparalleled in modern history. ... Some 2.5 million Anatolian Muslims lost their lives, as well as between 600,000 and 800,000 Armenians and up to 300,000 Greeks. All in all the population of Anatolia declined by 20 per cent through mortality (Zürcher, 2005:163).

What is at issue here is a perception that Armenian and Christian deaths are more highly valued than Turkish and Muslim deaths in the discourse. The Turkish Coalition of America (TCA) has championed this line of argument. When I met with them in the summer of 2011 they gave me Justin McCarthy's book, *The Turk in America: Creation of an Enduring Prejudice*,³⁶ and a map they commissioned from him titled "Forced Displacements of 5 million Muslims and 1.9 million Christians, 1770-1923." TCA President Lincoln McCurdy described to me their interest in these productions.

One of the things that we have been doing is trying to educate the general public that what's been happening is that one little sub-chapter of this most violent period of history is being told and you are not hearing the rest of the story. ... You have got to look at the whole period. This is giving confidence to the people to speak up, because many of the stories you hear from Armenian Americans are 'Those horrible Turks killed my grandparents, or my grandparents witnessed their parents being killed by Turks' but no one hears about the stories of Muslim children witnessing their parents or grandparents being machine gunned down by Christians (McCurdy).

None of the activists I interviewed denied that a great number of Armenians died or were killed. However, they stressed that those fighting against the Ottomans had been just as brutal and they desired recognition for all suffering or for none at

36. TCA gave a grant to help fund McCarthy's research for this book, according to the acknowledgements page.

all. “You don’t want to be in a race for the bottom, who suffered the most,” TCA counsel David Saltzman said. But, TCA Vice President Güler Köknar picked up on Saltzman’s train of reasoning, “If anybody will, if a group is out there to be held accountable for something that relates to this history, then everybody ought to be held accountable,” Köknar said. “The other way around is un-American, it’s unfair, it’s certainly not ethical or human rights oriented. It’s just politics.” The activists I spoke with are not the only ones to notice this. Scholars such as Dyer (1976) have noted a tendency to weight the deaths of the two sides differently. Representing a criticism that she repeated several times in her review of 1915 historiography, she wrote of one work, “There is throughout the work an unpleasantly dualistic approach to massacre: Muslim massacres of Christians are a heinous and inexcusable outrage; Christian massacres of Muslims are, well, understandable and forgivable” (1976:105).

The theme of asymmetrical blame, responsibility, and guilt is also a driving force behind ATAA President Ergün Kırlikovalı’s activism and, as he tells it, in his personal story. Two hours into our interview – we spoke for nearly five – we had an altercation of sorts when he asked me “how many Muslims did Armenians kill in World War I?” I admitted I did not know the answer – and I do not believe it is answerable, not least because Armenians were not state actors and because the Ottoman Empire was being attacked on many fronts simultaneously – but he had made his conceptual point.

If you realise this Cameron then you’ll know why I am the way I am. ... It’s not only you, it’s everybody in this country, in the West. When it comes to Armenian victims or victimhood, they’ll blurt out numbers, they’re certain Turks did it, it’s genocide, wah! I’m just turning the medallion around, I’m just asking a simple question. How many Muslims were killed by Armenians? ... Where is the story of those Muslims?! My parents are one of them. Where is their story? That’s why I’m here. I’m here, because of my father.

What followed was a tale of his personal history not repeated from his father’s mouth but re-constructed from his books, his childhood recollections, and other clues held together with conjecture. The way he tells the story, his father Ratip was

born in 1911 in Kırılıkova, a village that was once situated on the northeast part of modern-day Greece that separates Bulgaria from the Aegean Sea and connects Greece to Turkey by land. He was orphaned during the Balkan Wars (1912-13) and shipped by train to Istanbul. Turks were required to take surnames for the first time in 1934, and he chose the name Kırlikovalı, meaning 'from Kırılıkova', as he knew of nobody else alive from his village and thus knew nothing about his own origins. And so the younger Kırlikovalı grew up with a name saying he was from a place that neither he nor his father knew anything about. Then, in the early 2000s, long after Kırlikovalı had begun his activism, he read a dispatch from the British Foreign Office,³⁷ quoted in Justin McCarthy's *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821-1922*, stating that parts of Greece had suffered greatly at the hands of Bulgarian nationalists and "the local Christian population," and it singles out the village of 'Kırılıkova' as "the scene of murders of Turks" (1995:140). He then combined this discovery with other information that suggests Armenian militants were training and operating in that area and he has imputed blame upon them for the loss of his father's town and family. "I'm doing part of this if not most of it for Ratip, my father," Kırlikovalı said. "He couldn't do all these things, he couldn't speak English or write English. But that's his story that was never told."

4.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have endeavoured to accomplish four things. First, I sought to explain the roots of the Recognition debate and provide some background on the events of 1915. Second, I demonstrated that the genesis of the Turkish official narrative regarding the events of 1915 are firmly embedded in the bedrock of Turkish nationalism and the formative discourse of the founder of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Third, I explored the unique unity of purpose created by the Recognition debate which binds many of the organisations studied in this thesis in common cause. The Recognition debate brings this small, tightly-knit group of activists into the same room, often with Turkish government officials as well, and they share many overlapping roles within the different organisations. One

37. Foreign Office 195-2438, no. 7076, Morgan to Lowther, Cavalla, 23 December 1912.

consequence of this is that these activists, even while pursuing their own agendas, inadvertently extend the reach of Turkish state institutions overseas. They do so by replicating Turkish state ideologies and narratives within the Turkish diaspora and defending them in American national politics. Fourth, I sought to explain three major strands of counter-narrative that were prominent in my fieldwork and in the general discourse of the Turkish American activists. These were the themes of due process, ethnicity vs. enemy, and shared suffering. In their own way each of these themes sought to undermine or otherwise confront the dominant narrative in the United States that the events of 1915 constitute genocide, and in many cases relate to the personal and formative experiences of the main actors featured in this present work.

I have argued throughout this chapter that the Recognition debate in the United States today is not about facts, or relating the historical record to the United Nations (1948) *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*. Extremely few of the individuals in this debate are trained historians and thus most are acting on received information. Instead, I have argued that *the Recognition debate is fundamentally about establishing and resisting lexical hegemony of a particular ideology in the discursive field with regard to the events of 1915*. This discussion takes place between many competing actors rooted in different ideological positions; a discussion which has not only been fundamentally shaped by but also continues to shape Turkish identity in the United States.

In this chapter I have detailed what I have come to see as the offensive strategies employed by Turkish American activists, meaning they are bids to change the dominant framing in the United States that the events of 1915 constitute genocide. In the next chapter I look at the defensive strategies employed by these same activists, which are pursued in order to prevent the spread of the term Armenian Genocide and to maintain space in public discourse for dissent and the articulation of minority views.

Chapter 5

Debating Genocide II: Preventing Lexical Hegemony

*The strongest bulwark of authority is uniformity;
the least divergence from it is the greatest crime.*

—Emma Goldman

In the previous chapter I outlined the genesis and characteristics of counter-narratives to the Recognition debate employed by Turkish American activists in Washington DC. These counter-narratives are offensive strategies, bids to change the dominant framing in the United States that the events of 1915 constitute genocide. However, the genocide narrative is sufficiently dominant in the United States that much of the Turkish American activists' work is defensive in nature. The activists seek to maintain space for dissent and the articulation of minority positions, and to prevent the word 'genocide' from attaining complete lexical hegemony in the Recognition debate. Such stretching of the discursive field is most prevalent in two areas. The first is in the courts, and legal challenges to prevent the spread of the genocide descriptor are found in the fields of insurance law, individual complaint cases, and school curriculum development, among others. The second is direct lobbying against recognition resolutions on Capitol Hill.

I begin this chapter by examining several key court cases in the areas of personal defamation, insurance, and educational curriculums, which were opened to prevent the application of the word genocide to the events of 1915. Following that, in

Section 5.2, I detail and contextualise House Resolution 252 (Res. 252), the Congressional record regarding Res. 252, and activities of the Turkish American organisations intended to prevent the resolution's passage. In the final section, Section 5.3, I analyse the media coverage of the Recognition debate during the time Res. 252 was on the agenda.

I argue that the Turkish American groups have achieved limited success in their attempts to maintain space for minority views regarding the events of 1915, especially through their increasing recourse to the legal arena. Their efficacy is less demonstrable in their efforts to oppose Congressional resolutions. In this latter arena, Turkish American groups have little influence compared to other, more powerful actors. Nevertheless they continue to engage in opposing Recognition resolutions, and are working to increase the sophistication and efficacy of their interactions with Congress. I further argue that their discourse in this opposition largely falls along two thematic lines, namely Turkish pride and freedom of expression. However, these groups continue to suffer from perceived problems of credibility, and during the course of Res. 252, they were rarely given a platform in the mass media to express and disseminate their views.

5.1 LEGAL ACTION

Much like other minorities, Turkish activists have begun to use the legal system to bolster their effectiveness against a larger, richer, and generally dominant majority. "The Turkish American public advocacy network has increasingly utilized the legal system in order to ... render more level a political arena which favours the more populated and politically active ethnic adversaries of Turkey in the United States," former ATAA president Günay Evinch wrote in a paper presented at the Ankara Bar Association in early 2008. While other minorities' struggles (e.g., civil rights, gay rights) have focused more on enforcing concrete rights (to education, voting, marriage, etc.), the nature of the Turkish American use of the legal arena is somewhat different. Because Turkish American politics is focused so tightly on discursive control and questions of identity rather than tangible goals, Turkish American lawsuits have focused on using legal mechanisms to stretch the

boundaries of the discursive field in ways that match *their* definition of what can and should be said, as opposed to dominant usage.

The TCA, TALDF, ATAA, and Saltzman and Evinch P.C. have been party/counsel to many court cases which, in one way or another, relate to the Recognition debate. These have concentrated primarily in three areas of law: defamation, insurance claims, and educational curriculums. While these areas of law seem unconnected, the cases under review in this section all share the common denominator of recognising the events of 1915 as genocide. I review the facts of four cases here – two defamation cases, one insurance claim and one education-related suit – and then provide final comments at the end. I argue that, from a discourse perspective, the goals in these cases were two-fold: 1) to prevent further penetration, recognition and acceptance of the events of 1915 as genocide than has already been accomplished to date; and 2) to maintain space for contesting the dominant genocide narrative. These are the mechanical underpinnings of how TALDF pursues its stated mission (see page 118) to combat “bigotry” and the “warping of Ottoman or Turkish history.”

5.1.1 Defamation

In this section I discuss two personal defamation cases. The first was brought by an academic who had published a book arguing against defining the events of 1915 as genocide. The second case was filed by a member of the House of Representatives who was accused of taking payments from the Turkish government to oppose recognition resolutions.

Lewy v. Southern Poverty Law Centre, Inc. (SLPC) was decided July 13th, 2010, in the middle of my fieldwork. Guenter Lewy, the plaintiff and a professor emeritus at the University of Massachusetts–Amherst, published the book *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey: A Disputed Genocide* in 2005. Shortly afterward, the Southern Poverty Law Centre, an Alabama-based organisation “dedicated to fighting hate and bigotry, and seeking justice for the most vulnerable members of society” (SPLC, 2013), published two articles in their newsletter titled ‘State of denial’ and ‘Lying about history.’ The authors of the articles do not mince words. The

first characterises Lewy as a revisionist historian and as “one of the most active members of a network of American scholars, influence peddlers and website operators, financed by hundreds of thousands of dollars each year from the government of Turkey, who promote the denial of the Armenian genocide” (Holthouse, 2008). The second likens those who oppose the framing of the events of 1915 as genocide to Nazi sympathisers and neo-Confederates who “argue slavery was a good thing for Africans” (Potok, 2008). Lewy brought suit against the SPLC, with the TALDF as counsel, claiming “the statements made in the *Intelligence Report* are defamatory because they falsely accuse him of corruption, fraud, and even commission of a crime under the Foreign Agents Registration Act” (Lewy v. SPLC, 2010). SPLC settled with Lewy, paying him an undisclosed sum of money and printing a full retraction, stating in part that SPLC was “wrong to assume that any scholar who challenges the Armenian genocide narrative necessarily has been financially compromised by the Government of Turkey” (Holthouse, 2008).

Schmidt v. Krikorian, et al. takes place in the political rather than the academic realm, but the underlying premise of the case remains the same: TALDF represented a politician accused of receiving money in exchange for her support in the Recognition debate. Bruce Fein and David Saltzman of the TALDF were proactive in pursuing this case, and they approached Schmidt with an offer to represent her rather than the other way around (House Committee on Ethics, 2011). Jean Schmidt served in the US House of Representatives from 2005-2013. She filed a defamation suit in 2009 – first to the Ohio Elections Commission, later in the courts – against David Krikorian, her Armenian American opponent in the 2008 and 2010 congressional campaigns, over statements “concern[ing] support Schmidt allegedly received from the Turkish government and/or Turkish interests in connection with Schmidt’s failure or refusal to support a Congressional resolution condemning as a genocide the deaths during World War I of a great many Armenians” (Schmidt v. Krikorian, 2012). The suit was ruled in Schmidt’s favour.

5.1.2 Insurance

As noted in Chapter 3, California has the largest population of Armenian Americans in the United States. It wields substantial political clout, and so it is perhaps not surprising that California has passed several laws specifically intended to benefit this group. Its revenue code exempts from taxation settlement payments to individuals, and their heirs, “persecuted by the regime that was in control of the Ottoman Turkish Empire from 1915 to 1923.”³⁸ California’s civil code, specifically section 354.4, allows “Armenian genocide victims”³⁹ to pursue legal action for unpaid insurance policies issued between 1875 and 1923 (the birth of the Turkish Republic). It also extends the statute of limitations for these claims until the end of 2016, well beyond normal practice.⁴⁰ Both laws affect the Recognition debate, as they serve to institutionalise Recognition and the term ‘Armenian genocide’ into legislation and case law, the two pillars of the American legal system.

None other than TALDF’s David Saltzman published an article in the peer-reviewed journal *Middle East Critique* that reviewed four cases brought under section 354.4. The intent of Saltzman’s article is plainly stated as “illustrat[ing] why section 354.4’s use of the term Armenian genocide is improper” (Saltzman and Neuwirth, 2011:342). He argues a) the term is superfluous to the law’s actual function because the law does not regard redress for genocide; b) it is unconstitutional as it conflicts with the federal government’s foreign policy prerogative; and c) “it is not in the best interest of the United States to permit California to legislate Turkish history” (2011:342).

Movsesian v. Victoria Versicherung AG, a case that was in the courts for nearly a decade, revolved around the question of item ‘b’ in this list: that foreign policy is the

38. See instructions for Schedule CA 540 and California Revenue and Taxation Code § 17131.2.

39. “Armenian Genocide victim” means any person of Armenian or other ancestry living in the Ottoman Empire during the period of 1915 to 1923, inclusive, who died, was deported, or escaped to avoid persecution during that period (California Code of Civil Procedure § 354.4).

40. Until recently this law allowed claims to be brought up until the end of 2010. It has recently been re-extended (See CAL. C.C.P. § 354.4 for the current law, and *Movsesian v. Victoria Versicherung AG* [670 F.3d 1067 9th Cir.] for the previous version).

exclusive domain of the federal government. It was a lawsuit filed in 2003 by a group of Armenian Americans against three German insurance companies for breach of contract and restitution of claims on Ottoman-era policies. One of the insurance company defendants filed to dismiss the case on the grounds that section 354.4 constitutes a matter of foreign policy as it threatens to affect Turkish American relations, and is thus unconstitutional (*Movsesian v. Victoria Versicherung AG*, 2012:1069). The Turkish government inserted itself in this case with a supporting argument (*amicus* brief) prepared and submitted by Saltzman.

The Turkish government sought to emphasise the foreign policy consequences of the Recognition debate to the court, positing that “no one can speak with more authority as to the Turkey – United States bilateral relationship than the state participants” (Republic of Turkey, 2011). The brief spells out Turkey’s official position on the events of 1915, and argues that the Recognition debate is a matter of foreign policy because: a) the Obama administration shows clear opposition to recognition, and this opposition in large part derives from Turkish governmental concerns; b) Recognition will adversely affect the normalisation of Turkish-Armenian relations and the success of the 2009 Turkey-Armenia Protocols (see page 143), which the Obama administration supports; and c) Ankara views recognition as harmful for Turkey and is willing to take preventative and/or retaliatory action in this matter. Letters from the Turkish Ambassador and the Chairman of the Turkish Parliamentary Foreign Relations Committee confirming these viewpoints were also included in the brief.

The court was thus tasked with determining whether Section 354.4 constitutes a matter of foreign policy, and if so, whether it conflicts with the US Constitution’s supremacy clause, which “gives the federal government exclusive authority to administer foreign affairs” (*Movsesian v. Victoria Versicherung AG*, 2012). The US 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in 2012 that this was indeed the case, stating in its decision that “the law establishes a particular foreign policy for California” and that “Section 354.4 is, at its heart, intended to send a political message on an issue of foreign affairs” (2012), thereby invalidating the insurance claims brought under this section. The case was appealed to the Supreme Court, after having already been

through three rounds of appeal in lower courts, but it was rejected, so this ruling is now fixed.⁴¹

5.1.3 Educational Curriculum

The last case under review here is *Griswold et al. v. Driscoll et al.*, which was decided in August 2010. The Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA) was a plaintiff in this case in conjunction with eight students and teachers in Massachusetts. In brief, the Massachusetts Board of Education was given the task of compiling a curriculum guide for the topics of genocide and human rights. When it was put up for review, the Turkish American Cultural Society of New England submitted several suggestions arguing against the events of 1915 being a genocide, which the plaintiffs refer to as the “contra-genocide viewpoint” (*Griswold v. Driscoll*, 2009). Four were ultimately chosen and added to the guide, including the website of the ATAA, only to be removed again before being published. The plaintiffs took the Board of Education to court, charging them with violating the first amendment’s freedom of speech clause by restricting access to information in response to political pressure from Armenian Americans. The court ruled against ATAA and the rest of the plaintiffs.⁴²

What is worth noting from this case, in the context of this thesis, is not the decision itself but the plaintiffs’ arguments. In their brief they do not argue against the inclusion of sources supporting genocide claims but instead against the exclusion of the ‘contra-genocide viewpoint.’ They argued “that Armenian political organisations and state elected officials pressured the defendants ... by insisting that all contra-genocide views be expunged from the Guide despite their educational merit, to mollify a politically powerful Armenian American community” (*Griswold v. Driscoll*, 2009). They further argued that the defendants violated the First

41. *Movsesian v. Victoria Versicherung AG*, 670 F.3d 1067 (9th Cir. 2012), petition denied under the name *Arzoumanian v. Munchener Ruckversicherungs-Gesellschaft Aktiengesellschaft AG*, No. 12-9, 2013 WL 2459623 (June 10th, 2013).

42. The court found the complaint exceeded the 3-year statute of limitations, and that the “Guide was a form of government speech and, as such, exempt from First Amendment scrutiny” (*Griswold v. Driscoll*, 2010). This decision was affirmed on appeal, with slightly differing logic.

Amendment by complying with these new requests (the brief used the more loaded word ‘succumb’), as students and teachers have the right to “inquire, teach, and learn free from *viewpoint discrimination*” (my emphasis) and the ATAA’s right to speak via its website (which was removed from the guide) (Griswold v. Driscoll, 2010). They criticised officials for “decree[ing] by fiat how history was to be viewed and taught.”

5.1.4 Comments

These four cases are all attempts by Turkish American activist organisations to maintain space for dissent from the dominant narrative without threat of sanction, to hinder the further penetration of the term ‘Armenian Genocide’ into the American legal system, and prevent the application of laws that use this term. The activist organisations act as both plaintiff and counsel, and certain individuals associated with these organisations, namely David Saltzman, have also represented the Turkish government in these battles. In this way they use the US legal system to effectively challenge and stretch the boundaries of the discursive field from a position of relative weakness vis-à-vis Armenian Americans and all others who hold the dominant narrative. As just demonstrated these kinds of legal cases appear in a variety of fields, and often take years to complete. In the next two sections I look at efforts to prevent the passage of a resolution affirming the events of 1915 as a genocide in Congress. This is a challenge similar in many ways to *Movsesian v. Victoria Versicherung AG*, as it focuses on preventing the appearance of the term Armenian Genocide in law and the application of this law. This battle also has strong Turkish government involvement, and the discourse surrounding the resolution is largely concerned with the creation of foreign policy antagonistic to Ankara.

5.2 RECOGNITION ON CAPITOL HILL: HOUSE RESOLUTION 252

Adam Schiff, the Democratic representative for California’s 24th district, an area just northeast of Los Angeles with a large Armenian American population, and 43 other representatives submitted House Resolution 252 (hereafter, Res. 252) to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on March 17th, 2009. One year later, on March 4th, 2010, it passed the committee by a narrow 23–22 vote. Ankara recalled its

ambassador the next day^d and kept him from the US capital for a month in protest.^e It was added to the House calendar in late September 2010 with 116 sponsors (more than a quarter of the total House), but was not immediately deliberated. On Dec. 22nd, 2010, “the House avoided a diplomatic clash with Turkey by adjourning without taking up a resolution that declares the mass killings of Armenians early last century to be a genocide.”^f

And thus was the short life of Res. 252, the most recent Recognition bill when I began my fieldwork. In brief, it “call[ed] upon the President to ensure that the foreign policy of the United States reflects appropriate understanding and sensitivity concerning issues related to human rights, ethnic cleansing, and genocide documented in the United States record relating to the Armenian Genocide, and for other purposes” (H.Res. 252). In this section, I contextualise the bill, analyse the statements made in Congress regarding Res. 252, and look at the efforts undertaken by the Turkish American organisations to oppose the bill’s passage. In the following section I analyse media reports related to Res. 252. I argue, as I did with the legal battles in Section 5.1, that opposing these bills is done in order to: a) prevent the dominant narrative from achieving complete lexical hegemony; b) maintain space for dissent; and c) to stem the further institutionalisation of the term ‘Armenian Genocide.’ Furthermore, I argue that the discourse of the Turkish American organisations regarding Res. 252 is strongly characterised by the theme of anti-Turkish prejudice and the spectre of shame awaiting all Turks if they are collectively labelled *génocidaires*. This re-frames Congressional resolutions, which are ostensibly tabled to commemorate and acknowledge a historical tragedy, as a political competition over the identity of Turkey, Turks, and Turkish Americans.

5.2.1 Res. 252 in Context

The course of Res. 252 ran parallel to world events, several of which affected the discourse and political context surrounding the draft bill. The most important of these is the Turkey-Armenia Protocols, an effort initiated three years earlier to normalise relations and open borders. The protocols also included the creation of a joint historical commission to study the events of 1915. The Turkish Foreign Ministry announced that the parties had agreed on a framework on April 22, 2009,

less than 48 hours before Obama's commemoration address that year. "The statement's timing seemed calculated to dampen enthusiasm in the United States for passing a resolution in Congress to recognise the Armenian killings as genocide," one *New York Times* report stated.⁸

It did not take long for this framework to fall apart. "[The Protocols] did not take into account [Armenia's and Turkey's] different hopes and expectations" (Phillips, 2012:60). A major sticking point was the issue of Recognition, as both governments apparently entered into the accord assuming their official versions of history would be vindicated by the commission. The two major Armenian American organisations decried the historical commission, arguing that agreeing to an investigation implied agreeing that a genocide might *not* have happened (2012:67). It ran into further trouble when the Armenian government submitted the protocols to the Constitutional Court of Armenia for an obligatory review, which declared them as *not* contradicting Article 11 of Armenia's Declaration of Independence. This states, "The Republic of Armenia stands in support of the task of achieving international recognition of the 1915 Genocide in Ottoman Turkey and Western Armenia." Ankara took umbrage at the ruling, stating that it had irretrievably biased the conclusions of the commission and refused to ratify the protocols. On April 22, 2010, one year after the Protocol framework was first announced and again less than 48 hours before Obama issued his annual statement, the Armenian government announced that the protocols were indefinitely suspended (Phillips, 2012:67-69).

Ankara knew the Protocols would be put to the Armenian Court's review, and thus in my view both Ankara's pursuit of the protocols and its rejection were strategic and designed to achieve several objectives. First, Ankara wanted to keep the conflict open. Phillips (2012:68), citing a Foreign Ministry official, notes that "to [Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet] Davutoğlu, the process represented the goal in and of itself." It wanted to appear on the side of impartiality and, ironically, demonstrate the futility of engaging in debate with a party that holds strong pre-conceptions. On top of this it also wanted to reduce overseas pressure for recognition, and explicitly stated that Res. 252 was an impediment to normalisation – the end goal of the protocols. "There is a process, and everyone

should strengthen this process and not try to weaken it,” Davutoğlu said the day after Res. 252 was introduced in the House. “We hope that the discussions on the Armenian issue do not affect this process in a negative sense.”^h

Other than the Protocols, the most salient issue affecting the official Turkish response to Res. 252 was the rift in Turkish-Israeli relations. Israel and the American Jewish lobby have long been Turkey’s greatest ally in the Recognition debate⁴³ (Phillips, 2012:63). Relations soured after Erdoğan strongly criticised Israeli President Shimon Peres at the 2009 World Economic Forum in Davos, and continued their downward descent after the Israeli Defence Forces intercepted the ‘Gaza Freedom Flotilla’ as it tried to breach the blockade of the Gaza Strip, killing nine Turks in the process (the *Mavi Marmara* incident). This rupture in relations received some attention in the press, and undoubtedly changed the Turkish tactics vis-a-vis Res. 252, but ultimately this loss of support did not affect the outcome.

5.2.2 Congressional Record on Res. 252

The *Congressional Record* is the official record of the happenings of Congress, published by the Government Printing Office. It contains eight statements by Congressmen pertaining to Res. 252, all of which support its passage. Four were given April 22-23, 2009, and four April 22-March 3, 2010 as part of the annual commemorations of the events of 1915 around the globe. April is, not uncoincidentally, Genocide Prevention Month.⁴⁴ These eight statements were given by six different speakers from four different states. Three came from representatives of California, and one each from Illinois, New York, and Massachusetts, all states with top-10 Armenian ancestry populations (See Figure 3.3). These speeches are all quite short and contain several identifiable themes, including: the clarity of the historical record; the link between past acknowledgement and future prevention; Turkish pressure; and the need for Turkish, not American, acknowledgment.

43. Turkey and Israel have historically maintained a strong relationship based on mutual security interests in regional politics, especially during the Cold War (see Nachmani, 1998).

44. As declared by many NGOs and several state legislatures.

Clarity of the Historical Record

Five of the eight statements given, in one way or another, summarise the events of 1915. Four describe the events of 1915 as specifically “systematic” murder/killing/terror, and four speakers cite the figure of 1.5 million Armenian deaths. Furthermore, five speakers make a point of noting the indisputable nature of the facts. Using Representative Jim Costa from California as an example, “it is, by any reasonable standard, established history that between 1915 and 1923 the Ottoman Empire systematically killed an estimated 1.5 million Armenians.”ⁱ Similarly, Representative Jackie Speier from California said, “the facts are not in dispute. The one thing left to question is not whether the Armenian genocide took place but, rather, if we in this Chamber have the moral and political backbone to stand for truth.”^j This goes against one of the core messages of the counter-narratives espoused by the Turkish American organisations, which is that while many of the basic facts are not in dispute, the motives and circumstances behind these facts are very much in dispute, and thus, crucially, the conclusions drawn from the (incomplete) historical record are incorrect. “Whether the Ottoman Armenian tragedy constitutes a case of genocide is a genuine historic controversy,” one ATAA press release reads, and this message can be found throughout the Turkish American discourse on the events of 1915.^k

Future Genocide Prevention

“If we are to prevent future atrocities, we must not be afraid to speak out about those that have taken place in the past,” Representative Henry Waxman from California said in 2010.^l As previously noted, April is ‘genocide prevention month’ and five speakers took the opportunity to link recognition of the events of 1915 with the goals of preventing future genocides from occurring. “Genocide is not something that can be swept under the rug and forgotten,” Costa said. “We need leaders around the world to not only recognise it, but to condemn it so the world can truly say ‘never again.’”^m One speaker suggests that recognition will help prevent a second *Armenian* genocide, and two other speakers bridge their comments into a statement on Darfur.

Turkish Pressure, Turkish Acknowledgement

Two speakers commented directly on Turkey's active role in preventing passage of Recognition resolutions, and a third commented on her role in stymieing efforts by the ATAA (although not by name) in their counter-narrative activities. "We cannot develop a foreign policy based solely on what other countries want to hear about their past," Costa said. "Turkey hires powerful and expensive lobbyists to meet with Members and staff, distort the historical facts, and make veiled threats on what might happen if the Genocide is recognised. For the last 20 years, Turkey has been very successful." Likewise Henry Waxman noted, "The Republic of Turkey threatens severe diplomatic consequences to nations that officially recognise the genocide, and current Turkish law deems discussion of the genocide to be a criminal offence."ⁿ Both of these members decried repeated claims by past and present US presidents that 2011, like previous years, was the wrong time for passage, with Costa noting that Obama had promised to recognise the events of 1915 while still a senator.

Representative Carolyn Maloney from New York boasted of her role in discouraging PBS from broadcasting the documentary *Armenian Revolt*, which ATAA screened for Congressional staffers in July 2010. "I joined with my colleagues ... in urging PBS not to give a platform to the deniers of the genocide by cancelling a planned broadcast of a panel which included two scholars who deny the Armenian Genocide. ... I led a successful effort to ... pull the plug on these genocide deniers."^o

Of these eight speeches only two show sensitivity to the articulated Turkish concern that characterising the events of 1915 as genocide is offensive to modern day Turks. Representative Jerry Costello from Illinois attempted to allay such fears in his 2010 speech, stating, "I do not advocate taking this action as a means of discrediting the Turkish people. It is simply recognition that this tragic event occurred, and it honours the fate of the 1.5 million Armenians who died."^p Representative Costa attempted a similar nod to Turkish sensitivities, however he seemingly contradicts itself by finishing with a demand for an apology. "No one holds modern-day Turkey responsible for the past sins of the Ottoman Empire," Costa said in 2010. "But they should recognise their history [and] apologise."^q

5.2.3 Turkish American Action on Res. 252

The Washington DC-based Turkish American organisations engaged in a variety of activities to prevent the passage of Res. 252, in addition to their broader educational and counter-narrative activities outlined elsewhere in this thesis. These can be split along two broad categories of grassroots campaigning, and direct congressional outreach and lobbying.

Grassroots Campaign

The main proponents of Res. 252 waited until the last day of the 2010 legislative session, December 22, before attempting to bring the resolution to the main House floor for a vote. According to Beril Unver, the congressional liaison at the Turkish Coalition of America, this was a discreet political move to try and force a vote before Congress broke for Christmas. “[Nancy] Pelosi and [Howard] Berman [both Democrats representing districts in California] are doing this under the radar,” Unver said. “There’s no announcement of it ... they’re going to bring it out secretly.” However, when Unver got word of it TCA, ATAA, and FTAA, the New York-based umbrella Turkish American organisation, orchestrated a mass letter and phone campaign through their email mailing lists.

TCA maintains a system on its website which allows individuals to send form letters on various issues to their representatives with a single click. ATAA sent at least six appeals to its mailing list from December 17th to December 22nd urging recipients to use this system. It also provided the telephone numbers of Nancy Pelosi and the House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer and a suggested script voicing opposition for people to follow.

The content of these appeals deserves some attention, as they cast the need for opposition in terms of anti-Turkish prejudice and against American interests. The letters ATAA sent on Dec. 17th and Dec. 18th were both headlined “Turkish American Solidarity Against Hatred and Prejudice on Capitol Hill: Vote ‘No’ on Armenian Resolution, H.Res.252.” They “encourage you to be good Americans and true friends of *Türkiye* [Turkey], and contact your member of Congress” through the

TCA system. They further inform the reader that ATAA and FTAA jointly sent letters to all members of the House, stating:

Please do not support a floor vote on H.Res. 252. If it does go to a floor vote, please vote against it. Armenian Resolutions are not a productive approach to resolve this matter, as they *legislate a criminal conviction against people of Turkish and Muslim heritage*, they legislate history on a controversial issue, and damage US interests in the critical region of Turkey (my emphasis).^r

The appeals sent by ATAA on Dec. 22nd, the day of the possible vote, expand on these themes and repeat the need for action.^s The body of the messages, excluding details for contacting congressional representatives, consists of four bullet-pointed reasons why Res. 252 should be opposed. The first argues, “People of Turkish and Muslim heritage and our children may forever be branded as committers of genocide, and be forced to carry that shame even though the Armenian case does not constitute genocide.” The second suggests such a resolution will open the door for reparation claims by descendants of Ottoman Armenians, and the third suggests it might allow for lawsuits regarding the restitution of “lands Armenians claim – lands which your families own and have lived on for centuries.” The fourth and final bullet point states “US-Turkish relations and US interests ... will be irreparably damaged,” followed by, “The dignity of people of Turkish and Muslim heritage will be violated when the American legislature passes judgment based purely on Armenian ethnic politics in California.”

A similar letter-writing campaign spurred on with similar rhetoric was waged in March 2010, when the House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC) was poised to vote on whether the resolution would be passed onto consideration by the full House. ATAA claims over 5000 letters were sent voicing opposition during the lead up to this vote on March 4th, and in its press release thanked other Turkic communities for their support.^t The resolution passed HFAC by a 23-22 vote, a substantially narrower margin than the previous three Recognition bills.⁴⁵ ATAA

45. 2007 H.Res. 106, 27-21; 2005 H.Res. 316, 42-7; and 2005 H.Res. 195, 35-11, respectively.

framed this shift to its members as proof of not only Turkish Americans' growing importance and effectiveness in advocacy, but also as a general shift in the awareness and perceptions of the broader American public. "H.Res. 252 signals a turning point in Turkish American public advocacy. The 23-22 vote reflects the growing efficacy of the Turkish American public advocacy network, including its infrastructure, technical abilities, critical mass, cooperation, solidarity, and determination."^u This of course may or may not be an accurate representation of the power dynamics involved – correlation is not causation, after all – but ATAA nevertheless appropriates the dubious accomplishment of 'losing less' for itself, for its partner organisations, and for the Turkish American community.

Congressional Outreach and Lobbying

Res. 252 and other recognition bills are strongly lobbied. According to the Centre for Responsive Politics ten organisations specifically registered to lobby Res. 252. These consist of three Armenian American groups, five defence contractors, an oil company and the US Chamber of Commerce. The Republic of Turkey was also active. It registered \$1,558,164 in *total* lobbying expenditures in 2010, according to the Sunlight Foundation and ProPublica. Lobbyists working for foreign governments also must report every 'contact' with Congress (i.e. emails, phone calls, etc.). In 2010, according to the same watchdog groups, 219 of 983 contacts (22%) were described as explicitly regarding Res. 252, on top of innumerable others vaguely described as having to do with 'meeting requests' and 'US-Turkish relations.' In short, these bills generate substantial attention from a variety of actors and consume large quantities of human and financial resources.

Conspicuously absent from the list of registered lobbyists on Res. 252 are the Turkish American groups.⁴⁶ Yet several of the organisations reported working to influence Congress directly. During the lead-up to the initial vote in the House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC), "ATAA visited most of the HFAC members at

46. I suspect this is because of the narrow legal definition of what constitutes 'lobbying' in Washington DC. These groups are classified as either non-profit organisations or political action committees, statuses which preclude lobbying activities according to the federal government.

least once at the local level and three times on Capitol Hill. On March 3, 2010, the ATAA, FTAA and Turkish faith-based groups visited each HFAC member one final time.”^v ATAA also screened a documentary titled *Armenian Revolt* to 45 Congressional staffers on July 28th, 2010, in an attempt to counter the Armenian National Committee of America’s similar screening of *Aghet*, a documentary supporting the narrative that the events of 1915 were in fact a genocide, one week earlier.

In the final hours before the bill was introduced on the House floor, several groups mounted an 11th-hour blitz on Capitol Hill. “The genocide resolution ... it was toward the end of the Democrats’ reign in Congress. I was going home for the holidays and I worked the phones,” Unver told me. “I visited people, all that kind of stuff. All the TCA team did. ATAA did [as well], FTAA came and helped.” They called officials from the State Department for help, which, as part of the Obama administration rather than Congress, was also opposed to passage.” “Before we had the Jewish lobbies on our side,” Unver continued, “this time it was Turkish Americans on their own for the first time ever and we beat it from hitting the floor.” Much like ATAA’s press releases Unver largely discounts the other actors in the picture. As previously noted, the Obama administration publicly declared his opposition to the resolution, while the Turkish government spent substantial resources on lobbying activities and withdrew its ambassador in protest. That aside, she seemed personally satisfied with the outcome. “It’s difficult, but I’m really really proud of the work that I’ve done, I’m proud of the work that we do,” she said.

Ambassador James Holmes, President of the American Turkish Council, admitted in our interview that “2010 was a very tough year for us.” As previously noted, Ankara recalled its ambassador after the HFAC vote (see page 142), and as part of this governmental campaign it informed ATC that no government officials would attend ATC’s annual business conference. This was compounded by the *Mavi Marmara* affair and Turkey’s attempts at brokering a nuclear deal with Iran.

These all added up to a 1-2-3 punch against the strength of the [Turkish American] relationship, which required us to be very active much of the year politically, in addition to the commercial activity. ... It required expending a lot of resources and energy on

Capitol Hill and around town, in the administration (Holmes).

The Turkish Coalition Political Action Committee (TC-USA PAC), a political offshoot of the Turkish Coalition of America (TCA), uses its money to attend political fundraisers and discuss issues with the candidates. TC-USA PAC Treasurer (and TCA President)⁴⁷ Lincoln McCurdy did not explicitly state in our interview how many such events he attended or how many times he discussed Res. 252 specifically. However, he did use the Recognition debate as an example of an issue he raises with the candidates, and given TCA's full corpus of activities and McCurdy's other statements, he almost certainly raised it at every opportunity.

We can go [to fundraisers] and some of the issues, like last year the Armenian Genocide comes up, we can talk about the fallacy of that. [The TC-USA PAC] gives us our opportunity [to] say, you should read this. Have you looked at this perspective? It's really going to hurt US-Turkish relations, and [the TC-USA PAC] gives us an opportunity to present that (McCurdy).

The TC-USA PAC also donates directly to political campaigns. According to filings at the Federal Elections Commission, the TC-USA PAC disbursed nearly \$162,500 in 2010 to politicians and parties. McCurdy told me such dispersals, "give Turkish Americans ... a spot at the table to amplify their positions on important things." Undoubtedly one of the issues brought up 'at the table' was Res. 252.

Finally, it must be noted that in addition to these Congress-related activities specific to Res. 252, many of the organisations mentioned in this thesis organise regular trips, in which they take representatives and staff from Congress on privately-funded, multi-day excursions to Turkey. Both old guard and new guard organisations are active in this, including the Turkish Coalition of America, the Turkic American Alliance, and the latter's component organisation, the Rumi Forum. According to the watchdog Legistorm, which monitors special interests in the United States, the Turkish Coalition of America ranked third in terms of the

47. The Turkish Coalition of America and the Turkish Coalition PAC are legally separate entities and McCurdy is the president of the former and the treasurer of the other, which is also legal.

number of trips it sponsored in 2010, taking 71 individuals (in groups) to Turkey at a total cost of nearly \$450,000. “That’s actually the lynchpin, the congressional trips,” Beril Unver, the Congressional liaison at the Turkish Coalition of America told me. The trips she organised, like the other groups, include a mix of historical sites, meetings with Turkish officials, as well as members of NGOs and, the press, and ‘ordinary’ people. “They don’t come back saying rah rah Turkey on everything. They come back knowing Turkey is a complex country, just like the US is complex,” Unver continued. “That it’s not so easy to make a black and white decision on anything. And that actually does impact people’s position on resolutions that oftentimes are one-sided.”

5.2.4 Comments

In this section I have contextualised Res. 252 in world events and situated the actors interested in its outcome. The representatives who spoke in defence of the resolution were all from districts with concentrations of Armenian Americans, a fact which several pointed out during their remarks. They articulated a need for American foreign policy to reflect historical “truth” and not be swayed by the sensitivities of foreign governments. They further suggested that acknowledging past genocides is an integral part of preventing future genocide.

The Turkish American organisations were active in generating grassroots support to oppose the legislation, and had some success in this matter. They did this by promoting a strong discourse of prejudice and the collective shame that would accompany the passage of Res. 252. They also pursued Congresspersons directly, calling and visiting their offices to express their views. This happened alongside the arguably much more powerful influences of corporate lobbyists and Ankara’s sabre-rattling rhetoric. Regardless of which forces tipped the balance – and for reasons I give in the next section I suspect it *was not* Turkish American activism – the Turkish American organisations claimed the victory in preventing Res. 252 from going to a vote for themselves and the general Turkish American population. In the next section I look at the course of Res. 252 from the perspective of its media coverage. I show that while there is some coverage of Turkish officials and the domestic debate

regarding the events of 1915 that exists in Turkey today, the Turkish American organisations were almost completely shut out of the media debate on this issue.

5.3 MEDIA COVERAGE OF HOUSE RESOLUTION 252

Recall from Section 3.3 that one of the four elements determining the effectiveness of an ethnic interest group, according to Haney and Vanderbush (1999), is the “salience and resonance of message” directed toward both the US government and the broader American public. In this section, I investigate this aspect by examining statements published in the American national press which opposed the passage of Res. 252. I have focused in this chapter, as well as in the one which precedes it, on the production and propagation of narratives by the Turkish government and the Turkish American diaspora. Thus, I am specifically interested in looking at this dataset from a perspective of source bias, i.e. looking at whose voices are heard, how often they speak, and for the Turkish and Turkish American voices, what they say. I argue that the Turkish government and was given ample space to express the official position regarding the events of 1915. I break down these narratives into four themes, including: a) judgement and asymmetry; b) threats and retaliation; c) inflammatory rhetoric; and d) domestic debate. In contrast, I further argue the Turkish American activists were afforded negligible coverage with regard to Res. 252. As such, they were largely unsuccessful in their attempts to insert their narrative of the events of 1915 into the American public discourse.

Using Factiva and the terms ‘Armenia[n]’ and ‘genocide’, I searched four of the top-selling national papers in the United States as well as the Washington DC local paper (see Table 2.1). After clearing false positives, such as tables of contents, I was left with 118 articles that contained both search terms and fell within the approximately 25-month time span under consideration (March 2009 through April 2011). Articles referencing both search terms in the American press generally had a strong, US-oriented foreign policy focus and followed the ebbs and flows of the news cycle and current events. The major topics of the coverage were: President Obama’s 2009 trip to Turkey; the Turkey-Armenia Protocols; Obama’s appointment of a new ambassador to Azerbaijan; two commemoration addresses of the events of

1915; and of course Res. 252 itself. These comprised 77 articles and included both straight news pieces and editorials. The balance of the dataset consisted of reviews of books, visual arts, and museum exhibitions regarding genocide. I refer solely to the non-arts articles in the rest of this section.

To focus primarily on the narratives and the sources published in these articles, I further isolated the 423 direct quotations present in the 77 articles. I then placed each quote into one of nine categories of speaker (summarised in Figure 5.1). Officials from the United States government were quoted most often by reporters (36%), reflecting the US government-oriented nature of the reporting. However it should be noted that fully half of this category consists of the repetition of relatively few soundbites from President Obama. Turkish officials (19%), primarily Prime Minister Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, and academics and ‘women-on-the-street’ from Turkey (10%) also feature prominently.

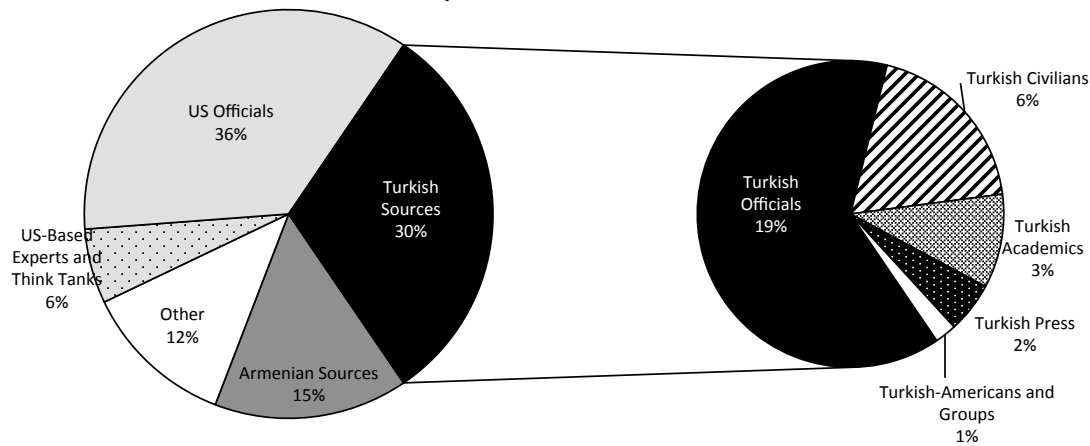
The most important contrast to note is the difference in the number of times Armenian Americans and their groups were quoted (11%)⁴⁸ and the number of times Turkish Americans and their groups were quoted (1%). In absolute terms, Armenian American groups and individuals were quoted 47 times over 22 articles, whereas the TCA, the only Turkish American group or individual represented, was quoted three times in two articles. Thus is it possible to say from the outset that even though the Turkish American groups expend great effort on the Recognition debate, the national press in the United States does not give them space to disseminate their messages and reporters do not utilise them as sources for their stories.

There are several reasons why this might be the case. First, there is a perceived credibility problem. The hegemony of the dominant narrative in the United States is sufficient such that deviating or disagreeing with it is inherently incredible and dismissed as ‘denial,’ and as we saw in Representative Maloney’s comments (see page 147) there are pressures “not to give a platform to the deniers of the genocide.” The Turkish Coalition of America understands this and attempts to counteract it in

48. This should not be confused with the 15% Armenian Sources shown in Figure 5.1, which combines Armenian American groups/individuals (11%) and Armenian government sources (4%).

order to raise their perceived credibility. When TCA sued the Centre for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at the University of Minnesota for defamation in 2012 it argued that the label ‘denialist’ is a smear tactic suggesting the rejection of underlying facts rather than a rational disagreement over the conclusions drawn from them (TCA v. Bruininks, 2012). In other words TCA argued that to label someone or something as being ‘in denial’ presupposes the correctness of the opposing view.⁴⁹ This is precisely, of course, what the dominant narrative in America suggests, and the uphill battle which Turkish American groups fight is to reframe the debate as disagreement, which connotes rationality, rather than denial, which connotes obstinacy.

FIGURE 5.1: DIRECT QUOTATIONS IN THE DATASET BY SOURCE



n=423

Second, which follows the first point, journalists who give space to the Turkish narrative are left open to charges of ignorance, gullibility, and defending the guilty party. This is a real issue, as the Armenian Americans who actively defend the narrative are vigilant and well-connected. Indeed, one article in this dataset relates the story of a journalist who received rebukes from his readers as well as his editor, who “scolded him over the telephone for appearing to be an apologist for the Turks,” after he published an article which suggested a death toll on the lower end of the estimations and refrained from using the term genocide to describe the events of

49. TCA v. Bruininks was not ruled in TCA’s favour.

1915.^x Thus it is safer from a practical perspective for journalists, disregarding all other factors, to not appear to give credence to the Turkish narrative.

Third, I speculate Turkish Americans are not perceived as actors of consequence in this debate. The debate revolves around official recognition, and the main actors are US government officials responding to the contradictory pressures of Armenian American constituencies and an angry Turkish government that threatens retaliation. Thus, from a pressure politics perspective, it is only the Turkish government's adamant refusal to accept the genocide label which matters. If Ankara ceased to object, in all likelihood these resolutions would pass with scant regard for the protests of Turkish American activists. Thus, for the reasons discussed above, the Turkish American activists to date are not only seen as non-credible but also as peripheral actors. This combination results in Turkish American activists being given few opportunities to present their views to the American public through the media.

5.3.1 Narrative Themes

Of the 77 articles, 48 contained direct quotations from some sort of 'Turkish' source: the Turkish government, Turkish press, Turkey-based academics and civilians, and the Turkish Coalition of America, the lone Turkish American entity represented (see Figure 5.1). These generally fall into one of five topics, including comments on Obama's commemoration speeches, the events of 1915, the Protocols, Obama's 2009 visit to Turkey, and regional politics (i.e. Iran, Israel, Nagorno-Karabagh etc.). Of those quotes commenting on the first three topics (approximately half of them), I found five major themes that strongly parallel those discussed previously. These include an asymmetry of responsibility and a distaste for foreign judgement, as well as a strong governmental discourse on retaliatory threats, conflicting views from the Turkish 'woman-on-the-street', and an entertaining but thoroughly counterproductive strain of bellicose rhetoric from Prime Minister Erdoğan.

Judgment and Asymmetry

Recall from Section 4.4 that two major legs of the counter-narrative strategies employed by the Turkish American groups involved the themes of being judged (due process) and the asymmetrical assignation of responsibility (shared suffering). As just observed these groups were given little space in the national press to express their views. The Turkish government, however, took up the standard and strongly pushed both these points home, at times mimicking the Turkish American groups (or vice versa), and at times diverging from their arguments.

High profile members of the Turkish government used the language of legality but actually worked to keep the debate normative rather than legal. “We condemn this bill that denounces the Turkish nation of a crime that it has not committed,”^y Prime Minister Erdoğan said in early March 2010. They condemned political meddling, such as when foreign minister Ahmet Davutoğlu said “we cannot accept the judgment of members of the foreign relations committee, who do not know anything about the history,”^z but they explicitly pushed against the suggestion that the Turkish and/or Ottoman governments must have their day in court. “It is not a legal or political issue, it is a historical issue,” President Abdullah Gül said in a joint news conference with Obama in April 2009. “We would agree to the results or the conclusions of [the Protocols’ joint historical] commission.”^{aa} The joint historical commission is *not* a substitute for the International Court of Justice. Thus by suggesting, genuinely or not, that the Turkish government would accept its decision *in lieu* of the courts, Gül appears content to allow the commission to clear the air emotionally and historically, but without exposing Turkey to legal liability, which might include reparations. It should be noted here that former ATAA president Günay Evinch – the main proponent of the innocent until proven guilty narrative among the activists I interviewed – also stated that he and ATAA support the protocols and the work of the joint historical commission. In saying this Evinch seems to walk the same middle line as Gül, seeking to perpetuate the existence of the controversy and protecting Turkey from legal liability, while perhaps ameliorating some of the pent up ill will on both sides. This position might seem surprising, given some of Evinch’s other statements recorded in this thesis, but like

Ankara (see Phillips, 2012:61), Evinch seemed clearly to believe that the joint history commission would serve to exonerate Turkey rather than condemn it.

The Turkish government further stressed the need to fully recognise Turkish and Muslim suffering in addition to Armenian pain. Responding to Obama's 2011 commemoration address Ambassador to the US Namık Tan said it presented "a wrongful, distorted, and unilateral political description of history."^{ab} President Gül said, regarding Obama's 2009 address, "Obama should also have expressed sympathy toward the 'hundreds of thousands of Turks and Muslims' killed around the same period."^{ac} Foreign Minister Davutoğlu hinted at a *quid pro quo* in his response to Obama's 2010 commemoration address, meaning that Turkey might soften its position in return for more equitable treatment. "If we are going to share griefs for humanitarian reasons, then we would expect respect for our own grief as well,"^{ad} Davutoğlu said. He did not state, however, that 'sharing griefs' meant accepting that events of 1915 constitute genocide. The Turkish Coalition of America also pushed this argument in a commemoration response statement and in an interview with its president Lincoln McCurdy. "Where does the ethnic cleansing of Ottoman Turks from the Balkans, Eastern Turkey and the Caucasus – with 5 million lost and 5.5 million refugees – come on the president's list of 'worst atrocities of the 20th century'?"^{ae} McCurdy said. In short, foreign minister Davutoğlu said, "it's a matter of national honour for us."^{af}

Threats and Retaliation

The Turkish government repeatedly made veiled threats of retaliation if Res. 252 passed the House, suggesting it would not only adversely affect Turkish American relations but also prevent the normalisation of Turkish-Armenian relations and the Turkey-Armenia Protocols. "Our message is very straightforward," Turkish Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Murat Mercan said in March 2010, "this resolution that is coming up to the committee will hamper Turkish American relations and is not helpful for relations between Turkey and Armenia."^{ag} Unlike the comments in the previous section, which came from the highest officials and mainly in response to commemoration addresses, this discourse was sustained through the period – I counted nine separate articles which include a direct quote along these lines – and

come from a variety of sources. “Turks find it very offensive to be equated with Nazis,” Turkish legislator Suat Kınıklioğlu said in March 2010. “We are working well with the U.S. in a number of areas – in Iraq, in Pakistan, Afghanistan, on the Middle East peace process, Iran and Syria. In all these areas, if this passes through the Congress there would be an impact.”^{ah}

I have already noted that the Ambassador was recalled in response to Res. 252 passing the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and Erdoğan said he would not be returned until “we get a clear signal on the situation.”^{ai} In the final analysis it came down to *realpolitik* vs constituency politics. As long as America has need of Turkey it will have difficulty passing any recognition resolution, a stalemate to which several of the House representatives quoted in Section 5.2.2 expressed their frustration. As a reporter for the Turkish national newspaper *Hürriyet* correctly noted, “On one side of the scale, there is the Congress under the influence of ethnic lobby groups, and on the other, there are the greater United States’ interests in Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran and Caucasus. It is up to the American administration to come up with the best choice between the two.”^{aj}

Inflammatory Rhetoric

Prime Minister Erdoğan is adept at ruffling feathers, and while his bellicose style makes him popular in certain circles domestically, in the American press it is used as a vehicle for questioning his intelligence and dismissing him as a serious actor. His statement from 2003 that Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir was welcome in Turkey because “a Muslim can never commit genocide”^{ak} was repeated three times during the period under study to remind readers of the ‘type’ of man he is. Erdoğan was also credited with calling the ‘Statue of Humanity’, which stood near the Turkish-Armenian border in Kars, a “monstrosity”^{al} and afterward it was quickly ordered to be demolished.^{am} His *coup de grâce*, however, came in March 2010 when he threatened, so to speak, to finish the job if Res. 252 passed.

Mr. Erdogan told the BBC’s Turkish-language service late Tuesday that of some 170,000 ethnic Armenians working in Turkey, only 70,000 were Turkish citizens. “We are turning a blind eye to the remaining 100,000,” he said. “Tomorrow, I may tell these

100,000 to go back to their country, if it becomes necessary, because they are not my citizens.” Allowing the Armenians to work in Turkey without papers was a “display of our peaceful approach, but we have to get something in return,” he said.^{an}

Domestic Debate

The fourth and final theme relates to the opinions of Turkish civilians on the question of whether or not the events of 1915 qualify as genocide. These came from one article, which pitted blunt denials from the ‘woman-on-the-street’ against the main feature of the article, a private commemoration ceremony in Istanbul in which “a group of Istanbul’s liberal intelligentsia” accepted the genocide designation. “Twenty years ago, this would have been impossible,” one such person said. “In the long run, what we’re doing today will give us a space to talk about issues such as the Armenian question, democratisation and freedom of speech.” Another said that, “the reason we call what happened a genocide is because the destruction wreaked on these lands was not just to the Armenians, but to their culture, too. Buildings, churches and cemeteries were razed.”^{ao}

These reflective statements were juxtaposed with quotes from certain Turks who expressed little desire to grapple with the issues. “I don’t think the Turks were involved in a genocide,” said one, “since the Ottoman period, we Turks have been peaceful and based our behaviour on justice and a peaceful society.” Others saw engaging with history as counterproductive or annoying, with one stating “I’m against the debate of what our grandparents did to each other. It just clouds our children’s judgement.” Another simply said “The Armenians are wrong to make such a fuss about it.”^{ap} The bleak dichotomy in this article, only one of two articles in the sample to include ordinary Turkish voices, paints Turkish society as being one in which extreme skepticism remains but where recently the genocide narrative is starting to find footholds in society. Suny (2009) observes a similar shift in Turkish academic circles regarding the events of 1915, and relates that a growing number of young Turkish academics are starting to challenge the dominant narrative in Turkey. The other article tells a similar story of growing cracks in the Turkish official narrative. It also demonstrates a wariness that international provocations strengthen

the nationalists' position, an idea also recorded in Açar and Rüma (2007), and suggests that Armenians in Turkey have bigger things to worry about than American recognition. It quotes Etyen Mahcupyan, the editor of *Agos*, a bilingual Turkish-Armenian newspaper in Istanbul.⁵⁰ "We live with Turks, and Turkey is changing for the first time in one hundred years. Of course 1915 is hugely important to us, but not what the U.S. Congress calls it."^{aq}

5.4 CONCLUSION

Former ATAA president Günay Evinch, in his 2008 paper to the Ankara Bar Association, frames the Recognition debate in terms of freedom of expression. "Censorship on the Ottoman Armenian experience is the most sophisticated strategy the Armenian American lobby is employing in order to promote its version of history as the undisputed truth" (Evinch, 2008). He characterises ATAA and like-minded groups as the underdog champions of free speech, dedicated to maintaining space for minority views.

In this battle to simply *not lose entirely*, the Turkish American activists, with no small help from Ankara's own defiance, have largely been successful. The Armenian narrative is certainly dominant, and has attained *near* hegemony. Thirty-eight states had passed more than 110 statements of Recognition by 2008 (Evinch, 2008), and any cursory evaluation of the mainstream American press will reveal a strong belief that the Turkish government and Turkish American activists are being futilely obstinate in their refusal to concede the point. Nevertheless, the Armenian narrative has not attained *complete* hegemony. It is commonplace for news articles to include a line about the term 'genocide' being controversial. Court cases like *Movsesian v. Victoria Versicherung AG* are decided on the strength of a *perceived controversy*, despite the fact that few Americans actually support the Turkish position. It is a battle to *maintain* the controversy, rather than a battle to *win* it. As I noted on page 144, for Turkish Foreign Minister Davutoğlu the main reason for pursuing the Turkey-Armenia protocols was to keep the ball rolling. "To Davutoğlu, the process

50. The previous editor of *Argos* was Hrant Dink, who was assassinated by a Turkish ultranationalist in 2007.

represented the goal in and of itself,” one foreign ministry official said (Phillips, 2012:68).

The activities of Turkish American activists can be seen as replicating certain functions of the Turkish state and as extending the state’s reach overseas. They do this by reproducing core elements of Turkish nationalist ideologies and narratives in the diaspora, as well as by promoting and defending nationalist ideas in American politics. This is particularly true with regard to the events of 1915. That said, the activists’ roles in Recognition debate and the small successes they have achieved to date are relatively minor when compared to those of the Turkish state. The activists I spoke with acknowledged that they are new to the game of American politics, and said they are working to improve their efficacy, capabilities, and membership base. They are also tentatively reaching out to each other to form a more unified front, as noted on page 81. As detailed by Haney and Vanderbush (1999), these vital characteristics largely dictate the effectiveness of ethnic interest groups in the United States (see Section 3.3). Following this, the Turkish American organisations at present can be viewed, at best, as having limited effectiveness in the Recognition debate and American politics in general. That they continue to fight this battle, despite their relative ineffectiveness, constitutes a further indicator of my main hypothesis: these activists are competing to defend and shape the identity of Turks and Turkish Americans on principle; they believe this is a battle which must be fought regardless of their chances of success. In the next chapter I will look specifically at the attitudes and characteristics of the *potential* diasporic membership base and the efforts by the Turkish American organisations to activate them.

Chapter 6

Will All Those Happy to Call Themselves Turks Please Stand Up?

*For last year's words belong to last year's language,
and next year's words await another voice.*

—T.S. Eliot, Four Quartets

Much of preceding three chapters have been about the creation, motivation, and participation of Turkish American activists in American politics, primarily in the debate over labelling the events of 1915 as the Armenian Genocide. Many of these activists, those whom I have been calling the old guard, had their political consciousness formed in the wake of the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 and hardened by Armenian militancy and calls for genocide recognition in the 1980s. In Chapter 3 I further explained that starting in the 1970s a new type of Turkish migrant – more conservative, religious and community-oriented – arrived in America. This group has been largely ostracised by the old guard, and as a consequence it has grown up apart from the earlier Turkish American population. It is now starting to claim its place in Washington DC and a changing of the guard is now occurring there. The new guard has, to date, focused more on community building and religious activities, rather than political activism, and has thus not been a major focus of this work. What has received comparatively little attention in this thesis up to now are the attitudes of the young – as the leaders of ‘new guard’ organisations are not young anymore either – and the silent, those not continuously

active in Turkish American politics. Nor have I discussed at length the interactions between the organisations and this broader Turkish American population. I focus on these two remaining issues here.

I begin with the latter topic. In the first section of this chapter I look at some of the tactics and programmes for cultivating grassroots support undertaken by the Turkish American activist organisations. These activities can be broadly divided into three types: fundraising, civic engagement education and promotion, and protest. In this section I also analyse the topics and content of ATAA's public notification service to see how, and for which reasons, the organisation reaches out to its members.

Following this, in Section 6.2, I look at the media coverage of the Turkish American organisations in both the Turkish and American national presses. I argue that while the organisations are largely ignored by the American press, the Turkish press serves as an amplifying echo chamber for the activists to broadcast their activities, positions, and narratives. I further argue that while this does not seem to translate into substantial increase in active membership for the organisations, it supports the construction of diasporic consciousness by continually reminding readers of their Turkishness and delineating between Turks and their 'others.'

In the third and final section of this chapter I look at some of the attitudes and ideas of the more passive and silent Turkish Americans living in Washington DC during the summer of 2011. I argue that while few engage in direct activism, the individuals I interviewed found ways to connect and keep up with Turkey. Many expressed pride in their 'Turkishness' and perceived prejudice against Turks in the United States. At the same time, many also expressed a broadening of horizons and a moderation of their views in the United States. As a consequence, some but not all agree with the methods or priorities of the groups discussed in this thesis.

6.1 GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM

Beril Unver was the project manager and Congressional liaison at the Turkish Coalition of America in 2011. From southern California – ATAA President Ergün Kırlikovalı was her folk dancing coach many years ago – Unver is an energetic 28-

year-old who speaks quickly, passionately, and at great length on all topics Turkish American. I met up with her and Yenal Küçüker, a 29-year-old who was born in Turkey but moved to America while in secondary school, at a downtown happy hour. In 2011 Küçüker worked as the community outreach director at ATAA.⁵¹ When I asked them about the attitudes they see in the broader Turkish American community, they let loose with a torrent of frustration. “We’re not a proactive community, we’re reactive,” Unver practically shouted at me.

We wait for someone to pinch us or punch us or to say something bad about us and then we get all nationalistic. Then we get ready to talk. ... What [Küçüker and I] are trying to do is get people out of the Turkish mindset that you have to react, that you have to be ready, that you have to defend your honour. That people are trying to take away your dignity. People are trying to take away your land. That’s not what we’re fighting for. We’re just trying to make a good name for ourselves (Unver).

Unver and Küçüker are two of the very few young people deeply involved in Turkish American activism. Their approach, well-represented in the above quote, was strikingly similar to many of the voices from the ‘passive majority’ that we will hear later on in Section 6.3. Unver’s comment was also of a markedly different tenor than that of the current leaders of the Turkish American organisations. Most of these individuals readily acknowledged wide-spread Turkish American apathy to the Recognition debate. “To the normal [Turkish American] man on the street, it matters very little, if at all,” Kırlikovalı said. He followed this by stating that usually individuals only become sensitised to the Recognition debate once it directly impacts them.

When that Turkish American's son or daughter goes to school and comes home crying, then all hell breaks loose. That's when he comes knocking on my door – 'Ergün, do something about this. I'm going to kill these sons of bitches.' Ok? Well, it's too little, too late, isn't it? You were a spectator all these years, didn't support me or others, or anybody else. ... Now that your kid comes home crying because somebody called her killer, now you want to do something about it. But

51. Both Küçüker and Unver have left these organisations.

now he's all upset. So, there's your answer. It's not important to him until, and unless, it touches him (Kırlıkovalı).

This is one reason why, in contrast to Unver who focused on re-framing the discourse away from that of a feud, the current leaders concentrate on upping their game, taking the offensive and bringing the fight to the opposition, and making their punches carry more weight. They perceive shared sentiment among some Turkish Americans, and seek to create and activate it in others, with the goal of broadening their grassroots base. In this section I detail several programmes designed to generate more wide-spread support for the Turkish American groups, their activities, and their agendas. In addition to this I analyse the outreach communications of one group, the ATAA, to see how and along which lines it communicates with its audience.

6.1.1 TALDF Education Outreach

The Turkish American Legal Defence Fund (TALDF) is a wholly owned subsidiary of Turkish Coalition of America. The TALDF states in its mission statement that its purpose is legal and civil rights education “to encourage Turkish American participation in American civil society and political processes without fear, intimidation, bigotry, prejudice or discrimination” (TALDF, 2010). As we saw in Section 5.1, its interactions with the American legal system primarily relate to recognition of the 1915 massacres and deportations of Ottoman-Armenians as a genocide. However, it also engages in educational outreach on civic engagement and civil rights. “Our first project has been, and will remain for a while, to educate the Turkish Americans on their rights as Americans,” TALDF Counsel David Saltzman told me.

What we want them to know is that they are no less an American than anyone else. As a citizen, and if they feel that they are denied a promotion at work, or denied access to resources, or are not allowed to speak their mind, or if their speech is chilled in anyway, then they might have some redress through the courts. ... We are really encouraging Turkish Americans to take advantage of all the civil liberties (Saltzman).

At the moment these educational outreach efforts are largely focused toward the Recognition debate, however they have the more conceptual goal of increasing the level of Turkish American political participation and savvy. According to TALDF's 2010 annual report, the organisation engaged in two major activities that year that focused on increasing civic engagement. The first consisted of presentations on legal rights and "the necessity of defending those rights despite the risk of harassment ... from Armenian Americans." The second involved cultivating grassroots support to oppose "prejudiced school instructional materials addressing such issues as the Armenian resolution, the Ottoman Empire, Cyprus, the PKK, etc" (2010). Thus, what is presented as educational outreach is very much a continuation of TALDF's other Recognition-related activities, albeit given a conceptual twist as broader education in civic engagement.

6.1.2 Political Action Committees

Political action committees (PACs) are one of the many vehicles used in the United States today to transfer money to politicians and political campaigns. PACs are not usually considered to be a grassroots strategy, as they often rely on the contributions of big donors. I have included them in this section because Lincoln McCurdy, the treasurer of the main Turkish American PAC, pitches them as a vehicle to amplify the voice of the Turkish American community. He sought grassroots support for the PACs in a 2010 campaign to increase the donor base to 10,000 Turkish Americans.^{ar}

There are five main PACs operating in the United States today that are primarily concerned with Turkish and Turkish American interests. Four PACs are associated with the Turkish Coalition of America, although they are legally separate entities. These are: TC-California-PAC, TC-Midwest-PAC, TC-New Jersey-PAC, and TC-USA-PAC. Lincoln McCurdy, the president of the TCA, is the treasurer of the last of these. The fifth, the Houston-based Turkish American Heritage PAC, is independent of the others, according to McCurdy, but works closely with them. "[The PACs] really gives the Turkish Americans, who were lacking for the longest

time, a spot at the table,” TCA Vice President Güler Köknar said. McCurdy further explained:

That’s part of the ballgame here. And the Turkish American community hasn’t really been involved in that, until we got this established, but if you want to get your message across it’s a very essential component of the grand strategy. It’s basically trying to raise money and then giving it to candidates who are going to appreciate it and who are going to work harder to promote US-Turkish relations (McCurdy).

In other words, all causes need blood and treasure to succeed. Unlike the umbrella organisations that have nation-wide networks of people, neither TCA or TC-USA-PAC are membership organisations and thus they are not ideally suited to generate grassroots support in terms of man hours. For this reason TC-USA-PAC has decided to concentrate on gathering treasure instead. “The Turkish American community has been very successful here, has assimilated into American society, and it’s quite affluent. So they have financial means which have not been utilised, which is what we are trying to do,” McCurdy said.

There are a lot of the issues, such as the Armenian Genocide resolution that’s always constantly being proposed, that upsets Turkish Americans very much (sic). And what we are trying to say is that unless you do something, if this upsets you then you need to get politically involved. And if you don’t get politically involved then you are a hypocrite. If you don’t care about it, fine, you’re not a hypocrite. But if you complain about it, and not do anything, then you are not helping the cause (McCurdy).

The PACs are still in their infancy, with the oldest among them just six years old. It is difficult to judge the effectiveness of PACs, in terms of their return on investment, but using disclosure data from the Federal Elections Commission it is possible to determine the number of individual donors and the quantities of money given (see Table 6.1). The national-level TC-USA-PAC has generated several times more funds than the other PACs, and they have done so from the widest funding base. That said, in terms of unique donors PACs are only barely scratching the surface of their possible support base. Between 2007 and 2012, a five-year period,

TC-USA-PAC only received funds from 172 different people. “This whole concept is new. It’s foreign to the Turkish culture: political giving,” McCurdy said.

TABLE 6.1: INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO TURKISH AMERICAN PACS

	TC USA PAC	TC California PAC	TC New Jersey PAC	TC Midwest PAC	Turkish American Heritage PAC
Data Range*	2007-2012	2010-2012	2010-2012	2012-2012	2007-2012
Unique Donors	172	17	26	2	54
Unique States	20	5	10	1	8
Median Contribution**	\$750	\$970	\$1000	\$500	\$500
Total Contributions	\$570,522	\$66,390	\$72,400	\$3,500	\$116,030
Total from top 20 donors (% total)	\$359,265 (63.0%)	n/a	\$70,875 (97.9%)	n/a	\$104,180 (89.9%)
Contributions from the Ayaslı Family*** (% total)	\$113,750 (19.9%)	\$45,000 (67.8%)	\$50,000 (69.1%)	0 (0.0%)	\$65,000 (56.0%)
Source: Federal Elections Commission (www.fec.gov ; accessed 9 May 2013) *Data range varies because not all PACs were established or started reporting data the same year. **Some donors have given multiple times. This is the median total donation of all unique donors across all years. ***Includes contributions from Yalçın Ayaslı, his wife, and two of his children (reported separately).					

Like most PACs the donations are top-heavy, with most of the funds coming from a few especially committed donors. The median amount donated from a single person (combining all years) is \$1000 or less. Perhaps the most striking aspect of this data is that many of the top 20 donors for TC-USA-PAC are names familiar to this thesis. David Saltzman, Günay Evinch, Ergün Kırlikovalı and his wife, and Lincoln McCurdy are all top-20 donors to TC-USA-PAC and have donated between \$10,000 and \$21,000 dollars across the five years that data are available. These represent the core members of the Turkish American activist community in Washington DC (see Figure 4.1).

Yalçın Ayaslı and his family also deserve special mention. Yalçın Ayaslı founded TCA in 2007 and endowed it with \$29,706,000 from his company, Hittite Microwave Corporation.⁵² In addition to this, his family’s combined contributions constitute the bulk of four of the five PACs, and they have donated almost the maximum allowable amount to TC-USA-PAC every year that it has been in operation.⁵³ The Ayaslı family, with Yalçın Ayaslı foremost among them, thus serve

52. Endowment information taken from TCA’s public tax filings, specifically their 2007 filing of form 990.

53. Individual donations are limited to \$5000 per person per year per PAC.

as key but silent players in the landscape of Turkish American activism. I was not able to meet with Yalçın Ayaslı himself. He is notorious for not giving interviews, and there is very little information about him available on the Internet. Thus, I can only speculate regarding his motivations. I suspect Ayaslı's drive for this comes from his personal history. Ayaslı, who grew up in Turkey, went to graduate school for electrical engineering in the early 1970s and has lived on the Eastern Seaboard since 1979 (Yalcinayasli.com). His socialisation in Turkey and the US is a classic 'old guard' story. Judging from the activities of the TCA and its affiliates, which are heavily into promoting Turkish culture, Turkish American activism, and the genocide recognition debate, he possesses an 'old guard' value set and world view as well.

6.1.3 Vanguard

Vanguard is the Assembly of Turkish American Associations' counterprotest group in Washington DC. It was started in the mid-2000s, according to former ATAA President Günay Evinch, and its *raison d'être* is obvious from the the double entendre of its name. Not only is a vanguard the shock troops on the front lines of a conflict, but Van is the city where the last conflict between Ottoman forces and Armenian nationalists took place prior to the general deportation orders that are at the centre of the Recognition debate (see page 127). Thus, Van-guard is composed of Turkish Americans who stand on the front lines of this modern-day parallel to the World War I-era challenge to Turkey's territorial integrity: the challenge to Turkey's reputational integrity in Washington DC. In addition to counterbalancing the Armenian Americans, who gather outside the Turkish embassy every April 24th on the anniversary of the start of the events of 1915, Vanguard has protested Kurdish-American and Greek-Cypriot protestors in the past. "Vanguard has appealed to a very large portion of the Turkish Americans," Evinch said. "People who don't necessarily want to write or call a member of Congress. Everyone has a different way of expressing themselves."

A "very large portion" is relative. Evinch later on in the same interview estimated that since Vanguard's formation, turnouts have increased from 30 to some 150 individuals. That said, Evinch noted that the size of the Armenian American protest

has steadily decreased as Turkish numbers have increased. He has made similar observations to the Turkish press, stating in 2010 that it was the first time he saw equal numbers on both sides,^{as} and Turkish television reported in 2011 that Turkish American counter-protestors numerically surpassed the Armenian protestors.^{at}

I was not able to attend a Vanguard protest in person, but judging from video footage and my interview with Evinch they are rowdy affairs popular with college students newly arrived from Turkey. As I detail elsewhere, for many of these new arrivals this is their first face-to-face experience with major public criticism of Turkey, Turks, and Turkish policies, especially with regard to the accusation of genocide.

One counter-protest regarding Cyprus that garnered some attention in the blogosphere took place on July 20th, 2010. It quickly devolved into a bullhorn-enhanced shouting match complete with phallic innuendos and one Turkish counter-protester shouting ‘hail Hitler’ and flashing a Nazi salute while laughing.^{au} I asked Evinch about these videos – he was at that particular protest – and suggested such a counter-protest might be counterproductive. He responded that while it is unlikely they will solve anything, the counter-protests serve as a pressure valve for the Turkish side.

All of a sudden they are being attacked like they’ve never been before, and they were like, ‘*Abi*,’ you know, brother, ‘what the fuck are these guys saying?’ You know what I mean? ‘I’m going to go break his mouth.’ You know what I mean? They are not accustomed to this kind of insult. And there are some of them [that] are like, ‘God. I thought we were over this stuff, like in World War I,’ you know? And so, it’s very educational I think, particularly to the students from Turkey, the foreign students (Evinch).

This is an critical observation, as it demonstrates an important source of new recruits for the Turkish cause. As I have repeatedly argued throughout this thesis, Turkish Americans have radicalised and gone on the defensive in the face of perceived prejudice and real attacks against ‘Turks’ as a concept. As noted on page 72, the United States is home to a revolving population of some 10,000-13,000 Turkish students, many of whom come face to face with the Recognition debate

only after they enter the American context. This apparently provides a valuable resource for the propagation and sustainability of the ‘Turkish cause’ in the United States today.

6.1.4 Turkish American Broad Advocacy Network (TABAN)

The Turkish American Broad Advocacy Network (TABAN) is ATAA’s grassroots outreach programme. It was instituted at ATAA in 2010 with 100% funding from TCA, however that shifted to a more equitable joint venture between ATAA and TCA in April 2011, just before my fieldwork began.⁵⁴ TABAN has a similar mission as TALDF’s educational outreach described earlier. During my fieldwork it was headed by Yenal Küçüker. He spent most of the summer of 2011 on the road, visiting Turkish American communities across the nation. “I teach them basic American Policy 101,” Küçüker told me. “Turks do understand that we are late bloomers, we’re late comers to American society ... and we’re not very active and involved. ... In general community members are not very aware of how to do grassroots, how to engage with elected officials ... and that’s where we come in as ATAA.”

TABAN’s purpose is tri-fold: 1) generate support for ATAA in Washington DC and raise awareness of the issues it confronts; 2) increase the level of civic knowledge amongst Turkish Americans; and 3) boost the presence of Turkish Americans in America’s political landscape. To achieve these ends, Küçüker gave presentations, distributed informational materials, and mediated meetings between constituents and representatives at district offices. “Usually that’s the first time they’ve ever done something like that,” Küçüker said. Evinch echoed this statement when he described the programme to me as well. “We actually take our seminar participants to their district offices, to meet their congressmen for the very first time in their lives, and they’re shocked,” Evinch told me. “They’re surprised, many of them. Oh, he met with me. I never got to meet my parliamentarian in Turkey. So, building relations

54. TCA chose to cancel this grant entirely in 2012 and TABAN has been put on hold indefinitely. (Personal communication from Yenal Küçüker).

between the voter and the legislator. Informing the legislator that he or she has a Turkish American community in his or her district.”

The places to which Küçüker travelled were strategically chosen to increase both support for ATAA and pressure in Washington DC. “We determine certain regions where we haven’t reached out before, or where there are significant or important Turkish groups that are relatively strong, but need some support,” Küçüker said. “Or if they have members of Congress that are members of the Foreign Affairs Committee in their region. We know they are important, they are influential. They need to communicate and contact these district offices.”

Interestingly, Küçüker stated that he has noticed increased activity by the new guard ‘Gülenists’ along similar lines, and that this has been causing a lot of consternation among the old guard. “[The Gülenists] do a lot of activities that are similar to what we do as ATAA and TCA. We find that we are repeating certain things that the communities are doing locally, but sometimes it feels like we’re competing against them,” Küçüker explained. “Sometimes when we visit a local office, a Congressional district office, they say, we just recently had a group come in, a Turkish group. Immediately we know it was the Fetullah Gülen group in that area.”

6.1.5 ATAA’s Community Information Service

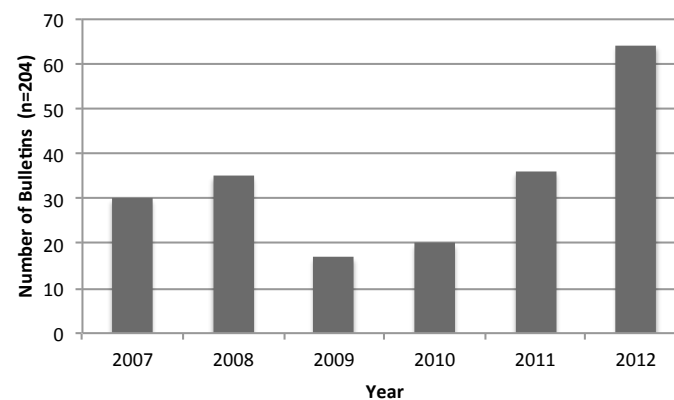
The other component of the ATAA grassroots outreach programme is its publications. These have taken on many forms over the years. Many years ago it published the *Turkish Times*, a newspaper carrying ATAA news and features about the Turkish American community. This was eventually discontinued, and since December 2009 ATAA has published a monthly newsletter online. ATAA also maintains a listserv, the ATAA Community Information Service, which distributes news and alerts as email bulletins to subscribers. I analysed the headlines of 204 of these bulletins distributed between 2007 and 2012 (see Figure 6.1). I wanted to see on which lines the ATAA has reached out to its community over the past half decade. This dataset comprises all the bulletins archived at *www.ataa.org* (accessed

11 May 2013), and so it is possible that this dataset is incomplete and does not represent *all* the bulletins distributed during this period.

Most bulletins were single topic issues, and so it was relatively straightforward to categorise each bulletin by its main topic. This resulted in five main categories (see Figure 6.2): 1) ATAA News, 2) Turkish Cyprus-related; 3) PKK/Kurdish separatism-related; 4) genocide recognition-related; and 5) other political issues.

The biggest single category of bulletins were organisational news, comprising almost half (100) of the entire dataset. Of these 100 bulletins, 41 were after-the-fact notices of events that had taken place.⁵⁵ Usually ATAA had hosted a public individual or held some sort of meeting. The balance of this category can best be described as corporate white noise: commemorations of American and Turkish holidays, obituaries, and praise of public statements and events were all featured in this category.

FIGURE 6.1: TIME DISTRIBUTION OF THE E-BULLETIN DATASET

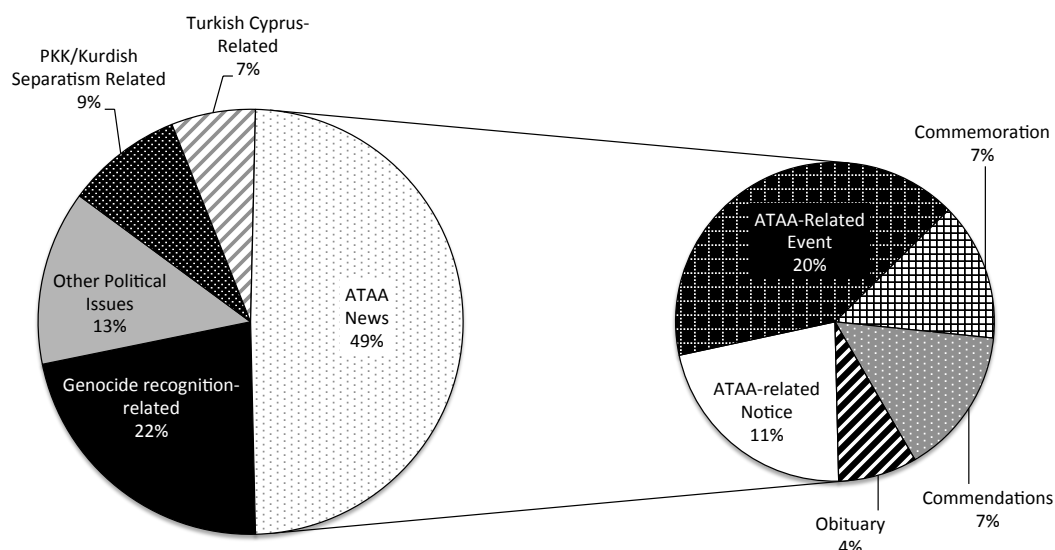


The other half of the announcements were more directly political. Two of the major categories, the Turkish Cyprus issue (13 bulletins) and Kurdish separatism (18 bulletins), are both classic issues for the old guard. Regarding the former, these included vigils, action alerts for Cyprus-related resolutions, Cyprus movie screenings, and expressions of solidarity with the Turkish Cypriots. Almost all of the bulletins regarding Kurdish separatists were simply condemnations of “PKK terror” and “PKK terrorists.” The biggest political category was related to the Recognition debate (45 bulletins). This is not surprising, given the centrality of the Recognition

55. Events that had to do with PKK/Kurdish separatism, Turkish Cyprus or Genocide recognition were counted in their own categories.

debate to the ATAA. Most were in regard to American resolution bills, however there were some that related to educational outreach; genocide-related laws in California (see Section 5.1); and anniversary commemorations of attacks by Armenian militants.

FIGURE 6.2: TOPICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ATAA E-BULLETIN DATASET



n=204

Taken together, this data emphasises and reinforces much of what has already been argued in this thesis. Aside from simply demonstrating that ATAA is being active, the Community Action Service of the ATAA reaches out on classically ‘old guard’ lines using the three core issues of Cyprus, Kurdish separatism and genocide recognition. Turkish ethnic solidarity is emphasised, with bulletins supporting Iraqi Turkmens, Macedonians, and Azeris. External ‘threats’ and ‘insults’ to Turkey and Turks are calls to action.

The political bulletins rely heavily on the theme of one-sided targeting by hostile ethnic groups toward the Turkish ethnic/national group. One claimed a Texas draft resolution regarding the ecumenical status of the Greek Orthodox Church in Turkey “interfered with US - Turkish foreign affairs; discriminated against Turkish Muslims, Jews, and Christians who are not Greek Orthodox; and dangerously advocated against the secular democracy of Turkey which is based on European law and traditions.” It concluded by saying, “Given extremists are readily eager to sneak

through anti-Turkish resolutions, ATAA and FTAA and their local chapters will continue to monitor this and similar anti-Turkish efforts.”^{av}

Another bulletin criticises a letter sent to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton from Nicholas Larigakis, the president of the American Hellenic Institute (the Greek American lobby), on the eve of her 2011 trip to Greece and Turkey. The bulletin described this letter as being “counterproductive” and “attempt[ing] to mislead the US foreign policy.” Furthermore, it “calls upon the US Administration to pressure the Greek government to take a more constructive stance on Cyprus and Macedonia issues, to put an end to the *ethnocentric and Turcophobic rhetoric*, and focus on the severe economic crisis in Greece” (my emphasis).^{aw}

This particular bulletin serves as a good example of a tendency I have observed throughout this thesis, in which the Turkish American organisations appear to interpret any disagreement with the Turkish position as anti-Turkish prejudice rather than as rational self-interest from a different perspective. The letter at the centre of this debate is indeed biased in favour of Greece. It portrays the country as a valuable ally in American foreign policy and absolves it of all guilt and responsibility in the political conflicts it discusses. It is also a condemnation of Turkish policy, granting no legitimacy to the Turkish government’s position, and placing blame wholly on Turkey and Macedonia (AHI, 2011).⁵⁶ But it is not overtly racist. It is not Turcophobic, any more than all criticism of Israel is anti-Semitic.

What is going on here? Many Turkish American activists, especially those of the old guard, seem stuck in an interpretive frame that has been permanently coloured by the *indisputable hate crimes* and assassinations in the 1970s and 1980s despite the intervening 40 years. This is not to say that true anti-Turkish racism and prejudice does not still exist – the blogosphere and rhetoric of some Armenian- and Greek Americans are alive with racism. But something of a discursive feedback loop exists. There are enough examples of indisputably racist actions to facilitate the permanent

56. These issues are: 1) a dispute over the name of the Republic of Macedonia; 2) the Turkish military occupation of Cyprus, which it deems “illegal”; 3) the “suppression” of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate; and 4) the maritime border dispute between Turkey and Greece.

framing of *all* statements conceivably negative toward Turkey as being motivated by hatred and ignorance. The leaders of the Turkish American organisations, in turn, further instrumentalise their interpretation as a means of rallying support. This potential for political gains increases the likelihood that future statements will be interpreted along the same lines, and the feedback loop continues. For pragmatic as much as personal reasons, these leaders often decline to delineate between those articulating hate speech and those who, more or less respectfully, speak from a different political position.

6.1.6 Summary

The broader Turkish American community does not remain permanently engaged in American politics. The old guard activists in Washington DC have interpreted this to mean the community is either insufficiently aware of ‘the issues,’ or lack the capabilities, tools, and incentives to engage with the political system. They further portray individual Turkish Americans as generally apathetic but reactive; complacent until insulted and then spoiling for a fight. I have reason to question this interpretation, as I will show later on in Section 6.3, but that is getting ahead of myself. For now I may say that in response to *their* interpretation of the attitude of the Turkish American community, the old guard organisations are attempting to alter the *status quo* and raise the level of political awareness, capability, and activity in the Turkish American community. In doing so they play to sensitivities engendered by Turkish nationalist thought, instrumentalising the themes of identity and insult – especially with regard to the Recognition debate – to enflame passions and provoke political engagement on the defensive.

In this section I detailed five different outreach programmes undertaken by the Turkish American activists to develop and broaden their grassroots support amongst the general Turkish American population. These included two separate civics education programmes, a political action committee, a counter-protest group, and an email-based information service. All are portrayed as existing to help Turkish Americans combat perceived anti-Turkish sentiment and attacks on their dignity and identities as Turkish Americans. In the next section I demonstrate how these

calls are largely ignored in the American national press but are echoed and amplified by the Turkish media.

6.2 THE MEDIA AMPLIFIER

In the previous section I looked at several organisational efforts to promote diasporic consciousness among the silent majority of Turkish Americans. In this section I look at another possible angle of diasporic identity construction: the coverage of Turkish American organisations and their activities in the press.

Recall for a moment the media study from the previous chapter (see Section 5.2), in which I examined the media coverage of the Recognition debate in the American national press. I analysed the direct quotations contained within that coverage from the perspective of source bias in order to see which voices were being included. I found, among other things, that the voices of Turkish Americans and their groups were almost entirely absent. I further concluded that Turkish American groups are ineffective at propagating their messages through the national print media in the United States, at least with regard to one of their primary activities – campaigning against Congressional resolutions aimed at recognising the events of 1915 as genocide.

In this section I approach the question of media exposure from a different angle. If Turkish American groups are not present in the American press coverage during what is arguably their most high-profile activity, when are they covered, if at all? I look at media coverage of the organisations across all topics, and I include the Turkish press in addition to the American press. The utility of studying the American press for this should be self-evident, but a few words must be said to explain my inclusion of the Turkish press as well. Many scholars have noted that the rise of cheap telecommunications and global media has made staying connected with the sending country more feasible than ever, and this media impact is one of the core themes of transnationalism studies (see Levitt, 2001; Vertovec, 2009). Aksoy and Robins (2000:345), studying Turkish media consumption in the Europe, have further argued that “in the transnational space ... [Turkish migrants] are seeking to find a way between their sense of their own Turkish origins and their

sense of how they might belong in their host countries. And they are actively using media to think about these questions of identity.”

Levitt, Vertovec, Aksoy and Robins have primarily described this dynamic as one in which migrants consume media from home and thus stay connected to their country of origin. I argue that in fact this story is more complex. Because the Turkish press carries more news of Turkish American activities than the American press does, a curious feedback loop is created in which Turkish Americans read about the activities of the Turkish American community as written by, published in, and filtered through the home country Turkish press. My methodology does not allow for me to argue for a direct, causal relationship between newspaper consumption and diasporic consciousness at this time. Instead, I have the more exploratory goal of suggesting how this self-referential media loop *might* serve to strengthen a sense of diasporic consciousness in ways that have not been extensively researched.

To these ends, I gathered articles from the American and Turkish newspapers listed in Table 2.1 (page 51) that contained the names of all the Turkish American organisations listed in Table 3.1 (page 71). My collection period spanned the same 25 months that I covered in the previous media analysis, starting with the introduction of Res. 252 on March 17th, 2009 to Obama’s commemorative statement for the events of 1915 on April 23rd, 2011. The American press yielded eight articles for all the organisations combined – it will be a short analysis – whereas the Turkish press yielded a more substantial 161 articles from the same period.⁵⁷

6.2.1 The American Press

Collecting articles based on organisational name confirms my previous analysis, in which I concluded that these organisations have a negligible media presence in the major papers of the American national press. Keyword searches for all the organisations across all five papers yielded only eight articles printed in the 25-

57. Methodological note: I treated duplicate articles, such as newswire articles, that were printed in different sources as separate articles. Of this 161-article sample 19 articles were reprints. Thus there are 142 unique articles in the dataset.

month span. Furthermore, 2009-2011 were not anomalous years. To create a reference point I ran a second search spanning nearly three decades of coverage, from 1983-2011. This greatly expanded search still yielded only 159 articles, or less than six articles per year on average. Furthermore, 50 of these (31%) were letters and op-ed contributions from the organisational members themselves. This demonstrates that although the organisations have attempted, primarily in earlier years, to insert their messages into the press directly, there has historically been extremely little press coverage of the Turkish American organisations.

Half of the eight articles published during the 25-month span currently under review are notices of community events and half pertain to the Recognition debate. Of the first half, two are planning notices for the construction of the Turkish American Community Centre (see page 79), one is a notice of a Rumi Forum lecture on the Gülen movement, and one is a notice of a Turkish Coalition of America-sponsored jazz history seminar titled “African American-Turkish Connections through the Arts.”⁵⁸ The Recognition-related articles include one piece describing reactions to Obama’s omission of the term genocide from his 2010 commemorative address, one article regarding Ambassador Namık Tan’s return to Washington DC after being recalled in protest to Res. 252 passing the House Committee on Foreign Affairs (see page 142), one article concerning the role of lobbying in the Recognition debate, as well as one letter from Lincoln McCurdy, the president of the Turkish Coalition of America (TCA).

The first of these Recognition-related articles includes a statement from TCA as one of many reactions to Obama’s 2010 address, in which Lincoln McCurdy asked why the many Muslim victims of the late 19th and early 20th centuries were not given a place in the commemoration (quoted on page 159). The second merely mentions that “the struggle over the resolution on the domestic front is being waged among organisations like the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) and the Assembly of Turkish American Associations,”^{ax} to counterpoint the article’s focus on

58. This is not as strange as it might seem. The legacy of Ahmet Ertegun, the Turkish American founder of Atlantic Records, has created a unique impetus in these circles for jazz-related events. As a case in point, in recent years the Turkish Embassy in Washington DC has played host to the Ertegun Jazz Concert Series.

Turkey's diplomatic manoeuvring in the Recognition debate. The third is a financial investigation of the major players that details the Turkish and Armenian governments' use of professional lobbyists, the expenditures incurred by the Turkish Coalition Political Action Committee (TC-USA PAC) and the two major Armenian American groups, and TCA's strategic targeting of key representatives. "The Turkish Coalition of America has targeted the districts of [House Foreign Affairs] committee members who are considered potential swing votes, including submitting op-eds to local newspapers from [Lincoln McCurdy]." ^{ay}

The fourth and final article is one such opinion piece McCurdy submitted to the *Wall Street Journal* shortly after the House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC) approved Res. 252 for a full vote by the House of Representatives. In the letter he reiterates several of the main talking points used by activists and the Turkish government that we saw in the previous chapter's analysis. He describes the resolution as "dangerous and poorly conceived" and claims that HFAC "has harmed the ongoing efforts by Turkey and Armenia to overcome their long-standing disputes," referring to the Turkey-Armenia Protocols. He reminds readers of Turkey's importance to the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts, and repeats the Turkish government's veiled threat that "members who may not have spent much time considering the consequences of this issue will help decide the fate of this relationship." ^{az}

This is the extent of the Turkish American organisations' exposure in the papers I surveyed over a 25-month timespan, and it largely confirms my analysis in the previous chapter. The Turkish American organisations have largely failed to achieve substantial coverage for any of their activities, and what little is available regards the Recognition debate. This stands in marked contrast to the coverage in the Turkish press, which features the Turkish American organisations more frequently and in a greater variety of contexts, albeit still with a strong Recognition debate component.

6.2.2 The Turkish Press

When I asked Hakan Taşçı, the Washington DC representative of TUSKON, how the Turkish American community in Washington DC might affect Turkey, he immediately singled out the information transfer in the Turkish-language media as a key part of any such influence.

Media. You should think constantly and seriously and see the impact. ... All newspapers in Turkey have their representatives here, which means every single event in this town, every single think tank event, has a kind of voice in Turkish media. That's very interesting, because you have similar kinds of events in all capitals. None of them make news in Turkey but the US [does] (Taşçı).

Taşçı was not exaggerating. During my fieldwork I met the representatives of nearly every major paper in Turkey as well as the state wire service, *Anadolu Ajansı*. I attended more than a dozen Turkey-centric events in the capital and there was always at least one media representative sitting in the back, taking notes. Taşçı was not alone in his estimation of their utility as a amplifying loudspeaker of Turkish American activities into Turkey. Both Güler Köknar of TCA and Demet Cabbar of the American Turkish Association of Washington DC noted not only the constant coverage of their activities but also how coverage in the Turkish media affects perceptions within the Turkish American community.

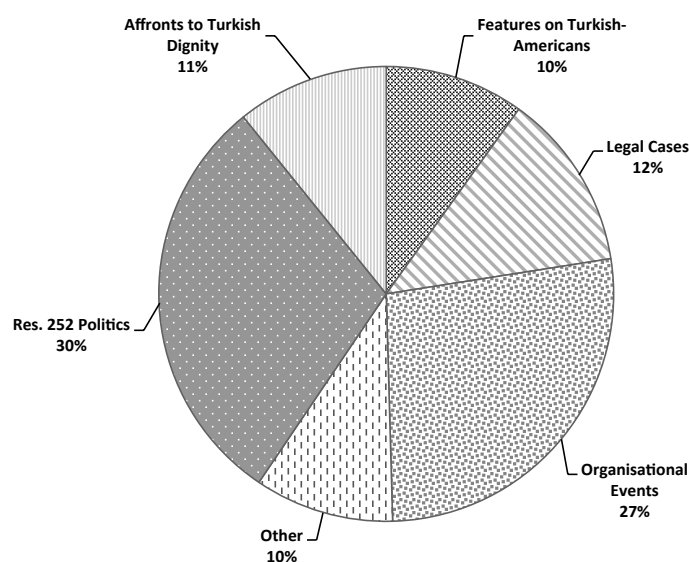
In order to get an initial handle on the content of the 161 articles that make up this dataset I separated them into three broad categories of coverage: official remarks, opinion columns, and organisational coverage.

Lengthy coverage of official remarks, a type of reporting that has a strong tradition in the Turkish press, accounted for 29% percent of the coverage. In such reports the organisations were mentioned because Turkish or American officials either attended an event held by a Turkish American organisation, or met with a Turkish American group as part of their schedule. Thus in these reports the organisations featured as peripheral actors, often functioning as the fora for speeches which in all likelihood would have been covered wherever they had taken place. The opinion columns, which were only 2% of the dataset, also use official visits as

touchstones. The remaining 69% of the dataset fell under organisational coverage, and as it yields more relevant meat for analysis this is where I will concentrate.

I have sub-categorised the organisational coverage into six themes (See Figure 6.3). The major category is, unsurprisingly, the politics surrounding specifically Res. 252 (30%). The second biggest is organisational events (27%), which consist of spot news reports of the many events held in Washington DC, just as Hakan Taşçı suggested. Also included are legal developments (12%) such as those reviewed in Section 5.1; affronts to Turkish dignity (11%); features on Turkish Americans and Turkish American organisations (10%); and a residual other category (10%). In the following sections I will briefly discuss the first five of these themes in order. I make final comments at the end.

FIGURE 6.3: THEMATIC SUB-CATEGORIES OF TURKISH MEDIA REPORTING ON TURKISH AMERICAN ASSOCIATIONS' ACTIVITIES



Res. 252 Politics

Thirty-three articles deal specifically with the politicking surrounding Res. 252. These include stories on some of the Turkish American organisations' offensive and defensive strategies, including: counter-protests outside the Turkish Embassy, ATAA's showing of the documentary *Armenian Revolt* to Congressional staffers (see page 151), the cancellation of the American Turkish Council's annual conference because of Turkish boycott (see page 151), and a series of play-by-play accounts as

the question of a general house vote on Res. 252 came down to the wire (see page 148).

One article, written the day after the president's annual commemorative statement, reports on the Vanguard counter-protest held outside the embassy in 2010 (see page 172). It states that "from an early hour Turkish Americans gathered on the pavement in front of the embassy to stand guard," opposite Armenian Americans that "showed posters accusing Turkey of denial and insulting Atatürk and the Turkish people."^{ba} The article notes that similar events happened in New York and, quoting former ATAA President Günay Evinch, that each year Turkish American counter-protestors have increased as Armenian American protestors have decreased.

Armenians collect children and young people from the churches in buses, their brains burning with hate. ... Five years ago only 30 Turks came, now there are 150 people. On the other side five years ago 700 people came, now there are between 150 and 200 people. This shows that from now on we are laying claim to our history and to Turkey in a serious way and that we will pursue this topic (Evinch).^{bb}

The article goes on to say that Turkish Ambassador Namık Tan invited the Turkish counter-protestors back into the embassy for a reception of sorts after the protest. He thanked them for protecting their country and suggested that they have the potential to be a far more powerful voice in the Recognition debate than the Turkish government could ever be.

With great generosity and sacrifice you have come here to stand against a great slander that is put forward against your country. You need to strenuously explain the fallacy of this slander to your friends and to the American interlocutors here and that it will not be accepted. This is because we are government officers and what we say cannot possibly be as effective as what you say (Ambassador Tan).^{bc}

A second example of the reporting on Res. 252 comes from a report filed on the last possible day for the House to vote on the resolution (December 22nd, 2010), headlined "Evinch: if the proposal passes it will be a rape of the honour of Muslims." It focuses on the suggestion that Res. 252 will cause "irreparable" damage

to Turkish American relations, the idea that “in the United States only Turks are being tried in the legislature,” and the pain this resolution causes to individual Turkish Americans. Evinch was given ample space to explain the last of these ideas:

I looked at my daughter’s face for a long time when I left the house today. I asked myself, ‘What a happy child, will (Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy) Pelosi change that? Will this crime burden the childish shoulders of this girl? ... All Turkish families must think this ... That it is only ethnic politics in California that is able to provide such a feeling is, for us, a huge insult and racist.’^{bd}

Legal Developments

This category is comprised of 14 articles covering four separate legal battles, three of which were discussed in Section 5.1. These were *Schmidt v. Krikorian* and *Lewy v. Southern Poverty Law Centre (SPLC)*, both defamation suits centred on claims that individuals were paid by the Turkish government to oppose the genocide label to the events of 1915, and *Griswold v. Driscoll*, which centred on the Massachusetts curriculum on genocide education. The fourth legal battle regards a proposed bill in California that sought to forbid the state from transacting with any firm found to have business ties with “Genocidal Regimes,” including both the Ottoman and Turkish governments.⁵⁹

Following the verdict in *Schmidt v. Krikorian*, which was found in Schmidt’s favour, Representative Schmidt was investigated by the Ohio Elections Commission for accepting free legal advice from TALDF. The commission found her to be innocent of intentional wrongdoing but required her to repay what amounted to an illegal gift (House Committee on Ethics, 2011). One article regarding this obfuscated the reason for the investigation, and through its headline and sub-head suggested that it was not only free legal advice but also her positive opinion of Atatürk that had landed her in hot water. The headline read, “Investigation into the US politician that praised Atatürk” and the sub-head described Schmidt as a “friend of the Turks” that was being investigated for accepting “free legal services from a

59. Bill 961, California Legislature, 2009-2010.

Turkish lobby group” and ended by stating that “A few years ago in her 19 May speech Schmidt remarked on Atatürk in glowing terms.”^{bc} The article’s contents centre around quotations from TALDF attorneys and Schmidt’s spokesperson stating that they are cooperating fully with the investigation and that they have followed the rules to the best of their knowledge.

In the case of *Lewy v. Southern Poverty Law Centre (SPLC)*, which regards a scholar who published a book critical of the dominant genocide discourse, one headline proclaims the verdict as “a victory for the American professor who came out against the genocide.” It states that SPLC accused Lewy of being a “Turkish agent,” and was subsequently made to retract the accusation and pay a monetary settlement. It explains the case under the heading “Lewy: the Armenian Genocide is a lie,” even though Lewy does not say that in the article and his book title more moderately calls it “a disputed genocide.” It publishes a large portion of SPLC’s retraction under the heading “they admitted they made mistakes,” and quoted Lewy as saying “This [ruling] does not only stop at clearing me of these malevolent accusations, but it also is a stamp of victory for research freedom.”^{bf}

Affronts to Turkish Dignity

This category is comprised of 12 articles detailing five different ‘scandals’ perpetrated in America against Turks and Turkish dignity in 2009 and 2010. Most of these scandals tie into the Recognition debate, like nearly everything discussed in this thesis, but I have singled them out because of their peculiar framing. These include: a) a CNN documentary on genocide in world history, which included the events of 1915; b) an ANCA campaign against NBA-star Kobe Bryant after he appeared in advertisements for Turkish Airlines; c) the broadcast of a map on CNN which labelled part of Eastern Turkey as “Kurdistan;” d) the removal of TCA’s Internet advertising by Google; and e) the use of the term “Turk’s head” in the product branding of a toilet bowl brush. I use the last two items of this list for my examples in this section.

One story, headlined “a big scandal at Google”^{bg} and sourcing a *Fox News* story^{bh}, relates that Google removed the Turkish Coalition of America’s advertisements

“repudiating claims concerning 1915” after the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) launched a grassroots complaint campaign. At issue, according to ANCA in the original *Fox News* article, were ads purchased by TCA and linking to its website that invited users searching for “Armenia” to learn about “Armenian Atrocities.”^{bi} *Fox News* further reported that Google defended its actions saying the ads contravened its policy against advertisements “designed to stir up hate or advocate against a protected group.” The Turkish version of the story acknowledged that Google defended its actions but did not provide similar details on Google’s policies. Rather it described the manoeuvre as one of sacrificing the constitutional right to free speech in the face of the Armenian lobby. The sub-headline states “Google caves to the Armenian lobby” and in the body states “According to Fox News, the advertisements TCA published on Google with the intent to contribute to the education of Turkish and American students were stopped in the face of the objections of the Armenian lobby.”^{bj} This article thus supports and repeats TCA’s framing of its role in the Recognition debate as seeking to educate the American public. This is in stark contrast to ANCA’s narrative that, successfully in this case, labelled TCA as purveyors of hate speech.

Another article that was published in three different papers reported that the Turkish American Legal Defence Fund (TALDF), in response to the indignation of a Turkish American individual, sent a complaint to the Nevell-Rubbermaid company for selling a toilet brush labelled as a “Turk’s Head.”^{bk} Turk’s head is not a brand name but rather a term for a style of brush. Nevell-Rubbermaid apologised and promised to circulate an educational memorandum, which TALDF attorney Bruce Fein reportedly called a “symbolic victory” and said that “from now on Turks can see their rights in America on any topic.”⁶⁰ Apparently not having much more to say on the topic of the Turk’s head toilet brush, the author of the article chose to close the story with a rundown of TALDF’s activities in the Recognition debate – the biggest perceived insult to Turkish dignity. These included:

60. A quick Internet search reveals that the Nevell-Rubbermaid toilet brush continues to be sold as a ‘Turk’s head.’ See, for example: http://www.staples.com/Rubbermaid-6320-C-Turks-Head-Toilet-Bowl-Brush-Brown-17-L/product_RCP6320

Providing free legal support for US politicians and intellectuals who had become targets because of their opposition to the Armenian diaspora's genocidal claims, taking legal action at American universities where there are Armenian attempts to obstruct the speech of Turkish intellectuals and students, ... and the latest in California ... [playing] a very effective role in repelling attempts to prevent students that did not listen to Armenian genocide arguments from graduating.^{bl}

Organisational Events

As Taşçı claimed in the introduction to this section, the Turkish media maintains many representatives in Washington DC and Turkish events and Turkish organisations are all thoroughly covered. In the 25-month period under study here 30 articles cover 19 distinct events and activities of Turkish American organisations; a figure that gives support to Taşçı's supposition. These include reports on many of the seminars held at the Rumi Forum on American policy in the Middle East, the ATC and ATAA annual conferences, the Washington DC Turkish Festival, and the curious event of the Turkish Coalition of America taking a group of Native Americans to Istanbul. Several articles also cover ATAA's 'Say Turk' campaign to bolster the Turkish American presence in the US Census and the Turkish Coalition Political Action Committee's campaign to boost Turkish American campaign contributions, both of which have been discussed elsewhere in this thesis.

In one article on ATAA's 'Say Turk' Campaign, former ATAA President Günay Evinch was given ample space to explain the programme, his larger strategy for increasing the political effectiveness of the Turkish American community, and the importance of both for the Turkish American community. Its lead paragraph contains a strong message from Evinch linking this campaign to the Recognition debate.

We already have our arguments, and when our voice is strong then those opposing us [the Armenian Lobby] will be more serious. Those arrogant groups that work while drunk on Turkish hatred, when we are strong, will start to be more logical and begin to think more fairly [toward us] (Evinch).^{bm}

Evinch makes further strategic connections between the Say Turk campaign and undermining the Armenian American power base. “We will know where our strength lies and we will use that strength in politics,” Evinch said. “For example the project related to the events of 1915 arises from the Armenian population of California, Massachusetts and New York. Our goal is to determine the Turks of these three states.” The Say Turk campaign is part of a “three-dimensional civil society movement,” according to Evinch, the other two dimensions being the expansion of the Turkish Caucus in Congress (an informal group dealing especially with Turkey-related matters), and the increase of Turkish American political donations. “We learned that in American democracy when Turks give money to Commission members in addition to putting forward arguments, the ears of Congressional members are open.”

A feel-good twist to this sort of strongly nationalistic reporting can be seen in writing on the Turkish Festival put on annually by the American Turkish Association of Washington DC (ATA-DC). Recall that I first introduced this festival in Chapter 3 as part of Turkish American activists’ general political strategy – aimed at garnering support and sympathy from the broader American population – as well as being a cultural outreach project (see page 95). One article representative of the reporting on the 2009 festival, which ran under the slogan ‘visit Turkey in DC,’ focused on the opportunity “to introduce” Americans to Turkey, the displays of Turkish culture, as well as on the enthusiasm of visitors for both the demonstrations and Turkey in general.

The rich variety of Turkish music and folk games, which emphasised Turkey’s unique relationship with the Balkans, the Middle East, the Caucasus, and Middle Asia were among the festival’s activities that garnered the most interest. The Americans took many pictures, broke into a rain of applause at the demonstrations, and danced to Turkish music.^{bn}

The article quotes Demet Cabbar, the president of ATA-DC and vice-president of ATAA, as saying “we ran an advertising campaign specifically aimed at foreigners. Our goal was to be able to explain our country better to foreigners, and I believe we were successful.” Notice how Cabbar curiously uses the term ‘foreigners’ to describe

Americans at an event taking place in America. The article goes on to quote several “Americans” regarding their favourite parts of the festival, such as the food and the ceramics on display. It also indirectly quotes two “Turks,” one of which had lived in Washington DC for the past 25 years, as saying “this type of activity not only is a chance to introduce foreigners to Turkey’s [cultural] riches, but also creates an opportunity to dispel our longing for Turkey and to see our kith and kin.”^{bo}

Features on Turkish American Individuals and Organisations

This dataset contained 11 articles that I classified as features on Turkish Americans. These included a profile on Yalçın Ayaslı, the multimillionaire founder and patron of the Turkish Coalition of America (see page 171); the central role of Saltzman and Evinch PC, the private practice law firm of Turkish American Legal Defence Fund (TALDF) counsel David Saltzman and former ATAA president Günay Evinch, in court cases regarding Cyprus, PKK, and events of 1915; the financial impact of the current economic crisis on ATAA’s endowment and donation income; and the increasing rate of political activism and formal political candidacies of Turkish Americans.

Six articles were published regarding the candidacy of five Turkish Americans in local races in 2010, which took place in parallel to the federal midterm elections on Capitol Hill. The most substantial of these reports, headlined “Turks will have a say,” reports that these candidacies are part of a more general trend of increased participation by Turkish Americans in the political system, always emphasising who is and who is not a Turk in the process. It also obfuscates the relative importance of these candidacies, conflating the Congressional midterm elections with local races at several points even while noting that the candidates are running in local elections.

Five Turks who have been settled in the United States for years will say ‘in American politics we are also [here]’ in the midterm elections on the 2nd of November. In the past three years Turks have donated \$385,000 to non-Turkish American politicians, but now they want to have a say with their own candidates in national politics. ... Five Turks ... even if in the most humble way, have said ‘I’m here’ by seeking local service.^{bp}

The article mentions that these candidacies have been announced on the heels of the House Foreign Affairs Committee vote on Res. 252. It then goes on to quote Lincoln McCurdy, in his role as treasurer of the Turkish Coalition's USA Political Action Committee (TC-USA PAC), who declared these candidacies to be some of the first buds of the Turkish American community's political flowering. "Turks are just now coming to life in American politics," McCurdy was quoted as saying, "in time we will pick the fruit."^{bq} Despite the connection made in the article between the candidacies and Res. 252, the role of the Recognition debate as a motivating factor nevertheless remains unclear. This is because the same report notes that the candidates themselves are avoiding the events of 1915. "Topics like the so-called Armenian genocide do not appear in the Turkish candidates' electoral campaigns," the report said.

Summary

In this section I have demonstrated that while the American press yielded extremely little coverage of the Turkish American organisations under study regardless of the topic, the Turkish press covered their activities in detail. This coverage can be broken into six broad themes, including Res. 252 politics, legal developments, affronts to Turkish dignity, organisational events, and features on Turkish Americans and their organisations. This coverage uncritically echoes and amplifies the framing and arguments of the Turkish American organisations. It serves to inflate their importance and impact while at the same time consistently emphasising the salience of Turkishness in America and the existence of prejudice of Americans against Turks and Turkey. I suggest that such coverage supports and encourages the inculcation of diasporic consciousness among 'everyday' Turks in the United States by: a) publishing news about Turkish Americans as important actors in both Turkey and the United States; b) emphasising the threats to Turkishness in the United States and, in many other respects, exhibiting sensationalist, nationalistic tendencies in the reportage; and c) echoing the framing and arguments of Turkish American activists and the Turkish government.

6.3 PASSIVE MAJORITY

The current leaders of both old and new guard organisations are the political entrepreneurs or ‘core members’ of the Turkish American diaspora, to use the terminology introduced in Chapter 2. “Core members are the organising elites, intensively active in diasporic affairs and in a position to appeal for mobilisation of the larger diaspora” (Shain and Aharon, 2003:452). Their organisations, especially the grassroots umbrella organisation the Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA) and its New York-based sister organisation the Federation of Turkish American Associations (FTAA), have a tendency to appropriate the voices of *all* Turkish Americans in the United States; to declare themselves the legitimate representatives of the Turkish American community. The opening lines of their (December 17th, 2010) joint letter to the House of Representatives urging the body not to pass Res. 252 is a good example of this. “We serve as Presidents of the main Turkish American grassroots organisations in America, which include over 250 local organisations nationwide and represent over a half-million Americans of Turkish heritage,” the presidents of both organisations wrote.

This claim to representative legitimacy is problematic, both in terms of scope and in terms of agenda. Leaving aside the fact that 500,000 people is approximately three times the official number of Americans with Turkish heritage (see Table 3.2), their claim implies that a) *all* Turkish Americans are members of a Turkish American organisation, and b) *agree* with the standpoints of the umbrella organisations. This is of course not the case. Both ATA-DC president Demet Cabbar and ATAA Civic Engagement Director Yenal Küçüker observed in our interviews that membership rates are low and, in many areas, falling. “Turkish American local components are struggling with membership fees. People are not willing to pay,” Küçüker said.

A large part of Küçüker’s job involves travelling the country to meet with component organisations, and he told me that young recruits are especially difficult to acquire. “Out of all the places I’ve visited so far out of a year and a half, the majority of my audiences are people over 30 years old, 40 years old. I don’t have any that are below 30. It’s very rare, maybe two or three. Maybe. So that’s very

concerning, that's very alarming," Küçüker said. He and his counterpart at the Turkish Coalition of America, Beril Unver, went on to explain that many of today's Turkish American youth have grown up watching and listening to their parents, who themselves are tiring of fighting the same battles over and over again. Küçüker and Unver saw this dogged focus on the battles of the past, coupled with the more Americanised lifestyle of the younger generation, as the reason behind a marked disengagement in the younger generation. Unver elaborated on this sentiment:

Those who are older, maybe our parents generation, are just tired of hearing about it. They don't want to do it, they think the genocide resolution is going to come up every year anyway, so just let it pass. They don't really get the implications, beyond that, and they don't feel like they can make a difference. Then you have [Küçüker's] and my generation [both are under 30 years old] ... they've gotten from their parents that they can't really do anything. So they disassociate with their Turkish heritage, or they just don't want to get involved (Unver).

Former ATAA President Günay Evinch, for his part, estimated a "critical mass" of only 5,000 Turkish Americans (1% of *ATAA's* overall population estimate), which he defined as people "who are very willing to do lobbying and activism to support US-Turkish relations." This critical mass constitutes "passive members" of the diaspora, in Shain and Aharon's (2003) typology, who are "likely to be available for mobilisation when the active leadership calls upon them." The balance, which is the vast majority of the population no matter which count is used, are "silent members." These are defined as "generally uninvolved in diasporic affairs (in the discursive and political life of its institutions), but who may mobilise in times of crisis. They are mostly part of the 'imagined community' ... often existing only in the minds of diasporic political activists, as well as those of home and host governments" (2003:452).

In this section I briefly lift the cover on these other two categories, moving away from the political entrepreneurs for a moment to hear some of the voices of the passive and silent migrants. My data comes from 41 interviews and surveys I conducted with 'ordinary' Turkish Americans, defined as those not in a leadership position with any Turkish American organisation that were living in the

Washington DC area at the time of my fieldwork. I located them through a basic snowball sampling method (see Chapter 2), using multiple entry points to increase the diversity of the sample. I started chains at two hair salons operated by Turkish Americans, the American Kurdish Information Network, the Turkish American Community Centre (the main Turkish mosque), and the ATAA father's day picnic.

Each interview subject answered a 65-question survey prior to the interview, which generally lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. They usually filled this out while I bought them a cup of coffee, the only compensation anyone ever received for participating in this research. As this is a relatively small sample that was non-randomly acquired, I should make the extent of my goals in this section clear. To use Oliver Bakewell's (2010:1694) wonderful expression, "my ambition ... [is to] go snorkelling and get a glimpse of the depths, not to go deep-sea diving." The central concern of this thesis is the Turkish American activists. This section connects to the whole by looking at how the broader Turkish American population in Washington DC, nearly 8000 strong in 2010 according to the US Census Bureau (see Figure 3.4), interacts and relates to those activists. Its purpose is thus to provide a taste of the attitudes and interests of the broader Turkish American population, and to hear some of their voices, but it will take further research to describe the politics of this group with statistical rigour.

I begin with a description of the survey data, which was geared to gathering basic demographic data and information on political participation. I then bring to the forefront some of the voices from my interviews which speak to the themes of this thesis. I argue that while many Turkish Americans maintain a strong sense of Turkish identity and are intensely aware and sensitive to what they perceive as anti-Turkish prejudice in the United States, they maintain a much greater variety of interests and political opinions regarding America, Turkey, and Turkish issues than one would guess from the activities of the Turkish American organisations under study here. I therefore suggest that, although there is certainly agreement in some areas between some people, the agendas of the Turkish American organisations *do not* reflect the attitudes or desires of *all* Turkish Americans. This is especially true of those who were not alive or politically conscious during the late 1970s and early

1980s, years which I have argued before were critical to the political development of the current organisational elites.

6.3.1 The Survey

Generally speaking, this sample turned out to be young, educated, secular urbanites with long experience in the United States. Respondents ranged from 20 to 58 years old, with a median age of 29 years old. There were slightly more women (58%) and unmarried (56%) respondents. Furthermore, fully 60% reported obtaining a masters degree or Ph.D – many first came to the US for advanced study – while another 27% had or were working on a baccalaureate when we met. The balance (12%) reported a secondary school or technical (vocational) education.

They worked a variety of occupations. Some were still students, some worked in restaurants or hair salons around town, while others were researchers, engineers, economists and analysts, among others. Sixty-five percent came from one of Turkey's three largest cities: Istanbul, Ankara or Izmir. All but one had lived in the United States for more than one year – I did not interview tourists – with a median stay of 7 years and an upper bound of 40 years residence. Four of the 41 (10%) were born in the United States. Twenty-seven (65%) were Turkish citizens only, two were American citizens only, while 12 (29%) were dual nationals. Forty percent of the 27 Turkish-only citizens were green card holders (permanent residents). To my knowledge none was undocumented, and most said they were staying in America with student, work, or asylum visa statuses.

Seventeen of the 41 respondents (41%) reported membership to one or more Turkish organisations. Eleven of these belonged to the local American Turkish Association in Washington DC (ATA-DC), however two others were members of a Turkish students association and one participated in a Turkish folk dance troupe. Five additional respondents worked in some capacity at the Turkish Coalition of America (TCA), three of which were summer interns in TCA's Congressional staffer programme.

I asked each survey respondent several questions regarding their participation and interest level in American and Turkish politics, and in Turkish American

organisations. Only three of the 41 respondents (7%) voted in the Turkish 2011 general elections. This low turnout was due, in part, to the *de facto* requirement for migrants to return to Turkey in order to cast their ballot. The participation rate in the 2008 American general election was markedly different, with 83% of *eligible* voters casting a ballot. However as one must be an American citizen to be eligible, this amounted to only 23% of the total sample. Aside from the American citizens voting in the 2008 US General election, the individuals in my sample seemed to have little interaction with the formal political system. Eight respondents (20%) claimed they had donated money to a political campaign in either Turkey or the United States at some point in their lives. Most surprisingly, given the rhetoric of the Turkish American activists, only nine respondents (22%) claimed to have “done anything” about Res. 252, which the respondents specified as signing a petition.

That said, many of the respondents reported a strong interest in Turkey and Turkish affairs. Sixty-eight percent reported discussing Turkish politics in their homes at least once a week, and 39% claimed to discuss Turkish politics with relations back in Turkey as frequently. Sixty-eight percent also reported watching a Turkish news programme on the Internet at least once a week and 83% reported reading a Turkish newspaper as frequently. The most popular papers by far were the higher-quality, secular papers *Hürriyet*, its English-language edition *Hürriyet Daily News*, and *Milliyet*. The more conservative *Zaman* and its English-language edition *Today's Zaman* were less commonly read. A majority of respondents also reported reading other, Internet-based Turkish news at least once a week.

6.3.2 Reassessing ‘Turkishness’ in the United States

In this section I introduce a selection of the interview participants from the ‘silent majority’ of Turkish Americans living in Washington DC. I have divided their comments into three broad themes that encapsulate much of what was said. The first regards their perceptions of anti-Turkish prejudice and ignorance in America today, and how this has enhanced their own sense of a Turkish identity. The second counterpoints this by emphasising how their experiences in America have broadened their horizons and moderated their opinions. Also included in this section is some critical comments of the official Turkish narratives and those of the

Turkish American organisations. In the third section I look at one consequence of criticism, which is the widespread apathy and political fatalism exhibited by many of my interview subjects. In this section, unlike in the rest of the this thesis, all names have been changed for privacy. In Section 6.6.3 I return to using the real names of individuals.

Perceptions of Prejudice, Inflaming Turkishness

A strong theme in the discourse of these interviews was the perception of prejudice against and ignorance of Turks and Turkey, and the stimulating effect that had on their Turkish identity. “Turkey is only known for its problems ... I’m so tired of explaining myself,” Elif, a 30-year-old woman graduate student told me over coffee. “[Americans] think you’re so patriotic. I’m not patriotic. I became patriotic after socialising with Americans.” Elif was also critical of ATA-DC’s Turkish festival for playing to America’s orientalist notions of Turkey, especially its emphasis on ‘classical’ Turkish and Ottoman culture, such as belly-dancing, kababs, and faux-Ottoman costumes. “We promote [Turkey] with their preconceptions,” she said.

Elif was hardly the only one to tell of encounters with prejudice. Eylül, a 28-year-old woman born in California to Turkish parents, recounted at length what it was like to grow up in one of America’s greatest concentrations of Armenians. “[For] Turkish Americans, at least in California, you feel like you can’t say it out loud. It’s a four-letter word, Turk. You don’t want to say it,” Eylül said. “I don’t want to be judged for what I am. I’m an American. I have every right to be there, but I’m also very proud of my heritage. And I don’t feel that I should be afraid to say it.”

Others felt Americans were more ignorant of Turks than prejudiced against them. “If you ask an American, they probably don’t know where Turkey is on a map,” Berat, a 29-year-old father of two, said as we drove to a meeting at a Gülenist private school on the outskirts of town. He came to the United States seven years earlier to pursue his Ph.D. in engineering and now works in the field. He told me, and others made similar statements, that it was not until he left Turkey that he realised how unknown the Turkish perspective is in the rest of the world. “Turkey’s politics and policies are not being defended by anybody here. Turkey’s past is not

being defended here.” Berat and others like him seemed to presuppose that if only members of Congress were more familiar with Turkish history and culture they would be more inclined to support Turkish positions on issues such as Recognition. He showed little interest in joining the fight however, excusing himself by saying he was not a politician but an engineer.

Expanding Horizons, Moderating Turkishness

In contrast to the tenor of the previous voices, many of the individuals I interviewed spoke of having their opinions moderated by their exposure to the United States. “I changed a lot here,” 26-year-old Ayşe said, who came to Washington DC from Ankara and now works as an accountant. “I used to have no room to change my mind. My American uncle says give it some space. We see more clearly here than [Turks] do [in Turkey].” Hatice, a 29-year-old project coordinator at the World Bank, echoed Ayşe’s statement. “I thought Istanbul and Turkey were the world,” she said. “When you’re in the situation you can’t see everything clearly. Coming outside gives you a different perspective.”

Many more interviews confirmed this as a widespread sentiment, with several highlighting the intolerance found within Turkey as well as America. Aylin, a 27-year-old woman working as a summer research assistant at a major think tank, was impressed by how seriously her opinion was taken at her job. “You can’t have a chance to share your ideas in Turkey, it’s so hard. Nobody listens to you. Here everybody listens to you,” she said. Like Ayşe, she also noted the disconnect between the powerful portrayal of Turkey domestically and its apparent weakness from an overseas vantage point. Two men especially criticised their experiences in the Turkish education and military establishments. Savaş, a 33-year-old culinary instructor, described the intellectual climate at his university. “Government, military, police, these things are sacred. A huge iron curtain for the Turkish people.” Aran, a 29-year-old linguist and one of the very few ethnic Kurds from Turkey that I was able to interview, echoed Savaş. “In college [in America] they say analyse. In Turkey they say memorise,” Aran said. He also recalled his mandatory military service, an especially difficult experience for him given the on-going struggle between the Turkish military and Kurdish separatists. “They were showing a movie during

military service. The whole world was against Turkey,” he said. “They were showing it over and over again. ... In Turkey, for many years intolerance was encouraged.”

More than one interview subject connected these perceptions of *Turkish* intolerance with those of the Turkish American activists, especially with regard to the Recognition debate. “Turks in Turkey care less than the Turks here,” Ayşe said. “In Turkey we never really heard about the issue. The Turks here are more passionate.” Yeter, a 24-year-old from Ankara that now works as a research assistant in the Turkish studies division of a think tank, was more critical of the Turkish American activists. “It’s part of the identity if you’re Turkish in the United States, unfortunately, to say there is no genocide, actually the Armenians killed us” she said. “If you had talked to me five years ago perhaps I would have said that as well. Now being here I’ve gained a different perspective.”

Aylin seconded this, and suggested the Turkish American activists were actually performing a disservice to Turkey and the Turkish American community. “It’s really important to have open-minded people over here but we don’t. They are so ideologic. They don’t know how to criticise their own ideology.” Savaş pushed much harder than both Aylin and Yeter on this point, and he was also the only interview subject that openly admitted to signing a petition *for* recognition of the events of 1915 as genocide. He said that if the Turkish government and people accept the genocide label, “It will be the first time in their fucking lives that they will face something as a public. ... If you face the facts, it will make you more intact, more honest. Finally you have some integrity. That’s what Turkish people need right now.”

Apathy and Activism

Many of my interview subjects chose to withdraw or otherwise not engage with politics, either out of apathy, disillusionment, or a sense that they cannot affect change. “That’s the huge weakness of the Turkish people,” Savaş mused, as much about himself as about his compatriots. “They don’t think they can change anything. ... To be political you have to be active. You have to do something. I don’t *do* anything.” Ayşe and Yeter both declared their disinterest in the Recognition debate. “The Ottomans are done, finished,” Ayşe said. “I don’t get involved in [the protests].”

Yeter criticised the tactics, saying “I don’t think it’s important to camp in front of the Turkish embassy,” she said. “It will bring nothing. ... It’s always at this high level, whether or not it was a genocide. The human aspect is not discussed.”

Ömer, a 36-year-old engineer and Hatice’s husband, also spoke on this theme. Like Ayşe he admitted to not knowing much about the Recognition debate until he left Turkey, and described protesting against recognition as trendy, “a cool political activity for the Turkish people.” However, he vehemently stated that “We should stop this conversation. We shouldn’t talk about this anymore. It wasn’t us, [it was] our father’s father’s father. ... The Armenian problem is not going to bring us a piece of bread to our table. It will not solve a single real problem. It takes us away from the real problem.”

6.3.3 Changing the Topic, Challenging the Narrative

Not everybody has chosen to withdraw. Some have started individual initiatives intended to present a Turkish identity to the American public, but without focusing on the big political issues so central to the organisations’ *raison d’être*. They challenge dominant narratives and perceived anti-Turkish prejudice through person-to-person diplomacy, and in this they resemble the annual Turkish Festival held by the American Turkish Association of Washington DC (ATA-DC). However, their distinguishing characteristic is their creative independence of the major organisations under study. I would like to briefly detail two such initiatives here. One is an Internet- and broadcast-based television programme showcasing Turkish American culture. The second is an experiment in nation-branding through a social media platform and free coffee.

Turkish American Television (TATV - www.turkishamericantv.org) began broadcasting in 2005 and claims to be the longest running Turkish American television programme. Founded by Hürriyet Ok, who has lived in the United States for 24 years and works in IT security, TATV airs on 11 public access channels across four states: Maryland, Virginia, Washington DC, and California. Like many Turkish Americans, Ok was occasionally the target of ignorant questions and stereotypical remarks. “If not the people, the stereotypes are in the media. Drug dealers, prisons,

Midnight Express,” Ok told me. “People are not happy about this. They come from their country and see their country portrayed like this.” At that time he was recording the shows of his choral group, and so he decided to start broadcasting them on public access television. “In America Turkish culture is less known, whether this is [through] ignorance or something else, so we should show what we are all about,” Ok said.

TATV broadcasts shows, concerts, and interviews with Turkish Americans or regarding issues of interest, such as immigration reform. It has garnered considerable attention, winning a ‘Top Producer’ award from Fairfax Public Access in Virginia, and now includes ATA-DC, TUSKON, and the Turkish Cultural Foundation, a sister organisation of the TCA run by Güler Köknar, in its list of sponsors. “[TATV] is a biographical archive of our lives here,” Ok said. “This will help create a more proud Turkish American community. We are bringing real life things ... role models, and we need that kind of self-petting as a community.”

The second initiative I would like to discuss was the brainchild of two people much younger than Ok. Gizem Şalcıgil White, 30, and Efe Sevin, 25, were both born in Turkey. They moved to the United States for masters programmes in communications and marketing at Emerson College in Boston, where they specialised in nation branding and online media. “I was just getting involved here with the Turkish community here and I just realised that the online side of every kind of promotion, information, is just lacking so many things. ... So I was thinking, why not create a new platform and also create a new story about Turkey,” Şalcıgil White told me while on her lunch break from the Turkish Embassy, where she works in the press office.

I told [the old guard activists], let’s not talk about the Armenian issue any more ... let’s start building a new story about Turkey, something new, something never heard of before ... they got really upset. They were like ‘who are you?’ you know? ‘We don’t even know you, what you’re talking about.’ ... And I said, ok. People are not open to new ideas. So I’ll just go forward and create the idea (Şalcıgil White).

Out of this process came *Türkayfe.org*. In short, *Türkayfe.org* is a social media platform for sharing experiences and stories about Turkey, with the explicit goal of ‘re-branding’ Turkey in a fresh and positive way. The name is a blend of the words Turk and cafe, and the site plays on the coffee house concept. It has a small group of dedicated contributors – mainly Turks and foreigners who either live in Turkey or who have visited it in the past – but it is open to anybody who cares to read and write about the country. The concept of nation branding is prominent on the site and thoroughly explained: the site is open and honest about what it is hoping to achieve.

Türkayfe.org aims to contribute to Turkey's branding attempts ... We believe Turkey has more than negative stereotypes and touristic clichés to offer. Turkish brand includes more aspects than sun, sea, and carpets. This is why it is up to us, individuals who have something to say about Turkey, to show the world other faces of Turkey. *Türkayfe* is here as a platform to create a more inclusive, a more vivid, and a more personal portrayal of Turkey (*Türkayfe.org*, 2013).

Şalcıgil White is an idealist who, like many of her compatriots first experienced the genocide discourse and prejudices against Turks only after she arrived in the States. This catalysed her to action, and no matter how hard I pressed on her she refused to state that *Türkayfe.org* has a business plan or any sort of commercial ambition. “We never thought about money. That was not our goal. The only goal was to try to build something really different,” Şalcıgil White said. “I think I just wanted to show some people that there are more ways to promote Turkey. You can talk about the Armenian issue, you can talk about the Cyprus issue, you can talk about how great our beaches are, or other things. But there’s nothing new about [those topics].”

Şalcıgil White has recently branched out from *Türkayfe.org* to attempt another style of person-to-person diplomacy. Washington DC has a large culture of mobile food trucks that cater to the many government buildings housed there, so she has teamed up with another partner and a large Turkish coffee company to found a mobile Turkish coffee truck. Between May and September 2012 it drove around the

eastern seaboard, distributing free coffee to passersby and talking about Turkey. In 2013 it did the same in Europe.

6.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter has been about efforts by Turkish American organisations to encourage a diasporic consciousness amongst this population, the possible supporting role of the media in this process, and the silent majority of Turkish Americans and their viewpoints.

I have argued that the Turkish American organisations at the heart of this study, who make up the ‘core members’ of the Turkish American diaspora, have so far failed to garner any significant coverage in the American press, even with regard to one of their biggest issues: the events of 1915. They have also largely failed to generate broad-based, *active* support for their cause, despite the programmes detailed in Section 6.1 aimed at increasing their grassroots base. The majority remain silent.

Their silence, however, was not due to a lack of knowledge of the issues. As demonstrated in Section 6.3, the ‘ordinary’ Turkish Americans I met are educated, informed, and possessed of a wide diversity of opinions. Many older Turkish Americans are battle-weary of the Recognition debate. Younger migrants and second-generation Turkish Americans did not personally experience the fallout of the 1974 Cyprus invasion and the Armenian militancy of the 1980s that proved so formative to members of the ‘old guard.’ Those few young people who are taking up the banner of Turkish American activism – Yenal Küçüker, Beril Unver, Gizem Şalcıgil White, and Efe Sevin – are all pushing for a new direction away from the Recognition debate and are looking for new ways to define their Turkishness. This stands in contrast to the current leaders of these organisations, who remain committed to the agenda they have pursued for decades.

These leaders are enabled in their singular focus in part by the Turkish press, which, unlike the American press, provides broad coverage of the Turkish American organisations. It acts as an echo chamber, publishing their framings, arguments and activities. It projects the organisational voices into Turkey and, through the Internet,

brings them back to the United States and into the consciousness of Turkish Americans. I suspect the most powerful consequence of this coverage is that it tells readers that a Turkish American community *exists*, and in doing so helps to construct and maintain that self-same community; to produce diasporic consciousness. The same may be said of the organisations themselves and their outreach campaigns. While not all Turkish Americans agree with their agendas or their tactics, their presence and vocal opposition to high-profile issues is a continual reminder that there are people in America that identify as *Turkish Americans*.

Both organisations and press tend to focus on affronts to Turkish dignity. The rhetoric is frequently inflammatory, at times sensationally so, and it often accuses other actors of being motivated by anti-Turkish prejudice and hatred. Without doubt the main political adversaries in this story, primarily the Greek- and Armenian American activists, produce ample inflammatory rhetoric of their own. However, it seems as if certain experiences in the United States and a socialisation into Kemalist Turkish nationalism have shaped the interpretative frame of reporters and activists alike in such a way that *all* statements critical of Turks and Turkey appear to be motivated by racial prejudice and hatred. Turkish journalists, inculcated in a culture that glorifies Turkishness at every opportunity, and the Turkish American leaders, who came of age in a time when Turks truly were the target of physical violence, are so influenced by these factors that seem to interpret anything remotely critical as an existential threat to which they must respond. This dynamic illustrates the extent to which the interpretation of meanings around Turkish issues in the United States is dependent upon the framing of the participants.

Yet more than three decades have now passed since the 1974 Cyprus invasion and, while the Recognition debate still produces ample vitriol on both sides, many 'ordinary' Turkish Americans now possess different cultural reference points. They are intrigued by the constant competition amongst ideas that characterises American civic life, a birthright for some and for others a sharp contrast to the Kemalist ideology of the Turkish state. Turkishness and Turkish dignity is still important to them, but they see different routes to success in preserving them, or at the very least judge the current strategy as one of diminishing returns. This is not

true for everyone. Many Turkish Americans remain receptive and sympathetic to the messages of the activists. But, especially among the youth, this is changing and there is no clear agreement on what the interests or agenda of the Turkish American 'community' are or should be.

The Turkish American organisations' best chance of reaching these people lies in helping them with everyday matters relevant to their life in America. Küçüker's campaign to educate local associations on how to get an audience with their Congressperson and how to exercise their civic rights as Americans has been quite well received, but it is a small part of what the ATAA does. As I first argued in Chapter 3, the organisations' overwhelming focus on Recognition and defence of the Turkish identity precludes them from devoting much organisational energy to the more practical concerns of everyday Turkish Americans.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

The central question of this thesis has been: how is Turkish diasporic identity formed and shaped by discourses that frame Turks, and that interrogate who or what a ‘Turk’ is? I studied this proposition amongst the Turkish American population of Washington DC, focusing primarily on activists engaged in the current political debate over official recognition of the deportations and massacres of Armenians by Ottoman forces as a genocide. I have traced the origins of Turkish American diasporic activism, explored the motivations of the activists, and examined the techniques they use to attempt to prevent the institutionalization – or lexical hegemony – in America of the term ‘genocide’ to refer to the events of 1915.

I have related this back to a particular type of constructed identity termed diasporic consciousness, the fuel to the engine of diasporic politics, which I have strongly argued is not inherent to migrant groups but is produced. Diasporic consciousness is, like all identities, plastic and may change shape over time. In the United States, political entrepreneurs work to construct and maintain a sense of diasporic consciousness within the migrant population – thereby converting a category of migrants who share a common country of heritage into an activated diaspora – as part of a political project. Many Turkish American activists have coalesced around battles of identity, the goals of which are to defend against slights to the reputations of Turkey, Turks, and Turkish Americans. They have done this in a context marked by political competition between multiple actors to label ‘Turks’, to define what it means to be Turkish in the United States. That this became their

focus is attributable in part to: a) their lived experiences in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s; b) their education and indoctrination into Turkish nationalist thought; and c) their wider political context, which embraces lobbying and can be highly sensitive to the wishes of vocal, minority constituencies. However, the agenda of these original political entrepreneurs is subject to increasing challenges. Migrants with different political stripes and younger Turkish Americans with more recent memories are beginning to put forth alternative political agendas and definitions of Turkishness in the American context.

7.1 KEY FINDINGS

In contrast to many studies which pre-suppose the existence of a motivated, activated diaspora, I have demonstrated in this thesis how diasporic consciousness is first produced and then instrumentalised for a political project. I have highlighted the formative experiences that led to an articulation of diasporic consciousness among core members of the Turkish American diaspora, and the continuing political activities that help to maintain this consciousness. Through this, I developed a conception of competitive identity formation in a diasporic context. I suggested this is one lens through which to understand the creation of the Turkish diaspora in the United States, and the dynamics that shape their politics today. In the course of writing five key themes emerged that have significant implications for both theory and policy.

7.1.1 Diasporic Consciousness Born on the Defensive

Citizens of the Turkish Republic first began to come to the United States in quantity in the late 1950s and 1960s (Karpas, 2008). However, it was not until: a) the Turkish military invaded Cyprus in 1974; b) the US responded with an arms embargo against Turkey; and c) Armenian militants began to attack Turkey-related targets in the 1970s and continued through the 1980s, resulting in several deaths, that some migrants started to organise. As ATAA President Günay Evinch explained on page 64, it was only then that some Turkish Americans decided ‘the community’ needed a more powerful voice in American politics to express the ‘Turkish’ point of view. These early activists were deeply impacted by this series of

events. They rallied people to the cause of defending Turkey and Turks against what they perceived to be unjustified attacks on their country and their person. These original political entrepreneurs received an additional push from the Turkish ambassador at the time, a political entrepreneur in his own right, who was seeking to drum up a local defense against growing calls for recognition (see page 116, also Dixon, 2010).

Crucially, this sequence of events demonstrates that the core members of the Turkish diaspora possess an autonomously-developed diasporic consciousness and pursue the agenda of their choosing. However, in doing so they often repeat state-sanctioned narratives that coincide with state aims, thereby inadvertently replicating the functions of Turkish state institutions in propagating Turkish nationalism as a core theme of Turkish identity overseas. I have emphasised the role of Turkish nationalism throughout this thesis, and have further argued that this confluence of individual and government interests across borders on certain issues is largely due to the strength of nationalism in Turkish diasporic identity rather than to government control or steering.

7.1.2 The Turkish American Diaspora is a Severely Fractured Entity

The Turkish American diaspora has been deeply fractured for some time (Halman, 1980; Karpas, 2008). In many ways, it is riven with the same political divisions that polarise domestic Turkish politics today. In both Turkey and America, those identifying as part of the nationalist, secular, Westernised elite are deeply distrustful of their more conspicuously pious compatriots who are often lower down on the socioeconomic ladder. However, this latter group has increasingly dominated business and politics over the past 15 years in Turkey and is gaining power in America as well.

This has led, broadly speaking, to a bifurcation of the Turkish American population. The secular elites, who first went to the US in the 1950s and 1960s, and their less well-off compatriots, who started crossing the Atlantic in the 1970s, have evolved quite separately for most of their history. At times there was open hostility between the groups. A large amount of distrust remains, however at the initiative of

ATAA President Günay Evinch the organisations have taken some first steps toward more open cooperation with each other, especially in areas of overlap such as the Recognition debate.

That said, these internal divisions, as well as being strongly outnumbered by rival ethnic lobbies, have limited the reach and effectiveness of Turkish Americans as an ethnic interest group on Capitol Hill. That such schisms are maintained by migrants, and that they hamper migrants' political endeavours in the receiving country, is an important observation for diaspora scholarship and diaspora policy discourse, both of which all too often treat 'the diaspora' as a single coherent bloc.

7.1.3 The Recognition Debate is the Field, Not the Fight

The Turkish American activists in Washington DC are working to prevent the further institutionalisation and naturalisation of the idea that the events of 1915 constituted genocide as part of a larger identitarian battle over what it means to be Turkish in the United States. In this battle they are competing, with many other actors, to define who or what a 'Turk' is. Are Turks unwarranted aggressors against Armenians, not to mention the Cypriots, Kurds, and others? Or are they in fact victims of aggression, skewed narratives, and double standards? Recall the statement of ATAA President Günay Evinch on page 117, in which he said that Turkish Americans should resist the appellation of genocide not so much because it is an inaccurate characterisation of the events, but because that will then smear Turks with the unhappy label of *genocidaire*. It is through this competition, and in order to better compete, that Turkish American activists have cultivated in themselves and others a sense of diasporic consciousness fixed in a defensive posture against perceived slights against Turks, Turkey, Turkishness, and Turkish Americans.

The primary – but not exclusive – field upon which this competition plays out is the Recognition debate. However, this debate is largely not about the facts, or about comparing facts against the internationally accepted definition of genocide found in the 1948 Genocide Convention. Neither the Turkish American activists, nor their Armenian American opponents, nor either side's allies in Congress are historians. They are all working on received information drawn from two competing ideologies.

The first, which is dominant in the most of the world but not in Turkey, is that the events of 1915 constitute a genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire against its Armenian subjects. This narrative has become an integral part of Armenians' history and identity, to the extent that the quest for international recognition of this trauma is included in the constitution of the Republic of Armenia. The second ideology, which is dominant in Turkey and equally embedded in the grounding myths supporting Turkish nationalism, is that the events of 1915 were a reasonable response against a seditious population in open rebellion against the Ottoman State in its darkest hour. I frame this as a battle over the lexical hegemony of the word *genocide*, with one side (Armenia and Armenian Americans) trying to naturalise it and the other (Turkey and Turkish Americans) trying to prevent its naturalisation as the lexical item for the events of 1915 to the exclusion of all others.

It is extremely unlikely that Turkish American activists will ever convince the majority of Americans that the events of 1915 were not a genocide, thereby reversing the dominant narrative, but this is not their goal. For them, winning is defined by *not losing entirely*, as by maintaining the controversy they create space for the articulation of minority viewpoints. In this space they are able to propagate narratives of Turkishness that do not include the ignominy of committing the first genocide of the 20th century, and in doing so they claim the right to define this aspect of their identities rather than suffer the definitions of others being imposed upon them. The fight is thus about imposing and resisting labels, and not about the facts themselves.

7.1.4 Ignored by the American Press, Lauded in the Turkish Media

A fourth key finding of this work comes from the three-part media study undertaken in this work, which taken together presents a comprehensive view of the print media space inhabited by the Turkish American activists. Turkish American activists are almost entirely shut out of the American media, however they are covered in minute detail in the Turkish press.

I found that while Armenian American groups and many other pro-recognition actors were allotted ample space in the press, the Turkish government was almost

the sole voice of the ‘contra-genocide’ narrative: the Turkish American groups so active in combatting Recognition were almost completely missing from the American press coverage on Res. 252. This is because of: a) a credibility problem suffered by those opposing Recognition; b) the professional vulnerability of journalists seen to give ‘genocide deniers’ a platform; and c) the perception that Turkish Americans are not actors of consequence in this debate. Turkish Americans garnered negligible coverage outside of the recognition debate as well. This shows that while Turkish American activists have been seeking to stretch the boundaries of American political discourse on the events of 1915 by defending the ‘right to dissent,’ their actual impact has been relatively minor. Nevertheless, due to their personal socialisation and perceived offences to Turkish pride, they have continued to fight a battle that has not yielded substantial fruit.

In contrast, I found that the Turkish media serves as an echo chamber for the Turkish American groups. Various outlets publish their framings and activities throughout Turkey, often in highly sympathetic, nationalist language. This coverage returns to the United States by way of the Internet where it is consumed by migrants. I argued that the most likely effect of this is to serve as a constant reminder to Turkish Americans that a community ‘exists’, and in doing so to construct that selfsame community.

7.1.5 Apathy and War Weariness Has Led to New Discourses of Turkishness

Many of the Turkish American organisations studied in this thesis purport to represent the Turkish American community as a whole, which they commonly cite as comprising around 500,000 people. They also, in deed if not always in word, take the Recognition debate as their primary field of political engagement, thereby equating the activists’ interest in the Recognition debate with the political priorities of the Turkish American population. This is incorrect, and many Turkish Americans do not agree with the agenda or the tactics of the activists purporting to represent them. In one-on-one dialogue with me both leaders and staff members acknowledged this reality. Membership levels in their organisations, especially paying membership, is low and falling, and as ATAA President Ergün Kırlikovalı said on page 167, most Turkish Americans are apathetic to the struggle unless it

begins to affect them personally. Personal admissions aside, however, the activists generally encourage the false perception that they represent all Turkish Americans in order to maximise their political impact.

Recall Beril Unver, the 28-year-old Congressional liaison officer for the Turkish Coalition of America (TCA), when she said on page 195 that, not only are the older generation exhausted by the Recognition debate, but the younger generation has largely declined to continue carrying the banner of what they perceive to be a lost cause. I found this sense of war weariness in many of my exploratory interviews with 'lay' Turkish Americans, those that make up the passive majority, however it was combined with a widespread perception that Americans, and more broadly Westerners, unfairly single out Turks and Turkey as targets for criticism and unwarranted hostility. This has led to a feeling of being on the defensive, heightening their awareness of their Turkishness and predisposing some to shallow support of the activists through mechanisms such as online petitions against proposed resolutions to recognise the events of 1915 as genocide.

Some Turkish Americans, primarily those who were either born in the United States or who moved there long after the Cyprus invasion and the rash of Armenian violence in the 1980s, are now positioning themselves as the new political entrepreneurs or core members of the Turkish American diaspora. Part of that project is to supplant the current preoccupation with the Recognition debate with alternative, more positive narratives of Turkey and what it means to be Turkish in the United States. Two such nascent entrepreneurs are Gizem Şalcıgil White and Efe Sevin, the architects behind the social media platform *Türkayfe.org* and the Turkish coffee truck now roving the American Eastern Seaboard and Europe. These projects were both conceived to challenge pre-conceived notions of Turks by creating a forum to discuss Turkish experiences and a friendly excuse to interact with Turkish Americans and taste a seminal part of Turkish culture, respectively.

7.2 CONTRIBUTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In this thesis I have explored the production of diasporic consciousness in the context of the Turkish American population in Washington DC. I have focused primarily upon the histories and motivations of some of the most ardent Turkish American activists, as well as their activism in one of their primary areas of interest: the Recognition debate. I have also explored, to a lesser extent, how the actions and rhetoric of these activists resonate with the broader Turkish American population in Washington DC. In doing so, I have made multiple theoretical and empirical contributions to the diaspora studies literature, which is where I primarily situate this study. However, this thesis also contains empirical contributions to discourse studies, Turkish studies, and the study of American ethnic politics.

7.2.1 Diasporas are Made

Overall, my case study strongly confirms constructivist notions of diaspora formation that have increasingly dominated the field over the past twenty years, while alternative primordialist and (purely) instrumentalist models have largely fallen by the wayside. It clearly shows that belonging to a diaspora is not the same as being part of a migrant population. The latter is simply a category of people that share a single characteristic: in this case Turkey as a common country of origin or heritage. The former, in contrast, is the activated network of people that strongly identifies with their country of origin/heritage and take an active interest in its affairs and well-being (see Adamson, 2008 for a discussion on the category/network distinction). This identification with and interest in the country of origin is known as a *diasporic consciousness*, which is a specific type of constructed identity. My reconstruction of the genesis of the Turkish American diaspora confirms that diasporic consciousness is the fuel that allows a diaspora to be imagined and take shape as a social form (see Sökefeld, 2006; Vertovec, 1997). It was created, in part, in reaction to events taking place in the individual lifeworlds of Turkish migrants in the 1970s and 1980s. Diasporic consciousness was (and still is) also created, in part, by diasporic political entrepreneurs in the service of a political project Adamson, 2008. This corroborates constructivist arguments in the diaspora studies literature

(see, *inter alia*, Sheffer, 2003:17-19) which stress that diasporas do not exist *a priori*. They are made.

7.2.2 Competitive Identity Formation

The major theoretical contribution of this thesis has been to offer a new way of looking at how diasporic consciousness, and thus diaspora, is produced. I have suggested that the process of continual construction and re-construction of diasporic consciousness is best understood as a matter of competitive identity formation. By this I mean that there is a competition between multiple actors to impose a definition or label on a diasporic group and to achieve broad-based support for that label or definition. This also implies the attribution of specific values, ideas, and political agendas to that group.

In contrast to the discursive latitude in Turkey, which is severely restricted in the context of the events of 1915, actors of all stripes have more freedom overseas to express their views. This means that, in many cases, Turkish citizens only had their received knowledge on events of 1915 – that it was not a genocide – challenged once they moved to the United States. They therefore suddenly found themselves on the defensive and stigmatised if they chose to continue believing and articulating what they were taught to be true. Some of them, therefore, chose to fight back and now work to disseminate their views and beliefs into the American discourse. This can be seen a bid to regain control over who they, as Turks, are perceived to be and who they perceive themselves to be. By tracing this process I have shown that – and how – the formation of diasporic consciousness thus takes place in interaction with competing narratives over history and national identity. This conception fills a gap in the literature, which has so far neglected the question of how the type of diasporic consciousness that pursues large-scale, formal political projects is created and maintained autonomously in the country of residence.

7.2.3 Diaspora as Practice and Political Project

My analysis of the proponents of Turkish American diasporic politics, as well as of their most important political projects, implies that diaspora should be conceived a set of practices and projects rather than as a bounded group held together by

common ancestry. On the one hand, I show that diasporic activists only make up a very small portion of the overall Turkish American population and that their claims to represent ‘the community’ are dubious at best. Their current agenda and preoccupation with the Recognition debate reflects the formative experiences of the first generation of Turkish immigrants to the US. Now 40 years on, their messages seem stale to many Turkish Americans today. On the other hand, I highlight the seminal role of non-Turkish actors in these diasporic activists’ current political projects, particularly the Recognition debate. As such, I argue that, at least within the context of formal politics, it is more useful to conceptualise the individuals who pursue diasporic political projects as a transnational community of commonly-interested people than as a community bounded by common ancestry.

With regard to specific practices, I have provided an in-depth study into the *mechanics* of ethnic lobbying in the United States. Few similar studies exist – most notably Gregg (2002), Paul (2000), and Tölölyan (2000) on the Armenian lobby; Haney and Vanderbush (1999) on the Cuban lobby; and Goldberg (1990) and Mearsheimer and Walt (2006) on the Israeli lobby – and thus the activities and strategies detailed here should prove useful to scholars and policy makers looking to understand or interact with this aspect of American politics. My analysis of ethnic lobbying in this case looks at narrative production as well as methods of action. In this, I particularly point out how the messages of the Turkish American activists reflect the diasporic consciousness of their producers, and in doing so I create a link between the identity-centric study of diasporas and the more functionally-oriented ethnic lobbying literature. Furthermore, unlike studies of Israeli and Armenian activism, which are the two paradigmatic victim diasporas, I have mapped the creation of a more fractured diasporic consciousness in a community with a less compelling collective memory and myth to bind it together.

7.2.4 Power and Discourse in the Diaspora

One of the major goals of this thesis has been to critically examine the discourses of Turkish nationalism and the Recognition debate. I have done this with the intent to gauge diasporic consciousness by proxy, in line with the theoretical contributions of Martin Sökefeld and others who argue that “consciousness needs to

be expressed in discourse in order to produce social and political effects” (Sökefeld, 2006:267).

In practice, this has entailed the examination of the sources and types of background knowledge used by different speakers in this debate, looking past the facade of common sense in order to lay bare the constructions of both these discourses. This is one of the main goals of critical discourse analysis as formulated by Fairclough (1995:31). “Adopting critical goals means aiming to elucidate such naturalisations, and more generally to make clear social determinations and effects of discourse which are characteristically opaque to participants.” To this end, I have explained the roots, foundations, symbols and rhetoric of the contra-genocide position in the Recognition debate. I have also examined the lived experiences, knowledge bases, and motivations of the people who choose to champion it, namely the core members of the Turkish American diaspora and a select few of their associates.

In examining the contests around the narratives of the events of 1915, I have looked at the differential capacity of competing agents to control discourse production. On the American stage, where these events are generally understood to be a genocide, Turkish American activists occupy a disadvantaged, marginalised position. Thus from their perspective, this is a contest to *maintain* the political and contested nature of an idea and to *prevent* it from becoming de-politicised, naturalised, commonsensical background knowledge. This is the opposite of Fairclough’s goal quoted above. Where he seeks to expose ‘myths’, as Barthes (1972) calls de-politicised knowledge, I have endeavoured to record the final opposition to the creation of a myth: the de-politicisation and naturalisation of the idea that the events of 1915 were a genocide. I have called this ‘preventing lexical hegemony.’

I have also inquired into how the discourse promoted by Turkish American activists, echoing that of the Turkish state, resonates with the broader Turkish American population. That this happens only to a limited extent illustrates the fragility and contestedness of productive power highlighted in Critical Discourse Analysis.

7.3 POLICY RELEVANCE

The findings and arguments of this thesis are relevant for policy in at least four different regards. First, my thesis emphasises the importance of identity and framing in diasporic politics. Unlike some other types of special interest groups (such as copper-mining, or Big Oil) where the chief lobbyists are hired professionals who do not necessarily identify with the issues and causes on behalf of which they lobby, diasporic organisations are often, but not always, headed by people who are not only passionate but take the issues personally. As Shain and Aharon (2003:455) perceptively argue, with diasporas “identity does not always determine interests ... sometimes identity is the interest.”

This is certainly the case with regard to the conflict over the events of 1915. After forty years and millions of dollars spent the two sides have largely stalemated. The repetitive motions of tabling a resolution, recalling the Turkish ambassador, mobilising the grassroots support, and eventually blocking it have become maddeningly predictable.

To stop such time-consuming but never-ending conflicts between diasporic interest groups policy makers would do well to approach the problem from an identity-centric point of view. As I have said elsewhere, the Recognition debate is not about the facts. It is about passing judgment and the repercussions that has on the identity, reputation, and dignity of those in opposition. Functional solutions to such enduring political conflicts will be the ones that creatively find ways for entire groups to save face and back down with pride intact.

Second, policy makers should be cognisant of the fact that diasporans are always only a small subset of any migrant group. This is because diasporic consciousness – the fundamental mechanism which induces migrants to actively contribute to the welfare of their country of origin – is not inherent to migrants. It must be produced, maintained, and focused by political entrepreneurs in order to become a viable force.

This is neither a simple nor a linear process. The overtures of these entrepreneurs are first of all inconsistently received by a heterogeneous target group, which has been identified through a single common characteristic. This targeting method is problematic, as migrants – like all people – possess multi-faceted identities and it is

erroneous to assume that their country of heritage is the most salient aspect of that identity. Perhaps more importantly, it is important to realise that the entrepreneurs are not the only voice in the field. Many actors from divergent positions *compete* to shape the identity of the target group. Whichever conception dominates at any one point in time is important, as it affects the politics, activities, and outlook of those encompassed within the group by virtue of their heritage. For policy makers, this means they should neither assume that self-styled ‘community leaders’ necessarily represent the aspirations or agendas of the migrant population as a whole, nor should they exclusively interact with them if their goal is to engage with the migrant population. For diasporic activists, acknowledging the heterogeneity of these agendas and aspirations, and integrating them into their political activities, would greatly increase the representativeness of their claims as well as the likelihood of increasing their constituencies.

Third, policy makers should be aware that diasporans are highly motivated but independent actors who are not always receptive to outside influence, even (or especially) the influence of their country of origin’s government. It is incorrect to perceive diasporas as passive receivers of government efforts to mobilise them. Other scholars, such as Hein de Haas (2006:92), who was writing on the development potential of migrants but whose comments can be taken more generally, recognised this when he describes attempting to “steer” diaspora engagement as a “fatal mistake”, and stresses that “it is important to recognise that many migrants *are* already mobilised for development in their own force” (see also Sheffer, 2006:138). In the current case, while the Turkish government has facilitated the activities of Turkish American groups in various ways over time, the only part of the ‘Turkish lobby’ that it can claim credit for or control over is the professional lobbyists it hires to promote its interests in Washington DC. All of the activists with whom I spoke bristled at the suggestion that they pursue their agenda at the behest of the Turkish government and denied that they received financial support from the Turkish government. I could find no direct evidence to the contrary, discounting soft support such as a corroborating voice in debates, access to Turkish government-owned buildings, etc.

Fourth, as I have repeatedly argued throughout this thesis, the zeal of the Turkish American activists I met in Washington DC and their sense of Turkishness formed *autonomously*. It is the product of a socialisation into Turkish nationalism at a young age combined with a slew of formative experiences they underwent during their time in the United States. That diasporic consciousness can be created and maintained in a foreign context *by the foreign context*, and that such an autonomous connection can extend the reach of the sending-country government overseas, is an observation which should interest both scholars and policy makers alike. My conclusions support those of other scholars who rightly emphasised the independent and self-driven nature of diasporic activism, as well as cautioned against heavy-handed government involvement. Diasporic activists should thus be regarded and dealt with as an autonomous, domestic voice rather than assuming that they merely mimic the voice of the sending-country government or export the conflicts of their country of origin.

In sum, this thesis demonstrates that policy makers should be: a) aware of the importance of framing in diasporic politics; b) cognisant of the small size and internal heterogeneity of diasporas, both characteristics that limit their capacity to affect change; c) aware that diasporans are independent actors pursuing their own agendas, and thus should not be approached as passive actors waiting to be ‘tapped’; and d) heartened by the fact that migrants in a receiving country can generate diasporic consciousness of their own accord, that it can be autonomously constructed.

This thesis should thus serve as a cautionary tale for policy makers seeking to engage with or influence migrant groups, and they should moderate their expectations. As the Turkish American example has shown, a diaspora with highly vocal core members, a central issue around which to coalesce, and even a strong concordance with the Turkish government’s own agenda has nevertheless largely failed to produce strong and widespread active support for that agenda.

Epilogue

My fieldwork for this thesis took place in the summer of 2011, but after that it took me two more years before I let the pen rest on this work. Much has happened in the intervening years, namely the Gezi Park protests of 2013, which I will come to shortly, but from the perspective of these organisations it is difficult to say how much has changed.

Most of the organisations appear to be doing much the same thing as they were when I left. The trade-focused American Turkish Council continues to hold its annual conferences under the stewardship of Ambassador James Holmes. The lecture series of many of these groups, which are the bread and butter of this unique industry, continue to take place. The American Turkish Association of Washington DC (ATA-DC) held its 11th annual DC Turkish festival and, in an effort to expand its cultural promotion efforts, its 2nd annual Turkish Cultural Heritage month in September 2013. After six years on the job Demet Cabbar stepped down as president of ATA-DC in 2013 and Gizem Şalcıgil White, who started the Turkish Coffee Truck initiative (Section 6.3.3), was elected president in her place (ATA-DC, 2013).

I exchanged emails with former ATAA president Günay Evinch in August 2013 (he is now a member of ATAA's board of trustees). He informed me that ATAA's 33rd annual conference saw the greatest diversity of organisational representatives to

date – ATAA only started inviting other umbrella organisations, both old and new guard, to participate in joint activities in 2011 – with representatives from many of groups featured in this work, among others, taking part. Thus it seems as if Evinch’s attempts to foster more unity among the groups under his banner of ‘Solidarity in Diversity’ is moving apace (see page 81). His letter was characteristically upbeat about the prospects of the Turkish American activist community – “You are on the cutting edge of understanding and writing about a civil society movement that will be momental (*sic*),” he wrote – however he neglected to mention some of the setbacks encountered by ATAA while it was under the stewardship of President Ergün Kırlikovalı.

I learned about these from Yenal Küçüker, who was ATAA’s director for civil engagement in 2011 but has now left the organisation. The post-mortem he emailed me was less than flattering, and one striking aspect of it was that he highlighted the destructive nature of ATAA’s singular focus on the Recognition debate.

Not being able or willing to “walking the walk” is ATAA’s number one problem. Although I enjoyed and valued the mission that I was given [to teach civic engagement skills to local chapters], I never felt that mission was equally embraced by the leadership. You know, during Presidential elections in the US there are tons of TV ads about candidates’ track records. If someone were to do the same thing for Ergün Bey [Kırlikovalı], they would definitely highlight the fact that during his term ATAA reduced staff from three to one, lost [the Turkish Coalition of America’s] grassroots grant, remained without a solid project/purpose (other than the Armenian issue) and did not gain significant number of individual members or organisational members (Küçüker).

He then ended his letter with a succinct statement which seems to reflect the sentiment of a great many young Turkish Americans, including many of those I gave voice to in Section 6.3. “The new generation of Turkish Americans are looking for leadership and progress, not a one-trick pony!” he said. Küçüker was an ex-employee of ATAA when he wrote this email, but he has not been the only individual to comment to me on ATAA’s declining stature and single-minded focus on the Recognition debate.

...

Starting in July 2013 dramatic events began to unfold in Turkey around the topic of Gezi Park. What started as a small movement of environmentalists against the destruction of downtown Istanbul's last remaining park turned into mass demonstrations against the impunity Turkey's police and politicians showed in their repeated and brutal suppression of largely peaceful civil protests.⁶¹ One remarkable aspect of these protests was the outpouring of support – for the protestors mainly but for the government as well – from the Turkish diaspora. The Internet, especially Facebook, was flooded with images from all corners of the world expressing their solidarity with the Gezi Park protestors under the banners #occupygezi and 'Everywhere is Taksim, everywhere is resistance' (*her yer Taksim, her yer direniş*).

Turkish communities around the world, including those found in Washington DC, were the site of numerous activities in relation to Gezi Park. Several Facebook groups organised solidarity protests in the capital. One group scheduled several meetings in Pershing Park, a gathering space just outside the White House lawns, inviting people on its Facebook page to participate in a global conversation on Turkey and democratic values. "After the protesters in Istanbul were forced out of and cut off from Gezi Park, citizens started to establish forums throughout parks in Istanbul to exercise free speech in a democratic setting. Join us ... to be part of this dialogue!"^{br} Footage available on YouTube^{bs} also shows a sizeable march that took place in Washington DC on June 16th. The marchers, many of whom wear Turkish flag t-shirts, are all ages and carry signs calling for the resignation of Prime Minister Erdoğan and an end to American support for his administration. "US gov't, stop supporting the fascist regime in Turkey" one banner said.

The Turkish Policy Centre is a new organisation in Washington DC that was not active at the time of my fieldwork.⁶² In mid-2013 it established the website www.OccupyGeziUSA.com and, according to this website, organised a crowd-funded, full-page advertisement published in the *New York Times* on June 7th. This

61. For a good summary of the start of the Gezi Park protests, see Cassano (2013).

62. The Turkish Policy Centre's website states that it was established in 2010, however it was not until 2013 that it held its first event and published its first position paper.

advertisement took a clear stance in the protests, and in no uncertain terms expressed the anger many felt toward the Turkish government's handling of the protests. "What's happening in Turkey? People of Turkey have spoken: We will not be oppressed!" it reads in large, heavy letters, before giving a short description of the Gezi Park protests. It ends with a call to "join the conversation and stand with us in solidarity."⁶³

Some of the organisations at the centre of this thesis remained silent. Others, however, found ways to voice their leaders' opinions and those of their members, albeit in a more cautious manner than the Turkish Policy Centre. ATA-DC published a statement on June 3rd on its Facebook page in which the board affirmed its support of democratic principles, including the freedoms of speech and peaceful assembly. This statement finished by saying "We, as members of the board are very concerned about the excessive use of force against civilians, and deeply oppose it. We call for an end to the violence and a just resolution to the protests as soon as possible."⁶⁴

ATAA issued two statements regarding Gezi Park through its community information service (Section 6.1.5). The first, published June 1st, called for restraint on both sides and a swift resolution to the issue, while also expressing concern for the increasing level of violence. In its effort to maintain a neutral stance ATAA condemned police brutality while at the same time allowed space for the preferred, and partially true, government narrative that the crowd was intermixed with *agents provocateurs*. "We are very concerned because unfortunately what began as peaceful protest appears to have escalated into mass and violent demonstrations, partly due to harsh police response and use of excessive force, but also due to extremists taking advantage of the situation and hijacking these peaceful demonstrations," the press release read.

This balance between the two sides tipped in ATAA's second press release published June 22nd. There was no mention of *agents provocateurs* or the damage inflicted to the Turkish police force, and it boldly stated "we expect full

63. Source: <http://www.occupygeziusa.com/> (Accessed: 10 October 2013).

accountability from the government to investigate and prosecute all those responsible for the disproportionate use of violence against peaceful demonstrators and innocent bystanders.” It went on to state that “ATAA’s primary responsibility is to represent the Turkish American community residing in the United States” and that it had received substantial feedback on the Gezi Park protests from concerned individuals, as well as the presidents of the local organisational chapters. ATAA was then presented with and pursued an opportunity to formally convey this sentiment to the Turkish government.

Ergün Kırlikovalı, the president of ATAA at the time of my research, and Mehmet Çelebi, ATAA president since 2013, are both members of the Overseas Citizens Advisory Board of the Turkish government. A meeting of the Board was scheduled for mid-June in Ankara, which Çelebi and Kırlikovalı had already planned to attend. “We used this opportunity to ask the Turkish American community coast-to-coast to share with us their thoughts, feelings, and comments, which they did and which we were able to relay to powers that be in Ankara,” Kırlikovalı told me in an email.

Our discussions about Gezi were with lower level department heads. We basically told that the Gezi Park demonstrations, in goals, words, deeds, and philosophy, was a new spirit and a movement that already made history, not unlike the “The ‘68 Generation” and the “Flower Children of 1960s”. Gezi hit an incredibly strong raw nerve, not only in Turkish social life but also, it seems, around the world. There were more than a dozen impromptu demonstrations-in-solidarity in Southern California alone, many more around the U.S., and indeed, around the world. So, it would be wrong to dismiss, downgrade, or belittle it as an ordinary public nuisance of some sort, as some in the Turkish government seemed inclined to do (Kırlikovalı).

Kırlikovalı said their comments were “duly noted,” even while the government representatives stressed the reality of the damage done during the protests to property and persons. “They drew our attention to the fact that violence was an unfortunate extension of Gezi and a cold, hard reality. ... We said we appreciated the violence aspect (*sic*) of Gezi, although injected by fringe elements and later, not by

Gezi spirit at first. I think we, the Turkish American community and the Turkish government, understand each other better now,” he wrote.

The movement spawned by the Gezi Park protests continues apace at the time of this writing in October 2013, albeit somewhat more quietly than the initial fireworks in June and July. What this epilogue demonstrates is that, given the right incentives and issues, Turkish migrants *engage strongly* with the political process in both Turkey and in their countries of residence. This directly contradicts my conclusions in **Chapter 6**, which highlighted a general trend of *apathy* amongst at least the Turkish American population, and suggests that it is perhaps more a question of agenda than anything else that turns many Turkish Americans away from engaging more actively with the political structures in which they are embedded. It also shows that significant events may lead to changes in organised political activism in a diasporic context.

Gezi Park served as a galvanising event throughout the Turkish diaspora, with a large outpouring of support for, primarily, the protestors. This was turbocharged by the media blackout Turkey experienced at the start of the Gezi Park protests and the subsequent call via social media channels to ‘get the word out’ about what was happening in Turkey (see Martínez, 2013). In the wake of the Gezi Park protests, it would be extremely interesting to study how the different components of the Turkish diaspora reacted to the events. How do the new political ideas raised by the Gezi Park protests interact with the divisions already present in the Turkish diaspora? Have ‘new guard’ migrants – who are generally thought to be more religious and thus to more strongly identify with the ruling AK Parti – supported the Turkish government in this matter? How has the ‘old guard’, which has the most ears in Congress, incorporated Gezi Park into their discussions on Capitol Hill or have they remained, in practice, primarily concerned with the Recognition debate? Perhaps most interestingly, what has been the impact of Gezi Park on the *youth* in the diaspora? Has it proved as formative for the creation of the next generation of core members and political entrepreneurs, just as the political events of the 1970s and 1980s created many the diaspora’s current leaders? These are just some of the questions raised by the Gezi Park protests that pertain to the construction of

diasporic consciousness and politics in the Turkish diaspora that would also prove of interest to scholars.

In June and July 2013 the Internet crackled with creative re-imaginings of Turkish nationalist symbols, images of resistance, and political commentary in the biggest show of frustration with the *status quo* that Turkish politics has seen in a generation. Of particular interest is the reconfiguration of symbols of government suppression into symbols of resistance. These symbols, regardless of whether they originated domestically in Turkey or in the diaspora, went transnational once they entered the borderless world of the Internet and became symbols for everyone who stood in solidarity with Gezi Park. It is in this area that I hope to continue my research on Turkish politics and discourse both domestically and abroad.

To give one example, and to end this work with a small display of my own solidarity with the people of Gezi Park, many Turks were infuriated with the aforementioned media blackout Turkey experienced at the start of the protests. This anger found a focal point with CNN Turkey's decision on June 6th to broadcast a documentary on penguins while Istanbul burned. Overnight dozens of Internet memes appeared to de-fang the image of the penguin, with its implicit display of government censorship, and combine it with other icons, such as the gas mask, in order to reissue it as banner of power for the protestors under the tagline *Penguen Direniş* – Penguin Resistance.



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