

Reconciliation:

A Case Study of the Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission

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About the Author

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Mooradian received his PhD from ICAR in 1996 and wrote his dissertation on “Third Party Mediations and Missed Opportunities in Nagorno-Karabakh: A Design for a Possible Solution.” He has published a number of chapters and articles on conflict resolution with particular reference to the conflict in Karabakh. He co-wrote an article with ICAR professor Daniel Druckman, “Hurting Stalemate or Mediation? The Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, 1990-95,” in the *Journal of Peace Research* (1999) and has published in the *Helsinki Monitor* and *Security Dialogue*.

Foreword

The Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution is pleased to publish Moorad Mooradian's working paper "Reconciliation: A Case Study of the Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission." Mooradian builds on his earlier work on third party mediation in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to analyze the role of a Track 2 commission established to promote reconciliation between Turks and Armenians.

The issue of Track 2 processes has been a central concern of many people at ICAR since the institution's founding. Mooradian's account of the Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission provides a number of cautionary lessons for those interested in promoting such processes. As Mooradian notes, any third party that seeks to play a constructive role between two communities divided in part by differing stances toward something as deep and emotional as genocide will need to analyze the conflict with great care. With palpable distrust between the two communities, early missteps can derail a reconciliation process. Mooradian's detailed examination of the Commission's Terms of Reference reveals some of these dangers.

In addition to providing a clear narrative of an important Track 2 initiative, Mooradian reflects on a number of key concerns to scholars in the field. He assesses whether the conflict was "ripe" and how concepts of neutrality should be understood in especially polarized contexts.

Everyone interested in the potential—and the limits—of Track 2 processes will value Moorad Mooradian's case study and analytical insights. We thank him for his contribution.

Sara Cobb
Director, ICAR

About the Institute

The Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (ICAR) at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia, has as its principal mission to advance the understanding and resolution of significant and persistent conflicts among individuals, communities, identity groups, and nations.

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It is easy to say what one intends:
the difficult thing, sometimes, is
to have an intention.

--Jean Rostand

THE PROBLEM

On July 9, 2001, in Geneva, news outlets announced that the Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission (TARC) had been formed “to promote mutual understanding and good will between Turks and Armenians and to encourage improved relations between Armenia and Turkey (Asbarez On Line, Item 4, Jul. 10, 2001). The Commission, as indicated by its name, accepted the task of “reconciling” a host of conflicts. These conflicts include those that exist between the Armenian nation and the Republic of Turkey (RoT) and conflicts exclusively between the Republic of Armenia (RoA) and the Turkish government. The denial by successive RoT governments for 89 years of the 1915 genocide and its aftermath is the most deep-rooted, seemingly intractable conflict between the Armenian nation and the RoT. For the purposes of this study, the Armenian and Turkish nations consist of the titular states and anyone in the diaspora who identifies as either Armenian or Turkish. There is a clear distinction between state and nation. The nation is inclusive by identity, while the state is confined to citizenship.

TARC arrived on the scene as an unofficial group to reconcile entrenched differences that have endured since 1915. From 1922, when the USSR was formed and smothered what was left of Armenia, until the collapse of the USSR in 1991, communication between Armenia and Turkey were nonexistent. Armenian groups in the diaspora and the Turkish government and some scholars in both communities occasionally spoke at, but not with, one another.

Elie Wiesel, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize and a professor at Boston University, commenting on the significance of TARC said, “I see this event as a miracle. It Turks and Armenians can meet and talk, that means others can do it, too” (*New York Times*, On Line July 10, 2001: 2). Six months later, in December 2001, TARC teetered on the brink of collapse. This study analyzes TARC and weighs its accomplishments against its goals as stated in its Terms of Reference (ToR) discussed below. TARC teaches excellent lessons on the significance of “ripeness” (in this instance the lack of it) in resolving conflict. Ripeness is a concept too often dismissed by conflict resolvers and, more important, by TARC. The commission is an excellent example of a fine idea with lofty ideals, without foundation, moving in the wrong direction.

THE PERIOD IN BETWEEN

To get a better idea of how and why TARC became public in such a divisive atmosphere, it is important to understand the situation with which the Commission had to contend. Without a working understanding of the environment, it is difficult to comprehend why TARC had such a rough initiation and why the loudest opposition to the Commission initially rose from the Armenian communities.

Armenian Community

After the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953, a slight liberalization under succeeding Communist Party bosses allowed ethnic identity to surface in the USSR. In Armenia, three monuments were constructed to honor the Armenians who died in the genocide; these monuments also highlight the divide between the worldwide Armenian communities and Turkey. Civic action resulted in the construction of the largest memorial on a prominent hill called *Tsiternakaberd* (Hill of Swallows) in Yerevan. A second monument—to the Armenians who defended themselves during the genocide and became legendary in Franz Werfel’s best-selling novel *Forty Days of the Musa Dagh*—was built close to Yerevan on the highest hill in the village of Musa Lehr (*dagh* is Turkish for mountain; *lehr* is the Armenian equivalent.). The third monument and museum is dedicated to the Armenians who defeated

The invading Turkish forces in 1918 at Sardarabard. After the battle Armenia declared its independence from Russia and established the first republic of Armenia. In 1920, Kemal Ataturk attacked Armenia from the west and the Lenin-Stalin Soviet armies invaded from the north. Rather than surrender to Turkish rule, the Armenian government made its peace with the Soviets. At the Treaty of Moscow in 1921, the Soviets ceded Armenian territories in Anatolia to Ataturk, including the historic Armenian symbol, Mt. Ararat. The treaty established the current borders.

The genocide accelerated the development of a widely dispersed Armenian diaspora. In the 1930s, Armenians in the U.S. were struggling to establish themselves in the midst of the Great Depression. In 1934, William Powell was cast to star in the movie version of *Forty Days of the Musa Dagh*. During the Warsaw ghetto uprising of the Jews against the Nazis “Musa Dagh” was a rallying cry. In 1935, Turkey succeeded in the first of numerous interferences in internal U.S. policy on issues significant to Armenian Americans. Ataturk’s pressure on the Roosevelt Administration induced the U.S. government to coerce Louis Mayer into dropping the film. MGM succumbed and canceled the project. For a detailed account of the censorship that ended consideration of the movie, see Edward Minassian, “Musa Dagh: The Film That Was Denied,” *Journal of Armenian Studies*, Vol. II, No. 2, Fall/Winter, 1986.

With the onset of World War II, the world’s attention focused on ending the war. By 1945, Armenia was deeply buried within the Soviet monolith. During the Cold War, the diaspora split in its loyalties to the isolated Armenian SSR. Meanwhile, genocide survivors—the first generation of Armenians as citizens of many countries—passed the Armenian language, religion, culture, history, myths, and pain to their progeny. Vamik Volkan has mislabeled this inheritance “the chosen trauma.” A people do not choose to be traumatized; a perpetrating party inflicts the pain. Volkan’s chosen trauma thesis suggests that victims are pathological because they have not been able to forget the trauma or put it behind them. His thesis absolves the

perpetrators of the crime and places the victims in the position of having to defend themselves. To this day, the Turkish government assaults the reality of the genocide, which is an integral part of Armenians' identity.

In 1973, a retired 74-year-old Armenian American civil engineer, Gourgen Yanikian who lived for more than 50 years with the image of the beheading of his family by the Turks in 1915, shot and killed a Turkish diplomat in California. This act of revenge inaugurated a series of killings of 30 Turkish diplomats by two Armenian terrorist organizations: the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) and the Justice Commandos for the Armenian Genocide (JCAG). By 1984, both organizations were essentially defunct. Both groups stimulated feelings of solidarity on the genocide issue in Armenian communities, but Armenians disassociated from and condemned the acts of murder.

For 76 years, the Armenian diaspora developed in isolation from Armenia. There are as many cultures in the Armenian nation as there are countries where Armenians live, and most are committed to gaining international recognition of the genocide. Younger, more affluent, better educated, and political savvy ethnic Armenians have carried their struggle for genocide recognition into the academic, economic, political, and social arenas; however, no single organization in the diaspora commands the loyalty or even the attention of the approximately eight million worldwide population.

Even though the disparate diaspora rallies to the cause of genocide recognition, no single entity, not even the RoA, dictates the terms or procedures. And because Turkey does not have official diplomatic relations with Armenia, it is difficult for any group, official or unofficial, to determine with whom it must have dialogue on any issue that affects the Armenian and Turkish nations. Conflict resolution is virtually impossible if the parties who will participate in a reconciliation activity cannot be determined. This is one of several problems that plagued TARC from its inception.

Turkish Community

When the charismatic general-turned-politician Kemal Ataturk founded the RoT, he resurrected Turkish nationalism as the cornerstone of the state. The squabbling Allies had little stomach or support from their constituents for challenging a Turkish nationalism fortified with arms and dedicated warriors. Ataturk successfully dictated his terms at the Lausanne Treaty deliberations in 1923. He gained the assurances that Turkey's borders would remain unchanged. All persons living within the confines of the republic were welcomed as citizens but only culturally as Turks. Unlike Nazi Germany after World War II, the whole of what is now Turkey was never completely conquered, nor was Turkish nationalism uprooted.

Kemal initially condemned the actions taken by his predecessors against the Armenians, but once his control of the republic was established, he acted to scrub clean the history and myths on which the republic was constructed. To cope with what he considered a blemish on Turkish nationalism and a disadvantage to becoming Europeanized, Ataturk created institutes in the Turkish government whose sole function was to sanitize Turkey's history. Rewriting the past to meet political and psychological ends became standard practice in the republic and is part of the legacy that Kemal bequeathed to his successor. Erik J. Zürcher, a prominent Turkologist, says, "All too often in the field of Turkology, we forget that the modern state of Turkey was built on

‘ethnic cleansing’ on a massive scale” (For a thorough analysis of Mustafa Kemal’s cleansing philosophy and its manifestations, see Erik J. Zürcher, “The Rise and Fall of Modern Turkey” in the Turkology Update Leiden Project Working Paper Archive for Turkology. University of Leiden Update, 2001).

Kemalist historians often depict the republic as a new state forged by the hand of Atatürk. Others, such as Bernard Lewis, alternate between making the Ottoman Empire a prehistory and using Kemalist historian postulates; for example, describing the linguistic purism of Kemal’s innovations. Other Turkologists, such as Zürcher, see the republic as an outgrowth of the Young Turk revolution, with some cultural evolution. Whereas the Germans uprooted National Socialism after the war, the new RoT infused life into its own brand of National Socialism. Democracy was not Atatürk’s forte, and Turkish nationalism rose to new heights as Kemalist ideology blended with many lingering cultural remnants.

Under the dynamic, uncompromising virtual dictatorship of Mustafa Kemal, much of the apparent decay of the Ottoman era was removed. The strong-willed leader, who assumed the surname Atatürk (Father Turk or father of the Turks) in November 1934, used the communal environment to shape a vision for Turkey that promised to be very beneficial for ethnic Turks. Atatürk brooked no dissidence from either internal or external sources. He inspired the ethnic Turks to believe that the new republic would bring a brighter day under the Kemalist nationalist banner that supplanted the green flag of Islam.

For the most part, ethnic Turks did not immediately immigrate. First, throughout the western world there were restrictive immigration laws against people from the “Orient.” Second, there was no need to migrate. The republic that Kemal handed to the Turks at his death in 1938 was considered a finished product. Deviation from Kemalism was considered “straying from the path of the father” or, more appropriately, the *ebedi sef* (immortal leader). Deviation became tantamount to treason, and laws were enacted that elevated Kemalism and the constitution to equal status (Pope and Pope, 1997).

Whereas Armenia and its diaspora developed in isolation from one another, Turkey’s rapid establishment of foreign offices and embassies in almost every capital in the world provided a means of reaching out and influencing its diaspora. Turkey developed a methodology for exerting a strong influence with its diaspora that eludes the Armenian nation to this day. Armenia and organizations in its diaspora coordinate on numerous issues, but the bonds are much looser than those between Turkey and its diaspora. Leadership from Yerevan is in a fledgling state that often runs counter to mature diaspora organizations that cherish their own independence. With the Turks, Kemal’s state took immediate charge and has not relinquished the lead.

It is from this ingrained source of Turkish power that Armenians demand recognition of the genocide. Direction from the Turkish government regarding TARC is especially important for Turkish citizens, since they are obliged to abide by Turkish laws (close to 100, including the constitution) that uphold denial under the rubric of national security. The few citizens—such as Taner Akcam, Halil Berktaş, Ali Ertem, and Kaan Soyak—who have challenged the official position on the genocide have undergone censure, threats, and legal prosecution (Armenian Genocide Resource Center, March 30, 2001). The Turkish government demands that if dialogue is to take place, the state will direct it. This position became a problem for the Commission’s Turkish members.

Two Events That Affected TARC

In September 2000, it seemed certain that after 40 years of trying, the U.S. House of Representatives would finally pass a resolution recognizing the genocide. On October 3, 2000, a delegation of Turkish parliamentarians arrived in Washington, D.C.; they accused the Armenians of lying about history and vowed that Turkey would never agree that genocide occurred. They warned that even a nonbinding resolution would irreparably damage U.S.-Turkey relations (Anadlou News Agency, October 3, 2000).

Turkey's defense minister, Sabahatten Cakmakoglu, warned that its multibillion-dollar arms contracts with America's defense industry would be canceled and the leases of U.S. bases in Turkey—a source of U.S. power extension into the region—would be terminated (Agence France Presse, October 6, 2000). On the heels of these warnings, Turkey's military chief of staff, General Huseyin Kevrikoglu, canceled a scheduled trip to the United States for discussions with General Shelton, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (*Jane's Defence Weekly*, October 11, 2000).

In spite of the threats, House subcommittees voted to bring the resolution to the floor for a vote on October 19. House speaker Dennis Hastert commented that the measure had his support and “would have enjoyed support among the majority in the House” (*CQ Monitor News*, October 12, 2000).

Responding to Turkey's call as a strategic ally to intercede on its behalf, Israel used its lobbying resources to flood the House with calls. The callers warned that passage of the resolution would have grave consequences, harming the Israel-Turkey alliance and resulting in disarray in the Middle East. Israeli foreign minister Shimon Peres made direct entreaties to President Bill Clinton (*Istanbul Sabah*, October 23, 2000). The final straw was President Clinton's warning to Speaker Hastert that a favorable vote endangered American lives. The resolution did not surface for a vote on the House floor (*CQ Monitor News*, October 20, 2000).

The second event that rankled Armenians followed 9/11 and President George W. Bush's declaration of war against terrorism. For years the Clinton administration had attempted to have Section 907 of the Freedom Support Bill (passed by Congress in 1992) repealed. Section 907 prohibits direct aid from the United States to Azerbaijan until the latter lifts its blockades of Armenia and Karabakh (Armenian Assembly press release, May 20, 1999). Each year Congress kept the law intact until the fateful day when terrorists struck America.

Immediately after President Bush declared his war on terror, oil interests, Azerbaijan, and Turkey pressured the Bush administration to repeal Section 907. Citing America's strategic interests and the desire for international support to combat the terrorists, some senators convinced Congress to give President Bush the authority to suspend Section 907 for one year at a time (*Assa-Irada*, Baku, November 16, 2001). Sensing the mood of Congress and not wishing to appear disloyal to the efforts against terror (Armenia had already declared its willingness to open its airspace to U.S. planes), Armenian lobby groups did not protest. In 2002, 2003, and 2004, President Bush extended the suspension for another year (Azerbaijan News Service, January 18, 2003). TARC emerged at this point, facing the daunting challenge of being accepted by Armenians as the third party that would work for reconciliation with Turkey.

Often overlooked and understated in this situation is the distress of the Turkish government. Both houses of the French Parliament had recognized the genocide, and President Jacques Chirac signed into law six months before TARC became public. The Turkish government may have given tacit approval for the creation of TARC, but the Turkish National Security Council and other powerful organs of government made it abundantly clear that any nation or group that attempted to recognize the genocide would feel their wrath (*Turkish Daily News*, May 13, 2002). When TARC surfaced, the Turkish members were under considerable pressure to hold the government's line. The manner in which TARC originated and the composition of the Commission guaranteed that both sides would not escape considerable pressure from internal as well as external sources. Comments from Antranik Mihranian, an ethnic Armenian political adviser and the most forthcoming Armenian commissioner, help to explain why huge gaps in cooperation existed and how the lack of ripeness played a decisive role in thwarting the reconciliation aims.

Mihranian—who lives in Russia, was an adviser to Boris Yeltsin, and now assists Russian president Vladimir Putin—spoke openly about the process during numerous interviews with the media from the day that TARC surfaced until he resigned in January 2004. He confirmed that TARC originated with the U.S. State Department and received tacit clearances from the RoA and RoT to proceed. He claims that both governments “at the highest levels of leadership” agreed to coordinate and consult without recourse to “partisan, political, personal, and other issues” that might undermine the proceedings. He maintains that the commitment did not materialize. Mihranian said that Commission member David Hovhannissian, a member of Armenia's Foreign Ministry at the time of TARC's formation, was the direct liaison for the RoA, while former RoT officials on the Commission performed a similar function for the RoT. Commissioner Van Krikorian, a U.S. citizen, stated, “There is no question that they [Turkish TARC members] were in constant contact with the government” (*Washington Times*, July 17, 2001).

Mihranian affirms that one reason TARC was formed was to pave the way for open, direct dialogue between the two governments on the issue of the genocide. The goal was to have “competent” people analyze public opinion in both countries and explore grounds for further contacts and agreements, “and that's it, nothing more” (*Ibid.*)

According to Mihranian, the Turks on the Commission had authority to use various words to describe what happened to the Armenians, such as “mass slaughter,” “tragedy,” and “terrible events of war.” However, the RoT prohibits any citizen, let alone the Turkish Commission members, from using the word “genocide” without qualifiers anywhere in writing, particularly on mutually agreed documents. To do so would imply that genocide did take place. Mihranian insists that throughout the course of the Commission's activity, 90 percent of the time was devoted to issues related to the genocide. However, because of Turkey's dictates on the non-use of the word “genocide,” it did not appear in the ToR or initial statements by TARC members as a group (*Ibid.*).

As for the results of the Commission, two months after TARC almost self-destructed in December 2001, Mihranian pointed to one area at a news conference in Yerevan that the author of this research attended in which it had achieved some success: “I would say that the recent softening of the visa regime is a direct result of the work of the Commission,” he said. He also mentioned that the issue of the blockade was raised and, in the process of its consideration, the Turkish members agreed that Turkey's blockade was incorrect, especially during the presidency

of Levon Ter Petrossian. However, the Turkish commissioners somewhat justified the blockade by stating that they had to come to the aid of their Azeri “brothers” (*Golos Armenii*, February 5, 2001).

Mihranian’s comments add credence to the main thesis of this study, that ripeness or the lack of it on the part of Turkey’s government prevented TARC from moving the genocide to a successful resolution. For the short term, Mihranian said, “Turkish society is under considerable rigid pressure of its government and will not be able to influence the government policies for the coming decades” (*Ibid*). In the same context he added an optimistic note for the longer term, saying that Turkish society is undergoing tremendous changes and that the genocide issue would be resolved under the leadership of a new generation of Turks.

These revelations reinforced the suspicions of Armenian critics of TARC that the Turkish members of the Commission could not seriously attempt to reconcile the differences on the genocide unless it meant a win for them. Equally significant is the inability of Turkish private citizens to make any inroads on this issue, because recognition of the genocide is in contravention of state policy. If this is the reality—and most evidence indicates that it is—TARC could not succeed in reconciling the Armenians and Turks on the genocide issue, since recognition is officially blocked by the RoT from becoming a Track 2 event. It is not likely that the RoT will surrender its hold on the issue in the near term.

TRACK 2 DIPLOMACY

Track 2 diplomacy involves various unofficial interventions in a conflict. The aim is to help resolve conflicts by encouraging and promoting communication—helping the parties to analyze the conflict, understand the issues, and collaborate toward mutually authored and shared methods of settling, solving, or resolving the differences. Track 2 diplomacy cannot succeed unless the core parties are committed to moving from confrontation to some degree of cooperation to solve a few or all issues.

A third party venturing between the Armenians and Turks needs to understand the difference between wishing they could resolve the genocide issue and working to help ripen the environment to a point at which the reconciliation process would stand a chance of succeeding. Before settling on a strategy, the intervener must evaluate and understand the current stage of the conflict and grasp the degree of readiness of both parties to address the issues that have caused the divide. In the case of TARC, it is apparent that neither side is willing to give ground on the genocide issue. TARC immediately caused the antagonists to confront the defining line of separation between Armenians and the RoT, without preparing the communities with problem-solving workshops in which the representatives of at least the major power groups from both nations participated.

Many issues separate the Armenians and the Turkish state, with the genocide being the biggest and most emotional. Since the onset of independence in 1991, Armenia has been willing to begin dialogue with Turkey without preconditions. The first and second presidents of Armenia and their foreign ministers have repeated the call for no preconditions. The Turkish government, however, has insisted on two conditions before Ankara will consider lifting the blockade of Armenia or establishing official diplomatic relations: the Karabakh conflict between the Armenians and Azerbaijan must be settled and Armenia must stop pursuing genocide

recognition. Similar conditions have been set by every Turkish administration since 1993. As recently as January 28, 2004, Turkish prime minister Recep Erdogan continued to set preconditions. He claimed that Turkey is willing to open the borders but that Armenia must retreat from lands claimed by Azerbaijan and Armenians must desist from seeking genocide recognition (*Armenian News Summary*, January 28, 2004).

Because Track 2 is a complement and not a competitor or a subset to official diplomacy, it is important not to confuse the two or attempt to force issues into Track 1 that require revolutionary legal and societal changes before recommendations can be accepted. Reconciliation in this instance involves a step-by-step process. What the Armenians demand is revolutionary to official Turkish thinking and encourages a defensive reaction. There is a major difference between raising issues, as TARC had done, and achieving success in resolving them.

The measure of success used in this study is the degree of accomplishment of the objectives listed in TARC's Terms of Reference (ToR). Before considering the ToR, it is helpful to briefly consider the differences between neutrality and impartiality, because these concepts affect TARC.

Neutrality and Impartiality

Seldom, if ever, are interveners neutral. Neutrality implies that an opinion has not been formed. Most interveners have studied a given conflict, at least in general terms, and have formed opinions. Impartiality is different. An impartial third party may have an opinion but does not allow this opinion or preference to dominate or influence the outcome.

As will be shown later in this study, none of TARC's members were either neutral or impartial, which impeded the Commission's ability to act as a reconciler for either the diaspora or the republics. As circumstances unfolded, it became evident that TARC itself needed mediation, particularly on the issue of the genocide.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The ToR, with 12 separate entries and the list of TARC's founding members, appeared on the Armenian Assembly Web site on November 27, 2001 (www.aaainc.org). The following are the most significant elements of the ToR:

1. The original members agreed to the ToR on July 9, 2001, and did so in an individual capacity.
2. TARC hopes to build upon increasing readiness for reconciliation among Turkish and Armenian civil societies and members of diaspora communities.
3. TARC intends to directly undertake programs for reconciliation and to "catalyze" projects by other organizations.
4. TARC is not a decision maker; it will make recommendations to the "concerned governments."

5. The Commission will support collaborative Track 2 activities in “business, tourism, culture, education and research, environment, media, confidence building, and other areas to be determined.”
6. TARC will call upon experts on project requirements and “may include specialists on historical, psychological, and legal matters, as well as other topics.”
7. TARC will conduct a review after one year.

A close look at the ToR reveals some very interesting aspects of TARC. First, all members served on the Commission “in an individual capacity,” meaning that they represented no group or organization except TARC. This implies that they were not in the employ of or influenced by any entity outside the Commission. Many members of the Armenian community do not accept that Turkish citizens can be independent from their government as it is constituted. If the Turkish members were in constant contact with the Turkish government, as stated by all Armenian commissioners, this point seems to be validated. As for the Armenians, David Hovhannissian was employed by the Foreign Ministry, which certainly raises questions as to his independence.

TARC’s goal of building on “increasing readiness” unrealistically supposed that the civil societies and governments are ready to reconcile. The myriad statements made by the commissioners indicate that the Armenians on the Commission and in the Armenian nation remain steadfast in their belief that genocide occurred, while the Turks, as a rule, disagree.

The Commission’s mention of “civil societies” in number 2 above was a signal, perhaps subconsciously, that the Commission members knew that the Turkish government was not ready to seriously address recognition of the genocide. The Turkish ambassador to the United States, Farouk Logoglou, as much as said this (CSPAN, November 29, 2001). He commented that dialogue is the only way to settle different interpretations of history but added, “You must not do this in an official way.” Logoglou insisted that the conflict is about an interpretation of history, which implies that the differences are a legitimate scholarly problem rather than a political one stemming from denial. His comments also suggested that Track 2 diplomats can settle this conflict without official involvement, which is at odds with resolution history and the practice and laws of his country.

Logoglou's comments provided fodder for critics of TARC. Opponents warned that TARC was not a serious endeavor for reconciliation, since the Turkish government wants historical dialogue but bars debate from taking place within its borders. Even if citizens participate in the Commission outside Turkey, they are still legally bound to comply with close to 100 Turkish national security laws. Turkish courts have applied an elastic interpretation of security and have prosecuted citizens with the expansive laws. Ambassador Logoglou’s comments continue a long line of official statements that indicate that the Turkish government is not yet ripe for even a political discussion of the issue (unless the discussion is on its terms), much less a political resolution.

Discussions with Armenian members of TARC suggest that the Commission began with an understanding among all members that the genocide would be accepted as fact. However, none of the members would allow this statement to be included in the ToR, even anonymously, so the understanding is relegated to rumor for now. Such an agreement would have been a huge

concession on the part of the Turkish members; as will be seen later in this study, their public remarks do not support rumors that they made such a gesture.

The fact that the Commission was a recommending body and that the Kocharian government is committed to genocide recognition as a state policy made little difference to the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF or Dashnak Party) and some other Armenian groups, in Armenia as well as in the diaspora. While the ARF is no longer the dominant force in the Armenian nation that it once was, it is a network with considerable influence. The party and its adherents believe that they own the genocide issue and stand guardian over the cause as surely as the Turkish military hovers over Kemalism. However, it would be fallacious to conclude that only the ARF condemned TARC. Other traditional Armenian political parties and numerous organizations in the Armenian nation were equally condemnatory, although not as vociferous as the ARF. It is equally incorrect to posit that only the Armenian side espoused radical ideas. Gunduz Aktan and Vamik Volkan also espoused radical clichés, as discussed below.

A glance at the backgrounds of the original Commission's members shows that they had experience in handling practical politics. They would have had a much better chance for internal harmony if they had concentrated on less emotional issues until some successes developed trust and improved relations, at least until the first-year review.

ORIGINAL COMMISSION MEMBERS

The Turkish members of the original Commission included three former members of the Turkish Foreign Ministry (Gunduz Aktan, Ozdem Sanbeck, Ilter Turkmen), one retired lieutenant general (Sadi Erguvenç), a former rector of Bogazici University (Ustun Erguder), and a psychiatrist (Vamik Volkan). The Armenian members were a former foreign minister (Alexander Arzoumanian); a former ambassador, Foreign Ministry employee when TARC was announced, and current faculty member at Yerevan State University (David Hovhannissian); an attorney and chairman of the board of directors of the Armenian Assembly of America (Van Krikorian); and Antranik Mihranian. The facilitator was David L. Phillips, an American.

The Commission's composition—six Turks and four Armenians—is rather strange. Armenians considered the imbalance to be unduly advantageous for the Turks. The composition of the Commission has not been publicly explained. One Armenian commission member who prefers to remain anonymous, told the author of this paper that the differences were no problem since the Armenians could bring in experts or assistance as needed.

The two TARC members who had experience in Track 2 diplomacy were Vamik Volkan and David Phillips (discussed below). Volkan is an American, a psychiatrist, and a Track 2 practitioner, and his opposition to genocide recognition is widely known. He is not impartial and was seen in the Armenian community as a threat, not a reconciler.

On the day TARC went public, Volkan announced in the *New York Times* that one cannot be an Armenian without reference to what happened in 1915 and that the genocide is part of the Armenian identity. These two statements are accurate and generate no objections. However, his follow-on comments inflamed the deepest fears of the Armenian community by seemingly advancing the thesis that the Armenian community is pathological because it has not forgotten the genocide; "We [Turks] lost an empire and did not grieve over it. Armenian members [on the

Commission] were surprised to learn that some of the Turks came from families that had suffered after being driven from other parts of the Ottoman Empire. Armenians cannot even imagine that Turks suffered, too. The key will be to find an empathetic understanding that they all suffered” (Douglas Frantz, Foreign Desk Section *New York Times*, July 10, 2001). Thus, on the first day, the only psychiatrist on the Commission evoked the “two sides to the story” and “equal victimization” theses, the standing arguments of the deniers. Further, Volkan dismisses the long-enduring implications of the “Sevres syndrome” (fear of having Turkey carved up by Christian powers) that has haunted the RoT since the 1920s. Volkan’s statements intensified the fears of Armenians who already believed the worst.

Ilter Turkmen, the Turkish member most respected by Armenians, stated that the Commission would not arrive at a historical judgment. He said, “As the dialogue proceeds, we hope to overcome problems, but that does not mean we will come to an exact historical photo of what happened 85 years ago” (Reuters News Agency, July 10, 2001: 1). There was no professional historian on the Commission, nor was there a renowned genocide scholar. Armenians feared that if majority vote decided the decisions made by TARC, Armenians would lose.

Ozdem Sanbeck inflicted additional damage on TARC the first day. He commented, “The intent is not to find out what the truth is but to open new horizons for the future and enhance mutual understanding” (Douglas Frantz, Foreign Desk Section *New York Times*, July 10, 2001). It is inconceivable that any member of the Commission would state that the truth is not a guiding principle and hold accommodation to be more important. Sanbeck fed the fears among the Armenians that the genocide recognition cause would be sacrificed for political expediency. Most Armenians encourage improved relations between the titular states but not at the expense of genocide recognition.

Gunduz Aktan made the most negative comments. He said, “When it comes to qualifying events 85 years ago in the Ottoman Empire, Turks around the table will not accept them as genocide” (Ibid). His message was clear: Regardless of what is presented, the Turkish commissioners will not change their minds.

Aktan seemed to go out of his way to antagonize the Armenian diaspora in an effort to cause TARC to fail. It is hard to think of any statement more damaging to the credibility of the Commission than this one: “The pathological hatred of Turks by extremist elements within the Armenian diaspora and Armenia has prompted them to influence the parliaments in the countries where they live as well as those countries’ media and education system against us” (*Turkish Daily News*, July 11, 2001: 1).

Aktan’s comments reduced all parliaments that did not defend Turkey’s denials to mindless automatons manipulated by clever Armenians. This statement reflects stereotypes by armenophobes who maintain that Armenians are devious, clever manipulators who convince innocent victims to do their bidding. This is a hate strategy used by the Young Turks in 1915 to launch the Armenian genocide and later by the Nazis to justify the slaughter of Jews. Aktan widened the “us versus them” chasm. The use of the word “pathological” made this statement sound like a Vamik Volkan blast. Every Turkish member of the Commission was either an activist or, at the very minimum, an advocate for Turkey.

The American attorney Van Krikorian, a prominent member of the Armenian contingent, made his reputation in the diaspora as an activist who worked for the Armenian Assembly to

lobby for favorable legislation for Armenian causes in the U.S. Congress. It is no exaggeration to say that Krikorian deserves much of the credit for the passage of Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act, which prohibited direct U.S. aid to Azerbaijan until the law was temporarily suspended, beginning in 2001. In addition, Krikorian challenged the State Department's nonrecognition of 1915 as genocide and won the case in U.S. courts.

As chairman of the board of directors of the Armenian Assembly when TARC was launched, he had been a leading figure in seeking U.S. congressional recognition of the genocide. He is not impartial by any stretch of imagination, and the ad hominem attacks upon him as a traitor by some Armenian radicals ignore his record before and since TARC was formed. One of his early statements reaffirmed his commitment to genocide recognition and the belief that the lack of communication is a major void: "The Armenian genocide is fundamental to who we are. Armenians and Turks continue to be divided. . . but whatever the divisions, they were clearly compounded by the lack of dialogue and direct contact." (*De Volkskrant*, July 14, 2001: 2). His continued presence on the Commission tests the viability of one conflict resolution theory—that an activist hoping to resolve an issue is conducive to the resolution process as a mediator.

In response to unjustified criticisms of betrayal, the Armenian members of the Commission released a joint statement listing a number of points. The following are the most pertinent: "Let us first state categorically that this is not an 'historical commission' and there is no debate about the validity of the Armenian Genocide; it is an internationally recognized fact . . . Each country must come to terms with its own record on this issue. It is a critical process which reconciliation efforts such as this one in no way impede . . . We agree with those who say there can be no true reconciliation until Turks acknowledge the Armenian Genocide (Armenian News Network, August 2, 2001: 1). Other statements by David Hovhannissian, Antranik Mihranian, and Alexander Arzoumanian indicate that each has a direct stake in any genocide decision. With both sides determined to hold the line on the genocide, it is not logical that this deep-rooted issue could be used as a means for reconciliation.

Thus, every member of the original Commission except David Phillips, the facilitator, had a history of being an activist or advocate—but this did not mean that Phillips was acceptable to the Armenian public. He helped put TARC together and presumably assisted in obtaining funds from the U.S. Department of State. He is a professor who teaches conflict resolutions at the Diplomatic Academy in Vienna and is a senior adviser for the U.S. Department of State and a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a conservative, Washington-based think tank. Many Armenians believed that Phillips presented a conflict of interest. The popular Armenian perception is that the State Department and CSIS give Turkey preferences in Armenian-Turkish relationships. Nothing that Phillips did or said publicly indicates that he had ulterior motives; however, by association, he was anathema to Armenians. Any Track 2 practitioner who hopes to retain the confidence of both sides must be free of any hint of possible favoritism. This is not the case with Phillips.

It is possible for a single person to facilitate some conflicts, but not this one, because there are too many intersecting issues. A panel of impartial conflict resolution experts thoroughly versed in conflict theory is necessary to help bring some order and sense to the procedure and to start a dialogue to develop communication that has been closed for a century. Because TARC has been discredited, extended communication and problem-solving workshops made up of impartial conflict resolution scholars might be organized to be the experts that are allowed in the ToR to provide some needed credibility and grass roots support. These workshops could work to move

TARC in a more acceptable direction, such as working to solve some practical differences to develop some trust between the parties and these might achieve greater returns.

Contrary to the claims of some Armenian critics, there was very little secrecy regarding the aims of TARC once its existence became public. But the commissioners' public statements were not particularly wise or well-designed to educate the wary audience. Instead of including a condition in the ToR that all public statements would require consensus, the Commission members became loose talkers. If the original Commission had included experienced conflict resolution scholars, they might have been able to avoid much of the counterproductive public argument in which both sides participated.

PUBLIC PRESSURE

As facts about TARC began to be publicly debated, the Armenian opposition grew vocal. Criticism from the Turkish nation did not initially materialize, so it appeared that the Turks were more favorably disposed to the Commission. Perhaps the reason is that Turkish schools teach nothing about the genocide. What they do read, hear, or see in the media supports denial, and most Turks consider that the "Armenian Question" was settled with the birth of the RoT. Turkish scholar Taner Akcam, who lives in Germany, has written extensively on these misperceptions and how they are injurious to improved relations between Armenia and Turkey (Akcam, 1999).

Part of the original confusion and controversy attributed to the Armenian nation stems from the inclusion of the diaspora in the TARC ToR. The Armenian diaspora does not have a mechanism to make judgments or express opinions as a group. Until the major organizations in the diaspora and the Armenian government devise a methodology in which representatives of the diaspora participate and allow the RoA to speak for the nation on this issue, confusion will continue to exist.

TARC AS TRACK 2 DIPLOMACY

For Track 2 diplomacy to succeed, its goals must be achievable and the people involved must be acceptable to both sides. Some members of TARC insist that it has achieved a great deal. David Hovhannissian best exemplifies the attitude. He insists that TARC's work increased official contacts at various levels. However, contact was never an issue; official diplomatic relations and progress once contact was made are the issues. Long before the Commission came into being, the two sides met, from the presidential to the delegate level, on various international and regional boards. One of many examples is the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Commission formed by the late Turgut Ozal, who invited Armenia to participate from its inception in 1992. The foreign ministers of Armenia and Turkey met on numerous issues before TARC's birth and continue to meet occasionally.

Hovhannissian cites TARC's discussion of restoring the ancient Armenian architectural monuments and cities of Ani and Akhtamara as one of its achievements. However, more than a year before TARC, on May 16, 2001, the Armenian government succeeded in gaining discussion of the preservation of Ani, the ancient Armenian capital, at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). The Armenian delegate also raised the issue of the destruction of ancient Armenian religious stones (*khachkars* or cross stones) in Nakhichevan and Turkey (Armenian News Network, May 16, 2001). On May 31, 1999, the UN took action to preserve

ancient sites around the world, and Akhtamara was specifically named as one of the religious sites (Armenian News Network, May 31, 2001). On July 7, 1999, the International Anatolian Faith Congress was formed by then-president Suleyman Demirel, and Akhtamara was one of the religious sites designated for preservation. On July 16, 2001, Turkey announced that it was taking steps to protect Ani's ruins (Anadlou News Agency, July 16, 2001). These are just a few instances of actions initiated to protect ancient sites before TARC surfaced. TARC should receive credit for discussing the issues, but it is farfetched to claim that broaching these subjects is a TARC initiative.

Three years after TARC emerged, there are still no official diplomatic relations, the border remains sealed, Armenian monuments and cross stones are still being destroyed, and there are no official bilateral economic ties. TARC possibly helps to ensure that these issues remain alive. As for the genocide, the Turkish government and media still aggressively deny it.

TARC's critics have attributed many unwarranted negatives to the Commission. By the same token, TARC commissioners and defenders are not too careful about making direct claims of successes without justification and cavalierly dismissing the work of Armenia's government and organizations in Armenia, Turkey, and the diaspora.

However, TARC's stated mission is not to discuss various issues but to foster reconciliation, moving forward and satisfying the challenges set forth in the ToR. Had TARC limited itself to issues such as opening the Armenian-Turkish border, promoting cultural and educational exchanges, and enhancing the economies of both countries, its chances for acceptance by both sides might have been better. Further, TARC included improving diaspora relations with Turkey and Turks as one of its goals in the ToR, yet opposition groups with a legitimate right to participate were excluded from the Commission. These excluded diaspora organizations with legitimate reasons to participate were automatically pulled in as critics and spearheaded the opposition to TARC.

For instance, in 2001, the European Parliament refused to make recognition of the genocide a requirement for Turkey's accession to the European Union as it previously had in November 2000. Instead, the Parliament announced that it expected Turkey and Armenia to "Arrive at a common understanding of the past" (Press Release, Forum of Armenian Associations in Europe, Dec. 5, 2001) in deference to the formation of TARC. The Commission's announcement after its New York meeting in December 2001 that its existence should not influence international decisions on the genocide came too late. Damage had already been done to discredit TARC in a large part of the Armenian community and increasingly among Turks who were incensed that the EU would make an issue of the genocide (*Armenian Reporter International*, November 10, December 1, 2001).

Funding

Money provided by a government jeopardizes the integrity of any ostensibly nonpartisan, nongovernment-affiliated organization. When a third party enters a conflict with Track 2 ambitions, it is critical to maintain independence from government interference.

Many influential countries—such as the United States, Germany, France, and Britain—have made statements on the genocide. France has supported the Armenian cause. The United States, Germany, and Britain have placed greater value on maintaining Turkey as a strategic

partner. While the Armenian side may be willing to accept a third party funded by the government of France, Turkey probably will not. The United States, Germany, and Britain may be acceptable to Turkey but are doubtful third parties for Armenians.

Information about TARC's funding raises legitimate questions about the Commission's claim to being an independent nongovernmental organization (NGO). Antranik Mihranian revealed in an interview that the Commission has received funds from the U.S., Austrian, Norwegian, and Swedish governments (*Azg*, January 23, 2004). In the same interview, Mihranian said that the Commission never met in Armenia because the Turkish members refused to lay a wreath at the Genocide Memorial and because Armenia's politicians strongly oppose the organization. If they are going to claim impartiality, third parties must keep their distance from government funds. When the Armenian people learned that at least some of the original funding for TARC came from the U.S. State Department, they felt a sense of betrayal. This latest revelation by a Commission member further damages TARC's standing in the Armenian nation. Groups that aspire to act as reconcilers should take notice.

NOVEMBER 2001 MEETING

After TARC's meeting in New York on November 19, 2001, David Phillips announced that the Commission had asked the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ)—an NGO headquartered in New York City that has a reputation for legal expertise on issues of genocide and the reconciliation of deep-rooted conflicts—to step in. The ICTJ was “to determine whether the 1915 mass killings and deportations of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire constituted genocide” as defined in the 1948 UN Genocide Convention (*Armenian Reporter International*, December 1, 2001, p. 1).

After Phillips's public verification of ICTJ's involvement, the Turkish members had a change of heart and asked the ICTJ to desist from conducting the study (*Golos Armenii*, February 5, 2002). The Armenian members accused the Turkish members of renegeing on the agreement to seek an independent judgment (*Armenian American Action Committee*, December 11, 2001). The Armenians, recognizing the Turkish members' dilemma in relation to their government, withdrew from the Commission “for the time being,” leaving the door open for a return at a later date (*Radio Free Europe/Russian Language Armenia/Turkey*, January 22, 2002).

Phillips held out the hope that the Commission could be salvaged. It did survive; after a period of hibernation, it again publicly surfaced, and it continues to this day. Officially, TARC did not end on December 11, 2001, although obituaries were written in both communities.

HIBERNATION

Three days after it was announced that TARC would at least temporarily cease to operate, Turkish papers ran postmortems. Alluding to the lack of ripeness in Turkey, one of the more popular dailies stated, “It would not be long before angry voices were raised against this venture on the Turkish side also. . . we see that many in Turkey have a long way to go yet before they can look at the past objectively, maturely, and with a sense of human compassion in order to try and understand what really happened in 1915” (*Turkish News*, December 14, 2001: 1).

On January 9, 2002, another popular Turkish paper placed the blame for the Commission's collapse on the Armenian members but added that "the nationalists of the two sides were not involved in the reconciliation process" (*Turkish Daily News*, January 9, 2002: 1). On the same day, Gunduz Aktan repeated an old refrain—that the Dashnak Party was the boogeyman that caused TARC's demise, that only 200,000–600,000 Armenians died in a tragedy in which more Turks perished as a result of Armenian ethnic cleansing, and that the rebellious Armenians betrayed the Ottoman armies, bringing upon themselves justifiable death. He added that only the Turkish commissioners made concessions and justified Turkish rejection of ICTJ involvement by stating that the outcome was bound to be favorable to the Armenian side. He used Turkey's strategic location and the value of its huge military in the war against terror to erroneously postulate that after September 11, 2001, the Armenians will be unable to convince anybody that genocide occurred in 1915 (*Turkish Daily News*, January 8 and 9, 2002). Divisive words indeed from a founding member of a group that is supposed to be a catalyst for improving relations.

Antranik Mihranian accused some Turkish members of trying to advance Turkish interests instead of working to overcome obstacles. But with such a partisan group, geared to fighting for their own causes, one wonders what Mihranian had expected. Three names resounded loudly in the Armenian rumor mills: Vamik Volkan, Ozdem Sanbeck, and Gunduz Aktan. Mihranian commented that reconciliation is not possible without recognition of the genocide and that dialogue with the Turks is essential for encouraging them to address their Ottoman past in a scholarly fashion and for "preparing [Turkey's] public opinion." What he did not say is that the Armenian public is not fully ready to deal with the Turks, particularly when it comes to reparations. Mihranian noted a crucial element of the impasse: Most Turks are concerned that recognition of the genocide would cascade into far-reaching territorial and financial claims and they do not trust the Armenian government's declarations that it recognizes the existing border with Turkey. Most revealing for TARC is Mihranian's conclusion that "estranged nations should start from confidence-building measures." (*Radio Free Europe, /Russian Language Armenia Report*, April 13, 2002: 1). The problem was that TARC focused on the genocide before taking steps to help make the environment conducive to confidence building.

Many Armenians agreed with Mihranian's statements, but the political wing of the ARF in Europe did not. The ARF gathered the support of 35 European organizations that opposed the creation of a revised TARC. The chair of Armenian National Committee Europe, Hilda Tchoboian, commented, "Recognition and reparations must precede any reconciliation effort" (*CDCA Europe press release*, May 23, 2002: 1).

One needs to recognize the extent of the Sevres syndrome in Turkey. Van Krikorian alluded to this syndrome and to the lack of ripeness. He stated that even if reparations were set aside as an issue, the Turks are not yet ready to recognize the genocide because they have been taught for three generations that no genocide occurred (*Mirror-Spectator On Line*, July 18, 2001). There is no power on earth that can induce Turkey—with its 700,000-person military—to give up one inch of territory, even if it recognizes the genocide. No state is likely to be bellicose with Turkey about Armenian land claims or reparations. But although Turkish fears about reparations may be an illusion, they are genuine fears that must be addressed.

Even with its setbacks, TARC did not go away. Before long, statements made by "sources" suggested that TARC was not finished and that plans had already been formulated for future meetings (*RFE/RL Armenia Report*, March 8, 2002). On March 14, Cengiz Candar, a

Turkish journalist visiting Yerevan, said at a news conference that TARC definitely would resume its work (*Azg*, March 14, 2002).

In July 2002, David Hovhannissian acknowledged that the Commission had met in Bodrum, Turkey, and that some very important discussions had taken place. On January 16, 2003, the international community learned that TARC had met in Paris (*Noyan Tapan*, January 16, 2003; *Iravunk*, January 30, 2003).

APPLICABILITY OF THE 1948 UN GENOCIDE CONVENTION

On February 10, 2003, TARC announced that the ICTJ had completed its study of the applicability of the 1948 UN Genocide Convention to the 1915 genocide. On July 12, 2002, both sides had submitted a memorandum of understanding to the ICTJ requesting an objective and independent legal analysis of the applicability of the 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide to the "events" that occurred concerning the Armenians in the early part of the 20th century in the Ottoman Empire. After an extensive legal analysis, ICTJ concluded that it is legally appropriate to maintain that the "events" constituted genocide as defined in the Convention because they were perpetrated with the intent of permanently resolving the "Armenian Question," whether or not they were official state policy. The legal experts agreed that the "events" of 1915 were more than a crime against humanity because, at the very least, there was awareness on the part of the actor of the discriminatory nature of the actions. The intent was obvious.

Why did the Turkish government assent to the ICTJ study? It seems clear from Gunduz Aktan's rebuttal that Turkey was confident that the 1948 Convention was not retroactively legally applicable to the 1915 genocide. Anticipating arguments against the retroactive applicability of the Convention, the ICTJ wrote that drafters of the Genocide Convention used the term "genocide" to refer to events that predated the Convention. Although Rafael Lemkin did not coin the term "genocide" until 1943, the text of the Convention and other writings (too long to list) conclusively establish that Lemkin and other drafters of the Convention understood and used the word to describe acts perpetrated before the Convention's adoption. The states that were parties to the Convention recognize, in the Convention's preamble, that "at all periods of history genocide has inflicted great losses on humanity."

In its conclusion, the ICTJ wrote that the four elements of genocide exist in the Armenian case: 1) the perpetrator killed or caused the death of one or more persons; 2) such persons belonged to a particular national, ethnical, racial or religious group; 3) the perpetrators intended to destroy, in whole or in part, that national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such; and 4) the conflict took place in the context of a manifest pattern of similar conduct directed against that group or was conduct that could itself effect such destruction. Consequently, "legal scholars as well as historians, politicians, journalists, and other people would be justified in continuing to so describe them as genocide" (*Armenian News Network*, Feb. 10, 2003: 1).

Not all Turkish newspapers agreed with Aktan. Ismail Cem Ozkan of *Radikal* wrote that Aktan's grandfather, Mustafa Abdulhalik Renda, participated in genocide as governor of Bitlis and Moush. Renda was then sent by Talaat Pasha, a relative, to Aleppo, where he carried out further massacres of Armenians deported to that province. The newspaper wrote biting, "Those who have died actually killed us. They are the murderers, and the law should be arranged accordingly, because law always sides with the powerful. With this in mind, he [Gunduz Aktan] is trying to clean up the past, but it is not working. The murderers are those who have been sent

into exile in the desert, and whatever we have done is in the name of this country” (*Radikal*, February 21, 2003: 1).

The ICTJ’s conclusion may have been an important development in numerous circles. However, Justin McCarthy, an Ottoman scholar favored by the Turkish government wrote that the UN definition of genocide is “essentially meaningless, because it can be applied to almost any conflict.” He argued that it is meaningless to submit a “historical question” to lawyers for final answers (*Turkish Daily News*, February 28, 2003: 1). McCarthy also takes exception to the plethora of scholars who support the genocide. Thus, in his view, whether it is a legal or a scholarly decision that supports the genocide, it is not acceptable.

A few days after McCarthy’s article appeared in Turkish newspapers, a ceremony was held in Erzurum, one of the largest centers of massacres and deportations of Armenians. However, the ceremony was not to honor the Armenian dead. Instead, in the village of Alca, Erol Kurkcuoglu, deputy director of the Ataturk University Turkish-Armenian Relations Research Center, accused the Armenians of perpetrating genocide against Turks (*Anadolu News Agency*, March 10, 2003). The following month, Erzurum authorities announced that they had prepared 5,000 CDs to distribute to foundations and associations to “enlighten people” to the fact that the Armenians were the guilty party (*Turkish Daily News*, April 2, 2003).

According to history professor Eric Weitz, when scholars define what happened to the Armenians as genocide, it is not accepted by the government of Turkey. Muge Gocek, a naturalized American citizen and former citizen of Turkey, said that she does not personally use the term “genocide,” not because she doubts the genocide but because the word is too political and “They’ll [Turks] stop listening to you when you use it.” Ronald Suny, another scholar, stated that the use of the word “genocide” makes the environment “a battlefield” (*Minnesota Daily*, March 31, 2003). When lawyers conclude that the events that took place uphold the legal definition of genocide as specified by the 1948 UN Convention, supporters of the Turkish government argue that lawyers cannot make a valid judgment because they are not historians. The conflict is a Catch-22 situation, because the Turkish government and society as a whole are not yet ready to accept the idea that their forebears perpetrated such a horrible crime. In short, the ripeness factor plays a significant and perhaps preponderant role in resolving the genocide conflict.

There is no doubt that the Commission attempted to rebuild toppled bridges between the Armenian and Turkish nations, but the selection of the genocide as the immediate focal point was ill-advised. It is the defining issue that separates the Armenians and the Turks; however, it is not the only problem. The subjective impediments of hatred, mistrust, stereotyping, and fear combine to prevent the analyses that might identify areas in which the two nations can construct secondary but important bridges over the divide to embark on the road to reconciliation. Rather than resolving the subjective problems first by working on practical issues to help build trust, TARC erroneously tried to use the genocide as the bridge builder.

However, the Commission did take some important steps. Assuming that the Turkish commissioners originally agreed to refer the genocide to the ICTJ, it appears that the Turks who want to find peace outnumber radicals such as Gunduz Aktan. This provides a glimmer of hope for the future and indicates that ripeness on the genocide issue is a possibility. The second important step the Commission took is showing, through the very act of meeting, that it is possible to open the door for dialogue to take place. There is an outside chance that the changes

in TARC will aid in the process of taking slow but deliberate steps on the long road to reconciliation and that the willingness of both sides to continue will overlap onto other NGOs and officials who want reconciliation.

CHANGES IN TARC

Several changes were made in TARC's composition. Sadi Erguvenc, Ozdem Sanbeck, Gunduz Aktan, and Vamik Volkan resigned as Turkish commissioners. Emin Mahir Balcioglu, Ahmet Evin, Ersin Kalayoglu, Sule Kut, and Ilter Turan joined the group. This raised the number of Turks to seven.

Antranik Mihranian resigned in January 2004 from the Armenian side, reducing the number of Armenians to three. No replacement was named, perhaps because all commissioners suspected what was to follow shortly after Joseph Montville, a former U.S. diplomat and an experienced third party intervener, joined the Commission as its second facilitator. Before he could place his imprint on TARC, on April 15, 2004, the facilitators announced that the organization has been disbanded. The announcement was accompanied by one terse statement: "It accomplished its mission" (*Armenian News Summary*, Apr. 15, 2004).

CONCLUSION

TARC can claim success in some areas. The Commission has helped to reverse the visa restrictions imposed by Turkey on citizens of Armenia, even though TARC did not initiate this action. It interceded to reestablish an already agreed-upon protocol between the two states about easy access to Turkey from Armenia that was suspended because of French recognition of the Armenian genocide. The RoA was already pursuing the reversal, but it is possible that TARC accelerated the process. This endeavor alone does not justify declaring TARC an effective reconciler.

TARC's second action is more impressive—submitting the Armenian genocide conflict to the ICTJ was no slight initiative and may have set a precedent for the future. However, even this achievement does not qualify TARC as a reconciler, because Turkey has given no indication that it remotely concurs with the ICTJ's conclusions or that it is ready to concede that genocide occurred. On the contrary, every public display since the ICTJ decision indicates that Turkey's position is as rigid as ever. Meanwhile, the Armenians have reemphasized their demand for genocide recognition.

Defenders of TARC have a tendency to gloss over the objectives of the ToR regarding reconciliation, as if the document were mere window dressing. But the ToR is a legitimate document by which to judge the Commission's progress. Reconcilers are not in the business of promoting victory for one side. Reconciliation has to satisfy both parties. The goals were to prepare the way for dialogue to solve the many pending issues, with the genocide issue being the defining separator. TARC may be reborn at a future date, but there is no evidence that reconciliation, particularly on the genocide issue, will occur in the near term. The overwhelming attention that TARC paid to the genocide denial has not yet resulted in any change in the adversarial relationship of the two countries. So, how anyone can decide that TARC is ended because it accomplished its mission is beyond comprehension or logic.

One of the striking features of TARC was its misnomer. An organization that has reconciliation as a goal strives to achieve friendship or union of sorts between two parties after an estrangement. The name may seem inconsequential, but not when 90 percent of the effort was devoted to the resolution of the Armenian genocide conflict. All members of the Commission agree that reconciliation is not possible until the genocide conflict is reconciled. Clearly, neither side is ready for a resolution—the Armenian side is determined to classify the events of 1915 as genocide, and Turkey is just as vehemently in denial. The division was obvious among the commission members, who split along national lines on the issue.

Numerous critics directed unjust vitriol at TARC, but many of the Commission's wounds were self-inflicted. It went off track when it overlooked practical issues that might have improved relations between Armenia and Turkey and pursued the deepest conflict without preparing the sides to confront the realities. Had TARC spent 90 percent of its time on more easily solvable issues instead of on the genocide conflict, it might have achieved clear successes. By not establishing a reputation as a problem solver, the Commission gained a dubious reputation in both societies that assisted in speeding along its demise.

At its founding, TARC needed impartial, skilled, and experienced practitioners in the art of problem solving. Unfortunately, most of the Commission members were used to winning politically, in the courtroom, or on the military battlefield. Lawyers, former ambassadors, and generals are trained to win. TARC's original members were adversarial, and they took on the key issue that perpetuates the rift, thus abrogating TARC's role as a bridge builder or mediator.

TARC's reception in Turkey and by its diaspora was initially favorable. Later, the Commission encountered difficulty with Turks over the matter of the ICTJ's legal decision. The divide between the two societies remains wide, as indicated by closed borders between Armenia and Turkey (the only ones remaining in Europe), Turkey's unwillingness to commence official diplomatic relations with Armenia without preconditions, and Prime Minister Erdogan's continued denial of the genocide, most recently in New York in January 2004.

TARC may have missed the mark as a reconciler between the two societies, but perhaps too much was expected of it. There is some evidence that the ICTJ decision created a flicker of interest in Turkey in the idea that the society needs to examine its history without government constraints. However, expansion of the flicker into a definite spark must wait for future generations. Meanwhile, Armenia and Turkey have immediate practical matters to resolve. TARC did not succeed in lowering the barriers between the two states and their diasporas, but the TARC experience has not been a waste; in fact, it proved some very important points. Both sides have a long way to go before true reconciliation can take place—perhaps if they start with practical issues, the environment for reconciliation will ripen. It is evident that some trust must develop between the societies before they attempt to resolve the genocide conflict. Another point the TARC effort proved is that resolution of the genocide conflict will require a step-by-step process assisted by trained conflict resolution experts.

In New York on April 24, 2003, David Phillips briefly reviewed the circumstances that divide the Armenians and the Turks, including the unsettled Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict over Karabakh. Phillips held out a "glimmer of hope" that both sides would recognize that dialogue between them is essential. He placed great emphasis on the benefits of Track 2 diplomacy, implying that TARC has broken through the barrier of silence between the two societies (MSNBC, April 24, 2003).

By accepting Joseph Montville into its staff, TARC seemed to recognize that reconciliation requires facilitators who are experienced with deep-rooted conflicts. But Montville was a member a brief time before TARC terminated its activities. Thus, he was not able to make much headway to improving the organization's functions.

At this writing, TARC is finished. However, it has sprung to life when it seemed buried in the past. However, its less-than-auspicious birth may prove to be a legacy that is too difficult to overcome. Whether TARC is resurrected or not, it offers valuable lessons for scholars, practitioners of conflict resolution, and NGOs that aspire to reconcile deep-rooted conflicts.

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