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**How The Turkish Lobby Influences Foreign  
Policy:  
The Case of Armenian Genocide Recognition  
in The United States**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis seeks to examine the characteristics of the Turkish Lobby in the United States and the strategies it has utilized in its approach to countering the Armenian Lobby's efforts at official Recognition of the Armenian Genocide. While the Armenian Lobby and its approach to Genocide Recognition in the United States has been well-documented, the organizational structure of the Turkish Lobby and its approach to counter Genocide Recognition has been less explored. The Turkish Lobby consists of various Turkish-American organizations with close ties to Ankara, as well as professional lobbying and public relations firms contracted by the Turkish government for millions of dollars annually. The variety of actors that compose the Turkish Lobby is a reflection of Turkey's multi-pronged approach to preventing Genocide Recognition. This seeks to examine the primary strategies the Turkish Lobby has employed to counter Genocide Recognition, as well as its strengths and weaknesses according to indicators of effective ethnic group lobbying. Two case studies are presented in order to gain a better understanding of the characteristics of the Turkish Lobby and the strategies it employed to prevent two House Resolutions calling for Genocide Recognition. The findings show that the Turkish Lobby fulfills several characteristics considered necessary for lobbying success, as well as the significant advantage of shared strategic interests with the United States government.

## **Keywords**

Ethnic interest groups, American foreign policy, Turkish Lobby, Armenian Genocide Recognition, National Interest

**Range of thesis: 22,297 words**

## **Declaration of Authorship**

1. The author hereby declares that he compiled this thesis independently, using only the listed resources and literature.
2. The author hereby declares that all the sources and literature used have been properly cited.
3. The author hereby declares that the thesis has not been used to obtain a different or the same degree.

Prague, 9 May 2019

Erin Currie

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## **Abbreviations**

AAA - Armenian Assembly of America

AGR - Armenian Genocide Resolution

AIPAC - American Israel Public Affairs Committee

ANCA - Armenian National Committee of America

ATAA - Assembly of Turkish American Associations

FARA- Foreign Agents Registration Act

FTAA - Federation of Turkish American Associations

HFAC - House Foreign Affairs Committee

H.Res - House Resolution

PAC - Political Action Committee

PKK- Kurdistan Workers' Party

TCA - Turkish Coalition of America

## **Introduction**

The Armenian Genocide, the systematic deportation and killing of approximately 1.5 million Armenians in the midst of the Ottoman Empire's decline, is a tragedy little known to the general American public (Sassounian, 2015). While media coverage commemorating the Genocide tends to spring up in the weeks preceding its official anniversary, April 24th, and the President of the United States traditionally issues an address on that day (avoiding, however, the term "genocide") it continues to remain largely unknown throughout the United States. However, the Armenian Genocide elicits much more controversy within Washington — a struggle between the executive branch and the legislative branch, a conflict between Recognition proponents and opponents within Congress, and a significant threat to the long-standing strategic relationship between The United States and Turkey.

Several top Washington officials have recounted the controversy generated by the dispute over Recognition. One State Department official recalls that during a 1992 lunch with National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft, the attendees concluded that the foreign policy issue that had taken up the most time and energy in Congress that year was Armenian Genocide Recognition (De Waal, 2015, p. 176). In her memoir, former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice recounts her role in the controversy, citing the power of the Armenian Lobby, referring to House Resolution 106 as "dreaded", and criticizing Congress for "grandstanding" and interfering with American foreign policy (Rice, 2012, p. 378). A handful of former Secretary of State of Hillary Clinton's leaked emails also provide a perspective on the complications Genocide Recognition posed to Clinton and her aides throughout her various roles in Washington (Sassounian, 2016). Samantha Power, Ambassador to the United States under President Obama, and Ben



Rhodes, Deputy National Security Advisor to Obama recently expressed their regret over the Administration's failure to recognize the Genocide (Toosi, 2018). Lobbying is the prime explanation as to why the Armenian Genocide — an undeniably tragic period in history, but at first glance not seemingly pertinent to current foreign relations — is a perpetually contentious issue in Washington.

Since 1975, the Armenian Diaspora in The United States has lobbied the Government to officially recognize the 1915-1923 massacres of Armenians as Genocide (De Waal, 2015). This recognition would occur in the form of a non-binding resolution with an official acknowledgement by the American government that would label the massacres of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire as Genocide, as well as the use of the term in the President's annual April 24th address. Apart from this verbal acknowledgement, no further concrete actions by the U.S. government would be taken.

To date, official Recognition has not come to fruition. The Turkish Government vehemently denies that the massacres constituted Genocide, claiming that there were deaths on all sides as a result of war. Ankara has therefore been determined to prevent the passage of a resolution in The United States stating otherwise. The Turkish Government views Genocide Recognition as an existential threat to the foundations of the Turkish State, and many have expressed fear that Recognition would lead to demands for reparations and territorial claims (Akçam, 2004; De Waal, 2015; Göçek, 2015). What it perceives as foreign interference in its affairs contributes to a widespread siege mentality both within the Government and throughout Turkish society.

In order to prevent Genocide Recognition, Ankara believed it needed a lobby of its own to combat the Armenian Lobby, which it perceived as having a high degree of influence on Capitol Hill. The Turkish government and its embassy in Washington fostered the growth and political involvement of Turkish-American organizations and

contracted professional lobbying and public relations firms in efforts to build a lobby which would act as a formidable opponent to the Armenian Lobby (Bali & Bessemer, 2012). With the establishment of the Turkish Lobby, the issue of Armenian Genocide Recognition — which landed on the Congressional agenda as a result of the Armenian Lobby's efforts — evolved into a battle between two ethnic lobbies as they attempted to influence American foreign policy to suit their respective agendas.

The study of ethnic lobbies and their influence on American foreign policy has been an increasingly popular topic in international relations circles, especially since the end of the Cold War. With the end of the Cold War, the U.S. foreign policy arena appeared to be increasingly receptive to other sources of influence (Ambrosio, 2002; Haney & Vanderbush, 1999). The Armenian Lobby has been referred to as one of the most formidable ethnic lobbies in the United States (Brzezinski, 1998, p. 28), but has so far failed to achieve its primary objective of Genocide Recognition. While numerous factors have been cited as explanations to the failure of Armenian Lobby's pursuit of Recognition, detailed information regarding the efforts undertaken by the Turkish Lobby to prevent Recognition is lacking. This thesis therefore seeks to examine how the Turkish Lobby has worked to influence American policy toward Genocide Recognition. In order to gain a clearer understanding of how the Turkish Lobby operates, two case studies on two specific Armenian Genocide Resolutions are presented. The case studies seek to answer the research questions of:

1. *What strategies has the Turkish Lobby implemented to prevent U.S. recognition of the Armenian Genocide?*
2. *What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Turkish Lobby based on the criteria believed necessary for ethnic lobbying success?*

## **Literature Review**

### ***Ethnic Groups as Political Actors***

The role of ethnicity in politics is not an American phenomenon, but the structure of the American government and the wide variety of ethnic groups present in the United States is conducive to the prominent role of ethnicity in American politics, particularly in the realm of foreign policy. Walzer, notes that throughout history, political theorists have tended to assume the communities they wrote about to be nationally or ethnically homogeneous (1982). He explains that in past ethnically and culturally diverse empires, assimilation to the dominant culture was a common practice. However, those who did not assimilate were more likely to mobilize for economic and political reasons, which often led to conflict with other groups. This regularly resulted in a shift to self-rule along cultural lines, leading political communities to become more homogenous. Throughout much of the the history of the United States, minority groups have been repressed, rendering them politically powerless. Continuous immigration however, altered the composition of the population. While earlier immigrants tended to assimilate, this trend decreased as more groups resisted the total abandonment of their identities and traditions. Walzer notes that this increasing “ethnic assertiveness” eventually led ethnic groups to build communities of their own, which entailed forming institutions, controlling resources, and providing services to members of the group. This set the stage for various ethnic group organizations to fight for their respective interests at the governmental level. As one might expect, many of these interests were connected with American foreign policy toward these groups’ countries of origin. Glazer and Moynihan emphasized the importance of the political role of ethnic groups in The United States, asserting that because the immigration process determines the ethnic

composition of the United States and public opinion of voters is one of the driving factors of foreign policy, immigration is the single most important determinant of American foreign policy (Glazer, Moynihan, & Schelling, 1975, p. 24).

### ***Ethnic Interest Groups and International Relations Theory***

Henriette Rytz notes that literature specifically on the role of ethnic interest groups as international relations actors is lacking, and that most of the related literature focuses on culture, diasporas, globalization, and transnationalism (Rytz, 2013). Rytz cites Yossi Shain and Aharon Barth's argument that ethnic interest groups should fall into the theoretical space shared by liberal and constructivist theory, and claims that ethnic interest groups cannot be explained by one single theory, but a combination. One of these is Liberal Theory, as it recognizes the role of domestic actors in international relations, as opposed to Realist Theory which recognizes the state as the sole legitimate actor. Another theory that can be applied to ethnic interest groups in International Relations is Transnationalist Theory, due to its focus beyond traditional borders and political arenas (Rytz, 2013). Both of these theories apply to the Turkish Lobby, as it is both an actor in American domestic politics, and closely linked with the Turkish government, blurring traditional borderlines.

### ***Ethnic Group Influence in American Politics***

As previously mentioned, the combination of the demographic composition of the United States and its governmental structure is conducive to ethnic group involvement in policymaking. Several scholars in the field point to pluralism as the reason for this (King & Pomper, 2004; Paul & Paul, 2009; Rubenzer & Redd, 2010; Rytz, 2013; Shain, 2008; Walzer et al., 1982). In short, pluralism refers to rule by many as opposed to one. Applied to American politics, pluralism means that in addition to the

three separate branches of government, numerous other groups representing a variety of interests have a voice in policymaking. These groups represent a wide spectrum — from corporate interests, to labor unions, to ethnic groups. Ethnic groups, like other groups, formed organizations in order to enter the political arena and influence policy in a way that would benefit their own communities, and in many cases, their home countries as well. Therefore, as Rytz notes, ethnic interest groups are institutionalized political representations of immigrant communities (Rytz, 2013, p.17).

These groups transformed their ethnicity into a cause in order to mobilize support from within their communities (Walzer et al., 1982). Naturally, the key area of policy that many ethnic groups sought to influence was foreign policy toward their homelands. Scholars are divided as to the degree of influence exerted by interest groups. Mancur Olson argued that without tangible incentives — typically financial — that groups would not be motivated to take action to influence policy (1971). C. Wright Mills argued that a group of elites essentially controls all aspects of policy in the United States, rendering ordinary citizens powerless (2000). In this case, interest group efforts would be futile. In their extensive study on ethnic interest groups in American foreign policy, Paul and Paul find that other actors have a greater impact on foreign policy, and most ethnic interest groups are much less powerful than they are perceived (2009). However, as noted by Oświęcimski, perceptions of influence are important, and the perception of a group as influential could potentially increase its *actual* influence (2013). Many of these perceptions of ethnic group influence have been negative, placing their loyalties into question and fearing that their agendas could potentially undermine the national interest of the United States.

Much of the existing literature on the role of ethnic interest groups in foreign policy is centered around the the concept of loyalty and the debate over whether these

groups support or undermine the American national interest. This debate has been addressed in the literature reviews of other case studies on ethnic lobbies. Heather Gregg separates these scholars into two groups — those who view ethnic interest groups as a threat to the American national interest and those who believe ethnic interest groups can positively influence American foreign policy (2002).

Michael Clough warned that the shift from foreign policymaking being controlled by a small elite to it being susceptible to a wide variety of actors could lead to the “balkanization” of the foreign policy making process, resulting in domestic disagreement over America’s role abroad, ultimately undermining American legitimacy and leadership abilities (1994). The way to prevent this, he asserted, was to completely redesign the foreign policymaking system, and build one that would include the initiatives of regional actors, ethnic groups, and global interest groups. Therefore, Clough did not consider ethnic interest groups alone to be a threat to the national interest of the United States, rather the failure to properly incorporate them into the policymaking process. Samuel Huntington on the other hand, considered ethnic interest groups to be a significant threat to The U.S. national interest (1997). He acknowledged that diaspora interests at times coincided with broader American interests, but claimed that diaspora groups often pursued specific interests at the expense of the national interest and America’s relations with its allies. He also believed that interest groups were able to influence American foreign policy by means of their resources, insinuating that American foreign policy could be influenced by the highest bidder. Yossi Shain takes a more positive approach to ethnic group influence, arguing that that ethnic group participation in politics leads to greater integration of their communities in the hostland, can lead to the spread of democratic values in their countries or origin, and possibly minimize conflicts abroad as a result of their involvement in conflict mediation (2008).

James M. Lindsay and John Newhouse touch on other aspects regarding the degree of influence interest groups have on policy making. Lindsay questions the concept of the national interest. He asserts that it is not an objective fact, and therefore it is not possible to state whether ethnic interests directly counter the American “national interest”. He also claims that ethnic group influence can, in fact, result in mutually beneficial gains. Lindsay issues a reminder that while most scholars highlight the ways ethnic interest groups attempt to manipulate the American political system to their advantage, this process also occurs in reverse, in which the United States instrumentalizes ethnic interest groups to legitimize policy goals of its own. Lindsay’s article thus highlights the necessity of exploring the dynamics of ethnic organizations, their interactions with the branches of government, and the role they play within the foreign policy system, rather than simply adding to the arguably oversimplified debate over whether these groups are harmful or helpful to the United States (2016).

Newhouse focuses on foreign lobbying — the hiring of professional lobbying firms by foreign governments. The increasing involvement of professional firms, Newhouse claims, reflects the privatization of diplomacy. He notes, like Lindsay, that while lobbying on behalf of foreign government could pose risks to the U.S. national interests, that it could also be beneficial in some cases. Newhouse however has a more cynical outlook than Lindsay, asserting that members of Congress seem to be driven by financial rewards (recalling Huntington’s insinuation) and value self-interest over national-interest, which in turn contributes to the decline of American legitimacy in foreign affairs (2016).

### ***Factors that Contribute to Ethnic Lobbying Success***

In the field of ethnic group lobbying, many scholars have focused on seemingly more concrete questions, such as what factors contribute to the success of these groups. Specific case studies on ethnic interest groups, primarily on the lobbies considered to be the most influential — the Jewish, Cuban, Greek, and Armenian lobbies — include characteristics of these lobbies believed to account for their success (Gregg, 2002; Haney & Vanderbush, 1999; Mearsheimer & Walt, 2008).

Several of the factors believed to increase the likelihood of ethnic interest group success are reiterated throughout the existing literature. Rubenzer and Redd have distinguished the factors into two categories: characteristics of a group, and contextual factors that affect its lobbying influence (2010). The framework used to assess the characteristics of the Turkish Lobby in this thesis is taken from David M. Paul and Rachel Anderson Paul's *Ethnic Lobbies and US Foreign Policy* (2009). This framework has been selected due to the fact that it is a relatively recent, comprehensive compilation of previous works on ethnic lobbies. The following factors will be later applied to assess the strengths and weaknesses of Turkish-American organizations.

1. Size and dispersion of the population
2. Saliency of foreign policy issues to the group
3. Resources
4. Assimilation into American society
5. Degree to which goals attempt to alter status quo

#### *Size and Dispersion of the Population*

Many ethnic group scholars point to the importance of not only the overall population of the ethnic group within The United States, but also to the concentration of the group within congressional districts. Overall population is



important due to the fact that higher numbers translate to more resources for the group, thus enhancing grassroots efforts (Paul, 2009). In terms of overall group population, Paul and Paul claim that ethnic organizations also value the importance of numbers, likely due to the perceived effect on group clout, and often report higher populations than the official ones provided by the U.S. Census. However, most scholars have concluded that ethnic groups that are smaller in overall population, but are geographically concentrated in congressional districts tend to have more success than those which are larger in number and dispersed throughout the country (Haney & Vanderbush, 1999; King & Pomper, 2004; Paul & Paul, 2009, Smith, 2005). This geographic concentration of ethnic groups tends to enforce their sense of identity and facilitates political organization. Paul and Paul also note that the geographic *dispersion* of ethnic groups across numerous congressional districts can be advantageous, as this would result in access to more members of Congress (2009).

### *Issue Saliency*

The saliency, or importance of a particular policy to an ethnic group affects its motivation, which is necessary for political mobilization (Haney & Vanderbush, 1999; Paul & Paul, 2009). James McCormick notes that a high level of commitment to an issue can compensate for small population size (2012). As mentioned in the previous section, the geographic concentration of groups tends to enforce their sense of ethnic identity. Paul gives an example of the Armenian Lobby to emphasize the role of ideology and memory to inspire group members to be politically active (2000). As one may expect, groups that have a heightened sense of identity are more likely to act on issues that impact

their ethnic kin (Paul, 2000; Shain, 2008). Furthermore, Mearsheimer and Walt note that the indifference of the rest of the population to an issue which *is* salient to an ethnic group increases that group's chances of policy success around this issue due to a lack of opposition to their motivation (2008). Paul and Paul suggest that crises amplify the salience of an issue, in turn incentivizing ethnic groups to mobilize and increasing membership and engagement in ethnic organizations. They also note that prospective losses as well as the existence of an enemy likely increase motivation, indicating high issue salience.

### *Resources*

Financial resources are important for ethnic group success, since they allow for campaign contributions, and more crucially the means to establish permanent organizations (Paul & Paul, 2009). The importance of strong organizations, which can effectively relay their message to both lawmakers and members is echoed throughout the literature on ethnic interest groups (Haney & Vanderbush, 1999; Lindsay, 2016; McCormick, 2012). In her literature review, Heather Gregg cites Tony Smith's claim that ethnic lobbies gain influence "by creating an 'organizational body' that articulates demands, mobilizes its constituents, and forms alliances with other groups" (2002, p.3). Lindsay notes that while a community's size, commitment, unity, and resources are important factors in determining success, that their ability to harness these factors and create gains is the most important (2016). In other words, their ability to create a strong organization that would allow them to properly utilize these other factors is crucial.

### *Degree of Assimilation*

Much of the literature on ethnic interest groups concurs that the degree of assimilation of an ethnic group into American society has ramifications that affect the group's likelihood of success (Ahrari, 1987; Haney & Vanderbush, 1999; Paul & Paul, 2009; Rubenzer & Redd, 2010). Scholars tend to concur that in order to be politically effective, groups should be assimilated in American society to a certain degree while still maintaining a strong link to their ethnic identity that keeps them motivated to advocate on their home country's behalf. Paul and Paul note that assimilation is also necessary for practical reasons, such as obtaining citizenship in order to vote, and learning English in order to effectively participate in the policymaking process (2009). They also claim that ethnic group organizations facilitate the assimilation process for members in order to increase group mobilization.

#### *Intentions to Change or Preserve Status Quo*

Scholars on ethnic interest groups also agree that groups that seeking to preserve the status quo are more likely to succeed than those seeking to change it (Lindsay, 2016; McCormick, 2012; Paul & Paul, 2009). Paul and Paul note that this is due to the fact that the passage of new legislation requires several steps, thus more effort, than simply maintaining a policy (2009, p.131). In the case of the Armenian Genocide Resolution, Armenian groups have sought to introduce a new policy that would change the status quo of the current U.S. policy of non-recognition. Turkish groups have worked to oppose this, therefore maintaining the status quo.

#### *Contextual Factors*

##### *Group Objectives in Relation to The National Interest*

The most pertinent contextual factor to this study is the correspondence of a group's agenda to United States interests. Several studies concur that the extent to which an ethnic group's agenda corresponds to national interest of the United States is a crucial factor in determining its success (Ahari, 1987; Haney & Vanderbush, 1999; King & Pomper, 2004; Rubenzer & Redd, 2010). The basic definition of the national interest is the "set of shared priorities regarding relations with the rest of the world" (Nye, 1999). Nye adds that the national interest can refer to a foreign policy that is *both* interest-based and moral-based, although interest-based tends to receive more focus from leaders. In the literature on ethnic interest groups influence, "national interest" primarily connotes strategic interests rather than moral interests. Oswiecimski highlights the importance of viewing the national interest factor as the *perception* of national interest by decision makers (2013). Yossi Shain asserts that national interest is a variable that fluctuates according to national identity, which is a variable itself that is determined by national and international forces (2008, p. 136). Due to the fact that the national interest of the United States can be construed differently depending on the actor, ethnic interest groups must take into consideration the current administration's perception of the national interest in order to tailor its strategies to that of the administration's agenda.

### ***Strategies Utilized by Ethnic Lobbies to Influence Policy***

#### *Direct and Indirect*

Gable categorized the influence interest groups exert on lawmakers into the categories of direct and indirect (1958). Direct strategies are comprised of direct contact between group representatives or lobbyists, and legislators or other government

officials. Indirect strategies typically consist of grassroots movements joined by members of the organization or members of the public sympathetic to a cause being pursued by a group.

Applying these two types of strategies to specific ethnic lobbies allows us to gain a more detailed understanding of what the strategies entail and how effective they can be. For example, Mearsheimer and Walt detailed the pressure that the Jewish Lobby exerts on Congress and the Executive Branch to back Israel, and underscored their intense attempts to control the narrative surrounding Israel in both the media and academia (2008). The lobby applies a mixture of both direct and indirect strategies in order to pursue these goals.

Hojnacki and Kimball discuss lobbying strategies in the context of how they are executed during the committee stage of the legislative process (1999). This is certainly applicable to both cases that will be discussed, as neither proceeded beyond the committee stage, meaning all lobbying was carried out during this stage. Hojnacki and Kimball also distinguish lobbying strategies as direct and grassroots, and note that each strategy fulfills a different set of objectives. They assert that while direct lobbying is more useful for providing lawmakers with specialized information and building support in Congress, grassroots lobbying is important for organizational maintenance as it engages supporters of the group. Furthermore, they claim that direct lobbying tends to be directed toward friendly lawmakers by defenders of the status quo, as opposed to those seeking to change policy, who also pursue grassroots efforts and lobby both friendly and undecided legislators.

#### *Strategies Specifically Employed by Turkish Lobby*

While literature is lacking on lobbying strategies carried out by Turkish groups, Yilmaz claims that The Turkish Lobby follows three primary methods to advance its

agenda: hiring professional lobbying and public relations firms, harnessing the Turkish-American community through cultural, educational, and academic organizations, and garnering support from American diplomatic, intelligence, and military officials (2004).

These methods therefore entail a combination of direct and indirect lobbying strategies. While direct strategies are carried out primarily by professional lobbying and public relations firms, as well as the American government officials who promote Turkey's point of view, indirect strategies are carried out primarily by Turkish-American organizations via grassroots methods. Turkish-American organizations focus their efforts on building grassroots support from the Turkish community, while lobbyists hired by the Turkish government use their extensive Washington connections in the legislative and executive branches, as business interests and think tanks.

### ***Contribution of Thesis to Field***

This thesis seeks to make an empirical contribution to the existing case studies on ethnic lobbies in the United States. As opposed to the Jewish, Armenian, Greek, and Cuban lobbies, which have all been cited as highly influential, the Turkish Lobby has received less attention in existing research as well as in the U.S. media. However, in one of the Turkish Lobby's primary policy issues — preventing Armenian Genocide Recognition — it has repeatedly overcome the challenge of the Armenian Lobby. While this thesis does not claim this success is due to the lobby's efforts alone, it will explore how the lobby operates in order to achieve this goal. In addition, the Turkish Lobby differs from the previously mentioned ethnic lobbies due to the fact that it is composed of both diaspora organizations and professional lobbying and public relations firms employed by the Turkish government. This thesis therefore examines the different approach followed by each entity in order to achieve Ankara's goals.

## **Research Methodology**

Two case studies are presented to further examine the questions of what strategies the Turkish Lobby has utilized in order to successfully oppose U.S. recognition of the Armenian Genocide and what the strengths and weaknesses of Turkish-American interest groups are. The case studies will examine two non-binding House Resolutions. Both resolutions passed the Committee vote, which is necessary before proceeding to a vote by the entire House of Representatives. However, after passing the committee votes, neither Resolution proceeded to a floor vote. The resolutions being analyzed are House Resolution 106, introduced in 2007, and House Resolution 252, introduced in 2010. The Resolutions are identical, both sharing the title of “Affirmation of the United States Record on the Armenian Genocide Resolution.” While this same resolution has been introduced at other times, these two particular resolutions have been selected due to the fact that they generated a great deal of controversy, therefore receiving more attention from all parties involved. As a result, more information surrounding the events is available to analyze. In addition, as these resolutions are fairly recent, more information is available on the Internet as opposed to during the time of earlier resolutions. This information provides insight into the characteristics of the Turkish Lobby and the strategies it pursued to oppose Recognition.

Furthermore, the fact that each resolution was introduced under different domestic and international political contexts allows for the opportunity to observe if the Turkish Lobby made any adaptations in order to improve its chances of success. H.Res 106 faced intense opposition from the Bush Administration. While the Resolution was to be voted on by Congress, and not the executive branch, intense executive pressure against its passage supplemented the efforts of the Turkish Lobby. H.Res 252 on the

other hand, was introduced under the Obama Administration. President Obama and other members of the executive branch had previously spoken out in favor of Armenian Genocide Recognition, and initially did not oppose the Resolution. This new dynamic resulted in a confident Armenian Lobby and an insecure Turkish Lobby (Knowlton, 2010a). Despite these different outlooks, each resolution met the same fate as neither managed to proceed to a full vote in the House of Representatives.

In order to gain more insight into the Turkish Lobby's efforts to prevent the passage of these resolutions, this paper analyzes material from both Turkish-American and Armenian-American organizations and media, U.S. media reports, Congressional records, and Justice Department records on the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA). The analysis of these materials will help to address the research questions what strategies the Turkish Lobby has adopted to oppose Genocide Recognition, and what the lobby's strengths and weaknesses are.

## **The Origins of the The Turkish Lobby in The United States**

In order to understand the multi-faceted composition of the Turkish Lobby, a general overview of the Turkish-American community is necessary. This overview encompasses the historical events which prompted the Turkish government to realize that it needed a lobby of its own in the U.S. in order to defend its interests. A brief description of the three major Turkish-American organizations is given, followed by an explanation of the various entities with whom the Lobby has formed alliances.

### ***The Turkish Community in the U.S.***

The Turkish population of The United States is relatively small, at approximately 350,000 (Yılmaz, 2004). For comparison, the Greek and Armenian-



American communities have respective populations of approximately 1.2 million and 465,000 (United States Census Bureau, n.d.). There were three major immigration waves, each wave bringing with it a different demographic. The second immigration wave, from the late 1950s to the early 1980s, was comprised of professionals who were for the most part nationalistic and secular, due to the fact that came of age under Ataturk's reign (Kaya, 2004). This strong sense of identity led immigrants in this wave to establish Turkish organizations in the U.S in order to retain links to their homeland. Kaya notes that the Turkish-American community is primarily concentrated in New York, New Jersey, California, Florida, Texas, and Illinois (2004). Kaya asserts that second and third-generation Turkish-Americans embrace their American identities much more than the first-generation, and are therefore more assimilated into U.S. society.

### ***Recognizing the Need for a Turkish Lobby***

Initially, Turkish-Americans formed organizations which were oriented more toward cultural events than political goals. With the rise of Armenian and Greek organizations in the United States, who retained anti-Turkish agendas, the Turkish-American community felt the need to defend its interests against the perceived attacks by hostile groups. Certain events of the 1970s — namely the Cyprus conflict, increased Armenian efforts to achieve official recognition of the Genocide, and Armenian terrorist attacks on Turkish diplomats — contributed to a feeling of besiegement both in Turkey and within the Turkish-American community, thus signaling to Ankara the need for an organized lobbying effort in the U.S (Bali & Bessemer, 2012). Increased demands of Armenians throughout the 1970s for Genocide Recognition resulted in Turkey making the need to counter these claims a top foreign policy priority (De Waal, 2015).

Armenian groups escalated their Recognition efforts in 1982, after a State Department report alleged that Armenian terrorist organizations were using Genocide grievances to justify their attacks on Turkish diplomats. The report emphasized that the State Department did not endorse the Genocide allegations. This pushed the Armenian Community to take its pursuit for official Recognition to Congress (De Waal, 2015). The primary parties of this dispute were initially the Armenian community in the United States, organized into two main lobbying groups, and the Turkish government. However, Ankara realized that in order to effectively counter the well-organized Armenian Lobby, it needed to form its own.

### ***Formation of Turkish-American Organizations***

A number of Turkish-American organizations can be found today. The Turkish Coalition of America (TCA)'s web site has a list of organizations, divided into national grassroots organizations, national special interest organizations, business associations, professional associations, political organizations (PACs), Turkic organizations, and a list of think tanks that cover Turkish issues (Turkish Coalition of America, n.d.). However, this thesis will focus primarily on the three most visible organizations involved in the fight against Genocide recognition: The Federation of Turkish American Associations (FTAA), The Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA), and the Turkish Coalition of America (TCA).

#### ***Federation of Turkish American Associations (FTAA)***

The Federation of Turkish American Associations (FTAA) was the first major Turkish organization founded in the United States, in 1956. According to the charter of the FTAA, the primary objective of the Association is to ensure that Turkish associations within the United States operate under a federation

roof. It works to “establish a sense of unity and solidarity by providing coordination between Turkish associations established within the United States” (Türk Amerikan Dernekleri Federasyonu, n.d.) As it was established before Ankara’s realization of the need to create its own lobby to promote Turkish interests in the U.S., its main focus was initially cultural rather than political. However, its focus evolved due to tensions with the Greek and Armenian communities (Akcapar, 2009). Akcapar notes that the FTAA’s primary goal is now to unite against the Greek and Armenian lobbies and bring the Turkish perspective to authorities in Washington (2009). The FTAA headquarters is located in New York City, at the same address as the Turkish Consulate, highlighting the close ties between the organization and the Turkish government. Despite being established in the U.S. for over 50 years, the website of the FTAA is entirely in Turkish, with no English option. This creates the perception that the FTAA is more insular, less assimilated, and less interested in disseminating its message to non-Turks. It also highlights the close connection between the Association and the Turkish government.

#### *Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA)*

The Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA), was founded in 1979 due to the efforts of Turkish Ambassador to the United States, Sukru Elekdag, together with the leaders of the Maryland American Turkish Association (MATA) and The American Turkish Association of Washington, D.C. (ATA D.C.) (Bali & Bessemer, 2012). The organization was founded with the purpose of countering the Greek and Armenian Lobbies and fighting against the perceived discrimination against Turkish-Americans (Bali & Bessemer, 2012). On its web site, the ATAA lists its two primary objectives: the first is to

cultivate a politically active Turkish-American community that can help to strengthen relations between the U.S. and Turkey, while promoting a positive image of Turkey to the American public. The second objective is to educate members of the government, media and the general public about issues of concern to both Turkey and the Turkish-American community (Assembly of Turkish American Associations, n.d.). ATAA board member Oya Bain described the reasons behind the Association's formation in more candid terms, claiming that American politicians, media, and the general public essentially tolerated Armenian terrorist attacks on Turkish diplomats and civilians, amplifying the frustration and humiliation of Turkish-Americans (HistoryofTruth.com, 2015). The ATAA chose Washington D.C. as its headquarters, taking advantage of its close proximity to decision-makers. Its location also allows for close cooperation with the Turkish embassy (Akcapar, 2009). The ATAA and FTAA closely cooperate in their shared goal of preventing Armenian Genocide Recognition.

#### *Turkish Coalition of America (TCA)*

The third major Turkish-American organization, the Turkish Coalition of America (TCA), was established in 2007. Unlike the FTAA and ATAA, the TCA is not an umbrella organization. However, the TCA shares similar objectives to the FTAA and ATAA, such as building a community of politically active Turkish-Americans, contributing to the development of U.S.-Turkey relations, promoting a balanced portrayal of Turkey in the American media, and placing matters of interest to Turkey and Turkish-Americans on the political agenda (Turkish Coalition of America, n.d.-a). Another objective of TCA's is to "serve as a think tank of expertise and a clearinghouse of information on Turkey

and Americans of Turkish descent,” signaling its intentions to take on a leadership role in the Turkish-American community. Like the FTAA and ATAA, the TCA has close ties with Ankara, and has worked closely with professional lobbyists hired by the Turkish Government (Sunlight Foundation, 2009).

The TCA is active in its initiatives with the Congressional Caucus on U.S.-Turkey Relations and Turkish Americans. The TCA also established a political action committee (PAC) called the Turkish Coalition USA Political Action Committee (TC-USA PAC) giving the organization and official capacity to provide financial support to political candidates friendly to Turkey and Turkish interests (Turkish Coalition USA Political Action Committee, n.d.). In addition, the TCA established the Turkish American Legal Defense Fund (TALDF), the mission of which is to protect the freedom of expression of Turkish Americans (Turkish American Legal Defense Fund, n.d.). While not explicitly stated, the TALDF essentially advocates the right to free speech for those who deny the Armenian Genocide. The TCA also has a program where it seeks to build alliances with other ethnic groups, such as African Americans, Native Americans, and Hispanics, as well as groups it considers kin like Bosnians and Macedonians, highlighting its alliance-building tactics.

#### *Turkish-American Organizations and Ankara*

Turkish-American organizations enjoy a close relationship with the Turkish government, which is reflected in their identical policy goals for U.S.-Turkey relations. The Turkish Embassy in Washington played a key role in the establishment of the ATAA and the two continue to cooperate closely. Some of the groups that fall under the ATAA are also located in Turkey, and there have been Turkish-born presidents of the

ATAA in past years (Laguerre, 2016). Donations from Turkish businessmen constitute a significant portion of the ATAA's funding. At at least one point, these donations were facilitated by a Turkish state minister, demonstrating the interlinkage between the Association and the Turkish government (Laguerre, 2016). As noted previously, the FTAA is located at the same address as the Turkish consulate in New York City, demonstrating a close relationship between the Association and the Turkish government. The TCA has declared that it does not receive any funding from the Turkish government, however they still share a close relationship and the TCA actively promotes Ankara's policy goals (Pecquet, 2018). The TCA has also organized several trips to Turkey for members of the U.S. Congress, in order for them to become better acquainted with Turkey (Turkish Coalition of America, n.d.-a). The Turkish-born founder of TCA and its American president who lived and worked for many years in Turkey both maintain a close relationship with the Turkish government, which is reflected in the Coalition's stated objectives.

It appears that the assistance and backing of the Turkish government magnifies the pressure exerted on the American government, thus contributing to the effectiveness of these organizations. Ankara's involvement in the activities of these organizations seems to compensate for the relatively low Turkish population in the United States. The Turkish government is able to exert pressure on the executive branch, which often trickles down to the legislative branch. This appears to give the Turkish Lobby an advantage over the Armenian Lobby in the sense that lawmakers are susceptible to pressure from various sources advocating Turkey's agenda, rather than from the diaspora community exclusively.

### ***Building Alliances***

In addition to fostering the creation of Turkish-American organizations, the Turkish government realized it could supplement its efforts to promote Turkish interests in the U.S. by building alliances with entities it viewed as influential in the American foreign policy arena. These entities include both other ethnic groups and lobbies, as well as American diplomatic, military, and intelligence officials, think tanks, scholars, and members of Congress friendly to their cause (Yılmaz et al., 2004).

### *Jewish Lobby*

The Turkish and Jewish Lobbies have a history of cooperation, although this has waned in recent years. When the Turkish government realized a need for a lobby of its own, it procured the assistance of the Jewish Lobby in the United States, which it viewed as extremely influential in American politics (Bali & Bessemer, 2012). Ankara took note of the fact that the Greek and Armenian population in the United States vastly outweighed that of the Turkish population. The Turkish-American community was also far less politically active than the Armenian and Greek communities (Bali & Bessemer, 2012). Its solution was to solicit assistance from American Jewish groups, via prominent members of the Jewish community in Turkey. The leaders of The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), a Jewish-American organization that holds a high degree of influence in Washington, advised Turkish-Americans on creating a lobby of their own (Lake, 2010).

While not all Jewish-American organizations have carried out Ankara's bidding throughout Genocide Recognition efforts, the Turkish Lobby has traditionally received support from prominent groups like AIPAC and the Anti-Defamation League. However, the Jewish Lobby's support has declined in recent years, largely due to political disputes between Turkey and Israel. The Jewish Lobby's role in the House Resolutions 106 and 252 will be expanded upon in the case studies.

*Turkic-American Organizations*

In more recent years, Turkish-American organizations have also sought to bolster ties and form alliances with other Turkic ethnic organizations. The websites of the ATAA and TCA continually acknowledge their cooperation. Turkish organizations have particularly sought to combine forces with the Azerbaijani diaspora in the United States, who they consider their ethnic kin. Since Azerbaijan has also been a target of Armenian-American organizations due to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the alliance between the Turkish and Azerbaijani diasporas is natural. While these organizations are not very influential on their own, Turkish organizations are able to increase their membership by including those of Turkic origin.

*The Departments of Defense and State*

The Turkish and American militaries have enjoyed strong ties dating back to the Cold War and Turkey's ascension to NATO in 1952 (Larrabee, 2008). The two countries shared a mutual interest in containing the Soviet threat, leading to enhanced cooperation between the two (Larrabee & Lesser, 2003). Although The U.S. and Turkey experienced issues in their relationship during the Cold War era, and a mistrust of Washington persisted in Ankara, military-to-military ties remained quite stable until the end of the Cold War (Larrabee & Lesser, 2003). Relations soured however, as a result of the Gulf War. Turkey believed that it received little to nothing in spite of all of its efforts to assist the US, leading to a deeper mistrust of Washington. Furthermore, the absence of the threat of Moscow left less with which to bind Washington and Ankara together. The U.S. and Turkey also experienced a deterioration of relations after the Turkish parliament voted against allowing U.S. troops to be based there for the 2003 Iraq War.



Despite these setbacks, both the U.S. and Turkey maintain that the continuation of their strategic relationship is necessary for their respective security interests. American defense contractors are also a key aspect of this relationship, as the U.S. is the top supplier of military technology to Turkey (Larrabee & Lesser, 2003). The Turkish Lobby has supported this strategic relationship, and utilized it to bolster its claims that a Genocide resolution would be detrimental to American security interests.

The U.S. State Department has also worked on maintaining strong relations with Turkey, repeatedly opposing Genocide recognition due to the potential damage it would inflict upon relations. The case studies reveal numerous contacts between lobbyists for Turkey and State Department officials, the opposition of former Secretaries of State to Genocide Recognition, as well as Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's opposition to Recognition after her previous support of it as a Senator.

#### *Think Tanks*

Turkey has long worked to cultivate relations with American think tanks, which have often championed Turkey as a role model for its neighbors in the Middle East and Central Asia (Benhaïm & Öktem, 2015). Many Turkish analysts work in U.S. think tanks and cooperate with universities and think tanks in the US and Turkey. Both the Turkish government and Turkish-American organizations have worked with The Atlantic Council, The Brookings Institution, The German Marshall Fund, and The Council on Foreign Relations — all prominent in Washington foreign policy circles (Tocci, 2011).

The Turkish Government and several Turkish businesses have made financial contributions to The Atlantic Council (Atlantic Council, n.d.; Phillips, 2017; Williams, Lipton, & Parlapiano, 2014), and the TCA has formed a partnership with the think tank to provide internship opportunities for young Turkish-Americans (Turkish Coalition of

America, 2015). As think tanks are one of the many actors who play a role in formulating American foreign policy (Haass, 2002), building relationships with American think tanks is therefore another strategy Ankara and Turkish-American organizations have implemented to influence American politicians to implement policy in their favor. Notably, each of these think tanks have previously published articles opposing Genocide recognition, or included this topic in policy recommendations.

### *Academia*

Another part of Turkey's strategy to improve its public image in the United States has been to establish academic programs on Turkish Studies (Bali & Bessemer, 2012). The Institute of Turkish Studies was established in Washington DC in 1982 by Turkish Ambassador to the United States, Sukru Elekdag. It received its funding from the Turkish government until 2015, when Ankara revoked its support (Redden, 2015).

These programs promote the Turkish point of view on contentious issues — including the Armenian Genocide — and paint a positive image of Turkey. In 1985, a group of 69 scholars on Turkish Studies in the United States signed an open letter, which was published in major American newspapers, to Congress (Eissenstat, 2014). The letter echoed the Turkish government's claims that the events of 1915-1923 did not constitute Genocide, but were rather a result of a messy war which resulted in deaths on all sides. The Turkish Lobby often refers to statements of "their scholars" when countering Genocide accusations, likely in attempts to bolster its legitimacy (HistoryofTruth.com, 2015).

### *Corporate Interests*

Turkey is an important client of several American defense contractors and energy corporations, many of which have lobbied on Turkey's behalf against the proposed resolutions for Genocide Recognition. Several HFAC members referenced the

potential economic damage of the Genocide Resolutions, pointing to the Turkey's advantage of economic importance in addition to strategic importance.

*The Congressional Caucus on U.S.-Turkey Relations and Turkish-Americans*

In their article about the effectiveness of the Armenian Lobby in the U.S., King and Pomper claim that the creation of a Congressional Caucus is a sign of a successful ethnic group (2004). The Congressional Caucus on U.S.-Turkey Relations and Turkish-Americans was established in 2001 by three House Representatives (Turkish Coalition of America, 2012). The Turkish Coalition USA Political Action Committee website states that "The Turkey Caucus is a bipartisan platform through which Members of Congress focus on fostering US-Turkey relations and show their support for issues of concern to Turkish Americans." It was referred to by the Turkish daily *Hurriyet* as "act[ing] as part of the Turkish Lobby in the U.S" (*Hürriyet Daily News*, 2011). The Caucus works closely with the TCA and its PAC. The TCA website features a section with the members of the Caucus, and includes news updates on its activities. One of these updates, for example, includes information about meetings between members of Congress and the Turkish Caucus, and Turkish American business and community leaders. Representatives of the TCA, ATAA, FTAA, and a few other Turkish-American organizations were present during these meetings (Turkish Coalition of America, n.d.-b). Many of the Caucus members have also participated in TCA-sponsored delegations to Turkey (Ayasli Group, n.d.). However, not all members of the Turkey Caucus take anti-Armenian positions, as some of them are also members of the Armenian Caucus.

Turkish-American organizations have been active in recruiting members of Congress to the Caucus. Laguerre notes that the ATAA utilizes its advocacy seminars focused on increasing its grassroots initiatives in order to network with members of Congress and to recruit them to their cause of supporting Turkey (Laguerre, 2016).

The Caucus is another facet of the Turkish Lobby — one which allows both Turkish-American organizations, professional lobbyists, and the representatives of the Turkish government itself a path of direct access to decision makers.

### ***Professional Lobbying and Public Relations Firms***

The final and most effective strategy pursued by the Turkish government to intensify its lobbying efforts in the United States is the hiring of professional lobbying and public relations firms to advocate on its behalf. These firms are commonly referred to as “K Street Firms,” since many of their headquarters are located in this part of Washington. The Turkish government has had professional firms in its employ since the Cyprus crisis in the 1970s (Bali & Bessemer, 2012). Aside from the clear political objectives of professional lobbyists, the Turkish government also initially employed them in order to present a more favorable image of Turkey to the American public. The lobbying firms in Ankara’s employ are led by former members of Congress who are familiar with the inner workings of Capitol Hill. The Turkish government pours large sums into retaining these firms. Yilmaz notes some of the specific tasks entrusted to these firms, which include promoting Turkey’s image and interests via direct contacts with members of Congress, their staff, and Executive Branch officials, organizing media campaigns, and working with the Turkish Embassy to prepare and distribute materials like fact sheets and press releases (Yilmaz et al., 2004).

These firms have close relationships with both the U.S. and Turkish Governments, allowing them a high degree of access to lawmakers and officials amenable to supporting their agenda.

### ***The Turkish Lobby — A Multipronged Approach***

While the Turkish Community of the United States initially refrained from political involvement, the Turkish Government realized it needed a lobby of its own to counter what it perceived as unfair attacks on Turkey's honor. However, due to the small and inactive Turkish-American community at the time, Ankara looked to the Jewish community, rather than Turkish-Americans, as they viewed Jewish-American organizations as having a high degree of influence over American politicians. Therefore, the Jewish Lobby was an early ally of Turkey in its efforts to create a lobbying force of its own in the U.S. The Turkish Government also perceived a need to improve its image in the U.S., and hired professional lobbying and public relations firms as a way to do so. It appears as if Ankara saw the need to supplement the newly established Turkish-American organizations with other entities in order to bolster the influence and effectiveness of the Turkish Lobby, placing an emphasis specifically on targeting the Executive Branch, which professional lobbying firms had access to. Ankara also focused on the strongest aspect of its relationship with Washington — security and defense — and worked to cultivate and maintain relationships with American defense officials and diplomats in order to have the support of influential and well-connected officials with pro-Turkey views.

The Turkish Lobby is therefore composed of a variety of entities. Turkish American Organizations of various types and professional lobbying firms constitute the bulk of it, and will be the focus of this thesis. The support the lobby has received from Jewish-American Groups, think tanks, officials from the Executive Branch, business interests, and scholars has helped supplement the lobby's influence. This multi-pronged approach by a range of actors appears to have contributed to the efficacy of the Turkish Lobby in its fight against Genocide Recognition.

## **How The Turkish Lobby Fights Genocide Recognition**

### ***Case I: House Resolution 106***

#### ***Overview***

House Resolution 106, The Affirmation of the United States Record on the Armenian Genocide Resolution, was introduced in the House on January 30, 2007. It was not the first attempt to pass a resolution officially recognizing the Armenian Genocide, but it was significant due to the amount of controversy it generated in Washington. A *New York Times* article written in the midst of the battle accurately described it as an issue that highlighted the contrast between Turkey's vast resources and access to powerful officials, and the Armenian Diaspora's moral appeals (Thompson, 2007).

The controversy centered around deteriorating U.S.-Turkey relations, and the potential of the Resolution to enhance this tension, disrupting American war efforts in the Iraq and Afghanistan. While this crisis did not generate a large reaction from the general public, it did elicit intense reactions from both Congress and the Executive Branch. The Bush administration went to significant lengths in order to prevent Congress from voting in favor of the Resolution. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates sent letters protesting the Resolution to Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee Tom Lantos even before the committee vote was held. Both secretaries issued outright warnings that the passage of the Resolution could endanger American military personnel stationed in the region (Arsu & Knowlton, 2007). Executive opposition was voiced all the way from the top, demonstrated by President George W. Bush's speech ahead of the committee vote urging the House Foreign Affairs Committee against voting on the Resolution (Myers & Hulse, 2007).

Proponents of the Resolution argued that heeding Turkish threats and continuing to turn a blind eye to the Armenian Genocide would detract from the moral authority of the United States, especially its credibility in speaking out against other human rights atrocities, such as genocide taking place in Darfur (Armenian National Committee of America, 2005). Whether or not the Armenian massacres constituted Genocide was not the focus of the dispute, as even many who contested the Resolution acknowledge the events as Genocide. The argument in Congress essentially boiled down to the importance of strategic interests versus the importance of moral authority.

This Resolution exemplifies the extent to which domestic and international politics are interwoven, and called attention to the degree of influence that could be exerted in the House of Representatives by both ethnic interest groups and foreign governments. Although the Resolution passed the House Foreign Affairs Committee with a 27-21 vote, it was never brought to a full House vote.

Throughout their lobbying campaign, Armenian groups emphasized that Recognition would benefit the United States and its world standing. These groups downplayed the extreme threats issued by the Turkish government, claiming that Turkey was ultimately more dependent on the U.S. than the U.S. was on Turkey, and any consequences from Recognition would be short-lived. The Turkish Lobby countered these arguments primarily by focusing on Turkey's strategic relationship with the U.S. The Turkish Lobby and the Turkish Government coordinated their strategies to prioritize the national interest argument. Information from a February 2007 State Department Cable states that a member of the Turkish Parliament emphasized the need for Turks to lobby Congress, and that pursuing the national interest argument would be more effective than arguing against the legal accuracy of the Armenian Lobby's claims (Wilson, 2007). One member of Congress claimed that Turks had even persuaded

American troops to call Congress members in order to urge them against voting for the Resolution (Crowley, 2007), reflecting the intensity to which the Turkish Lobby instrumentalized the War in Iraq and national security. While the Turkish Lobby did continue to deny that the events of 1915-1923 constituted Genocide, they did not make denial their primary strategy. The Turkish and Armenian lobbies both recognized the need to tailor their strategies to coincide with the national interest, but the Turkish Lobby ultimately had more conditions weighing in its favor.

The Turkish Lobby employed both direct and indirect strategies in order to convince members of Congress that Genocide Recognition would not yield any benefits, while indefinitely placing the security of the United States, especially its military, at risk. Turkish-American organizations and professional lobbyists funded by the Turkish government worked in tandem to foil the Armenian Lobby's efforts, and convince members of Congress to reject Recognition in favor of regional stability and national security. They also received support from the Presidential Administration, the State Department, Defense Department, and other interests.

### ***Strategies Employed to Combat H.Res 106***

The Turkish Lobby employed a combination of direct and indirect strategies to prevent the Resolution from passing. From the available information surrounding the Resolution, it appears that that direct strategies were more prevalent than indirect strategies, corresponding to Hojnacki and Kimball's assertion that direct strategies are more commonly utilized during the committee phase of legislation. Turkish-American organizations attempted to mobilize the Turkish-American community into grassroots action, but also worked with K Street firms in order to approach lawmakers directly. Professional lobbying firms primarily took a direct approach, arranging meetings with members of Congress and other government officials.



### ***Strategies Utilized by Turkish-American Organizations***

An examination of the websites of Turkish-American organizations throughout 2007 shows that these groups emphasized the importance and efficacy of grassroots efforts. The three major organizations, the TCA, ATAA, and FTAA, coordinated their efforts, shown by both the ATAA and FTAA websites linking to a TCA action alert to oppose H.Res 106 (Turkish Coalition of America, 2007). This particular alert was issued *after* the Resolution passed the House Foreign Affairs Committee vote, and was designed in order to prevent it from proceeding to a full vote on the House floor. The alert provided a pre-composed letter for members, with five arguments as to why H.Res 106 was unfair. The letter included the familiar claims that Congress should not legislate history, that anti-American sentiment among the Turkish public would intensify in the event of passage, and that a Turkish-Armenian Joint History Commission should decide the matter. It also states that the suffering of Ottoman Muslims at the hands of Armenian fighters has gone unaddressed. The template only required the sender to fill out personal information, making it convenient for members of all three organizations to participate in opposing the Resolution.

The TCA, which was only established earlier in the year, appeared to be the most active in lobbying against the Resolution. The organization coordinated events with the Turkish Congressional Caucus and cooperated closely with the Turkish government. TCA President Lincoln McCurdy met with Livingston Group lobbyists in order to discuss upcoming visits from Turkish members of parliament (U.S. Department of Justice, 2007). Academic events were also held, featuring scholars who contended that the events of 1915 did not constitute Genocide. A TCA community update released after H.Res 106 passed the HFAC vote praises the efforts of Turkish-Americans, among other factors, for the withdrawal of several co-signers of the Resolution (Turkish

Coalition of America, 2007). According to FARA records, which will be addressed in the following section, Several Congress members who withdrew their support of H.Res 106 did so after documented meetings with lobbyists from K Street firms. However, there is no mention of the efforts of these lobbyists in this TCA community update, and no mention elsewhere on their website.

In the same community update, there is also a message regarding the importance of public opinion, noting that Armenians have unfairly held the advantage in this area. The organization urges members to monitor local media and respond to articles that contradict the Turkish position. TCA's efforts to gain the support of lawmakers were not always overtly related to Genocide Recognition. In a 2007 message on its website, the organization notes its close cooperation with the Congressional Turkish Caucus, including a trip TCA organized for six Congress members to Turkey in May of that year (Turkish Coalition of America, 2007b). During this trip, the delegation met with various Turkish Government officials, including Prime Minister Erdogan. These officials emphasized the need to uphold a mutually beneficial relationship between the United States and Turkey, and persuaded them that the passage of H.Res 106 would imperil relations. The Congress members also met lobbyist Stephen Solarz, who was under contract from the Livingston Group at the time (Ota, 2007). This trip demonstrates the level of interconnectedness between Turkish-American organizations, the Turkish Government and K Street lobbyists. Two of the Congress members were also part of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and would therefore later vote on H.Res 106.

The ATAA worked with the TCA in efforts to prevent the Resolution's passage. Like the TCA, the ATAA also praised the participation of its members on impacting the outcome of the vote, claiming that the loss was not by as large of a margin as it had been in previous years, due to the mobilization of the Turkish-American community

(Assembly of Turkish American Associations, 2007). Another bulletin addressing the outcome of the vote notes that many Congress members who voted in favor of passage had large Armenian populations from which they received campaign contributions (Assembly of Turkish American Associations, 2007). Both of these press releases emphasize the injustice of the Committee's yes vote. The ATAA also fails to note the efforts of K Street firms in opposing H.Res 106, underscoring instead the efficacy of the Turkish-American community's grassroots initiatives. A message from ATAA's President in August 2007 notes that the organization sent letters to Congress, along with books, brochures, and papers in order to educate them in various topics. One can assume that these materials included information denying Genocide claims and underscoring the importance of maintaining U.S.-Turkey relations. This message also included plans to expand the organization's grassroots efforts, signaling its realization that it had room to improve in that area.

As the FTAA's website is only available in the Turkish language, finding material related to H.Res 106 proved more difficult. However, the site also links to the TCA's action alert, again highlighting the cooperation between the three major organizations. The site also includes a letter (in the Turkish language) from the Turkish Consul General urging members to contact their representatives in order to voice opposition to H.Res 106 (Turk Amerikan Dernekleri Federasyonu, 2007). The letter includes a link to the TCA action alert. The only English-language material on FTAA's Web site during the period of the Resolution is a letter to Abraham Foxman, the Director of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), a prominent Jewish-American organization. Foxman had issued a statement that the actions of the Ottoman leadership in 1915 were "tantamount to genocide" (The Atlantic, 2007). As the ADL had previously assisted Turkey in opposing Genocide Recognition (Banerjee, 2007), this

statement resulted in a heavy backlash in the Turkish community, illustrated by the letter to Foxman from the Vice President of the FTAA. This letter also highlights the relationship between Turkish and Jewish-American organizations.

The three major Turkish-American organizations followed the same approach in opposing H.Res 106, with the TCA seemingly taking charge. Reports from these organizations emphasize the grassroots approach of their members, praising their ability to make an impact despite the small size of the Turkish-American community. While the sites of Turkish-American organizations emphasize the impact of ordinary Turkish-Americans in influencing lawmakers, the mainstream media largely neglects the existence of these organizations, highlighting instead the influence of professional lobbyists. None of the available materials of the organizations mentions K Street lobbying against the Resolution, perhaps giving members the impression that the only lobbying being carried out was that of the Turkish-American community.

### ***Strategies Utilized by K Street Lobbyists***

According to Justice Department records, K Street lobbying for Turkey was primarily carried out by three lobbying firms and two public relations firms. The lobbying firms were DLA Piper, for which former House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt was a senior counsel (Ota, 2007), The Livingston Group, headed by former Congressman Robert Livingston, and Solarz Associates, the firm of former Congressman Stephen Solarz. Public relations agencies Fleishman Hillard and the Glover Park Group focused their efforts on media coverage of the Resolution and U.S.-Turkish relations. The lobbying firms implemented a direct strategy in their efforts to prevent passage of H.Res 106. This primarily entailed meetings, calls, and emails with members of Congress and other government officials, as well as brokering meetings

between Turkish and American officials. The public relations firms focused on improving Turkey's image in the United States.

The Livingston Group helped Turkey fight against previous Genocide Resolutions, and was therefore not new to the scene. Robert Livingston personally released a video on the Capitol Hill Broadcasting Network urging Congress members against voting for the Resolution. He focused on the arguments of Turkey's role as a crucial regional ally and that claims of Genocide are overblown and neglect to tell the full story. Livingston echoed the argument that this was an issue for historians, and not legislators to decide (Bogardus & Snyder, 2007). FARA Records show that Livingston and other lobbyists in his firm made extensive contacts with members of Congress as well as other government agencies such as the State and Defense Departments. Aside from these meetings, it has been claimed that campaign donations from Livingston to certain lawmakers may have also helped influence their decisions (Thompson, 2007). The Livingston Group also cooperated with the TCA and the Turkish Caucus in order to host a reception honoring visiting Turkish Members of Parliament. Livingston and other lobbyists from his firm also accompanied the Turkish Ambassador to the United States, Nabi Sensoy, to several meetings with lawmakers. While full records of what was discussed at these meetings are not available, the documents refer to the discussion topics as revolving around H.Res 106 and the status of U.S.-Turkish relations (U.S. Department of Justice , 2007). The FARA records also list events attended by lobbyists, including one at the Brookings Institution think tank, where Livingston spoke with several State Department officials. Additionally, the firm held meetings both with Vice President Dick Cheney and an aide, highlighting the firm's high-level access (Thompson, 2007).

Lobbying records of Solarz Associates show similar tactics of meeting with and contacting lawmakers, many of whom held seats on HFAC at the time. The records also include letters written by Solarz to certain members of Congress, requesting to meet in order to provide information about H.Res 106 and how it was being perceived in Turkey (U.S. Department of Justice, 2007a). In these letters, Solarz mentions the potential impact of the Resolution on American war efforts in the region, again highlighting the primary argument against the Resolution.

Richard Gephardt, a former House Majority Leader who previously advocated for Armenian Genocide Recognition, lobbied on behalf of DLA Piper law firm. FARA Records for the firm include a services agreement, detailing the firm's responsibilities (U.S. Department of Justice , 2007a). These services included preventing any legislation that would harm Turkey's interests, working closely with Congress members who could assist Turkey in its goals, and finding events which Turkish Embassy personnel should attend. In addition, one of the services included acting as an informal advisor to Turkish-American organizations, again underscoring the interlinkage between the Turkish Government, K Street firms, and Turkish-American organizations. Like the lobbyists of The Livingston Group, DLA Piper lobbyists also sought and held several meetings with lawmakers and government officials. The firm was also responsible for distributing materials to lawmakers denying Genocide claims, such as a booklet entitled "Appeal to Reason" (Crowley, 2007).

Public relations firms Fleishman Hillard and the Glover Park Group were hired with the goal of enhancing Turkey's image in the United States and providing guidance in the realm of media relations. Turkey's hire of these public relations firms, and the aforementioned bulletin from the TCA accentuating the importance of positive press coverage, underscore the Turkish government's concern surrounding the public opinion

battle over Genocide Recognition. Fleishman Hillard's services listed in their agreement with the Turkish Government included advisement on U.S. media relations, acting as intermediaries between Turkish Embassy officials and the media, arranging interview opportunities for Turkish government officials, attending events pertaining to Turkey, and editing advertisements made by the Turkish Embassy (U.S. Department of Justice, 2007b). The Glover Park Group's services were largely the same (U.S. Department of Justice, 2007c). Notably, The Glover Park Group assisted the Turkish Government in creating a full-page advertisement published in a number of American newspapers on April 23, 2007, the day before Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day. The ad opposed H.Res 106, calling instead for a joint Turkish-Armenian commission of historians to determine the truth of what happened in 1915 (De Waal, 2015). This proposal, which Armenians have viewed with total distrust since its inception, had been continuously echoed by the Turkish Lobby throughout their campaign against H.Res 106. This ad was likely targeted more toward decision makers who read these newspapers as opposed to the general American public, and while the ad alone likely lacked the potency to influence the decisions of members of Congress, it reflects the degree to which lawmakers were inundated with arguments from the Turkish Lobby.

### ***Executive Branch Lobbying***

As previously mentioned, the Bush Administration was deeply involved in the Recognition battle, overtly warning Congress against forging ahead with a vote on the Resolution. The State and Defense Departments also vehemently objected to the Resolution's passage, citing likely diplomatic and security repercussions. As opposed to the Armenian Lobby, who focused their efforts on the Legislative Branch, the Turkish Lobby's strategy included appealing to the Executive Branch to lobby on its behalf as

well. While the Executive Branch was not the body actually voting on the Resolution, it exercised great influence in pressuring against its passage. In a newsletter released shortly after the Committee vote, The TCA cites pressure from the Administration, State, and Defense Departments as a factor contributing to the withdrawal of support of the Resolution, and therefore decreased likelihood of proceeding to a full floor vote (Turkish Coalition of America, 2007).

This pressure against H.Res 106 came all the way from the top, with President Bush specifically urging Congress against voting for it in a speech. In her 2011 memoir, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice recounts her efforts to lobby against the Resolution echoing the Turkish Lobby's trope of it being a matter for historians, not politicians, to decide (Rice, 2012). Throughout the battle of H.Res 106, The State Department also emphasized the importance of good relations with Turkey, and officially advised against the passage of the resolution. In a September 2007 speech at the Atlantic Council think tank, a State Department official praised the American-Turkish alliance, and stated that the Resolution's passage would jeopardize reconciliation efforts between Turkey and Armenia (Burns, 2007). One development in particular that reflected the magnitude of the battle was a public letter signed by eight previous Secretaries of State, warning of the damaging effect that the Resolution could have on US relations with Turkey (Congressional Record - House, 2007). The letter focuses on the concerns of the former secretaries that the Resolution would endanger Turkish-Armenian reconciliation efforts and pose a threat to U.S. troops in the region. It also mentions Turkey's role as an energy transit hub, and alternative to Russia and Iran. Aram Hamparian, Executive Director of the Armenian National Committee of America, claimed that Turkish lobbyists were responsible for enlisting the support of the former Secretaries in the form



of this letter (Armenian National Committee of America, 2007). However, no evidence was found to support this claim.

FARA records for The Livingston Group and DLA Piper throughout 2007 show that lobbyists held several meetings with officials from The State Department, Defense Department, and the National Security Council. The listed subjects of these meetings include U.S.-Turkey relations, and H.Res 106. DLA Piper's Services Agreement includes educating members of the Administration on issues regarding Turkey.

While Executive Branch Lobbying did not prevent the Resolution from passing the HFAC vote, it appeared to have played a key role in influencing public opinion, and sowing doubt as to whether it bringing the Resolution to a full floor vote was feasible. According to a Turkish analyst for Brookings, the lobbying of the Executive Branch helped to improve Turkish-American relations — elevating the Turkish public's perception of the Bush Administration and increasing its faith in decisionmakers (Taşpınar, 2008).

### ***Other Entities Involved in Lobbying***

The Turkish Government also enjoys the advantage of other interests — businesses, energy corporations, and defense contractors — lobbying on its behalf, due to their economic stakes in the country. OpenSecrets records reveal that Raytheon, United Technologies, PepsiCo, and CitiGroup lobbied against H.Res 106 (Center for Responsive Politics, n.d.). During the HFAC Markup of the Resolution, some of the members mentioned the potential damage its passage could inflict on American business interests in Turkey (Committee on Foreign Affairs, 2007). Therefore, it was Washington's best economic interests that H.Res 106 not pass.

Ankara also expected the Jewish Lobby to assist in lobbying against the Resolution, as it had traditionally in the past. Turkish officials reportedly pressured the

Israeli government to direct Jewish-American groups to lobby against the Resolution (Keinon, 2007). When the bill passed through the Committee vote, many Turks held the perception that American Jews were at fault since they had the ability to prevent it but did not exercise that power (Schleifer, 2007). Turkey's *Today's Zaman* newspaper even posted a poll after the HFAC vote asking readers who they thought bore the most responsibility for H.Res 106 passing through Committee. The options were: Turkey, The US administration, the Armenian diaspora, and Jews ("TODAY'S ZAMAN," 2007). Readers responded that Turkey shouldered the most responsibility, followed by Jews. Considering the extent to which the Armenian diaspora has been demonized in Turkey for their Genocide claims, this shift in public opinion reflects the schism that began to appear between Ankara and the Jewish Lobby in the United States. Despite this perception, some Jewish-American organizations did lobby against H.Res 106. For example, while Turkey was displeased with the Anti-Defamation League's acknowledgement of the 1915 massacres as Genocide, the ADL continued to oppose the passage of the Resolution (Schleifer, 2007). Norman Liss, a lobbyist of Jewish descent, also lobbied against H.Res 106 on behalf of the Turkish Embassy. Liss carried this out pro-bono. According to FARA records, Liss contacted Jewish-American organizations to discuss H.Res 106 (U.S. Department of Justice, 2007b).

Lastly, several think tank analyses regarding H.Res 106 opposed its passage, citing national security concerns and its potential to destabilize the region (Radu, 2007; Parris, 2007; Kempe, 2007; Cohen, Graham, & Murch, 2007). This again underscores the advantage enjoyed by the Turkish Lobby of the alignment of its agenda with that of influential foreign policy actors.

## ***Case II: House Resolution 252***

### ***Overview***

House Resolution 252, The Affirmation of The United States Record on the Armenian Genocide Resolution, was introduced in the House of Representatives in March 2009. The Resolution was identical to H.Res 106. While it did not generate the level of public controversy that H.Res 106 did, changed circumstances led the Armenian Lobby to be very confident at the prospects of recognition, which in turn caused a great deal of concern in Ankara that this Resolution had a real possibility of passing a House vote. A key factor that caused this perception was the new Administration. President Barack Obama, Vice President Joe Biden, and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had all formerly recognized the Armenian Genocide, and Obama had promised to recognize it officially if elected President (Associated Press, 2016). Therefore, as opposed to the Bush Administration's disposition toward Ankara's policy goals in regards to recognition, the Obama Administration did not display the same willingness to insert itself into the debate. This encouraged the Armenian Lobby, and concerned the Turkish Lobby (Knowlton, 2010a).

The House Foreign Affairs Committee voted in support of the Resolution 23-22 in March 2010. After this, the Obama Administration became more involved in attempts to prevent the Resolution from going to floor vote. However, the Administration's arguments were centered more around the Armenia-Turkey Normalization process than the Iraq War. Secretary of State Clinton spoke to Representative Howard Berman, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, the night before the vote. She warned that a yes vote would jeopardize the Normalization protocols, which the U.S. was helping to mediate. President Obama also told Turkish President Abdullah Gul that he did not want to see Normalization efforts endangered (Knowlton, 2010). This involvement of the Administration however, paled in comparison to that of the Bush Administration in the previous case. Turkey responded to the Committee's vote by recalling its ambassador.

The Armenian and Turkish Lobbies resumed their respective lobbying efforts throughout the year, but a full House vote never came to the floor.

This case provides a contrast to the previous one due to the number of contextual factors that appeared to weigh in the Armenian Lobby's favor. The most significant of these factors was the ongoing negotiations between Armenia and Turkey to normalize relations. The Turkish Lobby repeatedly emphasized that Genocide Recognition would completely derail any prospects for rapprochement. In addition, a changed Washington, with a new Administration and a larger Democratic majority in the House caused an air of insecurity to prevail over the Turkish Lobby (Knowlton, 2010a). The final factor that impacted expectations surrounding the Resolution was the deterioration of relations between Turkey and Israel, leaving the Turkish Lobby fearful that the Jewish Lobby would abandon it and instead support the Armenians (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2010). While this did not happen, the Jewish Lobby largely remained neutral in this debate, leaving some to doubt the prospects of the Turkish Lobby's success.

### ***Strategies Employed to Combat H.Res 252***

#### ***Strategies Utilized by Turkish-American Organizations***

Turkish-American organizations again carried out grassroots efforts as they had in their fight against H.Res 106. However, this time they added to their national interest argument, placing more emphasis on the concern that H.Res 252 would pose a significant threat to the normalization of relations between Armenia and Turkey. The TCA, ATAA, and FTAA again cooperated in their actions (Assembly of Turkish American Associations, 2010). ATAA President Gunay Evinch claimed that Turkish-Americans submitted over five thousand letters to lawmakers through this joint

campaign. He also noted that ATAA and FTAA representatives personally visited HFAC members in efforts to dissuade them from voting for the Resolution.

As for H.Res 106, The TCA also appeared to be the most active of the three main organizations in terms of lobbying efforts. The organization also appeared to take a more aggressive media approach this time. Its website included the section “TCA Raises Public Awareness on H.Res 252” with a list of articles that referenced the TCA, as well as editorials published by the organization and its President, Lincoln McCurdy (Turkish Coalition of America , 2010). In one particular editorial published in Florida newspaper, McCurdy specifically singles out Florida Representative Connie Mack, who sat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, for preparing to support the Resolution (McCurdy, 2010). He urges constituents to communicate their opposition to H.Res 252 to Mack. The representative later voted against the Resolution. The organization also placed an anti-H.Res 252 advertisement in *The Hill*, *Politico*, and *Roll Call* — publications all widely read by lawmakers and other government officials. The ad stated that the Armenian Lobby was effectively rejecting reconciliation, wishing instead to perpetuate conflict (Turkish Coalition of America, 2010).

TCA’s action alert to its members regarding H.Res 252 urges them to contact their representatives to voice their concerns. The alert also includes a list of talking points members can use (Turkish Coalition of America, 2010a). Notably, the first listed talking point is that there is no historical consensus that the events of 1915 constituted Genocide. Reconciliation is only briefly mentioned. The main talking point revolves around the assertion that H.Res 252 jeopardizes American national interests (Turkish Coalition of America , 2010c). The TCA touts the effectiveness of Turkish-American organizations, their members, and the Congressional Turkish Caucus in the decision not to bring H.Res 252 to the House floor (Turkish Coalition of America , 2010a).

However, as in the case of H.Res 106, the organization fails to acknowledge lobbying efforts carried out by K-street firms. Finally, the Turkish Coalition USA PAC continued efforts to raise funds for lawmakers friendly to Turkey. The PAC donated to the campaigns of several HFAC members during the 2010 election cycle (Center for Responsive Politics , 2013 ). While most of the amounts do not seem substantial enough to impact the decisions of lawmakers, it demonstrates that along with its close cooperation with the Turkish Caucus, the TCA has been working to cultivate close relationships with lawmakers and facilitate access to them.

The ATAA also appeared to have increased its grassroots and direct efforts since 2007. In a letter following the HFAC vote, the President of the organization refers to the ATAA Grassroots Turkish American Broad Advocacy Network for mobilizing the Turkish-American community to take political action (Assembly of Turkish American Associations, 2010b). In addition, the Media Watch and Response Committee was formed in order to encourage the Turkish-American community to organize and combat perceived anti-Turkish bias in the media (Assembly of Turkish American Associations, n.d.). Therefore, the organization took steps it viewed as necessary after it had previously referenced the importance of media attention in the H.Res 106 case. In addition to these new attempts at increasing grassroots support, ATAA's President Gunay Evinch penned letters to representatives as well as President Obama shortly after the HFAC vote, expressing his gratitude to those that voted no, disappointment with those who voted yes, and urging President Obama to apply pressure in order to prevent a full Congressional vote (Assembly of Turkish American Associations, 2010b).

As previously noted, as the majority of the FTAA's website is only available in the Turkish Language, it is more challenging to find primary information linked to the group's lobbying efforts. Their site does include an action alert link to TCA's site, again

demonstrating the partnership between the organizations. A joint letter from FTAA President Kaya Boztepe and ATAA President Gunay Evinch urges representatives against bringing H.Res 252 to a full floor vote (Assembly of Turkish American Associations , 2010). The letter includes a lesser-seen argument regarding Armenian arms sales to Iran, clearly intended to damage the reputation of Armenia. It appears as if the majority of FTAA's initiatives against H.Res 252 were coordinated with the other organizations, rather than taking any solo measures.

From the accounts of the three organizations, it appears as if they pursued a more aggressive grassroots approach in countering H.Res 252 than in the case of H.Res 106, and built upon the national interest argument, insisting their pursuit for peace and reconciliation.

### ***Strategies Utilized by K Street Lobbyists***

The majority of K Street lobbying on behalf of Turkey was carried out by Richard Gephardt's firm, Gephardt Group Government Affairs, LLC. The Gephardt Group also retained the services of other firms, including Dickstein Shapiro and Caspian Group LLC. Public relations firm Fleishman Hillard continued its work for the Turkish Government, retaining the assistance of another firm, 30 Point Strategies, LLC. As in the case of H.Res 106, the lobbying firms implemented a direct strategy, vigorously contacting members of both the Legislative and Executive branches in attempts to persuade them to vote against H.Res 252. The public relations firms again focused on image enhancement for Turkey in the United States as well as liaising with Jewish-American organizations, likely in attempts to salvage the relationship between the two lobbies.

Less mainstream media coverage of the activities of K Street firms is available than was for H.Res 106, however FARA records for the lobbying firms again show

extensive contacts with lawmakers, especially HFAC members. The records also show close cooperation with members of the Turkish Caucus, seemingly regarding “Dear Colleague” letters and letters to Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010; U.S. Department of Justice, 2011). As in the previous case, most of the meeting and call subjects are labeled under the category “U.S.- Turkish Relations,” (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010a) implying that the primary strategy of lobbyists was again to highlight the shared strategic interests of the two countries. Public relations firms again focused on media monitoring and recommendations to the Turkish Embassy on how to respond to media inquiries regarding the HFAC vote (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010b; U.S. Department of Justice , 2011b). The firms also attended several events at think tanks, again highlighting the Turkish Lobby’s cooperation with other entities with foreign policy influence. As previously mentioned, public relations firms were now tasked with salvaging relations with Jewish-American organizations, according to the description provided in the FARA records for 30 Point Strategies, LLC (U.S. Department of Justice, 2011b). This signals the unease of Ankara and the Turkish Lobby with what it perceived as diminished support from the Jewish Lobby.

While the available information suggests that Turkish-American organizations amplified their efforts in opposing Genocide Recognition, the strategies of professional lobbying firms appeared to remain largely the same. However, as in the case of H.Res 106, the extensive communications between K-Street firms, lawmakers, and members of the Executive branch illustrate the high degree to which Washington decision makers were inundated with appeals from influential figures to oppose H.Res 252.

### ***Executive Branch Lobbying***



As aforementioned, the Obama Administration remained largely removed from the battle over Genocide Recognition. HFAC Chairman, Rep. Howard Berman, did not receive any communication from the Administration until the night before the scheduled vote, when Secretary of State Hillary Clinton called him to warn that the Resolution posed a threat to the normalization of relations between Armenia and Turkey (Rozen, 2010). After the Committee vote, Clinton reportedly spoke with the Congressional leadership, voicing the administration's opposition to proceeding to the floor with the Resolution (Blua, 2010). Therefore, as opposed to the Bush Administration's intensive lobbying leading up to the HFAC vote on H.Res 106, the Obama Administration took a primarily reactive approach. As a result, legislators received less publicized pressure from the Executive Branch for this Resolution than in the case of H.Res 106.

### ***Other Entities Involved in Lobbying***

Like in the previous case, Turkey received the support of business interests in lobbying against H.Res 252. These interests included defense companies Northrop Grumman, Raytheon Co, BAE Systems, United Technologies, and Lockheed Martin as well as energy giant Exxon Mobil (Center for Responsive Politics , n.d.-b). While the extent of the lobbying carried out by these corporations is beyond the scope of this thesis, their involvement again illustrates Ankara's success in cultivating a wide body of support to lobby on behalf of its interests, the multifaceted nature of the Turkish Lobby, as well as American economic interests in Turkey that may have contributed to the prevention of Armenian Genocide Recognition.

Additionally, as a result of the tensions between Turkey and Israel noted previously, Jewish-American organizations did not actively support the Turkish Lobby as they had in the past (Krieger & Keinon , 2010; Lake 2010). However, information from FARA records reveals that the Turkish Embassy continued to seek the support of

the Jewish Lobby. It does not appear as if the Turkish Lobby received consequential assistance from Jewish-American organizations, however.

## **Assessing The Turkish Lobby's Impact on Armenian Genocide Recognition**

### ***Efficacy of Turkish-American Organizations***

From the available information, it appears that Turkish-American organizations played a supplementary role to K Street lobbyists in their lobbying activities. This corresponds with Hojnacki and Kimball's observation that direct lobbying is more common during the committee stage of legislation, while grassroots lobbying is carried out for the sake of organizational maintenance. Furthermore, as the lobby worked to maintain the status quo, the choice of using direct tactics over grassroots tactics aligns with Hojnacki and Kimball's assumption that this is typically preferable to bringing more public scrutiny to an issue. An assessment of the TCA, ATAA, and FTAA based on Paul and Paul's hypotheses for successful ethnic lobbying paints a clearer picture of where their strengths and weaknesses lie, and how this factored into their lobbying efforts.

#### 1. Size and dispersion of population

*- Ethnic communities that have large populations have greater influence in the foreign policy making process*

Since the Turkish-American community, with a population of approximately 350,000 is relatively small, it does not fulfill this hypothesis. An examination of ATAA's website throughout the time period of the Resolutions suggests that it realized this weakness, and took measures to make the Turkish

community appear larger. It partnered with the U.S. Census Bureau to count the number of inhabitants of Turkish origin, as well as those with origins of all Turkic ethnic groups (Assembly of Turkish American Associations , 2010a) in attempts to boost population statistics. In press releases regarding actions taken by members to oppose the Resolutions, the organizations routinely emphasize numbers of letters written, emails sent, and so forth, depicting the community as thriving. Therefore, it appears as if Turkish-American organizations work to create the perception that the Turkish community is larger than it really is.

- *Ethnic communities that are dissipated across a large number of congressional districts have greater influence in the foreign policy making process*

The Turkish-American community is not dissipated across a larger number of congressional districts, therefore also failing to fulfill this hypothesis. However, this does not appear to have been a major hindrance in their efforts due to the fact that the majority of the organizations' efforts were carried out via Internet, phone, mail, and fax. Paul also notes that ethnic communities concentrated in geographic areas tend to maintain their identities. Since the Turkish-American community is concentrated in certain areas, this seems to work to its advantage.

## 2. Saliency of Foreign Policy Issues to the Group

- *Ethnic groups that find foreign policy issues to be very salient have greater influence in the foreign policy process*

Paul's analysis of issue salience for ethnic groups from 2004-2007 finds that the two most salient foreign policy issues for Turkish groups were U.S.-Turkey relations and opposition to U.S. Recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

Based on the rhetoric found on the websites of the organizations, and the fact that the Armenian campaign for Genocide Recognition is one of the primary factors that resulted in mobilizing these groups to counteract these claims, the Turkish-American organizations find foreign policy issues, especially Genocide Recognition, to be very salient. The saliency of Armenian Genocide Recognition claims dramatically escalated following the spate of Armenian terrorist attacks on Turkish diplomats in the 1970s and 80s. This resulted in the creation of a counter-narrative to Genocide claims which were previously not spoken about in Turkey, and the designation of countering Genocide claims a top foreign policy priority in Ankara (De Waal, 2015). Therefore, the saliency of Armenian Genocide claims to the Turkish government appeared to have trickled down to Turkish-American organizations. The homepages of the websites of the FTAA, ATAA, and TCA throughout the period of the debate over the discussed resolutions are dominated by news surrounding H.Res 106 and H.Res 252, claims of Armenian violence and threats directed toward Turks, and posts highlighting certain scholars' repudiations of Genocide claims. Finally, Paul's claim that individuals are more motivated by losses than by gains could be applied to Turkish organizations, which highlight the demands of more radical Armenians for reparations and lost territory (Evinch, 2005). This likely works to instill a fear among members that Genocide Recognition could result in further threats to Turkey's sovereignty. Therefore, according to Paul's hypothesis, this high issue salience contributes to the influence of these Turkish groups.

- *The existence of an enemy of the ancestral homeland increases the influence of an ethnic group*

The Turkish-American organizations have the Armenians, Kurds, and Greeks as their enemies. A significant reason for the creation of these organizations was to defend themselves against attacks from these enemies, giving these groups a clear purpose and motivating factors with which to mobilize their members. The Turkish Lobby therefore fulfills this criterion.

- *The existence of a historical trauma increases the influence of an ethnic group*

Paul notes that the historical trauma of the Armenian Genocide increases the influence of Armenian groups, however Turkish groups claim traumas of their own. The organizations have frequently decried the failure of Recognition proponents to acknowledge the suffering and deaths of Ottoman Muslims, which they claim numbers to over 1.1 million (Assembly of Turkish American Associations , 2007a). The groups also regularly highlight the Armenian terrorist attacks on Turkish diplomats throughout the 1970s and 80s, adding to their sense of victimization. The Turkish Lobby therefore also seems to fulfill this criterion.

3. Resources

- *Ethnic groups with greater financial resources have more influence in the foreign policymaking process.*

Paul highlights the importance of financial resources due to the ability to contribute to campaigns and to fund permanent organizations. She notes that campaign contributions are important for influencing decision makers, and that permanent organizations are crucial for grassroots capabilities and facilitating group involvement in the policymaking process. In the U.S. Census table of 2005 median household income by ethnicity, the Turkish median is only slightly above the national average, but lower than other groups, including Armenians

and Greeks. The TCA appeared to have recognized the need to improve in this area when it established its own political action committee (PAC) in 2007. This PAC made donations to several members of the HFAC, most of whom voted against the Resolutions (Center for Responsive Politics, 2013). However, it is unlikely that the donations alone influenced the decisions of these lawmakers. Turkish-Americans reportedly lagged behind other ethnic lobbies in this respect due to their unfamiliarity with the American tradition of making financial contributions to political candidates, as it is not customary in Turkey (Soylu, 2015). However, the TCA took initiative to educate the Turkish-American community in order to improve in this area. Notably, contributions from ordinary Turkish-Americans only constitute a small part of the total resources at the Turkish Lobby's disposal. The bulk of Lobby's resources is provided by the Turkish government, which spends millions of dollars per year on the professional lobbying and public relations firms discussed in the cases. The Turkish Lobby has also enjoyed the resources of the business interests who lobbied on behalf of the discussed resolutions (Rosiak, 2009). While representatives of Turkish-American organizations have claimed that the Armenian Lobby has a major financial advantage over them (Taylor, 2007), they do not acknowledge the resources they enjoy thanks to the support of the Turkish Government. Therefore, the Turkish Lobby fulfills this criterion.

- *Ethnic groups that are represented by permanent organizations dedicated to foreign policy issues have greater influence in the foreign policymaking process.*

Paul explains that permanent organizations play a crucial role in lobbying, due to their ability to develop important relationships with policymakers. They are also instrumental in their ability to mobilize the ethnic

community to take grassroots action. As noted previously, Turkish-Americans have created a multitude of organizations in addition to the three discussed in this thesis. Paul notes the role that organizations play in educating their members on how to become politically involved. An examination of the websites of the discussed organizations during the time period of the discussed resolutions reveals their efforts to increase political involvement of their members. While it is difficult to assess the actual level of influence the Turkish side had in the process thanks to the efforts of these organizations, they may help to create a more balanced perception of the lobbying battle so that it is one between two diaspora groups as opposed to a battle between one diaspora group and multiple high-priced lobbying firms. The Turkish Lobby therefore fulfills this criterion.

#### 4. Assimilation into American Society

- *Ethnic groups that have assimilated into society, but which still maintain ethnic connections, have more influence in the foreign policy-making process.*

Paul explains the delicate balance of this factor, in that assimilation is necessary for the effective political participation of groups but if a group has assimilated too much, members risk losing scope of their identity and thus their incentive to mobilize on behalf of group interests. Paul notes that newer immigrant groups are likely to be less assimilated, and that those that speak a language other than English at home are more likely to maintain ethnic connections. Based on 2005 Census data, 52.4% of Turkish-Americans are foreign-born, and 57.2% speak a language other than English at home. Based on this measurement, Turkish-Americans seem to be slightly less assimilated than Armenian-Americans, of which 42.72% are foreign born. The percentage of those who speak a language other than English at home indicates that they still

maintain ethnic connections. As noted previously, the FTAA website is only available in the Turkish language, and a significant amount of material on the ATAA website is also in the Turkish language, indicating the strength of the Turkish-American attachment to their homeland. Throughout the time period of the Resolutions, much of the available updates on the ATAA site are in the Turkish language. Paul claims another way to assess assimilation is to examine the involvement of groups in the political process. Voter turnout rates, contacts between group members and lawmakers, and the number of group members running for public office are all indications of political involvement. While this specific data could not be found for Turkish-Americans, reports from the organizations throughout the time period of the House Resolutions emphasize the high degree of contact between Turkish-Americans and members of Congress in order to persuade them against voting for the Resolution. The website of the Turkish Coalition USA PAC has a “Political Spotlight” section of Turkish elected and appointed officials, however the numbers do not appear to be especially significant (Turkish Coalition USA Political Action Committee, n.d.-b). Turkish-Americans appear to have taken strides to increase their assimilation, while still maintaining ethnic connections, fulfilling this criterion.

5. Degree to Which Goals Attempt to Alter the Status Quo

- *Ethnic groups that are protecting established policies will have more influence in the foreign policy-making process.*

Paul asserts that the groups seeking to protect the status quo have an advantage over those trying to change it, since the nature of the policymaking process presents more opportunities to prevent changes to established policies. As there are a number of obstacles new legislation has to clear before



ratification, the Armenian Lobby faced a disadvantage in this respect. While both Resolutions passed the HFAC vote, full floor votes were never scheduled, which Paul notes is a common occurrence. As the Turkish Lobby protects the current U.S. Policy of non-Recognition, they enjoy a major advantage in this regards, and fulfill this criterion.

The fact that the status quo was also the policy purported to advance U.S. national interests also worked to the Turkish Lobby's advantage. The lobby clearly seized upon this, repeatedly arguing that Genocide Recognition would pose a threat to the interests of both countries.

### ***Role of Turkish-American Organizations***

Based on the above assessment, the Turkish-American organizations' strengths lie in issue saliency, resources, and alignment of their goals with the status quo. Their major weakness lie in population size, while they seem to be improving in the factor of assimilation. It appears as if the organizations' strong suits contributed to their success in opposing the discussed Genocide Resolutions. The saliency of Armenian Genocide Recognition and the potential negative effects it would create throughout Turkish society assisted the group leadership with mobilizing its members to voice their opposition to it. The resources provided by the Turkish government have allowed the organizations to prosper and foster political action. The fact that the organizations were striving to maintain the current policy of non-Recognition gave them a significant advantage over the Armenian organizations seeking to change it.

As previously stated, it is not possible to isolate the efforts of the Turkish-American organizations from professional lobbyists who campaigned against the Armenian Genocide Resolutions in order to determine their efficacy alone. However, from the available information it appears as if the organizations, primarily the TCA,

actively lobbied against the measures. While the organizations touted the influence of their grassroots support, it is difficult to get a true measure of the nature of this facet of these lobbies, as the only information available is from the organizations themselves and other Turkish media, which would clearly benefit from creating the perception of a high degree of grassroots support. Of the three organizations discussed, the TCA appeared to have been the most active and effective. The fact that the ATAA and FTAA websites often directed their members to TCA action alerts demonstrates the group's leadership role, as well as the high degree of cooperation amongst the organizations.

### ***Role of Professional Lobbying Firms***

The role of professional lobbying firms differed than that of Turkish-American organizations, as they focused on directly influencing members of Congress and the Executive branch, rather than mobilizing public support. Media reports on the lobbying involved in the Resolutions tend to focus on the battle between Armenian diaspora organizations and hired K Street firms, thus overlooking the involvement of Turkish-American organizations. As the K Street firms were also tasked with advising Turkish-American organizations, it appears that Ankara placed a great deal of trust in their political prowess. The numerous contacts that K Street lobbyists made with Congress members (especially those in HFAC), as well as officials in the White House, State Department, and Defense Department likely contributed to the decisions of lawmakers not to bring Resolutions 106 and 252 to the House floor for a full vote. Evidence of K Street influence is on display in the markups for both H.Res 106 and H.Res 252. Although both passed the committee vote, the remarks of the members who voted no echo the arguments propagated by these firms, as well as Turkish-American organizations. The wide network of connections enjoyed by the lobbyists, not only on Capitol Hill but throughout the Executive branch, also appears to have played a role in

facilitating access to and cooperation from Washington decisionmakers. Armenian lobbyists argued that Recognition would help to uphold the leadership role of the United States, especially in regards to human rights. Turkish lobbyists made sure to emphasize the tangible losses that Recognition would bring, namely militarily and economically, providing those voting against the Resolutions with the justification of protecting America's national interests.

### ***The Turkish Lobby in Perspective***

The findings regarding the Turkish Lobby's strategies and characteristics share similarities with case studies conducted on other ethnic lobbies. The main difference, however, is the fact that the Turkish Lobby is composed not only of diaspora organizations, but also of firms hired to lobby directly for Ankara, distinguishing it from the other ethnic lobbies commonly studied.

Considering that one of the primary reasons behind the Turkish Lobby's formation was to provide a foil to the Armenian Lobby, highlighting how this study relates to those on the Armenian Lobby provides another lens through which to view the Turkish Lobby's efficacy. Heather Gregg attributes the success of the Armenian Lobby to the hypermobilization of group resources — the result of the split of the Armenian community into two primary bodies, with organizations representing each resulting in heightened activity — and alliance building with Congress and other lobby groups (2002). Gregg also notes that the Armenian Lobby has been quite successful despite the small size of the community and lack of significant impact in elections, emphasizing that other factors can compensate for deficiencies in group characteristics. Paul's article on the Armenian Lobby focuses on the leadership's utilization of historical trauma (Genocide) and religion in order to mobilize group members. While the Armenian Lobby has succeeded in many of its goals, it clearly has not in succeeded in its goal of

Genocide Recognition. Like the Armenian Lobby, the Turkish Lobby has benefited from resources and alliance building. However, the resources are largely derived from the Turkish Government, and alliance-building is focused on the executive branch, business interests, and think tanks in addition to influential figures within Congress. In the case of Genocide Recognition, where Ankara has consistently threatened a drastic response, the Turkish Lobby's warnings regarding the stability of the Turkish-American alliance and ties with influential foreign policy decision makers outweigh the passionate moral appeals of the Armenian diaspora.

Haney and Vanderbush's study on the Cuban Lobby focuses on the mutually beneficial relationship the Lobby shared with the executive branch, and how the American government utilized the Cuban Lobby to further its own foreign policy goals (1999). Therefore, in addition to the fact that the Cuban Lobby was well-organized, the support it received from the Administration was instrumental to its policy success. While Washington was not responsible for the creation of the Turkish Lobby, influential figures in the Departments of State and Defense have interests in maintaining good relations with Ankara, and have therefore developed close ties with figures in the Turkish Lobby. Therefore, like the Cuban Lobby, the Turkish Lobby's success in lobbying against Genocide Recognition is can be partly attributed to shared goals with the U.S. Government.

Mearsheimer and Walt's study of the Jewish Lobby centers around its primary strategies of influencing U.S. policy toward Israel. These strategies are pressuring Congress and the Executive Branch, and ensuring positive public discourse regarding Israel. The Turkish Lobby also pressures Congress and the Executive Branch to support Turkey, and attempts to ensure positive public discourse regarding Turkey. The public relations firms have been tasked with this, and the comments of members of Congress

during the HFAC markups reflected the efforts to portray Turkey as a steadfast ally and model democracy for the region.

As stated previously, this study is an addition to existing case studies of other ethnic lobbies. The Turkish Lobby shares many similarities to the other ethnic lobbies studied, which is unsurprising due to the fact that the Jewish Lobby provided it with organizational assistance, and the Armenian Lobby was its primary rival along with the Greek Lobby. Like the Cuban Lobby, the Turkish Lobby has benefited greatly from the support of US Government officials due to shared foreign policy goals. Unlike these other lobbies, however, the Turkish Lobby enjoys the advantage of being composed of both diaspora organizations and professional lobbyists who enjoy a great deal of access to key decision makers.

### ***Alternative Considerations***

It appears as if the Turkish Lobby was successful in influencing some lawmakers to oppose House Resolutions 106 and 252. However, since a variety of factors were at play, it is not possible to definitively prove this with the information available. The fact that the agenda of the executive branch aligned with that of the Turkish Lobby in both cases obscures the question of who the real force was behind the failure of both Resolutions to be brought to a full floor vote despite passing the HFAC vote. It was likely a combination factors, rather than just one.

While the Turkish media and leadership of the Turkish-American organizations touted the active involvement of the Turkish community, especially in relation to H.Res 252, others claimed that the matter had already been decided by the executive branch and Congressional leadership, and the Resolutions had no chance of making it to a floor vote despite the outcomes of the HFAC votes (Tanir, 2010). For these reasons, this

thesis focuses on the characteristics and actions of the Turkish Lobby, rather than attempting to measure its degree of influence.

### ***Limitations of Study***

One limiting factor in answering the research question of what the strengths and weaknesses of the the Turkish Lobby are, based on the Paul's criteria was the difficulty of determining the objectivity of some of the material used. Most of the mainstream media focused only on K Street firms as opposed to Turkish American organizations, and tended to minimize their involvement. On the other hand, Turkish and Armenian organization websites and media often used hyperbolic language, often making it difficult to assess the realities of the cases.

Another limiting factor in this study was the difficulty of finding materials relating to the Turkish Lobby. Many links supposedly containing information about Turkish-American organizations were broken or removed. Some materials and sites that were previously accessible, shut down in the process of writing this thesis. However, the digital Internet archive, The Wayback Machine, was a useful tool for capturing some information that is no longer available online, especially in relation to the Turkish-American organization websites.

In regards to the FARA records used for discussing the activity of K-street lobbyists, detailed information regarding what exactly lobbyists discussed with members of Congress and Executive officials was lacking, rendering it more difficult to determine what tactics were used to persuade officials to oppose Armenian Genocide Recognition. However, some accounts and interviews from mainstream media supplemented this.

### ***Suggestions for Further Research***

This thesis provided a brief overview of the Turkish Lobby's strategy of building alliances in order to generate more support for its agenda. While the alliance between the Turkish and Jewish Lobbies has been covered extensively in other works, other alliances have been less explored. Further research on how the Turkish Lobby cultivates relationships and procures assistance from business interests and think tanks could shed more light on its abilities to influence foreign policy, and more generally how other ethnic lobbies focus on alliance-building as a strategy to influence policy. Further investigation into the influence of foreign lobbying — professional firms hired by foreign governments — may also yield interesting observations in regards to ethnic lobbies and foreign influence.

## **Conclusion**

The findings from the cases of House Resolutions 106 and 252 illustrate that Turkey takes a multipronged approach in its efforts to prevent Armenian Genocide Recognition. It supplements its direct lobbying efforts — carried out primarily by K Street firms — with grassroots efforts carried out by Turkish-American organizations. Since its inception, the Lobby has also focused on cultivating alliances with influential actors in the foreign policy field. Its focus on lobbying the Executive Branch in addition to the Legislative Branch distinguishes it from the Armenian Lobby, which primarily focuses on the grassroots lobbying of Congress members. Furthermore, the Turkish Lobby has become adept at framing the issue of Genocide Recognition as a matter of U.S. National Security, emphasizing the mutual interests shared by Ankara and Washington in maintaining the status quo of non-recognition. The fact that the U.S. was embroiled in two wars in the region during the debate over the resolutions seemed to amplify the Turkish Lobby's national interest-centered arguments. The Turkish Lobby also instrumentalized the normalization process between Turkey and Armenia, insisting

upon Turkey's willingness to address the allegations, just not in front of the United States Government.

The lobbying carried out against Genocide Recognition also served to provide more insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the Turkish Lobby, according to criteria believed necessary for ethnic lobbying success. The cases revealed that the Turkish Lobby holds the advantage of advocating for the maintenance of the status quo — non-Recognition. The Turkish Lobby therefore has faced fewer obstacles than the Armenian Lobby in this respect. The Lobby is also proficient in resources. While financial contributions from the Turkish-American community do not appear to be substantial enough to severely impact the Lobby's influence, it enjoys significant financial backing from the Turkish Government, as well as the support of corporate interests. Not only has this backing allowed for the organizations discussed to prosper, but it has allowed for the hire of professional lobbying and public relations firms, which constitute part of the Lobby and supplement the efforts of the Turkish-American organizations. The Turkish Lobby also fulfills the criterion of issue salience, as Genocide Recognition has resulted in the mobilization of Turkish-American organizations who oppose it. The leadership of the organizations emphasized that Turks were also victims of suffering, both as a result of violence during the Ottoman Empire, and as a result of Armenian terrorist attacks inflicted on Turkish diplomats in the 1970s and 1980s. In terms of assimilation, the Turkish Lobby's savviness in operating within the American political system seems to be increasing thanks to educational initiatives undertaken by Turkish-American organizations. While the Turkish-American population is rather small, the Lobby has also worked on increasing ties with other Turkic groups in order to bolster support.



Finally, this study underscores the complex nature of American policymaking and the various influences behind it. Although Turkish and Armenian diaspora organizations maintain relationships with their respective home governments, both can be considered domestic actors. The hire of professional lobbyists by a foreign government, however, illustrates the extent to which domestic and international politics are intertwined in the United States. With the topic of foreign influence currently at the center of intense debate in American politics, the study of ethnic lobbying continues to carry relevance and would benefit from further research.

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