IDENTITY CONFLICTS?
THE SENSE OF 'VICTIMHOOD' AND THE ENEMY IMAGES OF TURKEY AND AZERBAIJAN IN THE FOREIGN POLICY DISCOURSE OF ARMENIA[1]

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Abstract

Students of Armenia's foreign policy have broadly treated the troubled relations with neighboring Azerbaijan and Turkey as an unsurprising consequence of the long-standing Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. It is taken for granted that the volatile geopolitics of the South Caucasus region is the core rationale behind the perpetual confrontations and hostilities (Melander, 2001; Shaffer, 2009).
However, this line of thinking tends to overlook the ideational landscape of the turbulence . This article argues that modern Armenia's political identity has been characterized by an acute sense of 'victimhood' arising from the memory of the Armenian Genocide, and that Turkey plays an important role as an 'Other', which enhances Armenia's self-image as a 'victim'. It suggests that negative images of Turkey and its ally Azerbaijan are deeply embedded, rather than being a product of manipulation. Yet the ruling elite has consistently appealed to the enemy images in attempts to assert Armenia's 'victimhood', divert attention from complex problems and legitimate its power by presenting country's plight as 'structurally inevitable' in its 'dog-eat-dog' neighborhood. Furthermore, it argues that Armenia's self-image of a 'victim' has significantly affected the treatment of Russia as an indispensable security ally.

KEY WORDS: 'Self'-'Other'; Armenian-Turkish, Armenian-Azerbaijani relations; Victim; Enemy.

INTRODUCTION

On 1 March 2018 the Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan declared the Armenian-Turkish protocols aimed at normalizing bilateral relations null and void. This decision once again put in the spotlight the long-standing logjam on troubled Armenian-Turkish relations, fraught with bitter memories of the past.

Received wisdom posits that it would be a futile attempt to understand the Armenian identity and collective memory without situating the Genocide at its very centre. Given the fatal scar that the Genocide has left on Armenian population, "Turkey" appears to represent everything that opposed the essence

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of "Armenia" in Armenian collective memory (Mirzoyan, 2010, pp. 57-58). This provokes an inquiry into the historical enmities and 'hereditary enemy states' conceptualized as 'dyads that share painful historical events in the past, which left scars either at one side or both of populations; still reflect hostile public mood toward each other deeply ingrained at the present; and express collective fear or distrust projected into the future' (Heo, 2012, p. 37).

The enemy image of Turkey has further reinforced due to its solidarity with Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, vividly manifested in the blockade imposed on Armenia. Essentially, there has been a growing tendency in Armenian foreign policy discourse to transfer the menacing reputation of the Ottoman Empire to modern Turkey. By raising the issue of the Genocide recognition in 1998, the Armenian leadership further put the country on a collision course with the historical foe.

Moreover, Turkey's close cultural, linguistic, religious, as well as political and economic ties with Azerbaijan, reinforce the perception of 'one state two nations', thus engendering a common enemy image. Overall, Armenia's acute feelings of victimization appear to persist to this very day.

This article contends that the Armenia's sense of 'victimhood' has significantly affected its treatment of the core 'perpetrator' Turkey and its ally Azerbaijan.

It moves beyond the overly elite-centric approaches which have characterized several works on Armenian-Turkish relations (Giragosian, 2009; Ghaplanyan, 2017). It gives a broader view of how Turkey is 'Othered', which is important in furthering our understanding of Armenia, where foreign policy decision making increasingly has to consider broader popular sentiments of the large and influential Armenian Diaspora – largely comprised of Genocide survivor bloodlines. Scattered in many countries most notably France and the United States, has played a critical role in maintaining the memory of the Genocide and moving it to the highest possible foreign policy agenda of Armenia.

Remarkably, there has been a growing tendency among IR scholars to treat diaspora as a unit of analysis in the field of international relations, with a special focus on the extent of diasporic influence on homeland foreign policy. Shain and Barth suggest that diasporic influences can best be understood by situating them in the 'theoretical space' shared by constructivism and liberalism; two approaches that acknowledge the impact of identity and domestic politics on international behavior. Essentially, diasporas' identity-based motivations should be an integral part of the constructivist effort to explain the formation of national identities (Shain and Barth, 2003). Sheffer distinguishes between "transnational communities" and "ethnonational-religious diasporas". He argues that while the identities, goals, and activities of transnational communities are diverse

and subject to change, especially due to their members' assimilation into host societies, ethno-nationalreligious diasporas are robustly attached to national homelands and, thus avoid aspects of assimilation that might negatively affect either their identities or their engagement with homeland politics (Sheffer, 2006). Rather, ethno-national-religious diasporas seek to deepen the unity of their ethnic and national identifications with their homelands' borders and politics (DeWind and Segura, 2014, pp. 11-13) . Essentially, this is the core rationale behind diasporas'desire to influence homeland domestic politics and foreign policy. No wonder diasporas are often involved in ethnic or international conflict either by promoting conflict resolution or by fuelling it.

Admittedly, the Armenian Diaspora's sensitivity to the Genocide and and more specifically its penchant for upholding the enemy image of Turkey puts dire constraints on Armenia's political leadership. This came to the foreground when in their attempts to normalize the troubled relations with Turkey, both the first and the third presidents confronted huge public opposition. Levon Ter-Petrosyan gained notoriety for his 'pro-Turkish' policy, while the sheer pressure of particularly the Armenian Diaspora forced Serzh Sargsyan to make certain revisions. It follows that the enemy image of Turkey is deeply embedded, rather than being a product of manipulation .

Yet the ruling elite has consistently appealed to the enemy images in attempts to assert Armenia's 'victimhood', divert attention from complex problems and legitimate its power by presenting country's plight as 'structurally inevitable' in its 'dog-eat-dog' neighborhood.

Moreover, Armenia's self-perception of a 'small victim' in the face of Turkish - Azerbaijani hostilities has in many ways affected the treatment of Russia as an indispensable security ally.

This study relies on observations from political speeches, newspaper articles, official documents and interviews which provide a body of discourse. It places a special focus on the core political speeches of former Armenian Presidents, pertaining to their conceptions of self-enemy dichotomies and the prevailing characteristics of the enemy images of Turkey and Azerbaijan from 1991 to 2017.

Van Leeuwen offeres several techniques that social actors can use in their speech such as: exclusion, inclusion, suppression, thematization, activation, passiviation, personalization, depersonalization, determination and indetermination, association and dissociation, differentiation and indifferentiation, beneficiation, backgrounding, abstraction, generalization, subjection (Van Leeuwen, 2008). Van Leeuwen's theory on the representation of social actors via language establishes the "sociosemantic inventory" of the ways in which social actors are represented. Inclusion and exclusion are the

fundamental categories, from which other subcategories derive (Van Leeuwen, 2008, pp. 23-53). The use of these techniques in political leaders' speeches is quite indicative of their treatment of 'the Other' within the core inclusion – exclusion dichotomy.

Essentially, first President Ter-Petrosyan's discourse tended to chiefly rely on the technique of inclusion given his emphasis on common interests with enemies and the necessity of moving beyond historical controversies. By contrast, his successor Robert Kocharyan made extensive use of exclusion, by raising the issue of Genocide recognition and framing Turkey as historical foe. Moreover, he excluded the possibility of peaceful co-existence with Azerbaijan and developed the narrative of 'ethnic incompatibility' (Azatutyun, 2003). At the outset of his presidency, third president Sargsyan tended to use the technique of inclusion, given his focus on common interests with the foes and Armenia's resolve to break the logjam on troubled relations. Yet, in later stages of his presidency and especially in the wake of failed rapprochement with Turkey Sargsyan resorted to the technique of exclusion. More specifically, he transferred the menacing reputation of the Ottoman Empire to modern Turkey and framed the latter as well as its ally Azerbaijan as irreversibly hostile, belligerent and exceedingly dangerous.

Overall, this study borrows insights from critical discourse analysis to explore how the Armenian policy makers use narratives to construct the enemy images.

1 THE ROLE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE ENEMY IMAGE AND THE RELEVANCE OF THE ARMENIAN CASE

Constructivist and poststructuralist-driven studies presume that the portrayal of enemy images is an integral part of identity construction, and an actor's sense of self is unclear and incomplete until the otherness is defined (Tamaki, 2010, p. 29). Thus, the enemy images become crucial ciriteria for defining the self, as well as securing the national boundaries by the representation of danger (Campbell, 1998, p. 11). In a similar fashion, Bo Petersson notes that negative stereotypes and enemy images are highly instrumental in upholding the borderlines that help collectives of people to establish and define their group identities (Petersson, 2006, p. 31).

Some works specifically look at the various social and political functions that enemy images may fulfill. Middens notes that 'the threat of enemies justifies actions that might otherwise be unacceptable or illegal… Enemies serve as a focus for aggression and as a means of diverting attention from complex and pressing internal problems or domestic conflicts'(Middens, 1990).

Overall, one of the most frequently observed functions of the enemy images is the potential to mobilize for or against a particular idea or a specific group. Indeed, the mobilizing power of the exceedingly dangerous enemies and ensuing acute threats would potentially have some legitimizing and justifying effects on governments' even most disputed and unpopular policies.

The "rhetoric of insecurity" suggested by Cambell seems to accurately capture the basic functions of the enemy images. According to this rhetoric, the state policies are legitimized through the attempt to instill notions of insecurity (Campbell, 1998).

To trigger the emotions of fear, the enemy must be portrayed as barbaric, cruel, uncivilized, immoral, treacherous and threatening. In effect, enemy images and related stereotypes are characterized by the claim that the enemy has aggressive and evil intentions and is led by a centralized and monolithic leadership that would be capable of carrying out intricate conspiracies (Hermann, 2003).

The Armenian case is significant for several reasons. It is the only European country subjected to double blockade by its neighboring Azerbaijan and Turkey. The arms race with Azerbaijan has rendered Armenia one of the most militarized countries in Europe and led to the securitization in the military sector. Notwithstanding the crippling constraints confronting the country, the Armenian leadership has ruled out the possibility of concessions regarding fiercely contested status of Nagorno-Karabakh. Besides, as noted earlier given the fatal scar that the Genocide has left on Armenian population, Turkey is unequivocally perceived as a perpetrator and historical foe in the Armenian collective memory. Meanwhile, the Armenian ruling elite is bound by the new generation of Genocode survivor bloodlines – constituting the Armenian Diaspora and consistently upholding the enemy image of Turkey.

Overall, the Diaspora's mounting influence on Armenia, as well as its sensitivity to Armenian-Turkish relations put dire constraints on Armenia'c policy towards Turkey.

Meanwhile, well acknowledging the deep-seated enemy image, the Armenian policy makers tend to refrain from overstepping the red lines. Rather, they have consistently strived to attribute country's plight to the hostile policies of belligerent and bellicose neighbors. Thus the ruling elite has fed the narrative of the victimized country, bound to acute enmities and threats.

Last but not least, the enemy images of Azerbaijan and Turkey have provided a fertile ground for treating Russia as a 'savior' with its security alliance with Armenia deemed to be a viable counterweight to the enemies. This sentiment is not novel. Rather, it has been deeply ingrained in Armenian political thinking.

Strikingly, shortly after the collapse of the first Armenian Republic and its Sovietization in 1921, one of the prominent leaders of its government, Hovhannes Kajaznuni noted: "From the first day of our statehood we well acknowledged that such a small, poor, deprived, and isolated country as Armenia cannot become truly independent and autonomous … We should be grateful to bolsheviks. By deposing us, they - if not saved—have put on a reliable path …." (Mirzoyan, 2010, pp. 23-24).

A century later, the perception of Russia in Armenian political thinking as 'helpless' Armenia's 'protector' in the face of Turkish hostilities, has largely remained intact (Terzyan, 2017, p. 193).

A question arises of how self-other dichotomy has evolved since the break-up of the Soviet Union, and what core shapes the enemy images have taken over time.

2 THE EVOLUTION OF THE ENEMY IMAGES FROM 1991 TO 2008: FIRST PRESIDENT'S PRAGMATISM VS. HIS SUCCESSOR'S POPULISM AND ASSERTIVENESS

Armenia's deep-rooted feeling of victimization, and Turkey's perception as the core perpetrator have been steadily reinforced since the break-up of the Soviet Union and immensely owing to the eruption of the Nagorno - Karabakh conflict. The latter induced Azerbaijan and Turkey to impose a crippling blockade on Armenia, fraught with a series of hardships that such a plight can inflict on a country. Notably, the Armenian society became increasingly resentful towards the historical foe Turkey and its ally Azerbaijan. Nevertheless, during his presidency from 1991 to 1998 and especially in mid 1990s the first Armenian President L. Ter-Petrosyan strived to prevent the furthering of particularly anti-Turkish attitudes in Armenian public consciousness, and most importantly dispel the victim-perpetrator narrative.

In his words, the challenges facing the country pushed historical conflicts to the background, and moved the economic and political benefits of cooperation with both Azerbaijan and Turkey to the forefront. Moreover, he fundamentally reframed the portrayal of Azerbaijan and Turkey, which shifted from historical enemies to Armenia's 'most natural allies' (Ter-Petrosyan, 2006, pp. 553-554).

Essentially, in an attempt to heal the rifts with the neighbors, the Armenian ruling elite gradually embarked on replacing the nationalistic sentiments with a new - neutral and civic identity. The transformation of Turkey's image and Armenian-Turkish rapprochement was placed at the core of this policy.

"We always remember historical conflicts but, guided by our country's realistic interests, we must overcome our pain and establish normal interstate relations… " (p. 300).

The analysis of Ter-Petrosyan's foreign policy speeches prompts to presume that he attached negligible importance to the identity in Armenia's foreign policy, and prioritized pragmatic political and economic considerations. Essentially, Ter-Petrosyan saw identity and collective memory as detrimental to country's development, and thus sought to inject the Armenian political thinking with rationalism and pragmatism (Terzyan, 2016a, p. 149).

It is for these reasons that Ter-Petrosyan's administration did not put the issue of the Genocide recognition on the foreign policy agenda, given its possible repercussions for Armenian-Turkish relations.

The Armenian President's discourse suggests that the troubled relations with the neighbors and particularly the economic blockade would inevitably militate against the development of independent statehood and plunge Armenia into the orbit of the Russian influence (Terzyan, 2018, p. 239).

He invariably noted that the country could not overcome the political and economic hardships as long as it would be blinded by the animosity towards Azerbaijan and Turkey, dismissing the tremendous benefits of regional cooperation and potential alliance building (Ter-Petrosyan, 2006, p. 48).

Thus, Ter-Petrosyan avoided taking a tough position on Azerbaijan and put a pronounced focus on rapid conflict resolution.

Remarkably, in order to lay ground for a constructive dialogue with Azerbaijan, he went as far as to reframe the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and define it as a Kremlin-led conspiracy against the two nations: " …the conflict itself has been artificially incited and retained by colonial nation [Russia]. Without the Kremlin's interference, Armenia and Azerbaijan would find a common language" (p. 197). Moreover, he regarded the conflict as the principal cause of Armenia's plight, and contended that it would be misleading and self-destructive to treat Azerbaijan as enemy (p. 630).

Overall, by redefining the enemy images, the Ter-Petrosyan-led elite aimed at breaking down the barriers of fear and mistrust triggered by the enemy images of Turkey and Azerbaijan. These would prepare ground for remedying the long-standing controversies, compounded by the collective memory of the enemy images (Terzyan, 2016a, pp. 147-148). Nevertheless, his efforts at reframing the enemy images of Azerbaijan and Turkey in Armenian strategic thinking and reconciling the collective memory with economic considerations proved futile.

Ter-Petrosyan's peace propaganda did not resonate with the Armenian political elite and post-war Armenian society. Moreover, his pronounced emphasis on

inevitability of concessions in Nagorno Karabakh conflict gained him notoriety. The leadership of Nagorno- Karabakh, along with that of Armenia's armed forces, as well as media, opposition and diaspora organizations fiercely condemned his pro-Turkish and pro- Azerbaijani stances (Terzyan, 2016a, p. 165). Ultimately, he resigned in 1998 and succeeded by one of the prominent leaders of Karabakh war and the disputed entity's first president Robert Kocharyan .

Ter-Petrosyan-led elite's benevolence towards Azerbaijan and Turkey markedly declined throughout Robert Kocharyan's presidency from 1998 to 2008.

From the outset of his presidency Kocharyan explicitly distanced himself from his predecessor and adopted much tougher stances on historical foes. Notably, determined to 'bring Turkey to justice' he raised the issue of Genocide recognition from the UN podium in September 1998, noting that Armenia would no longer fade it into oblivion (Asbarez, 2001).

As a typical authoritarian leader he would have powerful incentives to have external enemies given that the threat of enemies would justify actions that might otherwise be unacceptable, and divert attention from complex and pressing internal problems (Midens, 1990). Overall, one of the most frequently observed functions of the enemy images is the potential to mobilize for or against a particular idea or a specific group. Indeed, the mobilizing power of the exceedingly dangerous enemies and ensuing acute threats would potentially have some legitimizing and justifying effects on governments' even most disputed and unpopular policies. The enemy images of Azerbaijan and Turkey became increasingly savage in the Kocharyan-led discourse broadly regarded as irremediably aggressive, belligerent, and even morally inferior (Kocharyan, 2011).

As a prominent leader of the Nagorno-Karabakh war and a politician whose political capital increased significantly owing to his unwavering opposition to Ter-Petrosyan's discourse on concessions, Kocharyan would avoid steps that would potentially damage his hardliner reputation. Moreover, his backers – the Armenian army, the nationalist party 'Dashnaktsutyun' as well as nationalist voters would keep him from following Ter-Petrosyan's path (Aberg and Terzyan, 2018, pp. 162-163). Not surprisingly, Kocharyan tended to treat the Nagorno - Karabakh conflict as a red-line issue and consistently denied the possibility of concessions with regard to the 'independent' status of the disputed territory (Kocharyan, 2011).

The securitizaion of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict may explain why he signed up to the Russia-led path. In effect, the enemy images of Azerbaijan and Turkey served as a convenient excuse for building security alliance with Russia. In

other words, security threats facing Armenia helped to justify the choice of Russia as a strategic security ally. Meanwhile, I argue that Kocharyan's choice significantly owed to his power motivation, say the belief that Russia would support his authoritarian regime due to Putin-led Russia's consistent promotion of authoritarianism in its near neighborhood (Terzyan, 2018, p. 245).

Media reports and accounts from Armenian politicans suggest that Kocharyan has been characterized by penchant for concentrating power in his hands and making decisions single-handedly. He has been widely depicted as a tough and unyielding politician in pursuit of his political goals (News.bbc, 1998). The presidential power increased profoundly following the assassinations of Prime Minister Vazgen Sargsyan and President of Parliament Karen Demirchyan in 1999. The latters significantly limited Kocharyan's power and were at odds with him over a series of critical issues (Aberg and Terzyan, 2018, p. 160).

Remarkably, the first President Ter-Petrosyan went as far as to compare Kocharyan to Mongol khans, who tended to wield unlimited power over their subjects (Azatutyun, 2004).

Essentially, Putin's pursuit of promoting authoritarianism in CIS countries as a crucial part of its renewed post-Soviet policy (Secrieru, 2006) significantly fit Kocharyan's ambitions. The electoral success stories of Russian-supported incumbents in Central Asian countries and Belarus and by contrast the mounting challenges facing the political elites in other CIS – Western-oriented democratizing countries, such as Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine have reportedly contributed to Kocharyan's choice of the Russian-led path (Terzyan, 2018, pp. 244 - 245).

Not surprisingly, Kocharyan established a 'mutually beneficial' partnership with Russia, by letting the latter take over the critical economic and energy infrastructures (around 90 percent of Armenia's power generating capacities) of the country in exchange for valuable support for reinforcing and retaining his power (Eurasianet, 2003). More specifically, the 'strategic partnership' with Russia considerably contributed to Armenia's large-scale militarization and thus enabled Kocharyan to monopolize power and coerce the opposition (Terzyan, 2018, p.245). Overall, the country smoothly plunged into authoritarianism, with all its attributes. Freedom House Reports noted downward trends in Armenia, featuring increasingly unresponsive and undemocratic governance and massive abuses of presidential power (Freedom House, 2005).

Thus I assume that Kocharyan's penchant for monopolizing power and retaining it has prompted him to harden positions on Azerbaijan and Turkey, thus providing a fertile ground for forging alliance with Russia.

Over time he went so far as to question the ethnic compatibility of Armenians and Azerbaijanis: "The Armenian pogroms in Sumgait and Baku, and the

attempts at mass military deportation of Armenians from Karabakh in 1991-92 indicate the impossibility for Armenians to live in Azerbaijan in general. We are talking about some sort of ethnic incompatibility " (Azatutyun, 2003).

In doing so he consistently strived to present country's plight as an inevitable consequence of Turkish-Azerbaijani hostilities. Meanwhile, the strides towards becoming a Russian-supported regime were broadly justified in terms of building Armenia's resilience against increasingly dangerous neighbors (Aberg and Terzyan, 2018, p. 163).

3 BOUND TO IRREMEDIABLE ENMETIES: THE CONCEPTION OF VICTIMIZED SELF AND HOSTILE NEIGHBORS IN THE FOREIGN POLICY DISCOURSE OF S. SARGSYAN (2008-2017)

Armenia's feeling of victimization has been vividly manifested in S. Sargsyan's foreign policy discourse .

> *"Just take a look on what's going on around our country, in the region and in the constantly shrinking world. Armenia, like a small boat, has again found itself in the very midpoint of turbulence. A war right next door, closed borders, problems with external communications, convoluted regional relations, clashing interests of great powers – this is the world Armenia faces today"* (Sargsyan, 2008).

The admission of Armenia's 'smallness' in the face of crippling external constraints, prompted him to take measures aimed at alleviating country's plight.

In contrast to his predecessor, he stressed that Armenia could not shift from survival to development as long as it would be enduring the double blockade imposed by the neighbors. Sargsyan assigned critical importance to moving the needle on Armenian-Turkish relationship. "I truly believe that the time has come to solve problems in Armenian-Turkish relations" (Ibid).

Not surprisingly, he invited the Turkish president to visit Armenia to watch the World Cup qualifying match between Armenia and Turkey on September 6, 2008. Abdullah Gül's historical visit to Yerevan, coupled with Sargsyan's commitment to establishing diplomatic relations with Turkey without setting pre-conditions, seemed to challenge the status-quo. All subsequent developments and statements seemed conducive to producing a breakthrough within a short time. The "roadmap" for normalizing relations was finalized in April 2009, preceded by a crucial milestone: on October 10, 2009 in Zurich the two countries' foreign ministers signed the "Protocol on the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Turkey" and "Protocol on

development of relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Turkey" (Terzyan, 2016a, pp. 171-171). The ratification of the protocols seemed to be just a matter of time, given the parties strong rhetoric supporting the end to the deadlock.Yet, the reality played out differently and, the signed protocols have not been ratified so far.

Some studies suggest that Azerbaijan's vast opposition to Armenian-Turkish rapprochement has been instrumental in obstructing it (Mikhelidze, 2009, pp. 1-9).

Beyond that, it is worth to note that Sargsyan's attempts of normalizing the Armenian-Turkish relations, and particularly the historical protocols sparked mass protests across the Armenian communities particularly in the US, France, Russia and Lebanon. The descendants of Armenian Genocide survivors largely regarded Sargsyan's initiative as a 'betrayal' (Europeanforum, 2009).

Especially in the US, home to the biggest Armenian Diaspora community, many pro-Armenian public organisations and prominent politicians raised fundamental objections to the Armenian-Turkish protocols, conceiving it as a desecration of the Armenian Genocide. The nationalist party Dashnaktsutyun pulled out of the ruling coalition in protest over Armenian-Turkish conciliatory talks. The party heavily criticized Sargsyan's conciliatory policy towards Turkey and the normalization "roadmap (Armeniandiaspora, 2009).

To reduce the mounting anxieties, Sargsyan embarked on a Diaspora world tour, visiting Paris, Los Angeles, Beirut and Rostov-on-Don (Russia) (News. am, 2009). Sargsyan sought to reduce the tension, by assuring that the Protocols would not interfere with the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

Under public pressure President Sargsyan submitted the Armenian-Turkish protocols to the Armenian Constitutional Court to evaluate their compliance with the Constitution. Even though the Constitutional Court approved the documents, it made references to the preamble regarding three principal issues of the protocols, which led to subsequent frictions with Turkey. First, it clearly stated that the ratification of the protocols would by no means hamper Armenia's efforts to achieve a worldwide recognition of the Genocide. Second, it rejected any connection between the protocols and the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. Most importantly, it clearly states that the protocols do not mean that Armenia officially recognizes the current border established by the 1921 treaty of Kars (Cacianalyst, 2010).

Turkey expressed its discontent with the Court's ruling and alluded to its repercussions with the Armenian-Turkish rapprochement (News.am, 2010).

In effect, along with Azerbaijan's simmering resentment towards the protocols (Mikhelidze, 2009, p. 3) Armenia's mounting wariness, stemming

from huge public pressure and vividly manifested in the Constitutional Court's ruling, significantly hampered the 'historical rapprochement'. Thus, President Sargsyan's attempts of healing the long- standing rift confronted seemingly intractable obstacles – immensely akin to those endured by the first Armenian President.

It has become increasingly clear that the successors of the Genocide survivors are still sensitive to any step towards breaking down the enemy image of Turkey and thus overcoming the historical controversies.

Remarkably, the failed Armenian-Turkish rapprochement significantly hardened President Sargsyan's position on Turkey, feeding the narrative of the historical foe.

Sargsyan smoothly resorted to magnifying the victimized image of Armenia, subjected to the perpetrator's belligerence.

Consistent with the notions, deeply-rooted in Armenian collective narrative, Sargsyan resorted to substantial othering of Turkey and the latter's treatment as inherently aggressive.

His discourse has been characterized by the tendency to blame Turkey for the troubled relations and Armenia's blockade. Despite all the ordeals and crucibles inflicted on the country by Turkish bellicosity, Armenia would seek to coexist peacefully with its neighbors, whereas Turkey's "New Ottomanism" could not bring anything but 'massacres, oppression, and tyranny as the Ottomanism did' (Sargsyan, 2011a).

Sargsyan framed Turkey as irremediably imperialistic and coercive, always trying to invade. 'Unfortunately, in this most civilized era of human history, there are still forces and statesmen that have not abandoned the archaic way of thinking and the invader psychology, confident that even today "the strongest will dictate" (Ibid).

Thus Armenia would have to further endure Turkish hostile policy – largely regarded as the biggest impediment to country's peaceful and free development (Sargsyan, 2013a).

No wonder, Sargsyan regarded Turkey's policy as the biggest obstruction to boosting partnerships with the EU and NATO. It follows that Armenia could not succeed on European and Euro-Atlantic paths as long as Turkey would keep the borders with Armenia blocked. Moreover, Sargsyan has noted that the fact that Turkey is a member of NATO 'It is not an added value to our security system… It is paradoxical that we have our input in North Atlantic security system meanwhile the policy of a NATO member directly harms our security system' (Sargsyan, 2014a).

In essence, by blaming Turkey for obstructing Armenia's advancement towards the EU, the Armenian ruling elite has made a convenient excuse for justifying country's U-turn - the shift from the Association Agreement with the EU to the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union (Terzyan, 2016b, p. 171).

Remarkably, to describe Armenia's plight in the hostile neighborhood with Turkey, the Chairman of the permanent commission on external relations of the Armenian Parliament Armen Ashotyan referred to the quote "Poor Mexico, so far from God, and so close to the United States" and added that this image of the US could be completely projected to Turkey. In doing so he justified the choice of the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union and framed it as indispensable to Armenia's security in the face of the Turkish menace (Aravot, 2017).

Research suggests a great deal of congruence between President's beliefs about Turkey, and those held by the representatives of the Armenian political elite.

The perception of Turkey as enemy is significantly amplified by its role as the 'biggest promoter' of Azerbaijan, and its aggression unleashed on Armenia. One of the former parliament members from 'Rule of Law' party noted that Turkey is the core source of Azerbaijan's weaponry and ammunition designed to wreck Armenia, and the biggest 'lobbyst' of Azerbaijan's interests. Thus, Turkey is irrefutably complicit in military aggression against Armenians both in Armenia and in Nagorno Karabakh (Gasparyan, 2016, p. 196). Another parliament member from the same party assigned importance to Russian troops located across the Armenian-Turkish border, given that the neighbourhood with Turkey poses security threats to Armenia (Interview, 2015).

The nationalist 'Dashnaktsutyun' party has adopted the toughest stance on Turkey and gives great weight to Genocide recognition, viewing it as a precondition for normalizing relations (Gasparyan, 2016, p. 197).

Nevertheless, other parties have softer attitudes and there is considerable consensus that disclosing of Turkish-Armenian border and establishment of diplomatic relations would significantly benefit Armenia.

Consistent with the official discourse, public opinion surveys among the Armenia's society suggest that Turkey has been broadly perceived as a hostile country across the Armenian society. More precisely, around 77 percent of respondents believe that Turkey pursues a hostile policy towards Armenia. Likewise, 82 percent of respondents believe that Turkey can not be trusted (Galstyan, 2016, p. 241).

The public opinion poll on the Ways for Normalization of Armenian-Turkish Relations conducted by the Caucasus Research Resource Center (CRRC)-

suggests that each second respondent (51%) fully or rather approves opening the border between Armenia and Turkey, while each third (33%) is absolutely or rather against it (Crrc, 2015).

Thus, in contrast to the Armenian Diaspora, the population of Armenia seems to have way more pliant positions on Turkey and even supports the idea of Armenian - Turkish rapprochement.

Nevertheless, it is hard to contend that the official discourse has significantly influenced the public perceptions of Turkey. In contrast to elite positions on Turkey, which have markedly hardened over last years, the negative beliefs of the Armenian society about Turks and Turkey have diminished from 2010 to 2014. More specifically, the number of respondents who believe that Turks have negative attitudes towards Armenians has dropped by 20 percent (Galstyan and Terzyan, 2015).

Nevertheless, the ruling elite has repeatedly magnified the victimized image of Armenia and framed Turkey as a perpetrator to put the blame of the troubled relations on Turkey, as well as regard the latter's blockade as the principal cause of Armenia's plight.

Overall, Sargsyan's initial enthusiasm for redefining Armenia's victimized image and normalizing relations with Turkey markedly diminished in the wake of large-scale protests sparked in Armenian Diaspora. Well acknowledging the mounting challenges to his ambitious agenda, Sargsyan simply avoided acting against the conventional wisdom and taking steps that could lead to the first President's unwelcome path.

3.1 'One Nation, Two States': the Enemy Image of Azerbaijan in the Foreign Policy Discourse of Armenia (2008-2017)

The enemy image of Azerbaijan in the foreign policy discourse of Armenia has been inextricably linked to that of Turkey.

Given Azerbaijan's strong cultural, economic, political ties with Turkey, coupled with their 'coordinated' blockade imposed on Armenia, there has been a tendency in the Armenian discourse to regard them as identical entities:'The Turkish-Azeri tandem formed under the "One nation, two states" slogan, for over twenty years through the blockade, deepening of the lines of division and rejection of cooperation has been trying to compel Armenia to make unilateral concessions' (Sargsyan, 2013b).

Broadly speaking, the enemy image of Turkey equally applies to Azerbaijan, along with some specific features attributed to Armenia's fiercest foe.

President Sargsyan's initial optimism about the possibility for achieving a breakthrough on Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution proved groundless and over time transformed into sheer disillusionment. This occurred gradually, gathering speed in the wake of Azerbaijan's vast opposition to Armenian-Turkish rapprochement. Sargsyan was quick to note that Azerbaijan's confrontational stance and mounting belligerence towards Armenia would inevitably perpetuate the long-standing hostilities. 'Azerbaijan's attempts to extort unilateral concessions through the threat to use force are doomed to failure; what's more, these attempts continue to remain the greatest impediment for the compromise-based settlement of the conflict' (Sargsyan, 2010)**.**

Moreover, over time Sargsyan resorted to civilizational and cultural othering of Turkey's 'little brother' Azerbaijan. He particularly questioned the Europeanness of Azerbaijan as 'the only country on the European continent that boasts the manifold increase in its military spending' (Ibid).

Thus the Armenian President concludes that Azerbaijan has largely misperceived the essence of European integration viewing Europe only as a 'convenient market for selling oil and gas' (Mediamax, 2011).

He particularly noted that the blockade of Armenia and closed borders per se contradict the very essence of the European Union and its system of value (Sargsyan, 2013c).

Even worse, Azerbaijan has been regarded as irremediably aggressive and impervious to the diffusion of European norms across the South Caucasus, due to the EU's intensifying engagement with the region. That explains why the transformative power of the EU did not resonate with Azerbaijan, leaving its 'dictatorial' and 'bellicose' nature intact (Sargsyan, 2011a).

Therefore, the EU's decision of grouping immensely incomparable Armenia and Azerbaijan into the same framework of the Eastern Partnership made little to no sense to the Armenian President: "The Eastern Partnership had some problems in its formation period yet... I still do not understand the criterion of grouping Armenia and Azerbaijan into one partnership – different opportunities, different approaches, different goals…" (Sargsyan, 2014b).

It follows, that in effect there is no common ground between 'European', 'peaceful' Armenia and 'non-European', 'dictatorial' Azerbaijan. "Coercion, violence, terror, war; these are our opponent's notions of reality. They are trying to impose upon us the same notions they force on their own people (Sargsyan, 2013a).

The civilizational othering led the Armenian President to implicitly portray the enemy as uncivilized, and incapable of complying with the norms of the civilized world: "While the civilized world is creating the necessary conditions

for a people's exercise of their right to self-determination, Azerbaijan, blinded by its oil revenues, is trying in all possible ways to impose its views on not only Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, but also on the mediator countries…" (Sargsyan, 2015a).

Indeed, it is not uncommon for an uncivilized enemy to come across as inhumane and cruel, and thus prompt the Armenian President to posit that it 'has irreversibly lost both the sense of reality and all norms of human conduct'(Sargsyan, 2015b).

Azerbaijan has been blamed for cultural and religious intolerance and, particularly, 'barbaric' mass destruction of Armenian cultural heritage in its territory. 'Sadly, there were also cross-stones which were destroyed barbarically, like 3000 cross-stones of New Jugha which were wiped out by Azerbaijan' (Sargsyan, 2016a).

In terms of political psychology, John Owen has argued that the images of a unit's culture is more or less sophisticated, democratic or nondemocratic, and backward are a basic underlying cognitive component central to foreign policy decision-making…as well as the perceptions of another states intentions whether hostile or friendly may derive from previous images of a states culture being liberal and democratic or illiberal and nondemocratic (Hermann, 2003, p. 288).

Notably, along with the above mentioned features, Azerbaijan has been regarded as increasingly dictatorial and coercive.

Azerbaijan's political leadership received a wave of condemnation for appealing to the enemy image of Armenia, in order to distract the attention from domestic problems and prop up the dictatorial regime. Put simply, as a typical authoritarian state Azerbaijan would need an external enemy to justify the reproduction of Aliyev's power and immense military spending. Besdies, it serves as an excuse for the plight of human rights and other political and economic shortcomings prevalent in the country. Thus one should not be taken by surprise about Azerbaijan's cruelty and inhumanity, since 'it is the same state that suppresses and exercises the most inhumane treatment of its own people'(Sargsyan, 2014c).

It follows that the dictatorial nature of Azerbaijan's regime heightens its aggressiveness towards Armenia and thus obstructs peaceful resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. "Obviously, Baku is using the Nagorno Karabakh conflict to divert the attention and rising discontent within its own society related to the pressing social and economic issues and blatant violations of human rights in the country"(Sargsyan, 2017).

Sargsyan has concluded that Azerbaijan has been steadily transitioning from the authoritarianism to a dictatorship, with all ensuing threats posed

to Armenia by increasingly unpredictable and unresponsive dictatorship (Sargsyan, 2015b).

The portrayal of the enemy's cruelty and inhumanity conjures up the real and hypothetical threats posed to Armenia: 'the true objective, or more precisely dream of Azerbaijan is to occupy Artsakh and ethnically cleanse it from Armenians. It implies that the population of Artsakh should be partly purged, partly deported as a result' (Sarsgyan, 2016b). Indeed, it would be counterintuitive to feel secure with an aggressive, dictatorial and reckless enemy around.

In Sargsyan's words 'the reckless four-day military escapade carried out by Azerbaijan in April 2016 was the epitome of Baku's years-long belligerent policy and ideology'. The devastation unleashed by Azerbaijan was regarded as a serious blow to peaceful settlement to the conflict. Not surprisingly Sargsyan questions Azerbaijan's foresight about conflict resolution and attributes its addiction to inciting arms race to its underlying recklessness (Sargsyan, 2017).

Overall, the enemy has been portrayed as inherently Armenaphobic, which purposefully demonizes Armenia and stires up hatred towards Armenians: "Armenians of the world are the number-one enemy of Azerbaijan." This is a statement by a country leader, not an opposition figure, for instance, nor a parliament member. A statement by no one more or less than a country president. These are the types of statements that give birth to Ramil Safarovs, who are subsequently glorified in their own country as heroes for axing an Armenian officer in his sleep" (Sargsyan, 2015b).

Consistent with Sargsyan's conceptions, Azerbaijan has been broadly conceived of as tremendously aggressive and the biggest threat to Armenia across the Armenian political elite. Not surprisingly, the whole responsibility for the logjam over the Nagorno Karabakh conflict resolution is attributed to dictator-led Azerbaijan. The deputy speaker of the Armenian Parliament E. Sharmazanov noted that the four-day war unleashed against Armenia in April, 2016 'once again proved the terrorist nature of Azerbaijan'(News.am, 2016).

The representatives of Dashnaktrutyun party have adopted the hardest position on Azerbaijan. According to the party representatives, concessions in Nagorno-Karabakh conflict could not lead to peace. Rather, they would further embolden Azerbaijan in its overly anti-Armenian pursuits (Gasparyan, 2016, p. 196). Notably, in 2009 one of the party representatives suggested that "those who call into question our territorial integrity under the guise of mutual concessions settlement with Azerbaijan must be prosecuted, because such comments would not be a"manifestation of democracy or pluralism but an unconstitutional step" (Rferl, 2009).

This approach, pertaining to particularly possible concessions has remained unchanged to this day.

Public opnion polls conducted from 2012 to 2015 suggest the perception of Azerbaijan and Turkey as hostile countries is shared across all groups, regardless of gender, age or background.

The vast majority of Armenian population (around 90 percent) perceives Azerbaijan as country's biggest enemy (Galstyan, 2016, p. 243).

Table 1: Self-Enemy Distinction in the Foreign Policy Discourse of Armenia

	Azerbaijan	**Turkey**
1991-1998	Non-democratic Natural ally Bellicose	Natural ally Indispensable neighbor Vital hub
1998-2008	Aggressive, morally inferior, ethincally incompatible Reactonary	Historical foe Important neighbor Belligerent
2008-2017	Dictatorial, non-European Destructive, InhumaneBelligerent, Irremediably aggressive	'Neo-Ottoman' Inherently imperial Treacherous Non-European

Source: author (based on foreign policy discourse analysis)

Overall, the Sargsyan-led elite consistently strived to depict the ongoing conflict as an inevitable consequence of Azerbaijan's dictatorial, destructive and aggressive nature. Meanwhile, the heightened emphasis on the victimized image of Armenia alluded to the argument, that the ball was on rival's court and thus there would not be much the ruling elite could do to alleviate the situation.

Notably, consistent with his predecessor's rhetoric, over time Sargsyan resorted to prioritizing the Armenian-Russian security alliance as the 'pivot of Armenia's security and a viable counterweight to Turkish-Azerbaijani aggression' (Sargsyan, 2013b).

There has been a tendency for the appeals to the enemy images to be followed by those to the indispensability of strategic partnership with Russia. It follows that the reinforced perception of Azerbaijan and Turkey as irremediably hostile and dangerous has considerably contributed to Russia's treatment as a pivotal security ally.

In other words, 'dividing lines, xenophobia and the inclination of some of Armenia's neighbors to solve issues through force or threats'(Sargsyan, 2012) have led its ruling elite to highly value Russia's role in the turbulent South Caucasus given that 'Armenia only benefits from a greater involvement of Russia in our region' (Sargsyan, 2016c).

Remarkably, the very security-related arguments have been broadly employed by President Sargsyan to justify Armenia's abrupt U-turn – the shift from the Association Agreement with the EU to the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union (Terzyan, 2017). Therefore, the enemy images and perceived threats have significantly influenced the discourse on foreign policy strategy.

CONCLUSION

The negative images of Turkey and Azerbaijan have been deeply embedded in Armenian political thinking and public consciousness, rather than being a product of manipulation. The feeling of victimization, as well as the enemy images have been further reinforced owing to the double Turkish-Azerbaijani blockade imposed on Armenia.

Contrary to the received wisdom, the first Armenian President L. Ter-Petrosyan consistently strived to prevent the furthering of particularly anti-Turkish attitudes in Armenian public consciousness, and most importantly dispel the victim-perpetrator narrative.

Ter-Petrosyan's benevolence towards the enemies did not resonate with the post-war Armenian society and the significant part of its political hardliners. Resigned Ter Petrosyan was succeeded by one of the most prominent figures of the Karabakh war R. Kocharyan who significantly toughened positions on the foes. Turkey was treated as eternal foe, with Azerbaijan framed as 'ethincally incompatable' with Armenia. In essence, the decline and notoriety of the first President cautioned against the acute complexities of rapprochement with enemies in Karabakh conflict sensitive Armenian society. Therefore, Kocharyan securitized the Karabakh issue, and extensively used it to justify the choice of Russia as a pivotal security ally and the transition into a Russian-supported authoritarian state.

By treating Turkey and Azerbaijan as irremediably aggressive, Kocharyan strived to present country's plight as an inevitable consequence of Turkish-Azerbaijani hostilities.

The third President S. Sargsyan adopted an ambitious agenda at the outset of his presidency aimed at normalizing Armenian –Turkish relations and moving them beyond the victim-perpetrator dichotomy.

Yet, Sargsyan's initial enthusiasm for achieving a breakthrough markedly diminished in the wake of large-scale protests sparked in Armenian Diaspora. Well acknowledging the mounting challenges to his ambitious agenda, Sargsyan simply avoided acting against the conventional wisdom and taking steps that could lead to the path of the first President's decline. Moreover, over time he resorted to transferring the menacing reputation of the Ottoman Empire to modern Turkey, framing the latter as an irremediably aggressive foe. Meanwhile, Turkey's close cultural, linguistic, religious, as well as political and economic ties with Azerbaijan have reinforced the perception of 'one state two nations', thus engendering a common enemy image.

In essence, the Armenian case has proved considerably unfit to the widespread treatment of 'othering' and memory interpretation as strictly an elite driven top-down process. This came to the fore when in their attempts to normalize the troubled relations with Turkey, both the first and the third presidents confronted huge public opposition. Levon Ter - Petrosyan gained notoriety for his 'pro-Turkish' policy, while the sheer pressure of particularly the Armenian Diaspora forced Serzh Sargsyan to make certain revisions.

Remarkably, the enemy images of Azerbaijan and Turkey have provided a fertile ground for treating Russia as a 'savior' with its security alliance with Armenia deemed to be a viable counterweight to the enemies.

Overall, even though the enemy images of Turkey and Azerbaijan have been deeply rooted in Armenian political thinking, the ruling elite has routinely appealed to them in attempts to assert country's 'victimhood', divert attention from complex problems and legitimate its power by presenting the country's plight as 'structurally inevitable' due to neighbors' hostilities.

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