

**Explaining Negative Descriptions of Armenians in Turkish Parliamentary Speeches
(1960-1980) via Group Position Theory**

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Abstract

This paper scrutinizes the role of Turkish politicians' threat perception on negative descriptions of Armenians between 1960 and 1980. In so doing, it brings together the theoretical insights of group position theory with the scholarship on the perception of non-Muslim minorities in Turkey. Building on a comprehensive, mixed-method content analysis of Turkish parliamentary proceedings, it demonstrates that Turkish politicians are more likely to make negative comments about Armenians while debating about national security and foreign threats than when speaking about other topics. The paper concludes that perceived threats contribute to the negative descriptions of Armenians in Turkish politics.

Keywords: group position theory, intergroup hostility, mixed-methods, Turkey, Turkish-Armenian relations.

Declarations

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1 Introduction

Intergroup hostility is often triggered and/or legitimized by threats dominant groups perceive from minorities. For example, Dhattiwala and Biggs' (2002) study on the anti-Muslim violence of 2002 in Gujarat shows that the level of violence was positively correlated with the majority's perception of demographic threats. Group position theory (Blumer 1958; Bobo 1999), a substantial topic of sociological literature, suggests that the members of dominant groups become antagonistic towards minorities once they perceive them as threats to their prerogatives. Accordingly, this perspective is frequently used to examine the public perception of minorities in the developed world, underscoring that population sizes of minorities and worsening economic conditions are significant predictors of hostility. The field, however, is short on analyses of the historical backgrounds of intergroup hostility and examples from less developed countries. This paper contributes to filling these scholarly lacunae by focusing on mainstream Turkish politics and accounting for the negative perception of Armenians through historical factors.

Building on group position theory, this study posits that Turkish political parties' threat perception is a significant contributor to their negative remarks about Armenians. To test this premise, it scrutinizes Turkish parliamentary speeches between 1960 and 1980. The paper's first and primary theoretical contribution is to bring together the insights of group position theory with scholarship on the perception of non-Muslim minorities in Turkish politics. Second, it helps to solve the lack of systematic analyses of the perception of Armenians in Turkey by using Turkish parliamentary records, an important but underexplored source. Third, it juxtaposes the insights of qualitative and quantitative analyses, a novel and productive methodological approach in the scholarship on group position theory and the Turkish perception of Armenians. This paper first recounts the relevant historical background, then

describes its theoretical approach, research context, and methods, before finally presenting the findings and discussing their implications.

2 Historical background

Armenians lived as an Ottoman minority under the millet system between the 15th and 20th centuries (Barkey 2008). Along with Jewish and Orthodox Greek minorities, they were officially recognized as “People of the Book” and were granted *dhimmi* (protected) status (Icduygu and Soner 2006). This status meant that they had religious, educational, juridical, and fiscal autonomy. The millet system crumbled during the gradual collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th and early 20th centuries, when the Ottomans struggled to control the movements for independence of minorities. To prevent their imminent downfall, they reformed the millet system and gave more freedom to the *dhimmi*. These efforts failed to save the empire, and it collapsed at the end of the first World War, as marked by the Treaty of Sèvres between the Ottoman Empire and the Allies in 1920. The treaty allocated most imperial territory to the Allies and the independent states of Kurdish and Armenian minorities. These conditions led the way to the creation the Turkish nationalist resistance, which waged and won the Turkish War of Independence (1919–1923). Subsequently, the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 paved the way to the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, which marked the end of the millet system and the minorities’ transition to modern citizenship. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire created competing Turkish and Armenian nationalisms, and intercommunal violence ensued. This includes the politically charged debate about the 1915–17 Armenian deportations and massacres, generally referred to as the Armenian Genocide (Göçek 2016), which is beyond the scope of this paper.

The republican elite perceived these minorities as potential collaborators of enemy (Icduygu and Soner 2006) and imposed discrimination. This maltreatment was made apparent by the

Wealth Tax of 1942, which placed a heavy economic burden on non-Muslim communities, driving many of their members to bankruptcy and eventually to “work camps” in Eastern Anatolia to pay their debts under harsh labor conditions (Aktar 2000). Mango (2006) claims that the tax was a reflection of the influence of racist ideology in Turkey. Another example is the 6–7 September Pogrom in 1955, xenophobic violence against non-Muslim minorities in Istanbul. Kuyucu (2005) argues that the Turkish state did not cover the full economic costs of the damage to minority communities caused by the pogrom, another instance of exclusion.

Several international events between 1960 and 1980 added to the negative perception of Armenians in Turkey. First, Turkey faced increased foreign pressure to define the Ottoman violence against Armenians between 1915 and 1917 as a genocide, especially after Uruguay became the first country to do so officially in 1965. This was perceived as an attack against Turkey by politicians, the media, and the general public (Gürpınar 2016). Second, in 1973’s tense political climate, an elderly Armenian man murdered two Turkish diplomats in Los Angeles, an event that was followed by a chain of terror attacks by The Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) between 1975 and 1990 (Gunter 2007). The ASALA murders of Turkish diplomats and their families in the 1970s and the 1980s were an important contributor to the negative perception of Armenians (Gunter 2007).

Also called the Second Turkish Republic (Zürcher 2004), the period between 1960 and 1980 in Turkey had peculiar characteristics. Various studies highlight its character in distinct areas, such as cinema (Tugen 2014), left-wing politics (Ertan 2019), and foreign policy (Kösebalaban 2011). The period saw all three successful military interventions in modern Turkish history, in 1960, 1971 and 1980, and two unsuccessful coup attempts. The 1960 military *coup d’état* overthrew the conservative-liberal Democrat Party (*Demokrat Parti* [DP]) government, executing Prime Minister Menderes and two colleagues (Harris 2011). The conspirators then formed the Committee of National Unity (*Milli Birlik Komitesi* [MBK]) and assumed the

powers of the Turkish parliament. The MBK, along with members of the Republican People's Party (CHP), Republican Villagers Nation Party (*Cumhuriyetci Koylu Millet Partisi* [CKMP]), and professional associations, established the Constituent Assembly (*Kurucu Meclis*) to publish the 1961 Constitution (TBMM 2018). This new constitution created a bicameral parliament formed by the National Assembly of Turkey and the Senate of the Republic. The National Assembly was formed by the elected members of parliament (MPs). The senate included 150 elected senators, 15 quota senators to be appointed by the president, and 22 members of the MBK (Ozgisi 2011). The two-house parliamentary system was ended by the 1980 *coup d'état*. This study explores the records of the Constituent Assembly, the National Assembly, and the Senate of the Republic, as well as the united meetings of the two houses, which are called the united meetings (*TBMM Birlesik Toplanti*).

The 1961 constitution was the most liberal in modern Turkish history, and it changed the state–society relationship. It guaranteed fundamental rights, such as the right to collective bargaining, and contributed to a more pluralistic democracy (Bal and Laciner 2001). The first elections after the coup resulted in the victory of the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* [CHP]) in 1961. The Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi* [AP]), representing the liberal conservative platform in the absence of the DP, won the following election in 1965. They governed until the 1971 coup, which led to a more chaotic period that witnessed ten minority governments and alternating violent political upheavals between left- and right-wing groups until 1980. The global economic crisis during the 1970s also negatively influenced the Turkish economy, adding to the socio-political volatility (Zürcher 2004). The conflict between Greeks and Turks in Cyprus culminated in the Turkish military intervention of 1974, becoming a very pressing issue in foreign policy. The 1980 coup came as a response to this political chaos, and it dramatically altered Turkish politics (Kösebalaban 2011). It also meant a new constitution and a return to the one-parliament system. This paper focuses solely on this period not only because

it is underexplored with regards to the perception of Armenians in Turkey but also because it highlights the interplay between the specific character of the historical moment and the political parties' approaches towards Armenians. Besides, methodologically, examining exclusively the one bicameral parliament in Turkish political history enables consistent data collection.

3 Perceived threats and the negative perception of non-Muslims in Turkey

Academic studies on the non-Muslim minorities in Turkey have uncovered exclusionary practices (Aktürk 2009; Bali 2001, 2004; Göl 2005; Toktas 2005). Suciyan (2016) states that the Armenian community is silenced and repressed. Indeed, the Armenian case is replete with conflicts and hostility, kept alive by various political tensions, such as the Nagorno–Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan (Dixon, 2010; Ozturk-Tuncel and Celikpala, 2019). Although some studies provide valuable insights from the experience of the Armenian minority in modern Turkey (Ekmekçioğlu 2016; Suciyan 2016), the academic literature often focuses on specific events, predominantly the historical debates about the international recognition of the genocide label (Açar and Rüma 2007; Avedian 2013; Bilali 2013; Gürpınar 2016). The scholarship could benefit from a theoretical perspective, which would provide a generic explanation of the negative perception in question and outline the shared factors behind it in different periods. Group position theory can guide this useful approach.

Group position theory suggests that inter-group prejudice arises when a dominant group perceives others as a threat to their prerogatives. This premise is based on two pillars: (1) dominant groups believe that they are entitled to privileges, and (2) when those privileges are perceived as being threatened, they develop hostile attitudes towards subordinate groups. In other words, the perspective proposes that changes in the social conditions of dominant groups are a strong indicator of intergroup hostility. The theory was initially developed by Blumer (1958), who highlights four kinds of feelings in prejudiced attitude: (1) dominant group

superiority, (2) the difference between other groups and the dominant group, (3) proprietary claims of the dominant group to certain areas of privilege, and (4) anxiety about other groups' desire for and design on the advantages of dominant group. Blumer (1958) expresses that the proprietary claims of dominant groups are the most prominent feeling in prejudiced thinking: therefore, Blumer conceptualizes prejudice as a defensive reaction against perceived threats. That is to say, through prejudice, dominant group members defend their historically and collectively developed social positions.

The academic literature on group position theory generally expects that the negative perception of outgroups will intensify with an increase in their population and worsening economic conditions of dominant groups. These studies most often test the relationship between dominant groups' attitudes and the sizes of minority groups in developed countries (e.g. Biggs and Knauss 2012; Semyonov et al. 2006). For that reason, historical, political, and contextual influences on prejudice, as well as the contexts of less developed countries, are not sufficiently analyzed. Accordingly, Quillian (1995, 1996) highlights a lack of studies on the important historical components of dominant groups' animosity towards outgroups. In parallel, Hiers et al. (2017) claim that past geopolitical conflicts and territory losses can foster a strong form of national identification and an increased level of animosity towards people seen as non-nationals. They classify Turkey as one of the most risk-averse countries among a data set of 33, which could influence the perception of Armenians.

A significant historical source for the perceived threat of Armenians in Turkey is the Sèvres syndrome, an anxiety about the threat posed by the alleged collaboration of external enemies and minorities to carve up the Republic of Turkey (Guida 2008). This conception is mainly inherited from the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, which was caused by wars with foreign enemies and the struggles for independence of its minorities. Indeed, its name comes from the Treaty of Sèvres. Turkish politics is replete with various manifestations of the Sèvres

syndrome. To start with, the first line of the national anthem expresses an assurance against this territorial loss: “Fear not, for the crimson flag that proudly ripples in this glorious twilight shall not fade.” In parallel, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founding father of the Republic of Turkey, describes the past hostility against Armenians by linking the historical events to territorial threats: “Whatever has befallen the non-Muslim elements living in our country is the result of the policies of separatism they pursued in a savage manner when they allowed themselves to be made tools of foreign intrigues and abused their privileges” (Zürcher 2011, 313). A more recent example can be found in a written response of Erkan Mumcu (2000), the Turkish Minister of Tourism at the time, to another member of the parliament: “Our target is to increase the income from tourism in the East and Southeast Anatolian regions...However, in so doing, we should not use any words or names that could damage our national unity...I would like to advise that you avoid phrases such as ‘Ancient Turkish and Armenian city remains.’”¹

The prevalence of the Sèvres syndrome could be explained by its roots in Turkish nationalism. Ziya Gökalp (1968), a key theorist of Turkish nationalism (Nefes 2018), states that the Ottoman empire’s dismemberment was the consequence of a lack of cultural unity among different communities and the advancement of a program of Turkism with the aim of creating a new nation. Gökalp (1968) formulates this new Turkish nationalism in various areas, such as linguistic, aesthetic, ethical, legal, religious, economic, and political Turkism. His religious Turkism only includes Islam, excluding the non-Muslim minorities in Turkey. That is to say, his nationalism shares the Sèvres syndrome’s distrust of minorities and therefore excludes different religious groups with the claim that they are incompatible with national morality. All in all, anxieties about territorial loss seem to have shaped Turkish nationalism, which elevates

¹ TBMM, *Tutanak Dergisi*, Term 21, Sitting 3 (17.10.2000), p. 549.

Muslim Turks as the dominant group whose privileges could be threatened by minorities' attempts to become independent. Building on group position theory, this paper proposes that Turkish politicians thus tend to describe Armenians negatively once they perceive national and international threats.

4 Method

This study brings together the insights of quantitative and qualitative content analysis. Content analysis is “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context” (Krippendorff 1989, 403). Quantitative content analysis is a deductive approach that systematically codes data into variables and then statistically examines the relationship between those variables to test hypotheses. Qualitative content analysis is an inductive approach that focuses on open and in-depth analyses (White and Marsh 2006). Combining these techniques results in a mixed-methods study, a “type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration” (Johnson et al. 2007, 123). While mixed-methods research most often juxtaposes methods in the data collection stage, such as conducting a survey and in-depth interviews in tandem, few studies benefit from taking this approach to the data analysis stage. One example, Lockyer (2006, 45), uses qualitative and quantitative content analysis techniques to unveil different aspects of her research question on humor, finding that each method helps to illustrate a different layer of meaning. In parallel, this paper mixes qualitative and quantitative content analysis in the data analysis stage. It employs a quantitative technique to investigate the overall strength of the relationship between discussions about perceived threats and descriptions of Armenians. It then draws on qualitative content analysis to explore in detail the interplay between the interplay between these issues by scrutinizing both manifest and latent aspects of

parliamentary records and accounting for any speeches that are not explained by the statistical model. Combining quantitative and qualitative techniques will also enable an interpretation of the effect sizes of qualitative categories (Onwuegbuzue 2003).

The paper takes the individual speeches of politicians as units of analysis. The author and a research assistant (RA) analyzed the parliamentary proceedings and coded the content into quantitative categories. The process occurred as follows: (1) the RA collected speeches that contain the word Armenian, *Ermeni*; (2) the author and the RA read all the speeches, jointly creating a coding scheme (see Table 1 below) and then individually coding the texts into two main categories: (i) the perception of Armenians and (ii) the topics to which each speech refers. In line with group position theory, the paper hypothesizes that politicians are more likely to portray Armenians negatively during debates related to perceived threats; (3) the author examined the data using quantitative and qualitative content analyses (for an alternative coding strategy on political speeches, see Erisen and Villalobos 2014).

Table 1. Codebook

Perception of Armenians	NEGATIVE: Description of Armenians' identity, existence, or actions in unfavorable terms, which includes defending an unfavorable treatment or perception of Armenians.
	NON-NEGATIVE: Description of Armenians' identity, existence, or actions using values-free or favorable terms, which includes criticizing an unfavorable treatment or perception of Armenians.
Debate Topic	CULTURE: Discussions on cultural products.
	EDUCATION: Debates on the Turkish schooling system.
	FOREIGN RELATIONS: Debates about diplomatic relations.
	HEALTH: Talks on the Turkish medical system.
	POLITICS: Discussions on political developments and politicians.
	SECURITY: Debates on security threats.

To delineate the predictors of negative perceptions, the author and RA first distinguished between politicians' negative comments and those of others. Instead of counting the number of negative comments about Armenians, they read the entire corpus of speeches and coded the overall tone of each speech as negative or non-negative. In that way, they provided more in-depth coding, thus requiring a non-automated process. When an MP uses positive and negative descriptions about Armenians, each coder had to assess whether the overall description was negative or not by paying attention to how central the negative and positive comments are to the speech, as well as considering the latent and manifest meanings of the words. One coder is Turkish and the other Turkish-Armenian: the latter could detect more latent meanings. This strategy also helps to identify the types of debates. Security debates include threats: the Sèvres syndrome, the conflict between left-wing and right-wing militants, foreign threats, an article critical of Turkey in a foreign magazine, and banditry. The education debates include speeches about the Turkish schooling system. The discussions about culture revolve around topics such as folk music, architecture, literature, and painting. The political debates are discussions about contemporary topics, such as individual politicians' acts. The health topic covered the talks on the medical system, and the debates on the economy include those concerning the state budget and corruption allegations. The foreign relations debates include comments on diplomatic relations with various countries, particularly the United States and France, where Armenian lobbyist groups were active.

To achieve reliability, the author and RA compared their codes and calculated the percentage of coding agreement, as well as Scott's π ($\text{Pr}[\text{observed}] - \text{Pr}[\text{expected}] / 1 - \text{Pr}[\text{expected}]$), which accounts for the probability of agreeing by chance (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein 1999). Concerning the debate topics, the coders achieved 100% agreement (Scott's $\pi=1$). With regards to the perception of Armenians, there was 95% simple inter-coder agreement, which corresponds to Scott's π ($=.89$). Neuendorf (2002) views simple agreement levels of 80% or

higher as acceptable. In our research, achieving high agreement rates might be related to having simple categories as well as the simplicity of the coding instructions and coder training. In particular, coding the debate topics was a straightforward process, as there is an index for each parliamentary sitting that briefly describes the debate topic.

5 Contributors to the negative political remarks about Armenians

The word “Armenian” is mentioned in 164 speeches given between 1960 and 1980 by the members of parliament (N=164). Table 2 below summarizes the party memberships and ideological orientations of the speakers. The latter is mainly based on an approximation of the positions of the political parties in line with the generally accepted taxonomy of the political positions in the relevant scholarship (e.g. Carkoglu 2007). The paper’s estimation does not account for the minor shifts in time and the differences in the position profiles of individual politicians. Nevertheless, it is reliable, as the political parties as a whole did not change their positions in this period. The right-wing political parties are Turkish nationalists and political Islamists. The center-right includes liberal political parties, such as the Justice Party (AP). Social-democratic political parties are viewed as centre-left (e.g. CHP). The paper does not attribute any orientation to the representatives of the Committee of National Unity and the quota senators. The distinction between the left and right-wing political parties in Turkey does not exactly correspond to that in Western democracies. Aydogan and Slapin (2015) argue that the center-left employs a more populist rhetoric than the center-left in the West.

Table 2. Speakers’ affiliations, political orientations and number of comments

Affiliation	Political Orientation	Frequency
Republican People's Party (CHP)	Centre-left	59
Justice Party (AP)	Centre-right	45
Committee of National Union (MBK)	-	14
Independent MPs	Vary per MP	11
Quota Senators	-	9
Democratic Party (DP)	Centre-right	8
Republican Villagers Nation Party (CMKP)	Right	4
National Action Party (MHP)	Right	4
National Salvation Party (MSP)	Right	6
Republican Trust Party (CGP)	Centre-right	2
New Turkey Party (YTP)	Centre-right	2
Total		164

Table 3 below illustrates that negative comments appear in 70.6% of the MPs' speeches. The majority of speeches with negative descriptions are about security and foreign relations, followed by those about economy, culture, and politics. With regards to non-negative perceptions, 48 non-negative comments about Armenians appear across all debate topics. One noteworthy result involves the proportions of non-negative and negative descriptions in particular topics. While the majority of the speeches on security threats and foreign relations negatively describe Armenians, the non-negative portrayals are more frequent in the other debate topics.

Table 3. Frequencies of debate topics and descriptions of Armenians (1960–1980)

Debate topic	Non-negative perception count (%within perception)	Negative perception count (%within perception)	Total (%within perception)
Security	5 (3.1%)	65 (39.6%)	70 (42.7%)
Foreign relations	10 (6.1%)	40 (24.4%)	50 (30.5%)
Economy	8 (4.9%)	4 (2.4%)	12 (7.3%)
Culture	8 (4.9%)	4 (2.4%)	12 (7.3%)
Education	10 (6.1%)	0 (0%)	10 (6.1%)
Politics	6 (3.7%)	3 (1.8%)	9 (5.5%)
Health	1 (0.6%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.6%)
Total (%within perception)	48 (29.4%)	116 (70.6%)	164 (100%)

Table 4 below outlines the differences between political parties. Unlike the pattern in debate topics, political parties have similar negative/non-negative perception ratios, and negative portrayals are more common than non-negative ones among all political parties except the New Turkey Party, which made one negative and one non-negative speech. This similarity implies that political party affiliation does not have a drastic impact on the description of Armenians.

Table 4. Political party affiliation and description of Armenians (1960-1980)

Political party affiliation	Non-negative perception count (%within perception)	Negative perception count (%within perception)	Total (%within perception)
Statesmen (No party)	6 (3.7%)	17 (10.3%)	23 (14%)
Republican People's Party	18 (11%)	41 (25%)	59 (36%)
Justice Party	18 (11%)	27 (16.4%)	45 (27.4%)
National Salvation Party	2 (1.2%)	4 (2.4%)	6 (3.6%)
National Action Party	0 (0%)	4 (2.4%)	4 (2.4%)

Independent (No Party)	2 (1.2%)	9 (5.5%)	11 (6.7%)
Democratic Party	0 (0%)	8 (4.9%)	8 (4.9%)
Trust Party	0 (0%)	2 (1.2%)	2 (1.2%)
Republican Villagers' Nation Party	1 (0.6%)	3 (1.8%)	4 (2.4%)
New Turkey Party	1 (0.6%)	1 (0.6%)	2 (1.2%)
Total (%within perception)	48 (29.4%)	116 (70.6%)	164 (100%)

A binary logistic regression analysis presents the statistical relationship between the presented perception of Armenians and the debate topics, which allows the analysis of the effect sizes of the variables. As seen in Table 5 below, the regression model demonstrates that the topic of security threats and foreign relations are significant predictors of the negative perception of Armenians ($p < .001$), as compared to the other debate topics (economy, culture, politics, education, and health). The odds ratios show that the chance of Armenians being described negatively is 39 times higher when Armenians are mentioned in a discussion on security, than when Armenians are mentioned in debates on economy, culture, politics, education, or health. The odds of Armenians being described negatively is 12 times higher when Armenians are mentioned in a discussion on foreign relations than those on economy, culture, politics, education, or health. Nagelkerke's R-squared is .453, indicating a relationship between prediction and grouping. The regression analysis confirms that the topics of security and foreign relations are reliable predictors for negative remarks about Armenians in the parliamentary debates.

Table 5. Logistic regression of the negative perception of Armenians (1960-1980)

			95% confidence interval	
Debate topic	B (SE)	Odds ratio	Lower	Upper
Security threats	3.664*** (.58)	39	12.509	121.592
Foreign relations	2.485*** (.496)	12	4.538	31.736
Constant	-1.163** (.348)	.33		

Note: $R^2 = .453$ (Nagelkerke), $.318$ (Cox & Snell); Model $\chi^2 (2) = 62.738$, ** $p < .01$, ***

$p < .001$

These results could be interpreted in two ways: (1) the debates about security and foreign relations could have helped to trigger the negative descriptions of Armenians by leading politicians to reflect on national and international threats, the main premise of this paper, or (2) the negative perceptions of Armenians might have made them more likely targets in debates related to security and foreign relations. The in-depth qualitative analysis below thoroughly explains the interaction between perceived threats and the descriptions of Armenians to check the validity of the main argument.

6 Turkish parliamentarians' portrayals of Armenians

This section first explores in detail how MPs articulate their negative views. Second, it examines the cases contradictory to the main premise (i.e. non-negative comments made during security and foreign relations debates) to assess the strength of the argument. Third, it explores the speeches in which MPs use non-negative remarks, exploring contexts not strongly linked to negative perceptions. Last, it analyzes the speeches that contain both negative and non-negative descriptions to present how and in what circumstances politicians shift their perceptions about the community, shedding light on the interplay between the opposing stances.

Table 6 below summarizes the debates in which politicians describe Armenians negatively. To begin with, the unfavorable descriptions often take place during security debates, in which the

MPs frequently reflect upon the dismemberment threats because of the Sèvres syndrome. Necmettin Erbakan (MSP), the founding father of political Islam in Turkey, warns about obtaining membership to the European Economic Community (EEC): “They present our entry to the EEC as a trade agreement, but they mean for us to become one state with Europe, losing our sovereignty. Greeks and Armenians will purchase our land.”² In the dismemberment threat posed by the Kurdish conflict, Asim Eren (CHP) sees an Armenian plot: “Armenians host a Kurdish Independence Institute in the Soviet Union, which spreads the nonsensical Kurdish maps, alphabet, grammar, and other brochures.”³ Second, MPs mention Armenians while referring to the conflict between right-wing and left-wing militants in Turkey. For example, various politicians refer to the Hekimhan events in Malatya in 1968, where right-wing militants, The Grey Wolves, attacked the students and teachers of a local high-school. MPs often held crypto-Armenians responsible for this violence. Hamdi Ozer (CHP) claims that “the crypto-Armenians, who infiltrated The Grey Wolves, carried out the attack.”⁴ Third, some MPs link Armenians to ideological threats from foreign powers. Sadi Somuncuoglu (MHP) states that “in the last few years, communists and Armenians abroad have organized attacks against Turkey.”⁵ Fourth, some politicians view Armenians as threats while discussing other security topics, such as banditry: Ekrem Ozen (CHP) recounts that “in southeast Turkey, one of the most formidable bandits, Musto, was Armenian.”⁶

Table 6. Negative mentions of Armenians and particular debate topics

² TBMM Birlesik Toplantı, *Tutanak Dergisi*, Term 19, Sitting 32 (26.04.1980), p. 332.

³ TBMM Birlesik Toplantı, *Tutanak Dergisi*, Term 1, Sitting 15 (01.07.1964), p. 380.

⁴ Cumhuriyet Senatosu, *Tutanak Dergisi*, Term 16, Sitting 32 (07.02.1977), p. 35.

⁵ TBMM Birlesik Toplantı, *Tutanak Dergisi*, Term 19, Sitting 32 (26.04.1980), p. 324.

⁶ Cumhuriyet Senatosu, *Tutanak Dergisi*, Term 6, Sitting 16 (20.12.1966), p. 516.

Topic	Particular debate	Frequency
Security	Dismemberment threat	38
	The conflict between left-wing and right-wing militants	15
	Foreign threats	10
	Other	2
Foreign relations	Activities of the Armenian diaspora against Turkey	19
	ASALA activities abroad and the host countries' responses	18
	Other	3
Culture	Cinema and films	3
	Armenian Minority Foundation in Turkey	1
Economy	Corruption allegation	3
	Proprietorship certificate	1
Politics	A left-wing politician's career	2
	Armenian genocide debate	1

The negative comments are also prevalent during debates on foreign relations. These speeches are predominantly about perceived diplomatic threats, including the physical threats to Turkish diplomats abroad from the ASALA and the responses of the foreign countries where these attacks took place. First, Armenian lobbying for international recognition of the genocide and counter-diplomacy against Turkey created anger. Mehmet Hazer (CHP) states that “in Europe, in the United States, and especially in France, Sweden, and Lebanon, the Armenian lobbying activities falsely present Turks as inhabiting a barbarian and vandal nation. This is a lie so often repeated that it is now beginning to be taken as reality.”⁷ Reflecting on the Cyprus crisis that followed the Turkish military operation in 1974, Memduh Eksi (CHP) alleges that “Armenian and Greek organizations spread false propaganda against Turkey because of the Turkish Peace

⁷ Cumhuriyet Senatosu, *Tutanak Dergisi*, Term 12, Sitting 28 (06.02.1973), p. 203.

Operation.”⁸ Second, MPs portray Armenians as an enemy when referring to ASALA activities. Munir Daldal (AP) states that “an Armenian, a Turkish hater and enemy, murdered two esteemed Turkish diplomats in the United States.”⁹ Last, politicians describe Armenians negatively when commenting on a *National Geographic* article about Turkey and the recruitment choices of the Foreign Affairs Ministry.

As table 5 above shows, during speeches on culture, economy, and politics, the MPs use negative descriptions much less frequently. In the culture-related discussions, they reflect on a film and the Armenian foundations in Turkey. Celal Tevfik Karasapan (AP) reacts to the inauspicious depiction of Turks in a Hollywood film, *The Lawrence of Arabia*, by blaming Armenians, among others: “I do not know whether the scriptwriter was an Armenian, Greek, or gypsy, but s/he and Greece created a film that contains unpardonable anti-Turkish scenes.”¹⁰ During the economy debates, MPs mention Armenians when talking about corruption allegations and the Turkish property law. Nevzat Kosoglu (MHP) argues that Armenians continued their corrupt economic behaviors after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire: “Most of the Armenians, who escaped from Istanbul following the Turkish War of Independence, returned and re-established their corrupt economic relations through various scams, like the Borekciyans, Sabuncuyans, and Gerdanyans.”¹¹ MPs also consider the Armenian genocide debate. Husnu Dikecligil (AP) states that “An Armenian told me that they deserved what

⁸ Millet Meclisi, *Tutanak Dergisi*, Term 4, Sitting 63 (17.03.1977), p. 30.

⁹ Millet Meclisi, *Tutanak Dergisi*, Term 3, Sitting 64 (21.02.1973), p. 525.

¹⁰ Cumhuriyet Senatosu, *Tutanak Dergisi*, Term 2, Sitting 30 (22.01.1963), p.133.

¹¹ Millet Meclisi, *Tutanak Dergisi*, Term 5, Sitting 116 (25.02.1978), p. 221.

happened. He added that it was not our fault, as they were the pawns of foreign powers and conspirators against Turkey.”¹²

Second, there is contradictory evidence to the main premise of this paper, that perceived security and foreign threats contribute to the negative perception of Armenians. Table 7 below presents the cases wherein politicians describe Armenians non-negatively in such debates. Here MPs differentiate between the loyal, free, and peaceful Armenian citizens of Turkey and the Armenian diaspora, an enemy. In some security-related discussions, MPs talk about dismemberment and ideological threats without labelling Armenians negatively. Husamettin Celebi (Quota Senator) comments on dismemberment threats as follows: “we have had newspapers in Greek and Armenian for more than 100 years. Their rights are protected by various agreements, but there is not another minority entitled to the same privileges.”¹³ Necip Seyhan (CHP) depicts Armenian citizens as targets of communist propaganda: “We should act immediately against the attempts of an ambassador of a socialist country, who tried to provoke our Armenians against Turkey and encourage them to migrate to Armenia.”¹⁴ In foreign relations discussions, some MPs refer to the Armenian diaspora’s activities, Turkish people living abroad, a *National Geographic* article, and a diplomatic visit to Jordan neutrally or positively. When considering the Armenian diaspora’s lobbying activities, MPs articulate appreciation of the Turkish-Armenians’ defense of Turkey. Suleyman Demirel (AP), seven-time Prime Minister of Turkey, states that “our Armenian citizens condemned the diaspora’s lies and unveiled the foreign conspiracy against Turkey. On 24 April, they paid respect to

¹² Cumhuriyet Senatosu, *Tutanak Dergisi*, Term 1, Sitting 28 (03.02.1967), p. 622.

¹³ Cumhuriyet Senatosu, *Tutanak Dergisi*, Term 16, Sitting 83 (04.10.1977), p. 279.

¹⁴ Cumhuriyet Senatosu, *Tutanak Dergisi*, Term 8, Sitting 49 (10.04.1969), p. 518.

Turkey by visiting the Republican Monument in Taksim.”¹⁵ Referring to the *National Geographic* article, Ismail Arar (CHP) criticizes the magazine without demonizing all Armenians: “They issued corrections on the part about Turks, but they did not follow our advice on the content about Armenians.”¹⁶

Table 7. Non-negative perception during discussions about security and foreign relations

Topic	Particular debate	Frequency
Security	Dismemberment threat	1
	Foreign threats	1
Foreign relations	Armenian lobby activities against Turkey	4
	Turkish migrants abroad	2
	<i>National Geographic</i> article	1
	Jordan visit	1

Third, non-negative descriptions are prevalent in debates on culture, politics, education, economy, and health. In debates on culture and health, politicians maintain a neutral tone, juxtaposing the appreciation and social exclusion of Armenians. Nihad Kursad (AP) acknowledges that “our palaces, constructed by Armenian or Italian architects, constitute an important part of our national wealth. Unfortunately, we [Turks] did not build them.”¹⁷ Salim Hazerdagli (CHP) complains that “there used to be only one medical doctor, an Armenian called Mihail, in my hometown.”¹⁸ When reflecting on politics, education, and the economy, politicians frequently mention Armenians without making any negative remarks. For example,

¹⁵ Cumhuriyet Senatosu, *Tutanak Dergisi*, Term 4, Sitting 79 (08.05.1965), p. 271.

¹⁶ Cumhuriyet Senatosu, *Tutanak Dergisi*, Term 12, Sitting 7 (28.11.1972), p. 180.

¹⁷ Cumhuriyet Senatosu, *Tutanak Dergisi*, Term 6, Sitting 50 (11.04.1967), p. 602.

¹⁸ Cumhuriyet Senatosu, *Tutanak Dergisi*, Term 10, Sitting 33 (31.01.1971), p. 590.

MPs emphasize non-Muslim minorities' right to educate their children using their own languages and religious beliefs. Sinan Orel (Independent) indicates that "in Armenian schools, religious education is given one hour per week."¹⁹ Speaking on economics and politics, MPs talk about individual members of the community neutrally. Kadircaan Kafli (CKMP) says that "the Ottoman state used to borrow money from ...Armenian bankers."²⁰ In a debate about secularism, Suphi Koraman (MBK) recounts the time when "in the southeast region, a citizen was sworn at for eating during Ramadan fasting time...out of fear, he lied and said that he was Armenian..."²¹

Last, a few speeches mix negative and non-negative remarks. All of the speeches with mixed remarks are about security: four are on dismemberment threats, and one is on the ideological threat of communism. While politicians in the former portray some Armenians as an enemy causing dismemberment threats, they praise patriotic Turkish-Armenians. Mehmet Hazer (CHP) reminds the listeners that "the Armenian Dashnak group, controlled by imperialists, attempted to dismember Turkey to establish Armenia... Despite this, we do our best to maintain good relations with Armenians today, and therefore our Armenian citizens never complain about the Republic of Turkey."²² About the threat posed by communism, the political speeches oscillate between labels of loyal citizens and enemy pawns used by foreign powers. Suleyman Tuncel (AP) simultaneously approves the peaceful cohabitation of Armenians and Turks and accuses the Armenian diaspora of propaganda.²³

¹⁹ Millet Meclisi, *Tutanak Dergisi*, Term 3, Sitting 153 (23.08.1971), p. 140.

²⁰ Millet Meclisi, *Tutanak Dergisi*, Term 1, Sitting 118 (28.05.1965), p. 296.

²¹ Cumhuriyet Senatosu, *Tutanak Dergisi*, Term 10, Sitting 114 (13.09.1971), p. 340.

²² Cumhuriyet Senatosu, *Tutanak Dergisi*, Term 9, Sitting 70 (12.05.1970), p. 363.

²³ Cumhuriyet Senatosu, *Tutanak Dergisi*, Term 18, Sitting 36 (06.02.1979), p. 460.

The qualitative inquiry reveals that security-related debates, particularly those concerning dismemberment threats, the counter-diplomacy of the Armenian diaspora, and the ASALA terror attacks, are linked to negative descriptions of Armenians. Politicians do not attach negative labels to the community when discussing the other included topics. In contrast, in few cases, they praise the contributions and patriotism of Armenians in Turkey. Moreover, this section illustrates that, when talking about perceived threats, some MPs differentiate between Turkish citizens of Armenian origin, who are praised, and Armenians abroad, whom they see as enemies. In short, these conclusions support the quantitative evidence and this paper's main premise. The politicians' speeches are careful enough to externalize the enemy and differentiate it from the Armenian citizens of Turkey, which would not be the case if the politicians were outright prejudiced about the Armenian identity. Therefore, it is not that the existing negative perception of Armenians among Turkish politicians surfaces in debates about security threats and foreign relations but rather that the content of these debates seems to have given way to negative descriptions. In other words, the distinction between good and bad Armenians implies that the prejudice is linked to the anxieties of Turkish politics and perceived threats to the state. This conclusion does not suggest that anti-Armenian prejudice does not exist; the paper rather unveils the likely conditions that enable it to circulate.

7 Conclusion

While reflecting on security and foreign threats, Turkish political speeches given between 1960 and 1980 tend to portray Armenians in negative terms. First, the quantitative inquiry of this paper notes that, when considering parliamentary speeches, the topics of security threats and foreign relations are reliable predictors of negative remarks. Political party affiliation does not seem to influence the speaker's perception of Armenians, as there is no political party depicting Armenians in a consistently negative or non-negative manner; rather, their views vary according to the debate topic. Regression analysis confirms a statistically robust relationship

between security and foreign relations debates and negative perceptions. Second, the qualitative evidence demonstrates that during these debates politicians often label Armenians as an enemy (1) posing a threat of dismemberment to the country, (2) spreading lies about the genocide, and (3) attacking Turkish diplomats. In the other debates, the general tone is neutral, merely depicting Armenians as citizens from a different ethnoreligious background. The speeches that contain both negative and non-negative labels show that politicians switch to negative remarks once they perceive Armenians as a security or diplomatic threat; otherwise, they portray the community as an established minority that lives alongside Turks. Last, a few speeches on security and foreign relations do not contain negative descriptions. In those cases, politicians differentiate Armenians in Turkey, who are loyal citizens, and a minority of Armenians abroad, the enemy, either being manipulated by or manipulating international powers.

The paper concludes that perceived security and diplomatic threats are important contributors to the hostility towards Armenians in Turkish politics, which supports group position theory. Turkish politics has inherited historical anxiety about dismemberment by a collective effort of foreign powers and minorities, otherwise known as the Sèvres syndrome, which seems to give way to negative descriptions of Armenians. Moreover, perceived threats to the official status quo, such as communism, provide further fertile ground for negative descriptions. The diplomatic threats posed by the Armenian diaspora and the ASALA terror group constitute another source of anxiety. Overall, threat perception seems to present an important challenge to democracy and human rights in the country, as it seems to develop a foundation for intolerant language about minorities. Thus, Turkish politics could benefit from effective management of the perception of internal and external threats, which could help to curb exclusionary attitudes towards minorities. These findings and conclusions are in line with the scholarship that links such socio-political anxieties with the negative perception of non-Muslims in Turkey. For

example, Göl (2005) states that the Turkish state's perception of the threat posed by Armenian claims on Turkish territory triggers state policies that are exclusionary to the community. This study contributes to group position theory by providing a fresh context, exploring how past conflicts and territory losses informs prejudice, which was previous lacking in discussions about threat perception.

For future studies, this paper recommends parliamentary proceedings as a rich and under-explored data source for political discussions of minorities, as they helped to unearth the context-specific factors in Turkish politics that trigger hostile descriptions of Armenians. The academic literature can benefit from using the existing free online access to these records in numerous countries to explore different contexts of hostility. This shift would provide grounds for international comparisons. Draege (2019) notes that parliamentary debates are potentially very useful resources with which to analyze politics and decision-making, as they contain comprehensive data on important debates over time. Furthermore, the scholarship on Turkish politics can expand on the insights of this study by investigating the political perception of other minorities mentioned in the parliamentary records. The study encourages the use of mixed-methods content analysis, as the quantitative and qualitative inquiries perfectly complement each other and enable a comprehensive scrutiny. As ethnoreligious hostility is a prominent instigator of violence today, it is imperative to explore its political roots thoroughly.

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