

# A LITERATURE BETWEEN SCIENTIFICITY AND SUBJECTIVITY: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE BOOKS RECENTLY WRITTEN ON THE ARMENIAN ISSUE

**Mustafa Serdar Palabıyık**

Research Assistant, Middle East Technical  
University, Department of International  
Relations, pserdar@metu.edu.tr

## **Abstract:**

*This article is written to explore how the Armenian question is being projected towards Western public opinion through several trends which has recently emerged in the Western literature on the Armenian genocide allegations. Within this framework, three trends are identified: non-scientific subjective discourse, partially-scientific subjective discourse and scientific objective discourse. In the article, the works of main representatives of these trends are exposed to a comparative and critical analysis in order to comment on the perception of the Armenian question in the West.*

**Key Words:** *Armenian question, Armenian genocide allegations, Robert Fisk, G. J. Meyer, Donald Bloxham, Simon Payaslian, Merrill Peterson, Guenter Lewy, Edward Erickson*

## **Öz:**

*Bu makale Ermeni meselesi konusunda son dönemde Batı literatüründe göze çarpan bazı eserleri inceleyerek Batı akademik toplumunda ortaya çıkan bazı eğilimleri tespit etmek ve bunun sonucunda Batı kamuoyuna Ermeni meselesinin nasıl yansıtıldığını gözler önüne sermek amacıyla kaleme alınmıştır. Bu çerçevede bilimsel olmayan taraflı yazın, kısmen bilimsel taraflı yazın ve bilimsel tarafsız yazın olmak üzere üç temel eğilim tespit edilmiş ve bu eğilimleri temsil eden yazarların eserleri karşılaştırmalı ve eleştirel bir analize tabi tutularak Ermeni meselesinin Batı'daki algılanışı yorumlanmıştır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Ermeni meselesi, Ermeni soykırımı iddiaları, Robert Fisk, G. J. Meyer, Donald Bloxham, Simon Payaslıyan, Merrill Peterson, Guenter Lewy, Edward Erickson*

## INTRODUCTION

**T**he Armenian question, which has recently come to the agenda again with the passing of a bill by the French Parliament that punishes the denial of the so-called Armenian genocide, has been one of the grass-root problems of the Turkish foreign policy for many years. New publications on this subject have been produced in increasing numbers every day not only in Turkey but also in the West. Some of these publications are completely composed of heroism, lacking scientific qualifications, and aimed at influencing a particular segment of the public opinion. However, besides these prejudiced publications, which are lacking knowledge, academic publications have increasingly begun to appear recently. In other words, not only the number of the publications but also their academic value is increasing; therefore, the quantitative development in the literature has been followed up by a qualitative growth.

Within this framework, three main tendencies among the books that have recently been published on the Armenian question in the Western literature draw the attention. The first one is consisted of the books that are comprised of a non-scientific and subjective style. The emotional and subjective discourse that lacks scientific values, which has generally been seen in the majority of the books published in the past, continues to shape this literature. In the first part of this article, two important representatives of this tendency, Robert Fisk and G. J. Meyer, will be examined.

Especially in the last five years there has appeared a new tendency in the books written in the West according to which their scientificity has increased but their subjectivity has persisted. Increasingly more academicians have made scientific analysis on the subject, made use of the archival documents and the primary sources within this framework, and referred to these sources in their works; therefore they have increased the academic reliability of their works. But still, especially with the extensive use of one-sided achieve documents and by picking the documents that are advocating the discourse of one specific side and ignoring the others, an extremely prejudiced manner has predominated this literature. In the second part of the article the works of Merrill Peterson, Simon Payaslian and Donald Bloxham, who are among the representatives of this new tendency, will be examined with a comparative analysis.

It is possible to argue that the works that are influenced by a new and significant tendency in the Western literature draws the attention more. This tendency

aims at explaining what had really happened in Eastern Anatolia between the years 1915-16 instead of a fruitless discussion with regard to the Armenian question that is “the genocide exists or not”. While doing this, it reflects a style that adheres to both scientificity and objectivity. In the last part of the article, the works of the two important representatives of this last tendency, Lewy and Erickson, will be examined.

In conclusion, a comparative literature analysis will provide the reader important clues on how the Western academic society has perceived the Armenian question. Within this framework, how this question has been projected to the Western public opinion will be better understood. The answers to the questions why the Armenian issue has been kept in the agenda of the Western public opinion and why increasingly more Western parliaments issued verdicts that recognize the so-called Armenian genocide in fact lie in the literature that is written on the Armenian question.

#### **A. THE FIRST TENDENCY: NON-SCIENTIFIC SUBJECTIVE DISCOURSE**

The first one of the tendencies regarding the Armenian question that is observed in the Western literature recently is in fact a continuation of the common point of the works that constitute the body of this literature. Accordingly, the genocide claims are presented with a completely demagogic approach, which addresses to the feelings of the reader. The important thing is not revealing the truth but to create a new rhetoric by an almost novelistic approach, which has no relation to the reality. Among the major characteristics of this tendency, the harshness of the style, exclusion of the scientific methods by all means, and prejudiced and subjective style of writing can be considered.

Two of the most important examples of this type of literature, where scientificity is ignored and subjectivity is given priority, will be analyzed in a comparative way below. The first one is the chapter titled as ‘Genocide’, which is written as an annex to the seventeenth chapter, ‘The Ground Shifts’, of the G. J. Meyer’s book, *A World Undone: The Story of the Great War, 1914 to 1918*.<sup>1</sup> The second one is the tenth chapter of Robert Fisk’s book, *The Great War for Civilisation: The Conquest*

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1 G. J. Meyer, *A World Undone: The Story of the Great War, 1914 to 1918*, New York, Delacorte Press, 2006.

*of the Middle East*, which is titled as ‘The First Holocaust’.<sup>2</sup>

Before going on the analysis of these chapters, it will be useful to have some idea about their writers. American writer G. J. Meyer is neither a historian nor an academician. Meyer, who identifies himself as a “professional writer”, worked as a columnist in the prominent press organizations of the USA such as *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Boston Globe* and *Harper’s Magazine*. In his book, which is about an event that has changed the world history, the First World War, he used only the secondary sources and there is no academic background. These made Meyer’s scientificity seriously questionable. Besides, the style that he used in his book and especially the historical mistakes, which are conspicuous in the annex that we analyze, are the indicators that these suspicions are not groundless.

As for the British journalist born in 1946, Robert Fisk, he had worked as the Middle East representative of prominent British newspapers *Times* and *Independent* for thirty years. Contrary to Meyer, he earned his doctorate on political science from the Dublin Trinity College and he was one of the very few Western journalists who served in the Middle East during the 1979 Iranian Revolution, 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War and 1991 Gulf War.<sup>3</sup> This ensured Fisk to be mentioned as one of the most experienced names regarding the Middle East. Fisk, who displayed his knowledge and experience in his various books,<sup>4</sup> recently draws the attention as one of the defenders of the Armenian genocide claims at the same time. Especially the polemic on this subject a few months ago between him and the Turkish Ambassador to London, Akın Alptuna, is striking.<sup>5</sup> While criticizing Akın Alptuna’s statements about the so-called genocide claims in his column in the *Independent* newspaper, he used an extremely mocking and pricking style and he changed the course of the debate from an academic dimension to a journalistic one.

### 1. The Style Used in the Books

Above all, it is possible to say that the aforementioned chapters are not reflecting the main theme of the books that they are involved in; therefore, they are regarded as chapters that are independent from the book and they even damage

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2 Robert Fisk, *The Great War for Civilisation: The Conquest of the Middle East*, London, Knopf, 2005.

3 For detailed information about Robert Fisk see his personal website, URL: <http://www.robert-fisk.com/>

4 *Pity the Nation: The Abduction of Lebanon*, New York, Nation Books, 2002 and *In Time of War: Ireland, Ulster and the Price of Neutrality, 1939-45*, Dublin, Gill & MacMillan, 1996 can be mentioned among the books of Robert Fisk that are about the Middle East.

5 Robert Fisk, ‘You Are Talking Nonsense Mr. Ambassador’, *Independent*, 20 May 2006.

the integrity of the book. Meyer's book is basically about the First World War. Certainly the Armenian incident happened in this period; but the part that reflects the genocide claims is put as an annex to the chapter that is about the condition of the fronts in Europe. The writer put the part that includes the genocide claims in this chapter just because he protects the chronological order, and this damages the integrity of the book. The same situation is also valid for Fisk's book. In a book that is basically about the conflicts in the Middle East, the Armenian genocide claims that has suddenly appeared is not only surprising but also has led to divergence from the main theme of the book. In short, both of these writers have placed these chapters in their books not because of the historical framework of their books but because of their personal choices.

As for the style that is used in these books, it can be said that the style is very simple and in a way that ordinary people can understand. Here, the aim is to facilitate the book to appeal to as many readers as possible, and especially to convince the readers, who do not have much knowledge on the subject, about the reality of the things that have been told. For this reason, an extremely striking and even, from time to time, a bloody and brutal language has been used, and some bloody scenes have tried to be portrayed in the eyes of the readers. This style, according to which among the two major sides of the Armenian question, namely the Armenian and the Turkish people, the first one is tried to be shown as completely aggrieved and the second one is completely the evil-doer, is toughened in a way that it obstructs reading the book from time to time.

Since to give examples that reflect this style from the books here will mean to repeat this grave mistake of these books, we will limit ourselves with just a number of words. For instance, Meyer defined the government of the Turks over the non-Muslim population with the word 'brutish'.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, Meyer defined the suppression of the 1909 Armenian uprising in Adana by using the words 'savagery' and 'slaughter'. In this manner, he did not mention the uprising at all and he reflected the suppression of the uprising as a unilateral genocide.<sup>7</sup> The style of Fisk is also not different. He described the so-called the mass graves in Deyr-i Zor, the situation of the corpses that were found there, and the bones in detail, and he used the phrase 'killing fields', which had previously been used for the massacres of the Pol Pot regime in Cambodia, for the Armenians.<sup>8</sup>

As stated above, the main aim in using this style is to tie down the ordinary

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6 G. J. Meyer, *A World Undone*..., p. 290.

7 G. J. Meyer, *A World Undone*..., p.290.

8 Robert Fisk, *The Great War*..., pp. 316, 318.

reader to the reality of the things written in the book with an unwavering faith through influencing them quickly, and to draw the attention of those who have some knowledge about the subject to the ‘gravity’ of it. Presumably, both writers have thought that their books would be that much influential to the degree that they use a bloody and brutal expression. However, the harshness of this manner of telling from time to time reaches to such an extent that leads to the distraction of the interest and the attention of the reader completely and that makes the book harder to follow up.

## 2. Questioning the Scientificity of the Books

The ‘assertive’ wording of the books unfortunately has not been reflected in the scientificity of the chapters of the books that are concerned with the genocide claims. It is not possible to see the footprints of scientific methodology in both of the books. Not only the sources of the information that are used in the first chapters of the books are unspecified, but also it is conspicuous even in the first reading that majority of the information is false. Besides, both of the books are full of contradictory expressions. Not only Meyer but also Fisk have not used footnotes by no means. Their extremely harsh and sharp style is remained unsupported because of this reason, and there are no factors other than the style that can convince the reader. While in the voluminous book of Meyer that is nearly seven hundred pages there falls to one footnote almost every page, there is not any single footnote in the chapter where the Armenian claims have been expressed. For this reason, the chapters of these books that reflect the Armenian claims are away from all manner of scientificity.

It is possible to illustrate this claim by quoting from Meyer’s annex. Meyer says these in the 289<sup>th</sup> page of his book<sup>9</sup>:

“For more than a generation before the war, nationalist Turks and Islamic extremists had been saying that the Ottoman Empire, in order to be saved, must be purified – must above all be purged of non-Muslim elements.”

Again, in the following page he puts forward this claim<sup>10</sup>:

“When the Balkan Wars sent a flood of displaced Muslims into Turkey, many were sent to Armenia (where Christians had no legal rights and were under the

9 G. J. Meyer, *A World Undone...*, p. 289.

10 G. J. Meyer, *A World Undone...*, p. 290.

heel of Kurdish tribal chieftains) with license to take what they wanted and kill anyone who tried to interfere.”

Certainly, such as in every book that gives voice to the Armenian genocide claims, this book also utters ‘the claim that half a million Armenians were subjected to genocide’, which lacks any scientific ground.

Meyer’s claims that are quoted above cannot be supported by any sources. Therefore, these claims were either written with hearsays or, what is more serious, produced by the writer himself.

In Fisk’s book, more grave scientific mistakes have been made and footnotes are not used even for some quotations. It is not clear from which archive document or book that these quotations are taken. To give an example, the writer mentions a telegram that was sent by the Interior Minister of the Ottoman Empire, Talat Pasha, to the Governor of Aleppo. In this telegram, Talat Pasha gives the following order<sup>11</sup>:

“You have already been informed that the Government...has decided to destroy completely all the indicated persons living in Turkey... Their existence must be terminated, however tragic the measures taken may be, and no regard must be paid to either age or sex, or to any scruples of conscience.”

Albeit it is not specified, Fisk has made this quotation most probably from the book of Aram Andonian, which is said to include the telegrams of Talat Pasha.<sup>12</sup> Yet, it is identified by the Turkish scientists that these telegrams are untrue<sup>13</sup>; thus, now many Western scientists have also agreed that these telegrams are totally fake.

The chapters of Meyer’s and Fisk’s books where they reflected the Armenian genocide claims are extremely far from scientificity not only because they did not refer to any written source but also because they include so many incorrect information. It is not the purpose of this article to mention all the mistakes in these chapters; however, it will be useful to see what kind of faults has been made.

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11 Robert Fisk, *The Great War...*, p. 318.

12 Aram Andonian, *The Memoirs of Naim Bey*, London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1920.

13 Şinasi Orel ve Süreyya Yuca, *Ermenilerce Talat Paşaya Atfedilen Telgrafların Gerçek Yüzü*, Ankara, Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1983.

Meyer claims that Armenia was the most powerful independent kingdom in the eastern frontier of the Byzantine Empire in the ancient times<sup>14</sup>; however, in reality Armenia did not exist as an independent state apart from the rule of Tigran the Great in B.C. 95 – 55. After the rule of Tigran the Great, Armenia became an independent state for the first time with the Armenian Republic of 1919 – 1920. Another claim of Meyer that is historically wrong is that the Armenians were a community downtrodden by the heavy taxes in the Ottoman Empire and that the Turks and the Kurds grew rich at the expense of the Armenians.<sup>15</sup> The British archival documents prove us that the truth is exactly the opposite of this idea.<sup>16</sup> According to this, Armenians grew rich at the expense of the Turks and they possessed the economical power in the regions where they were living. A last example is the claim that no Turkish official was punished after the Armenian deportation<sup>17</sup>; but to assert this claim means not to know or to ignore the Military Tribunals (Divan-ı Harp), which were established after the First World War, the trials of these courts and the sentences that they imposed.<sup>18</sup>

Similarly, there are incorrect statements also in Robert Fisk's book. Fisk states in his article that the 'powerful Turkish lobby' in the USA 'attacks' every academician and journalist who says that the genocide is a 'reality'.<sup>19</sup> This claim is ridiculous more if not false; for it is impossible to say that the Turkish lobby in the USA is a powerful one. Yet, the influence of the Turkish lobby remains very weak against the power and aggression of the Armenian lobby. Moreover, during the visits of two of our retired ambassadors to the USA, Gündüz Aktan and Ömer Engin Lütem, it became apparent that exactly opposite of Fisk's claim is valid.<sup>20</sup> The conference that our ambassadors would hold in the University of South California in Los Angeles City was cancelled by the university administration upon the pressures of the Armenian lobby. In short, while uttering the Armenian genocide claims is a very easy and expected behavior in the USA, to say the opposite results in assimilation through repression.

14 G. J. Meyer, *A World Undone*..., p. 289.

15 G. J. Meyer, *A World Undone*..., p. 290.

16 Concerning the reports that were written by the British Consuls in İzmir and Aleppo about the non-Muslim population in the Ottoman Empire in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century see M. Serdar Palabıyık, 'Threatened or Threatening?: Two British Consular Reports Regarding the Condition of Non-Muslim Communities in İzmir and Aleppo' *Review of Armenian Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 9, 2005.

17 G. J. Meyer, *A World Undone*..., p. 291.

18 Thus, at the end of the trials in the Military Tribunals (Divan-ı Harp), 1397 individuals were punished with various penalties including the death penalty. For detailed information see Kamuran Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, Ankara, *Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları*, 1985, p. 221.

19 Robert Fisk, *The Great War*..., p. 340.

20 For detailed information see Ömer Engin Lütem, 'Ermeni Sorunu ve İfade Özgürlüğü', <http://www.iksaren.org/index.php?Page=Makaleler&MakaleNo=233>; for an example to the projections of this subject in the Armenian press see <http://www.panarmenian.net/news/eng/?nid=17061>



Fisk's mistakes are not confined to these. In his article, he refers to Iskenderun as an Armenian city and this claim is totally wrong.<sup>21</sup> Certainly there was an Armenian population living in Iskenderun at that time; however, while Armenians could not constitute the majority of the population at any period in the nineteenth century even in the six provinces of the Eastern Anatolia where they were the most populous, it is unfair to claim that Iskenderun is an Armenian city.

Still, in his article Fisk states that the President of the USA, George W. Bush, 'did not use the word genocide any more' in April 24, 2001 and instead he used the word 'tragedy'.<sup>22</sup> This statement implies that before 2001 Bush was using the word 'genocide' in his speeches. This is also totally wrong.

In conclusion, both of these books are extremely far from being scientific since they have not referred to the original sources and they included false and discordant information. It is striking that these chapters, which will certainly lead to be charged with plagiarism if they were written by an ordinary postgraduate, have been presented to the attention of the world public opinion.

### 3. The Prejudiced Manner in the Books

Another point that draws attention in the writings of Meyer and Fisk is the prejudiced and subjective manner of the writers. In fact, this prejudice is perceivable both from the style of the writers and from their re-construction of the historical reality by distorting the historical information. According to this, while the 'Turks are presented as if they are 'brutal and bloodthirsty' nation, Armenians are the 'absolute oppressed' and 'innocent victims'. This paralyzed mentality is so emphasized that even the murders of the Turks by the Armenians is presented as excusable. For instance, Meyer has written that in December 1914 an Armenian troop under the command of the Russians passed the border and killed 120,000 Turkish people.<sup>23</sup> But he does not make any single explanation about this massacre. However, he does not hesitate to present the arrests of the prominent leaders of the revolutionary Armenian Committees in Istanbul in April 24, 1915 as 'the murders of the Armenians by the death-teams established in Istanbul'.<sup>24</sup>

Robert Fisk denotes his prejudgment by identifying the Armenian deporta-

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21 Robert Fisk, *The Great War...*, p. 335.

22 Robert Fisk, *The Great War...*, p. 349.

23 G. J. Meyer, *A World Undone...*, pp. 290-291.

24 G. J. Meyer, *A World Undone...*, p. 291.

tion with the Jewish Holocaust during the Second World War. This deception is frequently resorted to in almost every book written about the Armenian genocide claims in the Western literature. Likewise, by resorting to this deception, Fisk's book has also preferred to provoke the Western public opinion against Turkey. Since the reality and brutality of the Jewish Holocaust has deeply affected the Western society, the existence of a similar Holocaust will result in immediate exclusion of the society that organized that holocaust by the international community. Fisk, who is aware of this, insistently associates the Armenian deportation with the Jewish holocaust. It will be appropriate to illustrate his claim by doing some quotations from the related part of his book.

Fisk claims that the Turks put a group of Armenians into a cave in Syria and led to their death through suffocation by lighting a fire at the entrance of the cave. As it is the case in the whole article, there is no single archive document with which he supports this claim. Fisk does not hesitate to present this fictive story as the 'first gas chamber of the twentieth century'.<sup>25</sup> According to Fisk, the similarities between the two 'holocausts' are not confined only to this: Armenians, like the Jews, were forced to settle in certain districts (*pogrom*), Armenian churches were set fire like the Jewish synagogues, Armenians were sent to death by the freight trains like the Jews. The Special Organization (*Teshkilat-i Mahsusa*) had already been the antecedent of Hitler's Special Forces, *Einsatzgruppen*.<sup>26</sup> Like the others, all these pretensions also could not go further from just being put forward since they cannot be supported by any single archival document. Fisk, in his article, lets why he made all these comparisons was such<sup>27</sup>:

"Is Turkey so fearful, so frightened of its own past that it cannot do what Germany has done for the Jews – purged itself with remorse, admission, acknowledgment, reparations, good will?"

In short, the reason why Fisk makes this erroneous construction is to make Turkey somehow accept the so-called Armenian genocide claims and accept to pay compensation to the Armenians. While doing this, he makes a great blunder and states that Germany 'purged itself' by paying compensation and accepting what they had done. However, Holocaust crime is such a severe crime that by no means it can be purged. It is impossible to compensate this crime with money. Therefore, Fisk does not hesitate to admit that he completely ignores the moral

25 Robert Fisk, *The Great War...*, p. 324.

26 Robert Fisk, *The Great War...*, p. 324.

27 Robert Fisk, *The Great War...*, p. 339.

dimension and concentrates on the material dimension.

In conclusion, the style of Meyer and Fisk is similar with the style of the leading advocates of Armenian genocide before who had Armenian origin, especially like Richard Hovannissian and Vahakn Dadrian. The fact that renders these two writers more reliable in the eyes of the international community is that they are not of Armenian origin. The two Western writers are more ardent advocates of the Armenian genocide claims than the aforementioned Armenian writers and this is perceived in the Western public opinion as a proof of the validity of the genocide claims. Nonetheless, as it will be pointed out in the third part of this article, another tendency that criticizes the Armenian claims from a scientific point of view, has recently began to develop in the Western public opinion.

## **B. THE SECOND TENDENCY: PARTIALLY-SCIENTIFIC SUBJECTIVE DISCOURSE**

In recent years, the most salient but may be the least noticed fact with regard to the Armenian question is that the Armenian claims are accepted more extensively by the part of the Western academic society. In this regard, to legitimize the Armenian claims and to re-construct them as a historical 'fact', more and more academicians and researchers are publishing more and more academic studies. This new trend in the West is especially drawing the attention. As indicated above, while the literature on the Armenian question is consisted of the texts generally written in a romantic style and far from being scientific, the publications of late years can be seen as the results of careful and meticulous studies. Now, more Western academicians pay attention to the archives, classify the documents in these achieves meticulously and refer to them in their studies. This is a factor that enhances the reliability of their works.

Another feature of the last studies on the Armenian issue published in the West is that these publications are no more being printed by the publishers financed by the Armenians. Instead, when taking account the academic publications that they have printed until today, very important and big publishers such as Palgrave, Macmillan and Oxford, began to print these publications.

This situation has two important impacts: Firstly, in these publishing houses, the academic studies are being printed and sold in higher numbers than the other publishing houses. This is resulted in spread of the studies that support the Armenian claims and present them as the 'historical fact' in a wider academic society.

At the end of this process, which resembles to a chain reaction, many more academicians reach these publications and use them in their studies. This, in turn, ensures that the Armenian claims can be more easily defended.

The second impact of publications that support the Armenian claims, which are published by the big and best-seller publishers, is more intangible and related the academic reliability. Generally these types of publishers have very strict requirements to publish. It is almost impossible that they publish studies, which do not fit academic criteria. The drafts that sent to these publishers are examined by various editors; therefore, they have become eligible to gain reliability in the academic society when they are published. This results in references to these publications in more studies and the rapid spread of the Armenian claims among the international academic and intellectual networks.

After this general assessment, in this part of the article basically three books will be examined and how this tendency is internalized in these three books will be analyzed. One of these books written by an Armenian writer, and the other two are written by American academicians. Before going through the detailed analysis of the books, it will be useful to give brief information about the writers and their studies.

The first one of the books that we are going to analyze is *United States Policy Toward the Armenian Question and the Armenian Genocide* by Simon Payaslian.<sup>28</sup> The book is published by the famous British publisher Palgrave-Macmillan in 2005. This publishing house, which has a very deep-rooted past, was established in the middle of the nineteenth century. One of the founders of the publishing house, Francis Turner Palgrave, served as the deputy private secretary of William Gladstone, who once served as British President and was known by his anti-Ottoman policies. Initially, it was working on linguistics and dictionaries. Especially after its merger with St. Martin's Press, a USA-based publishing house, in 2000, it has started to publish in the fields of social sciences such as political science, history, international relations, and it achieves a very prestigious position among the academic society in a very short time.

As for Payaslian, he is an academician with the title of assistant professor and he is working as the chair of the Armenian Genocide Studies and Modern Armenian

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28 Simon Payaslian, *United States Policy Toward the Armenian Question and the Armenian Genocide*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

History at Clark University in the USA.<sup>29</sup> After he earned his doctorate degree from Wayne State University in 1992, he published many items regarding the so-called Armenian genocide. The most striking one among these publications is *The Armenian Genocide, 1915-1923: A Handbook for Students and Teachers*, which can be evaluated as a product of the efforts to incorporate the Armenian genocide claims in the American education curriculum.<sup>30</sup>

The other two writers whose books we are going to analyze are Donald Bloxham and Merrill Peterson. The British academician Donald Bloxham earned his post-graduate degree from the Keele University and his doctorate degree from Southampton University. Then he began to work at the University of Edinburgh and at present he has been working as an instructor in the department of History in this university. Bloxham's field of expertise is holocaust studies and he has been the director in charge of the academic studies of a civil society organization, *Holocaust Educational Trust*. Among his publications, *The Holocaust: Critical Historical Approaches*,<sup>31</sup> which he wrote together with Tony Kushner and *Remembering Belsen: Eye-Witnesses Record the Liberation*,<sup>32</sup> which he wrote together with Ben Flanagan, are important. Both of these books are about the Second World War and the Jewish Holocaust.

The recent book of the writer that is going to be analyzed in this article is *The Great Game of Genocide: Imperialism, Nationalism and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians*.<sup>33</sup> The book is published by the Oxford University Press, which is accepted as one of the most prestigious publishers of the academic society, in 2005. The first publication of The Oxford University, which had been founded in 1096 and had been accepted as one of the oldest and well-known universities of Europe, was in 1478. However, as a publishing house that regularly prints books it was set up for the first time in 1668.<sup>34</sup> Today it is the biggest publisher of the world with the capacity of publishing 4500 academic books a year. Certainly such a big and well-known publisher has a huge distribution network. Its

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29 For detailed information see <http://www.clarku.edu/departments/government/facultybio/cfm?id=449&progid=168&>

30 Simon Payaslian, *The Armenian Genocide, 1915-1923: A Handbook for Students and Teachers*, Glendale, Armenian Cultural Foundation, 2001.

31 Donald Bloxham and Tony Kushner, *The Holocaust: Critical Historical Approaches*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2005.

32 Donald Bloxham and Ben Flanagan, *Remembering Belsen: Eye-Witnesses Record the Liberation*, London, Vallentine Mitchell and Co., 2005.

33 Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide: Imperialism, Nationalism and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005.

34 For detailed information see <http://www.oup.com/about/>

publications rapidly spread across the academic community. Therefore, it is so unfortunate that this publishing house has published a book that supports the Armenian genocide claims.

The last book that we are going to analyze is *Starving Armenians: America and the Armenian Genocide, 1915-1930 and After* by Merrill Peterson.<sup>35</sup> In fact, Merrill Peterson is not an academician who has studied topics such as holocaust and crimes against humanity. His field of expertise is American history and he made the editorship of a magnificent corpus of the writings of Thomas Jefferson.

The writer has begun to be interested in the Armenian issue when he went to Armenia in 1997 by a trip that was organized by a civil society organization, Peace Corps. Being influenced by this trip, he has written this book. At present Peterson is working as a professor at the University of Virginia in the Department of History and his book is published by the publishing house of this university, the Virginia University Press. This publishing house was established in 1963 and besides the academic books, it also publishes prestigious journals including *the Papers of George Washington*, *the Papers of James Madison*, *Studies in Early Modern German History*, and *Studies in Religion and Culture*.

Having briefly introduced these three writers, their studies and the publishers, in this part of the article the similarities and differences between their studies will be compared through a detailed analysis, and therefore the main points in this new trend in the Western literature will be stated. While doing this, such as we have done in the first part, we will make a critical analysis of these works by emphasizing the styles of the writers, the topics that they have dealt with, and how they have dealt with them.

### 1. Comparing the Styles of the Works

The four books that we are going to analyze have some commonalities in terms of style. Firstly, leaving aside the subjectivity and one-sidedness of the information given in these books, there is scientificity, which we have not observed in Fisk and Meyer. For all information that is given in the book, there is a meticulously given footnote system and all the sources are specified. Therefore, these books seem to be 'reliable' scientific sources for those readers who do not have a deeper knowledge on the subject.

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35 Merrill Peterson, *Starving Armenians: America and the Armenian Genocide, 1915-1930 and After*, Charlottesville, Virginia University Press, 2004.

A second feature that augments the ‘reliability’ of these books is that the writers have used some archive documents. Especially Payaslian and Peterson have largely made use of the American archives. Similarly, Bloxham has made use of the German and British archives. Just like the use of footnotes, to examine the archive documents is also a feature that augments the scientificity of the books.

Although these books can be formally regarded as academic works, they lack an objective style. They either do not pay attention to the sources that include the Turkish claims, or they slide over them by inadequate references to one or two books. While they frequently refer to the works of Armenian and Western writers who advocates for the Armenian claims such as Peter Balakian, Richard Hovanissian, Vahakn Dadrian, Yves Ternon and Turkish writers that supports the Armenian claims such as Taner Akçam, they ignore the works written on the Turkish claims.

Similarly, the Ottoman archives have also been ignored in the works of these writers. That these writers cannot read in Ottoman can be a reason; but especially after the Turkish History Foundation (*Türk Tarih Kurumu*) has translated the documents about the subject to English, not to make use of these documents is an indicator of a subjective approach. While the entire Western archives have been examined and the documents that support their claims have been carefully selected, it is inexcusable not the pay attention to the Ottoman archives.

A second indicator of this biased approach is that they intentionally used the Armenian names of some cities in Anatolia, which have been the Turkish cities for centuries. For instance, they used Harpert instead of Harput, Marzopan instead of Merzifon, and therefore they tried to emphasize that these regions are Armenian soil and the Turks are the invaders.

Thirdly, while the propaganda tools such as the Blue Book<sup>36</sup>, Memoirs of Ambassador Morgenthau<sup>37</sup>, and the telegrams that are attributed to Talat Pasha<sup>38</sup> are creditable books although the academicians have proved that they have no scientific validity, the reports that were prepared by General Harbord and Admiral Bristol in the First World War, which reject genocide, have been ignored and

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36 The original idenfication of this book that is known as Blue Book is as such: James Bryce ve Arnold Toynbee, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Ermenilere Yönelik Muamele, 1915-1916*, Çev. Ahmet Güner, İstanbul, Pencere Yayınları, 2005.

37 Henry Morgenthau, *Büyükelçi Morgenthau'nun Öyküsü*, çev. Atilla Tuygan, İstanbul, Belge Yayınları, 2005.

38 Aram Andonian, *The Memoirs of Naim Bey*, London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1920.

criticized as being one-sided. This contradictory attitude undermines the reliability of these books in large.

As for the style that used in writing the books, they are written with a less romantic style. Instead of the bloody and brutal language that is used in the books of Fisk and Meyer, a more realistic, simple and fluent language predominates. This style, which makes following the books very much easier, is a style that is expected from the academic works.

## 2. The Subjective and Incorrect Parts in the Books

Albeit the books that are analyzed here are accepted as books that are in accordance with scientific criteria, so many mistakes and a subjective approach draw the attention. This is because of the fact that one-sided archive documents are used in the books and the secondary sources that are used in the books are far from objectivity. In this part of the article, these mistakes and one-sided writings will be examined through examples.

To begin with Payaslian's book, it gives the information that nearly 20,000 Armenians were killed in Adana region just after Abdulhamid II had been toppled down in 1909.<sup>39</sup> No archive documents but two secondary sources were indicated as the source of this information. However, in the pages that this information was given, it is also written that in 1909 the relations between Armenians and the Turks were the best and that Dashnaksutiun, one of the Armenian organizations, engaged in a political alliance with the new administration.<sup>40</sup> This is quite contradictory. In March 1909, the relations between the Armenians and the Turks were in its highest level. If such a large-scale Armenian massacre happened, then how can the relations be in its highest level and how can Dashnaksutiun be in alliance with an administration that is responsible from the 'massacre'? The book cannot explain this huge contradiction; therefore, this claim remains, to put it mildly, as a ridiculous claim.

Another contradictory expression in the book is about the order given in 1915 for the Armenians living in Zeytun and around to hand over their arms to the state. According to the writer the Armenians did not obey this order and they had a 'legitimate' reason for not to obey. Payaslian states that if the order for disarmament had been issued for the Muslims, then the Armenians would have left their

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39 Simon Payaslian, *United States Policy...*, p. 20.

40 Simon Payaslian, *United States Policy...*, pp. 19-21.



arms.<sup>41</sup> This expression extremely contradictory; because the Zeytun Armenians rebelled and the security forces of the state asked the Zeytun Armenians for handing over their arms to the state in order to suppress the revolt without bloodshed. The question why an order for disarmament had not been issued for the Muslims appears in the book as an extremely meaningless question.

Another historical mistake that is made in almost every book that advocates for the Armenian discourse is the claim that the six provinces in the Eastern Anatolia (*Vilayet-i Sitte*) were promised to the Armenians by the Major Powers through various means since majority of the population of these provinces were composed of the Armenians. Payaslian also repeats this mistake.<sup>42</sup> However, in no period of Ottoman history Armenians were constituted the majority of the population in this region.<sup>43</sup>

Again another mistake that is intentionally made in these kinds of books is the claim that 1.5 million Armenians were subjected to genocide. It is disputable how this number has been come up with and from which scientific source it is taken. But when this number was pronounced, it suddenly accepted and it has become a symbol of Armenian genocide. However, the demographic statistical studies show that this number of 1.5 million is extremely exaggerated. This issue will be examined in detail in the third part of this article.

At this point, Payaslian gives an interesting detail. A report prepared in the USA about the situation of Armenian refugees mentions the existence of 'hundred of thousands of Armenians' in the Middle East.<sup>44</sup> If this report is a reliable one and the Armenians are living in the Middle East in such huge numbers, then the claims of massacres and mass murders that were allegedly happen in Deyr-i Zor are no longer valid. At the same time, the claim that 1.5 million Armenians were subjected to genocide becomes extremely controversial.

Bloxham's book is entirely built on contradictions. In explaining the aim of his book, Bloxham states importance of the international relations dimension, which has been neglected for a long time in analyzing the Armenian question, in order

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41 Simon Payaslian, *United States Policy...*, p. 71.

42 Simon Payaslian, *United States Policy...*, p. 68.

43 Justin McCarthy, 'The Population of the Ottoman Armenians', in *The Armenians in the Late Ottoman Period*, Ankara, The Turkish Historical Society for the Council Of Culture, Arts and Publications of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, 2001.

44 Justin McCarthy, 'The Population of...', p. 187.

to fully comprehend this issue<sup>45</sup>:

“The project from which the book evolved originally intended to focus upon Turkish denial of the Armenian genocide, and Western acceptance of that denial. But it soon became clear that denial and its accommodation could not be properly understood without knowledge of how the outside world related to the deeds of the Ottoman Empire during and immediately after the First World War itself. I then realized that, in turn, it was impossible properly to explain this pattern of interaction without reference to the vital earlier interaction between the Ottoman state and the ‘Great Powers in the ‘Armenian question’ up to and during the genocide.”

The writer, who attributes such an importance to the international dimension, states in the beginning of his book that dealing with this issue in international level causes to ignore the ‘fact’ that this crime is committed by the Ottoman Empire.<sup>46</sup> Although he states in the preamble of his book that the Armenian question cannot be understood without understanding the international dimension, he then points out the ‘drawbacks’ of these methods. This is the most important indicator that this book is full of contradictions.

This is not the only contradiction in Bloxham’s book. There is a great dilemma in the image of an Armenian that is presented in the book. Bloxham could not decide on to present the Armenians whether as the ‘oppressed victims’ wailing under the ‘oppression’ of the Ottoman state or as the ‘revolutionary heroes’ who ‘successfully’ struggles against the state; and he used both of them in his book. Therefore, he has come up with contradictory expressions in the book. Meanwhile he lets the sentences slip out that the Armenians rebelled against the Ottoman Empire, cooperated with the Russians and other Western states; that the Allied Forces used the Armenian issue as a propaganda tool; and even that the Armenians killed the Turks. The following quotations are extremely striking:

“...[T]he first flier of the ARF declared its intention to ‘fight until its last drop of blood for the liberation of the fatherland’. The third flier claimed the ARF would set for itself ‘the exact hour of the common uprising in Turkish Armenia’”<sup>47</sup>

45 Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game*..., p. 7.

46 Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game*..., pp. 18-19.

47 Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game*..., p. 50.

“Many of the demonstrators [who had participated in the 1895 Kumkapı incidents] were armed and were obviously expecting trouble...”<sup>48</sup>

“[After the Balkan Wars]...Armenians inside and outside the empire felt free to appeal again to the Great Powers, and Russia was only too happy to avail itself of an opportunity to reestablish its imperial influence in the Ottoman dominions”<sup>49</sup>

“International factors, the interaction between Russia and Armenian nationalists particularly, continued to be important until well into the First World War in influencing a developing CUP [Committee of Union and Progress] policy”<sup>50</sup>

“Vorontsov-Dashkov’s [Russian governor-general of Caucasus and military commander] opportunistic ‘plan for revolt among Turkish Armenians’ foresaw the creation of Armenian bands under military command in the Caucasus...under the authority of the Russian military and the Choi consulate...Five volunteer battalions were consequently formed – two were added later – with the support of the ARF-dominated Armenian National Bureau in Tiflis to fight alongside the Russian Army”<sup>51</sup>

“During the Russian advance into eastern Anatolia at the beginning of 1916, vengeful Armenian forces...murdered many Muslims, as testified to in the British sources.”<sup>52</sup>

“In Allied rhetoric the murder of Armenians gave them grounds for special consideration in the redrawing of the Near Eastern map. In reality, however, it merely served during the war as a useful propaganda tool for the Entente”<sup>53</sup>

All these quotations prove that the Armenians are not ‘innocent victims’ such as accentuated in the book at all. In short, the Armenians rebelled in order to establish a state independent from the Ottoman state; they turned this rebellion into supporting Russia during the First World War; and the Ottoman state subjected the Armenian population to deportation in order to prevent this betrayal and to ensure order. This simple truth is so bare and correct that it leaks to even the most subjective books.

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48 Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game...*, p. 52.

49 Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game...*, p. 64.

50 Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game...*, p. 67.

51 Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game...*, p. 73.

52 Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game...*, p. 100.

53 Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game...*, p. 134.

Bloxham's discourse of the 'oppressed victim' becomes so exaggerated that the murders committed by the Armenians are either ignored or claimed that they are exaggerated.<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, the massacres committed by the French East Legion in Çukurova region<sup>55</sup> and even the assassination of Turkish diplomats by ASALA in 1970s are tried to be legitimated.<sup>56</sup>

Another incorrect claim of Bloxham is that after the Ottoman-Russian War in 1877-78 the migrants from Caucasus and the Balkans were intentionally settled in the Eastern Anatolia as a measure that would threaten the security of life and property of the Armenians.<sup>57</sup> He based this claim on the Armenian writer As-tourian's book. Here, the aim is to show that 'genocide' is not an arrangement of 1915 but in fact an Armenian 'genocide' had been planned since the end of the nineteenth century. Since the writer cannot support this claim with an authentic document, he could not go beyond having mentioned it and he then passed over it slightly.

As for the Peterson's book, the fact that Peterson is not a specialist on the Armenian issue and he began to examine this issue after his trip to Armenia causes him to make extremely amateurish mistakes in his book. The major one is Peterson's definition of 'historical Armenia'. According to this definition, almost half of the present Turkish territory is regarded as the historical soil of Armenia.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, there are some claims in the book that makes it necessary to question the scientificity of the book such as the mother of Abdulhamid II was an Armenian and when the sultan had learned this he became an enemy of the Armenians since he did not deemed it suitable for himself to be a 'half-Armenian'.<sup>59</sup>

Another contradictory expression in the book is about the suppression of the 1909 Zeytun revolt. Since there is no mention of any revolt in the book, the Armenian rebels, who were killed during the suppression of these revolts, are presented as the innocents who became subjected to a massacre without rhyme or reason. However, probably because he also could not explain the death of Armenians, he exhibits this contradictory manner by saying that 'No body can exactly explain who or what had given a start to this massacre'.<sup>60</sup>

54 Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game...*, p. 117.

55 Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game...*, p. 141.

56 Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game...*, p. 219.

57 Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game...*, p. 47.

58 Merrill Peterson, *Starving Armenians...*, p. 17.

59 Merrill Peterson, *Starving Armenians...*, pp. 22-23.

60 Merrill Peterson, *Starving Armenians...*, p. 28.

In short, albeit they are accepted as scientific works, the three books that are analyzed here have to be questioned since they do not abide by one of the most important requirements of scientificity, the principle of subjectivity.

### 3. The Activities of American Missionaries

One of the most important tendencies that are seen in the books written on the Armenian issue in the Western literature is re-assessment of the activities of American missionaries. As it is known, the American missionaries engaged in missionary activities especially in the Eastern Anatolia from the beginning of the nineteenth century and they carried out intensive work to convert the Armenians to Protestantism. In the Turkish literature on the Armenian issue, these missionary activities are generally interpreted as the activities that encouraged the Armenian revolts. Those who support the Armenian genocide claims have frequently used these extremely biased reports of the missionaries as the evidences of the so-called genocide. One of the most important examples of this is the memoirs of Henry Morgenthau, who had served as the US Ambassador to Istanbul in 1913-1916. The mistakes and the subjective style in this book, which is said to comprise of the eye-witness accounts of those who had survived from the so-called genocide, has later been criticized by the works of Heath Lowry.<sup>61</sup> At the end, the missionary activities have been used to the utmost in order to support the Armenian genocide claims by both the Armenian writers and by the Western writers who advocates for the Armenian claims.

However, when we examine the literature in recent years, there appear serious criticisms directed towards the American missionaries. The role of the American missionary activities in the Armenian question that has become chronic has been mentioned even in the books that support the genocide claims. For instance, by referring to the memoirs of Sir Edwin Pears,<sup>62</sup> who was a jurist and journalist that had lived in Turkey for long years, Peterson clearly states in his book that the missionaries carried out activities that ‘instigated political agitation’ in the places which were intensely populated by the Armenians in the Eastern Anatolia.<sup>63</sup>

Payaslian has written that these Protestant missionaries were used by the USA

61 Heath Lowry, *The Story Behind Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*, İstanbul, The Isis Press, 1990.

62 Sir Edwin Pears, *Forty Years in Constantinople: The Recollections of Sir Edwin Pears, 1873-1915*, London, H. Jenkins, 1916.

63 Merrill Peterson, *Starving Armenians...*, p. 20.

as ‘economic agents’ rather than their religious duties<sup>64</sup>:

“The American Protestant missionary community became instrumental in the expansion of American commercial interests as well. Active in evangelical work in the Ottoman Empire since the early nineteenth century, missionary workers traveled with American merchants and the Navy and engaged in explorations throughout the region collecting ‘commercial intelligence’ and serving as the eyes and ears of the United States”

In short, it is clearly indicated in these lines that the real purpose of the Protestant missionaries was not to spread Protestantism in the region and that they used their religious identities as a screen to disguise their political and economical intelligence activities.

Moreover, Payaslian states that the missionary activities were not local and minor and that the American Protestant missionary activities only in the Ottoman Empire were equivalent to the 25 percent of the missionary activities all over the world. This complex missionary network was composed of 12 stations, 270 liaison offices, 145 missionaries, 811 local workers, 114 churches with the community of nearly 48,000 people, and the most important of all 1266 schools that educated nearly 60,000 students.<sup>65</sup> How such a complex network was permitted to be formed in the Ottoman Empire constitutes another research topic.

Another criticism directed to the Protestant missionaries was the fact that they approached to the Armenians completely with a colonial mentality. In other words, the missionaries, who regarded themselves as civilized people and the representatives of the Western civilization, did not hesitate to describe Armenians as uncivilized and barbaric peoples. Payaslian indicates this colonial mentality with the following word<sup>66</sup>:

“During the larger part of the nineteenth century, the American missionaries showed little respect toward the Armenians and believed them to be ‘nominal Christians’ in ‘a state of deplorable ignorance and degradation’...”

Again according to Payaslian, a Protestant missionary, who was going from Kars to Yerevan, defined Armenians as dishonest, lecherous, ignorant peoples

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<sup>64</sup> Simon Payaslian, *United States Policy...*, p. 10.

<sup>65</sup> Simon Payaslian, *United States Policy...*, p. 11.

<sup>66</sup> Simon Payaslian, *United States Policy...*, p. 13.

who were managed by drunkard priests, had a low-profile character, and desired money greedily.<sup>67</sup>

Majority of Armenians certainly reacted against these missionaries who approached them as such and they perceived the missionaries as a threat to their existence. According to these Armenians, who interpreted the main aim of these missionaries to seize the authority of the Armenian Church, the real target of these missionaries was to carry out the 'divide and rule' policy.<sup>68</sup>

Meanwhile, Peterson gives a very significant detail about the missionary schools. According to Peterson, the missionary schools were in fact the schools where the religious compulsion and fanaticism were exercised at the highest level. The religious pressure that was exerted to the Muslim students who were accepted to the American missionary schools is an example of this. For instance in 1917 the director of Izmir International College Alexander MacLachan ordered the Muslim students either to attend the chapel of the college regularly or leave the school. There occurred serious conflicts between the school administration and the students who did not obey this order.<sup>69</sup> The existence of such a detail in a book on the Armenian issue gives an idea about how the Protestant missionaries are criticized.

In short, in recent books written on the Armenian issue in the Western literature it is observed that the missionary activities have been harshly criticized. While initially the missionaries were presented as the heroes, who saved the Armenian society from the repression of the Ottoman Empire, it is seriously criticized in this new literature influenced by the archive documents and post-colonial approach that these missionaries had regarded themselves as the representatives of civilization and defined Armenians as an uncivilized society.

#### **4. Criticizing the Role of America in the Armenian Issue**

In relation with criticizing the activities of the missionaries, another general tendency is criticizing the USA and the activities of its Ambassador to Istanbul, Henry Morgenthau. The writers that we examine argue that USA remained indifferent to the massacres of Armenians during the First World War and that the efforts of Ambassador Morgenthau were insincere.

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<sup>67</sup> Simon Payaslian, *United States Policy...*, p. 13.

<sup>68</sup> Simon Payaslian, *United States Policy...*, p. 13. pp. 13-14.

<sup>69</sup> Merrill Peterson, *Starving Armenians...*, p. 56.

Payaslian harshly criticizes especially that the USA did not intervene while the Armenians were being deported in 1915. According to the writer, in the middle of 1915 there occurred a pro-Armenian environment in the USA with the impact of the missionary reports and this generated an influential pressure of the public opinion that the USA should play an effective role to stop the deportation. However, the Secretary of State Robert Lansing opposed to an attempt for the Armenian issue on the level of the Ottoman government. Payaslian mentions two reasons for this attitude. Firstly, Lansing opposed to an intervention unless the American citizens living in the Ottoman Empire and their assets were in danger. Secondly, such an intervention would bring costs more than the benefits for the national interests and the security of the USA.<sup>70</sup> According to Payaslian, this attitude of the USA signifies nothing more than endangering the lives of the Armenians for the sake of its own political and economical interests.

The criticisms of the USA necessarily continue with criticisms of the US Ambassador to Istanbul, Henry Morgenthau. Both Peterson and Payaslian uttered in the beginning of their books that the activities of Morgenthau were not sincere. According to both of the writers, since he was a close colleague of President Woodrow Wilson, Morgenthau in fact was expecting to have important posts in the future cabinets by standing by his side in the presidential elections. It is for this reason that he at first refused a post that would keep him at distance from the USA such as ambassadorship in Istanbul, but then he accepted it through the agency of respectable people.<sup>71</sup>

According to Peterson, the most important duty of the American Embassy in the Ottoman Empire was to support and protect the missionaries, who were US citizens. However, especially during the First World War the Embassy put the emphasis on the protection and development of the concessions for the railroads and oil in parallel with the development of economic relations between the USA and the Ottoman Empire; consequently, whenever it is necessary, it could give the secondary importance to supporting the missionary activities, which constituted a problem between its relations with the Ottoman Empire.<sup>72</sup>

Peterson states that Ambassador Morgenthau pursued such a hypocritical policy. Likewise, when the presidential elections were coming in 1916, Morgenthau resigned hurriedly and returned to the USA from Istanbul. Peterson explains

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70 Simon Payaslian, *United States Policy...*, p. 77.

71 Simon Payaslian, *United States Policy...*, p. 36; Peterson, *Starving Armenians...*, p. 1.

72 Merrill Peterson, *Starving Armenians...*, p. 2.



this development with the following words: “[Morgenthau] wanted to work for the re-election of the President Wilson. He had believed that nothing would be more important than this in the international politics.”<sup>73</sup> In short, a rank that he would receive following the re-election of Wilson had been more important for Morgenthau than the fate and the future of the Armenians.

Payaslian states that Morgenthau’s priority was not the Armenians but the economic interests of the United States. He presents the meeting of Morgenthau with Talat Pasha in December 22, 1913 as the evidence of this. According to this, Talat Pasha invited Morgenthau to give some advices on how he could attract the US investors by traveling the Ottoman Empire, and the next day of this appetizing offer he sent a telegram to the Secretary of State, Bryan, stating that the Standard Oil Company should be encouraged to give a credit of 500,000 Ottoman liras to the Ottoman Empire.<sup>74</sup> It is obvious that the Interior Minister of the Ottoman Empire, who was blamed for the Armenian massacres, could be appreciated by the Ambassador Morgenthau in the presence of an attractive offer, even when there was not any decision for deportation.

Payaslian mentions about a great dilemma that on the one hand Morgenthau became closer to the Ottoman government for the sake of the economic interests of the United States while on the other hand he collided with the Ottoman government for the continuation of the ‘civilizing’ activities of the missionaries.<sup>75</sup> Likewise, even Morgenthau was aware of his contradictory attitude and he states in his memoirs that this was hypocrisy: “I am a successful hypocrite that has been playing a role in this society. I do not know how long I can keep up this.”<sup>76</sup>

After all it is necessary to open parenthesis here and state that Payaslian and Peterson has differentiated between the politicians and the civil society organizations. Both writers have appreciated especially the activities of American Near East Relief for the Armenians while they are criticizing the hypocritical attitudes of the American politicians.

In conclusion, in the literature on the Armenian issue an anti-American attitude becomes increasingly apparent besides the criticisms of the missionary activities. Especially the fact that the USA has not recognized the so-called genocide

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73 Merrill Peterson, *Starving Armenians...*, p 11.

74 Simon Payaslian, *United States Policy...*, p. 38.

75 Simon Payaslian, *United States Policy...*, p. 42.

76 Simon Payaslian, *United States Policy...*, p. 45.

can be pointed out as the factor, which augments these criticisms. The writers who advocates for the Armenian issue more and more emphasize the allusion that the USA also has a responsibility in the Armenian genocide.

### **5. Comparing the Jewish Holocaust with Armenian Genocide**

Just like in Fisk and Meyer but in a more outstanding style the Armenian deportation is compared with the Jewish Holocaust by the Nazi's in these books and an effort has been made that this crime will not be delimited to the Germans and will be applicable to the Turks. Especially Bloxham's book is full of an effort to search for these types of similarities.

In page 79 of his book, Bloxham compares Bahaeddin Shakir with Heinrich Himmler. He compares Bahaeddin Shakir's gathering volunteers to fight against the Armenians with Himmler's activities in 1941-42 near the Russian borders; therefore, he tries to match the Armenian genocide with the Jewish holocaust by claiming in between the lines that the Ottoman administrators engaged in activities similar to the Nazi rulers.<sup>77</sup> As a matter of fact he clearly states in the further parts of his book that this comparison is a correct one:

"As to the popular comparison of the Holocaust and the Armenian genocide, this is perfectly acceptable on historical grounds. The episodes have important similarities and equally significant differences, and highlighting both is the aim of comparative study."<sup>78</sup>

In short, Bloxham has also fallen into this error that has commonly been made and he has regarded the Armenian deportation and the Jewish holocaust as equal. Yet, these two issues are so dissimilar both from the point of their positions in the international system and from the point of their methods and processes that it is impossible to make any comparisons.

### **6. The Nasturian, Assyrian, Caldean Genocide Claims and the Claim that Atatürk Carried on with the Armenian Genocide**

Beside the Armenian genocide claims, another common point in the books that we examine in this part of the article is that they frequently utter the claim that the Turks put genocide into practice for other Christian peoples living in the

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<sup>77</sup> Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game...*, p. 79.

<sup>78</sup> Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game...*, p. 230.

Ottoman Empire. The most important reason of this is to indicate the allegation that the Turks have a 'genocide culture'; therefore, to emphasize that the so-called Armenian genocide is not the only example of this issue. Another point emphasized by these writers is to accuse Mustafa Kemal and the newly-established Republic of Turkey with 'genocide' by claiming that the 'genocide' of these peoples was carried on by the Kemalist regime itself.

For instance, Peterson mentions in his book about Pontus genocide ordered by Mustafa Kemal and he states that nearly 360,000 Greeks were killed. Besides, he has written that two-thirds of the Assyrian and Nestorian population was subjected to genocide.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, by stating that Mustafa Kemal was an officer who had ascended within the Society of Union and Progress (*İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*), Peterson gives the impression that the mentality of the Society, in other words the 'genocide culture', endured.<sup>80</sup>

Another method used by Peterson to accuse Mustafa Kemal with committing genocide crime is to assert the claim that the fire in Izmir, which started after the Turkish armies had entered Izmir, was a genocide planned by the Turks themselves. According to Peterson, as a result of this fire, which had set by the Turkish army itself, nearly 100,000 Greeks were either dead or killed.<sup>81</sup>

Similarly, Bloxham also mentions that the Greeks and the Kurds were subjected to genocide by the new regime.<sup>82</sup> Such as Peterson, Bloxham claims that the Turkish armies carried out a huge Greek slaughter after they had arrived at Izmir.<sup>83</sup>

Surely, these claims are so mistaken, one-sided and ridiculous that they cannot be taken as serious. Nevertheless, it will be useful to mention with a few sentences how meaningless they are. First of all, the Pontus genocide claim is nothing more than the suppression of the uprising of the Pontus Greeks who rebelled during the First World War and began to slaughter the Turkish population living in the coast of the Black Sea. The claim that the Turks performed Greek genocide in Western Anatolia exhibits the ignorance of the writers besides being unreasonable. Even an ordinary student of history knows that the Greeks had invaded

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79 Merrill Peterson, *Starving Armenians...*, p. 124.

80 Merrill Peterson, *Starving Armenians...*, p. 121.

81 Merrill Peterson, *Starving Armenians...*, p. 130.

82 Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game...*, p. 97.

83 Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game...*, p. 165.

Western Anatolia, the retreating Greek army at the end of the subsequent wars subjugated the Turkish population in the Western Anatolia to a huge decimation, and the Izmir fire was set by the Greeks themselves to ensure the intervention of the Allied Forces.

The claim that the Greek population was expelled from the Turkish territory is similarly mistaken. The Greek population living in Turkey and the Turkish population living in Greece moved through a population exchange between Turkey and Greece in accordance with the Lausanne Treaty. This event is most probably the most systematic population exchange throughout the history. In short, there is neither an expulsion of the Greeks nor a Greek genocide.

In conclusion, it should be reiterated that although these tree books can be regarded as scientific to some extent, they create serious gaps and questions marks in the minds of the reader and fall into contradictions and historical errors as a result of the intensive biased manner.

### **C. THIRD TENDENCY: SCIENTIFIC AND OBJECTIVE DISCOURSE**

The last tendency that is observed among the works written on the Armenian issue in the Western literature in recent years is the type of literature, which is both compatible with the scientific criteria and possesses quite an objective style. This type of literature is trying to search reality of the Armenian genocide claims and to discover the truth by means of a scientific analysis. For this reason, the historical reality is reformulated by examining the claims through a critical eye and evaluating them in the light of the historical documents. The works of Prof. Dr. Guenter Lewy and Edward Erickson, who have been the representatives of this new tendency, will be the examined in this part.

Again, to begin with the writers first, Prof. Dr. Guenter Lewy was born in 1923 in Germany, and when he was just ten the Nazi government came to power. Then a period of enormous repression and violence prevailed Germany. In 1939, just before the First World War, Prof. Lewy migrated first to Palestine and then to the USA; however, he lost some of his relatives in the holocaust carried out by the Nazi government. The painful experiences of Prof. Lewy's childhood and early adulthood are very important since they constitute the milestone in his academic life.

He commenced his undergraduate education in the USA at the City Col-

lege of New York, and later he obtained his masters' and doctorate degree from the University of Colombia. He started his academic career at the University of Colombia in 1953 and he has been pursuing his career at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst since 1964. He is an expert on genocide and other crimes against humanity.

As for the works of Prof. Lewy, in his book *The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies*<sup>84</sup>, which is one of the most important of his book about the crimes against humanity, he talks about the atrocities against the Gypsies by the Nazi regime. Why and how the gypsies transformed to a hated minority by the Nazi regime despite they did not have any economic and intellectual power in Germany when compared with the Jewish society is examined in this work. In another book, which is titled as *Catholic Church and Nazi Germany*<sup>85</sup> and has excited great interest in Europe and America, Prof. Lewy has analyzed the role of the Catholic Church in holocaust by the Nazis. In this context, how Christianity, which defines itself as the religion of compassion or at least supposed to be so, supported the ideology of 'otherizing'. In the book, how the German Catholic priests supported Hitler's ideology and the notion of 'Aryan race' is explained through striking quotations and illustrations.

The book of Guenter Lewy that will be examined in this article is titled as *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey: A Disputed Genocide*<sup>86</sup>. In this book, Lewy questions many various Armenian genocide claims and the tries to discover the truths.

Another writer that we will examine in this part of the article is Edward J. Erickson. He is a retired officer of American Army and a member of an American think-tank called *International Research Associates*. Among the works of Erickson, who has been specialized on Ottoman History, *Defeat in Detail: The Ottoman Army in the Balkans, 1912-1913*<sup>87</sup>, where he analyses the defeat of the Ottoman army in Balkan Wars, and *Ordered to Die: A History of the Ottoman Army in the First World War*<sup>88</sup>, where he analyses the Ottoman warfare during the First World

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84 Guenter Lewy, *The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000.

85 Guenter Lewy, *Catholic Church and Nazi Germany*, Cambridge, De Capo Press, 2000.

86 Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey: A Disputed Genocide*, Salt Lake City, University of Utah Press, 2005.

87 Edward J. Erickson, *Defeat in Detail: The Ottoman Army in the Balkans, 1912-1913*, Westport, Greenwood Publishers, 2003.

88 Edward J. Erickson, *Ordered to Die: A History of the Ottoman Army in the First World War*, London, Praeger Publishers, 2000.

War, can be mentioned. The work of Erickson that we will examine in this article is his article titled as 'Armenian Massacres: New Records Undercut Old Blame, Reexamining History'<sup>89</sup> which is published in *Middle East Quarterly*.

Such as the books analyzed in the previous part, both of the works that we are going to analyze in this part can be regarded as scientific in terms of their methodologies and their references to the archive documents. However, the scientificity of these books stems not only from their methodologies but also from their objectivity. While the books that have been analyzed in the previous part refer almost only to the books and archive documents, which support the Armenian genocide claims, Lewy and Erickson have used simultaneously the Western archives and the Ottoman archives, the sources that support the Armenian claims and the sources that support the Turkish counter-claims. Therefore, they have created quite objective publications. When evaluated with regard to the style this objectivity draws the attention immediately. In short, in these two works both the Turkish and the Armenian claims are analyzed from a critical point of view. Moreover, instead of an unfruitful debate such as 'the genocide exists or not', what had really happened in the years 1915 – 1916 has tried to be clarified.

Lewy has analyzed basically the Turkish and Armenian claims separately in his book; then in the light of the archive documents he has criticized the parts that he found mistaken or subjective. The main argument of Lewy is that the Armenian issue has become a political issue by being rapidly departed from the historical perspective, and this has radicalized the claims of the two sides of the issue, the Turks and the Armenians.

Lewy has been criticizing the Turkish thesis by states that the Armenian massacres are underestimated and different dimensions of this great tragedy are ignored. He also has been criticizing the Armenian thesis by emphasizing that the Armenians exaggerate what had happened, that they try to present themselves as innocent victims, and that a great many of the Armenian claims are not historically true. Within this framework, some claims that he has made a comparative analysis are as follows:

1. The claim that the Armenians constitute the majority of the population in Eastern Anatolia, especially in the Six Provinces: Lewy has proved in the light of the archive documents that this claim is not true, and that the Armenians

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89 Edward J. Erickson, 'Armenian Massacres: New Records Undercut Old Blame, Reexamining History', *Middle East Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 3, Summer 2006.

did not constitute majority of the population in any region of Anatolia even in the period that they had the most dense population. In this regard, he emphasized the inconsistency of the 'historical Armenian' claims.<sup>90</sup>

2. The claim that Abdulhamid II had been hostile to the Armenians from the beginning and he gave the order of the 1895-96 Armenian 'massacres': by making quotations from James Bryce, one of the writers of the Blue Book on which the Armenian claims are depended in large, Lewy demonstrates that Abdulhamid II had no hostility towards the Armenians before the Treaty of Berlin.<sup>91</sup> However, he had to take some measures in order to suppress the secessionist activities that gained momentum after the Treaty of Berlin. Nevertheless, any document concerning the order of Abdulhamid II for Armenian decimation has not been able to found until today.<sup>92</sup>
3. The claim that the Turkish nationalism that had been developed since the beginning of the twentieth century was effective in the Armenian genocide: Many writers, who support the Armenian claims, think that the Turkish nationalism, which was developed by the writers such as Ziya Gökalp, Yusuf Akçura etc., caused ethnic cleansing. Lewy asserts that this idea is an exaggerated one, which was produced as a result of a strained interpretation that lacks any scientific ground.<sup>93</sup>
4. The claim of 'Ten Orders' issued by the Society of Union and Progress: Lewy demonstrates in the light of the British archives that this document which appears in the publications of a leading supporter of the Armenian claims, Vahakn Dadrian, and is claimed to have ordered the decimation of the Armenian nation to the provincial offices of the Society of Union and Progress, is not an authentic document.<sup>94</sup>
5. The claim in the book of Mevlanzade Rıfat'ın titled as The Insight of the Turkish Revolution (*Türk İnkılabının İç Yüzü*) that Union and Progress had planned an Armenian genocide: Another source frequently referred again by those writers who advocate for the Armenian view is the book of Mevlanzade Rıfat in which he put forward that the Armenian genocide had been planed before-

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90 Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres...*, pp. 3-4.

91 Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres...*, p. 9.

92 Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres...*, p. 33.

93 Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres...*, p. 46.

94 Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres...*, p. 50.

hand in a secret meeting of Union and Progress to which he had attended. By evaluated various scientific studies, Lewy emphasizes that Mevlanzade Rıfat had never been in the central committees of the Union and Progress, therefore he could not attend to the secret meetings; besides, he had been adopted a manner against the Union and Progress, therefore his writings are not valid.<sup>95</sup>

6. The claim that the Documents of Naim-Andonyan and the Blue Book are reliable sources: It is demonstrated in the light of the archive documents that the Naim-Andonyan documents which are included the telegrams attributed to the Interior Minister of the deportation period, Talat Pasha, where it is claimed that Pasha had ordered the killing of Armenians, and the Blue Book which is claimed to discuss the statements of the genocide witnesses are not reliable sources.<sup>96</sup>
7. The claim that the members of the Union and Progress admitted the genocide in the Courts of War formed after the First World War: By relying on the statements of Aram Andonyan himself, who prepared the Naim-Andonyan documents, Lewy expresses that these courts behave with political considerations, not with the judicial ones; therefore the judgments were not reliable.<sup>97</sup>
8. The claims on the role of the Special Organization (Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa) in the Armenian genocide: According to Lewy, the existing information about this organization, which had assumed some secret missions during the First World War, shows that it had not been established with the purpose of suppressing the Armenians.<sup>98</sup> Lewy refers that the claims opposite to this are simplistic rumors, which are not based on archive documents.<sup>99</sup>
9. The claim that 1.5 million Armenians were subjected to genocide: Lewy proves with scientific methods that this claim is not in line with the historical realities and the archive documents. Even Toynbee, who is one of the writers of the Blue Book, gives the number of 600,000. This number has intentionally been increased over the years. The number of losses given by Lewy on the base of the archive documents remains at 642,000. The Armenians who were dead because of natural reasons such as illness and starvation is also included in this

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95 Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres...*, pp. 52-53.

96 Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres...*, pp. 67, 137-139.

97 Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres...*, p. 77.

98 Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres...*, pp. 82-89.

99 Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres...*, p. 88.



number.<sup>100</sup>

Lewy not only refutes these claims in his book, but he also argues that the documents on the Armenian issue have to be analyzed with a critical point of view. In this regard, he emphasized that the careful evaluation of especially the reports of the missionaries and the statements of those who escaped from the so-called genocide is a proper approach. He demonstrates through the examples how these reports and statements were written up in an exaggerated style and full of prejudices, and even the events, which had never taken place, were written as if they had happened.<sup>101</sup>

In the light of all these data, he puts forward that the things happened in the years 1915-16 cannot be regarded as genocide unless there is a document in the archives which presents indisputable evidences that genocide was realized, that the decision for deportation taken by the Ottoman State during the war is not a previously-planned genocide on its own, but only the implementation of deportation was not performed properly due to the war conditions and the poor and incompetent diplomacy of the Ottoman administration; for this reason the tragic Armenians losses were experienced.

As for Edward Erickson, in his article that we examine he lays the stress upon the role of the Special Organization in the Armenian issue, which has been one of the most frequently-mentioned points by those who claim the 1915 events was genocide.

The prominent historians and writers of the Armenian Diaspora are trying to link the Ottoman government with the Armenians deaths by claiming that Special Organization was a paramilitary organization which played a key role in the so-called Armenian genocide. For example, the Armenian historian Vahakn Dadrian implies that the Ottoman State is directly responsible from the Armenian massacres by claiming that Lieutenant Stange himself, who had been a German artillery officer serving in the Ottoman army, organized the Armenian massacres. The article by Erickson utters that this claim is not complying with the historical reality and in fact the archive documents has disproved it.

Following the introductory part where he evaluates the Ottoman military organization in Anatolia during the First World War, Erickson's article continues with a lengthy part where he mentions the role of the Lieutenant Stange's troop

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100 Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres...*, pp. 240-241.

101 Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres...*, pp. 142-149.

in the Ottoman-Russian battles. According to the writer, the aim of Special Organization was not to kill the Armenians but to arrange activities, which would prevent the Russian armies to move ahead. In this regard, any authentic record that will demonstrate the direct relation between the Armenian deaths and this organization, which performed the duties such as to create disorder in the backlines of the Russian army, to organize uprisings by giving the Muslims in Russia an organizational structure, to deactivate the routes for logistics, has not been able to be determined. The article ends with a conclusion, which indicates that the details are important in discussing the historical issues, and that the details can become clear only by searching into the archive documents.

In conclusion, the article by Edward Erickson is extremely important since it shines a light on a controversial aspect of the Armenian issue. Since he utters these claims by basing them on the archive documents contrary to many Armenian writers, his article is highly consistent and convincing. The tables in the article provide sources for the historians by displaying the structure of the Ottoman military organization in the Eastern Anatolia. Shortly, Erickson's article can be regarded as a serious contribution to the literature since it not only corrects a mistake frequently made in the literature, but it also fills an important gap.

## CONCLUSION

This article is written to examine the recent tendencies in the Western academic society through a comparative analysis of the recent works on the Armenian issue that draw attention in the Western literature, and to display how the Armenian issue has been reflected in the Western public opinion. In this regard, some interesting elements draw the attention in this literature, which can be summarized in three tendencies that are the unscientific subjective discourse, partially scientific subjective discourse, and scientific objective discourse.

Above all, the Western academic society and the Armenian Diaspora have now been aware that analyzing Armenian issue through an outdated, romantic style that lacks scientific qualifications can no longer raise supporters for the Armenian views. For this reason, Diaspora has been trying hard for the formation of a literature on this issue where a particular scientific style is used but the Armenian views will not be compromised. In this regard, archives have begun to be used more but the documents have been subjected to an unequal treatment while this has been done. While there has been many attributions made to the documents

that are supporting the Armenian views, those who are advocating for the opposite of these views are ignored. This has led to emergence of extremely subjective works, which consequently even falls into historical mistakes from time to time or includes a contradictory expression.

Another method of making the Armenian views academically reliable is printing the works on this issue in the most prestigious publishing houses of the Western academic society. Therefore, these works not only reach more people thanks to the wide distribution networks of these publishing houses but also perceived as more trustworthy works by the Western public opinion.

Contrary to this quantitative and qualitative development in the literature that supports the Armenian views, there is a setback in the works written in Turkey. Although the number of publications that supports the Turkish views have increased, it is possible to say that their quality has been diminished. The overlooked aspects of the Armenian issue have not been searched; instead the points that have been repeated for many years are expressed. Unfortunately, significant works cannot be produced apart from insufficient number of academic works on this subject.

However, more serious than this, the academic works published in Turkey and advocate Turkish claims are hardly known in the West. These academic works, which are using the Ottoman archive that has been neglected by the Western literature, have either never been translated into English, or cannot able to reach the Western public opinion even if they are translated. The solution for this to ensure these works to be published by the prestigious publications houses of the West, just like the writers who advocate for the Armenian claims do. Thus, a greater portion of the Western public opinion can reach these works and a more balanced literature development on the subject of the Armenian issue can be achieved.

