

AGOS AND ARMENIAN COMMUNITY: AN INQUIRY ON THE
REFORMULATION OF ARMENIAN IDENTITY IN TURKEY

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Prof. Dr.
Meliha Altunışık
Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Prof. Dr. Ayşe Ayata
Head of Department

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Assoc. Prof. Dr.
Aslı Çırakman Deveci
Supervisor

Examining Committee Members

Prof. Dr. Feride Acar (METU, ADM) _____

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Aslı Çırakman Deveci (METU, ADM) _____

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Cem Deveci (METU, ADM) _____

Asst. Prof. F. Umut Beşpınar (METU, SOC) _____

Assoc. Prof. Dr. İlker Aytürk (Bilkent, POLS) _____

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name, Last name : Yasemin Koç Gabrielsen

Signature :

ABSTRACT

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Koç Gabrielsen, Yasemin

Ph.D., Department of Political Science and Public Administration

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Aslı Çırakman Deveci

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This study presents the process of identity reformulation of Armenian community in Turkey through analyzing the Armenian-Turkish newspaper *Agos* between February 1996 and May 2014. This study explores Armenian identity in social constructivist terms treating *Agos* as a political text. In this inquiry, first, analytical elements of Armenian identity in Turkey are determined as civic life and political representation, 1915 narratives and collective memory, and religion. Secondly, *Agos*'s reflection of Armenian identity in Turkey is analyzed in reference to those identity elements. The analysis is divided into four time periods. Key conclusions drawn from the analysis point to the evolution of the Armenian identity toward a more heterogeneous structure. The main conclusion of this study is the active role and importance of the debates structured around Islamized Armenians in the reformulation process of Armenian identity in Turkey as reflected

through *Agos*. The study highlights the need to treat the Armenian identity and community in hybrid terms basing this argument on the role of Islamized Armenians on the Armenian identity's reformulation process in Turkey.

Keywords: *Agos*, Armenian community in Turkey, Armenian identity, Islamized Armenians.

ÖZ

AGOS VE ERMENİ KİMLİĞİ: TÜRKİYE’DE ERMENİ KİMLİĞİNİN YENİDEN YAPILANDIRILMASI ÜZERİNE BİR ARAŞTIRMA

Koç Gabrielsen, Yasemin

Doktora, Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi: Yard. Doç. Aslı Çırakman Deveci

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Bu çalışma, Türkiye’deki Ermeni toplumunun şubat 1996 ve mayıs 2014 arasında kimliğini yeniden yapılandırma sürecini *Agos*’u analiz ederek ve Müslümanlaştırılmış Ermeniler tartışmalarına odaklanarak sunmaktadır. Bu araştırmada *Agos* siyasi bir metin olarak ele alınmış ve Ermeni kimliği sosyal yapısalcılık çerçevesinde incelenmiştir. İlk olarak Türkiye’deki Ermeni kimliğinin analitik unsurları; sivil hayat ve siyasi temsil, 1915 anlatıları ve kolektif hafıza ve din olarak belirlenmiştir. İkinci olarak *Agos*’un Türkiye’deki Ermeni kimliğini yansıtması da belirlenen kimlik unsurularına göre incelenerek Ermeni kimliğindeki değişim tarif edilmiştir. Analiz dört kısma bölünmüştür. Analizin temel sonuçları Ermeni kimliğinin daha heterojen bir yapıya doğru ilerlediğini göstermiştir. Araştırmanın ana sonucu Türkiye’deki Ermeni kimliğinin yeniden yapılanması sürecinde İslamlaştırılmış Ermenilerin *Agos*

tarafından yansıtılan aktif rolü ve önemidir. Bu çalışma, Türkiye'deki Ermeni kimliğinin ve topluluğunun melez kavramlarla ele alınması gerekliliğinin altını çizerken bu argumanı Müslümanlaştırılmış Ermenilerin Ermeni kimliğinin yeniden yapılandırılması sürecindeki etkisi üzerine kurmuştur.

Anahtar kelimeler: *Agos*, Türkiye'deki Ermeniler, Ermeni kimliği, Müslümanlaştırılmış Ermeniler.

To all those who strive for justice and peace...

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the Armenian identity reformulation in Turkey reflected through the analysis of the Armenian bilingual newspaper *Agos*. This inquiry describes the Armenian identity in Turkey to be composed of religion; 1915 narratives; and civic and political life through the analysis of *Agos*. These elements presumed to make up the Armenian identity in Turkey are employed in this study as the key elements to describe the process of identity reformulation. This research on the Armenian community in Turkey is influenced by the assassination in 2007 of Armenian intellectual Hrant Dink, one of the founders and the late editor in chief of *Agos*. It is further influenced by the lack of everyday knowledge and critical academic research on the current position of the Armenian community and Armenian identity in Turkey. The main purpose of this study is to describe the reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey through analyzing *Agos* to define the Armenian community in Turkey within the period under analysis in reference to the reformulation process of Armenian identity in Turkey. It seeks to contribute to our understanding of the Armenian community in Turkey today.

The main research question in this study is: *How is the Armenian identity in Turkey reformulated between 1996 and May 2014 as reflected by Agos?* Sub-questions are: *How the listed three elements of Armenian identity (religion, 1915 narratives, and civic and political life) contribute to the reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey?* and *What are the main events influencing the reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey during the period under analysis?*

The significance of this study lays in the fact that it aims to analyze Armenian community in contemporary terms, seeks to explore Armenian identity from a constructivist perspective, and it presents the reformulation of Armenian identity through analyzing *Agos* treating the newspaper as a political text rather than a minority newspaper. Furthermore, it is crucial to understand the current state of Armenian community in Turkey to know about the Armenians living in Turkey and their daily experiences through their identity reformulation process a couple months prior to the centennial of the 1915 events with a new focus on the Armenian identity.

This study, in its focus on the Armenian community and Armenian identity in Turkey, does not aim to talk about the historical controversies and how they are perceived today, but seeks to elaborate on their impact on the Armenian identity and Armenian community in Turkey. The inquiry is limited to the Armenian population living in Turkey, in Istanbul, because the majority of the Armenian population is concentrated in Istanbul (Örs and Komşuoğlu, 2007, p. 415).

This study is based on the assumption that identity is flexible and contextual and its contextual nature can be observed and perceived by an outsider to the Armenian community in Turkey. This study is further based on the assumptions that *Agos* has a contribution in the reformulation process of Armenian identity in Turkey, and *Agos* reflects the current state of Armenian community and Armenian identity in Turkey. It is also assumed in this study that *Agos* reaches or has the potential to reach beyond the borders of Armenian community in Turkey.

Agos is established in 1996 reflecting the desire of the citizens of the Armenian community in Turkey to be active members of the broader Turkish society and to make the Armenian voice and demands heard. This took place in a climate of change in the 1990s with the increasing importance of issues of identity, democracy, multiculturalism, and

minority rights in politics and political debates in the face of globalization. In this context, Armenian community in Turkey has had experienced a new set of opportunities to be politically active in the Turkish social and political scene. Furthermore, with the collapse of the USSR, independent state of Armenia was established creating new conditions for the Armenian community in Turkey. This has provided *Agos* with a chance to be an active element for the reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey.

1.1. Literature Review

The current scholarship in the literature on the Armenian community and identity in Turkey focuses on the elements of Armenian identity, elaborating on their importance and the role for Armenianness in the face of history and contemporary situation in Turkey mainly in relation to exclusion and othering (Özdoğan et al., 2009; and Özdoğan and Ohannes Kılıçdağı, 2012).

In those studies, Armenian identity is treated as a constant state of Armenian existence defined mainly around the terms of religion, history, 1915 narratives, and language (Örs and Komşuoğlu, 2007; Özdoğan et al., 2009; and Özdoğan and Kılıçdağı, 2012). In the literature on Armenian studies, Armenian identity is also explored in its relation to the construction of the Turkish nation state and Turkish national identity (Göl, 2005). Armenian identity is further analyzed in relation to Turkish identity in order to determine the first level of identification of Armenians in Turkey, showing that Armenian allegiance is to Armenian identity rather than to Turkish citizenship. Other studies elaborate on the Armenian identity in Turkey as a minority identity (Bal, 2006; Oran, 2004).

Armenian identity in Turkey is further analyzed in its relation to the 1915 events and related debates. Scholars who study the 1915 events from a historical standpoint consider them from different perspectives and focus points. Some historians explore the nature of the events and

aim to explain why they qualify to be called “genocide” in their terms (Gunter, 2011; Bloxham, 2005); others focus on the real estate and property policies of the state in order to present the systematic annihilation policies in their accounts (Akçam, 2004 and 2006); and feminist perspectives elaborate on the multiple victimized position of women as an outcome of the 1915 population relocations and extrajudicial executions.

There is another cluster of studies arguing that the 1915 policies and attitudes of the Ottoman Empire toward Armenians continue in today’s Republic. The most prominent scholars in this category, Taner Akçam and Müge Göçek (2011 and 2014), point out the continuations between the Ottoman Empire (Young Turks) and the Republic of Turkey in terms of minority-related policies and historical legacy mainly underlining “Sèvres syndrome”. Both T. Akçam and M. Göçek claim that the past has been silenced and is regarded as taboo in Turkey. M. Göçek sees the end of past trauma through constructive relations between Turkey and Armenian community and Armenia as the means to overcome the conflicts based on the 1915 events and their repercussions in today’s Turkey, relating it to the Armenian experience in Anatolia since the Ottoman period. T. Akçam also provides archival documents on the 1915 events as a contribution to the historiography of these events that he regards as massacres. One of the influential contributions of T. Akçam’s study, *The Young Turks’ Crime Against Humanity* (2012), is the argument that assimilation is a part of “genocide” in his terms, and Armenian conversion (Islamization) was carried out for that purpose during 1915 and 1916.

In Müge Göçek’s most recent study *Denial of Violence* (forthcoming, October 2014)¹, she analyzes Turkish memoirs published

¹ This study is published in November 2014, however in this study, I refer to the pre-publication book manuscript sent by the author.

in Turkey searching for the “denial of violence” in her terms. M. Göçek’s search in this study is related to Turkish collective memory in general and her argument on the emergence of Turkish official narrative of denial in particular. Her analysis claims that state has a denial narrative and it is asserted on two strategic moves: selectivity and silencing followed by decontextualization. M. Göçek asserts that denial of collective violence by the Ottoman and Turkish state against Armenians covers the period from 1789 to present. She claims that the early signs of denial of the violence committed against Armenians started in 1789. M. Göçek defines collective violence as “a range of human activities one social group engages in and carries out against another with the intent to inflict physical, material or symbolic harm” (2014, p. 30). Through this study, M. Göçek’s adds the dimension of Turkish collective memory to archival studies.

Another category of studies on the Armenian community in Turkey deconstructs the Armenian identity in its focus on the Islamized Armenians in Turkey, detaching the assumed identification between Christianity and Armenianness. The issue of Islamized (converted) Armenians is taken in relation to the 1915 events as well as to Armenian identity. It is a relatively new research area, and studies on the topic mainly claim that conversion was employed as an assimilation policy during the World War I and argue that it was carried out on a gendered and age-sensitive basis; these studies benefit from archival work as well as oral history (Altınay and Türkyılmaz, 2011; Ekmekçioğlu, 2013).

Feminist approaches to Armenian identity and 1915 events establish their arguments on women’s means to pass on history and identity to their children and families through culture. Melissa Bilal (2004) analyzes lullabies as means to transmit collective memory in order to understand the state of being Armenian in Turkey today. She argues that displacement and loss are the experiences shaping the sense of Armenianness. Lerna Ekmekçioğlu and Melissa Bilal (2006) analyze

prominent Armenian feminist women novelists during the Ottoman Empire, providing an insightful analysis on feminist Armenian literature during the Ottoman Empire. Lerna Ekmekçioğlu (2006) also stresses silencing in writing history and how those women were left out of Ottoman-Armenian-Turkish historiography. Ayşegül Komşuoğlu and Birsen Örs (2009) elaborate on the role of Armenian women in the survival of Armenian community in Istanbul, arguing that women's role in domestic and public spheres indirectly influence Armenian identity by providing conditions for survival.

Moreover, there are studies that elaborate on the history, current state of Armenian community, and Armenian identity in Turkey, underlining the demands and needs of the Armenian identity in Turkey in order to sustain and develop their culture. These have two clusters: analysis with positive connotations suggesting paths for Armenian community and broader Turkish society to coexist; and studies that blame Armenians for trying to construct their separate public sphere and being ungrateful. Analyses on *Agos* can also be placed in these two clusters. There are studies on *Agos*, arguing for its positive contribution to the Armenian identity in Turkey; on the other hand, some studies regard it a nationalist community newspaper. By these studies, *Agos* is considered to be one of the means to end the assumed silence and invisibility of Armenian community in Turkey as the studies claim, and it is regarded as influential in reformulating Armenian identity in Turkey. Yet *Agos* is also claimed to be an advocate of diaspora politics and a newspaper aiming to construct the Armenian identity on the basis of language-religion-history in line with the classical theories of nationalism (Eraslan, 2007). It is further claimed by other studies that *Agos* discursively creates an alternative ethnicity-based public space for Armenians in Turkey to construct their identity away from assimilation (Dönmez, 2008).

The inquiry in this study on the Armenian community and identity in Turkey is carried out through analyzing *Agos* because in the existing literature on the Armenian community, Armenian identity in Turkey has not been described through such analysis. Furthermore, *Agos* has not been explored as a political text deconstructing the Armenian identity and community in Turkey. Despite the existence of a number of studies on the Armenian community and identity in Turkey, these studies remain limited on their analysis in contemporary terms. Enlisting the elements of Armenian identity, these studies disregard the flexibility of elements of identity implying absolutism. Building on the previous research on the Armenian community and identity in Turkey, this study argues that Armenian identity is continuously reformulated, and this process can be described through the analysis of *Agos* to assess the current state of Armenian community in Turkey starting from 1996.

1.2. Research Design

The analysis on the Armenian community and identity in Turkey in this study is conducted through the premises of qualitative method of social research. Furthermore, data collection and analysis processes have followed the main premises of textual analysis.

Qualitative research explores the issue at hand, providing a complex and detailed understanding of the question. The purpose is to understand the contexts in which participants address a problem (Creswell, 2007, pp. 39–40). Qualitative research “is conducted through an intense and/or prolonged contact with a ‘field’ or life situation. These situations are typically ‘banal’ or normal ones, reflective of the everyday life of individuals, groups, societies, and organizations” (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 6). As a second feature, qualitative research has a holistic perspective, implying that the whole phenomenon is perceived as a complex system — more than the sum of its parts — going beyond the cause-effect relationship (Patton, 2002, p. 41). The third feature of qualitative research is flexibility of design, keeping the inquiry open to

change and adaptation as the research deepens (Patton, 2002, pp. 40–1). The fourth feature is the qualitative character of data. Yet another feature is the personal experience of the researcher and her direct engagement with the issue, together with empathic neutrality. The analysis in qualitative research is inductive, it is guided by analytical principles, and it ends with a creative synthesis. Qualitative research is context-sensible and places findings in a social, historical, and temporal context (Patton, 2002, p. 41). The emphasis is on everyday life and how people give meaning to the world.

John Creswell asserts that qualitative research is informed by a variety of worldviews or paradigms shaping the research, including post-positivism, constructivism, advocacy/participatory perspective, and pragmatism. This qualitative study is shaped by constructivism that is based on the meaning intersubjectively produced by individuals and their experiences. “Subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically [...] they are not simply imprinted on individuals but are formed through interaction with others and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals’ lives” (Creswell, 2007, pp. 20–1). The constructivist perspective puts emphasis on interaction and process. In brief terms, “constructivism is the view that the manner in which the material world shapes and is shaped by human action and interaction depends on dynamic normative and epistemic interpretations of the material world” (Adler, 1997, p. 322). Moreover, the main assumption of social constructivism is the theory that knowledge and social reality are socially constructed. Social construction of reality implies that social reality is not given, but produced; its meaning is derived from the systems of intersubjective relations in everyday life among social actors.

The constructivist paradigm in this study is social constructivism as developed by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann in their work *The Social Construction of Reality* (1967). In their attempt to formulate a

new theory of sociology of knowledge, Berger and Luckmann define knowledge as “the certainty that phenomena are real and that they possess specific characteristics” (1967, p. 1). The knowledge they refer to is everyday knowledge in the society. In their account, individuals in society not only produce knowledge but also themselves and their environment. Berger and Luckmann assert that individuals in society are in the process of becoming in their relation to the environment (social and cultural order) and others in the environment. They claim that the relation between society and individual is a dialectical one, arguing that society is an objective reality produced by individuals, while individuals are produced in their relations to the social. Furthermore, the constructivist qualitative research conducted in this study is shaped by the post-modern theoretical perspective.

1.2.1. Data Collection Procedures

The data collection procedure in qualitative study begins with an idea, personal interest, or ideological leaning related to the issue. The researcher determines the issue of inquiry as she progresses in data collection. This study started with the researcher’s personal and intellectual interest in the Armenian community in Turkey following Hrant Dink’s assassination in 2007. During the early stages of data collection, the intention of this study was to determine the elements of Armenian identity in Turkey. The research question was: “*What are the main elements of Armenian identity in Turkey?*” Yet, it was modified following the preliminary data collection and analysis when the research is shaped by the constructivist perspective of identity.

The unit of analysis in this study is Armenian community in Turkey and the research sample is *Agos*. The method of sampling is chosen as purposive or judgmental sampling, which focuses on a small or single sample and which “means that the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (Creswell, 2007,

p. 125). This inquiry is based on the assumption that *Agos* is the institution that can inform the research issue and provide more insight into the process of reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey. *Agos* is chosen as the sample representing Armenian community after the preliminary research and early stages of data collection, because “when developing a purposive sample, researchers use their special knowledge or expertise about some group to select subjects who represent this population” (Berg, 2001, p. 32). Furthermore, “purposive samples are selected after field investigations on some group, in order to ensure that certain types of individuals or persons displaying certain attributes are included in the study” (Berg, 2001, p. 32). Additionally, *Agos* in this study is an information-rich case in examining the reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey, as purposive sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases “whose study will illuminate the questions under study” (Patton, 1990, p. 169).

1.2.2. *Agos*, Armenian Printed Press, and Armenian Community in Turkey

Agos is the only newspaper of the Armenian community in Turkey printed in Turkish (*Agos* is a bilingual weekly newspaper, but the number of pages in Turkish is more than the number of pages in Armenian). *Agos* is established by a number of Armenian intellectuals in Turkey who have democratic and progressive visions both for the Armenian community in Turkey and the broader Turkish society. *Agos* seeks to voice and channel the demands of Armenian community within the community itself and to the broader Turkish society. In an interview, Hrant Dink tells that *Agos* aims to open Armenian community to the broader society, making Armenian community and its demands visible to the broader Turkish society going beyond the Armenian community and to call the Armenian community to start acting with political motives. In this interview, Dink also tells that one of the purposes of

Agos is to inform the broader society about injustice and discrimination Armenian community in Turkey is subjected to in Dink's perspective.²

Yet, *Agos* does not claim to be the sole representative of the Armenian community in Turkey, and even causes intra-community conflicts because not the whole Armenian community agrees with the perspectives and attitudes of *Agos*.³ In this study, *Agos* is interpreted as the representative of one of the progressive and change oriented groups of the Armenian community in Turkey as it was established in 1996. This tends to disregard, to a certain extent, the changes *Agos* has gone through within the period under analysis and different perspectives in the newspaper for analytical purposes in this study.

Even though the major outlet and medium of intra-community communication of Armenian community has been the printed press and literature, Armenian community in Turkey did not have the chance to employ this method effectively until *Agos*'s establishment in 1996. Armenian literature and journalism trace back to the early modernization and Westernization period of the Ottoman Empire. The Armenian press experienced its demise starting from World War I until the establishment of the Republic of Turkey (Özdoğan et al., 2009, pp. 212–3). Since then, Armenian periodicals have experienced a limited recovery, but never a full resurgence under strict state control. For that reason, it is only possible to talk about a relatively weak existence of contemporary Armenian publications in Republican Turkey compared to the Ottoman Period.⁴ All present-day Armenian periodicals are printed in Istanbul in Armenian and/or in Turkish. Considering the relatively small population

² Dated 22 April 2001, in Oran, 2006a, p. 131.

³ Rober Koptaş, Interview with the author, 23 October 2012.

⁴ For a detailed analysis of the Armenian press in the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey see: Hülya Eraslan, "Agos (1996–2005): Türkiye'de Yayınlanan Türkçe-Ermenice Gazete Üzerine İnceleme." MA thesis. Ankara University, 2007.

of Armenians in Turkey, most periodicals are printed based on the number of subscriptions and delivered to addresses.

Although some of those periodicals are printed by and targeted to a small community or organization, others are for larger communities such as academia or the broader Turkish society. Journals, magazines, pamphlets, newsletters, and newspapers make up the main periodicals published by the Armenian community in Turkey today. Two notable journals that should be listed are *Kulis* (1946–1996) and *Surp Pirgiç* (1832present). *Kulis*, a theatre journal published by Agop Ayvaz, has the longest publication history in Turkey. *Surp Pirgiç* is a medical journal published in Armenian by the *Surp Pirgiç* Hospital in Istanbul. Additionally, *Jbid* [*The Smile*] is the only children's periodical printed in Armenian in Turkey. The Solidarity Foundation of Turkish-Armenian School Teachers has been publishing *Jbid* eight times a year (October–May) since 1991. *Jbid* functions on subscription basis, and its circulation rate is 1250 (Özdoğan et al., 2009, p. 214).

Moreover, there are newsletters and pamphlets published by the alumni associations of Armenian schools in Turkey. They mostly focus on the cultural life of community and seek to abstain from politics and political debates (Özdoğan et al., 2009, p. 214). Among those, *Nor San* [*New Student*] is published by the alumni of *Pangaltı Mkhitaryan* High School, with a focus on Armenian literature, and *Hobina* is published by the alumni of *Getronagan* High School. Published since 1993, starting from 2001 *Hobina* is circulated in Turkish four times a year and monthly in Armenian. *Hobina* focuses on current affairs related to the Armenian community in Turkey (Özdoğan et al., 2009, p. 214). Additionally, schools have their own newsletters on the cultural and social activities they organize.

The Armenian Patriarchate in Turkey has two periodicals: *Şoğagat* and *Lraper*. *Şoğagat* is the official periodical of the Armenian Patriarchate. It is published annually as a scientific journal (Özdoğan et

al., 2009, pp.213–4). *Lraper* is published since 1995 as the Patriarchate's official newsletter. Its online content is available in Armenian, Turkish, and English. As regards to its purpose, *Lraper* reports on congregational affairs and events as well as the Patriarch's deliberations with political figures and leaders. Congregational events (baptisms, weddings, and funerals), documents (press statements and announcements), newsletters, church related events, Ecumenical news, interfaith news, and temporal affairs (such as politics) are available in the online archive of *Lraper*. In the most general terms, *Lraper* expresses opinion and releases statements on the events and news about the Patriarch, Patriarchate, religion, and the congregation. *Lraper* is not only interested in religious but also civic affairs. It is involved in affairs and events related to the Armenian community in Turkey, be they political, religious, or social.

Lraper also communicates frequently with Armenian newspapers in Turkey, but not always in good terms. It can be observed by analyzing *Agos* especially between 1999 and 2007 that at certain times, the Patriarchate prefers to use *Lraper* as a means to respond to claims of Armenian newspapers in Turkey, such as those of *Agos*. It is implied by *Agos* that the Patriarchate seeks to inform the Armenian congregation as the single center of knowledge and information. For that reason, *Lraper* expresses opinions and releases statements on news related to the Armenian community in Turkey and the Armenian diaspora. *Lraper* has a pro-state and pro-status quo attitude.

Finally, there are three newspapers printed by the Armenian community in Turkey: *Jamanag*, *Nor Marmara*, and *Agos*. Although *Jamanag* and *Nor Marmara* are daily newspapers and are printed in Armenian, *Agos* is weekly and bilingual, and is published in Turkish, with four Armenian pages. *Jamanag* [*Time*], established by Misak Koçunyan in Istanbul in 1908, is the oldest daily Armenian newspaper in the world and the oldest newspaper printed in Turkey. The newspaper

has four pages and is printed in the Armenian language with Armenian script. It is printed daily except for Sundays and religious holidays, and its circulation rate is around 1500. *Jamanag* functions on the subscription basis and is distributed to areas with dense Armenian population in Turkey (Eraslan, 2007, p. 60). Because *Jamanag* is published in Armenian, it could be inferred that the newspaper targets a specific group of Armenians in Turkey and does not seek to extend its followers and speak to a larger community. For that reason, *Jamanag* is a community newspaper aiming to inform Armenians on community affairs, in the Armenian language, with the aim of strengthening community bonds through culture and shared values.⁵ In an interview, Ara Koçunyan — editor in chief and owner of *Jamanag* — states that the majority of their readers are middle-aged and older members of the Armenian community in Istanbul. A. Koçunyan states that the newspaper's agenda is related to three main elements of Armenian identity in Turkey: citizenship, Armenian origin, and Christianity (in Özdoğan et al., 2009, p. 217). A. Koçunyan also asserts that *Jamanag* does not have an organic relation to any political ideology or political party, and *Jamanag* does not represent views of a certain group (in Özdoğan et al., 2009, pp. 216–7). He claims that *Jamanag* believes in cooperation of Armenians and broader Turkish society and represents that conviction. A. Koçunyan further asserts that the newspaper puts emphasis on the Armenian existence in Turkey, and in doing so, *Jamanag* also seeks to solve the problems of Armenians in Turkey. In undertaking that dual purpose, *Jamanag* does not adopt an aggressive language, he states (Koçunyan in Özdoğan et al., 2009, p. 216). In terms

⁵ A community newspaper can be analyzed under community journalism. Lowrey et al. define community journalism as “intimate, caring, and personal; it reflects the community and tells its stories; and it embraces a leadership role” (2008, p. 276). In most general terms, “community journalism would (a) reveal, or make individuals aware of, spaces, institutions, resources, events, and ideas that may be shared, and encourage such sharing; and (b) facilitate the process of negotiating and making meaning about community” (Lowrey et al., 2008, p. 288).

of Armenian identity, *Jamanag* assumes a constructive role for the reproduction of Armenian culture in traditional ways and within the community itself. Interaction with broader society is not regarded as a requirement for reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey as expressed by A. Koçunyan. For that reason, it can be argued that *Jamanag*'s devotion to reformulate Armenian identity in Turkey remains limited because of its choice of language. *Jamanag* is printed in Armenian, and for that reason it appears to disregard the undeniably notable population of Armenians in Turkey who do not speak and read in Armenian. *Jamanag* has a traditional perspective and speaks to a limited number of people. However, in its own right, it serves to reformulate Armenian identity within the Armenian community in Turkey to the extent that it can reach them. Furthermore, based on A. Koçunyan's statements, it could be interpreted that *Jamanag* aims to restore the Armenian identity based on traditional elements of Armenian culture and religion. For that reason, identity reformulation seems to serve as an attempt to sustain traditional Armenian identity envisioned by the Turkish state and more or less internalized by the Armenian community in Turkey. Nevertheless, although *Jamanag* does not speak to the broader society or even to the whole Armenian population in Turkey, its value for the Armenian community in Turkey should not be disregarded.

Nor Marmara [*New Marmara*] or *Marmara*, a daily also published in Armenian, was established in 1940 in Istanbul by Süren Şamlıyan. It is published six times a week except for Sundays, and the average circulation rate of the newspaper is around 1500 (Özdoğan et al., 2009, p. 218).⁶ *Marmara* has four pages and covers news concerning cultural, social, and religious affairs of the Armenian community in Turkey. *Marmara* distinguishes itself from *Jamanag* by claiming that it focuses

⁶ *Jamanag* and *Nor Marmara*'s circulation rates are close because many Armenians in Turkey buy them to help these newspapers survive (Koptaş, 2012).

more on culture and art, and targets a more elite section of the Armenian community (Özdoğan et al., 2009, p. 218). As a further distinction, *Marmara* has a high level of sensitivity and concern regarding Armenian language (Özdoğan et al., 2009, p. 218). Since 2001, *Marmara* has a Turkish supplement on Fridays. Editor in Chief Rober Haddler states that the Turkish supplement is necessary to reach the younger generation of Armenians in Turkey (Özdoğan et al., 2009, p. 219). Unlike *Jamanag*, *Marmara* recognizes the fact that not all Armenians in Turkey know Armenian and that the younger generations especially do not have a good command of the Armenian language (Özdoğan et al., 2009, p. 219). Despite the claim of being an elite Armenian newspaper in Turkey, because *Marmara* has pages in Turkish, it has the potential to reach more members of the Armenian community and interested members of the broader society. It also has a higher chance of contributing to the process of reformulating Armenian identity in Turkey because *Marmara* seems to be aiming to embrace those who cannot speak Armenian. Yet it does not express such concern.

In contrast to the printed Armenian media in Turkey introduced above, *Agos* aims to make the Armenian community, its elements, and demands visible to the broader Turkish society and to the Armenian community itself. Such demystification intended by *Agos* functions at two levels: *Agos* aims to make Turkish society see Armenians as real people, and it also strives to support Armenians' effective intra-community communication and interaction. Such channels of dialogue have the potential to lead Armenians to communicate with the broader Turkish society and to help the community to face with and overcome the historic trauma of 1915 in *Agos*'s perspective.

The need to establish *Agos* has stemmed from the necessity for the Armenian community in Turkey to speak for itself and to make the community and its demands visible to the broader society ending the closed structure of the Armenian community. It was also shaped by the

context of globalization, increased importance of identity and identity politics, and enabled by the reforms initiated in the scope of the European Union (EU) accession process in 1999 following the Helsinki Council in Turkey. In an interview with journalist Duygu Yazıcı for the *Cumhuriyet* daily on 22 April 2001, Hrant Dink describes the road to establishing *Agos*. He states that it all started in a meeting with the Armenian Patriarch around 1994. Dink tells that the Patriarch was upset about the news linking Armenians to PKK terror in Turkey, which was claimed by newspapers that refused to publish the Patriarch's disclaimers. For that reason, Dink tells in the interview that the Patriarch invited a group of Armenian intellectuals (journalist Anna Turay, attorney Luiz Bakar, Harutyun Şeşetyan, and Hrant Dink) and the Patriarch's proxy (Mesrob Srpazan) to search for solutions to such allegations that were deemed to be unjust by the Patriarch and the Armenian community in Turkey. Dink asserts that during the meetings they agreed on a major point: Armenian community was a closed community by structure, and it was unable to introduce itself to the broader society, which posed an important barrier for the community. The group decided at the meetings that closed structure did not protect the Armenian community from assimilation as it was intended, but was causing its isolation. Dink asserts that an urgent need for opening the community to the broader society was recognized, as well as the need for communication with Turkish media. Dink claims that monthly meetings started with the aim to bridge the gap between the media and the Patriarchate. However, he tells, the intellectuals deemed those meetings insufficient and started considering the need to establish a Turkish-language Armenian newspaper in Turkey. One of their main motivations, as told by Dink, was to be able to defend the Armenian community when it was needed, and also to introduce the Armenian community to the broader society in community's true nature. Another purpose stated by Dink was to end the lack of communication within the

Armenian community. He tells that they also considered such a newspaper necessary in order to be able to educate and train new intellectuals for the Armenian community in Turkey. Dink underlines that they decided to fund the newspaper through their own contributions and through sales, rather than relying on outside sources to be able to keep the critical stance of the newspaper. Furthermore, they established the newspaper as a nonprofit institution, and Hrant Dink became the first editor in chief.

Agos, the bilingual Armenian-Turkish weekly newspaper, was established in 1996 in Istanbul and is the youngest Armenian newspaper in Turkey. *Agos* [*Furrow*] was founded by Hrant Dink, Luiz Bakar, Harutyun Şeşetyan, and Anna Turay. Later, Sarkis Seropyan, Arus Yumul, Sendi Zurikoğlu, Diran Bakar, Setrak Davuthan, and Niver Cazo joined the team. The zero issue was published on 25 February 1996, and the first issue was published on 5 April 1996 in Istanbul.⁷ The first issue of *Agos* was eight pages long, and its circulation rate was 1800. During the early years, *Agos* was only available in certain locations in Istanbul that has a dense Armenian population.⁸

Even though *Agos* is a bilingual newspaper, the number of pages in the Armenian language are fewer than the number of Turkish pages. This is because unlike other Armenian newspapers printed in Turkey, as Dink stated in his interview, *Agos* also targets those Armenians in Turkey who cannot speak and read Armenian. The main purpose, with the choice of language, is to integrate these readers into the Armenian community in order to strengthen that sense of community, ensure

⁷ As Dink tells, the first issue of *Agos* was printed on *Zadik* [Easter]; the date was April 5th, but it has always been celebrated with *Zadik* every year. In other words, *Agos*'s birth has been associated with the Resurrection (Dink in Çandar, 2010, p. 439).

⁸ Today, *Agos* has 24 pages and is distributed across Turkey, as well as in some foreign countries, on demand. Its content is also available online. After the assassination of Hrant Dink, *Agos*'s circulation rate increased from 3500 to around 5000 (Koptaş, 2012).

cooperation in community affairs, and contribute to Armenian political identity construction (Ağan, 2007, pp. 1945; Oran, 2006a, p. 131).

Organizationally, *Agos* is a nonprofit and autonomous newspaper. Ideologically, *Agos* has taken a critical stance against the Armenian community in Turkey, the Patriarchate, diaspora, Armenia, and the Turkish state. From the beginning, the main call of *Agos* has been to initiate dialogue and establish peace and democratic relations between the Armenian community and the broader Turkish society (Oran, 2006a, p. 137). Besides its ideological tendencies, *Agos* implied a certain agenda and purpose when it was established in 1996 as expressed in Dink's interview. As reflected by Dink, the newspaper expressed its desire to be the voice of the Armenians in Turkey who had been characterized by a closed community structure for many decades; however, it did not claim to be the representative of Armenians in Turkey. As one of the founders of *Agos* Arus Yumul states in a study on Armenians in Turkey that "Armenians have accepted the position of 'silent other' for many decades and have chosen to live almost invisibly, which made it easier for the rest of the society to talk about the Armenians in the way they desire" (2011, p. 151). With the intention of speaking for themselves, *Agos* aimed to tell Turkish society about Armenians in Turkey, including history, and Armenian identity with its own voice in order to start the struggle for political recognition and visibility of Armenian identity in Turkey. For that reason, from the early years on, *Agos*'s main policy is to claim the elements of Armenian identity, such as Armenian language, culture and historical values, collective memory, and the narratives of the 1915 events, with the aim of passing them to future generations while protecting and developing those elements.

Agos covers subjects related to its purpose, which center around being a minority in Turkey; being Armenian in Turkey; feeling different; Armeniaphobia in Turkey; the decline of Armenianness;

multiculturalism; identity; constitutional citizenship and democracy; problems of the Armenian community; discrimination, racism, and nationalism in Turkey; Armenian language as a tool of self-expression and its current state of decline; Turkey's relations with Armenia and the border problem, Azerbaijan, and the European Union; the Armenian diaspora; the role of the Church and Patriarchate in the Armenian community; the *Varlik Vergisi* [Capital Tax]; September 6–7 events; studies and research on Armenians and Armenian community; problems faced by Armenian foundations; and community affairs and activities.

In analyzing *Agos*, data in this study are primarily collected through online archival search from the digital copies available on *Agos*'s web page. Missing issues were collected and accessed in the form of hard copies. In this inquiry, 938 issues of *Agos*, printed between 25 February 1996, and the end of April 2014, have been read in detail, classified according to key terms and issues into clusters (community events, Turkey's agenda, international affairs, Armenia, Armenian diaspora, and special issues). Those clusters were refined following the early data collection process that determined the assumed elements of Armenian identity in Turkey (1915 narratives, religion, and civic life and political participation). In addition to the online data collection process and analysis of *Agos*, informal unstructured and formal structured interviews were conducted with the individuals directly related to the unit of analysis. Within this context, one structured Skype interview was conducted with *Agos*'s editor in chief Rober Koptaş;⁹ one formal interview was conducted with a young nonprofit organization in Armenian community (*Nor Zartonk*); and multiple informal face-to-face and online information exchanges were conducted with scholars and informed people as well as members of the Armenian community in Turkey.

⁹ Rober Koptaş stepped down in January 2015 and the current editor in chief of *Agos* is Yetvart Danzikyan.

Moreover, nonparticipant observation on-site and through the Internet accompanied the process of online data collection in the preliminary and further stages of data collection. As a part of this observation process, I also kept a research diary from October 2012 to March 2014. I was able to conduct on-site observation in the Greater Boston Area because of my residence during this qualitative inquiry. Such observation was possible due to a considerable Armenian diaspora population in Watertown, MA. As a part of this data collection process, I attended cultural and political events, seminars, and talks as a nonparticipant observant. As a part of the data collection process, I also met with Istanbul Armenians visiting the area and conducted informal interviews with them on Armenian identity and Armenian community in Turkey, as well as on *Agos*. In addition, I also joined a Turkish-Armenian women's reconciliation group, first as a nonparticipating observer and then as a participant. The group was composed of women from Turkey (Armenian and non-Armenian) and women from the diaspora who live in the Greater Boston Area.

1.2.3. Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis is conducted starting from the early stages of the data collection process in a qualitative research. It follows the patterns of qualitative inquiry in which data analysis does not begin at a specific stage of the research, but the researcher begins data analysis well before she completes data collection. The research questions are developed and revised during data analysis that goes hand in hand with data collection because the “process is dialectic, not linear” (Agar in Wolcott, 1994, p. 11).

Moreover, although the term analysis is adopted in working with the data, it aims to encompass three ways of working with the data as developed by the scholar Henry Wolcott: description, analysis, and interpretation (1994, pp. 12–20). Description “addresses the question, ‘What is going on here?’ Data consist of observations made by the

researcher and/or reported to the researcher by others” (Wolcott, 1994, p. 12). In describing the data, an analytical framework is followed, developing a narrative around one framework as well as developing the description around critical and key events (Wolcott, 1994, pp. 19–20). As the second way, analysis “addresses the identification of essential features and the systematic description of interrelationships among them” (Wolcott, 1994, p. 12). The final method suggested by H. Wolcott is interpretation, which “addresses processual questions of meanings and contexts” (Wolcott, 1994, p. 12).

Data analysis in this study is interpretive and inductive within the scope of textual analysis. Following the constructivist perspective subscribed to the intersubjectivity of reality and knowledge, data are interpreted by the researcher based on her perspective and perception of the issue under analysis. It is further inductive, because particulars are investigated first to arrive at a bigger general picture by building a theory rather than starting with a theory and then deducing to particulars.

Moreover, this study employed textual data analysis. As Alan McKee asserts, “textual analysis is a way for researchers to gather information about how other human beings make sense of the world” (McKee, 2003, p. 1). A. McKee states that this methodology is “for those researchers who want to understand the ways in which members of various cultures and subcultures make sense of who they are, and of how they fit into the world in which they live” (McKee, 2003, p. 1). In that sense, “when we perform textual analysis on a text, we make an educated guess at some of the most likely interpretations that might be made of that text” (McKee, 2003, p. 1). In textual analysis, a text is “something that we make meaning from [...] The word ‘text’ has post-structuralist implications for thinking about the production of meaning” (McKee, 2003, p. 4). Within the scope of textual analysis, a qualitative content analysis is conducted in this study with a focus on meanings rather than frequency of message variables.

After the data are prepared and organized for analysis in this study, bringing together observations, interviews, and notes from *Agos*; they are categorized into themes through coding and finally represented in discussion presenting the description of reformulation process of Armenian identity in Turkey. In this process, coding refers to the analytic process through which data are fractured, conceptualized, and integrated to form a general perspective and/or theory. “A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (Saldaña, 2010, p. 3). In relation to that, codifying “is to arrange things in a systematic order, to make something part of a system or classification, to categorize. When codes are applied and reapplied to qualitative data you are codifying” (Saldaña, 2010, p. 8).

Data analysis in this study started with the focus on Armenian identity in Turkey and observed the major peak points in the Armenian identity in terms of contextual importance of the identity elements. In this inquiry, the analysis of *Agos* for exploring Armenian identity is established around the three elements of Armenian identity in Turkey (1915 narratives, religion, and civic life and political action).

1.2.4. Delimitations and Limitations

The delimitation of this study is time: It starts with the first issue of *Agos*, published in 1996, and ends with the last issue published in April 2014. There are a number of limitations of this study, beginning with the language barrier, because the researcher does not speak or read Armenian. However, this can be compensated by a sufficient amount of work in the field that has been translated into English and Turkish. No notable difference is anticipated between the material in English and Turkish and material in Armenian. The second barrier is the researcher’s location being distant from the subject of research in physical terms; this can be handled by the employment of online tools and infrequent travels.

1.3. Outline of the Thesis

In order to describe the process of reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey, this study evaluates *Agos*, starting from its first issue published in February 1996 and extending to the end of April 2014. The analysis covers four major periods divided in this study considering the turning points for the Armenian community, political climate in Turkey, and the inner dynamics of *Agos*.

Overall, this study is designed as seven chapters. In the second chapter the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study is presented. First, the identity approach adopted in the study is introduced as one shaped by the social constructivist perspective. This is followed by an analysis of the elements of Armenian identity in Turkey enlisted during the early stages of data collection and analysis as 1915 narratives, civic life, and religion. Furthermore, the historical context regarding Armenian identity and Armenian printed press in Turkey since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey until *Agos*'s establishment is presented.

The first period of analysis in this study, the third chapter, is divided from 1996 to 2002. It starts with the publication of *Agos*'s first issue in 1996 and deals with the early years of *Agos* up until the election of a new government in Turkey in November 2002. The third chapter covers this period and provides an analysis of Armenian identity through *Agos* prior to the demands and call voiced by *Agos* followed by active role of the newspaper to reformulate Armenian identity in Turkey and to restructure Armenian community in Turkey accordingly. As it is, the third chapter presents the main elements of Armenian identity during *Agos*'s early years and a general picture of Armenian identity and Armenian community in Turkey between 1996 and 2002. The chapter presents *Agos*'s attempts to demystify Armenian identity in Turkey for reformulating Armenian identity in relation to the identity elements

enlisted in this study (1915 narratives, civic life, and religion), with an emphasis on citizenship and political visibility.

The second stage of analysis in this study, the fourth chapter, starts in 2003 with the formation of the new government and extends until the end of 2006 as the pre-assassination era of Hrant Dink. During this periodization, Hrant Dink's ideas and perspectives are elaborated on as he expressed in *Agos*. The analysis in this chapter mainly focuses on Hrant Dink and his perspectives on Armenian community, Armenian identity, Armenian diaspora, and Turkish state as published in *Agos* between 2003 and 2006. The weight is placed on Dink's two articles bringing in the debates on the Islamized Armenians and questions of Armenian identity in its relation to Turkish national identity. The news item published in *Agos* on the possible Armenian heritage of Sabiha Gökçen brought the debates on Islamized Armenians in the Armenian community and public debates in Turkey. The second article expressing Dink's perspective on Armenian identity is explored in its relation to Turkish nationalism and introduced as the article leading to Dink's assassination in 2007. The reformulation of Armenian identity as reflected through *Agos* is structured around the debates on Islamized Armenians.

The analysis between 2007 and 2010, chapter five, covers the post-Dink era of *Agos* and Armenian community in Turkey. The analysis in this chapter starts with Hrant Dink's assassination in 2007 regarding it a breaking point for the Armenian community and identity in Turkey as well as for *Agos*. Hrant Dink's funeral and massive participation by the members of broader Turkish society are taken as indicators as the breaking point also for the relation between Armenian community and broader Turkish society. Furthermore, Etyen Mahçupyan, as *Agos*'s new editor in chief is introduced in this chapter comparing and contrasting his perspectives with those of Dink. As the presentation of post-Dink era, this chapter and periodization presents an evaluation of the

Armenian identity and Armenian community in Turkey vis-à-vis Dink's legacy in the reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey as expressed and reflected through *Agos*.

The final phase and the sixth chapter of this study starts with the new editor in chief when Etyen Mahçupyan leaves his position and Rober Koptaş replaced him in 2010 and the chapter ends in April 2014 due to time constraints of the study. During this period, *Agos* tries to act on the legacy of Hrant Dink, repeats the call for reformulation of Armenian identity, and restructuring Armenian community in Turkey. Considering the context affecting the reformulation of Armenian identity during this period, the main focus of this chapter is the intensified debates on the Islamized Armenians reflected by *Agos*. This period also marks the last phase analyzed in this study, and in it, this chapter concludes the most crucial element in the present context on the reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey.

Following the analysis of *Agos* in four periods chapter seven as the last chapter completes the study by reintroducing and discussing the research questions and the main hypotheses in light of the conclusions derived from the study and the findings reached in the chapters. It concludes the study with the reevaluation of the Armenian identity, its process of reformulation as analyzed through *Agos* and the main influences in Armenian identity between 1996 and 2014.

CHAPTER 2
IDENTITY AND THE ELEMENTS OF ARMENIAN IDENTITY
IN TURKEY

2.1. Identity: Definitions and Classifications

*“Who are you?” said the Caterpillar.
Alice replied, rather shyly, “I-I hardly know, sir, just at present—at least
I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have
changed several times since then.*

Lewis Carroll, Through the Looking Glass

Identity is a fluid concept. Contemporary use of identity referring to individuals’ features such as their race, ethnicity, or gender, is derived from the studies of Erik Erikson and Alvin Gouldner in social psychology in the 1950s (Appiah, 2005, p. 65). In recent years, identity has become a central theme in political science in almost every subfield. In political theory and political sociology, inquiry into the question of identity underlines various discussions on race, culture, ethnicity, nationality, gender, and sexuality. Research in Turkish politics focuses on the construction of Turkish national identity and its relation to other identities in Turkey. In comparative politics, the concept of identity occupies a central position in research on nationalism and ethnic conflict. In international relations, the idea of state identity is at the heart of constructivist critiques of realism.

In this study, I elaborate on identity within the scope of political theory and political sociology, based on the assumption that identity attributes importance to social structure and collectivity individual is located in. I define identity as *a collective and individual political concept constructed on the basis of perceived and/or real differences based on cultural, social, sexual, and ethnic characteristics of an individual and related to her membership to a group, not in isolation but*

in relation to and based on contact with other identities in society. In this perspective, identity is defined as a contingent social construct and a process rather than a static and fixed state of political and social character. In that sense, identity is regarded in this study as an intersubjective category based on the intersubjective reality of individuals located within the objective and shared reality of a collectivity. Identity implies a multiplicity of elements and can reflect multiple subject positions, either fragmented or unified. The multiplicity of subject positions does not necessarily lead to a divided self but implies multiple layers in a subject position in the form of multiple identifications.

The socially constructed nature of identity is derived from the constructivist worldview in analyzing the social world (referred to as reality) and the formation of knowledge. According to the social constructivist perspective developed by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, “reality is socially constructed” (1967, p. 13). Using the constructivist paradigm, in this study, identity is analyzed in its relation to self and the collectivity in which the self is located. If identity elements are seen as labels, once those labels are applied to people, they have psychological effects on those people and influence how they view themselves. Thus, labels function as means to shape people’s selves and actions. This process is called identification which is an outcome of social actors’ expectations, formed by identity elements, and the construction of identities based on the expectations through the internalization of those identity elements (Appiah, 2005, p. 66). As an outcome of identification, an Armenian in Turkey, for instance, might shape her life as an Armenian, a citizen of Turkey, and a woman. In that sense, there are two dialectical levels of the identity construction process for an individual: identity as self (subjective) and identity as a member of a group (objective). Those two levels of identity may overlap and

articulate, or be in conflict; they are relational, and they mutually influence each other.

Identity, furthermore, has social, economic, and political connotations, such as those based on class, ethnicity, and nationality. However, in this study, they are not employed as elements for analyzing Armenian identity in Turkey. Political identity is employed as the core model while analyzing the process of reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey through *Agos*.

2.1.1. National Identity

Widely quoted Benedict Anderson claims in *Imagined Communities* that a nation is a limited and sovereign imagined community (2006). Anthony Smith defines nation as “a named human population sharing an [sic] historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass public culture, a common economy, and common legal rights and duties for all members” (Smith, 1991, p. 40).

“National identity is defined as ‘a way of behaving’ or mental state and actually takes shape within the process of nation-state building [...] What is important is the formation of a common mindset, and for this to manifest itself in shared modes of behavior” (Akçam, 2004, p. 48). Deriving from A. Smith’s suggested definition of nation, certain elements of national identity illustrate its features and distinguish it from other identity classifications: space and territory, the idea of patria, and legal-political equality of members, and a common civic culture and ideology (Smith, 1991; Joseph, 2004). In addition to those elements, national identity evokes feeling of belonging, narration, and collective memory.

2.1.1.1 Belonging and National Identity

Belonging is an important notion in the analysis of national identity from a constructivist perspective because it is one of the vital elements of identity construction and reformulation. Although belonging is mainly associated with nation, it is widely used for other allegiances beyond

national identities. For instance, Stuart Hall associates belonging with cultural identities that he defines as “those aspects of our identities which arise from our ‘belonging’ to distinctive ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, and above all, national cultures” (Hall, 1996b, p. 596).

Belonging, in its relation to national identity, implies exclusion. This is because the bonds created by nation and national identity provide subjects with mediums to distinguish the other. Belonging further implies locality, a territory, especially when national identity is concerned, because territory is among the vital elements of national identity. Belonging to a nation and national community also means belonging to those lands. Such analysis of national identity in relation to land and belonging is very significant as far as the 1915–1918 Armenian population’s relocation from Anatolia is concerned. Even after leaving their motherland, Armenians’ national identification has lain with the very same lands for centuries.

2.1.1.2. Nation and Narration

Another element of national identity construction is narrative, an important component in building a sense of belonging for the social actor, as well as collectivity. Margaret Somers identifies four dimensions of narrative: ontological, public, conceptual, and metanarratives (Somers, 1994, p. 617). Under conceptual narrativity, M. Somers defines narrative identity based on the assumption that narrativity is a condition of social beings, social consciousness, social action, social structures, and society (Somers, 1994, p. 621).

National culture, as an integral part of national identity, is constructed in narrativity (Hall, 1996b, p. 613). Stuart Hall’s analysis provides five examples for the discursive construction of national culture through narration. Narrative of the nation is the story of the nation told and retold in national history, literature, and popular culture. Such a story aims to provide national symbols, historical events, and rituals to represent shared experiences giving meaning to the nation. The narrative

of the nation connects our everyday existence with a national destiny (Hall, 1996b, p. 613). The second example presented by S. Hall is the emphasis on origins, continuity, tradition, and timelessness based on a primordial perception of national identity (Hall, 1996b, p. 614). The next discursive strategy, invention of tradition, is borrowed from historian Eric Hobsbawm, who argues that national traditions that are claimed to be old may have recent origins and in some cases are invented. Invented tradition means “a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past” (Hobsbawm, 2004, p. 1). The fourth strategy of discursive construction of national culture analyzed by S. Hall is foundational myth, a “story which locates the origin of the nation, the people, and their national character so early that they are lost in the mists of, not ‘real’, but ‘mythic’ time” (Hall, 1996b, p. 614). The final strategy S. Hall presents is “the symbolic idea of a pure, original people, or ‘folk’” which becomes a reality since it is the primordial people who exert power in nations (Hall, 1996b, p. 614).

The role of narrativity becomes more important in its relation to collective memory mainly when it concerns minority groups in a nation. Through narrativity, collective history is passed through generations, and it constructs and reconstructs collective memory within national identity such as in the case of Armenian community in Turkey.

2.1.1.3. Nation, Narration, and Collective Memory

Narration of national identity and the sense of belonging are directly related to collective memory, especially when minorities are considered. Narration and collective memory are crucial for Armenian identity in Turkey, based on the 1915 events and conflicting official historical accounts with those of the Armenian national narration in Turkey. Following that premise, Armenian community in Turkey adopts

narration as a means to pass on the historical element of Armenian identity to future generations in its own terms.

Collective memory acts as a link between the past and future, and is located in the present. Collective memory represents the present; it is not collective history, but reconstruction of the past in the present, and it depends on the actors' collective participation. Collective memory is a social element and has validity as long as it is considered within the scope of the social. However, collective memory stems from individual memory, even though it can only be activated within society (Halbwachs, 1992, pp. 46–51). The reason that Armenians in Turkey attribute importance to culture and cultural community events as reflected by *Agos* is to enable collective memory to survive in Turkey.

2.1.2. Ethnic Identity

Although ethnic identity is commonly conjoined with national identity (ethno-national), because of its unique features, I treat ethnic identity as a separate category in this study. Ethnic identity is different than national identity because ethnic identity places more emphasis on common descent as compared to national identity (Joseph, 2004).

Ethnic identity can be defined as “allegiance to a group with which one has ancestral links” (Edwards, 1985, p. 10) or as “basic group identity” (Isaacs, 1981, pp. 301). To be sustained, ethnic identity requires a sense of group boundary established through shared values, objectives, and symbols. Ethnic identity emphasizes community of birth and native culture (Smith, 1991, pp. 11–2). In its more extensive definition, ethnic identity excludes other ethnicities, and in that way, depending on the degree of exclusion, ethnic identity can be a source of conflict in collectivities. There is also the possibility of redefining the boundaries of ethnic identity, even though such mutability is limited (Nagel, 1994, pp. 1546).

Ethnic identity depends on biological factors acquired by chance at birth. It implies race, and such community belonging cannot be changed

completely. For that reason, ethnic identity signifies an absolute identity structure as compared to national identity. Its chances of political action are enhanced in its articulation with other identity elements in constructing a collective identity. For that reason, it has a secondary role and importance in this study's focus on Armenian identity in Turkey from a constructivist perspective.

2.2. Armenian Community and the Elements of Armenian Identity in Turkey

Ethnic and national elements are among the constructive components of Armenian identity in Turkey. Yet the analysis of *Agos* points to the fact that the weight placed on such elements has had negative impacts on the Armenian identity in Turkey in political terms leading the community to exhibit apolitical features. The rest of this chapter presents the main elements of Armenian identity in Turkey (1915 narratives, religion, civic life and political action) as identified during the early stages of data collection and analysis of this study. Then, those elements of Armenian identity, after their introduction, are referred to in the following chapters while analyzing the reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey, through *Agos*.

2.2.1. Armenian Community in Turkey

Armenians are inhabitants of Asia Minor since the ancient times before the Turkish and Muslim arrival to Anatolia. For centuries, Armenian and Turkish populations lived together on the shared territory of Asia Minor, developing and nurturing a common culture. Armenians were an integral part of the Ottoman Empire, and they are a part of the Republic of Turkey as a non-Muslim minority group defined by the Lausanne Treaty in 1923.

2.2.1.1. Historical Background: 1923–1990

The Lausanne Treaty established the new state and recognized non-Muslims as equal citizens of the new country with additional rights and protections along the lines of their religious and cultural differences. The

Armenian population in Turkey is identified as a minority group together with Jewish and Greek populations. Following such recognition, the state formation, national identity construction, and democratic consolidation processes of the new Republic had their impacts on the identity construction and reformulation of minorities in general, Armenians in particular. Some of those policies directly targeted minorities, while some had their effect only indirectly.

The new state, Republic of Turkey, established in 1923 and aimed to build a modern nation state following the Western model on the ruins of the Ottoman Empire. In that context, one of the projects executed by the new state was to modernize the social formation accordingly through social and political reforms. Radical reforms ranging from the form of attire to introducing a new alphabet were launched for those purposes. As presented in more detail in this chapter, Turkish history was tried to be associated with ancient civilizations of Anatolia going beyond the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, a history and a language thesis were employed to construct a national identity as an antithesis of the Ottoman identity. Those attempts to prove ancient Anatolian roots of the Turkish people and culture tended to put emphasis on race because the main attempt was to prove the existence of a Turkish race, where race was taken to mean a national community. In this framework, race was tied to language and stressed the importance and role of Turkish language in the construction of national identity. The purpose was to create an alternative history to the history of the Ottoman Empire, going back in time to ancient cultures such as the Sumerians and Hittites (Çağaptay, 2006, pp. 516).

Within the scope of reformism and the process to construct a new social structure and nation, artificial myths and bonds were also invented for the construction of Turkishness. The state initiated pseudo scientific studies on Turkish language and history to legitimize its claims on Turkish history in Anatolia and ancient Turkish culture (Çağaptay, 2006;

Ersanlı, 1992; Aytürk, 2004; Çolak, 2004; Poulton, 1997). For such purpose, the Turkish Hearths Committee for the Study of Turkish History [*Türk Ocakları Türk Tarihi Tetkik Heyeti*] formulated the Turkish History Thesis [*Türk Tarih Tezi*]. When the Hearts were dissolved in 1931, the Committee changed its name to the Society for the Study of Turkish History [*Türk Tarihini Tetkik Cemiyeti*]. The Society was given the task of constructing the narrative of Turkish national history and proving that Turkish was the mother language of great civilizations, in cooperation with the Society for the Study of Turkish Language [*Türk Dili Tetkik Cemiyeti*]. In order to undertake those tasks, a workshop was organized in Ankara in 1932 with the participation of teachers and scholars from various disciplines. They conferred on the Turkish History Thesis, defining Turks as a heroic and ancient race (Çağaptay, 2006, pp. 52). The Thesis intended to prove that Anatolia was the ancient fatherland of Turkish people. This argument further implies that the Turks were already in Anatolia as an ancient nation before any minority group such as Greek and Armenians.

The early period of the Republic (1923–1945) was a one-party system where CHP [*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*], (Republican People's Party) as the founding party was the government. During those years, in an attempt to construct a national identity, the new Republic initiated policies aiming at the Turkification of the social formation for a unified society. Those Turkification policies were legal, language and education related, as well as economic.

The Turkification policies in the legal field are directly related with citizenship defining who is included and excluded from the new nation. There were a number of demographic policies in this context. Among those, the law enacted in 1927 (Law No. 1041) stated that those Ottoman subjects who were residing outside Turkey during the War of Independence (1919–1923) and had not returned after the War would lose their citizenship. Following that law, previous subjects of the

Ottoman Empire were denaturalized based on their nonparticipation in the War of Independence (Çağaptay, 2006, p. 72). The Law of Turkish Citizenship [*Türk Vatandaşlığı Kanunu*] No. 1312 of 1928 was used as grounds to denaturalize previous Ottoman subjects, such as Armenians, who had left the country during the first decade of the twentieth century and had acquired citizenship from other states (Çağaptay, 2006, p. 72–3). Moreover, the Statue of Traveling [*Seyrisefer Talimatnamesi*] was issued in 1933, regulating the movement of Anatolian Christians in Turkey. This statue also made it difficult for some previously Ottoman subjects to return Anatolia; in line with the laws numbered 1041 and 1312, they were denaturalized (Çağaptay, 2006, p. 71).

Legal Turkification policies also refer to demographic policies carried out in Anatolia mainly targeting non-Muslim and non-Turkish populations, to advance their integration. In this respect, the First Resettlement Law [*İskan Kanunu*] No. 885 was enacted in 1926 to deal with the flow of immigrants but also to manage the country's ethnic distribution and Turkification. In that way it allowed for the relocation of non-Turkish Muslim groups, such as the Kurds, to areas with a high Turkish population, in order to foster their integration. The Second Resettlement Law No. 2510, dated 1934, divided Turkey into three main regions, calling for the strategic relocation of the population with reference to ethnicity and language, by the Ministry of Interior (Çağaptay, 2006, pp. 84–5).

Another legal regulation as a part of the Turkification policies to unify the nation focused on foreign names; the Law on Last Names [*Soy Adı Kanunu*] was enacted in 1934 and required every Turkish citizen to acquire a Turkish last name. In line with this Law, although most minority groups such as the Armenians were only changing their last names, most Jewish citizens changed their first names as well.

Turkification in terms of language refers to the introduction of a new alphabet and declaration of Turkish as the language of the new

nation. This declaration has undermined the existing language diversity in the country. In this context, policies were implemented to make the society internalize the Turkish language (Lewis, 1999; Üstel, 2004; Çağaptay, 2006). Turkish was declared as the official language of the Republic in the 1924 Constitution, and Arabic script was replaced with a new Latin script in 1928. The change in script was followed by attempts to purify the language, replacing the Ottoman words with the new Turkish ones. Further language policies were implemented in the following years in order to make Turkish the language of the new nation and to integrate non-Turkish elements of the state through language. The “Citizen Speak Turkish” [*Vatandaş Türkçe Konuş*] campaign was launched on 26 April 1927, and continued through the 1930s, mainly targeting the Jewish population and urging Jewish citizens to learn and speak Turkish. In 1935, the campaign took a new shape, following the speech of Prime Minister İsmet İnönü calling upon every citizen in Turkey to speak Turkish. For this purpose, the National Union of Turkish Students [*Türk Milli Talebe Birliği*] undertook an unofficial campaign to make Turkish the only language spoken in Turkey. It expressed itself in the form of harassing people who spoke languages other than Turkish in Turkey.

In 1932, the first Turkish Language Congress was convened in İstanbul, attended by teachers. The purpose was to revive Turkish language and save it from the corruption caused by the Ottoman language. Attempts were made to purify language by replacing Persian and Arabic words with Turkish ones. In 1932, the Parliament passed a law requiring the government to collect Turkish words that exist in spoken language, but not in dictionaries, from all parts of Anatolia. In addition, new words were created to replace existing ones. However, those policies became less influential and practical than planned.

The Sun-Language Theory [*Güneş-Dil Teorisi*] was created and launched in the face of the failure of language policies. The theory

argued that all languages were developed from a primeval language spoken in Central Asia and that Turkish was the language closest to that origin. The theory, which asserted that all languages were developed from that primeval language through Turkish, was developed by Austrian linguist Hermann Kvergić and appreciated by Mustafa Kemal as it attributed a superior position to the Turkish language. However, soon enough the theory was abandoned, as it was widely criticized by the West, and its main underlying principles were invalidated (Zürcher, 2004, p. 190).

Declaration of Turkish as the official language of the new state might imply homogenization of the nation during the nation building process. The language policies might have disregarded the language diversity existing in Anatolia together with Armenian as the language of Armenian minority in Turkey. Armenian minority was given the right to speak Armenian and teach Armenian in minority schools, but people's names were Turkified.

Economic Turkification policies that have had affected the minority and population in Turkey are related to taxation and property ownership. Those policies have limited the economic activities and development of the minority population in Turkey. Başak İnce argues that the guiding motto during the early years of the Republic was “in Turkey work is for the Turks”, underlining the process of “economic Turkification” (İnce, 2012, p. 71). As an example, B. İnce asserts that, civil servants and doctors had to be of Turkish origin according to the 18 March 1926, Article 4 of the Civil Service Law No. 788.¹⁰ Following the economic Turkification policies, in 1926, the government issued a regulation demanding all companies to keep their records in Turkish. Furthermore the law limiting the employment of non-Muslim citizens in Turkey in certain occupations (Allocation of Crafts and Services to the Turkish

¹⁰ This law was amended in 1965 by the State Civil Servants Law.

Citizens in Turkey) was sent to the parliament in 1929 and passed in 1932. The law had ten articles; the first article listed the professions reserved for “Turkish citizens”, and the second listed the jobs forbidden to “non-Turkish” citizens (İnce, 2012, p. 72).

In this context, citizenship is aimed to be defined in inclusive terms. Turkishness was defined, in a sense, unifying the organic/ethnic and the civic/territorial elements (Smith, 2005, p. 441). Defining Turkishness went hand in hand with the construction of the notion of Turkish citizenship in opposition to the subject [*tebaa*] system of the Ottoman Empire (İçduygu et al., 1999, p. 187). The first Constitution dated 1924 defines Turkishness in the article 88 as any citizen of Turkey irrespective of religion and race, Turkishness was defined through citizenship. Thus, the 1924 Constitution of the Republic of Turkey recognized the citizenship of non-Muslims, but not their Turkish nationality. It was based on their language and ethnicity but also on religion, even though the new state is based on secular principles (Çağaptay, 2006, pp. 14–5).

Aside from the Turkification policies, some economic regulations such as *Varlık Vergisi* [Capital Tax] had negative consequences for the businesses owned by the minorities in Turkey. The Capital Tax passed in the parliament in 1942 and “it soon became apparent that the really important data determining a taxpayer’s assessment were his religion and nationality” (Lewis, 1968, p. 298). Commissions were established and the amount to be paid is publicly posted. Taxes to be collected on the basis of religious affiliation and ethnicity. Muslims were classified as ‘M’, non-Muslims as ‘G’, foreigners ‘E’, and converts as ‘D’. The determined amounts were supposed to be paid within 15 days. Those who could not pay that amount lost their property and some were even sent to a labor camp in Aşkale (Lewis, 1968, p. 298). Majority of non-Muslims resorted to selling their property to be able to pay those taxes

(Örs and Komşuoğlu, 2007, pp. 411–2). The taxation system is abandoned in stages and repealed in 1944.

Turkification policies of the single party regime were not completely abandoned after 1945 with the initiation of multi-party politics, yet they changed their form and intensity. As Tanil Bora asserts, although multi party politics and Democrat Party (DP) as the new political party established in 1946 and came to power in 1960 gained the support of minorities, it did not bring about the expected new blood for the minorities in Turkey (Bora, 2008, p. 913). T. Bora claims that the tension between citizenship and ethnicity remained in the official interpretation of nationalism. “The change in Turkey was not as dramatic as it seemed [...] new political forces represented by the DP has entered the political arena, but in power they continued to work with the same instrument [...] as had the republicans” (Ahmad, 2003, p. 104). However, recognizing the society’s interest in the new political party, CHP has initiated liberalization attempts for itself and society. This might be interpreted as one of the positive impacts of DP for non-Muslims in Turkey. They benefited from the general liberalization of the country.

Moreover, Umut Koldaş asserts that the period between 1950s and 1970s reflects increasing levels of interaction and communication within the Armenian community and with the broader Turkish society as a part of democratic consolidation. Based on this argument, he argues that “socioeconomic and political integration of Armenian minority into the society took place less problematically and more progressively [...] until the violent political acts of Armenian terrorist organizations beginning from early 1970s” (Koldaş, 2003, p. 80). U. Koldaş (2003) tells that, between 1950s and 1970s, Armenian community in Turkey started to feel connected to the system without experiencing discrimination except for the pogroms in 1955. He further underlines the importance of political participation of Armenian community in this era when the

Armenian community was represented in the Grand National Assembly (Koldaş, 2003).

Major events considering minorities in general and Armenians in particular in this period can be listed as 6–7 September pogroms of 1955 against non-Muslims, but mainly Greek population in Istanbul and ASALA terror against Turkish diplomats. 6–7 September 1955 events or the Istanbul pogrom was a series of violent riots by a mob against mainly the Greek population of Istanbul. During those days property, business, and churches of Greek minority in Istanbul were destroyed and caused the emigration of the Greek population from Istanbul.

Furthermore, Turkey witnessed a wave of terror attacks by the Armenian terror organization Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) during 1970s and 1980s. Those attacks were held in multiple countries targeting Turkish diplomats and their immediate families. “The declared rationale was to gain revenge for Turkish massacres of Armenians during World War I and to achieve [...] the ‘3Rs’: (1) recognition of what happened; (2) reparations; and (3) restoration of the ancestral homeland” (Gunter, 2011, p.1). Even though ASALA was not organized by Armenians living in Turkey, it resulted in creating hostility toward Armenians in the broader Turkish society during 1970s and 1980s. Although ASALA had declared larger political purposes such as unifying all Armenians and fighting imperialism, the big deadly attacks in 1980s on Ankara and Paris airports and a public bazaar in Istanbul alienated people from the organization. Those attacks caused a large number of civilian deaths and the organization is not active since then.

1970s ended with a military coup and a military rule on 12 September 1980 lasted until 1983. “From 1984 onwards the press, both Kemalist and socialist-oriented, constantly drew attention to the growth of Islamic currents” (Zürcher, 2004, pp. 288–9). Islam as a part of the national identity and Turkishness has become more prominent with the

rise of Islamic identity and political Islam in Turkey in the post–1980 era (İnce, 2012, p. 150).

The period between the establishment of a new state to define a new nation and a national identity and a post military society has considerable impact on the Armenian community and identity in Turkey. The perception of citizenship and Turkification policies might have had alienated the Armenian community from the state and broader Turkish society. Yet, aside from the ASALA terror, Armenians were not in the picture with their Armenian identity for decades. This situation changes in the 1990s together with new waves of political movements in the global arena.

2.2.1.2. Armenian Community in Turkey: post-1990s

In 1990s, the changes in the world fostered by liberalization, globalization, new dynamics with the fall of the USSR, reform process initiated in Turkey guided by the EU, and the need to comply with the conventions of the United Nations (UN) have made the issues of human rights as well as minority rights central to political and social debates in Turkey. *Agos*, the Armenian bilingual newspaper, was established in this new climate when identity and minority politics became popular and crucial issues in Turkey following the global trends.

Although the Armenian community is the most populous non-Muslim group in Turkey, the community is a rather small one, concentrated in Istanbul (Komşuoğlu and Örs, 2009, p. 33; Özdoğan and Kılıçdağı, 2011, p. 18).¹¹ Today the estimated number of Armenians living in Turkey is around 60,000–70,000 (Özdoğan and Kılıçdağı, 2011, p. 18).¹² As one of the officially recognized minority groups in

¹¹ Armenian community in Turkey is concentrated in Istanbul, and the majority of its members have emigrated from different parts of Anatolia. Besides a small number of Armenians living in different Anatolian cities such as in Ankara, there is also a village in Anatolia — Vakıflı in Samandağı — the entire population of which is Armenian. It is also the only village left in Anatolia where all inhabitants are Armenian.

¹² The census in Turkey has not gathered data on ethnic and religious affiliation since 1965. According to the 1966 data of the State Statistics Institution, the last census data

Turkey, the Armenian community's daily cultural and social life is experienced as a minority group in Istanbul.¹³

Social and cultural life of the Armenian community in Turkey is organized around several key institutions: the Armenian Patriarchate, endowed institutions (or minority foundations, consisting of 16 schools, all of which are in Istanbul; their alumni associations; and churches), two hospitals (*Surp Pırgıç* Hospital and *Surp Agop* Hospital), two orphanages, three newspapers (*Marmara*, *Jamanag*, and *Agos*), newly established fellow townsman [*hemşeri*] associations, and civil society organizations (such as *Nor Zartonk* and Hrant Dink Foundation) (Özdoğan and Kılıçdağı, 2011, p. 20).

Because Armenian community is a small, geographically and culturally concentrated community, in time the community established a relatively closed structure within the broader Turkish society. As an outcome of this self-contained structure, since the early years of the Republic, the lack of communication and interaction between the Armenian community and the broader Turkish society might have created mutual misconceptions of the other. These groups either constructed their perception of each other on historical accounts and collective memory, or made assumptions about the other (Akçam, 2000; Dink, 2008). Armenians constructed their perception of the “Turk” based on their habits of taught ignorance [*öğretilmiş yok sayma*], while

reporting the number of Armenians in Turkey was acquired through the 1965 census based on the number of native Armenian language speakers: 33,094. The estimated number today is based on registration in Armenian churches, and the figure is far from having the characteristics of a scientific and accurate data set. The estimated number provided here is derived from the previous studies and research on the Armenian community in Turkey.

¹³ The Armenian community in Turkey is one of the minority groups, together with Greek and Jewish populations, recognized by the Lausanne Treaty in 1923. The Lausanne Treaty recognizes only those three non-Muslim populations living in Turkey as minorities. Other cultural and ethnic groups, such as the Kurds, are not granted minority status, based on their Muslim religious beliefs. Minority groups are granted certain rights, e.g., practicing their religion and having their own separate schools, based on their minority status.

Turkish society's perception of Armenians is based on protective/defensive distance (Özdoğan et al., 2009, p. 4).

It is perceived in the literature on Armenian community in Turkey that one of the means for raising the voice of the Armenian community is the bilingual Armenian newspaper *Agos*, founded in 1996. Establishing *Agos* is one of the most crucial elements for the reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey. This process of reformulation of Armenian identity entered a new, more dynamic phase in 2007 following the assassination of Hrant Dink, one of the most outspoken Armenian intellectuals in Turkey (Özdoğan and Kılıçdağı, 2011, p. 19; Laçiner, 2009, p. 13).

The era following Dink's assassination is marked by intra-community questioning of the Armenian community in Turkey and more frequent instances of communication between the Armenian community and the broader Turkish society. The first and most visible indication of this new dynamic was Hrant Dink's funeral, where a considerable number of non-Armenians attended and expressed their solidarity with the Armenian community in Turkey. This first spark was followed by the online petition "I Apologize" launched in December 2008 and signed by around 300 notable Turkish intellectuals, scholars, and journalists apologizing for the "Great Catastrophe of 1915" as stated in the text of the petition. This petition was further signed by thousands of people in Turkey and abroad. Although not considered to be a successful apology in political terms by some members of the Armenian community and some scholars such as Taner Akçam, the campaign in itself was embraced as a positive step (Erbal, 2013). As another way of showing empathy with the Armenian community and questioning Turkey's official version of history, on 24 April public commemorations have been held in Istanbul and Ankara since 2010. These started as small-scale events in Istanbul, organized by the online platform *DurDe* in

2010.¹⁴ Since then, people from the broader Turkish society have been participating in these commemorations in increasing numbers.¹⁵ Since 2011, the main slogan of the commemorations held by *DurDe* has been “This pain belongs to us all”, which aims to reflect the unity of Turkish society in the face of the perceived discrimination against Armenians.

But who are the Armenians in Turkey? As indicated earlier, their history traces back to the ancient inhabitants of Asia Minor whom Turkish society knows little about. Why? Because Armenian identity remained invisible to the broader Turkish society for almost a century mainly due to the self-contained community structure. However, in an attempt to change this structure, since 1996, with *Agos* as the embodiment of the desire to speak for the Armenian community in Turkey, the community has been fighting to be heard by the broader society. This also initiates the reformulation process of Armenian identity in Turkey as through *Agos*.

Armenian identity is not homogenous and is being reformulated. It is not possible to list the features and elements of Armenian identity in Turkey conclusively due to the flexible and contextual nature of identity. Yet it is possible to identify the basic elements in the reformulation process of Armenian identity for analytical purposes. I deduce those analytical elements through my analysis of *Agos*, which reflects *Agos*'s perception of Armenian identity, based on the implied importance attributed to those elements by the newspaper and the preliminary data

¹⁴ *DurDe*, “Say stop to racism and nationalism”, is an online platform founded in 2007 in Turkey. It is undertaking an anti-hate crime and hate speech campaign, together with similar campaigns related to fight against racism, nationalism, sexism, homophobia, and any kind of discrimination in Turkey. For more information, see <<http://www.durde.org>>.

¹⁵ In 2013, 24 April commemoration events were held in Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Adana, and Bodrum, and there has also been an independent event organized in Dersim for the first time. Additionally, in 2013 some diaspora Armenians also participated in these events in Turkey for the first time.

collection process on the Armenian identity in Turkey.¹⁶ These elements are religion; civic life and politics; and history, the 1915 narratives, and collective memory.

2.2.2. Elements of Armenian Identity in Turkey

I argue that the traditionally assumed elements making up the Armenian identity in Turkey are religion, civic life and politics, and the 1915 narratives. This part of the chapter aims to present those elements as guiding principles in relation to the analysis of the process of reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey through *Agos*.

2.2.2.1. Armenian Religion: Apostolic Christianity

Religion is among the crucial elements of Armenian identity in Turkey because religion has been an integral part of Armenian national and cultural identity throughout Armenian history. This has caused religion to be articulated with history, national myth, and narration for the Armenian community.¹⁷ Even for nonreligious members of the Armenian community in Turkey, religion is an important element of identity construction in national and cultural terms (Koptaş, 2013). Religion and the idea of nation co-exist in Armenian history because Armenians were the first nation in history to convert to Christianity, as early as the fourth century (Russell, 2005; Panossian, 2002). Because of this articulation between religion and Armenian national identity, Armenian community in Turkey does not solely refer to a religious community, but also to an ethnic, national, and cultural community.

The Armenian Church is called the Apostolic Armenian Church or Armenian Orthodox Church. It is one of the ancient Oriental churches and also one of the oldest Christian churches. Additionally, the Church has been associated with only Armenians for over fifteen centuries.

¹⁶ I refer to *Agos*'s community news pages, which focus on Armenian history, religious festivals, and cultural community events every week.

¹⁷ The story of Armenian conversion to Christianity and its being the first Christian nation in the world is among the most popular elements of the Armenian national myth (Panossian, 2002).

Since its establishment, the Apostolic Church has only represented Armenians (Özdoğan et al., 2009, p. 46). The Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople was founded in 1461 to be the spiritual leader of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Istanbul. Although for Armenians in Turkey the main denomination of Christianity is Apostolic, there are also Protestant and Catholic Armenians.

The Armenian Catholic Church of Istanbul was founded in 1830 after the recognition of Armenian Catholics as a *millet* (religious community). It was unified in 1867 with the Cilicia Armenian Catholic Patriarchate founded in 1740 in Istanbul.¹⁸ The Armenian Protestant Church was founded in Istanbul in 1845, and it was recognized as a *millet* in 1850. In contrast to other churches, a civic leader, rather than a spiritual one, was appointed to the Armenian Protestant church.¹⁹

Besides being an integral part of the Armenian national identity, religion (Apostolic Christianity) has also served as a unifying element for the Armenian community in Turkey. The primary reason for this is because the Ottoman Empire divided its social formation on a religious basis in contrast to its Muslim character (*millet* system) (Shaw and Shaw, 2002, p. 1256). For that reason, during the Ottoman period Armenian religion was the main principle, suggesting a unified identity element for the Armenian community in Turkey. Moreover, Armenian population is organized as a minority group due its Christian character since the establishment of the Republic.

The *millet* system of the Ottoman Empire strengthened the role and importance of religion for the Armenian community in Turkey. The Armenian *millet* was recognized in 1461, in addition to the Muslim,

¹⁸ Since 1967, the Archbishop of Armenian Catholics in Turkey has been Hovannes Çolakyan. It is estimated that there are 150 Catholic Armenians in Turkey. Çolakyan stresses his spiritual leadership and has chosen not to be involved in politics (Özdoğan et al., 2009, pp. 180–1).

¹⁹ Protestant Armenians in Turkey are considerably fewer in number than the other Armenian Christians, and they are also less organized (Özdoğan et al., 2009, p. 181).

Greek (Orthodox Christian), and Jewish *millet*s. Since the Ottoman period, the Patriarchate is the main institution representing the Armenian community in Turkey in its relation to state and society. The Patriarchate undertakes political and social roles in addition to its spiritual ones. For that reason, the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople is regulating civilian and nonreligious community affairs such as those related to Armenian foundations, including schools and hospitals. Although traditionally those tasks have been within the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate, today there is a sense of discontent manifested in the Armenian community's call for secularization and a reduced role of religion in public life (Özdoğan and Kılıçdağı, 2011, pp. 524).

The call for a less active role of religion in public life could also be claimed to be influenced by the diminished effect of religion for the daily life of the Armenian community in Turkey. Religion is not the main element shaping Armenian identity because not all Armenians are religious, not all of them are Christians, and not all believe in the same denomination of Christianity. However, religion retains its cultural unifying role for the Armenian community in Turkey (Koptaş, 2012). It is still important because the Armenian community in Turkey considers religion and the Church to be part of their cultural and national identity beyond their spiritual purposes. For instance religious festivals — some of them traced back to pagan times — play an important role in Armenian culture and identity. These festivals are perceived as symbolic days that foster belonging in the Armenian community (Koptaş, 2012). For the Armenian community in Turkey the Church appears to be the place to feel Armenian and has a symbolic importance for the identity (Koptaş, 2012).

In our Skype interview, Rober Koptaş, editor in chief of *Agos*, stated that the Armenian community in Turkey today identifies itself with religion and the Church. He asserted that despite the existence of nonreligious Armenians in Turkey, the majority of Armenians are

believers. R. Koptaş further stated that the Church and schools have been the main Armenian institutions in Turkey since the early years of the Turkish Republic, following the similar historical patterns of Armenian identification with the Church during the Ottoman Empire. It is because, he claimed, churches were the only institutionalized structures of the Armenian community recognized by the Republic. As an example of this state-made connectedness, R. Koptaş said that it was not possible to attend an Armenian school without a baptismal record from the church, and this process had to be renewed every year for registration. In that respect, R. Koptaş claimed that the system in Turkey did not allow for individual choice when it came to religion. For that reason, Armenian community in Turkey accepted this relation as it was presented to the community. Furthermore, according to R. Koptaş, churches are the main institutions for Armenians in Turkey because the Church undertakes a considerable number of functions, including educational, social, and cultural roles; for example, weddings, funerals, and baptisms are held in churches. Those events are among the vital sources of feeling Armenian, and churches appear to be the places where individual differences are minimized.²⁰

Underlining the differences in religious tendency among Armenians in Turkey and the weakening impact of religion for Armenian identity, *Nor Zartonk*, a civil society organization of Armenian community in Turkey established by young left-wing people, stated in our e-mail interview that for conservative Armenians the most important element of being an Armenian was to be a member of the Armenian Apostolic Church. However, as an organization, they argue against a specific religion being the main element of Armenianness, while opposing the

²⁰ Interview with the author, 23 October 2012.

treatment of the Armenian community in Turkey as a religious community.²¹

Although there is not a one-to-one correspondence between being religious and being Armenian, religion is one of the crucial components of Armenian identity in Turkey, and the Church is a part of that importance attributed to the religion.

2.2.2.2. Civic Life and Politics

As far as the ethnicity debate is concerned, I argue that there is only one ground on which a discussion of Armenian ethnicity could be presented within the scope of this study, considering the identity perception adopted: A debate on ethnicity that puts emphasis on the elements of culture and civic life rather than race and blood ties. I claim that Armenian ethnicity in Turkey is strongly connected to language and religion as well as national and civic elements such as history and myth. It is the assumption that rather than basing the ethnic roots on the elements of a certain race, Armenian community in Turkey has chosen to identify its ethnic roots as being one of the ancient people in world history in cultural and historical terms (Panossian, 2006). Armenian identity implies a sense of belonging to locality in Turkey in terms of ethnic roots. However this should not be confused with *Blut und Boden* [blood and soil] German nationalism that regards myth as blood, and soil as the source of this blood (Lacoue-Labarthe et al., 1990, p. 296). Unlike *Blut und Boden* nationalism, Armenian local attachment is linked to civic identifications such as language and culture, not to blood.

Language has a vital importance in the construction of identity (Fishman, 1989; Edwards, 2009 and 1985; Joseph, 2004). Armenian language, just like religion, is a crucial component of Armenian national identity, and it is also embedded in religion. Furthermore, for Armenian community in Turkey, the importance of language is an outcome of its

²¹ Interview with the author, 14 November 2012.

strong role in shaping a rich oral and written culture, together with its contribution to a sense of belonging and unity (Özdoğan, et al., 2009, p. 31).

The importance of the Armenian language is based on the sacredness of Armenian script. Armenian script is sacred because it is as old as the Armenian conversion to Christianity and because it was created by Armenian clergy [*Mesrop*] in 405. Until then, the script used by the Church was Greek and Syriac/Aramaic. As a result of the creation of this new script and language by clergy in the fifth century, the first schools teaching the new Armenian language were predominantly opened and managed by monasteries, allowing the Church to monopolize the instruction of Armenian language and literature — which is still valid today to a certain extent. Because clergy coined the new Armenian script and language, and the Church monopolized education, Armenian language is loaded with religious references. Although the link between religion and Armenian identity is weakening due to more modern and secular community affairs, religion retains its crucial place in Armenian identity through its embedded character in language and culture, and thus in civic elements of Armenian identity.

Over time, and due to new needs emerging in community, the Armenian language has gone through major transformations in its interaction with other languages (mainly Turkish, Kurdish, and Russian). Today, there are two main written and spoken versions of the Armenian language: Western Armenian, based on the Armenian spoken in Istanbul, and Eastern Armenian, spoken in Erevan. There is also a third version of Armenian language that is used by the Apostolic Church. Western Armenian is based on the Armenian spoken in Istanbul, but it is also the Armenian spoken in Anatolia. Although Eastern Armenian language is the official language of Armenia and is a living language, Western Armenian language is struggling for survival in Turkey. In 2009, Western Armenian was added to the list of endangered languages

by UNESCO.²² According to a research conducted by Professor Arus Yumul in the early 1990s on the language patterns of Armenians in Istanbul, 60 percent of Armenians could not speak Armenian at all. A. Yumul's research also shows that the majority of those who could speak Armenian do not have an advanced command of the language (in Özdoğan et al., 2009, pp. 30610).

Although the Armenian language is very crucial for the Armenian community in Turkey, it is in the process of decline. Such decline has both in-group and external reasons similar to the decline and death of any language (Nelson, 2007). In other words, this decline results from systemic and structural reasons that are community related and are based on the external impact of Turkish state policies at the same time. Considering the intragroup causes of the decline, such a process cannot be related only to Turkish state policies. Turkish language policies imposing language assimilation especially in the 1930s have certainly had a considerable impact on the decline of the Armenian language in Turkey; however, although the decline of Armenian language is relatively recent, the use of Turkish language by the Armenian community in Turkey is not. Armenian community has been bilingual since the Ottoman period and has had a good command of Turkish since then. Thus, if being bilingual has had an impact on the decline of the Western Armenian language, it is the outcome of a long process.

Arus Yumul analyzes the structural reasons of decline in Armenian language in Turkey (in Özdoğan et al., 2009, pp. 307–11). She argues that the language sphere of the Armenian is getting smaller; there are fewer and narrower social circles for the Armenian community to speak the language in Turkey. A. Yumul underlines the importance of socialization agents in learning a language, especially for children and younger people, stressing the fact that most Armenian children do not

²² According to UNESCO, Western Armenian is a “definitely endangered” language with an estimated number of 50,000 speakers.

encounter the Armenian language until the age of seven, and they perceive it as a school language. She also adds, based on her research, that many Armenian families do not speak Armenian even in their private sphere, at home, anymore.²³ Furthermore, considering the fact that Armenian households read Turkish newspapers and watch Turkish television, it becomes almost impossible for children to hear anyone speaking Armenian at home, according to A. Yumul. In addition to the stated structural reasons, she asserts that as a reaction to the discriminatory policies toward minorities in Turkey (such as the Turkish language campaigns of the 1930s), Armenians have chosen not to speak Armenian language in public, and in time it became almost a hidden language. According to A. Yumul, all these reasons made Armenian an impractical language for Armenians in Istanbul because it seemed easier to speak Turkish both at home and in public, rather than switching languages (in Özdoğan et al., 2009, pp. 307–11). As Diane Nelson states, “speakers of a minority language do not suddenly decide that their language is worthless out of the blue” (2007, p. 201). She argues that “these feelings are often the result of generations of political and social disadvantage forced on them by speakers of the ‘majority’ or national language” (Nelson, 2007, p. 201).

In contrast to the study conducted by A. Yumul in the 1990s, a more recent study by Birsen Örs and Ayşegül Komşuoğlu reflects almost a process of revival on the use of Armenian language within the Armenian community in Turkey (2007, pp. 421–2).²⁴ Their research shows that Armenian mothers are especially attentive to speaking Armenian at home in order to teach the language to their children. Despite the rising

²³ In a similar fashion, based on their study, Anjel Tozcu and James Coady state that 77 percent of the people they interviewed on the use of Armenian language among the Armenians in Turkey do not speak Armenian at home (2003, p. 154).

²⁴ “Out of 228 interviewees, 198 (86.6 percent) could speak the Armenian language and 27 (11.8 percent) could not. Knowledge of the Armenian language in this context must be understood in terms of daily speech” (Örs and Komşuoğlu, 2007, pp. 421–2).

awareness as concerns the decline of the Armenian language, overall regression has not yet been reversed. R. Koptaş underlines the declining role of language for Armenians in Turkey, claiming that it has lost its character of being the language of communication in the community.²⁵

As indicated, schools are the primary places for Armenian children to learn their languages. There are no Armenian schools in other parts of Turkey except for those in Istanbul (Özdoğan et al., 2009, p. 194). Although schools in Istanbul are almost the only places for Armenians to learn their mother language, Armenians face further problems and obstacles in relation to academic resources and the organizational structure of schools.²⁶ It is stated by *Agos* that the red tape involved and the bureaucratic requirements slow down education-related processes and have a discouraging effect on schools and the Armenian community in Turkey. Furthermore, the number of students attending Armenian schools is declining. This can be explained by the parents' tendency to prefer Turkish or other foreign schools rather than Armenian schools, as parents regard these other schools as more successful and better for their children's academic future and career. There are also limitations in being registered to an Armenian school since the 1980s, because every year students have to prove that they are Armenian with a baptismal paper acquired from their churches (Özdoğan et al., 2009, pp. 200–1).

²⁵ Interview with the author, 23 October 2012.

²⁶ The legal framework regulating Armenian education institutions in Turkey is based on the Lausanne Treaty, which grants minorities in Turkey the right to establish, administer, and inspect education institutions. Based on this right, minorities have the right to open schools (funded by themselves) and teach in their native languages. Furthermore, the Turkish government has the right to declare Turkish as the compulsory language without taking the right to native language education away (Özdoğan et. al., 2009, p. 194). Since 1923, a number of additional legal regulations have been put in place. One of those is Law No. 625, *Özel Öğretim Kurumları Kanunu* [Law of Private Education Institutions], enacted in 1965, which is still in effect and bans foreigners and minorities from opening new schools and constructing new school buildings. Additionally, according to the law, in those schools where the medium of education is a language other than Turkish, the school headmaster has to be a "Turk".

Besides the structural problems faced by Armenian schools in Turkey, another reason, which also results from the decline of Armenian language, is the lack of new literary products such as novels and poems in the Armenian language. Unfortunately, there is no new literary production in the Western Armenian language; there are only translations and re-publications of previous works or new works written in Turkish by Armenians (Koptaş, 2012).²⁷

The Armenian language is declining, but it retains its role and importance for Armenian community and identity. It is even adopted as a yardstick to measure the degree of Armenianness by some in the Armenian community. A group of Armenians define themselves as full Armenians based on their command of the language, calling other Armenians as half or quarter Armenians (Özdoğan et al., 2009, pp. 314–5). In opposition to this perspective, it should be stressed that the Armenian language and culture is just as important to those who do not know Armenian. The dependency of ethnicity on language does not imply that knowledge or command of the language implies any degree of identification for the social actor.

The Armenian language is an integral part of Armenian identity and has a crucial cultural role for all Armenians in Turkey, irrespective of their command of the language. *Agos* was established on the recognition of such conflict, with the desire of underlining that not all Armenians in Turkey speak Armenian and that this creates communication problems within the community. It is *Agos*'s assertion that irrespective of command or knowledge of the Armenian language, they are Armenians, that is, Armenian identity can be constructed without knowledge of the language (Özdoğan et al., 2009, p. 312).

²⁷ *Aras Yayıncılık* (Publishing Company) was founded in Istanbul in 1993 and is considered to be the window to the Armenian literature. It publishes books in Turkish and Armenian. However, the majority of the books published are either translations from other languages to Armenian or reprints.

Armenian civic and political life is organized around Armenian foundations and nongovernmental organizations. Yet there is no political party or member in the parliament representing Armenian community in Turkey during the time period under analysis. This lack of civic and political life marks another element of Armenian identity in Turkey in its relation to hegemony of religion in the community and cultural life.

2.2.2.3. History, the 1915 Narratives, and Collective Memory

Collective and national history is a crucial component of national identity and an element in the construction of Armenian identity because it gives meaning and endurance to collective existence and memory (Smith, 1991). Armenians are one of the oldest nations of Asia Minor, the first Armenian nation is traced back to roughly 600 B.C. Armenians have lived under many nations and empires until the establishment of an independent Armenia in 1991 with the collapse of the USSR (there are also a number of Armenian kingdoms until the region was conquered by the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century; the last one of those kingdoms was the Kingdom of Cilicia). Wars, conflicts, and conquests constitute an important part of Armenian history, myths, and national identity.

As indicated earlier, one of the vital elements of national identity is territory or land. For the Armenian community in Turkey this land is a part of Anatolia and the Republic of Turkey. Armenians are one of the ancient civilizations of Anatolia. History becomes a vital element for Armenian identity, especially when it comes to the issue of land and their nativity. Armenians in Turkey feel the need to bring up history fairly often because they constantly feel the need to express their native status on those lands and re-establish their existence on a continuous basis in reference to history. Based on their historical and cultural roots in Anatolia, Armenians in Turkey have a strong attachment to Turkey. They also regard the struggle to prove their existence in Turkey

valuable. It is one of the reasons why many Armenians have chosen to stay and live in Turkey rather than in diaspora.

Besides land and territory, the 1915 narratives make up a significant part of history and Armenian identity. For Armenians in Turkey, it is argued that the construction of collective memory is directly related to the 1915 as well as 1895 narratives as the “chosen trauma”²⁸ (Tuğal, 2001). The 1915 narrative not only refers to the constructive role of claimed events in identity, but to collective history. Armenian history is not only remembered with reference to claimed violence but also to good times before the violence; the unity and peace before 1915 exists as a nostalgic memory (Özdoğan et al., 2009, p. 390).

The 1915 events have two further outcomes for Armenian collective memory besides trauma and violence. On the one hand, there is keeping history in individual memory, and on the other, passing history to the next generations through collective memory. This is further accompanied by invisibility, as a result of which it is perceived that the Armenian community in Turkey did not want to be visible in the public sphere for many decades as Armenians. One of the most common strategies claimed to have been adopted by the Armenian community in Turkey to be invisible was to adopt Turkish names and to convert to Islam (Özdoğan and Kılıçdağı, 2011, p. 32).

Another reason for this claimed invisibility of Armenian community and Armenian identity was related to the state’s attitude toward Armenians. The Turkish state has expected Armenians to be good citizens [*makbul vatandaş*], and as long as they “behave”, Armenians are said to be tolerated in Turkey (Özdoğan et al., 2009, p. 25). Although Armenians in Turkey are expected to be loyal citizens of the Republic, it is asserted by *Agos* that they experience discrimination by the state, such as in relation to property ownership and being hired as civil servants. As

²⁸ “‘Chosen trauma’ refers to the shared mental representation of a massive trauma that the group’s ancestors suffered at the hand of an enemy” (Volkan, 2001, p. 79).

a reaction, Armenians, for a long time had to prove their loyalty to the state as citizens but also lived as outsiders to the broader Turkish society within their own community in their struggle to make their history, memory, religion, and culture survive. Armenian community has not been regarded as a problem for a long time because it was a hidden enclave, and this was appreciated by the Turkish state (Özdoğan et al., 2009, p. 25).

2.3. Conclusion

This chapter has introduced a general identity discussion and the assumed elements of Armenian identity in Turkey. In this chapter identity is defined in constructivist terms, and in relation to this perception, notions of national and ethnic identity are introduced.

In talking about the elements of Armenian identity, it is stated that religion and language have symbolic influences on Armenian identity, but they cannot be regarded as the main determinants and influences. However, the 1915 narrations and collective memory are claimed to be essential elements influencing Armenian identity in Turkey today in political terms because of their continuing importance for the Armenian community in Turkey.

The following chapters present the reformulation process of Armenian identity as analyzed through *Agos*. They explore *Agos* in political terms in relation to its reflection on the process of identity reformulation of the Armenian community from February 1996 to the end of April 2014. Chapter 3 analyzes the first seven years (1996–2002) of *Agos*.

CHAPTER 3

AGOS: THE TRENCH IN THE ANATOLIAN SOIL

1996–2002

Until the 1990s Armenian community in Turkey has been regarded invisible as the community, intentionally or unintentionally, has made it remarkably difficult for an outsider to observe Armenian identity and its process of reformulation due to the community's perceived closed structure to the broader Turkish society.²⁹ On the counter side, the broader society in Turkey has not been particularly interested in the Armenian community. However, with the establishment of *Agos* in 1996 by a group of intellectuals of the Armenian community as a weekly political newspaper printed mostly in Turkish, such a chance is available to outsider researchers and those who are interested in Armenian community and Armenian identity in Turkey.

This chapter presents the process of reformulating Armenian identity in Turkey between 1996 and 2002 through an analysis of *Agos*. The yardstick used in this chapter for the analysis is the elements making up the Armenian identity: the 1915 narratives, religion, and civic life and politics and how they are perceived by *Agos*. This chapter also introduces *Agos* as a political medium of the Armenian community that serves as a means to demystify Armenian community and Armenian identity in Turkey for the broader Turkish society and even for the Armenian community itself. In this context, demystification refers to making the Armenian community and identity visible to the observer and the participant at the same time. Yet this is not coincidental because it is one of the main aims for establishing *Agos*: ending the perception of a silent and invisible Armenian community in Turkey and urging the

²⁹ "Ermeniler" Mıgırdıç Margosyan, *Agos* 19 April 1996.

Armenian community in Turkey to act in political terms as active citizens of Turkey.

In its attempt to investigate the process of identity reformulation of the Armenian community in Turkey between 1996 and 2002 through an analysis of *Agos*, this chapter argues that the main features of the identity reformulation process during the period under analysis are remarkably related to the idea of restructuring Armenian community in Turkey in social and political terms as reflected by *Agos*. Moreover, this chapter stresses that the process of reformulating Armenian identity between 1996 and 2002 is marked by *Agos*'s call for visibility and political activism for the Armenian community in Turkey as the citizens of Turkey. *Agos*'s call for Armenian identity in Turkey is to be less cautious and more vocal in the broader society and also it challenges the perception of citizenship in Turkey that is tailored not only for minorities but also for the broader society.

3.1. Elements of Armenian Identity and Reformulation of Identity

The elements of Armenian identity referred to in this chapter in presenting the identity reformulation are listed as religion, the 1915 narratives and history, and civic life and political participation. From 1996 to 2002, the process of reformulating the identity of the Armenian community was open to observation perhaps for the first time through a media product that was printed and made available to the broader public in Turkish since the establishment of the Republic. Moreover, since 1923, *Agos* exemplifies the first public attempt to question the Armenian community and its structuring. For that reason, during this period, the reformulation of Armenian identity is somehow subtle and entangled with issues of the Armenian community as well as broader Turkish society. Hence, between 1996 and 2002, the process of Armenian identity reformulation is accompanied by a demand voiced by *Agos* to restructure Armenian community.³⁰ Such an idea of restructuring mainly

³⁰ "Önceliğimiz ne Olmalı?" Hrant Dink, *Agos* 17 November 2000.

refers to redrawing the boundaries of religious authority and civic initiatives, thus granting a space for the civic organizations to maneuver and for new ideas to emerge in the Armenian community. In relation to Armenian identity, this is not observed in the form of decreased importance in the role of religion, but as a call for greater emphasis placed on nonreligious elements of Armenian identity in Turkey by *Agos*. It refers to activating civic and political elements of the Armenian identity as an accompaniment to the role of religion. *Agos*'s focus is on the need to have civic initiatives that work in cooperation with the religious authority of the Church. In terms of Armenian identity, this implies strengthening civic and political elements of the identity, such as citizenship, to articulate with the role and importance of religion for the Armenian community in Turkey.

In this call for civic initiatives, citizenship is an important dynamic for *Agos* and Armenian community in Turkey because Armenian identity refers to being Armenian and being a citizen of Turkey at the same time. Moreover, *Agos* enlists a third element of Armenian identity in Turkey as the Republic of Armenia. In Hrant Dink's terms, it is based on the assumption that if being Armenian is defined as an ethnic identity and being a citizen of Turkey as a political or civic identity, then being a part of Armenia is the emotional identity of the Armenian community in Turkey. This premise is based on the idea that Armenians all around the world are unified at the emotional level as emotional identification, beyond their shared history and culture, because of the experiences in 1915.³¹

In its relation to the civic and political life of Armenian community and components of identity in Turkey, restructuring the community is assumed by *Agos* to empower the community in political terms and to encourage the community to be more outspoken, politically active, and demanding within the broader society and in its relation vis-à-vis the

³¹ "Size Birse Bana Üç" Hrant Dink, *Agos* 29 March 2002.

state. The interaction of the three elements of Armenian identity (religion, the 1915 narratives, and civic and political life), this chapter argues, serves to make visible the nature Armenian identity in Turkey during this period. This study does not elaborate on the visibility of the Armenian community, but on the elements and components of Armenian identity to investigate that nature of the identity in Turkey between 1996 and 2002 as presented by *Agos*.

3.1.1. Silenced History, Mourning, and the 1915 Narratives

The 1915 narratives and collective memory remained as secret stories within the Armenian community and silenced in both Turkish and Armenian historiography (Altınay, 2013). It is argued in *Agos* that this, in turn, led the Armenian community to put more emphasis on the trauma of the 1915 events. The 1915 events are crucial in this study considering their impact on the Armenian community today in terms of the identity reformulation process. The 1915 incidents introduced in this study reflecting on the community's perception of the events as presented in *Agos*, beyond my personal and academic approach. The events that took place in 1915 are referred to as population relocations and the meanings attached to those incidents by the Armenian community in Turkey are recognized and reflected in this study through the eyes of *Agos*.

The 1915 events are essential components making up the Armenian identity in Turkey as both in the form of narratives and collective memory. Through the 1915 narratives and collective memory, history serves as an active element for the process of reformulating Armenian identity in Turkey. In this reformulation process what is reconstructed in relation to the 1915 narratives is neither changing the way events are narrated nor subscribing to the official history perspective of the state instead of the Armenian community's version of historical accounts, but how those narratives make sense to the community today through facing emotions and, in a way, deconstructing history as reflected by *Agos*. In

other words, what is reformulated in relation to the 1915 narratives is the way those narratives and collective memory are perceived and conjoined with Armenian identity in Turkey.

It is expected by *Agos* and especially Hrant Dink that change in the perception of the 1915 events will be accompanied by reconciliation and facing with history. Reconciliation in this context not only refers to reconciliation between the broader Turkish society and the Armenian community, but reconciliation of two elements of Armenian identity: being Armenian and being from Turkey [*Türkiyeli*], thus being an Armenian from Turkey [*Türkiyeli Ermeni*]. Such reconciliation is also assumed to be a process of healing for the Armenian community through harmonization of its antagonistic elements. For almost a century, this reconciliation has not taken place according to *Agos* because the expectation of the Armenian community has been that the Turkish state should recognize the 1915 events as “genocide”. Because this has been seen as the path to reconciliation, the Armenian community in Turkey has not acted on realizing reconciliation in alternative terms. The issue was expected to be resolved through an outside, state, intervention rather than an inner action of the Armenian community. For that reason, it is *Agos*’s assertion that the policies of the state against the Armenian historical claims have had a considerable effect on the Armenian community and Armenian identity in Turkey. As Müge Göçek contends, “denial refused human beings the very basic need to reconcile with their emotions, a reconciliation that would then generate the possibility of healing” (2014, p. 15).

Reformulating Armenian identity in this context refers to reconstructing those expectations regarding history and its perception today and, in turn, attributing less power and authority to the Turkish state to affect the identity and even the psychology of Armenian community in Turkey. This is because the 1915 narratives and collective memory not only constitute a political and economic issue for the

Armenian community in Turkey but they are also deeply emotional and psychological. For that reason, the process of reformulating Armenian identity in terms of the 1915 narratives is an individual as well as a collective one, and also a private matter, even though it has public and political connotations.

Coming to terms with history and emotions, reconciliation, and reflecting on today's Armenian identity are assumed to go beyond obsession and trauma by *Agos*. Obsession here refers to putting the 1915 events at the center of identity and making any interaction of the Armenian community in Turkey with the state and broader Turkish society dependent on those events, basing all expectations and demands on the 1915 events, and reflecting on the present through the 1915 events. Yet, in his *Agos* columns, Hrant Dink underlines that ending this obsession does not mean forgetting what happened in 1915 or undermining the role and importance of the 1915 narratives for Armenian community; rather, it means relocating the focus on the 1915 events and providing the opportunity for the contemporary demands of the Armenian community to politicize identity in alternative terms.

In this framework, *Agos* and Hrant Dink offer the independent state of Armenia as a principle means to support the Armenian community in its attempt to heal and to reformulate its identity in more political terms based on the contemporary and everyday needs of the community. Armenia was established in 1991, after the collapse of the USSR on the partially historical lands of the Armenian people, reflecting the long-held dream of Armenians. The independent state of Armenia provides a common land and a sense of national belonging that all Armenians can relate to, no matter where they are living. For that reason, *Agos* suggests Armenia as an impetus to help the Armenian community to confront history and community's emotions so as to aid in the healing of Armenian identity today. Moreover, the focus on Armenia instead of the 1915 narratives has the potential to serve as a progressive unifying

element for the Armenian community in reformulating Armenian identity.

Between 1996 and 2002, the reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey, in relation to the 1915 narratives and collective memory, is observed as centering on the focus on Armenia and the need to develop an alternative intra-community perspective. It is oriented around deconstructing history in order to be able to reformulate Armenian identity today. Deconstructing history, in this perspective, means re-evaluating the elements of history, thus the 1915 events and narratives, and articulating those elements with alternative ones such as the independent state of Armenia.

3.1.2. Role of Religion and the Armenian Patriarchate

Armenians were among the first nations to accept Christianity as the state religion. The majority of the Armenian community in Turkey is Apostolic Christian, organized under the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul. Religion is an integral part of Armenian national and cultural identity, and for that reason, the Church has a central unifying role in the lives of Armenians in Turkey. Under the Ottoman rule, because social formation was organized along the lines of religion, referred to as the *millet* system, Armenian community was represented by the Church. This has led the Armenian community to be impersonated and administered to by the Church. When the Lausanne Treaty in 1923 defined the Armenian community as a minority group based on religious lines, this Ottoman system was somehow protected under the Republic of Turkey. For that reason, the Church has started to assume a civic and political personality in addition to its religious role. In turn, this central role of the Church in the Armenian community has prevented the distinction between public and private spheres for the Armenian community in Turkey. The Church assumes power and authority over every aspect of the community life of Armenians in Turkey. In today's terms, when identity cannot be constructed around only religion and

religious identification, this expansion of the Church calls for a need to restructure the Armenian community, reorganizing the power and authority of the Patriarch and Patriarchate.

The call for reform voiced by *Agos* to limit the power of the Church reflects a divide between the traditional-conservative and secular-liberal perspectives in the Armenian community. Yet it should be underlined that such an intra-community divide of the Armenian community in Turkey is traced back to the late Ottoman Empire, as analyzed by Müge Göçek (2014, pp. 117–26). During the transformation of Ottoman imperial sentiments, Armenians started to experience intra-communal fragmentation among urban and secular Armenians on the one side and traditional-rural and religious Armenians on the other (Göçek, 2014, p. 117). Beginning from this period, the secular-liberal section of the Armenian community has been challenging the rule of traditional religious leaders [*amira*]. M. Göçek states that the Ottoman Empire tried to arbitrate between the two groups by establishing two councils, one civic and one spiritual, under the Sultan’s supervision. However, in time, the ranks of the secular council expanded due to the increased number of Armenians educated abroad who held progressive views, while the traditionalist council representing the status quo started to lose power (Göçek, 2014, pp. 123–6). This process led to a sharp break with the establishment of the Republic, defining Armenian community in religious terms as a continuation of the Ottoman tradition while also disbanding the civic committee in 1997 on the grounds that it was not compatible with the principle of laicism. The civic committee acted as an unofficial body consulted by the Patriarch on matters having a bearing on the Armenian community at large, beyond religious concerns.³² The Advisory Committee was very helpful in sustaining dialogue between spiritual and civic members of the community and

³² “Danışma Kurulu Lağvedildi” editorial, *Agos* 12 December 1997.

effectively helped in resolving the conflicts.³³ *Agos* states that without this Advisory Committee, the Armenian community is left with only a religious authority and representation.

With the re-established *de jure* domination of the Patriarchate over the Armenian community in Turkey, historical intra-community fragmentation reorganized itself. For that reason, religion, which acts as cement for community, has started to cause conflicts where the civic and political life of the Armenian community is concerned. The major reason for conflict is not the religion per se but the way it is institutionalized and manipulated by the Patriarchate and the Church as expressed by *Agos*. Domination of the Church over the Armenian community is possible because the close ties among culture, daily life, and religion help the Patriarchate to justify its involvement in the daily, social, and political affairs of the Armenian community in Turkey.

As stated, the Patriarchate-oriented congregation life has been almost imposed on the Armenian community since the early years of the Republic, following the Ottoman model. The Patriarch has the status of a political and religious leader [*etnarch*] within the Armenian community and in the community's relation with the state. This caused the Armenian community to be stripped of its other national and cultural characteristics, reducing its identity to religious identification and basing Armenian social order on religion. Although this model functioned well during the Ottoman Empire due to structural conditions, it is not possible for such a system to fit in the rule of laicism as defined by the Republic of Turkey. Because the principle of laicism does not allow for a structuring that is religious and civic at the same time under one institution, there is an ongoing indeterminacy related to the inner functioning of the Armenian community and its relation to the state.³⁴

³³ “Anlamakta Zorlanıyoruz” editorial, *Agos* 12 December 1997.

³⁴ “While the Treaty of Lausanne contained a general guarantee that the religious, cultural and charitable institutions of non-Muslims would be protected within the

Furthermore, this causes the Patriarchate to be in a disputable position in regard to being the central organization of the Armenian community as a religious institution undertaking civic and political roles.

Cognizant of those concerns and criticisms, the Patriarchate is not willing to act on them because the Patriarchate is worried that it is going to lose its central position if it allows for civic structuring outside its boundaries as stated by *Agos*. On the other hand, the Patriarchate is offering contradictory solutions to end the conflict within the community: It suggests civic structuring within its own structure.³⁵

As a traditionally democratic institution, the Church does not disregard the demands in society but also is not willing to curb its power and authority. It is a unique feature to the Armenian Church that the Patriarch is elected through popular vote, following the 1863 Code of Regulations.³⁶ After the establishment of the Republic, the 1951 patriarchal election “was conducted pursuant to a special decree issued by the Democrat Party government, while the election in 1961 was done on the bases [sic] of the Patriarchal Election Directive annexed to said governmental decree” (Özdoğan and Kılıçdağı, 2012, p. 53). This decree was planned to be temporary and did not have legal binding power over any elections in the future. However, patriarchal elections in 1990 and 1998 also followed this 1961 regulation per the decision of the

framework of minority rights, it did not codify any specific provisions regarding the administration of the institutions inherited from the Ottoman period. Since the founding of the Republic of Turkey, the Patriarchate does not have legal entity (legal entity status); and there is no new bylaw or statute introduced for patriarchal elections. Historical institutions such as churches, schools, hospitals and orphanages were gathered under the community foundations (*vakıf*) and lost their autonomous structures of the Ottoman era as their operations became subject to the newly adopted Republican laws [...] This causes the Patriarchate to have a supra-institutional status while conveying the common problems of the institutions to official authorities” (Özdoğan and Kılıçdağı, 2011, pp. 51–2).

³⁵ “Sivilleşmenin Yanlış Adresi” Hrant Dink, *Agos* 23 August 2002.

³⁶ Code of Regulations or the Regulation of the Armenian Nation was approved by the Ottoman Empire in 1863. The text defines the power of the Patriarch and Armenian Assembly as the civic body within Armenian *millet*.

government. Following the 1863 Code, patriarchal elections have two steps: First, “the electorates in the endorsed constituency of each church elect the lay delegates, and the Spiritual Council designates the spiritual delegates”, and then “the assembly of delegates, consisting mostly of civilian people (6/7), elects the Patriarch and the members of the Spiritual Council from among these candidates” (Özdoğan and Kılıçdağı, 2012, p. 53). This refers to bypassing the candidacy process participated in by the community and the election of the Patriarch by the Council, in opposition to the democratic tradition of the Church. According to the decree dated 1961, the Council applies to the ranks of the Ministry of Interior and then the Mayor’s office of Istanbul, and then the Council determines the constituencies and number of representatives.³⁷

Two Patriarchs (II. Karekin Kazancıyan and II. Mesrob Mutafyan) served during the period between 1996 and 2002. Patriarch Karekin Kazancıyan was succeeded by II. Mesrob Mutafyan in 1998. Most of the reform demands by the Armenian community were voiced after 1996 with the establishment of *Agos*, and Patriarch Mesrob Mutafyan became reactionary around early 2000 in the face of rising demands by the Armenian community and intellectuals of restructuring the Armenian community and reform in the Church as can easily be observed through *Agos*. Mesrob Mutafyan’s reaction reflects that he was taking criticisms and demands personally more than institutionally because the Patriarch was complaining that he was offended by the criticisms demanding the Church to be less involved in non-religious affairs.³⁸ He even threatens to curse those who criticize him and the Patriarchate.³⁹ After 2000, the

³⁷ The decree of the Council of Ministers, dated 18 September 1961 and numbered 5/1645, sets the rules and procedures for the election of the Armenian Patriarch in Turkey just for one time.

³⁸ Kilise Kendi İşine...” Mesrop Srpazan, *Agos* 18 November 1996.

³⁹ “Patrik’ten ‘Lanet’ Tehditi” editorial, *Agos* 24 November 2006; “Ne Demek Lanetlemek!” editorial, *Agos* 24 November 2006.

Patriarchate got in a visible power struggle with those who demanded change and reform; *Agos* states that Mesrob Mutafyan resisted these demanded changes so as not to lose the upper hand in the Armenian community.⁴⁰ In November 2002, the Patriarchate released a circular, the intent of which was to increase its influence in the Armenian community, including its power over civic institutions such as Armenian foundations, in opposition to the reform demands to limit its scope of influence and power.⁴¹ As indicated, these kinds of contradictory suggestions reflect the Church's desire to be the single power in the Armenian community that manifested itself in Patriarch's negative stance against *Agos*.⁴²

In terms of religion, the process of reformulating Armenian identity during this period was conjoined with the need to restructure the Armenian community and was influenced by disbanding the Civic Committee in 1997. It was shaped by the desire to limit the influence of religion in the Armenian community and to emancipate the Armenian identity from over-determination by the Church and religion. It reflects a desire to claim other elements of Armenian identity independent of the domination of religion in order to reformulate the Armenian identity in more political and civic terms in Turkey. Reformulation of Armenian identity in terms of religion refers to the redefinition of the role of religion in the Armenian community in Turkey.

3.1.3. Armenian Identity and Turkish Citizenship

The Armenian community in Turkey possesses dual identity: Being Armenian as defined by the Church, the 1915 narratives, and Armenian

⁴⁰ "Tanrı Kiliseyi İktidar Arzusundan Korusun" Hrant Dink, *Agos* 20 July 2001; "Sivilleşmenin Yanlış Adresi" Hrant Dink, *Agos* 23 August 2002.

⁴¹ "Kilise ve Okul Ayrılmadıkça" Hrant Dink, *Agos* 1 November 2002.

⁴² "Patrik'ten Açıklama" editorial, *Agos* 13 July 2001.

culture and history; and being a citizen of Turkey, which is constructed on an alternative view of history, Islam, and Turkish culture. In the process of reformulating the civic and political elements of Armenian identity, *Agos* attempted to redefine the perception of citizenship to be melted into the Armenian identity in Turkey.

In this study, citizenship is not merely defined in legal and political terms, “but also as an articulating principle for the recognition of group rights” (Isin and Wood, 1999, p. 4). Furthermore, in its relation to identity, citizenship is defined “as the practices through which individuals and groups formulate and claim new rights or struggle to expand or maintain existing rights” (Isin and Wood, 1999, p. 4). It is not the intention of this study to elaborate on the notion of citizenship and debates on citizenship in Turkey. However, it should be emphasized that the definition and perception of citizenship in Turkey has been modified multiple times since the establishment of the Republic. Nevertheless, as the persisting element, citizenship has been defined in reference to obligations and duties more than rights since 1923 with perhaps the exception of the 1961 Constitution. For that reason, in Turkey, citizenship reflects the state’s expectation of a well-behaved society and communities. The emphasis on duty has enabled the state to keep the broader Turkish society and minorities, such as Armenians, under discipline and control. Abiding the rules and acting within the boundaries of citizenship defined by the state, the Armenian community has remained invisible as an outcome.

However, since the 1990s and during the period under analysis in this chapter, Armenian community has started claiming rights attached to citizenship, stressing their importance over duty and obligation. This is referred to as “claiming citizenship” or “being active citizens of the state” by *Agos*. What should be underscored here is the fact that although minorities in Turkey claim that they face serious discriminatory policies based on their minority status and related legal and political

regulations, the state's definition of citizenship and its perspective thereon is not tailored for the Armenian community and minorities specifically, but for the broader society.⁴³ In that sense, the problems the Armenian community is facing in relation to citizenship and their citizenship status is, to a great extent, a repercussion of the general perspectives on citizenship policies in Turkey.

Although citizenship is a crucial dynamic in the reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey, I argue that the role of citizenship in Armenian identity is indirect in its interaction with Armenianness. Hence, in this chapter, the relationship of citizenship to Armenian identity in Turkey is analyzed with respect to civic elements and political demands of the community between 1996 and 2002 as reflected by *Agos*. In this context, citizenship is treated as a political and legal element with equal or greater demands for rights over the stress on obligation. In a sense, the perception of citizenship introduced in relation to Armenian community by *Agos* not only challenges the citizenship status of minorities in Turkey, but the broader notion of citizenship as well. In general terms, the basic features of Turkish citizenship, as established during the early years of the Republic and that were valid until the early 2000s, include “subordination of the individual to the objectives of political unity” and “a civic-territorial, secular and republican, duty-based-passive identity” (Ter-Matevosyan, 2010, p. 94). It is the assertion of this study that the Armenian political identity is also shaped under the influence of those elements.

Accepting the citizenship model proposed for the whole society, the Armenian community has not challenged the main premises of the state and has acted within the boundaries determined. As stated, this has caused the Armenian community to be perceived as a politically and

⁴³ This is not to underestimate the existence of othering and discrimination toward non-Muslims in society, but to approach the subject from another perspective that does not aim to stress the victim position of the Armenian community, but the general oppressive structure of the society.

socially silent and invisible community living at the outskirts of the broader society, almost as an observant rather than a participatory community. Even though the general citizenship policies of the state concerning the broader society have been modified over time, the minority policies have not been reformed or amended since the Lausanne Treaty until the 1990s. For that reason, Armenian community together with the other minorities of the Lausanne Treaty has not had the chance to be as politically active as the broader society and remained invisible and this has not changed considerably between 1996 and 2002. Moreover, in addition to the state policies causing the Armenian community to be perceived as invisible, to a certain extent, Armenian community in Turkey has isolated itself from the broader society because of the fear of assimilation as argued by Hrant Dink.⁴⁴

Such cases of real or perceived invisibility have prevented the Armenian community to be active in political terms between 1996 and 2002. Due to a lack of political activism, to subscribing to the citizenship perspective determined by the state, and regulations pertaining to the political activity in Turkey, the Armenian community has not been politically represented for almost a century as a minority group. Even though there were active Armenians in Turkish political life, especially in the ranks of the left-wing political parties and movements, this claim is based on the fact that after 1923, there has not been an Armenian political party established in Turkey. Neither has there been an Armenian representative in the parliament since 1960s, nor a candidate or political party explicitly championing the interests and demands of the Armenian community in Turkey in the post-1980 era. This is not to argue for a need for ethnicity-based political party and politics, but rather for representation of the particular interests of the Armenian community based on its unique features at the general state and broader society level. There were no options available to the

⁴⁴ “Az Buz Değiliz Biz” Hrant Dink, *Agos* 22 June 2002.

Armenian community for representing their particular in the broader society between 1996 and 2002.

This is not to assume that everyone in the Armenian community has the same interests, demands and ideology, sharing the same particulars. I recognize that not all members of the Armenian community identify first with being Armenian, and not all have demands different from those of the broader community. Nonetheless, this study is based on the idea that the Armenian community as a minority community in Turkey has demands that are distinct from those of the broader society. Moreover, in terms of political identification, Armenian community is not an ideologically and politically unified, homogenous bloc. For that reason, any opinion related to the Armenian community's political participation and community's ideological tendencies are generalizations as presented in this chapter.

As an outcome of the lack of political activism within the Armenian community in Turkey in the post-1980 era, the community's political options have been constrained with the options available to broader society. During the period analyzed in this chapter, Armenian community as reflected by *Agos* is critical to CHP (Republican People's Party), based on the Party's ties with the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) [*Ittihat ve Terakki Partisi*], active during the last period of the Ottoman Empire and held responsible for the 1915 events and population relocation by Armenians. Moreover, left wing in Turkey was not perceived as welcoming toward minorities and non-Muslims between 1996 and 2002 as claimed by *Agos* because of the left wing's subscription to the *ulusalci* idea of Kemalism. *Ulusalci* here refers to the political view, shaped by Kemalism, constructed in Turkey after the establishment of the Republic. This political perspective, in the broadest terms, represents a view of nationalism that is established based on Mustafa Kemal's idea that anyone who is a citizen of Turkey is a Turk. This left-wing approach, determined by the principles of Kemalism, has

led minorities to be overlooked under the idea of nation and their demands left unheard and unmet within the premises of nationalization — of economy, social life, and daily life. Moreover, it is argued in *Agos* that the Turkish left is not interested in the Armenian issue and does not assume any responsibility for the 1915 events because the Left regards those as problems of the Ottoman Empire, not of the new state, in line with the official Turkish historical narratives.⁴⁵

Besides CHP and the left wing in Turkey, among other political parties of the period, Welfare Party (RP) [*Refah Partisi*]⁴⁶ caused discontent in the Armenian community as reflected by *Agos* because of its explicit pro-Islamist tendencies, while the True Path Party (DYP) [*Doğru Yol Partisi*]⁴⁷ was considered to be one of the viable options for the Armenian community during the period under analysis.⁴⁸ The DYP was considered feasible as the better of all evils and because it was a

⁴⁵ “Türk Solu, Azınlıklar ve Tarihe Bakış” Kevork H. Aksel, *Agos* 3 May 1996.

⁴⁶ RP, the Welfare Party, established in 1983, became Turkey’s biggest political party in the 1995 elections, under the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan. “The Welfare Party’s re-traditionalization included the redefinition of the people’s identity through Islamic principles and the memories of the near, Ottoman past. On the basis of some aspects of the Islamic movement that had already described Ottoman history as part of Islamic history and the Ottoman state as an Islamic state since the 1970s, the new moral base was constructed. It was regarded as necessary to project a holistic vision of community, a secure shelter for all, as an antidote to the evils of modern individualism and alienation. In the 1995 election campaigns, the discourse of the WP had a populist tone, embracing all segments and ethnic and religious differences of the country. The WP’s programme [sic], which included Islamist, nationalist, Ottomanist and modernist elements, was aimed at determining the boundaries of a new community by offering a prescription to define the symbols of sociopolitical and socioeconomic life. Among WP leaders and intellectuals, use of the Ottoman imagination depended upon a successful combination of Turkishness and Islamic belief [...] WP municipal leaders and the WP-led coalition government, in adopting the politics of symbols, attempted to acculturate — in truth, to Islamicize — Turkish society, and the Ottoman way of life and politics had an important place in that process [...] The WP ruling cadre and intellectuals’ nostalgia for the Ottomans included a kind of nationalist-imperialist imagination anticipating creating once again the Greater Turkey as in Ottoman times” (Çolak, 2006, pp. 595–6).

⁴⁷ DYP, the True Path Party, was established in 1983 as a center-right political party.

⁴⁸ “Panik Yok Endişe Var” editorial, *Agos* 5 July 1996; “Refah Partisi, İslam ve Gayrimüslimler” Rifat N. Bali, *Agos* 6 September 1996.

conservative political party by *Agos*. Furthermore, rising Islamist politics in Turkey's political life during the late 1990s precipitated concern, if not outright fear, for the Armenian community.⁴⁹

As indicated, the Armenian community has been seeking political representation within the ranks of the Turkish political scene rather than exclusively within the Armenian community. In this search for political representation, new political parties and liberal perspectives, such as the New Democracy Movement (YDH) [*Yeni Demokrasi Hareketi*]⁵⁰ and the Freedom and Solidarity Party (ÖDP) [*Özgürlük ve Dayanışma Partisi*], have been welcomed and highly appreciated by the Armenian community and *Agos*.⁵¹ Likewise, new political potentials are considered to be exciting prospects for democracy and progress on the political scene in Turkey and for the Armenian community; among these are AKP's electoral victory and the new government formed in November 2002, despite its Islamist undertone.⁵² AKP's electoral victory was welcomed by the Armenian community and *Agos* because, unlike CHP, AKP is not from the ranks of military bureaucracy and thus was not associated with the elitism and nationalism of CHP. AKP was seen as new blood in the political life in Turkey. *Agos* also had the assumption that a political party with Islamist sentiments would respect other religions as well. Moreover, in 2002, AKP appeared to be pro-Western, pro-EU, pro-liberal, and an inclusive political party because it had made promises to consider the demands and expectations of the Armenian community in Turkey.

⁴⁹ "İnanç ve İktidar" editorial, *Agos* 5 July 1996.

⁵⁰ The New Democracy Movement (YDH) was active between 1994 and 1997, established as a liberal political movement, then transformed into a political party.

⁵¹ ÖDP, Freedom and Solidarity Party, established in 1996, is an anti-militarist and anti-nationalist left-wing political party in Turkey.

⁵² "Kararsızların Seçimi" editorial, *Agos* 1 November 2002; "Yeni bir Sayfa" editorial, *Agos* 8 November 2002; "İyimseriz" editorial, *Agos* 8 November 2002; "Kuş Sesleri" editorial, *Agos* 15 November 2002.

Focusing on the political options available to the broader society and the lack of political activity in the Armenian community, between 1996 and 2002, shows that in political terms, the Armenian community in Turkey has not constructed its identity distinctly from the broader society. The civic and political elements of Armenian identity appear to be byproducts of the politics of the broader society rather than those constructed within the Armenian community in this period. Furthermore, I have the impression that there is no demand or desire to establish an Armenian political party in Turkey, the main reason being the potential risk for causing intra-community conflicts and alienation. Additionally, *Agos* asserts that the majority of the Armenian community defines itself through its minority status and does not want to be actively involved in politics, either out of fear or because of lack of interest.⁵³ This indicates an absence of civic initiative and political motivation in the Armenian community in Turkey that reflects on Armenian identity. Armenian political life between 1996 and 2002 appears to have been limited to voting, whether at intra-community or national elections.

Moreover, based on my observation and analysis of *Agos*, the Armenian community perceives civic action as attending cultural community events, which is understood to be an intra-community political action. For that reason, beyond attending community events, civic and political action does not appear to be an important concern for the community in the time period under analysis as investigated through *Agos*. This lack of observable interest is important for my study because political participation and civic action are directly related to the notion of citizenship, which is a vital component of Armenian identity in Turkey. Thus, any discussion involving political and civic action brings the issue back to the discussion of identity and its relation to citizenship.

In this framework, I argue that the formulation of the citizenship component of Armenian identity in Turkey has not been realized in

⁵³ “Kapıyı Çalan Kimdir” Hrant Dink, *Agos* 22 January 1999.

distinct terms neither it has taken place in interaction with other elements of Armenian identity in Turkey. On the contrary, I assert based on the analysis of *Agos* between 1996 and 2002 that the Armenian community has chosen to construct the citizenship component of Armenian identity in passive terms and as a mere legal status, disregarding its social and political connotations and accepting the citizenship perspective defined by the state. Hence, Armenian identity as the citizen of Turkey appears to be invisible and obedient, and was marked by deontological motives subscribing to letting the state determine the perspective of citizenship as analyzed in this chapter through *Agos*.

The Armenian community has followed the rules of being *makbul vatandaş* [good citizen] of the state for decades. Following the rules, being good and obedient citizens, and not causing any trouble has been a part of the Armenian survival strategy since the early twentieth century. I contend that in the 1990s, and especially with the establishment of *Agos*, which is acting as a medium to voice the demands of the Armenian community, this tradition was shattered, if not completely broken.⁵⁴ The alternative suggested by *Agos* is becoming demanding citizens of the state rather than simply following the rules, which have the risk to be discriminatory in nature, but as citizens of Turkey, calling for rights actively in the public sphere. In that sense, and considering the reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey in civic and political terms, what is observed in this period between 1996 and 2002 is Armenian community's claim to a view of citizenship that demands rights and being politically active in raising those demands.

In this process, accompanying the call to be more active and demanding citizens is the need to reform and utilize the (nonreligious) Armenian foundations in Turkey in order to undertake civic and political roles within the Armenian community. Armenian foundations are the

⁵⁴ "Karanlıkta Işık Çalmak" Oşin Çilingir, *Agos* 27 September 1996.

only nonreligious organizations with the civic and political potential for action and representation in Turkey. However, in their current state, these foundations prove to be incapable of any form of representation and action. In recognizing the need to improve the Armenian foundations in Turkey, *Agos* has a call for reform and for restructuring the Armenian institutions for their democratization, efficiency, and transparency, which is also articulated with the demand to restructure the Armenian community, thereby limiting the power and authority of the Church.

Armenian foundations have the status of endowed institutions; they are *vakif* as defined by law. Churches, schools, hospitals, and orphanages are the main Armenian institutions in Turkey that are officially recognized by the state as congregational foundations [*cemaat vakıfları*] or community foundations. In 1936, they were defined as charity foundations with a public corporate personality established by non-Muslim citizens of Turkey and placed under the DGF (Directorate General of Foundations) [*Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü*]. Because the foundations' framework of action is determined by law, they are only granted a limited sphere for autonomous action and are placed under state control. For that reason, Armenians, like other non-Muslim minorities in Turkey, have the risk to suffer from state policies while administrating and funding their foundations.

Moreover, although the Treaty of Lausanne has provided a guarantee to the non-Muslim minorities that their religious and cultural institutions would be protected “within the framework of minority rights, it did not codify any specific provisions regarding the administration of the institutions inherited from the Ottoman period” (Özdoğan and Kılıçdağı, 2012, p. 51). Furthermore, a number of laws and regulations adopted after the establishment of the Republic have introduced various restrictions on the non-Muslim foundations almost breaching the Lausanne Treaty. The Civil Code introduced in 1926

excluded community foundations from the scope of establishing new foundations and the Municipal Law (1930) enabled the transfer of graveyards to municipalities.

Besides such restrictions, one of the main problems faced by Armenian foundations in Turkey concerns financial autonomy, and when the Armenian community administers the finances poorly, the problem becomes more notable and threatens the survival of the foundations. Non-Muslim foundations are not allocated any grants by the state, and the community has the responsibility to fund its own institutions. Furthermore, there is a lack of support from the Armenian community to sustain those institutions as claimed by *Agos*, and there is an overwhelming need to support Armenian foundations in Turkey in order for them to function properly in the community. Especially in cases of economic crisis, those institutions (such as schools and hospitals) need more assistance from the Armenian community. However, *Agos* asserts that such support is rarely provided to those institutions at sufficient levels.⁵⁵ So, one of the main reasons for the current state of the Armenian community in Turkey is lack of funding.

Armenian foundations face further problems caused by the state due to seizure and confiscation of Armenian real estate since the 1936 Declaration.⁵⁶ Not only do Armenian foundations experience administrative and financial problems, but Armenian community has also been losing property for almost a century. Those confiscations are just and legitimate because the conditions for state seizure of minority property are defined by law.⁵⁷ Yet such seizures breach the Lausanne

⁵⁵ “Sorumluluğa Davet” editorial, *Agos* 20 July 2001.

⁵⁶ “Zihniyet Bildiğini Okuyor” editorial, *Agos* 18 May 2001.

⁵⁷ “The 1936 Declaration, an act introduced on the grounds of title registry of the immovable properties of foundations, resulted in contradictory decisions which later on took the form of unlawful decisions. The Declaration demanded that foundations should prepare and submit property declarations listing the immovable properties they held. However, since some of the properties of the community foundations, which had no charters, registered their declarations in the name of saints (*nam-ı mevhum*) or

Treaty and basic citizenship rights concerning property ownership. Since the 1970s, real estate belonging to minority institutions has been seized by the state and returned to previous owners in line with the 1936 Declaration, preventing foundations from acquiring property and real estate. No compensation has been offered to the Armenian foundations in return. Although the chairmen of Armenian institutions have been applying to the state in their search for a solution, they have not been compensated yet.⁵⁸ In 2002, within the scope of the EU reforms, the '36 Declaration has been amended and reformed by the Parliament⁵⁹; however, this has not been regarded enough to resolve the problems of the Armenian community related to property ownership — both foundation-related and individual. This is because while the Parliament

community members (*nam-ı muhtesar*), the Foundations Administration did not allow title registry of these properties in the name of the foundations. The ownership of these properties was transferred, in the course of time, to either the Foundations Administration or the Treasury, on various grounds. Some foundation properties acquired after the 1936 Declaration were seized through court decisions on the grounds that there was no clarity on acquisition of immovable property in the declarations. The Assembly of Civil Chambers of the Court of Cassation also verified this conduct with a decision dated 1974, ruling that property acquisitions by community foundations had a dimension threatening the state as it described the community foundations as 'foreign' legal entities" (Özdoğan and Kılıçdağı, 2012, p. 74). "With the decision of the Assembly of Civil Chambers of the Court of Cassation dated 1974, the declarations submitted in 1936 were accepted as foundation charters/statutes, which grabbed community foundations by the throat. With an unlawful interpretation, the Assembly of Civil Chambers of the Court of Cassation approved seizure of all properties acquired through purchase, bequest, donation and testament after the submission of the 1936 Declaration to the DG Foundations, although there were no provisions setting forth that community foundations could not acquire any immovable property after 1936. With this practice, immovable properties were transferred either to their former owners or inheritors when possible. Where there were no owners or inheritors, the DG Foundations and the Treasury of the DG National Real Estate acquired the property without making any payment whatsoever to community foundations" (Özdoğan and Kılıçdağı, 2012, p. 75).

⁵⁸ "Dayatan Sorunlar" editorial, *Agos* 25 July 1997; "Zihniyet Bildiğini Okuyor" editorial, *Agos* 18 May 2001.

⁵⁹ "Sayın Cumhurbaşkanımız, Sayın Meclis Başkanımız ve Sayın Başbakanımız" editorial, *Agos* 23 November 2001.

was in the process of making related policies, the lower levels of bureaucracy went on seizing Armenian real estate and properties.⁶⁰

Another problem related to state policies that Armenian foundations face concerns elections held for the administrative boards of these foundations.⁶¹ Election regulations for foundations have to be approved by the state prior to each round of election, and if they are not, delays in the functioning of the Armenian community and foundations occur.⁶² Elections held within the Armenian community are important and exciting because they have the potential to be a means of reform and change for the Armenian foundations and community in Turkey as expressed by *Agos*. This is a manifested declaration of belief and trust in the power of people: democracy. Foundations are the only civil society structures for Armenians in Turkey, and they are considered vital for the reformulation of Armenian identity around political terms.⁶³

An additional issue related to elections listed by *Agos* is the problem of electoral districts and the need to restructure them, which also requires state action. Due to the existing structuring of the electoral districts of Armenian foundations, some foundations are left without any

⁶⁰ “İnadına Haksızlık” editorial, *Agos* 8 February 2002; “Yönetmelik Yasayı Boğdu” editorial, *Agos* 11 October 2002.

⁶¹ “İvedilikle Girişimde Bulunulmalı” editorial, *Agos* 15 January 1999. “The problems encountered in the administration of foundations and in the election of their directors are two-folded [sic]. The first stems from legal restrictions and gaps, and the second is the result of outdated attitudes that prevent broad participation. When considered from a wider perspective, it is seen that the problems originate from a tight organization model imposed both by the legal arrangements and the usual practices of the internal administration of the Armenian society. The developments witnessed with regard to the administration of foundations in the recent years, and the discussion carried out by the participants on that basis, show that there is a search for a new model for organization. One dimension of this research which brings to the fore the coordination between Armenian community foundations in particular and the adoption of different laws tailored for the specific circumstances of community foundations in general cuts across with demands for secularization in ‘community administration’” (Özdoğan and Kılıçdağı, 2011, pp. 79–80).

⁶² “Sonu Nereye Varacak?” editorial, *Agos* 3 March 2000; “Devlete Arzımızdır” editorial, *Agos* 9 March 2001.

⁶³ “Seçim Yolunda” editorial, *Agos* 4 May 2001.

candidates and electorate. This causes further problems because when there is no community member in the district, the foundation is deemed to be not functioning and is seized by state.⁶⁴ As Luiz Bakar, attorney and the press secretary of the Patriarch, reports, the electoral constituencies of some foundations are left without almost any households.⁶⁵ *Agos* argues that the need for electoral constituency reform should also include changes in the prerequisites to elect and to be elected because the regulations in place do not always favor the most qualified. Existing regulations make voters choose people, for the administration of many institutions, whose only qualification is to have resided in the region.⁶⁶ Expected reform related to the election system was realized for the institutions that individually applied to the state in 2001.

Civic action and political representation of the Armenian identity in Turkey as reflected by *Agos* between 1996 and 2002 is directly pertinent to the empowering institutions and structures capable of providing such support. For that reason, it is correlated to reclaiming citizenship by demanding rights from the state, exhibiting civic character going beyond the boundaries of the community, and reorganizing and restructuring community affairs and organizations for civic action and political representation. The process of reformulating Armenian identity in terms of civic and political action is associated with the recognition of the need to redefine and restructure Armenian foundations in Turkey between 1996 and 2002.

⁶⁴ “Seçim Sistemi Değişmeli” editorial, *Agos* 2 June 2000; “İki Önemli Sorunumuz” editorial, *Agos* 18 May 2001.

⁶⁵ “Beykoz Mucizesi” Luiz Bakar, *Agos* 18 October 1996.

⁶⁶ “İvedilikle Girişimde Bulunulmalı” editorial, *Agos* 15 January 1999; “Şimdiden Uyarıyoruz” editorial, *Agos* 15 January 1999; “Seçim Sistemi Değişmeli” editorial, *Agos* 2 June 2000.

3.2. Conclusion

This chapter has presented the reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey between 1996 and 2002 through the elements of Armenian identity: religion, the 1915 narratives, and civic and political life. It has been argued that Armenian identity was reformulated during this period based on the perceived need to redefine and rearticulate the elements of Armenian identity and to restructure the Armenian community as reflected by *Agos*.

As concerns the 1915 narratives, during this period, *Agos* has argued that the reformulation of Armenian identity focuses on Armenia as the shared element of identity to replace the 1915 “obsession” and on the need to deconstruct collective memory so as to perceive the 1915 narratives in alternative terms.

The role of religion for the Armenian identity is reformulated in its articulation with the need to restructure Armenian community in Turkey between 1996 and 2002. It is shaped by the desire to emancipate Armenian identity from over-determination by the Church and religion and to claim the other elements of Armenian identity in a call for being more secular and political as voiced by *Agos*.

Civic action and political representation of the Armenian identity in Turkey between 1996 and 2002 is directly related to reclaiming citizenship by demanding rights from the state, exhibiting civic character going beyond the boundaries of the community, and reorganizing community affairs and institutions for civic action and political representation. The process of reformulating Armenian identity in terms of civic action and political representation focuses on the need to redefine them.

After the presentation of the observed nature of Armenian identity and its early stages of reformulation between 1996 and 2002 through *Agos*, the following chapter presents the process of identity reformulation between 2003 and 2006, with a focus on Islamized

Armenians following the piece published in *Agos* on the possible Armenian heritage of Sabiha Gökçen.

CHAPTER 4
REFORMULATION OF ARMENIAN IDENTITY AND
ISLAMIZED ARMENIANS
2003–2006

My daughter, the children are dying one by one. No one will survive this march. If you give them [children] away, their lives will be saved, if not, they will die. We will all die. Let them go, so that at least they can live.

Fethiye Çetin, My Grandmother

Fethiye Çetin's grandmother, Heranush, shared this destiny with numerous Armenian children and women around 1915 in Anatolia. Countless families gave their children to Muslim families; many Armenian women married into Muslim households, and others were abducted and forced into religious conversion (Somel et.al., 2011, p. 12). It is not the intention of this chapter to talk about the horrors of violence in times of armed conflict, especially when women and children are concerned, but to examine another group of Armenian community in Turkey and its impact on the reformulation of Armenian identity: Islamized or converted Armenians.

Although the argument concerning Islamized Armenians is not new to the period analyzed in this chapter, it began to be publicly known and debated in 2004, when *Agos* published an article about the possible Armenian heritage of Sabiha Gökçen. After this article was published in *Agos*, Islamized or converted Armenians became the peak issue covered by the newspaper between 2003 and 2006. The claim stirred a big controversy in Turkey, especially within the Kemalist-militarist segments of the broader Turkish society and the Turkish military. However, this process also made the history, the 1915 events, and the issue of Islamized Armenians part of the public debates. For that reason, I argue that such a negative climate and the controversy surrounding

Agos and Hrant Dink, as the champion of the call to focus on life rather than death, has had positive connotations for the reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey between 2003 and 2006. In other words, the conflicts and debates initiated by this article printed in *Agos* fueled discussions on Armenian community and, more importantly, Armenian identity in Turkey in alternative and more hybrid terms. It also brought a rather new perspective to the 1915 events almost introducing a milder tone while talking about history almost as an opposition to the demands raised by the Armenian diaspora considering the 1915 events. For that reason, the analysis and observation on the reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey between 2003 and 2006 is carried out with a specific focus on Hrant Dink's article on Sabiha Gökçen and the debates it initiated. In doing so, this chapter aims to analyze the impact of the debates of the Islamized or converted Armenians on Armenian identity in Turkey that was covered widely during this period by *Agos*.

Moreover, Hrant Dink's article on Armenian identity published in *Agos*, which caused him to be convicted of Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code, will be introduced in relation to the reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey in this chapter. I would like to stress that the Hrant Dink cases are referred in this chapter in relation to the reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey as analyzed through *Agos*. I do not seek to elaborate on the legal cases, neither the process of making Hrant Dink a political target by portraying him as a racist enemy of the state, nor his alienation within the Armenian community, leading to his assassination. It is not the intention of this study to speculate on Dink's victimization, but to analyze the connotations of his case for the reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey as reflected through *Agos*. Thus, this chapter does not analyze in detail the legal issues related to the introduced events. Instead, its purpose is to explain how Hrant Dink's articles politicized the question of Armenian identity in Turkey and contributed to the reformulation of Armenian identity through *Agos*.

Toward this end, this chapter first introduces Hrant Dink and his *Agos* article on Sabiha Gökçen in its relation to Islamized Armenians and then references Dink's project for the reformulation of Armenian identity not only in Turkey but also in Armenia and for the diaspora as printed in *Agos*. The analysis is conducted in relation to the 1915 narratives and collective memory, religion, and civic action and political representation as the analytical identity elements employed in this study. The major importance of this period for the reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey, as analyzed in this chapter, is the excessive emphasis on the Islamized Armenians and the need stressed by *Agos*, primarily voiced by Hrant Dink, to deconstruct the 1915 narratives by considering those who survived rather than those who perished, as well as to introduce an additional identity element to the Armenian identity, thereby underscoring its hybrid features. Thus, the reformulation of Armenian identity between 2003 and 2006 is observed heavily in the introduction of Islamized Armenians in Armenian identity through the *Agos* articles written by Hrant Dink and the controversies they entailed, as well as with the call highlighting the need to deconstruct the 1915 narratives and history accordingly.

4.1. The Armenian Intellectual from Anatolia: Hrant Dink on the Armenian Identity

Hrant Dink, a businessman, Armenian intellectual, and one of the founders of *Agos* and its first editor in chief, became a controversial figure in Turkey in 2004 with his views he expressed in *Agos* on the 1915 events and Armenian identity. Although Hrant Dink's perspective was suggesting a milder tone especially considering history in contrast to those of Armenian diaspora, he was not welcomed publicly during this period. Yet, his vision will be highly appreciated by the broader Turkish society and even the state after his assassination in 2007 and *Agos* being the champion of his perspective on history and Armenian identity.

Hrant Dink, started writing articles for *Marmara* newspaper in 1994, then his perspective was reflected in *Agos* starting in 1996. Dink expressed his anticipation of the Armenian identity in *Agos* and sought for its reformulation and politicization in alternative terms than the ones tried until that time. However, Dink's attempts were neither welcomed by the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople, nor by the state. The Patriarch almost defamed Dink whenever possible, the state tried and convicted him and his ideas. The Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code was used against Dink twice as a response to his statements and published opinion. It is not my intention to elaborate on those cases and the Article 301, but the issue should be introduced briefly to place the situation in a context.

The Article 301 was added to the Turkish Penal Code that became effective on 1 January 2005.⁶⁷ The Article 301 is controversial because it limits and endangers freedom of speech and freedom of press in Turkey, even though the Article holds that it does not constitute a crime if the intention is to criticize. The Article calls for imprisonment based on “insult to Turkishness”, yet “Turkishness” is not defined in the Article and for that reason appears to be a vague term (Karcıoğlu, 2008, np). The Article 301 has itself been criticized for its vagueness and the potential damage to freedom of speech, freedom of press, and human rights in Turkey. Increasing objections to the Article 301 from the broader Turkish society and the European Union forced the government to revise the Article. However, as *Agos* argues there is a need to amend the Article completely rather than making minor changes because its

⁶⁷ Article 301: “1. A person who publicly denigrates Turkishness, the Republic or the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, shall be sentenced a penalty of imprisonment for a term of six months to three years. 2. A person who publicly denigrates the Government of the Republic of Turkey, the judicial bodies of the State, the military or security organizations, shall be sentenced to a penalty of imprisonment for a term of six months to two years. 3. Where denigrating of Turkishness is committed by a Turkish citizen in another country, the penalty to be imposed shall be increased by one third. 4. Expressions of thought intended to criticize shall not constitute a crime” (in Algan, 2008, p. 2238).

existence, rather than its wording, violates freedom of speech.⁶⁸ Thus, although the Article is partially amended, *Agos* sees its presence as violation of freedom of speech as well as civil and human rights in Turkey.⁶⁹ Regardless of the fact that “Turkishness” was replaced with “Turkish nation” through an amendment, the Article is still a threat to freedom of speech. Moreover, “Turkish nation” also has ethnic and religious connotations, considering the perception of citizenship in Turkey that has the risk to other non-Muslims and people of non-Turkish descent.

The vagueness of the Article on the one hand, and the criminalization of criticism under the rubric of insult on the other, laid the groundwork for intellectuals and journalists to be persecuted due to their alternative perspectives and criticisms. Hrant Dink was among those who were convicted of the Article 301 on insulting Turkishness because of the term he employed in one his articles published in *Agos* as a part of the series “On the Armenian Identity” in 2004. As does the series, those articles reflect Hrant Dink’s desire for the Armenians to formulate a collective political identity by redefining and reassigning its constructive elements. Dink’s analysis and suggestions mainly target the diaspora, recommending Armenians in diaspora to go beyond the “obsession” with the 1915 events and to focus more on culture and language as elements of Armenianness today. It reflects almost a call for a middle ground to mediate between the Armenian diaspora and Turkish state calling for a milder tone regarding 1915 events and history. However, through a conscious manipulation of his statements by the media in Turkey, Dink was declared a racist and an enemy of Turks, and

⁶⁸ “301 Makyaj Odasında” editorial, *Agos* 27 October 2006.

⁶⁹ Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code was amended on 30 April 30 2008, by Law No. 5759. “Turkishness” and “Republic” were replaced with “Turkish nation” and “Republic of Turkey”. The changes also granted more discretionary power to judges, requiring the permission of the Minister of Justice for investigation. Moreover, the changes lowered the limit for the maximum penalty.

in 2004, he was charged with insulting Turkishness. The second piece written by Dink, stirring up another controversy in Turkey, did not lead to his conviction, but starting in 2004, it made Hrant Dink and *Agos* central to the political debates in Turkey and cast new light on the discussions pertaining to Armenian identity in Turkey. This news item published in *Agos* was on the possible Armenian heritage of Sabiha Gökçen, the adopted daughter of Mustafa Kemal. In the following pages, the link between those articles and Hrant Dink with the process of reformulating Armenian identity is explored in relation to the 1915 narratives, collective memory, and religion, with a focus on Islamized Armenians as reflected by *Agos* between 2003 and 2006.

4.1.1. Talking about Life and the 1915 Narratives

The 1915 narratives of the Armenian community in Turkey are about misery, pain, death, and trauma. For that reason, for the Armenian community in Turkey, to talk about the 1915 events is to talk about a century-long mourning, which has led the 1915 narratives to be characterized as an “obsession”. However, the process of reformulating Armenian identity as suggested by Hrant Dink in *Agos* shows an attempt to overcome such obsession by relocating the weight placed on the “genocide” claims from the center of the 1915 narratives, and repositioning the trauma and obsession by deconstructing history and the narratives.⁷⁰

Hrant Dink’s call voiced in *Agos* goes beyond being an abstract and psychological demand when it is materialized as a conference in 2005 in Turkey. In order to deconstruct history and bring to the table some alternative viewpoints related to the 1915 events, a conference was organized in Istanbul by Turkish, Armenian, and international scholars and intellectuals. Although the conference was not actively organized by *Agos*, Hrant Dink was a participant and it was widely covered by the

⁷⁰ “Bazı Günler” editorial, *Agos* 25 April 2003; “İbadetse Eğer bu Bekleyiş” editorial, *Agos* 21 April 2006.

newspaper. The conference, “Ottoman Armenians During the Decline of the Empire: Issues of Scientific Responsibility and Democracy”, was scheduled to be held at the Bogazici University in Istanbul. However, the organization of the conference itself stirred a controversy in Turkey even before it began. There was an apparent split among the academics and scholars between those who defend the official state thesis, standing against “genocide” claims, and those who defend the perspective of calling for the 1915 events to be recognized as “genocide”.⁷¹

The issues and debates, which focused more on the conference itself than on the papers presented there, further highlight the general perspective on the 1915 events and the Armenian community in Turkey. The reactions have indicated that the official version of history is not to be challenged or questioned. Furthermore, the reactions implied that any challenge in this framework is considered an attack and an insult to the state, as well as to the history of the Turkish nation as stated by many Members of the Parliament (MPs). Per the decision of the government, the conference was postponed; the organizers and participants were accused of being backstabbers, and the conference was labeled as treason and insult. The act of organizing the conference was called an attempt to manipulate, defame, and degrade Turkish history by Armenians as reported.⁷² Those debates and disputes were not enough to cancel the conference altogether; it was rescheduled for 23–25 September 2005 at the Bogazici University.⁷³ This time, an administrative court adopted a motion for a stay of execution on the grounds that the conference was illegal and unscientific.⁷⁴ A day later, a

⁷¹ “Ermeni Tartışması” *Radikal* 24 May 2005.

⁷² “Konferans Ertelendi” *Radikal* 25 May 2005.

⁷³ “Ermeni Konferansı 23–25 Eylül’de” *Radikal* 23 August 2005.

⁷⁴ “Yargı Bilime Kilit Vurdu” *Radikal* 23 September 2005.

non-state, private university in Istanbul, Bilgi University, agreed to be the host, and the conference was held on 24–25 September 2005.⁷⁵ There were diverse reactions to the conference. During the sessions, protests were held outside Bilgi University by the nationalist political party (*Büyük Birlik Partisi*), the *ulusalci* political party (*İşçi Partisi*), and the Kemalist civil society organization ADD (*Atatürkçü Düşünce Derneği*).⁷⁶ Müge Göçek reported that on the day of the conference she participated in, there was a police escort, and a hundred ultra-nationalists were protesting, throwing rotten tomatoes and eggs. “In addition, a couple of ultra-nationalist Turks managed to get into the auditorium where the conference was held, trying to lecture us on what had actually happened in the past” (Göçek, 2014, pp. 354–5).

The debates and conflicts around the Conference point to the 1915 taboo in Turkey as well as the impossibility of questioning the state ideology, even though the Armenian community in Turkey expressed the intention to deconstruct its 1915 narratives and collective memory as stated by Hrant Dink in milder terms. Although Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan urged the Conference to be held as scheduled, and argued against the court decision, the majority of the MPs and all the political parties called for its cancelation. The main arguments were based on the claim that the perspectives to be presented in the conference conflicted with the official state perspective on the 1915 events; the conference was held by Armenians to lobby for their “genocide” claims; and the purpose of the conference was to defame Turkey. Those debates revealed the limits of presenting and publicly discussing the alternative approaches to Turkish history and the 1915 events, and thus Armenian identity in Turkey.

⁷⁵ “Konferans Bugün Başlıyor” *Radikal* 24 September 2005; “Konferans Kazasız Belasız Sona Erdi” *Radikal* 26 September 2005.

⁷⁶ “Gün Boyu Eylem” *Radikal* 24 September 2005.

The conference was highly welcomed by *Agos* as breaking the taboo on the 1915 events and opening history to public debates and discussions. An alternative perspective to talking about the 1915 events is deemed necessary by *Agos* because, for almost a century, it is asserted that the campaign of the Armenian community structured around the recognition of 1915 events as “genocide” has not brought the inner peace and reconciliation the Armenian community in Turkey has been seeking. In terms of identity, Hrant Dink argues that dwelling on death has not contributed to the reformulation of Armenian identity in progressive terms, but only reproduced the pain. Hrant Dink underlines that focusing on life does not mean forgetting those who perished in 1915, but advocating for demands today and for the future of Armenians, the ones who are still with us. As an outcome of the focus on life through Islamized Armenians realized through the piece published in *Agos* on Sabiha Gökçen, with the changes in the 1915 narratives and collective memory, in the identity reformulation process, life has started to supplant death in debates on history. What it means in terms of the 1915 events is that in *Agos* the focus is turning to those who survived, rather than being preoccupied only with those who perished during 1915 during the period under analysis. Such a perspective is assumed to be more productive than “dwelling on the dead” in Hrant Dink’s terms when talking about the 1915 events and for Armenian identity.

The focus on life calls for concentrating on those who survived the 1915 events and their whereabouts today. This need is complemented with an alternative perspective to Armenian identity both in relation to the 1915 narratives and religion: Islamized Armenians, those who converted willingly or forcefully to Islam during and after the 1915 events. The focus on Islamized Armenians highlights survivors who are claimed to have been victims in different ways. It is based on the assumption that Islamization or conversion was an assimilation policy

that coexisted with the physical destruction of bodies because it aimed to eliminate Armenianness (Bjørnlund, 2009, p. 36; Ekmekçioğlu, 2013, p. 525). For that reason, *Agos*'s and Hrant Dink's call for the focus on life over death does not imply ignoring the 1915 events, but on exploring another dimension of those events.

4.1.2. Collective Memory, Converted Armenians, and the 1915 Narratives

Islamized or converted Armenians are the newly popularized issues in the process of reformulating Armenian identity as a part of the 1915 narratives and collective memory concerning this period as reflected by *Agos*. Reformulation of Armenian identity with the focus on Islamized Armenians is detectable first and foremost through Dink's article, published in *Agos*, on the possible Armenian heritage of Sabiha Gökçen — the adopted daughter of Mustafa Kemal as well as the first woman combat pilot in history — and the conflicts created by this article in the broader society as well as in the state and military. Before elaborating on this news item; the reaction Dink and *Agos* received from Turkish media, society, and the state; and its impact on the reformulation of Armenian identity, it is vital to express its significance for *Agos*, or why it was newsworthy.

Agos considered the possible Armenian heritage of Gökçen newsworthy because it had long been a claim that Sabiha Gökçen was among the Armenian orphans adopted by Muslim families during and after the 1915 events, representing the case of converted or Islamized Armenians. She was perceived by *Agos* as a proof of Islamized Armenians symbolizing life and survival within the scope of the 1915 events. However, this claim stirred controversy in the Turkish state and society because Sabiha Gökçen was the adopted daughter of the founder and first president of the Republic of Turkey, and it implied a link between Mustafa Kemal and the 1915 events reaching the cult of the leader established in Turkey.

Since its early years, *Agos* had been reporting on Muslim Turks discovering their Armenian heritage in Turkey, calling them “genocide survivors”. In this framework conversion is taken to be a survival strategy (Özdoğan, et.al., 2011, p. 16). Islamized Armenians are regarded as survivors and the issue is elaborated on in terms of assimilation and melting Armenianness away. Although Christian conversion to Islam was not an uncommon practice during the Ottoman Empire, yet, different than the previous acts of conversion, it is claimed that these Armenian conversions between 1915 and 1916 were age and sex sensitive (Ekmekçioğlu, 2013, p. 525). This assumption is supported by the argument that men and women experience mass violence and atrocities in different ways⁷⁷, sometimes referred to as “gendercide” (Bjørnlund, 2009, p. 17).

Even though there are no certain numbers on the Armenians who were Islamized, it is estimated that somewhere between 100,000 to 200,000 Armenians were converted to Islam (Bjørnlund, 2009, p. 34). Four levels of conversion of Armenians were identified between 1915 and 1916: voluntary conversion in the initial stages of the 1915 persecutions; the incorporation of Armenians by Muslim households; the distribution of Armenian families by the state; and the use of Ottoman orphanages to assimilate Armenian children (Sarafian in Bjørnlund, 2009, p. 34). Islam has not been claimed as an element of Armenian identity that is defined by Christianity, it has neither been a part of the literature on Armenian studies and history. Although it was common knowledge in Anatolia and within the Armenian community that a considerable number of Armenians converted to Islam during and after the 1915 events, the issue has not been a considerable part of the debates in Turkey. In a lecture, Ayşe Gül Altınay identified three reasons for the

⁷⁷ It is not the intention of this chapter and study to elaborate on the situation of women during the 1915 events, but it should be underlined that there are studies arguing that Armenian women were subjected to sexual violence in this period (Bjørnlund, 2009; Ekmekçioğlu, 2013).

lack of discussion on Islamized Armenians: Patriarchal understanding of gender; prevalence of racist- and ethnicity-based understanding of nation; and the hegemony of the “genocide” recognition vs. “genocide” denial debate in the field (2013). Furthermore, “the survival of Armenian women and children, and the presence of their descendants in the present population of Turkey, have been silenced in both Turkish and Armenian nationalist historiographies” (Somel, et.al., 2011, p. 12). According to Hrant Dink, there is a notable population of Islamized Armenians and their children/grandchildren in Anatolia, but they either do not know their Armenian origins or have chosen to hide them out of fear. Dink states that this historical fact is still considered to be a taboo subject in Turkey by both Turks and Armenians.⁷⁸

Yet, those stories became public in recent years through novels, historical research, and memoirs (Altınay and Türkyılmaz, 2011, p. 25). The issue of Armenian conversion is not new to the last couple decades, however public knowledge of and debates on the issue are relatively new. “Although the earliest example of this body of literature was Serdar Can’s 1991 *Nenemin Masalları* (*My Grandmother’s Tales*), it was not until 2004 that the issue of Islamized Armenians became a matter of public debate” (Altınay and Türkyılmaz, 2011, p. 32). It is asserted that nine memoirs and works of fiction is published between 2004 and 2008 pertaining the issue.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ “Konu Açılmışken ... Türkiye Ermeni Toplumun Ekonomi Politığı (5)” Hrant Dink, *Agos* 20 October 2006.

⁷⁹ Fethiye Çetin’s grandmother’s memoir, *My Grandmother* was the first one to be published between those dates in 2004. Following that memoir, Elif Şafak’s novel *Baba ve Piç* (*Bastard of Istanbul*) telling about a Turkish girl discovering her Armenian ancestors is published in 2006. Similar examples are *Tehcir Çocukları* (*Children of Forced Emigration*) by İrfan Palalı (2005), Kemal Yalçın’s 2005 book *Sarı Gelin* (*Sari Gyalin*), *Korku Benim Sahibim* (*Fear Owns Me*) by Filiz Özdem in 2007, Yusuf Bağı’s 2007 book *Ermeni Kızı Ağçık* (*The Armenian Girl Ahcik*), *Seninle Güler Yüreğim* (*My Heart Rejoices with You*) by Kemal Yalçın dated 2006, and *Gülççek Günel Tekin*’s 2008 book *Kara Kefen* (*Black Shroud*) (Altınay and Türkyılmaz, 2011, pp. 36–7).

In reference to Islamized Armenians and the role of Islam in the Armenian identity as observed during this period, within the scope of this study I would like to underline that I consider this search for hidden Armenian identity as claimed in the literature on Armenian studies and in *Agos* as an apolitical search for Armenian identity and an identity trap. I argue that, calling Islamized Armenians as Armenians reflects an identity perspective that is based on ethnic and national roots. Based on my argument in this study that identity is not fixed, but is social, is subjected to perpetual reformulation, and is based on self-identification, I do not consider the hidden converted or Islamized Armenians who are not aware of their Armenian roots or have chosen to hide it as Armenians in Turkey because they have not claimed and experienced their Armenianness. Instead, I suggest considering Islam, together with Christianity, as an element of Armenian identity in the process of reformulating Armenian identity in Turkey and the deconstruction of history and the 1915 narratives, as long as it is claimed by the individual as an identity element.

The article on the possible Armenian heritage of Sabiha Gökçen published in *Agos* should be considered within this framework of a broader search for Islamized Armenians in the Armenian community in *Agos*'s quest for bringing alternative perspectives to history and 1915 narratives with a focus on life rather than death. It is a part of the aim particularly verbalized by Hrant Dink to relocate the 1915 trauma from its central position and offer alternative ways to deconstruct history. The article on Sabiha Gökçen as an example of Islamized Armenians in Turkey, "80-Year-Long Secret of Sabiha Hatun", appeared in *Agos* on 6 February 2004. Although, as indicated, *Agos* had already been mentioning the existence of Islamized Armenians in Turkey since 1996 and reporting on the people discovering their Armenian origins and ancestors, the coverage on Gökçen garnered more attention by the broader public and was controversial because it was perceived to be on a

taboo name due to Gökçen's relation to Mustafa Kemal. The article argued that Sabiha Gökçen might be among the Armenian orphans adopted after 1915 by a Muslim family. It stated that her real name was Hatun Sebilciyan and that her parents died during the 1915 events and she was placed in an orphanage before Mustafa Kemal adopted her. The article published in *Agos* is based on a first account testimonial from Sabiha Gökçen's niece Hripsime Sebilciyan Gazalyan from Armenia.⁸⁰

When the news item appeared in *Agos*, there was no reaction in Turkish society or in the media because *Agos* was read by only a small number of people, mainly limited to those within the Armenian community. Then, two weeks later, the *Hürriyet* daily published the article as it appeared in *Agos*, without any change or interpretation, questioning the possible Armenian heritage of Sabiha Gökçen, as claimed by an Armenian woman living in Armenia (Hripsime Sebilciyan Gazalyan).⁸¹ "First reaction has come from the secular-nationalist forces in Turkey and Sabiha Gökçen appeared to be a bigger issue than talking about the 1915 events and even the 'genocide'" (Mahoney, 2006, np). The reaction was taken to be more serious with the public statement released by the highest ranks of the Turkish Armed Forces.

The General Staff of the Republic of Turkey released a public statement on its website on 21 February 2004, right after the article was published in the *Hürriyet* daily. The statement asserted that Sabiha Gökçen was a gift from Atatürk to [the] Turkish nation and that she had the honorary title of being the first woman combat pilot of the Turkish Armed Forces. Furthermore, it was expressed that Gökçen was the symbol for Turkish women, representing the advanced state of women in Turkish society envisioned by Mustafa Kemal. The statement held that to open such an important symbol for discussion, irrespective of the

⁸⁰ "Sabiha Hatun'un Sırrı" Hrant Dink, *Agos* 6 February 2004.

⁸¹ "Sabiha Gökçen'in 80 Yıllık Sırrı" Ersin Kalkan, *Hürriyet* 21 February 2004, in Göktaş, 2007, p. 62.

purpose, did not have positive contributions to make to national unity and public peace. Then the statement referred to the definition of Atatürk nationalism, stressing that the [Turkish] nation as well as citizenship were not defined in ethnic or religious terms. It was stated that it was impossible to regard this claim [of Sabiha Gökçen being Armenian] as even newsworthy because such a claim abused national sentiments and values. The General Staff questioned the purpose behind such allegations and regarded it as a negative criticism directed at Kemalist nationalism and the Turkish nation-state structure. The statement argued that the reason behind such publications and assertions targeting national unity and solidarity, as well as national values, were very well known and that those reasons raised concerns.⁸² Then the statement called for public peace within the framework of the Kemalist system of thought, setting its own conditions of public peace as the hegemonic terms. The primary call made by the statement was to be more sensitive to the main principles of the Turkish Republic and the unity of the Turkish nation (in Göktaş 2007, pp. 66–7).

The General Staff assumed a role in the debate on the possible Armenian heritage of Sabiha Gökçen, stressing the national unity or, in other words, homogeneity. The General Staff's statements implied that even though Sabiha Gökçen had had Armenian origins, she had grown up as a Muslim Turkish woman and that there was no need to question further. The controversies around the news item disregard the fact that the intention of the news item was not to raise doubts about the ethnic or national heritage of Gökçen but to talk about Islamized Armenians and the survivors of the 1915 events as milder perspectives to history. Yet the military's statement showed that Islamized Armenians were accepted as Turkish by the military, state, and society and any debate around the issue was seen to be irrelevant.

⁸² However those “very well known reasons” have neither been enlisted nor mentioned in the statement.

Following the military's statement, other daily Turkish newspapers and journalists also started to elaborate on the issue. In his daily *Cumhuriyet* column, İlhan Selçuk regarded this news on Sabiha Gökçen as digging into the history, creating an ethnic conflict in the society that served the purposes of imperialism to divide the nation.⁸³ The following day, İ. Selçuk questioned whether this news item was published to support the "genocide bill" debates in European parliaments, calling it a rumor lacking any substantial proof.⁸⁴ In a similar way, in his column in the *Hürriyet* daily, Emin Çölaşan questioned the validity of such claims presented by "an Armenian newspaper published in Istanbul" [*Agos*]. Even though he started his article by saying, "there is nothing wrong with being Armenian", in the following sentences he called it a shame to claim that a respectful woman like Gökçen was Armenian.⁸⁵ There are many more examples on the coverage of the issue, but for the purposes of this study, suffice it to say that it was considered an insult to call Gökçen an Armenian and the news item published in *Agos* was considered to be a plan by Western countries to divide the unity of the Turkish nation. There were even counter-attempts to prove her Muslim and of Turkic character, with claims that Gökçen was Bosnian.⁸⁶

The issue, once it was taken up by the Turkish media, was taken out of context and almost became a national concern. Why was it such a big controversy to claim that Gökçen could have been an Armenian orphan? One of the main reasons was her direct association with Mustafa Kemal. Fatma Ulgen claims that with the Sabiha Gökçen news published in *Agos*, Mustafa Kemal became a part of the 1915 debates for the first

⁸³ "İşimiz Zor" İlhan Selçuk, *Cumhuriyet* 24 February 2004, in Göktaş, 2007, pp. 74–5.

⁸⁴ "Sabiha Gökçen ve Tehcir" İlhan Selçuk, *Cumhuriyet* 25 February 2004, in Göktaş, 2007, p. 76.

⁸⁵ "Ermeni imiş!" Emin Çölaşan, *Hürriyet* 24 February 2004, in Göktaş, 2007, pp. 80–1.

⁸⁶ "Hayır Boşnak'tı" Ayda Kayar, *Hürriyet* 22 February 2004.

time, because “in the Turkish Republic, the cultural memories on Gökçen remain deeply entangled with those of Mustafa Kemal’s” (Ulgen, 2010, p. 55). Furthermore, it was regarded as a challenge to the symbol of Turkishness and foundational myths because Gökçen was not only Mustafa Kemal’s adopted daughter, “she was also a proud symbol of the ‘military nation’. As an icon, as a myth, it wouldn’t [sic] be an exaggeration to regard her as one loaded gun of Turkish nationalism” (Ulgen, 2010, p. 112). F. Ulgen also underlines that Gökçen was a project and represented Turkishness, “she was the human embodiment of Atatürk’s dreams realized for modern Turkey, for the modern Turkish woman and, for ‘Turkishness’ and for Turkish civilization” (Ulgen, 2010, p. 118). Thus, the article caused controversy because it directly touched on the foundational myth of Turkishness and the founder of the myths. This is also the main reason that the military was actively involved in this debate.

Such arguments are also related to the nationalism debates in Turkey, because they are perceived as an imperialist game and an attack on Kemalism. Nationalism in Turkey, as stated by Tanıl Bora, is “beyond-political” and “above-ideology” as a fundamental principle (2008, p. 15). In his analysis on nationalism, T. Bora claims that in order to understand the fundamental role of nationalism in Turkey, it is necessary to perceive the articulation of nationalism and Kemalism because nationalism is one of the six principles of Kemalism (Bora, 2008, p. 16). T. Bora classifies Turkish nationalisms based on their ideological contents as: “official nationalism” or “Atatürk nationalism” that acts as the ideology of state and order based on the savior Atatürk mythos loaded with authoritarian loyalty that is modernist at the same time; “Kemalist left-nationalism” or “national leftism” that regards modern nation as the subject of laicism, development, independence, anti-imperialism, and even construction of a local socialism; “liberal nationalism”, the approach that regards strong capitalism and a market

society as the main task of nationalism; “ethnic nationalism”, which defines being a Turk on the basis of cultural ethnicity; and “conservatist nationalism” mainly articulated with Islamism (Bora, 2008, pp. 19–20). As can be observed, the claim for Gökçen’s Armenian heritage marred almost all versions of nationalism in Turkey and their articulation with Kemalism.

However, if perceived within its own purpose and context, the controversy around Sabiha Gökçen’s possible Armenian heritage refers to *Agos*’s attempts for alternative accounts of history for the Armenian community in Turkey, the broader Turkish society, and the state. However, for the state and military this was considered an attack on the official thesis, Kemalist principles, and Mustafa Kemal himself. On the part of the Armenian community, it is a good example of a story of an Armenian child raised as a Muslim-Turkish woman completely assimilated and integrated in Turkish society and who even became an honorable member of the society and history. Gökçen’s case is presented by *Agos* as a proof for Armenian community that there are Armenians who survived only by sacrificing their Armenianness during the 1915 events. In identity reformulation terms, the debates around the Gökçen case and Islamized Armenians show the emerging importance of life over death and assimilation as a part of the 1915 narratives and collective memory.

4.1.3. The Patriarch, Islam, and Armenian Identity in Turkey

The analysis of the reformulation of Armenian identity in terms of religion is both related to Islamized Armenians and to questioning the role and hegemony of the Church for the Armenian identity between 2003 and 2006. Moreover, during this period, through the debates on the Islamized Armenians Islam is also introduced by *Agos* almost as a potential element of Armenian identity that has the possibility of breaking the power of the Church over the Armenian community in Turkey which has the monopoly on the definition of Armenianness in

legal terms because the Patriarchate is the official representative of the Armenian community in Turkey. This challenge is due to the discovery by some Muslim-Turkish people of their Armenian heritage and to their claiming their Armenianness.

The Armenian Patriarchate as the official representative of the Armenian community in Turkey has assumed the upper hand in the Armenian community. It further strengthened its grip over the Armenian community especially after the government disbanded the Civic Committee in 1997. In terms of Armenian identity, it also granted the Patriarch a claim on the construction and reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey. In the face of the Patriarch's domination over the Armenian community and its functioning in Turkey since its establishment, there have been increasing demands within the Armenian community voiced by *Agos* to limit the power of the Church over civic affairs of the Armenian community in Turkey.

The call for reformulating the Armenian community in more secular, civic, and transparent terms is taken to be a call questioning the role and authority of the Patriarch by the Patriarchate. In reality, the call is not related to the religious function and role of the Patriarch and Patriarchate, but to the expansion of religious authority into the nonreligious realms of the Armenian community. It is not a denial of the power and importance of the Church for Armenians in Turkey; it is a call for reducing the power of the Church over mundane and social affairs of the community such as the education system and the press.⁸⁷ This is necessary for a more secular and political community life for Armenians in Turkey, and an attempt to break the sole role of religion over determining Armenian identity in Turkey by questioning its articulation with other elements of the identity.

⁸⁷ "Biz Bunu mu İstiyoruz" editorial, *Agos* 26 December 2003.

The expansion of the Church, which appeared as a necessity during the early years of the Republic, in order to keep the Armenian community together following the Lausanne Treaty, evolved into the norm of the community. However, it is not accepted to be a modern structure for today's Armenian community when the Church undertakes both religious and civic affairs as claimed by *Agos*.⁸⁸ Limiting the power of the Church is not only seen as vital for a more democratic and political Armenian community by *Agos*, but for a stronger Church that undertakes its religious functions appropriately. It is asserted by Markar Eseyan that the Church is the only organization to have survived since the Ottoman period as the bond connecting Armenians in Turkey, and that for that reason, its structure should be revived.⁸⁹ Thus, it is *Agos*'s assertion that the Church should be strengthened as a religious institution and leave the non-spiritual issues to civic individuals and institutions for a secular and stronger Armenian community in Turkey.

Nevertheless, in the face of reform demands voiced by *Agos*, the Patriarchate continues its struggle against the reform and secularism proposals in its attempt to be the power center and the representative of the Armenian community in Turkey. During this period, it was once again made explicit that the Patriarch was not willing to accept diminishing his power and opening space for civic identity reformulation in the Armenian community that is not mainly structured around the Church's power.

On the other hand, in terms of the role of religion for the Armenian identity in Turkey this period is unique in its stress on Islamized or converted Armenians who claim their Armenianness. In the following decades, the potentially increasing number of Muslim Armenians in Turkey coming out could pose a more serious challenge to the centrality of authority of the Church and Christianity in the Armenian community

⁸⁸ "Beş bin Kişi" Markar Esayan, *Agos* 17 January 2003.

⁸⁹ "Bilakis" Markar Eseyan, *Agos* 24 January 2003.

in its definition of Armenianness. Christianity will not cease to be a central element of Armenian identity in Turkey, but the Church may have to recognize the diversity of religious belief or disbelief in the Armenian community and might have to deal with the new elements involved in the definition of Armenianness.

4.1.4. The Armenian Community as a Congregation vs. Civil Society

The Armenian community's structuring and organization under the jurisdiction of the Patriarch and religion has led the community to exhibit the features of a congregation in the time period under analysis. It is argued in *Agos* that, as an outcome of such structuring the Armenian community in Turkey lacks the organization of a civil society in itself. In other words, Armenian community exhibits the features of a *Gemeinschaft* [community] instead of a *Gesellschaft* [society], in the terminology developed by Ferdinand Tönnies. In his influential sociological analysis, F. Tönnies makes a distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, corresponding them to forms of social units.⁹⁰ F. Tönnies claims that “all intimate, private, and exclusive living together, so we discover, is understood as life in *Gemeinschaft*. *Gesellschaft* is public life — it is the world itself” (2009, p. 33).

⁹⁰ F. Tönnies states, “human wills stand in manifold relations to one another. Every such relationship is a mutual action, inasmuch as one party is active, or gives, while the other party is passive or receives. These actions are of such a nature that they tend either toward preservation or destruction of the other will or life; that is, they are either positive or negative” (2009, p. 33). Within this framework, F. Tönnies focuses on “the relationships of mutual affirmation. Every such relationship represents unity in plurality and plurality in unity. It consists of assistance, relief, services, which are transmitted back and forth from one party to another and are to be considered as expressions of wills and their forces. The group which is formed through this positive type of relationship is called an association [*Verbindung*] when conceived of as a thing or being which acts as a unit inwardly and outwardly. The relationship itself, and also the resulting association, is conceived of either as real and organic life — this is the essential characteristic of the *Gemeinschaft*; or as imaginary and mechanical structure — this is the concept of *Gesellschaft*” (2009, p. 33).

Gemeinschaft starts from the assumption of perfect unity of human wills as an original or natural condition [...] The common root of this natural condition is the coherence of vegetative life through birth and the fact that the human wills [...] are and remain linked to each other by parental descent and by sex, or by necessity. (Tönnies, 2009, p. 37)

Following the model of Armenian community in Turkey organized under the authority of the Church, “the idea of authority is, within the *Gemeinschaft*, most adequately represented by fatherhood, or paternity” (Tönnies, 2009, p. 39). In contrast, “the theory of *Gesellschaft* deals with the artificial construction of an aggregate of human beings which superficially resembles the *Gemeinschaft* in so far as the individuals live and dwell together peacefully” (Tönnies, 2009, pp. 64–5). *Gemeinschaft*-like relationships can be of fellowship type, authoritative type, and mixed type (Tönnies, 2009, pp. 252–4). Following this analysis, as asserted by *Agos*, the Armenian community in Turkey needs to balance the civic and religious powers within itself to be more of a *Gesellschaft* and exhibit a more modern community structure.

For that purpose, *Agos* sees civil society initiatives as ways for the Armenian community to be perceived as a civic community rather than a religious congregation. It is *Agos*’s assertion that this can be realized through the active participation of Armenian community in community life through utilizing the foundations full capacity.⁹¹ Active participation of the community members into the community affairs and limiting the power of religion are further assumed to help the Armenian community to reformulate itself and advance its culture rather than revolving solely around the community’s historical heritage.⁹² *Agos* reflects the claim that the existing social modeling also caused the decline of Armenian civic initiatives and institutions, such as Armenian foundations, together

⁹¹ “Değişimin Seçilmesi” editorial, *Agos* 12 March 2004.

⁹² “Sivil Girişimlere İhtiyacımız Var” Hrant Dink, *Agos* 4 July 2003.

with state policies that led to the regression of those institutions. Armenian foundations (mainly schools and hospitals) were established to undertake civic purposes and affairs of the community. Yet they lost ground after the establishment of the Republic of Turkey due to state seizure as well as intra-community financial and administrative problems.

Within the scope of the EU Harmonization Package, in January 2003, reforms were initiated to resolve the problems of the minority foundations in Turkey. However, those reforms connected the acquisition of immovable properties to the DGF's authorization. In January 2004, the "Regulation on Foundations" added more restrictions to the acquisition, such as the requirement of the opinion of the relevant ministries and institutions when deemed necessary, without further specifying the institutions.⁹³ During this period analyzed in this chapter the problems of the Armenian foundations, despite a number of amendments, reforms, and new policies implemented within the scope of EU reforms, have persisted.⁹⁴ Foundations were also faced with bureaucratic and administrative barriers in their attempts to enjoy new

⁹³ "In the end, of all the applications filed between 2003 and 2004 for the return of approximately 2250 seized properties, those resulted in registry did not exceed 20% due to bureaucratic obstacles [...] During this process, it became clear that the bureaucracy resisted the new legal reforms, as the Foundations' Administration refused to return the properties that belonged to community foundations but that had been seized by the state or placed under the control of the DG Foundations, and insisted that recovery of properties that have become the private property of third persons would in no way be possible" (Özdoğan and Kılıçdağı, 2012, p. 76).

⁹⁴ The government "amended the Law on Foundations once more in its subsequent reform package in January 2003, but it only replaced the Council of Ministry with the DGF as the authority to give the permission, and maintained the permission requirement. The DGF has been the first and foremost actor in violating the rights of non-Muslim foundations for decades, and authorizing this institution meant strengthening its control over non-Muslim foundations. As a result of a third amendment to the Law on Foundations in July 2003, the time given for registration applications of non-Muslim foundations was increased by eighteen months. Law No. 4778 introduced certain favorable regulations for non-Muslim foundations regarding the acquisition and disposal of immovable [*sic*] and their registration in their name, but it also imposed restrictions and conditions on the exercise of the rights granted to them. These restrictions were reinforced with a regulation that came into force on 24 January 2003 to implement the law" (Kurban and Hatemi, 2009, p. 24).

rights granted to them through reforms, and institutions such as the state Treasury, did not adapt to new regulations easily (Kurban and Hatemi 2009, p. 24).

Disappointed in the civic community organizations, the Armenian community in Turkey resorts to the political and civic options available to the broader society during the time period analyzed in this chapter as reflected by *Agos*. Due to a lack of political parties and organizations to particularly represent the Armenian community in Turkey, the Armenian electorate tends to support those parties and candidates having policies related to and concerned with the Armenian community and/or Armenian identity or minorities in Turkey. Furthermore, although the Armenian electorate does not vote as a bloc, the majority of Armenians do not cast their votes for CHP. Following this trend in the Armenian community, in the 2002 elections, AKP appeared as the most viable option for the Armenian community as reflected by *Agos*. The new government was seen by *Agos* as having the potential to change and initiate reform in the Turkish state and society to benefit Armenians as a Christian minority in Turkey. Yet it was observed that one of the reasons for newly available potentials during the rule of the AKP government was the EU membership negotiations and reforms following the membership process, not necessarily AKP government per se.⁹⁵

The new government established by the new political party, AKP, was regarded as a hope for change in Turkish politics and a potential means of representation for Armenian identity. Furthermore, according to Vahram Ter-Matevosyan, initially there was mutual interest between *Agos* and the new government; AKP was interested in establishing a symbolic alliance with the Armenian community together with the “marginalized communities” (2010, p. 99). V. Ter-Matevosyan recounts how Dink informed him about Erdoğan, inviting Dink and some other

⁹⁵ “Gerçek Gündem” editorial, *Agos* 2 May 2003; “Pariluy” Hrant Dink, *Agos* 18 June 2004; “Ve Artık Bundan Sonrası” editorial, *Agos* 7 October 2005.

Armenian intellectuals during the pre-2002 election campaign to participate in the elections on the “AK Party ticket” (2010, p. 99). V. Ter-Matevosyan asserts that although Dink declined the offer, he agreed to cooperate with AKP in the following years (2010, p. 99). Thus, from the beginning Hrant Dink and Armenian intellectuals of *Agos* put their faith in the new government and AKP because the Armenian community was in search for representation on the political scene, and the call on the side of AKP was seen as a potential political opportunity and a new political approach for the Armenian community.

Manifesting this search, as indicated by *Agos*, the Armenian electorate, while skeptical, was sympathetic to AKP and the government formed by it. Based on his analysis of the election results of Şişli and Bakırköy as being densely populated Armenian neighborhoods of Istanbul, V. Ter-Matevosyan asserts that the Armenian community favored AKP; to a lesser extent CHP; and independent candidates who were closer to Armenians in the 2002 elections (2010, p. 103). V. Ter-Matevosyan argues that Armenians who voted for AKP claimed that the party had a positive attitude toward the issues important to the Armenian community, compared to the previous governments, and that its Islamist identity implied the party would respect all religions (2010, p. 105). V. Ter-Matevosyan further asserts that the faith in AKP was so great that Armenians chose to repress the Welfare Party [*Refah Partisi*] rule when an Islamist political party transfigured Armenian churches to mosques (2010, p. 105). It can be argued that AKP’s distance from CHP bureaucracy and the military made it appear as the new blood in Turkish political life for the Armenian community and *Agos* and presented a potential chance for political representation despite its Islamist undertone.

The Armenian community, in its search for political representation, favored AKP because, as Ayşegül Komşuoğlu’s study asserts, Armenians in Turkey have a negative perception of CHP, the opposition

party, as the party of status quo (2007, p. 153). In her research on the political and voting behavior of Armenians in Istanbul in ethnic terms from November 2004 to May 2005, A. Komşuoğlu states that based on historical reasons, especially middle-aged and older Armenians have a negative perception of CHP (2007, p. 153). A. Komşuoğlu claims that the authoritarian policies of the single party period and the historical ties of CHP with CUP (Committee of Union and Progress) caused CHP to be perceived in negative terms by the Armenian community in Turkey (2007, p. 153). She further asserts that such negative attitudes toward CHP cannot be generalized to the broader Armenian community in Turkey, claiming that Armenians who migrated from Anatolia to Istanbul have a milder tone concerning CHP compared to Istanbul Armenians (Komşuoğlu, 2007, p. 153). A. Komşuoğlu relates this attitude to lack of information in Anatolia about the events taking place in Istanbul and Western cities, such as the 6-7 September events and language campaigns (2007, p. 153). In addition to the Armenian community's relative distance from CHP, she contends that because of their occupations, historically, Armenians have preferred to vote for political parties employing models of liberal economy and parties that are closer to the political right (Komşuoğlu, 2007, p. 153). It is her assertion that due to a lack of viable right-wing parties in Turkey, today many Armenians vote for CHP in order not to vote for AKP, whom they identify with Islam (Komşuoğlu, 2007, p. 154). Yet she also claims that for the majority of the Armenian community, CHP is not a party to be voted for under any circumstances (Komşuoğlu, 2007, p. 161). A. Komşuoğlu further stresses that besides concerns relating to ideology and party politics, specific attention paid to the issues related to Armenian community is a reason for Armenians to vote for a political party or candidate (2007, p. 156). In this framework, the rise of pro-AKP sentiments in Armenian community as reflected by *Agos* is directly

related to AKP's manifested distance from CHP, but due to its Islamist tendencies, Armenian community has been skeptical of AKP as well.

Although the Armenian community is in search of political representation in Turkey, it does not have a political party specifically representing the community and its interests. A. Komşuoğlu's study questions the possibility of establishing an ethnicity-based Armenian political party in Turkey (2007, p. 155). Based on her interviews, A. Komşuoğlu states that among the 238 participants, 48.7 percent were willing to have an Armenian political party (Komşuoğlu, 2007, p. 155). However, she states, participants are not willing to support an ethnicity-based political party for Armenian community in Turkey, probably because they were affected by the negative atmosphere built around Kurdish politics (Komşuoğlu, 2007, p. 155). In her study, A. Komşuoğlu asserts that participants favor establishing an Armenian political party in Turkey, although they do not support ethnicity-based politics because they believe that such a party has the potential to represent Armenian community in social and political terms and make Armenian community and identity more visible to broader society, and that this, in turn, may provide the chance to bring solutions to the problems of the Armenian community in Turkey (2007, p. 155). A. Komşuoğlu emphasizes that in this perspective, representation is adopted to refer to the representation of the Armenian community, and goes beyond political representation (2007, p. 155). The need to have Armenian candidates in the already established Turkish and Kurdish political parties is also mentioned as a necessity by the participants in her study (Komşuoğlu, 2007, p. 156). Yet A. Komşuoğlu concludes that Armenians deem it to be more important who the candidate is rather than her ethnic origin (2007, p. 158). The sought-for representation by the Armenian community in Turkey does not make ethnicity a requirement but is more concerned with the actual politics. Thus, it manifests the search for civic and

political participation and representation that considers Armenianness but is not necessarily shaped by Armenianness per se.

The search for political activity and civic life within the Armenian community expressed by *Agos* has contributed to the reformulation of the Armenian identity in more political terms by trying to detach the issue of identity from the domination of religious determination. As indicated, the challenge posed by the debates established around the Islamized Armenians on the hegemony of the Church in defining Armenianness has the potential to contribute to the reformulation of civic and political elements of the Armenian community in Turkey.

4.2. “Poisoned Blood” vs. “Poisonous Blood”: Armenian Identity and Turkish Nationalism

Another matter that must be stressed in a discussion of the reformulation of Armenia identity in Turkey between 2003 and 2006 through *Agos* is Turkish nationalism. This issue is related to Hrant Dink’s article, printed in 2004, on Armenian identity and to an expression he used in that article. Hrant Dink had a mission he reflected in *Agos* to contribute to the reformulation of Armenian identity by replacing and redefining the identity elements. His purpose went beyond Armenian identity in Turkey to target the diaspora as well. In offering a milder perspective in relation to history and how it is perceived today Dink’s main call for the diaspora was to come into terms with the 1915 events and to reformulate Armenian identity on alternative terms, such as with a focus on Armenia as the common land of Armenians or focusing on life instead of death while talking about history. Hrant Dink establishes his call to reformulate Armenian identity in a series of articles entitled “On the Armenian Identity”, published in *Agos*, mainly targeting the diaspora in 2003 and 2004. Before moving on to consider the article that caused Dink to be convicted, his previous articles in the series are introduced briefly here to establish the basis of his arguments on Armenian identity and the 1915 events.

Dink's first article in the series elaborates on future possible paths for sustaining and advancing Armenian identity for the Armenian diaspora. It is an assessment of the current situation of Armenian identity in the diaspora and it focuses on the domination of the obsession with the 1915 events and the 1915 trauma.⁹⁶ The second article Dink writes in this series elaborates on the role and importance of the Church as a constitutive element and its role in sustaining and reformulating Armenian identity.⁹⁷ In the next article, Dink delves into the relation between Armenian identity and religion, stressing the historical role of religion and Christianity for Armenians. Dink highlights the close relationship between nationality and religion, which he argues turned the Church into a national church. He further states that Armenian identity extends beyond the Church today and that it is not reasonable to limit Armenian identity within the scope of the Church and nationalism. Dink asserts that identities are becoming more diverse and that they require redefining in new terms.⁹⁸ Dink's vision for Armenian identity is one that is not mainly based on the 1915 events or one that is shaped under the excessive influence of religion.

In his next two articles, Dink puts more emphasis on the Armenian diaspora. In his account, diaspora means the end of the territorial unity keeping a nation together. He asserts that losing the territorial unity damaged Armenian national identity to a great extent and that Armenian identity was in decline in the diaspora. He suggests Armenia as the means for overcoming this decay and for the reformulation and survival

⁹⁶ "Ermeni Kimliđi Üzerine (1) Kuşaklara Dair" Hrant Dink, *Agos* 7 November 2003.

⁹⁷ "Ermeni Kimliđi Üzerine (2) Kilisenin Rolü" Hrant Dink, *Agos* 14 November 2003.

⁹⁸ "Ermeni Kimliđi Üzerine (3) Kaç Vartan'ın Çocukları" Hrant Dink, *Agos* 5 December 2003.

of the Armenian identity in diaspora.⁹⁹ In the following article, Dink further elaborates on the Armenian diaspora and the decline of Armenian identity. Dink identifies the focus on the 1915 events that he regards as obsession as the reason of decay of the Armenian identity in the Armenian diaspora and for that reason calls for its reformulation for a stronger Armenian identity.

Dink's analysis of the Armenian diaspora continues in his next article, with the perception of the "Turk" as it relates to the diaspora and the significance of the 1915 events for the diaspora Armenian identity. Dink states that Armenians have employed the recognition of 1915 events as "genocide" as the key element of Armenian identity. However, he asserts that the denial of this demand by the Republic of Turkey, the primary element of identity for diaspora Armenians, has damaged Armenian identity to a great extent. Armenians, Dink states, believing that they could not get what they deserved, started to experience their identity in terms of their insistence on demanding the truth in their terms, and this insistence became the main motto of diaspora Armenians. Dink claims that the main element shaping the current structure of Armenian identity is the phenomena of the "Turk" serving as a "carcinogen tumor". In his account, the relation between Armenians and Turks has mutually influenced both parties, and the end of their harmony is defined as betrayal by both sides, shaped by Armenian trauma and Turkish paranoia. Dink asserts that the "Turk" is both the poison and antidote of Armenian identity. The important question, he states, is whether Armenian identity can manage to get rid of this "Turk".¹⁰⁰ As can easily be inferred here, Dink's call for the Armenian diaspora is to replace the 1915 obsession and the obsession with the "Turk" with another component of Armenian identity (the independent

⁹⁹ "Ermeni Kimliği Üzerine (4) Pratik Kimliğin Teorisi" Hrant Dink, *Agos* 19 December 2003; "Ermeni Kimliği Üzerine (5) Batı: Cennet ve Cehennem" Hrant Dink, *Agos* 26 December 2003.

¹⁰⁰ "Ermeni'nin Türk'ü" Hrant Dink, *Agos* 23 January 2004.

state of Armenia) in order to create a healthier identity in his terms. Within this framework, Dink asserts that Armenian identity can be freed from the “Turk” in two ways: by receiving empathy from the Turkish state and society toward the Armenian nation, showing that Turkey comprehends the trauma of the Armenian nation; or by Armenians themselves getting rid of the influence of the “Turk” from their own identity. This second option is more probable, according to Dink, because it depends on the will and initiative of the Armenian people. It requires them to be active in reformulating their identity rather than being passive recipients reacting to decisions and policies of Turkey. Dink asserts that carrying the past with honor and dignity should be the dominant force in Armenian identity, rather than making history a burden.¹⁰¹ In his search for a reformulation of the Armenian identity, Dink argued that Armenian identity was no longer constructed and shaped by Armenians, but by Turkey and the Turkish state. He urged Armenians to stop waiting for the “Turk” to understand them and instead to find new elements for constructing their identity.¹⁰²

The following article on the Armenian diaspora, Armenian identity, and the “Turk” is the one that led to Dink’s conviction on Article 301 and his demonization in Turkish public opinion. The terms that initiated a legal investigation against Dink refer to the last sentence of Mustafa Kemal’s address to Turkish youth: “the power you need is in the noble blood in your veins”. Dink stated, “the clean blood to replace the poisoned blood emptied by the ‘Turk’ is in the noble vein of the relation to be established between Armenia and the Armenian”. Dink argued that the relation with Armenia and the diaspora has a vital role in the identity

¹⁰¹ ““Türk’ten Kurtulmak” Hrant Dink, *Agos* 30 January 2004.

¹⁰² “Su Çatlağını Bulanda ...” Hrant Dink, *Agos* 15 October 2005.

of diaspora Armenians and new approaches to identity, as presented in his previous articles of this series.¹⁰³

Dink's article on Armenian identity, talking about the "poisoned blood of Armenians" created a huge controversy in the Turkish media, as the "poisonous blood of the Turk". The first spark came from Deniz Som of the *Cumhuriyet* daily, whose account also became a part of the final verdict in court against Dink, based on Article 301. D. Som's piece was not only a reaction to Dink's most recent article, but also to the previous piece mentioned above in which Dink questioned the possible Armenian heritage of Sabiha Gökçen. D. Som starts his article with a quotation from Dink's piece with the sentence "poisoned blood", calling it racism. D. Som even claims that this was a "blood cleansing operation" going beyond the evils of Hitler. Then he mentioned the news item published by the "weekly Armenian newspaper *Agos* published in Istanbul" on Sabiha Gökçen, stating that this newspaper claimed that the adopted daughter of Mustafa Kemal, the first woman combat pilot of Turkey, had Armenian origins. Such a claim, D. Som stated, was based on the statements of a cleaning lady (Hripsime Sebilciyan Gazalyan, was who interviewed for *Agos*) who came to Turkey from Armenia. Supporting the press release of the General Staff of the Turkish military, D. Som stated that the real purpose of such claims should be questioned, mentioning the existence of traitors in Turkey.¹⁰⁴ D. Som's accusations later became a part of Dink's court verdict.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ "Ermeni Kimliği Üzerine (8) Ermenistan'la Tanışmak" Hrant Dink, *Agos* 13 February 2004.

¹⁰⁴ "Sabiha Gökçen" Deniz Som, *Cumhuriyet* 24 February 2004, in Göktaş, 2007, pp. 93–4.

¹⁰⁵ For a detailed analysis on the media's role in the formation of public opinion in Turkey, based on the analysis of Hrant Dink's articles, see Kemal Göktaş, *Türkiye'de Basının Kamuoyu Oluşturması, Örnek Olay: Hrant Dink'in Hedef Haline Gelen bir Siyasal Figüre Dönüşürülmesi*, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi, 2007.

What happened next? A case was initiated against Hrant Dink, based on the Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code on “insulting Turkishness” or “denigrating Turkishness”. The conscious misinterpretation of Dink’s statements led to an interrogation by the mayor of Istanbul and was followed by legal proceedings in the Şişli province of Istanbul. On the basis of the Article 301, Dink was convicted in October 2005 for “denigrating Turkishness”.¹⁰⁶ “In particular, the nationalists have pursued journalists who write critically on five major areas: Atatürk, the Armenian killings, separatist Kurds, the security forces, and the Turkish presence in northern Cyprus” (Mahoney, 2006, p. 28). Hrant Dink’s controversial articles touched on two main issues of those areas.

In relation to the reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey, Dink’s series of articles for the Armenian diaspora do not differ significantly from the general patterns of identity reformulation of the Armenian community in Turkey as expressed by *Agos* in its attempt to offer a milder position concerning history and breaking the domination of the Church. However, Dink’s insistence on the element of the “Turk” touched on a sensitive topic of Turkish nationalism and interrupted the identity reformulation call and process with a legal decision.

4.3. Conclusion

This chapter presented the Armenian identity reformulation process between 2003 and 2006 in Turkey through analyzing *Agos* with specific a focus on Islamized Armenians as one of the peak issues covered by the newspaper. The analysis was conducted in reference to the elements of Armenian identity identified in this study: religion, the 1915 narratives, and civic life and political representation in relation to the controversies

¹⁰⁶ This was not the first time Dink was convicted of transgressing Article 301. The first time he was convicted was because of his statements about the Turkish National Anthem’s use of the “Turkish race” in 2002, in which he underscored the fact that he was not “Turkish”, but “an Armenian from Turkey”. In this instance, his penalty was suspended due to good behavior.

revolving around the ethnic heritage of Sabiha Gökçen. In this chapter, the main focus on the reformulation of Armenian identity through *Agos* has centered on the issue of Islamized Armenians and deconstructing history and the 1915 narratives around it.

The focus on Islamized Armenians emphasized life with respect to the 1915 narratives and history, and attempted to introduce an alternative perspective to history. This issue became prominent with the news published in *Agos* on the Sabiha Gökçen's possible Armenian heritage. Within the scope of this chapter, Islamized Armenians further challenged the hegemony of the Church over the Armenian community, introducing Islam as an alternative identity element for the Armenian community in Turkey in discussing what constitutes Armenianness.

The following chapter explores the process of Armenian identity reformulation between 2007 and 2010 in its relation to Hrant Dink's assassination in 2007 and following the initial debates on the Islamized Armenians as well as the new dynamics in the Armenian community as reflected by *Agos*.

CHAPTER 5

“We are all Armenians”: AGOS AFTER HRANT DINK

2007–2009

...I have often felt tempted to answer that I am ashamed of being human.

This elemental shame, which many people of the most various nationalities share with one another today, is what finally is left of our sense of international solidarity; and it has not yet found an adequate political expression [...] For the idea of humanity, when purged of all sentimentality, has the very serious consequence that in one form or another men must assume responsibility for all crimes committed by men and that all nations share the onus of evil committed by all others. Shame at being a human being is the purely individual and still non-political expression of this insight.

Hannah Arendt, Essays in Understanding

Hrant Dink, one of the founders of *Agos* and its first editor in chief, was assassinated in January 2007. Despite the horrible act of murder and the great misfortune of losing Dink, this chapter argues that Dink’s murder as a turning point in Turkey changed the course of events for Armenian community and identity in Turkey in a positive and constructive way. The argument is based on the assumption that Dink’s assassination opened the Armenian community to the broader Turkish society and enabled increasingly active participation from the broader society in the historical and contemporary issues concerning Armenians in Turkey fostering interaction between the two groups. Moreover, and more importantly, it fueled the Armenian community to act on its needs

and demands, picking up from where Dink left off following his footsteps on the Armenian identity with the call to facing history and focusing on life instead of death as in the case of Islamized Armenians. Undeniably, such change has had a considerable positive impact on the process of reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey. Following Dink's assassination, the 1915 narratives, civic action, and religion dimensions making up the Armenian identity have been articulated in new terms as an effect of the increased interaction and dialogue between the Armenian community and Turkish society. More significantly, acting on the legacy of Dink, his assassination played a pivotal role in initiating an intra-community questioning and assessment of the condition of Armenian community and identity in Turkey as reflected by *Agos*.

In order to elaborate on this new era for the Armenian community and the process of reformulating Armenian identity, this chapter focuses on *Agos* from 2007 to the end of 2009. In this inquiry, this chapter reflects the aim to explore the new dynamics that became available to the Armenian community for the reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey in relation to the elements of identity as well as the possible impact of the debates on the Islamized Armenians as a late identity dynamic unlocked in 2004. Furthermore, within the scope of this analysis, Hrant Dink's assassination and funeral are taken as the points of reference in this chapter's focus on the reformulation of Armenian identity as the signifier of the turning point and a new phase for the identity and the community. Dink's murder and funeral are analyzed in relation to Armenian identity's association with 1915 narratives and deconstructing history, and reconstructing collective memory.

This chapter furthermore introduces Etyen Mahçupyan as *Agos*'s new editor in chief (2007–2010) and outlines his perspectives that were embedded in *Agos*. Etyen Mahçupyan had a business and academic background; prior to his role in *Agos*, he was a part of the New

Democracy Movement in Turkey.¹⁰⁷ Mahçupyan also wrote for the newspapers *Radikal* in 1997, and then for *Yeni Binyıl*, and *Zaman*, respectively. Mahçupyan is dramatically different than Dink. Mahçupyan was not raised as an Armenian embracing the Armenian identity; in fact, Mahçupyan did not even identify himself as Armenian and did not spend time within the Armenian community until his adulthood (Mahçupyan, 2005). For those reasons, he was a latecomer to the Armenian community and to Armenian identity and the identity reformulation struggle of the community in Turkey. Because of those differences and his relative detachment from Armenian identity, Mahçupyan's personality and ideology alienated some journalists and intellectuals in *Agos* as well as in the Armenian community. The differences between Dink and Mahçupyan are crucial for my study and worthy of outlining because, as editors in chief, their perspectives directly affected the position and attitude of *Agos* toward Armenian identity and its reformulation in Turkey. It is not the intention of this study to elaborate on the intellectual and journalistic capacity of Mahçupyan and how he changed *Agos* in a couple of years; suffice it to say that this period has not been a very progressive and productive period for *Agos* in its attempt to reformulate Armenian identity in Turkey. The period between 2007 and 2009 is marked by inner conflicts and struggles for the newspaper, which ended with many writers leaving *Agos*. However, such changes and conflicts did not alter *Agos*'s purpose and struggle for the Armenian community in Turkey, but modified them due to Mahçupyan's slightly different vision for the community. This process is also indirectly reflected in my study through my analysis of the reformulation of Armenian identity through *Agos*.

¹⁰⁷ The New Democracy Movement [*Yeni Demokrasi Hareketi*] was founded in 1994 by a prominent businessman, Cem Boyner, and defended classical liberal values such as pluralism, liberty, and free market economy. A number of notable businessmen and intellectuals joined the movement. In time, it evolved into a political party and entered the elections in 1995, but faced a vast failure. In 1997, the party dissolved.

This chapter first introduces the discussion on the impact of Dink's assassination on the process of reformulating Armenian identity and then presents the deconstructing the role of religion for the Armenian identity in its relation to civic life and political representation, in response to the discussions around the patriarchal elections in 2008 as analyzed through *Agos*. It is argued here that Dink's murder changed the interplay of dynamics in the Armenian community and Turkish society and that the failed crisis management following the illness of the Patriarch urged the need to restructure the Armenian community accompanied with a new identity perspective brought about by the debates around the Islamized Armenians since 2004.

5.1. Hrant Dink's Assassination and the Reformulation of Armenian Identity

Hrant Dink was assassinated in Istanbul on 19 January 2007 in front of *Agos's* office. Hrant Dink had been under attack by nationalist and Kemalist-militarist groups since early 2004, due to two pieces he published in *Agos*. One of those articles was on the possible Armenian heritage of Sabiha Gökçen as an example of Islamized Armenians, while the other was a misinterpretation of a term Dink adopted in his analysis of Armenian identity, in which he called upon Armenians to emancipate themselves from the burdens of the past. From early 2004 on, Dink was harassed and threatened, and he spent his last years trying to justify himself. He was declared as an enemy of the state and Turkish people, and was turned into a target, mainly by the Turkish media (Göktaş, 2007, p. 4). Hrant Dink was singled out as a target not only because he was Armenian but also because he was an Armenian questioning and criticizing the system, the broader Turkish society, and even the Armenian community. Dink's murder can also be interpreted as an attack on the Armenian community, reminding the community to behave, and not to dust the books of history. On the other hand, Dink's murder changed the dynamics in broader Turkish society and its relation

with the Armenian community by creating an opening in the public sphere as expressed by *Agos*.

In this chapter, the circumstances that caused Dink's murder are not detailed, but instead the focus is on how those circumstances and his death have had surprisingly positive outcomes on the process of reformulating Armenian identity in Turkey. These were a result of Dink's two main contentions as they appeared in his articles: talking about life and survival, and going beyond the obsession with the 1915 events. His articles have already cracked the taboo surrounding those issues, and as a part of Dink's intellectual legacy, more attention has started to be given to the issues since his murder. In other words, Dink's murder gave life to his ideas and his vision for the Armenian community and identity; these were also organized under the Hrant Dink Foundation established after his murder. The Foundation was founded in 2007 in Istanbul in order to actualize Dink's vision and his ideas for the Armenian community in Turkey, the broader Turkish society, and the diaspora, through mutual understanding, interaction, and dialogue. The Foundation was established based on Dink's ideas on freedom, justice, antiviolenace, antidiscrimination, and antiracism and aimed to help create a democratic society without othering where differences could exist side by side.

In line with those ideas and purposes, the Foundation defines its fields of action as supporting creativity of children and youth; working for the realization of cultural diversity and difference as a right; and realization of human rights and democracy. It exists in order to develop cultural relations between Turkey, Armenia, and Europe; to support the democratization process in Turkey; to sponsor studies on history free of nationalism and racism; and to archive texts, documents, and photos on Hrant Dink. Besides fostering publications, archival projects, cultural activities, travel grants and trips, and oral history studies; providing scholarships and grants; and organizing conferences and talks, the

Foundation also has annual Hrant Dink Awards, a project on hate speech in the media, and an annual short movie festival.

Dink's murder changed the process of reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey in an unexpectedly positive way because, as Ron Eyerman states in his analysis on the cultural sociology of political assassinations, "like natural disasters, political assassinations provide an occasion for collectivities to reflect on themselves" (2011, p. 10). R. Eyerman defines political assassination as a "murderous act against an individual or individuals that engages a community" (2011, p. 146). In this context "what is essential is that the victim is felt by others to represent something significant to their own identity, their foundational values, and their sense of belonging" (Eyerman, 2011, p. 146). R. Eyerman asserts that the shock makes the collectivity question itself, and "they have the capacity to awaken a sense of collective belonging, to create a 'we', while at the same time raising questions about the grounds upon which the collectivity rests" (2011, p. 11). R. Eyerman argues that political assassinations cause cultural traumas and "foundational identity crisis". In this perspective, cultural trauma is defined in discursive terms borrowed from Jürgen Habermas, as a "discursive response to a tear in the social fabric, where the foundations of an established collective identity are shaken by a traumatic occurrence and are in need of renarration and repair" (Eyerman, 2011, p. 12). In those terms, this chapter argues that Hrant Dink's assassination brought Armenian community together and contributed to the process of identity reformulation, reflecting on the community itself. Dink's death has opened the way to questioning the taboos and history, reconstructing the collective memory, and politicizing Armenian identity.

Hrant Dink's funeral was held on 23 January 2007 in Istanbul. It was marked by massive participation of people from the broader society. On the day of his funeral, participants were carrying banners: "We are

all Hrant Dink” and “We are all Armenian”.¹⁰⁸ Dink’s funeral created optimism in the Armenian community and a sense of awareness in Turkish society, signaling a potentially new kind of interaction between the two.¹⁰⁹ *Agos* regards the unity and collective grief displayed at the funeral as very monumental and unexpected. Building on those empirical expressions of collective mourning, this chapter argues that it has contributed to the deconstruction of history and reconstructing the 1915 narratives for the Armenian community in Turkey in the process of the identity reformulation.

5.1.1. The 1915 Narratives and Reconstructing Collective Memory

Dink’s funeral was the first gathering of broader Turkish society and the Armenian community publicly uniting against the same enemy with the same feelings of grief and disappointment. This gathering contributed to the deconstruction of collective memory by both sides, but for the purposes of this study, more importantly, the gravity of the event is attributed to the Armenian community. In that way, Dink’s murder and funeral have contributed to the process of reformulating Armenian identity in Turkey through reconstructing collective memory and the 1915 narratives as reflected through *Agos*.

The attempts of the broader society to be more engaged in the Armenian community have been also expressed in apologetic language. One of the tangible indications of this process was an apology campaign launched by a group of intellectuals in Turkey. Following Dink’s murder, for honest or pragmatic political reasons, intellectuals in Turkey have started paying more attention to the Armenian community and perhaps because of the guilt they associate with Dink’s murder, those

¹⁰⁸ “Bir Cenaze Yüz bin Hrant” Rober Koptaş, *Agos* 26 January 2007; “...Ve Vicdan İsyân Etti” editorial, *Agos* 26 January 2007. I also recall the event myself, as I was watching the funeral on TV from Ankara.

¹⁰⁹ Rober Koptaş, Interview with the author, 23 October 2012.

intellectuals have tried to act on history and apologize for anything about the 1915 events, but not the nature of events per se. Thus, the apologetic attitude was influential within the discursive boundaries determined by the state and did not have a radical character.

An online campaign, “I apologize”, was launched in 2008. The petition was prepared by four intellectuals (Ahmet İnel, Baskın Oran, Cengiz Aktar, and Ali Bayramoğlu) and was signed by thousands of people in Turkey and abroad.¹¹⁰ It was an apology for “the denial of the Great Catastrophe” of 1915 and “insensitivity showed” to this catastrophe; it was an apology for the denial of the “injustice”.¹¹¹ Thus, contrary to the common perception, the petition does not aim to apologize for the “Armenian genocide”, but for “insensitivity” and “denial” of the “Great Catastrophe” and suffering as expressed in the text. The term “genocide” was not referred to in the text, but *Medz Yeghern*, as employed by the presidents of the United States every year on 24 April, was adopted instead. The nature of the event is also defined within the limits of the official historical perspective of Turkey.

It appears that the intellectuals who prepared the text wanted to make a gesture to the Armenian community to show their feelings of shame and perhaps humiliation after Dink’s murder, yet they have chosen to apologize for the state’s policies. On the part of the broader society, this does not constitute a reconstruction of collective memory, but a reproduction of the official state perspective and discourse on history. However, on the part of the Armenian community, the Campaign could have an impact on reconstructing collective memory, if only because a number of Turkish intellectuals being sorry for the acts

¹¹⁰ The petition is not open for signatures anymore, but during the time it was open, it was signed by 32,454 people. <<http://www.ozurdiliyoruz.com>>.

¹¹¹ The full text in English: “My conscience does not accept the insensitivity showed to and the denial of the Medz Yeghern (Great Catastrophe) that the Ottoman Armenians were subjected [to] in 1915. I reject this injustice, and for my share, I empathize with the feelings and pain of my Armenian brothers. I apologize to them”.

and attitudes of their state, and because the issue entered the arena of public discussions in some way.

In a way that did not really reflect the nature of the text presented online, Ahmet İnsel, as one of the intellectuals who composed the apology, states that the Campaign is an attempt to confront the “Armenian Question” (2009, np).

The apology initiative connotes not only the great human tragedy caused by the mass deportation and chastising of the Ottoman Armenians in 1915 [...] it connotes the collective reaction which accumulated in response to the trivialization, even the denial and or inversion of this utmost serious event. (Insel, 2009, np)

However, the text does not talk about the denial of “genocide” in relation to 1915 events, but refers to the “Great Catastrophe”, or punishment as he calls it. In that sense, building on the vagueness of this expression, A. Insel states that everyone who signed the petition has had different reasons and motives, and different perceptions of the text. Thus, he asserts that everyone took something out of the text. He stresses the need to face the history, to break the taboo built around the history, and to confront the history in our own terms. It is A. Insel’s assertion that “the apology, in a way, was for the lack of apology by those who actually should apologize” (2009, np). It is also presented as an attempt to break the state monopoly on the issue and challenge the state mentality. Nonetheless, the text does not bring any new or alternative perspectives to those of the state; it does not face the history or the “Armenian Question”. For that reason, the Campaign did not go beyond making the issue a part of the public debates for a while, which may have contributed to the reformulation of Armenian identity in terms of collective memory and the 1915 narratives.

The reception of the petition was both positive and negative, as expected. Those reactions were mainly built around what actually occurred in the history, how to name the 1915 events, and also harsh

criticisms that the text is an apology from Armenians who actually claimed to have massacred Muslims. A quick archival media (newspaper) Internet search on the time between December 2008 and January 2009, with the key word “Armenian”, shows that the negative reactions contained claims that the events of 1915 were not “genocide”; that there was nothing to apologize for; and that Armenians were trying to divide and invade Turkey.¹¹² There were also counter-campaigns against the text by nationalist groups in Turkey (Erbal, 2013). The petition was even investigated by the Supreme Court of Appeal on the grounds that it humiliated the Turkish public. However, the investigation was terminated on the grounds that the Campaign was within the jurisdiction of democracy and freedom of speech.¹¹³ Even the Armenian Patriarchate reacted negatively to the Campaign, claiming that “pain should be buried in history”, and the positive aspects of Turkish-Armenian relations should be underlined instead.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, not all intellectuals, including the prominent scholar Taner Akçam and Nobel prize winner Orhan Pamuk, signed the text, regarding it insufficient due to its wording (Erbal, 2013). On the other hand, some intellectuals and journalists perceived the petition as a democratic civil society initiative and a positive step toward talking about historic taboos.¹¹⁵

I argue that the apology was not an apology for the 1915 events, and it actually did not challenge the official state perspective on the 1915 events, thus did not bring anything new to the table. I agree with the

¹¹² “Toprağımızda Gözleri Var” Rahmi Turan, *Hürriyet* 29 December 2008; “Özür Bildirisi’nin İmza Fiyaskosu” Hasan Pulur, *Milliyet* 23 December 2008; “Büyük Felaket” Melih Aşık, *Milliyet* 23 December 2008.

¹¹³ “Ermeniler’den Özür Kampanyasına İnceleme” *Hürriyet* 9 January 2009; “Ermenilerden Özür Kampanyasına Takipsizlik” *Hürriyet* 26 January 2009.

¹¹⁴ “Çekilen Acıları Tarihe Bırakalım” Sefa Kaplan, *Hürriyet* 30 December 2008.

¹¹⁵ “Ne Özrü Ulan!” Mehmet Ali Birand, *Hürriyet* 23 December 2008; “Evet, ‘Bildiriyi’ Ben de İmzaladım” Hasan Cemal, *Milliyet* 25 December 2008.

analysis of Ayda Erbal whose deconstruction of the text is valuable because in addition to being a scholar, A. Erbal is an Armenian from Turkey, and her analysis provides us with a perspective, in intellectual terms, from within the Armenian community in Turkey. Furthermore, differing from other reactions pertaining to what really happened in 1915, A. Erbal aims to analyze the text itself from a standpoint similar to the one I expressed above.

In her deconstruction of this text, A. Erbal (2013) elaborates on the choice of the term *Medz Yeghern* instead of the term “genocide”. She states that those who formed the text expressed that they did not want to use the term “genocide”, claiming that the term itself was highly politicized and that signing this text did not mean recognizing 1915 events as “genocide”, but only recognizing the collective pain induced by the 1915 events. A. Erbal argues that this is a whitewashing of institutional crime with wording (2013). Furthermore, she states that a semantic game comes into play in the text, so as not to alienate the Turkish state (2013). She asserts that the Turkish state has never denied that something traumatic happened in 1915 but has denied categorizing those events as “genocide” (2013). A. Erbal states that people took from the text whatever meaning they wished (2013). She asserts that the Armenian community in Turkey and Armenia, for instance, regarded it as an apology for “genocide”, although this was not so (2013). She states that Armenians wanted to hear what they wanted to hear, thus reframing the apology (2013).

Although A. Erbal regards it as an unsuccessful apology, lacking even the most basic elements of a true expression of regret, she recognizes that the debate it initiated has been fruitful and appears to be a positive step toward a future reconciliation and dialogue (2013). This is the element, I assert, that has contributed to the identity reformulation process of the Armenian community by reconstructing collective memory. A. Erbal claims that the apology was not successful because it

is devoid of an agency and responsibility, devoid of subjectivity, and it is not clear who is the receiver of apology (2013). She states that in the Campaign, there is the intent to apologize, but it is not certain whether the object of the apology has the right ground to apologize (2013). A. Erbal claims that the apology was expected to come from the state, and nobody demanded anything from the intellectuals in Turkey (2013). Furthermore, A. Erbal argues that neither the offense nor the agency of denial stated in the apology is clear (2013). She adds that there is no mention of correcting injustices or reparations for the offense (2013). A. Erbal also states that an apology should be humble and should not attempt to negotiate; however, this text, in her account, tries to negotiate the terms of responsibility (2013). Furthermore, it is an apology based on terms that are acceptable to those who framed the text, not on the terms that Armenians demand (Erbal, 2013). She regards it as a preemptive apology muting particular points of view and in that way, A. Erbal states, the text has an immense power over Armenians, a preemptive power because if Armenians do not accept the apology, they will be perceived to be the ones causing the problem (2013). However, ideally, she asserts, in an apology, the other party should have the right to not accept the apology (2013).

I agree with A. Erbal's deconstruction of the text and her contention that selective use of terminology in the text means that it is not actually alternative or radical, yet I disagree with her concept of the apology in relation to this Campaign. Contrary to her assertion, I argue that a political apology should be analyzed in different terms from interpersonal apology. The Campaign, although prepared by a group of intellectuals, was signed by a considerable number of people from broader Turkish society. It was not prepared and signed by political representatives of the state, but it has a political character due to its perception by the public and the way it was presented by those who composed and launched it. As Mathias Thaler argues, in his analysis on

political apology, sincerity is not a standard for political apologies (2012, p. 265). So, I claim that, as an apology, the text should be considered in political terms and can be perceived as an apology in and of itself, but it does not reflect the assumed purpose of confronting the 1915 events and history of this period.

Overall, the “I Apologize” campaign had an impact on the process of reformulating Armenian identity in Turkey because it brought the 1915 events into the public sphere and caused them to be heard and known by wider groups of people. This, in turn, has contributed to the reconstruction of collective memory by the Armenian community with the participation of people from the broader society as reflected through *Agos*. Although the Campaign was not groundbreaking or radical in its wording and intent, when considered in the context of Dink’s murder and Armenian identity, on the surface at least, it has had positive connotations for the Armenian community for the process of reformulating Armenian identity.

5.2. Religion, Civic and Political Representation, and Islamized Armenians

The Armenian community in Turkey has been trapped in a community structure organized in the form of religious congregation since the Lausanne Treaty establishing the Republic. In the face of increasing demands voiced by *Agos* to restructure the community along the lines of secularism and democracy, the Patriarch persists in his refusal to bring about change and reform. Yet the demands for reform voiced by *Agos*, in line with secularism, aim to provide channels for civic representation for the Armenian community. One of the methods used to challenge the domination of the Patriarch over community life has been to highlight the existence of non-Apostolic Armenians in the Armenian community and the debates on the Islamized Armenians. Moreover, the organization of the community structure around the Church caused additional disruption in 2008 when the Patriarch was

unable to perform his duties due to a serious illness. The debates around the requirement to elect a new Patriarch as opposed to appointing a temporary replacement until he passed away started an undemocratic process within the Armenian community as claimed by *Agos*, which is still ongoing.

In political terms, the Armenian community is once again limited by the political options than those available to the broader society, and the Armenian community does not have a political party or candidate in Turkey working for its interests and representing its demands. For that reason, as in previous periods, political parties with democratic and progressive agendas comprise the political choices of the Armenian community as analyzed through *Agos*.

The process of reformulating Armenian identity during this period is structured by *Agos* around the call for reform, to limit the power of the Church within the Armenian community in the search for civic representation and political action. It is fueled by the failed management of the process after the illness of the Patriarch which led to the democratic tradition of electing the Patriarch within the Church being overruled. Lack of viable political choices and alternatives for the Armenian community in Turkey also contributed to the need for restructuring the community. Reform and reformulation of Armenian identity around more civic terms have not implied displacing the role and importance of religion; instead, it was the structuring of the community around the Church that was questioned. Furthermore, the debates around the Islamized Armenians since 2004, have the potential to pose challenge to the Church's definition of Armenianness.

5.2.1. Political Options of the Armenian Community

Because the Armenian community has largely been represented by the Church and has not been given any considerable chances of political representation in the broader Turkish society, it has been limited with political alternatives available to the broader society. Within this

framework, the Armenian community has been closer to the parties and candidates championing EU membership, minority and human rights, and anti-militarist perspectives between 2007 and 2009. Based on its early years in the government, AKP was perceived to be a great fit for such representation in its liberal and progressive discourse by *Agos*. It should be kept in mind that the Armenian community in Turkey is not a homogenous block, and has voted for other political parties and ideologies. Here, a generalization has been adopted for the purposes of analyzing political identity and the participation of the Armenian community in Turkey. I recognize that the Armenian community is diversified in its political views, but there is no tool in place for my study to measure such diversification.

After its first year in the government, AKP has remained a party of choice in the Armenian community mainly due to the lack of viable political alternatives in Turkey as expressed by *Agos*. Additionally, *Agos* regarded the candidacy of Abdullah Gül for the President of the Republic as a progressive change in Turkey; it was based on the claim that he would be one of the few presidents not to have any affiliation with the military and bureaucratic Kemalist elite.¹¹⁶

According to scholar Vahram Ter-Matevosyan's study on the voting patterns of the Armenian community in Turkey, the data presented, based on the pre-2007 election polls, assert that Armenians were to increase their support for AKP by 100 percent compared to the 2002 election (2010, p. 104). The same study also states that CHP was about to lose more than 20 percent of the votes it had received in the 2002 election (Ter-Matevosyan, 2010, p. 104). The study discloses that the election results reflected the pre-election polls, claiming that Armenian faith in AKP increased between 2002 and 2007 (Ter-Matevosyan, 2010,

¹¹⁶ "Aman Virgölüne Bile Dokunmayın" Etyen Mahçupyan, *Agos* 16 February 2007; "Düğümün en Karışık Olduğu An" Ali Bayramoğlu, *Agos* 13 April 2007; "Cumhuriyet'in Demokrasi Sınavı" editorial, *Agos* 27 April 2007; "Hayırlı Olsun" editorial, *Agos* 31 August 2007.

p. 104). Such support for AKP is regarded as extraordinary by *Agos*, but not very surprising. It is extraordinary because it is not common for non-Muslim communities in Turkey to identify with political parties having Islamic sentiments. However, it is not surprising because AKP managed to dissociate itself from the traditional Islamic political parties in Turkey and responded to the demands of the Armenian community and non-Muslim communities in Turkey during its first term in government as perceived by *Agos*.¹¹⁷

Without any viable political opposition to the ruling party, or candidates to champion the demands and interests of the Armenian community or minorities in Turkey, the Armenian community continued, to a great extent, to support AKP during this period. Because the major means of political participation adopted by Armenians is elections, election results and polls are referred to as indications of the political choices of the Armenian community in Turkey. As there is no Armenian political party or an Armenian candidate endorsed by the community, it has been argued in this chapter based on the analysis of *Agos* that the Armenian community in Turkey favored AKP during this period because of the party's welcoming liberal outlook in its first governmental period.

5.2.2. The Patriarch, Civic Representation and Islamized Armenians

The domination of a structure organized around the Church and Patriarchate for the Armenian community and its foundations had further implications besides the political ones for the community. In order to activate the Armenian community and ensure political and civic action, it is *Agos*'s assertion that Armenian foundations should be revived in more secular and civic terms, but they first need to be saved from seizure by the state and from falling apart due to lack of attention and

¹¹⁷ "Kim Sesimizi Duyarsa" editorial, *Agos* 29 June 2007.

funding. Furthermore, another issue related to internal democracy and cooperation in the Armenian community has emerged around the need to elect a new Patriarch in 2008. The process of reformulating Armenian identity also involves the ongoing call to restructure and reform the Armenian community and its organizations by limiting religious domination, thus empowering the Armenian community for democracy. The debates on the Islamized Armenians initiated in 2004 further accompany those demands related to the role of religion and Church on the Armenian identity.

5.2.2.1. Armenian Foundations and Seized Property

The seizure of Armenian foundations' property has political, civic, and economic repercussions for the Armenian community in Turkey. This problem, according to *Agos*, caused by the state policies, has deepened due to poor management of the foundations and decreasing participation of the Armenian community in community matters, combined with the domination of the Church over community affairs and lack of civic initiatives, has left the Armenian community with a tangled ball of problems.

Agos claims that for the foundations that are still in the hands of the Armenian community, a need for better management and active community participation exists in order to be able to keep them functioning for the benefit of the civic character of the Armenian community in Turkey. Furthermore, Armenian foundations should strive for communal cooperation, underscoring their common ownership and utilize their common community resources (both financial and labor related) more efficiently and effectively, following principles of secularism.¹¹⁸ It is expressed in the *Agos* that more qualified, younger, and civic-minded managers, with experience in the field and long-term

¹¹⁸ "Sivilleşme Niçin İstenmez?" editorial, *Agos* 19 June 2009.

strategies, are needed for the boards of the foundations, to revive and empower the Armenian foundations in Turkey.¹¹⁹

With regards to the seized property, within the scope of the EU reforms, in 2008 the state implemented new policies enabling the foundations to reacquire their property per individual application. The law grants the foundations the right to acquire and dispose of property, receive donations from organizations, and establish economic enterprises. Additionally, for the first time in history it allows a member elected by the foundations to sit in the Foundations' Assembly. Furthermore, the law stipulates the return of some property seized by the state since the 1960s (Özdoğan and Kılıçdağı, 2011, p. 77). However, those arrangements were considered limited by *Agos* because it was not possible to return all properties acquired by third parties and because the law does not stipulate any compensation as an alternative. Moreover, it is asserted in *Agos* that the wording is ambiguous and leaves considerable discretion to the arbitrariness of bureaucracy.

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled in 2007 that Turkey's Law on Foundations, dated 1936, violates minorities' right to property. Beyond proving the violation of minorities' human rights in Turkey, and although ECHR's decisions are binding for Turkey, the decision was unable to solve the problem related to Armenian community's property. It is not possible for the Armenian community to apply for reacquisition of real estate seized prior to 1987, because the right to individual application was approved in 1987, and most of the minority property was confiscated before that date.¹²⁰

The problems of Armenian foundations go beyond real-estate and property-related issues; they are directly linked with the disenfranchisement of the Armenian community in Turkey. As asserted

¹¹⁹ "Siviller de Sivilleşmeli" Etyen Mahçupyan, *Agos* 20 June 2008.

¹²⁰ "İşte Hukuk İşte Adalet" editorial, *Agos* 12 January 2007; "Gaspin Tescili" editorial, *Agos* 12 January 2007.

by *Agos*, because one of the most basic ideas of citizenship in classical liberal terms directly results from the idea of property, it is not possible for those who cannot claim any right to their property to be citizens.¹²¹

Another dimension of seizing minority property, thus revoking the rights of the Armenian community in Turkey, is related to the direct association between citizenship and property. Most Armenian property carries traces of Armenian heritage and history; when they were confiscated by the state, names of those foundations were Turkified, and they were used for different purposes than their original ones. For instance, when graveyards were seized, the graves were moved to other cemeteries, and those lands became zones hosting hotels, parks, and apartments. *Agos* argues that the state fears that once it starts returning those properties to their non-Muslim communities, the existence of these communities in Anatolia will be remembered, and this will challenge the foundational myth of the state. This makes the issue bigger than just a property problem for Turkey as well.¹²²

Armenian foundations include the sole civic institutions of the Armenian community in Turkey. However, they have not served in their true capacity since the early years of the Republic due to legal issues and intra-community matters. The Armenian community has lost a considerable amount of foundation property through state seizure, and the ones remaining are mostly left idle and are not being managed properly. The ineffectuality of these foundations prevents the Armenian community from organizing along civic and political lines and presenting an alternative to the domination of the Church.

5.2.2.2. A Patriarchate without a Patriarch

It is the assertion of this study that one of the main elements of Armenian identity in Turkey is religion. The majority of the Armenian

¹²¹ “Küçük Pırıltılar” editorial, *Agos* 11 April 2008.

¹²² “Gerçeklik Korkusu” editorial, *Agos* 18 April 2008.

community is Apostolic Christian, and the Church is associated with Armenian national identity in Turkey. Yet there are also Catholic and Protestant Armenians, although they are fewer in number. In her study on the Jewish and Armenian communities in Ankara, Ozgur Bal elaborates on the Catholic Armenians living in Ankara. She states that Catholic Armenians make a distinction between their Catholic and Armenian identities. Their primary identification is on religion, that is, Catholicism, rather than on being Armenian (Bal, 2006, p. 133). Her study shows that Catholic Armenians originated in Ankara, even though Armenians living in Turkey might have originated from different parts of Anatolia. It is asserted that being a Catholic Armenian in Ankara is a prestigious position (Bal, 2006, p. 33). During this period between 2007 and 2009, with Etyen Mahçupyan as the new editor in chief, the Catholic constituency in the Armenian community also became more apparent compared to the previous periods due to Mahçupyan's religious affiliation.

As a Catholic Armenian, Mahçupyan, through *Agos*, highlights further dynamics in the Armenian community and elements of Armenian identity that were not much visible until then. I contend that Mahçupyan had a more bourgeois and highbrow attitude and did his best to highlight differences within the Armenian community. Those differences were more or less of a socio-economic nature in the community with a superiority claim. Although such differences can be alienating, their visibility contributed to differentiation and variation, once again underlining the fact that the Armenian community in Turkey is not a homogenous unit and that certain elements of Armenian identity cannot be listed as valid for the whole community. Mahçupyan's position provides an example of the heterogeneity of Armenian identity in Turkey in terms of socio-economic differences and religion.

Emphasizing his detachment from the broader Armenian community and the nationalist sentiments in Turkey, Mahçupyan relates

these to his Catholic upbringing, in contrast to the Apostolic Christian majority of Armenians in Turkey (Mahçupyan, 2005). Catholic Christians migrated to the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century, and they were more effective than any other nationality in proselytizing to the Armenian congregation. Catholicism spread mainly in the more Western and urban areas in Anatolia and has had class connotations representing a general perspective of Enlightenment and the domination of modern daily life over traditional (Orthodox) forms of life. For that reason, within the Armenian community, Catholic Armenians assumed themselves to be superior to the Apostolic Armenians as being more modern, Western, and urban. They put distance between themselves and Apostolic Armenians, who represented a stronger sense of Armenianness in their account. According to Mahçupyan (2005), this distance determined the relation of Catholic Armenians to Armenian nationalism. Being apart from the majority of Armenians and the Orthodox congregation, Catholic Armenians constructed a more individual-oriented identity perspective distinct from those of the broader Armenian community (Mahçupyan, 2005). In that way, Catholic Armenians could also move away from the ideology, limitations, and oppression of the state because they freed themselves from the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople as well (Mahçupyan, 2005, pp. 28–30). Highlighting such differences in the Armenian community in terms of religion and life style is important in understanding the reformulation of Armenian identity in alternative and hybrid terms as analyzed through their expression in *Agos*.

Such variations also have the potential to pose a challenge to the claimed hegemony of the Armenian Patriarch over the Armenian community, who stands against any call for reform and change that would limit his power. At times, the Patriarch goes further, employing name-calling and accusing people of being selfish and disrespectful to

him and his position.¹²³ He insists on being the representative of the Armenian community and has intensified his relations with the state and government. In an interview with the German newspaper *Spiegel*, the Patriarch did not shy away from expressing his opinion on political parties and the political climate in Turkey. Although it is not common for religious leaders to express an opinion on political parties, it was not surprising for the Armenian Patriarch in Turkey to do so because the Armenian Patriarchate is very involved in nonreligious affairs as stated by *Agos*. The Patriarch undertakes self-appointed political tasks as well, despite criticisms from the Armenian community. In other words, because of his simultaneous roles in spiritual and nonreligious affairs, the Patriarch sees expressing political opinion as a part of his tasks.

The increasing domination of the Church and the Patriarch's resistance to reform in the Armenian community posed a serious threat to intra-community democracy in 2008, when, because of a serious illness, the Patriarch was unable to undertake the duties and responsibilities of his position. The solution the Spiritual Council brought to this situation created unease within the Armenian community because of its undemocratic and illegitimate nature. Following his illness, the Council declared that the Patriarch's position was a lifetime position and that there was no need for an election while he was alive. The Council's interpretation of this decision was enacted by delegating the power of an elected leader to two archbishops who are only responsible to the Spiritual Council. This was regarded as a "Patriarchate without a Patriarch" by *Agos*. The situation also implies a Patriarch with power, but no responsibility. Such a decision, in turn, creates the risk of a power coalition without any responsibility. *Agos* claims that this

¹²³ "Türkiye Ermenileri Patriği Mesrob II Hazretleri'nin Yılbaşı Mesajı" editorial, *Agos* 5 January 2007.

decision carries the risk of creating an arena of power that cannot be checked.¹²⁴

Besides contributing to the lack of civic initiatives in the Armenian community, the patriarchal crisis has led to further questioning of the power and place of the Spiritual Council in the Armenian community, especially its impact and authority on all social and public areas. Specifically, the representation provided by the head of the Council to the state institutions is deeply questioned. Because of their education and lifestyle, those who have chosen a spiritual life are not capable of training leaders who are aware of contemporary civic and political affairs. Also, even though the Patriarch is capable of managing and undertaking political affairs, in terms of his knowledge and character, conflicts arise between the attitude expected from him as a spiritual leader and the tasks he needs to undertake for political and civic affairs. With this new regulation, *Agos* asserts that Armenians in Turkey are left with an appointed leader who does not have any responsibility because he is not elected, but who represents the Armenian community de facto.

The illness of the Patriarch brought the hardship of being a congregation, and being trapped in a religiously dominated structure, to the forefront for the Armenian community in Turkey. This structure was solidified by the Lausanne Treaty and helped the Ottoman social structure divided along the lines of religion to continue in the modern state. In this way, the new state also perceived and defined non-Muslim citizens as belonging to a different category while identifying itself as the state of (Sunni) Muslim citizens. The Lausanne Treaty defined non-Muslims as minorities making them dependent on the state by establishing the position of spiritual leadership as an arena of power. What is stressed by *Agos* is the fact that secular politics does not only

¹²⁴ ““Patriksiz Patrikhane’ye Hayır” editorial, *Agos* 26 December 2008; “Cemaatte Sağduyu Beklentisi” editorial, *Agos* 2 January 2009; “Patrikhane TSK’ya mı Özeniyor?” Etyen Mahçupyan, *Agos* 2 January 2009.

require civic administration, but engaging a temporary power that is participatory, sharing, transparent, and accountable. In Mahçupyan's perspective, the temporary nature of power constitutes the basis of its secular nature because being secular first and foremost stresses equality.¹²⁵

The conflict that developed around the illness of the Patriarch and the process of how to fill his position highlights the urgent need to restructure the Armenian community, redefine the power of the Church, and enact laws to give a legitimate guidance to the Armenian community in matters related to the Patriarchate. The lack of a legitimate position for the Patriarchate, together with the power struggle enacted by the spiritual members of the Armenian community who are resisting secular reforms, has damaged the democratic tradition as well as the civic and political life of the Armenian community according to *Agos* between 2007 and 2009.

5.3. Conclusion

This chapter contains two major discussions on the process of reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey between 2007 and 2009 as expressed through *Agos*. The first is structured around Hrant Dink's assassination and claims that Dink's murder has had positive contributions to the reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey through deconstructing history, reconstructing collective memory, and strengthening collective Armenian identity. The second argument is established around the expected, but not realized, election for a new Patriarch, underlining the need for reform for the realization of civic action and political representation, as well as a need to relocate the role of religion in the Armenian identity.

In terms of the reformulation of Armenian identity, what is observed is a different interplay of the dynamics of identity, following

¹²⁵ "Sekülerleşemeyen Laiklik" Etyen Mahçupyan, *Agos* 6 June 2008; "Sivilleşme Herkese Lazım" Etyen Mahçupyan, *Agos* 13 June 2008.

Dink's assassination. One of the reasons contributing to such change is the increased commitment to Dink's ideas and his legacy for Armenian identity. These include deconstructing history and the events of 1915; confronting what took place; focusing more on life instead of death; and questioning the central role of religion in the Armenian identity; and recognizing the existence of Islamized or converted Armenians. Moreover, Dink's funeral and the participation of those from the broader Turkish society have led to a reconstruction of collective memory in the face of camaraderie during this time of pain.

A power-related, organizational problem of the Armenian community was materialized around the Church after the illness of the Patriarch and intensified the process of reformulating Armenian identity in civic and political terms, calling for reform and change for a more democratic and modern Armenian community.

The following chapter presents the last period of inquiry in this study. It aims to analyze the process of Armenian identity reformulation between 2010 and April 2014 as reflected through *Agos* with the weight placed on Islamized Armenians. The next chapter also summarizes the final analysis derived from the previous chapters, before moving to the conclusion.

CHAPTER 6

“THE TRUTH WILL SET US FREE”: AGOS AND ARMENIAN IDENTITY ON THE VERGE OF THE CENTENNIAL OF THE “TRAUMA” 2010–2014

It has been almost 100 years since the claimed traumatic 1915 events by the Armenian community. Yet neither the Armenian community in Turkey nor Turkish society has reached a consensus on history. Moreover, Armenian community, as argued by *Agos*, has not faced history toward possible intra-community reconciliation. For that reason, it is *Agos*'s assertion that the Armenian community still carries the trauma of 1915 and historic suffering today as a central part of Armenian identity followed by the call to overcome such trauma. In line with that argument, this chapter presents the analysis of the process of reformulating Armenian identity less than a year prior to the centennial of the 1915 events by *Agos*. The period under analysis starts in 2010 with Rober Koptaş as the new editor in chief of *Agos*, replacing Etyen Mahçupyan, and ends in April 2014 due to the time constraints of this study.

The analysis carried out in this chapter elaborates on the reformulation of Armenian identity in relation to the analytically presented identity elements of the Armenian community in Turkey in this study: religion, the 1915 narratives, and civic and political life. Within the scope of this inquiry, central importance is attributed to the role of religion in its articulation with the 1915 narratives in reformulating Armenian identity in Turkey. The main point of reference in this analysis is the conference held on Islamized Armenians in Fall 2013 in Istanbul and *Agos*'s coverage on the issue of Islamized Armenians pertaining to but not limited to the Conference. Furthermore,

the crisis in the suspended election process of the new patriarch will also be introduced in this chapter in relation to the attempts to reallocate the role of religion in Armenian identity. Here it is argued that the focus on Islamized Armenians has provided the Armenian community with alternative perspectives on Armenian identity and additional issues to discuss on the Armenian community in Turkey. This signifies an emphasis on the perspective of a hybrid identity in contrast to a homogenous and absolute identity, and questions Armenian identity as we perceive it to be today. Thus, the organization of the conference and debates it initiates contributes to the process of reformulating Armenian identity with reference to the 1915 narratives and religion as analyzed through *Agos*.

In order to present the process of reformulating Armenian identity in Turkey, this chapter focuses on the conference on Islamized Armenians, the debates it initiated, and the controversies around the required patriarchal elections, articulated with the need to restructure Armenian community along more secular lines as expressed by *Agos*. Another focus in this chapter is collective memory and history in relation to the statements made by Turkey's Prime Minister on 24 April 2014. Last, a final description of the process of identity reformulation of the Armenian community in Turkey is presented as analyzed through *Agos* since 1996.

6.1. Islamized Armenians, Religion, and Armenian Identity

This chapter describes the reformulation process of Armenian identity in Turkey between 2010 and 2014. In this it is argued here that the Conference on Islamized Armenians was one of the most visible indications of the attempt, in a materialized form, to reformulate Armenian identity. It is my assertion that the Conference not only made a historical actuality visible to the public and academia, but also attempted to break the strong link between religion (Christianity) and nation (Armenian national identity) with regard to Armenian identity in

Turkey. Furthermore, the Conference brought about an alternative perspective to reading the 1915 narratives, as defended by Hrant Dink: talking about life rather than death, leading to the deconstruction of history and collective memory. The Conference is widely promoted and covered by *Agos* as the peak issue especially in 2013.

6.1.1. Accepting the “Other Half”: Islamized Armenians

Islamized Armenians and debates around the issue are not new to this period. The subject became central in public debates in Turkey in 2004, following Hrant Dink’s article, published in *Agos*, on the possible Armenian heritage of Sabiha Gökçen. The news on Islamized Armenians has also been covered and presented by *Agos* since 1996. Research on and interest in the issue increased after that news item appeared in 2004 in *Agos* in Turkey and Armenia as well as in the international arena. Research on the subject of Islamized Armenians has had considerable impact on the reformulation of Armenian identity. Islamized, or converted, Armenians present a gray area in Armenian identity: survival rather than death, but only through assimilation as it is covered and stated by *Agos*.

The reality of Islamized Armenians further points to an inherent characteristic of identity: identities are neither pre-set nor predetermined, but are perpetually changing depending on the context and their interactions with other identities. Armenian identity, which has been presumed to be defined and characterized by certain features, is no exception; it is ever changing and nonhomogeneous, Islamized Armenians being the most notable example of this.

Furthermore, Islamized Armenians underline a Muslim identity element for the Armenian community in Turkey challenging the hypothesis that “all Armenians are Christian” and the official Turkish definition of Armenian minority set by the Lausanne Treaty. Although the subject has become popular only recently and covered more frequently by *Agos*, it has been known in the Armenian studies literature

that conversion was one of the strategies adopted between 1915 and 1918, mainly by Armenian women and children in Anatolia. Moreover, it is asserted by *Agos* that it was a part of the Ottoman state policy especially at the local level around 1915 to place orphaned Armenian children in Muslim households to realize their conversion and assimilation, as well as to transfer their property to Muslims. Islamization and conversion have been aspects of the 1915 narratives and Anatolian memory.

Although increased attention to the issue has the potential to make it easier to detach Armenian identity from religious determination, *Agos* asserts that this situation carries the risk of creating tension among Christian Armenians and Muslim Armenians. The risk exists because Armenian identity is well articulated with the Armenian Church; furthermore, Christianity is taken to be one of the central elements of Armenian identity, while Muslim has been its other due to historical reasons. As a response to the possible tension in the Armenian community based on religion, *Agos* argues that what is needed is to foster a more flexible, lucid, and inclusive identity approach.¹²⁶ When identities are taken in the absolute sense, they are restrictive, making it more difficult for people to coexist in peaceful interaction. This suggested hybrid identity perspective has the potential to resolve such conflict, going beyond the limits and determination of absolute identities. Within this context, Rober Koptaş, *Agos*'s editor in chief, defines hybridization as being aware of other people's multiple identities, to realize that their integrity and autonomy is as important as one's own and to act accordingly.¹²⁷

Another risk underlined in *Agos* is that Christian Armenians may not be ready to face the reality of Muslim Armenians. Because in

¹²⁶ "1915'in Kayıp Çocukları" editorial, *Agos* 4 May 2012; "Yeni Cümleler" editorial, *Agos* 4 May 2012.

¹²⁷ "Kimlik Meselesi" Rober Koptaş, *Agos* 22 January 2010.

Armenian culture identity is defined through Christianity, it might be difficult to imagine Armenian identity associated with the other, that is, Muslim. Yet again, a hybrid identity perspective and understanding can overcome this, breaking the absoluteness of Armenian identity by making it more flexible. Because the issue is fairly new, considering how recent is its public appearance, Rober Koptaş argues that the Armenian community does not know much about Islamized Armenians yet. It is implied in *Agos* that Muslim Armenians are regarded as inferior by some members of the Armenian community, and they are not necessarily welcome. Moreover, in Rober Koptaş's account due to a lack of understanding, Armenians in Turkey tend to consider Islamized Armenians as having the potential to become Christian, or full, Armenians in the face of the current population decline. For that reason, Armenians view Muslim Armenians as presenting a chance to substitute the lost population. This situation signals the need for the two groups to interact and know more about the Islamized Armenians in order to understand and appreciate their unique character and the challenge they pose to the absolute identity perspective.¹²⁸

The subject of Islamized Armenians, more importantly, provide an alternative reading to history and to perceiving the 1915 events. By converting as a survival strategy, the presence of these Armenians furthermore put emphasis on survival rather than death during the 1915 events. However, one has to be careful in this analysis. Although the converted Armenian population survived physically, it was more or less assimilated and has hidden its Armenianness even from the families. It is asserted by Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, based on her archival research that in the Muslims households where Armenians were incorporated in, in most

¹²⁸ "Müslüman Ermeniler" Rober Koptaş, *Agos* 24 May 2013; "Gavur Değil Müslüman Ermeni" Rober Koptaş, *Agos* 27 September 2013; "Bu Sefer Ölenler Değil 'Kalanlar' Konuşulacak" Özgün Çağlar, *Agos* 4 October 2013; "Ermeni Kimliğinin Müslüman Ermenilerle İmtihani" Rober Koptaş, *Agos* 1 November 2013; "Kalpsiz bir Dünyada Kalp Aramak" Yetvart Danzikyan, *Agos* 8 November 2013; "Mutlaklığa Karşı Melezlik" Rober Koptaş, *Agos* 8 November 2013.

cases, converted Armenians were not allowed to practice their religion, neither to keep their names, nor to speak their language (Ekmekçioğlu, 2013, p. 528). The identity perspective adopted in this study relies heavily on self-identification and being recognized as such by the others. For that reason, Armenians who survived the 1915 events through conversion and who have not identified themselves as Armenian cannot be considered within the scope of Armenian identity in this study. Yet they provide an indicator for identity reformulation that has redefined the role of religion in Armenian identity by considering the existence of Muslim Armenians who discover their Armenian heritage and identify as Armenian despite being Muslim as reflected through *Agos*.

Converted Armenians are regarded as “genocide survivors” in the literature on Armenian studies and by *Agos*. Defiant as, *Agos* is, it reappropriates the term *kılıç artığı*¹²⁹ to define and refer to survivors of the 1915 events, including Islamized Armenians, especially the orphaned children adopted by Muslim families, as the “lost children of 1915”. *Agos* has been covering the issue of Islamized or converted Armenians from its early years on, and there have been early signs of interest in the issue from the broader Turkish society since some people began discovering their Armenian heritage. Furthermore, Hrant Dink was attacked by radical groups and media because of his 2004 claim about Sabiha Gökçen’s possible Armenian heritage. Despite the fact that *Agos* had been interested in Islamized Armenians since 1996 and there were memoirs published in Turkey pertaining to the issue, it did not have a considerable place in the public debates until the Gökçen incident in 2004. When the fact of Islamized Armenians become a part of political debates in Turkey, more research was conducted in the field, and more memoirs and studies were published on Islamized Armenians,

¹²⁹ It is a term used in the Ottoman documents to refer to people who survived massacres; it has negative connotations, and the literal translation would be “leftovers of the sword”.

leading to an international conference together with *Agos*'s increased coverage of the issue in 2013.

The International Conference on Islamized Armenians was organized by the Hrant Dink Foundation in cooperation with the History Department of Bogazici University, Malatya HAYDER¹³⁰ (whose idea it was to have the Conference), and the support of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the Chrest Foundation, and the Olof Palme International Center; it was held on 2–4 November 2013 in Istanbul at the Bogazici University in honor of Hrant Dink and covered in detail by *Agos*. It was stated that the Conference was expected to be an introduction to further academic research on the issue. Participants of the Conference were prominent international scholars on history, ethnicity, identity, Armenian history, and genocide studies, as well as journalists, lawyers, and intellectuals. For the purposes of this study, I introduce the main assumptions of the speeches delivered at the Conference, through the Conference videos, as made fully available on the web archives of the Hrant Dink Foundation and as covered by *Agos*.¹³¹ The Conference was organized in eight panels, one round table meeting, one forum, and one workshop. Movie screenings were also arranged in conjunction with the Conference. The Conference is crucial in its contribution to the reformulation process of Armenian identity as reflected through *Agos*.

The Conference was based on the argument that in tandem with the transformation and change in the Ottoman Empire, there have also been collective acts of conversion to Islam during the early twentieth century. In this scope, Armenians were Islamized and became Muslims, as

¹³⁰ Malatya HAYDER is an organization founded by Armenians living in Istanbul who are from Malatya.

¹³¹ The conference texts are not published in the form of a book yet, but conference speeches are available online in video form on the Hrant Dink Foundation's website. <<http://www.hrantdink.org/?Detail=753>>. The texts of speeches are also available on *Agos*'s website in the special conference issue. Both the videos and *Agos* coverage is referred to in this chapter.

individuals and in groups, especially between 1915 and 1918. The Conference call states that although the exact number of converted Armenians is not known, it is known that groups of Armenian children were adopted by Muslim families and survived the 1915 events. Moreover, although it is mostly women who survived the 1915 events, by marrying a Muslim, in very rare cases men and a whole family, neighborhood, or village survived through Islamization. It is also stated that some Armenians reunited with their families in later years, but many of them have chosen to take Muslim names and remained Muslim for the rest of their lives, and have kept their stories silent. This issue was kept silent until recently, when it found means to be visible through life stories, novels, and historical research.¹³²

The Conference started with the opening speeches of Rakel Dink as the president of the Hrant Dink Foundation; Gülay Barbarosoğlu, president of Bogazici University; Hosrof Köletavitoğlu, Malatya HAYDER president; and scholar Ayşe Gül Altınay.¹³³ Introductory speeches repeated the main purpose of organizing the Conference as opening for questioning the issue that has been kept in the dark for decades. Yet they also underlined the hardship of talking about Islamized Armenians because it has also been taken to be a taboo for a long time. In reference to Muslim Armenians, late Hrant Dink's wife Rakel Dink stated, "we knew for years but ignored our other half". She asserted that Muslim Armenians were not allowed to speak their languages, had to leave their faith behind, and "they were eradicated from history, they were buried alive". R. Dink asserted that such discussions could help us to discover the truth. Hosrof Köletavitoğlu underlined that there was no racial purity in Anatolia, considering the

¹³² <<http://www.hrantdink.org/?Detail=753>>.

¹³³ Ayşe Gül Altınay is also the co-author of the book *Torunlar* [Grandchildren] with Fethiye Çetin, the author of the memoir *Anneannem* [My Grandmother] and Dink's family's lawyer.

multinational history of the lands, underlining that “when we see that there is such inter-penetration of the cultures, then otherization will come to an end”. Thus, Islamized Armenians are taken to be a challenge to the homogenous and distinct identity assumptions in Anatolia, implying common culture and shared identity elements between the Armenian community and the broader Turkish society.¹³⁴

The panel “Burden of History, Politics of Naming”, conducted by Fethiye Çetin, Nebahat Akkoç, and Sibel Asna on their personal stories and experiences, followed the opening talks. The panel, which covered both history and the present time, signified a conversation between a Turkish woman with (discovered) Armenian ancestors, a Kurdish Alevi woman with (discovered) Armenian ancestors, and an Armenian woman. In the form of an informal talk, the gathering of three women with intersecting identity elements signifies the complexity of identities in Turkey and the complexities of Armenian identity as well.

As a part of the first panel, in her talk entitled “The Historical and Historiographical Silence on Islamized Armenians and Memory Work along the Axis of Ethnicity, Nation, and Gender”, Ayşe Gül Altınay elaborates on the relationship between Islamized Armenians and identity. A. G. Altınay draws attention to the predominance of the memoirs published on Islamized Armenians being by women, stating that it was not only that the majority of Islamized Armenians were women, but it was also deemed easier for women’s stories to come out today because of the patriarchal race perspective. A. G. Altınay asserts that the phenomenon itself and the silence around it are shaped by gendered perspective. She emphasizes further that this silence in history, related to Islamized Armenians among the dead as well as the forgotten or ignored population, is international in scope. Her question pertains to how to make sense in identity terms of this population of Armenians in

¹³⁴ <<http://www.hrantdink.org/?Detail=753>>.

Turkey now coming out. A. G. Altınay asserts that the grandchildren of Islamized Armenians provide us a more complex identity structure and suggests the need for methods of discussing cultural variation that are more dynamic.¹³⁵

The second panel, “The Recent and Distant History of Islamization”, focused on the Islamization of Hemshin Armenians during the Ottoman Empire and today. Uğur Bahadır Bayraktar’s talk, entitled “Abduction, Marriage, and Islamization in the Tanzimat Era”, presented the stages of Armenian conversion in the Ottoman period and underlined the state policies used to regulate conversions since the nineteenth century. There were incentives for voluntary conversion, such as paying less tax, and those conversions were regulated (approved or denied) by the state. Besides voluntary conversion, the abduction of women and their forced conversion was also a common practice before 1915. Selim Deringil’s paper, “Mass Conversion during the Hamidian Massacres, 1894–1897”, talks about the collective (mass) conversion of Armenians during the “Hamidian massacres” as a survival strategy against the attacks, and also discusses the state regulation of conversions. Thus, Armenian conversion started prior to 1915 in his account as early as the nineteenth century.

The third panel, “Islamized 1915: History and Bearing Witness I”, started with Taner Akçam’s talk, entitled “Assimilation as a Structural Element in the Conversion of the Armenians”. In his talk, T. Akçam underlines that assimilation, in relation to Islamized Armenians, is a part of “genocide” in his terms and it usually overlooked in analysis of the “Armenian genocide” he claims, referring to Raphael Lemkin’s definition of genocide. In his speech, T. Akçam argues that conversion was a systematic state policy for the realization of assimilation and that it was not merely carried out on the basis of Islamization policies. T.

¹³⁵ “Torunlar Bize Yeni Kimlik Soruları Sorduruyor” Ayşe Gül Altınay, *Agos* 11 November 2013.

Akçam refers to documents that show that the state denied requests from Armenians who asked to convert to Islam and ordered them to be deported as soon as possible, because the state recognized these requests as a survival strategy according to T. Akçam. Later in 1915, that ban was lifted, and Armenian conversion was accepted by the state if they were deported and/or stayed in their previous residences. T. Akçam's speech also underlines that Armenians who have chosen to remain Christian were allowed to practice their religion but were not allowed to speak Armenian. T. Akçam further refers to the official documents ordering Armenian orphans to be farmed out to prominent Muslim families in provinces and villages where there were no Armenian and non-Muslim populations. T. Akçam tells that their property rights were further transferred to those who adopted them. According to T. Akçam, this was an economic incentive to sustain assimilation.¹³⁶ In T. Akçam's account, Armenians were Islamized as a part of the assimilation policies, and it is not possible to know the exact number of converted Armenians.

Panel Four of the Conference, "Islamized 1915: History and Bearing Witness II", started with Vahe Tachijan's talk, "Mixed Marriage, Prostitution, and Survival", which focused on survival strategies of Armenian women in Aleppo and how they were received by the Armenian community after the war. His paper underlined the difficulty converted Armenian women experienced in trying to return to their families and/or communities after the war. Even though Armenians searched for Armenian children in Muslim households, to take them back into the Armenian community and to reformulate their identity, most women remained as outcasts. Especially, it is argued, if they were pregnant or had borne children from their Muslim husbands, they were accepted only as long as they left their "children of the enemy" behind. For that reason, V. Tachijan claims that some Armenian women became

¹³⁶ "Soykırımın Unutulan Boyutu Asimilasyon" Ferda Balancar, *Agos* 11 November 2013.

prostitutes to survive, while the married ones stayed in their Muslim families. Moreover, for the Armenian women who did not have a home to go back to, he tells, there were newly established shelters where women were also prepared for return to their communities through learning a trade. This situation in V. Tachijan's account, underscores the gendered violence in times of conflict and the way women were regarded as more disposable members of the community.

Arda and Doris Melkonian asserted that conversion was a survival strategy mostly adopted by women rather than men.¹³⁷ Women not only married Muslim men to save their own lives but also at times to save the lives of their family members. It was possible for Armenian women to marry into Muslim families, it is argued, and that option was not available to men. Arda Melkonian argues that while gender provided women more survival opportunities, those same opportunities prevented women from returning to the Armenian community. Most of them feared exclusion from the Armenian community; the fear was more prominent especially if those Armenian women had children.¹³⁸ Doris Melkonian talked about children during the "genocide" in her terms and their separation from their families and loved ones given up by their families or taken by the Muslim families (Turkish, Kurdish, and Arab). Some families even sold their children for food and money she tells. Adopted children in cases developed attachment to the new family and abandoned their Armenian identity, embracing the new faith and culture, especially if they were loved and nurtured. Parents were also concerned about the identity of their children and raised identity awareness of their children;

¹³⁷ Although both sisters are working on oral history, gender, and genocide they have presented two separate papers at the Conference. Arda Melkonian's paper is "Gender and Survival Options during the Armenian Genocide", focusing on women and Doris Melkonian's paper is entitled "Taken into Muslim Households", focusing on children.

¹³⁸ "Müslümanlaştırılan Kadınlar Ermeni Kimliğine Geri Dönemedi" Özge Atasel, *Agos* 11 November 2013.

some resisted assimilation and conversion, and returned to their communities as Armenians when the war was over.

Ishkhan Chiftjian's paper, "Islamization as an Instrument of Surviving and/or Disappearing", claims that Muslim Armenians should be evaluated as a social stratum. "Assimilation of Armenian Deportees", written by Hilmar Kaiser, focuses on the different experiences of conversion processes based on center-periphery distinctions during the 1915 events. His talk stresses that conversion was available to Armenians before 1915 as well and it was regulated by the state. It is asserted that conversion was acceptable only when it was approved by the central authority, and the authorized change was made in population document; then the "converttee" got a new name that changed or altered the Armenian name. After this legal process, the person was still counted as an Armenian, not a Muslim, and had no right to travel and had to remain where she resided. In that sense, H. Kaiser asserts that converted Armenians lived as if they were in a detention camp. Yet he underlines that today no data exist from the Ottoman Ministry of Justice, which was handling the conversions. He further asserts that conversion was also the sphere in which resistance was taking place.

The Sixth Panel, "Memory, Ethnicity, Religion: Kurdish Identity", in general focused on the experiences of Islamized Armenians in Kurdish literature and culture. It is based on the argument that Islamization of Armenians was not only accompanied by Turkification but also by Kurdification. In his talk "Misilmeni: An Analysis of Perceptions of Muslim Armenians among Muslim Kurds", Ramazan Aras stressed that Islamized Armenians were called "Misilmeni" instead of Muslim by Kurds, referring to an incomplete state, or softer version, of being Muslim. The next panel, "Memory, Ethnicity, Religion: Dersim", focused on the Dersim massacres in 1937 and 1938, Alevi Armenian identity as an example of Islamized Armenians, and the experiences of Islamized Armenians in Kurdish communities. It was

stated that converting was looked down upon as leaving one's religion and to the Kurds it appeared as something that was not honorable.

In the last panel, "Memory and Identity", Laurence Ritter presented a case study, "Reconstructing Identity", on the role of family structure on the identity of Islamized Armenians. Her presentation underlined endogamy employed both as a strategy and a coincidental practice for Eastern Anatolian Islamized Armenians. She asserts that being deprived of identity occurred not only a religious but also on a cultural basis. Anoush Suni's talk on "Displacement and the Production of Difference" focused on silence, the history of violence, nation building, and the process of exclusion and inclusion in Turkey today and discussed the physical and symbolic displacement of Islamized Armenians. She asserts that Islamized Armenians are perpetually out of place, existing on the edge of dominant imaginaries. In this context, she draws attention to the politics of place, and the effect of place and displacement on otherness.

Two workshops followed the panels: "Religion and Identity", a round table discussion chaired by Rober Koptaş and a forum titled "Grandchildren". The round table's participants were Krikor Ağabaloğlu,¹³⁹ Cemal Uşak,¹⁴⁰ and Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal.¹⁴¹ During the round table conversations, it was demonstrated that religion influences social and political dynamics and that it could be forced on people by power holders and through politics, as in the case of the Armenians. The forum "Grandchildren" focused on ending silence and opening new ways of communication to forge a new identity for the Armenian community in Turkey. It called for Christian Armenians to embrace Muslim Armenians in order to heal, rather than continuing to

¹³⁹ The president and pastor of the Foundation of Armenian Protestant Church and School of Gedikpaşa.

¹⁴⁰ Vice-President of the Journalists and Writers Foundation in Turkey, as a part of the "Service Community" of Fethullah Gülen.

¹⁴¹ Theology journalist.

claim that the latter are dividing the Armenian community. It is asserted that Muslim Armenians are not inferior Armenians; they are as Armenian as the Christian Armenians.

The Conference brought into light the assimilation element of the 1915 events and related policies in the post-1915 era through abduction, adoption, and conversion.¹⁴² Considering conversion as a survival strategy, participants also underscored the gendered nature of conversion and the silence around the issue when it was considered to be a taboo subject.¹⁴³ Workshops bringing the grandchildren of the Islamized Armenians together were organized during the Conference and elaborated on how to perceive and reformulate Armenian identity in relation to this new state of complex identity structure, as well as on recovering from the historic trauma.¹⁴⁴ Some participants defined the situation of Armenians as a schizophrenic state due to the existence of two conflicting sub-identities in one subject and the necessity of hiding one's identity.

Yet the Conference pointed to the need to perceive identity in general, and Armenian identity in particular, in new terms which are more flexible, hybrid, and multiple. It underlined the multiple experiences of being Armenian in Turkey and the importance of self-identification in constructing and reconstructing one's identity. The importance of the Conference lies not only in the issue under consideration but in the participation of the grandchildren of Islamized Armenians who were able to tell about their own experiences and the life stories of their grandparents. Through such stories, Islamized

¹⁴² "Çocuklar Müslüman Ailelerin Yanına Verilerek Asimile Edildi" Fatih Gökhan Diler, *Agos* 11 November 2013.

¹⁴³ "Dersim Ermeniliği Çok Katmanlı Bir Kimliktir" Özgün Çağlar, *Agos* 11 November 2013; "Muş'tan Uzanan Uzun İnce bir Yol" Fatih Gökhan Diler, *Agos* 11 November 2013.

¹⁴⁴ "Torunlar Birarada Şifalandı" Uygur Gültekin, *Agos* 11 November 2013.

Armenians become more real, going beyond being an academic research interest accompanied with the coverage of the issue by *Agos*.

The existence of Muslim Armenians poses a serious challenge to the Armenian identity as it is perceived and experienced in Turkey today. It requires Armenianness to be reformulated, recognizing the multiple states of being Armenian and loosening its attachment with Armenian religion and language. Moreover, the need to recognize Muslim Armenians as Armenians also refers to recognizing their survival; otherwise, there would be no difference between Armenians who perished during 1915 and those who survived and passed on their Armenianness, irrespective of its extent, to their children and grandchildren.

6.1.2. The Reformation of the Church and the Armenian Community

Debates around Islamized Armenians imply a possible detachment between religion and nation and a turning point in the Armenian identity as far as religion is concerned. The call to reform and restructure the Armenian community to relocate the Church from its central position and put an end to its absolute authority is an ongoing dynamic in the Armenian community as expressed by *Agos* since its early years. Since the disbanding of the Civic Committee in 1997, the Armenian community has been left with only religious power and representation, and since 2008, it has been ruled by arbitrarily appointed leaders instead of an elected patriarch. Those developments have strengthened the power of the Patriarch over the Armenian community and caused the expansion of his rule in all spheres of the community while also increasing demands for reform toward a more secular and civic structure in the community as voiced by *Agos*.

In order to resolve this situation; to break or weaken the domination of religious authority; and to overcome the lack of civic initiatives in the Armenian community, in 2012, a nonreligious civic platform (*Düşünce*

Platformu) was organized with the purpose of aiding the Armenian foundations in Turkey. The platform's main purpose was to deliberate solutions and to represent common reason as an outcome of those public deliberations within the Armenian community.¹⁴⁵ The platform is still active and serving as an advisory board for the civic matters related to the Armenian community in Turkey, yet it has not proven to be strong enough to challenge or weaken the power of Patriarchate.

In addition to the requirement to reform the structuring of the Armenian community, the most urgent need asserted by *Agos* is the election of a new patriarch. Since the Patriarch Mutafyan had to leave his position due to health-related reasons in 2008, there is an ongoing debate in the Armenian community pertaining to who will fill the position. Traditionally, Armenian patriarchs are elected by popular vote; thus there was the requirement and expectation for the election of the new Armenian Patriarch. Contrary to traditional procedure and expectations, the Spiritual Council ruled that there is no need to elect a new patriarch because he is still alive, creating a power gap in the community and assigning a temporary leader for the position. The debate around the post of the Patriarch is very important for Armenian community, considering the role and power of the position. For that reason, having a patriarch who is not elected through popular vote, which is contrary to tradition, is seen as a tremendous problem for legitimacy and democracy in the Armenian community.

Electing the patriarch by popular vote is unique to the Armenian Church and traces back to the nineteenth century, it was an outcome of secularization attempts carried out by Armenian intellectuals to limit the power of Armenian *Amiras* on community affairs. With the Code of Regulations [*Ermeni Milleti Nizamnamesi*] in 1863, the authority of the patriarch was limited, and civic groups and individuals were granted

¹⁴⁵ "Aklin Yolu Bir" editorial, *Agos* 7 December 2012.

crucial positions in managing social affairs. The regulation determined the main principles of intra-community functioning, delegating civic and social issues to civic commissions and providing an organization that was suitable for the historical period. Yet the republican principle of secularism abolished the central administration and civic commissions of the Armenian community. Today, under the Republic, the Armenian Patriarchate has neither a legal status nor a statute establishing it. Furthermore, the election of the patriarch is not based on a legally binding text, but on a set of regulations that are revised and accepted during each election period. This is against equity Rober Koptaş argues because the related decision on the election of the Armenian Patriarch, dated 1961, states that the regulation is a one-time and temporary one.¹⁴⁶ This legal gap has been manipulated to fill this lack in the way desired by the Spiritual Council following the unexpected health conditions causing the Patriarch to step down in 2008.

By ignoring the demands of the community in handling how the post should be filled, it is argued in *Agos* that the Patriarchate and religious leaders have further consolidated the power, thus damaging intra-community democracy. In relation to the attempts to reformulate Armenian identity in Turkey, this power crisis is crucial and involves power struggles. It points to the need to restructure the Armenian community to reposition the role of religion within it.

Agos claims that the failure to achieve a democratic process in choosing the new patriarch disappointed the Armenian community that was anticipating change and reform. It was the expectation that the election of a new patriarch would bring progress to the Armenian community and would help to dissociate religion from civic affairs, thereby granting the Armenian community a more political and civic character. Thus, it would be an opportunity to restructure Armenian

¹⁴⁶ “Seçim Müteşebbis Heyeti’ne Düşen” Rober Koptaş, *Agos* 1 January 2010; “Patrik Seçimi ve Duygusallığın Sınırı” Rober Koptaş, *Agos* 5 February 2010.

community as well as the Patriarchate. Partially, such expectations were based on the anticipated character and features of the new patriarch as well as on the election process itself. The idea expressed in *Agos* was to hold collective deliberation, under fair and equal conditions, on the expected and desired qualifications of the new patriarch. Moreover, *Agos* anticipates the new patriarch to have the appropriate education and intellectual capacity; to be qualified to administer spiritual and civic areas of action simultaneously; to be able to treat everyone based on the principle of equity and to attribute importance to worthiness; to encourage civic structures to take initiative; to treat all segments of the community equally; and to possess the vision to reflect developments in the broader society onto the Armenian community.¹⁴⁷ However, such expectations could not be met because the election process did not proceed in traditional ways. In *Agos*'s account this carries the risk of alienating people from the church, as well as of abolishing popular vote altogether, thereby ending intra-community democracy.¹⁴⁸

The conflict lasted for a few years, with a temporary appointment to the position by the Spiritual Council led by Aram Ateşyan.¹⁴⁹ Because there is no regulation for the election of the patriarch, the Council sought for state approval, and the process was carried out in secrecy. It ended with the state approval of appointing a temporary patriarch because the current patriarch is still alive.¹⁵⁰ Following this decision, Aram Ateşyan acquired the temporary position of Patriarchal Vicar fait accompli in *Agos*'s terms and even acquired the right to wear the robe that can only

¹⁴⁷ “Nasıl Bir Patrik?” Tatyos Bebek, *Agos* 22 January 2010.

¹⁴⁸ “Seçilmiş Son Patrik II. Mesrob Olabilir” editorial, *Agos* 8 July 2011.

¹⁴⁹ “Kapalı Kapılar Ardından Eş Patrik Seçilir Mi?” editorial, *Agos* 22 January 2010; “Suyu Bulandırmayın” editorial, *Agos* 29 January 2010.

¹⁵⁰ “Halktan Korktular” editorial, *Agos*, 2 July 2010; “Yönetenlerin Yanılgısı” editorial, *Agos* 9 July 2010; “Bu Emrivaki Kabul Edilemez” Rober Koptaş, *Agos* 9 July 2010; “Hem Patriksiz Hem De ...” Rober Koptaş, *Agos* 10 December 2010; “Egemen Bağış’tan Patriklik Gafları” Rober Koptaş, *Agos* 26 November 2010.

be worn outside the spiritual institutions granted only to the spiritual members.¹⁵¹

Since 2008, Aram Ateşyan has held the temporary position, and there has been no sign of preparation for elections despite the ongoing demands in the community for an election with a popular vote. Yet Aram Ateşyan carries on the tendency of the Patriarchate to ignore the demands in the community and aims to consolidate power even further. In an interview with the Armenian newspaper *Jamanag*, he declares that as the Patriarchate, he and the clergy are trying to establish a central administration unit under the leadership of the Patriarchate for the Armenian community. What was more striking about this interview is the statement that such a process would not be subjected to popular vote because Aram Ateşyan asserts that when the people choose, the process is disturbed because unqualified people get involved. Instead, he states, intellectuals, leaders, and prominent and trustworthy people of the Armenian community will vote for this position, or if it is attained by state approval rather than by election, the Patriarch will be appointed by the Patriarchate.¹⁵² Those statements further raise concerns in the Armenian community in Turkey, *Agos* states, because Ateşyan's attitude clearly points a path away from democracy and the legitimacy of the electoral process toward further strengthening the Patriarchate in *Agos's* account.

In the face of the ongoing struggles involving the Patriarchate and the power of the Church, it is evident that the Armenian community in Turkey needs to be restructured and granted permanent regulations as it is stated by *Agos* to end the arbitrary manipulation of power gaps and

¹⁵¹ "Gizli Kapaklı İşler" Rober Koptaş, *Agos* 6 May 2011; "Ateşyan Kisve Giyme İznini Çoktan Almış" editorial, *Agos* 6 May 2011.

¹⁵² "Başepiskopos Ateşyan'ın Dediği Dedik, Çaldığı Düdük" editorial, *Agos* 27 January 2012.

abuse of power.¹⁵³ In that way, the Armenian community can create space for civic initiatives and political action, reformulate its identity away from the determination of religion, and it will acquire a more modern community structure. This will also require the cooperation of the community in pressing demands for reform and change.

The need to restructure the Armenian community and redefine the scope of the Church is accompanied with the need to reposition religion from its central place in Armenian identity in Turkey as analyzed through *Agos* in this chapter. Following increased interest in and research on the Islamized Armenians, Christianity cannot be claimed to be the central element of Armenian identity in Turkey anymore, and the Patriarchate does not legitimately represent the whole Armenian community within this structure. Furthermore, since the necessary election for the new patriarch was by-passed by the Spiritual Council, the legitimacy of religious power in Armenian community is questioned by *Agos*. Deriving from those facts together with the expressed need to restructuring the Armenian community in Turkey, there is an implied need to define Armenianness in new terms considering the existence of Islamized Armenians in Turkey.

6.2. Our Big Loss, the 1915 Narratives, and Collective Memory

The Armenian community reformulates its identity in reference to the 1915 narratives and collective memory that stand in contrast to those of Turkey. During this final period under analysis, Armenian identity is influenced by intensified debates around Islamized Armenians and collective memory, expressed in the statements of the Prime Minister of Turkey in 2014. The emphasis on the 1915 narratives during the process of reformulating Armenian identity in Turkey highlights the importance of facing and coming into terms with history, and embracing rich Armenian culture and heritage rather than being obsessed with the past

¹⁵³ “Geleceğe Doğru” editorial, *Agos* 13 April 2012.

as analyzed through *Agos*. It is the assumption reflected by *Agos* that accepting as true the events that took place in 1915 has the potential to emancipate Armenian identity and community from the shackles of the past; in other words, the truth will set us free.

As seen in 2008, after the assassination of Dink, an apologetic discourse emerged in the Turkish intelligentsia, who most likely has acted on shame and guilt toward Armenians. Whether it is a genuine and sincere feeling or an anti-government and anti-status quo attitude, related apologetic activities continue into this period.¹⁵⁴ In addition to the online “I Apologize” campaign, a considerable number of people from the broader Turkish society have started organizing, in conjunction with the Armenians, public commemoration events on 24 April to commemorate the 1915 events and remember those who perished. Those events have been taking place in Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, and Diyarbakir since 2010.

Agos asserts that despite the limited public forum provided for the Armenian community with respect to the 1915 events, there has not been any policy change regarding aligning the official version of history of Turkey with collective memory of the Armenian community or finding a middle ground. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has repeatedly stated that if the Armenian diaspora insisted on the recognition of the 1915 events as “genocide”, Armenians (Armenian immigrants) in Turkey would be deported to underscore that their existence in Turkey was illegal and they were only tolerated by the government.¹⁵⁵ In 2012, Erdoğan also time and again underlined the Muslim state idea(l), which highlights othering in Turkey with an assumed homogeneity when he said, “one state, one nation, one flag, one religion” during one of his

¹⁵⁴ “Korku” Cem Sey, *Agos* 23 April 2010; “1915 Görünür Oldu” editorial, *Agos* 30 April 2010; “24 Nisan’ın Ardından ...” Rober Koptaş, *Agos* 29 April 2011.

¹⁵⁵ “Başbakan Erdoğan’dan Aynı Nakarat: ‘100 bin Ermeni’ye Göz Yumuyoruz” editorial, *Agos* 5 February 2010.

speeches.¹⁵⁶ Thus, in 2014, when Erdoğan conveyed his condolences for the 99th anniversary of the 1915 events, his approach was not perceived to be different than the official state approach to the 1915 events by *Agos*. This was taken to be a positive step by some because it was the first time that, on 24 April, a high-ranking state official in Turkey expressed any regrets for the 1915 events; however, Erdoğan's statement reaffirms the extant official state approach and discourse on history.

The official state perspective claims that the Ottoman government was only responsible for the order to deport the population, not the events following it; population relocations were only limited to war zones and members of the Dashnaktsutyun Organization (Armenian Revolutionary Federation); atrocities were largely the result of inter-communal clashes; most of the Armenian deaths resulted from a lack of resources to protect the deportee convoys and caravans, to ensure sanitation, and feeding; it was not the intent of Ottoman government to destroy the Armenian population, but the aim was its relocation; there was a war that also caused a civil war between Armenians and Turks and led Turks to suffer heavy losses; and the Turkish population loss exceeds the Armenian population loss (Dadrian, 2003, pp. 274–5). In this framework, population relocation is presented as a legitimate security precaution because it is argued that Armenians were plotting with Russia against the Ottoman Empire and that the Ottoman Empire could not be held responsible for casualties because it neither aimed to destroy the whole Armenian population nor to deport all Armenians; that there were no death convoys, and Armenians were given enough time before forced emigration; that they were further aided by the state, and their final destination was arranged, with allocated housing and land; and that the entire Armenian population in the Ottoman Empire was less than the number that is claimed to have perished (Çiçek, nd).

¹⁵⁶ “Başbakan ‘tek din’i Ağzından mı Kaçırıldı?” Oral Çalışlar, *Agos* 11 May 2012.

According to the former president of the Turkish History Foundation, Yusuf Halaçoğlu, the 1915 events cannot be called “genocide” because they do not qualify to be named as such, but instead constituted deportation or forced immigration. Y. Halaçoğlu asserts that deportations took place within the context of the World War I during which the Ottoman Empire was one of the main battle zones. The argument asserts that Armenians were cooperating with invader nations on the Ottoman lands, joining them with the desire to establish an independent Armenian state on the lands of the Ottoman Empire. Y. Halaçoğlu once again states that only Armenians in the war zones and strategic locations and those fighting against the Empire were subjected to forced immigration to the Der-Zor area of Syria, which was relatively far from the war zones. The intent of forced immigration, according to Y. Halaçoğlu, was not to destroy the Armenian population; their return was planned when the war was over (Halaçoğlu, nd, p. 11). Moreover, most of the Armenians are claimed to have reached Syria, while some managed to immigrate to Europe, the United States, and Egypt (Halaçoğlu, nd, p. 17). Those Armenians who returned after the War were also given property and housing in his account. Y. Halaçoğlu argues that the casualties on the way were caused by attacks to the convoys that had nothing to do with the state; besides, the convoys were given to military personnel for protection. Thus, in his account, the state tried to ensure the safety of Armenians rather than trying to kill them. Y. Halaçoğlu, compares the 1915 deportations with the Holocaust and reaches the conclusion that the 1915 deportations were forced immigration, not “genocide” (Halaçoğlu, nd, p. 22), because only Armenians working against the state were deported in his account. Y. Halaçoğlu claims that Armenians were given time to pack and get ready; all the needs of the émigrés were met by the state; their destinations were chosen for a sustainable life with fertile lands; they had medical aid when needed; orphans were placed in Muslim families until their

parents' return; they were protected by the military; Islamized Armenians were subjected to forced immigration unless they married a Muslim, and they were allowed to reconvert to their religion when the war was over; food subsidies were provided especially to Armenians in Syria; and after the war they were allowed to return their homes (Halaçoğlu, nd, p. 22–3). The official state perspective not only claims that the Ottoman Empire did not plan to kill the Armenian population but that it even tried to protect Armenian lives and property between 1915 and 1918. According to this perspective, it was the global war that affected the conditions of Armenians, not the state policies.

Erdoğan's condolences in 2014 repeated the state perspective in different terms. Thus, his speech just reframes the official thesis and presents it with different wording, even though it does not challenge any pillars of the official stance or present a change in discourse. Erdoğan's statements presented expressions of sympathy not only to Armenians but to all those who lost their families, irrespective of nationality and religion, during the last periods of the Ottoman Empire and World War I (WWI), and it underlined the global war conditions, as in the official thesis. Erdoğan wished peace to those Armenians who perished under the conditions of the early twentieth century, and he presented his condolences to their grandchildren. In this statement, Erdoğan also called the 1915 events "an event with anti-humane outcomes", which should not cause antagonism and hostility between Turkey and Armenians in his account. Those statements reflect an attempt to frame all events of WWI under the same cover, drawing attention to the fact that everyone suffered and that there is no need to compare and contrast pain and suffering among different groups. The statement points to the common culture in Anatolia and the possibility of building the future together, as in the past. As indicated, the official stance also accepts that there were much causality along the way, but it was not the policy itself that was responsible — just the unforeseen circumstances. Erdoğan

further suggested that those events should not be a barrier to building good relations between Turks and Armenians, further repeating the call for establishing a historical committee to conduct research on the 1915 events and claiming that the Turkish archives were open to researchers.¹⁵⁷

Even though the speech recognizes the importance of 24 April for the Armenian community in Turkey and all around the world, and claims that alternative opinions on the 1915 events should be expressed freely, it does not acknowledge the 1915 events in any different terms than the long held official perspective. Instead, it places those events within the framework of war and identifies it with other groups' losses as our common pain during the late years of the Ottoman Empire and WWI, once again repeating the official historical line of argument. Nonetheless, Erdoğan underlines the equality of suffering and pain of all groups during this period, irrespective of race and religion; thus it is the task to remember and understand the pain of Armenians just like of the pain of the other groups (Muslims). This underlines the fact that the speech does not acknowledge Armenians and their suffering separately; rather, they are mentioned together with other groups in the Ottoman Empire. The stress is put on the common culture and historical heritage of Anatolian people in the past, today, and in the future. It is the argument that people of those ancient lands, who share culture and tradition, should be able to talk about their history and commemorate their losses in proper ways.

As indicated, Erdoğan's statement does not provide a new perspective, and it also does not suggest an alternative path to the solution of the issue as also expressed by *Agos*. It is neither an apology nor an acknowledgment of the past as it is anticipated by the Armenian community. For that reason, the statement does not bring an alternative

¹⁵⁷ "Erdoğan'dan '24 Nisan' İçin Taziye Mesajı" *Radikal* 23 April 2014.

approach to history. It just reformulates the state theory with a twist in a populist sense that can be regarded as a crowd pleaser.

Following a similar idea, in his assessment of Erdoğan's statements, Taner Akçam asserts in *Agos* that Erdoğan's statements were neither a grand gesture nor groundbreaking.¹⁵⁸ In T. Akçam's account, other than the prime minister giving a speech on the issue, there is nothing new in the statement. As an example, T. Akçam states that the Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu has expressed that opinion multiple times already. In T. Akçam's account, Erdoğan's statement just provided an official standing to Davutoğlu's previous statements, causing them to be seen as the official government position.

Although Erdoğan's statement appeared to be a grand gesture, it was just a repetition of the existing state perspective carried out since the 1920s. Yet this is not surprising because AKP government has not been much different from its predecessors concerning history and the official state ideology. Moreover, as Onur Bakiner points out in his analysis on the relation between memory and majoritarian conservatism in Turkey today, it is a common practice for states to deny past human rights violations, irrespective of the government in charge. Still, Turkey is unique in its active enforcement of the denial in his account (Bakiner, 2013, p. 696). Even though AKP appears to have a different account of past, which diverges from the Kemalist teaching of history, that account does not go further to accept past wrongdoings. Furthermore, AKP shares the idea(l) of a homogenous nation that is (Sunni) Muslim and Turkish. Yet AKP puts more emphasis on religion than being Turkish, which differs from the Kemalist discourse. "What is striking about this post-Kemalist memory framework is that, just like its Kemalist predecessor, it affirms the state's central role on propagating 'patriotic' interpretations of the past and guarding against 'unpatriotic' ones"

¹⁵⁸ "Approaching 2015: How to Assess Erdoğan's Statement on the Armenian Genocide" Taner Akçam, *Agos* 4 June 2014.

(Bakiner, 2013, p. 699). Calling “the historical discourse advocated by the AKP’s leadership and pro-government intellectuals majoritarian conservative”, O. Bakiner claims that the “majoritarian conservative worldview employs history to imagine and glorify the nation as a Turkish-Muslim entity” (Bakiner, 2013, p. 699). For that reason, it is not surprising that the AKP government is also on the side of the official state perspective in its attempt to glorify the Turkish-Muslim nation they dream of.

In this framework, it is evident that the 1915 events and naming them are about religion as much as it is about history. It reflects the clash of historical accounts of state and the Armenian community. It also implies an underlying religious conflict between a society that is assumed to be almost completely Muslim and a Christian minority group within this society. In this framework, in relation to the 1915 narratives and history, the process of reformulating Armenian identity has not been influenced much from the statements of the Prime Minister, but the discourse adopted in the statement totalizes all Anatolian population and melts the significance of the Armenian experience in an attempt to undermine its importance in history and today. However, Armenian identity is reformulated to a certain extent to highlight the significance of the 1915 events against its normalization in the war discourse from the viewpoint of the Armenian community in Turkey.

6.3. Conclusion

This chapter, as the last chapter of inquiry this study, has argued that a transformation in the process of reformulating Armenian identity is established around the subject of Islamized Armenians. This subject does not itself entail a reformulation of the role of religion for the Armenian community, but deconstructs history and the 1915 narratives, including the stories of those who survived, together with those who perished; it dissociates nation and religion and rearticulates them in Armenian identity.

This study has explored the process of reformulating Armenian identity in Turkey since 1996, through an analysis of *Agos*. The concepts referred to have been the analytical elements of identity referred to in this study: the 1915 narratives, religion, and civic and political action. From the first period analyzed (1996–2002) onward, religion and the 1915 narratives have occupied the central place in identity debates. In the process of reformulating Armenian identity, civic and political elements are reformulated, not deconstructed, due to structural reasons. On the other hand, the 1915 narratives and the role of religion have been deconstructed and reformulated since 1996. With their rearticulation in different terms together with the effect of the debates on the Islamized Armenians on Armenian identity, Armenian identity today stands in more hybrid and politically active terms compared to its state in 1996.

Between 1996 and 2002, the process of reformulating Armenian identity has the turning points of establishment of a bilingual newspaper, *Agos*, to serve as an active civic unit in the Armenian community. Following that, the process of identity reformulation is defined in reference to claiming citizenship and confronting history in order to move forward. The process has been one of self-definition, involving the interaction of all parts of the Armenian community in Turkey. Between 2003 and 2006, the reformulation of Armenian identity is described through Islamized Armenians and its influence on the Armenian identity through Hrant Dink's article published in *Agos* on the possible Armenian heritage of Sabiha Gökçen. The period between 2007 and 2010 entailed a turning point for the Armenian community and Armenian identity due to Hrant Dink's assassination. This is observed in the reformulation of Armenian identity as being more political, and was marked by searching for a means to face history and deconstruct the 1915 narratives, as well as to reformulate collective memory. The final period analyzed in this study is presented in this chapter, 2010–2014, once again brought Islamized Armenians to the center of the process of

reformulating Armenian identity in Turkey in relation with the role of religion, the 1915 narratives, and history. This chapter, summarizing the point reached in this study, argues that the process of reformulating Armenian identity in Turkey is closely articulated with the subject of Islamized Armenians in their relation to the history, the 1915 narratives, religion, and national identity.

The following chapter provides an overview of the study and presents concluding remarks on the process of reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey in new and more hybrid terms.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The main argument of this study holds that it is possible to define the contemporary conditions of Armenian community in Turkey by describing the reformulation of Armenian identity through analyzing *Agos*. In consequence of the analysis of *Agos* between 1996 and 2014, this study has aimed to contribute to the contemporary perception of the Armenian community in Turkey by means of a critical research. The theoretical framework of this inquiry was shaped by the identity debates, and its contextual elements that have been determined by the turning points in and for the Armenian community as reflected through *Agos*. In deconstructing Armenian identity and the Armenian community in Turkey, this analysis of the reformulation of Armenian identity has treated *Agos*, the Armenian bilingual newspaper, as a political text. In investigating the reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey this study has employed the benefits of qualitative method of social research.

The research presented here aimed to answer the following questions: *How is the Armenian identity in Turkey reformulated between 1996 and May 2014 as reflected by Agos; How the listed three elements of Armenian identity (1915 narratives; religion; and civic and political representation) contribute to the reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey?; and What are the main events influencing the reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey during the period under analysis?*

In an overview of the analysis conducted in this inquiry, this chapter introduces the main points derived from the study in order to present the findings, its answers to the research questions, and suggested future paths of study in the field. Observations formed here concerning the process of reformulating Armenian identity in Turkey are based on the analysis of *Agos* in four periods, from its first issue, printed in February 1996, until the end of April 2014. The analysis conducted in this study

presents the main turning points for the Armenian community in Turkey in the process of reformulating Armenian identity. In answering the main research question asking how the Armenian identity in Turkey is reformulated between 1996 and 2014 as reflected by *Agos*, the main analytical elements of Armenian identity identified in this study are 1915 narratives, religion, civic and political representation.

The process of reformulating Armenian identity in Turkey in relation to the 1915 events and collective memory is highly influenced by the debates on the Islamized Armenians as reflected by *Agos* mainly since 2004. Talking about those Armenians who became Muslim during the 1915 events, either voluntarily or by force, brought to the forefront the question of assimilation by *Agos* in relation to Armenian identity in Turkey. It initiated a new period for *Agos* which is shaped by a call voiced especially by Hrant Dink for an “obsession” with death to be replaced with a new historical perspective centered on life. Collective memory was also highly influenced by this recognition of another group of Armenians in Turkey as it was sought by *Agos* to embrace Islamized Armenians and place them within the collective memory of Armenian community.

In terms of religion (Apostolic Christianity) as one the main elements of Armenian identity in Turkey, the analysis of *Agos* has indicated two major points one of which is related to Islamized Armenians and the other is the need to restructure and reorganize Armenian community in Turkey. The subject of Islamized or converted Armenians was dominant in public and intra-community debates first in 2004, after Hrant Dink’s article on Sabiha Gökçen was published in *Agos*, and then in 2013 when the Conference on Islamized Armenians was organized and widely covered by *Agos*. Such a focus on Islamized Armenians has underlined the existence of a hybrid Armenian identity in Turkey, challenging the assumption of a homogenous identity dominant in the Armenian community and calling for the need of alternative

perspectives in analyzing and talking about Armenian community in Turkey. Furthermore, recognition of the possibility of Muslim Armenians within the Armenian community has led to a possible relocation of the centrality of Apostolic Christianity as the religion in Armenian identity and community and its domination in defining Armenianness at least at the discursive level. Second, the importance assigned to the issue of Islamized Armenians when combined with the demands to limit the power and authority of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople on the Armenian community in Turkey made the call voiced by *Agos* for restructuring the community a more urgent one also challenging the central authority of the Patriarchate.

Civic and political representation, enlisted as the third element of Armenian identity in this study while analyzing *Agos*, remains stuck in the debates around limiting the power of the Patriarch and reacquiring seized Armenian property, as well as in struggles on the Turkish political scene during the analysis. The reformulation of Armenian identity in reference to those elements has not presented any considerable changes to be introduced in relation to Armenian identity and Armenian community in Turkey as observed in this study as reflected by *Agos*.

The analysis in this study is further divided into four major periods in line with the turning points in the Armenian community, political climate in Turkey, and the inner dynamics of *Agos*. The first period covered from 1996 to 2002 as the initial years of *Agos*, the second one started in 2003 and ended in 2006 as the pre-assassination era of Hrant Dink, the third period of analysis started in 2007 with the assassination of Hrant Dink and ended in 2010, and the final period started in 2010 and covered the period until the end of April 2014.

The reformulation of Armenian identity is firstly analyzed between 1996 and 2002. In being the first period of analysis, Chapter 3 has provided an investigation of Armenian identity through *Agos* prior to

Agos's call for initiating reformulation of Armenian community and identity in Turkey. This chapter has elaborated on the key elements of Armenian identity in Turkey during *Agos*'s early years. A general picture of the Armenian community and identity are presented. In relation to the elements of Armenian identity enlisted in this study (1915 narratives, civic life and political representation, and religion), it has been argued in Chapter 3 that *Agos* has aimed to demystify Armenian identity in Turkey by placing emphasis on citizenship and political activism.

Chapter 4 has presented the second periodization for the analysis of the reformulation of Armenian identity in Turkey between 2003 and 2006. Being the pre-assassination era of Hrant Dink, the emphasis in that chapter is placed on Hrant Dink's ideas and perspective on Armenian diaspora, Armenian identity, and Armenian community in Turkey as he expressed in *Agos*. The analysis in this period has put emphasis on Hrant Dink's two articles stirring controversies in Turkey. It has been argued in that chapter that the news item published in *Agos* on the possible Armenian heritage of Sabiha Gökçen caused an increased attention on the issue of Islamized Armenians in broader Turkish public sphere and in Armenian community. It has been argued on Dink's second article published in this period that although Dink was expressing his mild perspective on Armenian identity, it has been received in counter and almost hostile ways in its interaction with Turkish nationalism. In this period, it has been argued that the reformulation of Armenian identity as reflected through *Agos* is expressed around the debates on Islamized Armenians following the news item on Sabiha Gökçen.

Third periodization, Chapter 5, covers the years between 2007 and 2010 as the post-Dink era after the assassination of Hrant Dink in January 2007. Dink's assassination in this periodization has been regarded as a turning point for the Armenian community and identity in Turkey as well as for *Agos*. Chapter 5 has demonstrated an evaluation of

Armenian community and identity vis-à-vis Dink's legacy as expressed and reflected through *Agos*.

The final period, Chapter 6, in this study starts with Rober Koptaş becoming the new editor in chief in 2010 and ends in April 2014. It has been argued that during this period, *Agos* has aimed to act on the legacy of Hrant Dink, repeated the call for reformulation of Armenian identity, and restructuring Armenian community in Turkey. Considering the context affecting the reformulation of Armenian identity during this period, the main focus has been on the intensified debates on the Islamized Armenians as reflected by *Agos*.

The argument developed and analysis conducted in this study have treated the Armenian community in Turkey as a non-Muslim minority group as defined by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. Yet, Armenian identity in this study has been explored in social constructivist terms aiming to provide a new approach to the investigation of Armenian community and Armenian identity. In its focus on *Agos* and Armenian identity in Turkey, this research has also aimed to contribute to the identity debates in political science by elaborating on an identity definition that is constructivist and that puts emphasis on flexibility of identity, thus underlining its contingent character underscoring the hybrid nature of Armenian identity in Turkey.

In theoretical terms, this study has the potential to provide an analysis of Armenian identity in Turkey that entails a more flexible and constructivist perspective, recognizing the intersubjectivity of identity also considering the possible effect of the debates on the Islamized or Muslim Armenians on the Armenian identity in Turkey. Moreover, the inquiry provides a means to expand on the concept of Armenian identity as being relatively independent from Turkish identity and nationalism, while focusing more on its intra-community dynamics in contemporary terms as reflected by *Agos*.

In this study, although qualitative analysis has provided an opportunity to analyze the process of reformulating Armenian identity from an intersubjective point of view, it prevented assessing individual differences by treating Armenian community as a unified bloc. A further study is needed to assess the impact of Islamized Armenians as the new dynamic on Armenian identity in Turkey and how this group is perceived in terms of individual identity by a field study. Moreover, considering the stated need to restructure Armenian community in Turkey by *Agos*, this study has not answered in detail how the Armenian community is structured in Turkey aside from the role of the Patriarchate. Another further study should also answer the question of how the political actors of the Armenian community can be empowered in Turkey for political and civic representation.

Considering the outcomes of my inquiry, the importance of my study is based on its emphasis on new dynamics of Armenian identity in Turkey since 1996 mainly with the perspective provided by the debates around the Islamized Armenians. This study has found out that those new dynamics of Armenian identity activated by the debates on the Islamized Armenians provide a new focus for the Armenian community and identity going beyond the debates over the 1915 events and how to name those events.

Agos is an important medium to understanding the Armenian community and identity in Turkey in critical terms. The analysis of *Agos* between 1996 and 2014 has established that Islamized Armenians is a key issue for the Armenian community and identity in Turkey today. The debates around the issue of Islamized Armenians have called for a focus on survival and assimilation and reshaping the Armenian collective memory by placing Islamized Armenians in a context. The debates have further brought a new religious dimension to the Armenian identity, and challenged the monopoly of the Patriarchate in defining Armenianness in Turkey. The reality of Islamized Armenians requires a

new perception and a new definition of Armenianness. It poses the question of how Armenianness is to be redefined in Turkey embracing the reality of Islamized members of a non-Muslim minority.

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¹⁵⁹ This work is published in November 2014, but because the unpublished draft is used for references in the study, to prevent any confusion regarding page numbers, “forthcoming” version is kept in the bibliography.

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“Sabiha Gökçen mi Hatun Sebilciyan mı?” Ersin Kalkan, *Hürriyet* 21 February 2004.

“Tek Yol ‘Birazda Yaş ama’(1).” Hrant Dink, *Bir Gün* 15 June 2006.

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“Toprağımızda Gözleri Var.” Rahmi Turan, *Hürriyet* 29 December 2008.

“Yargı Bilime Kilit Vurdu.” *Radikal* 23 September 2005.

“Yine Vurulduk.” Melih Aşık, *Milliyet* 20 January 2007.

APPENDICES

A. CURRICULUM VITAE

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Surname, Name: Koç Gabrielsen, Yasemin
Nationality: Turkish (TC)
Date and Place of Birth: 30 January 1984, Samsun
Marital Status: Married
Phone: +1 617 866 8279
email: ysmn.koc@gmail.com

EDUCATION

Degree	Institution	Year of Graduation
MS	METU Political Science and Public Administration	2008
BS	METU Political Science and Public Administration	2006
High School	Samsun Anadolu Lisesi	2002

WORK EXPERIENCE

Year	Place	Enrollment
2011– 2012	METU Department of Political Science and Public Administration	Student Assistant
2007– 2010	IBF International Consulting	Translator/Interpreter
2009	Chamber of Survey and Cadaster Engineers' HQ	Political Consultant

FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Advanced English, Fluent German, Basic Italian

PUBLICATIONS

1. Koç Gabrielsen, Yasemin. "What it Means to be Turkish." Rev. of *Muslim Nationalism and the New Turks*. Jenny White, *Turkish Review* 3.6 (2013): 653–4.
2. Koç, Yasemin. "Sosyalist Ütopya ve Modernite: Morris'in *Hiçbir yerden Haberler'i*." *Sosyoloji Dergisi* 3.18 (2009): 123–37.

HOBBIES

Running, visiting museums, traveling

B. TURKISH SUMMARY

Bu çalışmada, Türkiye'deki Ermeni toplumunun kimliğini yeniden yapılandırma süreci 1996 yılında İstanbul'da Ermeni entelektüeller tarafından kurulan, Türkçe ve Ermenice yayımlanan haftalık *Agos* gazetesinin analizi üzerinden tartışılmış ve sunulmuştur. Bu çalışmada *Agos* gazetesinin analiziyle araştırılan da, Türkiye'deki Ermeni toplumunun 1996 yılından bugüne gelene kadar geçirdiği değişim süreci ve bugünkü durumudur. Bu amaçla, Ermeni kimliğinin 1996 yılından itibaren 2014 Mayıs ayına kadarki yeniden yapılanma süreci *Agos* tarafından yansıtıldığı şekilde analiz edilmiştir.

Türkiye'deki Ermeni toplumu ve Ermeni kimliği üzerine yürütülen bu çalışma hiç bir kurum, birey ve/ya ülke tarafından desteklenmemiş ve finanse edilmemiştir. Çalışmanın tamamı ve bu çalışmada öne sürülen düşünceler tamamen yazarın kendi orijinal araştırması ve yorumudur. Bu çalışma Türkiye'deki Ermeni toplumu ve kimliği üzerine yürüttüğü araştırmada akademik literatüre katkı yapmanın dışında herhangi bir amaç gütmemektedir. Ayrıca bu çalışmada *Agos* üzerine yapılan analiz de tamamen araştırmacının kendi bakış açısını yansıtmaktadır ve gazete metinlerinin öznel olarak yorumlanmasıyla sunulmuştur. Böylece bu çalışmadaki temel amaç, Ermeni kimliğini ve ona bağlı olarak da Ermeni toplumunu güncel ve dinamik kavramlarla analiz etmek ve sunmaktır.

Türkçe'yi Ermenice'nin yanında yayın dili olarak seçerek Ermeni kimliğini Ermeni toplumu dışından bir gözlemcinin takip etmesine imkan sağlayan *Agos* gazetesi, bu çalışmada, Türkiye'de Ermeni kimliğinin yeniden kurulumu sürecinde 1996 yılında kurulmasından itibaren Mayıs 2014'e kadar incelenmiştir. Bu çalışmada bahsedilen inceleme ve araştırmanın referans noktası olması için çalışmanın ilk aşamasında yürütülen ön araştırma sonucunda Ermeni kimliğinin üç unsuru belirlenmiştir. Bu unsurlar, din, sivil ve siyasi yaşam, ve tarih ve kolektif hafıza olarak sıralanmıştır. Türkiye'de Ermeni kimliğinin

kurucu unsurları olarak belirlenen din, sivil ve siyasi yaşam, ve tarih ve kolektif hafıza, arařtırmada *Agos* üzerinden incelenen Ermeni kimliđinin yeniden kurulması sürecinin analizinde başvuru noktaları olarak ele alınmıřtır. Bir diđer deyiřle, 1996 ve 2014 yılları arasında T¼rkiye’de Ermeni kimliđinin yeniden kurulumu süreci din, sivil ve siyasi yaşam, ve tarih anlatıları ve kolektif hafıza kavramları ekseninde İstanbul’da Ermeni toplumu tarafından yayımlanan haftalık gazete *Agos*’un incelenmesiyle arařtırılmıřtır.

Arařtırmacıyı T¼rkiye’deki Ermeni toplumuna ve Ermeni kimliđine odaklanan bu çalıřmayı yapmaya yönelten temel etkenler Ermeni entelekt¼el ve *Agos*’un kurucularından olan Hrant Dink’in 2007 yılında İstanbul’da suikasta uğraması ve aynı zamanda T¼rkiye’deki Ermeni toplumu üzerine güncel terimlerle odaklanan eleřtirel yeterli sayı ve kapsamda arařtırmanın olmamasıdır.

T¼rkiye’deki Ermeni kimliđinin kurulması ve yeniden yapılanması süreci analiz edilirken, bu arařtırmada, aynı zamanda kimlik kavramı da sorgulanmaktadır. Kimliđin içinde yer aldıđı ve etkileřimde olduđu bađlamla olan iliřkisine ve deđiřkenliđine dikkat çekmek bu çalıřmanın amaçlarından biridir. Böylece, bu çalıřmada, Ermeni kimliđinin analizi genel bir kimlik tartıřmasıyla da beraber y¼r¼t¼lmektedir. Bu arařtırmada kimlik, kurulu ve statik bir durum ya da tamamlanmıř mutlak bir unsur yerine dinamik bir kavram ve bir süreç olarak tanımlanmıřtır. Aynı zamanda kimliđin birey ve grupların etkileřimiyle sürekli olarak kurulum ve yeniden yapılanma halinde olduđunun da altı çizilmiřtir.

Bu çalıřmanın genelinde, kimlik kavramının analiz edilmesinde ve T¼rkiye’deki Ermeni kimliđinin yeniden yapılandırılması sürecinin incelenmesi ve sunulmasında Peter Berger ve Thomas Luckmann tarafından geliřtirilen sosyal yapısalcılık [*social constructivism*] kuramı ana teori olarak kullanılmıřtır. Sosyal yapısalcılık teorisi uyarınca gerçeđin [*reality*] verili olmadıđı ve sosyal olarak kurulduđu [*social*

construct] düşüncesi çalışma boyunca araştırmanın arka planında tutulmuştur. Böylece, bu çalışma, teorik çerçevesinde ele aldığı kimlik tartışmasında kimliğin öznel, akışkan, bağlamsal [*contextual*] ve değişken karakterini Ermeni kimliğinin yeniden yapılanması süreci üzerinden vurgulamaktadır. Sosyal yapısalcılığın süreç üzerine olan vurgusundan da yola çıkarak bu çalışmada, kimliğin sosyal olarak kurulması bireylerin kimliklerinin birbirleriyle ve içinde buldukları toplumla olan ilişkilerinde karşılıklı etkileşimle sürekli yeniden yapılanma sürecinde olmalarını ifade etmektedir.

Türkiye'deki Ermeni toplumuna ve Ermeni kimliğine odaklanan bu çalışmanın temel araştırma sorusu: *Ermeni kimliğinin şubat 1996 ve mayıs 2014 arasında yeniden yapılandırılması Agos tarafından nasıl yansıtılmıştır?* tır. Alt sorular ise: *Ermeni kimliğin belirlenen üç unsuru olan din, tarih anlatıları, siyasi ve sivil hayat, Türkiye'deki Ermeni kimliğinin yeniden yapılanmasına nasıl bir katkıda bulunmaktadır?* ve *Analiz süresince Türkiye'deki Ermeni kimliğinin yeniden yapılanması üzerinde etkili olan temel olaylar nelerdir?* Çalışma, bu sorulara cevap verirken nitel araştırma yönteminin temel unsurlarından yararlanmıştı.

Sosyal bilimlerde verilerin nitel olarak toplandığı ve analiz edildiği nitel araştırma metodu pozitivismeye eleştirel bir metot olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Nitel çalışmada temel amaç araştırmada konu edilen birey ya da grupların yer aldıkları bağlamı gözlemleyerek, inceleyerek ve anlayarak sorunu bu bağlam çerçevesinde ve sorunun gerçekle [*reality*] ilişkisini göz önüne alarak incelemektir. Temel odağı günlük hayat ve bireylerin kendi günlük hayat pratiklerini ve günlük hayata verdikleri anlamı analiz etmek olan nitel çalışma yöntemi, veri toplama ve analiz aşamalarında gerçek hayatla doğrudan iç içe ve sürekli ilişki halinde yürütülmektedir. Nitel çalışma kapsamında analiz edilen grup ya da birey günlük hayat ve günlük hayat pratikleri içinde yer aldığı şekliyle bu çalışmaya dahil olmaktadır. Böylece, nitel çalışmanın odağı olan birey veya grup bağlamla ve çevresel koşullarla ilişkisinden koparılmaz

ve yürütülen çalışmanın değerlendirilmesi de var olan koşullara göre yapılır. Bu prensip ekseninde nitel çalışmanın veri toplama evresinde araştırmacı tarafından çevresel etmenlere müdahale edilmez ve süreç olduğu gibi, doğal halinde bağlamla olan ilişkisi içinde incelenir. Verilerin bu yöntemle bağlamdan koparılmadan toplanmasıyla nitel araştırma aynı zamanda bütünsel bir perspektif sağlar. Nitel araştırma, incelenen konunun karmaşık bir sistem olduğu kabulünden yola çıkar ve bütünün parçalarının toplamından daha fazlası olduğunun altını çizer. Ek olarak, nitel araştırma kapsamında veri toplama ve araştırma süreci esneklik, zaman zaman araştırmanın planı ve hatta araştırmanın temel sorusu dahi yeniden tanımlanır ve bulgulara göre adapte ya da revize edilir. Nitel çalışmanın bu şekilde esnek ve değiştirilebilir olmasının nedeni, araştırmacının çalışmaya bir teoriyle başlamak yerine araştırmayı belirli bir kavram ve fikir ekseninde tüme varım yöntemiyle yürütmesidir. Böylece nitel araştırma, analitik unsurlarla araştırma ilerledikçe şekillenir ve ancak veri analizi tamamlandıktan sonra verilerin yaratıcı senteziyle sona erer. Nitel çalışmada verilerin toplanması aşamasında olduğu gibi verilerin analizinde de sosyal ve tarihi bağlam göz önünde tutulmaktadır. Bu tür çalışmada, verilerin analizi, veri toplama aşamasında başlar ve araştırmanın ilk aşamasından itibaren ele alınan sorunun kendi bağlamından koparılmadan incelenmesini sağlar.

Yukarıda bahsedilen genel özelliklerinin yanı sıra, nitel araştırma, kullanılan paradigmaya göre de odağını değiştirir. Türkiye'deki Ermeni toplumu ve kimliği üzerine odaklanan bu nitel araştırmayı şekillendiren paradigma yukarıda da belirtildiği gibi sosyal yapısalcılıktır ve bu çalışma post-modern teorik perspektifle şekillenmiştir. Kimliğin sosyal olarak diğer bireylerle ve toplumla etkileşim içinde kurulması ve yeniden yapılandırılması analizinde post-modern teori, bu çalışmada Türkiye'deki Ermeni toplumunun ve kimliğinin nasıl yeniden kurulduğunun ortaya konulmasının analizinde kullanılmaktadır.

Bu arařtırmadaki analizde teorik perspektif olarak ele alınan sosyal yapısalcılık çerçevesinde kimlik kavramı siyasi teori ve siyaset sosyolojisi kapsamında tanımlanmıştır. Çalışmada tanımlanan kimlik kavramı kültürel, cinsel, sosyal ve etnik, gerçek ya da var sayılan farklar ekseninde kurulan kolektif ve/ya bireysel niteliđi olan kültürel ve siyasi bir kavramdır. Çalışmada öne sürülen kimlik kavramı, bireyin ait olduđu grubun özellikleriyle ve toplumdaki diđer kimliklerle de etkileşimiyle kurulan bir kavramdır.

Nitel arařtırmanın temel prensiplerine uygun olarak bu çalışmanın veri analizi, veri toplama aşamasında başlamış ve böylece ön arařtırma evresi ve arařtırmanın ilk aşamaları da bu çalışmaya planlanan arařtırmayı yönlendirecek nitelikte ve önemde veri sağlayan aşamalardan olmuştur. Arařtırmanın ilk evresi olan ön arařtırmada Türkiye'deki Ermeni toplumuyla ilgili arařtırma odađının belirlenmesi için Osmanlı İmparatorluđu'ndan bu güne uzanan sadece Türkiye'deki deđil diasporadaki Ermeni toplumunun üzerine de kapsamlı bir ön arařtırma yürütülmüştür. Bu arařtırma temel olarak kütüphane, online veri tabanları ve akademik makaleler üzerinden yürütülmüştür. Arařtırma kapsamında Ermeni toplumunca ve Ermeni toplumu üzerine yazılmış romanlar, anılar, şiirler, biyografiler, yemek kitapları, ve akademik arařtırmalar okunmuş ve incelenmiştir. Ayrıca Ermeniler üzerine yapılan ve Ermenilerce hazırlanan filmler ve belgeseller de bu aşamada izlenmiştir. Ek olarak, arařtırmacı, katılımcı olmayan [*non-participatory*] gözlemler ve gayri-resmi mülakatları da ön arařtırmanın bir parçası olarak gerçekleştirmiştir. Bu ilk aşamayla arařtırmanın odađı Türkiye'deki Ermeniler ve Türkiye'deki Ermeni kimliđinin yeniden kurulum süreci olarak daraltıldıktan sonra arařtırma örneđi [*sample*] de *Agos* gazetesi olarak belirlenmiştir.

Bu çalışmada, *Agos*'un arařtırmanın örneđi olarak belirlenmesinin nedeni gazetenin sayfa sayısı çođunluđunun Türkçe olarak basılmasının yanı sıra, gazetenin Türkiye'deki Ermeni toplumu ve kimliđi için açıkça

ortaya koyup ifade ettiđi bir projesinin olması ve böylece kimlik analizi için bu çalışmada aranan türden veri sağlayabiliyor olmasıdır. *Agos*, bu çalışmada, amaca uygun örnekleme [*purposive sampling*] ile seçilen sayıca yeterli ve kapsamlı bilgi sağlayan kaynak [*information rich*] olduđu için bu araştırmanın odağıdır. *Agos*, bu çalışmadaki araştırma kapsamında bir azınlık gazetesi olarak değil siyasi bir metin olarak analiz edilmiştir.

Bu çalışma süresince *Agos* üzerinden yürütölen analizin büyük çoğunluđu gazetenin internet arşivinden toplanan verilerin öznel olarak yorumlanmasıyla sağlanmıştır. 1996 yılında basılan ilk sayıdan Mayıs 2014'e kadar olan sürede gazetenin tüm sayıları baştan sona okunarak veriler toplanmış ve toplanan veriler genel başlıklara göre gruplandırılmıştır. Daha sonra da bu verilerin analiziyle çalışmanın genelinde kullanılmak amacıyla Ermeni kimliğinin üç analitik unsuru belirlenmiştir. Toplanan verilerin analizi yukarıda ifade edildiđi gibi veri toplama süreciyle beraber başlamış, yorumlayıcı [*interpretive*] metotla ve tüme varımla yapılmıştır. Tüme varım yönteminin kullanılmasının nedeni nitel araştırma metoduna uygun olarak araştırmaya en başta teoriyle değil verilerle başlanması ve analiz sonucunda tümel bir teoriye ulaşılmasının hedeflenmesidir. Analizin yorumlayıcı yöntemle yapılması da nitel araştırmanın öznel karakterinden kaynaklanmakta ve araştırmacının öznel bakış açısını yansıtmaktadır.

Türkiye'deki Ermeni toplumunun kimliğini yeniden yapılandırma sürecini *Agos* üzerinden incelemeyi ve araştırmayı hedefleyen bu çalışma yedi bölümden oluşmaktadır. Giriş ve sonuç bölümlerinin yanında çalışmanın ikinci bölümü genel olarak bir kimlik tartışması sunar ve Türkiye'deki Ermeni toplumunu tanıtarak genel bir Ermeni kimliği tartışmasını sunduktan sonra çalışmada kullanılacak kimlik unsurlarını belirler. Diğer dört bölümde ise çalışmanın gövdesini oluşturan temel analiz sunulmaktadır. Çalışmanın temel kısmı olan *Agos* analizinin dörde bölünmesinde Türkiye'deki, Ermeni toplumundaki ve

Agos içindeki deęişimler göz önüne alınmıştır. Buna göre ilk bölüm, 1996 yılında *Agos*'un kurulmasıyla başlayıp 2002 yılının kasım ayında yeni kurulmuş bir siyasi parti olan Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP)'nin hükümet kurmasını takiben 2002 yılıyla birlikte sona ermiştir. İncelenen bu dönemin belirleyicisi, Türkiye siyasetinde yeni bir aktörün iktidara gelmesidir. Analizin yürütüldüğü ikinci bölüm 2003 yılından 2006 yılının sonuna kadar olan dönemi kapsamaktadır. Buradaki bölünme ise Hrant Dink davaları ve Hrant Dink'in suikastına giden dönemin analizi temel alınarak yapılmıştır. Bu bölümdeki diğer önemli bir unsur da Müslümanlaştırılmış Ermeniler konusunun *Agos* aracılığıyla 2004'te gündeme gelmesidir. 2007 yılından 2010 yılına kadarki dönemi sunan sonraki bölüm de Hrant Dink'in 2007 yılının ocak ayında gerçekleşen suikastı ve onu takiben *Agos* içindeki yapısal ve yönetsel deęişim referans alınarak bölünmüştür. Bu bölüm, ayrıca, Etyen Mahçupyan'ın *Agos* gazetesindeki editörlük dönemini kapsamaktadır. Yine bu bölümün temel odaklarından biri de 2008 yılında Ermeni Patrik'inin rahatsızlanıp makamından çekilmesini takip eden seçim krizidir. Son analizin bölümü ise 2010 yılından 2014 yılına kadar olan dönemi sunmaktadır. İncelenen dönemin 2010 yılında başlaması *Agos*'un editörünün deęişip Rober Koptaş'ın yeni editör olması ve mayıs 2014'te sona ermesi ise çalışmanın kurulduğu zaman kısıtlamasıdır.

Yukarıda da belirtildiği gibi çalışmanın giriş bölümünü takip eden ikinci bölümü genel bir kimlik tartışmasıyla başlamaktadır. İkinci bölüm, Ermeni kimliğinin yeniden yapılanması sürecinde çalışmada kullanılacak olan Ermeni kimliğinin analitik unsurlarını sunmuştur. Aynı zamanda bu bölümde Türkiye'deki Ermeni toplumu ve kimliğinin genel bir durum analizi de ortaya konmuştur. Bu çalışmada, Ermeni toplumu Türkiye'de 1923 yılında imzalanan Lozan Anlaşması ile yasal olarak kabul edilmiş üç gayri-Müslim azınlık grubundan (Yahudi, Ermeni ve Rum) biri olarak tanımlanmıştır. Türkiye'deki Ermeni toplumunun

Anadolu'daki nüfusu her ne kadar on dokuzuncu yüzyılın sonundan bu yana hızla azalıyor da, diğer azınlık gruplarıyla karşılaştırıldığında Ermeni toplumu Türkiye'deki en kalabalık azınlık grubudur. Hemen hemen tamamı İstanbul'da toplanmış olan Ermeni toplumunun bugünkü nüfusu 50.000 civarındadır.

Her ne kadar 1923 yılında Ermeni toplumu Türkiye Cumhuriyeti yapısı içinde bir azınlık grubu olarak tanımlanmışsa da Ermenilerin Anadolu'daki varlığı antik dönemlere dayanmaktadır. Coğrafi konumu nedeniyle Ermeni ulusunun anavatanları tarih boyunca saldırılara ve istilaya uğramış daha sonra da Osmanlı İmparatorluğu tarafından fethedilmiştir. SSCB'nin 1991'de çöküşüne kadar da bağımsız bir Ermeni devleti var olmamıştır. Osmanlı İmparatorluğu döneminden bugüne kadar Türklerle ve diğer dini ve etnik unsurlarla yaşayan Ermeniler bu gruplarla ve Türk toplumuyla ortak tarih ve kültür geliştirmişlerdir. Diğer yandan Türkiye'deki Ermeni toplumu Hrant Dink'in ocak 2007'deki suikastına kadar Türkiye'de Ermeni toplumu olarak ve siyasi bir unsur olarak görünür olamamıştır. Bu bağlamda Hrant Dink'in suikastı Ermeni toplumu ve Ermeni kimliği için önemli bir dönüm noktasıdır. Bu siyasi cinayet Türkiye'de Ermeni toplumunun sadece kültürel ve nostaljik bir unsur olarak hatırlanmasının ötesinde Hrant Dink'in cenazesinde gözlemlenen büyük katılımı da siyasi yönüyle kamusal alanda görünmesinin de temellerini atmıştır. Hrant Dink cinayetiyle Türkiye'de sadece Ermeni toplumunu değil diğer azınlık grupları da gündeme gelmiştir.

1923 Lozan Anlaşmasıyla yasal olarak Türkiye'deki üç (gayri-Müslim) azınlık grubundan biri olarak tanımlanan Ermeni toplumunun yapısı ve devletle olan ilişkisi bu azınlık tanımı ekseninde kurulmuş ve o şekilde yürümektedir. Gayri-Müslim bir azınlık grubu olarak Türkiye'deki Ermeni toplumunun sosyal ve kültürel hayatı bazı temel kurum ve kuruluşlar etrafında örgütlenmektedir. Bu kurumların en başında Türkiye'deki Ermenilerin çoğunluğunun mensubu olduğu

Apostolik (Gregoryen) Hristiyanlık'ın ruhani lideri olan İstanbul Ermeni Patrikliği gelmektedir. 15. yüzyılda Osmanlı İmparatorluğunca Ortodoks Ermeni veya Apostolik Hristiyan Ermeni cemaatinin ruhani lideri olarak kabul edilen İstanbul Ermeni Patrikliği, Türkiye'deki Ermeni toplumunun sadece ruhani değil aynı zamanda siyasi ve kültürel liderliğini de üstlenmiştir. Böylece, Patriklik, Ermeni toplumunun devletle olan ilişkilerini yürütüp toplumu devlet düzeyinde de temsil etmektedir. Türkiye'deki Ermeni toplumunun diğer kurumları ise 1936 düzenlemesiyle yasal terimlerle vakıf olarak tanımlanmış hemen hemen tamamı İstanbul'da yer alan Ermeni vakıflarıdır. Bu kurumlar; 16 okul, bu okulların mezun dernekleri ve kiliseler, iki hastane (*Surp Pırgıç* ve *Surp Agop*), iki yetimhane, üç gazete (*Marmara*, *Jamanag*, ve *Agos*), yeni kurulan hemşeri derneklerinin yanı sıra *Nor Zartonk* ve Hrant Dink Vakfı gibi sivil toplum ve araştırma kuruluşlarıdır. Ermeni vakıfları Türkiye'deki Ermeni toplumunun sosyal ve kültürel hayatlarını yürüttükleri, kimliklerini kurdukları ve yeniden yapılandırdıkları en temel kurumlardır.

Vakıfların bu kurucu ve koruyucu yönlerinin yanı sıra Ermeni toplumunu ve kimliğini sınırlandırıcı yanı da bu çalışmada altı çizilen noktalardan biridir. Bunun nedeni Ermeni toplumunun bu vakıflarla sınırlı kalıyor görünmesi ve vakıfların yapısal ve maddi olarak kendilerinden beklenen görevi yerine getiremeyecek durumda olmasıdır. Ayrıca, devletin 1936 düzenlemesinden yola çıkarak vakıflara ve vakıf mülklerine el koyması ve geri iade ya da maddi tazminat sağlamaması Ermeni toplumunu sosyal, siyasal ve finansal açıdan zor duruma düşürmektedir.

Küçük bir toplum olması ve coğrafi olarak belirli bir bölgede toplanmış olması nedeniyle Ermeni toplumu Türkiye'de küçük ve kapalı bir toplum olarak tanımlanmış ve algılanmıştır. Ermeni toplumunun kendini bu şekilde kurmasının nedenlerinden biri asimilasyon korkusuyla kendini Türk toplumundan izole etmesinin yanı sıra devletin

azınlık ve vatandaş kavramlarının Ermeni toplumu üzerindeki olası etkileridir. Böylece, Ermeni toplumunun genel Türk toplumundan görece izole durumu devletin makbul ve sessiz vatandaş beklentisi ve fikriyle pekiştirilmiştir.

Ermeni toplumunun izole ve kapalı olarak algılanan yapısı, Ermeni toplumunu Türk toplumundan uzaklaştırmış ve zamanla kendi içine kapanmasında etken olma olasılığını taşımaktadır. Diğer taraftan ise Ermeni toplumunu tanımayan ve tanımaya da çalışmayan Türk toplumunun Ermenilerle ilgili olan imajı da büyük oranda tarihi ve güncel önyargılarla şekillenmiştir. Cumhuriyetin ilk yıllarından bu yana birbiriyle etkili bir iletişim ve ilişki içinde ol(a)mayan Ermeni ve Türk toplumu karşılıklı olarak birbirleriyle ilgili fikirlerini büyük oranda tarihi ön yargılarla kurmuş ve böylece karşı grubu ötekileştirmiştir. Öyle ki iki grup arasında bir duvar olduğu metaforu literatürde sıkça kullanılmaktadır. Bu yapı içinde Ermeni kimliğinin kurulması ve yeniden yapılanması süreci de kendi toplumu içinde kalmış ve bu nedenle özellikle siyasi anlamda sınırlı kalmıştır. Bunun nedeni ise Ermeni azınlık grubunun Türk toplumu ve devletiyle olan ilişkilerini zorunlu göç ve katliamlarla şekillenen tarih travmasıyla, Türk toplumunun ise Ermeni algısını yine aynı olaylar etrafında kurulmuş tabuyla şekillendirmesidir.

Türkçe-Ermenice yayın yapan bir gazete olarak *Agos*'un kurulması da Ermeni toplumunca ve akademisyenlerce bu kapalı yapının kırılması olarak yorumlanmıştır. *Agos*, 1996'da İstanbul'da bir grup Ermeni entelektüel tarafından Ermeni toplumunu Ermenilerin kendi sesiyle Türk toplumuna anlatmak ve Ermeni toplumunun kendi içindeki iletişimini de artırmak amacıyla kurulmuştur. Her ne kadar Türkçe ve Ermenice olarak iki dilde yayın yapıyor olsa da, kurulduğundan bu yana *Agos*'un Türkçe sayfaları Ermenice sayfalarından sayıca daha fazladır. *Agos*'un sıfır sayısı 25 Şubat 1996'da ilk sayısı da 5 Nisan 1996'da basılmıştır. *Agos* kar amacı gütmeyen bağımsız bir gazete olarak kurulmuştur ve ideolojik

açından kendini her hangi parti ya da örgütle özdeşleştirmez. Gazete, kuruluşundan itibaren Türkiye’de diyalog, barış ve demokrasiyi savunmaktadır. *Agos*’un duruşu Ermeni toplumuna, Türkiye’ye ve Patrikliğe eleştirel bakış sunmaktadır. *Agos*’un ele aldığı konular: farklı olmak, Türkiye’deki Ermeni fobisi, Ermeni kültürünün gerilemesi, çok kültürlülük, kimlik, anayasal vatandaşlık ve demokrasi, Ermeni toplumunun problemleri, ayrımcılık, ırkçılık ve Türkiye’de milliyetçilik, Ermenice, Türkiye-Ermenistan ilişkileri ve sınır problemi, Azerbaycan ve Avrupa Birliği, Ermeni diasporası, Ermeni toplumunda kilise ve Patrikliğin rolü, Varlık Vergisi, 6-7 Eylül olayları, vakıfların problemleri ve topluluk aktiviteleridir.

Türkiye’deki Ermeni kimliğinin yeniden yapılandırılma sürecinin *Agos* üzerinden analizi de bu kavramlar etrafında şekillenen genel unsurların belirlenmesiyle yürütülmüştür. Yukarıda belirtildiği gibi bu çalışmada kimlik değişken ve sürekli kurulum halinde olan bir unsur olarak tanımlanmıştır. Bu genel kimlik kavramını takip ederek Türkiye’deki Ermeni kimliğinin heterojen ve bağlamsal niteliği de çalışma boyunca vurgulanmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı Ermeni kimliğinin genel geçer unsurlarını belirleyip listelemek değil, kimliğin geçtiği değişim sürecini analiz etmek ve sunmaktır. Yine de bu çalışmada pratik ve analitik amaçla Ermeni kimliğinin üç temel unsuru belirlenmiştir. Bu belirlenen unsurlar çalışma boyunca yürütülen analizde Ermeni kimliğinin yeniden kurulması sürecinde kırılma ve değişim noktalarını belirlemede indikatörler olarak ele alınmıştır. Çalışmanın ilk veri toplama ve ön çalışma evresinde belirlenen ve temeli *Agos*’un Türkiye’deki Ermeni kimliğini yansıtmalarıyla belirlenen Ermeni kimliğinin unsurları: din (Apostolik Hristiyanlık), sivil hayat ve siyaset, ve tarih ve kolektif hafızadır.

Belirtildiği gibi gayri-Müslim bir azınlık grubu olan Türkiye Ermenilerinin büyük çoğunluğu Apostolik Hristiyan’dır. Ermeni toplumundaki en güçlü ve merkezi kurum da bu inanın ruhani lideri

olan İstanbul Ermeni Patrikliğidir. Bu kurumun merkezi rolü yapısal nedenlerin yanı sıra dinin Ermeni kimliğindeki merkezi öneminden de kaynaklanmaktadır. Ermeni toplumunda din ve kilisenin bu merkezi öneminin en büyük nedeni Ermeni toplumunun tarihte Hristiyan olan ilk ulus olmasıdır. Apostolik Hristiyanlık en eski Oryantal dinlerden biridir ve sadece Ermenilere özgüdür. Böylece, Hristiyanlık'a geçiş ve din Ermeni kültür ve tarihinin içine eklemlenmiştir. Dinin, kültür ve tarihle olan bu yakın ilişkisi göz önüne alındığında dinin Ermeni kimliğindeki merkezi önemi de daha anlaşılır olmaktadır. Dinin ulusal kimlikle doğrudan bağlantısı ve ilişkisi nedeniyle tarih boyunca din, Ermeni ulusal ve kültürel kimliği ile iç içe geçmiştir. Bu nedenle din, tarih, ulusal mit ve anlatılarla eklemlenmiştir ve Ermeni kimliğinde merkezi bir rol üstlenmiştir. Burada hatırlatılması gereken nokta Ermeni kimliğinin homojen olmadığı ve din konusunda da farklılıkları içinde barındırıyor olmasıdır. Diğer bir deyişle Türkiye'deki bütün Ermeniler Apostolik değildir, sayıca az da olsa Katolik ve Protestan Ermeniler de vardır Türkiye'de. Aynı zamanda Ermeni toplumunun tamamı Hristiyan ya da dindar da değildir. Bu nedenle dinin Ermeni kimliğinde merkezi rolü sadece onun ruhani karakterinden kaynaklanmaz aynı zamanda ulusal ve kültürel karakterinden de beslenmektedir.

Ulusal ve kültürel öneminin yanı sıra Ermeni Patrikliğinin Ermeni toplumunda yönetim ve temsil açısından siyasi bir rolü de vardır. Patrik'in bu siyasi rolü nedeniyle Ermeni kimliği için din sadece ruhani bir kimlik unsuru olmanın ötesinde aynı zamanda ulusal, kültürel ve siyasi kimlik unsurlarına da denk gelmektedir. Bu durumun iki taraflı çalışmasıyla Türkiye'deki Ermeni toplumu kültürel ve siyasal bir yapının yanı sıra bir cemaate de işaret eder. Patrikliğin bu ikili rolünün en temel nedeni Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun sosyal formasyonunu millet sistemi denilen yöntemle din temelli bölümlere ayırması ve yönetmesi, ve 1923 yılında Lozan Antlaşması ile bu sistemin Cumhuriyet döneminde de büyük ölçüde devam ettirilmesidir. Lozan Antlaşması

azınlıkları gayri-Müslimler olarak tanımlarken bu ayrımı din üzerinden temellendirmiş ve Ermeni toplumunu din temelli bir grup olarak tanıdığını ifade etmiştir. Böylece, Ermeni toplumunu devlet katında temsil eden kurum da Patriklik olmuştur. Bu nedenle Türkiye'deki Ermeni toplumu için bugün ruhani temsilin temel temsil olmasının altında yatan en büyük neden devletin Ermeni toplumuyla ilişkisini din üzerinden kurması ve yürütmesidir. Fakat temel kurum olmasına rağmen Cumhuriyet kurulduktan sonra Patrikliğe tüzel kişilik verilmemiştir ve seçimler de dahil iç işleyişle ilgili gerekli yasal düzenleme yapılmamıştır.

Bu çalışmada analiz edilen Ermeni kimliğinin dinle olan ilişkisi bağlamında yeniden kurulum sürecinde iki nokta öne çıkmıştır. Bunlardan biri Müslüman ve/ya İslamlaştırılmış Ermeniler, diğeri de kilisenin toplumdaki rolü ve etkisi üzerinedir. Ermeni kimliğinde dinin rolüne referansla analiz edilmiş olan yeniden yapılandırma sürecinin kırılma noktalarından ilki Ermeni kimliğinde İslam'ın da bir kimlik unsuru olarak yer alıyor olmasının tartışılmaya başlanmasıdır. Bu konunun tartışılması her ne kadar gündeme oturduğu 2004 yılından çok daha önce başlamış olsa da, konu ancak Hrant Dink'in 2004'teki yazısıyla hem Türkiye hem de Ermeni toplumunun gündeminde önemli bir yere yerleşmiştir. Mustafa Kemal'in manevi kızı Sabiha Gökçen'in 1915 olayları sonrası Türk ve/ya Müslüman ailelerce evlat edinilen Ermeni çocuklarından biri olması olasılığını tartışan bu *Agos* makalesinin temel amacı 1915 olaylarını farklı ve daha ılımlı bir açıdan görmek ve ayrıca yaşam üzerine odaklanmaktır. Türkiye medyası ve Silahlı Kuvvetler tarafından pek iyi karşılanmayan bu gazete yazısı beraberinde aynı zamanda Ermeni kimliğinin yeniden kurulumu için olumlu bir tartışmayı, Müslüman ya da İslamlaştırılmış Ermeniler konusunu gündeme getirmiştir. Bu konunun Ermeni kimliği için önemi; tarihe hayatta kalma ve yaşam odaklı alternatif bir bakış açısı sunması ve Müslüman Ermenilerin varlığını öne sürerek homojen kimlik anlayışına

karşı melez kimlik bakışını sunmasıdır. Böylece, kimliğin kırılmasında ikinci nokta olan kilisenin Ermeni kimliğindeki ve Ermeni toplumu üzerindeki tek eli ve hegemonyası da sorgulanmaktadır. Modern bir toplum yapısına ulaşmak isteyen Türkiye'deki Ermeni toplumu Patrikliğin rolünün yeniden tanımlanmasını ve kilisenin sadece ruhani alanla sınırlandırılmasını talep etmektedir.

Ermeni toplumundaki reform talebi ve kilisenin rolünün sorgulanması çalışmada belirlenen diğer bir kimlik unsuru olan sivil ve siyasi hayat kapsamında da kimliğin yeniden kurulumu sürecinde kırılma noktası olarak yer almaktadır. Bu çalışmada sivil ve siyasi hayatla ifade edilen sivil katılım, dinin toplumdaki rolüne karşı sekülerleşmeyi savunma ve dinin hegemonyasından kurtulmuş siyasi bir temsili ifade etmektedir. Patrikhane tarafından düzenlenen ve yönetilen sivil hayatın bu kapsamdan çıkarılıp tamamen sivilleştirilmesi ve dini otoritenin ruhani işlerler ilgilenerak siyasi temsili de sivillere bırakması analiz edilen zaman aralığındaki en temel talepler ve çabalarıdır. Ermeni kimliğinin sivil unsurunun ön plana çıkarılabilmesi için dinin rolünün sınırlandırılmasının yanı sıra var olan Ermeni vakıflarının tam kapasite kullanılabilmesi ve devlet tarafından el konulan azınlık vakıf ve mülklerinin de geri alınması diğer talepler arasındadır. Etnik temelli bir Ermeni siyasi partisi kurulması gündem dışı bir konu olmakla beraber Ermeni kimliğinin siyasi temsiline Patrik'in tekelinden alınması ve sivillere delege edilmesi önemli bir zorunluluk olarak görülmektedir.

Bu çalışmada Ermeni kimliğinin analizi için belirlenen üçüncü unsur ise tarih anlatıları [*narratives*] ve kolektif hafızadır. Burada tarih geçmişe ve geçmişle ilgili anlatıları, kolektif hafıza da bu anlatıların bugüne taşınmasını ve söylemsel olarak yeniden kurulmasını ifade etmektedir. Tarih anlatıları ulusal kimliğin en önemli söylemsel kurucu unsurlarından biridir. Anlatı sayesinde ulusun tarihi, edebiyatı ve kültürü sürekli yeniden anlatılır ve ulusa anlam veren unsurların tekrarlanarak kimliğin yeniden kurulması sağlanır. Anlatının rolü kolektif hafızayla

ilişkisi göz önüne alındığında daha da önem kazanır. Kolektif hafıza geçmişi bugünde kurarak tarih anlatılarının bugüne ve geleceğe taşınmasını sağlar. Bu anlamda kolektif hafıza geçmişi değil bugünü temsil ederek tarih anlatılarını kimlik için tamamlar.

Ermeni toplumunun uzun tarihi neredeyse MÖ 600'e dayanmaktadır. Ermeni kültür ve ulusal tarih anlatılarını şekillendiren savaşlar ve istilaların yanı sıra Ermeni tarih anlatıları Osmanlı İmparatorluğu döneminde tecrübe edilen zorluklar ve zorunlu göçlerle de büyük ölçüde şekillenmiştir. Güncel Ermeni tarih ve kolektif anlatılarının önemli bir diğer unsuru da 1991'de Sovyet Sosyalist Cumhuriyetler Birliği'nin çökmesiyle bağımsız bir devlet olarak kurulan Ermenistan Cumhuriyeti'dir. Ulusal tarih ve kolektif hafıza Ermeni kimliğinin bu çalışmada analiz edilen en önemli unsurları arasında kabul edilmiştir çünkü kolektif hafıza da tıpkı kimlik gibi sürekli yeniden yapılanmaktadır. Bu çalışmada Ermeni kimliğinin analitik unsurları olarak belirlenen ulusal tarih ve kolektif hafıza Müslümanlaştırılmış Ermeniler üzerine olan tartışmalardan büyük ölçüde etkilenmiş ve yeniden yapılanma süreçleri de bu etki ışığında gerçekleşmiştir. Müslümanlaştırılmış Ermeniler üzerine yürütülen tartışmalar tarihe alternatif bir bakış açısı getirmekle kalmamış aynı zamanda Türk toplumunun içinden Ermeni olduklarını keşfedip bu kimliği talep eden bireylerin varlığıyla da yeniden şekillenme sürecine girmiştir. Ermeni tarihine bakış bu anlamda Ermeni toplumu için sadece acı olaylar, kayıplar ve ölümü değil aynı zamanda hayatta kalma hikayeleriyle Ermeni kimliği için entegrasyon ve asimilasyon tartışmalarını da beraberinde getirmiştir. Bu tartışmaların ve yeni alternatif bakış açısının bir sonucu olarak da Ermeni kimliği, kimliğinin içine daha heterdoks ve melez unsurları alacak şekilde yeniden yapılanma sürecine girmiştir. 2004'te *Agos*'un Sabiha Gökçen'in olası Ermeni kökeni üzerine bastığı yazı ile ilk defa geniş bir şekilde Türkiye'de gündeme gelen Müslümanlaştırılmış Ermeniler ya da Müslüman Ermeniler konusu

2013'te İstanbul'da organize edilen Müslümanlaştırılmış Ermeniler konulu konferansla da akademik tartışma ve araştırmayla daha da derin analiz edilerek farklı unsurları ortaya çıkarıp bu kimlik yapılandırma sürecine katkıda bulunmuştur. *Agos*'un 1996'dan beri konu edindiği Müslümanlaştırılmış Ermeniler Ermeni kimliğinin yeniden yapılandırılması sürecinde de kimliğe dinamik ve alternatif unsurlar sağlamaktadırlar.

Bu çalışmada, Ermeni kimliğinin Müslümanlaştırılmış Ermeniler üzerinden yürütülen analizi sadece bu çalışmada belirlenen Ermeni kimliğinin analitik unsurlarına referansla değil, aynı zamanda bu çalışmada *Agos*'un analiz edildiği dört bölüme bakarak da sunulabilir. İlk bölümde sunulan giriş ve ikinci bölümde kavramların genel terimlerle sunulmasını takip eden çalışmanın üçüncü bölümünde 1996 ve 2002 yılları *Agos*'un ilk dönemi olarak analiz edilmiştir. Üçüncü bölümün kapsadığı dönem Ermeni kimliğinin hem Ermeni toplumunun kendisine hem de Türk toplumunun tamamına *Agos* tarafından dışa vurulduğu ve böylece görünür olduğu dönemdir. *Agos*'un 1996 yılında kurulması ile Ermeni toplumu için daha aktif ve görünür bir dönemin başladığı literatürde ifade edilen genel kanıdır. Ayrıca *Agos* da kurulmasının nedenleri arasında böylesi bir çabayı ifade etmektedir. Bu bölümde Ermeni kimliğinin belirlenen unsurlar ekseninde yürütülen analizde bölüm temel olarak Ermeni toplumunun görünür olması üzerine kurulmuştur. Bu görünürlük kapsamında aynı zamanda Ermeni kimliğinin ve Ermeni toplumunun da genel hali *Agos*'un analiziyle sunulmaktadır.

1996 yılında *Agos*'un kurulmasıyla görünür olan ve kendini ifadesiyle hızlı bir ivme kazanan Ermeni kimliğinin yeniden yapılandırılması süreci aynı zamanda Ermeni toplumunun yeniden yapılandırılması talebini de ortaya çıkarmış ve *Agos* tarafından ifade edilmiştir. Bu talep de en temelinde Patrikliğin Ermeni toplumundaki yetki ve otoritesinin yeniden tanımlanması gerekliliğini beraberinde

getirmiştir. Bunun nedeni bu yeniden yapılanma talebinin *Agos*'un laiklik, siyasi temsil ve sivil eylem isteğiyle ortaya çıkmış ve kavramlar ekseninde yansıtılıyor olmasıdır. 1996 ve 2002 yılları arasına odaklanan bu bölümde üzerinde durulan bir diğer nokta da Ermeni kimliğinin yeniden kurulumu sürecinde Türkiye Cumhuriyeti vatandaşlığının kimlik unsuruyla da olan ilişkisidir. Ermeni toplumunun karakteristik özelliklerinden biri olan bu ikili [*dual*] kimlik özelliği aynı zamanda *Agos* tarafından vurgulanan aktif ve görünür vatandaşlık çağrısına eşlik etmektedir. Araştırılan bu dönemde *Agos* tarafından dile getirilen genel eğilim ve hem Türk hem Ermeni toplumuna yöneltilen çağrı tarihle yüzleşme ve kimliğin odağını tarihten bugüne ve geleceğe kaydırma olarak öne çıkmıştır. *Agos* tarafından bununla amaçlanan daha güncel ve üretici bir Ermeni kimliğine ulaşmaktır. Ayrıca *Agos*'un çağrısında bugüne odaklı kurulması istenen Ermeni kimliği için Ermenistan da temel bir kimlik unsuru olarak ön plana çıkmaktadır. Böylece Ermenistan *Agos* tarafından tarihe ve Ermeni kimliğine bugünden bir alternatif olarak önerilmektedir.

2003 ve 2007 yılları arasını kapsayan çalışmanın dördüncü bölümünde Ermeni kimliğinin yeniden kurulma süreci *Agos* tarafından kamusal bir tartışma konusu haline getirilin Müslüman ya da Müslümanlaştırılmış Ermeniler konusuna odaklanarak analiz edilmiştir. Bu bölümde Müslümanlaştırılmış Ermeniler üzerine yürütülen kamusal ve Ermeni toplumu içindeki tartışmaların Ermeni kimliği üzerindeki etkisi araştırılmıştır. Müslüman Ermenilerin bu dönemde Türkiye gündemine gelmesinin nedeni Hrant Dink'in 2004'te *Agos*'ta yayınlanan Sabiha Gökçen'in 1915 olaylarından sonra Müslüman aileler tarafından evlat edinilen Ermeni çocuklarından biri olabilme olasılığının sunulmasıdır. Her ne kadar İslamlaştırılmış Ermeniler ilk kez bu dönemde gündeme gelmemiş olsa da konunun yaygın olarak tartışılması ve kamusal alanda konuşulması bu döneme denk gelmiştir. Ayrıca konunun gündemde bu kadar uzun süre kalmasındaki ve büyük bir

tartışma maddesi olmasının en temel nedeni de Müslümanlaştırılmış Ermeniler konusunun Sabiha Gökçen üzerinden ortaya atılmış olmasıdır. Burada önemli olan nokta Sabiha Gökçen'in Türkiye algısındaki yeri, yani Mustafa Kemal'in manevi kızı olmasıdır. Konunun *Agos* tarafından gündeme getirilmesi Ermeni kimliğinde tarihin ve kolektif hafızanın yeniden kurulmasında etkili olmuş, tarih üzerine konuşulurken hayattan ve hayatta kalanlardan da bahsedilmesi gereğini gündeme getirmiştir. Böylece bu konu üzerine odaklanmak Ermeni kimliğine alternatif bakış açıları sağlamıştır. Aynı zamanda Müslüman Ermeniler konusunun gündeme gelmesi *Agos* tarafından 1996 yılından itibaren dile getirilen bir talep olan kilisenin reform edilmesi ve rolünün azaltılması isteğiyle de örtüşmektedir.

Müslümanlaştırılmış Ermeniler üzerine yürütülen tartışmaları takip eden dönem olan çalışmanın beşinci bölümünde ise 2007 ve 2010 yılları arasında Ermeni kimliğinin yeniden kurulmasının *Agos* üzerinden incelenirken temel olarak Hrant Dink suikastı üzerinde durulmuştur. Bu dönemde Ermeni kimliği üzerindeki en büyük etken Hrant Dink'in 19 Ocak 2007'deki suikastı ve büyük katılıma tanık olan cenazesidir. Beklenmedik bir şekilde, Hrant Dink'in ölümü gibi Ermeni toplumu için büyük ölçüde acılı olan bir olay Ermeni kimliğinin yeniden yapılanması sürecinde olumlu sonuçlara neden olmuştur. Bunun en büyük nedeni, Hrant Dink'in ölümünün Ermeni kimliğinin Ermeni toplumunun içinde sorgulanmasına neden olmuş ve Hrant Dink'in düşünsel mirasına sahip çıkılmasının gerekliliğine karar verilmesiyle sonuçlanmıştır. Aynı zamanda, Ermeni toplumu içinde öne çıkan diğer unsurlar da siyasi ve sivil yöne ağırlık verilmesinin gerekliliğidir. Ek olarak, çalışmanın bu bölüm, 2007'de Hrant Dink'in suikastından sonra *Agos*'un yeni editör olan Etyen Mahçupyan'dan da bahsetmektedir. 2007 ve 2010 yılları arasında *Agos*'u analiz eden bu bölümde ayrıca 2008 yılında Patrik'in rahatsızlanmasıyla ortaya çıkan Patriklik seçimi krizini dinin ve kilisenin Ermeni toplumu ve kimliğindeki rolü ve bunu takiben bu rolün

sorgulanarak *Agos* tarafından dile getirilen toplumun yeniden yapılanması talebiyle de incelenmektedir. Patrik'in 2008'de rahatsızlanmasıyla ortaya çıkan seçim krizi üzerine *Agos* yasal düzenleme talebiyle beraber seçilmemiş bir lider tarafından temsil edilen Ermeni toplumunun kilisenin ve dinin hegemonyasından kurtulması çağrısını da yinelemektedir. Bu çağrı aynı zamanda önceki dönemde Ermeni kimliği için yeni bir unsur olarak ortaya çıkmış olan Müslüman Ermeniler tartışmasıyla da şekillenerek dinin Ermenilik üzerindeki tanımlayıcı rolü ve etkisi *Agos* tarafından sorgulanmaktadır.

2010 yılında Etyen Mahçupyan'ın editörlüğü Rober Koptaş'a devretmesiyle başlayıp mayıs 2014'e kadar süren dönemi kapsayan altıncı bölüm, bu çalışmada *Agos* üzerinden yürütülen analizin son bölümüdür. Son bölüm olması nedeniyle kimliğin yeniden yapılanmasının analizinin yanı sıra bu bölüm aynı zamanda genel olarak çalışmanın özet sonucunu da sunmaktadır. 2010 ve 2014 yılları arasına odaklanan bu dönemin temel odağı Müslüman veya İslamlaştırılmış Ermeniler ve süregelen Patrik seçimi tartışmalarıyla bu tartışmaları takip eden reform talebidir. Bu bağlamda Ermeni kimliğinin yeniden yapılandırılması sürecinde kimliğin Müslüman Ermeniler tartışmalarından etkilenen unsurları tarih anlatıları ve sivil hayat ve siyasi temsil etrafında gerçekleşmektedir. Bu dönemde Ermeni kimliğinin yeniden yapılanma süreci tarih anlatıları ve dinin kimlikteki rolündeki değişimin eklemlenmesini tecrübe eder. 2004'ten sonra *Agos* aracılığı ile tekrar gündeme gelen Müslüman Ermeniler konusu bu dönemde bir konferans etrafında cisimlenmiştir. 2013 sonbaharında İstanbul'da organize edilen Müslümanlaş(tırıl)mış Ermeniler Konferansı ve *Agos*'un bu konferansa gazetede yoğun olarak yer vermesi bu sürecin en temel unsurlarından biridir. Müslüman ya da İslamlaştırılmış Ermenileri tekrar gündeme getiren bu konferans heterojen, değişken ve melez kimliğe yaptığı vurguyla Ermeni kimliğinin yeniden yapılanması

sürecinde Ermeni kimliğinin kurucu unsurlarını etkileyen en büyük etkendir.

Bu çalışmanın temel bulguları ve araştırmanın son tartışmaları sonuç bölümünde yeniden ele alınmış ve araştırmayı yöneten sorulara verilen cevaplar özet halinde sunulmuştur. Çalışmada sunulan Ermeni kimliğinin yeniden yapılanması süreci bu çalışmanın başında belirlenen Ermeni kimliğinin analitik unsurlarına referansla *Agos* üzerinden 1996 yılından Mayıs 2014'e kadar incelenmiştir. Çalışmayı yöneten araştırma sorusuna cevap verirken Ermeni toplumunun bugünkü durumunu anlamak için *Agos* üzerinden Ermeni kimliğinin yeniden yapılanması incelenirken Ermeniliğin yeniden tanımlanmasının en temel unsuru ve etkeni Müslüman ya da Müslümanlaştırılmış Ermeniler olarak belirlenmiştir. Konunun temel bir unsur olarak ortaya çıkmasıyla da Lozan Anlaşması ile gayri-Müslim bir azınlık olarak tanımlanmış Ermeni azınlığının yeniden tanımlanması gerekliliği bir gereklilik olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. İlerleyen dönemlerde ve gelecekteki çalışmalarda da Ermeni kimliğinin yine bu ekseninde kurulmaya devam edileceği ve Ermeniliğin bu kapsamında yeniden tanımlanma sürecine gireceği de bu çalışmanın varsayımdır.

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