



From Silence to Recognition: Exploring the Evolving Discourse on the Armenian  
Genocide by US Presidents

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## ***Abstract***

*The Armenian Genocide, a dark chapter imprinted in history, stands as a poignant reminder of the long-lasting impact of human suffering. This paper aims to analyze the discourse on the Armenian Genocide by Presidents Obama, Trump, and Biden, contributing to country studies, regional studies, and genocide studies. Through discourse analysis of their statements on Armenian Remembrance Day, we will examine the language, narratives, and perspectives expressed by the presidents. The paper argues that there has been a shift in the discourse used by President Biden by using more explicit and direct language to address the atrocities executed against the Armenian nation when comparing the respective discourse to his two predecessors. This study carries significant implications in different fields, enclosing the analysis of shifting narratives and power dynamics surrounding the Armenian Genocide, contributing to genocide studies, and supporting the ongoing objective of recognition and justice by the Armenian community.*

*Keywords: Armenian Genocide, US policy, US discourse, Obama administration, Trump administration, Biden administration*

## **1. Introduction**

Over a century ago, a dark chapter of history unfolded, leaving an indelible scar on the Armenian nation and challenging the world to confront the unsettling truth: the Armenian Genocide (Akçam, 2006). Despite the relentless pursuit of truth and justice, the international community still averts its gaze, leaving the full recognition of this tragedy an unfulfilled promise (Dadrian, 1989).

The enduring struggle of the Armenian nation to attain recognition<sup>1</sup> for the profound suffering they endured engenders a deep sense of concern and urgency. The lack of full international acceptance and recognition almost 108 later emphasizes the importance of uncovering the historical facts behind these horrors (Hovannisian, 1992). Recognizing the Genocide and the language used by influential leaders holds great symbolic and moral weight, acknowledging the victims and seeking justice. Examining the shifting power dynamics and nuances in the presidents' discourse helps us understand the complexities of international

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<sup>1</sup> As of 2023, governments and parliaments of thirty-four nations, had legally acknowledged the Armenian Genocide (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, n.d.). Three nations, Azerbaijan, Turkey, and Pakistan, openly reject that there was an Armenian Genocide.

politics and the role of language in shaping historical narratives. By examining the rhetoric employed by Presidents Obama, Trump, and Biden, we aim to contribute to the broader scholarly endeavors of country, regional, and genocide<sup>2</sup> studies.

The research problem addressed in this study is the analysis of the language regarding the Armenian Genocide as expressed by Presidents of the United States (US) – Obama, Trump, and Biden. The current research gap and limited literature on the issue of the efforts on the recognition of the Genocide, specifically by the US presidents, the foundational dynamics of power expressed in their discourse, the consequences of the recognition by the US, and the position of the US in the South Caucasus region with the evolving international scene, have developed this research problem. While there have been studies on US regional foreign policy in the South Caucasus, there has been no extensive research on how US presidents have addressed the Armenian Genocide. Previous literature has often overlooked the country-specific perspective, with a limited examination of the rhetoric employed by American leaders in relation to this historical event. This study seeks to fill a research gap by exploring the complexity of the discourse regarding the Armenian Genocide in the context of US presidential statements, therefore adding to an enhanced comprehension of this important historical event.

The primary purpose of the study lies in analyzing the US discourse around the Armenian Genocide by US Presidents Obama, Trump, and Biden might help us determine if the approach of the US currently under Biden's administration has changed when compared to the discourse used by the previous Presidents. The research study also seeks to investigate the elements observed in the discourse around the Armenian Genocide by three US presidents that may have revealed a shift in the discourse with the research question: *How does the discourse on the Armenian Genocide differ among Presidents Obama, Trump, and Biden, and how has President Biden's approach diverged from his predecessors?* We can determine changes in the discourse towards the Armenian Genocide throughout time by comparing the rhetoric of three successive administrations with their respective statements through discourse analysis.

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<sup>2</sup> United Nations Genocide Convention, adopted in 1948, defines genocide as any of five "acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group" (United Nations, 1948). Raphael Lemkin, a Polish-Jewish lawyer, used the term "genocide" in 1944 to define the diligent and systematic murder of a certain group of people. The book *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* (1944), written by Lemkin, gives observations on the execution of Nazi policies during World War II while also acknowledging past instances of mass murders.

Moreover, the analysis will strive to assess whether such a shift in the discourse towards the Armenian Genocide may be a reflection of a broader change in American foreign policies on the South Caucasus region or whether it is peculiar to US-Armenia ties. Through this process, we may obtain a clearer sense of the US's vital strategic interests in the area and the manner in which they have developed over time. In essence, the purpose of this academic examination is to uncover the elements in the discourse by the US presidents on the topic of the Armenian Genocide and reveal the probable shift in US foreign policy toward Armenia in the discourse used by Biden.

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This paper will use a qualitative small-N comparative design (Ragin, 1998) in an explanatory approach to answer the main research question and examine how three American presidents—Obama, Trump, and Biden—have discussed the Armenian Genocide in their statements based. By applying Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA), the study design intends to examine the parallels and discrepancies in their speech and find any changes in Biden's strategy from his predecessors. Moreover, by using QCA, we can see differences in their discourse about the genocide, find out what factors influenced their discourse, and explore how power dynamics and other contexts, such as recognition, justice, and the United States' role, come into play. Moreover, the explanatory approach (Toshkov, 2016) chosen for this paper is justifiable given that it is applied to find and explain the relationships and underlying influences behind how Presidents Obama, Trump, and Biden addressed the Armenian Genocide, providing a thorough examination of their respective approaches and objectives. This design will help us analyze how these presidents shaped the narrative around the Armenian Genocide and reveal the underlying dynamics at play.

These three presidents were chosen for their influence and tenure in creating US foreign policy, giving an excellent opportunity to compare and study their approaches to international matters, such as their rhetoric on the Armenian Genocide. This case selection is particularly relevant and in line with current research emphasizing the importance, which will be discussed in later chapters.

In this paper, the dependent variable is the discourse on the Armenian Genocide by Presidents Obama, Trump, and Biden. It refers to the content, language, and framing in their statements addressing the Armenian Genocide. The dependent variable captures the variations and similarities in how the presidents discuss and address the genocide. The independent

variables include shifting power dynamics and dimensions of recognition, justice, and the role of the United States in the region. These independent variables, such as geopolitical considerations, historical perspectives, and political interests, represent the factors that influence and shape the presidents' statements. By analyzing the discourse in relation to these independent variables, the research aims to understand how power dynamics and different dimensions of the Armenian Genocide contribute to shifts in statements by the US presidents. The research puzzle is considered the possible shift in the US Presidential Discourse on the Armenian Genocide.

The primary data source will be formal statements delivered by Presidents Obama, Trump, and Biden on Armenian Remembrance Day. These declarations will be acquired through official government websites. Obama's data-gathering era runs from 2009 to 2016, Trump's from 2017 to 2020, and, accordingly, Biden's from 2021 to the present. The use of presidential statements as a valuable tool for examining discourse on this subject stems from the realization that political leaders significantly impact how public narratives are shaped, and society perceives specific issues. Statements made by presidents carry much weight since they are influential public figures with the ability to influence legislation and public opinion. They are also used strategically to spread political agendas. These remarks frequently convey the viewpoint, objectives, and ideologies of the individual leaders, giving a glimpse at how they perceive and portray the issue at hand. This method has been effectively used in several papers to discover how different themes are constructed discursively, demonstrating its effectiveness and analytical worth (Venizelos, 2023; Mills, 2011). Hence, using presidential statements as a key data source for the analysis makes it feasible to comprehensively explore the discursive aspects and power dynamics related to the main topic of this paper.

The formal statements made by Presidents Obama, Trump, and Biden on Armenian Remembrance Day will be the primary source of data for this paper. This selection is influenced by the significance of Armenian Remembrance Day as a crucial occasion in commemorating the Armenian Genocide. Armenian Remembrance Day, marked on April 24th<sup>3</sup> each year, has enormous symbolic and historical relevance for the Armenian community and the larger world

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<sup>3</sup> Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day or Armenian Genocide Memorial Day takes place each year to remember the victims of the Armenian Genocide. On April 24, 1915, a tragic event took place in Constantinople and other major cities of the Ottoman Empire, where hundreds of prominent Armenians were arrested and held captive. The majority of them were brutally murdered or subjected to torture and forced labor in remote areas. This marked the beginning of a systematic attack on the Armenian nation. (Jones, 2010, p. 106).

society concerned with human rights,” genocide prevention. Presidents’ statements on this historic day offer an opportunity to examine their discourse directed to the Armenian Genocide since they are projected to discuss the historical significance, acknowledge the atrocities committed, and display their views on recognition and justice, and other matters revealed in the analysis.

Notably, in the chapter dedicated to Obama’s approaches, we looked through the statements generated by the official website of the archive devoted to the activities of Obama (<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/>). We generated the categories to look for when using the integrated search engine according to the priorities of the Armenian foreign policy, hence touching upon those subjects considered to be of the most vital importance. One of the keywords that were put on the search instrument on the website were the phrases “Armenian Remembrance Day” and “Meds Yeghern,” the Armenian term that means “The Great Crime,” which was the Armenian Genocide<sup>4</sup>. The reason behind this is that we later also see that “Medz Yeghern,” or “Meds Yeghern,” is the term used to address the atrocities committed towards Armenians in the 20th century, and using this term made it possible to generate the official statements by the presidents on April 24th, which is the “Armenian Remembrance Day.” Furthermore, the search engine generated seven results, including the President’s annual statements from 2010 until 2016, covering the period when Obama served in office. Therefore, the selection of the statements published by the White House during Obama’s period includes the time period of 2010-2016.

With the same logic used to derive statements that include the category “Armenian Genocide,” in the chapter dedicated to the discourse on the Armenian Genocide voiced by President Trump, we selected the official statements generated in the official archive website (<https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/>) devoted to the term of Trump in the White House (2017-2020).

Similarly, in the section dedicated to the discourse used by President Biden to address the Armenian Genocide, we generated the statements by the US President by using the search engine on the official website of the White House and by using the keyword “Armenian Remembrance Day,” which, in turn, refers to the day dedicated to the victims of the Armenian

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<sup>4</sup> Medz Yeghern or “Մեծ Եղիւն,” which translates to "Great Evil Crime," is an Armenian term commonly used to refer to the Armenian Genocide. In official contexts the term “Հայոց Ցեղասպանութիւն” - "Hayots Tseghaspanyun" or "Armenian Genocide" is also utilized. (Matiossian, 2013)

Genocide. The website provided annual statements on April 24th, celebrated as the Armenian Remembrance Day, by President Biden from 2021 to 2023, including the period in office to the most recent statement published in 2023. Using the statements on Armenian Remembrance Day, our goal is to analyze the discourse around the Armenian Genocide and its significance during Biden's presidency and its adopted foreign policy.

In order to find reoccurring themes and categories within the statements, a discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1989; 1995) technique will be used for the selected data. First, we will start by reading and examining the statements thoroughly, looking for recurring topics and ideas. This step will help us to find common themes, phrases, and story components referenced or stressed by the presidents. The statements will be thoroughly studied, with particular emphasis on the language, rhetorical devices, and the main ideas presented. To thoroughly examine the discourse surrounding the Armenian Genocide, the study approach will include a combination of manual coding and computer-based analysis utilizing the Spacy library. The gathered statements will be examined and evaluated to discover important themes, repeating patterns, and rhetorical narratives used by each president. This technique consisted of categories including historical truth, genocide recognition, justice, and other relevant characteristics drawn from the data, which will be put in a comparative analysis. In addition to manual coding, an automatic analytical strategy will be used with the Spacy library, which provides linguistic processing tools. We were able to examine the statements using Spacy by breaking them down into individual words, recognizing their grammatical structure, and revealing the connections between the phrases.

The highlighted themes and categories from the statements of the three presidents will be compared side by side as part of the comparative analysis. With a specific focus on any shifts in dynamics of power, acknowledgment, justice, and addressing historical truth in Biden's speech when contrasted to Obama and Trump, the analysis will look at the parallels and variations in how they discuss the Armenian Genocide. Moreover, triangulation of data sources and perspectives will also be employed to strengthen the validity of the findings.

Furthermore, addressing any biases that may result from my personal history and experiences is crucial as I perform this study on the discourse around the Armenian Genocide. Due to my positionality as a student with an Armenian heritage with a strong connection to the topic, I acknowledge the potential biases that can arise during the analysis. However, throughout this study, deliberate efforts will be made to eliminate personal views and emotions



from data processing and analysis. I will seek to conduct the study from a critical and objective standpoint by keeping conscious of my positionality and biases. By explicitly recognizing the possible biases, I intend to increase transparency and foster an improved comprehension of the study processes.

This study will employ a rigorous and systematic approach to thoroughly analyze the discourse surrounding the Armenian Genocide, as stated by Presidents Obama, Trump, and Biden. We seek to discover repeating themes, underlying narratives, and rhetorical methods used by each president by thoroughly reviewing their statements. Through this research, we intend to find the elements of their discourse on the Armenian Genocide. We can determine the parallels and variations in their approaches by diving into the details of their language choices, narratives, and rhetorical techniques, subsequently putting a spotlight on whether President Biden's discourse on the Armenian Genocide reflects a shift in comparison to his predecessors.

The structure of this paper is as follows. The following section on the overview of the existing literature explores current scholarship on US-Armenia foreign relations, emphasizing the historical backdrop and the notion of Nagorno-Karabakh, and includes hints on the US-Turkey ties and interests. The section on theoretical framework investigates power relations theory and its application to an examination of presidential language on the Armenian Genocide as well as will introduce the hypothesis that will guide the analysis. The critical section of the paper, encompassing the analysis, which in turn is divided into three subsections, examines Presidents Obama, Trump, and Biden's discourse, assessing their language and rhetoric. The discussion section summarizes the findings and provides further implications and the obstacles of the study.

## **2. US-Armenia Relations and the Complexities of Genocide Recognition**

This chapter dives into the current literature on the complexities surrounding the recognition of the Armenian Genocide and the complex nature of US-Armenia relations. It examines the historical framework of US-Armenia ties, US-Turkey relations, Armenian foreign policy, and the relevance of the Nagorno-Karabakh war in US-Armenia relations.

## 2.1 Historical Overview of the US-Armenia foreign relations

When the former Soviet Union collapsed at the end of 1991, the United States recognized the independence of Armenia (Nichol, 2001). The US has partially strengthened its relationship with the West to reduce its reliance on Russia for commerce, security, and other links. The US has fostered close connections with Armenia to support its democracy and to alleviate the concerns of Armenian Americans and others about its fate. (Nichol, 2012)

As part of its strategy for the South Caucasus, the United States has worked to mediate disputes between Georgia and its separatist territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the latter's Nagorno Karabakh (NK) area. Nichol (2012) brings up the idea of the region being acknowledged by the European Union as part of its "neighborhood," which explains that it is legitimately entitled to play a significant role, while others contend that improved ties with Azerbaijan might help the United States' relations with other Islamic nations while also helping to "contain" Iranian and Russian influence.

Petros (2003) notes how Armenia has helped the US military battle terrorism by opening its airspace to them while keeping strong political and economic connections with Russia. Armenia began to distance itself from its Russian partner immediately after independence but quickly realized that it was not in a geopolitical position to do so. Moreover, The United States did acknowledge Armenian independence on December 25th, 1991, and established diplomatic relations on January 7th, 1992.

Reflecting on the roots of the diplomatic relations between the two states, Adamyan (1995) and Petros (2003) mention that although Armenia lacks the natural resources that would draw US attention, ties between Armenia and the US remain vital due to the sizable Armenian Diaspora. There are an estimated 1.4 million Armenians in the United States. The Armenian community in the United States is enormous and politically engaged. The Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) is the biggest and most important Armenian grassroots organization in the United States. The Armenian community can exert some impact on US policy as a consequence of its actions. Armenia sees the Diaspora as an extra conduit for developing US-Armenian ties. According to Hovhannisyan (2004), in order to promote regional peace and stability, Armenia has created positive communication with the US government in military/security domains, including defense as well as economic collaboration. The US has become more interested in Armenia and the Caucasus region since September 11th, 2001. The US has endeavored to halt the expansion of Islamic influence in the area and garner

support for its fight against terrorism. The author asserts that despite US soldiers entering the area unprecedentedly to train local forces in the battle against terrorism, Russia still views the territory as crucial. To help the US military battle terrorism, Armenia has opened its airspace to them while still keeping strong political and economic connections with Russia. He also looks at Armenia's participation in or collaboration with other international organizations, such as the Council of Europe, the World Trade Organization, and NATO's Partnership for Peace Program, in addition to the development of Armenia's diplomatic ties in after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Many scholars have looked at the development of Armenian foreign policy since the country's independence in 1991 and its implications for Armenia-US ties. The direction of Armenian security and foreign policy, according to Giragosian (2003), is driven by an important pattern. The fundamental changes in security following 9/11 and the ensuing universal fight against terrorism initiated by the United States are the basis of this tendency. The United States may now be considered a Central Asian military force and is militarily active and involved in every South Caucasus nation, representing two of the main prominent effects of these post-9/11 adjustments. Moreover, on the conditions created post-9/11, according to Kotanjian (2004), the post-9/11 conditions have created a new geopolitical framework that presented Armenia with important challenges and opportunities. Notably, the South Caucasus reflects the long-term goals of US foreign policy in the large territory of Central Eurasia and is quickly developing into one of the world's most active geostrategic territories. The article also highlights the significance of Armenia in advancing security in the region and democracy in the South Caucasus, which either aligns or conflicts with the foreign policy interests of the United States, the European Union, Russia, and other players in the region in Central Eurasia.

We also see that alongside fostering political connections, Armenia sees US interests as essential to its economic security. (Petros, 2003) A Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) was signed between the United States and Armenia in May 2015. The TIFA offers tactical guidelines for the discussion of trade and investment-related problems. The agreement establishes a forum for high-level discussion of matters of shared interest to expand trade and investment prospects between the two countries. As of 2021, Armenia imported around \$137 million from the US, and exports to the US estimated \$82 million. (International Trade Administration, 2022)

The motivations underlying President Obama's move not to recognize the Armenian Genocide are examined by Zarifian (2021). To provide some background on this contentious subject, the author draws conclusions from various sources, including memoirs from the Obama administration. In his paper, Zarifian explains how several circumstances affected the Obama administration's stance on the Armenian Genocide. One crucial aspect is the delicate balance between American foreign policy toward Turkey, a critical partner and NATO member. The Obama administration was unwilling to endanger this significant partnership by recognizing the Armenian Genocide since doing so may have strained diplomatic relations and prevented collaboration on vital regional concerns. In this context, Erbal (2015) discusses the persistence of the Armenian Genocide denial and its long-term effects. Erbal emphasizes the historical background and the Ottoman Empire's systematic genocide of the Armenian people during World War I. The article stresses the need to recognize the Genocide, highlighting how denial prolongs the pain of the Armenian people and prevents justice and peace. Erbal contends that to prevent such crimes from happening in the future, the world community has to address the issue at hand, take a firm stand against denial, and promote truth, remembering, and accountability.

Poghosyan (2022) mentions, in the larger framework of American foreign policy during Trump's Administration, the strategic significance of the South Caucasus, comprised of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, owing to its geographic location and energy resources. Specifically, regarding energy diversification, security, and stability, Poghosyan argues that the United States has continued to be interested in the South Caucasus area. In the framework of the US's approach to the South Caucasus area, Novikova (2019) analyzes how the United States views its relations with Armenia. The South Caucasus is where the United States has a particular stake in fostering security and stability, especially in light of the Armenia-Azerbaijani war in Nagorno-Karabakh. The United States favors amicable conflict settlements and serves as a mediator in peace talks. Although the article summarizes American policy in the South Caucasus, it may not fully address current changes in American-Armenian ties.

The gap in how the difficulties of the Caucasus region are seen in Russian and American political discourses is supported by Markedonov (2021). Through the lenses of the "security dilemma" and the "fundamental attribution error," the author examines the US-Russian rivalry in the Caucasus. The article focuses on Biden's announcement of the "return" of his country to international processes and the strengthening of Euro-Atlantic unity and

explains the emergence of the new American power on the international scene as a whole and in the post-Soviet environment in particular, determines its importance.

The currently available literature on integrating the foreign policy of the United States towards Armenia exclusively offers a cursory review within a larger regional framework rather than concentrating on Armenia alone. This absence of an in-depth examination of US policy toward Armenia emphasizes the demand for more research. Researching US foreign policy toward Armenia is crucial because it provides an understanding of broader issues, including regional security, conflict resolution, democratization, and economic partnership. It also clarifies US interests, priorities, and strategies in the South Caucasus region and demonstrates the bilateral relationship between the US and Armenia, notably areas of cooperation and potential disagreement. The study also adds to European studies and is not restricted to the US viewpoint. As a significant player in international affairs, the EU aims to coordinate its policies with those of the US, particularly in areas of common problems and interests. Understanding US foreign policy toward Armenia helps the EU to work with the US effectively, coordinate strategies, identify possible points of agreement or disagreement, and strengthen the transatlantic relationship. A thorough EU strategy for the South Caucasus may be developed due to policy reviews, and the EU may gain from analyzing US foreign policy on regional security, efforts to resolve conflicts, democratization, and economic cooperation in the region.

## 2.2 An Overview of US-Turkey Relations

It is essential to examine the US presidential discourse regarding the Armenian Genocide by including a literature assessment on US-Turkey ties. The political, economic, and strategic facets of the relationship between the US and Turkey have all been intricately intertwined. Turkey is a NATO ally and appears to be a major regional power; therefore, it can be crucial to American geopolitics. The above pattern has frequently affected how the US manages delicate historical matters like the Armenian Genocide. Considering the background of US-Turkey ties may assist in grasping the context of US presidents' statements on the Armenian Genocide. It illustrates the complex balance between accepting historical facts and preserving diplomatic relations. Furthermore, the study of US-Turkey ties enables a more transparent comprehension of the power dynamics at play, the weight of political factors, and the limits US presidents encounter when dealing with delicate subjects such as human rights and historical justice. Our study, therefore, obtains a broad perspective by taking into account

the literature on US-Turkey relations, exposing the interaction between geopolitical reality, historical memory, and the rhetoric surrounding the Armenian Genocide.

Lesser (2006) highlights significant themes that have impacted US-Turkey ties, including internal political events in Turkey, its regional goals, and varying viewpoints on security problems. Lesser argues that the United States has often viewed Turkey through the lens of geopolitics, perceiving it as a strategic partner and a crucial ally in the region. However, he suggests that this geopolitical approach can be a “delusion” that oversimplifies the complexities of the relationship. The article highlights that while there have been periods of close cooperation and alignment of interests between the two countries, there have also been significant challenges and disagreements.

Zanotti (2016) briefly accounts for the historical backdrop and the contemporary dynamics of US-Turkey ties. The primary claim is that many political, security, and economic variables affect the relationship between the United States and Turkey. The significance of Turkey from a geopolitical standpoint, its function as a NATO ally, the difficulties posed by terrorism and regional wars, domestic political events, and the changing dynamics of US-Turkey relations under several administrations are all covered in the article. It emphasizes that while the US and Turkey have worked together strategically on several fronts, including counterterrorism initiatives and maintaining regional stability, there have also been policy differences and areas of contention, such as those involving human rights, democracy, and various approaches to regional conflicts. The paper emphasizes how crucial it is for the two nations to maintain diplomatic communication to negotiate these complications and improve collaboration in areas of shared interest.

The history and dynamics of American-Turkish ties in the period after World War I and after the Armenian Genocide occurred are examined in Daniel’s (1959) paper, where the author argues that American-Turkish relations at that point could have been influenced by the Armenian Question, which refers to the genocide, and the subsequent calls for justice and acknowledgment of the suffering of the Armenian question. The essay investigates the impact of the American reaction to the Armenian Genocide, which included humanitarian aid and diplomatic involvement, on the changing alliance between America and the newly formed Republic of Turkey. It draws attention to the conflicts and difficulties caused by the moral responsibility of the United States to alleviate the suffering of the Armenian people and its strategic interests in preserving relations with the Turkish government. The essay examines

significant occasions, diplomatic discussions, and political choices that impacted American-Turkish ties in the years following the genocide. It illuminates the difficulties and problems both countries experienced in navigating the aftermath of the Armenian Genocide and forming their bilateral relations, underscoring the delicate balance between American humanitarian concerns and political considerations.

The bilateral relationship between the United States and Turkey is examined by Albright, Cook, and Hadley (2012), who look at the political, economic, and security facets of the relationship between the two countries. They talk about the historical background and significant turning points in US-Turkish ties, such as Turkey's accession to NATO, its contribution to regional security, and its domestic political changes. The authors also explore the potential and difficulties that both nations confront regarding counterterrorism, energy security, and the advancement of democracy. It offers a more comprehensive examination of the US-Turkey relationship. It may directly address issues associated with Armenia, such as changes in regional security dynamics and old conflicts between Turkey and other countries. The interesting part is that the authors not only focus on the potential partnership between the two countries but also highlight the areas where they may find differences, such as disagreements over policy towards Syria or issues related to democracy, human rights, and freedom of the press. Additionally, the authors discuss the difficulties Turkey faces as a result of the intricate regional dynamics, including its relationship with Russia and its position on local problems like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

### 2.3 Armenian foreign policy and where does the US stand in that realm?

In this section, we are paying specific attention to Armenian foreign policy to uncover the key issues on which Armenia may mold its international profile. The inclusion of Armenian foreign policy in our literature review takes utmost relevance since it provides a critical and complex prism through which to analyze the statements and actions of successive administrations in connection to the issues vital in Armenian foreign policy. We can get advanced and thorough knowledge of the underlying reasons and complex ramifications that underlie these official views by exploring the larger context of Armenian foreign policy objectives. The pursuit of worldwide acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide and the demand for justice on behalf of its victims are two of Armenia's foreign policy objectives, and they have a significant impact on the language and approaches used by governments to confront

this historical catastrophe. This comprehensive consideration of the Armenian foreign policy permits a deeper investigation of the issues that are at the highest priority, providing relevant data about the complex web of variables that affect and mold the objectives of the Armenian foreign policy, which in turn, provides the understanding of the categories and themes, which we will use to search for in the statements later in the analysis and will be the foundation of our case selection.

According to the Official Website of the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia (Mfa.am), we can outline the foreign policy objectives of Armenia, which include “reinforcing the external security, sustaining externally beneficial circumstances for the growth of Armenia, demonstrating Armenia’s positions on the international stage, increasing the effectiveness of safeguarding Armenia’s and its citizens’ interests internationally, expanding involvement with global institutions and procedures, enhancing cooperation with partner states, along with resolving issues within the region and establishing an environment for the partnership.” Moreover, we observe that preventing genocide and other crimes is a top priority of Armenia’s foreign policy agenda. Recognizing the Armenian Genocide is of great significance to Armenian foreign policy as it allows Armenia to affirm its national identity (Dadrian, 1989) and seek justice for the victims of the genocide (Hovannisian, 1992). Moreover, the acknowledgment of the genocide by other nations sends a powerful message that acts of genocide will not be tolerated. It is outlined in the foreign policy objectives that the issue of Nagorno Karabakh and the peaceful resolution of the conflict, “based on the self-determination of the people of Artsakh,” is at the utmost priority of Armenia (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, n.d.), which we will be discussed more in details in section 2.2.1. According to the observed points of foreign policy goals, we retrieve the category from the foreign policy priorities that we want to focus our analysis on later in the paper, which encompasses the discourse on the Armenian Genocide in the context of statements of three Presidents of the United States, which is an important topic and an important example of how the recognition of such cases contributes to the prevention of such crimes in the future (Scheffer, 2006; Hovannisian, 1992; Smith, 2014; Erbal, 2015).

In the recognition debate, the literature states that governments, in contrast to legal bodies, should analyze and utilize the term “genocide” primarily from a preventive standpoint rather than a strictly criminal perspective. Insisting that a government or the UN Security Council undergoes the lengthy process of establishing that atrocities towards a nation have occurred according to international criminal law before taking decisive action is a misguided



approach. This insistence overlooks the urgency and gravity of potential genocidal situations, as waiting for conclusive legal determinations may result in missed opportunities to intervene effectively. Instead, governments should prioritize swift responses, such as military, diplomatic, or economic measures, to prevent or halt acts that could potentially escalate into genocide, even if the ultimate categorization of these acts as genocide is not immediately ascertainable. This approach recognizes the importance of prevention and highlights the necessity for proactive measures in addressing and stopping atrocities. (Scheffer, 2006)

In this section, we seek to identify shared concerns, potential crossroads of collaboration, and potential flashpoints between the United States and Armenia by analyzing the dynamics from both sides.

Due to its distinctive strategy of balancing the interests of significant global powers through a procedure known as “complementarism” or “multi-vectorism,” Armenia’s foreign policy is an interesting case among the post-Soviet republics. Armenia seeks to preserve balance in its relations with many powerful countries and reconcile its connections with them. (Melikian, 2013)

The literature gives us valuable information about the foreign policy priorities of Armenia. Minasyan (2012) mentions that since 1991, complementarity has been the cornerstone of Armenia’s foreign policy. Armenia sought to strike a delicate balance and bring together the interests of numerous international and regional forces actively engaged in the South Caucasus area, unlike many other newly independent post-Soviet republics in the early 1990s. This strategy aimed to avoid any significant allegiance to the West, Russia, or Iran. Armenia’s strategic alliance with Russia, adoption of the European development model, beneficial partnerships with Iran and the United States, membership in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), and increased cooperation with NATO are all highlighted in the country’s 2007 national security strategy as contributing factors to its complementarity-based foreign policy.

Giragosian (2005) explains that the Armenian foreign policy has aimed to reconcile the divergent interests of Russia and the Western countries while capitalizing on its valuable asset—the Armenian Diaspora. Referred to as “complementarity,” this foreign policy approach encompasses the strategic priority of ensuring security through a strong alliance with Russia and maintaining positive relations with Iran while aligning with Western principles and

objectives. Despite appearing contradictory, this policy of complementarity seems to be the logical outcome of Armenia's historical and geopolitical circumstances.

Kotchikian (2004) notes that Armenia, as a small state, has endeavored to overcome its strategic vulnerability resulting from the blockade imposed by two antagonistic neighboring countries, Turkey and Azerbaijan. In response, Armenia has developed a nuanced and multifaceted foreign policy approach.

Petros (2003) looks at the variables and occasions that have affected Armenia's foreign policy goals and decision-making procedures. The article summarizes significant historical events that have influenced Armenia's foreign policy trajectory, including the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Nagorno-Karabakh war, and states that one of the driving factors in the region's foreign policy, particularly Armenia, is security and stability. That is why it is essential to look at the foreign policy of Armenia from a security perspective. The security of Armenia has been impacted by the evolution of its interactions with Russia and the US. Russia considers the area strategic, but the United States has military personnel stationed to coach regional security forces in terrorist operations. While retaining close economic and political connections with Russia, Armenia has granted the US military accessibility to its airspace in solidarity with the battle against terrorism.

The Armenian armed forces joined the NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) program shortly after its inception in 1994. As part of its program, NATO and the three countries in the South Caucasus region, including Armenia, engage in cooperative endeavors such as high-tech scientific collaborations, English language training, defense education at NATO institutions, and civil emergency planning. Armenia has greatly benefited from participating in civil emergency planning activities and from NATO's Science Program. One notable project, which receives financial support from NATO and holds significant importance for Armenia, aims to connect the information systems of its seismological analysis institutes with those in Greece, Italy, and the United Kingdom. (Kotanjian, 2004)

More on the partnership between Armenia and the US can be found on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia's official website, which states that via Strategic Dialogue, which puts a particular emphasis on democratic reforms, the rule of law, and anti-corruption initiatives, Armenian-American ties achieved a new level in 2019. Since 1992, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has had a significant presence in Armenia, undertaking several initiatives to help business development, energy regulation,

humanitarian relief, legislative reforms, etc. The US is crucial to Armenia's growth since it is one of the leading suppliers of aid to Armenia. Furthermore, the US actively helps maintain stability in the South Caucasus area as co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, notably by finding a peaceful settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, n.d.).

#### 2.4 The Concept of Nagorno-Karabakh in the Context of US-Armenia Relations

In the US-Armenia relations framework, the Nagorno-Karabakh issue is of critical importance. The dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan has its roots in this area, and the US has actively participated as a co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group to find a peaceful settlement. The views, trust, and collaboration between both countries can be influenced by the United States' position and actions in Nagorno-Karabakh, which may also affect regional dynamics and chances for peace and stability.

Navigating the Nagorno-Karabakh War presented unique difficulties for the United States. On one side, given Azerbaijan's substantial oil resources, the US is interested in preserving its territorial integrity and stability. The US administration's capacity to serve as an unbiased mediator in the dispute, especially concerning Azerbaijan, has been constrained by domestic reasons. The US government has also struggled with Russia's participation and developing a strategic course of action. The US could only participate in the fight somewhat when a truce was mediated. (Kasim, 2012)

Ismailzade, F. (2005) explains the essence of The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which started in 1988, by stating that it had significant implications for the Soviet Union's collapse and the newly independent nations of Azerbaijan and Armenia. The conflict resulted in the displacement of over a million Azerbaijanis and hundreds of thousands of Armenians. A fragile ceasefire was established in 1994, but Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding provinces remained under Armenian occupation. The geographical location of the conflict, acting as a bridge between East and West and the former Soviet territories and the Islamic world, has contributed to its complexity. This consideration attracted the attention of regional powers, leading to competition and rivalry among them. Additionally, Azerbaijan's substantial oil and gas reserves have drawn the involvement of external powers such as the United States, China, and

the European Union, eager to secure energy resources. Consequently, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict remains unresolved and frozen, characterized by geopolitical complications.

The study of the relevant literature has advanced knowledge of US-Armenia relations and highlights the need to compare foreign policies throughout administrations. The complexities of US foreign policy towards Armenia under the Biden administration and its consequences for the larger geopolitical environment call for further investigation and study.

### **3. Unveiling Narratives: A Comparative Analysis of the US Presidential Discourse on the Armenian Genocide**

This paper relies on the power relations theory, which can help to examine how power is used and exerted through language. This focus may be explored by examining how language may create social hierarchies, validates some perspectives, and represses others. Fairclough (1989) investigates the relationship between language and power. He demonstrated that specific language elements might be employed to conceal the agency of strong players and make their positions seem inevitable. In his view, language serves as a tool for both the exercise and maintenance of power in addition to serving as a medium of communication. Power systems have an impact on language, which then reflects the ideologies and social connotations attached to it. According to Fairclough, persons in positions of authority purposefully utilize language to sway narratives and affect public perception. They can establish what constitutes reliable data and dictate the language and frameworks used in discussions and disagreements.

A theoretical framework for investigating how power dynamics is reflected and enacted via discourse, particularly regarding the Armenian Genocide, will be provided by incorporating Fairclough's (1989) theory about power and language. It provides a bridge between the goal of the paper and the subject of the study. It will facilitate the process of analyzing how language is applied to this subject to create narratives, sway public opinion, and uphold or undermine power structures. Moreover, using the concept of power relations, we may examine how power influenced the direction of American foreign policy regarding the Armenian Genocide. We utilize the theory in our analysis to explore how the US President's language and actions—as well as tying the topic with the mentioned literature, we may

incorporate its interactions with other nations involved in the problem, such as Turkey—are influenced by power relations. Furthermore, in the scope of our paper, the power and language theory serves as a foundation for utilizing discourse analysis as the primary methodology approach to explore how power dynamics impact the perspectives, interests, and actions of different elements that will be derived from the analysis, shaping the discourse and potential policy outcomes.

The research question, based on Fairclough’s theory of power and language (1989), strives to investigate Presidents Obama, Trump, and Biden’s statements on Armenian Remembrance Day and the power dynamics; hence our hypothesis is as follows:

H: The discourse on the Armenian Genocide by Presidents Obama, Trump, and Biden through their statements reflects shifting power dynamics and highlights different elements concerning recognition, justice, and the collaborative ties between Armenia and the US. We expect that in the discourse around the Armenian Genocide, Presidents Obama and Trump avoid using the word “genocide” openly, revealing a power dynamic that puts diplomatic worries ahead of accepting historical facts. In contrast, President Biden’s speech on the Armenian Genocide represents a shift in the discourse with an open and explicit usage of the term “genocide” to characterize the atrocities committed against the Armenian people. His use of words has changed from the circumspect manner of his predecessors, signaling a deeper commitment to truth, justice, and recognition. Using the term “genocide,” President Biden undermines the historical narrative and suggests a more direct discourse addressing the historical injustices the Armenian people suffered.

### 3.1 President Obama’s Approach to the Armenian Genocide: Acknowledging the Past

As we are looking into the statements of President Obama in regard to the Armenian Genocide, the first thing that we pay attention to is how the Genocide is portrayed in his statements. We observe that repeatedly emphasized the remembrance of the Meds Yeghern, the widespread atrocities endured by the Armenian people in 1915 during the latter days of the Ottoman Empire. The messages convey their regret and anguish for the lost lives and the hardship the Armenian community has faced.

*(“... we commemorate the Meds Yeghern and honor those who perished in one of the worst atrocities;” ...” We are joined in*

*solemn commemoration by millions in the United States and across the world” (Statement by the President on Armenian Remembrance Day, 2013; 2014;2015; 2016)*

The statements have a recurring theme of the importance of historical remembrance and the need to align with the past. US Ambassador Henry Morgenthau, who contributed to bringing attention to the brutality and working to end the crimes (Balakian, 2003), is frequently mentioned. This mention may emphasize the significance of historical personalities and their attempts to draw attention to human rights violations. This recurring theme illustrates the proactive position adopted by a well-known American official in addressing the hardships of the Armenian people by stressing Ambassador Morgenthau’s attempts to raise awareness and challenge Ottoman leaders during the massacres. This focus on American engagement and concern may strengthen the sense of humanity and compassion. It is important to note that the repeated reference to Ambassador Morgenthau does not mention the Obama Administration’s or the United States’ official recognition of the Armenian Genocide. Instead, it acts as a historical touchstone, noting the part played by an American diplomat in spreading awareness of the crimes and fighting for the rights of the Armenian people.

The observations also show that these statements recognize the Armenian people’s tenacity and significance to the American culture and the wider world. They draw attention to the numerous Armenian immigrants who set fresh starts in the US. Moreover, touching upon the Armenian people, Obama’s choice of language, referring to the circumstances as the “Meds Yeghern,” is particularly noteworthy. President Obama appreciates the Armenian perspective and their profound historical understanding of the events by utilizing the Armenian phrase. It is vital to remember that these remarks do not use the word “genocide” directly and explicitly. Given that it falls short of the goal of Armenian foreign policy, this oversight has been a source of dispute for those calling for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

We can establish one significant dilemma in these statements directed at Armenian Remembrance Day. These documents do not specifically ascribe the events to a premeditated act of genocide, even if they express sorrow and recognize the agony endured by the Armenian people. However, they stress the value of a “full, frank, and just acknowledgment of the facts,” signifying an understanding of the necessity for historical truth and justice. These statements highlight a number of recurrent themes and groups that provide insight into the Obama

Administration's position on US foreign policy toward Armenia and its recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

Commemoration and remembrance emerge as central themes throughout the statements. The statements also emphasize the idea of universal humanity and compassion. They underline the ties between the American and Armenian peoples, thanking Americans for their support and thanking Armenian Americans for their contributions to American society. A notable theme, however, a political dilemma can be considered the call for a comprehensive acknowledgment of the historical truth surrounding the Armenian Genocide. Moreover, the language of the statements suggests a deliberate balancing act between recognizing the Armenian Genocide's historical reality and preserving diplomatic connections. The comments do not specifically utilize the word "genocide," which may be due to political reasons and the sensitive nature of the subject in light of US-Turkish ties.

### 3.2 President Trump's Language on the Armenian Genocide: A Contested Narrative?

Starting with the first point of observing how President Trump addresses the Armenian Genocide and the specific wording used, we find that in his statements, Trump refers to the Armenian Genocide as one of the worst mass murders of the 20th century. The Armenian phrase "Meds Yeghern" is used to indicate the historical catastrophe even if the word "genocide" is not used officially. The statements emphasize the value of remembering and expressing sorrow for those who endured suffering and lost their lives during the Meds Yeghern. The statements pay tribute to those who suffered and perished during the Meds Yeghern and express their sadness over their passing. President Trump shares the grieving and reflection among the Armenian community over the lives lost in this awful incident.

*"... those who suffered during the Meds Yeghern...; ... we commemorate the Meds Yeghern, one of the worst mass atrocities of the 20th century"* (Statement by President Donald J. Trump on Armenian Remembrance Day, 2017; 2018; 2019; 2020).

These addresses also emphasize the tenacity and contributions of the Armenian people. President Trump honors Armenians who built new realities and made essential contributions to the nation in the United States. Additionally, these remarks recognize the Armenian community's power and contributions to culture.

*“... take this moment to recognize the courage of those individuals who sought to end the violence...; we also honor and recognize the work; we pay respect to those who suffered; we also recognize the resilience of the Armenian people”*(Statement by President Donald J. Trump on Armenian Remembrance Day, 2017; 2018; 2019; 2020).

The significance of recognizing previous crimes in order to stop their repetition is emphasized. President Trump emphasized the importance of admitting and coming to terms with sad aspects of history as well as his resolve to prevent such crimes in the future. The remarks praise Turkish and Armenian peoples' efforts to recognize their common heritage and work toward a more equitable and inclusive future. This statement may emphasize the value of open communication, mutual respect, and collaboration between the two countries to advance atonement and develop a more inclusive society. President Trump shows support for agendas aimed at healing historical grievances and fostering a more amicable relationship between the Turkish and Armenian peoples by endorsing these efforts.

*“ ... We welcome the efforts of Armenians and Turks to acknowledge and reckon with their painful history.”* (Statement by the President on Armenian Remembrance Day, 2019).

The president's remarks also emphasize the remembrance of and collaboration on Armenian Remembrance Day on a global scale. They underline the shared principles and longstanding relationships between the American and Armenian peoples as well as the universal importance of this day and their solidarity with all Armenians worldwide. Additionally, President Trump highlights the historical ties and solidarity between the two countries by thanking Americans for their sacrifices in providing critical humanitarian aid to Armenian refugees.

Based on the analysis, the following themes and categories may be determined from President Donald J. Trump's statements on Armenian Remembrance Day:

- Recognition of the Armenian Genocide.
- Mourning and Remembrance.
- Resilience and Contributions of the Armenian People.
- Prevention.
- International Commemoration.



President Trump and President Obama, in their statements addressing Armenian Remembrance Day, acknowledge historical injustices, stress the significance of remembering the past, and make amends for it. Both presidents use discursive components in the sense of compassion and mourning for the deaths, acknowledgment of the Armenian people's resilience, and a plea to prevent further crimes. They also emphasize the efforts made by individuals and entities in supporting survivors and rehabilitating communities. However, a notable discursive difference lies in their choice of terminology. However, the vocabulary they choose shows a clear conceptual difference. While President Obama used the name "Medz Yeghern" to describe the events, President Trump has used terms like "one of the worst mass atrocities" instead. Despite this distinction, both presidents stressed the importance of global remembrance, global Armenian solidarity, and the lasting ties between the American and Armenian peoples. President Obama and Trump mentioned Henry Morgenthau, the American ambassador to the Ottoman Empire during the Armenian Genocide, in their addresses commemorating Armenian Remembrance Day. Both presidents emphasize the part that individuals play in humanitarian endeavors by praising Morgenthau for his efforts to put an end to the bloodshed and his subsequent commitment to helping the Armenian people, which might be seen as acknowledging his impact and position as the United States Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire during the Armenian Genocide. In terms of power dynamics, mentioning Henry Morgenthau might signify the perception of the United States as a significant player in international affairs. By highlighting Morgenthau's efforts, the narrative brings up the role of the United States in shaping the response to the Armenian Genocide and demonstrates a sense of responsibility or moral obligation to address historical injustices.

Moreover, we also look at how using pronouns reflects the power dynamics at work. Using inclusive pronouns like "we" and "our," President Obama encourages cooperation and solidarity among the audience. Using inclusive language, Obama establishes his authority as the President of the United States and portrays himself as a leader who recognizes and understands the Armenian population. As opposed to this, President Trump's language focuses more on the pronoun "I." In contrast to Obama's inclusive wording, this usage emphasizes Trump's involvement in and acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide, which reflects a more individualistic viewpoint. Trump positions himself as an active participant in the remembrance by using the pronoun "I," demonstrating his authority and knowledge of the topic.

### 3.3 President Biden’s Shifting Discourse on the Armenian Genocide: Breaking the Silence

In this section, we focus on the statements of President Biden, and we put our effort into analyzing the statements on the Armenian Genocide to later use them to compare the narrative of the remarks with the previous administrations. Using the statements on Armenian Remembrance Day, our goal is to analyze the discourse around the Armenian Genocide and its significance within the Biden administration and its adopted foreign policy. This section aims to uncover the language, rhetoric, and underlying meanings in these selected statements.

President Biden uses bold and unequivocal language in all three statements to acknowledge and recognize the Armenian Genocide as a historical catastrophe. In contrast to past administrations, which frequently avoided formal acknowledgment, the usage of terms like “Armenian Genocide,” “Ottoman-era Armenian Genocide,” and “Meds Yeghern” shows a change, a shift in the language used by a US president to address the Armenian Genocide. This verbiage highlights the president’s dedication to historical accuracy and recognizing historical injustices. Additionally, it can be considered that starting with his first statement President Biden shows consistency by using the term genocide instead of “atrocities” or other words to describe the crimes that happened in the Ottoman era:

*“ ...we remember the lives of all those who died in the Ottoman-era Armenian genocide .....,” “ On April 24th, 1915, Ottoman authorities arrested Armenian intellectuals and community leaders in Constantinople. Thus began the Armenian genocide...,” “Today, we pause to remember the lives lost during the Meds Yeghern—the Armenian genocide...”* (Statement by President Joe Biden on Armenian Remembrance Day, 2021, April 24th; 2022, April 24th; 2023 April 24th)

In all of his remarks, President Biden has emphasized the value of remembering and celebrating the past. Terms like “*honor the victims,*” “*remember the lives of all those who died,*” and “mourn what was lost” evoke a feeling of seriousness and sympathy. President Biden recognizes the collective grief of the Armenian people by acknowledging the suffering and loss they have endured, as well as the lasting effects of the genocide on Armenian communities.

*“One and a half million Armenians were deported, massacred, or marched to their deaths in a campaign of extermination,” “... and mourn the tragic loss of so many lives.,” “... a tragedy that forever affected generations of Armenian families.”* (Statement by President Joe Biden on Armenian Remembrance Day, 2021, April 24th; 2022, April 24th; 2023, April 24th)

President Biden also emphasizes the Armenian people’s resilience and efforts to rebuild. Phrases such as “Forced to find new homes and new lives,” “survived and rebuilt their community,” and “strength and resilience” are used to describe how the Armenian community overcame hardship and preserved their culture. Given the ability and will in the face of extreme pain, the Armenian people are given greater power by their story of resiliency. Here, the statement emphasizes that one of the locations where the suffering community found a home was the United States, which can show the power dynamics very discreetly and show how the US gave them a new opportunity to live and preserve their culture:

*“So many of those who survived were forced to begin new lives in new lands—including the United States ... they nurtured their families and preserved their culture.”* (Statement by President Joe Biden on Armenian Remembrance Day, 2023, April 24th)

We can observe that bringing up the idea that the Armenian people had the ability to preserve their culture and how *“They strengthened our nation”* (Statement by President Joe Biden on Armenian Remembrance Day, 2023, April 24th) was a new concept compared to the last presidents’ statements. In this sense, President Biden provides an acknowledgment of the efforts that the community put in their country by phrasing it as if they were an addition to the stability of the US. Furthermore, this comment highlights the significant contributions that Armenian immigrants have made to the country. The purpose of this phrase can be to recognize and value the contributions made by the Armenian community to American society and to present them as an integral component of the fabric of the nation.

Furthermore, President Biden constantly highlights the significance of human rights and the need to stop such crimes in his speeches. Using language such as *“preventing such an atrocity from ever again occurring,” “remain ever-vigilant against the corrosive influence of hate,”* and *“recommit ourselves to speaking out and stopping atrocities”* demonstrates a dedication to advancing justice and maintaining human rights ideals (Statement by President Joe Biden on Armenian Remembrance Day, 2021, April 24th; 2022, April 24th; 2023 April

24th). Armenia's foreign policy aims and more extensive international efforts to combat genocide and crimes against humanity align with the emphasis on preventing future tragedies.

The remarks made by President Biden also highlight the necessity of opening the borders, reconciliation<sup>5</sup> and building a brighter future. The expressions "*pursue healing and reconciliation,*" "*forge a better future,*" and "world unstained by the daily evils of bigotry and intolerance" all suggest a more tolerant and equitable society. These remarks demonstrate a desire to promote international harmony, collaboration, and a sense of shared accountability to correct historical injustices (Statement by President Joe Biden on Armenian Remembrance Day, 2021, April 24th; 2022, April 24th; 2023, April 24th).

Compared to prior administrations, President Biden's rhetoric has changed significantly, according to a discourse analysis of his remarks on Armenian Remembrance Day. The Biden administration's willingness to face historical truths and advance justice is shown by the administration's explicit recognition of the Armenian Genocide, emphasis on remembrance and commemoration, recognition of resilience and rebuilding, commitment to preventing further atrocities, and call for healing and reconciliation. The aspirations of the Armenian people for recognition, justice, and a more accepting world are echoed in these declarations, which align with Armenia's foreign policy aims. The use of the word "genocide" by President Biden deviates from prior administrations' rejection of the term and shows a proactive approach to redressing historical injustices and fostering a brighter future. The Armenian community may benefit from this shift in discourse since it validates their experiences and gives them a sense of empowerment.

Moreover, in addition to its significance in history, President Biden's use of the word "genocide" in his remarks on Armenian Remembrance Day has broader implications. The use of the word "genocide" might be interpreted as a delicate diplomatic problem affecting bilateral ties, regardless of the fact that the comments did not specifically mention the current relations between the US and Turkey. Turkey, a significant NATO partner, has passionately opposed and aggressively fought against the designation of the events of 1915 as genocide. As a result,

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<sup>5</sup> Reconciliation between Armenia and Turkey has been a long-standing challenge, principally because of the unsolved issue of the Armenian Genocide, the conflict of Nagorno Karabakh, etc. The denial of the genocide by Turkey has created deep-rooted resentment and mistrust, impeding any meaningful progress. The absence of diplomatic relations and the closed border further exacerbate the strained relationship between the two countries. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, n.d.)

President Biden's utilization of the phrase might be seen as a change from other administrations' avoidance and a possible division in US-Turkey ties. However, this topic unveils an opportunity for future research that will uncover the US-Turkey relations in light of President Biden's recognition of the Armenian Genocide. President Biden sends a message that he is ready to put human rights and historical accuracy ahead of political expediency by formally recognizing the Armenian Genocide. The relationship between the United States and Turkey may suffer as a result of this position. The administration's decision to use the word "genocide" shows a break from diplomatic restraint and its dedication to upholding the concepts of justice and accountability. It is a symbolic act that connects with the Diaspora of Armenians and fosters their ongoing struggle to be recognized and reconciled. It is a symbolic gesture that resonates with the Armenian Diaspora and supports their longstanding efforts for recognition and reconciliation.

Based on our analysis of the statements, we can retrieve the recurring themes and categories that were seen in the contexts and demonstrate the differences in their chosen language and rhetoric between the Presidents. The results are shown in the table below.

If we consider power dynamics and power relations theory in this context, we can observe that in the frameworks of Obama's and Trump's statements, one significant area where power relations are at play is the acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide. Due to the complicated power relations between the United States and Turkey, Presidents Obama and Trump refrained from using the word "genocide." Recognizing the Armenian Genocide might deteriorate bilateral ties between the United States and Turkey, a vital NATO partner.

On the other hand, President Biden's use of the word "genocide" suggests a change in the power dynamics. Biden shows a determination to put historical truth and justice primarily, regardless of the risk of deteriorating relations with Turkey, by publicly acknowledging the Armenian Genocide. This change can be linked to shifting geopolitical conditions and reevaluating US foreign policy goals.

When it comes to commemorating the Armenian Genocide, each president displays a sense of regret or grief for the lives lost during the genocide. President Biden goes even further, underlining the significance of remembering and repeating the commitment to "*never forget.*" Both Obama and Trump emphasize the need to remember and learn from the past to prevent

future tragedies, while President Biden, similar to the theme of commemoration, reiterates his vow to never forget and to prevent such crimes.

To varied degrees, all three presidents acknowledge the Armenian people's resilience. President Biden particularly comments on their resilience and emphasizes their attempts to maintain their culture. As previously said, a focus on culture is a new theme used by President Biden in the discourse of the Armenian Genocide. Regarding reconciliation efforts, Obama and Trump welcomed the recognition of history and the ongoing attempts to reconcile between the Armenian and Turkish people. President Biden made no explicit mention of reconciliation in his remarks. Instead, his statements addressed the topic directly, to what it seems, intending to put an emphasis on the genocide recognition action without expanding on other topics and themes. All three presidents stressed cooperation with the Armenian people, expressing sympathy, recognizing international linkages, and respecting the Armenian community's contributions to American society.

Moreover, Biden, for instance, does not mention any political figure, such as Henry Morgenthau, which contributed to human rights efforts. This change might be a deliberate move to support a more inclusive narrative that highlights the collective tenacity and power of the Armenian people rather than pinning the development only on specific individuals. This narrative also aligns with Biden's stress on how Armenian people contribute to the strength of their country, and the much broader take would be that instead of focusing on the efforts done by US political individuals, as seen in Obama's and Trump's statements, Biden highlighted the contributions and efforts of the Armenian society. President Biden's statements prioritize the message of remembrance, resilience, and prevention of future atrocities.

*Comparative Analysis of Presidential Discourse on the Armenian Genocide: Recurring Themes and Categories across the Discourses by Presidents Obama, Trump, and Biden*

Themes and Categories		President Obama	President Trump	President Biden
<b>Recognition</b>	No use of the term "genocide," uses "Medz Yeghern".	No use of the term "genocide"; uses "Medz Yeghern".	Refers to the "Armenian Genocide" explicitly.	
<b>Commemoration</b>	Mourns the loss of innocent lives.	Grieves for the lost lives.	Remembers the lives lost and renews the promise to "never forget".	
<b>The Resilience of the Armenian People</b>	Recognizes the resilience of the Armenian people.	Highlights the resilience of the Armenian people.	Reflects on the resilience of the Armenian people and their efforts to preserve their culture.	
<b>Remembering and Learning</b>	Stresses the need to remember such crimes to prevent them from happening again.	Pledges to learn from past tragedies to ensure they are not repeated.	Renews the pledge to never forget and to prevent such crimes.	
<b>Reconciliation Efforts</b>	Welcomes the efforts of Turks and Armenians to acknowledge history.	Supports the acknowledgment of history and the reconciliation efforts between Armenians and Turks.	Does not explicitly mention the topic.	
<b>Cooperation</b>	Expresses solidarity with the Armenian people worldwide.	Acknowledges the ties between the two nations and the contributions of Americans in supporting Armenian refugees.	Values the contributions of the Armenian community to American society.	
<b>Political Figures</b>	Mentions Henry Morgenthau and Raphael Lemkin	Highlights the contributions of Henry Morgenthau and Raphael Lemkin.	Does not mention individual initiatives.	

## 4. Discussion

This paper examined the discourse around the Armenian Genocide by three US Presidents – Obama, Trump, and Biden – through discourse analysis. It used the extracted categories and themes to draw a comparison to detect any differences and shifts in the discourse in the rhetoric used by President Biden. We aim to contribute to broader scholarly endeavors in country-specific, regional, and genocide studies.

To sum up the paper, we have produced three conclusions. The first conclusion is that the analysis revealed an interesting trend, with President Biden using more explicit language in recognizing the truth of the Armenian Genocide and emphasizing the importance of preventing similar atrocities in the future. We revealed that Presidents Obama and Trump did not use the word “genocide,” rather referring to it as “Medz Yeghern,” an Armenian phrase that translates as “Great Evil Crime.” President Biden, on the other hand, publicly acknowledged the crime as the “Armenian Genocide.” This evolution in acknowledgment represents a crucial shift in the debate around the historical truth of the Armenian Genocide within the context of the US.

The second conclusion of the paper is that the statements by the US Presidents emphasized themes of remembering the past and resilience. For instance, we saw that while all three presidents grieved the lives lost during the genocide, President Biden focused on the grief of the Armenian people and their efforts to maintain their culture and identity, highlighting one of the distinctive features of Biden’s discourse.

Adding to the previously stated findings, we have come up with another conclusion that arose from examining President Biden’s used discourse. President Biden, unlike his predecessors, does not specifically identify specific political individuals, such as Henry Morgenthau, who played a crucial role in human rights endeavors. This change in emphasis may reflect a shift toward creating a more inclusive narrative that stresses the collective resilience of the Armenian people and might, compared to attributing development only to individual players.

These findings expand upon the existing literature by addressing the limited focus on country-specific studies related to Armenia and the US rhetoric on the Armenian Genocide. Previous research has primarily examined the US regional foreign policy in the South Caucasus, neglecting a comprehensive examination of how US presidents have specifically



discussed the Armenian Genocide. By thoroughly analyzing the statements of Obama, Trump, and Biden, this study fills that gap. It provides valuable findings into the evolving discourse on this topic within the research on the US president and their used discourse. The paper adds a vital dimension to the current literature by highlighting the need for further country-specific research and incorporating it within the larger framework of international relations and historical recognition initiatives.

Despite the conclusions obtained from this paper, it is vital to acknowledge the obstacles we faced while conducting the research. To begin with, the analysis was primarily based on remarks made by three American presidents, which may not accurately reflect their views in the bigger picture. The investigation did not cover other types of communication, such as official policy publications or diplomatic encounters. However, this paper can serve as a foundation for further studies on more specific and in-depth foreign policy analysis on Armenia-US relations, as well as considering the connection between the main topic of this paper with the foreign policy of Turkey and we can contribute to the further examinations of US-Turkey relations.

The findings of this study may hold implications for understanding the discourse surrounding the Armenian Genocide and its recognition by American presidents. Moreover, analyzing various patterns in Obama, Trump, and Biden's rhetoric provides perspective on the developing views and responses to the Armenian Genocide within the American political scene.

The explicit use of the term "genocide" by President Biden, as well as his focus on preventing future atrocities, demonstrate a trend toward a more explicit recognition of past events and a dedication to preserving fundamental human rights. This narrative may have implications for the further pursuit of recognition and justice by the Armenian community and the international community, as a more open discourse on the Genocide can contribute to the initiative of achieving international recognition and further prevention of such crimes.

Furthermore, the presidents' divergent responses can underscore the delicate interaction between political interests and moral imperatives in dealing with past tragedies. The paper highlights the importance of power dynamics and political objectives in shaping discourse about critical historical events. Further understanding of these dynamics can help us develop a better grasp of how political leaders manage sensitive historical problems and the impact of their public discourses on those impacted.

The findings also add to the body of knowledge on the Armenian Genocide by analyzing the presidents of the US rhetoric, which has received less attention in other research on regional foreign policy. The discourse analysis is given a special perspective by the evaluation of presidential statements, which reveals the influence of influential individuals on popular narratives and perceptions of the Armenian Genocide. The results of this study may be used as a resource by decision-makers, advocates, and academics involved with issues such as genocide recognition, human rights, and historical justice. They can also serve as a foundation for future studies, initiatives, and policies.

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