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Enacting multi-layered citizenship: Turkey's Armenians' struggle for justice and equality

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ABSTRACT

Throughout the history of the Turkish Republic, Turkey's Armenians have been subjected to a trade-off between the limited minority rights granted by the 1923 Lausanne Treaty and equal national citizenship. Traditionally a closed, depoliticized community, the citizenship practices of the Armenian minority have become increasingly differentiated in recent years. Building on a notion of citizenship as multi-layered and constituted through collective practice, this article investigates the implications of the political acts of Turkey's Armenian minority on sub-national and national citizenship in Turkey. We show that Turkey's Armenians are coupling rights demands, identification, normative references, and mobilization at the sub-national, national, and transnational levels in innovative ways, and are thereby negotiating different layers of citizenship in Turkey in a way that strengthens equal national citizenship.

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Introduction

In recent years, citizenship studies in Turkey have burgeoned into a rich body of literature, focusing *inter alia* on the effects of globalization and identity politics, limitations and extensions of rights, and mobilization in the context of various citizen-groups in Turkey. In this respect, non-Muslim communities in Turkey have also received significant attention. However, although there is by now a fairly developed literature on the historical evolution and continuing constraints of the non-Muslim minority rights in Turkey (Aktar 2000; Bali 2000; Icduygu, Toktas, and Soner 2008; Oran 2004; Ozdogan et al. 2009; Toktas 2005), relatively less empirical research has actually been conducted on the politics of non-Muslim communities themselves (Bali 2000; Ozdogan et al. 2009). Given the deep transformations that Turkish politics and society has undergone in recent decades, how different citizen-groups are negotiating and reconciling multiple layers of identity and citizenship in practice is assuming utmost importance. Building on original empirical research on Turkish citizens of Armenian origin in Turkey (hereafter referred alternatively as Turkey's Armenians or Turkish-Armenians),¹ as well as on recent theoretical advances in citizenship studies, we analyze the ways in which Turkey's Armenians have re-negotiated and

thus altered minority and national citizenship through practice. We argue that rather than solely recognizing minority identity, this negotiation process has aimed at strengthening their equal national citizenship.²

Recent theoretical advances in citizenship studies have undermined the dominant construction of citizenship as a legal status granted by virtue of membership in a national community, and have focused on the practices by which citizenship is acted and enacted (Isin 2002; Isin and Nielsen 2008). Nation states remain as the only institutions that can grant citizenship status. Yet, in practice, citizenship has undergone a process of de-nationalization (Benhabib 2004; Kadioglu 2007; Soysal 1994). If citizenship consists of rights, freedoms, duties, participation, and identity (Delanty 2000), then individuals, as members of multiple sub-national, national, and transnational identity communities, holding rights at the sub-national, national as well as the global level, and engaging in sub-national, national, and transnational political activism, are in fact practicing, and thereby constituting citizenship as multi-layered (Yuval-Davis 1999).

The citizenship of Turkish-Armenians formally takes on a multi-layered character, as they possess rights both as members of a non-Muslim community and as citizens of Turkey. In contrast to the Muslim ethnic and religious minorities in Turkey, such as the Kurds and the Alevis, the Armenians along with the Jewish and Greek Orthodox minorities have enjoyed a certain set of group rights, granted to them by the 1923 Lausanne Treaty. Yet, the Turkish state has narrowly interpreted and inadequately implemented these group rights and freedoms, which are already below contemporary standards of minority protection (Oran 2004). At the same time, often subjected to discriminatory practices of the Turkish state and the historical prejudices of the Turkish-Muslim majority, Armenians experience at best a tenuous existence as national citizens (Okutan 2004; Ozdogan et al. 2009). Moreover, as this article will demonstrate, they have experienced a regular tension and trade-off between sub-national rights and national citizenship: defending sub-national rights and identity have required Turkey's Armenians to silently endure second-class treatment as national citizens. Claiming rights and equality as national citizens, on the other hand, has necessitated that they de-emphasize their sub-national rights and identity.

In this article, we analyze how Turkey's Armenians are enacting and negotiating citizenship within this multi-layered structure by focusing on three recent issues involving the Armenian community in Turkey, namely the controversy over the election of a new patriarch, the statement of condolences issued by the then Prime Minister of Turkey, Erdogan, on the 99th anniversary of the Armenian massacres, and the property rights cases that were taken to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). Drawing on the coverage of the three issues mainly in the Turkish and Turkish/Armenian press,³ formal interviews conducted with a representative set of Armenian institutions,⁴ and on our extensive conversations with Armenian intellectuals and civil society leaders (2011 to present), we survey the acts of citizenship undertaken by different groups of Armenian citizens and analyze the meanings and implications of those acts at different layers of citizenship.

In the next section, we introduce our conceptual and methodological approach, which is premised on conceiving citizenship as enacted and multi-layered. Mainly drawing on secondary literature, the following section provides an overview of the citizenship structure of Turkish-Armenians, situating the sub-national and national layers and their relationship in historical context. In the penultimate section, we present our primary analysis, which focuses on the political acts carried out by members of the Armenian community in the

context of the above-mentioned three issues. In the final concluding section, we summarize our findings and draw implications for citizenship, democracy, and reconciliation in Turkey.

Minorities and multi-layered citizenship

The literature on minorities and citizenship involves both theoretical and institutional studies and debates around various versions of multi-cultural citizenship (Castles 1997; Joppke and Lukes 1999; Kymlicka 1995), and empirical research on minority mobilization (Giugni and Passy 2004; Koopmans and Statham 1999). Although widely distinct, both literatures share a similar approach to citizenship, as an institution imposed from above that enables or constrains citizens' rights, allegiances, and activism. In contrast, we view citizenship not only as a pre-given institutional structure, but a collective practice that is enacted by the citizens (and non-citizens) themselves to gain and enhance rights and freedoms (Isin 2007; Isin and Nielsen 2008). Citizenship comes into being and is continuously remade through the ways in which citizens (and non-citizens) act toward the status, rights, privileges, and responsibilities they do (or do not) possess.

The study of citizenship as collective practice is burgeoning through the growing number of works that empirically analyze the different ways in which citizenship is enacted by various political actors, including those who do not possess the status of citizenship (Isin and Nielsen 2008; McNevin 2006; Nyers 2003). Although citizenship is a national-level status, the enactment of citizenship is not necessarily confined to the national level. As Soysal (2001) notes, the boundaries of the political no longer correspond to those of citizenship, as cross-national allegiances, solidarities, and movements proliferate and a universal human rights discourse becomes entrenched. In other words, the possession of certain rights and entitlements are becoming divorced from membership of national political communities, and as individuals claim rights and invoke allegiances beyond their nation states, their political practices come to constitute enactments of citizenship at the trans and supranational levels (Isin and Saward 2013). The enactment of citizenship also extends to the sub-national level as identity politics along ethnicity, culture, locality, gender, sexual orientation become prominent in many societies. Citizens enact multiple and often cross-cutting sub-national citizenships as they engage in political practices that invoke sub-national allegiances and demand rights based on specific sub-national identities (Kadioglu 2007).

Focusing on groups such as diasporic communities and indigenous minorities, Yuval-Davis (1999, 123–124) has drawn attention to the 'multi-layered environment in which people exercise their citizenship' and argued that citizenship needs to be understood as a 'multi-layered construct' affected by relationships and positionings in local, ethnic, state, and trans-state layers. Multi-layered citizenship, in this sense, does not simply mean that citizenship can be practiced at multiple levels. Such an understanding reproduces a categorically segmented and scalar approach to citizenship, where the different layers are assumed to be necessarily in a mutually exclusive and hierarchical relationship (Isin 2007, 211). Instead, the enactment of multi-layered citizenship entails to the continuous negotiation of the boundaries and relations between sub-national, national, and trans/supranational rights claims, identification, and mobilization, and thereby gives rise to 'transversal politics and dialogue' (Yuval-Davis 1999, 132).

In empirically analyzing the political practices of the Armenian community in Turkey, we adopt 'acts of citizenship' as a methodology (Andrijasevic 2013; Isin and Nielsen 2008).

As a method, 'acts of citizenship' focuses on instances of political participation to study the ways in which subjects constitute themselves as citizens, regardless of whether or not they formally possess status. Accordingly, our analysis focuses on political acts carried out by members of the Armenian community, such as demonstrations, petitions, litigation, and public reactions, and on the meanings that are ascribed to these political acts. In particular, we identify the rights claims, identification patterns, normative references, and mobilization patterns that characterize each political act, and situate them in different layers of citizenship. In practice, the layers of citizenship do not necessarily exclude one another. For example, an act may embody a claim to sub-national rights, but invoke national principles and entail transnational mobilization. After analyzing the different citizenship acts of Armenians in this fashion, we identify their implications for sub-national/national and transnational citizenship in Turkey. Those acts that are exclusively situated in one layer of citizenship serve to reproduce the boundaries and hierarchies between the different layers, while those that transgress different layers negotiate and reconstitute them in different ways. Thus, approaching citizenship as enacted and multi-layered allows us to analyze whether and how citizenship in its multiple layers is being continuously remade through the practices of individuals.

Citizenship structure of Turkey's Armenians

A contentious history of segregation, discrimination, and violence shapes the context within which Armenians in contemporary Turkey practice minority and national citizenships. Under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, the Armenian subjects were organized as a *millet*, a semi-autonomous religious group. In the *millet* system, the Armenian, Greek, and Jewish communities enjoyed autonomy in their religious and civil affairs, but were subjected to discriminatory policies in public employment, education, and taxation (Braude and Lewis 1982). The Armenian, Greek, and Jewish religious heads were recognized as representatives of their communities in their relations with the Ottoman state and were granted authority also over civil affairs and internal governance. In 1863, a sub-national constitution was developed by the Armenian community to specify the rules of religious and political governance in the community; *Nizamname-i Millet-i Armeniyan* [Regulation of the Armenian Nation] was adopted by the Ottoman state (Ozdogan et al. 2009, 125–130). With the institutionalization of universal citizenship in the 1876 Ottoman constitution, discriminatory practices of the *millet* system were progressively abolished. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the non-Muslim communities, in general, and members of the Armenian community, in particular, assumed prominent economic, political, and cultural roles, served as members to the Ottoman Parliament, and led the Empire's economic relations and cultural links with Europe (Ozdogan et al. 2009, 118–122, 286–291). However, as nationalist uprisings in the Balkans and the Middle East threatened the integrity of the Empire, the inclusive ideology of Ottomanism gave way to the Turkist movement, which aimed to construct a homogenous national community (Isyar 2005). The ascendance of the Turkist ideology culminated in the deportations and massacres of Armenians during World War I (Akcam [1999] 2006).

Throughout its gradual disintegration, nation-building in various parts of the Ottoman Empire proceeded in tandem with religious homogenization through forced and voluntary population movements. Thus, while in 1820, non-Muslims constituted 40% of the total Ottoman population, by the beginning of World War I, their percentage declined to 19%,

and by 1927 to 12.5% (Icduygu, Toktas, and Soner et al. 2008). The 1923 Lausanne Treaty signed between Turkey and the victor states of World War I did not recognize any national minorities within Turkey (such as Kurds), but it did confer special rights to the remaining religious minorities, who are referred to as the 'non-Muslims of Turkey.' Articles 38, 39, and 40 of the Lausanne Treaty, respectively, grant these minority groups the right to exercise their religion freely, to engage in civil and political life, and to establish their own schools. According to Article 42, the Turkish state is responsible for the protection of religious buildings belonging to these groups, and Articles 40 and 43 state that the Turkish state is responsible for ensuring that non-Muslim Turkish citizens do not experience discrimination based on their religious affiliations. Although the Treaty granted these rights and protections to all non-Muslim communities within Turkey, the Turkish state has implemented these provisions only for the Armenian, Jewish, and Greek Orthodox minorities (Oran 2004).

Soon after, certain provisions of the Lausanne Treaty came into conflict with the unitary institutions of the newly established Turkish state and non-Muslim communities were pressured to abrogate some of their sub-national rights in order to enjoy equal citizenship at the national level (Aktar 2000). The adoption of the secular Civil Code, modeled on the Swiss version, in 1926 pressured the non-Muslim communities into ceding their rights to self-governance in civil affairs (Bali 2000). The 1923 Unity in Education Law subjected the minority schools to the Ministry of National Education in curricular and governance matters. In 1934, the 1863 Regulation of the Armenian Nation was abolished (Okutan 2004).

Despite the institution of universal citizenship, Islam remained a constitutive element of Turkish identity and nation, and as a result, non-Muslims continued to be subjected to a series of discriminatory practices in the early republican period (Cagaptay 2004; Okutan 2004). In 1931, a campaign by the name 'Citizen, Speak Turkish!' was initiated, and Turkish-speaking citizens were asked to intervene when they heard other languages being spoken in public (Aydingun and Aydingun 2004). In 1939, non-Muslim males of a certain age group were conscripted as menial laborers into the Turkish army, even if they had completed their service before (Bali 2000). Moreover, non-Muslims suffered from economic policies, which sought to create an ethnically Turkish bourgeoisie. For example, in 1926, the government passed a law making Turkish the only language to be used in business transactions; in the same year, Turkish descent became a precondition of public employment and remained so until 1965. To secure government finances during World War II, a special 'Capital Tax' was levied disproportionately on non-Muslim citizens. Those who were not able to pay were sent to forced labor camps (Aktar 2000).

Although such extreme measures were discontinued after the end of World War II, the rights of non-Muslim minorities continued to be compromised to reciprocate the worsening relations between Greece and Turkey. On 6–7 September 1955, Turkish nationalist mobs incited by fabricated news about an attack on Atatürk's house in Thessaloniki caused widespread damage to non-Muslim property in Istanbul, generating fear among all non-Muslims and causing them to emigrate in significant numbers (Aktar 2000). As the Cyprus conflict intensified in the 1960s and 1970s, the Turkish Government began confiscating the property of non-Muslim foundations, based on a court decision that declared all property acquired after 1936 as illegal acquisitions (Kurban and Hatemi 2009).

Specifically in the case of the Armenian community, the assassinations of Turkish diplomats in the 1970s by the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia increased the social marginalization (Ors and Komsuoglu 2007, 412), and according to our interviewee at

the Surp Kevork Foundation, the fear of reprisals led many Armenians to leave the country. Several bomb attacks were carried out against Armenian religious and cultural institutions between 1977 and 1979 (Kaya 2014). The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the early 1990s also made Armenians the target of hate-speech and violent attacks (Kaya 2014). The issue of the ‘recognition’ of the 1915 Armenian deportations and massacres as ‘genocide’ continues to create societal unease, especially in periods when the Turkish state is subjected to international pressures.

These experiences have led the remaining Armenians to lead a precarious and introverted existence. Our interviewee at the Surp Kevork Foundation estimates the number of Turkish citizen Armenians to be around 65,000, down from an estimated 300,000 in 1950. Once constituting vibrant communities throughout the country, currently, over 90% of the Armenian community resides in Istanbul. According to our interviewee at Surp Kevork foundation, Armenians have chosen to migrate to Istanbul or overseas because they were unable to sustain their communities and religious practice in Anatolia:

Man [*sic*] lives in Sivas, there is not a single church. There was, but not anymore. When I was doing my military service in Amasya ... the church there has been converted into a sports center. I went to the mosque to pray.

Since the establishment of the republic in 1923, only four Armenians have served in the Turkish parliament in various periods, and none after 1961 (Ozdogan et al. 2009, 291–301).⁵ Armenians generally refrain from taking part in Turkish political life, and they perceive that they are not encouraged to do so. For example, when our interviewee at Surp Kevork Foundation announced his candidacy for local office, he was troubled by the number of journalists, who called just to confirm:

It was regarded as strange. Why? Only when it is considered normal, we can say there is democracy in this country.

Similarly, although the ‘Turkish descent’ restriction on public employment was lifted in 1965, there are no Armenians (nor non-Muslims) in public and military office (Toktas and Aras 2009–2010). This absence is perceived as the clearest indicator of ongoing discrimination. As our interviewee at Surp Kevork Foundation remarks: ‘If my son were a military officer, if my nephew were a policeman, I would not feel like an underdog.’ According to our interviewee at Hrant Dink Foundation, it has become a ‘self-fulfilling prophecy’ and produced a general unwillingness to seek public employment among Turkey’s Armenians.

Turkish-Armenians also experience discrimination at the societal level. Armenian names often evoke confusion, questions about origin, and stigmatization, which, as our interviewee at *Agos* newspaper remarks, make one ‘feel like a foreigner in one’s own country.’ Consequently, Armenians often choose to adopt an additional Turkish name to use in social interactions (Ozdogan et al. 2009, 420). The widely used totalizing phrase *gayrı-müslim* (non-Muslim) also causes significant discomfort. Our interviewee at the Armenian Patriarchate describes it as:

One of the ugliest phrases ... to make you feel different. Are the migrants in Germany referred to as non-Christians? We are the founding elements of this land.

Faced with such discrimination, the Armenians have dissociated their cultural and communal lives from the wider Turkish society. The Armenian schools and churches continue to play a significant role in sustaining the Armenian language, culture, and identity. Our interviewee at Surp Kevork Foundation estimates that the number of active Armenian churches

in Turkey have diminished from above 2000 before 1915 to around 35–38. At present, there are 16 Armenian schools, two orphanages, two hospitals, and three newspapers managed by Turkey's Armenian minority (Ozdogan and Kilicdagi 2011). The community faces financial and various bureaucratic obstacles in keeping these remaining institutions in functioning condition. In fact, all of our interviewees have insisted that Armenian culture is historically such an inseparable, integral part of Turkish culture that the maintenance of Armenian culture and institutions should be not only a communal, but also a national responsibility.⁶

In recent years, a number of surveys have been conducted on the political and cultural attitudes of Turkish citizens of Armenian origin (Ercetin 2014; Ors and Komsuoglu 2007; Ozdogan et al. 2009).⁷ Albeit with some variation due to sampling, the findings generally indicate a high level of engagement in community institutions (80–88% attendance in Armenian schools, above 80% membership in at least one Armenian cultural association, above 60% regular [once a month or more] attendance in church, 63–82% readership of Armenian newspapers, including the Turkish-Armenian newspaper *Agos*). Those who indicate self-identification as Armenian range around 82–83%. On the other hand, the number of responses emphasizing national citizenship has varied between 32 and 64% across surveys. Eighty-three percent indicate they perceive a high degree of discrimination against them in society, and 80% indicate medium to high level of perceived insecurity (Ercetin 2014).

While the attachment to and concern for the preservation of Armenian identity remain strong, the community is by no means monolithic (Kaya 2014). The Armenian community is comprised of Apostolic, Catholic, and Protestant sects, although the Apostolic Patriarchate is accepted as the representative of the entire community. Since the nineteenth century, secular and religious Armenians disagree about the role that the Armenian Patriarchate should play in the civil matters concerning the community. There have also historically been important cultural and ideological differences between Istanbul- and Anatolia-based Armenians. In addition, our interviewee at *Agos* newspaper has noted that high-income individuals and directors of wealthy foundations enjoy more privileged relations with the Turkish state authorities.

In the last 8–10 years, corresponding both to Turkey's EU accession process and the AKP government rule, the Armenians have witnessed significant improvements in the recognition and the proper implementation of their rights by the Turkish state (Toktas and Aras 2009–2010; Soner 2010). In particular, legal and regulatory changes have lifted certain discriminatory restrictions in the activities of non-Muslim foundations and schools. However, the EU accession process did not alter Turkey's approach toward minorities: the legal changes were enacted within the general framework of individual human rights and not to address specific concerns of minorities (Toktas and Aras 2009–2010). Similarly, the improvements in bureaucratic procedures witnessed in recent years remain dependent on the continuing goodwill of the Turkish Government and have not yet been grounded in new institutional frameworks (interview Surp Kevork Foundation).

Also in this period, members of the Armenian community have become more active and visible players in Turkish political and cultural life, supported by growing numbers of liberal Turkish intellectuals who raised awareness about Armenian issues within Turkish society writ large. A key driver of this engagement was *Agos*, a weekly newspaper that publishes both in Turkish and in Armenian, established in 1996. The ideological and political differences within the community, which were previously suppressed, started to be discussed more

openly (Kaya 2014). However, the assassination of Hrant Dink, the prominent Turkish-Armenian intellectual and chief-editor of *Agos*, in 2007, revealed once again the fragility of the non-Muslim existence in Turkey as well as the continuing prejudices and discrimination, especially as evidences of police neglect, praising of the assassin, and the prior intimidation of Dink by public officials became exposed.

Armenians and the enactment of multi-layered citizenship

In sum, the context within which Turkey's Armenians practice citizenship is characterized by a trade-off between sub-national and national citizenship. In effect, minority status has translated into a second-class national citizenship. According to our interviewee at *Agos* newspaper, being a minority means 'knowing your place.' On the one hand, the rights demands that Armenians make at the sub-national level based on the Lausanne Treaty have to battle the perception that they amount to special privileges; even though as our interviewee at the Armenian Patriarchate stressed, Lausanne Treaty rights have neither been perceived nor implemented in this fashion. On the other hand, as our interviewee at the Hrant Dink foundation underscores, the citizenship acts and rights demands of Armenians at the national level are encumbered with perceptions of foreignness and are constructed as threats to the nation:

No matter how much we emphasize the citizen, it is as if we need to sacrifice our other identity in order to do so.

This trade-off has shaped the ways in which Turkish-Armenians practice citizenship. Traditionally, Armenians have sought the preservation of their sub-national rights and identity in the context of discriminatory practices of Turkish nationalism and citizenship through seclusion, silence, invisibility, depoliticization (interview, *Agos* newspaper), and unconditional loyalty (Ozdogan et al. 2009). The community has voiced demands only on issues that concern the community. Loyalty has to some extent been internalized as a part of communal identity. As put by our interviewees at Surp Kevork Foundation:

No Armenian has ever done anything against this country. We would never let such a person remain within the community. This is because we have come to accept and identify with this country.

However, according to our interviewee at *Agos* newspaper, loyalty has a price. It has produced within the Armenian community silence on contentious issues of Turkish politics and a general lack of support for the struggles other, non-official minorities, such as the Kurds.

In recent years, however, the citizenship practices of Armenians have become increasingly differentiated (Kadioglu 2007). As also underlined by our interviewee at the Hrant Dink Foundation, some Armenians have begun to engage in individual activism in all issues concerning Turkish politics and pursue 'equal citizenship' in solidarity with other minority groups and liberal-leftist intellectuals in Turkey, while others continue to give primacy to the protection and proper implementation of Lausanne Treaty rights and advocate unity under the leadership of Patriarchate. On the one hand, the rift between these two groups has become more pronounced (Kaya 2014) and reproduced the understanding of sub-national and national citizenship as a dichotomous choice. For example, our interviewee at the Patriarchate criticizes the growing public activism of some Armenians as 'excessive.' On the other hand, the dichotomy and trade-off between sub-national and national citizenship is to some extent

being transversed with certain citizenship acts that couple rights, identities, and mobilization at the sub-national, national, and trans/supranational levels in innovative ways.

Below, we investigate the citizenship acts undertaken by different groups of Armenian citizens in response to the patriarchal election controversy, statement of condolences issued by Turkish Prime Ministry about the 1915 events, and the property rights cases taken to the ECtHR.

Patriarchal election

The Patriarchate is the single most important autonomous institution of the Armenian community in Turkey. It was established in 1461 by the Ottoman Sultan Mehmet II, and assumed responsibility for both the spiritual and civil matters of the Armenian community under the *millet* system. In 1863, the authority of the Patriarchate was restricted with the Regulation of the Armenian Nation, and an autonomously elected Armenian people's assembly was established to take decisions concerning the civil issues of the community. When the Republic of Turkey did not adopt this self-governance system and subjected all Armenian institutions to national laws in 1934, it left only the Patriarchate and the Religious Council intact as autonomous institutions of the community, and created a vacuum concerning the civil matters (Ozdogan and Kilicdagi 2011). Although the authority of the Patriarchate is confined to the spiritual realm, the Turkish state has approached the Armenian patriarchs as representatives of the community and encouraged them to take on civil responsibilities (Ozdogan and Kilicdagi 2011). Armenian Patriarchate is unique in that it elects its leader through indirect popular vote. Following the death or resignation of patriarchs, the new patriarch is chosen by delegates, six-seventh of which are elected by the community (Ozdogan et al. 2009, 273–281).

This self-governance system was put to test when, starting in 2008, the Armenian Patriarch, Mesrob Mutafyan, began to suffer from a degenerative brain condition, and became unable to perform his duties (Aktifhaber 2010). Because the Patriarch had neither died nor possessed the mental capacity to declare his resignation, the question of whether he could lawfully be replaced arose. The Patriarchate made an official application to the Turkish authorities in December 2009 to organize elections for a new co-Patriarch, who would serve alongside Mutafyan until his death. However, the committee established to oversee the election process subsequently made a second application to the Turkish authorities in January 2010, this time for the election of a new patriarch (T.C. Icisleri Bakanligi 2010). These two applications were indicative of the differences within the church and the community; while some claimed that it would be against their religion to proclaim Mutafyan as dead, others insisted that the election of a new Patriarch is necessary for effective governance and representation (Kurban 2010). In June 2010, the Turkish authorities ruled that elections cannot be held since Mutafyan is still alive, and that since no precedent or regulation exists regarding a co-patriarchal position, instead a deputy Patriarch should be appointed to discharge his duties until his death (T.C. Icisleri Bakanligi 2010). Without informing other candidates, the Patriarchate's Supreme Council consequently appointed Aram Atesyan as the deputy Patriarch on 1 July 2010.

The reactions of the Armenian community to this appointment have entailed diverse multi-layered citizenship practices. In particular, the liberal-secular members of the Armenian community have demanded the implementation of the sub-national right of patriarchal

election through national-level mobilization, and by invoking national-level principles. Consequently, a group of Armenians have organized under the initiative 'We want to elect our Patriarch' and petitioned the Prime Ministry with more than 5000 signatures, and launched two court cases in Turkish administrative courts (Aktifhaber 2010). The petition stated that the Turkish Government's decision violates the Armenian community's right to elect its own religious leaders, a violation which is unacceptable in a democratic secular state. Their demands as well as the reference to secularism principle have resonated with members of the Armenian community, such as our interviewee at Surp Kevork Foundation, as well as with non-Armenian human rights advocates in Turkey (Kurban 2010).

Alternatively, a second formation within the community has chosen to demand the right to elect a new patriarch through mobilizing at the community level and by invoking communal principles. Recently, the directors of some Armenian foundations have organized themselves in a common civilian platform, and addressed sub-national instead of national authorities by calling on Atesyan to reapply for new elections in order to maintain the survival and unity of the community (Agos, 9 October 2014).⁸

In response, the Patriarchate has invoked sub-national principles and advocated communal mobilization. Instead of the principle of secularism, the reference point in the Patriarchate's discourse is the 1863 Regulation of the Armenian Nation. According to our interviewee at the Patriarchate, the problem has arisen from the non-implementation of the Regulation, and as a result, the absence of a permanent assembly of delegates, which, according to the Regulation, is the only body with the authority for deposing a Patriarch. Consequently, the Patriarchate regards the controversy within the community to be a result of 'ignorance' about the Regulation (interview). The Patriarchate also insists that, according to the Armenian Regulation, the community's relations with the Turkish state need to be mediated by the Patriarchate: 'The Patriarchate has been the center of the community and the community has been led by its religious head for 550 years. No other person or organization can assume this role ...' (Agos, 2 October 2014). Therefore, the Patriarchate characterizes independent mobilization within the community, as in the case of the above campaign, as a 'rebellion' and is opposed to the open discussion of communal issues within Turkish society writ large (interview). In contrast, many Armenians as well as our interviewee at Hrant Dink Foundation believe that the relationship between the state and the citizen should be direct and not mediated by an institution.

In sum, the issue of patriarchal elections has instigated diverse citizenship acts within the Armenian community in Turkey. By coupling the pursuit of a sub-national right with national principles and mobilization, the 'We Want to Elect our Patriarch' campaign has blurred the boundary between sub-national and national citizenship. In contrast, both the independent activism of foundations and the Patriarchal reaction have reinforced this boundary. On the other hand, although situated exclusively at the sub-national level, the acts of foundations and the Patriarchate have represented different forms of sub-national mobilization.

1915 'events' and message of condolence

The Turkish state has long denied the existence of an Armenian genocide, and has stressed that the casualties suffered by the Armenians during World War I occurred as a result of reciprocal communal violence and as the unintended consequence of the deportation

process undertaken for security reasons. Intensely propagated by the Turkish state through national education, diplomacy, and historical research, this denialist stance has become integrated into Turkish national identity discourse, but never attained international acceptance. In recent years, some Turkish civil society actors have started to contest this denialist stance by organizing commemoration activities, but have not been able to alter the state policy (Kadioglu 2007, 293–294).

For the first time on the 99th anniversary of the Armenian massacres, Turkey's then Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan issued a message, expressing the Turkish state's official condolences to the 'grand-children' of 'Armenians who lost their lives in the conditions prevailing in the beginning of the twentieth century' (Agos, 23 April 2014). The carefully worded message in part deviated from the established denialist stance by stating that 'understanding and sharing the Armenians' commemoration of painful memories ... is the duty of humanity.' However, at the same time, the message generalized the Armenian suffering to all Ottoman peoples of the period, warned against it becoming an instrument of opposition to Turkey, and reiterated the official position in calling for the establishment of a joint historical commission.

This episode as well as the issue of Armenian massacres in general plays a critical role in constructing the relation between national and transnational citizenship for Turkish-Armenians. As noted by Ozdogan et al. (2009, 32), while the events of 1915 undoubtedly play a critical role in the construction of collective Armenian identity and memory, diasporic Armenians attach greater salience to the events of 1915 than Armenians in Turkey. This is because Turkey's Armenians can also rely on community institutions in sustaining their identity, and memories of 1915 have been supplanted with other experiences – both negative and positive – with Turkish state and society. Turkish-Armenians have coped with the tragic memories of 1915 mostly by choosing to forget (Ozdogan et al. 2009, 391), yet at the same time indicate their preference for some form of acknowledgment or apology from the Turkish state (Ozdogan et al. 2009, 399).

Accordingly, Erdogan's statement was assessed in general favorably as 'a milestone,' 'courageous,' 'promising,' and 'sincere' by the members of the Armenian community in Turkey (Agos, 30 October 2014). An Armenian businessman went as far as publishing a half-page ad in a leading Turkish daily, personally thanking the Prime Minister for the statement, calling him the greatest Turkish statesman after Atatürk (Hurriyet, 28 April 2014). According to our interviewee at the Patriarchate, the statement's historic nature becomes apparent if one 'reads between the lines,' and those who are not satisfied with the statement 'would never be satisfied anyway.' However, several members of the Armenian community expressed reservations about the ambiguous and timid wording, and stressed the need for the statement to be followed by assumption of responsibility, concrete measures, and formal apology (Koptas 2014). Our interviewee at Surp Kevork Foundation stresses that 'the statement provided only 1% consolation,' and will not make a difference unless followed by other measures. The interviewee at Agos newspaper pointed to the ambiguity stemming from Erdogan's previous anti-Armenian and denialist rhetoric, and otherwise repressive stance toward dissent: 'I cannot say there is progress because there are not only Armenians in Turkey.' However, even with these reservations, the reactions of Turkey's Armenians stood in marked contrast to the reactions of the diasporic Armenian community and the political elite of Armenia, which were overwhelmingly negative and dismissive, characterizing the statement as 'insincere,' 'a good public relations campaign,' and 'a diplomatic reiteration of the denialist stance' (Agos, 24 April 2014).

In the context of this contrast between the Turkish-Armenian and diasporic-Armenian reactions, the statement provided an occasion for many Turkey's Armenians to constitute themselves as national citizens and mark the boundary between national and transnational identification. The director of an Armenian religious foundation, for example, commented that the statement is an answer to the diaspora, who always question how and why Armenians in Turkey continue to live with 'those evil, denialist Turks' (Agos, 30 October 2014). The director of another foundation considered the statement of condolence to be the outcome of Turkish-Armenians 'constructive approach' (Agos, 30 October 2014). Our interviewee at Hrant Dink Foundation remarks that she found the statement significant because she 'knows the situation and psychology in Turkey,' although outside of Turkey, the statement was largely dismissed as ludicrous.

Our interviewee at the Patriarchate has stressed that the issue is between Turkey and the Armenians, and is of no concern to third parties such as the state of Armenia:

The letter is not addressed to the state of Armenia. It should not be anyway. My state is Turkey, not Armenia. At the time [of 1915], Armenia did not exist.

On the other hand, our interviewee at Surp Kevork Foundation resists the totalizing image of the diaspora, and stresses that while a certain group ('ones in Beirut') is prejudiced because of their upbringing, the rest is open and keen to maintain close relations with Turkish culture and society: '[The Armenians in Europe] live like Turks, gather to sing Turkish songs, and harbor a deep longing.' The director of another foundation chooses to distance himself from the diaspora, while noting the importance of relations between Turkey and Armenia (Agos, 30 October 2014).

Thus, the condolence letter has triggered relatively similar citizenship acts among members of the community otherwise espousing different citizenship approaches. Despite the variation in the level of enthusiasm, the public reactions of the Armenian community have entailed national-level mobilization and identification coupled with a conscious rejection of transnational mobilization and identification. Therefore, these acts have solidified the boundary between sub-national/national and transnational identification.

Rights violations and ECtHR

Litigation in the ECtHR is one of the primary ways in which Turkish citizens engage with European institutions to ensure the full implementation of their rights (Rumelili, Keyman, and Isyar 2011). Generally, Kurdish citizens of Turkey have been at the forefront of this practice since early 1990s, but in recent years, non-Muslim Turkish citizens, including Armenians, have taken a number of property rights violations to the ECtHR.

Despite the commitments made in the Lausanne Treaty, the Turkish state has violated the property rights of non-Muslim foundations by a number of executive measures. Established by imperial edict during the Ottoman Empire, non-Muslim foundations lacked legal statute. However, they were able to acquire property either through purchase or donation with governmental certification of their legal status. In 1961, institutions of non-Muslim minorities were subjected to the Directorate General of Foundations, and their authorization to acquire real estate was revoked. Initially, non-Muslim institutions took legal action at the national-level against this measure; however, their claims were rejected in courts and finally in the High Court of Appeals in 1971, with a verdict that characterized non-Muslim institutions as 'entities formed by non-Turkish individuals.' Consequently, their property ownership was

limited to those they had declared in 1936, and the properties they had acquired afterwards were seized by the Turkish state (Kurban and Hatemi 2009). The most serious damage was inflicted on the Armenian community, with a total of 30 properties seized from late 1960s until the early 2000s (Kurban and Hatemi 2009).

In the 2000s, Turkey's Law of Foundations was amended and replaced several times as part of political reforms in the EU accession process, with each step generating strong political opposition (Soner 2010). The return of seized properties was enabled in a limited manner only by the latest 2008 Law. Approximately, 15–20% of seized properties have since been returned (interviews *Agos* Newspaper, Patriarchate). According to data compiled by Kurban and Hatemi (2009), Armenian institutions have taken six property claims to the ECtHR, and while one early case was dismissed in 1994 on procedural grounds, four cases submitted in 2000s were all settled/decided in favor Armenian institutions, leading either to the return of claimed properties or the payment of indemnities by the Turkish state.

The members of Armenian community express diverse opinions regarding the appropriateness of mobilization at the European level. Some consider it antithetical to their identities as national citizens. Our interviewee at Surp Kevork Foundation, whose two property claims were favorably settled by the ECtHR, indicates that they were forced to take their cases after exhausting all domestic legal remedies, and expresses the shame he experienced with the following words:

How can a person sue their father or brother? How can a person sue the country where he lives and makes his living? But they brought us to that point.

Construing European mobilization as antithetical to national identification, Turkey's Armenians justify it as a last resort measure, a result of governmental and bureaucratic malfunction, which would be unnecessary if there were full democracy in Turkey (interviews Surp Kevork Foundation and Patriarchate). Unlike in the case of Kurds, the use of European institutions is not coupled with discursive identification with Europe (Rumelili, Keyman, and Isyar 2011). Europe is represented as a 'third party,' and the ECtHR cases are considered an aberration from their otherwise principled practice of seeking the resolution of internal issues internally: 'We believe our issues in Turkey will be and should be resolved in Turkey' (interview, Patriarchate). While the Kurds make frequent references to European norms in their rights claims, our interviews indicate a preference toward referencing national principles among the members of the Armenian minority. As our interviewee at the Armenian Patriarchate remarked:

Our heritage provides us with more established norms and higher standards of coexistence than Europe's. Ottoman period institutions are more suitable for governing minority affairs.

Even those interviewees who credit European institutions with Turkey's recent progress in recognizing the minority rights take care to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate European interventions in Armenian issues. For example, while supporting the involvement of the EU and ECtHR, our interviewees at Hrant Dink Foundation and *Agos* newspaper have both expressed strong reservations against the involvement of European states. According to our interviewee at Hrant Dink Foundation, 'a third party should not derive political capital from a state's relations with its minority.' In particular, the adoption of parliamentary resolutions that recognize Armenian 'genocide' is considered to be insincere and politically motivated. According to our interviewee at *Agos* newspaper, such resolutions are 'meaningless' as long as there is no recognition on the part of Turkey and Turkish public opinion.

Our interviewees have all indicated that Europeanness is not a common identity marker among both Turkish-Armenians. This resistance toward European identification may be a response to the common perception in Turkish society that Armenians have close connections in Europe (interview, Patriarchate), and the frequent mobilization of that perception to frame Armenians as acting with Europe against Turkish interests.

In sum, in response to rights violations, Turkey's Armenians in recent years have begun to couple national rights claims with European-level mobilization. What is notable is that in contrast to other disadvantaged groups in Turkey (Rumelili, Keyman, and Isyar 2011), Armenians dissociate European-level mobilization from European identification. Therefore, as in the issue of the condolence letter, the ECtHR cases have triggered citizenship acts that strengthen the divide between sub-national/national and transnational identification.

Conclusion

By subjecting the citizenship acts of Turkey's Armenians around three recent issues concerning the community to in-depth analysis, this article brought into spotlight the agency of the Armenian citizens that manifests itself in choices regarding citizenship practice. The analysis showed that Turkey's Armenians are not only becoming active citizens in terms of demanding the proper implementation of their minority and national citizenship rights, but they are also reshaping minority and national citizenship in Turkey. Turkish-Armenians are coupling rights, identity, and mobilization at the sub-national, national, and trans/supranational levels in new and innovative ways and in doing so have begun to contest the trade-off between sub-national rights and national citizenship by enacting themselves as simultaneously minority and national citizens. This is clearly evident in the context of the patriarchal election controversy, where certain acts have blurred the boundary between sub-national and national citizenship by coupling the pursuit of sub-national rights with national principles and mobilization. The relationship between national and transnational citizenship, on the other hand, is being negotiated in two directions. The property rights cases taken to the ECtHR blur the boundary between sub-national/national and transnational citizenship by coupling the pursuit of national rights with European-level mobilization. At the same time, the dissociation of European-level mobilization from European identification and the reactions toward the statement of condolences point toward the hardening of the boundary between national and transnational citizenship.

Overall, despite some variation, the citizenship practices of Turkey's Armenians are strengthening the national layer. It needs to be noted that by locating demands for equal national citizenship at the center of their negotiation of minority and national citizenship rights, Turkey's Armenians are making significant contributions to the democratization and pluralization of Turkish politics. At the centennial of 1915, these contributions are also facilitating a much needed reconciliation.

Notes

1. Our research does not cover irregular migrants from Armenia, who are residing in Turkey.
2. In the cases of other citizen-groups in Turkey, this negotiation process has yielded different results (see Rumelili, Keyman, and Isyar 2011).
3. Media analysis focused mainly on *Agos* and *Radikal* newspapers as well as online news sources, such as *Bianet*.

4. Interviews were conducted at the Armenian Patriarchate (Istanbul, 16 November 2014), Agos newspaper (Istanbul, 27 October 2014), Surp Kevork Foundation (Istanbul, 7 January 2015), and Hrant Dink Foundation (Istanbul, 5 November 2014). Based on our analysis of the news coverage on the three issues, these institutions were identified as critical actors representing different positions. Established in the fifteenth century, the Patriarchate is historically the most important autonomous institution in not only the spiritual, but also civil and political matters concerning the community. Agos is a Turkish-Armenian newspaper, established in 1996, which plays a critical role in bringing Armenian issues and perspectives to the public sphere in Turkey and fostering engagement between Turkish and Armenian intellectuals. Hrant Dink Foundation is established in the name of the former chief-editor of Agos, who was assassinated in 2007, and aims to promote understanding, mutual respect, and reconciliation between Turks and Armenians. Finally, Surp Kevork Foundation was interviewed to represent the views of Armenian foundations, which have pursued the return of properties seized by the Turkish state via litigation in the ECtHR. In the interviews, respondents were asked to evaluate Turkey's Armenians' approaches to their sub-national and national citizenship rights and obligations, and indicate their views regarding the differences of opinion in the community regarding the three issues. Interviews were conducted in Turkish and later translated to English by the authors.
5. As of March 2015, one Armenian is appointed as advisor to the Prime Minister.
6. According to our interviewee at the Armenian Patriarchate, national resources have been allocated to the upkeep of Armenian institutions for the first time in 2014, although the funds have not yet been received.
7. Ors and Komsuoglu survey was conducted with 228 participants in 2004–2005. Ozdogan et al. survey was administered to 258 subjects active in Armenian associations. Ercetin survey was administered online to 120 participants.
8. Historically, the religious foundations have been in an organic relationship with the Patriarchate (Kaya 2014), and continue to support its leadership.

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