

Washington's Belated Armenian Genocide Recognition Is Politically Motivated

By [Paul Antonopoulos](#)

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A historical moment was achieved on October 29 for the Armenian lobby in the U.S. after the House of Representatives recognized the Armenian genocide, with 405 votes in favor and 11 against the Resolution. This timely move was certainly aimed at provoking Turkey, who has consistently denied that the foundation of the modern Republic of Turkey was built on the ethnic cleansing of the Christian minorities in the country, particularly the Armenians, Greeks and Assyrians. There is little doubt that this belated recognition by the U.S. was chosen to be announced on Republic Day, a public holiday in Turkey commemorating the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey on 29 October 1923.

Although the [resolution](#) focusses primarily on the Armenian genocide, it also recognizes the genocide against "Greeks, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Syriacs, Arameans, Maronites, and other Christians." The resolution also makes mention of U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire from 1913 to 1916, Henry Morgenthau, who described the empire's "campaign of race extermination," and was instructed on July 16, 1915, by U.S. Secretary of State Robert Lansing "to stop Armenian persecution."

The resolution also highlights other instances in history where the U.S. recognized the genocide, but of course makes no mention of why the recognition has occurred now? The Armenian lobby in the U.S. has been pushing for genocide recognition for decades, but recognition was only achieved on Tuesday. With over 400 votes in favor, President Donald Trump cannot veto the resolution even if he wanted.

Normally at odds with each, Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), along with all other sectors of Turkish society and political establishment, denounced the U.S. recognition. There is little doubt that the recognition is politically motivated, with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu claiming the U.S. are wanting "to take revenge" over their differences in Syria and CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu stating that "You cannot use the events of history to take revenge politically."

With Washington-Ankara becoming increasingly distant because of Turkey's insistence on buying the Russian S-400 and conducting an operation against the Syrian branch of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), the People's Protection Units (YPG), that the U.S. has financially and military supported despite Ankara's insistence that they're a terrorist organization, Washington's move to recognize the Armenian genocide is in conjunction to [sanctions](#) and bitter rhetoric between the two countries.

Rather, this proves that the Armenian genocide recognition should have been a moral imperative for the U.S., but Washington never did so to appease Turkey. As the U.S. and Turkey are members of the anti-Russian NATO, the issue of genocide recognition, despite

significant pressures from the Armenian lobby, found no success in Washington. Turkey controls the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus straits, Russia's only access to its only warm water ports in their country. Although international law guarantees freedom of navigation through the waterways, in any hypothetical war between NATO and Russia, blocking Russia in the Black Sea would be a priority.

With Turkey continually defying the U.S. and improving its relations with Russia, Washington are now finding alternatives to Turkey. It is for this reason that the U.S. has opened three new military bases in Greece and made the Mediterranean country a [Plan B](#) option against Russia in case of Turkey's continued insubordination. With a bolstered American presence in Greece, the U.S. feels it is in a comfortable position to potentially blockade Russia and/or Turkey if it ever had to do so, making it another well-timed moment to recognize the genocide.

Çavuşoğlu and Kılıçdaroğlu are justified in their claims that the U.S. recognition of the Armenian genocide is politically motivated, but also the very fact that the recognition was not made decades ago was also politically motivated to appease Turkey and ensure their loyalty to NATO. With Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan claiming that the resolution has "no legal force" as only "historians [...] and not politicians, should decide on this issue," he does not build a strong case for Turkey as it is nearly unanimous by [genocide historians and scholars](#) that the ethnic cleansing of the Armenians, Greeks, Assyrians and other Christians in the late Ottoman period definitely occurred with organization and structure.

More curiously is the fact that several Kurdish organizations and political parties have not only recognized the Armenian genocide, but also apologized for their ancestor's role in following orders from Turkish authorities in Constantinople to massacre and ethnically cleanse Armenians and Assyrians. Included in recognizing and apologizing for the genocide are the PKK, the Turkey-based Peoples' Democratic Party and the Iraqi-based Kurdistan Democratic Party.

With the modern Republic of Turkey built on a Turkification process, with some of my own family members forced to change their surname into a more Turkish-sounding name in living memory, coupled with Turkish national hero Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's slogan of "Ne mutlu Türküm diyene!" (How happy is the one who calls themselves a Turk!) that had to be recited by every student in Turkey as an Oath until it was [annulled](#) by the AKP government in 2013, the Armenian genocide recognition by the U.S. is a step in restoring Armenian, Greek and Assyrian ethnic and religious identity in Turkey.

Justice Minister Abdulhamit Gul is justified to say that the U.S. should look at its own history before accusing others of genocide. This argument though does not absolve Turkey from facing its dark history, apologize and try and create more friendly relations with Greece, Armenia and the Christian minorities who remain in Turkey.

Russia has recognized the Armenian genocide since 1995 and today it has little impact on Russian-Turkish relations. Rather, this latest provocation by the U.S. against Turkey is likely to just push Ankara closer to Moscow because of the motive and timing of the Armenian recognition.

There is little doubt that the U.S. recognizing the Armenian genocide is politically motivated. However, this does not negate the fact that the decades of non-recognition was also politically motivated. Although late in recognizing the genocide compared to other European

countries, it is likely that Washington's recognition will have a far greater impact than the Russian, French or German recognition. It is likely we will begin seeing extremely pro-U.S. states like the United Kingdom, and perhaps even Israel, following this move.

Therefore, does it matter why the U.S. has decided to now recognize the genocide when it did?

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Paul Antonopoulos, a research Fellow at the Center for Syncretic Studies, writes for InfoBrics where [this article](#) was originally published.

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