

# The Clash of Narratives: Armenian and Turkish Narratives on the Events of 1915

## Anlatılar Çatışması:

### 1915 Olayları Üzerine Ermeni ve Türk Anlatıları

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#### Abstract

*This paper focuses on narratives about the resettlement of Armenians in 1915. It seeks to understand how a variety of Armenian and Turkish political actors shape international politics by re-narrating the events and pursue to reconstruct the reality in a way that favours their interests. In contrast to previous works highlighting historical and legal perspectives, this paper does not aim to prove or disprove their allegations if the resettlement of Armenians was genocide or not. Rather, I propose to contribute to the literature on aesthetic sources of International Relations by analysing two movies; namely, “The Promise” and “The Ottoman Lieutenant” to identify how the process of reconstruction and representation have been maintained by Armenian and Turkish political actors. Later on, the power and influences of narratives will be discussed in the nexus of the international relations and diaspora politics.*

**Key Words:** Resettlement of Armenians, Aesthetic Theory, Narrative Analysis, Diaspora, Social Constructivism, Popular Culture, International Politics

#### Öz

*Bu makale, 1915'te Osmanlı Ermenilerin yeniden iskânına ilişkin üretilen anlatılara odaklanmaktadır. Türk ve Ermeni siyasi aktörlerinin 1915'de yaşanan olayları nasıl yeniden anlattığı, gerçekliği ulusal çıkarları doğrultusunda nasıl inşa ettikleri ve uluslararası politikayı nasıl şekillendirdikleri üzerinde durulacaktır. Tarihsel ve hukuki perspektifleri öne çıkaran mevcut literatürdeki çalışmaların aksine, bu makale farklı platformlarda dile getirilen Ermenilerin yeniden iskânına yönelik sözde soykırım temelli iddialar ile ilgilenmemektedir. Bunun yerine, siyasi aktörler tarafından yeniden inşa ve temsil sürecinin nasıl sürdürüldüğünü anlamak için “Söz” ve “Osmanlı Subayı” isimli iki film analiz edilecektir. Bu vesileyle, Uluslararası İlişkilerin estetik kaynakları kapsamında literatüre katkıda bulunulması amaçlanmaktadır. Çalışmanın son kısmında, anlatıların gücü ve etkileri uluslararası ilişkiler ve diaspora siyasetinin keşiştiği noktada tartışılacaktır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Ermenilerin Yeniden İskânı, Estetik Kuram, Anlatı Analizi, Diaspora, Sosyal İnşacılık, Popüler Kültür, Uluslararası Politika

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## Introduction

There were many tragedies in the last century of the Ottoman Empire. In the course of dissolving, the Empire lost its territories and (Muslim and non-Muslims) subjects. The 1915 events also profoundly influenced subsequent generations of Turks and continue to affect international relations. Political elites, interest groups and ordinary citizens in both Turkey and Armenia continue to engage with the events. Armenians allege genocide, but the Turkish government rejects this, and insists they were a reaction to the circumstances of the First World War. The events have become particularly politicized in countries with large Armenian diaspora populations.

A variety of actors aim to shape international politics by re-narrating the events of 1915, but also seek to reconstruct the reality in a way that favours their interests. The concept of narrative has travelled between various disciplines over the last forty years, and also entered the social sciences.<sup>1</sup> It was ignored and marginalised in the discipline of International Relations (IR) for a long period of time, but became established after Constructivist approaches increased its impact.<sup>2</sup> In the case of the events, there are different narratives of what occurred that take different forms, including conversations, legends, local news, movies, myth and short stories.<sup>3</sup>

In contrast to previous works that seek to place the events of 1915 in historical and legal perspective, this paper does not intend to prove or disprove the allegation of genocide. Rather, it instead focuses on the power of narratives in international politics. It first seeks to understand how narratives can shape international politics and also identifies how their powers are exercised in diasporic spaces. It then proposes to contribute to the literature on aesthetic sources of IR by analysing two movies (*The Promise* and *The Ottoman Lieutenant*) to identify how the resettlement of Armenians has been reconstructed by Armenians and Turks.

The first section establishes the theoretical framework that is used to develop the concept of narrative and discusses how this concept is used in IR. In the second section, two movies that were released on the eve of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the events are used to develop the narrative analysis. In order to bring out key differences, the paper focuses on four key themes, specifically the political situation, representation of self and other, and attitudes of the imperial powers towards the resettlement of Armenians. The final section discusses the potential of narratives to change perceptions and shape international politics. The paper acknowledges that narratives can mobilise

- 1 Matti Hyvärinen, "An Introduction to Narrative Travels", Matti Hyvärinen, Anu Korhonen and Juri Mykkänen (Eds). *The Travelling Concept of Narrative*, Helsinki 2006, p.1
- 2 Alex Danchev and Lisle Debbie, "Introduction: Art, Politics, Purpose", *Review of International Studies*, Vol.35, No. 4, 2009. pp.775-779.
- 3 Roland Barthes and Lionel Duisit, "An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative." *New Literary History*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1975, p. 237.

masses and shape international politics, but it contends this does not apply in diasporic spaces, as they have a limited ability to influence members of the opposing groups for the reason that they do not share the collective past, along with associated feelings and perceptions. But there are some grey areas where narratives exert influence and have the potential to shape international politics. Narratives can be used as tools that influence other members of the host country, and they can also reconstruct reality for those who are not involved in the issue. They can also be assumed to be unpolarised, as they could impact perceptions about the issue and make them familiar to any group. Narratives could also increase the ability of diasporic institutions, at both domestic and international levels, to become involved in preparing the host country's foreign policy.

### Theoretical Framework

The concept of narrative, which originally emerged from the disciplines of literary and narratology, has been defined as “a clear sequential order that connects events in a meaningful way... thus offering insights about the world and/or people's experience of it”.<sup>4</sup> It is a constitutive structure of meaning and an important element of the social world that surrounds humans.<sup>5</sup> Barthes states:

“Among the vehicles of narrative are articulated language, whether oral or written, pictures, still or moving, gestures, and an ordered mixture of all those substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, short stories, epics, history, tragedy, drame [suspense drama], comedy, pantomime, painting ... stained-glass windows, movies, local news, conversations...”<sup>6</sup>

There are many forms of narrative, which is also known as “storytelling”. It is distinctively human<sup>7</sup> and this is confirmed by Mumby, who refers to people as “Homo Narrans”.<sup>8</sup> It can therefore be placed alongside economic, sociologicus or politicus.

Barthes traces narrative back to suggest it began with the history of humanity, and was therefore present at all times and places and in all societies. There is no community without narrative and all human groups, including classes, have stories to tell. Narrative is therefore an international, trans-historical and trans-cultural phenomenon that people are exposed to

4 Lewis P. Hinchman and Sandra K. Hinchman, *Memory, Identity and Community: The Idea of Narrative in the Human Sciences*, Albany, SUNY Press, 2001, p.26.

5 Howarth, David. “Power, Discourse, and Policy: Articulating a Hegemony Approach to Critical Policy Studies.” *Critical Policy Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 3-4, 2010, p. 311-312.

6 Roland Barthes and Lionel Duisit, “An Introduction to the Structural...”, p.1.

7 David Herman, *Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative*. Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2002, p.1.

8 Dennis K. Mumby, “Introduction: Narrative and Social Control”, Dennis K. Mumby, (Eds.) *Narrative and Social Control: Critical Perspectives*, London, Sage, 1993, p.1.

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from the beginning of their lives. Berger observes that our lives are immersed in narrative, and even suggests everything is narrative.<sup>9</sup> This is however hard to accept.

When Narratology is more narrowly viewed as part of a theoretical framework, it can be used to highlight specific aspects of narrative. Some suggest that the concept of narrative should be distinguished from the story and sub-branch of discourse.<sup>10</sup> It cannot be considered as a simple story that is understood as a basic outline of the fundamental events that occurred, and is instead viewed as “beginning, middle and end” and as depending on systemic and logical explanations.<sup>11</sup> It seeks to assess what is happening and how, where, when and why it occurs, along with the protagonists.<sup>12</sup> One defining feature of the construction process is that narratives are specific and only focus on certain aspects of the events. Throughout fictionalisation, narratives do not therefore narrate all of the details of any circumstances and only address extraordinary aspects.<sup>13</sup> It is possible that the construction process of narrative is based on remembering and forgetting. In this construction process, some aspects of the event are not involved. Narrative depends on narrators and consists of elements they select to present the event. Narrative is reconstructed and does not therefore contain the essence of the event. Narrative does not need a linear timeline. Toolan argues that “time does not necessary have to be linear, but that the time sequence of the events has to have sort of causality to it, as narratives are a perceived sequence of non-randomly connected events”.<sup>14</sup> Accordingly, different versions can be produced when separate narrators re-narrate the same event.

Individualist ontology on the concept of narrative varies its content and provides a degree of flexibility. But it is hard to accept that new narratives will be easily accepted by audiences because it is to be expected that new narratives will emerge that are more powerful and persuasive when compared to other written sources (such as statistics, reports or analysis) that nonetheless have to be compatible with previous versions.<sup>15</sup> This underlines the effect of political context, and Spencer reiterates this by observing that

- 9 Berger, Arthur Asa Berger, *Narratives in Popular Culture, Media and Everyday Life*, London, Sage, 1997, p.1.
- 10 H. Porter Abbott, “Story, Plot, and Narrative”, David Herman, (Eds.) In *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, p.41.
- 11 Emery M Roe, “Applied Narrative Analysis: The Tangency of Literary Criticism, Social Science and Policy Analysis”, *New Literary History*, Vol.23, No.3, 1992, p. 563.
- 12 Linus Hagström and Karl Gustafsson, “Narrative Power: How Storytelling Shapes East Asian International Politics.” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 32, No. 4, 2019, pp. 390.
- 13 Molly Patterson and Kristen Renwick Monroe, “Narrative in Political Science”, *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1998, p.320-321.
- 14 Michael Toolan, *Narrative: A Critical Linguistic Introduction*. London, Routledge, 2001, p.6.
- 15 Linus Hagström and Karl Gustafsson, “Narrative Power: How.....”, pp. 394-396.

narrative does not occur in a vacuum.<sup>16</sup> The contents of the narrative and attitudes of narrators are affected by a particular environment and, for this reason, narratives cannot be freely manipulated.

But narratives also have an important function. Heinen presents them as a fundamental human activity that reduces complexity and helps to make sense of the world.<sup>17</sup> Narrative forms can be used to understand and perceive a social world constructed by actor interactions. Narratives provide alternative insights at the individual, communal and international levels that are frequently used in the disciplines of political science and international relations. As narrative further consolidates in the discipline of Political Science and IR, its implications will extend beyond narratology and this is further underlined by Reismann, who argues that narratives have political functions.<sup>18</sup> Although they refer to the past, they shape the contemporary political world by constructing and reshaping norms, identities and ideologies that are shared by groups, national states and organisations.<sup>19</sup>

In theoretical terms, it is likely that postmodern and constructivist approaches will help to make the political aspects of narratives more meaningful and observable. Although observers have raised epistemological objections and questions about the credibility of narratives over the last 20 years, IR scholars have highlighted a number of promising features.<sup>20</sup> Accordingly, they have increasingly adopted the concept of narrative and have tried to construct research agendas by referring to constructivist theory.<sup>21</sup>

Although it is difficult to argue that constructivists are monophonic

- 16 Alexander Spencer, *Romantic Narratives in International Politics: Pirates, Rebels and Mercenaries*. Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2016, p. 15.
- 17 Sandra Heinen, "The Role of Narratology in Narrative Research across the Disciplines" Sandra Heinen and Roy Sommer, (Eds.) *Narratology in the Age of Cross-Disciplinary Narrative Research*, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 2009, p.196.
- 18 Catherine Kohler Riessman, *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*, CA, Sage Publications, 2008, p.8.
- 19 Shaul R. Shenhav, "Political Narratives and Political Reality" *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 27, No. 3, 2006, 246; Astrid Erll, "Narratology and Cultural Memory Studies" Sandra Heinen and Roy Sommer, *Narratology in the Age of Cross-Disciplinary Narrative Research*, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 2009.
- 20 Margaret R. Somers, "The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A Relational and Network Approach." *Theory and Society*, Vol. 23, No. 5, 1994, p. 606.
- 21 Following articles can be seen as prominent works in the literature; Christopher Browning, *Constructivism, Narrative and Foreign Policy Analysis: A Case Study of Finland*, Bern, Peter Lang, 2008; Karl Gustafsson, "Narratives and Bilateral Relations: Rethinking the "History Issue" in Sino-Japanese Relations" Stockholm University, 2011; Annick .T.R Wibben, *Feminist Security Studies: A Narrative Approach*. London, Routledge, 2010; Linus Hagström, "Power Shift' in East Asia? A Critical Reappraisal of Narratives on the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands Incident in 2010." *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 2012; Ronald R. Krebs, *Narrative and the Making of Us National Security*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015; Alister, Miskimmon, Ben O'Loughlin, and Laura Roselle, *Strategic Narratives: Communication Power and the New World Order*, London, Routledge, 2014.

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within the IR literature, its general principles have been determined. Constructivism simply emphasises that meanings are assigned to material objects, and is therefore less concerned with the mere existence of the objects. Accordingly, it seeks to explore the role of culture, discourse, ideas, images, norms and symbols in social life. Constructivism views the world, and what we know about the world, as socially constructed. The fact that reality is continually being constructed opens the way for change. In other words, meanings are not fixed but can change over time, and actors can alter them by using their ideas and beliefs. Wendt notes that the “fundamental principle of constructivist social theory is that people act towards objects, including other actors, on the basis of the meaning that the objects have for them”.<sup>22</sup>

Narrative does not only present reality but also constructs it.<sup>23</sup> Reality is not pre-ordained or ‘natural’, as it does not exist outside of human thought and nor is it independent of ideas or narratives.<sup>24</sup> Constructivists claim that “things” do not have meaning in and of themselves, and therefore contends they only become meaningful in discourse.<sup>25</sup> From this perspective, narrative is seen as simultaneously reflective and constitutive.<sup>26</sup> Constructivism and narratology concur that it is impossible to access ‘pure’ reality, and this is because narratives are a subjective understanding of the world.<sup>27</sup>

When this alternative and subjective world is conceived within the framework of narratology, it is viewed as “setting” the location or surrounding environment where the narrative is located. And Constructivism can also provide insight into similarities between the setting and the social world where interests, actions and social norms are formed. Spencer reminds that settings like the social world can be constituted both individually and subjectively.<sup>28</sup> In demonstrating this, he draws on culturally embedded story genres that are frequently shared throughout society and are therefore inter-subjective. A setting is however never complete, as it cannot show or describe

- 22 Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics” *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 2, 1992, pp. 136-137.
- 23 Sandra Heinen, “The Role of Narratology in Narrative...”, p. 199.
- 24 Alexander Spencer, *Romantic Narratives in International...*, p. 26.
- 25 Ole Wæver, “Discursive Approaches” *European Integration Theory*, Anje Wiener ve Thomas Diez, (Eds.) Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 198.
- 26 Patricia Ewick and Susan S. Silbey, “Subversive Stories and Hegemonic Tales: Toward a Sociology of Narrative”, *Law & Society Review*, Vol. 29, No. 2, 1995, p.199.
- 27 Ansgar Nünning, “On the Perspectives Structure of Narrative Texts: Steps toward a Constructivist Narratology”, Van Willie Peter and Seymour Chatman, (Eds.) *New Perspectives on Narrative Perspective*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2001, p.209.
- 28 Alexander Spencer, *Romantic Narratives in International...*, pp. 27-28.

the whole story world or universe where the story is taking place. It always has to leave spaces that can be filled by the reader's or viewer's imagination. The setting is not just a passive background picture that provides the colourful backdrop for the action and the characters, as it can become part of the action and provide a reason or indication why the story has developed in a particular way. Put differently, narratives do not just allow us to understand international politics and actor behaviours but are actually significant elements in the socially constructed world. Copeland claims Constructivism is concerned with the question of how the past shapes the way actors see their present situation.<sup>29</sup>

This enables scholars to develop different perspectives about issues in international politics by referring to narratives. The relationship between narrative and international politics could also be part of the debate that refers to the "aesthetic turn" in the IR literature.

Bleirker observes:

"The aesthetic turn reorients our very understanding of the political: it engenders a significant shift away from a model of thought that equates knowledge with the mimetic recognition of external appearances towards an approach that generates a more diverse but also more direct encounter with the political".<sup>30</sup>

The use of aesthetic sources has provided new perspectives that have enriched our interpretative repertoire. These sources can offer us different insights into international relations. This produces a type of reflective understanding that does not emerge by systematically applying the technical skills of social science analysis, but rather by cultivating a more open-ended sensibility about the political. This might then enable us to appreciate what we otherwise cannot even see: for example, perspectives and people excluded from prevailing purviews or the emotional nature and consequences of political events. This enables us to step back and see political conflict and dilemmas in new ways. The aesthetic approach assumes there is always a gap between representation and what is represented. Aesthetic insight does not seek to ignore or narrow this gap but instead acknowledges that this gap is the very location of politics.

In common with narratives, aesthetic sources cannot be limited to a single form. There are other similarities between narratives and these sources. Numerous IR scholars have also considered architecture, cinema, lite-

29 Dale C. Copeland, "The Constructivist Challenge to Structural Realism: A Review Essay", *Review of Social Theory of International Politics*, Vol.25, No. 2, 2000, p. 210.

30 Roland Bleiker, *Aesthetics and World Politics*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp. 19-20.

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ature, music, visual art and other aspects of popular culture. Any form of representation is inevitably a process of interpretation and abstraction. The power of aesthetics and its political relevance can be traced back to this inevitable process of abstraction.<sup>31</sup>

At first glance, movies are prominent among the different forms. In contrast to poems, literature or visual art, narratives can be visualised through movies, which are aimed at the masses rather than political elites. Roack argues movies are a suitable medium for historical and political issues.<sup>32</sup> In contrast to written sources, which are too linear and narrow to present the fullness of the complex and multidimensional world where humans live. But movies can easily engage the minds of people by combining images, audio and special effects. They can hope to approximate real life and encompass daily experience, ideas or words, along with conscious and unconscious motives and emotions.

Although movies can embody all of these aspects, it is difficult to sustain the claim that movies purely represent the historical events. Jarvie claims that movies should not be seen as history because it consists of poor information load and is affected by discursive weakness.<sup>33</sup> Accordingly, there is no way to write a meaningful history of film, as they will inevitably reflect the perceptions and values of historians. A World that moves at an unrelenting 24 frames a second proves no time or space for reflection, verification or debate. It is impossible to provide the all-important critical elements of historical discourse (narrative) as you cannot evaluate sources, make logical arguments or systematically weigh evidence. As a consequence, these movies should be viewed as narrative reconstructing and the representation of cultural identity rather than the presentation of objective historical materials.<sup>34</sup> Narratives can be plotted in different ways. Similarly, most historical events and their sequence can be used in different ways and this gives rise to an equally wide number of interpretations and meanings.<sup>35</sup> Ehrenhaus observes emplotment (temporally or causally) is essential for understanding a historical event and for making sense of the past, both on an individual and social level.<sup>36</sup>

From this theoretical perspective, we come to see movies as case studies that re-narrate historical and political issues in international politics.

31 Roland Bleiker, *Aesthetics and World Politics*, p. 46.

32 Richard Roack, "Historiography as Cinematography: A Prolegomenon to Film Work for Historians", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 1983, pp. 416-418

33 Ian Jarvie, "Seeing through Movies", *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 1978, p. 378.

34 Monika Fludernik, *An Introduction to Narratology*. London: Routledge, 2009, p. 1.

35 Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978, pp. 84-85.

36 Peter Ehrenhaus, "Cultural Narratives and the Therapeutic Motif: The Political Containment of Vietnam Veterans." Dennis K. Mumby, (Eds.) *Narrative and Social Control: Critical Perspectives*, London, Sage, 1993, p. 80.



But movies are often incompatible and are formed by different narratives. In referring to the academic literature, we see that incompatibility helps provide insight into the construction of issues in international politics. There have been various cultural outputs that examine the events, including the recent movies, *The Promise* and *The Ottoman Lieutenant*, which were both released 100 years after the events. Both show how narratives can be used to construct political reality and also impact international relations

The events of 1915 dramatically altered mutual perceptions and socio-political relations in the last period of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>37</sup> There is an

37 The Turkish narrative holds that when the Ottoman Empire was disintegrating at the end of WW1, Armenian representatives saw an opportunity, in cooperating with Russia and the Allied forces, to establish an independent Armenia. After the defeat of the Ottoman army at Sarikamış and the British and French attack on Çanakkale, Armenians tried to assault Ottoman armies, cut communications from behind and begin armed uprisings. Armenians were still citizens of the Empire but this did not stop them from forming voluntary troop detachments to fight against it. They committed mass murders of Muslims in the Eastern Anatolia region. When the Çanakkale Wars began and Istanbul was threatened after the Russians defeated the Ottoman armies in Eastern Anatolia, Armenians expanded their activities in parallel to the enemy attacks. In this period, the Van uprising broke out after Zeytun, Bitlis, Muş and Erzurum, and there were more massacres of Muslims. The Ottoman government then tried to prevent the events. After Armenian soldiers were disarmed, the Internal Affairs Ministry instructed that Armenian policemen and officers who were not trusted and who were found to have become involved in the activities were to be sent to provinces without Armenians. But after this proved to be unsuccessful, the Ottoman government sought to close rebel organizations and began to arrest their leaders on 24 April, 1915. Precautionary measures were expanded and applied to civilians. The Ottoman government then issued a law (Relocation and Resettlement Law) on 27 May, 1915 that would relocate Armenians to less populated areas. But the events produced different narratives. The Armenian narrative holds that the events of 1915 were genocide and the contending Turkish narrative maintains that the Ottoman government and representatives in the region did not seek to annihilate the Armenian population and actually tried to protect them. Armenian historiography scholars reject this, and accuse its defenders of trying to justify 'genocide'. The Turkish narrative, meanwhile, emphasizes ethnic cleansing and massacres of Muslims in the Balkans. It also emphasizes the role of major powers and the intention of Armenian revolutionary groups to carve out eastern Anatolia and turn it into an Armenian national homeland. In order to strengthen their allegations, it cites the Ottoman Archives and invites all researchers to discuss and conclude what really happened in 1915. Further information can be found following researches; Jeremy Salt, "The Armenian 'Relocation': The Case For 'Military Necessity'", *Armenian Studies*, No: 48, 2014, pp. 65-75; Yusuf Sarımay, "Türk Arşivleri ve Ermeni Me-selesi", *Bellekten*, Vol.70, No. 257, 2016, pp.1-20.; Norman Stone ve Maxime Gauin, "Reply to L'Histoire", *Armenian Studies*, No: 33-34, 2009, pp. 125-140.; DAGM, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeniler (1915 - 1920)*, Ankara, 1995.; Gunter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey: A Disputed Genocide*, The University of Utan Press, 2005.; Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims 1821-1922*, Darwin Press, 1995.; Şükrü Elekdağ, "The Armenian Question", *Armenian Studies*, no: 1, 2001, pp. 70-86.; Edward J. Erickson, "The Armenians and Ottoman Military Policy, 1915", *War in History*, Vol.15, No.2, 2008, pp.141-167.; Yusuf Sarımay, "What Happened on April 24, 1915? The Circular of April 24, 1915, and the Arrest of Armenian Committee Members in Istanbul", *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, Vol.14, No.1-2, 2008, pp. 75-101.; Kemal Çiçek, "Relocation of The Ottoman Armenians In 1915: A Reassessment", *Review of Armenian Studies*, No, 22, 2010, pp. 115-134.

ongoing debate about if the events were actually genocide. Although there is an extensive literature on this subject, its academic and historical value has become deeply politicized. Political elites have supplanted historians and, as a result, history has been transformed into narrative. These narratives seek to consolidate and reconstruct reality and do not encompass all aspects of the historical issue. A number of case studies would be worthwhile to analyse in further depth. They do not just demonstrate how events are reproduced and represented in popular culture, but also provide insight into how international politics is shaped by various narratives.

## Method

By standing on the theoretical framework mentioned above, this article treats two movies as primary data and seeks to analyse how the resettlement of Armenians has been reconstructed by Armenians and Turks through the method of thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis is frequently used in the range of various disciplines in social sciences. Although it has been variably defined<sup>38</sup>, it simply refers to "...a method for analysing qualitative data which entails searching across a data set to identify, analyse and report repeated patterns".<sup>39</sup> Braun and Clarke, prominent scholars who conceptualised thematic analysis, argue that thematic analysis as a method is a core skill for other analysis in the qualitative research. They do not call thematic analysis as methodology. Accordingly, they also claim that the method of thematic analysis provides flexibility researchers to not be bound to certain paradigms. It suits the perspectives; namely, critical realist, post-positivist and constructivist.<sup>40</sup> As Joffe suggests, it is easy to observe how certain social constructs develop through the thematic analysis.<sup>41</sup> Alternatively, according to Boyatzis "thematic analysis allows the interpretive social scientist's social construction of meaning to be articulated or packaged in such a way, with reliability as consistency of judgment, that description of social "facts" or observations seems to emerge".<sup>42</sup> By standing on this point of view, it is likely to consider that researchers can reach deeper meaning within the data through thematic analysis.

Before moving on to explain how the method of thematic analysis is used to understand these two movies (*The Promise* and *The Ottoman Lieute-*

- 38 Richard Boyatzis, *Transforming Qualitative Information: Thematic Analysis and Code Development*, Thousand Oaks (CA): Sage, 1998.; Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis In Psychology". *Qual Res Psychol*. Vol.3, No.2, 2006, p.82; Robert Merton, "Thematic Analysis In Science: Notes On Holton's Concept", *Sci Cult*. Vol. 188, No.4186, 1975, pp. 335-338.
- 39 Michelle E. Kiger and Lara Varpio, "Thematic Analysis of Qualitative Data: AMEE Guide No. 131", *Medical Teacher*, p.2.
- 40 Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis In Psychology" ..., p.81
- 41 Helene Joffe, "Thematic Analysis". In: Harper D, Thompson AR, editors. *Qualitative methods in mental health and psychotherapy: a guide for students and practitioners*. Chichester (UK): John Wiley & Sons; 2011, pp. 209-224.
- 42 Richard Boyatzis, *Transforming Qualitative Information...*, p.13.

nant), the term “theme” should be clarified. According to Braun and Clarke, it means “patterned response or meanings” within the data which is associated with research questions.<sup>43</sup> Also, themes can be observed in various forms; namely, semantic, which address more explicit or surface meanings of data items, or latent which reflect deeper, more underlying meanings, assumptions or ideologies.<sup>44</sup> The method of thematic analysis is an appropriate and powerful method to use when seeking to understand a set of experiences, thoughts or behaviours across a data set.<sup>45</sup> It allows researchers to construct themes to reframe, reinterpret and connect elements of the data.<sup>46</sup> From this point of view, two aspects of the thematic analysis can be clearer. First of all, it has become an organisational tool for labelling the data and secondly, it is used as interpreter for the data. Generally, researchers can adopt six steps which have been proposed by Braun and Clark while conducting thematic analysis.<sup>47</sup>

In terms of the data collection, uncensored DVD versions of the movies have been gathered and watched in original languages. By following guideline of the thematic analysis, two movies have been coded to show differences among narratives on how the resettlement of Armenians in 1915. The political situation in the Ottoman Empire, the representation of Armenians, the representation of Turks and the imperial states are used as chief themes in the process of analysis. Differently from the previous works on the resettlement of Armenians or political relations among Turks and Armenians in the field of International Relations, working with movies and narratives is frequently preferred by sociology, anthropology, and psychology even though some hard to absorb new research trends. It is likely to come across in the number of academic works highlighting aesthetic aspects of the international relations. The works of *LHM Ling and Mari Nakamura's Popular culture and politics: re-narrating the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands dispute*, *Adam Breuer and Alastair Iain Johnston's Memes, narratives and the emergent US–China security dilemma*, *Cynthia Weber's International Relations Theory: A Critical Introduction* and *Jutta Weldes's Going Cultural: Star Trek, State Action, and Popular Culture* can be the best examples of showing power of narratives and movies in the agenda of international relations. Moreover, some well-known journals such as *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* and *Annual Review of Political Science* have given priority to issue special volumes focusing on narratives aesthetic and inter-

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43 Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, “Using thematic analysis in psychology” ..., p.82.

44 Richard Boyatzis, *Transforming qualitative information...*, p.28.

45 Victoria Clarke and Virginia Braun, “Thematic Analysis”. *J Posit Psychol.* Vol. 12, No.3., 2017, p. 297.

46 Michelle E. Kiger and Lara Varpio, “Thematic Analysis of Qualitative Data: AMEE Guide No. 131”, p.3.

47 These steps can be sorted as “familiarizing yourself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report/manuscript” Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, “Using thematic analysis in psychology”, p.87.

national politics. In order to contribute to the literature on aesthetic sources of IR, this paper seeks to analyse two movies (*The Promise* and *The Ottoman Lieutenant*) to identify how the resettlement of Armenians has been reconstructed by Armenians and Turks through the thematic analysis.

### **The Clash of Narratives: The Promise vs the Ottoman Lieutenant**

*The Promise* is the first case study. It seeks to re-narrate the events and place it on the agenda of international politics. It was released in four languages (Armenian, English, French and German) and was shown at leading film festivals in 2016 including the Toronto International Film Festival and the Virginia Film Festival. The decision of the producers to release the movie in multiple languages was most likely intended to appeal to international audiences. They worked with Terry George, the well-known director, and Robin Swicord, a renowned writer who had previously contributed to blockbuster projects.<sup>48</sup> Their budget was large, even by Hollywood standards. Big budget productions can also be more easily advertised to international audiences. *The Promise* had a larger budget than previous movies that were popular with the Armenian diaspora, including *The Cut*, *Ararat* or *Forty Days of Musa Dagh*. According to Internet Movie Database (IMDb), the producers spent \$90m (USD). The cast included Oscar Isaac, Charlotte Le Bon, Christian Bale and Jean Reno.<sup>49</sup>

The *Ottoman Lieutenant*, the second case study, was released in the same year. It provided a different narrative about the events. In common with *The Promise*, it also tried to appeal to international audiences.<sup>50</sup> It was scripted by Jack Stowell and directed by Joseph Ruben. Although the producers' preference was to work with Barrandov Studios in Prague, most of the shootings were actually done in Turkey, in Cappadocia, Istanbul and Niğde. The cast included Hollywood (Michiel Huisman, Hera Hilmar and Ben Kingsley) and Turkish (Selçuk Yöntem and Haluk Bilginer) stars. The *Ottoman Lieutenant* had a smaller budget than *The Promise*, at approximately \$40m (USD).<sup>51</sup>

48 Hotel Rwanda was one of his most well-known films.

49 Internet Movie Database, "The Promise". <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4776998/> [Accessed 02 May 2020].

50 The *Ottoman Lieutenant* was strongly criticized by reviewers for various things, including its acting, sound and story. However, these are primarily matters of cinematography. For critiques; Los Angeles Times, "Review: Historical epic 'The Ottoman Lieutenant' lacks depth and heat", 09.03. 2019, Online: <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/movies/la-et-mn-mini-ottoman-lieutenant-review-20170309-story.html> [Accessed 04 April 2020]

Film Eleştirileri, "Osmanlı Subayı", 25.05.2017, Online: <https://filmelestirileri.wordpress.com/2017/05/25/osmanli-subayi/> [Accessed 04 April 2020]

When considering the film at the levels of narratology and international relations, it is instead necessary to evaluate narratives from the perspective of identity and focus on the question of how these narratives (setting aside the question of their quality) affect diasporic identities and international politics.

51 Internet Movie Database, "The Ottoman Lieutenant". <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4943322/> [Accessed 02 May 2020].

Although their budgets were different, both movies were similar in other respects. First, they had similar scores on independent movie ranking sites. Neither *The Promise* nor *The Ottoman Lieutenant* scored well and IMBD's records show they respectively received scores of 6 and 6.6, and therefore had similar impacts on audiences.

Second, the two movies have similar stories. The initial trailers introduce them both as love stories. *The Promise* is about a love triangle between Mikael Boghosian (Oscar Isaac), a young rural Armenian who dreams of studying medicine in Istanbul; Ana (Charlotte Le Bon), who represents well-educated, cosmopolitan and urbanised Armenian women; and Chris Myers (Christian Bale), an Associated Press (AP) war journalist tasked with covering the political situation in the Ottoman Empire before the First World War. These characters are influenced by the events in different ways. *The Ottoman Lieutenant* is a love story about an idealistic American nurse and Turkish officer in World War I. Before Lilie (Hera Hilmar) was removed from her position as an intern nurse, she refused to accept or implement policies that discriminated against Afro-Americans. After seeking to sustain her humanitarian assistance, she meets Dr. Jude (Josh Hartnett), a member of the Armenian Relief who works as a missionary in Van, Turkey. Lilie is deeply affected by his efforts and passion, and she decides to join him. But she needs a military escort to accompany her as she travels from Istanbul to Van. Her request is granted by the Ottoman Authorities. İsmail Veli (Michiel Huisman), a young Turkish officer, is appointed as her military guard, although she is unaware he is also a spy who will report on Armenian activities in the eastern cities of the Empire before the start of the Russian occupation.

Although both movies focus on the experience of Armenians, they specifically focus on the year of 1915 in the Ottoman Empire. They can both certainly be regarded as clichéd and unsophisticated if they are only considered as a love stories and their subtexts and the political contexts of the narratives are ignored. Here it should be recognised that considering them as a love story does not help us to understand how international politics is shaped by narratives. Closer analysis of these movies is likely to highlight key themes that include the political situation, the representation of self and other, and the attitudes of the imperial powers towards the events. Focusing on these themes makes it possible to identify differences in the narratives reproduced by Armenians and Turks.

### **The Political Situation in the Ottoman Empire**

This is the first theme that highlights differences between the narratives. Although *The Promise* describes the political situation and the final years of the Ottoman Empire, it focuses in particular on the timeline, situation of minorities and impact of Germans. It begins in 1914, and is intended to focus on the events of 1915. In other words, Turkish-Armenian relations are tightly squeezed into a two-year period. *The Promise* therefore begins with the pre-

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mise that Turks were planning to annihilate the Armenian community before 1915. Second, *The Promise* assumes that minority groups in the Ottoman Empire were always suppressed and struggled to protect their identities and cultural rights. This overlooks and indeed ignores a co-existence that was established since the Turkish tribes encountered Armenians in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Third, *The Promise* accentuates the German impact on the Empire. When describing political situations and relations, it always refers to Germans.

The film makers appeared to have two goals in mind. After WWI, Germany was held to be responsible for starting the war and had to sign the Versailles Treaty, which obliged it to pay reparations to other European states. Whenever a Turkish soldier appears on the screen, he is always accompanied by a couple of German officers, who are involved in all decision-making. In effect, the Ottomans are presented as German puppets and Armenians are, by implication, victims of an Ottoman-German project. Second, the film makers suggest parallels between the events and the Holocaust, and indeed even openly borrow from Holocaust movies. One of the key scenes in *The Promise*, when detained Armenians are killed in the yard, is clearly indebted to *The Pianist*<sup>52</sup>, which had depicted a Nazi commander using a pistol to randomly execute Jews. When Mikael discovers a train full of starving Armenians, he reproduces a motif of several Holocaust movies. These examples highlight a clear intention to establish parallels between Armenians and the suffering of Jews in WW2.

The *Ottoman Lieutenant* instead considers the political situation in the Ottoman Empire from a different perspective. Although the historical timeline begins in 1914, some scenes encourage audiences to consider the roots of the political turmoil in the Ottoman Empire. Its approach to history is therefore clearly different from the one adopted by *The Promise*. It therefore does not focus on nationalist movements, but also considers internal socio-economic pressures and domestic reformist movements. It also acknowledges the significant poverty that existed at the time. And it considers the collapse of relations between the subjects of the Empire in this wider context. Audiences are therefore invited to consider and comprehend the “big picture”. In this manner, it seeks to situate the political situation in larger historical perspective.

The identity of the narrator in *The Ottoman Lieutenant* is also different. Lillie is an “outsider” who decides to join the missionary campaign in Anatolia. From the time she lands in Istanbul to her final arrival in Van, she does not only experience poverty and war time conditions, but also comes to understand insecurity in the Empire. Along with her first-hand experience, she also appears to be deeply influenced by Ismail Veli, her protector and companion. In some cases, she therefore re-narrates the political events, and

52 *The Pianist* is a 2002 biographical war drama film produced and directed by Roman Polanski. The script was written by Ronald Harwood and Adrien Brody is one of the cast members.

places particular emphasis on the insecure and chaotic atmosphere that prevailed when the Empire joined the war. It is likely that this influenced the Ministry of Foreign Affairs when it endorsed the “fair memory” of the film and recognised its potential to contribute to reconciliation between the Armenian diaspora, Turkey and Armenia.

### **The representation of Armenians**

This is another theme that demonstrates differences between narratives. Both movies highlight various aspects of the Armenians and Armenian community in an attempt to endorse their narratives. In *The Promise*, Armenian lifestyles, social status and WWI experiences are described in detail. It clearly has some elements of nostalgia. For example, it begins with an Armenian village where everyone is happy and there are no problems. It then proceeds to identify Armenian urban and rural identities, although it does not recognise their socio-political relations and internal conflicts and therefore effectively throws them in the same pot. They are both represented as victims of the 1915 annihilation. Armenians are presented as politically disadvantaged and as being economically exploited by Turks. Throughout the film, they are presented as helpless. When Mikael goes to Istanbul’s Grand Bazaar to find his uncle, he speaks to a Turkish seller who accuses Armenians of being untrustworthy. This prejudice is later presented as one of the reasons for the events.

Finally, it is not merely that parallels are drawn with the Holocaust; rather, the distinction between the two events is essentially collapsed. Concentration camps, torture and systematic massacres feature, and young Armenians work as slaves while their older counterparts are murdered. And just in case audiences fail to draw the required conclusions, it is made clear that they have been conscripted on behalf of Imperial Germany. The victimhood of all Armenians is a recurring feature of the film.

The *Ottoman Lieutenant* instead clearly distinguishes between civilian and rebel Armenians. One Turkish commander makes this clear when he notices that the former “do not want to kill you”. Rebels are seen as collaborators of Russia while civilians are depicted as being trapped between the Ottomans and the Russians. It is also made clear that Armenian Christians and Turkish Muslims suffered to the same extent in the war.

The U.S missionaries view the Armenian rebels as freedom fighters. Dr. Gresham, the head of the missionary hospital in Van, states “Anatolia welcomes rebel souls” and does not hesitate to support Armenian rebels and their organizations. But this indirectly confirms the Turkish thesis about socio-political chaos in the Empire during the war.

### **The representation of Turks**

Another difference appears in the representation of Turks. In *The Promise*, Turks and other Muslims are coded and represented as opponents of the Armenian identity. All negative features and images are drawn on to describe

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and reconstruct the Turkish identity. All Turks in uniforms are represented as supporting the annihilation of Armenians. They are shown with German officers in some scenes, and this is intended to highlight similarities with the Holocaust. *The Promise* also does not distinguish between Turkish officers and civilians. Most of the civilians are represented as fanatics who unquestioningly support the decisions of the Ottoman government and are ready to massacre Armenians. However, there is one exceptional character; namely, Emre who is introduced in the early scenes as a classmate of Mikael. By way of partial compensation, a good-hearted Turkish character is added who is pro-Armenian to pronounce and defend the Armenian allegations like good-hearted Germans in the Nazi realm. In this way, film makers not only did seek to highlight similarities between *The Promise* and other Holocaust movies, but they create a medium within the Turkish society.

The *Ottoman Lieutenant* generally focuses on Turks with a military identity. All characters, including the leading actor, are patriotic Turks and want to protect the Ottoman Empire and its subjects. Some Turkish soldiers and people are presented as refusing to listen to orders during the Armenian resettlement. The movie therefore seeks to convince the audience that Armenian casualties were due to misbehaviour by deserters and uncontrolled angry civilians. In clear contrast to the Holocaust, this suggests there was no clear intention to annihilate the Empire's Armenian population.

### **The imperial states**

Both movies discuss the roles of the imperial states. Although they have different perceptions, they appear to adopt a similar approach. Imperial states such as France, Germany, Russia and the U.S are coded as either protector/helper or destroyer. *The Promise* places the U.S and France in the first category. The journalist Chris Myers and Ambassador Morgenthau reinforce the belief that the U.S protected Armenians. Chris Myers plays a particularly important role by engaging public opinion among the Christians and allied powers. The movie also emphasises the diplomatic protection and official position of the U.S government. One example of this is the imaginary meeting between Talat Pasha, the Empire's interior minister and Morgenthau, a U.S ambassador. In this scene, Morgenthau clearly states that Christians Armenians are protected by the U.S. France is also considered as a protector that evacuates Armenians from Anatolia and fights against Turkish troops to save Armenian lives.

Germany, meanwhile, is coded as a destroyer country that helps the Ottoman Empire to annihilate Armenians. Again, the movie draws a clear parallel between Armenians and Jews in the Holocaust. This view is popular among members of the Armenian diaspora, who view themselves as the first victims of the mass atrocities and crimes against humanity that defined the 20<sup>th</sup> century. *The Ottoman Lieutenant* views the imperial states very differently, and present the British Empire, France and Russia as hostile states



who seek to dismember the Ottoman Empire by encouraging the Armenian rebels to achieve their imperial strategies. The movie emphasises the mutual interests of the Armenian rebel and the imperial powers, and considers the Armenian rebels to be volunteer soldiers who joined the foreign army and threatened the Ottoman army. The German Empire is also presented as “an imperative” ally of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War.

### **The Implementation of Narratives in Diasporic Space and International Politics**

At first glance, the case studies suggest there are two fundamentally different narratives of the events of 1915. This paper has however sought to move beyond this apparent divergence to engage with four themes. This enables a slightly different angle – first, how the two narratives shape ongoing political debate between Turks and Armenians, and second the extent to which they shape international politics.

This enables us to consider the impact and roles of narratives in international politics and also enables us to discuss the concept of narrative in a way that contributes to the IR Literature.

The preceding section discusses the theoretical background and literature, and it notes how aesthetic sources have the potential to contribute new perspectives on political issues to the field of IR. Some scholars observe narratives are powerful and influential tools that can impact international politics by touching hearts and minds. However, this presumes a willingness to change political opinions and an inability to resist impacts. But, as this paper notes, neither expectation applies in all contexts at all times. For example, in diasporic spaces, opponent or alternative narratives do not have a powerful influence. The diaspora literature often observes that the concept of diaspora refers to ‘in-between’ situations. Put differently, this suggests opportunities for those who show the following:

1. “Migration, whether forced or voluntary, from a country of origin in search of work, trade or to escape conflict or persecution.
2. An idealized, collective memory and/or myth about the ancestral home.
3. A continued connection to a country of origin.
4. A strong group consciousness sustained over time.
5. A sense of kinship with diaspora members in other countries”<sup>53</sup>

Of these features, a strong group consciousness may prevent alternative narratives from being spread out. For example, Armenian, Black, Indian or Jewish diasporas are closed circles.

In this context, politicised issues are fanatically adopted by members of the diaspora, and they effectively come to function as part of their identity.

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53 Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*. London, Routledge, 2008, pp. 23-25.

If new and alternative narratives contradict what was believed in the past, they will be rejected. These individuals engage alternative narratives through a series of preconceptions. The issues become taboo and are closed to discussion. Here the influence and power of alternative narratives appears limited and they are unable to touch hearts and minds. In this situation it is hard to accept Pautz's argument that movies can help to change political perceptions and shape politics when they are focused on relations between Turks and Armenians.<sup>54</sup> Although no primary research has sought to measure Armenian and Turkish attitudes by applying alternative narratives, it is possible to obtain some preliminary presumptions by applying indirect methods and sources. For instance, ratings and reviews posted on online platforms may provide clues about how narratives have been perceived. When the movies premiered, reviews and news coded them both as propaganda. Armenian political organisations, in seeking to maximise their influence on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the events, labelled *The Ottoman Lieutenant* as a "denier movie" that pushed the official position/s of the Turkish state, and this prejudiced Armenian opinion against the movie even before it was released. *The Promise* was also criticised by Turkish scholars who claimed it repeated false Armenian allegations.

In the Turkish and Armenian cases, narratives do not say anything about the opposing group. The theoretical framework suggested the reconstruction of narrative consisted of two significant steps, specifically remembering and forgetting. Through both, narrative becomes more concise and interesting. However, some aspects are highlighted and others are omitted. And the final end product does not please members of the opponent group. Furthermore, the question of how the impact of the narrative can be measured is likely to give rise to a series of methodological conundrums. Strong prejudice and stereotypes are also likely to undermine the research.

There are some grey areas where narratives become powerful and have the ability to exert influence and shape international politics. Narratives also benefit from the diasporic context, and can be used to influence other members of the host country. Narratives have two important roles. First, they can reconstruct the reality for those who were not involved in the issue. They can be assumed to be unpolarised, and so could impact perceptions about the issue and make them familiar to any group. Second, narratives could increase the ability of diasporic institutions, at both the domestic and international levels, to involve the host country's foreign policy preparations.

With regard to Turkey-Armenian relations and the events, both establishing public opinion and asking policy makers to state their official position/s on the events of 1915 can provide good insight into the role/s of narrati-

54 Pautz, Michelle C. "Films can have a major influence on how people view government". Retrieved from <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/usappblog/2015/03/12/films-can-have-a-major-influence-on-how-people-view-government/> [Accessed 09 May 2020].

ves in host countries. Rather than resolving the issue through a joint working group, public opinion and foreign parliaments are used to stoke enmity and ensure protracted political deadlock.

## Conclusion

By standing on results of the thematic analysis, it can be argued that each movie constructs the reality in their perspectives which drive from existing ideology and world views. As is discussed above, the representation of “self” in the *Promise* was based on the victimhood of all Armenians while the *Ottoman Lieutenant* generally focused on Turks with a military identity. All characters, including the leading actor, are patriotic Turks and want to protect the Ottoman Empire and its subjects. On the other hand, the representation of “other” has negative connotations. Putting it differently, they do not acknowledge, let alone engage, the views of the ‘other’, it is inevitable that they will be dismissed as propaganda. And this is why both sides expend such huge amounts of energy in an effort to make foreign governments and international audiences accept their version of events. Differences which have been observed in themes led the movies and also their constructed realities to locate at poles and prevent to emerge out shared meanings among the narratives. Thus, it could be asserted that both have tended to consolidated their own audiences and repeated existing narratives instead of emerging out alternative narratives.

The literature on the concept of narrative clearly establishes that it has different forms and meanings. It does not occur in a vacuum, and can therefore be changed to reflect how narrators reconstruct reality. Narratives inevitably emerge from a process of interpretation and abstraction. With regard to the power of the narrative, it is frequently assumed that narratives provide alternative insights and change perceptions. However, this paper argues this assumption is not always true. With regard to the power of narratives, it is hard to accept that narratives will easily influence people if they clash with alternatives. This is especially true in the case of diasporic spaces, as political issues are fanatically supported, primarily because they have become part of ethno-religious identities. Diaspora members could be reluctant to adopt new, alternative or opposing narratives. Rival groups do not share a collective past and/or feelings or perceptions, and so the impact of narratives on members of the opponent groups will necessarily be limited. This highlights that narratives cannot be freely changed or manipulated.

This paper also underlines there are grey areas where narratives have the power to exert influence and shape international politics. Narratives also benefit from the diasporic context and can be used to influence other members of the host country. This suggests narratives have two important roles. First, they can be used to reconstruct reality for those who are not involved in the issue. It can be assumed they are unpolarised, and so they could impact perceptions about the issue and make them familiar to any group. Second,

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narratives could increase the ability of diasporic institutions to exert influence at the domestic and international levels. Diasporic institutions that favour their interests could therefore affect the host country's decision making-process and foreign policy.

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