With the conclusion of World War I, the Armenian cause in the United States enjoyed a brief season of hope and vitality. American support was an offshoot of international sympathy for Armenian suffering and an unshakable sense of optimism. In a burst of national goodwill, the United States seemed intent on freeing the Armenians from centuries of persecution. Americans from the halls of Congress to the church pews of Mississippi joined together in the effort. They delivered speeches, wrote letters, exchanged ideas, and donated millions of dollars. Within less than a decade, however, the Armenian cause was irreparably splintered and largely forgotten.

This study examines the formation, activity, and gradual disintegration of the Armenian consensus in the United States. Most revealing is the period between the sovietization of the Armenian Republic in 1920 and the defeat of the Lausanne treaty in the Senate in 1927. During these years, the inherent divisions within the Armenian cause were unmasked and the basic motives of all parties clearly illustrated.

The setting was almost entirely American, often isolated from the reality of the Armenian situation and actual conditions in the Near East. Most importantly, the fissures that crippled the Armenian consensus in the United States were also products of domestic factors. Armenian nationalists fought American missionaries, Republicans battled Democrats, and the State Department grappled with philanthropic interests. The Armenian consensus inevitably unraveled in the process.

America was introduced to the plight of Armenia through the reports of American missionaries in the Near East. Representatives of the American Board of commissioners for Foreign Missions reached the Ottoman Empire in 1820, enthralled with the prospect of evangelizing the area’s Muslims. The missionary presence steadily expanded throughout the nineteenth century, but the ranks of apostate Muslims did not.

Ultimately, the missionaries found their niche among the Eastern Christians: Greeks, Nestorians, Syrians, and especially Armenians. As the social disorder of the Ottoman Empire intensified throughout the 1800s, the Armenians would come
to burrow deeper and deeper into America’s collective conscience. The same sense of moral outrage that fueled the abolitionist campaign, the temperance crusade, and the peace movement among New England Protestants contributed to the stereotypes of the era. For better or worse, missionary literature soon branded the Armenians as persecuted, helpless, and above all, piously Christian, while at the opposite pole cultivating the image of the “terrible Turk.” At the same time, the missionaries pressed on with their educational program. By 1914, the American Board was operating nine colleges and forty-three high schools in Ottoman territory. More than 33,000 students were enrolled in missionary schools at the outbreak of World War I.\(^1\) No group benefited more from these educational opportunities than the Armenians.

The American public’s first significant occasion to evidence its generosity on behalf of the Armenians came in response to the massacre of up to 200,000 Armenians in 1894–1896. A total of $1.5 million in American charity was distributed by the National Armenian Relief Committee, in cooperation with the American Red Cross.\(^2\) The massacres also prompted a sizable exodus to the United States, raising the population of the American-Armenian community to more than 70,000 by 1914.\(^3\)

America’s relationship with Armenia entered a new phase in 1915 with the first reports of the Armenian genocide that would eventually claim 1.5 million lives. The Armenian Relief Committee soon came into existence, and in November 1915 merged with the Persian War Relief Fund and the Syria-Palestine Committee to form the American committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief (ACASR).\(^4\) James L. Barton, foreign secretary of the American Board, chaired the new body and quickly popularized the cause of relief in the Near East. Mass rallies were held in New York, Philadelphia, and Detroit. Leading entertainment personalities led huge parades down Fifth Avenue. Proceeds from the 1916 Harvard-Yale football game went to the ACASR\(^5\) and President Woodrow Wilson declared Armenian suffering a national concern.\(^6\) From 1915 to 1930, the ACASR (later to become the American Committee for Relief in the Near East and then the Near East Relief) would collect $116 million in American charity.\(^7\) The Armenian tragedy provided the most potent appeal for funds and brought the status of Armenia closer to the American heart than ever before. Herbert Hoover was scarcely exaggerating when he wrote in his memoirs:

> Probably Armenia was known to the American school child in 1919 only a little less than England. The association of Mount Ararat and Noah, the staunch Christians who were massacred periodically by the Mohammedan Turk, and the Sunday School collections over fifty years for alleviating their miseries—all cumulate to impress the name Armenia on the front of the American mind.\(^8\)

Originally, the ACASR was conceived as a strictly philanthropic organization, but the political turmoil of the age soon attracted many of the group’s leading members. Barton kindled the initial spark in January 1918, bringing together an elite clique of prominent Armenophiles to coordinate political efforts and influence the State Department. Included in the inner circle were industrialist Charles R. Crane, a personal friend of Wilson’s who would lend his services to the King-Crane Commission to Turkey in 1919; Cleveland H. Dodge, heir to the Phelps
Dodge Corporation and a lifelong confidant of the president; and veteran missionary William W. Peet, as well as Garegin Pasdermadjian, the informal American representative of the Armenian National Council in Tiflis. 

By the fall of 1918, Barton and his committee had formulated a definite approach to the Armenian national question. First, they recommended the creation of an international commission to look after the surviving Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and disarm Turkey's defeated troops. As a long-range solution, the committee called for an independent Armenia consisting of the six traditional vilayets of Turkish Armenia, the Russian Armenian provinces of Kars and Erevan, the vilayet of Trebizond along the Black Sea, and the vilayet of Adana in Armenian Cilicia. The proposal was undeniably ambitious in its territorial claims, but not out of step with the optimism that characterized the closing days of the war. Projecting the United States as guardian of the fledgling Armenian state, Barton declared: “Give the Armenian capital and a righteous government and he will turn the whole of Turkey into a Garden of Eden in ten years.” The British, however, were not so buoyant and chose to leave the committee’s ideas out of the Mudros Armistice of October 30, 1918. Secretary of State Robert Lansing was also reluctant to press for American involvement in the Near East.

Actually, the notion of an independent Armenian nation-state had only recently merited serious consideration. Western political concepts had gradually seeped into the crumbling Ottoman social order during the nineteenth century, often through the curriculum of the American Board schools. In the case of the Armenians, however, the experience of national independence was linked directly to the upheaval of World War I. By May 1918 this turbulence had already produced a small Armenian republic in the Caucasus, tucked between hostile neighbors and overflowing with a million destitute inhabitants. Independence was assured only when Armenia’s army turned back the Turks near the capital of Erevan, and even then peace did little to comfort Armenia’s pathetic refugees.

In the United States, this dismal state found its most ardent champion in another product of the Near East’s convulsion. Vahan Cardashian was born in the ancient Anatolian city of Caesarea around 1880. He attended a French school for a decade and spent two years in an American institution before emigrating to New York in 1902. After marrying a wealthy and socially prominent widow, Cardashian entered Yale in 1904. He earned his law degree in four years and was admitted to the New York Bar in 1909. That same year he opened what was to become a successful legal practice in New York. Cardashian divorced his wife in 1916.

In 1911, Cardashian began representing the Ottoman Embassy and the New York consulate. His resignation came in 1915 when news of the Armenian massacres arrived in the United States. Cardashian also learned that his mother and sister were among the victims. With his personal life shattered, Cardashian increasingly devoted his energies to the cause of Armenian nationalism. His correspondence reached leading diplomats, university presidents, Washington’s key power brokers, and eventually the White House. Later, Cardashian focused his efforts on molding Armenophilia into an effective political force. The result was the staunchest advocate of Armenian statehood in the American political arena – the American Committee for the Independence of Armenia (ACIA).
The ACIA came together in early 1919 under Cardashian’s direction. Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, supplied the rallying point with a resolution endorsing an independent Armenia stretching from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea, and Cardashian followed up with a flurry of letters to political figures, clergymen, industrialists, diplomats, educators, and other members of America’s upper crust. Within a few weeks, Cardashian had recruited an impressive coalition.

In fact, the men who composed the ACIA were a somewhat curious lot. Most were wealthy and well-bred. With the notable exception of Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, few were identifiably ethnic. Protestant ideals and a sense of patrician duty were perhaps the strongest bonds among them.

James W. Gerard, chairman of the ACIA for nearly a decade, shared much in common with other ACIA members. The son of an attorney and New York state senator, Gerard followed his father and grandfather in attending a prestigious preparatory school and then Columbia College. He served as ambassador to Germany until 1917 and upon his return found himself deeply embroiled in Armenian affairs. In his autobiography, however, Gerard allots only two sketchy pages to his involvement with the Armenians and remains befuddled as to why the Armenians turned to him in their hour of need. During his years as ACIA chairman, though, Gerard acted as the willing mouthpiece of Cardashian’s tireless diplomacy, and also demonstrated a sincere personal commitment to the purpose of the ACIA.

INESCAPABLE DIVISIONS

From its inception, America’s sentiment for Armenian statehood proved a fragile aspiration. The unparalleled tragedy of the genocide lent the impetus, but did not inspire a political solution to the Armenian catastrophe.

Nonetheless, for a brief period, Armenian national ambitions were swept up in the heady idealism that brought World War I to a close. British, French, and Italian leaders proclaimed their interest in the future of Armenia, while, in the United States, pledges to the Armenian cause came from both the White House and Congress. The twelfth of Wilson’s Fourteen Points dwelt on the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire and boosted hopes for Armenian self-determination to unprecedented heights.

The roster of the ACIA reflects Armenia’s rather sudden fashionableness. Cardashian had indeed succeeded in skimming off the cream of American society for his new organization. However, he could in no way bridge the basic divisions that would inevitably undermine the Armenian consensus. The first cracks in the Armenian cause actually appeared before the movement had even taken shape. As Wilson dispatched troops to Europe in April 1917, a hotly contested battle was raging within the White House on the question of Turkey. On one side, Barton and Dodge told the president that a declaration of war against the Ottomans would provoke the destruction of the remaining American missionary property in the empire (valued at no more than $20 million) and imperil the lives of family and friends. Meanwhile, Cardashian applauded the War Department’s plan to land 75,000 troops in Cilicia. Former President Theodore Roosevelt
and several Armenian groups backed Cardashian’s lobbying, but in the end Wilson chose to stay out of the Near Eastern conflict.

At the conclusion of the war, the essential rift between Cardashian’s nationalism and Barton’s evangelism reemerged. The debate now centered on the settlement of Armenia’s future. Cardashian judged Armenia’s prospects of attracting a mandatory power as very dubious and consequently steered the ACIA toward a policy of direct American aid to the Armenian Republic. Throughout 1919, the ACIA petitioned Wilson to extend Armenia de facto recognition along with munitions and supplies for a 50,000-man army. In March 1919, such a request carried the signatures of 40 state governors, 250 college and university presidents, 85 bishops (including a cardinal), and 20,000 other clergymen. Cardashian reasoned that a well-equipped military force could occupy the Armenian plateau and thus substantiate Armenian territorial claims at the Paris peace conference without further Allied intervention.

Conversely, Barton and his friends sought to ensure both an American presence and a missionary presence in the future of the Near East. Barton supported self-government for the peoples of the Ottoman Empire, but his foremost priority was to safeguard nearly a century of American Board investment in the region. To this end, he recommended the appointment of a strong mandatory nation in the Near East to lay the foundations of prosperity and responsible government. At the same time, the Near Eastern question was eliciting an assortment of other opinions. Former American ambassador to Turkey Henry Morgenthau merged earlier views into his own scheme for a tripartite mandate over Constantinople, Anatolia, and Armenia, and advanced the United States or Britain as a suitable guardian. In April of 1919, Caleb F. Gates, president of Robert College in Constantinople, rejected altogether the idea of an independent Armenia. Speaking in the Ottoman capital, Gates argued that Anatolia must be treated as an indivisible whole and that a separate Armenia would only precipitate strife. Gates was loudly seconded by the United States high commissioner in Constantinople, Admiral Mark Lambert Bristol.

Rather than reconcile the various factions of the Armenian consensus, the ACIA chose instead to tear down the facade of unity. Gerard labeled Morgenthau’s suggestion as “immoral and impracticable,” while tracts such as The Joint Mandate Scheme linked the tripartite mandate to a revival of pan-Turkism. In reality, by late 1919 the problems of the Armenian cause went far beyond internal discord. The Allied decision to postpone peace with the Ottoman Empire, the resurgence of Turkish nationalism in response to the Greek landing at Smyrna in May 1919, and the rise of isolationism in the American Senate all dimmed Armenia’s hopes. Most ominous was the Senate’s repudiation of the League of Nations Covenant on November 19, 1919. By this time, the Armenian cause was entangled in the Wilson–Lodge feud and the larger morass of partisan politics. Wilson’s firm identification with the mandate concept abetted Lodge’s inexorable drift toward isolationism over the course of 1919. The Republican chieftain remained a mild proponent of direct aid to Armenia but both he and his party – along with a substantial wing of the ACIA – came to shun stronger ties to the old world.
The Armenian cause sputtered along into 1920, with the ACIA desperately clamoring for recognition and some slight show of support. In response, Under Secretary of State Frank L. Polk dismissed the chimera of a sea-to-sea Armenia and instead outlined his own program for independence: a small, compact state with access to one sea and moral support from the Allies. The White House finally granted de facto recognition in April, three months behind the other Allies, but offered nothing tangible. Then on May 24 Wilson shunted aside Gerard’s repeated warnings and formally submitted to the Senate his doomed request for a mandate. When the vote came on June 1, Wilson’s defeat was predictably resounding. Only a dozen Democrats stood by the President while sixty-two senators expressed their opposition.

Across the Atlantic, things looked no brighter. The Allies concluded a meaningless peace treaty with an Ottoman government that had long ago relinquished real power to the nationalist armies of the Anatolian interior. The Treaty of Sevres created an independent Armenian state and assigned Wilson the task of designating its boundaries within stipulated limits. (The president did not complete this pointless chore until November.) As expected, the settlement did little to improve Armenia’s hapless position, and was soon overshadowed by the distressing news of an August 24 accord between Moscow and Ankara. Terms of the agreement, along with the first dispatch of Soviet economic aid, reached Turkey in mid-September and prompted Kemal to launch an offensive against Armenia. The Turkish attack progressed rapidly, and on December 2 Armenia’s government was compelled to accept Soviet rule. Before the facts were known, Gerard, Barton, and George R. Montgomery (another important figure in missionary circles) beseeched Lodge to back a loan to Armenia. Lodge first appraised Congressional reaction as “very doubtful.” However, when word of Armenia’s sovietization came, Lodge was no longer hesitant. Such a loan was now “out of the question,” he wrote Barton on December 13. “I do not see what there is that we can do beyond the work of charity for the relief of suffering in the Near East.”

Barton concurred on December 16: “The hope of an independent Armenia seems to me buried for a generation at least.”

PICKING UP THE PIECES

The sovietization of Armenia further shook the already crumbling Armenian consensus in the United States. Without an independent state to serve, the ACIA in the early 1920s stumbled about in quest of a new strategy and ultimately settled on protecting the legal principles of the Sevres treaty. At the human level, though, the more established interests in the Near East again came forward to address the frightful Armenian refugee problem. The principal individuals were humanitarians rather than nationalists, but events following World War I had also taught them the value of political clout. In the fall of 1919, many leaders of Near East Relief and the former Congregational Committee on Armenia sought an alternative to the cynicism of Paris and Washington. Their answer was a new organization: the Armenia America Society (AAS; originally known as the
American Friends of Armenia). A number of ACIA members were also included on the society's national committee (Gerard, former American ambassador to Turkey Oscar S. Straus, Senator John Sharp Williams of Mississippi, and Rabbi Wise). Armenia America Society organizers Barton, Ernest W. Riggs, and Hamilton Holt also enjoyed dual membership. According to its charter, the AAS endeavored to "unite in cooperation the many friends of Armenia for the purpose of ascertaining the needs of Armenia, of bringing these needs before the American people and securing satisfaction of those needs through American assistance." At its zenith in the spring of 1922, the organization claimed sixty chapters in the United States and maintained close ties with the International Phil-Armenia League of Geneva. Moreover, the AAS nudged aside the ACIA in the forefront of the Armenian cause and earned the enduring enmity of Cardashian.

Internationalism remained the standard of the AAS long after such an outlook had lost favor in American politics. Reflecting missionary influence, the society backed Wilson's mandate proposal and later beat the drums for expanded American involvement abroad. AAS Chairman Walter George Smith, former head of the American Bar Association and an executive committee member of Near East Relief, called for American intervention in the Ottoman Empire during testimony before a Senate subcommittee in 1919 and again in a 1920 magazine article. Equally outspoken was the AAS's director, George Montgomery, a Yale Ph.D. and a former advisor to the American peace delegation on the Near East. After the collapse of the Armenian Republic, Montgomery began exploring options for a permanent political remedy to the ongoing refugee tragedy. His eventual proposal, and the most significant contribution of the AAS, would be a national home for the Armenians.

As conceived, the "national home" would be a stepping stone to full independence. Participants in the first Zionist Congress of 1897 had initially made use of the term to avoid references to a Jewish state. In the case of the Armenians, the national home concept originally focused on a region of the Armenian plateau that would ultimately be united with the Armenian state in the Caucasus. The Armenian National Delegation, representing Armenians of the Ottoman Empire, linked the scheme to stipulations of the League of Nations and the Sevres treaty in a memorandum in October 1920. The massacre of Armenians at Marash in 1920 and unsettling rumors of a French withdrawal from all of Cilicia, however, shifted attention farther south. The immediate safety of Cilicia's approximately 250,000 repatriated Armenians reoriented thinking on the national home, especially after the sovietization of Armenia. As a temporary measure, Smith suggested American backing of the French occupation, possibly with a Congressional loan.

The national home made its formal debut on the international diplomatic scene at the London conference of the Allies in early 1921. The AAS momentarily had reason to applaud British Foreign Secretary Lord George Curzon's adherence to the independent Armenia of the Sevres treaty, but by March 12 the Wilson award had succumbed to political expediency. A "national home" in Cilicia would be substituted for the provisions of the Sevres treaty, according to the
latest revisions. Aware of France’s wish to abandon Cilicia altogether, Smith’s first reaction was to denounce the deceit of the Allies, but soon the AAS recognized its limited choices.

Montgomery quickly came to terms with the political reality. While still publicly insisting on the Wilson award, he defined the national home, in a letter to Lodge on January 13, 1921, as an area under joint protectorate that would someday enjoy the status of a “commonwealth.” The plan surfaced again at an AAS rally in February. A few weeks later, Montgomery had narrowed his sights geographically to conform with Allied dictates. “We look forward to the establishment of another Bulgaria in the Taurus region,” he wrote Harding’s secretary of state, Charles Evans Hughes, on March 29.

Of course, not all Armenophiles could be expected to surrender the Sevres treaty so readily. With particular rancor, Cardashian condemned the national home as “anti-Armenian” and contrary to the ACIA’s goal of independence. Gerard added to the schism by dropping his nominal membership in the AAS and formulating a new set of demands. From Hughes, he requested de jure recognition of Soviet Armenia and provisions for a 10,000-man American-Armenian army to occupy the Wilson award. Joining the ACIA in opposition to the national home was the dominant political force of the Armenian Republic—the Armenian Revolutionary Federation. Thus, the bitter divisiveness that was to hobble the efforts of both Armenians and Armenophiles had sunk deep roots by the early months of 1921.

Disregarding this growing animosity, the AAS pressed onward with its activities. A pamphlet coauthored by Barton, Smith, and Stanley White illustrated the precarious state of Armenian refugees in Cilicia and triggered a barrage of letters to Washington in mid-1921. France’s decision to withdraw from Cilicia in October brought renewed urgency to the national home campaign, stirring even Harding to grope for a painless solution to the tragedy. Toward that end, Montgomery’s note to Under Secretary of State Henry P. Fletcher on December 16 carried a few novel suggestions: appointment of an Ottoman Christian governor in Cilicia, exchange of the Sevres provisions for a national home in Cilicia, and funding through a portion of German war reparations or article 259 of the Versailles treaty. Rebuffed by the executive branch, the AAS next turned to Congress. Montgomery and Riggs drafted a resolution and persuaded Representative John J. Rogers of Massachusetts to introduce it on December 12. The Rogers bill asked nothing more of the United States than to issue a “moral protest” to the Kemalists and initiate a conference with the Allies on the problems of the Armenians in Cilicia. The White House was interested, but not supportive, and the measure quickly disappeared after hearings before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs in March 1922.

As Armenian refugees faced the wrath of the Kemalists in 1922, the tone of the AAS turned more strident. Montgomery accused the French of perfidy and called for the ouster of Admiral Bristol. The vehemence of the AAS assault travelled as far as Ankara and sparked denunciations by the Turkish press and disavowals from Americans in Turkey. Nationalist Turkey’s emerging self-confidence also compelled the Allies to reconsider the Sevres treaty in early 1922.
The AAS instantly moved to lobby for American participation, combining traditional moral arguments with economic incentives. The United States, however, remained aloof as the Powers met in February and March to discuss the treaty and the Turco-Greek war. Neither issue was resolved at the time.

After Kemal's decisive victories in the summer of 1922, the obsolescence of Sevres became clearer still and another conference was scheduled to convene in the Swiss city of Lausanne on November 20. The AAS, the Armenian National Delegation, and Barton bombarded the White House with appeals for official American representation, but Harding agreed to send only a team of observers. Montgomery, Barton, and Peet then journeyed to Lausanne to present the case for a national home. Montgomery summarized the AAS position in the "Memorandum of the Armenian National Home" and convinced the American contingent to relay the document to the subcommittee on minorities on December 16.

Within the actual conference proceedings, however, the AAS project was rapidly reduced to a political pawn by the British. On December 12, Lord Curzon threatened an early rupture of the gathering over the issue of the national home, but two days later seemed placated by Turkey's pledge to join the League of Nations. His later pleas for a national home were obviously mellowed by his enthusiasm for Ankara's blossoming friendship with the West. When the proposed minorities section of the treaty was drafted on December 21, neither the Armenians nor the national home were mentioned. The coming days offered no upturn for AAS fortunes. The national home concept - once akin to a "commonwealth" and later pared down to an innocuous "retreat" (in the words of Lord Curzon) - had been scuttled once and for all. Armenian representatives at Lausanne conceded defeat in a January 11, 1923, letter to Harding, thanking the United States for its past efforts and requesting future support. Curiously, with hopes for a national home all but obliterated, the ACIA chose to execute an about-face. On January 6, the group came out with a full endorsement of the national home, backed by forty-four impressive signatures.

For Barton, though, the Armenian cause had more or less drawn to a close. On February 8, during a conversation with Under Secretary of State William Phillips, he indicated his willingness to negotiate with the Turks. He also maintained an interest in Montgomery's often intriguing attempts to settle Armenian refugees. Actually, the AAS director had mentioned Syria, Bulgaria, Romania, or the United States as possible host countries in communications to the State Department dating back to October 1922. (Projects to colonize displaced Armenians in the American South were also broached in 1920 and 1921.) In the early months of 1923, he pursued a Soviet offer to relocate 250,000 Armenians between the Kuban and Don rivers. The proposition lured him to the Soviet Union in March, where he learned that the Kremlin would scatter self-governing Armenian cantons in the central Volga region, Transcaucasia, the Kirgizian Republic, and other parts of Turkestan. Montgomery relayed the proposal to representatives of the Armenian Republic in May and then dropped the matter after meeting strong disapproval. More feasible was the aim of the National Delegation to transport 50,000 Armenians from Greece to Soviet Armenia. The plan was approved by both the League of Nations and the State Department in
the fall of 1923. For his part, Montgomery pushed for Congressional legislation to supply the needed $5 million, but by April 1924 White House support had evaporated. - The League of Nations provided only another source of frustration. An International Settlement commission on Armenians was set up in March 1925, with a role for Near East Relief, but it failed to overcome its mistrust of Moscow.

ARMENIA DISCARDED

Among the shapers of American foreign policy, the Armenian cause signified little more than a minor nuisance in the 1920s. America’s top representative in Constantinople from 1919 to 1927, Admiral Bristol, sought to combat Armenophobia during Wilson’s administration. He addressed letters to senators in 1919 denying the ACIA’s depiction of unbearable conditions in Armenia and connecting Armenian propaganda to British and French imperialism. The peoples of the Near East were unprepared for self-government, in his opinion, and would improve their fate only with firm guidance from the West. By 1922, Montgomery and Barton were leading a drive to remove Bristol but soon discovered that the admiral’s views had found a receptive audience in the State Department. Allen W. Dulles of the Near East Division, although touched by Armenian suffering and a trustee of Near East Relief, was typical in his unswerving pragmatism. The Armenians were in fact only one of several small national groups snubbed by the State Department during the interwar years. The Department also turned a deaf ear to the pleas of Jewish Zionists, Kurds, Assyrians, and Maronite Catholics in Lebanon. Hughes and Dulles even went out of their way to dilute a Congressional resolution endorsing the Balfour Declaration.

Hughes was perhaps Washington’s greatest paradox. At one time the keynote speaker at the ACIA’s inaugural banquet and a recognized pillar of the Armenian cause, Hughes resigned from the ACIA on February 26, 1921, and then wrestled with a guilt-ridden conscience during his four years as secretary of state. He professed concern for the Armenians but pointed to the paucity of diplomatic options in dealing with Kemal and Lenin. A similar sense of realpolitik characterized America’s three-man team of observers at Lausanne. As the senior member of the delegation, Bristol obviously cared little for Armenia while Joseph C. Grew, the minister to Switzerland, and Richard W. Child, the ambassador to Italy, lacked a deep understanding of the Near East. Grew also looked disdainfully on missionary and relief operations in the region and spurned the principle of self-determination. “There would be thousands of peanut states and the map would look like chicken pox,” he wrote in his diary.

Officially, the State Department included the national home among its seven primary interests at Lausanne, but on November 22, 1922, Grew and Child were already prepared to declare the plan hopeless. Hughes revealed something of his personal dilemma when two days later he urged the Americans to probe for new ideas, including possible refugee havens in the Aegean islands or Cyprus. He remained vigilant in his pursuit of potential answers well into January. Harding, too, expressed anxiety over a public backlash in response to the Armenian plight.
Dulles, however, evinced none of the sentimentality of his superiors. Instead, he lambasted the "misstatements, misquotations and extravagant recommendations" contained within one of Cardashian's memorandums and on February 19, 1923, called for an end to correspondence with the ACIA. When the second session of the Lausanne conference opened on April 23, the State Department began to explore avenues of rapprochement with Turkey. "Non-interference" was accepted as the best policy toward the Armenian problem and cleared the way for the signing of a Turco-American pact on August 6. Ironically, the Turks refused to include even the meager minority clauses of the Allied agreement in the accord, contending that the United States had not been a party to the original treaty or a member of the League of Nations.

Cardashian now readied himself for his last major struggle. After the fall of the Armenian Republic he had lashed out in anger at Wilson, missionaries, the Armenian National Delegation, Armenian Protestants, and the Armenian bourgeoisie, and soon broadened his contempt to cover the State Department. Fewer and fewer allies, however, came to Cardashian's defense. Senator William B. King of Utah continued to turn out a number of bills on behalf of the Armenians but won little backing aside from Senator Thomas Sterling of South Dakota and Representative Edward C. Little of Kansas. (The first words of praise for Kemal came in January 1923, when Senator Robert L. Owen of Oklahoma lauded the Turkish leader's respect for Western values.)

Nonetheless, Cardashian held the ACIA together until 1927 to fight the Turkish-American Treaty of Commerce and Amity. Underlying the often acrimonious contest was Cardashian's belief that ratification of the treaty would compromise the legal status of the Sevres treaty and damage Armenian claims to the Wilson award. Such abstractions assumed particular significance when complemented by Cardashian's prediction of impending revolution in Turkey and the Soviet Union.

Gerard shared Cardashian's convictions and remained committed to what was left of the Armenian cause. In February 1923 he forewarned Hughes of the ACIA's intent to block resumed relations with Turkey. Nine months later, the ACIA formally kicked off its drive and earned front-page coverage in a number of newspapers. Inside the State Department, officials appreciated the treaty's weaknesses and directed their energies toward public education. Missionaries and businessmen in Turkey were enlisted, reports compiled, journalists lobbied, and speakers dispatched. Notwithstanding, Hughes confessed that Gerard's propaganda was making some headway. The secretary of state had become a special target of the ACIA, assailed for his alleged connection to Standard Oil. ACIA charges led the New York World to editorialize on April 23: "Show Mr. Hughes an oil well and he will show you a foreign policy." Later that summer, the Democrats inserted a plank in their national platform which opened: "We condemn the Lausanne treaty. It barters legitimate American rights and betrays Armenia, for the Chester oil concessions." Gerard was treasurer of the Democratic National Committee at the time.

During the same period, Cardashian worked to maintain an open channel to the secretary. On February 7, 1924, he assured Hughes that no member of the
ACIA would intentionally slander him and described the ACIA's task as "extremely unpleasant, although commendable." Gerard forecast that treaty foes would raise 45 votes in the Senate. Thus ratification hinged on the administration's willingness to insert provisions protecting both Armenian and American rights. Hughes, however, concentrated on subverting his opposition from within. He queried fourteen ACIA members after their names appeared on a pamphlet and gained six repudiations of the treaty fight. Supplemented Hughes' work, Dulles investigated Cardashian's earlier association with the Turkish Embassy and gathered renunciations of the activist from the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople and Armenian Protestant leaders in Turkey. The State Department also recruited Barton and many of his colleagues on the American Board.

The treaty dispute remained dormant for most of 1924 and 1925 as the administration of Calvin Coolidge balked at submitting the accord to the Senate. Attitudes hardened in the meantime. The State Department under Secretary Frank B. Kellogg adopted the intransigence established by Hughes, and Cardashian's letters dropped the pretext of courtesy. The formation of the American Committee Opposed to the Lausanne Treaty (ACOLT) marked an escalation in hostility. The new group's chief accomplishment was the publication in 1926 of a book on the Lausanne Treaty. Again the demand for a free, independent Armenia within the Wilson award (those lands Wilson designated as "Armenia" following the Treaty of Sevres) was asserted as a reservation to the Lausanne treaty, while much of the ACIA's propaganda from earlier years was resurrected. In contrast to the ACIA, though, ACOLT's membership roster listed only nineteen names. Although the ACIA's most powerful political figures were absent, the committee could at least claim two former ambassadors to Turkey (Abram I. Elkus and Straus), along with a few well-known clergymen. Coordinating the pro-treaty forces was the General Committee of American Institutions and Associations in Favor of the Ratification of the Treaty with Turkey. The committee came into being in mid-1926 and included as affiliates the American Board, the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, the Council of Turkish-American Relations, the Federated American Chambers of Commerce of the Near East, the National Council of Congregational Churches, the Near East College Association, the YMCA, and the YWCA. Robert W. Alley, chairman of the Council on Turkish-American Relations, oversaw the production of a 164-page book entitled The Treaty with Turkey: Why It Should Be Ratified. Contributors included Hughes, Child, Bristol, Barton, Gates, and Senator William E. Borah of Idaho, chairman of the Foreign Relations committee.

In the Senate, Borah worked until January 1927 to avoid a decisive confrontation. When the treaty finally came to the Senate floor on January 18, the vote of 50–34 fell six votes short of the necessary two-thirds. Only five Democrats were among the ranks of the majority. Turkish reaction to the outcome was surprisingly mild and facilitated an exchange of notes between Ankara and Washington on February 17. Turkey agreed to the continued favorable treatment of American trade and the eventual resumption of diplomatic relations. As expected, Cardashian was enraged by the action and immediately cabled his "keen disapproval" to the White House. As the administration's plan to receive a Turkish
The ambassador to the United States became known, Cardashian orchestrated what amounted to a one-man propaganda campaign. He crisscrossed the country and distributed resolutions to dozens of Armenian communities. Nevertheless, the United States received Turkish Ambassador Ahmed Mouhtar Bey on December 5, 1927, and in turn appointed Grew to the American post in Ankara. Cardashian stepped up his pace of activity in the early months of 1928, but this had little impact. Only Gerard and Bishop William T. Manning supported him with letters to the State Department, and soon even Gerard declined to lend his name to Cardashian's often violent attacks on the Turkish ambassador. Ignored by the press and government officials, Cardashian continued to pursue the Armenian cause until his death in 1934.

Ultimately, the missionary establishment did not fare much better. Near East Relief reached an understanding with the Kemalists in 1921 but rapidly shifted its operations to other areas of the Near East. Meanwhile, the American Board's educational mission in Turkey was reduced to 1,400 students in nine schools by the time Washington and Ankara opened diplomatic relations. Secularization and Turkish nationalism were increasingly woven into the curriculum.

CONCLUSION

The year 1927 found the Armenian cause in complete disarray. The once powerful ACIA had lost virtually all its political influence while the defunct AAS had generally lost interest in the Armenians. In the end, Cardashian's nationalism could not be reconciled with Barton's evangelism or with Hughes' mild humanitarianism. The Armenian cause could not keep its many facets under one roof. The issue itself had been reduced to a political football. The Armenians served the Democrats well in their attempt to embarrass the Coolidge administration in the Senate and again turned up in the Democratic national platform of 1928.

Of course, one could return to the consensus of 1918 and marvel at its illusive strength, but this would hardly explain the subsequent disintegration of the Armenian cause. In retrospect, the postwar cohesion appears as an aberration—an outgrowth of sympathy emboldened by transient idealism. When the Armenophiles were forced to confront the reality of starving Armenian refugees and defiant Turkish soldiers, the Armenian cause began to lose its unanimity. The patriots who dreamt of a sea-to-sea Armenia cared little for the aspirations of the American Board. Likewise, the staid conservatives who constituted the hierarchy of America's philanthropic institutions could not be expected to suddenly cultivate a taste for revolutionary nationalism. As the years passed and the immediate tragedy of the Armenian genocide faded, the basic divisions within the initial consensus emerged with increasing clarity. The Armenian cause was simply too fragile to survive the international turmoil of the postwar era and the rough and tumble jostling of American partisan politics. The promises of 1918 scarcely left a mark on the realities of 1927.
NOTES

2. Ibid., p. 69.
3. Ibid., p. 42.
7. Ibid., p. xi.
10. Ibid., pp. 109–110.
11. Ibid.
13. Ibid., p. 8.
14. Senate Joint Resolution 378, introduced on December 10, 1918, read as follows: “Resolved, That in the opinion of the Senate, Armenia, including the six vilayets of Turkish Armenia and Cilicia, Russian Armenia, and the northern part of the Province of Azerbaijan, Persian Armenia, should be independent and that it is the hope of the Senate that the peace conference will make arrangements for helping Armenia to establish an independent republic.”
19. Ibid., p. 10.
On March 7, 1919, five of the leading members of the American Committee for Relief in the Near East—Barton, Peet, John H. T. Main, Harold A. Hatch, and Edward E. Moore—cabled Secretary of State Lansing from Constantinople with their opinion that “Turkey is politically, financially, morally bankrupt.” Regarding minorities, the telegram stated: “We believe that with independence definitely assured to each nationality as it becomes qualified to exercise self government control by a disinterested mandatory will be welcomed by an overwhelming majority of the people concerned.”

United States of America, The National Archives (Washington, D.C.), Record Group 59: General Records of the Department of State (Decimal File, 1910–1929), 867.00/850 (Hereafter known as: U.S. Archives, RG 59.)

Grabill, Protestant Diplomacy, p. 175.
Ibid., pp. 169–170.


Papers of Frank L. Polk, Yale University, Sterling Memorial Library, Box 81/187, January 21, 1920; Box 81/188, February 11, 1920; Box 81/188, February 18, 1920; Box 81/188, February 20, 1920; Box 81/188, February 24, 1920; Box 81/188, March 10, 1920; Box 81/188, March 16, 1920.


Papers of Henry Cabot Lodge, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, December 13, 1920.

Ibid., December 16, 1920.


Ibid.


Ernest W. Riggs initially conducted the AAS’s daily affairs. Montgomery assumed the directorship when Riggs became the educational director of Near East Relief in late 1920.


U.S. Archives, RG 59, 860J.40161110.


Ibid., p. 59.

Ibid.


Grabill, Protestant Diplomacy, p. 257.
364 Mark Malkasian

46 Cook, “The United States and the Armenian Question,” p. 293.
47 U.S. Archives, RG 59, 860J.4016P.81/179.
48 Ibid., 860J.4016/96.
49 Ibid., 860J.4016/181.
51 U.S. Archives, RG 59, 867.4016/578; 867.4016/634.
52 Cook, “The United States and the Armenian Question,” p. 309.
53 U.S. Archives, RG 59, 867.4016/813.
54 Ibid., 711.67119/2.
55 Ibid., 867.4016/894.
56 Ibid., 867.4016/877.
58 U.S. Archives, RG 59, 867.4016/839.
59 Ibid., 867.4016/844.
60 Ibid., 867.4016/896.
61 Ibid., 867.4016/816.
62 Ibid., 867.4016/928.
63 Ibid., 860J.48/143.
64 Ibid., 860J.48/68; 860J.48/70; 860J.48/74; 860J.48/75.
65 Ibid., 860J.48/147.
66 Ibid., 860J.48/156.
67 On November 6, 1923, Allan W. Dulles of the Near Eastern Division described the National Delegation’s representative, M. Vartan Malcolm, as “reasonable, sane and willing to be helpful” in an inner-department memorandum, contrasting his conduct with Cardashian’s obstinacy (U.S. Archives, RG 59, 860J.48/158). Dulles had learned of the conflict between Malcolm and Cardashian earlier in the year. On January 4, 1923, he reported to Hughes on his meeting with Malcolm, disclosing the following: “I may add that Malcolm, who has always impressed me as being a rather intelligent Armenian, told me that he had called Cardashian to his office and told him that he had no right to continue to pose as the spokesman for an influential Armenian committee, that he represented only himself, and that he was doing the Armenian cause a great deal of harm.” (U.S. Archives, RG 59, 767.68119T&M-3/15).
68 Ibid., 860J.48/175.
69 Ibid., 860J.48/184.
70 Ibid., 860J.48/189.
71 Ibid., 860J.48/220; 860J.48/221.
72 Ibid., 867.00/944.
73 Ibid., 867.01/6.
74 Grabbill, Protestant Diplomacy, p. 260.
75 U.S. Archives, RG 59, 701.60J11/9.
78 Ibid., 867.4016/823.
79 Ibid., 867.4016/888.
80 Ibid., 867.4016/859; 867.4016/816a.
81 Ibid., 867.4016/817.
82 Ibid., 867.4016/816.
83 Ibid., 867.4016/922. One of the few voices of protest within the State Department came from C. Van H. Engert of the Near Eastern Division. On January 25, 1923, Engert submitted the following assessment to Dulles: “The Turk has succeeded in achieving precisely what he set out to do in 1915—nay, infinitely more than he dared hope—for he not only got rid of the Armenians but also of the Greeks, and that in spite of the crushing allied victories.” (867.4016/914). Regarding the rapprochement of Turkey and the United States, Engert advised Dulles on March 14, 1923: “Now by dealing with the Turks ‘as though nothing had happened,’ by appearing to shake hands with them, by
haggling over ephemeral advantages, without taking into consideration American public opinion, we might lay ourselves open to criticism which it would be difficult to answer . . . We cannot afford to lower our standards of honor and morality to suit the political exigencies of the day,” (711.672/17).

89Ibid., 767.6819P/52.
90Ibid., 711.672/183.
94Ibid., p. 16.
95U.S. Archives, RG 59, 867.4016/921.
96Ibid., 711.672/241.
99U.S. Archives, RG 59, 711.672/25B.
100James W. Gerard, “The Chester Oil Concession and the Lausanne Treaty,” Armenian Review, XXVIII (Spring, 1975), p. 25. In April 1924, the ACIA circulated a pamphlet which scandalized Hughes’ involvement with Standard Oil and the so-called Chester Concession. (Turkey had ratified the Chester Concession in 1923 but revoked it shortly after the pamphlet appeared.) The Chester Concession originally granted an American firm rights to build 2,500 miles of rail in the Ottoman Empire and exploit the subsoil resources within forty miles of the track. Conflicting claims by Britain, France, and the Soviet Union later complicated the arrangement and induced the Kemalists to abandon the scheme altogether. The ACIA alleged that Hughes backed the Chester Concession in order to secure drilling rights for Standard Oil.
101Ibid., p. 29.
102DeNovo, American Interests, p. 159.
103U.S. Archives, RG 59, 711.672/261.
104Ibid., 711.672/187.
105Ibid., 711.672/261.
106Ibid., 711.672/213. Barton’s support, however, was not without reservations. He asked Dulles if “it would be wise to threaten Turkey that we could conclude no treaty with her until justice were done to the Armenians.”
107Ibid., 711.672/480.
109DeNovo, American Interests, pp. 164–165.
110Ibid., p. 165.
111U.S. Archives, RG 59, 711.672, Protests/1–51.
112Barton, Near East Relief, pp. 149–150.