

**Keynote Address**

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Heritage Party

It is an honor to be back at Georgetown University, a very important university in a very important capital city, which has always played its pivotal role throughout the modern history of the Republic of Armenia and the Armenian people. And as a graduate of the Georgetown University Law Center, it is especially enjoyable for me to be back in these hallowed halls, although I would rather not recall too precisely how long I have been gone.

But I must also confess that it is also rather humbling for me to be here today, particularly as I look through this distinguished audience. In fact, I am reminded of the conversation between two cows in the Armenian countryside grazing there on the Ashtarak-Gyumri highway, and they see a truck whiz by and on the truck it says—it's a milk truck—"pasteurized, homogenized, and Vitamin D added," and one cow turns to the other and says, "it makes you feel a little bit inadequate, doesn't it?"

Well, that is close to capturing how I feel today being here among this group of scientists, ambassadors, and professors, and especially among a young generation which holds out a lot of promise for Armenia and its future. The keynote address, I think, is nothing more than a summary. For those who have been present throughout this Forum, from last night's presentation of the new report by the organizers and the two panels today, we have a new generation of a policy analysis, of a critical approach to Armenia-Diaspora relations. And I think that the challenge, as we look forward, almost on the eve of the third decade of Armenia's independence, to creating a unified or coordinated vision, or a blueprint for the future would nearly have the challenge of conveying into a policy process the hearts and minds, and the policy prescriptions that are being discussed here at this Forum.

Armenia and the Diaspora are indeed as different from each other as they are one. We know in this transnational, globalized third millennium that, both conceptually and literally, Armenia and Diaspora have shared identities; Armenia has become part Diaspora, Diaspora, part Armenia, and therefore the challenges and tribulations and prospects for the Armenian nation are very much attached to the developing discourse within Armenia, within dispersion, and between the various diasporas and the one Republic of Armenia. Very symbolically, this Policy Forum takes place during a trinity of days that mean a lot to us in Armenian history. Twenty-two years ago on February 27-28, this past weekend, the Armenian community of Sumgait, in Azerbaijan, was attacked based on its identity, for being Armenian, and basically the militarization of the Mountainous Karabagh conflict and the quest of Artsakh for liberty and self-determination took on a new form, as a nation that in history had survived a Genocide and national dispossession, faced once again the specter of pogroms and victimization, and deadly and violent punishment merely on the basis of one's own identity.

Today, March 1, exactly two years ago in downtown Yerevan, we Armenians underwent a very shameful presidential-driven tragedy, where we lost ten citizens, faith and confidence in our nation, and the values and standards that our parents and grandparents have passed on to us as traditional Armenian staples. We remember the fallen: beyond Armenia's frontiers and within Armenia proper and in our own way we say never again; never again because the quality of Armenia's making it, the quality of its future, the ability of Armenia to deliver on foreign policy objectives is directly conditional on the quality of life in Armenia, the depth of democracy, and the application of the rule of law. We remember and we must work never again to allow tragedy, both within our frontiers and outside them—where any and all Armenian rights are at issue or under attack.

And March 2, tomorrow, is the eighteenth anniversary of Armenia's accession to the United Nations, Armenia's sovereign return to the family of nations, and I am very happy that Ambassador Shugarian, Mr. Papian, and many other public servants are with us here today. As well as my father, Professor Richard Hovannisian, the dean of Modern Armenian History, who was there at that time, and someone who has been also extremely concerned that Armenian history should not repeat.

The challenge, I think, that weaves its way through the presentations of our meeting is how to graduate beyond our own parochialism and to come upon an integrated, inclusive policy process, not necessarily anchored in structure—although there is a lot of talk about new structures. The policy that realizes the capacity of our nation and delivers results; delivers results in Armenia and in the Diaspora.

We, as a nation, are long on civilization but short on statecraft, and we still have not found the formula to translate the wealth of individual talent across the board into collective success at home or abroad. To do this, of course, to forge this joint institutionalized decision making, we need to harness the resources—professional, intellectual, and especially our youth—allowing for their individual and professional integration into the decision making process, distinguishing at once between strategy and tactics and also allowing for the division of responsibilities.

Ownership of and stakeholding in policy formulation and implementation are very key for this new generation. And it is this generation which, in modern circumstances, the Republic of Armenia has to compete for; to compete for their resources, their contributions, their investments because this generation is the generation of the world, there are many demands and many choices that it is called upon to make, and Armenia has to be competitive against this background as well.

But the important thing is that we must hold ourselves to the highest possible standards of statecraft, and democracy, and respect for rights; having lost so much in history, we should not seek shortcuts, or easy ways out.

A self-critical diagnosis is always helpful, as difficult as that might be, and we come, based on the presentations that we've heard over the last two days, to the conclusion that we do have problems with respect to good governance and accountability, specifically within the Republic of Armenia, also in Diaspora, and finally in the relationship between the various diasporas and sub-diasporas with the Homeland. In Armenia, there is no real application of laws in any truly equal and equitable manner. We remain challenged to strive for a day when we can say that the rule of law obtains in the Republic of Armenia, without regard to wealth, power or influence. There remains, to this day, a very vertical post-Soviet decision making apparatus, where the powers of state and of government are not subject to any check, balance, or separation, a very executive-heavy system where "telephonic justice" continues to take its toll on those who seek justice in the Republic of Armenia; a system that has allowed political prisoners for the expression of their political views—whether we like those views or not; where monopolies and oligopolies are the order of the day; and where the old nakharar system of Armenian history, the feudal system, continues throughout the regions and countryside of Armenia. Conflict of interest between public duty and private gain is endemic; it permeates all spheres of life and begins at the very top, and runs all the way down. And it is for that reason that anyone who wants to talk about prescriptions and strategies and programs must get with it, and apply the rule of law starting from the top because that's where the source of Armenia's graft and conflict of interest begins. To weed it out we need a new methodology of public consolidation.

It may be easy to sit in Armenia, to offer policy prescriptions as an NGO, one in the environmental realm, the other one in human rights, the other political party on foreign policy and Turkish-Armenian relations, to gather in Washington and elsewhere, where we have very sharp minds concerned about the future of Armenia, and asking the question: "well, how do we realize that potential?" With each one continuing in his own narrow pathway, her own little project—which is very important, don't get me wrong, a significant contribution to Armenia and its future—but one which misses the bigger picture; which does not allow for a bridging of the divide and a joint political, societal solutions to Armenia's problems.

It may not be politically correct to say so, but what we're talking about is the delivery of results, and in Armenia we will not be able to deliver those results in our generation if the solution is not political and the political bearers of policy are not in tune with their constituents in Armenia and in the Diaspora.

Since 1995, as we all know, there has not been a transfer of authority through free and fair elections. In each of Armenia's three administrations the right of the citizen, of the voter, has been denied, taken at times by intimidation and outright force. And authority, with very few exceptions, has been reproduced from within. Fraud, violence, disenfranchisement of the citizenry are all issues that have attained during Armenia's first two decades of independence.

What are we thinking? An enlightened nation spread about the globe because of the tragedy of our history and bearing witness to and countenancing, for nearly two decades, the disrespect of our own citizens, when the citizen and his empowerment are pivotal, not only to good governance and Armenia's future, but also to national security, to the pursuit of foreign policy objectives.

When we go from village to village, during the elections, and whether it's the Heritage Party or our opposition colleagues in the Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Dashnaktsutiun or the Armenian National Congress, or even those who are in the majority parties in the coalition, well, at least for us, when we go out and knock on those doors, our main issue is not convincing the Armenian citizen to vote for us, but to vote at all, to come out and say, "you know, I can make a difference, I belong to this country and its future." And overcoming that apathy, that indifference, and that fatalism which has been forced upon the Armenian body politic is, I think, the major challenge of our generation in Armenia, in the political field, and I'm sure also in the Diaspora.

And another item that has been discussed—and you'll find a note on it in the Policy Forum report—something that our generation has to find a solution to is the Church-State relationship. I am a member of the Armenian Apostolic Church, I have been baptized in it, married in it, and that comes to us through the generations. But the Church has to get out of politics. Church and State have to be separated, and if, to date, the main critical target of the politicization of the Church has focused on the Great House of Cilicia at Antelias and the party Dashnaktsutiun, that's almost passé. Right now, as the report notes, there is a great danger that at least certain circles in the service of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin are taking part in the political process, to the detriment of the Church and the Armenian people. On March 1, when demonstrators and policemen who were on the dividing lines of a polarized society, it's not only my colleagues at Heritage who had to be there separating the two segments of our people, but the Church had to be there and above it all.

Sadly, however, instead of a unified or coordinated policy development based on diversity and competition of ideas, we have something quite different, and I quote a recent report of the Armenian Center for National and International Studies (ACNIS) about the current events in Armenia. It's nothing new for you:

“Domestic politics in Armenia remains hindered by a pronounced stalemate between the authorities and the opposition, and hostage to the petty nature of a political discourse dominated by the politics of personality and partisanship over policy of national interest. More troubling, Armenian society remains polarized by the unresolved post-election crisis of 2008, with the authorities unable or unwilling to respond to widespread demands for real change. Given the lack of legitimacy, and in spite of the lack of any popular mandate to govern, the Armenian authorities have increasingly been gambling on securing an external success. But as progress in the diplomatic effort to “normalize” relations with Turkey stalled abruptly, at least on the face of it, in January, and with any real progress over Mountainous Karabagh seemingly as remote as ever, the start of this year in Armenia offered little hope that the Armenian authorities would be able to garner that much needed dose of legitimacy, or forge success in the foreign policy realm. Over the longer term, however, the country’s mounting socio-economic divide and widening disparities in wealth and income, and the added pressure of budget deficits and rising foreign debt, pose more serious threats to stability and security in Armenia. The most recent sign of such mounting economic pressure stems from a new trend of rising inflation and consumer price rises covering a wide range of commodities and basic staples.” This also points out issues of strategic and structural deficiency, as “January saw no improvement in the level of investment or remittances, and the government still seems unwilling or unable to take on the challenge of entrenched corruption and arbitrary tax collection.”

It’s easy to register what we need. The answers, I think, have to be offered by you in your deliberations, and fora like yours, elsewhere in Diaspora and in the Republic of Armenia, to transform our agenda, to give modern depth and contour to the Armenian program, building on traditional items of historical survival and national stability, but integrating into the traditional agenda a contemporary dimension that is based on a creative tension, a benchmark-based engagement where Armenians and our communities get to the order of the day of implementing and realizing policy, and not necessarily jockeying with each other for photographic access to Armenia’s president or the US secretary of state.

This is serious stuff, and if we are to succeed, the national and the democratic agendas have to become one and the same: Artsakh and foreign policy; developmental priorities; rule of law, not as a motto or a line item, but as a real-life demand of the Republic of Armenia; democracy issues, infrastructure projects. We’re all proud of the Goris-Stepanakert highway as one of the few tangible results of Armenia-Diaspora relations. But beyond that there are issues of energy, of breaking through Armenia’s land-locked status in creative, modern ways where the true partnership of Armenia and Diaspora can be tested. There were several opportunities, both in Turkey and in Georgia, to acquire ownership of port facilities and a variety of other infrastructural opportunities that we

did not consider important enough to include on our agenda.

This transformation, neither revolution nor evolution, calls for a new national paradigm based on basic human values (there is nothing anational about basic human values), vital national interests, individual liberties and expression, and democratic participation and governance. Our domestic conduct directly impacts our ability to articulate and implement foreign policy goals. It is here that civil society, diasporas, and individual Armenians of good faith and conscience can contribute, in real time and in real programs, to render Armenia a domain where the citizen is crown and rights rule the country.

We have to put our own house in order, without an escape hatch from it. If we expect justice from the world, in terms of recognizing our history and our rights and our legacy, we've got to deliver justice at home. And when we do that, I believe that we will have an easier time, and a more effective outreach in sharing with our partners in the United States, in the West and around the world our approaches and positions on issues of geopolitics, human rights, and the Armenian place in the world.

In 1915, we lost not only 1.5 million of our forebears, we lost a homeland, a way of life, a civilization in which our people had lived for more than three millennia.

There is no negotiation, there is no protocol, and there is no resolution—as important as they are—that can compensate for the depth and breadth of that transgenerational loss. And that loss notwithstanding, it was the considered opinion of the reborn Republic of Armenia that we should seek a normalization of relations with the Republic of Turkey, without preconditions. And for all the critique that I have leveled against all three Armenian administrations, this policy, I think, demonstrated a political maturity and a calmness and calculation of policymaking that befit a newly independent Armenia.

Unfortunately, we remained alone in that policy proposition. And in the last days of January, in 1992, having the honor of representing the Armenian republic in foreign relations, I went to Prague to help enter Armenia into the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the CSCE, which later became the OSCE. Armenia had just been recognized by the United States, on Christmas Day in 1991, by an address by President Bush senior. There was euphoria, there was excitement, and many from the Diaspora came to join their colleagues in the new Armenia to build a foreign ministry from the bottom up. And when I walked into that room in Prague, expecting a sailing into international relations, the reality of Armenian-Turkish relations and their legacy struck me immediately.

Instead of the welcome that we expected from my good friend Hikmet Çetin, the distinguished former foreign minister of Turkey immediately took the floor and posited three preconditions to our entry into the CSCE. Those three preconditions were that Armenia was to recognize de jure the existing borders based on the treaties of Moscow and Kars, the infamous and illegal treaties between the Kemalists and the Bolsheviks, our version of Molotov-Ribbentrop. Number two: the Genocide was to come off the agenda, in terms of Armenia's political vocabulary and the quest to have it reaffirmed around the world. And number three: a condemnation of terrorism, without a concomitant condemnation of the highest form of terrorism—state terrorism—which is otherwise known as genocide.

Later, Mountainous Karabagh and its gifting, if you will, to Azerbaijan became an added precondition, but for those of you who actually read the Protocols that are on the table today, you will see that those three preconditions of the Turkish side have found their way there, one way or another, nearly two decades after they were initially introduced. And the only way that they're not preconditions is if they have been accepted already, and therefore they're not preconditions anymore.

Now, my response at the time, and I don't know, in the light of what's going on in Armenia in the last year or so, maybe I made a big mistake eighteen years ago, was that "these are issues for resolution between Armenia and Turkey. The resolution of these outstanding issues can take place in two ways: one is the establishment of diplomatic relations through an exchange of notes, the exchange of diplomatic legations, and the use of that diplomatic relationship to build confidence and over time to solve the issues that come to us from history and which are very much part of the modern agenda. Or, second, if Turkey wants to take an excursion into history and broach these issues in front of the scores of countries here assembled, with US Secretary of State James Baker at my side, then we're ready: let's put it all on the table, right here, and let's go back to 1921, the Treaties of Kars and Moscow, and then to 1915 and the great genocide and dispossession of the Armenian people, which was crowned by those illegal treaties."

There was a whirlwind of diplomatic activity, and via the intermediation of Secretary Baker and other partners in Europe, Turkey withdrew its veto and we entered the CSCE. And three consecutive administrations to date, all their failings and mistakes and disregard of human rights notwithstanding, were able, nonetheless, to keep this policy until recently.

I think that Prime Minister Erdoğan is a very honest man, and I believe when he speaks, he speaks on behalf of his voters, and I think that we have to commend him for that. The prime minister, his foreign minister, his chief European negotiator, and the delegation from the Turkish parliament which is visiting Washington this week in

advance of the Committee hearing on March 4, all of them are carrying their denialist position and speaking their mind. These are the people who are going to realize and carry out the Protocols.

And from day one, it's been very clear that not only is the Treaty of Kars the ratification and legitimation of the dispossession and genocide of the Armenian people—and that's exactly what the Protocols do—but there is a Turkish policy of linkage which, as much as we try to escape from it and as much as it has made sense in the past diplomatically, comes back to the crossroads and there is a demand to connect it with Mountainous Karabagh.

And using the language of “occupation,” Ankara and the leaders of the modern Turkish Republic, who built their state, with all due respect, based on the exclusion of the Armenian people from their homeland, not to mention the Kurds and Alewis and Cypriots, try to establish linkage and go for the Karabagh jugular on the Protocols.

We cannot allow the legitimation, the legalization of our loss of homeland, of our dispossession, of our genocide, without at least simultaneously addressing the issues of history and its acknowledgment, and of education and cultural heritage, of a right of return, and of secure access to the sea. So, this decision has to be made not only by the Armenian state, but by all Armenians and also all Turks. Either no preconditions, establish those relations with an exchange of notes, open up those embassies and work on that relationship OR put it all on the table right now!

This is where we are and this is something that is at the crux of Armenian national security, not simple notions of patriotic romanticism. The question that has been begged is—especially with what's going on in Turkey today; we wish them well to come out of this situation more strong in their democracy and their commitment to normalize relations with neighbors—is Turkey ready, in the European spirit, in the good example of post-war Germany, to face its history, to open frontiers, to normalize relations, and to give resolution to the variety of issues that have come to us from the past?

This is Turkey's Armenia challenge, but it's also the Kurdish issue that requires good-faith resolution, and a multitude of other matters that are germane here. If we go back to the Tanzimat era, it seems that the Western partners of Turkey, and even the Armenians, sometimes very naively, thought that with each wave of reforms and documents and protocols and agreements there would be some improvement, and each time the situation got worse. And now we need to see the beef and to make sure that we are in possession of our rights, that we, as small and weak as we are with respect to the stronger neighbor in Turkey, also have self-respect in history and

rights, and we want to reintroduce the symmetry in our relations; either no preconditions by anybody in any way, or put it all on the table.

The US Resolution that will come before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs at the end of this week and that may perhaps come before the full Congress later on is very important. And the Armenian organizations and public deserve a lot of credit, as Americans, for keeping that issue on the agenda. But first and foremost, that Resolution is one that seeks to maintain the integrity of American history, and that is what this Administration and this Congress have to decide on, whether the time has come for the United States, its Administration, the State Department and the Congress to say that we are masters of our own history, we stand by our record and our ambassadors, consuls and their testimony which formed the primary, unprecedented and comprehensive documentation of the first genocide of the 20th Century. And I am very proud that Ambassador Evans is with us here today. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

This leads us to Mountainous Karabagh. Under international law, Karabagh and Azerbaijan have nothing to do with each other. Mountainous Karabagh achieved independence by the book; not only under precepts of international law and customary international practice, but pursuant to the controlling Soviet legislation. It decided to leave Soviet Azerbaijan, which had no juridical identity at the time. It did so under the law, and for those international lawyers who know about the Montevideo Convention on the constitution of states and their recognition, Mountainous Karabagh satisfies each and every criterion of that Convention.

I, as a member of the Heritage party and a proud citizen of Armenia, have been a proponent of the recognition of Mountainous Karabagh from the early days. At that time, people in the Administration, based on the OSCE peace process, did not think it wise to recognize in order to allow the peace process to take its course. And Armenia has done that for the last sixteen years, longer, eighteen years since Helsinki, when the peace process began. And since then what has happened in a world that talks about the rule of law and democracy, and the equal application of standards? Our partners in the West recognized Kosovo, and I don't buy the intellectually and legally false *sui generis* argument that it's based on a set of unique circumstances. Our other partner, the Russian Federation, and a few others later responded by recognizing Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Where is the rule of law?

And if at bottom there is no rule of law in international relations, but rather the rule of interests in this world of ours, then Armenia has to seriously consider who is going to be the first nation to recognize, within its constitutional frontiers, the Republic of Mountainous Karabagh. And which world nation will recognize

Karabagh, Kosovo, and Abkhazia all at once? Then maybe we can talk about ethics and the rule of law in international affairs.

Unfortunately, we also have to brace for the possibility of war, as we continue to follow with great concern the bellicose rhetoric that comes to us from the Azerbaijani leadership. And it's not only their words, it's their deeds. War is hell. The excesses have been on all sides. There has been a tragedy and loss for everybody in the conflict. But when you have video evidence of what uniformed Azerbaijani police officers did in December of 2005, at the medieval cemetery of Jugha, in Nakhichevan—where, in broad daylight, one by one they killed the thousands of khachkars of Jugha—how can you talk about a return to the status quo ante? This is not random vandalism, it is state-sponsored cultural terrorism. If that had been a Semitic cemetery, the world would be rightfully outraged, and at every forum in Washington, in Strasbourg, at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly that issue would have been on the agenda. But it was only an Armenian cemetery, and this takes us back to the issue of rights.

And those rights are also in question and under attack in Georgia and in the historic Armenian region of Javakhk. Not only the issues of linguistic and cultural minority rights for the Georgian-Armenian population, but for the right of the Armenians of Javakhk to live there, as part of the Armenian patrimony, as part of the Armenian national security system, and as a very important link between Georgia and Armenia—two potentially strategic allies who still have to find their common way. And here also we talk about Armenia-Diaspora relations: the strategically-located Akhalkalak train station was recently privatized, and Armenia or its diasporan organizations did not participate, and it was taken by an Azerbaijani consortium.

Finally, in this broad spectrum between evolution and revolution, we must discuss our new model for transformation. We want political resolution, but we're not going to wait for this young generation to come into power and to opposition, we have to deliver to them an Armenia that at least satisfies the minimum legitimate political benchmarks for a modern democratic state.

We are a nation in crisis across the board. And the imperative now is to embark upon a grand national dialogue in advance of the next election cycle, during the next couple of years. A grand national dialogue within Armenia, including the three coalition parties and the three major opposition forces, together with civil society and the NGO sector. A grand national dialogue in Diaspora to find the procedural, process-anchored, and structural mechanisms to embark upon an Armenia-Diaspora partnership where the democratic and national roadmaps are one and the same, so that we do not keep returning to these fine, well-prepared conventions to share our views as to why we talk the talk but we can not implement the great Armenian walk. And so in the

great discourse between Armenia and Diaspora we have to forge that consolidated Armenia-centric, but Diaspora-inclusive framework for strategy, politics, economy, information and innovation, education, environment, healthcare, public relations, and maintenance of identity in the 21st Century. The Armenian Cause is not only spatial, it is qualitative and pertains to each and every sphere of life and endeavor.

Edmund Burke, writing in another time and place, noted that “the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” And, so, I turn to you, ladies and gentlemen and especially our youth: this is your agenda, it’s your choice, it’s your future, and it’s our Homeland. There is no other. From now on we shall not beg because hereafter our solutions lie within; no more blame game on our contemporary issues with respect to external actors. Our questions and our answers rest within; they are right here, and in Yerevan, in Stepanakert, and every where the Armenian youth comes together.

Deep in the Soviet period, Paruir Sevak, the famous Armenian poet, questioned rhetorically: “Where is our salvation? In and, alas, not in our hands.” Perhaps if the great writer were with us today, facing in the post-Soviet realm these watershed challenges, he would correct himself: “Our salvation is in our hands and, alas, again in our hands.”

Realize your potential. Live in reality. But never surrender the dream!