When Henry Morgenthau, United States ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, took his post in Constantinople in 1913, his mission as he understood it was to promote the burgeoning American economic interests in the Empire and “to foster the permanent civilizing work of the Christian missions, which so gloriously exemplified the American spirit at its best.”¹ By April 1915, however, events and actions enacted against the Turkish Armenians by the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), the Turkish ruling party at the time, deeply impacted the extremely compassionate Morgenthau.² Reports of mass deportations and massacred Armenian populations coming from various consular posts and missionary institutions throughout the Empire flowed into his embassy almost daily throughout 1915, leading Morgenthau to add to his mission the use of his post for the benefit of the Armenian cause. His efforts helped in the creation of large scale relief efforts that provided millions of dollars to survivors as well as orphanages for thousands of children who lost their families in the genocide.

The humanitarian movement, though, seemed to stand in stark contrast to the American tradition of isolationism and the official governmental stance of neutrality towards all belligerent nations during World War One. This paper’s purpose is to analyze how Morgenthau utilized his resources to draw out the charitable nature of American citizens concerned about the fate of the Armenians and how America’s concerns for the welfare of Armenian victims influenced the US government to put diplomatic pressure on the CUP to end its genocidal policies. The large-scale assistance efforts facilitated by the American relief movement were in many ways made possible by the dedication of individuals like Morgenthau working towards aiding Armenian victims, while

simultaneously working within the constraints of America’s neutral position towards the Ottoman Empire.

Literature regarding the Armenian Genocide and America’s reactions to it reveal a dualistic response by the United States government to information about the massacres occurring in the Ottoman Empire. Scholars have also shown how individual and collective relief efforts helped the victims. Jay Winter argues that major media made millions of Americans aware of the atrocities being committed. But while the US government recognized the CUP’s actions as wrong, it did nothing to prevent such massacres from occurring.3 Others like Simon Payaslian have stressed the dichotomy within the government between President Wilson’s humanitarian rhetoric and actual American policy that promoted friendly relations with a government perpetrating genocide for the sake of free trade.4 Another approach historians have taken on this topic has been to focus on American actors during the genocide, and in particular, how their actions benefitted survivors. Merrill D. Peterson has studied the role Morgenthau and humanitarian leaders like James Levi Barton and Cleveland H. Dodge played. Instead of focusing on the shortcomings of the United States government in ameliorating the CUP’s genocidal policies, Peterson analyzes the struggles and successes of those individuals working on the ground, fighting to save destitute and starving Armenian survivors. Like Peterson’s more positive study of what America did rather than what it did not do, historian Peter Balakian argues in *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America’s Response* that the relief efforts during the Armenian Genocide signified the “first international human rights movement in American history and helped to define the nation’s emerging global identity.”5 Though similar to Peterson’s focus on the steps Americans took to help survivors, Balakian emphasizes that the American relief effort can be understood as a catalyst for the emergence of a United States more interested in the international

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community. My study brings together some of these approaches and analyzes the importance of individuals in facilitating America’s reactions and responses to the genocide. Persistent individuals during the Armenian Genocide shaped Americans’ views on this tragedy and ultimately helped to forge a national identity centered, in part, on humanitarian work.

The Armenian Genocide: An Overview

The story of Aghavni reveals in a nutshell, the horror of the Armenian Genocide, told by a victim and a survivor. She was twenty years old in 1915, with two children, and lived in Sivas. A month before being deported she recalled the imprisonment of local Armenian political leaders, the hanging of one hundred-fifteen men in less than three days, and many more being chained and led outside the city to be shot. Among those who died was her husband, a soldier in the Ottoman Army. When being led out of town, she had a donkey and food supplies for two days. Some time during the journey her mother, leading the donkey, began to lag behind the group and was killed by a gendarme. The gendarme threatened to shoot her too after she tried to reach her mother’s body. After seven months of marching, Aghavni saw her grandmother drowned by the gendarmes. Two of her aunts, her uncle, her brother, and a neighbor were also murdered along the way. She witnessed hundreds of women commit suicide through drowning and even tried it herself. Months later she finally reached Der-Zor on the banks of the Euphrates, starving, naked, and incoherent. A family there took her in and saved her life. Sometime along the journey she also lost both her children, though Aghavni never detailed their fates.6

The Armenian Genocide can be understood as the deliberate attempt of the CUP to eliminate Armenians and other Christian populations within Turkey, and homogenize Anatolia to be only

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populated by Muslims in order to secure territorial integrity. The CUP, also known as the Young Turks, wanted to exterminate the Armenian Christians within the Ottoman Empire because they no longer trusted Christians living amongst the predominantly Muslim population. Following the 1912-1913 Balkan Wars, the Ottoman Empire lost sixty percent of its European territory. A growing faction within Turkey, which included the Young Turks, sought to eliminate Christian populations so that they could not pose a threat to the Empire from within. The Armenians constituted the largest population of Christians within the Empire, numbering around two million before 1915.

Talks within the CUP, beginning in March of 1915, focused on coming up with a plan to solve the Armenian question, and by 29 May, 1915 Ottoman leaders drafted Temporary Law of Deportation. This law became the central driving force behind the wholesale deportations of Armenian populations from the six Armenian vilayets throughout the Ottoman Empire, during the summer and fall of 1915. The government, using soldiers and gendarmes, who were usually freed criminals, sent deportation notices throughout the Empire, and it usually fell to the individual governors of the various territories to enact the policies of the CUP, with the help of soldiers and gendarmes.

Information originating from the various American consuls located throughout the Ottoman Empire suggests that these deportations followed very methodical measures. Deportation notices were placed in public spaces within cities and villages with Armenian populations stating that all Armenians had just a few days to gather what they could carry and be ready to leave town. Another trend captured in the reports made to Morgenthau detailed the rounding up of Armenian male populations within the provinces. Death came quickly for them, as local authorities working under CUP orders held show trials in public squares, in which Armenian men would be brought up on trumped up charges. A popular “crime” became charging Armenians for concealing weapons, to be used against the regime, in their houses. In many of these cases however, the weapons found were either planted by

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Turkish soldiers and *gendarmes*, or bought under duress by Armenians so that they would actually have a weapon to surrender to Turkish authorities. These show trials always ended in the same fashion, with many Armenian husbands and fathers being murdered before the deportations.

Like the show trials, the deportations followed a basic design too. The remaining Armenian populations from a specific area would be rounded up and sent out of town under the guise that the soldiers and *gendarmes* accompanying them would protect the caravans. After a day or two marching, more violence occurred. The people assigned to be protectors turned into tormentors. Random murders, forced starvation and dehydration, and forcing women to march naked through the scorching deserts were some of the tactics used by the soldiers and *gendarmes*. Later on the road to Syria, where many of these caravans were destined to, women also had the dishonor of being sold into sexual slavery. Official numbers of those who died during the Armenian Genocide do not exist because of widely varying estimations by various parties. Some say as many as one and a half million Armenians died between 1915 and 1919, but the number that is most widely accepted is around 800,000 dead and two million deported.

Much of the information that exists today about the Armenian Genocide would not be available had it not been for Morgenthau and his efforts at getting news of the genocide into the United States. His daily reports to the State Department gave detailed explanations of the events that took place in towns where consulates were located. Unfortunately, in places where consulates and American missionaries were not present, similar atrocities went unnoticed. The same is true along the deportation trails. Although some is known as to what the conditions for the victims were like, there is much that will never be known precisely because we have only survivors to look towards for information. This situation underscores the importance of Morgenthau simply because his reports portrayed the clearest picture of the genocide from many angles, including his negotiations with the CUP, consulate and missionary reports, and finally, his own pleas for help resulting from his analysis of the information obtained by his embassy.
Ambassador Henry Morgenthau

Henry Morgenthau’s position as ambassador to the Ottoman Empire during the Armenian Genocide provided him a unique position within the various groups involved in creating the general American responses to the Armenian Genocide. His office allowed him to communicate directly with the American and Ottoman governments, as well as his consular posts and the missionaries within the Empire. The position did not make the man, however. Morgenthau’s dedication to the Armenian people, as well as his close ties to President Wilson, explain how the dedication of an individual helped realize a broad American relief movement.

Morgenthau’s long-time friend, President Woodrow Wilson, appointed him to the position of ambassador to the Ottoman Empire in 1913. Morgenthau lacked any tangible diplomatic experience, but he had much experience as a successful businessman and as the financial chairman of Wilson’s election committee. Multiple factors led Wilson to decide to put Morgenthau in Constantinople. For one, Morgenthau was Jewish and, as Merrill D. Peterson notes, “Wilson, in fact, wanted a Jew at that station because of the paramount importance of Palestine and its Jewish colonists in the Ottoman Empire.”8 Another important factor that lent to Morgenthau’s appointment was the perception that an American ambassador in Constantinople had very little to do diplomatically. Morgenthau’s primary concerns were perceived to be looking after the interests of America’s well-established missionary presence and providing assistance to representatives of American business interests effectively made up the job at hand.9 Finally, Wilson’s pick of Morgenthau rested more on their relationship and Morgenthau’s personality than on his diplomatic experience.

The United States adopted a strict policy of neutrality throughout the Armenian Genocide in order to keep friendly relations with the CUP. Even when the United States entered World War One, it

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9 G.S. Graber, *Caravans to Oblivion*, 81-82.
still remained neutral with the Ottoman Empire, despite the empire’s alliance with America’s new enemies, Germany and Austria-Hungary. Given the significant missionary presence within the Ottoman Empire and America’s burgeoning economic interests within the region, the American government found it more prudent to maintain friendly relations than to intervene forcibly in the genocide. Morgenthau, as America’s diplomatic representative to the Empire, sought to maintain America’s neutral stance. If a different diplomat had been posted in Constantinople, this neutral stance might have served to maintain a distance from the CUP’s genocidal policies. Henry Morgenthau controlled that position, however, a man with a strong sense of morality and bold personality, traits picked up from his days as a successful business man. By understanding Morgenthau’s personality we can begin to determine why he became so important in facilitating general American responses of empathy towards the Armenian plight.

During the course of 1915, the Department of State received a significant amount of information about the Armenians from Morgenthau. His dispatches always conveyed a growing sense of alarm about the Armenian situation and stressed the breadth of the policies being enacted. Morgenthau’s worry intensified as time went on. Cables sent to Washington in April and May reported deteriorating situations within the Armenian population. But by the late summer months, his dispatches described massacres made the word “deportation” synonymous with the death and destruction by murder, exposure, and starvation that occurred on the forced marches. 10

The subject of neutrality never seemed to be questioned in any of the correspondence made between Morgenthau and the Department of State. While plenty of information on massacred Armenians reached members of the US government, State Department and military leaders never considered forcible intervention, because they believed it would worsen the situation for Americans and Armenians. Secretary of State Robert Lansing admitted that a declaration of war on the Ottoman

Empire would have jeopardized the already significant American missionary and educational interests in Turkey and could have provoked the CUP into further persecution of non-Muslims living in the Ottoman Empire.11 With large amounts of information on dead and dying Armenians and no chance of military pressure being put on the CUP, Morgenthau looked to economic assistance as a means to help Armenians in need.

An especially telling telegram sent to Secretary Lansing from Morgenthau on 4 October 1915 reveals how Morgenthau encouraged American sympathizers responding to news about the Armenian Genocide to unite altruism and practicality. Morgenthau noted that the Turks were becoming more resistant to outside influence, a development that threatened to handicap any efforts to persuade the government from ending the genocide. In the end of the telegram, he explains that “…direct the sympathies that are aroused [in] America into practical channels. Large sums of money are needed to relieve suffering and prevent starvation and the United States is the only source from which substantial assistance can be secured.”12 From what Morgenthau wrote in this document, it became apparent that his aims were to rally support for monetary aid for survivors rather than requesting that the State Department pressure the CUP to end the genocide. An equally revealing document came from the State Department only three days later. The writer noted how the United States, through the actions of Henry Morgenthau, pressed the Ottoman regime to end the Armenian massacres but that the Ottomans remained steadfast in their genocidal efforts. This document, like countless others, also reflected the USA’s neutral stance and unwillingness to intervene militarily. Ultimately, this State Department representative concluded, “[t]hese disinterested actions, solely inspired by humanitarian sentiments, are infrequent in international dealings. The United States has also supplied money and ships to enable

12 Telegram #1121, from Ambassador Henry Morgenthau to Secretary of State Robert Lansing, October 4, 1915, Constantinople (National Archives Microfilm Publication M353, roll 44); Record Group 59; National Archives Building, College Park, MD.
the Armenians to find refuge in America.”\textsuperscript{13} Much like Morgenthau’s telegram, it reveals that America’s solution to the Armenian question was to provide humanitarian aid to survivors rather than to intervene militarily.

The decisions made by the American government regarding the Armenian crisis reflected efforts made by Morgenthau for two main reasons. First, Morgenthau, through his constant stream of reports, became the government’s source of information regarding the massacres in Turkey. His reports proved instrumental in giving the government detailed information of what was happening in the Ottoman Empire. Second, his position as ambassador meant that it was his responsibility to meet with CUP leaders about American-Ottoman affairs. Morgenthau’s meetings with the CUP in which he pleaded to them to help the Armenians met heavy resistance, as witnessed in his telegram to Robert Lansing. The flow of information made the American government depend upon Morgenthau for relaying information regarding the Armenian Genocide, and as a negotiator with the CUP to cease its genocidal policies. For these reasons the solution to lead humanitarian efforts for Armenian victims became a negotiation between the compassionate Morgenthau and a government strictly adhering to a policy of neutrality.

**America’s Missionaries and Consulates: Morgenthau’s Eyes and Ears**

The American missionary presence within the Ottoman Empire dated back to the turn of the nineteenth century. By the turn of the twentieth century, missionaries played a very large role in American-Ottoman relations. Missionaries spread throughout the Empire, and on many occasions they would travel with American merchants and the Navy, exploring various areas within the Ottoman Empire and collecting what historian Simon Payaslian tagged as “commercial intelligence.” With many of the missionaries working under the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions

\textsuperscript{13} Dispatch #218, October 7, 1915 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M353, roll 44); Record Group 59; National Archives Building, College Park, MD.
(ABCFM), whose membership roster boasted many of America’s wealthiest merchants, the economic information gathered by American missionaries helped draw financial and moral support for missionary efforts by American businessmen. In turn, the ABCFM, through the financial contributions of its members, created one of its largest missionary establishments in the world.  

America’s missionaries were much more than a sophisticated network of gatherers of information though. As with the goals of any missionary community, they set goals to convert citizens within the Ottoman Empire to their various sects of Christianity, which were mainly protestant. Using the ABCFM as an organizational springboard from which to pursue their endeavors, the missionaries established American educational institutions such as Euphrates College in Harput and the American College for Girls in Constantinople. These organizations allowed them to speak on behalf of (mostly Protestant) churches and provide educational opportunities for those interested in listening to their messages. The Armenians were particularly prominent throughout these educational institutions; they were really the backbone of the missionary movement in Turkey. Christian missionaries learned quickly, for instance, that Ottoman law prohibited Muslims from converting. The Armenians then, being the most prominent non-Muslim minority throughout the empire, garnered greater attention; and that attention, at least for most Armenians was mutual.

Not only were the Armenians seen as potential converts to Protestantism, but conversely, the American institutions set in place by missionary efforts became vehicles for an intellectual and economic renaissance within the Armenian community. The beginnings of the intertwining between the Armenians and Christian missionaries led to profound effects in American public opinion during the Armenian massacres in the 1890s and 1900s, and ultimately the Armenian Genocide. As news of the killings of Armenians reached the United States, many individuals within the political community expressed outrage precisely because the wholesale slaughter of Armenians damaged the American public opinion.

missionary institutions. One clue to the effects of the Armenian Genocide on the missionary institutions can be seen in student enrollment numbers in the American missionary oriented educational institutions before vs. after the Great War. Student enrollment in such institutions essentially dropped by half between the years 1911 and 1916: 55,632 students were enrolled in 663 different educational institutions in 1911 vs. only 24,070 in 397 institutions in 1916. These statistics reveal how the Great War affected the network of American missionaries throughout the Ottoman Empire. And since these individuals served as America’s economic eyes and ears embedded within a potential great trading partner, the drop in numbers also shows the damage American commercial interests took as a result of the Armenian Genocide. Missionaries would correspond with Morgenthau about how the deportations and massacres affected missionary institutions.

Information such as pictures of Armenian victims in missionary hospitals assisted Morgenthau in the amount of evidence he had to support his claims of race extermination, but what became important was how Morgenthau delivered that information to the Department of State. In one department memo highlighting Morgenthau’s influence on the government, Morgenthau stressed that the United States had a real interest in the CUP’s policies, because some of the people being tortured and killed, though Armenian, were naturalized American citizens working at American colleges throughout the Empire. It later noted that the department approved Morgenthau’s course of action to plead with the leaders of the CUP to end the genocide and that the department offered no further comment. This particular memorandum signified two things. First, it showed that, despite American

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18 Some time in late October, 1915, Morgenthau received from Dr. Wilfred Post of the American Hospital in Konia, a dossier of over 20 photographs taken of Armenian victims of the genocide. It remained significant visual evidence because many of the pictures highlighted the misery experienced by the Armenians. Morgenthau sent these pictures to Robert Lansing, but also warned Lansing not to publicly connect these pictures with Dr. Post, out of fear that the public knowledge could damage the ability for missionaries in Konia to distribute relief.
19 Memorandum, July 20, 1915 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M353, roll 44); Record Group 59; National Archives Building, College Park, MD.
interests being attacked, the United States was still unwilling to intervene. Second, it underscored the independence given to the relatively inexperienced Morgenthau. Despite the immense challenges this genocide presented an ambassador, the US government trusted Morgenthau to stay maintain diplomatic neutrality and gave him the freedom to plead on behalf of the American people to end the genocide.

The vast bulk of the information about the genocide received by Morgenthau and wired to the Department of State came directly from the first-hand accounts of Morgenthau’s web of consulate posts scattered throughout the Ottoman Empire. G.S. Graber notes that “[t]he impossibility of keeping the facts of genocide away from the eyes of foreigners is nowhere more amply demonstrated than in the series of reports the American ambassador received from his consuls throughout the empire.”

The methodology used by the Turks to perpetrate the genocide was purposeful in that most of the mass murder and other atrocities were committed away from any witnesses who could have reported what they saw to the rest of the world. Additionally, very few “deportees” had the chance to escape and report what they saw; usually very few survived the atrocities committed on the deportation marches. Consular reports therefore constituted the bulk information received about the genocide.

In order for Morgenthau to be able to be as successful as he was at raising American awareness towards the Armenian Genocide, he needed the assistance of his consuls. They had the ability to offer frequent reports on the status of their regions and could serve as staging zones for aid. In so doing, they became powerful tools for relief efforts to send food, clothing, and money deep in the heart of the Ottoman Empire. Also, reports made by missionaries were too easily intercepted by a Turkish government that did what it could to ensure that its actions would not be witnessed by the outside world until after the war, yet another strategy Turkey used in its claims that a civil war within a global war was consequential in the deaths of the Armenians. The consuls, however, had the luxury of a more free exchange of information with Morgenthau. Since America had remained neutral after the

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war broke out, official consular business remained under diplomatic protection. And for the most part the Turkish government did not censor correspondence between Morgenthau and his consuls, enabling Morgenthau to use neutrality to his advantage. The information that Morgenthau received on an almost daily basis during the summer of 1915 told chilling tales of the culling of an entire race, as witnessed by consuls like Leslie Davis, posted in Harput, and George Horton, posted in Smyrna.

These reports not only created scenes of misery and destruction that Morgenthau could use as evidence towards his cries of race extermination, but they also provided Morgenthau with information that he could use in estimating the amount of aid needed in certain areas. A report from Trebizond dated 28 July 1915 gave Morgenthau crucial information on the severity of the deportations and murders that had occurred there in the month of July. The consul, Oscar S. Heizer, recounted several stories told to him by witnesses about seeing dead Armenians throughout the countryside surrounding Trebizond. Some were partially buried, others floated down rivers, and some just lay on the ground. He also stated that by 6 July 1915, all the Armenian houses, about one thousand, had been emptied. Heizer continued: “There was no inquiry as to who were guilty or who were innocent of any movement against the government. If a person was an Armenian that was sufficient reason for being treated as a criminal and deported.”\footnote{Letter, from American Consulate, Trebizond to Ambassador Henry Morgenthau, July 28, 1915, Trebizond (National Archives Microfilm Publication M353, roll 44); Record Group 59; National Archives Building, College Park, MD.}

This report gave Morgenthau valuable information to relay to his superiors because it estimated who was deported, how many, and where they were deported from. It also gave estimates on how many already died, numbers that ultimately could help Morgenthau deduce the amount of aid survivors of Trebizond’s deportations needed. Estimations of aid in the beginning of American relief efforts, however, were grossly underestimated. Subsequent reports revealed that the aid received in some places met only one-tenth of the demand.

An American consul of particular importance to historians was Leslie Davis. From his consular post in Harput, a central staging area along the deportation routes, Davis bore witness to a
clear cross-section of the tragedies that befell the Armenians throughout Turkey. His reports included shocking eye-witness accounts of genocidal acts that he and the few survivors that escaped the deportation marches had witnessed. They also contained photographs depicting massive numbers of dead Armenians, many of whom were murdered just a few days march outside of Harput and carelessly left to rot in the desert sun with little more than a few shovelfuls of sand covering up the bodies.

Davis remains an important individual during the genocide because of his one hundred thirty-two page report detailing his experiences in Harput during the genocide. It was the first account given by a foreign diplomat that described mass grave sites where Armenians, previously seen alive a few days earlier, had been found dead. One particularly revealing section of his report claimed that the fate of the first caravan to leave Harput had been decimated by unruly gendarmes, Kurdish thugs, disease, and especially starvation. Of those who left Harput, only about twenty percent made it to their destination in Syria.22 Another harrowing report made by Davis depicted his stumbling upon an area several miles outside of Harput that had been turned into a staging area for mass murder. In his report Davis described thousands of bodies being found partially buried in the sand and bullet holes found in the trees, signs that many of the Armenian deportees’ fates were at the end of a gun or bayonet. More important than the slaughter he revealed, Davis also wrote about individual efforts of relief made by his consulate and missionaries around Harput. His report describes his opening up his consulate to help hide Armenians from the Turks. Davis also admitted to using the consulate as a distribution center for letters. By doing so, Armenians were able to write to family in America and receive letters back which helped morale as well and contained money, until the State Department ended remittances.

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for money and switched the channels of direct aid from the State Department to private relief organizations like the ABCFM. 23

Ultimately the story of Leslie Davis represents the process of America’s responses to the genocide. Davis witnessed the deportations and massacres as a neutral diplomat. He revealed what he witnessed to Morgenthau, who in turn relayed the information to the Department of State, calling it race extermination. Much as the Armenian Genocide affected general American interests in the Ottoman Empire, the genocide impacted Davis’ consulate. By March of 1915, the American schools in Harput were forced to shut down. Davis and his consulate served as stations for relief for the Armenian victims. Like broader segments of the American public, Davis’s witness to the scope of inhumanity in the Ottoman Empire helped to transform neutral, isolationist ideologies into humanitarian charity.

Reactions Stateside: Newspapers, Relief Organizations, and the State Department

Reports of the genocide began to appear in newspapers around the nation by mid-1915. The New York Times, which printed many articles covering the genocide, provided grizzly details about the demise of the Armenians and painted the very real picture of systematic race extermination that was occurring in the Ottoman Empire. One report from Trebizond, relaying information about the deportation marches, stated:

Many fell by the way and many died of hunger, for no provisions were furnished them. They were robbed of all they possessed, and in many cases the women were stripped naked and made to continue the march in that condition. Many of the women went mad and threw away their children. The caravan route was marked by a line of corpses. Comparatively few of the people ever reached their destination.24


Another article made reference to fears that, unless Turkey was stopped, there would be no more
Christians in Ottoman Empire.\textsuperscript{25} The messages conveyed in the series of articles printed by the \textit{New
York Times} stressed the need for Americans to be aware of the tragedies befalling the Armenians,
much like the consular reports written to Morgenthau did. And just as Morgenthau’s quick and
unwavering calls for aid from the Department of State elicited response, stories in the news prompted
also some Americans to write to the State Department to ask what they could do to help the
Armenians.

Relief organizations began to form as information about the genocide emerged from the
Ottoman Empire. They pinpointed the State Department and Morgenthau as a reliable method of
transporting aid, and inquiries for assistance were made to the State Department. A memo from the
American Red Cross to the State Department revealed the humanitarian side of Americans being
brought out by the reports of genocide: “These reports are rapidly arousing a widespread interest
among the American people and the American Red Cross is receiving daily inquiries as to the
possibility of forwarding and distributing relief in Armenia.”\textsuperscript{26} The Red Cross then asked that the
State Department to request from Morgenthau a report with the most reliable information regarding
conditions of the Armenians and to indicate the most effective method for spreading relief.\textsuperscript{27}

In conjunction with the influence spread by newspapers, and most significantly, the \textit{New York
Times}, American missionaries directly shaped relief efforts. Using recommendations given by
Morgenthau, James L. Barton, former president of Euphrates College in Harput, helped lead
organizational efforts to combine the forces of various relief funds, such as the Dodge Relief
Committee and the American Armenian Relief Fund that had been created during 1915, into a larger
organization. By September of 1915, the Armenian Relief Committee (ARC) was founded in order to

\textsuperscript{26} Memorandum, from American Red Cross to Department of State, September 25, 1915, Washington, DC (National
Archives Microfilm Publication M353, roll 44); Record Group 59; National Archives Building, College Park, MD.
\textsuperscript{27} Memorandum, from American Red Cross to Department of State, September 25, 1915, Washington, DC (National
Archives Microfilm Publication M353, roll 44); Record Group 59; National Archives Building, College Park, MD.
raise funding and obtain more information about Armenians’ conditions in Turkey. Soon after ARC’s inception, Barton, with permission from the State Department, reviewed all the dispatches Morgenthau relayed to the department throughout 1915. He then led the organization’s push for public support for relief funds. That November the ARC joined forces with the Syrian-Palestine Relief Fund and the Persian War Relief Fund. Together the triumvirate called its organization the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief (ACASR). Ultimately the significance of the relief efforts led by Barton and his partners led to the founding of the ACASR. By 1919 the ACASR became the Near East Relief (NER), and from 1915-1930, the relief fund brain-child of Barton and other missionary supporters raised upwards of one hundred sixteen million dollars in the United States to go towards helping Armenian survivors stay safe and begin their lives anew. In the short term, relief money received by missionaries and other relief organizers within the Ottoman Empire was used to provide the most basic needs, such as food and clothing. Initially money was scarce, and it was difficult to provide anything more such basic necessities for deportees. Later on, however, with increases in funding as a result of greater popular support and a stronger organizational structure, victims were better cared for. By the end of World War One, the amount of relief being funneled into the empire was enough to help rebuild the lives of Armenian survivors. By 1930 NER helped rebuild houses, farms, infrastructure such as roads and irrigation, and schools, helping to put an end to the suffering of the Armenians.

Morgenthau played an essential role in coordinating this large-scale relief effort. Relief organizers like The Red Cross and Barton relied on his office for information regarding the situation in the Ottoman Empire. Not only was Morgenthau’s information instrumental in the distribution of aid, but also his pleas for aid provided additional fuel for the relief movement to further organize itself and

combine organizational forces. Morgenthau’s reports and pleas for aid, in turn, assisted individuals like Barton in their endeavors in securing aid money from an American public that had been disheartened by Turkish policies and was motivated to help Armenian survivors.

The Department of State continued a consistent policy of neutrality throughout the Armenian Genocide, even after the United States declared war on Ottoman allies in 1917. Since the Ottoman Empire was seen as a “promotional state,” the United States wanted to maintain peaceful relations in order to promote trade relations and open economic opportunities for American businesses looking towards Turkey as a possible place to do business. Missionary work within the Ottoman Empire also enabled economic fact finding, helping to foster a legacy of promotion within the United States. The State Department, fearing any direct involvement in preventing the genocide, responded to any correspondence it received about what it was doing in response to information gathered about the massacres and deportations by explaining that “[t]he Ambassador [Morgenthau] will continue to use his good offices to the fullest extent consistent with the position of the United States as a neutral country, on behalf of the Armenians in the Turkish Empire.” This statement suggests that the United States government, though maintaining its position as a neutral power in World War One, did not maintain distance from the CUP’s genocidal policies and supported the efforts of Morgenthau and others in assisting the Armenian people.

While the State Department never took formal action against the CUP in response to its crimes against Turkish Armenians, it did serve as a staging ground for relief funds in the process of organizations such as the ACSAR sending aid to Armenian victims in the Ottoman Empire. Receipts made to charity organizations detailed the State Department sending checks to Morgenthau for the distribution of aid. One receipt, for instance, notified August Belmont, Treasurer of the Committee of

30 Simon Payaslian, United States Policy, 89.
31 Simon Payaslian, United States Policy, xi.
32 Letter, from Robert Lansing to Ira C. Copley, November 9, 1915, Washington, DC (National Archives Microfilm Publication M353, roll 44); Record Group 59; National Archives Building, College Park, MD. Many documents located on the microfilm reels in RG 59, M353 have this statement. It seemed to represent America’s diplomatic stance with the Ottoman Empire regarding its policies on the Armenian Genocide.
Mercy that his check for sixty-five thousand dollars was able to be drawn on by Ambassador Morgenthau.33 Once again, these letters of receipt signify the importance of an individual like Morgenthau because the State Department recognized that Morgenthau knew enough about the situation in the Ottoman Empire to be able to administer relief funds to the places that needed it most desperately.

The State Department also functioned as a liaison between relief organizations at home and relief efforts in the Ottoman Empire by serving as a go-between with the missionary relief efforts in Tiflis and the American relief committees in the United States. Correspondence between Tiflis and Washington revealed detailed accounts of how many refugees survived in Caucasus, how many supplies the missionaries were receiving, and how great the demand was for more relief. One such report noted that the totality of Armenian refugees in Caucasus reached 170,000 by 10 December 1915 with their need being “very great.” It asked the State Department if relief efforts could take care of 20,000 refugees at approximately five dollars a month.34 These telegrams became important for a couple of reasons. First, they gave both the government and those directing relief efforts details about how great the need for aid was in some communities. Second, they solidified the State Department’s importance in the relief movement. The individual efforts of Morgenthau, Barton, and others helped spark a large-scale relief movement, and the State Department showed its willingness to extend its offices in order to increase the effectiveness of relief organizations trying to send their donations to Turkey.

33 Letter, from Alvey A. Adee to August Belmont, October 16, 1915, Washington, DC (National Archives Microfilm Publication M353, roll 44); Record Group 59; National Archives Building, College Park, MD.
34 Telegram, SMITH to Robert Lansing, December 10, 1915, Washington, DC (National Archives Microfilm Publication M353, roll 44); Record Group 59; National Archives Building, College Park, MD.
Conclusions

The work during the Armenian Genocide and after by Henry Morgenthau, Leslie Davis, and James Barton demonstrates that individuals played an essential role promoting humanitarian concern among US citizens and helping to direct their financial aid. The efforts of Barton and his contemporaries, in particular, led a relief movement that raised over one hundred sixteen million dollars over fifteen years. That money was essential. One American peace negotiator in 1920 declared that it was “no exaggeration to say that the Armenians would have disappeared as a nation,” had it not been for American relief efforts. Even if a little exaggerated, this statement demonstrates the importance of American aid to Armenian survivors struggling to feed and clothe themselves and eventually rebuild housing and infrastructure. Barton and others played key parts in mobilizing public support for funds, as did newspaper editors who published stories recounting horrors from the Ottoman Empire. Simply put, ignoring the Armenian question became difficult to do.

Leslie Davis and the group of consuls ultimately help foster change in American foreign policy and even Americans’ vision of their country’s work abroad. Working intimately with the Turks and Armenian victims, the consuls generated first-hand accounts of the genocide that Morgenthau could use as firepower in his demands for assistance. Leslie Davis’s description most dramatically makes this point. His report detailed how he used his consulate as a refuge for Armenians attempting to hide from Turkish authorities. Davis admitted that “it would have been very bad if I had been caught.” Despite his fears, Davis helped many survivors reach safe haven, and his personal actions reflect the humanitarian actions of the American nation at large.

American citizens likewise read many articles describing in painful detail the number of people affected and just how the CUP and its policies victimized Armenians. By becoming witness to

genocide, the American public, much like Davis, could have either ignored the issue or rallied around the Armenians. Albert Shaw, the editor of the *American Review of Reviews*, proclaimed in 1930 that “[t]he special appeal of the Near East Relief transcended anything in the way of a nationalizing movement of charity and brotherhood that we have ever known.”\(^{37}\) Clearly the American people, much like Davis, stepped up and rallied around the Armenians.

Lastly, Morgenthau’s unique position as ambassador allowed him to be at the center of every American response to the Armenian Genocide. He received daily reports from the consulate posts and provided the State Department with information about the genocide. He helped philanthropists such as Barton make use of the State Department’s countless files about the situation in the Ottoman Empire in order to advance the relief efforts. This assistance became extremely important, especially in 1915, because the aid being distributed early on was grossly insufficient. Eventually knowledge gained from Morgenthau’s reports helped those coordinating the relief effort realize that their organizations had greatly underestimated the full extent of the Armenian Genocide.\(^{38}\) Morgenthau’s office also became a staging ground for aid coming into the Ottoman Empire through State Department channels. Since Morgenthau drew from vast knowledge on the Armenian situation from his consuls and from information received while regularly speaking with top CUP officials, the Department acknowledged Morgenthau as someone who could distribute aid to missionary stations who most needed money and supplies for assisting victims. In his tireless efforts to helping the Armenian cause, Morgenthau personified a growing American humanitarian spirit that developed during this crisis in 1915. Much more than representing the American people in his ambassadorial post and the American spirit through his efforts, Morgenthau signified the importance of the individual by working tirelessly to bring the Armenian Genocide to the world’s attention.

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\(^{37}\) Peter Balakian, *The Burning Tigris*, 280.

\(^{38}\) Peter Balakian, *The Burning Tigris*, 281.