

MARRIAGE FROM HELL

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**Woodrow Wilson
International
Center
for Scholars**

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David Boyajian, 12 December 2011

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A leading Congressman, a Wilson family descendant, citizens' groups, and many others agreed. One prominent journalist called the WWC "a global joke."

Several months ago, this Congressionally-created, multi-million dollar think tank, funded partly by taxpayers, made another colossal blunder. It hired former eight-term Congresswoman Jane Harman (D-CA) to be its president, replacing Lee Hamilton, also a former Congressman.

Harman, like Hamilton, is not only part of the good-old-boy (and girl) network of which the WWC is so fond. Among her other baggage, charges of illegal conduct in a spy scandal involving AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) have shadowed Harman for years.

Let's take a closer look at Harman and the Wilson Center to see why they're the marriage from hell.

Harman's spy scandal

Two top AIPAC officials, Steven Rosen and Keith Weissman, were indicted on spy charges in 2005 for passing classified documents to Israel.

Citing confidential sources, Time magazine, in 2006, and *Congressional Quarterly*, two years ago, reported that the Feds had wiretapped Cong. Jane Harman and a "suspected Israeli agent" agreeing to this deal: Harman would persuade the Justice Department to reduce the charges against Rosen

and Weissman; in exchange, AIPAC and its influential supporters would persuade then-Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi to reappoint the unpopular Harman as top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee.

Harman apparently promised the "Israeli agent" to "waddle into" the AIPAC scandal "if you think it'll make a difference." Harman ended the exchange with "this conversation doesn't exist."

The Justice Department and CIA wanted to prosecute Harman. But Alberto Gonzales, President Bush's Attorney General, reportedly refused because – ironically – he "needed Jane" to support the government's ongoing warrantless wiretapping program.

Shockingly, charges against Rosen and Weissman were dropped in 2009 because a judge put constraints on Federal prosecutors. Larry Franklin, the Defense Department official who passed the classified documents to the two AIPAC officials, wasn't so lucky. He pled guilty three years earlier and went to prison.

Harman has long denied any wrongdoing. She has never, however, given a full account of her conversations regarding Rosen and Weissman. Full accounts, as we shall see, are not one of Harman's virtues.

Harman's genocide flip-flop

While co-sponsoring Congressional resolution HR 106 on the Armenian genocide committed by Turkey, Cong. Harman went behind the backs of her constituents in October of 2007 by asking then-Foreign Relations Chair Tom Lantos (D-CA) to bury the resolution. Only after her constituents discovered this through other sources did she admit to it.

But the explanations for her flip-flop made little sense. "This is the wrong time" for the resolution, wrote Harman. But she couldn't cite anything relevant in 2007 that had changed regarding Turkey, Armenia, or the Middle East since she signed onto the resolution a few years earlier.

Harman claimed that a genocide resolution would "embarrass or isolate the Turkish leadership." This claim came suspiciously soon after she met with Turkey's threatening Prime Minister, Recep Erdogan. Apparently, recognizing a genocide requires an OK from the perpetrating country's leader.

But Harman reached truly ridiculous heights by claiming– again, this was in 2007 – that it was "obvious" that Turkey's "leadership" was needed for "resolving the Israel-Palestine issue." Turkey had never, of course, played a significant role in mediating between Israelis and Palestinians. What really caused Harman's genocide flip-flop?

Jewish groups and Turkey

AIPAC was (and is) one of several major Jewish American organizations that have colluded with Turkey to, among other things, defeat Armenian genocide resolutions. Israel, Turkey, and Jewish groups formed their ménage-à-trois in the 1990's.

Yola Johnston, Community Outreach Director for the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, has admitted that AIPAC, the American Jewish Committee, B'nai B'rith, her own organization, and "the Jewish lobby" have "quite actively supported Turkey in their efforts to prevent the so-called Armenian genocide resolution from passing."

AIPAC, reported the Washington Times last year, had "lit up the phones" against the genocide resolution when "the Turks" asked a "senior researcher" at AIPAC to do so. That "senior researcher" and "architect of the Jewish community's support for Turkey" was none other than AIPAC's notorious Keith Weissman. So the Harman-AIPAC-Weissman threesome was at the center of not only a spy scandal but also a genocide cover-up.

And there's more. Yet another scandal may have induced Harman's genocide duplicity.

Anti-Defamation League scandal

Harman wrote her genocide flip-flop letter to Chairman Lantos just as the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) was taking a beating in the U.S. and internationally for denying the Armenian genocide and helping Turkey lobby against Armenian genocide recognition. Human rights activists, principled Jews, and Armenian Americans had just months earlier launched a campaign (see NoPlaceForDenial.com) that was to result in more than a dozen Massachusetts cities' evicting the ADL's so-called "No Place for Hate" anti-bias program.

The Turkish government was furious that the embarrassing arrangement among it, Jewish groups, and Israel was being splashed across the headlines. Prime Minister Erdogan made a frantic call to Israeli President Peres, while Turkey's foreign minister reportedly warned the Israeli ambassador that "our bilateral relations will suffer."

Did Harman, who was certainly aware of this uproar, panic at the prospect of a further deterioration in the already strained relations between Israel and Turkey? Did she ask Lantos to kill the genocide resolution because Turkey would blame Israel, AIPAC, the ADL, and even Harman herself if the resolution succeeded?

Considering the timing, Harman's relationship to Israel and the genocide-denying AIPAC, and the illogical explanations for her flip-flop, it seems probable. Though the House Committee narrowly passed the resolution, Harman had to be pleased that it did not make it any further. Her appeasement of Turkey, however, proved to be in vain:

- Erdogan was soon calling Shimon Peres a mass murderer (January 2009) for Israel's offensive against Gaza.
- Israel scolded and humiliated Turkey's ambassador (January 2010) in response to Turkish criticism and an anti-Israeli TV show.
- Israeli commandos shot nine Turks to death on a ship that had tried to break the Gaza blockade

- Erdogan has expelled the Israeli ambassador, cut defense ties with Tel Aviv, and threatened military retaliation unless Israel apologizes and pays compensation for the flotilla killings.

But when, like Harman, one has few firm principles and has fooled herself into believing that a country such as Turkey is a friend, she inevitably winds up with yogurt on her face.

No self-respecting institution would have considered hiring anyone with Harman's background. That may explain why the Wilson Center hired her. It has little respect for its mission or the American people.

The Wilson Center flouts Congress

The Woodrow Wilson Memorial Act of 1968 was crystal clear: The WWC must commemorate Wilson's "ideals and concerns" and memorialize "his accomplishments." Yet it has ignored large swaths of the Wilson administration's record on the Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia), Turkey, and the Middle East.

The WWC isn't just thumbing its nose at Congress and taxpayers. It has closed its eyes to a wealth of political knowledge about a region in which the U.S. has enormous interests. The Caucasus, for example, is a major locus for producing and transporting oil and gas. It's also ground-zero in the new Cold War between the U.S. and Russia, particularly since the Russian-Georgian war of 2008.

Donald Wilson Bush, President of the Woodrow Wilson Legacy Foundation and a Wilson family descendant, has rightly accused the WWC of "violating very own mission and purpose."

Wilson's Record

Wilson and the State Department's record on the region from the WWI era is extensive. Though the U.S. did not formally declare war against Turkey in WWI, Turkey was the main ally of Germany, America's enemy. Wilson condemned, in the strongest terms, Turkey's genocide of Armenians and was a fervent advocate of Armenian independence. By the terms of the Treaty of Sèvres - a product of the Paris Peace Conference in 1920 - the U.S. formally delineated the borders of that part of Armenia and Kurdistan that now lies within Turkey's eastern regions. Turkey later reneged on the Treaty.

Yet, despite the clear stipulation of Congress, Wilson's record has been almost totally ignored by the WWC. Indeed, three years ago, historian and legal scholar Ara Papiian, a Canadian resident and former Armenian Ambassador to Canada, applied for a WWC Fellowship to do ground-breaking research on the U.S. archival record regarding Turkey and the Caucasus - a proposal the WWC should have jumped at. Papiian was rejected without explanation. Ironically, several months ago Lee Hamilton told the American Historical Association that U.S. foreign policy officials need the views of "historians." Yet as WWC president, he all but ignored the history of Wilson's Caucasus policies.

Tainted corporate cash

The WWC has been corrupted by its gluttony for corporate cash. Case in point: it acknowledged that money was the main reason it journeyed to Turkey in 2010 to honor a Turkish billionaire whose Dogus Holding conglomerate is a WWC donor, and to give a much-criticized award to Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu.

Cong. Gary Ackerman (D-NY), Chair of the House Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia, blasted Lee Hamilton for honoring Davutoglu. Ackerman cited Turkey's military occupation of Cyprus, closure of the border with Armenia, and denial of the Armenian genocide. Honoring Davutoglu was "absolutely inconsistent with the mission of the WWC and the ideals that animated President Wilson's administration and foreign policy."

The Wilson Center, added Donald Wilson Bush, had engaged in "Turkish diplomatic appeasement." It had "sacrificed its legitimacy as a 'neutral forum for open, serious, and informed dialogue.'"

"Why," asked Claudia Rosett, "should Congress keep fueling this morally blank, misleading and venal exercise with millions of American tax dollars?" Good question.

Part of why the WWC has all but ignored Wilson's record on Turkey and the Caucasus is undoubtedly that many major donors (present and past members of its elite "Wilson Alliance") have lobbied for, or been members of trade organizations that have lobbied for, Turkey and against the Armenian resolution. These include Alcoa, BAE Systems, Bechtel, Boeing, Bombardier, Chevron, Coca Cola, Exxon-Mobil and Honeywell.

In fact, Harman's predecessor, Lee Hamilton, engaged in a clear conflict of interest during his tenure by sitting on the board of BAE Systems, a defense giant which does lots of business with Turkey. Last year a Federal judge slapped BAE's parent corporation with a \$400 million criminal fine for "deception, duplicity and knowing violations of law... on an enormous scale." Too bad the judge didn't also look into the Wilson Center.

Hamilton also sat on the board of the Albright Stonebridge Group, a "global strategy firm" headed by former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

Hamilton's WWC bio, incredibly, was dead silent about his corporate affiliations. This same Lee Hamilton co-chaired the official National Commission on the 9/11 attacks, whose report has been widely criticized as incomplete and biased. Hamilton and Harman, you see, can be counted on not to rock the corporate establishment's boat.

The WWC is rife with other questionable characters, including those with deep ties to Turkey, such as former board member and present Wilson Council member Ignacio Sanchez, a lobbyist employed by DLA Piper, which is a registered foreign agent for Turkey. And former "Wilson Public Policy Scholar" Marc Grossman, ex-US ambassador to Turkey and DLA Piper bigwig. "Coincidentally," Sanchez and Grossman were both on the WWC Search Committee that hired

Made for each other

If ever there was a marriage made in hell, therefore, Jane Harman and the Wilson Center are it:

- The W/WC receives millions in “donations” from the military-industrial complex, which influences the Center’s agenda and policies. Similarly, Harman – a former Defense Department lawyer – has received large campaign contributions from defense and aerospace firms’ Political Action Committees and employees, including those in El Segundo, a key military-industrial center located in her former Congressional district.

“Coincidentally,” major Wilson Center donors BAE Systems (Lee Hamilton’s comrade-in-arms), Boeing, and Chevron have offices in El Segundo. Indeed, BAE, Boeing, and Chevron were her “constituents” (and American Turkish Council members) not only when she was in Congress. Those corporations – another “coincidence” – are her “constituents” again, at the WWC. Might the WWC have hired Harman for her expertise in raking in military-industrial “donations”?

- The WWC has ingratiated itself with Turkey. It has given awards to its Foreign Minister and a major Turkish corporate donor, and virtually ignored Wilson’s policies regarding Turkey and the Caucasus. Harman, too, has ingratiated herself with Turkey. She reversed her stance on the Congress’s Armenian genocide resolution (and gave absurd reasons for doing so).
- And just as the Wilson Center has gotten away (so far, anyway) with violating its Congressional mandate, Jane Harman has escaped prosecution (so far, anyway) for her dealings with a “foreign agent” in the AIPAC espionage scandal.

No, there’s no prospect that Harman will lead the WWC to adhere to the Woodrow Wilson Memorial Act of 1968, fulfill its pledge to be a “neutral forum for open, serious, and informed dialogue,” and release the grip that mega-corporations have on it.

If Congress of its own volition will not bring the Wilson Center to its senses, then Congress must be pushed by the American people to do so. Other possibilities are investigations and legal action by third parties.

Just don’t count on Jane Harman’s cooperation.

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