

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF  
ARMENIAN GENOCIDE STUDIES

VOLUME 6, NO. 2, 2021

# **International Journal of Armenian Genocide Studies**

Published by Armenian Genocide Museum & Institute Foundation

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ISSN 1829-4405



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Bartłomiej Krzysztan, Ph.D. is an assistant professor at the Institute of Political Studies of Polish Academy of Sciences. Graduate of Political Sciences at Université Libre de Bruxelles and Political Science and Cultural Studies at the University of Wrocław. His research interests include political anthropology, political and cultural memory, post-colonialism, ethnic and national identities, especially in the South Caucasus region.

Bartłomiej Krzysztan  
Institute of Political Studies of Polish Academy of Sciences  
ORCID: 0000-0001-5632-6884  
bkrzysztan@isppan.waw.pl

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# HISTORICAL ANALOGY AND POLITICAL CONTINUITY AS TECHNOLOGIES OF POWER. THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE AND NAGORNO-KARABAKH CONFLICT INTERRELATION IN THE CONTEMPORARY ARMENIAN POLITICS

*Bartłomiej Krzysztan*

*Institute of Political Studies of Polish Academy of Sciences, Poland*

## **Abstract**

Analyses of the transformation and political change in Armenia pays noticeable attention to the dominant role of discourses of the Armenian Genocide and the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh for nation and state-building processes. At the same time, the two issues usually are investigated separately. Attempts are rarely made to interpret the interrelation and connection between the two narratives. Nevertheless, the trauma-based discourse of memory is linking the two narratives as technology of power through discursive structures/mechanisms of analogy and continuity. Methods of discourse analysis combined with expert interviews, internet questionnaires and ethnographic field research aim to analyse the crucial discursive patterns and mechanisms. Hypothetically, instrumentalized and ideological usage of combined narratives are impacting the political changes, in Post-Soviet Armenia. The article touches upon only one aspect of the discursive interrelation between the Armenian Genocide and the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. Thus, the subject under the question is the impact of the usage of historical analogy and the idea of continuity understand as technologies on contemporary Armenian politics of memory.

**Keywords:** Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Armenian Genocide, politics of memory, technologies of power, historical analogies, continuity.

The article was submitted on 07.07.2021 and accepted for publication on 08.11.2021.

**How to Cite:** Bartłomiej Krzysztan, "Historical Analogy and Political Continuity as Technologies of Power. The Armenian Genocide and Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict Interrelation in the Contemporary Armenian Politics," *International Journal of Armenian Genocide Studies* 6, no. 2 (2021): 7-39.

## Introduction

This paper is a part of the broader project which core aim is to conduct in-depth research investigating the interrelation between the politics of memory about the Armenian Genocide and Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with the notions of transformation and political change in Armenia between 1988 and 2018. The aim of the study is also to reflect on and describe the experiences of the political revolution(s), ruptures and breakthroughs and subsequent possible changes in attitudes towards ideologized discourses. This interrelation and dependence operate on many different levels of discourse, so it is impossible to exhaust the topic completely in one paper. Given this, this article has two objectives. First, it contains extended reflections on potential epistemological, methodological, and theoretical approaches to the issue. Secondly, the case study presents the results of preliminary research of the exploratory case study focusing on the question of historical analogy and ideological continuity understood as technologies of power. These will be used in the further development of research on the specific issue itself that is the focus of the article. The case study of Armenia could be used as a theoretical and methodological matrix for analysis of analogical processes of discourse instrumentalization, interrelated with transformation and change in post-Soviet conflict spaces.

Recognition of the events of 1915 as genocide plays an extremely important role as one of the bases of the international policy of the Republic of Armenia after 1991. The impact of this issue on domestic politics is also significant, as exemplified by the lack of diplomatic relations with the Republic of Turkey, mainly determined by the negationist policy pursued by Ankara. The consequence of the lack of diplomatic relations is, in turn, the blockade of the country, which has a significant impact on its economic situation. Quite a few studies have been written about the political conditions related to politics, including the politics of memory towards the recognition of the Armenian Genocide.<sup>1</sup> Two of the rare examples of the analytical approach to the question of politics of genocide were proposed by Thomas de Waal and Vartan Matiossian.<sup>2</sup>

Equally important is the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, which, through successive armed clashes and escalations, has an undeniable influence on the process and dynamics of change, including, above all, successive breakthroughs/ruptures within the Armenian political system. The deep militarisation of the country and strategic decisions (such as the alliance with Russia) have a significant impact on the internal situation. Up to date, quite meticulous research and analysis has been carried out on this issue as well.<sup>3</sup> However, attempts

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1 Maria Koinova, "Diaspora Coalition-Building for Genocide Recognition: Armenians, Assyrians and Kurds," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 42, no. 11 (2019): 1-21; Ronald Grigor Suny, *"They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else": A History of the Armenian Genocide* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017); Taner Akçam, *A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility* (New York, NY: Picador, 2007); Cathie Carmichael, *Genocide before the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University, 2009); Donald E. Miller and Lorna Touryan Miller, *Survivors: An Oral History of the Armenian Genocide* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

2 Thomas de Waal, "The G-Word: The Armenian Massacre and the Politics of Genocide," *Foreign Affairs* 94, no. 1 (2015): 136-48; Vartan Matiossian, *The Politics of Naming the Armenian Genocide. Language, History and 'Medz Yeghern'* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021).

3 Levon Chorbajian, *The Making of Nagorno-Karabagh - From Secession to Republic* (New York: Palgrave

to combine both issues/narratives within a single discursive space have so far received limited discussion.<sup>4</sup> The objectives, the paradigm and the state of art allowed the following research questions to be posed: *how the historical analogies and idea of continuity is instrumentalized as technology of power in the contemporary Armenian politics?* Although in research that draws at least in part on the achievements of political anthropology to make any hypotheses seems to be a methodological abuse, for the sake of clarity of rhetoric, one working quasi-hypotheses can be made: *being the subject to ideologization, the issue of the interrelation between the Armenian Genocide and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict used as a technology of power in contemporary Armenian politics, is its significant variable.* Those question and hypothesis are complementary for the main question of the broader project: *how the instrumentalized discursive interrelation between narratives of memory of the Armenian Genocide and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict impact the political change in Armenia between 1991 and 2020?*

## Methodologies, materials, and methods

The article is a stand-alone case study. As mentioned above in the objectives section, the premise is to present two levels of research on the discursive relationship between the Armenian Genocide and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Thus, in the first dimension, the article undertakes theoretical and methodological reflections on ways to study the interrelation of these issues. This is because the question of how to study a particular phenomenon is important in the context of in-depth research. In the second dimension, the article presents the results of preliminary research conducted in Armenia in April and May 2021. The research was designed as an exploratory case study. Its primary purpose as an introduction to further in-depth research was to gather information along multiple dimensions. The primary aim of this research was to seek answers to the question of what discourse elements (narratives) are necessary to explore in the context of research problem. Ultimately, this preliminary research was supposed to refine both the research questions and hypotheses. The next issue was to consider how to research the different narratives. The second methodological approach was a broad discourse analysis.<sup>5</sup> Both approaches are treated as methodologies

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Macmillan, 2001); Laurence Broers, "'From Frozen Conflict' to Enduring Rivalry: Reassessing the Nagorno Karabakh Conflict," *Nationalities Papers* 43, no. 4 (2015): 556-576; Ohannes Geukjian, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in the South Caucasus: Nagorno-Karabakh and the Legacy of Soviet Nationalities Policy* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Claude Mutafian, "The Karabagh in Twentieth Century," in *Caucasian Knot: The History and Geopolitics of Nagorno-Karabagh*, ed. Levon Chorbajian, Patrick Donabedian, and Claude Mutafian (London: Zed Books, 1994).2001

4 Geukjian, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict*; Vicken Cheterian, "The Uses and Abuses of History: Genocide and the Making of the Karabakh Conflict," *Europe-Asia Studies* 70, no. 6 (2018): 884-903; Victor A. Shnirelman, *The Value of the Past: Myths, Identity and Politics in Transcaucasia*, *Senri Ethnological Studies* 57 (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 2001); Harutyun Marutyan, *Iconography of Armenian Identity: The Memory of Genocide and the Karabagh Movement* (Yerevan: Gitut'yun Publishing House, 2009); Henry E. Hale, *Patronal Politics: Eurasian Regime Dynamics In Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

5 Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, *Methods of Critical Discourse Studies* (New York: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2015); *The Routledge Handbook of Critical Discourse Studies*, eds. John Flowerdew and John E. Richardson (New York: Routledge, 2017); Marianne W. Jorgensen and Louise Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, (London, Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2002).

rather than methods, to set out a certain paradigmatic approach to the materials and data collected through the methods used in the fieldwork. This multidimensional approach that juxtaposes seemingly strongly divergent issues, allows for an in-depth cognitive look. Discourse analysis, in turn, seems to be the best way to analyse such disparate narrative representations as public memory spaces, expert narratives and results of survey questionnaires.

To find appropriate research methods, various qualitative methods were used in the preliminary research. First, the method of expert interviews was used.<sup>6</sup> As a supplement, a survey questionnaire with the same questions was distributed among the Armenian university students. The questionnaire was used to conduct 11 in-depth expert interviews in a semi-structured format (same question, open-ended response option with no restrictions plus an open-ended comment option at the end).<sup>7</sup> The same questions were used in the online questionnaire presented to the students however, the option to answer was reduced to closed answers (eight possibilities - definitely yes, yes, rather yes, rather not, no, definitely not, difficult to say, don't know). For question 2, the possible answers were as follows: definitely significant, significant, rather significant, not significant, definitely not significant, hard to say, don't know. For question 8, the possible answers were as follows: definitely increased, increased, rather increased, rather decreased, decreased, decreased significantly, difficult to say, don't know. This survey yielded 36 responses.<sup>8</sup> The questionnaire contained 9 questions, additionally, 5 sociological questions were asked at the beginning of every interview (gender, age, education, field of study, place of origin). In the case of expert interviews and questionnaire research, it is important to make one essential annotation. The research was conducted in April/May 2021, less than six months after the end of the Second Karabakh War, on the eve of the early parliamentary elections held in June 2021. The political tension, the trauma of the experience of defeat in the war, resulting in the loss of control over a significant area of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, certainly had a significant impact on the emotions, and therefore on the perception of the situation, and therefore also on the issue of the basic subject of the study.

Secondly, classical ethnographic fieldwork with usage of participant observation and visual anthropology was conducted.<sup>9</sup> During the research, the most significant public representations of memory were visited and documented. As such, both state and private museums, sites of memory and carefully selected public representations are understood. The

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6 Alexander Bogner, Beate Littig, and Wolfgang Menz, "Introduction: Expert Interviews - An Introduction to a New Methodological Debate," in *Interviewing Experts*, ed. Alexander Bogner, Beate Littig, and Wolfgang Menz, *Research Methods Series* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2009), 1-13; Stefanie Döringer, "'The Problem-Centred Expert Interview'. Combining Qualitative Interviewing Approaches for Investigating Implicit Expert Knowledge," *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 24, no. 3 (2020): 1-14.

7 Interviews in digitized and transcribed form in the author's archive.

8 The questionnaire is available as an annex.

9 D. Soyini Madison, *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance* (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Inc, 2011); Sarah Pink, *Doing Visual Ethnography* (London, Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2006); Marcus Banks, "Doing Things with Photographs and Films," in *Visual Methods in Social Research* (London: Sage, 2001); Marcus Banks, "Visual Anthropology is not Just Ethnographic Film: The Visual as Material Culture," in *Visual Research Methods*, ed. Peter Hamilton (London: Sage, 2006); Michael Angrosino, *Obserwacja w Nowym Kontekście. Etnografia, Pedagogika i Rozwój Problematyki Społecznej*, trans. Filip Rogalski, vol. 2 (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2010).

initial exploratory case study research presented in the article is the basis for undertaking in-depth explanatory research.

## **Results**

### *Expert interviews and Survey Questionnaires*

The questionnaire entitled “On the relation between the Armenian Genocide and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict” was used in both the expert interviews and the online questionnaires completed by students. The questions were composed according to a cognitive key relating to the different dimensions of the existence, shaping, and changing relations of narratives about the Armenian Genocide and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

The first question was composed as follows: *In your opinion, is there a connection between the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the Armenian Genocide issue?* This is a question central to the whole discussion of the interrelation under investigation. It is an ontological question about the individual’s belief whether the relation between two phenomena really is. In the questionnaire, 38.9% of the interviewees indicated that such a relationship definitely exists, 41.7% answered that it exists, 11.1% that it rather exists. The remaining 8.3% indicated to answer “it is difficult to say”. The absence of a negative answer may be an indication of how potentially formed the social perception of the existence of the relationship is. In the interviews conducted with experts, the answers are varied, and the issue of interrelation is dealt in a more nuanced way compared to questionnaires. Experts emphasise that to reliably describe the relationship between the two phenomena, it is necessary to separate the perspectives on it in different accounts of socio-political reality. The first criterion can be referred to as the perception criterion. It is based on the dichotomy between social perception and professional (scientific and political) perception. According to all interviewees, there is certainly a belief in the relationship between the two phenomena in public perception. It is mainly due to the deep “immersion” in the history of Armenian society and the presence of history in political discourse as its essential component. It was repeatedly underlined in the interviews that, especially during the Second Karabakh War Armenian politicians (mainly Prime Minister Nikol Pashinian), repeatedly stressed the issue of the “existential threat to Armenians”, analogous to the experience of the Armenian Genocide of 1915. At the same time, “genocidal intentions” on the part of both Turkey and Azerbaijan were emphasised. Meanwhile, at the level of professional perception, there was a clear tendency to emphasise the relationship between the two phenomena, which is realised in the creation of specific academic and political multi-level narratives. The second criterion of division can be referred to as the criterion of substantive content. It is based on three dimensions in which the interrelation between the Armenian Genocide and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict should be considered.

The first dimension of the relationship is the question of ideological continuity. It was repeatedly stated in the interviews that in both public and professional perception, there is a belief that there is an ideological continuation of intentional actions against Armenians. This continuity would be rooted in basing policies towards Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh,

recognition, and remembrance of the Armenian Genocide, both in Turkey and Azerbaijan, on Pan-Turkic ideas. An example of ideological continuity cited more than once was Enver Pasha's role in the decision-making triumvirate of the Committee of Union and Progress. His responsibility in the narrative came down to the implementation of Pan-Turkic ideas, above all the concept of uniting nations of Turkic origin in Anatolia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. Armenians were to be an obstacle to the realisation of this goal, and a decision was taken to annihilate them, which was first carried out in the Ottoman Empire and then continued in the Caucasus, above all in Nagorno-Karabakh, Nakhichevan and Baku. There, the continuation of the annihilation process was to be handled in 1918 by Nuri Pasha, Enver's younger brother and Commander-in-Chief of the Army of Islam.<sup>10</sup>

The second dimension of the interrelation is the question of historical analogy and the continuity of intentional actions. In this context, Soviet policy towards the Kemalist Turkish Republic, which was normalised in the 1920s, was emphasised at the expense of the Armenians. At the same time, the Turkish influence on the internal Soviet decisions of the early 1920s, which resulted in the creation of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast within the Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republic, and the annexation of Nakhichevan to Azerbaijan, was clearly emphasised. The decisions taken with the agreement of 10 November 2020, ending the Second Karabakh War, are considered historically analogous to the Turkish-Soviet agreements.<sup>11</sup>

The third dimension of the relationship is the issue of political instrumentalization, both within internal politics in Armenia and in the assessment of Turkish and Azerbaijani policies. In this context, it is worth pointing out that serious doubts have also been raised about linking the two phenomena. They are supposed to stem primarily from an assessment of the systematic and organised policy of repression against Armenians, which is completely different in the case of the Ottoman genocidal policy and Azerbaijan's policy towards Nagorno-Karabakh. At the same time, an important aspect that unites all three dimensions in this criterion is the question of the externalisation of the causes of relations. It is the result not of internal decisions taken by Armenians, but the consequence of ideological, historical, or political actions of the players directly involved - the Ottoman Empire/Turkey, Azerbaijan, and the USSR/Russia.<sup>12</sup> Despite the nuances, it can certainly be said that the relationship of interdependence, as well as the perception through the prism of historical analogy and ideological continuity, is indeed emphasised.

The second question was composed as follows: *If yes, how significant do you think the connection between the Armenian Genocide and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is?* This is a consequential question since the answer to it depends on the belief in the existence of a relation between two phenomena. If there is a recognition of existence, then it is possible to assess the significance of the connection/relation. In the online questionnaire, again, the prevailing view was that the connection was significant. 51.4% of respondents indicated the answer "definitely significant," 37.1% - significant, 2.9% - rather significant. The answer "difficult to say" was indicated by 5.7% of the respondents. 2.9% of respondents stated

<sup>10</sup> Interview V, 8 May 2021.

<sup>11</sup> Interview II, 29 April 2021.

<sup>12</sup> Interview III, 4 May 2021.

that the connection is insignificant. In the case of the expert interviews, an indicated point was the different intensification of the presence of the discourse linking the two phenomena, depending on the political moment in question. A regularly repeated observation in the interviews was the comparable presence of the genocide narrative as a continuation/analogy in the second half of the 1980s when the Karabakh Movement began its activities and during the Second Karabakh War. Here the cited example was the use of the term “genocidal” to describe Azerbaijan’s intentions towards the Karabakh Armenians during the war.<sup>13</sup> At the same time, in the historical dimension, the significance of the account is emphasised by references to specific events. In this narrative, the events in the Caucasus in the years 1918-1920 (the Armenian-Turkish war, the offensive of the Army of Islam, the massacres of Armenians in Baku and Shushe), and then the pogroms and aggression against Armenians in Soviet Azerbaijan in the 1980s (Sumgait, Kirovabad, Baku) are an obvious consequence of 1915.<sup>14</sup> One important element that plays a key role in representations in the public space also emerged in the interviews, namely the question of the survival of the Armenians, threatened by the “Turkic” alliance, whose aim is not only the recapture of Nagorno-Karabakh but also the subjugation of other Armenian lands - the provinces of Syunik and Gegharkunik (around Lake Sevan) and even Yerevan.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, it is necessary to stress that equally clear, especially among younger experts, were the opinions that this is a socially constructed narrative that is not justified by the facts and that Azerbaijani policy towards Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenians, has nothing to do with the genocide of 1915.<sup>16</sup> Relevance thus comes down to a political exploration of the narrative in which Armenians emphasise the Turkish-Azerbaijani connection and the genocide as a continuation. It is thus a significant connection in political terms.

The third question was composed as follows: *In your opinion, does the potential recognition of the Armenian Genocide by Turkey depend on the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict?* This question is based on the issue of causality. Assuming the existence of a relationship between the Armenian Genocide and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, an answer was sought to the question of whether official political and legal recognition of the Armenian Genocide by Republic of Turkey could affect political change in Nagorno-Karabakh. Causally, then, the existence of the interrelation here would be expected to affect political change. Compared to the previous questions, it is not possible to assess causality because of the reception among the respondents. Most respondents answered, “it is difficult to say” (22,2%). 41.6% of respondents perceived a correlation between the recognition of the genocide and the resolution of the Karabakh conflict, of which 13.9% said it definitely exists, 19.4% said it exists and 8.3% said it rather exists. 36.2% of respondents stated that there is no such correlation, including 16.7% that there is rather not, 13.9% that there is not and 5.6% that there is definitely not. In the case of the in-depth interviews, doubts about the actual dependence are significant. In each interview, it was indicated that in the case of the policy of the Republic of Turkey during the thirty years of the independent Republic

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13 Interview I, 28 April 2021.

14 Interview II, 29 April 2021, Interview VIII, 8 May 2021.

15 Interview V, 8 May 2021.

16 Interview I, 28 April 2021.

of Armenia, the initiation of talks on the Armenian Genocide (reconciliation process), was dependent on the issue of ending the Karabakh conflict. The interviewees also stressed that the stance towards this correlation was changing in Armenia over time. The culmination of the attempt to move away from linking the two issues in international politics was the football diplomacy initiative in 2008.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, it was pointed out that in the second decade of the 21st century, especially after the Turkish-Azerbaijani rapprochement and the aggravation of the situation around Nagorno-Karabakh after the April 2016 war, this dependency has ceased to be relevant.<sup>18</sup> It was interesting to point to the interrelation between victim and perpetrator, which by using a minor issue such as the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was supposed to change the perception of Armenians as victims of the genocide of 1915. The use of the image of injustice suffered by the Armenians of Azerbaijan was to reassure international public opinion that the events of 1915 were not an unequivocally one-sided act of genocide committed against the Armenians. It was to be one of the elements of a multidimensional negationist policy.<sup>19</sup> Some of the interviewees indicated that this correlation does not exist, regardless of how the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict would be resolved. This is supposedly due to the all too important place that denialism of the Armenian Genocide holds in the historical culture and identity politics of the Turkish Republic. Recognition of the genocide would have to mean a complete redefinition, which is impossible under the current government.<sup>20</sup> Another element that has been pointed out as giving rise to doubts is the question of economic and political pressure. It has been pointed out that only political pressure from superpowers or a strong economic necessity can force Turkey to consider discussing genocide, but that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is not such an issue.<sup>21</sup>

The fourth question was composed as follows: *In your opinion, is the potential resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict dependent on Turkey's recognition of the Armenian Genocide?* Also, this question is related to the question of causality, in reverse order. Casually, then, political change in feedback would affect the existence and form of the relationship between the two phenomena. Also, in the case of this question, reversed from the previous one, the answers were varied and ambiguous. The largest number of respondents (25%) indicated that the potential recognition of the Armenian Genocide by Turkey could not influence the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (answer “no”). Additionally, 2.8% stated that causality in this relationship is definitely not there, and 11.1% that it is rather not there. Nevertheless, this represents 38.9% of the responses, while 55.5% of the respondents were of the opposite opinion (answer “definitely yes” - 13.9%, “yes” 19.4%, “rather yes” - 22.2%). 5.6% of the respondents indicated “difficult to say.” In the case of expert opinion, they are also ambiguous. Although dependency, as in the case of the earlier question, is emphasised, the prevailing view is also that there is no potential causality. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is perceived as a marginal element of Turkish policy and therefore cannot be seen as dependent on the recognition of the genocide, importantly, regardless

17 Interview III, 4 May 2021. Also Alexander Iskandaryan, “Armenian-Turkish Rapprochement: Timing Matters,” *Insight Turkey* 11, no. 3 (2009): 37-44.

18 Interview IV, 8 May 2021, Interview VIII, 8 May 2021.

19 Interview VI, 8 May 2021.

20 Interview III, 4 May 2021. Interview V, 8 May 2021.

21 Interview X, 14 May 2021, Interview XI, 12 May 2021.

of how the solution would look (whether it would be in favour of Armenia or Azerbaijan). Importantly, in this case, the experts more clearly emphasize that the Nagorno-Karabakh issue is related to the geopolitical situation in the Caucasus, while the issue of recognition of the Armenian Genocide is more of an issue of internal Turkish politics.<sup>22</sup> Thus, recognition of the genocide does not necessarily entail facilitating the reconciliation process around Nagorno-Karabakh. The opposite statement also appeared in the interviews. According to experts, the recognition of the genocide by Turkey, and thus the normalization of relations with Armenia, could be associated with the reduction of Azerbaijan's aggressive rhetoric and policy towards the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. At the same time, it would be a bargaining chip for Yerevan in negotiations with Baku, even if recognition in this context would be understood only as a right to memory and would not be linked to concrete consequences such as demands for compensation.<sup>23</sup>

The fifth question was composed as follows: *In your opinion, does Armenia have a policy that emphasizes the connection between the commemoration of the Armenian Genocide and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict?* It is therefore a question about the politicisation of the relationship between the Armenian Genocide and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. From the level of recognition of the existence of the relationship itself, considerations are already shifted to the issue of exploitation, and thus instrumentalization as a concrete technology of power. In this case, in the closed questionnaire, 19.5% of the respondents answered that such a policy was in place, with only 2.8% answering "yes" and 16.7% "rather yes". 2.8% of respondents said they "don't know" and 8.3% said it was "difficult to say." The existence of such a policy was assessed unequivocally negatively by 69.7% of respondents. Of these, 13.9% said that Armenia "rather" does not have such a policy, 44.4% that it does not, and 11.1% that it "definitely" does not. Among experts, opinion on this issue is unequivocal - there is no official policy that combines both issues in domestic and foreign policy.<sup>24</sup> However, there was also an indication that while there is no such official policy, there is potential for it to be conceptualised and used as a tool in foreign policy.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, experts stress that there is no doubt that in the statements of the most important Armenian politicians, especially from the time of the Second Karabakh War, analogies and narratives indicating a kind of continuity appeared regularly. This was mainly due to Turkey's involvement on the side of Azerbaijan. Experts emphasise, however, that the use of correlations, both as analogies and continuations, was an ad hoc political exercise and there are no grounds to presume the existence of a specific political doctrine.<sup>26</sup> According to experts, political linking of these issues in the dimension of rational use of resources may have dual consequences. On the one hand, it may lead to a deeper antagonization of relations with Turkey and thus be dangerous for Armenia (realist approach). On the other hand, the political linking is necessary for ethical reasons, as there is historical and ideological evidence that shows that the correlation between the experience of genocide and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

22 Interview II, 29 April 2021, Interview XI, 12 May 2021.

23 Interview X, 14 May 2021, Interview I, 28 April 2021, Interview V, 8 May 2021.

24 Interview II, 29 April 2021, Interview VI, 8 May 2021, Interview I, 28 April 2021, Interview IX, 8 May 2021, Interview X, 14 May 2021, Interview XI, 12 May 2021, Interview V, 8 May 2021.

25 Interview VIII, 8 May 2021, Interview V, 8 May 2021.

26 Interview I, 28 May 2021, Interview VII, 8 May 2021.

is real (ethical approach).<sup>27</sup> At the same time, some experts do not doubt that the linking of the two issues is socially constructed because of the belief of many Armenians that there is no difference between Azerbaijanis and Turks at the ethnic, national, and cultural level. This makes the correlation between the two phenomena play a significant role at the level of primary “the political.”<sup>28</sup>

The sixth question was composed as follows: *If yes, do you think that linking the Armenian Genocide to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is the right policy direction for Armenia?* This is a consequential question. It depends on the question of recognising whether the relationship of the Armenian Genocide and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is a technology of power used in Armenia. This is an evaluative question and implicitly raises the ethical dimension of the relationship under study. In the questionnaire, 12.5% of respondents indicated the answer “don’t know” and 18.8% answered “difficult to say.” For 31.3% of respondents this is not a valid policy, of which 3.1% answered “definitely not,” 18.8% answered “no” and 9.4% answered “rather not.” At the same time, 37.5% of respondents indicated that the correlation policy was correct, of which 21.9% answered “yes” and 15.6% “rather yes.” Then, the dichotomy identified by experts regarding the validity of such policies and the conflict between ethical and realistic action is evident in the perception of respondents. Differing opinions are also expressed by experts. Some point out that such a merger works against Armenia and should not take place.<sup>29</sup> Experts also point out that the harmfulness of the policy of merging the two phenomena is also related to the fact that two separate narratives are created in Armenian politics - for internal and external needs. In external politics, the message is carefully controlled in which the two phenomena are separated from each other, while in internal politics there is a merger, and Nagorno-Karabakh is part of the Greater Armenia project that includes the territories of Western Armenia (East of Anatolia), so separation is impossible.<sup>30</sup> At the same time, some experts point out that the development of the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh in the 1920s is a consequence of the actions of the Young-Turks and a direct result of the Bolsheviks’ relations with the Kemalists, so from an ethical and axiological point of view, the pursuit of such a policy would be most appropriate.<sup>31</sup> The legitimacy of such a policy is also demonstrated from a more rational perspective as an opportunity to use the trauma and experience of genocide and loss as a tool in international politics.<sup>32</sup>

The seventh question was composed as follows: *In your opinion, has Armenian policy towards the relationship of recognition and commemoration of the Armenian Genocide and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict changed after the change of power in 2018?* The question looks at the change over time in the approach to the relationship of the two phenomena. If 2018 and the so-called Armenian Velvet Revolution were the last significant political change, the question aims to test the potential change in the use of the relationship of the memory of the Armenian Genocide and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in current politics.

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27 Interview IV, 8 May 2021, Interview VII, 8 May 2021 Interview III, 4 May 2021.

28 Interview VI, 8 May 2021.

29 Interview IV, 8 May 2021.

30 Interview VI, 8 May 2021, Interview IX, 8 May 2021.

31 Interview II, 29 April 2021, Interview III, 4 May 2021.

32 Interview I, 28 April 2021, Interview VII, 8 May 2021.

Thus, the question is meant to indicate the relevance of an important assumption of the research, namely the belief in the processual dynamics of instrumentalization and its change, not only over time but also in context. For this question, 2.8% of the respondents answered, “don’t know” and 8.3% “difficult to say.” 36.1% of respondents believe that after 2018, a change in the policy of combining the two phenomena has not occurred. Of this, 2.8% said it “definitely” did not occur, 11.1% said it did not occur and 22.2% said it “rather” did not occur. The opposite view was held by 52.7% of those questioned, of which 8.3% believe that it has “definitely” occurred, 25% that it has occurred and 19.4% that it has “rather” occurred. Nuanced and ambiguous assessments, on the other hand, were presented by experts. An element highlighted is the issue of uncertainty about the direction of change in the real dimension, i.e., the actual blaming of Nikol Pashinian and his associates for the defeat in the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War and causing Azerbaijan and Turkey to gain a narrative advantage. At the same time, it is questioned whether there is any indication of a political change of course in the context of the correlation of the two phenomena.<sup>33</sup> According to some experts, this policy has not changed because of the transformations initiated by the so-called Velvet Revolution in 2018. Nevertheless, also in these distanced opinions, there is a conviction about the political use of the narrative linking the two phenomena during the armed phase of the conflict in 2020. At the same time, it has also been highlighted those statements linking both issues, for example in the context of the lifting of the border blockade with Turkey conditional on the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, have started to reappear in the discourse in Turkey.<sup>34</sup> An important observation made in the interviews is the question of the change of form (the language of politics) while there is no change of content in the context of combining the two phenomena.<sup>35</sup> Some experts also point out that, at the declarative level, there has indeed been an indication since 2018 of a desire to make changes in the approach to both phenomena considered both singularly and in combination. Nevertheless, it was emphasised that the change was not finally realised and remained only at the level of ideas. The issues of democratisation and the fight against corruption, which dominated the actions of Nikol Pashinian’s government before the 2020 war, were pointed out as the reason for the lack of implementation of the proposed policy.<sup>36</sup> An important aspect highlighted in the context of the 2018 political shift was the issue of the desire to separate Armenian politics regarding the two phenomena and the expectations of the Armenian diaspora in the West, which expected a more decisive combination of narratives about the Armenian Genocide and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.<sup>37</sup> It is important to emphasise that if the thesis of a redefinition of the post-2018 policy is accepted, the change concerns only the issue of the approach to the potential resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, while the approach to the commemoration and recognition of the Armenian Genocide remains unchanged.<sup>38</sup>

The eighth question was composed as follows: *If yes, how would you rate the extent to*

33 Interview XI, 12 May 2021, Interview III, 4 May 2021.

34 Interview V, 8 May 2021, Interview VII, 8 May 2021, Interview VI, 8 May 2021, Interview IV, 8 May 2021.

35 Interview V, 8 May 2021, Interview II, 29 April 2021.

36 Interview X, 14 May 2021, Interview VIII, 8 May 2021.

37 Interview X, 14 May 2021.

38 Interview I, 28 April 2021.

*which the use of narratives about the relationship between these issues has intensified after 2018?* The question arising from the previous one concerns the assessment of the degree of intensification (or lack thereof) in the process of instrumentalization of the relations of the studied phenomena in politics. In this question, significantly, the highest percentage of “difficult to say” responses of 33.3% appeared. At the same time, 36.4% of respondents said that the intensity of the use of linked narratives had increased, of which 15.2% said it had “definitely increased,” 9.1% said it had “increased,” and 12.1% said it had “rather increased.” 21.2% of respondents felt that the use of linked narratives had decreased, of which 9.1% of respondents said, “rather decreased,” 3% said “decreased” and 9.1% said “definitely decreased”. In the case of the expert interviews, one of the elements highlighted in the case of this question was the doubt towards the intentionality of linking both phenomena for political purposes. The argumentation was based on the statement that what is obvious and understandable for experts, for example, academic experts, i.e., the obvious connection between the Armenian Genocide and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, is not necessarily understandable by politicians.<sup>39</sup> It is extremely important to point out that the intensified use in one narrative, was primarily due to the increasingly aggressive policies of Azerbaijan and Turkey towards Armenia, and ultimately the armed conflict in 2020. At the same time, an additional connection was also indicated in the context of the “cultural genocide” affecting the Armenian heritage in Nakhichevan.<sup>40</sup>

The ninth question is composed as follows: *In your opinion, should the issue of resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict be combined with the issue of the Armenian Genocide?* This is a crucial question. It concerns the legitimacy, validity, and correctness of using a combination of both narratives in Armenian politics. It thus intertwines questions of pragmatic necessity, the ethics of such action, and value judgements on issues that are extremely important components of collective memory and collective identity. For this question, 58.4% of those asked indicated that the two phenomena should be combined. 13.9% of respondents indicated a “definitely yes” answer, 30.6% a “yes” answer and 13.9% a “rather yes” answer. The opposite opinion was held by 41.6% of the respondents, of which 22.2% answered “rather no,” 16.7% “no” and 2.7% “definitely no.” An important aspect highlighted in the expert interviews was the issue of the need to separate academic and expert knowledge from the use of history by politicians. According to the experts, knowledge about the connection based on analogy and continuity between the phenomenon of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the phenomenon of the Armenian Genocide should be widely disseminated, which does not mean that at the same time it should be subject to manipulation, instrumentalization and ideologization for the achievement of specific political goals, whether defined as internal or external.<sup>41</sup> The highlighted negative consequence of combining the two phenomena is the granting of a narrative side to Turkey in the Karabakh conflict, which is in clear contradiction to the Armenian *raison d'état*.<sup>42</sup> For some experts, the two issues should be separated, since their combination at the level of political realism has bad consequences for

39 Interview II, 29 April 2021, Interview VII, 8 May 2021, Interview III, 4 May 2021.

40 Interview I, 28 April 2021, Interview V, 8 May 2021.

41 Interview V, 8 May 2021, Interview VIII, 8 May 2021.

42 Interview VI, 8 May 2021, Interview II, 29 April 2021.

Armenia's foreign policy goals, negatively affecting both the issue of a potential settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in favour of Yerevan and the promotion of recognition of the Armenian Genocide.<sup>43</sup> In some cases, benefits that could be described as economic were highlighted as those that could serve as positive arguments for combining the two narratives.<sup>44</sup> In addition to economic arguments, ethical and axiological ones were also raised, stressing the right of Armenians to remember and recall their history, which at the same time justifies the validity of combining the two phenomena.<sup>45</sup> The question of the inevitability of discursive fusion arising from the demand on a social level in a traumatised society also emerges in the interviews. In this case, the question of the rightness and correctness of the chosen political direction does not play a role.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, among experts who support combining both narratives, there is the question of the rightness of such an action in the perspective of international law and building the image of Armenia and Armenians as victims, juxtaposed with the perpetrators, i.e., Turkey and Azerbaijan, who are not separated in such a narrative.<sup>47</sup>

### ***Representations of the Past in the Public Space***

In the post-Soviet space, the relevance of public representations of memory was considered from multiple perspectives.<sup>48</sup> Kiril Stanilov, among others, has written about the space of the post-socialist city and the role that representations of memory play in it as elements of the consolidation process of transformation.<sup>49</sup> Also museums as both places of representation of the past and spaces of persuasion were analysed in the context of the former USSR and the South Caucasus.<sup>50</sup> In Armenia, reflections on public representations of the communist past and their ambiguous legacy were undertaken.<sup>51</sup> An important voice in the analysis of public spaces of memory in an anthropological perspective in Armenia itself is the work of Harutyun Marutyan.<sup>52</sup> Representations of the past in public (understood as political) space, perform the function of places of memory. They are at the same time a representation of the

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43 Interview III, 4 May 2021, Interview IV, 8 May 2021.

44 Interview X, 14 May 2021.

45 Interview IX, 8 May 2021.

46 Interview VII, 8 May 2021.

47 Interview I, 28 April 2021.

48 Julie Fedor, "Memory, Kinship, and the Mobilization of the Dead: The Russian State and the 'Immortal Regiment' Movement," in *War and Memory in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus*, ed. Julie Fedor et al., *Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), 307-345; Benjamin Forest and Juliet Johnson, "Monumental Politics: Regime Type and Public Memory in Post-Communist States," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 27, no. 3 (2011): 269-288.

49 Kiril Stanilov, *The Post-Socialist City: Urban Form and Space Transformations in Central and Eastern Europe after Socialism* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010).

50 Clive Gray, *The Politics of Museums* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); *Museums and Sites of Persuasion: Politics, Memory and Human Rights*, eds. Joyce Apse, Amy Sodaro (London, New York: Routledge, 2019); Malkhaz Toria, "Between Traditional and Modern Museology. Exhibiting National History in the Museum of Georgia," in *Museums and Sites of Persuasion. Politics, Memory and Human Rights* (London, New York: Routledge, 2020), 39-55.

51 Gayane Shagoyan, "Between Memory and Memorial: Anastas Mikoyan and 'Social Lustration' in Armenia," *Caucasus Analytical Digest* 80 (2016): 2-5.

52 Marutyan, *Iconography of Armenian Identity*.

official discourse towards the past and play a creative role for the binding narratives.<sup>53</sup> What is nuanced, but clearly manifested in the in-depth interviews and the online questionnaire, is represented very clearly in the public and individual memorials and realms of memory. Representation (of memory) in this context is defined according to Paul Ricoeur's conception, in which representation can be interpreted in three distinct senses. Firstly, representation is thus the representation of the past in the present. Secondly, representation is the reappearance in the space of discourse of what has hitherto been absent. Third, representation is also a reference for the historian.<sup>54</sup> The following are representations of the past in space, indicating a discursive connection between the phenomenon of the memory of the Armenian Genocide and the phenomenon of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.



53 Andrzej Szpociński, "Miejsca Pamięci (Lieux de Memoire)," *Teksty Drugie* 4 (2008): 11-20; Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux Des Memoires," *Representations* 26 (1989): 7-24.

54 Paul Ricoeur, *Pamięć, Historia, Zapomnienie*, trans. Janusz Margański (Kraków: UNIVERSITAS, 2012), 252-253.



Photo I and II. Exposition of the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Armenia Mother Armenia Military Museum in Yerevan. Author's photo, Yerevan, 07.05.2021

Photos I and II show representations at the Mother Armenia Military Museum in Yerevan. According to information, the museum was officially opened as a memorial on 29 November 1950, on the 30th anniversary of the establishment of Soviet power in Armenia. In front of the entrance to the complex, there is a pedestal, on which a sculpture of Joseph Stalin was placed. Because of the “Khrushchev thaw,” the monument was removed, and in its place, the Mother-Armenia monument was established in 1970. The interior of the complex was dedicated to the sacrifice of the Armenian people made during the Great Patriotic War. In 1995 the complex came under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Armenia and was divided into two parts - in the basement there is an exposition dedicated to the Great Patriotic War, and on level zero there is an exposition “The War of Liberation in Artsakh.” The first significant narrative element to note is the equating of the significance of two historical events - the Great Patriotic War and the First Nagorno-Karabakh War. The contradiction of such a combination - the Soviet defence against the Nazi invasion and the guerrilla war on the ruins of the empire - is only apparent. The manner of exposition points to similar mechanisms and structures shaping the narratives. The individual heroic attitudes of Armenians participating in both conflicts are highlighted. In the case of the exhibition on Nagorno-Karabakh, the heroic attitudes of Armenians from the diaspora, such as Monte Melkonian, who decided to support the Armenian cause, are emphasised. This also shapes the element of historical continuity. Ideological underpinnings play no role concerning national identity in practice. Nor does it matter what the dispute was about and whether the struggle took place in lands considered Armenian or in distant Europe. These similar mech-

anisms and structures of commemoration indicate the presence of a historical analogy. It is marked in the metaphorical figures used for presentation. As during the Great Patriotic War, the figurative basis for the representation of the First Nagorno-Karabakh War is the idea of sacrifice and martyrdom, often at the ultimate expense of lives. Both narratives are also linked by the issue of liberation and throwing off unjustly imposed shackles, as well as the communal - national-ethnic - effort that must be made to preserve identity. What unites the two narratives shaping a kind of historical continuity at the narrative level is the question of survival. Sacrifice and martyrdom must be made for the Armenian ethnic and national identity to survive. The survival of the nation (group identity) and the individual testimonies of survivors that function through this are the basis for the commemoration and the struggle for recognition of the Armenian Genocide. Strengthened as a form of living history by the experience of the Great Patriotic War, it had a chance to be preserved in the next generation, and then to be realised now of turning point and the necessity to take up the struggle for Nagorno-Karabakh.<sup>55</sup>



<sup>55</sup> Analysis based on the exposition descriptions and conversations with the museum staff.



Photo III and IV. Exposition of Fedayi Museum in Yerevan. Author's photo, Yerevan, 01.05.2021

Photos III and IV show museum representations at the Museum of the Armenian Fedayi Movement in Yerevan. This is a small, private museum created through the efforts of Ilyich Beglarian and named after General Andranik (Ozanian), one of the most important commanders of the Armenian fedayi movement at the turn of the 20th century. It is in the vicinity of the National Pantheon in Yerevan. It was established in 1995, then closed after the building was privatised and reopened in 2006. The fedayi movement emerged in the 1880s as self-defence groups and irregular militias whose main purpose was to protect Armenians in Western Armenia from Kurdish armed groups, Hamidian militias and Ottoman troops. Attacks on Armenian peasants intensified during the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid II. Fedayi units' activity was particularly significant during the Hamidian massacres, the Zeytun Rebellion, the Defence of Van, and the Sasun Resistance. An additional goal of the fedayi that formed over time was to obtain autonomy for Armenians in the Ottoman Empire or independence.<sup>56</sup> Part of the exhibition in the museum (visible in the photos) is devoted to the “successors” of the fedayi, this time protecting the Armenian territory of Nagorno-Kara-

<sup>56</sup> Richard G. Hovannisian, “The Armenian Question in the Ottoman Empire 1876-1914,” in *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times. Foreign Dominion to Statehood: The Fifteenth Century to Twentieth Century*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian, vol. II (London: Macmillan, 1997), 203-238.

bakh from the Azerbaijani threat. The issue of the enemy is equated in representation by the analogy of Turks and Azerbaijanis. However, the question of teleology is also dealt with - like the fedayi, the participants in the First Karabakh War fight to defend the threatened Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh. At the same time, a second objective is also revealed, namely the desire to liberate territories considered to be occupied by foreigners. During the First Nagorno-Karabakh War, there was a regiment named after Andranik, and the attitude of the general himself, and other fedayi, was meant to be inspirational for young Armenians reaching the front.<sup>57</sup> At the same time, it is worth pointing out an even more important connection. The greatest heroes of modern Armenian history are military commanders meritorious in a theoretically lost cause - like Andranik and Vazgen Sargsyan, a commander from the First Karabakh War. Thus, the reference to specific figures is a historical analogy of a similar struggle, and incidentally also a continuation of the “Turks” clash. At the same time, as the exhibition points out, also for General Andranik Karabakh was an important part of the Armenian liberation struggle, which further highlights the analogy between the two narratives.<sup>58</sup>



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57 Patrick Gore, *Tis Some Poor Fellow's Skull: Post-Soviet Warfare in the Southern Caucasus* (iUniverse, 2008), 17-18.

58 Analysis based on the exposition descriptions and conversations with the museum staff.



Photo V and VI. Sardarapat Monument. Author's photo, Sardarapat, 10.05.2021.

Photos V and VI show public representations at the memorial site of the monument commemorating the Battle of Sardarapat which took place between 22-26 May 1918 during the Caucasus Campaign of WWI between Armenian forces and the Ottoman army which invaded the territory of Eastern Armenia. The memory of the Battle of Sardarapat was marginalised in Soviet historiography until the 1960s. Only with the violent protests in Armenia in 1965, on the 50th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, did the Soviet authorities agree to create a memorial at the site where the battle took place. The official opening of the memorial took place in 1968, on the 50th anniversary of the battle.<sup>59</sup> Today, the Battle of Sardarapat and the Armenian offensive at Bash-Aparan and the defence of Karakilisa (today's Vanadzor) are an important part of Armenian memory. Glorification is not only linked to the commemoration of the military victory that led to the establishment of the First Republic of Armenia on May 28, 1918. The Battle of Sardarapat is considered the decisive moment of the Caucasus Campaign, which not only halted the Ottoman offensive into the Caucasus, slowing the march on Baku, but also prevented the final annihilation of the Armenians.<sup>60</sup> In the mid-1990s, after the end of the First Nagorno-Karabakh War, official commemorations of Armenian soldiers who fell during the war were established on the memorial grounds. They have a specific character, combining individual remembrance in the form of tombstones with the politics of remembrance linking the issue of Armenian defence

59 Razmik Panossian, *The Armenians: From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 251.

60 Christopher J. Walker, *Armenia: The Survival of a Nation* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), 254-255.

against the Ottoman offensive with the struggle for the liberation of Nagorno-Karabakh. The most prominent element in collective memory, therefore, is the question of continued resistance to Turkish aggression resulting in the Armenian Genocide in Western Armenia, which, thanks to a self-sacrificing defence, was not extended to Eastern Armenia.



Photo IX and X. Garegin Nzdeh School and Museum. Author's photo, Yerevan 07.05.2021.

Photo IX and X shows representations in everyday life at the Garegin Nzdeh School and Museum in Yerevan. School No. 12 named after Garegin Nzdeh is in the Yerevan district of Shengavit, near the square of the same name. The school hosts a small museum whose exhibition depicts the life and work of Garegin Nzdeh, an Armenian military officer and politician. He was associated with the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, being one of the most important military commanders of the First Republic of Armenia. After the Soviet invasion of Armenia in November/December 1920, disagreeing with the plan to incorporate his native Nakhichevan and Nagorno-Karabakh into Soviet Azerbaijan, he formed the Republic of Mountainous Armenia in Zangezur, fighting against the Soviets until July 1921. He then carried out organisational activities for the ARF. During WWII, he was a supporter of cooperation with the Axis states.<sup>61</sup> The figure of Nzdeh, repressed in the Soviet Union, is also significant because, paradoxically, his openly anti-Soviet and anti-Ottoman stance is different from the standard more nuanced approach to the Soviet legacy in Armenia. At the entrance to the school, there is a significant plaque that highlights the historical continuity between the fedayi movement, the founders of the First Republic of Armenia and the fighters of the First Karabakh War. In addition to highlighting elements indicated in the earlier case of representation, in this case, it is interesting to build a bridge between Eastern and Western Armenia, of which Garegin Nzdeh was a representative, fighting against the Ottoman Empire in the Bulgarian army during the Balkan Wars, as well as against Soviet Russia in Zangezur. This representation thus becomes important due to the fact of linking anti-imperial resistance to oppression, of which the Azerbaijani policy towards Karabakh is also a contemporary manifestation in the narrative.



<sup>61</sup> Razmik Panossian, "The Past as Nation. Three Dimensions of Armenian Identity," *Geopolitics* 7, no. 2 (2002): 132.



Photo VIII and IX. 106<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. Author's photo, Yerevan 24.04.2021.

Photos VII and VIII show representations of remembrance in anniversary commemorations - 24 April, the symbolic date marking the beginning of the Armenian Genocide. On 24 April 1915, in Constantinople and other centres of the Ottoman Empire after the decision of the state authorities, the most important representatives of the Armenian intellectual elite were arrested. The arrests became the beginning of an organised deportations and mass slaughters against Armenian subjects of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>62</sup> On the anniversary of this day, the most important celebrations are held to commemorate the symbolic beginning of the Armenian Genocide. The celebration usually begins the day before late in the evening with the torchlit procession to the Genocide Memorial. On 24 April, thousands of Armenians visit Tsisternakaberd, one of the hills in the centre of Yerevan, where a monument commemorating the victims has been located since 1967 and, since the 1990s, the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute has been operating. Armenians come to Yerevan from all over the country and from abroad, where Armenians, as a consequence of the genocide, have formed a significant and influential diaspora. Officials and embassy representatives from countries that recognise the genocide also pay visits. In their hands, they usually bring white and red flowers, symbolising innocence, and bloodshed. They are placed around an eternal fire that burns next to the spire that crowns the memorial site. Participatory observation conducted during the commemoration of the 106th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide on 24 April 2021 made it possible to observe the mechanisms of linking the narratives of memory about

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62 Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert*, 271-272.

the Armenian Genocide and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. It is worth noting that this was a significant anniversary because its most important accent became the use of the word “genocide” by US President Joe Biden, which in political practice means its recognition. As can be seen in the attached photos, banners referring to the issue of international recognition of the Artsakh Republic appeared on the monument itself, linking these issues to the memory and recognition of the genocide. At the same time, banners referring to the Karabakh issue could be seen throughout the day of the ceremony. In the context of the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War, which ended with the signing of a ceasefire agreement entering into force on 10 November 2020, the visit to the memorial by soldiers who participated in the fighting, returning from the war with severe injuries, was particularly symbolically significant. Most probably, the recognition of the genocide by one of the most important world powers, which came at a significant time immediately after the end of the Second Karabakh War, may result in an even more pronounced strengthening of the discursive connection.

## Discussion and Further Research

The research question of the study is stated as follows: *how the historical analogies and idea of continuity is instrumentalized as the technology of power in contemporary Armenian politics?* The juxtaposition of the results of diverse research methods, allowed, in an interpretative perspective, to indicate the mechanisms and structures of the use of historical analogies and the idea of continuity in linking the phenomena of memory of the Armenian Genocide and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Thus, it is not an abuse to confirm the initially stated hypothesis that *being the subject to ideologization, the issue of the interrelation between the Armenian Genocide and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict used as a technology of power in contemporary Armenian politics, is its significant variable.* The discursive link is much more important, that is, the search for an answer to the question of whether this experience exists in the political consciousness in Armenia.

There are different ways of understanding the issue of historical analogy.<sup>63</sup> In the first sense, it is a heuristic tool that helps analyse the technologies of power used in shaping hegemonic discourse. In the second sense, a historical analogy can be a justification or explanation in discursive space. In the third sense, the historical analogy functions as a reason for making specific decisions. In the fourth understanding, essentialist historical analogy occurs as the perception of a situation as analogous to prior experience. For this reason, it is

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63 Robert Axelrod and Larissa Forster, “How Historical Analogies in Newspapers of Five Countries Make Sense of Major Events: 9/11, Mumbai and Tahrir Square,” *Research in Economics* 71, no. 1 (2017): 8-19; Paul Bartha, “Analogy and Analogical Reasoning,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (2019); Peter J. Dortmans and Eleanor Eiffe, “An Examination of Future Scenarios Using Historical Analogy,” *Futures* 36, no. 10 (2004): 1049-1462; James Ferguson, “Proletarian Politics Today: On the Perils and Possibilities of Historical Analogy,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 61, no. 1 (2019): 4-22; Hall Gardner, *IR Theory, Historical Analogy, and Major Power War* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019); Djouaria Ghilani et al., “Looking Forward to the Past: An Interdisciplinary Discussion on the Use of Historical Analogies and Their Effects,” *Memory Studies* 10, no. 3 (2017): 274-285; Yahya Kamali and Sedighe Sheikhzadeh Jooshani, “Reasoning in Foreign Policy Making from the Analogy Perspective: The Case Study of Iran’s Nuclear Issue,” *Asian Politics & Policy* 11, no. 2 (2019): 208-226; Andrew Mumford, “Parallels, Prescience and the Past: Analogical Reasoning and Contemporary International Politics,” *International Politics* 52, no. 1 (2015): 1-19.

difficult to have one precise definition, but referring to the wide spectrum of those proposed by researchers, it is possible to construct the following formulation: “a historical analogy is a present meaningful reference to a past situation and experience, in the context of a current discourse.” Ideological continuity is understood similarly, as a kind of historical analogy. Thus, it operates similarly to social memory, which, while focusing on the content of the past, functions dominantly in the present. At the same time, historical analogy and continuity are technologies of power that also requires explanation.

The origin of the term is Michel Foucault’s reflections on “governmentality,” undertaken mainly during his lectures at the Collège de France.<sup>64</sup> The use of this category allows for a broader analytical view of the problem under study. Narratives in discourse are thus a form of social practice, discursive formations must pass an “institutional test” to become part of it. Thus, what is significant goes beyond the causal understanding of political action (from sender to receiver). What means politically must be socially structured. Consistently, then, “technologies of power” are not simple “political tools” that serve to establish dominance and sustain power. As Monika Bobako writes: “(...) [*the technology of power is*] *productive and regulative, realized through a whole complex of practices, discourses, institutions, knowledge systems that make up complex tactics for managing populations and producing subjectivity.*”<sup>65</sup> Nikolas Rose shortly defines technologies of power (government) as “(...) *those technologies imbued with aspirations for the shaping of conduct in the hope of producing certain desired effects and averting certain undesired events.*”<sup>66</sup>

### ***Explanation of results***

The exploratory case study has proven that historical analogy understood as a technology of power stands as a useful heuristic tool of analysis. There is no doubt, based on the expert interviews, the online questionnaire, and the interpretation of the representation in the public space, that historical analogy occurs as the perception of a situation as analogous to prior experience. How historical analogy and ideological continuity are present in the discursive practice of contemporary Armenia indicates that two other understandings of this category are present explicitly, intertwining with each other in narratives about the past and present. Historical analogy is used as a justification or explanation in discursive space. This is especially true of how the narrative of the Azerbaijani-Armenian rivalry is constructed, constructed on the analogy of Turkish-Armenian relations over 100 years ago. “Offensive defence” against the invasion of the “Other” Turk is thus a drawing, based on historical analogy, of an omission in the past that resulted in genocide.

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64 Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*, trans. David Macey, vol. V, *Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976* (London: Picador, 2003); Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978*, trans. Graham Burchell, (New York: Picador, 2009); Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979* (New York: Picador, 2010).

65 Monika Bobako, *Islamofobia Jako Technologia Władzy. Studium z Antropologii Politycznej* (Kraków: UNIVERSITAS, 2017), 47.

66 Nikolas Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 52.

The issue of defence is closely linked to the issue of explaining the sacrifice that Armenians must make in the face of an external threat. As public representations indicate, in the case of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict it is analogous to how sacrifice was understood during the defence of Eastern Armenia during the Caucasus offensive of the Army of Islam, or during the Great Patriotic War. This way of thinking is coupled with a specific attitude of victory through sacrifice, which, originating in the commemoration of the Great Patriotic War, influenced the perception of Armenian success in the First Karabakh War. In this case, the historical analogy is combined with its subsequent understanding, that is, functioning as a reason for specific decisions. The limitation of sovereignty, both in the dimension of international alliances (Russia) and civil subjectivity (especially during the rule of the Republican Party of Armenia), is conditioned by the necessary, explained by references to the past.

Consequently, another figure of analogy emerges - the idea of survival. The fact that a genocide has been survived makes the survival of the nation justify and explain political reality, but it also causes concrete decisions to be made. This is particularly important as the research indicates that these are not only reactive decisions but also proactive ones. The difference comes down to the fact that the use of survival issues in politics is explored. The traumatisation of society and the experience of genocide itself becomes a useful technology of power.

An assumption that can be drawn from the results of the research is the issue of distinguishing the discursive exploration of the connection with the absence of an actual official policy pursued by the Armenian state in the international arena. In this context, it is also significant to distinguish between a narrative created for internal use, in which the combination of two narratives must certainly be considered a technology of power, and a narrative constructed for external use, i.e., used in diplomacy and external relations. In the latter case, if references are made at all they are cautious, leaving aside categorical statements. It is thus a significant connection in political terms.

The conclusion that can be drawn from the analysis of the material obtained from the preliminary research is that the narratives about the undoubtedly occurring interrelation between the two phenomena stem from Armenian perceptions about the shape of discourse in Turkey and Azerbaijan. However, as Vicken Cheterian's research indicates, the portrayal of this interrelation in both Turkish and Azerbaijani discourse is much more nuanced than it is presented in narratives in Armenia.<sup>67</sup> Without in-depth historical research, as well as cross-sectional sociological studies in Turkey and Azerbaijan, there is no way to confirm the existence of a real "genocide" policy and continuity so deeply rooted in Armenian discourse. Nevertheless, even if the existence of an actual "genocide policy" pursued by the adversaries of the modern Armenian state is questionable, there is no doubt that the notion of its facticity is an extremely significant technology of power and, consequently, a driving force in contemporary politics in Armenia.

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<sup>67</sup> Cheterian, "The Uses and Abuses of History"; Ceylan Tokluoglu, "The Political Discourse of the Azerbaijani Elite on the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict (1991-2009)," *Europe-Asia Studies* 63, no. 7 (2011): 1223-1252.

## ***Unexpected findings***

The transformation and political change in Armenia were analysed both as separate case studies and from a comparative perspective.<sup>68</sup> These perspectives - historical, political, and sociological - need to be complemented by an analysis of the impact on political change and transformation of the combined discursive phenomena of the memory of the Armenian Genocide and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Thus, the primary question of the extended research of which this preliminary case study is a part is: *how the instrumentalized discursive interrelation between narratives of memory of the Armenian Genocide and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict impact the political change in Armenia between 1991 and 2020?* The broad hypothesis set for the in-depth study stated as follows: *politics of memory has a decisive impact on the transformation and political change in Post-Soviet Armenia.* One element of this influence hypothesised is the use of historical analogy and the idea of continuity of historical experience as a technology of power. In this context, the study tested the potential change in this issue because of the Armenian Velvet Revolution of 2018 and the Second Karabakh War of 2020. The findings indicate that the impact of instrumentalising the connection between the phenomena on political change, in this case, was not necessarily significant. However, this exploratory case study indicated that within this politics of memory, one of the most significant causal elements for political change is the correlation of the narrative of the Armenian Genocide and the issue of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Despite the existence of diversified perspectives on the interrelation between the Armenian Genocide and Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (including the attempts of decisive separation), the instrumentalization and ideologization of narratives of memory profoundly dominate the mainstream pattern of past representation. Consequently, it can have a definitive impact on the dynamics of political change. Thus, for further research, it is required to analyse the impact of instrumentalized connection on the most significant political changes in contemporary Armenian politics within the timeframe between 1991-2019.

## ***Limitations and Weaknesses***

It is necessary to draw attention to limitations and restrictions. The primary one is the qualitative nature of the survey itself, which results in the fact that they cannot be seen as representative surveys. As qualitative research, the results presented should be considered as

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68 Sven Eliaeson, Lyudmila Harutyunyan, and Larissa Titarenko, *After the Soviet Empire: Legacies and Pathways* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2015); Nora Dudwick, "Political Transformations in Postcommunist Armenia: Images and Realities," in *Conflict, Cleavage, and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, ed. Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Nora C Dudwick, "Memory, Identity and Politics in Armenia," (PhD, 1994), 1-476; *Transcaucasia, Nationalism, and Social Change: Essays in the History of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia*, ed. Ronald Suny (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996); Donnacha Ó Beacháin and Abel Polese, *The Colour Revolutions in the Former Soviet Republics: Successes and Failures* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010); Alexander Agadjanian, Ansgar Jödicke, and Evert van der Zweerde, *Religion, Nation and Democracy in the South Caucasus* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014); Taras Kuzio, "Transition in Post-Communist States: Triple or Quadruple?" *Politics* 21, no. 3 (2001): 168-77; Hale, *Patronal Politics*; Evgeny Finkel and Yitzhak M. Brudny, "No More Colour! Authoritarian Regimes and Colour Revolutions in Eurasia," *Democratization* 19, no. 1 (2012): 1-14.

a kind of descriptive for existing phenomena with an indication that there are many cracks and crevices in the discourse where the past is interpreted and represented differently. Another significant limitation follows from this. When analysing two historical and political events, the leading question for the historian should be whether the combination and correlation of the two phenomena under study is justified in past events. This question is not the most important one in this research, because “truthfulness” and “validity” are secondary if, in the discourse, the discursive formation occurs. If at an imagined social and political level the validity of the connection can be confirmed, and this has been demonstrated by the research, then “historicity” is of secondary importance. In other words, the influence of this relationship is important for political change in Armenia after 1991, regardless of whether its actual occurrence can be proven within the framework of a classically understood history. Nevertheless, during further in-depth research, the historical perspective is necessary.

The research has undoubtedly shown how instrumental the technology of power in contemporary Armenian politics is in instrumentalizing the question of historical analogy and the idea of continuity. Preliminary research also confirms the suitability of the theoretical framework adopted, with the clear indication that it does not exhaust the entire potential space of the object of analysis. More broadly, the research suggests the need for a wider exploration of the content, structures, and forms of narratives, which are not only political tools but also social discursive practice.

## **Conclusion**

The conclusion that can be drawn with certainty is that, as technologies of power, the instrumentalization of the connection between the two phenomena is of more than average importance in Armenia. Thus, the presented research fulfils the role of added value to the aforementioned case studies on memory and collective identity in contemporary Armenia, addressing this issue from the rare perspective of investigation over interrelation between the Armenian Genocide and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Because of this, the presumption of broader research about the possible significant impact of this connection on the issue of political change in Armenia cannot be dismissed. Moreover, the preliminary research suggests the potential for investigating the historical correlation. Through broader archival research in Armenia, the possibility of juxtaposing discursive technologies of power with historical analysis emerges. It makes the research appropriate to be continued. Too little time has yet passed to indicate what impact the defeat in the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War will have on the account of the memory of the Armenian Genocide and the narrative of Nagorno-Karabakh. Nevertheless, the search for an in-depth answer as to how significant a variable defeat will be for the shape of the discourse represents an important space for future research. What matters here is not only the context of impact on political change in general but the dynamics of transforming the identity of victory through sacrifice (characteristic of the First Karabakh War), into a new form. It is an open question to what extent it will be discursively intertwined with the idea of remembering the Armenian Genocide.

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like, with all sincerity of heart, to thank the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute for the Lemkin scholarship that made it possible to conduct research in Armenia and to present its results in the form of an article. Thank you for your openness, support and inspiration at an extremely difficult time marked by the consequences of the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War, preparations for early parliamentary elections and the Covid-19 pandemic.

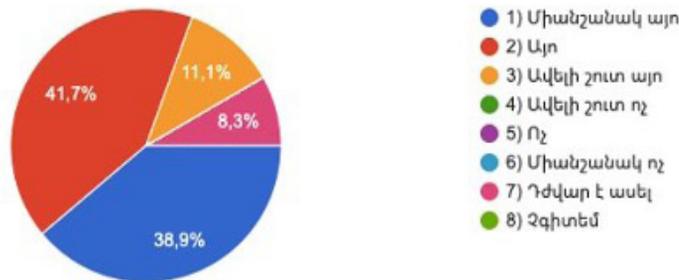
## Appendices

### Tables with captions

**Table I. In your opinion, is there a connection between the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the Armenian Genocide issue?**

I. Ձեր կարծիքով արդյո՞ք Լեռնային Ղարաբաղի կոնֆլիկտի և Հայոց ցեղասպանության խնդրի միջև կապ կա:

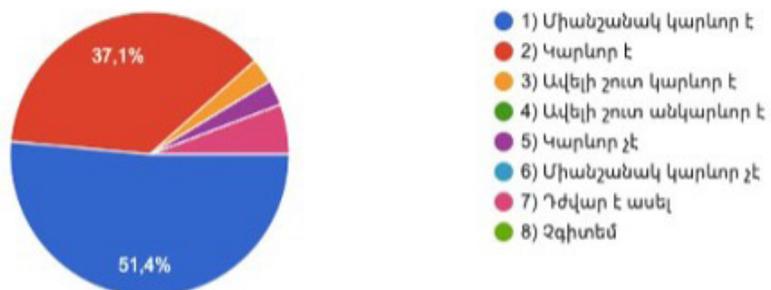
36 odpowiedzi



**Table II. If yes, how significant do you think the connection between the Armenian Genocide and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is?**

II. Եթե այո, ապա որքան՞ով է ըստ Ձեզ կարևոր Հայոց ցեղասպանության և Լեռնային Ղարաբաղի կոնֆլիկտի միջև առկա կապը:

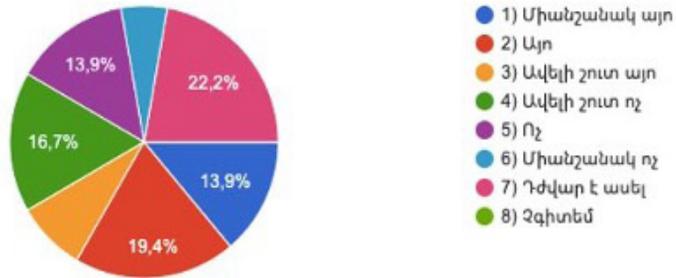
35 odpowiedzi



**Table III. In your opinion, does the potential recognition of the Armenian Genocide by Turkey depend on the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict?**

III. Ձեր կարծիքով, Թուրքիայի կողմից Հայոց ցեղասպանության հնարավոր ճանաչումը կախված է Լեռնային Ղարաբաղի կոնֆլիկտի լուծումից:

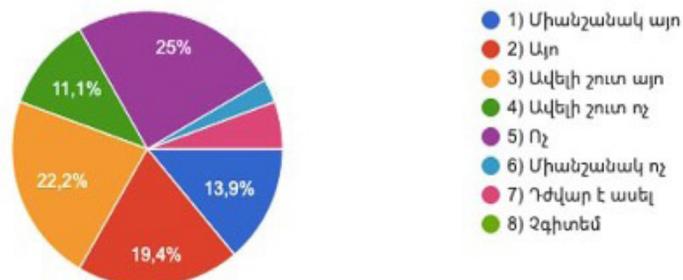
36 odpowiedzi



**Table IV. In your opinion, is the potential resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict dependent on Turkey's recognition of the Armenian Genocide?**

IV. Ձեր կարծիքով, Լեռնային Ղարաբաղի կոնֆլիկտի հնարավոր լուծումը կախված է Թուրքիայի՝ Հայոց ցեղասպանության ճանաչումից:

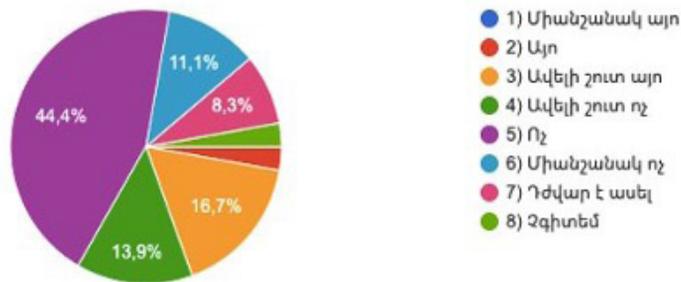
36 odpowiedzi



**Table V. In your opinion, does Armenia have a policy that emphasizes the connection between the commemoration of the Armenian Genocide and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict?**

V. Ձեր կարծիքով, Հայաստանը վարո՞ւմ է այնպիսի քաղաքականություն, որը շեշտում է Հայոց ցեղասպանության հիշատակման և Լեռնային Ղարաբաղի կոնֆլիկտի միջև առկա կապը:

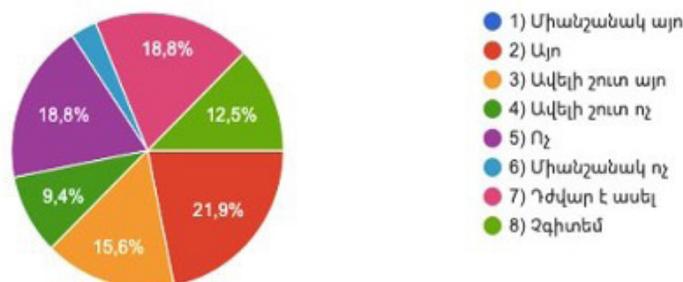
36 odpowiedzi



**Table VI. If yes, do you think that linking the Armenian Genocide to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is the right policy direction for Armenia?**

VI. Եթե այո, Ձեր կարծիքով ճիշտ է Հայաստանի կողմից վարած՝ Հայոց ցեղասպանությունը Լեռնային Ղարաբաղի կոնֆլիկտին կապելու քաղաքականությունը:

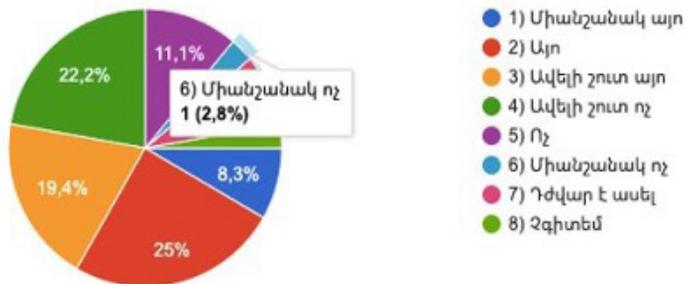
32 odpowiedzi



**Table VII. In your opinion, has Armenian policy towards the relationship of recognition and commemoration of the Armenian Genocide and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict changed after the change of power in 2018?**

VII. Ձեր կարծիքով, Հայաստանի վարած քաղաքականությունը Հայոց ցեղասպանության ճանաչման և Լեռնային Ղարաբաղի կոնֆլիկտի լուծման հարցում փոխվե՞լ է 2018 թվի իշխանափոխությունից հետո:

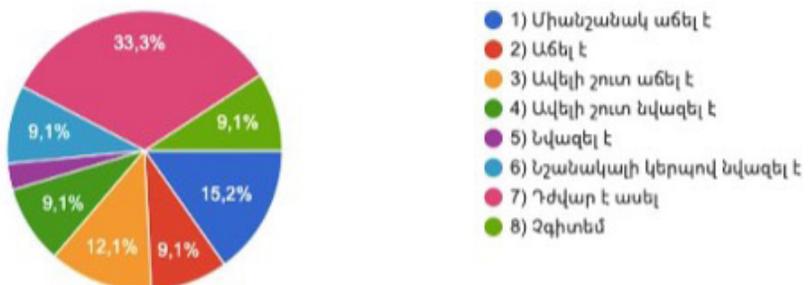
36 odpowiedzi



**Table VIII. If yes, how would you rate the extent to which the use of narratives about the relationship between these issues has intensified after 2018?**

VIII. Եթե այո, ապա ինչպե՞ս կգնահատեք՝ ինչ չափով են մեծացել այն խոսակցությունները, ըստ որոնց 2018 թվից հետո ուժեղացել է այս խնդիրների միջև եղած կապը:

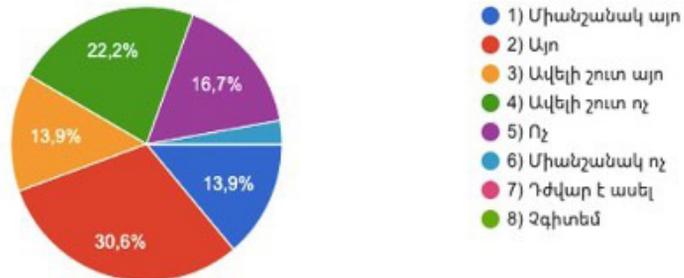
33 odpowiedzi



**Table IX. In your opinion, should the issue of resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict be combined with the issue of the Armenian Genocide?**

IX. Ձեր կարծիքով, պետք է Լեռնային Ղարաբաղի կոնֆլիկտի լուծման հարցը կապվի Հայոց ցեղասպանության խնդրի հետ:

36 odpowiedzi



Hasmik G. Grigoryan, Ph.D. in History, cultural anthropologist,  
independent researcher

Research fields – the mechanisms of Genocide implementation,  
perpetrators and victims of Genocide, unarmed resistance during the  
genocides, post-genocide, and post-memory.

E-mail: [grigoryanhasmik86@yahoo.com](mailto:grigoryanhasmik86@yahoo.com)

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# FOOD PROCUREMENT METHODS DURING THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE AS EXPRESSIONS OF “UNARMED RESISTANCE”: CHILDREN’S EXPERIENCES

*Hasmik G. Grigoryan*

## Abstract

The main objective of the article is to discuss whether food procurement methods during the Armenian Genocide could be considered as unarmed resistance. For this purpose, the first part of the article touched upon some scientific questions and the formation of the concept of unarmed resistance in the context of the Holocaust.

Such scientific interest was inspired by the fact that though there had been instances of armed resistance during the Armenian Genocide, fights in self-defense, including those with victorious outcomes, as in Van, nonetheless there existed an opinion that the Armenians were to be blamed, to some extent, to have been “slaughtered like sheep,” i.e. without resistance. For that very reason, the purpose of this article was to offer a scholarly assessment of the concept of “resistance” by suggesting its subcategories as subjects for separate research. Indeed, it is impossible to cover all the viewpoints on the problem and all the forms of resistance within one article; however, this article was an attempt to formulate new queries.

In the second section of the article, an attempt is made to group food procurement methods during the Armenian Genocide and consider them in the context of the concept of unarmed resistance. Special attention is paid to the experiences of children, trying also to identify the types of activities that the social groups were involved in and the extent of involvement. Food acquisition methods that were part of the daily life during the Armenian Genocide are discussed as expressions of conscious and unconscious struggle against the genocidal policy of condemning people to starvation.

The article is based on published memoirs and oral histories of the Armenian Genocide survivors.<sup>1</sup> Although food procurement methods were diverse, the article offers the most common forms: *feeding on wild grass, collecting fruits, berries, and nuts, begging*, often referred to by the survivors as life and death struggle.

**Keywords:** Armenian Genocide, Holocaust, children, unarmed resistance, food, memoirs, oral histories.

The article was submitted on 23.08.2021 and accepted for publication on 08.10.2021.

This is an extended version of the author’s article published in Armenian.

**How to Cite:** Hasmik Grigoryan, “Food Procurement Methods during the Armenian Genocide as Expressions of “Unarmed Resistance”: Children’s Experiences,” *International Journal of Armenian Genocide Studies* 6, no. 2 (2021): 41-52.

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<sup>1</sup> Predominantly the Oral History Project materials were used in the article, which were collected since 1978. For more details about the Project at <https://umdearborn.edu/casl/centers-institutes/center-armenian-research/armenian-assembly-oral-history-project>, accessed 04.04.2019.

## Unarmed Resistance: Some Scientific Queries

*Bread in my mind is associated with the contentment of being sated and the anguish of hunger. One centuries-long black summer my people and I were made destitute, starving. From that day on bread has been sacred to me, and my love for it comes close to veneration.*<sup>2</sup>

**Aram Haigaz (Chekemean),**

Survivor of the Armenian Genocide

The Jewish resistance with its diverse manifestations has been actively elucidated for more than half a century both in the historiography of the Holocaust as well as in public discourse.<sup>3</sup> Whereas in the context of the Armenian Genocide the issue of *unarmed resistance* has been hardly studied.<sup>4</sup> That is why, before moving to the main topic and considering food procurement methods during the Armenian Genocide as unarmed resistance let us briefly discuss some methodological issues based on the Jewish experience.

Holocaust historian Dan Michman wrote that the issue of resistance to the Nazis by the Jews and non-Jews came to the forefront of scientific and public attention still during WWII, as underground movements received a strong emotional and moral response. This interest particularly grew in European countries liberated immediately after the fall of Nazi Germany. In late 1960's the semantic scope of the term "resistance" had already expanded in Holocaust historiography, and a new concept was formed called "Kiddush Hahayim" ("the sanctification of God's Name").<sup>5</sup> Two Hebrew terms started to circulate in academic

2 Aram Haigaz, *Չորս տարի Քիւրտիստանի լեռներում մէջ* [Four Years in the Mountains of Kurdistan] (Lebanon, Printing House of the Armenian Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia, 1972), 282.

3 For literature dedicated to the Jewish resistance see: *Jewish Resistance, A Working Bibliography* (Washington: Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, USHMM, 2003). The first exhibits of the monument/museum in memory of the Holocaust victims built in 1957 in Israel presented the Jewish resistance in the Warsaw ghetto, uprisings in Sobibor and Treblinka extermination camps and the struggle of the survivors to get to Israel. Ten years later, in the spring of 1968, the first scientific gathering at the institute was also dedicated to the topic of resistance of the Jews. For the collection of the reports see *Jewish Resistance during the Holocaust: Proceeding of the Conference on Manifestations of Jewish Resistance, Jerusalem, April 7-11, 1968*, ed. Grubsztein Meir (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1971).

4 Professor at Columbia University, USA, Khatchig Mouradian is studying the topic of unarmed resistance in the context of the Armenian Genocide. See Khatchig Mouradian, *The Resistance Network: The Armenian Genocide and Humanitarianism in Ottoman Syria, 1915-1918* (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 2021); "The Meskeneh Concentration Camp, 1915-1917: A Case Study of Power, Collaboration, and Humanitarian Resistance During the Armenian Genocide," *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* 24 (2015): 44-55; "Genocide and Humanitarian Resistance in Ottoman Syria, 1915-1916," *Études Arméniennes Contemporaines* 7 (2016): 87-103, <https://doi.org/10.4000/eac.1023>; "The Role of Armenian Women During the Genocide," filmed 04 April 2017 at YouTube, AGBU, video, 08:06, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHjPzHsf1j4>, accessed 10.02.2019; "Not Like a Lamb to the Slaughter: Humanitarian Resistance during the Armenian Genocide," filmed 11 February 2017 at YouTube, Program of Armenian Studies, video, 01:41:17, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UPTztY-7LHc>, accessed 10.02.2019. Still in 2011, the importance of studying the issue was touched upon also by ethnographer, chief researcher at the Institute of Archeology and Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of Armenia Dr. Harutyun Marutyan, "Trauma and Identity: On Structural Particularities of Armenian Genocide and Jewish Holocaust," *International Journal of Armenian Genocide Studies* 1, no.1 (2014): 53-69.

5 For detailed comments on the term see Rabbi Aaron Rakeffet, "The 'Kedoshim' Status of the Holocaust

literature: “Amidah” (הדימעה תליפת) and “Hitnagdut” (התנגדות). The first covered all the aspects of resistance, including armed resistance – Hitnagdut.<sup>6</sup>

So, what called forth the semantic expansion of “resistance”? Generally, in the historiography of the Holocaust, the following key queries had been circulating: Was the history of the Holocaust only about violence, annihilation, and suffering, was there no spirit of heroism during the Holocaust, or did everyone go to die “like sheep to the slaughter” (חבטלן אצכ)? What should be described as resistance in general, what did people resist and how?

After the Armenian Genocide and Jewish Holocaust both the Armenians and the Jews had developed the stereotype that people were “slaughtered like sheep,” without resistance. Although in the case of the Jews, this expression was considered as “old-testamentary” and had a long story,<sup>7</sup> the historiography of Holocaust had been tackling Vilna ghetto underground fighter Abba Kovner’s appeal.<sup>8</sup> On 1 January 1942 Kovner announced: “We will not be led like sheep to slaughter. True we are weak and helpless, but the only response to the murders is revolt. Brethren, it is better to die fighting like free men than to live at the mercy of the murderers. Arise, Arise with last breath. Take Courage!”<sup>9</sup>

During one of his interviews Holocaust historiographer Yehuda Bauer noted: “... by using that metaphor, he tried to cause a rebellion against the very use of that term.”<sup>10</sup> According to Y. Bauer, the using of the phrase after the Holocaust differed greatly, as it had acquired an accusatory content.<sup>11</sup> A facilitating circumstance to the latter was that in 1960’s some Jewish intellectuals, including Raul Hilberg and Hannah Arendt suggested the approach, according to which, the Jews were partially to blame for their extermination, as they did not resist. Raul Hilberg noted that the Jews did not have any plans for fighting: neither by taking up arms, nor even by choosing psychological warfare tactics,<sup>12</sup> while in Hannah Arendt’s assessment the behavior of the Jews during the Holocaust was more obedient than heroic.<sup>13</sup>

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Victims,” *Hirhurim Musings Torah Journal* 7 (2010): 185-198.

6 Dan Michman, *Историография катастрофы. Еврейский взгляд: Концептуализация, терминология, подходы и фундаментальные вопросы* [Holocaust Historiography: A Jewish Perspective: Conceptualizations, Terminology, Approaches and Fundamental Issues], trans. M. Guba et al. (Dnepropetrovsk: Central Ukrainian Foundation for the History of the Holocaust “Tkuma,” 2005), 242.

7 Reference has been made to the Psalms and Isaiah’s prophecy: “Yea, for thy sake are we killed all day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.” (Psalm 44:22) and “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.” (Isaiah 53:7). See *Աստուածաշունչն ևստեան չին ևս Նոր Կտակարանների* [The Holy Bible] (Yerevan: Bible League International, 2010).

8 For details, see Yael Feldman, “Not as Sheep Led to Slaughter?” *Jewish Social Studies* 19, no. 3 (2013): 139-169.

9 Richard Middleton-Kaplan, “The Myth of Jewish Passivity,” in *Jewish Resistance against the Nazis*, ed. Patrick Henry (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014), 6.

10 Amos Goldberg, “Like Sheep to the Slaughter?” Excerpt from Interview with Yehuda Bauer, Director of the International Center for Holocaust Studies of Yad Vashem, 18 January 1998, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, at [http://www.yadvashem.org/odot\\_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20203667.pdf](http://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20203667.pdf), accessed 23.07.2017.

11 *Ibid.*, 1-2.

12 Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, vol. 3 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 1104.

13 Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem. A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking Press, 1964), 11.

Although there have been many publications to date dedicated to the Jewish resistance that criticize the “myth of passivity” of the Jews during the Holocaust, nevertheless it still persists in popular thinking and is frequently circulated in the media.<sup>14</sup> The stereotype of passivity of the Jews and “being slaughtered like sheep” left a deep imprint not only on the survivors, but also on the post-war Jewish community, developing perceptions of incapacity, passivity, obedience and lack of courage.<sup>15</sup>

It is due to fighting the very stereotype that the term “resistance” expanded semantically to include the armed and unarmed forms of resistance formulated as the “Jewish response to the Holocaust.” The process was greatly facilitated by the fact that the studies centered on everyday life of the Jews and simple, routine actions of people.

Various formulations of unarmed resistance emerged in European historiography, some of which pointed out certain actions like falsifying documents, supporting the family members of the arrested, hiding the evaders of compulsory labor, etc. In Dutch literature such actions are primarily known as “nonviolent self-defense” (*geweldloze verdediging*), in French literature as “benevolent resistance activities” (*activites caritatives*), “cultural resistance” (*resistance culturelle*), in Danish literature and that of other countries as “passive resistance” and “symbolic resistance,”<sup>16</sup> there are also “spiritual resistance” and/or “moral resistance” expressions covering spiritual and cultural activities.<sup>17</sup>

In the context of the Armenian Genocide, the image of a “defenseless victim” was created in mid 1950s by the Soviet leadership. Harutyun Marutyan writes about the policy of the Soviet Union in this period: “In fact, the Soviet leadership, particularly from the second half of the 1950s, did not so much forbid discussion of the Genocide, as it did foster the retention of memories in which Armenians were exclusively presented as innocent victims who had lost the greater part of their historical homeland and therefore needed sympathy.”<sup>18</sup> According to the author, the situation started to change since the 50th anniversary<sup>19</sup> of

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14 Patrick Henry, “Introduction,” in *Jewish Resistance against the Nazis*, ed. Patrick Henry (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014), xiii.

15 Feldman, “Not as Sheep,” 143.

16 Michman, *Holocaust Historiography*, 248.

17 “Moral and Spiritual Resistance,” at <https://www.holocaust.com.au/resources/moral-and-spiritual-resistance/>, accessed 10.02.2019; “Spiritual Resistance in the Ghettos,” at <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/spiritual-resistance-in-the-ghettos>, accessed 10.02.2019; For more details about spiritual resistance see *Spiritual Resistance: Art from Concentration Camps, 1940-1945*, ed. Miriam Novitch (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981); Rachile Kostanian, *Spiritual Resistance in the Vilna Ghetto* (Vilnius: Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum, 2002); Joseph Rudavsky, *To Live With Hope, To Die With Dignity: Spiritual Resistance in the Ghettos and Camps* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1997).

18 Marutyan, “Trauma and Identity,” 59.

19 In 1965 the Armenian people in Soviet Armenia and entire Diaspora universally commemorated the victims of the Armenian Genocide and celebrated the day of their remembrance. See “50th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide 1965 USA,” filmed 17 February 2017 at YouTube, Eboni Coursey, video, 16:20, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=laLB9yb3B64&fbclid=IwAR3x10Scr9v4EW7rWzKCrFi2Vh3DW8aCuyH1YrO31rVfFT7sODfQY2xEoTw>, accessed 05.11.2018; “Armenian Genocide 50th anniversary UN debate, 1965,” filmed 31 October 2014, at YouTube, The Genocide Education Project, video, 18:12, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h02U7pfMOfg&fbclid=IwAR2t2NC9I54JV1kAqwa\\_cq1fbNq9X98OJijnXnKUC1uICxCHNzi05www2lec](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h02U7pfMOfg&fbclid=IwAR2t2NC9I54JV1kAqwa_cq1fbNq9X98OJijnXnKUC1uICxCHNzi05www2lec), accessed 05.11.2018; Maike Lehmann, “Apricot Socialism: The National Past, the Soviet Project, and the Imagining of Community in Late Soviet Armenia,” *Slavic Review* 74, no. 1 (2015): 10-31; Avag Harutyunyan, *Հայոց ցեղասպանության 50-րդ տարեկիրը և Երկրորդ հսկրասպանությանը* [50th Anniversary of the Armenian

commemoration of the Armenian Genocide, after the Karabagh Movement in 1988 and the victory in Karabagh War.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, among some layers of the Armenian society, perhaps, mostly among the youth a belief has been shaped that “*enough has already been said concerning the genocide: it distorts the psychology of our children and youth, and contributes to increasing xenophobia, etc.*”<sup>21</sup> According to the author, one of the factors shaping such thinking was that certain groups of the society held a perception that ostensibly “*the Armenians were slaughtered like sheep,*” almost without resistance.<sup>22</sup>

In reality, neither the Armenians, not the Jews putting in resistance ever felt themselves as defenseless victims. On the contrary, they preferred to take up arms and die with dignity. Accepting Bauer’s viewpoint, we must note that in the context of the Armenian Genocide likewise armed self-defense seemed to be directed against that very perception. This is evidenced in particular by the fact that one of the heroes in the Austrian writer Franz Werfel’s novel *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*, a leader of the Musa Dagh self-defense, priest Aram Tomasian refused to die like a “defenseless sheep,” deciding to fight to the death: “*I know how I mean to die – not like a defenseless sheep, not on the road to Deir ez-Zor, not in the filth of a concentration camp, not of hunger, and not of the stinking plague – no! I mean to die on the threshold of my own house, with a gun in my hand....*”<sup>23</sup>

The novel written on real facts became symbolic for the Zionist youth movement both in Palestine and in Europe, particularly in the ghettos.<sup>24</sup> The Holocaust historians considered that this perception was so widespread in the 1930s that when translating the book into Hebrew the author had translated the expression “defenseless sheep” into “not as a sheep led to slaughter.”<sup>25</sup> Jewish historian Yair Auron writes that the story of the defense of Musa Dagh was something like a parable, also a model and a source of inspiration for the members of the Jewish underground. They equated their fate to that of the Armenians. The author states: “*In both cases, the persecutor’s purpose was the uprooting, the exile, and the physical annihilation of entire communities, and in both cases, resistance embodied the idea of an honorable death as a nation, or a chance to be saved as individuals.*”<sup>26</sup>

Another instance of this was that back then the press wrote about the self-defense of the Armenians in Cilicia in 1915 (according to the source, likely in Zeytun): “*The massacre started also in the region of Cilicia. The couriers were able to reach Van. It was they, who hoisted up the flag of rebellion. This time they do not want to be slaughtered like sheep (the underline is the author’s - H.G.). And that is the right decision. They are going to die as it comes, they might as well die fighting: it will do honor to them.*”<sup>27</sup> In May 1915, at the dinner held after the occupation of Van by the Russian Army and Armenian voluntary

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Genocide and the Second Republic] (Yerevan, Noravank, 2015).

20 For details, see Harutyun Marutyan, *Iconography of Armenian Identity*. Volume 1: The Memory of Genocide and Karabagh Movement (Yerevan: Gitut’yun, 2009).

21 Marutyan, “Trauma and Identity,” 58.

22 Ibid., 58-59.

23 Franz Werfel, *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* (New York, the Viking Press, 1934), 205.

24 For details see Yair Auron, *The Banality of Indifference: Zionism and the Armenian Genocide* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2000), 293-311.

25 Feldman, “Not as Sheep,” 158.

26 Auron, *The Banality of Indifference*, 309.

27 «Ապստամբութիւնը Կիլիկիոյ մէջ» [The Uprising in Cilicia], *Arev* (Alexandria), № 19, 21 June 1915, 3.

groups, the leader of self-defense Aram Manukian addressed the Russian commander [A. Nikolaev] saying: “*When a month ago we declared an uprising, we did not expect that the Russians would come. Our situation was hopeless: we either had to surrender and allow to be **slaughtered like sheep** [underline is the author’s - H.G.] or perish, like the musicians of the Titanic, to the solemn sounds of music. We preferred the latter.*”<sup>28</sup> The antipode of the latter was “to be slaughtered like sheep,” being martyred, suffering, becoming a scapegoat.<sup>29</sup>

Generally, armed resistance could be viewed as an act of moral resistance also, as making such a decision by those who resort to self-defense takes deep morality, such as, for instance, the notion of honorable or mindful death.<sup>30</sup> Maybe that was why the Holocaust historians considered armed resistance as an expression of “resistance” in its broader perception. Based on this logic, Bauer defined *resistance* as follows: “*I would define Jewish resistance during the Holocaust as any group action consciously taken in opposition to known or surmised laws, actions, or intentions directed against the Jews by the Germans and their supporters.*”<sup>31</sup>

Thus, Holocaust historians considered as *resistance* any action aiming at the protection of physical existence and maintenance of “human face,” any action against the policy of extermination or the “logic of extermination,” even intentions, any action, which would have served as a barrier to reaching the ultimate goal of crime.

## **Unarmed Resistance during the Armenian Genocide**

In accordance with one of the provisions of Article 2 of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations Organization (UN) on 9 December 1948, deliberately inflicting on a group conditions of life calculating to bring about its full or partial physical destruction committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group as such, means genocide.<sup>32</sup>

One of the tools of inflicting unfavorable conditions during the Armenian Genocide was condemning hundreds and thousands of people to starvation on the roads of deportation as well as in concentration camps. Considering starvation as a policy of committing genocide, George Shirinian points out the motives of such policy:

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28 «Վանի մէջ» [In Van], *Armenia* (Sofia), № 25, 6 June 1915, 1.

29 “Be slaughtered like sheep, be a martyr, become a scapegoat” and similar expressions often are met both in the memoirs of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide, oral histories and the press of the time. For instance, “James Pricey telegraphed from Tiflis that of 160,000 population of Sivaz only some 10,000 were left, and they are the elderly and the unable only. The person who telegraphed was an eyewitness who had managed to get over to Tiflis. He said that many were slaughtered like sheep and thousands threw themselves into the rivers.” See «Սվազի կոտորածը» [The Massacre of Sivaz], *Azg* (Boston), № 25, 31 January 1916, 1.

30 The concept of mindful death is best expressed in the following formula: *Mindless death is death; mindful death is immortality*. See Yeghishe, «Վասն Վարդանայ և Հայոց պատերազմին Դարձի երիցու Մամիկոնի հայցեալ» [About Vardan and the Armenian War by David elder Mamikonean], Chapter 2, 2.

31 Yehuda Bauer, *The Jewish Emergence from Powerlessness* (Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 27.

32 *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 9 December 1948*, 280, at <https://treaties.un.org/doc/publication/unts/volume%2078/volume-78-i-1021-english.pdf>.

Finally we explored the motives of the Turks in using starvation as a tool of genocide, finding that it was partially to provide an excuse that the Armenians died of natural causes, but also to inflict maximum punishment by way of a slow, organizing death, in order to extract vengeance and exert their domination over the Armenians, who refused to stay in their subordinate position within the Ottoman social and political system.<sup>33</sup>

Below are described the means by which the Armenians procured food on the roads of deportation or in concentration camps with a special focus on children's experiences. The procurement of food and prolongation of physical existence were resistance to the Armenian Genocide and a barrier to achieving the ultimate goal of the perpetrators.

The Armenian Genocide brought on times of trial for the children who often were wandering from place to place alone, passing through Muslim households, ending up in the hands of various "masters" and struggling consciously or unconsciously to stay alive by displaying agility and cunning.

As a rule, the memoirs of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide, as well as their oral histories started with descriptions of their peaceful life. It is noteworthy that when talking about the deportation the survivors frequently referred to their "happy childhood" as a period that was "left behind" or was over. The children having lost their happy childhood were facing new challenges. The five-year-old inmate of Antoura Turkish orphanage Karnig Banyan referred to their home as a chapel and their garden as a paradise: "*Our house was a temple of prayer with murmur of prayers heard year-round.*"<sup>34</sup> Hitting the road of deportation, he understood that the world was wider. He states: "*We were leaving, but unexpectedly in my mind's eye I would go back to our town, our home, the warm ambience of our house, the fresh bread of our house, the delicious fruits in our garden, the trees casting shadow on our bench near the wall, the current of cool air gliding-passing through them ... They all were left behind ...*"<sup>35</sup>

Leaving behind a happy childhood the children seemed to grow up prematurely, sometimes also assuming the role of the "head of the household." They were involved in the responsibilities of decision-making and securing the necessities of life, sometimes taking care of the members of the family alone. In fact, they were assuming these functions right from the beginning of deportation. The survivors themselves explained this by the fact that they were the eldest of the kids or even if they were not the eldest of the kids, they still perceived themselves as already mature. Nicholas Berberian born in 1902 in Caesarea tells: "*So they said in seven days you've got to get out, so we put our stuff on the wagon and the whole family went out. My father was gone, so I was the head of the family, I was the oldest.*"<sup>36</sup>

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33 George N. Shirinian, "Starvation and Its Political Use in the Armenian Genocide," *Genocide Studies International* 11, no. 1 (2017): 29-30.

34 Karnig Banyan, *Յուշեր մանկությանն և որբությունն* [Memoirs of Childhood and Orphanhood] (Antelias-Lebanon: Printing House of the Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia, 1992), 17.

35 Ibid., 84.

36 Nicholas Berberian, Armenian Assembly Oral History Project, <https://umdearborn.edu/casl/centers-institutes/center-armenian-research/armenian-assembly-oral-history-project>, watched 08.08.2016.

The Armenian children not only took part in the preparations for the exile, but also assumed the task of comforting and encouraging the adults on the roads of deportation. Survivor Ashkhen Poghikian<sup>37</sup> tells about what happened with their caravan in the autumn of 1915 in Tigranakert: *“The next day Levonik died. I remained with mother; I was comforting and consoling her.”*<sup>38</sup>

Siranoush Boyajian (maiden name Ghazarian) born in 1907 in Marash remembers with bemusement how she could have taken care of the family, including the new-born baby, at seven and run the entire household after her mother’s death. They reached Homs with the caravan set out from Marash then moved to Mardin and settled there. She describes in detail the domestic overload that she had to manage after her mother’s death: *“I’m the oldest. And then we buried my mother, and we came home .... there was a [newborn - H.G.] baby, we do not now what to do. There’s nobody that we can say, give some milk, so I had to take care of that baby for a month. ...How did God give me the strength to do it all?”*<sup>39</sup>

The survivors speaking about their behavior, employed cunning and versatility inappropriate for their age, noted that hunger, death and witnessing the murder of their relatives had numbed their senses; they no longer felt fear and were aware that the alternative was death. As described by one of the survivors, eleven-year-old Hamparsoum Berberian, they had become “cruel” and “insensitive” as they realized that they might be the next victim.<sup>40</sup>

## **Food Procurement as a Life or Death Struggle**

Noteworthy is the fact that on the roads of deportation the behavior of the children often was controversial: much as they had resigned themselves to death, they sought for everything that would enable to survive. Nine-year-old Hovakim Dishdishian tells:

...having spent bit by bit the supply of water that we had, we again were standing very close to death as the day before, and I must tell you, we have come to reconcile with it eventually... The more we made headway in the night, the thinner our ranks became, everyone lived with their own pains solely, the road became covered with the corpses of our fellow man sharing the same fate with us, but in the light of the moon and by its power my sister and I were proceeding to the stop over of the unspeakably excruciating caravan, that is the water that we craved...<sup>41</sup>

Taguhi Antonian born in 1900 in Bitlis speaks of the ways of feeding as a battle between life and death: *“My aunt cooked the blood of a dead cow in a pot, we ate it. Either we were going to die, or live. The horse hoof prints were full of urine, rain; we drank that as water; what could we do, we were thirsty.”*<sup>42</sup>

37 Was born in 1908 in Erzurum. The memoir was written down in 1978.

38 Verjiné Svazlian, *The Armenian Genocide: Testimonies of the Eyewitness Survivors* (Yerevan, Gitut’yun, 2011), 223.

39 Siranoush Boyajian, Armenian Assembly Oral History Project.

40 Hamparsoum Berberian, Armenian Assembly Oral History Project.

41 Hovakim Dishdishian, *Դեր-Չորի անսպասում: Հիշողություններ* [In the Desert of Deir ez-Zor: Memoires] (Yerevan, Gitut’yun, 2006), 123-127.

42 Svazyan, *Armenian Genocide*, 104.

### *Feeding on Wild Grass*

The children survivors of the Armenian Genocide were describing the road of deportation as a never-ending march controlled by armed police officers. Despite the fact that many of them have witnessed the murder of their relatives and compatriots, nevertheless many youngsters frequently identified the road of deportation with the sense of hunger interpreting it first as absence of water and food. Abraham Aghbashian born in 1912 in one of the villages near Tomarza recalls that on the road of deportation they were worried by nothing than food, even the armed police officers. As they were deported in summer, the survivor said that they fed on wild dandelions and rainwater: “*For year, year and a half, we had nothing to eat but wild dandelion.*”<sup>43</sup> Abraham Aghbashian says that wherever they saw green grass “*they ate like a cow*” and “*lap like a dog, the rainwater on the ground.*”<sup>44</sup>

Nvard Aytinian from Sivrihisar who was a kid during the Armenian Genocide testifies:

Our wayfarers of the divided train waited for some time in Gonia as well and then we hit the road to Mersin on foot loading our belongings on donkeys. ...When we reached Mersin, we started to gather grass in the fields and eat it. But even so, we would have been happy with it, had the swarms of locusts not attacked and destroyed the grass. We stayed in Mersin for about two-three weeks. Finally, after manifold and indescribable suffering we reached Raqqa ...<sup>45</sup>

The problem of foraging was constantly present not only on the roads of deportation, where people fed on wild grass, which often led to poisoning and death.<sup>46</sup> The Armenian deportees who took refuge in the mountains also lived on grass. “Aravot” newspaper of 12 May 1919 published an article about seven orphans who were found by British soldiers and handed over to deportees from Adana to be sent to Constantinople. They were placed in Haydar Pasha orphanage. After living in the mountains for years, the small children had lost the ability to speak and only by making the sign of the cross did they manage to make people understand that they were Armenians. The paper writes: “*When they got to another station, they were given bread, they rejected it sternly, jumped down, gathered grass and ate it inside the car. Having been used to herbivory for years they had forgotten about bread.*”<sup>47</sup>

Father Vahan, a priest from Caesarea, tells the following about feeding on wild grass and surviving: “*All the men of our village were axed in the canyons by the criminals of Ittihad, most of the women were thrown into the river or raped and Islamized, so far of 570 people only 25 have been left who escaped the dreadful genocide by finding refuge in the mountains and feeding on grass.*”<sup>48</sup>

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43 Abraham Aghbashian, Armenian Assembly Oral History Project.

44 Ibid.

45 Աղէտէն վերապրողներ, *Տէր-Զօր* [Survivors of the Disaster. Deir ez-Zor] (Paris: P. Elekean, 1955), 62.

46 Haykanush Melkonean, *Կեանք և մահ* [Life and Death], Series of Books on the April Genocide, No. 9 (Antelias-Lebanon, Printing House of the Armenian Great House of Cilicia, 1960), 26.

47 «Լեռը գտնուած եօթը որբեր» [Seven Orphans on the Mountain], *Aravot* (Constantinople), № 3, 12 May 1919.

48 “Of 570 persons only 25 women were left,” *Ariamart* (Constantinople), № 17 (1832), 11 December 1918.

Five-year-old Andreas Garamanian<sup>49</sup> recalls about hunger, thirst and foraging on the roads of deportation: “*The caravan would stop from time to time to rest, [people] would run to the rain water collected in potholes to quench their thirst elbowing one another, and hunt for wild plants to eat ...*”<sup>50</sup>

Babken Incheapean, an Urfa orphanage inmate, tells:

The next day, Monday, the war would resume. And hunger with it. Light soup and very little bread were the food ration. We were compelled to feed on grass. We would run from the orphanage through a hole to gather grass and eat it. We could even hardly find grass in those places. Sometimes we would run away from the orphanage in the nights together with some orphans and go far away to get enough grass. So, we ate grass every day ...<sup>51</sup>

#### *Gathering fruits, berries and nuts*

Another way of foraging was to gather fruits, berries and nuts. Seven-year-old Arshaluys Boyajian tells that she did not even remember for how many months they had walked, without socks and shoes, to get to Aintab after leaving Sebastia. She recalls that when their caravan was passing by small villages local people sold food to them; however, upon reaching Aintab, they ate whatever they could gather from the orchards outside the city.<sup>52</sup> This was actively practiced by the kids who had run away from Kurdish, Turkish or Arabic families and were returning to their localities or hitting the road to Aleppo alone. Hambarsoum Berberian, escaping from the train with his brother, set off for their hometown Adana, where their military brother was. The survivor tells about food procurement on the road: “*We were small. Anyway. Only, after going abit, there was a thing, a garden, we found a, what was it, tomatoes, tomatoes, from that garden, we found a tomatoe. We ate one or two of that.*”<sup>53</sup>

#### *Begging*

Another way of food procurement that the Armenian deportees were resorting to not only when passing through villages and small towns on the way of exile but also in Arab settlements was begging, also quite common among the children.

The US Consul to Harput Leslie Davis writes: “*There were a number of children whom I found at one time or another and kept in the Consulate, in addition to those who had come there with their mothers. The first one was a little boy about nine years old by the name of Nerses Der Garabedian, who was born in Haverhill, Massachusetts, and had been brought to Turkey by his parents just before the war. They were gone, together with his brothers and sisters, and he was begging in the market place....*”<sup>54</sup>

49 Born in Kars Bazar in 1911.

50 Andreas (Tavros) Garamanean, *Տարագրեալի մի յուշերի* [The Memories of an Exile], Volume 2 (Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1972), 10.

51 Babken Incheapean, *Մեծ եղեռնի շրջանին հայ որդի մը ողբասուլիսը* [The Odyssey of an Armenian Orphan during the Genocide] (Paris: Turabian Press, 1951), 230-231.

52 Arshalous Boyajian, Armenian Assembly Oral History Project.

53 Hamparsoum Berberian, Armenian Assembly Oral History Project.

54 Leslie A. Davis, *The Slaughterhouse Province: an American Diplomat's Report on the Armenian Genocide*,

Zaruhi Ayanian from Kessab, who was six during the Armenian Genocide, tells that they had a cow with them when they were deported, which her mother was milking on the road. They were deported to the village of Bazur, where they sold the cow, then they reached Hama, Homs, and from there the settlement of Nebek near Damascus. Staying there for a year, she begged together with her mother to live on.<sup>55</sup> Abraham Aghbashian who we already had mentioned and who was telling about eating dandelions, continues: “*I had a stomach as big as a cow, because I was eating nothing but the wild dandelion. Occasionally, I remember when my mother and I used to begging house to house for food.*”<sup>56</sup> Ten-year-old Karnig Arpajian born in Balu stayed in Aleppo for two years before the British entered. Here he was begging [in the streets] together with two orphan kids to survive:

Well, I wasn't afraid no more, I said, the most, what they gonna do, gonna kill me. This is what I had in my mind. I always thought tomorrow is another day, the next day is another day, like that, I didn't give a care for it, that's the way I felt. I didn't care nothing. I'm hungry, I'm starving, I'm begging here and there, two weeks of it, I beg, I beg. I ate apple cores, I ate pear cores, I ate watermelon peelings, and I ate melon peelings, you name it, I ate any dogged thing that could be eaten, it wasn't eatable, but I had to eat it.<sup>57</sup>

Suren Papazean, born in 1901 in the village of Havav of Balu, writes about his experience:

In the winter of 1917 I arrived in Peri all alone. I did not know anyone; I walked in the market, in the streets, I saw that a group of Armenian orphans of my age, smaller than I, would beg all day long, while at night they would go to the stable of government horses to sleep. I joined them, I found a desolate corner and huddled. Everybody took out whatever they had begged, started to eat. I had been hungry all day long, and I slept hungry.<sup>58</sup>

Haykanush Mekonean told how the government provided food to the deportees in Aghbunar to prevent the latter from begging and spreading diseases in Aintab. She says: “*My sister and I got to go to same village called Aghbunar. There was a woman with us who had a five- or six-year-old boy; the woman would go to the city to beg to be able to sustain the little one. The government would give a small loaf of bread a day so that we did not go to the city to beg and spread diseases there.*”<sup>59</sup>

### *Family Solidarity and Mutual Help*

Family solidarity and mutual assistance could also be considered as manifestations of

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1915-1917 (New York, Aristide D. Caratzas, 1989), 113-114.

55 Zaruhi Ayanian, Armenian Assembly Oral History Project.

56 Abraham Aghbashian, Armenian Assembly Oral History Project.

57 Karnig Arpajian, Armenian Assembly Oral History Project.

58 Suren Papazean, *Վերստորոյի վրէ ռիստակաւնը* [The Odyssey of a Survivor] (Yerevan: Amaras, 2000), 113.

59 Melkonean, *Life and Death*, 27-28.

unarmed/moral resistance in the context of organizing the daily life, particularly food procurement. In some cases, the survivors themselves described and interpreted this phenomenon as “a way to survive,” in some cases we assessed it as such. During the discussion of the topic in the context of the Holocaust, of importance was the riskiness of mutual assistance, i.e. the existing danger and types thereof: to what extent people would risk their own life to help their family members or just relatives. This statement often helped to explain the notion - why they did not come to each other’s help. “Mutual assistance” in everyday life is viewed as “constructive behavior” contributing to survival.<sup>60</sup>

Parantzem Alexanian, a survivor of the Armenian Genocide from Balu, tells that a Turk took her out on the road of deportation, separating her from the members of her family. When passing nearby a bakery, he gave her some bread: “*When he got piece of bread, I ran back to the way I came. The man followed me, understood that I wanted to give that bread to my mother. I reached, throw that bread to them, came and joined him.*”<sup>61</sup> Abraham Aghbashian proudly recalls how risking his own life he delivered bread to the Armenian deportees personally when his mother had been working for an Arab family.<sup>62</sup>

Karnig Arpajian tells about stealing from a grocer and helping his kin: “*I started stealing, it’s not good, but reason I steal because I wanted to give it to my nationalities, they were hungry, I want to help my people. I’m ten, eleven years old but I still think of my nationality and my religion, I won’t change.*”<sup>63</sup>

The above examples demonstrate that Armenian children have understood that they are risking their own life, but still they have run the risk and extended help to their relatives.

Thus, the article touched upon an important scientific question: what is non-armed resistance and the purpose and problems of its study? Based only a few distinctive examples from many thousands of testimonies, the notion that the various ways in which Armenian children procured food during the years of the Armenian Genocide could be viewed as manifestations of *unarmed resistance* was put forward and corroborated.

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60 Boaz Kahana, et. al., “The Victim as Helper-Prosocial Behavior during the Holocaust,” *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations* 13, no. 1/2 (1985-86): 361.

61 Parantzem Alexanian, Armenian Assembly Oral History Project.

62 Abraham Aghbashian, Armenian Assembly Oral History Project.

63 Karnig Arpajian, Armenian Assembly Oral History Project.



Lance Levenson is a doctoral student in the Seymour Fox School of Education at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel. His research interests lie in sociology and anthropology of education, international education, nationalism and identity, genocide and intergenerational memory, and the education of ethnic and religious minorities. He has conducted extensive ethnographic fieldwork within Jerusalem's Armenian diaspora community and its school, where he also serves as a teacher for the secondary grades.

Email: [lance.levenson@mail.huji.ac.il](mailto:lance.levenson@mail.huji.ac.il)

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# “EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED TO THE GENOCIDE.” INTERGENERATIONAL MEMORY, DIASPORA MOBILIZATION, AND ARMENIAN YOUTH IDENTITIES IN JERUSALEM

*Lance Levenson*

*The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel*

Considering commemorative practices of postmemory, past presencing, and transnational memory, this study considers how Genocide memories and the conflict in Artsakh intersect to shape the performance of diasporic Armenian youth identities in Jerusalem as members of a disempowered minority community. Drawing on ethnographic research in Jerusalem’s Armenian School, participant-observation in community events, and interviews with youth and community leaders, this article documents processes of intergenerational memory transmission within educational and community settings and suggests ways in which inherited narratives of victimization find new expressions via transnational acts of citizenship. As Jerusalem’s multilingual Armenian youth engage in commemorative ceremonies and take protests to the streets in acts of diaspora mobilization, memories are (re) interpreted to construct novel identity narratives tied to an imagined Armenian transnation.

**Keywords:** intergenerational memory, Armenian Genocide, diaspora mobilization, youth identity, ethnography

The article was submitted on 13.07.2021 and accepted for publication on 25.10.2021.

**How to Cite:** Lance Levenson, “Everything is Connected to the Genocide.” Intergenerational Memory, Diaspora Mobilization, and Armenian Youth Identities in Jerusalem,” *International Journal of Armenian Genocide Studies* 6, no. 2 (2021): 55-73.

## **Introduction**

Since the Armenian Genocide's centennial, the entrance to the Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem's Old City has been adorned with a large banner bearing an outline of the Armenian Genocide Memorial complex in Yerevan, the official purple forget-me-not flower emblem, and the slogan "I Remember and Demand" written in Armenian, English, Arabic, and Hebrew. As is the case elsewhere in the diaspora, the Genocide has long been considered a defining symbol of Armenian collective identity within the Jerusalem community. But what are the memories and demands which shape the identities of today's Jerusalemite Armenian youth as members of a marginalized community in Israel? In many ways, this banner represents the multiple facets of Armenian youth identity negotiation in Jerusalem: the historical trauma of the Genocide, the connection to the Armenian homeland, and the demand for recognition faced by a double minority - Armenian Christians living amongst the primarily Muslim Arab minority within a Jewish majority population - in a region plagued by intractable conflict. Against this background, Israel's non-recognition of the Genocide and complicity in recent Azerbaijani aggression during the last Artsakh War further complicates the process of identity negotiation.

Drawing on the theoretical concepts of postmemory, past presencing, and transnational memory as practices of remembering, this study considers how intergenerational memories of the Genocide and the ongoing conflict in Artsakh intersect to shape the performance of diasporic Armenian youth identities in Jerusalem. I first consider how practices of postmemory (ways in which youth relate to trauma endured by their ancestors) and past presencing (how youth perform Genocide memories in the present) contribute to identity constitution through the retelling of collected stories and the experience of day-to-day life behind the walls of the Armenian Quarter. I then discuss how the community's Sts. Tarkmanchatz Armenian School and organized rallies around Genocide recognition, in particular, function as sites and spaces for identity-building through the performance of intergenerational memory and transnational citizenship. Finally, I examine how diaspora mobilization for Genocide recognition and support of Armenia in the Artsakh conflict - two major events which are linked in community memory - constitute localized ways of commemorating. While such localized practices of transnational memory have the potential to forge collective identities, given the complexities of the geopolitical landscape, they also prompt Jerusalemite Armenian youth to question their very sense of belonging as they navigate the space between homeland and diaspora.

## **Diaspora Nationalism and Identity Construction**

In contrast with traditional conceptions of nationalism tied to the nation-state, whose geopolitical borders are understood to define citizenship, diaspora or long-distance nationalism forges cohesion among dispersed populations, such as the Armenians.<sup>1</sup> Following Ander-

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<sup>1</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Long-Distance Nationalism: World Capitalism and the Rise of Identity Politics* (Amsterdam: Centre for Asian Studies, 1992).

son's understanding of the modern nation as an imagined community,<sup>2</sup> Werbner conceptualizes diasporas as "deterritorialized imagined communities which conceive of themselves, despite their dispersal, as sharing a collective past and common destiny, and hence also a simultaneity in time."<sup>3</sup> Considering Cohen's features common to diasporas,<sup>4</sup> this "collective past and common destiny" is rooted in (traumatic) dispersion, shared collective memory, the idealization of and commitment to the homeland, and a strong ethnonational collective consciousness extending across national boundaries. This diaspora consciousness<sup>5</sup> creates an imagined transnational community<sup>6</sup> connected by ties of moral co-responsibility,<sup>7</sup> reflected in the Armenian case by the notion of *Hay Dat*, "the Armenian cause." According to Khachig Tölölyan, the concept of *transnation* encompasses both the homeland and diaspora communities, while emphasizing such ties and interconnectedness.<sup>8</sup>

We must also recognize that diasporas are fluid and dynamic constructs,<sup>9</sup> allowing for the continuous (re)construction of ethnonational identity, which lies "at the very core of diaspora and its influence in home - and hostland."<sup>10</sup> Likewise, postmodern conceptions of identity demand that we reject the metanarrative of static, unified identities, and instead, understand identity as fluid, in-process, and even contradictory.<sup>11</sup> Diasporans are constantly negotiating their identities to cultivate social capital, those resources (e.g., knowledge, norms, supportive networks) linked to facilitating and sustaining group membership.<sup>12</sup> Given that the homeland "may serve as the physical embodiment of the shared national identity,"<sup>13</sup> homeland tragedy - both past and present - becomes a key channel through which sense

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2 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006).

3 Pnina Werbner, "The Place Which is Diaspora: Citizenship, Religion and Gender in the Making of Chaordic Transnationalism," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 28, no. 1 (2002):121, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830120103967>.

4 Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2008), 6-8.

5 Steven Vertovec, "Three Meanings of 'Diaspora,' Exemplified among South Asian Religions," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 6, no. 3 (1997): 277-299, <https://doi.org/10.3138/diaspora.6.3.277>.

6 Victoria Redclift, "The Demobilization of Diaspora: History, Memory and 'Latent Identity,'" *Global Networks* 17, no. 4 (2017): 500-517, <https://doi.org/10.1111/glob.12150>.

7 Werbner, "The Place Which is Diaspora," 121.

8 Khachig Tölölyan, "Elites and Institutions in the Armenian Transnation," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 9, no. 1 (2000): 107-136, <https://doi.org/10.1353/dsp.2000.0004>.

9 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994); Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (London: Routledge, 1996); Rogers Brubaker, "The 'Diaspora' Diaspora," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28, no. 1(2006):1-19, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0141987042000289997>.

10 Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff, *Digital Diasporas: Identity and Transnational Engagement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 31.

11 Anthony Elliott, *Concepts of the Self* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2014); Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); Stuart Hall, "Introduction: 'Who Needs 'Identity?'" in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (London: Sage, 1996), 1-17.

12 Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Richardson (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1986), 241-258; Janroj Yilmaz Keles, "Digital Diaspora and Social Capital," *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 9 (2016): 315-333, <https://doi.org/10.1163/18739865-00903004>; Robert D. Putnam, "The Prosperous Community: Social Capital and Public Life," *American Prospect* 13 (1993): 35-42.

13 Yossi Shain, "The Role of Diasporas in Conflict Perpetuation or Resolution," *SAIS Review* 22, no. 2 (2002): 138.

of belonging is established.<sup>14</sup> For the Armenian diaspora, national identity is “suspended” between homeland and hostland,<sup>15</sup> yet anchored in the memory of the historical Genocide and the ongoing conflict with Azerbaijan over Artsakh.

## **Practices of Remembering: Postmemory, Past Presenting, and Transnational Memory**

Research has consistently revealed how intergenerational memories of the Armenian Genocide are central to Armenian collective identity in the diaspora.<sup>16</sup> From a praxeological perspective, memory is understood as an ongoing, interactive social practice which can be performed, (re)produced, confirmed, discussed, and felt and linked to identity, spaces, places, and time. Practices of remembering are embedded within specific social contexts, subject to rules of how to remember that are associated with particular memory communities.<sup>17</sup> Following Chernobrov and Wilmers’ analysis of diaspora Armenian youth identities in France, the United Kingdom, and Russia,<sup>18</sup> and Gül Kaya’s research on Armenian youth identities in Canada,<sup>19</sup> the current research draws on the theoretical concepts of postmemory, past presenting, and transnational memory to understand the role of the Genocide and practices of remembering in shaping youth identities within the specific context of Jerusalem’s Armenian community.

Postmemory refers to how those in subsequent generations relate to the cultural trauma experienced by ancestors who came before.<sup>20</sup> Although those individuals comprising the second, third, and fourth generations did not directly experience the traumatic events of the past themselves, their effects persist into the present: “They ‘remember’ only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences were

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14 Yossi Shain and Aharon Barth, “Diaspora and International Relations Theory,” *International Organization* 57 (2003): 449-479, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818303573015>.

15 Razmik Panossian, “Between Ambivalence and Intrusion: Politics and Identity in Armenia-Diaspora Relations,” *Diaspora* 7, no. 2 (1998): 149-196, <https://doi.org/10.3138/diaspora.7.2.149>.

16 See for example, Sossie Kasbarian, “The Politics of Memory and Commemoration: Armenian Diasporic Reflections on 2015,” *Nationalities Papers* 46, no. 1 (2018): 123-143, <https://doi.org/doi:10.1080/00905992.2017.1347917>; Razmik Panossian, “The Past as Nation: Three Dimensions of Armenian Identity,” *Geopolitics* 7, no. 2 (2002): 121-146, <https://doi.org/10.1080/7140009311>; Susan Pattie, “New Homeland for an Old Diaspora,” in *Homelands and Diasporas: Holy Lands and Other Places*, ed. André Levy and Alex Weingrod (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 49-67.

17 Danielle Drozdowski and Carolyn Birdsall, “Advancing Memory Methods,” in *Doing Memory Research*, ed. Danielle Drozdowski and Carolyn Birdsall (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 1-20; Gabrielle Rosenthal, “The Social Construction of Individual and Collective Memory,” in *Theorizing Social Memories: Concepts and Contexts*, ed. Gerd Sebald and Jatin Wagle (London: Routledge, 2016), 32-55.

18 Dmitry Chernobrov and Leila Wilmers, “Diaspora Identity and a New Generation: Armenian Diaspora Youth on the Genocide and the Karabakh War,” *Nationalities Papers* 48, no. 5 (2020): 915-930. <https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2019.74>.

19 Duygu Gül Kaya, “Memory and Citizenship in Diaspora: Remembering the Armenian Genocide in Canada,” *Citizenship Studies* 22, no. 4 (2018): 401-418, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2018.1462503>; Duygu Gül Kaya, “100 Voices After 100 Years: Remembering the Armenian Genocide in Diaspora,” *Popular Communication* 16, no. 2 (2018): 128-140, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15405702.2017.1378889>.

20 Marianne Hirsch, “The Generation of Postmemory,” *Poetics Today* 29, no. 1 (2008): 103-128, <https://doi.org/10.1215/03335372-2007-019>.

transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to *seem* to constitute memories in their own right.”<sup>21</sup> Postmemory narratives of the Genocide transmitted between generations have become a fundamental component of diasporic Armenian identity. For example, Azarian-Ceccato’s study of the great-grandchildren of Armenian Genocide survivors in Central California<sup>22</sup> demonstrates how communities of memory linking the past and present are formed through the narrativization of collected stories, in which the experiences of another are incorporated into one’s own life history.<sup>23</sup> Likewise, research on long-distance nationalism among Armenian youth in Southern Russia finds that “the retelling of genocide experiences is an overarching, cultural narrative that defines family and ethnic group beliefs and identity.”<sup>24</sup> Meanwhile, Gül Kaya describes how Canadian-Armenian youth used an audiovisual postmemory project to reconstruct their connections with the past and engage in activism for historical justice in the present<sup>25</sup>.

Such a reshaping of the past within contemporary contexts summons Macdonald’s concept of “past presencing,” which considers how “people variously draw on, experience, negotiate, reconstruct, and perform the past in their ongoing lives.”<sup>26</sup> From Armenian diaspora communities in Brazil<sup>27</sup> to those in Iran,<sup>28</sup> performance of the memory of the Genocide at commemorative events plays a cohesive role in developing and maintaining collective identity given the familiarity of the trauma and its relevance to collective imagination. Considering commemorations as “performances of the past which are central to the politics of the present,”<sup>29</sup> such practices of past presencing function to cement scattered, diverse Armenian diaspora communities into a collective imagined Armenian transnation. Yet, localized ways of commemorating mean that past presencing is performed in distinctive ways because of varying socio-historical and geopolitical contexts.<sup>30</sup> This localization of past presencing practices recalls Rothberg’s located approach to transnational memory, which pays “rigorous attention to the local . . . but it situates such attention in relation to other scales: from

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21 Ibid., 107.

22 Natasha Azarian-Ceccato, “Reverberations of the Armenian Genocide: Narrative’s Intergenerational Transmission and the Task of Not Forgetting,” *Narrative Inquiry* 20 no. 1 (2010): 106-123. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.20.1.06aza>.

23 Brian Schiff, Chaim Noy, and Bertram J. Cohler, “Collected Stories in the Life Narratives of Holocaust Survivors,” *Narrative Inquiry* 11, no. 1 (2001): 159-194.

24 Ulrike Ziemer, “Belonging and Longing: Armenian Youth and Diasporic Long-Distance Nationalism in Contemporary Russia,” *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 10, no. 2 (2010): 294. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1754-9469.2010.01079.x>.

25 Gül Kaya, “100 Voices,” 130.

26 Sharon Macdonald, “Presencing Europe’s Pasts,” in *A Companion to the Anthropology of Europe*, ed. Ullrich Kockel, Máiréad Nic Craith, and Jonas Frykman (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 234.

27 Pedro Bogossian-Porto, “Accounts of a Genocide: Collective Memory among Armenians in Brazil,” *Haigazian Armenological Review* 38 (2018): 449-466.

28 James Barry, *Armenian Christians in Iran: Ethnicity, Religion, and Identity in the Islamic Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018): 206-244.

29 Camilla Orjuela, “Mobilising Diasporas for Justice: Opportunity Structures and the Presencing of a Violent Past,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44, no. 8 (2018): 1366, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1354163>.

30 Sabrina Papazian, “The Cost of Memorializing: Analyzing Armenian Genocide Memorials and Commemorations in the Republic of Armenia and in the Diaspora,” *International Journal for History, Culture and Modernity* 7 (2019): 55-86, <https://doi.org/10.18352/hcm.534>.

the regional to the national to the global.”<sup>31</sup> The concept of transnational memory, rooted in a processual and generative approach to cultural memory, reflects the deterritorialization of memory-making, aided by transnational flows of peoples and new media technologies.<sup>32</sup> According to Gül Kaya, public commemorations in Canada, in which the transnationalized memories of the Armenian Genocide are performed and reproduced, are central to the construction of Armenian ethnic identity and inform local practices of citizenship.<sup>33</sup> In this manner, performances of memory can function as acts of citizenship<sup>34</sup> in tandem with diaspora mobilization and engagement.<sup>35</sup>

## **Diaspora Mobilization and the Armenian Case**

As an expression of diaspora nationalism, diaspora mobilization is a political activity that crosses one or more borders and aims to influence the political situation in the homeland or influence public opinion in the country of residence on political events abroad.<sup>36</sup> Common examples of diaspora mobilization include economic remittances, philanthropy, volunteering in the homeland, political lobbying, engagement on digital platforms, and organizing protests and demonstrations in support of the homeland. However, Mavroudi cautions that we cannot assume that long-distance nationalism and an emotional attachment to the homeland will necessarily galvanize diaspora populations.<sup>37</sup> Rather, diasporas are embedded in local, national, supranational, and global contexts which shape, and are shaped, by their activism.<sup>38</sup> Past presencing, ways in which the past is experienced, performed and represented in the present, is at the heart of diaspora identity and mobilization.<sup>39</sup> Diasporans may mobilize to express their identities, motivated by a sense of obligation or guilt and/or in response to feelings of marginalization in the country of residence.<sup>40</sup> Identity-focused conflicts, such as the conflict over Artsakh, engage diasporas as mobilized transnational actors<sup>41</sup> or “third

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31 Michael Rothberg, “Locating Transnational Memory,” *European Review* 22, no. 4 (2014): 652, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1062798714000441>.

32 Chiara De Cesari and Ann Rigney, “Introduction,” in *Transnational Memory: Circulation, Articulation, Scales*, ed. Chiara De Cesari and Ann Rigney (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 12.

33 Gül Kaya, “Memory and Citizenship,” 414.

34 Engin F. Isin, “Theorizing Acts of Citizenship,” in *Acts of Citizenship*, ed. Engin F. Isin and Greg M. Nielsen (London: Zed Books, 2008), 17.

35 Michael Rothberg and Yasemin Yildiz, “Memory Citizenship: Migrant Archives of Holocaust Remembrance in Contemporary Germany,” *Parallax* 17 no. 4 (2011): 32-48, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13534645.2011.605576>.

36 Lea Müller-Funk, “Diaspora Mobilizations in the Egyptian (Post)Revolutionary Process: Comparing Transnational Political Participation in Paris and Vienna,” *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 14, no. 3 (2016): 353-370, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2016.1180471>.

37 Elizabeth Mavroudi, “Deconstructing Diasporic Mobilisation at a Time of Crisis: Perspectives from the Palestinian and Greek Diasporas,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44, no. 8 (2018): 1309-1324, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1354159>.

38 Maria Koinova, “Diaspora Mobilisation for Conflict and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Contextual and Comparative Dimensions,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44, no. 8 (2018): 1251-1269, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1354152>.

39 Orjuela, “Mobilising Diasporas for Justice,” 1359.

40 Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff, “Diasporas and Conflict Societies: Conflict Entrepreneurs, Competing Interests or Contributors to Stability and Development?” *Conflict, Security & Development* 11, no. 2 (2011): 115-143, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2011.572453>.

41 Armine Ishkanian, “Diaspora and Global Civil Society: The Impact of Transnational Diaspora Activism

level” players in transnational communal politics.<sup>42</sup> Consequently, we can understand diaspora mobilizations as acts of citizenship<sup>43</sup> in which performances and acts produce and define citizenships, which may lie outside legal and political categories of citizenship.

The confrontation and memorialization of past and present atrocities in the homeland involving human rights violations are key impetuses behind diaspora mobilization and engagement.<sup>44</sup> In the Armenian case, the Genocide and Artsakh conflict have historically served as focal points for patriotic mobilization in the diaspora, where commemorative events and protests take place across the globe, in locations far removed from where the atrocities actually happened. Genocide recognition is the primary political cause around which diaspora organizations unite, with cooperation taking place between different political parties and across generations because of the shared cultural trauma.<sup>45</sup> As such, diaspora nationalism and mobilization around Genocide recognition provide a reference point for identification, especially for marginalized Armenian communities in the Middle East.<sup>46</sup> Given that the Artsakh conflict and the Genocide share the same symbolic enemy (regarding the close cultural, linguistic, and military ties between Turkey and Azerbaijan), this unresolved dispute has functioned as a secondary rallying point around which Armenian diasporas mobilize.<sup>47</sup> After the escalation of the conflict during the Four Day War of April 2016, Chernobrov and Wilmers noted that postmemories and practices of past presencing became increasingly important for Armenian youth identity negotiation in the diaspora as the Genocide and present conflict were linked.<sup>48</sup> In light of the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War, the ensuing ceasefire, and the significant territorial losses endured by the Republic of Artsakh, the current research explores how intergenerational memories of the Genocide shape the performance of diasporic Armenian youth identities in Jerusalem considering these new realities.

## **Case Study: The Armenian Community of Jerusalem and its Youth**

Occupying approximately one-sixth of the Old City, the Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem constitutes one of the oldest Armenian diaspora communities. Centered around the Monas-

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on Armenia’s Post-Soviet Transition” in *Central Asia and the Caucasus: Transnationalism and Diaspora*, ed. Touraj Atabaki and Sanjyot Mehendale (London: Routledge, 2004), 113-139.

42 Shain, “The Role of Diasporas,” 117.

43 Isin, “Theorizing Acts of Citizenship,” 17.

44 Maria Koinova, “Diasporas and Secessionist Conflicts: The Mobilization of the Armenian, Albanian and Chechen Diasporas,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34, no. 2 (2011): 333-356, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2010.489646>; Maria Koinova and Dzeneta Karabegovic, “Diasporas and Transitional Justice: Transnational Activism from Local to Global Levels of Engagement,” *Global Networks* 17, no. 2 (2017): 212-233.

45 Sossie Kasbarian, “The ‘Others’ Within: The Armenian Community in Cyprus,” in *Diasporas of the Modern Middle East: Contextualizing Community*, ed. Anthony Gorman and Sossie Kasbarian (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 241-273; Maria Koinova, “Conflict and Cooperation in Armenian Diaspora Mobilisation for Genocide Recognition,” in *Diaspora as Cultures of Cooperation*, ed. David Carment and Ariane Sadjed (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 111-129.

46 Kasbarian, “The ‘Others’ Within,” 256.

47 Chernobrov and Wilmers, “Diaspora Identity and a New Generation,” 926; Khachig Tölölyan, “The Armenian Diaspora and the Karabagh Conflict Since 1988,” in *Diasporas in Conflict: Peace Makers or Peace Wreckers*, ed. Hazel Smith and Paul Stares (New York: United Nations University Press, 2007), 106-28.

48 Chernobrov and Wilmers, “Diaspora Identity and a New Generation,” 926.

tery of St. James, the headquarters of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the community's origins can be traced to at least the fifth century. Following a massive influx of refugees who had survived the Genocide, the monastery was transformed into a neighborhood in the 1920s.<sup>49</sup> Serving as a major cultural center, today the monastery compound houses three churches, clerical residences, administrative offices, lay residences, social clubs, a library, health clinic, football field, and the Sts. Tarkmanchatz School. A theological seminary, located across the road from the monastery, trains young men for the priesthood.

Most of the community's youth attend the Sts. Tarkmanchatz School, founded in 1929 to educate the children of the growing lay community. Operating under the auspices of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Sts. Tarkmanchatz School functions as an ethnic community mother-tongue school,<sup>50</sup> with goals of Armenian language maintenance and the development of Armenian identity. In addition to instruction in a variety of Armenological subjects (Armenian history, language, culture, and religion), the school uses the British-based International General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) curriculum (in lieu of Israeli *bagrut* or Palestinian *tawjihi* matriculation). Given use of the British curriculum, English is the primary language of instruction in all courses, except for the Armenological subjects (taught in Armenian) and Arabic and Hebrew language classes. Students speak Armenian (Western dialect) and/or Arabic as their mother tongue(s) and receive mandatory instruction in the Armenian, Arabic, Hebrew, and English languages.<sup>51</sup> Alongside formal education at the Sts. Tarkmanchatz School, many youngsters are active participants in scouting programs run by the two main social clubs (Homenetmen and Hoyetchmen), which have traditionally played central roles in the socialization of Armenian diaspora youth.<sup>52</sup>

Despite the efforts of community institutions, such as the social clubs and the Sts. Tarkmanchatz School, to preserve Jerusalem's Armenian enclave, its population has experienced a marked decline since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. This trend is not unique to the Armenian community, but is also characteristic of Jerusalem's other Christian

49 On the history of Armenians in Jerusalem see Victor Azarya, *The Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem: Urban Life behind Monastery Walls* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Bedross Der Matossian, "The Armenians of Jerusalem in the Modern Period: The Rise and Decline of a Community," in *Routledge Handbook on Jerusalem*, ed. Sulaiman Mourad, Bedross Der Matossian, and Naomi Koltun-Fromm (London: Routledge, 2018), 396-407; George Hintlian, *History of the Armenians in the Holy Land* (Jerusalem: St. James Press, 1976); Raymond Kevorkian, "From a Monastery to a Neighbourhood: Orphans and Armenian Refugees in the Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem (1916-1926). Reflexions Towards an Armenian Museum in Jerusalem," *Contemporary Levant* 6, no. 2 (2021): 141-157, <https://doi.org/10.1080/20581831.2021.1898124>; Daphne Tsimhoni, "The Armenians and the Syrians: Ethno-religious Communities in Jerusalem," *Middle Eastern Studies* 20, no. 3 (1984): 352-369.

50 Joshua A. Fishman, "Ethnic Community Mother Tongue Schools in the U.S.A.: Dynamics and Distributions," *International Migration Review* 14, no. 2 (1980): 235-247, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2545475>.

51 On the multiple discourses present in the Armenian School's curriculum see Lance Levenson and Julia Resnik, "Between Ethnonational and International Curricula: Competing Identity Discourses in the Armenian School in Jerusalem," *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 42, no. 2 (2021): 213-228, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2021.1877528>.

52 Pedro Bogossian-Porto and Thiago Bogossian, "The School is Not Enough: The Role of Non-Formal Educational Spaces in Preserving Armenian Identity in the Diasporic Community," *International Studies in Sociology of Education* (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1080/09620214.2021.1912632>; Nicola Migliorino, *(Re)constructing Armenia in Lebanon and Syria: Ethno-Cultural Diversity and the State in the Aftermath of a Refugee Crisis* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008), 200.

communities, whose waning population can be attributed, in large part, to their uncertain position in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.<sup>53</sup> Writing about the Armenian community in particular, Harry Hagopian explains it cannot separate itself from the conflict, “since the deleterious social and economic consequences (such as emigration) of this conflict have been visited upon them as a direct result of the political situation and the Israeli occupation.”<sup>54</sup> Given the precarious situation of Christian communities vis-à-vis the ongoing struggle over Jerusalem, as well as contentious citizenship statuses, limited access to higher education, and a lack of affordable housing, many Armenians have emigrated over the years to diaspora centers in Europe and North America in pursuit of higher education and career opportunities.

For those Jerusalemite Armenians who have remained despite these challenges, Israel’s non-recognition of the Genocide and collaboration in recent Azerbaijani belligerence in Artsakh complicates matters even further - especially for youth in the midst of negotiating identities. Like elsewhere in the diaspora, most of today’s Jerusalemite Armenian youth are descendants of Genocide survivors. For the Jerusalem Armenian community, Turkish denial of the Genocide is compounded by Israel’s refusal to recognize the Armenian Genocide,<sup>55</sup> despite the Jewish State having been established in the aftermath of the Holocaust. Furthermore, during the Second Artsakh War in the Fall of 2020, Israel provided military support for Azerbaijani aggression, including the sale of kamikaze drones used in attacks on Armenian soldiers and civilians.<sup>56</sup> Finally, many Jerusalem Armenians perceive a real “Turkish threat” in Jerusalem. Turkish President Erdogan has claimed that “Jerusalem is our city,” while media outlets have reported on Turkish schemes to purchase Armenian and Christian properties in the Old City.<sup>57</sup>

Amid the Jerusalem Armenian community’s marginalization, the protracted Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and Israel’s non-recognition of past and present Armenian suffering, this article explores how the complexities of the geopolitical landscape interact with intergenerational memories of the Genocide. How do intergenerational memories of the Genocide (transmitted within family, school, and community settings) shape the performance of diaspora Armenian youth identities in Jerusalem? How are collected stories around the Genocide and the Artsakh conflict linked within communities of memory? How do mobilizations

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53 Daphne Tsimhoni, “Christians in Jerusalem: A Minority at Risk,” *Journal of Human Rights* 4, no. 3 (2005): 391-417, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14754830500257695>.

54 Harry Hagopian, *The Armenian Church in the Holy Land* (Nottingham: Russell Press, 2016), 30.

55 Yair Auron, *The Banality of Denial* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2003); Israel W. Charney, *Israel’s Failed Response to the Armenian Genocide: Denial, State Deception, Truth Versus Politicization of History* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2021).

56 Seth J. Frantzman, “Israeli Drones in Azerbaijan Raise Questions on Use in the Battlefield,” *The Jerusalem Post*, 1 October 2020, at <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/israeli-drones-in-azerbaijan-raise-questions-on-use-in-the-battlefield-644161>; Yossi Melman, “As Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict Expands, Israel-Azerbaijan Arms Trade Thrives,” *Haaretz*, 7 October 2020, at <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/nagorno-karabakh-conflict-israel-azerbaijan-arms-trade-armenia-iran-1.9212986>, accessed 07.08.2021.

57 Tobias Siegal, “Erdogan: Jerusalem is Our City, a City from Us” *The Jerusalem Post*, 3 October 2020, at <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/erdoan-jerusalem-is-our-city-a-city-from-us-644306>; Baruch Yedid, “Turkey Working to Take Over Armenian Quarter in Jerusalem’s Old City,” *The Jewish Press*, 13 February 2020, <https://www.jewishpress.com/news/middle-east/turkey/exclusive-turkey-working-to-take-over-armenian-quarter-in-jerusalem-old-city/2020/02/13/>, accessed 08.08.2021.

around collective memories intersect with local geopolitics to construct identity narratives among Jerusalem's Armenian youth, as members of a disempowered minority?

## **Methodology**

This research draws on extensive participant observation from over six years (2015-2021) of fieldwork in the Armenian Jerusalem community and in the Sts. Tarkmanchatz Armenian School, where I have served as a teacher in the secondary grades since 2013. In addition to my daily presence at the school within the framework of my teaching responsibilities, during this time period I took part in countless assemblies, marches, protests, memorials, and prayer services organized by the school, the Armenian Patriarchate, the social clubs, and various advocacy organizations. Public commemorations and ritual performances, abundant with cultural codes and symbols,<sup>58</sup> play a pivotal role in shaping collective identities as values, memories, and meanings are passed between generations.<sup>59</sup> When feasible, on-site fieldnotes were taken during the events, with full observation protocols typed as soon as possible following their completion. In several cases, audio and video recordings of events were used to supplement the fieldnotes. In conjunction with participant observation, I conducted ten intensive interviews with Jerusalem Armenian youth and youth leaders in the community social clubs to understand identity construction from a phenomenological perspective. All interviewees are graduates of the community's Sts. Tarkmanchatz School, including three alumni who are current or former teachers at the school.

Occupying a dual role as a teacher-ethnographer, I often engaged in commemorative events, by necessity, as a "complete participant."<sup>60</sup> While permission to conduct research in the school was granted by the school administration, my presence at school and community events was not unexpected, given my position as a member of the social setting. Marching in the streets with youth, carrying banners, chanting slogans, delivering speeches, and lighting candles, I functioned as an "insider-outsider" occupying a "space between."<sup>61</sup> Despite years of "insider" experience within the community, I always possess some degree of "outsiderness" as a non-Armenian within the Armenian Quarter, where I must navigate a space, culture, and language not my own. The embodied ethnographic approach employed in this study permits an analysis of multiple memory dimensions, including the social, spatial, and material. As diaspora youth engage in practices of postmemory and past presencing within a transnational field, I seek to identify those interactive processes through which past traumas are bestowed with collective meaning(s) in the here and now.

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58 Don Handelman, *Models and Mirrors: Towards an Anthropology of Public Events* (New York: Berghahn Books, 1998), 1-20.

59 Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 41-71.

60 Raymond L. Gold, "Roles in Sociological Field Observations," *Social Forces* 36, no. 3 (1958): 217-223, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2573808>.

61 Sony Corbin Dwyer and Jennifer L. Buckle, "The Space between: On Being an Insider-Outsider in Qualitative Research," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 8, no. 1 (2009): 54-63, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406918788176>.

## Intergenerational Trauma, Collected Stories, and Youth Ethnonational Identity Construction

For the typical passerby, the Armenian Quarter, located in the southwest corner of Jerusalem's Old City, is easy to miss. While it is the smallest of Jerusalem's four quarters, it is not its diminutive size that simply prevents its discovery. Rather, most of the Armenian Quarter lies obscured from view, its residents and institutions isolated from the general public behind nearly impenetrable stone walls. Wandering tourists are repeatedly turned away at the entrance; only members of this diaspora Armenian community, or those who are connected to it, are allowed to continue onward. A simple Armenian greeting to the vigilant guards serves as an informal password which enables your safe passage into the confines of the Armenian Convent (known simply as the *vank*) behind heavy iron gates which lock nightly at midnight. Not only does the Armenian Quarter's physical isolation from the outside world maintain a monastic environment, but it also functions to preserve, on a daily basis, the experience of siege and threat that has characterized the history of the Armenian nation.

Sako<sup>62</sup> referenced the closed nature of the Jerusalem Armenian community: "*We're survivors of a genocide, you know. We really need, it's embedded in us to stay together, stay somewhere safe.*" Taleen also described the Genocide as a unifying, yet isolating force on identity construction:

I think it [i.e., the Genocide] made us more patriotic than most other nationalities would be. I think the fact that there is a large part of our history, especially because it's unrecognized, it makes us very, sort of fight for the justice that we deserve, and do all that. I think it really did bring us closer together. Because if it wasn't for the Genocide, most of us wouldn't even be in Jerusalem. . . . And as people, it did bring us closer together, it did make us stay attached to our roots, and not just get lost amongst Israelis or Palestinians.

Taleen links the community's existence to the Genocide, while highlighting the Armenian patriotism it has fostered, and which has kept them from assimilating within local cultures and identifying with either party to the regional conflict. Unlike the dual loyalties documented in Armenian communities elsewhere,<sup>63</sup> Taleen and the other interviewees described their national identity solely as "Armenian."

The Genocide, and the protective walls of the *vank*, were also fundamental forces in shaping Kohar's identity:

So I grew up in Jerusalem, but I always knew that I'm Armenian and I'm nothing else but Armenian. . . . I grew up identifying as Jerusalemite, but I've never identified myself as either Israeli or Palestinian. And I think it's the community here, and the

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62 All participant names used are pseudonyms to protect anonymity.

63 See for example, Anny Bakalian, *Armenian-Americans: From Being to Feeling Armenian* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1993); Vered Amit Talai, *Armenians in London: Management of Social Boundaries* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989); Gül Kaya, "Memory and Citizenship," 406.

convent itself, and the literal walls of the convent, that kind of allow that identity to form. . . . As diaspora Armenians, we grow up kind of with that identity like molded, because you know it's a reality that you have to live with. Because of the Genocide we're here. But you know, we have to make do with what we have. But there's always this idea of an Armenia that maybe we can hopefully go back to. If not my parents, then me. If not me, then my children.

Like Taleen, Kohar associates the suboptimal diasporic condition and her Armenian Jerusalemite identity - which lies outside the bounds of traditional political or legal citizenship - with the Genocide. Kohar's reference to the "idea of an Armenia to go back to" is striking. Despite the existence of the modern Republic of Armenia, it is the ideal of an "imagined" Armenian homeland to which she aspires to return.

Interviewed youth frequently referred to the overwhelming nature of the Genocide and the intergenerational transfer of trauma. Lilit explained how the Genocide seems to touch every facet of her life:

So this is something every Armenian has to grow up with. The Genocide. It has to be mentioned at least thirty times a month. Everything is connected to the Genocide. . . . And in school, you learn about this from a very young age. You have lectures about it, many books about it. It's always there. It's part of our identity. That's how we look at it. It's not just some topic in a textbook.

For Lilit, postmemories - formed through family stories, books, and lessons in school - are a fundamental part of her identity. Positioning himself as a victim of the Genocide, Sako describes an inherited trauma rooted in postmemories of events experienced by his great-grandparents. *"Growing up and learning about all this, knowing that you had some homes over there, and everything taken away, all the factories or the shops that you had. Just like, it's all gone, it's not for you anymore. Learning that as a kid I think was pretty traumatizing, in a sense that you can't really trust a lot of people."*

Sako's narrative, in which he makes claims to homes, factories, and shops in Eastern Anatolia as if he personally experienced the losses, illustrates the power of postmemory rooted in cultural trauma to connect generations. Meanwhile, past presencing can be observed in Sako's remark concerning how this intergenerational trauma conferred an inability to trust others today. Vahan's narrative similarly features collected stories, using the first person plural pronoun "we," which inserts himself into the Genocide memory:

We were merchants. So we had that going on, and then the Genocide happened and we ran away. We had to. We lost all the assets. So, my great-grandmother, pregnant with my grandfather, of course, ran all the way through Syria and there was this Turkish soldier. It turns out he held her at gunpoint while she was pregnant. . . . He let her go. Turns out, obviously, had he pulled the trigger, I wouldn't be sitting here today, Teacher Lance. So the thought of that, that event, that single decision of pulling

or not pulling the trigger more than a century ago, led to my existence here, is mind boggling.

Vahan's existential musings, tied-up with internalized collected stories and intergenerational memories, provide yet another example of how the practice of past presencing links the past with the present.

Practices of past presencing and an internalization of the Genocide are also observed in Kohar's narrative, in which she asserts she feels as if she was born with genetic memories of the collective trauma, and explains how this influences her everyday performance of identity in Jerusalem:

I don't remember the day my parents told me about the Genocide. . . . It was something, as if I was born knowing this, you know. And I think part of that is because it's always talked about, whether it's talked about, you know, in the home, like my grandma telling stories of her grandparents that died there, or her parents that fled from Armenia, or Western Armenia. Or whether it was from school or the protests that we're taken to, you know, you're a one-year-old, you go to the protest . . . . So, I think it's a huge, huge part of my identity, the Genocide itself. . . . I owe it to my ancestors that survived, and those that didn't survive, to preserve that identity and culture that, whether it's through going to dance practice or going, or singing Armenian, or when I'm walking by the school and the kids are speaking in English, telling them to speak in Armenian. . . . I do that as a result of the Genocide.

Kohar describes her identity as rooted not only in the past events themselves, but in how she continuously reconstructs the meaning of the Genocide in her day-to-day life through those activities which strengthen both individual and collective Armenian ethnonational identity. The Sts. Tarkmanchatz School and community protests are highlighted by Kohar as significant mediators of this identity entrenched in Genocide memories. I will now examine how intergenerational memory is transmitted within these contexts.

### **Youth Performance of Genocide Memories and Transnational Citizenship in the School and at Community Protests**

From giant maps documenting forced deportations perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire to black-and-white portraits depicting well-known Armenian Genocide victims, the physical walls of the Sts. Tarkmanchatz School bear witness to the memory of past atrocities. Lining the hallways are annual school pictures, in which the entire student body and school staff pose on the steps of the old orphanage to re-enact a photograph of child survivors from the 1920s, which is currently featured in the exhibition at the Armenian Genocide Museum in Yerevan. Taking the annual school photograph in this exact location is a past presencing practice which reinforces the intergenerational memory of the Genocide.

Students are actively involved in past presencing in the curriculum, as students are en-

couraged to express intergenerational memories through the visual and performing arts. A bulletin board display created by Grade 6 students to commemorate the 106<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Genocide in April 2021 linked the Genocide with both identity and the Armenian homeland. Drawings of trees and references to roots (e.g., “Cut my branches, burn my leaves, but you’ll NEVER touch my roots!” and “24 April 1915. Armenian Genocide. From the roots we came.”) emphasized the rootedness of youth identities in the events of 1915. Meanwhile, the Armenian tricolor, maps of Armenia, images of the Armenian Genocide Memorial, pomegranates, mother Armenia, and Armenian landscapes served as expressions of transnational identities rooted in memories of the Genocide. The annual school ceremony commemorating the Armenian Genocide in late April provides opportunities for student to perform the past, for example, through the performance of survivor testimonies. With the melancholy music of the *duduk*<sup>64</sup> sounding softly in the background, a ninth-grade student read a survivor testimony as she actively took on the role of the victim: “*The crowds were huge in Meskeneh. We were in the middle of a vast sandy area and the Armenians there were from all over, not only from Marash. We had no water and soldiers would not give us any. . . . We used to eat grass. We used to pick grains from animal waste, wash them and then in tin cans fry them to eat.*”

When the student takes the stage before the school community, she transforms into the survivor, obscuring temporal boundaries as past suffering, performed in the present moment, becomes that of all Armenians.

Each year on 24 April, the Jerusalem community organizes protests and marches in acts of diaspora mobilization in which commemorative practices function as transnational acts of citizenship. Takvor described the importance of this day as a unifying, identity-building event for the community: “*Remembering the dead is important, it’s . . . one of the days that brings the community together. . . . I’m not a victim anymore. We’re not victims today of that Genocide. We’re victims, we are victims of the Genocide, but we have demands.*”

While at first glance, Takvor’s remarks may seem contradictory. Initially, he declares that he’s not a victim anymore, but then immediately reverses course and states that “*we are victims of the Genocide, but we have demands.*” However, Takvor’s statement can be interpreted to reflect a lingering sense of collective victimization that extends beyond a personal sense of trauma. Through these protests, inherited narratives of victimization find new expressions via transnational acts of citizenship in which claims and demands are shouted in the streets of Jerusalem.

On 24 April 2019, Armenian youth took part in one such ritualized protest facing the Turkish consulate, following the annual custom in Jerusalem on Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day. Gathered behind the police tape cordoning off the permitted demonstration area, the youth, bearing the flags of Armenia and Artsakh, were clad in red T-shirts bearing the three words: “RECOGNITION. CONDEMNATION. REPARATION.” With bodies transformed into political posters, youth publicly re-enacted the role of bleeding victims in

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<sup>64</sup> The *duduk*, or Armenian oboe, is a symbol not only of the historical trauma of the Genocide but also a symbol of Armenian national identity. See Andy Nercessian, *The Duduk and National Identity in Armenia* (Laham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2001).

front of the oppressor. One of the youth leaders shouted into the megaphone, demanding an end to the ongoing Turkish and Israeli denial:

We call upon the international community and countries like the USA,<sup>65</sup> the United Kingdom, and Israel to stop using the Armenian Genocide as a political card, and fulfill their moral and historical obligation by recognizing the Armenian Genocide. Turkey, you cannot run away from your own shadow. In the name of the Armenian people, and especially its youth, I pledge an oath that we will never rest until the Armenian Genocide is recognized.

Standing under the scorching sun, staring down the red star and crescent flag flapping in the wind across the street, I joined those assembled in the scathing chant: “Shame on Turkey! Turkey run, Turkey hide, Turkey’s guilty of genocide!”

Lilit described her experience as a participant in these protests, in which Genocide memories are performed and transnational citizenships enacted:

Posters. Armenian flags everywhere. Your hair, pins, everything is the flag. You just feel patriotic and you have that moment where you say, “I’m happy I’m Armenian.” You just feel that moment of pride, when you’re with your people and you have purpose there. And you’re going after something. . . . Of course we want Israel to recognize, because as citizens, we’re doing our part. . . . I think we deserve that from our country. I’m saying our, because we’re technically citizens. We have the passport, we were born here.<sup>66</sup> Something so important to us. Some people still today are struggling. You know, post-traumatic syndrome. PTSD. . . . Their parents saw the war, and they saw their parents die in front of them.

Lilit’s narrative seamlessly flows from visual displays of Armenian pride and support of the homeland, which constitute transnational acts of citizenship, to local acts of citizenship in which she demands recognition from the country in which she resides and holds a passport. She then returns to the lingering trauma of Genocide postmemory, which is exacerbated by the lack of Israeli recognition.

Sevan also decried Israel’s moral failure, which he attributed to political motives: “*Especially them [i.e., Jewish Israelis], they have been through a genocide, so they know the grief and the pain. . . . They have been through a Holocaust. They should recognize it. . . . It’s inhumane not to [recognize the Genocide] because of politics. But again, politics is another world. It’s a world of lies, let’s say.*”

Politics is also at the heart of Israel’s involvement in the recent Artsakh conflict. Jerusalemite Armenians, such as Sevan, must contend not only with Israel’s non-recognition of the Genocide - and by extension their collective identity - but also with Israeli military

<sup>65</sup> On 24 April 2021, United States President Joe Biden formally recognized the Armenian Genocide.

<sup>66</sup> While Lilit and her family are Israeli citizens, a sizable number of Jerusalemite Armenians do not, in fact, have Israeli citizenship, but rather have the status of “East Jerusalem resident,” which does not entitle them to an Israeli passport.

support for Azerbaijan. I now turn to the role of intergenerational memory and diaspora mobilization in shaping youth identities during the conflict's most recent escalation in the autumn of 2020.

## **From the Genocide to the Second Artsakh War: Diaspora Mobilization, Transnational Memory, and Questions of Identity**

Like elsewhere in the diaspora, in the Jerusalem community, the Artsakh conflict is often linked with the Genocide. In the words of Takvor: *“The Genocide, this topic is very much alive in the community. Add to that the present conflict with Azerbaijan, which adds also like an alarm to the Genocide. We connect the two stories together. . . . Israel today is not recognizing the Genocide because of Azerbaijan. ”*

Referencing the economic and military partnership between Israel and Azerbaijan, Takvor not only couples the Genocide with the current hostilities but also associates Israel's non-recognition of Turkish responsibility with the strengthening of Israeli-Azerbaijani cooperation. Given this linkage, and considering the prominent role played by Genocide postmemory in mobilizing diaspora Armenians and shaping contemporary youth identities in Jerusalem, it follows that the Artsakh conflict functions in a similar capacity. Emulating the annual 24 April Genocide protests, Jerusalemite Armenians took to the streets in acts of diaspora mobilization in October and November 2020. Decked out in red, blue, and orange, youth pounded the pavement, marching in the streets of downtown Jerusalem as they belted out lyrics to patriotic and revolutionary songs rooted in intergenerational memories. “Today we'll take Artsakh, tomorrow Van!” proclaims the penultimate line of the song *Yelek Hay-er Baykari*, connecting the present-day war with the lost historical homelands of Western Armenia. Protestors carried an array of glossy posters, including one featuring a black-and-white Hitler-Erdogan composite, complete with the Turkish flag and Nazi swastika pinned to either of the hybrid supervillain's suit jacket lapels. Hebrew text printed on the sign read: “Erdogan is the Turkish Hitler. To arm Azerbaijan is to arm Hitler.” This poster links the Genocide, the Artsakh conflict, and the Jewish Holocaust together in an appeal to the Israeli government to halt arms sales to the Armenian adversary.

Invoking the popular mantra of “Never Again,” often used in public discourse on the Holocaust, Kayane also linked these events together, even labeling the Armenian losses in Artsakh a second genocide:

Whoever attacks us, we need to stay strong, be one hand. . . . If everyone gives their own opinion, nothing is going to work and we're going to lose another country. Which we did. That, in my case, is another genocide that happened. Another hundred years passed, and we didn't learn from the mistake that happened a hundred years ago. We go outside for protests, “Never again, never again, never again.” And what? It happened a couple months ago. And we lost a lot of boys, young boys, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen. It's sad we lost a generation. It's hard to talk about this topic because we're not progressing.

Echoing Vahan's use of the first person plural "we" in the narration of collected stories as a practice of past presencing described previously, here Kayane's repetition of the word "we" refers to a unified Armenian transnation shaped by transnational memories of loss situated within a cyclical perspective of historical time. Lamenting a lack of progress and the seeming ineffectiveness of diaspora mobilization efforts, Kayane experienced the recent Armenian defeat through the lens of Genocide postmemory.

As a frequent participant in community demonstrations against Israeli weapon sales to Azerbaijan, Levon also described the sense of loss and disillusionment he experienced during the Second Artsakh War: *"It was kind of like a dream. . . . After the war, we really felt what it was like being in a war. . . . Even if the event didn't directly affect me. Because it's my nation, and we suffered for being Armenian. The protests that I went to every day, shouting that never really got anywhere, you know?"*

Similar to Genocide postmemories, transnationalized memories of the recent war - facilitated largely by social media - can transcend space and time to mold identities rooted in the collective suffering of the Armenian transnation. Notably, Levon's grief is not only vicarious, but bound up with personal feelings of defeat given that his shouting appeared to fall on deaf ears. Referring to protests around both the Genocide and Artsakh issues, Kohar also questioned whether such acts of diaspora mobilization really get anywhere: *"But in terms of the activism, whether it's social media or actually going to these protests, I think those are a little bit useless. . . . I think those protests are more for us than to actually make any change."*

Both Levon and Kohar express the inability of these mobilization efforts to effect change, considering the politics of non-recognition in Israel and the relative powerlessness of the small Armenian Christian minority. Likewise, Sako also describes acts of mobilization as diasporan identity-building events, whose political effectiveness is limited: *"I don't think the protests would do anything, for the government, at least. . . . I think it's more about us than anyone else. Yeah, I think it's more about us, like going out and being able to chant and say all of those things on that day. . . . I'm an Armenian, we went through a genocide. So it's much easier for us, just being relieved, to let that off our chests for a bit."*

Despite the perceived uselessness of demonstrations for influencing policy changes within the Israeli government, these community events provide opportunities for Armenian youth to engage in performances of transnational memory, through which they shore up ethnonational identities and forge transnational allegiances.

Even though diaspora mobilizations may function as acts of transnational citizenship, several Jerusalemite youth described tensions between the homeland and the diaspora related to the Artsakh issue and the Genocide. Such tensions often raised challenging questions about their identities. As an Israeli citizen, Levon described the criticism he received on Facebook during and after the Artsakh War because of Israel's involvement in supplying arms to Azerbaijan: *"We were criticized a lot by other Armenians because we live here. . . . Because of the selling, you know? They call us, "Jew," you know, "Go to your weapons-selling government. . . . You don't belong to Armenia, it's not your country, you have an Israeli passport."*

While Levon previously declared his transnational allegiance to Armenia as “my nation,” his loyalty - and even ethnonational identity - is called into question by homeland nationals due to his legal citizenship status and Israeli complicity in the Armenian defeat. Recalling family vacations to Armenia, Lilit also discussed how she does not feel as if she belongs in the homeland, despite the patriotic displays of “Armenianness” during the community protests which she recounted earlier:

When we go to Armenia, they look at us as foreigners . . . . And that’s because of the Genocide. . . . There are tensions between two Armenians, one from Armenia and one from the diaspora. . . . I thought to myself, “Where do I belong?” It’s a bit cheesy. You don’t belong in Armenia because they think you’re an outsider. You don’t belong in your country. It’s just, it’s part of the identity that you learn in school, eventually.

Lilit reiterated a lack of belonging in Israel, where her diaspora Armenian identity, grounded in memories of the Genocide, is not recognized, and the protective walls of the *vank* preserve Armenian roots while preventing youth from assimilating within local Israeli and Palestinian societies. The experiences of Levon and Lilit shed light on how transnationalized memories of the Armenian Genocide and the Artsakh conflict inform both local and transnational practices of citizenship and belonging.

## **Concluding Remarks**

One hundred and six years after the Armenian Genocide, intergenerational memories remain at the forefront of diaspora consciousness. Within the Jerusalem Armenian community, Genocide memories function as both unifying and isolating forces of identity construction as diaspora youth engage in practices of postmemory and past presencing within a transnational field. Intergenerational memories, collected stories, and inherited trauma are key factors in youth identity construction, as the past is linked with the present four generations after the Genocide and given renewed meaning in light of Armenian losses during the Second Artsakh War. The community school and organized demonstrations function as sites for intergenerational memory transmission and identity performance as youth engage in transnational acts of citizenship tied to an imagined Armenian transnation. As youth participate in these performances of memory - dramatizing survivor testimonies, carrying signs in protest, chanting slogans, and belting out patriotic songs - identities are molded as meaning is created through thoughts, feelings, and affects shaped by intergenerational memories. Given politics of non-recognition within Israel, diaspora mobilizations primarily serve as transnational identity-building events, while the locatedness of transnational memories also shapes citizenship practices at home. Yet homeland-diaspora tensions, and the complexity of the local socio-political landscape, present challenging questions about identity and belonging for Jerusalem’s Armenian youth. Lilit’s simple query of “Where do I belong?” reflects this intricate challenge of identity formation for Jerusalem’s Armenian youth. Such questions of belonging stem from the community’s marginalization, transmission of inter-

generational memories, non-recognition in local milieus, and regional geopolitics - all of which are, indeed, connected to the Genocide.

**Acknowledgments:** I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the entire Jerusalem Armenian community, the faculty and students of Sts. Tarkmanchatz Armenian School, and all the participants who trusted me with their stories and opened their hearts to share their thoughts and experiences with me.

Dr. Harutyun T. Marutyan is a social/cultural anthropologist, Director of the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Foundation. He is also a chief researcher in the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, National Academy of Sciences, Armenia.

Dr. Marutyan's research fields include genocide memory and national identity, iconography.

E-mail: [agmidirector@genocide-museum.am](mailto:agmidirector@genocide-museum.am)

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# THE LOCAL AND GLOBAL IN THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE MEMORIAL

*Harutyun Marutyan*

*Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Foundation, Armenia*

Memorials are one of the most common forms of memorialization and may be understood as symbolic reparations for the victims and survivors of mass violence. They acknowledge the suffering and grief of the victims and pay tribute to the dead. At the same time, the memorials epitomises not only history but also teaches contemporary lessons of local and global character. The Armenian Genocide Memorial as a symbol of grief and revival of the Armenian nation serves all these aims.

This article aims to address some points of history of the construction of the Armenian Genocide Memorial, its local and global implications, the issue of absence of names in the Memorial, as well as the feelings of patriotism and statehood embedded in the Armenian Genocide Memorial.

**Keywords:** memory, memorials, Armenian Genocide, Karabagh Movement, national identity.

The article was submitted on 04.07.2020 and accepted for publication on 26.10.2020.

This is an extended version of the author's article published in Korean.

**How to Cite:** Harutyun Marutyan, "The Local and Global in the Armenian Genocide Memorial," *International Journal of Armenian Genocide Studies* 6, no. 2 (2021): 75-89.

## Introduction

Globalization and, particularly, cultural globalization is creating a borderless world. As a result, many phenomena that had narrow, national implications are being re-evaluated and re-interpreted to stress their universal and democratic features and be presented to the world within the context of more understandable concepts.

Each generation must acquire the knowledge and skills needed to build the private and public dispositions necessary to support democratic values and understand the importance of respect for human rights. They should be used to combat discrimination, hate speech and other violations, being built through texts, studies and the power of example, consciously constructing and reproducing democracy, one generation after another. Traumatic past experiences, memorials and museums accumulating the people's memory thus gain new meanings and roles in civic education in the age of globalization.

Memorialization - understood as the practice of remembrance by commemorations, writing history textbooks and establishing memorials. Memorials as one form of memorialization, may be understood as symbolic reparations for the victims and survivors of mass violence, since they acknowledge their suffering and grief and pay respect to the dead. Therefore, after mass violence, memorials can be understood as the physical loci of recognition and the imperative of not forgetting the atrocities of the past.<sup>1</sup>

Public memorials such as historic sites, monuments and museums, certain public art or conceptual art projects and commemorative events have become critical elements in the current struggles for human rights and democracy. Communities, in vastly different contexts, see public memorialization as central to justice, reconciliation, truth-telling, reparation and embracing the past.<sup>2</sup>

Recognizing the power and potential of memorialization, NGOs, victims' groups, and truth commissions in various countries have advocated that memorialization be a key component of reform and transitional justice. Such initiatives, for the victims of violence, are the second most important form of state reparation after financial compensation.<sup>3</sup>

Memorials exist to tell us something about the past while seeking to affect the future. They and museums are embedded in local sites and function as nodes around which the fabric of remembrance unfolds in multifaceted and organic ways. Some are sites where atrocities occurred, while others represent more abstract and conceptual places and can be constructed and placed anywhere.<sup>4</sup> Memorials are often seen as being established for the forming of collective memory, meaning and identity, with those of a difficult past being

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1 Julia Viebach, "Alétheia and the Making of the World: Inner and Outer Dimensions of Memorials in Rwanda," in *Memorials in Time of Transition*, eds. Susanne Buckley-Zistel & Stefanie Shafer (Cambridge-Antwerp-Portland: Intersentia Publishing Ltd., 2014), 69.

2 Sebastian Brett, Louis Bickford, Liz Ševčenko, Marcela Rios, *Memorialization and Democracy: State Policy and Civic Action*, [https://www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Global-Memorialization-Democracy-2007-English\\_0.pdf](https://www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Global-Memorialization-Democracy-2007-English_0.pdf), accessed 12.02.2020.

3 Ernesto Kiza, Corene Rathgeber, and Holger-C. Rohne, *Victims of War: An Empirical Study on War-Victimization and Victims' Attitudes toward Addressing Atrocities* (Hamburg: Hamburg Institute for Social Research, 2006).

4 Judy Barsalou, "Reflecting the fractured past: memorialization, transitional justice and the role of the outsiders," in *Memorials in Time of Transition*, 47-68.

symbolically enacted and recounted at their sites. This symbolism is not, however, limited to the geographical site of the memorial site itself. Through various processes and agents, these local memories and memorial sites are transformed into transnational spaces. Even though memorials have always been present, they are becoming globalized as memories are released and shared.<sup>5</sup> A perfect example of this is the Armenian Genocide memorial.

## **Aspects of the History of the Construction of the Armenian Genocide Memorial**

It seems that memorials are only meant to embody the memory which they are built to preserve and pass on, but actually solve immense problems. Civic education of future generations is carried out through them, conveying basic values, some of which will be addressed below, using the Armenian Genocide Memorial and Museum as an example.

It should be noted that the story of *the construction of the Memorial itself is an example of a struggle against violations of human/national rights and the result of civil disobedience and courageous civic behavior*. What is meant by this statement? The point is that from the mid-1920s until the mid-1950s the Armenian population of Soviet Armenia was deprived of the right “to grieve.”<sup>6</sup> I do not know which article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights embodies the right to “remember,” but being deprived of it was a reality for Soviet Armenian citizens. This thirty-year period is known in history as the “Stalinist era.” During that time, talking about Armeno-Turkish relations, massacres of Armenians, the fate of the Armenians in Western Armenia, even hints of the need for the return of the Armenian occupied lands by Turkey were qualified as manifestations of nationalism and anti-Soviet sentiment and were punished by execution, imprisonment or exile to Siberia.

It was only during the “Khrushchev thaw” (from the mid-1950s to 1964) that historians, writers, and artists were allowed to reflect on the massacres of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, the experiences of individual Genocide survivors and their later activities etc. Armenian writers’ works, who were victims of Stalinist repression; Armenian classic writers, who were labeled as “nationalists” and the “enemy,” were gradually returned to the people and were seized upon, as were editions of books by Western Armenian writers that were published in tens of thousands of copies.<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps it was due to inner political changes as well as a certain liberal approach toward the issue of the Genocide, brought about by literature and art, that fomented, on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Genocide, the mass demonstrations that occurred in Yerevan in April 1965. This was an unusual phenomenon in the Soviet state of those times, with tens of thousands of people taking to the streets to commemorate the memory of the innocent victims of the Genocide and to demand reparations.<sup>8</sup>

5 Annika Björkdahl, Stefanie Kappler, “The Creation of Transnational Memory Spaces: Professionalization and Commercialization,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 32 (2019): 383-401.

6 Vardges Petrosyan, “On the different sides of the ‘psychological barbed-wire’” in *Մեր ժողովուրդն իմն է՝ ինչպես իմ սիշտը* [Our people are mine - as is my grief] in *Collection of Articles*, ed. Levon Ananyan (Yerevan, Hayastan, 2003), 132.

7 Harutyun Marutyan, *Iconography of Armenian Identity. Volume 1: The Memory of Genocide and the Karabagh Movement* (Yerevan: Gitut’yun, 2009), 38-39.

8 Avag Harutyunyan, *Հայոց ցեղասպանության 50-րդ տարեկիցը և Երկրորդ հանրապետությունը* [The 50th

The Soviet Armenian leadership (having received the Kremlin's permission in advance) marked the anniversary of the Genocide in a solemn session in the Opera House. Thanks to the people's request and the patriotic stance of the Armenian Soviet leadership, the Armenian Genocide Memorial was built in 1965-1967. It is noteworthy that during the construction of the memorial there had always been a concern that the Moscow/Kremlin leadership of the Soviet Union may suddenly change its mind and stop construction. The memorial was therefore built quickly, without any reports being published in the press.

Roads leading to the memorial pass through a large park. The complex itself occupies an area about half a hectare and consists of three main structures: a one hundred metre long memorial wall with the names of the Armenian settlements in the Ottoman Empire where major massacres took place inscribed on it, the open air memorial hall and the obelisk symbolizing "Resurrecting Armenia." The circular open-air hall, 30 m in diameter, built of 12 huge basalt pylons inclined towards the eternal flame in the centre, symbolize the perpetual memory of the Genocide victims. The 40 m high obelisk is the stone embodiment of the sprouting of two leaves that ascend with each other and symbolize the revival of the Armenian people (pic. 1).



Pic. 1 - The Armenian Genocide memorial: a general view.

Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide and the Second Republic] (Yerevan: Noravanq, 2015). By becoming acquainted with the roots of the Armenian Genocide Memorial Complex and also with the history of the construction of the monument itself, one may learn the essence of totalitarian/authoritarian systems and the need to struggle for fundamental human rights and freedoms, as well as the potential negative effects of hate speech. This information will educate a conscious citizen, whose role in building of a healthy society is of the greatest importance.

## **The Local and The Global in the Genocide Memorial**

Being situated on top of a hill and separated from the urban environment, the memorial complex is, at the same time, in harmony with the scenery, particularly with the outline of Mount Ararat in the far distance (pic. 2, 3). In fact, two of the most important symbols of the Armenian identity - made by nature and by man - are brought together in one place. The panorama of Yerevan from the high monument site should be added to this, the symbol of the Armenians who survived the Genocide and as a symbol of the revived and resurrected Armenian people.



Pic. 2 - The Armenian Genocide Memorial and Mount Ararat.



Pic. 3 - The Obelisk "Resurrecting Armenia" with Mount Ararat in the background.

The existence of Mount Ararat has another implication. In Noah's time a *global catastrophe* - the Great Flood - befell the world with the consequent salvation of mankind. Noah's Ark grounded on Mount Ararat. The Armenian Genocide was also a *global catastrophe* in its local coverage - when an attempt was made to exterminate an entire nation that had been living in its homeland for centuries. The remnants of the Armenian nation have, however, spread throughout the world and regained the power to regenerate itself from ashes like a phoenix and has built a new life, the proof of which is Armenia's capital Yerevan, spread before Mount Ararat and below the Armenian Genocide Memorial. Thus, *even the location of the Armenian Genocide Memorial relates to several global events.*

The memorial epitomises not only history but also teaches contemporary lessons. Even though the Armenian Genocide has been recognized by genocide and holocaust scholars<sup>9</sup> and the abundance of evidence, the Republic of Turkey, the perpetrator state and successor of the Ottoman Empire, has denied the fact of the Armenian Genocide at the state level for more than a century. Therefore, it is quite natural that the process of international recognition of the Armenian Genocide is perceived by the Armenians as the *establishment of moral and legal justice*. The presence of the *world* in the memorial, the recognition of the Armenian Genocide as a *global catastrophe* and its consequent remembrance by the world is visualised in the memorial spruce garden (pic. 4, 5) where the presidents and prime ministers of more than 40 countries, as well as statesmen, politicians and representatives of international organisations have planted more than 210 blue spruce trees in memory of the victims of the Armenian Genocide. Not all the states who have planted a spruce have recognised the Armenian Genocide - which is a foreign policy issue for them - but planting a tree is a way of paying tribute to the memory of the innocent victims. Every year in the second half of April, the "world" again "materially" appears near the memorial close to the spruce garden. It takes the form of a large sign showing the flags of the states that have officially recognised the Armenian Genocide (pic. 6).

The effect of this Soviet modernist-style monument on the visitor is due to the total lack of any decoration and the spiritual music permanently heard there. It is a unique example of a combination of architecture and music in the art world showing the limitless possibilities of stone to create a perfect structure by simple, strict and impressive means. In 1995 the Genocide Museum was added to the complex area (pic. 7) and was enlarged in 2015 without affecting the memorial in terms of its volumetric-spatial aspects.<sup>10</sup>

20<sup>th</sup> century world history shows that victims of Genocides, as a rule, experience tremendous hardship in overcoming the calamities that have befallen them. But they also try, by remembering the bitter past, to learn lessons and build new lives. It is natural that the process of surviving and building a new life is a positive challenge.

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9 Statement by 126 Holocaust scholars, holders of academic chairs, and directors of Holocaust research and studies centers, [https://www.armenian-Genocide.org/Affirmation.21/current\\_category.3/affirmation\\_detail.html](https://www.armenian-Genocide.org/Affirmation.21/current_category.3/affirmation_detail.html), accessed 12.02.2020.

10 Marutyan, *Iconography of Armenian Identity*, 39-46; Idem, "Formation, Development, and Current State of the Armenian Genocide Victims Remembrance Day (Part 2)," in *Ts'eghaspanagitakan handes* 7 (2) 2018: 108-110.



Pic. 4 - The Memorial Garden.



Pic. 5 - The Memorial Garden with its blue spruces: individual plaques indicate who planted each of them and when.



Pic. 6 - The special sign with the flags of the states that have officially recognized the Armenian Genocide on it.



Pic. 7 - The Armenian Genocide Memorial and Museum with Yerevan in the background.

## **The Issue of Presence or Absence of Names**

Most monuments and memorials are structures dedicated to the victims of war. Every nation-state considers it a sacred duty to remember and commemorate victims who have died for a just cause - the defence of the homeland. Memorials dedicated to the victims of war are often built in cemeteries and, if possible, have the names of those buried there inscribed on them. The names of the victims are also recorded on cenotaph-memorials dedicated to the residents of a particular region who went to war and never returned. Similar memorials started to be built in Armenia after the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemoration of the Great Patriotic War (World War II), that is - since 1965. Although they don't have a particular pattern, memorials of national importance have the names of all the victims inscribed on them (such as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington).

Memorials dedicated to the victims of other catastrophes are slightly different. Thus, many memorials built in Europe and devoted to the Holocaust also have the names of the victims of the crimes perpetrated in a particular location or state. This is, of course, natural, as people initially remember the victims of *their* region or state (fatherland or country).

The case of the Armenian Genocide memorial differs somewhat. Like the Holocaust, the Armenian Genocide also happened during a world war. As in the Jewish case, the Armenians, although not a belligerent people, suffered the largest number of people killed - about 1.5 million - comprising both civilians and those conscripted into the Ottoman Army (the latter however, were not engaged in fighting), which was higher than the number of French killed at the front and twice as many as the number of British soldiers killed (including those from the colonies). If all the victims of WWI constitute 4.0-4.4% of the population of Germany or France, 75% of the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire were victims of the Armenian Genocide. The majority don't have graves, while the places where mass graves exist are within the territory of modern Turkey. The names of the people buried there are unknown or are simply forgotten.

The Holocaust was recognized by the perpetrator-state and the world in general and memorials were built in many countries where the Holocaust was perpetrated. The Armenian Genocide is not recognized by the perpetrator-state, the Republic of Turkey, which is the successor of the Ottoman Empire. There are no memorials there, and their specialists-archivists are not interested in revealing the names of the victims.

Thus, the descendants of victims of the Armenian Genocide are deprived of the opportunity to build memorials in their ancestors' fatherland and engraving the names of those deported from a particular region or massacred there on them. So, there are no memorials with a particular territorial or local coverage and, most probably because of that the names of the Armenian Genocide victims are not engraved on any memorial. Instead, there is another reality: hundreds of big and small memorials not only in the Republic of Armenia, but also in many foreign cities with the Armenian communities. This is because the existence of the Armenian Diaspora is a direct consequence of the Armenian Genocide, while nearly half the population of the Republic of Armenia is made up of the descendants of Ottoman Armenians.

According to Armenian historiography, genocidal acts were also perpetrated in Eastern Armenia, in other words the current Republic of Armenia. The names of quite a number of Armenian Genocide victims are known from written and oral sources. In order that those names don't disappear over time and to uncover those that are unknown, it is necessary to collect them in an online database. The Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute has declared the creation of the online database to be one of its primary projects and, in this way, to attempt to uncover the names of Armenian Genocide victims; in other words, to create a *virtual database-memorial* with the names of the victims of the Armenian Genocide being recorded. A similar task was carried out and results achieved to a great extent by Holocaust scholars. Thus, there is an attempt to create a *new type of memorial* - a virtual one, with the help of the *internet as medium for the birth of its globalization*.

## **The Memorial and the War Factor**

In the mid-1960s, when a project was created to build a memorial dedicated to the Armenian Genocide victims, there were no (even ideologically) similar memorials in the Soviet Union. The existing ones were devoted to well-known party, state, political and military leaders. Meanwhile, the program of the construction of great memorials dedicated to the victory in the Great Patriotic War was launched, among them the Piskaryovskoe Memorial Cemetery in Leningrad (1956-1960), the Memorial Complex in Mamaev Kurgan dedicated to the heroes of the battle of Stalingrad (1959-1967), the Tomb of the Unknown Hero Memorial in Moscow's Red Square (1966-1967) and the Katyn Memorial Complex in Belarus (1966-1969), etc. It was necessary to find a "place" within Soviet ideology to justify the erection of a monument that would be devoted not to *victory* but to the *victims* of the Armenian Genocide during WWI. This was also "odd" because of the absence of any connection with Communist ideology. Thus, there had to be something greater than Soviet ideology or a narrowly Armenian connotation. The solution was found. In his letter addressed to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR in Moscow, the First Secretary of the Armenian Communist Party, Yakov Zarobyan<sup>11</sup> put the issue into a *global* dimension, stressing the need to remember not just victims who had died for victory in the war, but *war* in general as being the greatest evil, killing millions of people. In this context, through using the name of Turkey, a universal formulation that "a similar tragedy must never happen in history again" was put forward, which was also acceptable to the Soviet ideology. The opinion is that through this formulation the Armenian Genocide was been taken from being a purely Armenian tragedy and placed in the realm of world history.<sup>12</sup>

The next important ideological concept in the above-mentioned letter was the following: To erect a monument devoted to the *Armenian martyrs of World War One* in Yerevan. The monument should symbolize the rebirth of the Armenian people (Author's emphasis). The formulation "World War One" was not only a time indication but was also aimed at

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11 While still a child, Yakov Zarobyan and his family was forced to leave the Armenian city of Ardvin (Kars region, now in Turkey).

12 Harutyun Marutyun, "Museums and Monuments: Comparative Analysis of Armenian and Jewish Experiences in Memory Policies," *Études Arméniennes Contemporaines* 3 (2014): 65-66.

transferring the event to the “global” realm. On the other hand, Soviet ideology, following Leninist interpretations had, for decades, presented WWI as an “imperialist war,” with only the Soviet Union, leading the world’s socialist block, resisting “world imperialism” by all possible means.<sup>13</sup>

## **The Issue of Patriotism and Statehood**

Visiting to the Armenian Genocide Memorial, different feelings arise in each and every Armenian. Initially there is a feeling of loss, as well as of *patriotism*, which is very important. To state that it is manifested unambiguously and very directly might not be right. US President Donald Trump in his speech at the 74<sup>th</sup> UN session particularly emphasized:

Like my beloved country, each nation represented in this hall has a cherished history, culture, and heritage that is worth defending and celebrating, and which gives us our singular potential and strength.

The free world must embrace its national foundations. It must not attempt to erase them or replace them.

Looking around and all over this large, magnificent planet, the truth is plain to see: If you want freedom, take pride in your country. If you want democracy, hold on to your sovereignty. And if you want peace, love your nation. Wise leaders always put the good of their own people and their own country first.

The future does not belong to globalists. The future belongs to patriots. The future belongs to sovereign and independent nations who protect their citizens, respect their neighbors, and honor the differences that make each country special and unique.<sup>14</sup>

The memorials dedicated to the victims of wars, in one way or another, have a function: to strengthen statehood. In the Armenian case, the Genocide memorial built during Soviet times, through its rising obelisk, was promoting the idea of a peaceful life built by the efforts of Soviet forces and within the large and powerful Soviet state. After Armenia regained independence, the accents on statehood were altered and the idea that the absence of a state and army assisted in the perpetration of Genocide was endorsed in different forms. Consequently, to face the modern challenges of the global world, a powerful state and a strong and efficient army is needed.

If, within the area of the Genocide monument and memorial in general only the idea of victimhood was stressed and heroism as a role model had no place there until 1990, then as a result of the First Karabagh war, the idea of heroism showed itself by the burial of five freedom-fighters in the vicinity of the memorial. Those graves directly emphasize the idea that the only way to avoid genocide is to struggle, and when necessary, to resort to arms (see details below).

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Remarks by President Trump to the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-74th-session-united-nations-general-assembly/>, accessed 23.06.2020.

In this sense “patriotism” and “democracy” are directly linked. The sense of patriotism among the Armenians visiting the memorial is probably reflected in the view that just one hundred years ago the nation lost Western Armenia, with about two-thirds of its people being killed. Surviving Armenians found refuge in one-tenth of historic Armenia and have built and are building a new, free and independent country that needs protection in order to prevent the repetition of the past.<sup>15</sup>

A vivid proof of what is said is the strong connection between the past and the present at the memorial. The point is that over the past half-century, the developments and challenges faced by Armenia and its citizens have, to some extent, been reflected in the memorial’s area. This connection is indicated by two other things: the khachkars (cross-stones) dedicated to the victims of the Armenian pogroms (1988-1990) in Sumgait, Kirovabad, and Baku (pic. 8) and the graves of the five freedom fighters killed in the Armenian-Azerbaijani border battles (1990-1992) (pic. 9).



Pic. 8 - Khachkars (cross-stones) devoted to the memory of the victims of the anti-Armenian pogroms in Sumgait, Baku, and Kirovabad (1988, 1990).

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<sup>15</sup> Measurement has not been made of the prevalence of this idea through quantitative or qualitative research, percentages, or interviews; such thinking has come from years of personal conversations by the author with various people.



Pic. 9 - The graves of five Armenian freedom fighters killed during the Armenian-Azerbaijani border clashes (1990-1992).

The above-mentioned cities are in Azerbaijan. However, the massacres of the Armenian population of those cities were the response of the Soviet Azerbaijani authorities to the events that took place many kilometers beyond those cities. As early as in 1921 Nagorno-Karabakh (94.6% of the population of which was Armenian then) located in the former Elizavetpol district of the Russian Empire (which became one of the constituent territories of the newly formed Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan in 1918) was, by the decision made by the Caucasus Bolsheviks and with the direct involvement of Stalin and Lenin, transferred to Soviet Azerbaijan as an autonomous region, instead of being joined to Armenia. Over the next six and a half decades, due to the policies followed by the Soviet Azerbaijani authorities, the Armenian population decreased substantially to 75%. In 1985 Gorbachev proclaimed the political policy of “perestroika” (restructuring), which also implied changes in national affairs. On February 20, 1988, the parliament of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region decided to apply to the USSR Parliament with a request to unite the region with Armenia. Mass demonstrations took place in the capitals of Armenia and Azerbaijan (Yerevan and Baku). On Gorbachev’s request, they were suspended on February 26. Starting on February 27 and for three days on, in the presence of Soviet army units, “mass disorders” took place in Sumgait during which, according to official data, “26 citizens of Armenian origin were

killed.” The method of killing was the same as used by the Turks during the Genocide of Armenians at the beginning of the twentieth century: they were beaten, tortured, raped, and thrown out of windows, slain with metal rods and knives, chopped up with axes, beheaded and burnt alive... The aim of these criminal actions was to block any possible solution of the issue, to terrorize Armenians and, in particular, to alarm the central Soviet authorities with the threat of further bloody actions and to force them to forego the demand for a just solution to the Karabakh issue.<sup>16</sup>

In commemoration of the Armenian victims of Sumgait, a monument-khachkar (crosstone) was erected in front of the Genocide memorial on April 24 1988. Another is dedicated to the massacres of Armenians in Baku on January 13-20, 1990, in which according to unofficial data, 200-400 people fell victim. The third khachkar is dedicated to the Armenians of Kirovabad (the second-largest city in Azerbaijan) who were killed or expelled. These crimes were regarded by the Armenians as a manifestation of genocidal policy and were compared to the Armenian Genocide, the memory of which immediately came to the fore. It is worth mentioning that Azerbaijanis share the same ethnic origins with the Turks.

It should be said that the Armenian Genocide is not a very distant story; but the massacre and exile of Armenians, seven decades after the Genocide, in 1988-1992, is a repetition of it on a small scale. Everything should be done to prevent it happening again.

Indicators of this mentality are the graves near the memorial wall, which forms part of the memorial. Five freedom fighters are buried near the Genocide memorial who, in the absence of Armenian armed forces, defended the borders of the country from Azerbaijan in 1990-1992 at the cost of their lives. In this way, the slogan “*Never again*” acquires a second meaning within the confines of the memorial, going beyond the boundaries of the Armenian Genocide (the purely historical past) and being closely linked to present-day reality. Some of the actions linked to the “*Never again*” slogan are the annual visits to the Genocide memorial by Armenian army conscripts and high school students. Such visits are also aimed at strengthening the rarely-mentioned but very important element of civic education - patriotism.

The *ideas of Genocide memory, concerns for the future of the country (in other words, patriotism) and democracy* in the memorial complex were strongly intertwined three decades ago during the years of the First Armenian Revolution (Karabagh Movement) in 1988-1990. In particular, rallies were banned in Yerevan in 1988 and the spring of 1989. In both cases, however, on April 24, Armenian Genocide commemoration day, mass marches were held at the Armenian Genocide memorial with hundreds of thousands of people participating. The marches were not only dedicated to the victims of the Armenian Genocide, but *directly linked the future of the country's democratic development and the Armenian Genocide topic of 70-75 years ago*. That is, the citizens relied on the past in their verbal and visual attitudes but were discussing the present and looking to the future. All this happened at the Genocide memorial, which became a political platform. So, in the posters and banners that were displayed in those days, the following several things were stressed:

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16 Marutyanyan, *Iconography of Armenian Identity*, 93-94.

- The Soviet Union was criticized for not officially recognizing the Armenian Genocide but, according to civil society, if it did, it would pose as a barrier to massacres on the ground of ethnicity in a multinational country;
- The Armenian Genocide and Sumgait massacres were put on the same level, as ideologies of Pan-Turkism, Stalinism, Fascism and Nazism;
- The Soviet authorities were required to make a political statement on the Sumgait events;
- A demand for condemnation of the perpetrators of the Sumgait massacres, who were perceived by demonstrators as enemies of perestroika (restructuring). Some expressed doubts that the organisers were among the USSR leadership and in the Kremlin;
- The absence of punishment was interpreted as the inability of the Soviet courts to hold a trial impartially and fairly, which was perceived as an overall weakness of the Soviet system;
- The conviction was that the citizens of Armenia should protect themselves, and not rely on the Soviet Union, the Soviet army or the Russians;
- It was highlighted that there was no need to mourn, but to resist, to fight and, for that purpose to have an army of its own;
- Finally, the prevention of future genocides or massacres was seen in the consolidation of Armenians and the establishment of a democratic and independent Armenia.

During the First Armenian Revolution/Karabagh Movement (1988-1990) the Armenian Genocide memorial became one of the places used for the expression of revolutionary ideas. Ideas that eventually appealed to the citizens of the country not only to remember the innocent victims of the Armenian Genocide and to claim justice for the solution of the Armenian issue, but also to fight for democratic freedoms; fight against national and legal discrimination; fight for the country's independence from the Soviet Union; fight for the restoration of national dignity; demand implementation of the constitutional provision of equality before the law envisaged by the constitutions of the USSR and Soviet Armenia.

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Every year, from early in the morning till late night on April 24, nearly a million people visit the Armenian Genocide memorial. They lay flowers at the Eternal Flame dedicated to the victims of the Armenian Genocide as a sign of respect for the memory of the 1.5 million innocent victims of the Armenian Genocide (1915-1923) and bow in gratitude before the martyred and surviving heroes who struggled for their lives and human dignity, reiterating the commitment to achieve worldwide recognition of the Armenian Genocide, the restoration of rights, the establishment of historical justice and the elimination of the consequences of the Genocide.

Juan Pablo Artinian holds a Ph.D. and a master's degree in History from the State University of New York at Stony Brook. He was awarded a B.A in History, from the University of Buenos Aires. His doctoral dissertation examined the relationship between politics and visual culture during mid-20th century Argentina. He published academic articles on Argentine history and a book on the Armenian Genocide. Artinian attended a seminar on genocides at the University of Toronto and lectures on this topic. He is currently a visiting professor of history at Di Tella University on Genocides and Human Rights.

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# BETWEEN THE LOCAL AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH: DIASPORA'S POLITICS FOR THE RECOGNITION OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE IN ARGENTINA 1965-2015

*Juan Pablo Artinian*

*Torcuato Di Tella University and University of Buenos Aires, Argentina*

Historiography has analyzed the recognition of the Armenian genocide using cultural and geopolitical coordinates belonging to both Western and Non-Western societies. However, the North-South dimension of this event and its effect on the diaspora has been neglected by most of the approaches taken by Armenian studies. In this article, I will analyze how the Armenian diaspora in Argentina advocated for recognition of the Armenian genocide from 1965 to 2015. This community is not only significant in terms of population - it is the largest in the Global South - but also because its contribution to the struggle for remembrance and recognition of the Armenian genocide is unique. Argentina is one of the few countries in which the genocide has been recognized by the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. In this article, I will analyze the specific dynamics of the Armenian-Argentine community's local activism and its contribution to the global recognition of the genocide.<sup>1</sup> The commemoration on April 24 in the official Argentine calendar, the recognition of the extermination of Armenians as genocide by Francis I, Roman Catholicism's first Argentinean Pope, demonstrate the importance of the interaction between the local and global.

**Keywords:** Armenian Genocide, diaspora, recognition of the Armenian Genocide,

The review article was submitted on 17.07.2021 and accepted for publication on 30.10.2021.

**How to Cite:** Juan Pablo Artinian, "Everything is Connected to the Genocide," *International Journal of Armenian Genocide Studies* 6, no. 2 (2021): 91-96.

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<sup>1</sup> For the recognition of the genocide in Latin America see Hayk Paronyan, Marvelio Alfaro Matos and Rogelio Meléndez Carbadillo, "El Genocidio armenio y su reconocimiento en América Latina," *Revista Dilemas contemporáneos: Educación, Política y Valores*, Mexico 8, no. 3 (2021). For the Armenian-Argentine community's local activism and its contribution to the global recognition of the genocide see *El derrumbe del negacionismo. Leandro Despouy, el Informe Whitaker y el aporte argentino al reconocimiento internacional del Genocidio de los armenios*, ed. Khatchik Derghougassian (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 2009).

## **The Armenian Diaspora between the Local and Global**

The academic production on the Armenian Diaspora in Argentina has been less extensive than the large number of books and articles on other groups that emigrated to the country.<sup>2</sup> Narciso Binayan Carmona's 1974 book, *The Armenian Community in Argentina*, was one of the first published works that provided a narrative and met some academic standards. It also attempted to go beyond what were then the prevailing narratives, most of which were non-professional.<sup>3</sup> During the 1980s, the works of the sociologist Beatriz Balian and psychologist Eva Tabakian dealt with the assimilation of this community to Argentine society.<sup>4</sup> During that decade, and also during the nineteen nineties, some academic works - which employed a traditional perspective on migration studies - focused on the chronological tracking of events having to do with the arrival and adjustment of Armenians in Argentina.<sup>5</sup> In the early nineteen nineties, American researcher Kim Hekimian also made a valuable contribution by examining the South American Armenian Diaspora as a case study.<sup>6</sup> During that same decade, Eduardo Karsacian published a study that emphasized the importance of community educational establishments in Argentina.<sup>7</sup> In addition to this research paper on Armenian schools, several authors - such as Libertad Telecemian - have researched the genocide's traumatic effects.<sup>8</sup> In the new millennium, the contributions of the historian Brisa Varela - who does not belong to the Armenian community - have enriched historiographical discourse by problematizing the uses of memory and the construction of community spaces.<sup>9</sup> In 2011, Vartan Matiossian published a book, which included detailed archival work and new conceptual tools with which to discuss and generate interpretations of the characteristics of the Armenian Diaspora in Argentina.<sup>10</sup>

The majority of the Armenians who arrived in Argentina became part of the global Diaspora because of the Armenian Genocide.<sup>11</sup> I will use the definition put forth by researcher

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2 For an analysis on the historiographical production on the topic see Nélide Boulgourdjian, "Evolución de los estudios armenios en la Argentina," *Revista Espacios de crítica y producción* 51 (2015): 57-66.

3 Narciso Binayan Carmona, *La colectividad armenia en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Alzamor editores, 1974). From the same author, *Entre el pasado y el futuro: los armenios en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: n.p., 1996).

4 Beatriz Balian de Tagtachian "Inserción de la colectividad armenia en la Argentina: un estudio de dirigentes," in *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas de la Facultad de Ciencias Sociales y Económicas de la Universidad Católica* (1981). Eva Tabakian, *Los armenios en Argentin* (Buenos Aires, 1989).

5 Nélide Boulgourdjian-Toufeksian, "*Los armenios en Buenos Aires*": *la reconstrucción de la identidad (1900-1950)* (Buenos Aires: Centro Armenio, 1997).

6 Kim Hekimian, "Armenian Immigration to Argentina, 1909-1938," *Armenian Review* 43, no. 1 (1990): 85-113.

7 Eduardo Karsacian, "Escuelas armenias de Buenos Aires: análisis de sus programas de estudio," *Los armenios en America del Sur*, ed. Vartan Matiossian (Buenos Aires: Primeras jornadas de estudio, 1991).

8 Azaduhí Libertad Telecemian, "Alcances del Genocidio en la colectividad armenia de la Argentina," in *Los armenios en America del Sur*. On memory also see, Rita Kuyumciyan, *El primer genocidio del siglo XX. Regreso de la memoria armenia* (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 2009).

9 Brisa Varela, *Geografías de la Memoria Lugares, desarraigos y reconstitución identitaria en situación de Genocidio* (La Plata: UNLP, 2008).

10 Vartan Matiossian, *Pasado sin Retorno, Futuro que espera, Los armenios en la Argentina, ayer y hoy* (Mon-tevideo: Ediciones ASCUA, 2011).

11 On the Armenian Genocide see Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide. Imperialism, Nationalism and the Destruction of Ottoman Armenians* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Raymond. Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide a Complete History* (London and New York: Tauris, 2011); Ronald Suny, *They Can*

Gabriel Sheffer, who states that: “Modern Diasporas are ethnic minorities groups of migrant origins that residing and acting in host countries, but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin - their homelands.”<sup>12</sup> The traumatic effects of the genocide and the search for justice on behalf of the Armenian cause must also be added to this definition. Those individuals who belonged to Argentina’s Armenian minority arrived after completing a lengthy journey that often included a few months spent in places like Greece, Lebanon, or France.<sup>13</sup> Thus, many families were scattered throughout the world, in places such as the United States, Canada, Brazil, or Uruguay. The oldest Armenian settlements were located in the Middle East in places like Lebanon, which, due to its proximity to the ancient Armenian territories, became a center for the global Diaspora. These settlements used churches, schools and representatives belonging to different political parties to build their community institutions. A large proportion of Armenians settled also in the United States, especially in California and in various locations on the East Coast, such as New York and Boston.<sup>14</sup> As for the world beyond the Americas, France has the largest Armenian community in Europe: it is located largely in cities like Paris, Lyon and Marseille. In Latin America, the principal destination for Armenian migrants were countries of the Southern Cone: Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay. However, in other parts of Latin America, the Diaspora also has a presence: thus, in smaller numbers, we can find members of the Armenian Diaspora in Chile, Mexico, and Venezuela.

## **Armenians in Argentina**

Armenians first began to arrive in Buenos Aires in the late nineteenth century. According to Matiossian, in 1907, a small group of them founded the first Armenian institution in Argentina: the Chamjlu Village Society for Education, which, though charitable contributions, enabled the functioning of a girls’ school in that village, located in what was then the Ottoman Empire.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, in 1912, the community celebrated their first mass in Buenos Aires - the first in South America - and founded the first parish organization of the Armenian Apostolic Church.<sup>16</sup> Matiossian’s study, which used the 1923 internal census of Buenos Aires that was carried out by the Armenian Colonial Center, indicates 46.69 percent came from the region of Cilicia, 30 percent from Aleppo - in modern Syria - and 19.4 percent from Cappadocia.<sup>17</sup> The author also includes a statement made in 1931 by the pastor of

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*Live in the Desert and Nowhere Else. A History of the Armenian Genocide* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2015); Taner Akçam, *Killing Orders, Talat Pasha's Telegrams and the Armenian Genocide* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

12 Gabriel Sheffer, “A New Field of Study: Modern Diasporas in International Politics,” in *Modern Diasporas in International Politics*, ed. Gabriel Scheffer (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 3.

13 Juan Pablo Artinian, “La resistencia de los sobrevivientes armenios en la Argentina. A 100 años del genocidio armenio,” *Todo es Historia* (2015): 28-31.

14 Anny Bakalian, *Armenian-Americans. From Being to Feeling Armenian* (New Brunswick and London: Transactions Publishers, 1993).

15 Matiossian, *Pasado sin Retorno*, 58-59.

16 *Ibid.*, 59.

17 *Ibid.*, 69-70.

the Armenian Apostolic Church, Hovhannes Amiriántz, who indicated that more than half of the community was made up of people from Hadjin, Aintab, and Marash.<sup>18</sup>

For the most part, the Armenians who settled in Argentina took up residence in the city of Buenos Aires. They also settled in suburbs of the city. At the same time, other Armenians gravitated toward other areas of the country, such as the province of Córdoba and the city of Rosario. Vartan Matiossian explains that prior to 1915, between 2,000 and 3,000 Armenians arrived to the country. The devastating effects of the genocide, the frustrated Armenian Republic of 1918 (and its subsequent Sovietization) and Kemal Ataturk's attempt to annihilate the survivors in Asia Minor in the early nineteen twenties determined the shape that the flow of Armenians arriving to Argentina would take.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, the restrictions on immigration imposed by the United States government drove many of them to the coastal regions of South America.<sup>20</sup>

### *Memory and Generations: from 1965 to the 1980s*

As the Armenian genocide receded into history, the memories of the genocide, which had once circulated only in the private sphere, began to crystallize into various rituals and ways of remembering.<sup>21</sup> In 1965, a global call for recognition of the genocide emerged, and this proved to be a pivotal moment in the process of recognition. Argentina was no exception: in a place where political instability and economic crises recurred, the Armenian community created a cultural framework and increased their visibility. Some of its members participated in national political life, while others had important roles in its economic and cultural activities. During the last military dictatorship (1976-1983), 22 Armenians disappeared because of state terrorism.

Since 1983, and with the return of democratic governments, the Armenian community in Argentina has initiated several changes. Thus, rather than emphasize key markers of difference - language and participation in community's institutions, such as the Armenian Orthodox church - the 1980s saw a turn towards the notion of a subjective identity. Thus, a sort of hybrid identity came into being during this period, in which certain subjective factors prevailed in ideas about identity. Along these lines, the researcher Khachig Tololyan affirms that: "the affiliation happens to replace the filiation."<sup>22</sup> Therefore, the redefinition of "Armenianism" also featured elements of hybridization with the Argentinian local cultural and political environment.<sup>23</sup> In this new political atmosphere, the Armenian community in

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18 Ibid., 70.

19 Ibid, 60.

20 In 1924 the Johnson-Reed Act was passed in 1924 that established "quotas" of income by national origin in the United States, closing doors for immigration from eastern and southern Europe.

21 On rituals and memory of the Armenian genocide in Argentina see Lucila Tossounian, "Usos del pasado: el '24 de Abril' como ritual conmemorativo," in *Genocidios del siglo XX y formas de la negación. Actas del III Encuentro sobre Genocidio*, eds. Nélica Boulgourdjian, Juan Carlos Toufeksian y Carlos Alemian (Buenos Aires: Centro Armenio, 2003).

22 Khachig Tololyan, "Rethinking *Diaspora(s)*: Stateless Power in the Transnational Moment," *Diaspora: a Journal of Transnational Studies* 5, no. 1 (1996):3-36.

23 On the concept of hybridization see the classic work by Hommi. K Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994). For the idea of hybridization and the Armenian diaspora in western societies see Razmik Panossian, *The Armenians. From King to Merchants and Commissars* (New York: Columbia Uni-

Argentina learned specific lessons from the success of Human Rights movements in Argentina. Also, Argentinian intellectuals and public figures sympathized with the cause of the campaign for the recognition of the Armenian genocide. A number of events in the historical record demonstrate this engagement. In 1984, in Paris, the Permanent Peoples Court, created in 1979 by the Italian senator Lelio Basso, debated the genocidal nature of the massacres of the Armenians. The jury heard arguments from a group of academics, including Tessa Hoffman, Richard Hovannisian, Christopher J. Walker, Jirair Libaridian, and Yves Ternon, as well as others who represented the Turkish state. The court, which included three Nobel Laureates - among them the Argentine Adolfo Pérez Esquivel - recognized the systematic killings of 1915 as a genocide. Another example of the engagement of Argentinian political figures occurred in August 1985, when the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities approved - after intense debate - its report on Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. One of its members, Benjamin Whitaker, presented a report that in its twenty-fourth paragraph indicated that the Ottomans had committed a genocide against the Empire's Armenian minority. The pressures of the Turkish government were felt throughout the deliberation process in Geneva, but the experts - among them the Argentine Leandro Despouy - did not yield to them.<sup>24</sup> The precedent of the text, popularly known as the "Whitaker Report" once again made the question of the systematic extermination of Armenians a public issue. After these two instances of recognition, in 1987 the Armenian community of Argentina scored a landmark victory not just in a domestic political context but also at a global level when President Raúl Alfonsín officially proclaimed that the events that had begun in 1915 were indeed genocidal in nature.

#### *From 20th to 21st century: Recognition of the Armenian Genocide in Argentina*

The echoes of international events would also have repercussions in South America's Armenian community. The end of the Cold War redefined both political divisions and the ways that one could belong to a diaspora. In 1991 - in an unprecedented series of events - the Soviet Union collapsed and Armenia declared independence. A new historical moment marked by war, economic difficulties and future uncertainties shaped a new dynamic between the diaspora and a young Armenian nation-state. Even in this new era, the diaspora's struggle for recognition and justice continued throughout the world.

During this century, the efforts made by the local Diaspora have achieved a three-part success in Argentina - making it a unique case. Following the aforementioned presidential recognition of the genocide, the parliamentary and judicial branches of the Argentine government officially recognized the Armenian genocide.<sup>25</sup> In 2007, a law passed Argentina's congress declared April 24 to be "Day of Action for Tolerance and Respect between Peoples in Commemoration of the Genocide Suffered by the Armenian People."<sup>26</sup> Also during the

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versity Press, 2006), 307.

24 On Despouy see Fabián Bosoer and Florencia Terruzzi, "Leandro Despouy. Trayectoria del Jurista Argentino que llegó a Ginebra," in *El derrumbe del negacionismo*, 65-155.

25 Juan Pablo Artinian, "El Genocidio Armenio 100 años después: Verdad, Memoria y Justicia desde América Latina" en *Cuadernos de Coyuntura*, UBA Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, primer cuatrimestre, 2015.

26 Law 26.199 of the Argentinian Parliament, January 11, 2011.

new century -thanks to the effort of different institutions and individuals of the Armenian community-both the Argentine government and the City of Buenos Aires published textbooks destined to teachers of national and district schools on the Armenian Genocide. Furthermore, several universities held academic conferences on the topic: one example of those conferences was the one at National University of Tres de Febrero in 2014. Also, the Center for Genocide Studies of the aforementioned university launched a collection with several books on the Armenian Genocide.

In the first years of the twenty-first century, inspired by a legal precedent set by the Argentine human right moment, a descendant of an Armenian family settled in Argentina initiated a legal process to assert his right to learn the truth about what happened to his relatives in 1915.<sup>27</sup> Finally, in 2011, after ten years had passed, a federal court ruled that the murder, torture and deportation that occurred in 1915 constituted a genocide by the Turkish state.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, historiography has analyzed the recognition of the Armenian genocide using cultural and geopolitical coordinates belonging to both Western and Non-Western societies. However, the North-South dimension of this event and its effect on the diaspora has been neglected by most of the approaches taken by Armenian studies. In this article, I have argued that the specific dynamics of the Armenian community's local activism made a unique contribution to the campaign for the global recognition of the genocide possible. Argentina is one of the few countries in the world that has recognized the Armenian genocide by way of the executive, legislative and judicial branches of its government. Last but not least, in 2015 an Argentine pope, Francis I, formerly known as Cardinal Bergoglio, declared that the extermination of the Armenians was the first genocide of the twentieth century. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to reconsider the importance of the contributions made in the Global South and the need for strengthened ties between the diaspora's Northern and Southern outposts, as well as for stronger links between the diaspora, Armenia, Arstakh and Latin America in the new millennium.

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<sup>27</sup> On the legal process see Federico Gaitan Hairabedian and Valeria Thus, "El juicio por el derecho a la verdad del Genocidio Armenio. Herramientas contra la negación, por la verdad y la justicia," *Bordes, Revista de Política, Derecho y Sociedad* 2 no. 8 (2018): 193-220.

<sup>28</sup> For more details see, Roberto Malkassian, "Una sentencia que hace historia," *Archivos del Presente, Revista Latinoamericana de Temas Internacionales* 15, no. 55 (2011): 83-117.

## BOOK REVIEW

Muriel Mirak-Weißbach, *Retter oder Täter. Ein General zwischen Staatsräson und Moral: Otto Liman von Sanders und der Völkermord an den Armeniern*. Bremen, Donat Verlag, 2021, 208 S.

Reviewed by Aram Mirzoyan, PhD, Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Foundation

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The issue of the Armenian Genocide has attracted the scholarly attention of both Armenian and non-Armenian researchers for many decades. Among the most important subjects in the field was and still is the issue of complicity in the Armenian Genocide. The most intriguing topic of research within the framework of the latter is the issue of German co-responsibility and in particular the German military's role in it. Numerous monographs and articles have dealt with this issue and allow one to argue that the German military did indeed have the main role in the German co-responsibility. It is worth mentioning, briefly, that the position and behavior of German military personnel who served in the Ottoman Empire during WWI and about whom materials are accessible were neither spontaneous nor surprising. German military culture had been taking shape from the unity wars of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was reflected in various historical events that followed. This began with the colonial campaigns in China during the Boxer Rebellion between 1900 and 1901, then in German South-West Africa during Herero and Namaqua uprisings between 1904 and 1907<sup>1</sup> and in German East Africa during the Maji Maji rebellion between 1905 and 1907. It ended with the crimes against humanity in Belgium and Northern France during WWI<sup>2</sup>.

It is necessary to bear one thing in mind when dealing with the issue of the German military's role in the Armenian Genocide – understand the general context of the question being researched. These could be the ideological or historical sectors, “personal portraits” of the key actors and other things. In other words, it is important to have a broad picture rather than a mere mention of the relevant facts.

From WWI onward, the issue of German co-responsibility in the Armenian Genocide has been periodically addressed by academicians as well as by the representatives of the public and political sectors. Many accusations have been made against the German Empire and its various representatives. Of course, not all the accusations made can be justified or have real facts to substantiate them. One of the tasks of the researchers who are active in this field is, therefore, to clarify existing information and present true facts, removing false ones.

Among the individuals who have been accused was General Otto Liman von Sanders

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1 In 2021 Germany recognized the crimes of the German Empire as genocide. See, <https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/politik/deutschland-namibia-herero-voelkermord-100.html>, accessed 14.09.2021.

2 For further information see, for example, Isabel V. Hull, “‘Military necessity’ and the laws of war in Imperial Germany,” in *Order, Conflict, and Violence*, eds. Stathis N. Kalyvas, Ian Shapiro and Tarek Masoud (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 352-377; Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction. Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005).

(hereafter generally referred to as the general). Most probably the severest of such accusations concerning him was made by Admiral Somerset Gough-Calthorpe of the Royal Navy. The Admiral argued that the general “held practically autocratic power as military dictator” when 300,000 Ottoman Greeks were subjected to deportation and massacre and that he oversaw the expulsion of 1.5 million Armenians and 450,000 Greeks from their homes in 1915.<sup>3</sup> It is obvious that more research is necessary to obtain a more objective picture of the role that General Liman von Sanders played in the fate of the Armenian people during the Armenian Genocide.

Concerning this, the newly published book *Retter oder Täter. Ein General zwischen Staatsräson und Moral: Otto Liman von Sanders und der Völkermord an den Armeniern*<sup>4</sup> by Muriel Mirak-Weißbach, an American-Armenian journalist, writer and specialist in English Studies, has broadened the context regarding one of the key individuals of the German military serving in the Ottoman Empire during WWI. General Otto Liman von Sanders was a Prussian cavalry general, a field marshal of the Ottoman Empire and head of the German military mission there from the end of 1913 until the end of WWI. The book is the sort of an adventurous journey through his later life, starting with his arrival in Constantinople on 14 December 1913 and ending with his return to Germany in 1919. Those times included the prewar period with its diplomatic battle concerning his initial appointment as the head of the first army corps, which triggered the “Liman von Sanders crisis.” This was followed by the whole of WWI (the Gallipoli campaign, the Armenian Genocide with special attention to the episodes which “brought” the Armenians as well as Greeks, Jews and him together, as well as his service in Palestine). In the immediate postwar period, he was held prisoner and interned in Malta; then returned home.

In the last three chapters of the book (“Honour,” “The German Tragedy,” “Yerevan 2019”) the author has come to the fore. If the previous chapters were devoted to the general’s life and deeds before, during and after WWI (from 1914 to 1919), then these last three chapters provide opportunity for the analysis, reasoning and finalization of the book’s main goal – depicting the general as the savior of the Armenian as well as Greek peoples and not as the war criminal who was responsible for the deportation and massacres of those same Armenians and Greeks during WWI.

The book ends with Professor Tessa Hofmann’s (Dr. phil., Magistra Artium, Prof. h.c.) and Helmut Donat’s (head of the Donat publishing house and a co-founder of the Working Group on Historical Peace Research) articles, which bring an additional viewpoint to the subject in question. The first article *Otto Liman von Sanders – an approach attempt* deals with the deportations which Otto Liman was involved in (in a positive or negative way) and with the accommodation of Greek and Armenian orphans in Panderma which he organized. The latter is considered in comparison with Turkish orphanages and Turkish state policy towards the non-Muslims orphans.

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<sup>3</sup> Michelle Tusan, *The British Empire and the Armenian Genocide. Humanitarianism and Imperial Politics from Gladstone to Churchill* (London, NY: I.B. Tauris, 2017), 216.

<sup>4</sup> Rescuer or Perpetrator. A General between Reason of State and Morality: Otto Liman von Sanders and the Armenian Genocide.

The second article *The Armenian rescuer Otto Liman von Sanders and the “honor of the German army”* is devoted to:

1. The crimes committed by the German army in Belgium and Northern France during WWI;
2. The reluctance to take responsibility for the fate of Armenians of the lands which were reconquered or newly conquered by the Turkish army after the treaty of Brest-Litovsk;
3. The propaganda of innocence (die Unschuldpropaganda) broadcast in Germany and different Germans who agreed to take part in it and who denied to do so (Otto Liman von Sanders, Johannes Lepsius, Walter Rößler vs. Armin T. Wegner, Martin Niepage, Heinrich Vierbücher).

The book’s prologue starts with the case of withdrawal of the honorable status of the general’s grave. The authorities of the German city of Darmstadt made this decision in 2015 (7)<sup>5</sup> taking into account that “*he was partly responsible for the atrocities committed against the Armenians.*” (9) As Mrs. Mirak-Weißbach states, her interest concerning the fate of the Armenians has a very personal, rather than a purely academic nature: both her parents were survivors of the Armenian Genocide and had been rescued as orphans by Turks.

According to the author there were several questions that she wanted like to find answers to. Among them were: who was Otto Liman von Sanders? What did he do during the WWI? If he really acted against the deportations, where and when did that happen? Why don’t people recognize what he did? etc. (10)

Concerning the prologue, it is worth mentioning another small detail: it claims that “*In 2016, the German Bundestag passed a resolution condemning the state crimes of the Ottoman regime but without clearly labeling them as genocide.*” (7) Indeed, this remark is mostly true concerning the body of the resolution. But the title of the resolution reads (literal translation) *Remembrance and commemoration of the genocide of the Armenians and other Christian minorities in 1915 and 1916*<sup>6</sup> (*Erinnerung und Gedenken an den Völkermord an den Armeniern und anderen christlichen Minderheiten in den Jahren 1915 und 1916*). It appears to be a quite precise mention of the Armenian Genocide. The aforementioned statement is true for the first resolution, passed by Bundestag in June 2005.

A small nuance should also be mentioned (not as a criticism, but rather as a statement of fact): sometimes it feels like the narrative drifts from the title question – rescuer or perpetrator? (Retter oder Täter?) and becomes more like biographical research concerning the general’s activities in the Ottoman Empire before and during WWI and the period of his internment in Malta. At first glance this could be considered a disadvantage. In reality, however, it provides us with the aforementioned broader picture which helps to better understand the main issue. Taking into account this feature, the current review will mostly be focused on the coverage of those parts which concern the book’s main topic.

The content of the chapter “The Genocide 1915-1917” can be roughly divided in two parts: a brief overview of the Armenian Genocide and the general’s activities to prevent or stop the deportations of Armenian and Greeks. In the transition from one topic to another

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5 The respective pages of the book are mentioned in the round parenthesis.

6 <https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/18/086/1808613.pdf>, accessed 14.12.2021.

Mrs. Mirak-Weißbach writes: “It was not the first time that Wangenheim<sup>7</sup> informed Berlin about the plight of the Armenians, and it would not be the last. But all of his diplomatic initiatives failed, as did Morgenthau’s,<sup>8</sup> with which he kept clashing. If the ambassadors in Constantinople did nothing or could not do anything, what could the military do?” (44)

The second part of the chapter describes the cases when the general opposed the deportation of Armenians and Greeks and either prevented or stopped them, e.g. in Urfa (March 1916), in the coastal regions of Asia Minor (August 1916) and Smyrna (November 1916) etc. But there was one case, when von Sanders ordered the deportation of Greeks from Ayvalık, but took all necessary steps in order to protect the deportees from severe measures. (50-51)

He also organized the accommodation of Greek and Armenian orphans in Panderma at his own expense. (47)

The chapter “Yerevan 2019” is the most important in terms of the author’s arguments and approaches concerning the role of the general. At the beginning, Mrs. Mirak-Weißbach describes the Tsitsernakaberd Memorial complex and in particular the 100 meter-long Memorial Wall as well as the symbolic tombs of people who did their best to help the Armenian people during the Genocide and to inform the world of this crime, e.g. Johannes Lepsius, Armin Wegner, Franz Werfel, Jakob Künzler, Henry Morgenthau Sr. etc. The author notes that the general is not among them. (90).<sup>9</sup>

The subsequent part of the chapter deals with author’s meeting and discussion with the director of Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Foundation and some of staff members and invited experts. (91-93).<sup>10</sup> She also discusses, justifying, in particular, Liman von Sanders’ role as the rescuer of Armenians, using the four criteria for awarding the title of Righteous Among the Nations, an official title awarded to non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust. (91-92) The approaches of the author in some points are, however, not substantiated.

The rest of this chapter (which also includes a series of photographs) presents a brief presentation of Germany’s role in the Armenian Genocide, as well as British and USA policy. (94-118) When writing about the Germans’ role, the author mentions that there wasn’t a united attitude towards the Armenian Genocide among them: it was either approved of or fought against. The general was among the second group. It is also noted that von Sanders was not able to stop the Armenian Genocide alone. (114)

The chapter “The Honor” begins with the question “Why did Liman von Sanders stand

7 Hans von Wangenheim, German ambassador to the Ottoman Empire in 1912-1915.

8 Henry Morgenthau Sr., US ambassador to the Ottoman Empire in 1913-1916.

9 This cannot be considered to be a surprise. The tombs are of those people who raised their voices or otherwise helped the Armenians during or after the Armenian Genocide. While Liman von Sanders is considered to be an accomplice in the crime of the Armenian Genocide. See for example Edita Gzoyan, «Թուրքիայի միջազգային իրավական պատասխանատուության հարցը Ա. համաշխարհային պատերազմից յետոյ», «Թուրքիայի միջազգային իրավական պատասխանատուության հարցը Ա. համաշխարհային պատերազմից յետոյ» [The Issue of Turkey’s International Legal Responsibility after World War I] *Haigazian Armenological Review* 41 (2021): 95-118

10 It should be specially mentioned that author’s interpretation of the closed discussion with some of the staff members of AGMI and invited experts is mostly unacceptable (93) but will not be referred to within this review. Generally, she does not clarify who is making the particular assertion, wrongly attributing some of them to the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute.

*up for the persecuted?”* So the main purpose of this chapter is to present the image of the general, introducing him as a person with principles, moral attitudes and a particular nature. One of the key parts of this chapter is the following:

According to his (the general’s –A.M.) understanding of military customs, he adhered to certain norms and codes of conduct and expected the same from others. It is the duty of soldiers to fight the enemy and protect civilians. (122)

Another is:

Liman’s strict adherence to the code of honor explains why he appealed to his high rank when it came to protecting innocent citizens or discriminated minority groups. It may also declare his unconditional defense of the Germans.<sup>11</sup> It was the basis of his actions but did not save him from making mistakes. (123)

The second part of the chapter deals with Soghomon Tehlirian’s trial and general’s behavior during it. The last part (Culture and Character) deals with and brings together three people – Otto Liman von Sanders, Johannes Lepsius and Walter Rößler.<sup>12</sup>

In the last chapter of the book “German Tragedy?” (135-137) the tendency to put Otto Liman von Sanders, Johannes Lepsius and Walter Rößler on the same level becomes more obvious. It might have been done intentionally in order to promote the situation where there is at least one leading person from the military establishment, civil society and the diplomatic corps who was pro-Armenian.

The book being reviewed is an attempt to bring together the facts about Otto Liman von Sanders’ life and deeds from 1913 till 1919, with special attention being given to the episodes concerning the saving of Armenians, Greeks and Jews from deportation during WWI. The main goal of this volume is to refute unfair accusations against the general and to present him as a person who carried out his office honestly. Moreover, there is a tendency in the last chapters of the book to make Otto Liman von Sanders equal to Johannes Lepsius and Walter Rößler in the field of pro-Armenian activities. The reason for this may be an attempt to find and/or create (depending on research) a prominent positive personality from the German military in the history of the Armenian Genocide.

Not all the statements and arguments the author puts forward may be accepted but this research is a step forward in the study of the role of the German Empire and its representatives in the Armenian Genocide. In any case, this book may contribute to further discussion and research.

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<sup>11</sup> This was also reflected in the denial of any accusations against the German military regarding their role in the Armenian Genocide. See, for example, *Deutschland und die Armenier. Ein Wort zu den Beschuldigungen der Entente. Von General d. Kav. Liman von Sanders.* In: *20. Jahrhundert. Dokumente zur Zeitgeschichte* 9 (1919).

<sup>12</sup> German consul in Aleppo from 1910 till 1918.

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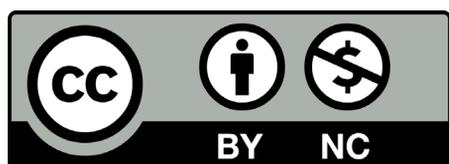
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