

**Constructing the post-Soviet Armenian National Habitus:
The Armenian Genocide and Contested Imaginations of Armenianness**

by

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Abstract

Armenians around the world commemorated the centennial of the Armenian Genocide in 2015, underscoring how compelling it is to consider contemporary expressions of their identity in relation to collective traumatic memory. This study examines the impact of the collective memory of the Genocide on the discursive shifts in Armenian national identity from 1988 until 2013. Inspired by Bourdieu's concept of habitus and critical discourse analysis, the theoretical framework of the dissertation links national habitus to the literature on collective memory and trauma and gendered constructions of the nation state. The main research question guiding this study is: *How is 'Armenianness' constructed in the period 1988-2013?* A secondary research question examined is: *Has the dominant discourse on 'Armenianness' shifted or changed in this period, and if so, how and why?* This study identifies four main pillars of Armenian collective identity in the contested construction of the discourse of 'Armenianness': *1) the place of women and constructions of femininity; 2) the 1988 movement in Armenia; 3) diaspora-homeland relations; and 4), Turkey-Armenia relations.* Using discourse analysis to analyze 48 semi-structured interviews conducted in Armenia and Karabakh in 2011 and other 'texts' such as government documents, speeches, videos, and documentaries, the case of Armenia is examined not only horizontally across time, but also across several issues that shape the political and social environment of post-Soviet Armenia.

The memory of the Armenian Genocide of 1915 is a strongly unifying factor that shapes the discourse of 'us' that makes Armenians feel part of a community, creating a strong sense of belonging to the Armenian nation despite the historical, social, ideological, and cultural differences that shape the Armenian habituses. The emotional and traumatic impact of the Genocide (through

survival stories and transmission) has shaped the habits of Armenians. As such, the Genocide of 1915 can be understood in many ways as the beginning of contemporary Armenian history that has shifted discourses around the conception of Armenianness for both the Armenian diasporas and the Armenians in Armenia, especially after 1988 for the latter. The fieldwork and analysis of all collected data reveal the importance of the *time* of 1915 for Armenians. But this seemingly unifying memory is overshadowed by, the striking complexities of difference found in Armenia and Karabakh.

The main argument of the dissertation is that the traumatic collective memory of the Armenian Genocide of 1915 directly and indirectly shapes the shifts in expressions of 'Armenianness' in Armenian national habitus(es) from 1988 until 2013 through its link with the four main pillars of Armenian identity. This link can be understood in a triangular relationship between Nagorno-Karabakh/Armenia-Turkey relations/and the traumatic memory of 1915. It seems that the continued denial of the Turkish government of their ancestor's crimes continues to weigh heavily on the Armenian psyche. Hence, the *time* of 1915 consciously and unconsciously continues to shape the process of Armenian national habituses.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Sevan Beurki Beukian. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name “Expressions of Identity in the Construction of Nations: the Case of Armenia and the post-Soviet Region”, No. Pro00019821, February 17, 2011.

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The journey of writing and completing this project has been very enjoyable to me, perhaps due to my personal connection with the importance of my topic. My defence was symbolically concluded in 2015, the year Armenians around the world commemorated the centennial of the Armenian Genocide. It is my hope that it will not be long before the threshold of justice is crossed by the Turkish state and a dignified historical justice is achieved for Armenians.

I wish to express my strong and sincere appreciation to my supervisor, Dr. Yasmine Abu-Laban. She has generously supported me from the beginning through the various stages of the PhD program, and I am deeply grateful to have worked with her. Her mentorship, wisdom, expertise, and careful guidance throughout these years have provided me with the support and confidence needed in order to complete the thesis project. Dr. Abu-Laban's constructive feedback and advice were very helpful in my first publication efforts.

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Diaspora Armenians around the World

List of Abbreviations

AAA	Armenian Assembly of America
AGBU	Armenian General Benevolent Union
ANC	Armenian National Congress
ANCA	Armenian National Committee of America
ANM	Armenian National Movement
HHSh	Hayots Hamazkayin Sharzhum or ANM
IEOM	International Election Observation Mission (IEOM)
KGB	Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti (Committee for State Security)
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
NK	Nagorno-Karabakh
NKAO	Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast
RSFSR	Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic
SSR	Soviet Socialist Republic
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USA/US	United States of America
USD	United States Dollars
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Diagram #1 Theoretical Framework

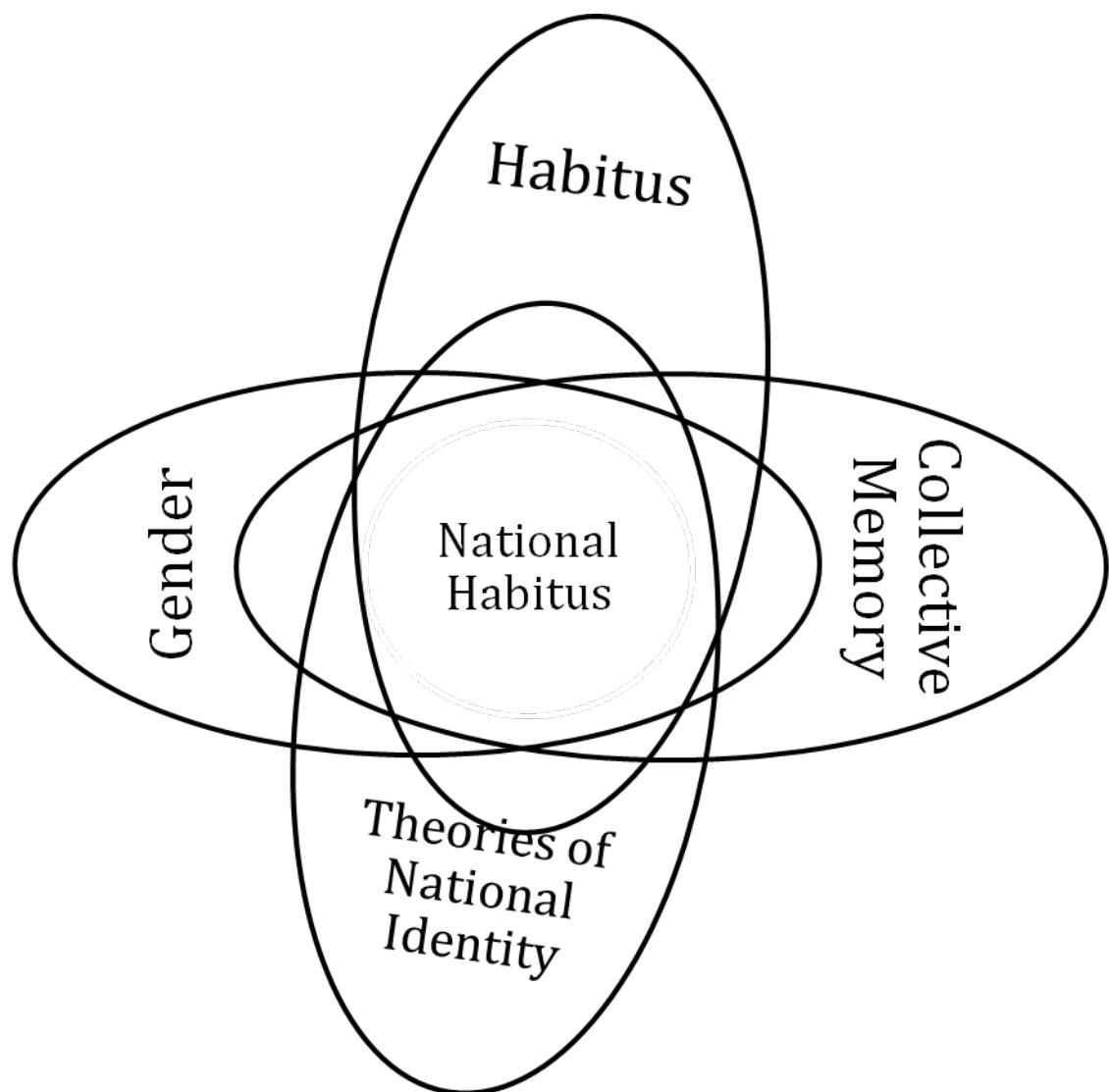
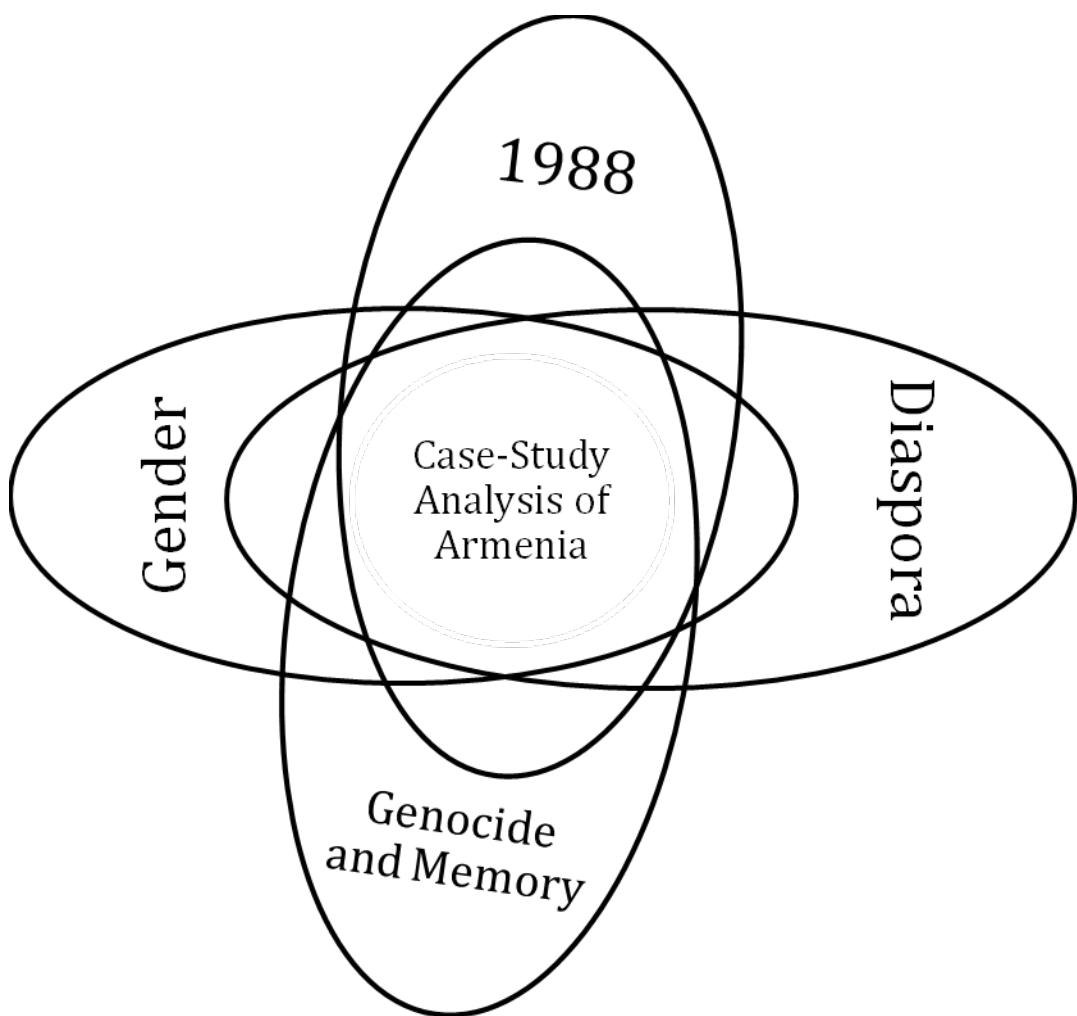
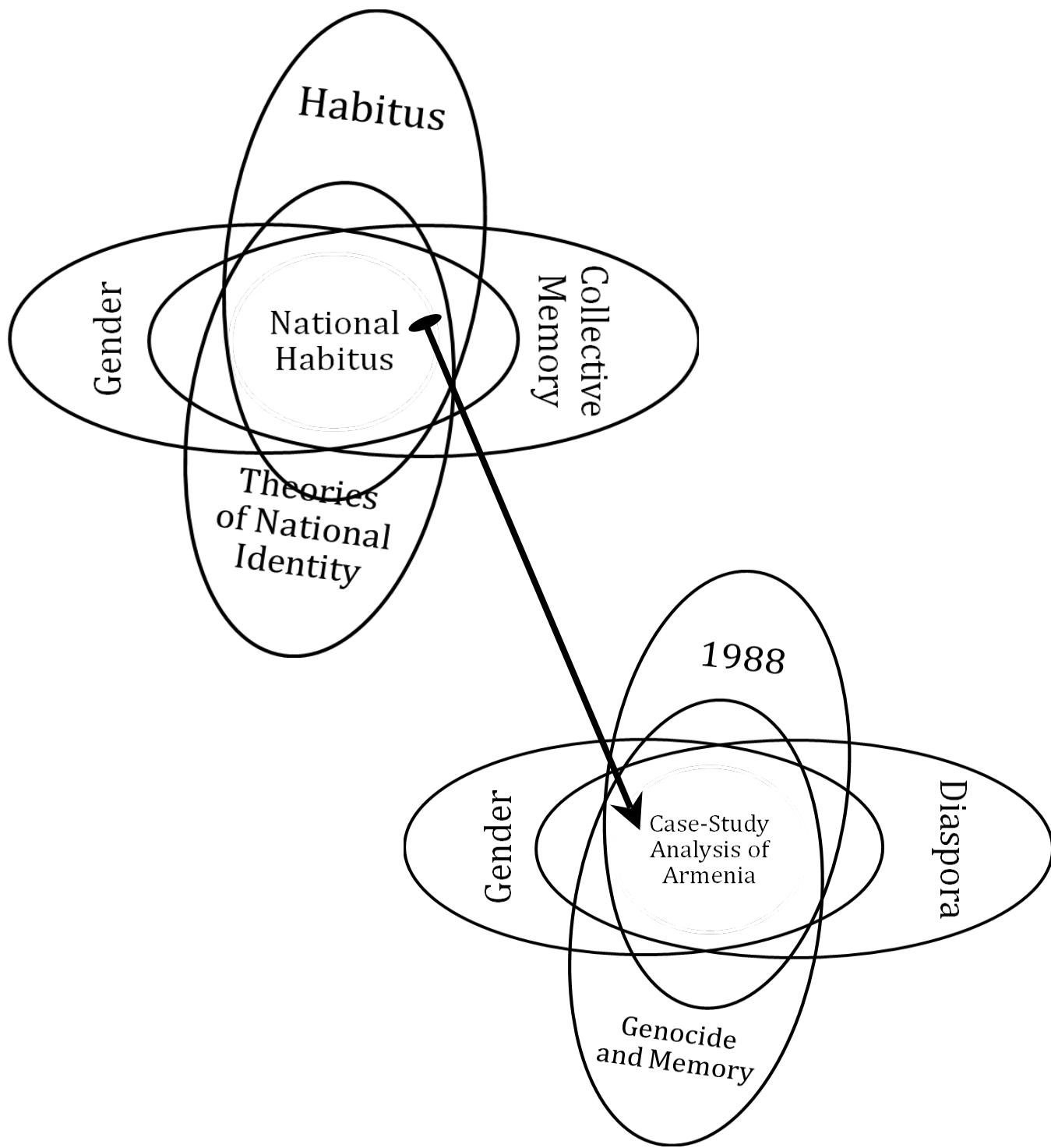


Diagram #2 Case-Study Analysis



Diagram#3 Linking National Habitus and the Case of Armenia



Introduction

It is impossible to exaggerate the significance of
the *mets eghern* (great slaughter) for
contemporary Armenian thinking, both in
Armenia and in the diaspora. The genocide
virtually eliminated Armenians from nine-tenths
of their historical territories in Turkey, leaving
them only the small fragment in the Russian
Transcaucasus to call their own. Throughout the
Middle East, Europe, and North America, it
created new or vastly enlarged diaspora
communities, where the memory of the genocide
served as a virtual “charter of identity,” even for
those who had not directly experienced it.
-- Dudwick 1997, 475, emphasis in original

This dissertation deals directly and indirectly with collective memory and trauma. The collective memory of the past, especially one that encompasses suffering, pain, and trauma, heavily shapes the national identity of a collective and individuals in that collective. Not only are these emotions transmitted intergenerationally, but they are kept in the memoir of the nation and constitute its accumulated memory. Emotions matter in politics in a way that is sometimes directly and indirectly infiltrated into the discursive construct of a nation. The past continues to be strongly present, and reflects the directions of the future as well, especially in the event of a traumatic past that lives in the nation's memory; as such the “traumatic dimension of the political” to use Jenny Edkin's phrase (2003, 8) has become an important aspect of study in political science that engages with questions of memory, politics, and trauma. As Ernest Renan eloquently put it as he wrote of the nation in the nineteenth century, sufferance brings people together in more powerful ways than the glorious days, a point that has been accentuated by Anthony Smith's work (2013b). As Renan put it,

To have common glories in the past and a common will in the present, to have accomplished great deeds together, and to wish to do more – these are the conditions that make a people. We love in proportion to the sacrifices to which we consented and to the ills we have suffered...Having shared a heritage of glory and regrets in the past, and having a shared and common program to fulfill in the future; to have suffered, enjoyed, and hoped together is much more meaningful than the common customs and borders that conform to strategic ideas. This is what we can understand despite the diversity of race and language. This is the point I was making earlier: “having suffered together”, and indeed, the common suffering unites [people] more than joy does. In terms of national memories, morning is worth more than glory, because it imposes obligations, and demands a common effort (1882, 23, author’s translation).

Traumatic experiences that are engraved in the collective (and individual) historical memory of a nation do not ‘disappear’ or ‘dissipate’ over time. Instead, I argue that these traumatic memories articulate themselves in the constructions of the nation continuously over time, especially when they constitute an enormous tragedy such as a Genocide, for example. The politics of memory and trauma examines the ways in which national habitus is shaped around narratives and constructions about certain events or times in the past. This is important not only because it shows that emotions matter in politics, but also because emotions reflect themselves into the most unexpected political and social expressions, such as in the 1988 nationalist movement in Armenia that gathered about a million protestors in Yerevan calling for the unification of Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia in the Soviet Union, or in Armenian foreign policy decision making . The aim of the dissertation is to present a narrative of the Armenian national identity as a discursive construct that looks at interviews conducted in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh and at other semiotic materials in order to unravel the factors that shape Armenianness.

In their seminal work on Palestinian memory and national identity construction, Ahmad Sa’di and Lila Abu-Lughod wrote the following related to the impact of the Nakba catastrophe in Palestinian national imagining: “The Nakba is often reckoned as the beginning of contemporary

Palestinian history, a history of catastrophic changes, violent suppression, and refusal to disappear. It is the focal point for what might be called Palestinian time” (Abu-Lughod and Sa’di 2013, 5). The Genocide of 1915 is in many ways the beginning of contemporary Armenian history that has shaped the conception of Armenianness for both the Armenian diaspora and the Armenians in Armenia, especially after 1988 for the latter. The fieldwork and analysis of all collected data revealed the importance of the *time* of 1915 for Armenians. The *time* of 1915 consciously and unconsciously shapes the construction of the Armenian national identity. The various factors examined in this dissertation that determine the discursive constructions of Armenian national identity highlight the place of 1915 in the collective identity of Armenians in Armenia and in the diaspora habituses through the complexities and contestations of Armenian identity. The memory of the Armenian Genocide is a strongly unifying factor that defines the ‘us’ and that constructs the Armenian imagined community to create a strong sense of belonging to the Armenian nation despite the historical, social, ideological, cultural differences that shape each Armenian habitus.¹ But within this seemingly unified nation, the complexities of difference are striking and significant for the construction of the imagined community. The dissertation takes a look at these contestations from the local Armenian perspective, through the fieldwork conducted in Armenia and Karabakh in 2011.

The continued stubborn and persistent denial by the Turkish state of the Armenian Genocide, the pain and emotions of remembering the suffering of grandparents and parents for Armenians, and the generation of orphaned children that eventually built their lives from nothing

¹ The dissertation takes seriously the consideration by Brubaker regarding the concept of groupism, and the importance of recognizing the diversity within groups. As such, I use the term Armenian habituses to denote that diversity. Obviously, diaspora habituses are diverse not only in terms of the field within which they are socialized, but also in terms of the diversity of perspectives within each habitus as well - so we can use for example sub-habitus(es) to capture that diversity. However, for the purpose of simplifying the text and the reading I will refer to habituses in plural in this thesis, but I am aware of the distinctions.

have moulded the Armenian national psyche, as reflected in the perceptions of Armenianness. The politics of emotion, then, is an important lens through which to examine and understand the case of Armenian national identity formation. According to Sara Ahmed, emotions are not limited to the psychological individual realm or the cognitive judgmental realm, but are important to look at in the public sphere for their pervasiveness in creating social boundaries between ‘self’ and ‘others’ or ‘us’ and ‘them’, emphasizing the sociality of emotions (2015; also see Sa’di and Abu-Lughod 2013; Halbwachs 2001). Jenny Edkins similarly argues that the collective remembering of traumatic events shapes and moulds the construction of national identity and foreign policy-making (Edkins 2003; also Langenbacher and Shain 2010; Becker 2014). The dissertation chapters examine the way in which the ‘us’ is constructed, revealing not only the points of agreement and similarity that strengthen the sense of belonging, but also, and more importantly, the discords and divergent imaginings around the construction of Armenianness and the boundaries of the Armenian nation.

The memory of the Armenian Genocide is often perceived to be stronger in the diaspora, due to the fact that the diaspora of 1915, or the *spayurk*,² was formed in large part by the survivors of the Armenian Genocide. However, the remembering of the Armenian Genocide is equally strong in Armenia, where we can estimate that about 40-50%³ of the population today are descendants of the Armenian Genocide, many of whom continue to identify with the village of their grandparents

²In Armenian *spayurk* means diaspora, and it refers to the ‘external’ (versus ‘internal’) diaspora living outside of the republics of the Soviet Union. The internal diaspora refers to the Armenian diaspora living outside of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republics but within the Soviet Union borders. After 1991, the term has not changes its meaning and continues to refer to the diaspora that lives in the Middle East, The Americas, Africa, Europe and Asia - but not within the former Soviet borders (the fifteen independent post-Soviet republics). In some way, such a distinctive terminology of diasporas further leads to the ‘othering’ of these ‘diasporas’ (for more information on this topic, see Panossian 1998, 1999, 2006; Tölölyan 1991, 1999, 2007; Payaslian 2010).

³ These numbers are not easy to determine, but already in the 1920s, according to Nora Dudwick, about a quarter of the Armenian population in the Russian part were the survivors of the Armenian Genocide who had found refuge in that part of Armenia (Dudwick 1997, 475; Saroyan 1988, 222). This statistics was also mentioned to me by Giro Manoyan, the Director of the International Secretariat and Armenian Cause (*Hai Tad*) Office of the Dashnak Party in Armenia, during my interview with him.

in today's eastern Turkey – or Western Armenia (*Arevmedian Hayasdan*) for Armenians.⁴ After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the many newly independent states that were formed in 1991 faced great hardship as they attempted to assert their 'separate' identities from the imperial centre, Russia, and from the Soviet past. In addition to a process of de-Sovietization, these new states are still undergoing a period of transition that is shaping the path of the nation-building process. Asserting one's identity as a nation includes decisions as to who is included and who is excluded, and most importantly what and who determines that. It also includes the geopolitical influences such as Europeanization which may come in conflict with ideas of 'authentic tradition'. The dissertation aims at studying the nation-building process in the post-Soviet region, particularly tackling the case of Armenia.

The introductory chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section lays out the key question and the core argument of the dissertation. The second one addresses extant historical explanations to contextualize the case study by tackling the expressions or silences of nationalism and identity in the Soviet era. The Soviet Nationalities Policy (SNP) is presented to explain the Soviet conception of the nation, nationalism, and identity. Although these policies underwent changes throughout the years, even after Stalin, the core outlook on the nation as a primordial objective category, for example, remained the same. Similarly, the historiography adopted by the Soviet authorities can also reveal the perception and design behind the SNP, and the way the Soviet state perceived the peoples within its borders, and what implications this has on the understanding of the post-Soviet nationalizing states. This section also tackles the history and memory of the Armenian Genocide of 1915 and its consequence on the Armenian nation's dispersal and

⁴ Western Armenia is the term used by many Armenians to refer to eastern Turkey in a geographical sense, and to remember their historical land where they lived before being expelled during the Armenian Genocide of 1915 committed by the Young Turk Ottoman government. The six Armenian vilayets or provinces in the Ottoman Empire were completely depopulated of its Armenian population from 1915: Van, Erzrum, Harput, Bitlis, Sivas, Diyarbekir,

separation from the homeland. The third section presents the methodological building blocks of the project, stressing the approach that was used to analyze the data collected during the fieldwork in Armenia and Karabakh in 2011 and through other sources.

Key Question and Core Argument: How the Dissertation is Organized

The dissertation project presents an analysis of the politics of Armenian national identity formation since the rise of the nationalist ‘liberation’ movement of 1988. This study seeks to fill an important gap in the literature on Armenia, where the focus has heavily been on diaspora politics, the study of diaspora nationalism, the study of the Armenian Genocide from a historical, anthropological, and sociological perspective, and the study of Armenian identity over the centuries (how nationalism rose). There are various studies that have looked at the Sovietization process in Armenia (Matossian 1962; Suny 1993a, 1993b), the nationalist movements of 1988 that led to the current independence (Malkasian 1996; Marutyan 2009; Chorbajian et al. 1994, Dudwick 1993, 1994), and the formation of the Armenian national identity over centuries (for different periods and for studies on Eastern Armenia and Western Armenia see the various sources by Panossian 2009; Payaslian 2007; Abrahamian 2006, Hovannisian 1997; Bournoutian 1983, 1993/4; Chorbajian 1994; Dudwick 1997; Russell 1997).

More recent studies on the post-Soviet period of Armenia focus on foreign policy (Papazian 2006; Giragosian 2006; Panossian 1998, 2001), the Armenian diaspora (Panossian 1998, 2006; Payaslian 2010; Bakalian 1993; Tölölyan 2000; Ter-Minassian, 1988, 1997; Pattie 1997, 2005), the diaspora-Armenia relationship (See Tölölyan 1996, 2002, Panossian 1998, 1999, 2001, 2003, Astourian 2005), democratic challenges (Krikorian and Masih 1999; Payaslian 2011; Ishkanian 2013), socio-economic conditions (Krikorian and Masih 1999; Dudwick et al. 2003) and the ethno-

territorial conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh (for the origins of the conflict and its potential resolution process see Geukjian 2012, 2014; Astourian 1994; and de Waal 2013, for the international peace-mediation efforts and failures, see Mouradian 1999; Cheterian 2011). Often some of these studies are framed from a “state-building” perspective. The case of the Armenian diaspora is also covered in the literature through the lens of Genocide studies,⁵ highlighting the impact of the Armenian Genocide on the collective memory of the diasporan Armenians or on individual discoveries of identity (Hovannisian 1986, 1992, 2007; MacDonald 2008; Miller and Touryan Miller 1993; Azarian 2007; Balakian 2009).⁶ There is a clear lack of scholarship that represents the expressions of identity of Armenians in Armenia through the memory of genocide, with few exceptions.⁷ *This dissertation project attempts to fill this gap in the literature by looking at how the Genocide is the main thread that weaves together the narrative of post-Soviet Armenian national identity expressions from 1988 to 2013.*

The aim of my dissertation is to look more closely at the “nation-building” process focusing on identity and constructs of Armenianness in Armenia in order to understand the challenges and outcomes of the Soviet legacy as well as the contemporary changes in national identity perceptions. In the theoretical Chapter One, I show how identities are socially constructed

⁵ I am differentiating here works that deal with the historical, legal, ethical, and moral components of the Armenian Genocide study. These works are quite extensive in the literature, and many Armenian scholars continue to actively publish on this issue.

⁶ Historical studies that examine the events of the Armenian Genocide with research in archives, historical documents, memoirs, and other historical materials are extensive and some of these sources include: Suny, Gocek and Naimark 2011; Walker 1980; Ternon 1990; Akçam 2004, 2012; Dadrian 2003[1995], 2004 [1999]; Bloxham 2005. In addition, several studies have focused on the Armenian Genocide from the narrative method of oral history collections, see for example Miller and Miller 1993 and Totten 2009; for the impact of the traumatic memory of the Armenian Genocide, see Hovannisian 1986, 1987, 1992, 2007; Balakian 2009; Svatlian 2011, Tachjian 2009. Finally on the reparations issue, see Theriault et al. 2015.

⁷ Harutyun Marutyan (2009) is the exception, who provides a detailed overview on the 1988 movement through the lens of the Armenian Genocide, and see Marutyan (2010) and Nora Dudwick (1997, 1993). Dudwick has provided an excellent analysis of the transformation of Armenian society from the 1988 movement and after. Her ethnographic and extensive interviews have been analyzed through collective memory and how it has been constructed in Armenian politics.

through discourse and how these identity discourses shape the process of national identity making in the case of Armenia from 1988 to 2013. I suggest adopting a more critical and integrative perspective of the various factors that shape Armenian national identity constructs in order to understand the constructions and discourses of Armenianness. In addition, I hypothesize that a seemingly ethnically ‘homogeneous’ nation should be studied more critically to uncover the underlying complex and contested relationships and issues. This is particularly striking in the case of the memory of the Armenian Genocide of 1915, which, at first sight, seems like a unifying memory, but in-depth examination of the perceptions and discourses around this memory will reveal, on the contrary, contested and competing definitions of Armenian identity.

The key research questions in this dissertation are as follows: *How is ‘Armenianness’ constructed in the period 1988-2013?* In addition, a second research question is also pertinent to unravel the constructions of identity: *Has the dominant discourse on ‘Armenianness’ shifted or changed in this period, and if so, how and why?* The questions will be tackled through the analysis of four main pillars of Armenian collective identity: gender relations and constructions of femininity, the 1988 movement in Armenia, diaspora-homeland and diaspora-Armenian state relations, and finally, Turkish-Armenian relations. To be able to understand the case of Armenian national habitus and the making of Armenianness, it is imperative to understand the strong links between Armenia and its diverse diaspora, which is in essence formed due to the organized genocide against Armenians by the Ottoman Young Turk government (for references on the historical examination of the Armenian Genocide, see ft 6; more details on the formation of the diaspora organizations are provided below). As such, understanding Turkish-Armenian relations is necessary, since ‘Turkey’ – the ‘Other’ – has been shaping ‘Armenianness’ especially since 1915. By extension, even though relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan can be distinguished from

Turkey-Armenia relations in some way, it is equally quite difficult to separate Turkey and Azerbaijan completely, since their foreign policies are tightly linked (see Chapters Two and Five). The year 1988 that brought people to the streets of Yerevan to ask for the unification of Karabakh with Armenia, which later also led to calls for the independence of Armenia from the Soviet Union, is also strongly representative of the moment of change from Soviet Armenia to a post-Soviet state that began symbolizing the ‘homeland’ of all Armenians even if it was only a small portion of the historical homeland of Armenians. A final but extremely important element that shapes the construction of Armenianness in the habitus is the way femininity is perceived among Armenians. The policies and perspectives tied to gender, family, and sexuality ought to be analyzed not from the local domestic perspective only, but also via transnational and international lenses in order to have a fuller and deeper understanding of the factors that condition certain discourses and restrain others that are not deemed ‘authentic’ Armenian (see Chapter Three). Such a study also notes the way social boundaries around femininity and masculinity segregate and exclude those who do not fit within those boundaries. This highlights the presence of a gender narrative that favours the dominance of the heterosexual and patriarchal family structure. These four pillars were chosen based on their importance in the discourses of Armenian identity and were also determined after the interviewees’ perspectives were collected and reflected upon. I explain this in more details in the methodology section in this chapter.

As such, identity discourses in Armenia are examined through the chosen four pillars of Armenian identity, and the empirical chapters will demonstrate how discursive shifts of Armenianness around these four factors should be analyzed through the triangular relationship of Nagorno-Karabakh/Armenia-Turkey relations/Collective traumatic memory of 1915. The dissertation is organized into a total of six chapters, including the introductory and concluding

chapters. The second, third, fourth, and fifth chapters present a detailed analysis of the case of Armenia based on the chosen four pillars of Armenian identity. These chapters also seek to answer a secondary question in this dissertation: *What is the impact of each factor on the process of Armenian identity formation?* The first chapter lays the backbone of the empirical discussion by presenting the overall theoretical framework of the dissertation. In addition, each chapter includes a more elaborate theoretical discussion that ties the examined Armenian identity factor with the general literature on that topic. This is also useful to further contextualize the Armenian case in the wider literature and to link each chapter to the main theoretical discussion.

The main research question has to inevitably tackle the way national expressions have shifted during 1988-1991 pre-independent years as well, because these years represent the period of heightened levels of nationalism, when the mobilization of the nationalist and separatist movements took place.⁸ In fact, the nationalist movements are often presented in the literature as one of the major causes leading to the dismantling of the Soviet Union (Suny 1991; Bremmer & Taras 1993; Muiznieks 1995; Cheterian 2008: 7-23; Brown 1997): it was indeed the reforms initiated by the centre that led to its own decay, and allowed the formation of a domain of action outside the party structures within the republics and autonomous regions (see especially Marples

⁸ In retrospect, we clearly know that the late 1980s marked crucial years in the history of the Soviet Union and the destiny of each republic. Yet, in the words of Mark Beissinger, “the idea of the disintegration of the Soviet state moved from the wholly unimaginable to the completely inevitable within the popular mind – both within the USSR and outside” (2002, 5). Indeed, as Beissinger argues, very few scholars were able to imagine or predict the collapse of the Soviet empire. One of the exceptions is the work of Hélène Carrère D’Encausse (1978), where she predicts the explosion (*L’Empire Éclate*) of the empire, yet identifies the weakness in the nationalist revolts against the centre (specifically from the Caucasus and Central Asia), without putting weight upon the weakening of the central party from where the reform policies initiated, and the nationalist mobilization and protests that were came as a result of these reforms and which eventually led to the breakdown of the Soviet Union.

1991 on this point).⁹ These movements began in the Baltic States, Armenia, and Eastern Europe and quickly spread towards other places like Georgia and Azerbaijan (Dawson 1996; Sedaitis and Butterfield 1991; Beissinger 2002; Jones 1997; Bremmer and Taras 1997). Some of them began as ecological movements, but quickly transformed into nationalist ones (see Geukjian 2007, 2012; Malkasian 1996; Dawson 1996, ix-x; Marples 1991, 2007).

The main argument of the dissertation is that the Karabakh movement of 1988, the role of women in the Armenian national habitus, the diaspora-homeland relations, and the Turkey-Armenia attempts to establish diplomatic ties, are all filtered through the memory of the Armenian Genocide of 1915. Therefore, the memory of the Armenian Genocide plays a strong role in shaping the Armenian national habitus(es) and this will be explored in more details within each empirical chapter. It seems that the continued denial of the Turkish government of their ancestors' crimes continues to weigh heavily on the Armenian psyche. Obviously not all Armenians think that there should be a preconditioned relationship with the Turkish government, or that the recognition of the Genocide, for example, is a necessary condition to build a relationship with the country. However, the fact that the genocide issue asserts a certain presence in social and political discussions affirms its importance, and now seems to predominate, to a certain extent and most of the time indirectly,

⁹ There are various interpretations to the collapse of the Soviet Union. One of the major ones has been that the collapse of the empire was caused by the Soviet nationalities policy on a long-term and the mobilization of nationalist movements on a short-term. I believe that the nationalist mobilizations in the late 1980s played a crucial role in the destabilization of the Soviet institutions - I refer this in the text in the next page. However, the below stated explanations are useful to consider because the collapse of such a regime may be more complex than to analyze with a single explanation. Cheterian (2009, 14-15) argues that it is not possible to explain the Soviet collapse with a single argument, and all these and other explanations are valuable for analytical purposes because "the Soviet collapse was the fall of an ideology, an empire and a system simultaneously" (15), Katherine Verdery (1996) argues that it is the presence of a "dual" economy – composed of a centrally administered controlling heavy industries and a second privatized part regulating consumer goods – that led to the collapse because the privatized part became the stronger of the economies, mainly initiated by the development of western capitalism. Zaslavsky takes a militaro-industrial approach to explaining the collapse, arguing that it was the model of the planned economy based on this approach that was pulling down the whole society to a "counter-modernization" (1997: 89). A third explanation argues that the collapse is due to imperial overstretch, focusing on increased military spending causing the need for further reforms in the state and party structures, at a time (perestroika) when spending was supposed to be reduced.

the nature and content of the diaspora-homeland relations, Armenian women's struggle for their own rights, the resolution of the Karabakh conflict with Azerbaijan (due to its direct link with Turkey),¹⁰ and the normalization of the relations with the Turkish state. The chapters that deal with the case study will show that there are clear and important reasons to consider the genocide in these relationships and the politics of Armenia. As such the Armenian Genocide of 1915 is not necessarily a direct factor but one that seems to come up and emerge in the discussion of each pillar of Armenian identity. Diagram #2 attached at the beginning portrays this point more visually.

Building History and Memory in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Eras

History and Historiography

Every nation formation involves a process shaped by the discourses and markers of belonging and identities. This process is not done in isolation; instead, it is heavily and deeply shaped by the historical conditions and the (sometimes contentious) events that disrupt the continuity and stability of a national discourse. An important consideration that this study makes is that national identity is multidimensional in scope, highlighting the importance of such a perspective in order “to avoid reifying ‘identity’ by theorizing identities as multiple, fragmented, and fluid” (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 6). Such a view requires looking at national identity as constructions (Calhoun 1997) in a way that takes into account the interrelated and interconnected factors of gender, diaspora, memory, and history.. The collective memory of past events, especially traumatic ones, creates strong ruptures in the nation building process of a nation, and as such becomes important markers of identity around which national identity discourse is constructed.

¹⁰ For an account of the Karabakh conflict from its beginnings to the ceasefire process, see the works of de Waal, 2010, 2013, especially chapter 11-14; Geukjian 2012, especially chapter 7; Zurcher 2007; Böyükbaş 2011; Altstadt 1992, among others.)

This is the basis of the framework used in this project for the study of Armenian national identity formation.

In most cases, according to Kolstø, what constitutes a strong nation is the ability to trace a history of statehood for the nation – the 19th century tradition of dividing ‘historical’ versus ‘ahistorical’ nations (2000, 30-31; also see Panossian 2006). The earlier in time this history of statehood, the stronger the roots of nationhood. This became the task of the Soviet ideologues, national academics in the republics, and nationalists’ own competing versions of people’s belonging and history in a given delimited territory: examples include Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, for example. The Soviet and post-Soviet era, however, demonstrate that national historians, intellectuals, ethnographers, and philologists have been able to relate to a ‘historical’ past, no matter whether this past was measured in terms of centuries or decades. What is also striking for the post-Soviet cases is the attempt at overcoming the Soviet historiography that “simply removed all persons who had fallen from grace, even central figures in important events of the past” (Kolstø 2000, 51). In the case of the Soviet Union, historiography was utilized deliberately and systematically by the leadership to integrate a multinational society and modernize it along self-defined socialist lines, by adopting particular conceptualizations of the nation and the nationalities that were part of the USSR. As early as 1913, even before the Russian revolution, Stalin wrote that nations are “a historically developed and stable community of people that has emerged on the basis of commonality of their language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up as manifest in the community of culture....Absence of at least one of these traits is enough for a nation not to be a nation” (Stalin 1951-52, 296-7, quoted in Tishkov 1997, 29).

National histories were suppressed and rewritten with these goals in mind. Historiography has been politicized for the purposes of artificially shaping official views of national identity both

in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. There is also, however, another aspect to this historiography, that of the marginal discourse (or counter-discourse) during the Soviet era, which, although repressed by Soviet control, was able to continue to develop through some historians' writings. This marginal discourse represents "a more subtle discourse distinct from the Soviet official line, often for the defence of the nation and against either the Russian central power or a rival neighbouring nationality" (Cheterian 2008, 37) In fact, it was this discourse that rose from the spectre of Soviet repression to slowly replace the dominance of the Soviet historiography, and this was possible only in the late 1980s with *perestroika* (restructuring) and *glasnost* (openness) in action. As Cheterian argues, "It was this marginal discourse that succeeded in mobilizing the imagination of the masses and emerging new elites, the intelligentsia and the working class, as the legitimacy of the Soviet ideology weakened." (2008, 37)

The Academies of Sciences and universities in the various republics of the peripheries of the USSR were important in producing the peripheral historiographies, not only in the union republics but also in the autonomous republics and oblasts, especially because they were restricted to their own territories and not to the Soviet Union in general (Kappeler 2003, 37). Some of the publications were printed in the national languages and made an effort to "conserve the traditions of the prerevolutionary period and of the 1920s." (Ibid.), to the extent that this was possible. However, an insightful point that Andreas Kappeler brings forth is that there were some differences in the extent of freedom in these publications: he adds that the Ukrainian, Tatar, and Moldovian historiographies were more controlled by the Soviets than those of the Baltic republics, Russia, Georgia, and Armenia (Ibid.), which provides an important understanding of the dynamics of the rise of the Armenian movement of 1988 in Yerevan, compared to other cases, though this is not the main focus of this section or thesis.

Only in the late 1980s were the historiographies of the various territories (somewhat) released from the Soviet ideological control. Historians in the republics and other territories began recovering and rewriting the ‘national’ histories of the people in the attempt to bring back the memories lost or buried under Soviet control. Andreas Kappeler distinguishes a few ways that the historians revived the history: some referred to the writings of the pre-Soviet national historians. Others relied on the models of the writings of émigrés (Armenians and those from the Baltic States) to build their own national histories, though this was not without internal intellectual clashes between the diasporic communities and the locals, such as the case of Armenia.

National historiography is thus an important element in the construction and formation of national identities. Its main function is to build “consensus through time”, as Edward Shils (1975, 186) states, upon which national identities are constructed and reconstructed. It is thus an attempt at locating people and their histories to identify the ‘other(s)’ in a historical mapping. The past is selected and moulded to fit present needs, certain parts of the past are promoted, others are sometimes aggressively forgotten in the making of history, and this applies to nation formation processes in general, not just to the post-Soviet space. In the independence period in the post-Soviet region, there was an active process of remaking history, especially because in some cases the historiography of the Soviet Union, in the views of the nationalists and historians, was incompatible with the reality of the history of the nation, was biased towards one nation against another, or was simply discriminatory in its imperial conceptualization and relative aggressiveness in promoting Russification. Therefore, national historiography is the “dialectic of collective remembering and forgetting, and of imagination and unimaginative repetition...” (Billig 1995, 10, taken from Sasse 2007, 65)

In a region such as the Caucasus, so diverse in its ethnic, religious, and territorial composition, it is inevitably necessary to take this dialectical relationship into account. It is also important to view historiography in terms of a responsive measure to other historiographies – especially in times of change and conflict, when it becomes increasingly necessary and essential for nations to assert their belonging and ‘ownership’ of a territory. Although historiography can constitute the meta-narrative of the nation, meaning the attempts to find an abstract meaning and definition of a nation for a people, it is as important to understand that these abstractions are translated into everyday activities, social factors that showcase national identity on a daily basis, related to the experiences of people and the circumstances they find themselves in (Somers 1994; James 1996; Wodak 1999; Platz 2000), especially because this reflects on the social practice of people, or the externalization of the metanarratives of national identity and history that becomes constitutive of the national habitus (to adapt from Bourdieu 1977). The context of historiography in the Soviet Union has been created by the ideological framework set by the Soviet approach to nationalities in its territory. This was done through a strict top-down view and ‘objective’ primordial understanding of nations and ethnicity. The knowledge of the territory and the peoples the Bolsheviks had conquered became an important tool in the hands of the rulers in order to make necessary decisions and this knowledge was collected through the work of ethnographers and locals (Hirsch 2005; Kolstø 2000): they sought to change and to homogenize the large Soviet entity, all by promoting the local national elements through a socialist lens. This was somewhat contradictory and it eventually perhaps led to the weakening of the Soviet state.. Notwithstanding actions of resistance, there was an overall influence of Russification and Sovietization that changed the social fabric and people, and the way they viewed and understood their surroundings. In sum, the Soviet state inevitably moulded the national habitus(es) of the Soviet peoples in the attempt to

create the *Homo Sovieticus*, explained below, and their actions of resistance are thus to be understood as a mechanism of agency and resistance.

The ethnographers had designed and created ethnic categories that the peoples of the Soviet Union had to choose from. It was a subjective self-identification only in appearance of one's ethnic or national belonging, but in reality it was strictly designed by the 'experts' who knew 'better', and this had implications in terms of how certain ethnic groups were classified as smaller or more advanced. The way assimilation took place was not only of the ethnic groups within the larger Soviet entity, but also of the smaller groups within the republics into the 'national identity' of that republic, a process that Hirsch terms 'double assimilation' which was not "simply a top-down process. Its success depended on mass participation. Soviet leaders and institutions introduced new vocabularies and structures, and then worked to make sure that people found them meaningful." (Hirsch 2014, 147) But these mechanisms of imposed categories of identity and assimilation were not always successful, as the case of the Karabakhi Armenians in Azerbaijan demonstrates.

In the nation-building process in the Soviet Union, the authorities faced an important obstacle. The aim was to draw the national state boundaries according to ethnic divisions or lines. However, this proved to be unsuccessful because the Soviet state's population was ethnically mixed and the boundaries of ethnicity were undergoing constant changes due to forced deportations, voluntary emigrations, border shifts - often imposed by the authorities - and intermarriages. These changes and inconsistencies made it "impossible to determine distinctly even the very names of Soviet nationalities, worse still to outline their 'own' territories" (Tishkov 1997, 31). It was mainly the ethnographers' job to delimit the boundaries and redraw the borders according to the nationalities or ethnic groups. Ethnographers and other experts were asked to fix

‘national’ boundaries, and they therefore tried to territorialize ethnicity, which created ethnic cartography in Russian ethnography. This was not just in Russia, as ethnographers in most national states understood ethnicity in strictly territorial ways; notably, this is perhaps not much different from dominant Western conceptions of the nation-state and national identity. In the end, the Soviet nationality regime was designed in a way that institutionalized ethnic diversity in a way that “ethnic nationality was aligned with the organization of public life.” (Brubaker 1996, 28) The uniqueness, if we can term it that way, of the Soviet state, is that “no other state has gone so far in sponsoring, codifying, institutionalizing, even (in some cases) inventing nationhood and nationality on the sub-state level, while at the same time doing nothing to institutionalize them on the level of the state as a whole.” (Brubaker 1996, 29)

The Soviet conceptualization of ethnicity and nationalism was one of the causes of the eruption of conflicts in various parts of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s. This led to claims of secession or separatism and irredentism. Therefore, these policies had mixed results throughout the republic and this process of territorial nationalism led to a certain reinforcement of the modern nation state, since the whole process was based on the assumption that territory was an important component of ethnic identity.

Exploring the Legacy of the Soviet Nationalities Policies (SNP)

One of the most important issues and analysis with the process of Soviet and post-Soviet nation formation is the Soviet objectification of the traditional ethnic and national cultures - this meant that the Soviet construction of nationalism conceived the nation or ethnic community as a natural grouping that traditionally existed in the particular territorial boundaries. The Soviets created categories of identification based on ethnographic research, censuses, and maps, as

Benedict Anderson writes with the Southeast Asia in mind, “...the census, the map, and the museum: together, they profoundly shaped the way in which the colonial state imagined its dominion – the nature of the human beings it rules, the geography of its domain, and the legitimacy of its ancestry.” (1996, 164) Of course this did not mean that the Soviets relied on the subjective self-identification of the various national and ethnic communities within its borders, but rather it derived its categorization to create imposed categories based on the perceived ethnic markers from the top down.

The discussion of the Russian imperial and colonial mechanism of categorizing the peoples within its borders reveals the ideas and ideologies Soviets considered relevant in enforcing on its peoples. Whatever the Soviet ideas encompassed and represented, and whatever political content it was conveying and imposing, what did people still consider as authentically theirs? Was there a differentiation between their views and what was deliberately constructed as theirs? The case of Armenia will show that there is a national area of expression that remained ‘authentic’ for Soviet republics (or regions, oblasts), and in particular for this project, what stands out is the year 1965 in Soviet Armenian where a protest on the occasion of the fiftieth commemoration of the Armenian Genocide of 1915 was organized.¹¹ This was followed by the recognition of the Soviet authorities of Armenian nationalism and the desire to raise their voice on the silenced topic of Genocide. The construction of the Armenian Genocide commemoration site of Tsitsernakaberd in 1967 succeeded the organized marches and protest in Armenia. This event is engraved in Armenian national memory and represents one of the first outbursts of Armenian nationalism in the tightly knit Soviet controlled republics.

¹¹ The protest of 1965 came in an era that was deemed more ‘relaxed’ due to the Khrushchev Thaw of the late 1950s and early 1960s, which created the opportunity for Armenian nationalism to revive. This period led to the formation of a “semi-secret national movement, which was also largely responsible for the turn of events on April 24, 1965, during the commemoration of the Armenian Genocide, a first in Armenia.” (Peroomian 2007, 106)

The protest of 1965 came in an era that was deemed more ‘relaxed’ due to the Khrushchev Thaw of the late 1950s and early 1960s, which created the opportunity for Armenian nationalism to revive. In fact, the Stalin era in Armenia is referred to as a second *Eghern*, meaning a second Genocide (Peroomian 2007, 109), a point that further accentuates the main argument of this dissertation, that the memory of the Armenian Genocide, particularly in the aftermath of 1965, strongly plays out in the construction of Armenianness in Soviet and post-Soviet Armenia. The period of Thaw led to the formation of a “semi-secret national movement, which was also largely responsible for the turn of events on April 24, 1965, during the commemoration of the Armenian Genocide, a first in Armenia.” (Peroomian 2007, 106) The commemoration of the Armenian Genocide continued over the years, and therefore also became part of the Soviet Armenian social and political identity, defining Armenianness, despite the strong limits of national expression – this point was also made to me by Armenouhi Stepanyan, an anthropologist at the National Academic of Science in Armenia (Author’s Interview, 2011). Rubina Peroomian continues her description of 1965, and in her words:

The commemoration [of 1965] began with an innocent rally, soon to turn into a turbulent demonstration. People took to the streets demanding the return of Armenian lands under Turkish occupation [Western Armenia]. Historical memory had shattered its fetters and, bursting into the open, was gradually impregnating the ignorant masses, those who hardly knew about the scope of the colossal catastrophe that had befallen the nation fifty years ago. (2007, 107)

On April 24, 1968, Armenians marched towards the Tsitsernakaberd monument, which is outside the centre of the city, and laid flowers at the memorial. What is striking from this era, as Marutyan explains, is that in the subsequent years starting from the 1970s, the marches to the memorial were led by the Communist Party leadership and government representatives themselves, and they also laid flowers at Tsitsernakaberd early in the morning of every April 24th (Marutyan

2010, 26). Therefore, the initial protests of 1965 led to the transformation of the memory of the Armenian Genocide from the private domain into the collective and official realm of Armenian Soviet politics. The description of a confused crowd, discovering for the first time about the Armenian Genocide on April 24, 1965, or the *Mets Eghern* (the Great Calamity), as Armenians refer to it, is a powerful image that makes one imagine the moment, with deep emotions and mixed feelings – the pain and suffering of their people, but also the extent of the oppressing Soviet (particularly Stalinist) era that had ‘hidden’ this truth from the dominant narratives of history. The increasingly larger crowds began shouting “We have not forgotten the *Mets Eghern*” and “*Mer Hoghere....Mer hoghere* [Our lands....our lands]” (referenced in Peroomian 2007, 108). What is also striking in these events is that there was a discourse among the intellectuals that the Armenian diaspora (the repatriated Armenians between 1920s until 1960s) had played a role in this awakening, a point I will discuss in the case-study chapters. Therefore, 1965 is an important turning point for all Armenians, since it moved the Genocide pain and suffering and intergenerational transmission from the private sphere to the public sphere of collective memory and collective commemoration.

The uniqueness of the Soviet state, and what makes it different from other imperial entities, is the way it adopted affirmative action as an active policy that resulted in the promotion and creation of nation-states with their own territories. This was adopted, albeit reluctantly, by Lenin and Stalin, the architects of the SNP, in order to keep a certain level of control over nationalism, instituting what they believed was ‘nationalist in form and socialist in content’ by the end of the Soviet national stage. As Terry Martin highlights in his phenomenal work on the Soviet affirmative action empire, “national consciousness was an unavoidable historic phase that all peoples must pass through on the way to internationalism.” (2001, 5) So this phase was necessary in the process

of modernization in order to achieve the results of socialism and communism. According to Terry Martin, what really stood out in the case of the Soviet empire was how Lenin and Stalin took the issue of nationalities seriously and as such created an empire based on “affirmative action” to use Martin’s phrase, which meant that “they supported the creation and development of non-Russian territories, elites, languages, and cultural institutions.” (Suny and Martin 2001, 8).

The Bolsheviks understood that the establishment of the Soviet regime would not be possible without the nationalist support from each republic. Thus the idea of self-determination was constructed to provide, in theory at least, a guarantee of freedom when a republic would want to secede from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). As Lenin put it:

...if we want to grasp the meaning of self-determination of nations ... by examining the historico-economic conditions of the national movements, we must inevitably reach the conclusion that the self-determination of nations means the political separation of these nations from alien national bodies, and the formation of an independent national state....[It] would be wrong to interpret the right to self-determination as meaning anything but the right to existence as a separate state. (Lenin 1950, 395-6)

In addition to the right of self-determination, the Soviet Union adopted the policy of *korenizatsiia*, translated as ‘indigenization’ (or nativization), in 1923 (Martin 2001, 10). *Korenizatsiia* included two policies that endorsed both national language and national elites of the titular republics, as part of promoting national identities within the defined national territories for the larger Soviet nationalities – so Armenian language would be used in the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic. The policy of *korenizatsiia* is also part of the strategy of the Soviet Union to practice the idea of ‘nationalist in form and socialist in content’ through the association of the national republics and territorial divisions with the territory, culture, language and local elites (Martin 2001, 15).

The degree of territoriality and territorial attachment of the various ethnic groups was not a simple matter, because it made and makes the understanding of nationalism more complex and loaded. “Territoriality is not a given;” Pål Kolstø states, “it is determined not only by geography, demography, and history but also by such intangibles as perceptions and ideas” (2000, 229). This is in fact the divisive factor in the minority/majority claims for territory – and a good way to explain the dichotomy self-determination and *uti possidetis juris* (territorial integrity as established in international law). The clash that occurs in the national society is triggered by the claims addressed by the minority groups that they are rooted in the lands they live in, bordered by historical, cultural or legal perceptions, and this counters the majority group’s denial of such an attachment. For instance, South Ossetians typically consider themselves as natives of the region where they live in northern Georgia, and they support their claim by stating that they have lived there for over two centuries. This claim is not accepted by most ethnic Georgians, who are convinced that the home territory of the Ossetians is in the Northern Ossetian Republic, currently in Russia (Aves 1992; Zürcher 2007; Kolstø 2000). In fact, it was the Bolsheviks who gave the Ossetians the two autonomous territories, one in the north and the other in the south, separated by the Caucasus Mountains (see Kolstø 2000). This disagreement on the territorial belonging led to the eruption of a civil war in 1992 after the collapse of the USSR; this conflict acquired a new dynamics and significance in August 2008.

Although the Soviet people have constantly migrated from one republic or oblast to another for jobs, education or family reunifications, the Bolshevik ethnographers managed to allocate each group a specific delimited territorial unit, which later, and in most of cases, became the internationally recognized borders of the independent republics after 1991. Joseph Stalin, people’s commissar for nationalities in the Soviet Union, wrote in his treatise entitled *Marxism and the*

National Question, about the importance of territory as an essential element of nationhood. Stalin thought that the Americans and the English did not form one common nation, even though they speak the same language: “Nations are formed only on the basis of protracted and regular contacts as a result of a community of life over generations. And a protracted community of life is impossible without a common territory” (Stalin, 1954, 303).

Stalin’s views influenced the Soviet idea and understanding of territory, which also directly reflects a conception of self-determination. This is vital to understand contemporary territorial and ethnic conflicts in the post-Soviet region, especially in the Southern Caucasus region. The Bolsheviks were supporters of political movements among the non-Russian peoples, because they considered them as allies against the Tsarist regime (Zaslavsky 1993). In addition, the format of the affirmative action empire, as proposed by Terry Martin, was not an end in itself for the Soviet Union, but it was a means through which the non-Russian nationalisms would be ‘tamed’ in order to achieve goals such as “industrialization, nationalization of the means of production, abolition of the market, collectivization of agriculture, and the creation of socialism and its export abroad.” (2001, 20) The particularity of the Soviet attitude towards the ‘Eastern’ part of the empire was based on the Bolshevik view of modernization and development. This was very much similar to arguments from the modernization literature that the eastern cultures were backward and needed an accelerated policy of modernization in order to have everyone on the same wave of development. Their conception of modernization and development was based on policies of “industrialization, urbanization, secularization, education, universal literacy, and territorial nationhood.” (Martin 2001, 126) The modernization literature was applied on the case of the Soviet Union and particularly the Soviet nationalities policy not as a narrative that emphasized the attempt to assimilate the non-Russian population through Russification and modernization, as Suny

and Martin highlight, but as “a dialectical narrative of preservation and transformation, both nation-making and nation-destroying.” (2001, 6)

Ronald Suny posits that the increase in the level of educated and urbanized people was not correlated with assimilation of people into the Russian culture. Indeed, the case of the Transcaucasian three republics did not follow Russification, and as Suny states, “Russification was simply not evident in Transcaucasia, either in the objective demographic and cultural trends or in the policies of the local communist parties.” (1996, 399) In this sense, the Transcaucasian case is more similar to the Central Asian one. Nonetheless, some level of change and transformation was evident in these regions, and people were not immune to the Soviet social changes and adapted to them over time without assimilating into the Russian culture (*Ibid*). In some way, the *Homo Sovieticus*, the stereotypical Soviet person,¹² project did have some success and transformed people to a certain extent by making them adapt to the social, economic, and political circumstances created by the Soviet Union in order to survive and live. The *Homo sovieticus* “is built around certain personality traits, or in other words, it is based on the assumption that the communist system was moulding an inner essence of individuals, creating a kind of correspondence between the systemic and personal features.” (Marody 2010, 80; Swader 2010, 62-79). However, to be clear this is not meant to say that people are passively inculcated with specific characteristics due to the social, economic, and political conditions. Aronoff and Kubik argue critically against assumptions embedded in the concept of *Homo sovieticus* as an explanatory tool that views people as passively not adjusting to the new system, and instead focus on the agency and creativity of individuals in adapting to postcommunist changes. In their words, “If in the view of *social adjusters* people

¹² The term *homo sovieticus* was coined by Aleksandr Zinoviev, who wrote a novel with the same title. Zinoviev was a former Communist Party member and worked in the Department of Logic at Moscow State University.

(often in general) are seen as the “material” that needs to be fixed, and while *institutional adjustors* call for fixing reform programs and their implementation, in this new way of thinking people are seen as agents who are capable of fixing themselves and who, in fact, are always doing so.” (2012, 273) As such, people learn to navigate within the new postcommunist habitus that may seem unfamiliar at first, even if the same people were the ones fighting for these changes.

The Armenian Genocide of 1915 and Its Impact on Identity Politics

The largest wave of diasporization of Armenians occurred as a result of the Armenian Genocide of 1915 committed by the Young Turk government in the Ottoman Empire. The violent expulsion of Armenians from their historic homeland represents the most important turning point in modern Armenian nation formation, referred to above as the *time of 1915*. Approximately 1.5 million Armenians were killed in the Genocide and mass deportations (due to starvation, dehydration, or illness). Many women and children were raped and abducted and enslaved, and many children became orphaned (eyewitness accounts and descriptions of the atrocities can be found in Miller and Miller 1993, Chapter 5; Peroomian 2009; Tachjian 2009). As Miller and Touryan Miller explain,

Many of the men were killed relatively early in the deportation process, often experiencing brutal and violent deaths. In contrast, women were left alone with their children to suffer for months on the deportation routes. They were raped, their children were abducted, and they were forced to make excruciating decisions. (1993, 94)

About five hundred thousand survivors fled the Turkish empire, which constituted the modern Armenian diaspora in the Middle East, Europe and America. Many women and children who were abducted by Turkish and Kurdish tribes, families, or individuals were able to escape or were saved by several organized missions. Some of those who escaped moved to Armenia, which became

independent from 1918 until its Sovietization: Armenia became home to about 40,000 orphans in 1919 for example (Hovannisian 1982, vol.2, 302).¹³

The Genocide and the escape of many survivors led to the eradication and emptying of the Armenian population from their historical homeland of Anatolia referred to as Western Armenia. *Therefore, Western Armenia symbolizes the loss of property, deterritorialization, the detachment from the homeland for the Armenians, with no possibility of return.* The Armenian Genocide is commemorated every year on April 24th by Armenians across the world. This day marks the beginning of the Genocide when Armenian intellectuals were deported from Constantinople and most of them were killed or died (See Bloxham 2005). The Genocide however does not only refer to the 1915 events, since these came as a continuation of previous massacres in different regions on different occasions - the Hamidian massacres of 1894-1896, the Cilician massacres of 1909, and the Kemalist campaign of 1919-1923 (Peroomian 2009, 7).¹⁴ The impact of the Genocide was not only measured by the deaths and losses recorded (or estimated) during the years of the early twentieth century, but also in the aftermath of the atrocities with the younger generation trying to make sense of what happened faced with the stubborn denial of the Turkish state of the Armenian Genocide.¹⁵ After a century has passed since April 1915, truths about the Genocide continue to

¹³ In fact, in those independent years, Armenia was itself in severe poverty and famine, under attack by the Turks and in 1920s the Bolshevik Army entered Armenia. Despite the difficulties, however, the experience of the orphans were different (more tolerable?) than those who ended up in the Antoura assimilationist orphanage in Lebanon. "The orphanage of Antoura had been the brainchild of Jemal Pasha (1872-1922), one-third of the Ottoman empire's ruling Young Turk junta and the military governor of Greater Syria, and Halide Edip (1884-1964)...the leading Turkish feminist of her day." (Panian 2015). For an account of the lives of the children in that orphanage, see the report by Robert Fisk in the *Independent* newspaper, accessible at <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/commentators/fisk/robert-fisk-living-proof-of-the-armenian-genocide-1918367.html>. Accessed on June 20, 2015 and the memoirs of Antoura, see Panian 2015).

¹⁴ For references on the history, politics, and social impact of Genocide, see the works of Suny, Gocek and Naimark 2011; Walker 1980; Ternon 1990; Akçam 2004, 2012; Dadrian 2003[1995], 2004 [1999]; Bloxham 2005; . For oral history collections, see for example Miller and Miller 1993 and Totten 2009; for the impact of the traumatic memory of the Armenian Genocide, see Hovannisian 1986, 1987, 1992, 2007; Balakian 2009; Svatlian 2011, Tachjian 2009. For the reparations issue, see Theriault et al. 2015.

¹⁵ The expressions of the second and third generation of Armenians - the children and grandchildren or the survivors of the Armenian Genocide - are vividly represented in various art forms, literature, academia, and through films (see Hovannisian 2007's edited collection for examples).

surface, most notably with discussions around the particular suffering of women and children in the Genocide and the hidden Armenians' existence and identity as will be discussed in Chapter Two to Five (Çetin 2008; Altınay and Çetin 2014)

Armenian dispersion goes far back from the 11th century with different waves of migrations throughout the centuries until 1915, and most of these migrants were merchants and from the nobility (for a brief description, see Panossian 1998, 152-5 and 2006; Suny 1993). Already by the early 19th century, new diaspora communities were forming in the urban centres such as Constantinople, Tbilisi, Baku, and Moscow, as well Geneva and Sofia; there were also several Armenian rural provinces in the Ottoman and Russian empires. As such, the political and revolutionary activities began in the cities where many young Armenians were becoming influenced by Russian radical thought and developing a sense of Armenianess. Given the situation of Armenians under Ottoman rule, the Russian Armenians turned their attention to liberate them (Suny 1993, 66-67). The two parties that were founded with the purpose of liberating Turkish Armenians from Ottoman rule were the Hunchakian Social Democratic Party (Hunchaks hereafter) founded in Geneva in 1887 by a group of Russian Armenian students and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF or Dashnaks hereafter) founded in Tiflis (Tbilisi) in 1890-1891 (see Suny 1993, 72-24 for a more detailed description of their party programs and their aims). A third party, the Democratic-Constitutional Party (or Ramgavar-Sahmanatragan) was also formed in Alexandria (Egypt) in 1908, but it had many adherents in Istanbul and it was considered to be the party of the bourgeoisie (the ideological orientation of this party came in response to the revolutionary and Marxist ideologies of the previous two parties, see Panossian 1998, 154).¹⁶ It is striking that since the time of their formation, these parties have always been in opposition or in

¹⁶ In 1921, the party reformed into Ramgavar Azatakan in Istanbul.

competition against each other. As Panossian puts it, “Since then, [the Ramgavar party] has played a significant role in diaspora politics and organization as an alternative to, and almost always in opposition to, the ARF [Dashnaks]. But the ARF remained - and to this day remains - the largest and most consequential political organization in the diaspora.” (1998, 154). The situation has not changed today, and these parties remain in often tension-filled relationships, having different views about the role of the diaspora, the image of the homeland, and the role of the parties in the diaspora and in the homeland, as this thesis depicts in the subsequent empirical chapters.

The Armenian diaspora’s estimated numbers are contested, with 10 million being an exaggeration and 4 or 5 million is the most estimated count. There are several sources that can provide the approximate number of Armenians living in different countries around the world. According to the Minister of Diaspora of Armenia, Armenians are spread across one hundred countries around the world. The largest community of Armenians live in Russia, with an estimated 2.2 million Armenians. This is followed by the large number of Armenians living in the United States (1.2 million), France (500,000), Ukraine (400,000), Georgia (450,000) and Latin America (100,000).¹⁷ The Armenian diaspora of 1915 began to rebuild their communities in order to maintain the Armenian language, religion, cuisine, customs and traditions (in a way that these were purified from Turkic influence, Tachjian 2009). The preservation of identity was possible through the establishment of Armenian schools, churches, community organizations, and political, cultural and sport clubs that helped to bind Armenians together and to keep the practice of language and culture for the younger generations. These institutions are mostly organized by the three political

¹⁷ These numbers were presented by the Ministry of Diaspora of Armenia at the International Dialogue on Migration, Diaspora Ministerial Conference, which took place 18-19 June, 2013 in Armenia. The report is accessible at <https://www.iom.int/files/live/sites/iom/files/What-We-Do/idm/workshops/IDM-2013-Diaspora-Ministerial-Conference/Diaspora-Ministerial-Conference-Presentation-Hakobayan.pdf>. For a full list of diaspora Armenians living in different countries around the world, see the working paper by Tatoul Manaseryan (2004) available at <http://www.aiprg.net/UserFiles/File/wp/jan2004/14.pdf>

parties in the diaspora, though several Armenian non-partisan organizations also play a significant role (See Tölölyan 2000b). These institutions and organizations are oriented toward different aims in each Armenian habitus in the diaspora. For example, there is more focus on lobbying for the Armenian Genocide recognition in the USA with two major lobbying groups, the ANCA and AAA (see Tölölyan 2000b; MacDonald 2008), while in Lebanon, the consociational arrangement guarantees six seats for Armenians in the Lebanese Parliament (Migliorino 2008).

For most Armenians in the *spyurk* or the older diaspora of 1915, the memory of the Armenians Genocide, the loss they experienced and the storied they heard reinforced their identity as Armenians. This identity was constructed particularly with an imagined geography of a sacred homeland that expands beyond the boundaries of the independent Armenia.¹⁸ Therefore, the collective memory of the Genocide has shaped Armenian identity discourse profoundly, not only for the survivor generation but also for the children and grandchildren of this generation. The diaspora of 1915 increasingly sacralized the Western Armenian territories where they had come from: the six Armenian provinces in the Ottoman Empire (Van, Bitlis, Sivas, Kharpert, Erzerum, and Diyarbekir) and the region of Cilicia - all of which are today in Turkey. These territories are symbolically represented through the Mount Ararat - the sacred mountains for Armenians. For the Armenians in Soviet Armenia, the years of Sovietization and repression of nationalist expression (despite their relatively looseness in Armenia) had not allowed public mourning or public expression of the trauma of Genocide until 1965. For many Armenians in Armenia, the historic homeland described earlier is part of their imagined territory of Armenian identity as well, but their

¹⁸ The maps of historic Armenia are portrayed by the three political parties of the diaspora. The historic map is also taught in school, portrayed in youth clubs, hung on walls of Armenian organizations, etc. The boundaries of historic Armenia include roughly the region of Karabakh, Lake Urmia, eastern Turkey and Cilicia, Javakheti, Nakhichevan, and the Armenian republic. This homeland was divided between the Ottoman and Persian empires and later Ottoman and Russian empires, see map in Miller and Touryan Miller 1993.

more immediate presence in the ‘real’ Armenia¹⁹ - an internationally recognized state - perhaps makes them connect to that homeland more strongly (in addition to Karabakh).²⁰ As such, as Payaslian puts it, “The Sovietization of the small Republic of Armenia in 1921...and the consolidation of the modern Republic of Turkey, left Soviet Armenia as representing the Armenian ‘homeland,’ although it never totally replaced Ottoman Armenia in the Armenian [diasporic] imagination.” (2010, 110). This partially explains the complexity of the diaspora-homeland relations, as the subsequent chapters will explain in more details.

Methodology and Research Design

The main research question in this dissertation is as follows: *How is ‘Armenianness’ constructed in the period 1988-2013?* In addition another question is also pertinent to my thesis to complement the first one: *Has the dominant discourse on ‘Armenianness’ shifted or changed in this period, and if so, how and why?* To answer these questions , I organized four main themes of discussion – the four pillars of Armenia identity that I consider as most significant in shaping national identity, in order to provide a fuller picture of the Armenian case:

1. The role of the 1988 Karabakh movement - The 1988 movement brought significant changes in the Armenian society that transformed it into a post-Soviet civil society. This has been the largest movement in the recent Armenian history and there has not been similarly successful protests that led to such radical shifts.
2. The role of gender constructions with a particular focus on the place of women in Armenianness. The perspectives tied to gender, family, and sexuality ought to be analyzed

¹⁹ The republic of Armenia constitutes only about 10% of historic Armenia (Payaslian 2010, 110).

²⁰ Most maps in Armenia and Karabakh would include the territories of the Armenia republic and the Karabakh de facto independent republic. Very few maps will be displayed with only Armenia (without Karabakh), and as far as I noticed in my fieldwork in Armenia and Karabakh, this was done only by foreign companies.

in order to have a fuller and deeper understanding of the factors that condition certain discourses and restrain others that are not deemed ‘authentically Armenian’

3. The perceptions around the role of the diaspora in Armenia: it is extremely important to consider the diaspora-homeland relations when tackling the case of Armenian national identity, due to the fact that the diaspora is much larger in numbers than the population in Armenia. In addition, the stateless Armenian diaspora that most significantly formed in 1915 had played the role of the state for seven decades (its own foreign policy, lobbying, and decision-maker on construction of Armenianness).
4. And finally the contestations around the memory of the Genocide via the examination of the Protocols of 2009. The importance of the consideration of the memory of the Armenian Genocide cannot be overstated in the case of Armenian identity, and it is therefore extremely important to consider the impact the collective traumatic memory can have on the nation.

I have used several research methods in order to answer the main research question. These methods include semi-structured in-depth interviews with Armenians in privileged positions in society, meaning those that have a higher symbolic capital,²¹ analysis of various ‘texts’ in the

²¹ According to Bourdieu, symbolic capital is not necessarily a separate form of capital, but it is the capital (including any form of the three types of capital he discusses such as the social, economic, and cultural capital) which becomes legitimized within the field as a form of honour, prestige, esteem or status. As Bourdieu explains based on his fieldwork in Algeria, “symbolic capital procures all that is referred to under the term *nesba*, that is, the network of affines and relationships that is held through the set of commitments and debts of honour, rights and duties accumulated over the successive generations, and which can be mobilized in extraordinary circumstances.” (1990, 119) These only acquire meaning, legitimacy, and authority within that particular field of social formation and socialization, thereby giving recognition to the particular form of capital. As such, capital alone is not as valuable as is the recognition of this capital in a given field of social practice that lends it more symbolic meaning and capital. As such, “Symbolic capital is inherently relational since it cannot simply be claimed: it must be recognized and in an important sense, mutually agreed.” (Lawler 2011, 1419). Symbolic capital establishes a particular understanding of how society prioritizes and values certain credentials, art, music, but also perceptions of femininity and masculinity, for example. Therefore, what is really powerful in the terminology of symbolic capital in Bourdieu’s work is that the symbolic capital’s “emphasis on power and legitimization is crucial in analyzing how some cultural goods and phenomena get to be known and recognized as “right” and their bearers recognized as legitimate holders of distinction.” (Ibid.; for a discussion on symbolic power and how the effectiveness of power is increased as it is naturalized, see Lukes 2005, 139-143).

written or oral form (interviews), and based on my informal encounters with Armenians during my fieldwork. These methods are used in order to (re)construct and capture the discourse of Armenian national identity from 1988-2013. Therefore, the method of discourse analysis is also used as the main tool through which I read, interpreted, and presented the main ‘texts’ in my data collection. These are detailed below to explain the methodology adopted of this project.

Method of Analysis and Fieldwork

For my case study analysis, I conducted a total of 48 extensive semi-structured interviews in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh in the spring (March-May) of 2011, with high profile politicians, political party leaders, journalists, non-governmental organization (NGO) leaders, and scholars to get a stronger sense of the contemporary local perceptions around these issues. The interviews in Armenia and Karabakh were conducted in (mostly Eastern) Armenian with 44 interviewees and the four remaining were in English.²² Of the 48 interviews, 14 were with women and 4 were repatriated Armenians who settled in Armenia after 1988. The initial selection of interviewees was done based on their high level positions in politics, the NGO sector, their research interests, and publications. This was followed with snowball sampling. I spent most of my fieldwork in the capital city of Yerevan, but I also made some trips to neighbouring cities such as Vanadzor for interviews. Moreover, I also went to Nagorno-Karabakh, the de facto independent republic located on the south-eastern side of the Armenian borders. This is the contested region between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and it has been relatively stable since the shaky 1994 ceasefire that only provides a semblance of peace between Azerbaijan and Armenia – and Karabakh. The

²² In terms of the calculation of interviews presented here, some of the interviews were conducted in a mixture of English and Armenian languages (both eastern and western Armenian), though either English or Armenian was the main language of interview. Therefore, I consider the interview main language the one that the respondent used in majority in his or her response to my questions, and used the second language as a way to explain certain concepts or to use certain concepts in that second language. I translated only the part that was in Armenian.

interviews provided the largest data for the research. As Brian C. Rathbun explains, interviewing “is often the best tool for establishing how subjective factors influence political decision-making, the motivations of those involved, and the role of agency in events” (2008, 686).²³ The interview data preparation involved transcribing the interviews, including incorporating my interview notes, and most importantly, translating the (mostly Eastern) Armenian language data into English. I have translated and transcribed all Armenian-language interviews with the most accurate possible translation in order to ensure that the meaning of terms and words are not lost in the translation process, particularly because many of my interviewees also used many Russian-language concepts or terminology, which are part of the spoken language in Armenia. Upon the completion of the transcription phase, the interview data was organized thematically under four main themes: the 1988 nationalist movement in Armenia, gender constructions, diaspora-Armenia relations, and the Turkey-Armenia Protocols of 2009 and the Armenian Genocide. This was done based on the interview contents but also my analysis of what my interviewees stated, in order to determine the most important factors that seem to be shaping Armenian national identity during the time period that I focus on in this thesis: 1988-2013.

The methodological advice of Ibn Khaldoun in *Al Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History* has inspired my approach in this thesis that it is important to “undertake fieldwork in order to examine issues in their actual and local contexts to draw on the insights of people whose lives are connected to the issues.” (quoted in Shihade 2011, xxii) This quote, indeed, is a reflection of the ways in which this project is based on interviews with locals and is also reflective of the theoretical framework as well, which is presented in detail in the first chapter of this work. The

²³ Brian Rathbun (2008) asserts the above quote despite the suspicion of various schools of thought (behavioralists or positivists, for example) around interviews as a viable method of research, as he presents in the chapter in the edited volume *Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*.

local perspectives and views on the four pillars of this project were vital in understanding the political arena of Armenia. I take the distinction Bourdieu has emphasized in his work on the category of practice versus the category of analysis seriously. Based on Brubaker and Cooper's work on deconstructing the concept of identity, “‘categories of practice,’...[refer to] categories of everyday social experience, developed and deployed by ordinary social actors, as distinguished from the experience-distant categories used by social analysts.” They also correctly emphasize that “such concepts as “race,” “ethnicity,” or “nation” are marked by close reciprocal connection and mutual influence among their practical and analytical uses.” (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 4) In this sense, nationalism and national identity, being intersubjective constructions and realities, need to be investigated in a way that takes into account the participant's subjective sense of belonging and national identification without considering these as passive reflections of the structural and meta-narratives of nationalism or national identity, but as agency. It is in this context that I turn to the theoretical concept of national habitus, inspired by Bourdieu's concept of habitus, in order to ground this study. I use the concept of *habitus* as defined by Pierre Bourdieu in his seminal work *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, where he explains habitus as “a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a *matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions* and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks.” (1977, 82-83, emphasis in original)

Habitus mediates between structural perspectives and individual agency, a long and conflicting debate in sociology and social sciences in general, and habitus as such is defined as “the system of dispositions that mediates between inert structures and the practices through which social life is sustained and structures are reproduced or transformed.” (Brubaker 1985, 758) Habitus refers to the socially acquired and socially moulded dispositions that are unconsciously

internalized by the individual through socialization, as “a system of internalized dispositions that mediates between social structures and practical activity, being shaped by the former and regulating the latter” (Brubaker 1985, 758). Therefore individuals become socialized in a particular historical and social context, the *field*, by building internal dispositions and perceptions vis-à-vis their social context that provide them the necessary ‘tools’ of action and guide them in the specific social setting – they thus develop a “feel for the game,” which Bourdieu argues is what makes the social game transformed as second nature (Bourdieu 1994, 63, quoted in Maton 2008, 54)²⁴. Therefore, the particular context within which the habitus functions is called the ‘field’, or “the system of objective relations that is constituted by various species of capital,” (Bourdieu 1977, 201), which is basically the setting within which agents are socialized. This is particularly pertinent to the case of the Armenian habituses, as the different Armenian diaspora communities are located in different fields which shape the dispositions of individuals, and therefore ‘produce’ different habituses among Armenians around the world. In explaining Bourdieu’s conceptual tools, Maton posits that “To understand practice, then, one must relate these *regularities* of social fields to the *practical logic* of actors....The source of this practical logic is the habitus” (Ibid., emphasis in original) The theoretical framework of the thesis based on the conception of habitus by Pierre Bourdieu is discussed much more elaborately in the next chapter.

It is important to explain one point regarding elite-based interviews for this dissertation. Based on my conception of national habitus that defines the way national identity is constructed, it is my perspective that even though elites are usually categorized as the manipulators or fabricators of nationalism or national identity (Gellner 1983, Hobsbawm and Rancher 1983, Anderson 2006),

²⁴ This is the work of Bourdieu entitled in French as *Choses dites*. See Pierre Bourdieu. 1994 [1987]. *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology*, translated by M. Adamson. Cambridge: Polity (originally published as *Choses dites* (Paris: Les éditions de minuit.)

elites, who are always part of the national discourse and the national identity making, are also important agents in the dialectical relationship between structure and agency, in that they are neither passive ‘performers’ of the nation, nor are they its only active makers, as is the tendency to reflect upon them in the literature on nationalism and ethnicity. Therefore the elites, admittedly in privileged positions and in positions of power in the nation-state, are also agents that reproduce the nation in a generative way based on Bourdieu’s theory of practice, which will be explained in the following theoretical Chapter One. This means that the Armenian elites and individuals in privileged positions in society are not automatically considered as being in equal social positions or having equal loci of enunciation: not all have access to the same resources, or have a similar ability to exert their domination or power (in a Weberian sense). In addition, in the case of Armenia, many who are in ‘privileged’ positions are not necessarily socio-economically and politically in similar positions – meaning not all possess equal social, economic and cultural capital, to use Bourdieu’s terms. This is an important note that is embedded in my assumption of elite and non-elite interviews and the method of interviews in general for this work.

In addition to conducting interviews for my case-study analysis, I also relied on other methods of research and techniques of data collection including newspaper articles from local Armenian and diaspora newspapers and other major news outlets, government documents and websites, speeches of government officials, blogs, documentaries, and Youtube videos. The purpose of using these diverse ‘texts’ (verbal and written) was to capture official and opposition discourse, in addition to diaspora perspectives on relevant issues by analyzing documents. Moreover, these methods and techniques were also used to capture the ‘story’ and narrative of national identity construction, to reconstruct the various events and moments in Armenian politics that are relevant to national identity by focusing on the four main pillars of analysis identified in

the dissertation. In addition to the primary resources, the collected ‘texts’ for my analysis such as interviews, speeches, government policy documents, newspaper articles, I also rely on Armenian, Russian, French and English language secondary sources to provide a more rounded view of my study. Finally, this study also draws on my observations while conducting my fieldwork in Armenia and Karabakh and, during previous trips there, participation in workshops and conferences, as well as conversations and discussions with friends and colleagues. These various methods informed and shaped my thinking about the nation building processes that are discussed in each chapter, which ultimately reveal the discourse on Armenianness.

Discourse analysis has become a common method of research among various scholars in different disciplines. It emerged first as part of the linguistic turn in the social sciences and was then absorbed by other fields of study that led to the grounding of discourse analysis as a methodology in the social sciences (Howarth 2000, 2-3). Howarth’s *Discourse* explains that there has been a widening of what could be included within the context of discourse analysis including “linguistic and non-linguistic material – speeches, reports, manifestos, historical events, interviews, policies, ideas, even organizations and institutions – as ‘texts’ or ‘writings’ that enable subjects to experience the world of objects, words and practices.” (2000, 10) This wide range of analytical measures enriches the way one can interpret and understand the ‘object’ of study. At the same time, Michel Foucault stresses that discourses are “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak,” in explaining that discourses are not confined to the language itself, but to the meanings they generate (1972, 49). This dissertation project draws on discourse analysis as a method of research that “assumes that all objects and actions are meaningful, and that their meaning is conferred by historically specific systems of rules.” (Howarth 2000, 8) This is the

approach taken in this dissertation to analyze the various materials and data collected during the fieldwork and the writing process.

Discourse analysis will then contribute to explaining the production and reproduction, as well as the sustenance of the Armenian national identity from 1988 until 2013. The study of the discursive construction of Armenianness is done through the examination of the four pillars of identity, which include the 1988 nationalist movement, diaspora-homeland relations, Turkey-Armenia relations, and the gendered constructions of Armenianness. As previously mentioned in this chapter, the four pillars were the result of both literature review, interviewees' perspectives collected in Armenia and Karabakh in 2011, my own fieldwork impressions over the years in Armenia and Karabakh. As such a point of clarification regarding discourse analysis is needed here to explain the way in which this method of research is applied in the dissertation to analyze the interviewees' quotes and speeches in particular. Critical discourse analysis is based on "authentic everyday communication in institutional, media, political or other locations rather than on sample sentences or sample texts constructed in linguists' minds." (Wodak et al. 1999, 8) Critical discourse analysts therefore understand the written and spoken texts as particular to a given field which socially produces them as much as they are themselves constituted by the social practices within which they exist (*Ibid.*). As such it seemed imperative in my view not only to focus on the language used by the interviewees or in the written texts as determining the dominant discursive practices on the construction of Armenian national identity, but also the ways in which the subjective expressions of people in a given field constitute the dominant discourse and the narratives of national identity, meaning that "Discourse is the kind of language used within a specific field." (Jorgensen and Philips 2002, 66). Discourse is reflective of not only the dominant constructions but also the ways in which agents understand their surrounding and their field, make

sense of their own roles within that field and also talk about their own perspectives, which reveals to us as researchers “a way of speaking which gives meaning to experiences from a particular perspective.” (*Ibid.*, 157). This is important because, as Richard Jackson puts it, “individual text analysis is not sufficient on its own to shed light on the relationship between discourse and social processes, critical discourse analysts adds a wider interdisciplinary perspective which combines textual and social analysis.” (2005, 25). This also highlights the ways in which hegemonic discourses function in shaping the lives and ways of thinking of individuals, meaning that individuals (and collectives) reflect the dominant narratives through their daily activities, discussions, ways of speaking and thinking. Linking Bourdieu’s conception of habitus to discourse analysis, the internalization of the structural and dominant narratives is reflected in the everyday practices. Dirk Nabers explains this phenomena by linking critical discourse analysis to the conception of hegemony advanced by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, that

Hegemony there Hegemony therefore reproduces our daily life; it starts to be hegemonic when our everyday understanding of social relations and the world as a whole starts to alter according to the framework that is set by the hegemonic discourse. It is an act of power because it makes the world intelligible (Naber 2009, 197).

Through these four main factors, the four empirical chapters reveal that the discourse of “Armenianness” has been centred on the traumatic collective memory of the Armenian Genocide of 1915. Therefore, these four pillars are discursively linked to the Armenian Genocide in the construction of identity of Armenians. In this context, national identity is analyzed discursively, through the analysis of ‘texts’ and other semiotic materials (documentaries, youtube videos, monuments, for example), in order to highlight the ‘dominant’ narrative that shape the given social context. Therefore, identities, or conceptions of Armenianness, are constructed and reconstructed through (dominant) discourses that condition certain discourses and restrain others that are not

deemed ‘authentically Armenian’. This also conditions and constrains the decisions and actions of elites in Armenia. As the dissertation empirical chapters demonstrate, the elites are also not all equal in their economic and especially symbolic capital – which is one of the contributions of this dissertation in understanding elite versus mass divide.

The interviews, as analytical sources of discourses, were conducted with high ranking politicians, journalists, NGO leaders, scholars and other elites or the ‘privileged’ in Armenian society, so the interpretation of these interviews served to explain the dominant discourse in Armenian society as propagated by those with cultural and social capital, to use Bourdieu’s term (1979, 1984, 1991). On the other hand, however, the purpose of these interviews was also to reflect on the way the interviewees unconsciously perceived the ‘dominant discourse’ in society and how they internalized those discourses and then reproduced them. Chapter Three on gendered constructions of the Armenian nation and Chapter Five on the impact of the Armenian Genocide on the Armenian nation (and psyche) are striking examples of this point. The way I have analyzed the interview transcripts has been to bring this ‘unconscious’ agency out and attempt to understand the subjective views of the interviewees on some of the aspects of nation building and certain events, for example. Some of the topics of the interviews were on events that took place twenty five years ago, so the political activists and politicians had to remember the events and remember themselves at the time these took place.

Discourse analysis allows for a more critical approach to the study of national identity by looking at nationalism not as an epiphenomenon in the history of modernization and industrialization, whatever the timing of these is for Armenia, but on bringing nationalism at the front and centre of inquiry, in order to comprehend the shifts in nationalist discourse by paying attention to the participants’ subjective experiences. Habitus is important in order to explain the

process of national identity making which occurs, in Bourdieusian light, by internalizing through socialization the external historical, social and other factors and externalizing these through agents' agency; all these being embedded in a particular discursive construct of the nation. Bourdieu's work is therefore important in this context in order to explain the importance of linking the objective structural factors and the subjective agency of nationalism and national identity. Bourdieu's habitus embodies that duality and that link between objective and subjective factors, and the habitus is as such "a system of dispositions that are socially constituted" (1992, 120, author's translation).

By looking at national identity as national habitus, I consider discourse "as a form of social practice" (Fairclough and Wodak 1997). In this sense, identities cannot be really understood outside of discursive practices that establish meaning and normativity within a given cultural and social context. As Ruth Wodak, the scholar who is most known for her extensive work in the tradition of critical discourse analysis (Wodak et al. 1999; De Cillia et al. 1999; Fairclough and Wodak 1997), explains that "the situational, institutional and social contexts shape and affect discourse, and, in turn, discourses influence social and political reality. In this sense, Armenian national habitus is examined, through discourse analysis of the various forms of 'texts' (interviews, videos, documentaries, speeches, newspaper articles, government documents), in a way that looks at national identity constructions through a dialectical relationship of the objective and subjective factors, or structure and agency. The next chapter presents the theoretical framework used in this project to explain the case of (post-Soviet) Armenian national identity through the prism of habitus, discourse, and memory/emotions.

Özkirimli's definition of nationalism highlights this, as "*a particular way of seeing and interpreting the world, a frame of reference that helps us make sense of and structure the reality*

that surrounds us.” (2005, 30, emphasis in original) In viewing nationalism as a discourse that infiltrates our being and shapes our frame of reference, we are able as researchers and analyzers of nationalism to study “participants’ primordialism” (Smith 1998, 158, quoted in Brubaker 2006), which helps us to explain the subjective ways that people relate to their identity, or the subjective perceptions that are embedded within one’s self-identification as part of a nation. As such, in the words of Ronald Suny, “Identities, then, are always formed within broad discourses, universes of available meanings, and are related to the historic positionings of the subjects involved, which are themselves constituted and given meaning by the identity makers.” (Suny 2001, 868) In this sense, then, national identities can be explained as social practices or discourses, meaning that in this context, identity can be explained as relational and stemming from various loci of enunciations that have diverse historical and social positioning. This is precisely how the dissertation’s core concept of national identity is defined as national habitus, as further detailed in the next chapter.

The narratives of national identity are neither rigid nor teleological, as they undergo changes due to historical, geopolitical, territorial, and circumstantial alterations. A strong sense of national identity, however, is not rendered easy in a region loaded with territorial problems and instabilities. Therefore, we can define identity as “a provisional stabilization of a sense of self or group that is formed in actual historical time and space, in evolving economies, polities and cultures, as a continuous search for some solidity in a constantly shifting world – but without closure, without forever naturalizing or essentializing the provisional identities arrived at,” (Suny 1999/2000, 144). Given the fluidity of identity and its formation and definition, nation formation is a constant work-in-progress, as Brubaker suggests, nations are constantly nationalizing. As such the national discourse on identity is shifting over time, and to understand the changes the dissertation looks closely at the four pillars that reflect Armenia ties with its neighbours and its

diaspora in particular. The nation is not a static category, and therefore any analysis and study of national identity should reflect the non-permanent nature of national identity and the shifting national discourse. In this sense, then, nationalism as a discourse encompasses the subjective ways that people make sense of the ‘objective’ elements of nationalism, in a way that provides researchers with extensive data on the perceptions of people, what is important to them, how they make sense of their place in the nationalist discourse, how they portray the nation and so on. This approach also allows us to view the elites not as the ‘fabricators’ or ‘inventors’ of nationalism, or the makers of ‘national imaginary’, but also as the participants within the nationalist discourse. The interviewee perspectives play exactly that role in this dissertation.

Reflexive Thoughts in Fieldwork

At the same time that individuals are immersed within a particular cultural setting with its own codes and norms, the researcher has to be reflexive about his/her own setting and the way that this might shape the researcher’s understanding. These two points mean that “we must attempt to understand and explain reality on the basis of specific culturally based perspectives or points of view from which we analyze a selected segment of reality” (Jensen 2012, 25). This can also be understood in Weber’s terms as “all knowledge of cultural reality is always knowledge from *specific and particular points of view*” (Weber, quoted in Jensen 2012, 25, emphasis in original), and this applies to the researcher’s position as well. As a female diaspora Armenian researching on post-Soviet Armenia, I am both an insider and an outsider to the context, both on cultural and linguistic levels. This presents some challenges, but also benefits to the comprehension of Armenian society and politics.

I am an insider in the sense that I am Armenian and I speak western Armenian (understandable to the eastern Armenian speaker with clearly detectable differences), and I am thus situated with a strong familiarity with the habitus and the field of study, though linguistically distant from the local eastern Armenian language. This means that I am easily identifiable as a diasporan Armenian. In addition, my knowledge of the habitus is particularly influenced by that of the diasporic habitus (particularly Lebanon and Canada), and I am therefore an ‘outsider’ to the post-Soviet context of Armenia. I familiarized with the (Soviet and) post-Soviet society through my fieldwork, trips, and friendships built in Armenia and Karabakh over the years. This means that my social positionality is different from a researcher who might be from the location of study. In Armenia, I am perceived as a diaspora from Lebanon, even though I am studying in Canada, and this is clearly distinguished by locals. As such, the relationship might feel closer as I am someone from the Middle East - culturally and politically more similar in my habitus than say someone from the Western context (born or raised in the West). I believe that the hospitality in sharing information with me as a researcher was very warm and all my interviewees willingly shared their expertise, knowledge, or perspectives of the topics at hand. The restrictions in information sharing was dependent on the position of the interviewee: for politicians, more carefully crafted answers were given since they are attached to their government position and to the ruling party in many cases, particularly for those in positions such as deputy foreign minister or deputy minister of diaspora. These were recorded interviews in most cases, though I had several instances of off-the-record conversations during my interview session as well, which provided room for my interviewees to express some more critical, reflective, or even more straightforward opinions related to events, people, and the diaspora(s) in general.

Finally, as an Armenian woman, my outlook on the social and cultural constructions stems from a particular locus of understanding and processing. Through Bourdieu's habitus, the gendered dispositions that guide me to locate myself in the *field* give me a different *feel for the game*. My relationship with the interviewees (mostly men), in this sense, could not be the same as that for a male researcher, though the opposite is also true in my case.²⁵ It is therefore important to state that, as Weber explains about social science research, "*There is no absolutely 'objective' scientific analysis of cultural life...independent of special and 'one-sided' points of view, according to which [those phenomena] are – explicitly or implicitly, deliberately or unconsciously – selected* as an object of inquiry, analyzed and presented in an orderly fashion." (quoted in Jensen 2012, 39, emphasis in original). In addition, as a researcher ought to think reflexively of their social position, Bourdieu reminds us that all 'social' language is embedded in relations of power that the researcher must be aware of. I believe that the diversity of researchers' social position towards the 'object' of study brings out enriching and varied findings.

Case-Study Selection

The post-Soviet region is particularly suitable for investigating issues of identity formation and nation building for several reasons. As Ronald Suny explains, "The post-Soviet states present a veritable laboratory of modern national identity formation....The Soviet example illustrates a second influence of identification when identity categories are externally generated, ascribed, or imposed by state or other authorities." (2000, 867) Although the Soviet empire attempted to impose a certain degree of Russianness upon most nations, the Soviet nationalities policies (SNP, hereafter) provided an unusual definition of the nation as an objective primordial category that was

²⁵ It is also true, perhaps, that a male researcher might be able to have an easier accessibility to certain (especially) male interviewees, that a woman might not. The opposite might also be true in some cases, so women interviewees might be more comfortable in interacting with me and talking about gender and women-focused issues.

present in a clearly bordered territory. The SNP underwent changes over the years, shifting the main focus of the Soviet state from state policy of nativization (or *korenizatsiia*, 1920s-1930s) to a more assimilationist perspective in the later years, but “in no time during the Soviet period was one of these poles completely removed from the ideology of the Soviet government” (Gorenburg 2006, 278).²⁶ In fact,

there was always a tension between the goal of showing the world that the Soviet Union treated its ethnic minorities better than any other country in the world and the goal of hastening the future merging of nations into a single communist mass....The establishment of ethnofederalism, indigenization, and native language education were paired with efforts to ensure the gradual drawing together of nations for the purpose of their eventual merger.” (Gorenburg 2006, 278)

In most cases, however, the territorial boundaries were not correspondent with a single culture, and most of these borders were to become an issue of high contestation in the late 1980s, with the beginning of *perestroika* and *glasnost*. The final years of Soviet rule evidently began with painful violent wars in many parts of the former Soviet region, such as South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Transdniestria. Another reason why this region is relevant to look into is that almost half of the population of the USSR was non-Russian. Some had a high sense of collective identity (such as Armenians), while others had relatively ambiguous ethnic identities, and more religiously defined allegiances (such as Azerbaijan and some of the Central Asian states). The Soviet centre dealt differently with these nations, giving them different degrees of autonomy to practice their language(s) and culture(s).

The dissertation’s main focus is on the case of post-Soviet Armenia. The advantages of a single case study approach and the focus on the nation building process from 1988 up to 2013 is

²⁶ For a detailed study of the changes in the Soviet Nationalities policies over the years, see the work of Brubaker 1996; Hirsch 2000; Martin 2001.

that it allows for a ‘thick description’ of the case based on the interpretation of various factors that inform us about the nation building process in Armenia (see Geertz 1973, 3-30). Case selection, especially a single case study, can have its biases and weaknesses, such as sample bias or selection convenience. However, the single case-study can also have several added advantages to the research project one is conducting (Gerring 2011, 1140), such as a depth of analysis and more reliable causality. The case study selection process can also include not only aims such as most deviant, most similar or different cases, but can also stem from practicalities for the researcher, such as “familiarity with the language of a country, a personal entrée into that locale, special access to important data or funding that covers one archive rather than another” and pragmatic considerations can be at the basis of the case selection (Gerring 2008, 649). There are several such considerations involved in the focus of the dissertation on the case of Armenia, though practicality of selection does not, of course, fully explain the reasoning in the choice of case study.

The case of Armenia is selected based on the gap in the literature related to research in understanding nation building (versus state building) trends in the South Caucasus region. In the case of Armenia, most studies of nation building focus on the history of the Armenian nation from the establishment of Christianity and the alphabet in the fourth and fifth centuries to the Sovietization of Armenia (See the works by Panossian 2006; Suny 1993a; Matossian 1962; Chorbajian et al. 1994; Hovannissian 1967, 1971, 1982.). These and other scholars have studied both the history of the ‘Western’ Armenians and ‘Eastern’ Armenians living under two distinct empires that led the Armenia nation to having two distinct fates in their development. The formation of the Armenian diaspora as a result of the Armenian Genocide of 1915, and the forced exile of Armenians from their home villages around those years, led to the formation of a large Armenian diaspora. For a long time until the establishment of post-Soviet Armenia, this diaspora

was the centre of Armenian nation building, a diverse diaspora that speak from different loci of expression. The diaspora(s) with their institutions, organizations, and political parties have successfully maintained and sustained Armenian identity in the various habituses (Tololyan 1991, Panossian 1998a). The Dashnak Party represents the most powerful party among the three diaspora parties, and has contestably ‘claimed’ the symbolic capital in determining the conception of Armenianness. On the other hand, Soviet Armenia was constructing its own understanding of Armenianness despite the Soviet attempts to create the *Homo Sovieticus*, who would supposedly transcend nationality, ethnicity, and religion. Still, Armenianness was maintained during those years and nationalist expressions were beginning to come out in the post-Stalinist era in different forms. These are also well documented in the literature (Matossian 1962; Suny 1993a; Tchilingirian 1999; Geukjian 2012).

My work builds upon these studies of nation building to shed light on the post-1988 *perestroika* and *glasnost* era since 1985-1986 that changed the configuration of the Soviet world and led to its collapse. The subsequent formation of the independent republics has been a story of struggle, economic collapse, changing definitions of femininity and masculinity, shifts in perceptions of Armenianness, and contestations with the existing diaspora who have become involved in Armenia, and bring a different imagining of this ‘Armenia’. These factors have shaped the way national identity expressions have been developing since 1988 and this is what this project seeks to explain (see Diagram #2). Therefore, the aim is not to produce a new theory based on the study of the case of Armenia, but to understand the peculiarity of the Armenian case vis-à-vis the existing theories of nationalism and nation building and to further explain the complexities of the Armenian case to contribute to the literature. The case of contemporary Armenia is thus presented through a renewed theoretical perspective and new empirical data.

Many of the theorists of nationalism observed the revolutions of 1989 in Eastern Europe as an important step towards the democratization of those societies (for a discussion on the various changes in 1989 and their impact, see the edited volume by Antohi and Tismaneanu, 2000). The equivalent of 1989 for the Southern Caucasus nations is the years 1987-1990 or the “thickened period of history”, to borrow from Mark Beissinger (2002, 27).²⁷ The nationalist movements of 1987-1990, which also reflect the high tension between the Kremlin and the national elites in the Soviet republics, could be explained as a crucial factor in the collapse of the communist empire in 1991 (Strayer 1998; Khazanov 1995, especially chap. 1). Since the end of the 1980s, in mostly all republics of the USSR, the strong nationalist movements grew, pushing the Soviet government to face the question of their right for self-determination and independence. The importance and the peculiarity of these movements, as mentioned by Linz and Stepan quoting Ian Bremmer, was that nationalism in the republics of the Soviet Union was a “manifestation of nationalism as liberation.” (Bremmer 1993, 15, quoted in Linz and Stepan 1996, 389) This is more reflective of the way titular nationalities²⁸ dealt with the central power – though not so much how the non-titular nationalities did, which can be characterized as a relationship of domination. In other words, nationalism in the end of the Soviet era became a symbol of freedom for all who no longer wanted

²⁷ In his fascinating work the events of nationalism that disrupt the quiet periods of nationalism, Beissinger explains the definition of thickened history as the “period in which the pace of challenging events quickens to the point that it becomes practically impossible to comprehend them and they come to constitute an increasingly significant part of their own causal structure.” (2002, 27).

²⁸ In the Soviet Union classification system for regions and territories, the titular nationality is defined as “the nation which, for any number of economic, demographic, cultural, or political reasons, has been vested with administrative power in a given region,” and it has “a special relationship with the state, being in a position of privilege *vis-à-vis* those nations not so empower – the *non-titular nationalities*.” (Bremmer 1997, 13, emphasis in original) This is in reference to the nation whose name was assigned to the Soviet republics in the ethnonational Soviet federation construction. But these were not equally assigned, instead “Of the fifty-three titular nationalities, fifteen were designated by the highest status of Soviet Socialist Republic (SSRs) or “union republics,” which together encompassed the entire union.” (Bremmer 1997, 8) In addition to the fifteen union republics who were the only ones with the theoretical right to secede from the USSR, other titular nations were allocated the status of Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics (twenty in number, such as Nakhichevan ASSR or Abkhaz ASSR), Autonomous Regions (*Oblasti*, counting eight, including Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Oblast and the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast), and ten Autonomous Areas (*okruga*), see Bremmer and Taras 1993, 1997 and David Laitin 1998, for more information on the divisions.

to live under the communist political system. The post-1991 period therefore embraced strongly, in many societies, the opening up of the market and adoption of liberal economic policies and the establishment of democratic regimes. Many politicians even formulated their post-Soviet national identity as a form of civic expression of nationalism – as was the case in Armenia with the coming to power of Levon Ter-Petrosyan in 1991. However, the disillusionment with the rapid political and socio-economic transition was severe in these societies attempting to undergo a triple transition in a span of only a few years. The economic weight had a crushing effect upon these societies with not only economic, but also political, social, and cultural repercussions.

These movements in the late 1980s, be they nationalist or secessionist, are conceived here as an event, to use Brubaker's term on studying nationalism which is distinguished from developmentalist views on nation building that mostly assume a teleological perspective (1996, 19-20). What is important is that these events played an important role in the formation and construction or, in some cases like Armenia, the consolidation of the national identity as Chapter Two demonstrates. This phase of the history of the region shaped the nation-building processes of the countries and had a strong impact on peoples' experiences with the nation and what it meant to them to be nationals were defined at the time. Thus, more than two decades later, studying these nationalist movements can help to understand the narratives that played a vital role in the reawakening of nationalism or, in some cases, the formation of the nationalist movements. These narratives can reveal evident and latent factors that shape identity politics, the meaning of Armenianness for the diasporans and local Armenians (*Hayastantsi*), the role of gender constructions, and the importance of the role of the memory of the Armenian Genocide of 1915, especially because 2015 marked the centennial of the Armenian Genocide.

Why is the case of Armenia interesting for this study? Generally, Armenia can be considered as an important case to understand the mechanisms of nation building in the post-Soviet space due to the following reasons. Firstly, the Armenian claims for Karabakh challenged the silence on the national question and pushed the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to address this issue,²⁹ though it was the reforms from the top and the weakening of the centre that opened the opportunity for the nationalist movement to have such a tenor. Secondly, Gorbachev did not condemn the Sumgait massacres of 1988, which escalated the tension between Armenia and Azerbaijan. As a result, optimistic hopes of change brought forth by *glasnost* to the South Caucasus societies were evaporated. Thirdly, Armenia is an interesting case because although it is one of the most ‘ethnically homogeneous’ among the Soviet republics. When studied in depth and details, the diversity in the perceptions of Armenianness is striking, and the diversity of thinking among Armenians themselves in ideological and homeland perceptions provides important layers of differences. Moreover, in the same light, the case of Armenia is also significant because, even though it may appear as a ‘homogenous’ nation state at first glance, since ethnic Armenians are in the majority Christians with a minority of Muslims and Jews and ethnic minorities living in Armenia such as Kurds, Russians and Georgians, the various habituses of Armenians in the diaspora and in Armenia reflect the diversity of the national habitus, a concept that captures the idiosyncrasies of the nation without the essentialist and primordialist views to it. This is especially the case in Armenia around one of the most unifying collective memories of the Armenian Genocide; as Chapter Five shows, the nature of nation building is contested by the diversity of

²⁹ Almost all of the nationalist movements that emerged in the Soviet Union began with demands for ecological policy reforms (see Hosking 1992, 10). It should be mentioned here that Armenian nationalist uprisings from 1987 to 1990 were not the first occurrence in the former Soviet bloc. In fact, the first example of such challenge against the Soviet state was organized by the Baltic region. According to Hosking, “In Latvia in the autumn of 1986 a public petition attracted 30,000 signatures in a call to abandon plans for a hydroelectric power station on the Daugava River, which would have drowned a good deal of arable land and several villages.” (1992, 10).

opinions and ideologies that constitute the image of the homeland. This dissertation attempts to capture this diversity beyond the seemingly ‘ethnically homogeneous’ appearance.

The case of Armenia can shed light on aspects of nation building that could complement the literature on the theories of nation and nationalism. For example, the overemphasis in the debates on the theories of nationalism on the modernist and primordialist perspectives³⁰ is not useful in the case of Armenia, where the conceptions of homeland, collective memory, traumatic history of Genocide, and attempts to safeguard the ‘authentic’ identity are necessarily integrated in the explanation of national habitus. For example, Panossian claims that:

Pillars of the distinguishing features of Armenian identity - the building blocks - were laid in ancient times: religion, language, territorial basis, myths and symbols. These objective historical characteristics of ‘Armenianness’ enabled the group to survive into the modern period when the subjective dimension was introduced on the road to nationhood, transforming the collective from an ethnic group into a nation. (2006, 23)³¹

The literature on nationalism does not address the importance of approaching nations as fluid entities beyond the Westphalian conception, which today increasingly encompass not only the nations that exist within the state, but also the nations that exist outside of the boundaries of that state, such as the diasporic communities or the migrant individuals and groups. Moreover, the case of Armenia presents a clear challenge to the modernists claim that the nation-state, and thus the nation building process, takes places within the boundaries of the Westphalian state. Armenia has a

³⁰ Primordialism argues that nations can trace an ethnic core, and is based on a common heritage and kinship ties among the people. In this sense the past is important in the making of the nation. Modernism emphasizes the novelty of the nation as both a political organization and in terms of identity formation. Most importantly for modernists, the nation and nationalism are absolutely modern constructs resulting from industrial capitalism. Within the modernist group, the most commonly used theoretical construct in almost all fields in the social sciences and humanities that deal with national identity issues has become Benedict Anderson’s ‘imagined community’, emphasizing the social construction of national identity. For an overview of the primordialist and modernist perspectives in the theories of nationalism and the variants among these views, and other views as well, see the world of Ozkirimli 2005, 2010; Smith 1991, 2009, 2010)

³¹ For an elaborate and in-depth study of the emergence of Armenian nationalism in the diaspora over the centuries, and an approach that combines elements of modern and pre-modern Armenian nation and nationalism, see Panossian 2006.

diaspora population larger than those living in the state of Armenia. This diaspora is also a mixture of the older diaspora, or *spyurk*, since the Armenian Genocide of 1915, and the newer post-Soviet diaspora. Moreover, the presence of strong diaspora habituses in various countries around the world presents strong challenges against state sovereignty and, in many ways, against the ‘traditional’ monopoly of the state to conduct foreign policy. In addition, even though the nation is a modern construction (Gellner, Hobsbawm, Anderson, for example; see the next chapter for more discussion), the pre-modern identity traits or cultural markers do not completely disappear in the making of the nation state (see Panossian 2006, for the case of Armenia).³² The impact of traumatic memories that shape the collective identity and even the making of the nation state – such as the Armenian Genocide memory – has not been dealt in the literature of nationalism, and instead has been addressed by the literature on diaspora identity and formation (Cohen, Arendt, Safran, and others). These complexities in identity formation and diversity of the national habitus make the case of Armenia an important and significant one to explore, especially in the way that the examination of the case of Armenia requires an interdisciplinary outlook in order to be able to really capture the diversity and complexity of national identity formation and maintenance in the contemporary era.

In the same light, the case of Armenia is also important because even though it may appear as a ‘homogenous’ nation state at first glance, since ethnic Armenians are a majority Christians and other Christian, Muslim, Jewish minorities live in Armenia as well, such as Kurds, Russians, and Georgians who constitute the minority, the various habituses of Armenians in the diaspora and in Armenia reflect the diversity of the national habitus, a concept that captures the idiosyncrasies of

³² For an extensive analysis of the role of the past in the contemporary expressions of Armenian foreign policy, see Mirzoyan 2010). Also see Anthony Smith’s extensive work on this subject. Though Smith does not tackle the role that collective memory around a traumatic experience plays.

the nation without the essentialist and primordialist views to it. This is especially the case in Armenia around one of the most unifying collective memories of the Armenian Genocide; as the empirical chapters demonstrate, the nature of nation building is contested by the diversity of opinions and ideologies that constitute the image of the homeland.

The goal here is to explain and understand the case of Armenia from 1988 up to 2013 based on the following factors: the impact of the 1988 movement, the construction of femininity in Armenia, the perceptions of the role of the diaspora among Armenians in Armenia, and the contested nature of memory politics on the Armenian Genocide during the Protocols of 2009. The objective of the dissertation is not to make theoretical generalizations based on the single case study or to use the empirical research based in Armenia for testing theories of nationalism and nation building. The theories are applied to the case of Armenia and tested only to contextualize the case of Armenia and show what its contribution to the literature on nation building can be and vice versa, that is what the literature can help to bring to light in the case of Armenian national identity construction. After all, As John Gerring writes, “A constructive methodology should enable researchers to think about problems in new ways; it should not focus narrowly and obsessively on testing.” (2011, 33)

The point is to use this case study and the discussion of the nation building process as a way to engage the theoretical literature on nation building by adding some new elements that the case of Armenia has to offer. In this sense, for example, Armenian women’s self-identification with motherhood is not an innovative discovery in the field of gender studies, nationalism, or nation building. But the way Armenian women express their ethnicity through the conception of motherhood is tightly linked to the history of the Armenian Genocide and the recent war with

Azerbaijan. These links provide a renewed discussion for the field of gender studies as they relate memory and collective history to gender studies, for example.

Dissertation Chapters

Each main chapter in the dissertation deals individually with a focus on one pillar of Armenian national identity. The first chapter lays out the theoretical construct that frames the case-study of the Armenian national habitus. It also sets the importance of the chosen methods of research as directly tied to the theoretical framework, which falls at the intersection of four large bodies of literature: theories of national identity construction, national habitus in a Bourdieusian perspective, gender studies, and collective memory (see Diagram 1). My second chapter investigates the role that the 1988 nationalist movement played in Armenian nation building. The main argument is that this movement continues to be part of the Armenian imaginary as a moment of unity for the whole nation, both due to the embeddedness of ‘Karabakh’ as a concept in the memory of the Armenian Genocide of 1915 and due to the nostalgic feelings in attempts to recreate it, though unsuccessful until now, as evident in the organized movement in 2013. The third chapter examines the role that women play in the imagined community. The chapter argues that Armenian women identify with their ethnic Armenianness as the mothers of the nation. The Armenian women’s identification with mothering is uniquely expressed through the history and memory of the Armenian Genocide and more recently the Karabakh conflict. The fourth chapter attempts to capture the ‘local’ Armenians’ perceptions (including some repatriated voices) of the Armenian diaspora, a fundamental component of the Armenian nation since it is the larger segment of the Armenian population. The chapter shows that there are competing images of Armenianness which heightens the tensions between Armenia and the diaspora(s) (and within each). The fifth chapter

highlights the contested discourses of Armenianness around the memory of the Armenian Genocide of 1915 committed by the Ottoman Turks. The Protocols of 2009 are taken as the main focus in order to demonstrate that this contested national identity is evident even in the most seemingly ‘homogeneous nation’ of Armenia and around such a seemingly unifying historical and collective memory as the Armenian Genocide. The Conclusion will show what the case of Armenia can help to explain and contextualize it within the general scholarly discourse on nation building. Additionally, the conclusion shows the trends in the region by comparing Georgia and Azerbaijan to Armenia in order to establish some regional similarities and differences relevant for future research areas on the Southern Caucasian states.

The collection of chapters is ultimately linked in the way that the theoretical framework and empirical case speak to each other and contribute to a better understanding of the two (see Diagram 3). Thinking of the national identity formation project as national habitus – in this case Armenian national habitus – is an extremely informative way of understanding the shifts in national expressions from 1988 until 2013 in Armenia. The stress is on positioning nationalism not as an epiphenomenon in the history of modernization and industrialization, whatever the timing of these is for Armenia (post-Soviet and Soviet), but to bring it to the centre of inquiry. The conception of national habitus allows us to think of nationalism as an intersubjective ‘practice’ occurring in society by both elites and masses. In this sense, nationalism is the expression of identity through the subjective perceptions of the subjects. The next chapter lays out the theoretical framework of the dissertation through which the empirical chapters are discussed and the collected data for the project is analyzed.

Chapter One: Theoretical Framework of the Dissertation: National Habitus, Women, and Collective Traumatic Memory

Introduction

...The national identity of individuals who perceive themselves as belonging to a national collectivity is manifested *inter alia*, in their social practices, one of which is discursive practice. The respective national identity is shaped by state, political, institutional, media and everyday social practices, and the material and social conditions which emerge as a special form of social practice plays a central part both in the formation and in the expression of national identity (Wodak et al. 1999, 29-30).

As theories of national identity are moving towards a more grounded understanding of national expressions, meaning a move away from structural explanations that de-humanize the experience of national identity for the people and the ‘masses’ to an explanation and method of analysis of national identity as something that is social and relational, and happens on a daily basis in everyday interactions and actions (Brubaker 1996; Calhoun 1997; Wodak et al. 1999; Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008; Rampton 2011). The question is, how can we combine these explanations in a way that addresses these complex definitions embedded in national identity? Here, I turn to sociology to assist me. Often, the grand narrative based explanations of nationalism have been the work of historians, political scientists and political theorists. Bourdieu’s focus on building a bridge between structure and agency is a fascinating theoretical resource to turn to in the understanding of national identity. In my work, I use the concept of national habitus as a way of explaining national identity. National habitus as national identity is able to capture not only the structural elements of nationalism but also the personal level as well, through the consideration of subjective expressions of nationalism. National habitus is deeply historical, particularly in the way it can accumulate past experiences and memories. It can strongly account for the gendered construction of national identity, as Chapter Three reveals, through its consideration of social positionality in expressions of

identity. Finally, national habitus is able to provide a sound supplement to the literature on nationalism that focuses on the duality between primordialism and modernism through its strong links between structure and agency. The focus on agency is an important aspect of national habitus in this project, particularly due to the methodology of research adopted through extensive semi-structure interviews. In this chapter, I argue that national habitus as such provides an important conceptual tool to explain national identity formation in a way that sheds light on the everyday subjective expressions of national identity through the narration of events and political changes from 1988 to 2013 in Armenia.

Rogers Brubaker's work on groupism has been extremely important in the social sciences because of the way he challenges our conceptual understanding of nations and national groups or communities and the differentiation he sets to make between nation as a category of practice and as a category of analysis, much inspired by Bourdieu. According to Brubaker, groupism is basically "the tendency to take discrete, sharply differentiated, internally homogeneous and externally bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts, and fundamental units of social analysis." (2004, 50) This dissertation follows Brubaker's conceptualization of groups and takes seriously the deeply heterogeneous, widely divergent, and epistemologically differentiated individual expressions of identity that attend to any construction or naming of a 'group' (also see Somers 1994; Suny 2000).

Even though it tends to be easier to use the term Armenians and diaspora Armenians in order to discuss certain aspects of the case, it is by no means an attempt to perpetuate groupism.³³ Brubaker's methodological precaution, as I understand his main project to be, is that scholars

³³ Brubaker himself cannot completely avoid the use of group terms such as 'Hungarians' or 'Romanians', for example, and Zsuzsa Csergo notes that shifting to a "groupless vocabulary is neither possible nor necessarily beneficial" (2007, 395).

should not “uncritically adopt *categories of ethnopolitical practice* as our *categories of social analysis.*” (2004, 52, emphasis original) In addition, it is important to think and work with concepts such as race, ethnicity, or nation not as groups themselves, which reifies them as essentialist, but in terms of “*ethnicization, racialization, and nationalization* as political, social, cultural, and psychological processes.” This means that the study of national identities, for example, should not be based on the category of group but groupness “as a contextually fluctuating conceptual variable.” (Brubaker 2004, 54, emphasis original) In this sense, then, we can also call the project of study ‘national expressions’ and ‘national identity’ as the study of ‘nationalizing nation states’ and not national states, as Brubaker posits, that looks closely at the “nationalizing discourses, policies, practices or processes in particular domains.” (Brubaker 2011, 1808) This project looks at national identity as discursive constructions of Armenianness, in order to reveal the complexity of the contestations around the imagined Armenia(s).

The focus on groupness allows researchers to focus on categories rather than groups, in order to “illuminate the multifarious ways in which ethnicity, race, and nationhood can exist and ‘work’ without the existence of ethnic groups as substantial entities. It can help us envision ethnicity without groups.” (Brubaker 2004, 55) This is definitely a useful conceptual tool for working on ethnic groups without essentializing them. However, this does not mean that the subjective expressions of identity of participants are completely put aside. On the contrary, this project gives weight to the participant’s primordialism, which Anthony Smith explains as “the approach which emphasizes the felt longevity of ethnic ties for the people bound by them...” (2002, 707) At the same time that we can think about national or ethnic groups in terms of groupness, we need to be aware of what Charles Mills (2000) states regarding the realities of race, when he rightly asserts that even though race is a social construct, it is also a reality in that it exists in how

people experience it. In this sense, “The sociology of knowledge, therefore, must concern itself with the social construction of reality.” (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 15) These theoretical and methodological considerations all contribute to the conceptualization of nation, nationalism, and nationalizing states as socially constructed categories of analysis. To be able to examine the concept of the ‘national’ in this chapter, I will draw on Bourdieu’s concepts of *habitus* and *field* to conceptualize national habitus in a way that diversities and contestations of identity constructions within a ‘group’ are captured. The socialization of individuals within the habitus and individuals’ generative and reproductive agency is viewed as a constant and circling existence in explaining national habitus. *In this chapter I contend that national habitus provides a strong conceptual tool in order to explain the discursive construction of national identity in way that reflects the importance of (traumatic) collective memory, gendered social positioning, relationality in social contexts, and diasporic national identity making.*

Social construction, a term that was coined by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann in *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966), has become widely used in various disciplines to denote the importance of constructionism – human beings make sense of their social setting, or their *field*, by constructing meanings and making interpretations of their surroundings. The shifts in the discourse of national identity are captured in this dissertation through discourse analysis of the various ‘texts’ and the semiotic materials collected. As much as the construction of the discourse of national identity is highlighted in this project, the work of Bourdieu is extremely important to incorporate the agency of subjects in the theoretical framework to examine national identity discourses in Armenia. Bourdieu’s conception of habitus and field are used here to present a theoretical framework that analyzes national identity constructs as national habitus. This is not a new term in the field of social sciences, since there are a few authors who have used this terminology to frame

their own work. Some have used *national habitus* to describe the ways in which “feelings of national belonging became central to one’s sense of identity,” (Le Hir 2014, 1) and to explain “the processes contributing to the development of national similarities within countries, not only in institutions and physical surroundings, but also in people’s behavior.” (Kuipers 2013, 18; also see Pickel 2005).³⁴

The conception of national habitus, inspired by Pierre Bourdieu’s work, is innovative in this work because of the way it incorporates various other theoretical discussions such as gendered national identity making, diaspora-homeland politics, and history and collective (especially traumatic) memory. This perspective offers an extremely rich and constructive way of building the theoretical framework (see Diagram #1). The use of habitus in Bourdieu’s work is much more familiar in sociology, and has become an inspiration to various other forms of habituses³⁵ that can explain other identifications such as gender and sexual identities, transnational identities, learning of sports, education, the domain of psychoanalysis, etc.³⁶ The importance of the conception of national habitus in this study is emphasized by the way Bourdieu’s work has pioneered in linking the objective and subjective factors in social processes. This is a significant perspective to complement the literature on national identity, since the focus has been on the modernists’ emphasis on the structural and objective factors that shape society, and as such, nationalism is viewed as an epiphenomenon of the forces of modernization and industrialization. Instead, this

³⁴ The term national habitus was coined by Norbert Elias, a German sociologist. (Le Hir 2014, 3; Kuipers 2012, 18).

³⁵ The term habituses in the plural will be used in the text instead of habitus because it explains the diverse communities of Armenians much more strongly. The diversity in terms of perspectives, political ideologies, geographical locations, and loci of enunciation make the Armenian nation an informative and significant case for analysis. As such national habituses can better explain this.

³⁶ The term habitus has also been applied to several areas of research, most notably to sports, such as Loic Wacquant (2013), to transnational habitus to analyze the transnational experiences in the digital age (Nedelcu 2012), to different conception of spaces (Hillier and Rooksby 2005), to sexual habitus in order to capture “the relationship between embodiment, gender identity, erotic desires, and sexual repertoires and practices.” (Schilt and Wondson 2014, 733) Bourdieu himself was supportive of the various uses of habitus in the social sciences, and he encouraged these interpretations, which he explicitly supported (see Bourdieu 2005, 43-53, as an example).

study takes seriously the importance of the relational and intersubjective conception of identity. The theoretical framework of this dissertation falls at the intersection of several inter-disciplinary theories of identity construction, as Diagram#1 shows. The theoretical intersections of this thesis are Bourdieu's conception of habitus, the collective memory of the nation, gendered national identity constructions, and the discursive constructions or narratives of national identity. The chapter reviews the main conceptual and theoretical framework upon which the empirical study of Armenian identity is investigated in the following four chapters in this dissertation.

The first part of this chapter presents the various theoretical debates and theories of national identity. The second part introduces the concept of national habitus in order to present the main framework of the dissertation. The third and fourth sections incorporate the various theories on memory and collective identity and the gendered conceptions of national identity. These sections also show how national habitus can account for the diversity in conceptions of identity making (such as Armenianness) in a way that takes into account the transnational influences of the nation (the existence of a transnational nation) and its diaspora. National habitus captures the complexities of these identities that exist in various and diverse habituses. The chapter shows that national habitus provides a solid base upon which the theoretical discussions can be built for this dissertation.

Theoretical Discussion on Nations and National Identity Constructions

The mainstream theoretical predominance in social sciences on nations and nationalism has considered the nation-state as the main entity of national identity construction, with often homogenizing consequences of the nation within the boundaries of the state (particularly Gellner 1983). Modernist theories assume that nationalism is a modern phenomenon, a factor that is

accepted by almost all theorists though with some variations, and this stands true especially for the Armenian case (see the extensive study by Panossian 2006; Libaridian 2004; Suny 1993a, 1993b). However, the diversity of expressions of ‘Armenianness’ is strongly evident in the case of Armenia, even though the Armenian nation is one of the few ethnically ‘homogeneous’ cases with about 95% ethnic Armenians in Armenia (Panossian 2006).

Theories of nation and nationalism have focused on the origins and emergence of nations and nationalism and the definition of these two concepts or ideas in order to explain national identity or nation-building as a historical evolution from the Western European experiences of the seventeenth and eighteenth century. The post-communist and post-Soviet cases have become experimental grounds for the theories of nation formation and nationalism. The post-Soviet cases have demonstrated that there is a need to re-examine these theoretical approaches to show their relevance and applicability vis-à-vis these cases. However, these experimental cases have been useful to arguably show that attempts at theorizing nationalism are neither easy nor simple tasks, and it is therefore probably not feasible to believe that a single theory can do it all, because context and time matter in the explanation of an idea and a movement such as nationalism (See Barrington 2006, 8-11, for the debates around these two definitions of nationalism; see Panossian 2006; Suny 1993a on the case of Armenia).

The theories of nationalism offer different explanations regarding the origins and definitions of nations and nationalism, the objectivity versus subjectivity factors in understanding nationalism (Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989; Brubaker 1996; Eley and Suny 1996; Smith and Hutchinson 1996; Nairn 1997; Smith 1998, 2010; Ozkirimli 2005), the civic versus ethnic model of nation formation (Brubaker 1999; Bunce 2005; Lecours 2000), and the place of the ‘past’ and collective memory (Smith 1998, 2010; Connor 1994). At the extreme polar opposites,

primordialism argues that nations can trace an ethnic core, and is based on a common heritage and kinship ties among the people (for a discussion on the primordialist perspectives and the variations within this theoretical view, see Smith 2010, 55-56).³⁷ Modernism emphasizes the novelty of the nation as both a political organization and in terms of identity formation. Most importantly for modernists, the nation and nationalism are absolutely modern constructs resulting from industrial capitalism. Within the modernist group, the most commonly used theoretical construct in almost all fields of social sciences and humanities that deal with national identity issues has become Benedict Anderson's (2006[1983]) conception of 'imagined community', emphasizing the social construction of national identity.

Andreas Pickel uses the term *homo nationis* in order to highlight the condition of the twentieth and twenty first century, which represents "the individual who is born and raised in a particular national culture, and who lives most of her life in a nation-state of which she is citizen...the 'nationalised personality structure' is fundamental in most state-societies today." (Pickel 2004, 327) This is indeed reflective of the human condition in the modern era that continues to be dictated by the Westphalian tradition. However, as the dissertation shows, the state is not the only actor in the international or domestic arena, and other forces, such as diaspora organizations, parties, or individuals, can have a competitively strong impact on state decisions as well.³⁸ In addition, the state is not always the *only* central institutional entity in making and

³⁷ For scholars such as Joseph R. Llobera and Adrian Hastings, the perennialist approach, a variant of the primordialist approach, explains the ancientness of nations and their *longue durée*. This approach claims that nations and national ties are ancient, but differs from the previous view in that it argues that they are not natural. Thus, scholars who maintain this approach show that nations exist before nationalism (Llobera 1994, 219-21; Hastings 1997; Armstrong 1982). The perennialists rely on heavy historical empirical data in order to make their case (Smith 2010, 55).

³⁸ This point is also made by major international relations theorists who work on migration and claim that "Mainstream scholars of international relations continue to place the state, as a unitary and rational actor, at the centre of their analyses of any type of transnational phenomenon whether it is trade, foreign direct investment, or international migration." (Brettell and Hollifield 2014, 11; also see the work of Kuznetsov 2014 on this point and the discussion on the various perspectives of international relations theory).

framing national identity. The case of Armenia reveals that the role of stateless entities, such as the Armenian diaspora organizations and institutions in each habitus, especially since 1915 and during the period of Soviet Armenia, can heavily shape the course of national identity formation.³⁹ In the post-independence period, the Armenian diaspora continues to play a vital role in many aspects for its communities (the older and newer post-Soviet diaspora) in the local habituses and on a more global scale for the Armenian nation. This is in parallel to the Armenian state that plays its own nationalizing function within the boundaries and outside of its post-Soviet diaspora – the Armenian Ministry of Diaspora was established in 2008, about seventeen years after independence.

The dissertation puts emphasis on the concept of national habitus, a relatively new term in the field of national identity studies that will be used in this project drawing on Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus* and *field*. National habitus is an important theoretical and conceptual 'tool' that brings social theory into identity politics so that differences are recognized in a way that culture, emotions, memory, and gender all become enmeshed in the conceptualization of national habitus.

As Craig Calhoun posits, for example:

An increasingly transnational sphere of public and academic discourse and increasing roles for women, gay men and lesbians, people of colour, and various previously dominated or repressed ethnic groups all press theorists not only to make sense of differences in the "world-out-there," but to make sense of the differences within the discourse of theory. This calls on theory to take culture seriously and to approach it reflexively, not objectivistically." (1994, 4)

Writing on Armenian national identity expressions thus requires the consideration of existing analogous constructs of Armenian identity - the habituses of Armenian communities in Armenia and in the diaspora. It is reasonable to ask, therefore, can we speak of a unified Armenian national

³⁹ This conclusion is made by some scholars who have provided detailed studies of Armenian national identity in the diaspora, such as Razmik Panossian (2006) and Khachig Tölöyan (2010).

identity today? If not, then the grounds of contestation and difference within the Armenian nation need to be investigated.

Some of the newer debates have moved away from classical modernism, as identified by most of the authors referenced above, to focus more on other major issues related to identity politics. Since the 1990s, there has been a scholarship that has rejected “the grand narratives and the causal-historical rationale behind the accounts.” These newer ‘post-classical’ debates (Day and Thompson 2004, 12-13) are influenced by the post-structuralist literature, and they heavily rely on Anderson’s modernist concept of the imagined communities which has become the basis of these arguments in social sciences (and humanities), and Billig’s (1995) banal nationalism, in addition to the literature on discourse analysis, gender studies, and postcolonialism (Day and Thompson 2004, 128-148). The post-classical scholarship is increasingly focused on the multicultural aspect of most liberal societies in the West (see classification by Smith 2008, 564 and Day and Thompson 2004, 13-14). First, the multicultural aspect is examined from a political philosophy and theory perspective through the work of scholars such as Yael Tamir, Will Kymlicka, Charles Taylor, Margaret Moore, David Miller, and many others. Second, from the perspective of gender and sexuality studies, bringing forth the patriarchal nature of the gendered state and nation building, the works that can be categorized here include scholars such as Pateman (1988), Yuval-Davis (1998); Abu-Laban (2008), Weber (2013) for example. Third, the “new social theory” perspective, including approaches from critical theory, postcolonialism, and poststructuralism, for example (Day and Thompson 2004, 13), has provided a renewed perspective on not only the western forms of multiculturalism but also on the postcolonial and non-Western nation states, which may have different historical, social, and political settings to begin with and may present outcomes that are not similar to that of the Western states.

The focus of some of the more contemporary scholars has shifted to formulate alternative accounts of nationalism that show how nations are continuously produced in every-day life, therefore taking a more bottom-up approach (Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008; Wodak et al. 2009). There was recently a debate initiated between Anthony Smith and other scholars, who are advocating a stronger bottom-up approach, claiming that the field of nationalism studies has neglected to include those perspectives in its elite-dense approaches in explaining the rise of nationalism. Smith counters these claims and cites Michael Billig as one example of a scholar who has worked on the more ‘mass’ perspective of nationalism.⁴⁰ Michael Billig (1995) argues that much of the process of nation-building is in the familiarization and internalization of the national ‘markers’, as the nation becomes expressed in the unnoticed habits that constitute social life. In a similar light Katherine Verdery (1996) argues for a third way beyond the great divide. By asking questions⁴¹ that deal with the different layers of abstraction that make up national identity, she argues that national identity is tied to people’s experiences. My theoretical framework is inspired by the Critical Discourse tradition initiated by Ruth Wodak and others, within the framework of Bourdieu’s habitus.

Identity politics, in my view, is directly linked to the idea of nation and nationalism as subjective expressions that make up a certain nation in a way that translate into the discursive construct of the nation state. These views provide a useful theoretical background and starting point for this project, which will give more weight to the way people internalize the national discourse and express their national identity, such as “Armenianness”, for example, through these

⁴⁰For a discussion between Anthony Smith and those who presented critiques of the nationalist schools of thought with more bottom-up alternatives, see the following debates by Jon E. Fox and Cynthia Miller-Idriss (2008) “Everyday Nationhood”, and the response by Anthony Smith (2008) in the same journal *Ethnicities*.

⁴¹ The five questions are as follows: What underlies the notion of identity? how do people become national? How is the nation symbolized? How can we understand intersection of nation with other social operators? How does the dissolution of the nation-state affect the viability and deployment of nation as a legitimating symbol in politics? (1996, 228-233)

subjective perspectives. Bourdieu emphasized that the conception of habitus meant that the “individual...is social, collective,” which he summed up by stating that “The habitus is socialized subjectivity.” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 101, author’s translation) As such, the individual and the collective are related in the conception of habitus, which therefore means that national identity as national habitus is a social and relational phenomenon. Even though structural changes (such as the collapse of the Soviet Union) can bring radical shifts in the social and political order, national expressions are not just a result of these larger changes, but they should be examined through the collective body of the nation and its habitus. As David Rampton notes in his critique of the constructivist perspective of nationalism, “ethnic and nationalist effects and practices are abstracted and decontextualised from the world of power as their significance is always located elsewhere. Put in plain terms, the grounds of knowledge for understanding nationalism in mainstream approaches are located in underlying dynamics rather than in the surface-level manifestation of nationalist discourse itself.” (2011, 247)

My project does not claim to represent the ‘people’s’ perspective, since my interviews were selectively done with the Armenian elite and those who have symbolic capital within diverse communities in Armenia. However, what I take from the existing debates in the field, and drawing on Bourdieu’s work, is that any explanation of nationalism or national identity has to focus on the subjective element of national discourse and the social reproduction of this discourse as localized expressions, without ignoring the objective conditions of industrial modernity or print capitalism. In emphasizing the subjective perspective in national identity making, from the viewpoint of elite interviews, the project considers that the elite and the ‘masses’ are part of the national discourse before they produce it. Put more simply, individuals internalize the ‘dominant’ discourse of national identity and reproduce it in a circular way – in this sense habitus can constrain social

action within the limits of the field but can also condition those actions that can bring forth change.

In Bourdieu's own words on the capacity of habitus and its interpretive strength, he states that

The habitus is both the generative principle of objectively classifiable judgments and the system of classification...of these practices....The habitus is necessarily internalized and converted into a disposition that generates meaningful practices and meaning-giving perceptions; it is a general transposable disposition which carries out systematic, universal application – beyond the limits of what has been directly learnt – of the necessity inherent in the learning conditions. (Bourdieu 1984, 170)

This can reveal the most 'accepted' and 'dominant' narrative(s) on nationalism and my interviewees' views clearly reflect that. In an attempt to understand in what ways the elite have internalized the nationalizing discourse, the dissertation turns to the idea and concept of national habitus. National habitus, as will be shown below, is able to bring together identity politics – which takes seriously the importance of bringing history, culture and emotions into the social (Calhoun 1994) and the political, as the works of Foucault have inspired us.

In this sense, then, habitus can account for the contestations and differences in identity formations in a nation, and can also account for the differentiated social positions – women or men, elites with different 'levels' of symbolic capital, diaspora Armenian or local Armenian – of individuals within a particular field. The next section will be based on a discussion of national habitus by linking the conception of national habitus to the construction of gendered national identity, diaspora politics, and the study of trauma, collective memories, and history. This perspective of national habitus is then the main theoretical framework that guides the empirical examination of the case of the Armenian national habitus from 1988-2013, particularly looking at the way collective traumatic 'events' such as the Armenian Genocide of 1915 can strongly shape the national habitus. As such, history, memory, and habitus become enmeshed in a way that the former two become absorbed into the Armenian habitus. In this sense, the memory of the Armenian

Genocide is ingrained in the Armenian unconscious and the Armenian psyche. Once again, this is not meant to imply that Armenian politicians or officials do not ground their decisions on rational calculations of interest or of power. However, as Bourdieu reminds us, subjects are not rational choice actors making decisions based on rational calculations of interests and economic gains – something he adamantly rejects, instead he argues agents make decisions and behave based on unconsciously internalized practical logic that gives agents a certain ‘feel for the game’.

National Habitus: National Identity through Relationality, Agency and Social Positionality

What the existing theories of nations and nationalism have done so far provides a tremendously rich spectrum of ideas and explanations in terms of the origins of nations, the relationship of the past to the present form of the modern nation-state, to the rise of anti-colonial nationalism (at least from a Eurocentric perspective). The ‘newer’ post-classical debates that are based on the recognition of the nation-state in the content of a plural and multicultural society have shifted the focus from nationalism to postnationalism (On various angles of this debate, see Appadurai 1996; Soysal 1994; Beck et al. 1994; Parekh 2008, Pieterse 2007; Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Paasi 1996). In addition, the intersectional studies have reminded us that there are other important factors in shaping our identities such as class, gender, religious affiliation (Yuval-Davis 1989), hence the focus on identity politics (Calhoun 1994, 1997). However, what we still cannot explain in the field is the way nationalism is such a powerful force that continues to infiltrate in human action, being, and identity in the modern (or postmodern?) era. More importantly, if habitus is the embodiment of history that carries within it accumulated capital of past experiences, memories, and histories, as Bourdieu (1990) argues, then how can we account for traumatic episodes or events of history into the construction of the nation? As such, this chapter considers

that national habitus, analyzed as the discursive construction of national identity by looking at various forms of ‘texts’, necessarily constitutes the study of memory, particularly traumatic collective memory, in order to really understand and unearth the discourses of national building that may deal with other more obvious factors, such as the role of social movements, the constructions of gender, the Karabakh conflict, even the foreign policy of the Armenian state and the diaspora-homeland relations. These are analyzed on their own in each of the empirical chapters, but, as *I contend in this thesis, the traumatic collective memories are directly and indirectly translated into the national identity constructions through agency in the social setting in a way that the traumatic memory of the Armenian Genocide can condition certain discourses and constrain others that do not fit within the ‘authentically’ constructed Armenianness.*

In this sense, national identity involves a process of internalizing memory and trauma, and social, historical, political elements and events that make up the ‘uniqueness’ of the nation. In addition, a significant consideration to state is that socialization should not imply a form of passivity, and instead the agency of the agents should be considered seriously in the study, because agents are both the products and the producers of their social field through habitus (Perez-Felkner 2013; Bourdieu 2000). In this sense, Bourdieu’s habitus can help to explain not only the structural factors that shape human lives, thoughts, interactions, and behaviour (usually involved in the socialization process, Perez-Felkner 2013, 120-121), but the important view of the unconscious internalization of the external factors and unconscious the externalization of the internal factors (Bourdieu, 1977, 72) summed up in Bourdieu’s theory of practice, the latter point being the unique contribution of Bourdieu for the study of nations and nationalism, in my perspective. Habitus is a useful conception in order to understand collective national identity expressions because it “has been elaborated to include aspects relating to embodiment, agency and the interplay between past

and present, and individual and collective phenomena to make sense of cultural behaviour and experience.” (Baker and Brown 2008, 57) This section discusses Bourdieu’s perspective and attempts to demonstrate the usefulness of his concepts, *habitus* and *field*, in the understanding of Armenian national identity discourse shifts in politics from 1988 until 2013. National habitus can provide the link between objectivism and subjectivism, a debate so deeply founded in political sociology. As such, participants and their internalization of the social, and their agency and action in ‘performing’ the habitus, are paid attention to, without discounting the role of the structures in constraining agency.

National identity depends in many ways on the socialization that takes place in schools and the media for example, especially with the advent of print capitalism and industrialization. In fact, Bourdieu explains the process of socialization by the state “through its schools and education system,” whereby the “state shapes those forms of perception, categorization, interpretation and memory that serve to determine the orchestration of the habitus which in turn are constitutive for a kind of national common sense.” (1999, 53-75) Habitus here plays a vital role in going deeper in explaining the way this socialization is internalized in individuals and collectives and also externalized as agency – this definitely stands as counter to the functionalist and instrumentalist perspectives. As Bourdieu states, this is the process of “the internalization of externality and the externalization of internality” (Bourdieu 1977, 72), meaning that “Habitus thereby brings together both objective social structure and subjective personal experiences.” (Maton 2008, 53) This is the main point of the theoretical framework of the thesis, as habitus is able to explain the ways in which the dominant discourse is both internalized by the agents through socialization mechanisms and externalized as the unintended or unconscious reflection of the dominant discourse by the agents (the elites in my case) (Also see Lukes 2005 on this point). By analyzing interviewees’

responses, the dominant discourse is revealed through the narrative of the agents themselves as the methodology section of the thesis elaborates.

Habitus is based on the conception of habit, and it is powerful in that it is able to encompass the whole of social realities and imaginings, because habitus “can be cognitive, emotional or moral,” expressed “as a particular gesture...[or] as in modes of moral reasoning.” (Pickel 2004, 330) Habitus is a concept that Bourdieu uses to explain the link between social structures and social practices in order to build a theoretical framework through which he would demonstrate how the social and political structures are incorporated and enacted through agents, without making them mechanical action doers or rational choice makers. Social structures impact individuals and social group, as they present the settings and conditions within which individuals internalize these structures and this consequently shapes and moulds their identity in the way of performing social practices.

These dispositions are the result of habit, though this is not a voluntary practice that individuals undertake, but a result of living and being in a given setting. The internalization of the social structures in a society builds collectives that share similar customs, values, informal rules of conduct (social and moral), that have the effect of homogenizing the habitus. As Bourdieu states:

One of the fundamental effects of the orchestration of habitus is the production of a commonsense world endowed with the objectivity secured by consensus on the meaning (*sens*) of practices and the world, in other words the harmonization of agents’ experiences....The homogeneity of habitus is what – within the limits of the group of agents possessing the schemes (of production and interpretation) implied in their production causes practices and works to be immediately intelligible and foreseeable, and hence taken for granted (1977, 80, emphasis in original).

In addition, Bourdieu also explains the unconscious process of internalization through the homogeneous habitus:

The objective homogenizing of group or class habitus which results from the homogeneity of the conditions of existence is what enables practices to be objectively harmonized without any intentional calculation or conscious reference to a norm and mutually adjusted *in the absence of any direct interaction* or, *a fortiori*, explicit co-ordination (1977, 80, emphasis in original)

The concept of habitus, according to Bourdieu, rejects explanations of ‘naturalness’; instead, it highlights the constructed social conditions. However, “Habitus...refers to learned practices and standards that have become so much part of ourselves that they feel self-evident and natural...What we learn as members of a system, in a specific social position, is...absorbed into our bodies...” (Kuipers 2013, 20) Therefore the sensation of belonging to a nation or a collective that shares certain objective and subjective features may feel natural to the participants, what Anthony Smith (2013a, 158), drawing from Clifford Geertz, calls “participants’ primordialism”, and this is of high importance because it arguably makes the national habitus *feel* unique. The national habitus captures the *reality* of national identity to the participants without essentializing or naturalizing them as reality, and it makes us aware of those features that seem *real* to people, versus how we, as social scientists consider them to be socially constructed, or socially discursive (for a discussion on national habitus as a discursive construction, see the work of De Cillia et al. 1999 and Wodak et al. 2009). Karl Maton demonstrates that with his conception of habitus and field, Bourdieu “claims to go beyond the opposition between structuralism and hermeneutics, between providing an objective account of social regularities and a subjective focus on the meaning-making of actors.” (2008, 55) In this sense, Bourdieu’s main aim was not only to explain how the field is formed, but how the “objectivity [mapped in the *field*] was constructed by individual subjectivities, constituted by their *habitus*.” (Grenfell 2008, 4, emphasis in original)

To really grasp the particular object of study, Bourdieu advised to examine the *field* where social interactions happen, meaning that “*locating* the object of investigation in its specific historical and local/national/international and relational context.” (Thomson 2008, 67, emphasis in original) As such, the historical and particular context matter in examining the object of study, and these are in turn reflected in the internalization and externalization of the field. The acquired habitus is thus connected to history, particularly collective history, which highlights habitus’s capacity to encapsulate shared experiences and common memories that become part of collective history and memory. This history is absorbed in the unconscious and reflected in the social practices through agents’ dispositions, defined as their practical knowledge of a given field (*champs*). In the words of Craig Calhoun, “habitus is internalized experience, embodied culture and history” (2013, 42). The contextualization of habitus as the unconscious internalization of a ‘history’ or ‘collective history’ is explained by Bourdieu as embedded within the unconscious, as he writes: “The “unconscious” is never anything other than the forgetting of history which history itself produces by incorporating the objective structures it produces in the second nature of habitus” (Bourdieu 1977, 78-9).⁴²

Agents are in turn able to influence the social structures through their own responses and behaviours. Therefore, habitus encompasses the “thoughts, perceptions, expressions, actions” of that particular social structure that generated it and is thus limited by the “historically and socially situated conditions of its production.” (Bourdieu 1977, 95) Habitus is not deterministic, because habitus is not “a closed cycle of repetitive change....The latter is a product of ‘the whole past,’

⁴² The reference Bourdieu makes here to Durkheim in explaining his thoughts, are as follows: “...in each of us, in varying proportions, there is part of yesterday’s man; it is yesterday’s man who inevitably predominates in us, since the present amounts to little compared with the long past in the course of which we were formed and from which we result....Conversely, we are very much aware of the most recent attainments of civilization, because, being recent, they have not yet had time to settle into our unconscious” Durkheim, *L’évolution pédagogique en France*, Paris, 1938, p. 16, quoted in Bourdieu 1977, 79).

‘accumulated’ and therefore *continually* constituted by historical events and processes even as those events and processes are transformed by integration into the habitus.” (Shaw 2002, 6-7, emphasis in original) It is therefore important to acknowledge that people do not react to particular events or situations based on their place behind a ‘veil of ignorance’ in the original position, as often assumed in the social contract tradition (see the work of Rawls 1999). Quite the contrary, in fact, people are deeply embedded in their social positionality, which plays out in the way they react. In this sense, then, as Rosalind Shaw rightly notes, “...experiences of [transformative] events and processes that become sedimented as memory are themselves mediated and configured by memory. From such a position, we can recast persistence, recurrence and reproduction as integral parts of transformation and innovation rather than their antitheses” (2002, 10).⁴³

Habitus is generative, as Bourdieu repeatedly emphasizes (1977, 78), and since it is a product of history, it can change, should alterations occur in the structure. As Shaw notes, in the first instance, Bourdieu’s concept may appear to be “an unproductive concept for contexts characterized by dislocation and rupture.” (2003, 5) In fact, dispositions that are formed as a result of the structural conditions (social and historical conditions) in a given context are not permanent in agents – they are long-lasting or durable because they are formed due to inculcation and acquisition since early childhood, but they are not immutable. They are prone to change due to a ‘crisis’ or a new contexts (new field) that requires one to adapt, develop new practical knowledge,

⁴³ Shaw (2002) is dealing with the history of slave trade in Sierra Leone – a history that spanned more than four centuries. This is in addition to the history of colonialism and the postcolonial era that she is examining. Her argument links the current political climate in Sierra Leone and peoples’ perception of politicians and the political arena in that context based on or directly tied to the history of slavery and colonialism. In this sense, such a ‘far’ history is not really that far or unusual in that context. In addition, the history of slavery and colonialism and the post-colonial era become enmeshed and set the *field* of examination. She references Nicholas Dirks, who wrote on postcolonialism that “the sedimented effects and legacies of colonial power are not attested to by a great variety of writings...From Fanon to Rushdie, that reveal the extent to which colonialism lives on in postcolonial societies and psyches” (1992, 7). This has a strong application in the context of Armenia, a post-Soviet postcolonial nation-state. In addition, however, the histories of Western and Eastern Armenia also become important in understanding the Armenian psyche, and this is what will be shown in the chapters that follow this one.

and be able to live in that context, for example moving to a new country or living in a ‘new world’ after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Bourdieu (1977, 78) termed this crisis as *hysteresis effect*, or “systematic mismatches between habitus and field.” (Steinmetz 2011, 52) In physics, hysteresis is defined as “the lag in response exhibited by a body in reacting to changes in the forces, especially magnetic forces, affecting it.”⁴⁴ The lag in response is often exhibited by individuals who find themselves in a new habitus, a new context within which they have to adapt and navigate – for example an immigrant in a host country, especially one that is culturally and linguistically very different. But these changes do not restrain the agent – they simply create a new habitus that ‘requires’ adaptation to its rules through the agents’ own (limited) choosing. This possibility for change therefore allows agents to become creative or perform differently, and it definitely allows the space for the unique and personal contribution of each agent within the structure. But all these are within the limits of that given field (*champs*).

But the hysteresis effect may also be more disruptive in some cases, such as when traumatic events occur, such as wars, genocide for a collective. In this case, the hysteresis effect is much stronger and thus this may lead to deeper changes in the structure as a result of violence, traumatic experiences, loss of family and community, dislocations, rape and sexual violence. Survivors of such atrocities are faced with a deeper shift in habitus that allows them to survive and live with those experiences and memories. What is important to think about in this context is how those experiences might affect the habitus of the younger generations that did not experience these atrocities but heard about them, lived with the survivors’ pain and memories, and perhaps lived in a different *field*. The different fields result in different habituses, not only among the local Armenian

⁴⁴ This is based on the definition provided by dictionary.com available at <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/hysteresis>

habitus(es), but also within the diaspora habituses for example, which is composed of various multilocal communities that live in different parts of the world. In addition, one could also perhaps think that the habitus of diaspora communities is also strongly shaped by whether or not they live in a state that has recognized the Armenian Genocide (or not) and how that shape the diaspora psyche.

An important point regarding habitus, that is also extremely useful when thinking about national habitus, is the relational characteristic of habitus. Habitus gains its meaning in particular contexts, as already discussed, such as fields (*champs*), and to use Bourdieu's terms, habitus has its own rules of the game, and each agent within a habitus acquires the knowledge and ways of understanding how to play the game and understand the rules (Lawler 2004, 112; also see Hillier and Rooksby 2005, 22-24). Talking about national habitus should not imply that the habitus determines and ‘forces’ the propagation of homogeneous social identities, on the contrary, habitus “exist[s] in relation to *each other*;” and because national habituses are “profoundly social, they carry the traces of the lines of division and distinction along which the social is organized. That is, class, race, gender, sexuality, and so on, are all marked within the habitus.” (Lawler 2004, 112) But, as discussed above, this is not to be understood as a constraining factor in the agent’s ability to bring forth social change. In addition, agents can also adapt to changing circumstances in the event when agents find themselves in a new field with new rules of the game.

National Habitus, Trauma, and Collective Memory

National habitus, the collective habitus of a nation, is well explained through these shared memories and histories that shape people in a particular way – the social structures mould national identity given particular circumstances, memories, collective histories, perhaps traumatic histories

or events, such as colonialism and genocide for example. Bourdieu eloquently captures the place of history and the ruptures in history in habitus and the way that these become internalized and embodied in agents in a way that is reflected in people's social practice:

The *habitus* – embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history – is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product. As such, it is what gives practices their relative autonomy with respect to external determinations of the immediate present. This autonomy is that of the past, enacted and acting, which, functioning as accumulated capital, produces history on the basis of history and so ensures the permanence in change that makes the individual agent a world within the world." (1990, 56)

Identities are fluid and changing (Edkins 2003, 7-8; also see Barth 1969; Hall 1996). As such, the habitus as embodied history is the result, in many ways, of the accumulated capital that becomes 'transmitted' through socialization, and becomes a guide individuals (unconsciously) use in their responses and reactions to their social settings. The accumulated past entails not only the harmonious historical continuity, but also the violent disruptions that are brought by traumatic events, which leave a powerful mark in the accumulated (historical) capital. Genocides, wars, colonialism, feeling threatened, and even migration are useful examples that portray these disruptions. These events become incorporated into the whole past or history of the habitus, and as such become internalized into the habitus. For Bourdieu, the generative element is an important factor to consider because habitus is not just a fact of repetition, but it "generates inventions and improvisations but within limits." (2005, 46) Individual agents shape the way these events are conceived and as such these become part of the habitus. As Shaw writes in the context of slavery,

A theory of practice is also a theory of memory that suggests a different way of "remembering" the past, in which not only everyday choices...but also violently dislocating transregional processes (conquest, colonialism, migration, war, wage, labor) are rendered internal, are (literally) incorporated into people and their social and cultural practice. (2002, 5)

This is an extremely powerful explanation in a way to state that traumatic past events do not just disappear in peoples' memories, over time. They become strongly ingrained in their conception of who they are as individuals and also as a collective. Traumatic experiences are therefore not only individual experiences, but they are transmitted through generations. Trauma is powerfully present in the perception of individuals of their surrounding and the way they make sense of their own selves. The transmission from parent to child, termed 'deposited image' by Volkan (1997) can also be understood at the group or collective level of transmission. For example, Volkan explains that often times "The transgenerational transmission of such a shared traumatic event is linked to the past generation's inability to mourn losses of people, land or prestige, and indicates the large groups failure to reverse narcissistic injury and humiliation inflicted by another large group..." (Volkan 2001, 87; also refer to Volkan 1997 on his extensive study of *chosen traumas*) It is therefore vital to not only explain identity formation through the macro processes, which is often the case in the literature (for a critique, see Calhoun 1994, 1997), but to locate identity within the social (and political) context which takes into account both the accumulated capital of the traumatic histories and the emotional capital that is also embedded in the habitus, specifically due to the strong relationship between emotions (such as pain) and traumatic experiences. Traumatic experience becomes part of the collective identity, ingrained in the perception of 'us'. As the term *chosen trauma* strongly articulates this, the term "reflects a large group's unconscious "choice" to add a part generation's mental representation of a shared event to its own identity." (2010, 52; also see Volkan 1997, on how traumatic experiences become woven into national identity; Kecmanovic 1996, 2002; Staub 2011; MacDonald 2009 on the example of Serb and Croats). Sara Ahmed's inspirational work on the politics of emotion can strongly guide us to understand the importance of emotions in national identity constructions. This is, in fact, an important focus of this project,

perhaps a reminder to ‘political science’ that national foreign policies, interests, elite actors and politicians are not *just* oriented in their social settings by their rational choices and through their perception of identities and ethnicity as instruments to gain more power. These are not rejected here, but it is important to complement this view, or to view another equally important perspective in parallel, that emotions can be the guide to politicians and elite actors in making policies, crafting foreign policies, and forming alliances (see Resende and Budryte 2014 for various examples).

Sarah Ahmed provides a thorough analysis of the lived emotions embedded in the discursive constructions of the nation-state, for example what constitutes the ‘soft touch’ British nation (2015, 1). The cultural politics of emotions is important for Ahmed because such narratives as Britain’s ‘soft touch’ towards immigrants, for example, create ‘others’. At the same time, Ahmed is looking at how emotions – shame, hate, pain, for example – become a form of national identity construction (2015, 102), an important point that inspires this part of the theoretical discussion in this dissertation. Therefore, memory and emotions are expressions not limited to the psychological or psychoanalytical domain of individuals, but can be seen to be ‘practiced’ and strongly expressed in the public sphere.

A closer look at how memories shape and affect societies and groups presents interesting challenges to the mainstream modernization school of thought in political science, that assumes a constant outlook onto the teleological future, with prescriptions for ‘progress’ towards a particular model of ‘success’ (see Assman 2011, 8, for a critique of the teleological view of modernization also see Suny 1993a; Peet and Hartwick 2015). This teleological evolution towards the brighter endpoint does not sit well with the literature on trauma and memory. Trauma, as Flora A. Keshgegian argues, is “something that is experienced “after” in memory,” but the notions associated with linearity in perception of time are not useful to understand the impact of trauma.

Instead, it is more constructive to think that “traumatic injury remains always present, yet never fully in the present. The character of the time of trauma is interruptive. It is experienced as simultaneous, not linear.” (2006, 102; also see Hirsch 2012, 5; also see Staub 2011 for how the past returns into the present) Jenny Edkins who wrote the seminal book on *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* argues that trauma interrupts linearity, but trauma cannot be excluded and cannot be forgotten (2003, 16). As such, she argues that:

Memorialisation that does not return to a linear narrative but rather retains the trace of another notion of temporality does occur. It is found when the political struggle between linear and trauma time is resolved not by a forgetting of trauma and a return to linearity, nor by attempting the impossible opposite – speaking from within trauma – but by a recognition and *surrounding* of the trauma at the heart of any social or symbolic order (Edkins 2003, 16).

One could also perhaps argue that the field of memory studies that focuses strongly on the role of the past into the present also presents some challenges to the conception of the modern nation-state, which modernization theorists, one of the dominant perspectives on the study of the nation, situates solely in the modern era without any reference or basis in the past. Even though the imagined community that Anderson (2006[1983]) discussed so well in his work provides an outlook to the constructivist approach that has become increasingly dominant in more recent works of the past two decades, the importance of understanding the collective memory of a national habitus extends beyond an imagination (or an invented tradition, see Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983 for this perspective). Anthony Smith’s ethnosymbolist approach grounds the idea of the nation into the modern era, but with roots in an ancient ethnie that is extended into the past, a useful conception of the nation that is particularly relevant here, especially in the context of thinking of collective memory of the nation. In this sense, one can prematurely conclude here that looking at the collective history of a nation necessitates perhaps the perspective of the theory of nationalism

that allows for a stronger place of the past into the present in order to create those indispensable links between the history of a people extended into the creation of the nation-state.

Collective memory shapes the nation's present and future through the lenses of the past, especially if the past has encountered a traumatic turn. Maurice Halbwachs argues that memory is shaped and formed through individuals' interactions and participation in the collective social life and context within which one lives. In this sense, then, Halbwachs shows that collective memory "is particularly a social phenomenon, and only in the social setting in which it has been constructed can individual memory be recalled....Individuals belong to multiple social and communal groups, and within each of these social settings there is an intrinsic collective memory." (Varjabedian 2007, 144) This experience can only crystallize through particular social interactions, which means that individual experiences are shaped by the peculiarity of the collective habituses that makes those experiences in the first place. The process of nation formation inevitably includes references to a shared collective memory, which relies in large part on narratives of history (or myth) and on imageries of collective memory that focus on specific people, events, and points of spatial references which Brian S. Osborne calls "places of recollection" that remain active through acts of commemoration (2008, 1343), or "lieux de memoire," to use Pierre Nora's captivating phrase.⁴⁵ The past, identified as socially constructed by some and given by others, is embedded in various concrete materials such as archives, museums, school textbooks, monuments, public displays, all of which carry a subjective but also historical memory.

⁴⁵ Pierre Nora examined the collective memory of the French nation, and he terms "lieux de memoire" the emotional and symbolic reference to the past in the form of history textbooks, national flags and anthems, monuments, national holidays, and so on. His emphasis is more on the homogenizing effects of these *lieux* on national identity, in order to "project a shared sense of civic values and an allegiance to the French Republic." (Badie 2011, 1079) This view has been critiqued heavily by postcolonial, postmodern, subaltern studies scholars in the French contexts and beyond, as Badie notes.

Differentiating collective memory from historical memory, Halbwachs argues that collective memory “is continuous and retains from the past whatever is still alive within the consciousness of the group, keeping memory alive....there is no rupture between the consciousness of the past and its existence in the present, thus nothing is lost and nothing can be lost in this continuum” (Varjabedian 2007, 144-5). Collective memory is socially constructed over several generations and becomes the ‘homogenizing’ element that binds individuals within a social context together by creating historic *lieux de memoire*, or sites of memory, such as monuments, school history textbooks, national flags, commemorative or remembrance dates, museums, national songs, and so on (Nora 1984). The national habitus is constructed around symbolic sites and events that become engraved in the history of the nation, that is what constitutes the ‘us’. The shared collective memory, as Marianne Hirsch correctly concludes, may be the result of the need of people to feel included and bonded in a group or in a “collective membrane forged by a shared inheritance of multiple traumatic histories and the individual and social responsibility we feel toward a persistent and traumatic past” (Hirsch 2012, 33-34).

However, these are not engraved in stone, and narratives of past events and dates are often subject to change, depending on the political social settings in different periods (different regimes and governments in power, for example). The reclaiming of the past into the present is a powerful political expression that transcends the familial transmission of memory from the surviving generation to the younger ones. The intergenerational transmission through family photographs, stories, eye witness accounts, oral histories, accounts of the homeland and the village, and so on, is absorbed into a larger collective consciousness that shapes into cultural memory. The latter is based on history and individual memories and is transgenerational. According to Aleida Assmann, “While the social format of memory is built on *inter-generational* communication, political and

cultural forms of memory are designed for *trans-generational* communication.” (2010, 42) Political and cultural memories are concretized through rituals, performances of memory, commemorations, archives, academic works, and often cultural expressions. As Assmann posits, “Humans acquire these memories not only via lived experience, but also via interacting, communicating, identifying, learning, and participating,” (2010, 40) a conception of the formation of habitus that Bourdieu would agree upon in the way that shapes the habitus and becomes second nature to one’s conception of the nation.

As such, the Armenian Genocide moves from the realm of only family stories to the ‘collective’ realm of Armenian national history and identity. Hence, it is the political and cultural memory that is particularly of interest to this chapter, since the focus is on the ways in which the national habitus and the discourse of national identity is shaped around the Armenian Genocide, most recently manifested at the time of the signing of the Protocols between Armenia and Turkey in 2009. As Halbwachs notes, collective memory and the embeddedness of memory as a social phenomenon is important in the conception of national habitus: localized forms of memory-making and memory-acquiring are based on the habitus – the dispositions of an agent are shaped by the ‘localized’ national memories: “[It] is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories....” (Halbwachs 1952, 38, quoted in Olick and Robbins 1998, 109) This means each Armenian habitus (diaspora habituses and the Armenian local habitus) is shaped through its own collective memory bound by the historical time and space, because “memories are recalled by me externally, and the groups of which I am part at any time give me the means to reconstruct them...” (Ibid.) As such, this study focuses not on understanding what happened in the past (the factual history of the Armenian Genocide, for example, or the history of the development of Armenian politics), but rather on how

the past is remembered today within our social space, a process of studying the remembering of the past terms *mnemohistory* by Jan Assmann. In line with his own work on *mnemohistory*, Assmann argues that just because it does not involve the study of the past itself does not mean that it is “the opposite of history, but rather is one of its branches or subdisciplines. But has an approach of its own...It concentrates exclusively on those aspects of significance and relevance which are the product of memory.” (2009, 9).

National habitus incorporates the imagined collective history (and trauma) into conceptions of Armenianness, as the normalization of the collective suffering in the process of socialization of individuals and their formation as Armenians. The collective history, much as it becomes the construction of the past into the present, is also a reality because of the extent of suffering, physical and emotional, endured by people – for example the Armenian Genocide of 1915. As Hrag Varjabedian explains well in this passage, “If histories are socially constructed tests of past events, then historicities provide the frameworks within which those histories become meaningful as they enter the consciousness of individuals within the social group.” (2007, 146) This national habitus guides individuals unconsciously in their field, as it mediates between the norms, customs, traditions, memories, gender roles, and expectations, that shape individual actions and regulates individual agency– as such individuals acquire the know-how on how to be Armenian, so to speak, without however grounding this in the assumption that Armenianness is fixed or there are common ‘national’ traits that mark a people (national stereotype, for example).

Gendered National Habitus

When thinking of national habitus for this dissertation project, the gendered aspect of national identity brings to light the question of whether or not habitus can help us to explain the

deeper gendered divisions of national identity, construction of femininity, and the role and place of women in national identity making. The gendered national habitus considers the social positioning of men and women differently, since agents acquire dispositions within the particular field. Xiaodong Lin argues in his study of male migrant workers' identity formation in China that "...habitus in the field of gender indicates that gender behaviour is not simply imposed from an external structural stance through gender expectations, values and norms. Rather, habitus works within social interaction through practising internalized roles and values." (Lin 2013, 111, quoting Krais and William 2000, 57)

Given the relational characteristic of habitus and gender (Adkins 2004, 6), we can then think of gender "as dispersed across the social field and deeply structuring of the general social field" (Adkins 2004, 6). The unique richness of the concept of habitus and field, particularly for feminist thinkers, is addressed by Lisa Adkins who writes that based on Bourdieu's conceptualization of the subject as *doing* practical action, "the social will always be understood not as an external law, set of rules or representations which the subject will somehow blindly follow, learn or incorporate since...the social will always be literally incorporated in the subject." (Adkins 2004, 10) Adkins references the work of Steph Lawler in the same volume, who posits along the same lines that habitus, a "socialized subjectivity" as Bourdieu puts it (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 101, author's translation), "is Bourdieu's way of theorizing a self which is socially produced. It is a way of analyzing how social relations become constituted within the self, but also how the self is constitutive of social relations." (Lawler 2004, 111) Even though habitus is manifested in a subject's behaviour or comportment (way of talking, body language, dressing styles, and other bodily explicit expressions), it is not "confined to the body, since it also consists of series of dispositions, attitudes and tastes." Gender is not only socially constructed and ontologically

positioning individuals in the way “*through which [they] see and know the world*,” but we can conclude that in general, and in this sense Bourdieu unique contribution could be extended to understand that, as V. Spike Peterson argued, “*the world is pervasively shaped by endeared meanings*. That is, we do not experience or “know” the world as abstract “humans” but as embodied, gendered beings. As long as that is the case, accurate understanding of agents - as knowable and as knowers - requires attention to the effects of our “gendered states.” (Peterson 1996, 406, quoted in Weber 2013, 112, emphasis in original).

Whether it is the Armenian state, Soviet and post-Soviet, or the Armenian diasporic institutions and organizations in the various habituses of Armenian presence, the dominance of a particular understanding of Armenianness is embedded in a gendered narrative. The patriarchal system and the role of men within the nation are highlighted as the role of the leaders that is complemented by the role of women as the guardians of the homes. Men are the public figures and decision makers and women guard the hearth and children. This narrative is reflected in both diasporan and Armenian identity, though the dissertation focuses on the subjective expression of women in Armenia in particular (see Chapter Three). The consideration of gender in studying nation building processes is important because the nation is always gendered (Yuval-Davis 1997). As such, gender narratives shape the norms and practices of gender relations in societies and set the terms of the division of labour for men and women in the nation, showing the existence of the domination of the masculine, to translate from Bourdieu’s work (1990). The theoretical framework in this dissertation on nations and nationalizing identity therefore takes seriously the place of gender and women in the construction of national identity, something that has been added by many feminist and gender studies scholars in the past two decades, especially in response to the ‘silence’ of the different schools of thought and paradigms of nations and nationalism. The silence of the

theories of nationalism continues to be surprising among the major mainstream modernist and primordialist theorists. Many works have challenged that silence and question the place of women and gender constructions in the formation and making of nation-states, arguing that national identity formation, state-building, nationalist movements are all gendered processes (Abu-Laban 2008; Göçek 2002; Moghadam 1994 and 2000; Chatterjee 1993; Brown 1992; Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989; Pateman 1988; Weber 2013). In fact, the masculine construction is beyond just the roles attributed to men versus women - or is not used to simply draw a boundary between men and women or masculine and feminine subjects. Instead, and beyond that, Cynthia Weber strongly posts that “mainstream IR theory is gendered, and its gender is primarily masculine...IR theory has traditionally taken masculinely engendered bodies and activities to be its objects of analysis, whereto those gendered bodies/activities are...men, states, or war....we define “gendered states”... and gendered activities like (war (masculine) and peace (feminine).” (2013, 181-182) This is one of the most understudied areas of research in the post-Soviet South Caucasus region, particularly in Armenia (both diaspora and Armenia).

The process of nation building includes various factors, such as memory, traditions, history, that shape the discourse on national identity. These factors are directly tied to the way the images of ‘women’, ‘home’, and ‘family’ are portrayed in the national imagining of the nation. In this sense, it is imperative to think beyond the mainstream modernist and other schools of thought of nationalism that is not just about the elite, institutions, or intellectuals that play the role of transmitters of national identity but, as Yuval-Davis (1998) posits, it is “women...who are central in the intergenerational transmission of cultural traditions and customs” (quoted in Abu-Laban 2008, 11). In post-colonial settings, these domains are relegated to the inner domain that is deemed to be

within the realm of authentic expressions of national identity, in contrast to the colonial influence (Chatterjee 1993; Abu-Lughod 1998).

In Armenia, and in the Soviet republics in general, there was an attempt by the Soviet state, in its earlier stages, to “supplant patriarchal authority and to eradicate patrilineal structure in Armenian society. Thus the attribution of resistance to flourishing kinship networks in the Soviet Union can be traced to early Communist ideology and practice in the case of Armenia.” (Platz 1995, 1) The Communists viewed the family as a ‘backward institution’ that was a site of “conservative resistance” to the Communist regime (Matossian 1962, 63). In the post-Soviet Armenian nation, family and kinship continue to play an important role for individuals, and is considered as the source of ‘protection’ for them.⁴⁶ This remains an important site of authenticity for Armenians, in their perception of Armenianness, and is also extremely important for us here, because of the way it conceptualizes Armenian women’s place within the domestic sphere in the nation.⁴⁷

The case of post-Soviet Armenia is thoroughly discussed in Chapter Three. Women are both the biological and cultural or ideological reproducers of the nation (Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989; Yuval-Davis 1997). In this sense, women embody the symbols of ethnic and national boundary formations that mark the ‘us’, and it is around women that the national boundaries are tightened. Femininity is therefore constructed as the moral, cultural, and biological location of the

⁴⁶ In a fascinating analysis of the post-Soviet Armenian society of the 1990s, Platz conducts an anthropological study on the relationship of Armenians to the state, and concludes, in the words of one of her interviewees, that in Armenia, “we don’t have capitalism”, but “we only have kinship” (2005)

⁴⁷ Liberal theory has usually divided society into the sphere of the state and the family or the private. This public/private distinction has been used by many feminists to highlight the subjugated role of the sexual dominance within the patriarchal system. This distinction, however, as posited by Suad Joseph (1997, 2002) who has conducted extensive studies on Lebanon, is not applicable on all societies. Some societies, such as Lebanon, include a three levelled distinction, the public, private and domestic spheres. This is an extremely interesting distinction to make for our case, where the family and kinship network continues to play an important role in Armenian society that secures its ‘traditional’ authenticity. The place of women in Armenian society can be understood through these divisions.

nation, and deviance from this construct is represented as harmful for the nation as a whole. As Fatma Göçek posits, “Even though nationalism acknowledges women’s reproductive role, the cultural reproduction of the national spirit still remains a male act” and in this sense, then, “In nationalist struggles, the discourse is thus about women but often not by them; the location of women in the inner domain precludes any possibility of effective reform in altering their political exclusion.” (2002, 7)

This is true of the case of Armenian women during the 1988 movement, and also afterwards, during electoral protests, civil movements, and so on. The national is prioritized over women’s needs or concerns, and the concept of women’s movement is demonized as a ‘feminist’ act that leads to the desire of emancipation and freedom, an act that is equalled with immoral behaviour and values. In addition, in many cases male nationalists have also condemned feminism, since it was viewed as dividing the nation during the time that brotherhood was needed and emphasized. In this case, women were asked to wait until the ‘right’ time, perhaps until the aftermath of a revolution or war in order to bring forth their demands, which in most cases is not a possibility for women, since “women who are not empowered to organize during the struggle will not be empowered to organize after the struggle....the nation-state will remain a repository of male hopes, male aspirations, and male privilege.” (McClintock 1997, 109; also see Enloe 2000) This is reflective of Armenian women’s case, who did not organize themselves into a movement neither during the nationalist movement of 1988, nor in its aftermath. Today, since Armenia is in a situation of cease-fire with Azerbaijan for the breakaway region of Karabakh, women continue to face the difficult in ‘prioritizing’ their needs. During my informal discussion with many women and my formal interviews, it became evident that Armenian women, in narrating the history of the movement or discussing the rights of Armenian women today, actively distanced themselves from

conceptions of feminism – some explicitly stating that they were *not* feminists, but were for the equal rights of men and women.

Conclusion

To conclude, Bourdieu's concept of habitus is vital and necessary to use in a study of nation and nationalism, or national identity construction, particularly using the method of interviews (formal and informal), because his theory of practice encompasses both structure and individual agency and action – in a way that reflects the internalization and adoption of the structure and the human expression through action, thought, attitude, and discourse, whereby the external and internal are in a symbiotic relationship over time, or in a dialectical one as Bourdieu defines it (1977, 72). As Sian Jones's excellent study on the conception of habitus and field in the representation of ethnicity shows:

The subliminal dispositions of the *habitus*, derived from the conditions of existence, provide the basis for the perception of shared sentiment and interest which ethnicity entails....[As such] the intersubjective construction of ethnic identity is grounded in the shared subliminal dispositions of the *habitus* which shape, and are shaped by, objective commonalities of practice.... (Jones 1997, 90)

This conception of habitus is fundamental to the theoretical framework of this dissertation because it helps to understand national identity via a bridge between intersubjective constructions of identity, the relationality of identity that highlights the different positionality of the subjects in the *field*, and the generative and reproductive capability of subjects to make sense of their surrounding context.

This chapter presented the theoretical framework of the dissertation, which will be used to examine the case of Armenia through the four pillar of identity. The following four chapters each investigate one pillar of Armenian identity in order to highlight the way these pillars are practiced

and discussed in Armenia, and the main perspectives on them expressed to me through my formal and informal interviews, my participation in various events in Armenia, and my own knowledge of the Armenian communities. In the chapters that follow this theoretical chapter, I make the case that by considering national habitus, we can understand the way that nationalism is dynamic, is a social process, and is created and recreated not only through state socialization mechanism, but also socially through the reproductive and generative capacity of actors – whether they are elite or not.

Chapter Two. Politics of Nationalism and Karabakhization of Politics: Nagorno-Karabakh, Nostalgia, and the Genocide

Introduction

In many ways, the late 1980s was marked with a great importance for the Soviet republics in their quest for change after *glasnost*, beginning with nationalist demands and followed by appeals to get de jure independence from Moscow. The year most referred to is 1989, when the Iron Curtain was taken down by the people frustrated at the division the bulk of cement created between them and their co-nationals. This year is powerful in many senses, as the democratic revolutions took force in Eastern Europe and they came to denote one of the strongest feelings of victory against authoritarian regimes in that region. Although very important for Eastern Europe, the year 1989 was not as significant as the years 1987-1991 for the Southern Caucasus region. This period of time represents the “thickened period of history”, to use Mark Beissinger’s term (2002, 27),⁴⁸ which symbolizes the struggle of the titular nations and the minorities within the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) to reclaim their rights against the Soviet regime. The Karabakh movement had a strong resonance not only in Armenia but also in Azerbaijan, and a similar movement was also initiated in Georgia, where nationalist movements gradually demanded separation from the Soviet entity.⁴⁹ The contagion effect of the movements was a strong factor

⁴⁸ In his fascinating work the events of nationalism that disrupt the quiet periods of nationalism, Beissinger explains the definition of thickened history as the “period in which the pace of challenging events quickens to the point that it becomes practically impossible to comprehend them and they come to constitute an increasingly significant part of their own causal structure.” (2002a, 27).

⁴⁹ For the nationalist movement in Azerbaijan, and the role of Nagorno-Karabakh in it, see for example Suha Bülbüls 2011, *Azerbaijan: A Political History*, London, New York: I.B.Tauris, Audrey Altstadt, 1992, *The Azerbaijani Turks: Power and Identity Under Russian Rule*, Hoover Press. For works on Georgian nationalist movements in the late 1980s, see the works of Jones, 1997; Aves, 1991 and 1992; Goldenberg, 1994.

which caused the weakening of the communist regime,⁵⁰ although it was arguably the political opening from the centre that created the opportunity for the nationalist movements to rise.

However, the nationalist movements of 1987-1990, which also reflect the high tension between the Kremlin and the national elites in the Soviet republics, could be explained as a crucial factor in the collapse of the communist empire in 1991 (Strayer 1998; Khazanov 1995, especially chap. 1). Since the end of the 1980s, in most republics of the USSR, the strong nationalist movements grew, pushing the Soviet government to face the question of their right for self-determination and independence. The importance and the peculiarity of these movements, as mentioned by Linz and Stepan quoting Ian Bremmer, was that nationalism in the republics of the Soviet Union was a “manifestation of nationalism as liberation.” (Bremmer 1993, 15, quotes in Linz and Stepan 1996, 389) This is more evident in the way titular nationalities, the ‘dominant’ nationalities after which the republics were named even if they did not constitute a majority,⁵¹ dealt with the central power – though not so much how the non-titular nationalities did, which can be characterized as a relationship of domination. In other words, nationalism in the end of the Soviet era became a symbol of freedom for all who no longer wanted to live under the communist political system. The post-1991 period therefore embraced strongly, in many societies, the opening

⁵⁰ See Beissinger 2002 and Sedaitsis and Butterfield 1991; for the impact of particular nationalist groups on the disintegration of the Soviet Union see Mviznieks 1995, for the Baltic movements; Rutland 1994 and Malkasian 1996 for the Armenian movement.

⁵¹ In the Soviet Union classification system for regions and territories, the titular nationality is defined as “the nation which, for any number of economic, demographic, cultural, or political reasons, has been vested with administrative power in a given region,” and it has “a special relationship with the state, being in a position of privilege *vis-à-vis* those nations not so empower – the *non-titular nationalities*.” (Bremmer 1997, 13, emphasis in original) This is in reference to the dominant nation whose name was assigned to the Soviet republics in the ethnonational Soviet federation construction. But these were not equally assigned, instead “Of the fifty-three titular nationalities, fifteen were designated by the highest status of Soviet Socialist Republic (SSRs) or “union republics,” which together encompassed the entire union.” (Bremmer 1997, 8) In addition to the fifteen union republics that were the only ones with the right to secede from the USSR, other titular nations were allocated the status of Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics (twenty in number, such as Nakhichevan ASSR or Abkhaz ASSR), Autonomous Regions (*Oblasti*, counting eight, including Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Oblast and the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast), and ten Autonomous Areas (*okruga*), see Bremmer and Taras 1993 and 1997 and David Laitin 1998, for more information on the divisions.

up of the market and adoption of liberal economic policies and the establishment of democratic regimes. Many politicians even formulated their post-Soviet national identity as a form of civic expression of nationalism – as was the case in Armenia with the coming to power of Levon Ter-Petrosyan in 1991. However, the disillusionment with the rapid political and socio-economic transition was severe in these societies attempting to undergo a triple transition in a span of only a few years. The economic weight had a crushing effect upon these societies with not only economic, but also political, social, and cultural repercussions.

This phase of the history of the region shaped the nation-building processes of the countries and had a strong impact on the way peoples' experiences with the nation and what it meant to them to be nationals were defined at the time. Thus, more than two decades later, studying these nationalist movements can help to understand the narratives that played a vital role in the re-awakening of nationalism or, in some cases, the formation of the nationalist movements. These narratives can reveal the evident and latent factors that shape identity politics, the meaning of Armenianness for the diasporans and local Armenians, the role of gender constructions, and the importance of the role of the memory of the Armenian Genocide of 1915, especially as Armenians commemorated the centennial of the Armenian Genocide in 2015.

This chapter examines the impact of the Karabakh (Karabakh, hereafter) movement in the national identity formation in Armenia from 1988 until 2013. The idealized view of Karabakh further contributes to disregarding or overlooking the realities that people face on a daily basis. In this chapter I present Karabakh as an abstract concept that plays an important role in Armenian politics. The main argument is that in order to comprehend Karabakh's place in Armenian nation building, there is a need to look at the concept of Karabakh through a triangular conception that includes the Karabakh region itself, the Armenian Genocide of 1915, and the Turkish-Armenian

relations. In fact, this triangular relationship was evident during the Karabakh movement in 1988, particularly after the Sumgait pogroms in February 1988, when Armenian refugees began to arrive from Azerbaijan to Armenia and Karabakh (see Marutyan 2009 for an extensive study).⁵² In addition, the question of the Karabakh conflict, the diaspora-homeland relations, and Armenian foreign policy were all shaped by the discourse on the Karabakh region, the Armenian Genocide, and the Turkey-Armenia relations and whether or not the Genocide recognition and land reclamation should be included in the policy agenda of the newly formed government of Armenia. In this sense, it is evident that the examination of ‘Karabakh’ is necessarily tied to transnational, international, and diaspora politics as well as domestic changes and events.

I draw on 48 interviews conducted in Armenia and Karabakh with former leaders of the Karabakh movement, politicians, NGO leaders, and academics to capture the story of the importance of 1988 and its continuing nostalgic expressions today in the same Freedom Square where the 1988 movement began. In addition to the extensive interviews, the literature provides excellent anthropological descriptions and analyses of the events from the Freedom Square itself, a great wealth of resources to a younger scholar who was hardly politically aware at the time of these movements and can only relate through readings, images, and videos to that time. The interviews play a fundamental role in recreating 1988 retrospectively, to learn which aspect of the movement is still remembered in Armenia and the diaspora.⁵³ The interviews, therefore, provide ‘stories’ that

⁵² According to Libaridian (1991, 104, ft 28): there was an agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan in November 1989 to have “an informal exchange of populations” that led to the bulk of refugees from Azerbaijan to escape to Armenia, and about 150,000 Azeris to go to Azerbaijan. From February 1988, Libaridian estimates about 200,000 Armenian refugees.

⁵³ However, the glorification of 1988 is limited to individuals, certain groups who played a role during that time and are still present in the Armenian political scene, and some media sources who remember the events. This is not the case on a national level, and the importance of 1988 is not as significantly remembered in the diaspora as well. The 1988 struggles have become heavily politicized in the Armenian nation, mostly because of the problems that arose in the aftermath of 1991 between the Dashnak party in Armenia and Levon Ter-Petrosyan, who was the president of Armenia from 1991-1998. In addition, the glory of 1988 struggles has been subsided due to the victory of Armenians in the war in Karabakh, particularly starting 1992. The Karabakh war has become an important symbol of Armenian national strength and triumph.

can help us to extrapolate these events in light of the current political environment in Armenia, based on continuous elite organized post-election rallies.⁵⁴ In this sense, the texts collected from the interviews were analyzed through discourse analysis in order to understand the dominant discourse around the conception of ‘Karabakh’ in Armenian politics. in addition, the texts were also used to rebuild the stories of 1988 and the impact of Karabakh on the subsequent changes in Armenian politics in a way that highlights the voices and perspectives of the participants. This twofold approach to textual analysis, as explained in the methodology section of the dissertation Introduction, provides a more rounded and complete understanding of events, concepts, and identity constructions in Armenia. Understanding the dominant discourse is the main aim of the dissertation, but this is complemented with the subjective recollection of interviewees in order to reconstruct the ‘story’ of 1988 and its influence on the Armenian social and political arena.

The chapter is divided into four main sections. After contextualizing some of the historical conditions, circumstances, and events that led to the more recent history of 1988 in the first section on relevant historical notes, the second section focuses on the formation of the Karabakh movement and the mobilization of Armenians. 1988 is more than just the year of the mobilization of Armenians around the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh. Compressing a year or a period from the decades and centuries of Armenian nation building into a moment, the chapter argues that 1988 is the moment when the Armenian national identity became consolidated, with a strong sense of unity both within Armenia, from all its regions, and between the Armenians in the diverse diaspora and

⁵⁴ There are also several social movements being organized in the past five years of so in Armenia to counter the regime’s careless policies that undermine the poor, the marginalized, the women, and the senior citizens. These movements have made some successful gains, but they remain small in action/goal structure. Perhaps this is the root of their current success, until they are one day able to bring together larger segments of population who are willing to partake in a bottom-up approach rather than a top-down, which has been the norm in Armenian politics. See Armine Ishkanian et al. (2013), “Civil Society, Development and Environmental Activism in Armenia,” Working Paper published by Socioscope Societal Research and Consultancy Center NGO, for a study of these movements, particularly the Teghut movement.

in, at the time Soviet, Armenia. The third section portrays the way that the triangular relationship between Karabakh/Genocide/Turkey-Armenia relations shapes the political scene of Armenia in the post-independence period by looking at the policies of each President around those three points. Finally, the last section explores how the 1988 movement continues to inspire people by creating a sense of nostalgia to those days in the square. People are perhaps trying to recreate 1988 in the same place in Yerevan through their memories of rallies and protests and through their desire for change and a better future.

Historical Notes

The particularity of the case of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Republic is highlighted by the fact that although it was “the only autonomous national region [in the Soviet Union] with a majority that was of the same ethnicity as a neighbouring Soviet republic yet was not permitted to join that republic.” (Suny 1993, 194; Laitin and Suny 1999, 148-149)⁵⁵ This has various geopolitical reasons explained below, but it left Karabakh with a majority Armenian population within the Azerbaijani Soviet Republic for nearly seven decades. The situation only changed after the 1988 movement began to intensify secessionist claims to reunite with Karabakh and as a result of the Soviet authorities’ nonchalance towards these claims and the negligence of the Soviet authorities to respond adequately since “the local Sumgait police and Russian MVD (Soviet Internal Ministry Forces) failed to move quickly to stop the violence.” (Geukjian 2012, 148)⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Ronald Suny also states that over the years, Armenians were increasingly discontented with the Azerbaijani rule, especially due to the “discrimination against Armenian language, culture, and contacts with Soviet Armenia... Armenians believe that Azerbaijan preferred to invest economically in regions where its own nationality were a majority rather than in Karabakh where 75 to 80 percent of the population was Armenian” (1993, 188, 194; Geukjian 2012). Armenians also felt culturally superior to the Muslim Azerbaijanis, and this also led to the isolation of the Armenian population from the Azerbaijanis, and as Suny notes, intermarriages were quite rare (*Ibid.*).

⁵⁶ Gorbachev stated in his memoirs that “The massacres in Sumgait produced universal outrage, everyone was shaken. at the same time, sympathy was shown in the Muslim republics for the people of their faith. events threatened to get out of control. we had been late in dealing with Sumgait and had underestimated its implications.” (1996, 333-5, quoted in Geukjian 2012, 150) The violence in Sumgait was committed by

According to Geukjian, in a letter sent by the Karabakh Committee dated 4 March 1988 to Gorbachev, “The Committee asked him to reveal and punish the perpetrators of the Sumgait pogroms,” in addition, the “Sumgait violence could be viewed as an outcome of Moscow’s sterile approach to the nationalities questions” (2012, 149).⁵⁷ Therefore, the situation gradually aggravated leading to the outbreak of war in Karabakh in 1992. The cost of the war was not only felt in Karabakh, but also very strongly in Armenia and Azerbaijan. These costs are not only calculated by material losses, but also human losses, and the strengthening in both the Armenian and Azerbaijani societies of the radicalized discourses of nationalism and nation building around Karabakh, still present today, with an elevated rhetoric of militarization by both regimes.

Nagorno-Karabakh, or *Artsakh* for Armenians, a 4,388 kilometre square mountainous area,⁵⁸ is located in the South Caucasus region, between Armenia and Azerbaijan, though it is under the control of Armenian forces and has become a de facto independent state since 1994, after a ceasefire was signed to halt the war. Armenia now controls not only the Karabakh enclave, but also part of the Azerbaijani territory which includes seven regions – a total of 4.7 percent of Azerbaijani territory, contrary to the Azerbaijani government claims which have been taken up by the Western media as well (de Waal 2013, 327).

Russia initially formed an Armenian province around Yerevan as the centre of that *Armyanskaya* oblast, but already in the 1840s, the original Armenian Province was divided into

⁵⁷ In fact, the Soviet authorities did not have a policy to deal with the nationalities problems and conflicts, since even Gorbachev believed that the nationalities problem had been solved in the Soviet Union.

⁵⁸ This is the size of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast. Today, after the ceasefire in 1994, the Armenian forces occupy regions such as Agdam and the Lachin area, for example. These territories were occupied by the Armenian and Karabakhi forces for strategic purposes and also, in the case of Lachin particularly but not solely, to establish territorial borderlines between Karabakh and Armenia. According to the official website of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, the territory is about 11500 square kilometres today and the population is about 145,000 (based on what my interviewees informed in Karabakh), but a more realistic estimate is 100,000 people, though this may change if the number of Armenian refugees settling from Syria and the Middle East in Karabakh increases over the coming years.

two oblasts. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the Yerevan Province or *gubernya* was formed with the original territories of the Armenian province of the 1830s (which included the khanates of Yerevan and Nakhichevan), and the Elizavetpol *gubernya* which included Zangezur and Nagorno-Karabakh, located between the Yerevan and Baku provinces (Malkasian 1996, 12-13; Mutafian 1994, 134-141; and see Geukjian 2012, 39-43; Böyükbaş 2011, 43; Mouradian 1994, 112-113; Hovannessian 1971, 79 especially refer to ft 33 on that page).⁵⁹ Although Zangezur was eventually incorporated into the Armenian territory, the Karabakh region was transferred to Azerbaijan.⁶⁰ There were various struggles to keep Karabakh within Armenia, and the various Armenian revolutionary parties fought for that region, the Hunchaks, and especially the Dashnaks. Of these struggles, one of the most important is the Armeno-Tatar war in 1905.⁶¹ It seems that the history of the region, the involvement of British, Turkish, and Russian diplomacy and the position of certain Armenian diplomats or representatives, were all factors included in the calculations of the transfer of various territories in that region from one authority to another during those years (Tchilingirian 1999; Swietochowski 1985).

The Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917 created the circumstances for the establishment of independent states in the region. This was, however, short lived, lasting for a couple of years until the Red Army entered Azerbaijan in April and Armenia in November of 1920 – absorbing the Southern Caucasus states into what later became the USSR on March 12, 1922 and uniting them under the Transcaucasian Federated Soviet Socialist Republics (TFSSR) until 1936

⁵⁹ For more details on the history of territorial divisions in the Transcaucasian region between the Russian and Persian empires; for the Azerbaijani scholarship and perspectives on these territorial formations and divisions see Swietochowski 1985, 3-7; Böyükbaş 2013.

⁶⁰ For more detailed reviews on these territories' histories and struggles see Hovannessian 1971, particularly 86-92

⁶¹ For more details refer to Geukjian 2012, 42-47; Mutafian 1994; for the political parties and their revolutionary activities see Panossian 2006; Nalbandian 1963.

(Zinin and Maleshenko 1994, 99).⁶² In Armenia, the Dashnak leadership which was then in power in the first Armenian Republic since 1918, fled the country.⁶³ These events shaped the Armenian nation as it created a strong divide between the Dashnak party and its adherents on one side, and the pro-Bolshevik Armenians, on the other. This particularly played out in quite harsh ways in the diaspora as the antagonism between the two sides grew stronger and played out in violent ways in the different habituses of the Armenian diasporic national communities.

There are two overarching explanations that are prevalent in the literature about why Nagorno-Karabakh was assigned as part of Azerbaijan, as opposed to Armenia: first and foremost, the literature considers the political relations between Stalin and Mustafa Kemal in the early years of the USSR, though this relationship later underwent tense periods that led Stalin to make territorial claims towards Turkey vis-à-vis the Armenian nation. The second is explained via the ‘divide and rule’ strategy of the USSR, which was based on addressing the multiethnic fabric of the USSR by ensuring that the peoples within it would be in constant but mild tension against each other in order to ensure that they would not use any opportunity to counter the Soviet state. When Stalin became the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1922, the *Kavburo*, the Caucasian Bureau of the Russian Communist Party, assigned the Karabakh enclave within the Azerbaijani republic borders, as stated in the *Kavburo* statement, in order to appease relations with and portray ‘good will’ toward the Turkish neighbour and Turkish Nationalist Party

⁶²For a detailed study of the sovietization process in Armenia, see the work of Hovannisian 1996. The breakup of the TFSSR was due to the fact that the three nations “were unable to integrate into one fragile political structure enforced on them by Moscow, particularly at a time when territorial nationhood and ethnic nationality were institutionalized in the USSR. therefore, with the failure of the TFSSR as a model and with the emergence of the 1936 Soviet constitution, the three nations became separate union republics in the ethno-federal structure of the USSR.” (Geukjian 2012, 87).

⁶³ During those early years after the Bolsheviks had entered the Caucasus, various attempts were made from Karabakhis to change the course of events of Karabakh’s fate. Some of them were individual initiatives, others were organizational, but these were completely shut down in the late 1920s (Mutafian 1994, 144). For the most detailed English language work on the First Republic in Armenia, see the extensive and multidimensional study of four volumes entitled *The First Republic*, published between 1971-1996.

leader, Mustafa Kemal (Lane 1992; Geukjian 2012, 70-71; Kazemzadeh 1951, 11-19),⁶⁴ and as a result to the strong desire and insistence of Turkey to have a common border with Azerbaijan (Bölükbaşı 2011, 41).⁶⁵ According to Bölükbaşı, the main reason why Karabakh was “awarded to Azerbaijan” (as opposed to Armenia) was that the Bolsheviks believed Azerbaijan was of strategic importance to them to establish strong ties with Persia, Arabia, and Turkey (2011, 41). It was thus not only based on the Ankara-Moscow interplay, but, as Tchilingirian argues, it was also based on the strategic geopolitical calculations of the Bolsheviks: “With such configurations, the Bolsheviks hoped it would be easier to expand their revolution into Turkey and other Muslim territories.” (1999, 441-442; also refer to de Waal 2003, 130)

Other scholars argue that Karabakh was ‘annexed’ to Azerbaijan because of the ‘divide-and-rule’ (or divide-and-conquer) strategy that the Bolsheviks adopted believing that this would ensure a greater control of the peoples of the USSR.⁶⁶ Divide and rule can be perceived to have been a controlling mechanism of the population within the Soviet borders as “a way of implanting troublesome and dissident populations within minority republics and pitting ethnic groups against each other, thereby undermining the possibility of minority nationalities working together against the central government” (Tchilingirian 1999, 441; also see Chorbajian 1994, 24). The status of Karabakh thus became de jure part of Azerbaijan, even though in a telegram on December 1920, Narimanov himself had stated that the entity was Armenian and was to be included within Soviet

⁶⁴ The original statement can be found in “Change in Soviet Policy Regarding the Status of Karabakh”, Hrant Avetisian, The Communist Youth League of Transcaucasia Under the Flag of Proletarian Internationalism, 3-5 July 1921” in Gerard Libaridian, 1988, *The Karabagh file: Documents and facts on the question of mountainous Karabagh, 1918 - 1988*. Cambridge: Zoryan Institute, pg. 36.

⁶⁵ According to Bölükbaşı, the main reason why Karabakh was “awarded to Azerbaijan” [as opposed to Armenia] was that the Bolsheviks thought that Azerbaijan was of strategic important for them to establish strong ties with Persia, Arabia, and Turkey. So it was not only based on the Ankara-Moscow interplay, but as De Waal argues, it was also based on the strategic geopolitical calculations of the Bolsheviks (2003, 130).

⁶⁶ For more information refer to Geukjian 2012, 70-76; Lynch, 2004, 26; Tchilingirian 1999; Swietichowski 1985; see Carrère d'Encausse 1990 and Zürcher 2002, 135-6 for a more general study on the Soviet approach to divide-and-rule policy.

Armenia (for the telegram, see Libaridian 1988, 34). This promise quickly fell to the side once Armenia officially became under Bolshevik rule.⁶⁷

There are those who think that the ‘divide-and-rule’ strategy may be far too simplistic an explanation to explain the Soviets long term planning of the regions and ethnic groups. De Waal holds that perhaps the decision of the Kavburo to allocate Karabakh to Azerbaijan were driven as much by economic strategies as their colonial planning; as such, “The new regions were intended to be economically viable territories, with all other considerations taking second place...In this sense, the creation of Nagorno-Karabakh could more exactly be called the politics of “Combine and Rule,” though this was far from ensuring harmony (2013, 145). But the combine and rule strategy did not capture the full picture, because strategic calculations, mentioned above, were also part of the decision-making process for Stalin regarding Nagorno-Karabakh. His policy on the repatriation of Armenians was shaped based on the later arising tensions with Turkey – in this light, it is perhaps more sound to explain the Soviet ‘reasoning’ regarding Karabakh through integrative lenses. In the early 1920s, after the Soviet power had been established in the Transcaucasus region, the Armenian population of Karabakh was at 94.4% (124,000), and this number declined to 76% (123,000) by 1979 (Suny 1993, 188).⁶⁸ In all cases, the story of territorial allocations and border

⁶⁷ The Soviet authorities had already drawn the borders between the Southern Caucasus republics, and had allocated the various regions of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Nakhichevan. But these were not the only territorial disputes in the region, nor the only two disputes Armenia had with its neighbours. The conflict of territory of Armenians with Georgia was not mentioned until now in this chapter, because it is not the main focus here, but it is useful to point out the way the territorial allocations were done in the Soviet Union, to explain that border modifications were far from unrealistic whether in the early years, or later (for example Crimea in 1954). These regions were the Lori and Akhalkalak regions. There was an armed conflict there as well, but it was not long before the Soviets intervened in 1921 and solved the problem as follows: both regions had an Armenian majority, but they allocated only Lori to Armenia and Akhalkalak was ceded to Georgia. The latter region did not witness the same struggles for reunification as did Karabakh, for example, and in 1991, both states accepted the Soviet era border demarcation as official. The claims of the Armenian government are not those of self-determination or irredentism towards the Armenians living in Akhalkalak, but they are claims of a higher level of autonomy to the Armenians in practicing their culture, religion and language (Kazinian 2011, Author’s Interview). These claims were not always strongly stated by the Armenians government fearing any clashes with Georgia, one of two open borders (among four) for Armenia. Today, these claims are heard more loudly, though not as strongly as they can be.

⁶⁸ According to Suny, Azerbaijanis were about 5.6% in the early 1920s and their numbers rose to 24% (37,000) by 1979, a five time increase.

drawing are imbued with typical colonialist views that are reinforced through the mechanism of controlling the destiny of whole populations by deciding where they live and who they belong to within an empire.

When the three republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia emerged as independent republics in the South Caucasus region in 1918, they began their independence period with disputed territories within their regional boundaries. These conflicts were aggravated by the British involvement in Transcaucasia in 1919 around the time of the Paris Peace Conference, which was supposed to settle all territorial disputes (Geukjian 2012, 54).⁶⁹ In August of the same year, the Armenians agreed to have the Bolsheviks control Karabakh, but already in 1921, the latter had established control in both Armenia and Georgia, finally having conquered the South Caucasus region. During the Bolshevik take-over of Karabakh, they promised the Armenians that Karabakh, Nakhichevan, along with Zangezur, would be under their territorial sovereignty. But Stalin's plans to establish close friendship ties with the newly emerging Turkish state annulled these promises, and instead Stalin ceded Nakhichevan and Karabakh to the Azerbaijani SSR, in addition to the

⁶⁹ The British had taken a pro-Azerbaijani stance based on their strategic and economic advantages in Transcaucasia driven by the large oil reserves found near Baku. As Geukjian claims, in addition to the oil reserves, "they [the British] believed that a strong and independent Azerbaijan allied with Britain would form a buffer against pan-Islamism and future Soviet encroachments upon British interests, mainly the road to India and the British mandates in the Middle East" (2012, 54). The British interests in taking a pro-Azerbaijan strategic position are also expressed by Arslanian 1974; Walker 1991; and Mutafian 1994.

Kars and Ardahan territories in Western Armenia (in eastern Turkey today) to Turkey.⁷⁰ This decision was promised to be changed in 1945, when Foreign Minister Molotov announced to the Turkish ambassador that the Soviet Union claimed these territories back from Turkey, though this initiative was abandoned after Stalin's death. This had detrimental effects on the Armenian communities worldwide, since many diasporans had agreed 'to repatriate' to Soviet Armenian 'homeland' because of the ostensible vow by Stalin to reclaim the lands from Turkey by the Soviets (see Chapter Four).⁷¹

The call for the reunification of Karabakh with Armenia did not only begin in 1987. In fact, the post-Stalinist era witnessed a refreshed attempt to rectify the situation for the Armenian side. From the early 1960s until 1987, Armenians sent petitions, wrote letters, and requested the Soviet

⁷⁰ In the beginning of 1918 after the Russian army had retreated from the Ottoman front under the Brest-Litovsk Treaty (March 1918), the western Armenian areas of Kars and Artahan were drawn into the Turkish borders. Although Russia had withdrawn, the fighting was left to the people of the region, and so Armenians continued to fight for their lands, but this was short-lived, and the Armenian populated cities of Erzrum, Van and Kars fell into Turkish hands, which in some sense brought an end to the armed fight in Armenian Turkey, and the focus shifted to Russian Armenia. Armenia declared independence on May 28th, 1918, establishing the first republic of Armenia. This was a fragile republic however, and the Armenian Dashnak leaders at the time were reluctant to be detached from Russia, as they were being attacked from Turkey which was already advancing towards Yerevan and Baku. To the surprise of the Armenians themselves, "In the battles of Bash-Aparan, Gharakilise and particularly Sardarapat the outnumbered and outgunned Armenia soldiers irregulars, peasants and other ordinary folk finally managed to stop the Turkish advances, securing the independence of the republic and preventing Ottoman troops from reaching Baku at that time." (Panossian 2006, 244) Ronald Suny also shows that the Soviet Russia's Foreign Affairs Commissar, Grigoree Chicherin, clearly stated to the Armenian delegation to Moscow headed by Levon Shant, to ask for a peaceful settlement of the Karabakh conflict against the claims of Azerbaijan on the Karabakh territory, that Soviet Russia would not support any claims made by Armenians to Anatolia, particularly because it was not in the interest of Russia to do so as it sought to strengthen its ties with the Turkish nationalists (1993, 130).

⁷¹ According to Susan Pattie, some believed that the reason for repatriate (*nerkaght*) was due to the low number of population in Armenia in the aftermath of WWII, which supposedly led Stalin to consider splitting the territory of Armenia between Georgia and Azerbaijan. In fact, this was the main reason that led the Catholicos Gevorg VI, head of the Armenian Church, to propose the project (2004, 115-117; a french translation of the letter is available in Mouradian 1979, 80). In a letter addressed to the Great Powers, Gevorg VI asked for the support of not only Kars and Ardahan but to the Armenian lands that were guaranteed by the Treaty of Sèvres (1920); for a full discussion, see Suny 1993, ch 10.

leadership to reconsider Stalin's decision made regarding the status of Karabakh in 1921.⁷² Armenians were continuously reminded of the loss of the Armenian presence in Nakhichevan due to the discriminatory policies of the Azerbaijani government; as Suny notes, "Armenian were fearful that their demographic decline would replicate the fate of another historically Armenian region, Nakhichevan, which had been placed under Azerbaijani administration as an autonomous republic." (Suny 1993, 188; also see Walker 1991)⁷³ During the years of *glasnost*, there were various attempts to gather signatures for petitions to be sent to Gorbachev by Armenians in Transcaucasia and Moscow. In addition, delegations were sent from Karabakh to make their case to the Central Committee in Moscow (Malkasian 1996, 28-29; Walker 1991, Tchilingirian 1999). Many of my interviewees reiterated that 1988 did not occur in a vacuum, but was historically linked to all these previous struggles and efforts.⁷⁴ They also commented on the link between 1965, the year of the 50th commemoration of the Armenian Genocide (also see Suny 1993a, 181-185; Panossian 2006, 320-3 on this point; see Peroomian 2007, 106-108 and Stepanyan 2010 on how 1965 revived nationalism especially in the literary domain in Soviet Armenia). In that year, protests were organized in Yerevan, and people from everywhere in Armenia and some from Karabakh as

⁷² There were various attempts during those years to send letters to the Secretary General of the Soviet Union, but to no avail. In 1963, a petition signed by 2,500 Karabakhis was sent to Khrushchev explaining that "the Armenian population of the Azerbaijani SSR has been subjected to chauvinistic policies creating extremely unfavourable conditions of life" (Libaridian 1988, 42-46), the aim of the letter was to ask for the annexation to Armenia (or RSFSR). Another such letter for requesting the unification of Karabakh and Nakhichevan was written by Suren Aivazyan, a geologist and Party member, on March 5, 1987, addressing Gorbachev. He mainly stressed the anti-Armenian position taken by Haidar Aliyev, who was then the Communist Party Representative in the Azerbaijani SSR. Suren Aivazyan, "Memorandum to the First Secretary of the Communist party of the Soviet Union, M.S. Gorbachev" *Haratch*, Paris, Published on December 4, 1987. Other than letters, the events of April 24th, 1965 that triggered a public demonstration in Yerevan to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Armenian Genocide created significant impact on this issue. Amid these demonstrations, people began shouting 'Our Lands' signifying both the Armenian regions in Azerbaijan and also in Turkey that they had lost in the negotiations between Russia and Turkey at the beginning of the 1920s. these events and others that symbolized the Armenian claims to the Soviet authorities in different years after the 1960s are well captured in the literature (Tchilingirian 1999; Mutafian 1994; Messerlian 1978; Malkasian 1996; Suny 1993, especially chapter 11)

⁷³ Ronald Suny also notes that in 1920s, Armenians were a large minority and already in 1926, their numbers had declined to 15% (15,600) and to just 1.4% (3,400) in 1979 – the Azerbaijani population had increased from 85% (85,400) to about 96% (230,000) and this was because of the higher birth rate and in-migration (1993, 188).

⁷⁴ This was stated to me during my interviews with Harutune Marutyan, Armenouhi Stepanyan, Levon Abrahamian, and Vazken Manukyan.

well joined the protests that called for the return of Armenian lands, referring to the Western Armenia in Turkey, Nakhichevan, and Karabakh.⁷⁵ The collective historical memory of the Armenian Genocide emerged powerfully in the 1965 commemorations and also strongly surfaced in the 1988 movement gatherings, especially after the Sumgait pogroms in Azerbaijan against Armenians.

In 1988, there was an important circumstance initiated by the policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, which provided the necessary political opportunity to shift the demands from letters and petitions to public gatherings and protests. The protests for the reunification of Karabakh with Armenia began in Stepanakert, and women played an important role in initiating those protests (Narine Aghabalyan, Author's Interview, 2011, author translation.). Just a few days before that, the Krunk Committee was formed to lead the nationalist uprising in Nagorno-Karabakh.⁷⁶ There had already been several small protests organized by people in the different areas of Karabakh, but on February 20th, 1988, Lenin Square in Stepanakert was filled with 40,000 people who had come out to show their support for the unification of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO)

⁷⁵ The year 1965 represents the first time when Moscow allowed the Armenians to commemorate the Armenian Genocide in Soviet history. Approximately 100,000 to 200,000 people gathered outside the Opera building in the Theatre square in Yerevan, demanding Western Armenian lands and Genocide recognition (Panossian 2006, 320; Geukjian 2012, 121; Peroomian 2007, 107; Suny 1993, 186-7). This was the first commemoration of the Armenian Genocide in Soviet Armenia. Peroomian describes the events that took place and the way people in Soviet Armenia slowly became aware, sometimes for the first time, about the Armenian Genocide (*Medz Eghern*, the Great Calamity, the word used by Armenians to refer to the tragedy).

⁷⁶ The Krunk Committee was composed of the following members from the higher echelons of the Soviet authorities within Karabakh: Robert Kocharyan was the leader, Armeniaronii Balayan, Henrik Grigoryan, Arkady Manucharov, Levon Melik-Shahnazaryan, M. Petrosyan, Henrik Poghosyan and Serzh Sargsyan (taken from Arus Harutyunyan. 2009. *Contesting National Identities in an Ethnically Homogeneous State: The Case of Armenian Democratization*. Western Michigan University, Kalamzoo: PhD Dissertation, ft43). What is quite interesting about this group is that the leader, Kocharyan later became the president of Armenia in 1998 until 2008 and Sargsyan, his close protégé, became his successor in power from 2008 until today. The first president of Armenia was a member of the Karabakh Committee that later turned into the ANM. These are important to point out, since it also reflects the deep entrenchment of Karabakh within Armenian power structures, though this is not the focus of this article. Another fact that stands out on the Krunk committee compared to the Karabakh Committee that formed in Armenia is that the former was headed by Communist Party members and government officials and managers, or the "Soviet 'feudal' upper class" as Abrahamian refers to them, who did not want to alter the Communist and Soviet power structures and establish democracy (Abrahamian 1991, 78). The Karabakh Committee was a group of intellectuals, teachers and activists, who left the strong impression that their activities were driven by bottom-up initiatives.

with Armenia, with banners in their hands reading “One people, one territory”, “Justice will prevail” (Malkasian 1996, 5). The issue also reached the parliament in Karabakh and in a surprising vote, the Soviet of People’s deputies of Karabakh, which was, at least until then, only a rubber stamp parliament, voted 110 to 17 for the reunification with Armenia (Malkasian 1996, 31; Laitin and Suny 1999, 152).⁷⁷

In Yerevan, the movement began cautiously in order to avoid police crackdown as was the experience in October 1987. The content and purpose of these protests quickly shifted from ecological demands, which had been widespread in many parts of the USSR, to political and social ones. The ecological movements that began organizing protests in the streets of Yerevan placed a crucial role in the Karabakh movement. The protests were mainly critical of the pollution that was generated due to the factories in Yerevan and around the city. What these movements contributed was basically that protests were possible as a means of putting forth an issue. Although the issue took a Green colour initially, this quickly transformed into a political movement, the Karabakh movement.⁷⁸ These protests were at first focused on the ecological effects of the Tsaghkadzor power plant, and were later superseded by the NKAO issue. The ecological issues quickly transformed to issues of national concern around the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave, “Several of the mass demonstrations in Yerevan calling for the unification of the NKAO with Armenia followed

⁷⁷ The first diaspora group to react to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was the Karabakhi diaspora within the Soviet Union, which is estimated at about 150,000 to 300,000 (Tölöyan 2007, 222). The Karabakhi diaspora was largest in Baku and Sumgait (in 1988 before the pogroms began in Azerbaijan against the Armenians), as well as in Armenia, Georgia, and Russia. The mobilization of the Karabakhi diaspora was strongest after February 20th, 1988, when the protests and claims addressed to the Soviet Union began by sending petitions to ask for the reunification to what was then the Armenian SSR. As Tölöyan states, “the speed with which the Karabagh diaspora began to agitate for support of the resolution suggests the strength of the links maintained with the homeland leadership” (2007, 222).

⁷⁸ For a description of these protests and the ecological claims see the work of Malkasian, 1996, and Geukjian, 2012. Already in 1986, Armenians began petitioning letters to Moscow on the status of the Karabakh Armenians and called for reunification. In 1987, local Armenian writers and intellectuals collected 80,000 signatures, of which about 30,000 was from Nagorno-Karabakh (Malkasian 1996, 28). Some notable Armenians also joined their voices to these initiatives, the most prominent of which were Sergei Mikoyan, the son of Anastas Mikoyan who was a member of the Politburo for a number of years), Abel Aganbegyan, the then senior economic advisor to Gorbachev, stated that the Nakhichevan and Karabakh should be returned back to Armenia, and Zori Balayan, a famous Armenian writer (Papazian 2001, 68; Malkasian 1996, 28-29)

immediately on the heels of demonstrations protesting the environmental pollution” (Fraser *et al.* 1990, 670; also Ashot Manucharyan, Author’s interview, 2011). The banners and placards of the protestors quickly shifted from environmental claims to demands of the unification of Karabakh with Armenia. The Armenian environmental movement was therefore the umbrella organization for the Karabakh movement, which brought to the forefront the organizing committee known as the Karabakh Committee.

On February 25th, 1988, more than a million people came to the Freedom Square in Armenia, this was more than a quarter of the total population of the Soviet Armenian Republic (de Waal 2010, 110).⁷⁹ The Karabakh movement was thus formed in the streets, from environmentalist protests to nationalism, the crowds chanted “Gha-ra-bagh!” and the most eloquent of its speakers were quickly taking over the crowds and leading them to the events of the following days – and thus the Karabakh Committee was formed.⁸⁰

The main focus of the Krunk Committee in Karabakh was the reunification of Karabakh with Armenia, whereas for the Karabakh committee in Armenia, already by May 1988, supplemented this goal with calls for democratization and struggle against corruption. As Libaridian puts it, “Karabakh became the trigger and the symbol of the protest movement against the system, but it did not limit the movement’s agenda” (1999, 28).⁸¹ In Armenia, the issue took on different colours: it began with demands of unification, and from there evolved to wider claims of

⁷⁹ The number of one million was also stated in “News Account of Events in Yerevan at the Height of Demonstrations.” *Los Angeles Times*. February 26, 1988, in Gerard Libaridian, ed. 1988. *The Karabakh File: Documents and Facts on the Region of Mountainous Karabakh 1918-1988*. Cambridge and Toronto: The Zoryan Institute, 94.

⁸⁰ The Karabakh Committee underwent changes in its ideological orientation and aims. The Karabakh Committee members also shifted over time, especially as the movement became more inclusive of aims and scope, addressing issues beyond Karabakh as the main cause. Initially, the members of the Karabakh Committee consisted of Zori Balayan, Sylva Kaputikyan, and Igor Muratyan – the membership later changed as the scope of the movement became larger (Libaridian 1999, 28).

⁸¹ Indeed, this focus on highlighting the corruption of the Communist state in Armenia, on displaying the history of committed injustices, and portraying it as taking a stance against the Armenian nation’s interest showcases one of the main differences between the Karabakh Committee and the nationalist movement in Karabakh.

democracy, corruption of the state, its carelessness towards the people's plight, and the lack of nationalist feelings among the Soviet Armenian leaders (which caused russification, though relatively much less than other republics or oblasts), and finally to claims of independence.⁸²

Ashot Manucharyan, a member of the Karabakh Committee, similarly stated in his interview with me that “the Karabakh movement quickly came out of its focus on Karabakh alone and began to address different issues [injustice, corruption, bribery, etc.], and my focus was on the latter issues, I spoke little about Karabakh,” and thus the focus from the ethnic and territorial concerns related to the Karabakhis and the Karabakh territory quickly changed, shifting the discourse around the construction of national identity and its priorities in Armenia. His speeches were “mainly about injustice, corruption, bribes, on the laws and illegitimacy, and as such the Karabakh movement quickly came out of its focus on Karabakh alone and began addressing all types of issues” (Ashot Manucharyan, Author’s Interview, 2011, author’s translation). Perhaps it is this shift in discourse that continues to persistently get carried within the protest movements in contemporary politics in Armenia - though the reason for the failure of these movements to bring changes, as the third section will show, is the lack of a general sense of these major concerns among the population. But it would be interesting to see whether the newer grassroots movements in Armenia since 2010 would be able to bring forward the kind of transformation the 1988 Karabakh movement brought to the political context - such a study seems pertinent. Armenia’s

⁸² Ashot Manucharyan, Manvel Sargsyan, Rafael Ghazaryan, Paruyr Hayrikyan, Armenouhi Stepanyan, Alexander Iskandaryan, Vazgen Manukyan, 2011, interviews with author. Also see Libaridian, 1999, 26-29; Abrahamian, 2009). Claims of independence in 1988 were not common throughout the Soviet Union. At the time of the Karabakh movement formation, there was no knowledge at all of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, no one expected it at the time, or knew it was coming. So to ask for independence was a major move from the Armenian side, one that was done at great risk, since from the start of the movement and the street gatherings of Armenians in Yerevan, the Soviet tanks and army were watching them, and many Armenians feared the tanks would march on them, and this was also confirmed to me by many of the interviewees in Armenia. The culture of dissidence in Armenia however, was not unfamiliar at all, since the 1960s, and the most prominent of the dissidents was Paruyr Hayrikyan who was much more overt than others. He was one of the few who asked for the independence of Armenia, sometimes very loudly even in the 1960s. There were other underground movements that were calling for independence; for instance, Vazgen Manukyan was in the 1960s a member of a secret organization claiming independence.

transition began in 1988 with the revival of nationalism over the NK issue, and with the formation of the Karabakh Committee.⁸³ But unlike the focus on non-ethnic issues linked to Karabakh during the movement, the discourse shifted once again after independence, especially as the tensions escalated to full conflict in Karabakh as the second section of this chapter will show. This is precisely why I consider the Karabakh factor to be not only about Karabakh itself, but rather a symbol of these protests and marches for people that has continued resonance based on the perspective expressed to me by Ashot Manucharyan and others. It is thus in the context of the rising social movements that the chapter discusses the Karabakhisation of politics in Armenia.

One of the first successes of the Karabakh Committee and the protests in Armenia was the October 1988 elections, when two deputies, Ashot Manucharyan and Khachik Stamboltsyan, were elected to the Supreme Soviet of Armenia. The mobilization for the elections took place on the square, and people were informed about the process by activists and table set-ups that distributed pamphlets (Abrahamian and Shagoyan 2012, 14). In March 1990 the first elections that challenged the monopoly of the Communist party in the history of the Soviet Union took place, with a majority seats from the ANM party. Ter-Petrosyan became the Chairman of the Supreme Council of Armenia on August 4, 1990. The main points on the agenda were Armenia's independence and democratization.

Indeed, in the subsequent months more candidates with grassroots support were elected, such as Rafael Ghazaryan in November 1988 and Levon Ter-Petrosyan, the future first President of

⁸³ The Council of Elders included Victor Hambardzumian (president of the Armenian Academy of Sciences), Zori Balyan (a writer), Silva Kaputikyan (a renowned poet), and Bagrat Ulubabyan (a historian, and a nationalist whose activities for the unification of Karabakh to Armenia began much earlier in the 1960s). The function of this council was mainly to work in parallel with the younger activists in the Karabakh Committee, and provide them with the necessary counsel and advice (Geukjian 2003, 334). Ohannes Geukjian comments in his study of the political and nationalist movements in Armenia and Azerbaijan on the role of this council, stating that the “members of the Council of Elders – as ‘ethnic actors’ – played the role of the link between the local Communist authorities and the Karabakh Committee” (2003, 335).

Armenia (1991-1998), in 1989. In the aftermath of the election of some of its members to the Supreme Soviet of Armenia, the Karabakh Committee was renamed as the Hayots Hamazkayin Sharzhum (HHSh) or the Armenian National Movement (ANM) in 1989.⁸⁴ The ANM was legalized in May 1989, after protests broke out starting April 24th, 1989, the day of the commemoration of the Armenian Genocide, to demand the release of the Karabakh Committee members from prison (Croissant 1998, 33).⁸⁵ The elections of 1990 were considered to be a turning point in the sense that, for the first time, a non-Communist candidate, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, became the speaker of the Armenian Supreme Soviet, and the ANM became the first non-Communist Party to be in power in the USSR (de Waal 2013, 56). These instances of Armenian ‘pride’ as reflected in my interviewees recollection in the way the protests were organized and in the deliberative democratic efforts put in the Square to attempt to really create a participatory form of politics by the Karabakh Committee demonstrated, according to my interviewees, that the Armenian example and experience was something to learn from. As such, the 1988 movement was more than just a moment of change for the Soviet Armenian Republic within the USSR; it was a transformation of the way a society viewed itself as unique, in its pride to make the change and to bring forth its demands. This was later further accentuated through the victory of the Armenians in the Karabakh war.

This was a transformative moment in Armenia and perhaps in the USSR, because for the first time, candidates to the Supreme Soviet of Armenia were selected by the people and not from above. Moreover, Ashot Manucharyan stated that the elections of two members of the Karabakh

⁸⁴The ANM members were Rafael Ghazaryan, Vazgen Manukyan, Hampartsoum Galstyan, Ashot Manucharyan, Vano Siradeghyan, and Levon Ter-Petrosyan. They were mainly intellectuals with no evidence of a history of involvement with or attachment to the communist government.

⁸⁵ The Karabakh Committee members were imprisoned after the December 1988 earthquake in Leninakan, Northern Armenia. The members were taken to Moscow and put in prison for about 6 months without trial. After all the protests, diaspora support, media coverage and attention, the members were released in May 1989. They returned back to Yerevan as heroes.

Committee to the Armenian Supreme Soviet in 1988 inspired Adam Michnik and the Polish Solidarity movement. He mentioned that conversations took place between himself as Karabakh Committee member and Michnik on this issue, and in his words:

Because of these elections, the Solidarnost from Poland and Adam Michnik with whom we have met a few times at very hot spots – once in Kiev when the Rukh [the People's Movement of Ukraine] movement was being organized [in 1989], so we were present at the founding of this democratic movement..., and once in Latvia...And Michnik told me during these meetings that based on our experience they had also decided to run for the elections when they saw that this was effective, as the two deputies in parliament were the representatives that were speaking for the people, and this was very effective. (Author's Interview, 2011, author's translation)

Malkasian notes that Armenians also made close friendships with the Baltic republics: Hambartsum Galstyan, for example, travelled frequently to Moscow to meet his counterparts from Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. There were also visits from the Baltic republics to Yerevan during the movements and rallies and Armenians also supported the efforts and struggles in the Baltic region (1996, 131). This highlights more strongly their own sense of Armenia's uniqueness, which reflects the importance of the movement within Armenia and the region. That sense of change is recalled today with awe perhaps due to the lack of such transformative movements in Armenia. the post-election protests, while important in the Armenian political scene, do not compare to the 1988 movement. Similarly Vazgen Manukyan also explained that,

the representatives of different countries came to visit us and to see what we were doing here; from the Baltic republics, the Ukraine, from the Russian dissident circles, and everyone was talking about the number of people and that in Armenia something unusual was taking place, we were all waiting anxiously regarding whether or not the tanks will kill the people in gathering. Gorbachev's decision [not to attack] led to the collapse of the SU because other peoples saw that they could do the same as in Armenia....(Author's Interview, 2011, author's translation)

Armenians were also deeply influenced by the dissident movements in Eastern Europe and Russia. The Armenian youth of the 1970s and 1980s were already strongly exposed to the Russian dissident literature, mostly addressed against the Communist regime (for example Solzhenitsyn). There was also the influence from the diaspora in Armenia particularly from its nationalistic literature, creating the “modern nationalists who were able to absorb the new, the Western, the diasporan Armenian, and to create the spiritual atmosphere for a national revival” in their ‘national’ writing (Peroomian 2007, 111) that not only explains the 1965 outburst by Armenians, but also the contexts within which Armenian nationalism was being prepared over the decades prior to 1988.“Gharabaghe Mer Ne!”⁸⁶: Karabakh as the Symbol and Marker of Armenian National Identity (1988-1994)

If history were kinder, the choices for Armenians might have been easier, but, as in the past, the survivors had no choice but to live the life they had been given. Armenians might have preferred another Armenia, another social system, another time or place, but this appeared a utopian dream. There was no Armenia but Soviet Armenia, no Armenian nation but the one that dreamed at the base of Ararat. Its fate in the twentieth century seemed inexorably, unavoidably tied to the Soviet empire. But as the empire itself began to tremble, Armenians acted among the first to accelerate its fall and to construct new national democracy. (Suny 1993a, 191)

The year 1988, after more than twenty five years, remains engraved in the memory of Armenians in Armenia in particular, but also in the diaspora, as the moment of change that broke the shackles of empire. Whether the new era can be characterized as a democracy under Ter-Petrosyan is a matter of great controversy, but there were real intentions to bring in change for

⁸⁶ “Gharabaghe mer ne!” means “Karabakh is Ours” in Armenian. This is taken from Mark Malkasian’s 1996 book entitled “*Gha-ra-bagh!*” which is also symbolic of the Armenian 1988 demonstrations in Yerevan – “*Gha-ra-bagh!*” was written on homemade banners that people took with them in their protests in February 1988, or were chanted in the streets during these protests. And “Gharabaghe mer ne!” was chanted during these protests.

people. The independence in Armenia was also greeted with a war with neighbouring Azerbaijan in the territory of Karabakh. As such Karabakh represents not only the disputed enclave between Armenia and Azerbaijan but also the movement of 1988. But it is also more than that – Karabakh symbolizes change, hope, unity, and power of the people. As such, the term is quite loaded with symbolism as the interviews revealed. This section explains why Karabakh has taken this place in Armenian political and social imaginary.

The Karabakh Committee organized itself and mobilized people in the streets of the capital city of Yerevan. The existing literature on the 1988 movement has covered the sequence of events that took place on the square through anthropological, participant observation methods, on-site interviews, archival work, by presenting a historical factual description of the events and the subsequent political outcomes. As such, my purpose here is to provide a narrative history of the movement and the events that snowballed as a result of the February 1988 protests through the recollection and the retrospective memories of the participants/interviewees I met with. This is useful to rebuild the events of 1988 and onwards through the subjective recollection of the participants, and this in itself can become the basis of analyzing the dominant discourse around 1988, diaspora-homeland relations, and the Armenia-Turkey and Armenia-Azerbaijan relations as well. The discussion on Karabakh here is not intended to explain the origin or roots of the Armenia-Azerbaijan war in Karabakh and the conflicting explanations of belonging of the territory, nor the resolution of the conflict.⁸⁷ Instead, this chapter will refer to the main events that have

⁸⁷ There are various works that have attempted to address the depth of these controversial issues, and they have explained the roots of the conflict, the process of resolution or post-conflict reconciliations, and the nature of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. See the works of Laitin and Suny 1999; Chorbajian et al. 1994; Geukjian 2012, Lynch 2004; De Waal 2010; Cheterian 2008; Croissant 1998; Böyükbaş 2011. For the domino effect of the national movements from the Baltics to the South Caucasus to other regions in the Soviet Union, see footnotes 1 and

relevance and that help to develop one of the main points of this chapter regarding the impact of 1988 on Armenia's nation building process.

The collective spirit that arose in the streets of Yerevan and Stepanakert was incomparable to any other moment of unity for the participants. There was a sense of unity, oneness, almost divine, that inspired so many. The breadth of the protest itself on February 22, 1988 brought a sense of admiration and gave courage to the people's spirit, as Malkasian interestingly captures it,

No one quite believed that a people best noted for cynicism and dark humor would suddenly join hands in solidarity...A tranquility almost unknown in Yerevan seemed to settle over the multitude. Absent were the normal unpleasantries of social intercourse in the Armenian capital – no shrill shouting matches, no jostling for a better view, no poison-dipped insults. People long accustomed to elbowing their way through lines for a kilo of chicken or a movie ticket shared, at least for the moment, an inexplicable bond. The students and intellectuals from the weekend rallies were still there, but now they stood shoulder-to-shoulder with a few factory workers, department store clerks, and others representing the first signs of working-class involvement. Unspoken that Monday afternoon was the realization that Yerevan had grown up (1996, 35).

One of my interviewees, Ashot Manucharyan, who was assigned to lead the Karabakh movement at a particular event,⁸⁸ described the feeling, even after more than 20 years. He recalled the moments and emotions quite vividly and stated that it was a time when people were overwhelmed with this spirit, the emotional aspect spilled over to the social feeling of oneness, in his words:

⁸⁸ Ashot Manucharyan recalled that one event where he was among the demonstrators, and the Karabakh movement was announcing the names of those who were selected to join the group who was going to meet with the leadership of the Communist Party Central Committee as some leaders had come from Moscow. The protests were taking place in front of the building of the Central Committee. The delegated group was composed of intellectuals, artists, poets, singers, university professors. So he decided to blurt out amid the demonstrations whether anyone experiences in politics was also going. So it was spontaneously decided that he would join them as someone who was more experienced in organizing than the artists and poets were for example. His political experience was based on the university activities. When Igor Muradyan's leadership was changed, he became part of the new Karabakh Committee, he stated to me that he did not feel that he was more experience than others, but others did not have organizational skills so someone was needed to take on the coordinating task in the group. This is an important segment I found during the interview, because it reflects the political inexperience of the leaders of such groups (common in the Soviet Union) that eventually led to the changes from the local to the Soviet scenes. Regarding Igor Muradyan, all those members of the Karabakh Committee I interviewed agreed that he was the main initiator and organizer of the Karabakh movement.

...people expressed great harmony, cooperation, among people and within one self. They were trying to live the ideal life in that square to help each other – in Yerevan at that time there was no robbery! And this lasted for months. And that factor of paradise [-like] idealism, was what made Armenia different from other republics. In Azerbaijan it was the emotional, here it was the harmony and this influenced a lot later. The victory of the war was a reflection of that state [of feelings] as well. Because in that state, people are very selfless. (Manucharyan, Author's Interview 2011, author's Translation)

One of the striking aspects of the unity also came from the noticeable reduction of crime rates during that time, which led to the spreading of a popular joke that “reflecting the reality...that criminals were also on strike.” (Abrahamian 1999, 65) As Ashot Manucharyan described above, there was no theft, no robbery in the Square, people behaved at their best. A popular joke Abrahamian recalls from that time was that “Armenia’s thieves went on strike together with the rest of the country,” though this was not just a joke and reflected some of the reality of the situation, especially when the “minister of the interior reported in a television interview that during the first February meetings the Yerevan crime rate was fantastically low, approaching zero.” (2001, 124).

This almost divine spirit described by Ashot Manucharyan and the feeling of elevated hope of the time was also expressed to me in various interviews with those who have partaken in them. Vazgen Manukyan conveyed how the public gatherings became larger and people could not believe that so many were coming together, “...the unity was so strong and so powerful, and maybe we have not been unified as in those times...and we could have used that unity much better, but unfortunately disappointments came about...” (Author's Interview, 2011, author's translation). Armenouhi Stepanyan, an anthropologist at the National Academy of Sciences, stated that Armenian national identity had been buried over many years. The first *bort'gum* (outburst) was in 1965 at the 50th commemoration of the Armenian Genocide, and the second outbreak was in 1988,

when “everyone was electrified, everyone became politicians, everyone was talking about politics. Women were also very active.” (Author’s Interview, 2011, author’s translation) Levon Abrahamian, a prominent Armenian anthropologist, describes the mass gathering of people in February 1988 in the Theatre Square and compared it to a single huge body:

...this gigantic body...was not simply a mechanical combination of its constituents. It has a common soul, a common mind, and (finally) a common feeling of ethnic self-consciousness. On these and the following days, according to the testimony of many informants, a remarkable feeling was generated, as though one were present at each instant wherever this massive body of the people swept and thrived (1991, 79).

Alexander Iskandaryan, the President of the Caucasus Institute, a policy think tank in Yerevan, explained that 1988, specifically the Karabakh issue, transformed Armenianness into a consolidated ethnic identity:

...an establishing point for Armenian identity. Armenia and Karabakh had an identity, but that was ethnic, cultural, or even primordial ethnic identity....The change from political to ethnic identity is a process, and in Armenia, the beginning of the process was Karabakh, and this issue became the core of Armenia’s political identity. (Author’s Interview, 2011, author’s translation)

The sense of strength of Armenians in the streets and their resilience in the face of the Soviet tanks truly reinforced their feelings of belonging to the Armenian nation as a unity capable of bringing change. The Sumgait pogroms in February 1988 were a strong factor in fortifying the determination of Armenians in their claims, particularly when they witnessed the state of the refugees coming from Azerbaijan. The feeling of ‘us’ was thus being built around not only the language, cultures, customs and traditions the Armenians had struggled to maintain in one form or another in the Soviet period, but also around the othering of Azerbaijani ‘Turks’, especially as the refugees and survivors began arriving in Armenia after Sumgait, Kirovabad (or Ganja today) and Baku massacres. The memory of the Armenian Genocide of 1915 quickly came to the fore as the

events were rapidly snowballing. If 1965 brought the diaspora closer to Soviet Armenians it was due to the collective memory of the Genocide being commemorated in Soviet Armenia for the first time. As Abrahamian stated to me,

What is important about 1965 is that one factor, the memory of the Genocide, became the same identity factor that brought people together for both the diaspora and the Armenians in (Soviet) Armenia. The transmission was mostly within families in an intergenerational level, but such a mass movement to come out to talk about the genocide, it was a first in Soviet Armenia” (Author’s Interview, 2011, author’s translation).

This memory was expressed once again during the 1988 protests, especially after the Sumgait February 1988 pogroms that killed around thirty people followed by the Kirovabad (Ganja) massacres in November of the same year.

Another factor that seems to have strongly contributed to the sense of unity and harmony in the Theatre Square during the ‘meetings’ in 1988 and onward was that the differences among people almost temporarily disappeared in the wake of the movement (Abrahamian 1991). One of the things that was revealed from my interviews in Armenia was the impression people had in how much there was a sense of participation by all in Armenia, from different regions and villages. Many had come from various villages to attend the meetings and partake in one of the most important moments in Armenian history. Manucharyan, for example, explained that people were coming from most regions such as Gyumri, Girovagan, Dzagatsor, and partook in the gatherings (Author’s Interview, 2011). Levon Abrahamian elucidates as well that a call was made to those present to provide shelter to the villagers and many responded (among them himself), even though not many of them needed it since they had relatives and friends who had already taken them in (1991, 80).

Abrahamian continues his portrayal of the sense of melting differences in the Square, by the non-significance of factors such as age, gender or other differences in the Square⁸⁹, such as physical abilities (able-bodies versus disabled) and the bilingual differences (Russian versus Armenian speakers), all of which disappeared during the gatherings (also Manucharyan, Author's Interview, 2011). Moreover, the minorities are also mentioned as part of the unity and brotherhood within Armenia. Finally, the diaspora-(Soviet) Armenia relations also reflect a sense of the dilution of differences between them, though this was strongest during the solidarity expressed by the diaspora in December 1988, after the Gyumri earthquake which took the lives of about 100,000 people from the area.⁹⁰

The gender aspect, for instance, is well captured by some of the interviewees I spoke to who were active in Armenia and Karabakh, such as Armenouhi Stepanyan and Svetlana Poghossyan in Armenia and Narine Aghabalyan in Stepanakert, who described their own experiences and the role women played in the movements (see the next chapter). Aghabalyan explained that at the beginning of the protests in Stepanakert in February 13, it was mostly students, youth and university lecturers and professors who were gathering and many of the speakers were women and their voices played an important role to mobilize people. Women also ensured that food was available to those in the Square who were spending long hours, and thus they brought bread, warm tea and other things from their homes to the gatherings. However, even though women played an active part in the movement of 1988, there was no initiative to organize

⁸⁹ For more information on the gender constructions in Armenian nation building from 1988 until recently, see Beukian (2014).

⁹⁰ The Gyumri or Leninakan as the city was called at the time occurred on December 7, 1988. It was referred as a major catastrophe because “the principle cause...was the inability of numbers buildings to safeguard their inhabitants by absorbing the seismic shocks and even allowing for areas of survival, i.e. free space among the ruins. The second cause was the inadequate organization and quality of the first medical relief efforts.” (Verluise 1995, 24-26). The probability of the earthquake was known in the Soviet Union since 1971 - the earthquake had two occurrences, one at 11:41am and the second at 11:45am with a force of 6.9 and 5.8, respectively. Values explains the number of deaths at 100,000, though some estimates even go further up to 150,000 (Verluise 1995, 31-32).

and mobilize women into a feminist movement that calls for more rights for women or for changes in societal views related to the construction of femininity (see Chapter Three). It is striking that my interviewees explained that they did not feel the need to fight or organize such a movement because they were given all their rights and felt equal to men.

The existing literature and the interviews I conducted reveal that there was a strong impression that these were moments of unity, harmony, and support that Armenians demonstrated during 1988, and the boundaries that distinguished Armenians in the West and East became somewhat ‘blurred’ and the differences ‘melted’ under the nationalist banner of the Karabakh cause. Obviously, the reality of the situation is much more complex, and it would be an exaggeration to assume that the differences disappeared. Rather, it is clearly more of a feeling or perception that arose in the moment of solidarity in December 1988 than in the actual relations between the organized diaspora and Armenia during that year and beyond. This is especially true when analyzing the organized diaspora (political parties) position vis-à-vis the 1988 nationalist movement, especially in its initial stages.

Many felt disappointed at the time with a letter sent by the three Armenian diaspora parties (the Dashnak, Hunchak and Ramgavar parties) in October 1988 expressing discontent and warning their (Soviet) co-nationals that the struggle against the Soviet regime for claims of independence was not wise.⁹¹ This was a strong blow against the many enthusiasts of the Karabakh movement activists, organizers, and intellectuals; Chapter Four details these various events and perspectives on both sides. But this moment also shatters the sense of ‘unity’ felt by Armenians in the Square, as

⁹¹ Various letters written by the diaspora parties and lobby groups in the United States and France, for example, are gathered in Libaridian’s *The Karabakh File*; these letters were addressed to Gorbachev and were written in late 1987 in order to ask the USSR to reconsider the decision regarding Karabakh and Nakhichevan. The joint statement written by the three parties in 1988 expressed discontent and warned their (Soviet) co-nationals that the struggle against the Soviet regime for claims of independence was not wise,

their diaspora ‘brothers’ were breaking their will for change. In this sense, the diaspora(s) contested the conception of Karabakh as change, arguing for safety against Turks and arguing for a rethinking in making calls against the Soviet Union that provided needed protection against the Turks. The letter asked the Karabakh Committee to be careful not to put the three million Armenians in the Soviet Union in danger, as hostages to the Soviet regime. A paragraph in this letter reads as follows:

We call upon our valiant brethren in Armenia and Karabakh to forgo such extreme acts as work stoppages, student strikes, and some radical calls and expressions which unsettle the law and order of the public life in the homeland and subject to heavy losses the economic, productive, educational, and cultural life as well as the good standing of our nation in its relation with the higher Soviet bodies and also with the other Soviet republics. These zealous attitudes also provide the fodder for the ulterior motives of the enemies of our people. Above all, we should safeguard the unity of our people, wherein lies our strength, and we should pursue our ultimate interests with farsightedness and determination. (text available in English translation in Libaridian 2001).

In fact, Vazgen I, the Armenian Catholicos from 1955 to 1994, also had a similar position believing that the fervour of the younger generation might bring harm to the Armenian nation from Turkey. The diaspora political parties abroad had not experienced the Soviet Union, and were thus not familiar with that Armenian territorial context. What was perhaps not considered was that those who were living in the Soviet Union knew much more what was going on at the time in that context, and were acting from a very different political and social setting – for example, the political opportunities presented to the elite and activists in the Armenian SSR with the policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* initiated by Moscow. The fear of Turkey is a conception that continues to shape the diaspora habituses (especially the Dashnaks) and this determines the ways in which Armenianness continues to be defined, within the confines of denial, threats from Turkey and a

perpetual mistrust toward that state. These are strongly expressed in diaspora-homeland relations and in determining Armenia-Turkey relations as the next Chapters will demonstrate.

In retrospect, many of the interviewees recalled this letter, sometimes also with a sense of understanding towards the diaspora. Vazgen Manukyan, for example, expressed that this “became a small obstacle or a small knot, and later the Karabakh war, for example, became [the struggle] of the whole Armenian nation in Armenia and outside. And the negative role of that letter sent from the three parties to stop the movement in 1988 was quickly overcome” (Author’s Interview, 2011 author’s translation).⁹² Therefore, the emphasis is on the diaspora assistance and involvement to help the Armenian co-nationals in their struggle, especially once the conflict escalated in Karabakh.

The position of the (mostly organized) diaspora vis-à-vis the movement can be seen as expressing doubt, and exhibiting critical, bordering on derogatory, attitudes regarding the nationalism expressed by Armenians in Armenia. This was probably due to the fact that the diaspora organizations have been accustomed to be the main ‘decision-makers’ on matters related to the Armenian nation building during the Sovietised period of Armenia. For example, Hrayr Maroukhian, the chairman of the Dashnak Party Bureau, stated in 1989 in an article published in *Droshak* (a Dashnak magazine), that the call for Armenia’s independence by the ANM leadership in Armenia was premature. As such, he concluded that “We consider extremist those nationalists...who, in the streets of Yerevan, put forth demands for Armenia’s independence from the Soviet Union,” and that even though the Dashnak Party would like to achieve independence (especially that the party motto itself is “Free, Independent and United Armenia!”), “it is not the appropriate time to present demands for immediate independence, when our people *need so much*

⁹² A similar position was articulated by Paruyr Hayrikian during my interview with him.

the support of the Russian people." In addition to the position of 'judgment' issued by a diaspora party that had no understanding of the local dynamics in Soviet Armenia and was very far from the local scene, Maroukhian stated that the (Soviet) Armenians were "presently under the influence of mass hysteria [*massayakan hogebanutiun*]" and therefore they are unable to comprehend the cautionary measures and stances of the party.⁹³ It seems from the language used that there was an underestimation of the abilities and judgments of the Karabakh movement in Yerevan, which did not sit well among the locals. In addition, there seemed to be absolutely no trust that the movement and the ANM were capable of 'handling' the situation and instead, there is a lot of blame assigned to ANM for using the situation for its own power and interest driven approach in another article Is it perhaps based on the sense that diasporan organizations and parties are much more 'experienced' in nationalist mobilizations (especially for the commemoration of the Armenian Genocide) that seems to be running through Maroukhian's words? In a report published in 2010 by the Policy Forum Armenia non-governmental organization analyzing the twenty years of diaspora-Armenia relations, the latter is characterized as changing in 1988 when the Karabakh movement was at the peak of its national struggle:

there was another parallel reversal of roles at this time in the domain of nationalist politics. Almost overnight, the torch of nationalism was passed on from the Diaspora to the homeland in 1988....the Diaspora was largely freer to practice nationalist ideologies and ideals and was, therefore, in many ways the standard bearer in this respect. This was about to change along with the awakening of the independence movement in Armenia and developments in Karabakh. Initially, the traditional diaspora political parties criticized the national movement in Armenia, stressing the significance of maintaining close ties with Russia. This came as a major disappointment for many in Armenia. (Policy Forum Armenia 2010, 9)

⁹³ These quotations are taken from Panossian's work (2001, 174-175, ft15, emphasis in original text), based on his translation of Maroukhian's piece in *Droshak* 19 (19) and published on January 4, 1989. This issue was not accessible on the *Droshak* website which has only digitized its issues since October 2010. *Droshak* is the main Dashnak magazine that has begun publishing since 1890s when the party was founded.

The 1988 Karabakh movement and the actions of the Karabakh Committee were not only expressions of nationalism, but they were concrete forms of struggle that would have important revolutionary consequences for Armenia and Armenians worldwide. The eventual calls for independence by the Karabakh Committee, much to the fear of the diaspora parties and organizations, led to the establishment of an independent state not only for the Soviet Armenians, but also for the diaspora – which meant that the diaspora around the world transformed from a stateless diaspora to a state-linked one (see Chapter Four for more details). Therefore, the sense of unity with the diaspora was gradually built after the movement had matured and became accentuated particularly as a result of the 1988 earthquake in Leninakan (today Gyumri) in Armenia, when Gorbachev, for the first time in the Soviet Union since WWII, allowed foreign aid to enter the Soviet Union. This contributed to an important phase of building the diaspora-homeland relationship after it had been fractured, given the distance the Soviet years had created.

This section argued that the Karabakh cause was the main catalyst in reviving nationalism in Armenia at the end of the 1980s. Karabakh is used in this context as a concept that represents the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, the victory against the Soviet regime and later the war in Azerbaijan, and the feeling that ‘justice’ was accomplished for Armenians by symbolically regaining the territory for the survivors of the Armenian Genocide. The awakening of Armenians and their mobilization reflected the strong links between Karabakh-Genocide-Turkey/Armenia relations. The sense of strength of Armenians in the streets and their resilience in the face of the Soviet tanks truly reinforced their feelings of belonging to the Armenian nation. In addition, the Sumgait pogroms of February 1988 became a strong factor in the determination of Armenians in their claims. The feeling of ‘us’ was thus being built around not only the language, culture, custom, and traditions the Armenians had struggled to maintain in one form or another in the Soviet period,

but also around the othering of Azerbaijani ‘Turks’, especially as the refugees and survivors began to arrive in Armenia after the Sumgait, Kirovabad (Ganja today), and Baku massacres, between 1988 and 1990. These tragedies reactivated the trauma and memory of the Armenian Genocide of 1915. It seems that ‘groups’ export their negative imaging and experience onto the ‘enemy group’ as a way to express their pain and historical suffering. The identification of Azerbaijanis as ‘Turks’ did not end with the ceasefire in 1994, but is extrapolated in the use of many Armenians in their everyday discourse not only in Armenia and Karabakh but also in the diasporas. Harutyun Marutyan, an anthropologist at the Armenian National Academy of Sciences and a Genocide studies scholar, expressed his views on the Karabakh movement and the role of the collective memory of the Genocide as a strong issue around which people mobilized during the Karabakh movement:

...the Karabakh movement was, in my view, the first in the Eastern European chain of revolutions, it was the first in the Velvet revolution chains, so the Velvet revolution began in Karabakh, meaning the Berlin Wall began to fall in Nagorno-Karabakh and the main powerful force behind this rise in nationalism was the post-Sumgait awakening of the Genocide memory....Suddenly, it became clear what was the factor that moved everything forward, it was the memory of the Genocide, which is a bit unusual. The memory is strong, but this memory can be in latent phase, and can become awakened. It was so in 1965 and in 1988...(Author’s Interview, 2011, author’s translation).

In addition to the memory of the Genocide that was revived once again during the Sumgait pogroms in 1988, the main question of the independence of Armenia also raised similar concerns from all parties regarding Armenia’s ‘security’ in the region as an independent state in the face of possible aggression by Turkey and Azerbaijan, for example, over the Karabakh enclave. In addition, the ideology of pan-Turkism continues to be a source of fear and worry for many Armenians in the diaspora and in Armenia. Perhaps these are embedded in the ideology of

victimhood and the psychology of survivor that many Armenians internalize from their childhood. The reality and imagination of Armenianness as tied to the painful memories of Genocide and the continuous denial by Turkey of that history, and the relationship of the Armenian nation with Turkey shape the national habitus(es) of Armenians in one of the strongest ways. In some way, as many of my interviewees reflected, and as explained in more detail in Chapter Five, the fear of Turkey and the pain of remembering became a crippling obstacle in the face of moving forward and advancing for Armenians. Others oppose to this view, and believe that there is more to the construction of Armenianness and the necessity of fighting for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide dictates the need for remembering the suffering and consistently rethinking relations with the Turkish state.

The mobilization around the Karabakh cause in Armenia and Karabakh shaped and influenced the nationalist politics of Armenia greatly on a mass level. It politicized people after years of subordination to a regime that infiltrated not only their political thinking and behaviour, but also their private lives, their lifestyles, and their families. The Karabakh Movement brought back the possibility of claiming ‘agency’ by conquering the Soviet past, even if this was short lived and even if this was initiated by the centre. More importantly, this section shows that 1988 can be considered as a moment of unity for Armenians, both between the diaspora and local Armenians

(despite the initial tensions that arose in the earlier stages of the movement) and between the Armenians from the various regions of Armenia.⁹⁴

The details of the Karabakh movement in Armenia are depicted here through retrospective lenses of the interviewees, who focused in their ‘stories’ on the aspect of the unity of the 1988 rallies and gatherings in the Square, which seemed to have absorbed differences among people for the duration of those protests. But most of all, the importance of ‘1988’ lies in its continued ability to create a sense of unity around a larger Armenian Cause – represented by the Karabakh enclave, its desire to (re)unify with Armenia, the Azerbaijani pogroms in Sumgait and Baku, and the subsequent war with Azerbaijan. The pogroms in particular, the eviction of Armenians from their homes in Azerbaijan, and the escalated tensions between Azerbaijanis and Armenians,⁹⁵ were all factors that brought back the memory of Genocide to Armenians. Notably, the Karabakh Movement also included references to the Genocide, to the Turkish recognition of the history, and calls for reparations in the form of Western Armenian lands (Marutyan 1999). It is therefore not surprising, that after independence, the Presidents of Armenia had to confront the latter issues, while state building efforts were being made in the early years. The next section turns to this precise aspect of modern Armenian politics, focusing on the impact of Karabakh on the Presidents’ foreign and domestic policy agendas, which also included diaspora-homeland relations in order to reflect on the ways in which the national discourse around the Armenian Genocide as the most

⁹⁴ However, the various movements that began in Karabakh from 1986 onwards, culminating in the 1987 protests in Stepanakert and the 1988 protests in Yerevan with large numbers in the streets in support of the Karabakh cause and the independence of Armenia, were not born only at the time. In fact, there were the reflections of the existing spirit of dissidence since the Soviet times in Armenia, as pointed out to me by various interviewees. The tradition of opposition and controversy was not foreign to Soviet Armenia; some of the most known and strongest dissidents in the Soviet Union were Armenians, with a strong discourse of independence already well-established in the 1960s and onwards. The most outward advocate of the independence of Armenia was Paruyr Hayrikyan, who represented one of the most important intelligentsias in Armenia, and he took on Haygaz Khachatryan’s party and already in the 1960s about 400 members had joined the party and remained members (Iskandaryan 2011, Author’s Interview). Others were much more cautious about their claims in the Soviet Union, and focused on the issue of Karabakh’s reunification with Armenia.

⁹⁵ Azerbaijanis were also forced to leave their homes and belongings in Armenia and Karabakh and became refugees in Azerbaijan, thought there was no systematic violence directed against Azerbaijanis in Armenia and Karabakh.

important element that defines ‘Armenianness’ became directly and indirectly part of all discussions related to the political and economic decisions by the state.

Rhetoric and Nationalist Discourse in Armenia’s Nation Building: Karabakh and Armenian Politics (1991-2013)

Karabakh, as a concept that encompasses both territory, victory against the Soviet regime, and a sense of ‘justice’ of being able to regain Armenian territory for the survivors of the Armenian Genocide, is a factor that unifies Armenians. However, the politics of resolving the Karabakh conflict, the types of concessions negotiated, the problems of the corruption in Karabakh, and the slow progression in any peace agreement are all points that create contested politics between and among diaspora and homeland politicians, activists, and intellectuals. There is no doubt that the Karabakh nationalist rhetoric remains an important part of the Armenian political discourse and national identity formation and maintenance, and the Karabakh issue is an important factor in determining the rise to power of elites in Armenia – especially the presidents. The three presidents were all involved in the Karabakh movement from the start, and struggled in different ways for the Karabakh cause. But once in power, things looked different and they each have shown to handle Karabakh and nationalist policies and the Armenia-diaspora relations differently, although common aspects are also strikingly found. As Alexander Iskandaryan noted to me, “In Armenia, the political forces are not divided on the basis of political ideologies....but on the issues and priority level that Karabakh takes on their agenda.” (Author’s Interview, 2011, author’s translation) But the priority around the importance of Karabakh is tied to the triangular relationship as discussed above, linking the Karabakh Cause to the Armenian Genocide and to the Armenia-Turkey relationship as well. It seems that this is the case of the President’s agendas as well, as will be shown below.

On September 21, 1991, Armenia held a referendum on independence and 94.05% of all eligible voters voted for independence; two days later, the Armenian Parliament declared the independence of Armenia from the USSR. The presidents of Armenia have extensive powers given by the constitution, some terming this a super-presidentialism (see Payaslian 2011). In addition, the most contested issue in Armenian politics since 1991 has been the elections which have always been accused of fraud and manipulation by the people and the opposition parties – in particular the presidential ones due to the fact that the president remains the most important figure in Armenian politics. The major gatherings of the opposition and the people have taken place as a result of the electoral discrepancies. In this light, the focus in this section is on the impact of Karabakh on the coming to power of presidents, complemented with an analysis on the post-election rallies by the opposition, in the following section of the chapter.

The personage, foreign policy agenda, and background, all matter in the figure of the president. But the contestations around the policies and positions adopted by the Armenian presidents are focused on the following three major points in this chapter: 1) the Karabakh conflict and its resolution; 2) the Armenian Genocide recognition and claims from Turkey; 3) and the approaches to Turkish-Armenian relations. These three points that represent the triangular view of the Karabakh cause are directly tied not only to the collective memory of the Armenian Genocide, but also to the diaspora-Armenia relations as well. These have been and continue to be fundamental in setting the tone of the foreign policy of Armenia, in determining the place of Armenia in the region, and in the changes in the presidents and elite circles in Armenia. Today, this discourse is strongly marked by the Turkish-Armenian rapprochement attempts in 2009 that led to the signing of agreements between the two countries. Sargsyan recently pulled the Protocols from the Parliament stating his frustration with the Turkish side for not taking the agreements seriously.

These will be addressed in much more detail in Chapter Five. The three main points above will be analyzed through the foreign and domestic stances of the three presidents of Armenia from 1991-2013 to reflect the extent of the Karabakhization of politics in Armenia.

The Karabakh war ended in a ceasefire in 1994 with the victory of the Armenian side. This was more than just a victory in the war for Armenians, however. Karabakh symbolized above and beyond that especially to the Armenian diaspora or *spyurk*, in reference to the memory of trauma, loss of homeland, belongings, and property, and survival of the Armenian Genocide. What was lost then seemed to have been gained, at least a portion of it, with this victory. Karabakh thus embodies this discourse and becomes not a reality but an abstract and idealized place that represents the culmination of Armenian struggle against its long-time enemy, the Turks. Such an idealization has its costs: what about the reality that people face on a daily basis? What about democracy and the rights of the people of Karabakh? What about what the Karabakhis think regarding the resolution of the conflict? What happens to the soldiers after the war is over and life gets back to ‘normal’? How can there be an improvement of the socio-economic situation in Karabakh? Some villages are almost empty with no economic development plans and prospects for the residents, for example.⁹⁶ These are the real issues, among others, that face people living in the enclave. Most importantly for *Karabakhtsis* (people of Karabakh), and also for Armenians in general, the peace process discussions, proposals, and negotiations all taking place behind tightly closed doors completely excludes the people’s voices – though the most affected from these would be the *Karabakhtsis* themselves, first and foremost.

⁹⁶ These are based on my personal notes during my trip to Nagorno-Karabakh in 2006 and in 2011. Some of the villages currently have three households, and the rest of the buildings are not abandoned with the residents having moved to Armenia or to Russia due to the harsh socio-economic situation.

To the diaspora, much like images of the homeland are idealized at the cost of its realities sometimes, Karabakh was also idealized. Libaridian puts it very well when he states that upon visiting or knowing Armenia more closely over the past two and a half decade or so,

Many Diasporans did not like what they saw [in Armenia]....What they did not like in Armenia they still seek to find in Karabagh: the pure, the traditional, the heroic, the comforting. Questions asked of Armenia and Armenian politics are rarely asked of Karabagh. The patriotism of Karabagh leaders is never questioned; those in Armenia remain guilty until proven to be only suspects (1999, 144).

These words depict a strong abstraction of Karabakh in the imagined Armenian nation and homeland. As such, in the minds of diasporans, as in the minds of many Armenians as well, Karabakh epitomizes not only the actual territory, the war, and the victory, but a victory for the whole nation that demonstrates a retribution for some of the losses of the Genocide. This is not at all an attempt to compare the two – they are not comparable. But the victory in the Karabakh war symbolized that Armenians did not always lose against the Turks – Armenian referred to Turks and Azerbaijanis as ‘Turks’ (and some still do in Armenia and the diaspora): the victory of the lands in Karabakh were an attempt to ‘recover’ Western Armenia and the Mount Ararat from Turkey.

The Armenian diaspora mobilizes to plan projects in Karabakh when money is needed, whether it is for road constructions, schools, or other projects – through such large organizations as

Hayastan All-Armenian Fund⁹⁷ and the Artsakh Fund.⁹⁸ In some cases, many diasporan political parties also engage in repopulation projects in Karabakh, in order to encourage Armenians to move and settle in Karabakh, especially in the Armenian controlled territories of Azerbaijan. For example, many Syrian Armenian refugees who were escaping the attacks on their villages (especially Kessab) and cities (especially Aleppo) in Syria, found a home in Karabakh, though they of course had to adjust to a different habitus in Karabakh, and this has not been without various problems of settlement such as lack of housing and employment.⁹⁹ In fact, since the outbreak of conflict in Syria in March 2011, more than 16,000 Syrian Armenians moved to Armenia and an estimated 12,000 have remained in Armenia, with some flexibility and assistance by the government and several diaspora organizations (UNHCR 2014).¹⁰⁰

The early years of independence were heavily shaped by the full scale conflict in Karabakh, which was halted with a ceasefire in 1994. But the impact of this war is not measured only in the

⁹⁷ The best example is the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund founded in 1992 by Armenian Presidential Decree in order to mobilize Armenian communities around the world to rally the material and financial resources of the diaspora and send it to Armenia. The fund collected donations through various fundraising activities and events such as annual telethons, phoneathons, gala dinners, concerts, and other events. Of these the most popular is the annual telethons because it brings various famous Armenians to host them (such as Arsinée Khandjian, Canadian Armenian actress, Kev Orkian, British Armenian comedian, for example). The telethons are big events and they are able to gather quite a lot of money for Armenia and Karabakh, for example in 2014, the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund Telethon was able to raise more than twelve million USD. See the following link for more information <http://www.himnadram.org/index.php?id=2>

⁹⁸ The Artsakh Fund was also established in 1992 – under the name of Lebanese Organ for Artsakh Assistance [Lipanani Artsakhi Ojantagoutian Marmine LAOM] and it was renamed to Artsakh Fund after the ceasefire in 1994. The Artsakh Fund has assisted Karabakhis in many projects, through they function through the government of Karabakh. Its main focus is on the rural areas of Artsakh directed at the revitalization of those areas and sometimes also repopulation. This fund, unlike the Hayastan All-Armenian Fund is more localized in Lebanon, where the Lebanese Armenian community donates mobilized to donate and assist their co-nationals in Artsakh. See <http://www.yerablur.am/viewmenu/2/>

⁹⁹ See the coverage of Syrian Armenians settling in Karabakh by Mariam Grigoryan. “Syrian Armenians now also Face Difficulties Living in Karabakh [Siryahayere hima el Gharabaghun bnagvelu khntir unen]” in *Arachin Lradvagan* news. June 13, 2013. Accessible at <http://www.1in.am/191100.html>, accessed on May 10, 2015; and also refer to Gayane Mkrtchyan. “Homeland, but not ‘Home’: Syrian Armenians Face Difficulties to Settle in Karabakh [Hayrenik, payc voch ‘doun’. Siryahayere tjvaranoum en Gharabaghun hasdadvel]” July 30, 2013. *ArmeniaNow*. Accessible at http://www.armenianow.com/hy/society/47852/syrian_armenians_kashatagh_nagorno_karabakh_resettlement Accessed on May 10, 2015. For more successful resettlement stories, see the coverage by Hayk Ghazaryan and Shahla Sultanova. “Karabakh Offers New Home to Syrian Armenians: Resettlement Scheme angers Azerbaijan, which sees it as an obstruction to an eventual peace deal.” *Institute for War and Peace Studies*, January 14, 2013. Accessible at <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/karabakh-offers-new-home-syrian-armenians>. Accessed on May 10, 2015.

¹⁰⁰ The report prepared by the UNHCR details the legal changes made in Armenia in order to accommodate the Syrian Armenian ‘refugees’ who had to flee their homes and towns in order to find safe haven in Armenia (among other places such as Lebanon). The report is accessible at <http://www.1in.am/191100.html>. Accessed on May 10, 2015.

number of material and human losses, or with the victory of the Armenian forces, but, more importantly, in the way that Karabakh has become infiltrated into Armenian politics. Therefore, since 1988, the fates of Armenia and Karabakh have become intertwined. Many Karabakhi politicians were brought to power in Armenia, in various high-ranking positions, such as the power ministries (for example, the ministry of defence and the ministry of internal affairs). For instance, many of the heroes during the war have found their way in power positions in both Armenia and Karabakh, such as the former president Robert Kocharyan and the current incumbent, Serzh Sargsyan, re-elected in 2013. In addition, the resolution of the Karabakh conflict has become increasingly centralized in the hands of the Armenian government, especially since 1998.

Regarding their position of Karabakh, the three presidents had seemingly differing views, perhaps more based on their ideological premises of how to resolve the problems of Armenia and Karabakh in general (See Libaridian 1999 for an interesting discussion on this view). Ter-Petrosyan believed that the main cause of Armenia's economic setback was the inability of Armenia to solve the Karabakh issue. One of the economic consequences of the war was the blockade imposed by Turkey and Azerbaijan. In addition, he was doubtful of the ability of the diaspora's financial support to rescue the local economy. After the resignation of the Prime Minister Vazgen Manukyan at the time, the latter explained to me that their differences also became wider on the role of the diaspora in Armenia.¹⁰¹ He also recalled when Ter-Petrosyan "publicly stated that he believed the diaspora would not last for a long time as they would eventually integrate and slowly disappear. So the best approach is to take as much money as

¹⁰¹ After Manukyan left resigned as PM, Ter-Petrosyan ordered the establishment of the Armenian Fund, which Manukyan was against because he believed it was only one small portion of the work to be done.

possible from them” (Author’s Interview, 2011, author’s translation).¹⁰² Manukyan believed, to the contrary, that a stronger relationship, one not based solely on financial purposes, was necessary to build long term cooperation. Of course this may have been Ter-Petrosyan’s position, but he also invited several diasporans to be part of his team as the state building process of Armenia was ‘launched’.

Ter-Petrosyan’s presidency will always be remembered for the victory of the Armenians in Karabakh. But after the ceasefire was in place, the main question then became: how to resolve the conflict in a way that safeguards the self-determination principle for Armenians and ensures that Karabakh remains Armenian? And, of course, how to reconcile these with the statehood of Armenia? In this light, after negotiations began with the Azerbaijani counterparts mediated by the OSCE Minsk Group, there were two proposals on the table to look at: the step-by-step approach (or phase approach) and the package approach.¹⁰³ Ter-Petrosyan was convinced that the “step-by-step” plan proposed in September 1997 under confidential negotiations would be the most reasonable, and it was indeed the right time to take this step otherwise Karabakh may lose its stance as equal interlocutors in the negotiation process, as he explained in a famous article in *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* newspaper (Ter-Petrosyan 1997). He made a statement in which he expressed his position vis-à-vis the Karabakh cause: “We were getting ten million dollars from the diaspora every year. That’s all. Robert [Kocharyan] and Vazgen Sargsyan said that if we worked

¹⁰² Panossian also references Vazgen Manukyan from an interview in the *Armenian Reporter International*, dated November 11, 1995, where Manukyan explains that Ter-Petrosyan “always insisted on ignoring the Diaspora as a ‘dying presence’...The President has simply written off the Diaspora as a vibrant and supportive entity and appears to be more interested in their financial input in Armenia.” (Panossian 1999, 95).

¹⁰³ The “package-deal” approach which was based on all issues related to the conflict and security of Karabakh (refugees, territory, consequences of conflict, end of the blockade, and so on) and the political aspect and status of Karabakh (peace agreement details) would be resolved together. By contrast, the “step-by-step” plan offered a more gradual outlook to the resolution of peace for Karabakh by first discussing the consequences of the war as mentioned above and then once the terms are set, the status of Karabakh could be then negotiated and discussed. The first set of issues related to the war and security called for the withdrawal of the Armenian forces from the occupied territories and the demilitarization of Karabakh. See “OSCE Karabakh Peace Proposals Leaked,” *RFE/RL Caucasus Report* 4, no. 3, 23 February 2001, in Thomas de Waal 2003, 258-259; Libardian 1999, 56-58).

well, we could get 450 million dollars a year. I showed them that that was impossible. On these grounds, analyzing all this, I concluded that if we didn't solve the Karabakh question, it would be bad for both Armenia and Karabakh. Time was playing against us" (quoted in de Waal 2013, 270).

Ter-Petrosyan approached the issue of the Karabakh conflict with pragmatism it seems, though many considered it as betrayal or anti-nationalist,¹⁰⁴ which was the source of high conflict with local politicians in his own circle and the Dashnaks in Armenia and the diaspora. According to his advisor during his presidency, Gerard Libaridian,¹⁰⁵ Ter-Petrosyan's position vis-à-vis the resolution of Karabakh, specifically, the necessity to compromise in the negotiations with Azerbaijan was not a newly stated perspective. He had been articulating this since he became president (Libaridian 1999, ch.2). But perhaps it was this moment that was used by his opponents that marked the end of the Ter-Petrosyan presidency in Armenia. His decisions regarding the Karabakh issue and resolution were countered by his close circle and supporters in government and also by Stepanakert – especially since Kocharyan's ties with Stepanakert remained strong even after he was appointed as Prime Minister in Armenia.

Although Ter-Petrosyan's rule was characterized as the rule of nationalist intellectuals who led the Karabakh struggle and independence in Armenia (which made him highly popular in 1991), his decision to adopt the step-by-step approach in 1997 led to his resignation. He had already lost legitimacy during the 1996 elections, which were accused of being fraudulent by many protesters

¹⁰⁴ It is important to note here that, according to Geukjian (2014, ch 4) this is not the view of the intellectuals and newspaper editors invited in 1997 to attend Ter-Petrosyan's viewpoint on the resolution. They did not see his adoption of these policies as a betrayal or as anti-nationalist.

¹⁰⁵ Until 1994, Gerard Libaridian served as the advisor of President Levon Ter-Petrosyan. From March 1993 to September 1994, he was also the First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. After 1994, he became the Senior Advisor and Secretary of the Security Council. In these positions in the Armenian government, Libaridian played an important role in the negotiations with Turkey and in the peace negotiations related to the Karabakh conflict. According to Stephan H. Astourian, even though Libaridian was a member of the Dashnak Party, he resigned from the party in December 1988 when he 'concluded that the party's opposition to the popular movement in Armenia and Karabagh and to the leadership of that movement was neither accidental nor based on ignorance.' (Libaridian 1999, X, quoted in Astourian 2004, ft.29).

and opposition figures. In addition, his harsh position against the Dashnaks in Armenia reflected badly on his presidency. His Prime Minister, Robert Kocharyan, his Defense Minister, Vazgen Sargsyan, and his Minister of Interior and Security, Serzh Sargsyan all had strong doubts about the step-by-step approach. There was a wide margin of ambiguity in the proposed plan, since it suggested that agreements would be done incrementally as each step is finalized, which did not provide guarantees of the independent status of Karabakh – so self-determination might not be upheld in the negotiations process. In addition, the step-by-step approach also constitutes the ‘land-for-peace’ deal that would ensure both parties uphold the continuity of the ceasefire until further negotiations determine the status of Karabakh and other – a point that the Karabakh delegation was insistent upon (Libaridian 1999, 56).

The diaspora parties were very clearly against the plans: the Dashnaks and the Liberal Democratic Party (Ramgavar Party) criticized Ter-Petrosyan’s policies, especially those related to Karabakh. But the most serious confrontation and clash occurred between Ter-Petrosyan and the Dashnaks. The diaspora was acknowledged for its dedication during the Karabakh war, for mobilization of people, as well as for providing financial and weapon assistance, which was done under individual diasporan initiatives. As Tölölyan states in an interview, “also very important was the work of individual diasporic Armenians from Greece, Lebanon, France and the US who supplied funds to purchase weapons and to provide medical services and pharmaceutical products. But perhaps the single most important contribution in human terms came from the Soviet Armenian diaspora, when officers of the former Soviet Army joined the forces of Armenia and Karabagh.”¹⁰⁶ Panossian claims that the Dashnak party was important for its “great symbolic value,

¹⁰⁶ Khachig Tölölyan and Taline Papazian. 2014. “Armenian Diasporas and Armenia: Issues of Identity and Mobilization: An Interview with Khachig Tölölyan.” In *Etudes Armeniennes Contemporaines: Juifs, Armeniens, un siècle d’Etat.* 3 (83-101). Also see Tölölyan (2007, 106-128).

as the “vanguard” of Armenians’ anti-Turkish and anti-Soviet struggle for national rights. It embodied the idea of independence and the “national cause” – including land claims” (Panossian 2004, 229). The Dashnaks wanted a nationalist leader, who would acknowledge Karabakh’s independence and the desire of Armenians to unite the enclave with the ‘Motherland’. In addition, they also sought a more solid foreign policy with regards to the recognition of the Armenian Genocide. The Genocide issue is a non-compromising point for many diasporan Armenians, and one which could not be sacrificed for better relations with Turkey. In response to these criticisms and increasing clashes between the Dashnaks and the incumbent president of the time, Ter-Petrosyan banned the party from functioning in Armenia (Libaridian 1999, 43-44). Their activity resumed only after the 1995 parliamentary elections, but they were officially re-registered in Armenia in 1998, after Robert Kocharyan became President.¹⁰⁷ Finally, the diaspora and the Kocharyan circle strongly believed in the Karabakh cause: it must be part of Armenia or become an independent state, thus it is important to continue the struggle. The Karabakhis took a hardline on this issue, and it was not one that could be easily compromised.

Because of Ter-Petrosyan’s policies and arguments regarding the Karabakh issue, tensions in the government with his own close circle, with the Karabakh leadership, and some opposition parties prepared the ground for this resignation (See Geukjian, 2014 who focuses on the Karabakh resolution).¹⁰⁸ In spite of all attempts at distancing it or trying to find solutions for it, the Karabakh cause remained a central and important issue in Armenian politics. Ter-Petrosyan appointed Robert Kocharyan as Prime Minister of Armenia on 20 March 1997. Kocharyan’s appointment could be

¹⁰⁷ Being a strong party in the diaspora, and a party known for its nationalist stance regarding Karabakh – also considering their strength in NK at the time – Levon Ter-Petrosyan could have attenuated his relations with the party. In addition, the party claims “legitimacy on their historic role during the...[Ottoman Empire]...and moral authority for the active financial and military role members have played in the armed struggles in [NK]” (Dudwick 1997, 87).

interpreted as a strategy adopted by Ter-Petrosyan for facilitating future negotiations with Azerbaijan, since Armenia “would need someone like Kocharyan to ‘sell’ any compromises to the Armenian people, especially in Karabakh.” (Panossian 2002, 152-153) What is striking in this list and others within the Armenian government is the presence of Karabakhi politicians in high and powerful positions in the Armenian government.¹⁰⁹

Hence, Ter-Petrosyan seemed, to many opposition forces including his own pro-Karabakh circle, to the Dashnak nationalists, and other opposition parties and members, to prioritize the resolution of the Karabakh conflict in a way that they deemed was a betrayal to Armenians and an inappropriately timed settlement given the situation in Armenia. For Ter-Petrosyan, although the military victory brought a sense of pride to the Armenians, the on-going war was destabilizing and morally devastating for the population, and more importantly, to the country’s economy. The Karabakh war was also causing the continuing embargoes imposed by Turkey starting from 1992 to show its support to Azerbaijan. Therefore, Ter-Petrosyan saw the need to normalize relations with Turkey in order to open the borders with Armenia – this would undoubtedly constitute an important step in improving Armenia’s economy, especially after the harsh years of 1991-1994 in Armenia, when power and water were in shortage, and the economic crisis deeply affected Armenians (see some of the stories in Chapter Three). For Ter-Petrosyan the Genocide recognition is not tied to the establishment of relations with Turkey. He stated the followed related to the Genocide:

The Genocide for me today is much more of a humanitarian idea. There has been committed a big crime against humanity, and this crime should be condemned, and a

¹⁰⁹ The extent of the presence of Karabakhi politicians in Armenia is even more evident when simply looking at the next two Presidents of Armenia: Robert Kocharyan, former President of Nagorno-Karabakh invited by Ter-Petrosyan to become PM in Armenia and Serzh Sargsyan, former Defense Minister in Karabakh and in Armenia as well after being appointed by Ter-Petrosyan.

proportional resolution should be reached. This is to me the idea of Genocide. But if we go with political quests for resolution: Western Armenia, Treaty of Sèvres, etc., this is to me secondary, and this is the wrong path. We should use all these in order to strengthen the Armenian state and to make it powerful, as the Israelis did (Author's Interview, 2011, author's translation).

Ter-Petrosyan never recognized Karabakh's independence and statehood, which led to the deterioration of Ter-Petrosyan's relationship with the Karabakh leadership (Herzig 1997, 263). Interestingly, however, none of the subsequent presidents did so as well and Karabakh remains unrecognized today by all countries, including Armenia. Already in 1991, the Dashnaks and ANM disagreed on the rapprochement with and the level of threat from Turkey, the Dashnaks claiming that pan-Turkism remained a threat and accordingly a pro-Russian position was necessary to secure the future of Armenia. Ter-Petrosyan believed that the country was not yet ready to acknowledge its desire for the annexation of Karabakh with Armenia, another point of contestation between ANM and the Dashnaks. In addition, he refused to recognize the independence of the enclave proclaimed in 1992 (Armenia still does not recognize NK). First, this was a significant change in his earlier positions (especially in 1988 until the collapse of the Soviet Union.) This shift from his previous stance led to many disagreements in the ANM, when members split to form other parties: these parties formed the opposition movements.¹¹⁰ In addition to tensions within his own circle, the opposition was growing against him. During my interview, various members of the Karabakh movement, who later became ANM members at the onset of Armenian independence, addressed the importance of Armenia recognizing Karabakh. The current government (since 2008) has a different view, and according to the late deputy foreign minister Karine Kazinian, they

¹¹⁰ Activists such as Vazgen Manukyan, Khachik Stamboltsyan, Shavarsh Kocharyan, David Vartanian, Ashod Manucharyan left the ANM to form the National Democratic Union (NDU), the Scientific-Industrial Civic Union (SICU) and the National Progress Party (NPP)

consider that they are supporting Karabakh and they are seeking its independence - and reunification is not on the discussion table at the moment (Kazinian, Author's Interview, 2011).¹¹¹

The main question to ask perhaps is that despite the position of Ter-Petrosyan regarding the resolution, what solution did his successors choose or believe was best for Karabakh? It seems that the same issues that were raised during Ter-Petrosyan regarding the resolution of the Karabakh conflict and normalization of relations with Turkey became the main points that the two other presidents dealt with, though it seems in a not so very different way. What determined the opposition against Ter-Petrosyan has to do with his disagreements with the Dashnak party and the Karabakh circle, but it is directly tied to his stances on the resolution of the Karabakh conflict and of the Armenia-Turkey relations that worsened his situation and consolidated the opposition against him. Therefore, some of the diaspora habituses contested the politics of nationalism (or non-nationalism, as they saw it) of Ter-Petrosyan, and these contestations led to a shift in the discourse around 'Armenianness' as related to Karabakh and the Armenian Genocide.

Ter-Petrosyan's long term plan did not materialize, as Kocharyan's appointment in the Armenian government "paved the way for the Karabakh elite to gain foothold at the heart of political power in Armenia" (Panossian 2001, 153). The influence of the local Karabakh elite did not stop with Kocharyan's appointment and his presidency in Armenia, as Hratch Tchilingirian notes, that influence "...extended beyond [Karabakh]: in the Republic of Armenia, the President and the Interior Minister are [Karabakhis], the Defence Minister is veteran of the war and [Karabakh] natives hold high government positions" (1999, 449). This Karabakh clique was one of the main strengthening pillars for Kocharyan, as the 'power ministries', meaning the defence and

¹¹¹ Deputy Foreign Minister of Armenia (2008-2011), Karine Kazinian, passed away on December 6, 2012 during a trip to the United States of America. She was appointed as Ambassador to the United Kingdom in September 2011. I remain grateful for her time and kind hospitality during our meeting and interview.

interior ministries, were his ‘Karabakh allies’ and supported him as he became president. But their support had also started earlier: when Ter-Petrosyan realized his ideas were not compatible with that of Kocharyan, he was not able to put Kocharyan out of office, because of the power ministries’ backing (Astourian 2000, 47).¹¹² In addition, Kocharyan also used this support to build the opposition against Ter-Petrosyan, which pushed him to his resignation in 1998. The diaspora’s role, particularly the Dashnak party, is also not to be underestimated in this power struggle led by Kocharyan. The tensions already deep with the Dashnak party, Ter-Petrosyan’s unpopular stances toward Turkey and Azerbaijan in the resolution of the conflict harmed him and led to his resignation. His soft approach to build relations with Turkey was not in his favour. However, it is interesting to note that, as Chapter Five demonstrates, the future positions of the Sargsyan government in the initiation of the Turkey-Armenia Protocols of 2009 were not much different from Ter-Petrosyan’s.

On February 1998, Levon Ter-Petrosyan resigned,¹¹³ by a ‘constitutional coup d’état’ pressured by his circle, though it was all constitutional in appearance:¹¹⁴ Defence Minister Vazgen Sargsyan, Minister of Interior and National Security Serzh Sargsyan (not related), and Prime Minister Robert Kocharyan. The main line of disagreement and the main reason for his resignation was the issue of Karabakh, and also the plans to establish diplomacy without preconditions with

¹¹² According to Libaridian, Ter-Petrosyan’s senior adviser to Ter-Petrosyan, the main reason for Ter-Petrosyan’s resignation did not have to do with Karabakh alone, and was based on the divergence of “visions of the place of Armenia and Armenians,” meaning between the pragmatist camp (Ter-Petrosyan and the ANM) and the ideologists’ camp (Vazgen Manukyan, the Dashnaks and others) representing the “struggle for the soul of Armenia.” (Libaridian 1999, 71)

¹¹³ The president, having the right to resign, passes his presidency to the chairman of the National Assembly. If the head of parliament is not capable to take over this responsibility or position, then the prime minister is appointed as acting president. When Ter-Petrosyan resigned, the National Assembly accepted his resignation; feeling loyal to his ally, Babken Ararktsyan also presented his resignation, which was accepted. Hence, Robert Kocharyan became the acting president on February 6, 1998.

¹¹⁴ Levon Ter-Petrosyan, 1998, “Hayastani Hanrapetitian Nakhakah Levon Ter-Petrosyani Hrajraragani Haydararoutiune [Armenian Republic President Levon Ter-Petrosyan’s Resignation Announcement]” February, 3, 1998, accessed on <http://hy.wikisource.org/wiki/LevonTerPetrosyan>.

Turkey. Ter-Petrosyan believed that a hard line position would only hurt Armenia's future in the international scene and in its economic development. Kocharyan, on the other hand, had led the NK Armenians in their struggle against Azeri forces and he was one of the leaders in the Karabakh front; he also later headed the State Defence Committee, became president in Karabakh from 1992-1996, first elected by the local parliament and later reelected by popular vote in 1996. He therefore took a more hard line stance on Karabakh, as will be demonstrated in what follows. But the disagreement seems to also be grounded in the proposed approaches in the settlement of the Karabakh conflict: Kocharyan favoured the package deal, which aimed at settling all issues together including the difficult question of the status of Karabakh (Krikorian and Masih 1999, 16). Ter-Petrosyan, as mentioned, preferred the step-by-step approach. Perhaps he also believed that it was not the right time to talk about resolutions to the conflict, since Armenia had just won the war and time would only be on Armenia's side. After Ter-Petrosyan announced his resignation on February 3, 1998, Kocharyan became acting president for some time, until he was elected as president on March 30, 1998. According to his allies and supporters in the government, especially the Dashnaks, he would guarantee Karabakh's security and he would safeguard his relationship with the diaspora and the (diaspora) parties in the Armenian government. In addition, he would also toughen his stance vis-a-vis relations with Turkey in order to continue the diaspora's mission on the recognition of the Armenian Genocide of 1915 by Turkey.

Kocharyan came to power with two beliefs: first, that the 'Karabakh Cause' would bring about more unity on the domestic scene, and second, he wanted to establish closer ties with the Diaspora so as to encourage economic investments and foreign aid to Armenia. His position on these issues shifted the discourse of the state from a more pragmatic approach to a more nationalist approach in prioritizing the Karabakh issue and the recognition of the Armenian Genocide. During

his inauguration speech in 1998, Kocharyan stated what he viewed Karabakh to be and what he envisaged for its future:

The [NK] issue is a national issue, and we have to settle it with dignity. Proceeding from the principles of peaceful resolution, we should achieve the international recognition of the Karabakh people's right to self-determination, ensuring its development within safe frontiers as the permanent geographic connection with Armenia (inauguration speech at the National Assembly, April 9, 1998, author's translation).

In fact, he believed diaspora financial assistance would help to fix some of Armenia's economic ills, especially because of the blockades and the war, and this would allow buying some more time before having to face the resolution of the Karabakh conflict. He was more consensual with the diaspora, in this sense and stressed the establishment of more favourable ties with the Armenian diaspora and the parties from the diaspora in the parliament – especially the Dashnaks and their nationalist stance. Kocharyan not only countered the ‘step-by-step’ approach, but he also turned away from relations without preconditions with Turkey, taking a tougher stance regarding the recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

We clearly see that the rhetoric on Karabakh has always been present in Armenian politics. Even when it was perceived as a problem, like in the time of Ter-Petrosyan, it was still considered as an important issue to discuss, and one that created opposition against Ter-Petrosyan among the Armenian elites. Despite different rhetoric – from its treatment as a problem during Ter-Petrosyan's presidency to its treatment as an important part of Armenian politics and national identity during that of Kocharyan – we clearly see the Karabakhization of politics in Armenia, and the influence of Karabakh on the politics of nationalism and the political discourse in Armenia. This trend continued during the Sargsyan presidency, though with much more effort invested in securing the government within his own circle and securitizing Karabakh politics. This latter trend

is also clearly the political approach of the Karabakh government. Starting from the Kocharyan presidency and to a stronger extent today with Sargsyan in power, there seems to be a larger divide between the Armenian and Karabakh governmental ties, although officially nothing seems to have shifted.¹¹⁵

Serzh Sargsyan's presidential agenda addressed the efforts for democracy and equality, the resolution of the Karabakh conflict and other related issues, and the strengthening of Armenia's foreign relations. His presidency in February 2008 began with a protest against the rigged elections; the OSCE/ODIHR¹¹⁶ noted voting irregularities and intimidation of people during the elections at the different polling-stations in Armenia (OSCE/ODIHR 2008)¹¹⁷. Sargsyan's camp asserted the election results were fair and right by referring to the International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) which declared that the elections had met all the requirements; the IEOM interestingly stated in their report that the elections were conducted "mostly in line with OSCE and Council of Europe commitments and standards," and that "[T]he conduct of the count did not contribute to reducing an existing suspicion amongst election stakeholders" (OSCE/ODIHR 2008).¹¹⁸ The elections, however, were followed by protests in the Freedom Square organized by the Ter-Petrosyan coalition – the Armenian National Congress (ANC). The protests

¹¹⁵ During my off-the record interviews with officials in Karabakh who wanted to remain anonymous, and also in my interviews with intellectuals and activists working in Nagorno-Karabakh, it became evident that there is a rising complaint among these circles that the Armenian government is increasingly 'ignoring' the Karabakh position and alienating it further from the negotiation processes and the decision-making. Although on some occasions, the president of Karabakh visits Yerevan for discussing the conflict resolution, this does not necessarily mean that the Karabakh president and his government have any significant impact on the decision stages at all. Recently Kocharyan defended his position

¹¹⁶ OSCE is the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the ODIHR stand for Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

¹¹⁷ The final report by the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission on the February 19, 2008 presidential elections in Armenia states the following: "While the 2008 presidential election mostly met OSCE commitments and international standards in the pre-election period and during voting hours, serious challenges to some commitments did emerge, especially after election day. This displayed an insufficient regard for standards essential to democratic elections and devalued the overall election process. In particular, the vote count demonstrated deficiencies of accountability and transparency, and complaints and appeals procedures were not fully effective." (2008, 1)

¹¹⁸ OSCE/ODIHR, Election Observation Mission. 2008. "Presidential Election, 2008: Republic of Armenia." Post-Election Interim Report No. 3, 20 February- 3 March 2008.

were not uncommon in Armenia, as there have been organized demonstrations against the irregularities and fraud in the elections since the 1996 elections in Armenia. What seemed different this time was the level of aggression the government expressed, under the Prime Minister Kocharyan, with many young protestors arrested – about 80 prosecuted in trials, and eight people were reportedly killed by the attacks the government launched against the protestors: until today, the crimes are yet to be revealed and identified and it seems that none of the victims' relatives or family received any compensation (Khachatrian, OpenDemocracy 2010).

In short, Sargsyan started his term with an attack against his political opponent – the prisoners were mostly all Ter-Petrosyan supporters and adherents, and the ANC has been trying until today to get the prisoners out. On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of Armenia's independence this year, president Sargsyan finally gave amnesty to 396 prisoners (in addition, 379 have had their sentences halted) of the March 1-2, 2008 events, including the editor-in-chief of the Armenian newspaper *Haykakan Zhamanak* (Armenian Times), Nikol Pashinyan, and the former member of the Armenian parliament Sasun Mikaelyan.

Sargsyan's presidency continues to be marked by several main elements, which are of note.¹¹⁹ These are first, the resolution and talks on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Second, the Turkish-Armenian protocols 2009-2010 and the relations with Turkey. Third, the March 1, 2008 crackdown on protestors that killed at least 8 and wounded many. Finally, a fourth issue is the diaspora-homeland ties that have weakened, even though a new Ministry of Diaspora was created

¹¹⁹ Interestingly, both Sargsyan and Kocharyan, the current and former presidents of Armenia respectively, were brought to power in Armenia by Ter-Petrosyan himself: Sargsyan was the head of the State Committee of Karabakh's self-defence forces, when in 1993 Ter-Petrosyan invited him to become the Minister of Defence of Armenia. He moved up the ladder and became the Prime Minister for Kocharyan before his election as president. In addition, Kocharyan, who had been the president of Nagorno-Karabakh since 1994, was asked to join the government in Yerevan to become the Prime Minister in 1997, at the height of the negotiations with Azerbaijan and the OSCE on the Karabakh conflict, as stated above in this section.

in 2008. Sargsyan is considered very pro-Russian, especially in the last few years of his presidency evident with his joining the Eurasian Customs Union, with a hard-line on issues regarding relations with Azerbaijan. He followed the Kocharyan footsteps in the Karabakh resolution matter, first by shutting Karabakh out of the negotiations, and then by taking over the decision-making for the fate of the Karabakhis. Although Ter-Petrosyan went into a self-imposed exile from politics after his resignation, he re-appeared on the political scene in 2007. It seems that in Armenia, the same players, sometimes with new agendas and positions and sometimes with the same old ones, continue to ‘manage’ and mobilize the political scene.

The Sargsyan administration is also marked by the desire to establish stronger ties with the Turkish neighbour, a highly controversial issue not only in Armenia, but mostly in and with the diaspora, as reflected during the Turkish-Armenian protocols in 2009. The borders with Turkey were blocked after the war in Karabakh began, and the relationship between the two countries has been uneasy given the history of the Armenian suffering in the Genocide of WWI. The continuous and active denial of the Genocide by Turkey since its establishment in 1923 has created an untrustworthy basis for the relations with the Armenians, especially in the diaspora. For decades, when Armenia was absorbed by the Bolsheviks, the diaspora newly arriving in the host countries as refugees and orphans slowly began to reorganize, and the political parties and their structure in the Ottoman Empire were recreated in the host countries. The diaspora, especially the Dashnaks, feel that they have been the main entity that has maintained and safeguarded Armenianness— so they were the main agents in (re)creating an Armenian national identity in the diaspora habituses after the Genocide, and this belief was strongly based on supporting evidence.¹²⁰

¹²⁰ There are two other parties and many other organizations in the diaspora that have functioned with the strong contribution by volunteers to help sustain Armenian identity amid the waves of *odaratsum* (refers to the loss of Armenian identity to other identities) and *tsulum* (integration).

From 1988 to 2013: Nostalgia and Politics of Change and Protests in Armenia

There are several ‘moments’ when similar protests were repeated in Armenia, though very few could be qualified as really bringing people together since these protests were mostly organized against presidential or parliamentary elections, therefore against claims of corruption addressed by one opposing party or bloc. The coverage of the protests below shows the attempts of the Armenian diaspora habituses to become more involved in the Armenian political scene by supporting a candidate’s struggle against the regime in Armenia - a candidate who is a repatriated Armenian from the US, with a record of standing up for the Armenian Genocide and the Karabakh enclave recognition. In fact, his electoral platform focused on these nationalist issues as well, as he declared that Armenia would recognize Karabakh once elected (*News.am* 2013) and the recognition of the Armenian Genocide would be the next step after being in office for him, especially in determining Armenia relations with Turkey. In his words, he stated that “Turkey, based on its own needs and interests, should recognize the great genocide and national dispossession of the Armenian people, seek full redemption and effect restitution, restore Armenian cultural heritage, ensure a secure right of return.”¹²¹ Reflecting upon this as a way to understand the discursive construction of ‘Armenianness’, the contested politics within the Armenian habituses seems to be focused on directly and indirectly with the politics of nationalism tied to the Armenian Genocide

¹²¹ Siranish Ghazanchyan, January 19, 2013, “Ensuring recognition of the Armenian Genocide will be a must if Raffi Hovhannisyan is elected.” *Public Radio of Armenia*. Accessed on September 9, 2015, accessible at <http://www.armradio.am/en/2013/01/19/ensuring-recognition-of-the-armenian-genocide-will-be-a-must-if-raffi-hovhannisyan-is-elected/>

The last post-election protest that was organized in relatively large numbers was the protest called by Raffi Hovannisian¹²² and some of his supporters from other parties who joined him in his struggle against electoral fraud in Spring 2013. Hovannisian was a strong contender in the 2013 elections and he received 37% of the votes, against Sargsyan's majority vote of 59%.¹²³ Officially, Sargsyan is the newly incumbent president of Armenia and he was inaugurated on April 9th. On February 19, 2013 Hovannisian's Heritage Party contested the official result based on electoral fraud and stolen votes, accusations that have been raised in every presidential election in Armenia since 1996 by the opposition candidate of the time. He declared his victory and announced himself as the legitimate president of Armenia, and asked Serzh Sargsyan to leave office and give power back to the people. As a consequence of the violations, threats, attacks, and forced ballot votes, many citizens felt it necessary to join Hovannisian's struggle and challenge Sargsyan's rule in Armenia.

Sargsyan was congratulated by the US, Russia, France, Iran, and Turkey, and formal reports issued by international observers from OSCE confirmed that the elections showed improvement and could be evaluated as free and fair overall. This led to hundreds of protesters, according to the *hetq* Armenian news, to gather in front of the OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation

¹²² Raffi Hovannisian repatriated to Armenia from the diaspora (United States of America or USA) in 1990, though he had previously visited Armenia (for example in December 1988 after the earthquake that shook Armenia, especially the region of Gyumri and its residents). His family followed him in the same year. Raffi Hovannisian was very supportive of the 1988 Karabakh movement and he wrote one of his support while he was still a lawyer in the USA during that time, see http://articles.latimes.com/1988-10-24/local/me-143_1_armenian-government for his article. After he moved to Armenia, he was appointed as the Foreign Minister of Armenia on November 7, 1991, according to his son's book. See Hovannisian, G. K. (2010). *Family of Shadows: A Century of Murder, Memory, and the Armenian American Dream* (New York: HarperCollins).

¹²³ The percentage received by the presidential candidate Hovannisian is higher than the one received by Ter-Petrosyan (21.5%). This need not necessarily reflect popularity, however, because many political parties did not participate in the elections in 2013, such as the Dashnak party, the Prosperous Armenia party, and the Armenian National Congress coalition of Ter-Petrosyan. Perhaps if these parties had participated in the elections with their candidates, the number of votes Hovannisian received might have been less.

building in Europe) in Yerevan demanding that the observers leave Armenia.¹²⁴ In another instance, young activists disrupted the press conference by the OSCE/ODIHR observing mission on February 19th, 2013 in order to read their own statement of protest against electoral fraud and the misleading report by the organization (Zolyan 2013). The Youtube video on this event was posted by CivilNet and also shown by other news sources and became very popular in Armenia and among the diaspora.¹²⁵ In fact, Youtube, Facebook, and Twitter have proven to be strong tools in revealing the violations that were taking place in different polling stations in Armenia, including the intimidation of various voters by those sent from the Republican Party of Armenia, the current ruling party.

People in Yerevan and nearby cities took part in mass protests in the Freedom Square to support Hovannisian, and many participated in the rallies organized in their own cities and villages. He organized a ‘tour’ to the nearby cities to speak with and meet people as part of his struggle against the election results. Even though some pro-government individuals showed up to challenge him and even pro-government mayors came down to the protests to oppose him, he did not counter them and tried to have a peaceful dialogue with them, as was evident in the various news posted from the Armenian (mostly critical online) media or from citizen journalists on Youtube. These were vividly captured by the opposition media, which is most active online and particularly on Youtube.¹²⁶ Once again, 25 years later, perhaps symbolically, Freedom Square was

¹²⁴ *Hetq News* (2013) “Protesters to OSCE Election Observers: “Leave Armenia Now!””, 22 February, available at <http://hetq.am/eng/news/23710/protesters-to-osce-election-observers-leave-armenia-now!.html>, accessed on 15 May 2013.

¹²⁵ *CivilNetTV Youtube Channel* (2013) “They Don’t Agree with the Observers”, February 19, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ST5-FO4j0g&feature=c4-overview-vl&list=PL1GXE7tjLboK-TDxoK9ssFG_m8ztWiVH_, accessed on 15 May 2013.

¹²⁶ See for example this video from the user Arpine Minaspyan who posted a video of Raffi Hovannisian’s *parevarshav* (Hello tour) to the region of Sevan in Armenia, dated March 10, 2013, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AX5cwtncXEc>

again filled with protesters who were there to counter the regime and the corrupt rule they have been governing with for many years now. Freedom Square is no stranger to such protests though, for the past 25 years, there have been other ones organized to mobilize people around a particular issue.

In late 2007, Ter-Petrosyan had a come-back to the political scene after many years of political isolation since his forced resignation in 1998, after which Kocharyan¹²⁷ took over the presidency. On February 19, 2008, some Armenians took to the streets of Yerevan to similarly express their rejection of the 2008 election results. Following ten days of protests and gatherings, the government used force and attacked the protesters on March 1, 2008, killing 10 people - a day still remembered by most Armenians.¹²⁸ Lyudmila Sargsyan, the chair of the Hunchak party in Armenia and an ally of Levon Ter-Petrosyan, described the events that took place and the tragedy that people faced. She stated in her interview:

...in my whole life, I have never lived in such a conscious-burdening situation. You cannot imagine how people were organized, how much they were honest: those who found lost wallets declared it and nobody stole them. And you cannot imagine how much people believed that these protests would change things, that in the end something will happen. We stayed there until 4-5AM, myself and Badrazian...On March 1st, I went home to have some sleep. I received a call saying – they [the government] are attacking. (Lyudmila Sargsyan, Author's Interview, 2011, author's translation).

¹²⁷ Interestingly, both Robert Kocharyan and Serzh Sargsyan were part of the Karabakh movement leadership in Nagorno-Karabakh in 1988. It is perhaps important to point out the differences that are inherited in Armenian politics since the divisions between the Karabakh movement in Armenia and Karabakh. Two of the leaders of the Karabakh Committee in Armenia were from Karabakh and they were dismissed. Igor Mouradyan, one of the leaders, was excluded on the grounds that he came to advocate violent means to expel Azerbaijanis in Armenia after the events of Sumgait had occurred.

¹²⁸ According to a report issued by the Human Rights Watch, "On March 1, 2008, police clashed with protesters in downtown Yerevan, demonstrating against disputed results of the presidential election. In several episodes in different parts of the city, police variously set upon protesters without warning or resistance, negotiated, withdrew, and returned to the offensive and finally fought a pitched battle with a small group of protesters. As a result, at least 10 people died - eight protesters and two police officers - and scores were injured." (Human Rights Watch 2009)

What stands out in these words of Sargsyan is the way she describes the atmosphere and people's attitude towards each other in the protests resonating strongly with the Karabakh movement protests in 1988 (particularly, Manucharyan and Abrahamian's description). People also kept the premises clean of dirt and rubbish.¹²⁹ What is also striking in this case is that these protests were taking place exactly on the anniversary of the 1988 protests (much like the 2013 protests as well), and this had an impact on the whole scene. As Abrahamian analyses, many of those who had attended the 1988 protests were also present here with their children and others who were simply attending out of interest for the events.¹³⁰ These protests continuously awaken the 1988 nostalgia of change for Armenia, symbolized by the impact that 'Karabakh' had on the political scene that bought together Armenian national habituses under a similar cause, especially after December 1988. Perhaps the discourse around Armenianness is shifting, particularly since 2010, through the challenges brought forward by the youth in questioning the dominant perspectives around governance. This is particularly important to explore not only for the 2013 protests as is my focus here, but also on the current grassroots movement that rose in 2015 as a result of the potential electricity price hikes in Armenia.

The 2013 protests were different from the previous ones for the reason that this time not only the 1988 protestors joined in, but also many of the younger generation of Armenian citizens who were increasingly becoming frustrated with the political, economic, and social situation in their country. In addition many Karabakhis also lent their support by attending the rallies and many diasporan Armenians visiting Armenia at the time or who had repatriated to Armenia also partook

¹²⁹ *Massis Post*, 1 March 2013, "March 1, 2008 a Black Day of Terror", available at <http://massispost.com/2013/03/march-1-2008-a-black-day-of-terror/>, accessed 15 May 2013.

¹³⁰ This characteristic of curiosity was very anecdotally but also seriously expressed to me by several interviewees who stated that Armenians are curious people and they like to join gatherings to know what is going on. This is one of the reasons that gatherings also have increasing number of attendees.

in the protests to support change.¹³¹ In fact, these elections in general witnessed a much more direct involvement of diasporan youth who trained to become election monitors. There were about a hundred diasporans, “both visiting and repatriated, as well as local Armenians and non-Armenian expats,” who participated in the monitoring in order to “document, record, and videotape any fraudulent activity...”¹³² Although there were also a number of youth who took part in the 2008 protests, the momentum was different this time since the effect of this protests was spreading quickly and various young activists were mobilized.¹³³

The famous Armenian-American diaspora leading singer of the ‘System of a Down’ band, Serj Tankian, expressed his support openly and wrote a letter to President Serzh Sargsyan asking him to listen to the people’s voices.¹³⁴ There were also some who joined the protests from Russia who had come to support their people.¹³⁵ This is an important change from previous protests in Armenia, when Armenians from different parts of the world were becoming involved in the

¹³¹ Naira Hayrumyan. 2013. “Focus on Liberty Square: Diaspora, Karabakh seen as factors in anti-government protests in Armenia.” *ArmeniaNow*, March 25, 2013. Accessible at http://www.armenianow.com/vote_2013/44713/armenia_postelection_standoff_rallies_raffi_hovannisan_movement accessed on May 20, 2014. There seems to be more coverage on this issue from the diasporan newspapers and English language news coverage in Armenia.

¹³² See the detailed report by the Armenia National Platform for Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum entitled “Report of the Armenian National Platform of EaP CSF Presidential Elections in Armenia in 2013.” Accessible at <http://eap-csf.eu/assets/files/Documents/ANP%20report%20on%20elections%202013.pdf> accessed on May 14, 2015. The report on the elections explains that civil society organizations in Armenia monitored the election process, in addition to various non-governmental organizations in Armenia, diaspora Armenians and foreigners in Armenia at the time. Also see the report by Ursula Kazarian 2013. “Armenia-Diaspora Election Monitoring Mission: First of its Kind.” *Asbarez News Blog post*. May 4, 2013. Accessible at <http://asbarez.com/blog/archives/109806> . accessed on May 10, 2015.

¹³³ The number of protestors at the March 2008 gathering is estimated at 30,000-40,000 people approximately by some Armenian newspapers, though more conservative numbers are offered by scholars at around 15,000 people approximately (See Bunce and Walchik 2011, 195); whereas the number of protestors present at the 2013 gathering is estimated on different days, mostly in the first couple of days of protests; on April 9th, the day Sargsyan was inaugurated into office, for example the number is at 10,000 according to Christian Garbis (2013).

¹³⁴ Similarly, important diasporan figures have also been very critical of Sargsyan’s government policies especially related to the increasing migration rates. Charles Aznavour, the famous French Armenian singer and Armenia’s Ambassador to UNESCO and Switzerland, and Aram I, the Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia. See Naira Hayrumyan. 2013. “Focus on Liberty Square: Diaspora, Karabakh seen as factors in anti-government protests in Armenia.” *ArmeniaNow*, March 25, 2013. Accessible at http://www.armenianow.com/vote_2013/44713/armenia_postelection_standoff_rallies_raffi_hovannisan_movement accessed on May 20, 2014.

¹³⁵ ArmeniaNow estimates the number of Russian-Armenians to be arriving at 150 people, and 500 were still under their way to Armenia (Hayrumyan 2013).

protests, perhaps due to the development of social media and social communication through Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, and other sources.¹³⁶ Many of the supporters saw in Hovannisian an important voice of change, arguably given his diasporan roots and due to his strong stances regarding the recognition by Turkey of the Armenian Genocide and the recognition and fair resolution of the Karabakh conflict, two main issues that a large majority of diasporans deem most important for Armenian foreign policy. In fact, his diasporan roots, being an American born Armenian who moved to Armenia in the early 1990s to become the first Foreign Minister of Armenia, were both his *forte* and his weakness in attracting people. According to Mikayel Zolyan, there were “some commentators [who] ridiculed his way of campaigning as imitation of Western political technologies, unsuitable for Armenia’s post-Soviet realities.”¹³⁷ Levon Ter-Petrosyan does not share a similar popularity among some diasporan groups, especially those who are adherents and members of the Dashnak party, which constitutes the most organized segment of the diaspora,¹³⁸ though there were several rallies organized in Los Angeles with the same banners as the rallies in Armenia in 2008 in support of Levon Ter-Petrosyan. An important development from the diaspora involvement in the 2013 presidential election protests is the reaction of the youth to the later events. For example, the municipal elections in Yerevan on May 5, 2013 were viewed as

¹³⁶ To see some opinions on the diaspora perspectives on why it is important to support Raffi Hovannisian’s struggle, see the op-ed piece by an Armenian repatriate from LA who also observed the elections in 2012 and 2013, Tania Sahakian (2013).

¹³⁷ In fact, it is important to mention here that this is both a point of attraction and distancing for many Armenians. Looking at various comments from different news posts on Hovannisian’s activities, lobbying and so on reveal that people are very skeptical about his campaign style and mission. However, many local Armenian lent their support wholeheartedly due to the fact that Hovannisian was able to stand up against the regime and even held an ‘alternative’ inauguration of his (unofficial) presidency. For his campaign style, see the piece by Mikayel Zolyan. 2013. “Armenian Spring in the Making?” *Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso* February 27, 2013. Accessible at <http://www.balcanicaucaso.org/eng/Regions-and-countries/Armenia/Armenian-Spring-in-the-Making-131350> accessed on June 15, 2014. Raffi Hovannisian’s campaign stood out due to the innovating methods of introducing himself to people: he went door-to-door, greeted people and talked to them (hence the title of Barevolution for the protests).

¹³⁸ The negative attitude of Dashnak members came as a result of clashes between the Dashnak party and Ter-Petrosyan in the early years of independence when the latter was president of Armenia. See Gerard Libaridian (1991, 1999) for a detailed analysis of the sources of clashes and the consequences in Armenian politics.

an important step in these protests for the opposition parties, due to the strategic power hold of the mayor's position in Armenia, since Yerevan inhabits more than one third of the Armenian population. What is striking is the active diasporan youth desire to be involved in the elections as election observers and media representatives, as a way to contribute to the changes in Armenian society.¹³⁹

The 2013 protests were also able to mobilize people from different parts of Armenia, again strongly reminding the power of 1988 in really mobilizing people for action. According to media sources, some Karabakhi opposition members also expressed their support, such as MP Vahan Badasyan who spoke in Freedom Square (Sahakian 2013), something that was missing in the 2008 protests, especially perhaps due to the alleged distinction Ter-Petrosyan made in his speeches between Armenians in Armenia and in Karabakh.

Another important difference between the 2008 and 2013 rallies is that the latter was much more available and circulated in the media through Youtube, Facebook and other social networking sites, and also diaspora newspapers. In and around 2008, social networks were not as developed in Armenia – meaning that even though people had Internet and email to communicate, they did not use social networking sites, especially not Facebook or Twitter.¹⁴⁰ The latter have become more popular in the past five or so years. Therefore, searching for videos on the gatherings and rallies of 2008 on Youtube reveals only a few uploads based on mobile phone recordings of a few minutes at most. The 2008 rallies were also heavily controlled by the Armenian police and violence was used actively against the protestors, which led to the death of eight people on March 1, 2008. However,

¹³⁹ This observing mission consisted of 100 diasporans (including repatriates and visitors) and 150 local volunteers who served as observers with the Transparency International organization. This was covered by one of the diasporan observers from the United States, Serouj Aprahamian (2013).

¹⁴⁰ Also, in most of the post-Soviet countries, vkontakte is much more popular, on www.vk.com.

the 2013 protests were covered more extensively by the media, including social media, and there were a few Facebook pages where discussion was possible on the events and information about the rallies were also posted. In addition, there are several Youtube videos of each speaker on the podium and the general public during the long days of the rallies against the presidential election results. The diaspora, particularly those living in the west, had easier access to the available channels of communication and social media, which meant that they were able to follow the events more closely. In addition, Raffi Hovannisian was supported by the Dashnak party in the diaspora and Armenia, which had been in opposition to Sargsyan since the Protocols of 2009 (see Chapter Five). These are therefore some of the factors that made the 2013 rallies and post-election demonstrations seem more widely followed and discussed.

The 2013 protests were peacefully organized, as in 2008, though an important difference is perhaps what the protests were actually calling for. In the case of 2008, there was a clear message of ‘toppling’ the government. For example, the main slogan that was moving the protestors in 2008 was ‘Down with Kocharyan and Sargsyan’, and quite interestingly “the factor of ‘Karabakh natives being in power in Armenia’ was being actively played out back then, fueling people’s antagonism...” (Hayrulyan, *ArmeniaNow* 2013) and creating a rift between Armenians from Armenia and Karabakh. In case of 2013, the protests were calling for Sargsyan himself to give power back to the people, by recognizing the real victor of the elections (according to Hovannisian and his circle). In the same year, many opposition figures who were supporting Hovannisian took the same podium to speak to those gathered around, sometimes talking about corruption, criticizing the state and the regime in Armenia, other times discussing the protocols and the importance of the memory of Genocide of 1915 for Armenians. Much like the 2008 protests were reminiscent of 1988, the 2013 one also brought back the memories to the many speakers on the podium,

especially Ashot Manucharyan, for example. Watching videos of his speeches today and (mostly images from) twenty-five years ago, it is quite striking to see the similarities in tone, body language, and wording. He spoke of the rise of political awareness among people twenty-five years ago in the same square; he called on people to fight against immorality, injustice, and to claim their human dignity:

I want to remind everyone the symbolic value of this [Freedom] Square....from here we sent out soldiers to the fronts to save Artsakh, here were gathered thousands of people during the earthquake of 1988, when there was a big wave of refugees....This square has governed the country, and today this Square has to reclaim and reconstitute its right to govern....Let me remind you all how we, between 1988-1900, took over our right to rule.¹⁴¹

The protests, especially the 2013 opposition rallies in the Freedom Square, brought strong memories of the 1988 movement though with a renewed force from the younger generation who were born around that time or later. Many of the students at Yerevan State University, despite the bullying by pro-government student groups, joined the rallies by boycotting classes in March 2013 and the strikes took place in front of the main building of the Yerevan State University, demanding the victory of Hovannisian to be officially recognized. Although a general look at the Barevolution, or the revolution of *barev* which means hello in Eastern Armenian,¹⁴² shows that it did not lead to the results it had initially aimed for, the main point is that it did mobilize people on a different level. The common aspect between this protest and the one in 2008 is that they both brought together different segments of the Armenian population in Armenia and in the diaspora in support

¹⁴¹ Ashot Manucharyan speech March 22, 2013 on Freedom Square during the opposition rally accessed on Youtube from Arachin Lradvagan page, author's translation.

¹⁴² The revolution was called Barevolution because of the campaigning method Hovannisian used during the presidential campaigns in Armenia, most particularly because he greeted people and spoke to them about his plans. He used a more Western (or North American) style or door-to-door visitation to people to present his electoral platform. As such, the revolution was termed Barevolution which means the revolution of greetings.

of the ‘leading figure’ of the protests, though perhaps the diaspora support seemed stronger in the latter protests due to the support of the Dashnak party and supporters of Hovannisian.¹⁴³

Although people were holding apricot colour placards with ‘Barevolution’ written on them during these protests, bringing the orange colour in Armenian struggle, a phenomenon also observed during the 2008 protests with many wearing orange ties for example, the Barevolution’s achievements fell short of a colour revolution as experienced in Georgia during its Rose Revolution in 2003 or the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004. However, the contagion effect is not only strongly present in the case of the nationalist movement of the 1980s, but also in these revolutionary moments that could either bring about an outburst and change or simply cause a spark. The lack of a strong unified opposition, the absence of concrete demands from the government, and the missing plan of action were all causes of the failure of the Barevolution. The continuous assembly of Armenian citizens in Freedom Square to counter the election results and the regime in Armenia is a demonstration of the nostalgic effect that the 1988-1990 movements continue to have on people, not only from the generation of those who partook in those protests and meetings, but also their children who grew up remembering those days. In addition, the nostalgic event is perhaps more concretely felt in the leaders’ reference to 1988 in their speeches, in the presence of the leaders of 1988 movements on the podiums of the rallies, and in the fact that these rallies take place on the Freedom Square. All these were reminiscing of those days of days of unity of the year 1988, when change was accomplished towards a better future for Armenia.

Conclusion

¹⁴³ I mention that it seems stronger because the Dashnak party represents the most organized part of the diaspora, even though this does not necessarily mean that the majority of diasporans are Dashnak adherents. This is an important point to address.

'Karabakh' is deeply engraved in the Armenian political habituses in the diaspora and in Armenia and is an important marker of the discourse around the construction of Armenianness - especially when observed in the triangular links between Karabakh/Genocide/Turkey-Armenia relations. . Hence, Karabakh, as a cause and an abstract conception, is an important factor which helped to organize and mobilize people, not only after the independence period, but also starting from the 1980s, and in some cases earlier when various initiatives were taken by the NKAO to address its desire to have more autonomy and even to (re)unite with Armenia. Even though some of the demands of the 2013 protests were not directly addressing nationalist politics, and instead focused on the corruption in the system and the fraudulent electoral process, much like in 1988, the impetus of change came from Raffi Hovannisian's desire to make changes in the nationalist politics of the state - especially around the recognition Karabakh, which all previous and the current government continue to deny, and the recognition of the Armenian Genocide as an important condition in establishing relations with Turkey for Armenia and Armenians.

Karabakh played a crucial role in four respects: 1) in the mobilization of people, 2) in the formation of the various movements in Armenia such as the Karabakh Committee and later the ANM, 3) in the consolidation of Armenian identity around a universal and powerful cause for the nation, and 4) stemming from the latter point, the perception of a united nation that can put aside its differences to achieve change. Therefore Karabakh shaped the strong collective memory of unity and harmony that ruled the Freedom Square in 1988, and which today Armenians (and Armenian movements) appear to be endlessly in search for in their gatherings and protests. Karabakhisation of politics in Armenia has taken place as such to influence the spirit of unity gathered in one place for freedom. The chapter argues that there is therefore a powerful feeling of nostalgia for the 1988 days in Armenia, in a way that the discourse of Armenianness is constructed

via the memory of the Armenian Genocide that also dominated the discourse of the 1988 nationalist movement, especially after Sumgait, Baku and other pogroms against Armenians in Azerbaijan. It was Armenianness reinforced against the ‘Turkic’ enemy that was ‘defeated’ in the Karabakh war, giving weight to the victor’s nationalism psychology.¹⁴⁴ In this sense, the triangular relationship between Karabakh/Genocide/Turkey-Armenia relations comes through within the discourse around ‘Karabakh’ as an abstract concept and symbol of change in Armenian politics, looking at the presidential policies and decisions. As such the ‘Karabakh’ factor shapes the discourse of Armenianness through this triangular relationship starting from 1988 until 2013, meaning that the Karabakh effect does not disappear after independence and the end of the war through ceasefire with Azerbaijan. On the contrary, Karabakh continues to shape the national identity discourse in Armenia through the nostalgic effect it exerts in the later movements for change, particularly the one in 2013 as examined in this chapter. The chapter sheds light not only on the aspects of ‘unity’ and ‘brotherhood’ that the Karabakh effect brought to Armenian politics, but also the deeper cleavages among and within the diaspora and local Armenian politicians and activists.

The increasing grassroots protests or ‘civic initiatives’ since 2010 that have more focused aims in particular locations are proving to be more successful, though on a much smaller scales

¹⁴⁴ The ‘Turks’ here refers the Azerbaijanis and the Turks, who in the Armenian national psyche, especially when the war erupted between them and Azerbaijan, are the same. Azerbaijanis were referred to by Armenians as Turks, particularly after the Sumgait 1988 pogroms committed by the Azerbaijanis against the Armenians of that town. This tragedy and the Baku 1990 pogroms as well reminded the Armenians of the traumatic events of the Armenian Genocide in 1915 committed by the Ottoman Turkish government.

than 1988.¹⁴⁵ It is time to look for the movements beyond these large gatherings into the smaller more specific movements that attempt to achieve relatively smaller changes. The Armenian (opposition) media has been covering various success stories of smaller youth initiated movements that are bringing together not only local Armenians in small villages or towns, but also Armenians from larger cities including the capital and even Armenians from the diaspora. The most recent and ‘successful’ protests in achieving the narrow aim of not accepting the increase of electricity prices was the ‘electricyerevan’ and ‘No to Plunder’ protest that began on June 22, 2015, though the outcome of the movement is yet to be seen. Perhaps this is the future of the ‘colour’ revolution and spirit in Armenia, a revolution organized by the youth?

The nationalist discourse is based on the importance of Karabakh for Armenia in the state-building process of the country. It deeply marked the post-Soviet phase, the victory for the Armenian ‘brothers’ in Karabakh and an important nationalist language in politics. Perhaps Karabakh as an abstract concept symbolized the transformation of victimhood – a strong emotional and psychological feeling in the post-Genocide era, to survivors and even fighters due to the accomplishments brought by the Karabakh movement and especially after winning the war against Azerbaijan in Karabakh (a point also made by Marutyan 1999). Perhaps to some of the diaspora, the closely tied issues of victimhood, Genocide, and Turkish-Armenian relations remain an important obstacle in thinking or imagining an Armenia that lives in peace with its two Turkic neighbours without the past weighing strongly on the generations. If the diaspora’s identity is tightly linked to the memory of the Armenian Genocide, and if the diaspora continues to view

¹⁴⁵ Examples of such social movements that have made changes include the Teghut environmental movement in Armenia. For more such examples, see the recent report by Armine Ishkanian, Gyulkhandanyan E., Manusyan S., and Manusyan A. (2013) “Civil Society, Development, and Environmental Activism in Armenia” (Yerevan: City Print House).

Armenia and mostly Karabakh in ideal terms, then how can the diaspora-homeland relations be viewed? What would be the basis of this relationship? Chapter four turns to these questions through the perspective of the local Armenians including repatriated Armenians. Before we tackle those questions, let us first turn to Chapter Three to address the place of women in Armenian politics - continuing the discussion of the impact of Karabakh and the memory of Genocide in the context of gendered inquiries.

Chapter Three. Motherhood as Armenianness: Expressions of Femininity in the Making of Armenian National Identity

Introduction

In her documentary film entitled “Grandma’s Tattoos,” Suzanne Khardalian (2011) tackles the forgotten history of the women who survived the Armenian Genocide of 1915 after being raped, abducted, and sometimes forced into slavery in Turkey; the tattoos were marked on their faces and hands by their kidnappers.¹⁴⁶ Suzanne’s grandmother had always been distant and unaffectionate towards her husband and her children. As her family members mourn her loss, they remember her as a cold person, especially towards her husband; she did not like physical contact with him. She spent hours gazing out the window, lost in her memories, pain, and parts of her life no one in her family knew about. Why did she have tattoos on her hands and face? Had she had to leave her children behind before being ‘rescued’ by the Armenian organizations to be reintegrated into the Armenian community? Had she been tortured by her abductor? Something had changed her forever; something that not even her children or husband could help her overcome with time. This is not just a story about pain and suffering, but perhaps more importantly about the burden of remembering that women had to carry after enduring so much, all by being expected to reproduce and give life to ‘continue’ the Armenian nation. This story of the documentary is significant in this

¹⁴⁶ The tattoos were generally marked on the face, neck, chest and/or hands of the women who were abducted, and they typically designate that women and girls were forced into marriage or sex slavery and became ‘owned’ by their husbands. The tattoos on the women shown in the documentary by Suzanne Khardalian are in the form of dots and ‘x’. Similarly, the photos of abducted and enslaved women on the Armenian Genocide Museum website also show the same symbols (see the link http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/online_exhibition_2.php). Some scholars state that tattoos were used to identify the ‘owner(s)’ of enslaved women/girls, and additional tattoos were placed if the ‘owner(s)’ changed (Sanasarian, 1989, 453). Eliz Sanasarian (1989), who wrote about women and the Armenian genocide as early as in the late 1980s, also states that these tattoos were not necessarily performed just by men, but the wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters of the abductors also at times took that role. It is important to consider that women can be both victims and perpetrators or collaborators in committing violence against women, although this is not the focus of this chapter.

context because it helps to unravel the construction of Armenian femininity and Armenian women's perception of their national identity, which highlights the particularity of the Armenian women's habitus(es). The dominant discursive construction of Armenian motherhood as femininity is particularly worthy of examination because it is tied to the history of the Genocide and the struggle for Karabakh. This is the story of many Armenian women, who had endured the same fate during the events of 1915, but whose stories have not been told in the history books written about the Armenian Genocide, or genocide in general.¹⁴⁷

History books are written by men, Suzanne Khardalian highlights in her documentary film. Indeed, these realities experienced by women were overshadowed by narratives and discourses of national suffering and victimhood (See Chapter Five; and also see Dadrian 2003). Such a perspective is clearly expressed, for example, by Vahagn S. Dadrian: "It is evident that in genocide

¹⁴⁷ Some of the literature on the Armenian Genocide generally does not present a sustained analysis of the gendered violence committed against women and girls, and usually refers to this type of violence simply as a concomitant of the totality of violence of genocide. According to Katharine Derderian (2005), during and after the genocide the Armenian community recognized the particularity of the experiences of Armenian women (for example, forced marriages or sex slavery). She lists Zabel Essayan's work in 1922 entitled "Chronique: Le rôle de la femme arménienne pendant la guerre" and Arshag Tchobanian's "La Femme arménienne: Conference faite à Paris le 18 janvier 1917" (Paris: Librairie Bernard Grasset 1918) as works that attempted to examine the genocide through the women's distinctive experiences. In the following decades, works have generally focused more on depicting the genocide as a national pain, without addressing the gendered aspects of violence. The suffering of the genocide is primarily a national one and the violence towards women is represented as part of it – see for example the work of Dadrian 2003[1995] and Hovannisian 2007. The painful memory of the genocide, the suffering of the Armenian nation, and the hatred towards the Turks, the perpetrators of the Genocide, were to become the main elements upon which the Armenian national and collective ideology was reconstructed, as the Armenians were attempting to recover from the traumatic events that they had suffered and witnessed and as they were trying to adapt to their new environments as refugees, particularly in the Middle East (see Chapter Four on this). More recent writings on the Armenian Genocide have begun highlighting the particular aspect of violence towards women, and the impact this has had on the construction of national identity, and the traumatic reintegration of women back into the Armenian communities after living in slavery to Turkish, Arab, or Kurdish men who had either saved them, raped them or simply found them on the roads. As Armenian relief organizations, in tandem with the European organizations, rescued these women, many of them were already married to the Turkish, Kurdish, or Arab men who had saved them or abducted them, and even had children from them. In many cases, the cost of reintegration into the Armenian community was very high, requiring women to leave behind their children, "who had 'executioners' blood in their veins" as Tashjian (2009, 69) puts it (see Derderian 2005; Bjorlund 2009; Shemmassian 2006; Sanasarian 1989 for a historical examination of gender-specific violence committed against Armenians in the Genocide of 1915; see Miller and Touryan Miller 1993, for oral history interviews revealing the experiences and psychological traumas survivors faced). The Armenian Genocide Museum in Yerevan also posts the stories and pictures of kidnapped Armenian women during the Genocide. For more information see the link: http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/online_exhibition_2.php. Armenian diaspora media has also taken on to discuss this topic and increasingly begun covering gender related issues in Armenia (domestic violence has particularly received strong coverage in the past five years or so, for example see the *Armenian Weekly* and *Asbarez* newspaper).

victim differences, whether among members of a single victim group or among several victim groups, are of little significance. The differences collapse into an abyss of irrelevance as they are leveled by the mechanism and claws of a mammoth engine of destruction” (1995, 400-401, quoted in Derderian, 2005, ft 25). Of course, we know today that the forgotten history of half of this nation, the women, has more implications in Armenian national history than many have acknowledged. As Joane Nagel highlights in a more general historical context,

It turns out that the idea of a nation and the history of nationalism are intertwined with the idea of manhood and the history of manliness...nationalist scripts are written primarily by men, for men, and about men. In these national dramas, women are relegated to mainly supporting roles – as mothers of the nation, as vessels for reproducing the nation, as agents for inculcating national culture into new members, and as national housekeepers responsible for maintaining home and hearth for the nation’s men who are out and about on important official business – fighting wars, defending homelands, representing the nation abroad, *manning* the apparatus of the state. Thus the real actors in nationalist productions are men defending their freedom, their honor, their homeland, and their women. (2003, 159; emphasis in original)

Nagel’s understanding applies to our case study of Armenian women not only in the context of genocide memory and literature, but also more contemporarily, in the case of the Armenia-Azerbaijan war, for example, which was exemplified as the soldier-man, or the manly man, fighting for the nation and saving Armenian Karabakh against Azerbaijan (Shahnazarian 2011). The heroes were the men fighting in an armed struggle, on the front line, putting their lives at risk for the nation. The women fighters on the front line were also considered heroic, but only by extension, and their role as heroines was attributed to assisting, helping, or caring for the fighting men and their children, and were not heroines in their own right (Shahnazarian 2010, see ft 30; 2011, 114-133). The women helped care for the wounded, fed the fighters, schooled the children, and were courageous pillars that stayed in the villages to encourage men to fight to ‘save’ their women (Narine Aghabalyan, Author’s Interview, 2011).

In light of the issues raised by a fuller consideration of gender, the purpose of this chapter is to explain the place of women in the nation building process of Armenia from 1988 until 2013. The chapter examines why in the aftermath of the struggle of the nationalist movement in 1988 in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh (hereafter Karabakh), the war in Karabakh and the difficult post-independence years, the role of women shifted from protestors, soldiers, and martyrs, to home-carers, housewives, and mothers. The chapter includes three main sections. First, the legacies of the Soviet policies on the ‘woman question’ are explored to highlight the implications of the socialist state on the newly independent transitioning society of Armenia. Second, the chapter examines the contribution of feminist theory to the study of nationalism and nation building, touching upon postcolonial theory to further understand the post-Soviet complexities. The case of Armenia is positioned within this literature highlighting the complexities of the Armenian Women’s habitus(es). The third section demonstrates that Armenian women understand their role primarily as caregivers in the family and the custodians of hearth and home, as signified by motherhood.

Motherhood is a strong concept in Armenian women’s (self-)identification with their nation. Based on my methodology in analyzing the interviews, I not only apply discourse analysis to reveal the dominant narratives around the construction of Armenian femininity in the Armenian national habitus(es), but I also attempt to capture the self-perception of Armenian women of their roles as women in the national habitus(es). The latter method of analysis of interviews provides an important bridge to understand Bourdieu’s conception of the generative capacity of actors, meaning the creative yet unconscious capacity of actors to continuously develop a ‘feel for the game’ within the field. Therefore, the “purpose of the interviews was to elicit *interpretive repertoires*,” that particularly deal with the gender roles in society (Charlebois 2010, 44).

Armenian women believe that the concept of motherhood is constructed to be a unique Armenian trait that distinguishes Armenian women from the *odarner* (foreigners)¹⁴⁸ or other non-Armenian women. This chapter shows that the self-expression of women highlights the authenticity of Armenian constructions of femininity as motherhood.¹⁴⁹ In particular, I argue that motherhood is embedded in the national and ethnic self-identification of women in Armenia, and even though the construction of motherhood is historically present in the national discourse of various nations, what makes it different in the case of Armenia is that the concept of motherhood is filtered through a distinct history of national struggle and genocide and upheld by Armenian women through that perception. This history is identified as the struggle to maintain Armenianness over centuries of attempts of (forced) assimilation, territorial loss, the Genocide of 1915, Sovietization, and the war with Azerbaijan; this particular history has been the burden of women and reflects itself within

¹⁴⁸ The term *odar* is used mostly by diaspora Armenians to refer non-Armenians in their communities. This term is also used to describe those Armenians who have integrated and adopted ‘local’ characters and values, meaning they have lost their Armenianness, or have distanced themselves from Armenian communities in the host countries. Therefore, for diasporan Armenians living in a host country, the *odar* represents the ‘other’, outside their imagined Armenian boundaries. For some Armenian women in Armenia, the ‘other’ is represented either through the image of the Muslim women living in their ‘traditional’ Islamic culture, or through the image of the Russian women, or even the Western women, who are considered more ‘open-minded’, ‘emancipated’, and ‘non-traditional’ women. These stereotypes shape the way some of the women I interviewed spoke about the ‘other’. See ft 19 in this chapter for the perspective offered during my interview with Svetlana Poghossyan, an anthropologist whose works focus on the gender culture and representations of femininity in Armenian society, who explained to me about the stereotyping of the ‘other’ Russian women in Armenian society for example.

¹⁴⁹ I use the term femininity in this chapter and dissertation in general as opposed to feminism to discuss Armenian women’s self-perception of their role for two main reasons. First the literature on gendered subjective identities and the perception of women’s role in the national identity is often referred to as feminine constructions or constructions of femininity, which suggests certain aspects and characteristics that become part of the construction of woman and the role of the woman in society and within her family. Femininity is therefore tied to the role of the woman, perhaps in performatively reproducing hegemonic gender roles within a particular field through our habitus (see Butler 1990, on performativity and Bourdieu 1977, on habitus). As Holmes and Marra argue, “the concept of ‘femininity’ undoubtedly comprises a central aspect of gender performance and it cannot be ignored.” (2010, 3) The second reason is the conceptual exercise of distinguishing feminism as a movement and a struggle that women or feminists undertake to achieve equality between men and women in society for example. My focus on femininity is also explained by the fact that there was a clear distancing women expressed during the interviews from any identification of their opinions as feminist. They verbally rejected that view, by emphatically stating that they are not feminists. As such feminism is tabooed in Armenia since it associated with the act of women calling and demanding emancipation and freedom, something that is considered outside the boundaries of morality and social decency for women.

feminine expressions of Armenianness.¹⁵⁰ As such, the construction of Armenian femininity as motherhood reflects the deep historical development of Armenian feminine national identity, rendering motherhood as a symbolic feature of national (self-)identity within the nationalist project. The constructed ideal image of the Armenian woman - part of the hegemonic construction of femininity, much admired and respected, is one of a sacrificing, caring, and nurturing Armenian mother for her family and her nation. As such, the “hegemonic femininity is a discursively constructed subjectivity which involves privileging the role of mother above all other.” (Charlebois 2010, 55) Similarly, an image of men as fighters and soldiers - hegemonic masculinity - is also constructed in Armenia and upheld by most men, particularly amid the militarization of Armenian national discourse due to the fragile ceasefire with Azerbaijan over the Armenian de facto state of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The dominant discourse on gender and sexuality in the post-Soviet context therefore increasingly reinforced, and continues to do so, a heterosexual patriarchal family structure. As such the LGBTQ in Armenia or women who do not fit the ‘norm’ (single mothers, or mothers who have children out of wedlock) are not accepted within the national habitus. There are of course social spaces within which the LGBTQ, for example, are able to create their own norms, but these spaces are not safe and continue to be attacked (whether they are online or in physical organizations). One organization that has continuously and openly stood for the LGBTQ and for a more inclusive normative discourse on gender and sexuality has been the Women’s Resource Centre in Armenia,

¹⁵⁰ The Genocide of 1915 has been covered by various Armenian women writers, such as Zabel Yessayan who wrote *The Agony of a People* (1922) and *Le rôle De La Femme arménienne pendant la guerre* (1922), some of her most famous works. These works portray the predicament of the Armenian survivors of the Genocide. Zabel Yessayan herself went to Cilicia in 1920, along with her two children, to provide assistance to the orphanages who had received a number of Armenian children whose family members had been massacred in the Genocide (Rowe, 2003, 197). Another famous Armenian woman who helped Genocide survivors cope is Diana Apkar, an Iranian-Armenian who became the Armenian ambassador to Japan during the first Armenian Republic (1918-1921). She played an important role in helping the survivors cope with their new lives in Japan. She wrote From the Book of One Thousand Tales whose 16 stories depict the events and circumstances of her time.

whose director, Lara Aharonian, a repatriated Armenian from Lebanon (and Canada) who co-founded the centre. Aharonian actively fights for the rights of women and to raise awareness related to issues of sexuality, violence against women, and LGBTQ as well. Such counter-discourses to the dominant perspectives therefore exist in Armenia (and the Caucasus), but the focus of this chapter is on the dominant discourse. The interviewees provided not only perspectives that always ‘conform’ to the dominant narrative, but also more critical perspectives were expressed against this narrative as the third section will highlight.

National Identity Construction and the ‘Woman Question’ in the Soviet Union

In order to understand the position of women in Armenia and to explain the shift in their image and role(s) in the nation, it is relevant to consider the legacies of the Soviet policies and the way the Soviet state handled the ‘woman question’, because of the continuing influence that these policies have on gender relations and perceptions in the post-Soviet states and peoples’ mentalities more generally. More importantly, it is crucial to understand the way the Soviet policies infiltrated societies in both public and private spheres, as this becomes significant in understanding the way Armenians responded to the imposed values on families, for example, and the way they strongly held on to the Armenian ‘ideals’.¹⁵¹ The revolutionary leaders who became the founders of the Soviet state in the 1917 October revolution were proclaiming an important change in the societal

¹⁵¹ Although the Soviets emphasized nativization policies or *korenizatsiia* in the early years of their rule, things changed radically in the aftermath of the early 1930s. Part of this shift was to impose Russian language as the lingua franca of the Soviet Union. However, with the end of the Stalinist years, the politics shifted once again, perhaps due to the strategies of the time to mark a turn away from Stalinist terror, or perhaps due to other calculations. In any case, Armenian nationalism marked its strongest expression in 1965, when Armenians took to the streets in Yerevan to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the 1915 massacres. They demanded the return of the (Western) Armenian lands with the help and assistance of the Russians. For more information on these protests that led to the Soviet government to approve the construction of the Genocide memorial in Armenia, in addition to other monuments, see the work of Ronald Suny, 1993, *Looking Toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History*, particularly chapter 11, and the work of Razmik Panossian (2006), particularly chapter 7. For a more general history on the Soviet Armenian stronghold to defend its national values, language, and history, see the work of Matossian 1962, chapter 8; Geukjian 2012.

structure of equality. In fact they called for a radical transformation in all economic and socio-political institutional structures to combat inequality and create a new social egalitarian order that addressed sexual and economic inequality (Lapidus 1978, 2). These leaders believed that these radical transformations would allow women to enter the political, social, and economic spheres in the Soviet Union, releasing them from what were deemed to be backward and insignificant household duties. This would be a good way for women to abandon their traditional roles, which was part of the Soviet plan to push societies into progress and modernization. As Lapidus argues, this would mean much more than a simple shift in the division of labour, transforming the whole structure of families in these now Soviet societies. She posits that

In a socialist society, the burden of the housework and child care would shift from the individual household to the social collective. Communal living arrangements would form the nucleus of the future socialist society....while children would be raised from an early age in public institutions that would foster new collectivist values and behaviour. (1978, 55)

It was, however, only in the late 1920s and the 1930s that the Soviet Union began the formal legal changes to establish the socialist society that would have significant impact on the gender (inter)relationships. Some of the legislation that was incorporated included civil marriage, abortion services, easing of divorce conditions, maternity pay including the right for extended maternity leave with job security. Women's pay was also to become equal pay for equal work, which altered the relationship between men and women in the socialist society.¹⁵² But these

¹⁵² Women were brought out of the isolation of the household into the public arena. Even though women had more independence and were able to work, the burden of childcare fell on them in the family. So for example, the young wife would be able to work outside the household to earn a wage, and this would be possible only if her mother (the grandmother of the child) or her mother-in-law would be able to look after the child at home. In some societies in the Soviet Union, it was even the great-grandmother who took care of the children while her daughter and grand-daughter worked outside. This is the irony of the Soviet state vision, which was supposedly trying to change the structure of the traditional family, yet in fact, it heavily relied and depended upon it for its functioning as this example shows. See the work of Tohidi (2000).

policies, as practice was quick to prove, were unable to guarantee that women would enjoy equality in gender relations in the private and public spheres. The problem of the double duty rapidly surfaced, showing that these policies were not able to really put women in an equal relation to men in social production, particularly because women remained responsible for household chores and much childcare, in addition to her work outside the home.

In the attempt to establish equal women's rights, the Soviet government was also trying to distinguish itself, or portray its superiority (as compared to the West), through these egalitarian principles. The framing of these policies was clearly directed as "critiques and responses to the West" in the words of Gal and Kilgman (2000, 9). In addition, as Maya Eichler shows, the discourse on nation and gender in the Soviet Union served to legitimize the communist ideological system as "a superior mode of social organization" (2008, 49). Although the policies of the Soviet state related to women's rights did result in quick steps towards equal rights and voting rights, for example, it did not lead to the election or appointment of women in the higher state bodies, such as the Central Committee of the Communist party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). One can also conclude that the desire of the Soviet state to create equality between women and men was not so much based on building an egalitarian society, as much as it was to replace the paternal authority of the household with state authority over all 'equal' members of society. In short, it was mainly an attempt to break the traditional family structure in most of the republics. As Katherine Verdery argues, the socialist state relied mostly on paternalist ideology to define the relationship of the state with its subjects, thereby positing a form of nationalism in the state discourse of the Soviet nation called the "socialist nation". This socialist nation, in Verdery's words, "emphasized a quasi-familial dependency she refers to as "socialist paternalism". Instead of political rights or ethnocultural similarity, it [the socialist state] posited a moral tie linking subjects with the state through their

rights to a share in the redistributed social product” (1996, 63). The attempt to construct the Soviet state as the paternal authority over all others meant that both men and women were seemingly equally under the authority of a larger power embedded in the state, thus equalizing men and women in their subordination to state socialism.

The consequences of these policies and state ideological constructions were many. First, instead of creating an egalitarian system in the social and economic spheres, the policies were not so effective in practice, especially not in the private sphere. Women’s image remained as the mothers and the caretakers, and men’s role was the main breadwinner of the household. In fact, the glorification of motherhood was emphasized during the thirties with the new legislation on families and planning.¹⁵³ But during World War II (WWII), the Soviet state made more efforts to highlight motherhood as the need for manpower increased (Matossian 1962, 182-183): this was not limited to that time period, and thereafter the discourse on motherhood went hand-in-hand with the working socialist woman image. As Maya Eichler posits, Soviet “women, in the role of biological and cultural reproducers were considered important allies in the building of communism” (2008, 50; and also see Issoupova 2000, 3-4). Indeed, as Issoupova (2012) argues, the Soviets attempted to construct a definition of motherhood by politicizing it to transform it into a service to the state. Through this redefinition of motherhood as an honourable service of women and mothers to the Soviet state, the state was not only able to put women under its control and mobilize them, but it also put under state control the private sphere, and especially the family (See Fuqua 1996; Verdery

¹⁵³ According to Matossian, the Soviet Union enacted family legislation in June 1936: abortions were no longer legal (except under certain medical conditions when the pregnancy presents dangers to mother’s health for example). In addition, on the social level, the Soviets provided generous donations to mothers of seven children or more. Later, the title of “heroine mother” was attributed to such women. Another legislative amendment was made to divorce laws, and one of the changes was the introduction of a fee charge to couples asking for divorce (1962, 182). This also reaffirms Issoupova’s point on how the Soviet state considered motherhood as a duty to the state, which makes it a rewardable act (2012).

1996). By extension, this also contributed to the building of the image of men in the Soviet Union as workers and soldiers, particularly the younger generation. Their roles were to build communism as they constituted the proletariat class, and to defend the Soviet state as the soldiers.

Although these changes were taking place at a rapid rate in the Caucasus region, the case of Armenia reveals that women were increasingly entering the labour force, and this change occurred most rapidly in major towns such as Yerevan.¹⁵⁴ As Yerevan developed into an urban centre in Armenia, along with other major cities such as Leninagan (Gyumri today), life began changing quickly, and the traditional structure of families and the division of labour within the family underwent transformations, especially because of the imposed collectivization (the formation of *Kolkhozes*), of agriculture in the villages beginning in 1929 (Matossian 1962, 62-73; Lapidus 1978, 110-119). This caused many to move to the cities. As a consequence, over the years, in the face of increased Sovietization and modernization in the Armenian society, women (and men) accepted these changes selectively. Women were now able to become active members of the labour force, but they wanted to keep their roles as mothers and caretakers (Stites 1978; Lapidus 1978; Matossian 1962). Armenian family values and structures survived despite Soviet interference and pressure to change it, as a result of Armenians' concerted efforts. This is part of the general response of Armenians against attempts to forcibly assimilate and change their values and

¹⁵⁴ For the rapid changes the republic was undergoing, particularly for women and the family, see the work of Matossian 1962, particularly chapter second entitled "The New Society".

traditional life in the Soviet Union, although some change did inevitably occur (Matossian 1962; also see Suny 1993 on the changes in Armenia under the Soviets).¹⁵⁵

In 1919, the Women's Section or Department – the *zhenskii otdel* or *zhenotdel* – of the Central Committee Secretariat of the Communist Party was established.¹⁵⁶ In the Caucasus and Central Asian regions of the Soviet Union, the party wanted to extend its influence throughout the population, to accelerate the process of industrialization and modernization. The *zhenotdel* or the *zhenskii otdel* in the ‘East’ was responsible for “spreading the message of the Party to the unorganized women in factories and villages throughout the Soviet Union” (Matossian 1962, 65-67). The *zhenotdel* was also given the task of creating and managing communal institutions that would have the space for childcare in order to reduce household care and perhaps liberate women from it (Lapidus 1978, 65-66). For the Soviets, the *zhenotdel* promoted the liberation and emancipation of women, though it did not do this under a feminist movement umbrella, but under the heading of the Communist Party itself. Although the Soviet Union changed various family codes to give women more rights,¹⁵⁷ it became quickly evident that the main aim of the Soviet

¹⁵⁵ See Mary K. Matossian, 1962., The Impact of Soviet Policies in Armenia for a detailed review on the traditional family and the village life, and the resistance of the Armenians from the upper communist echelons such as the roles that the First Secretary of the Communist Part of Armenia – such as Aghasi Khanchian – played and others. In their communist positions, under the covers of Soviet appointed leaders, many of these leaders in high position showed instances of Armenianess – sometimes risking their careers for it. The discussion is also extended to the dissident activities in Armenia in the work. Also see Gail Lapidus’s Women in Soviet Society: Equality, Development and Social Change (1978).

¹⁵⁶ For a review of the beginnings of Zhenotdel and the leadership in Russia, see Richard Stites (1978). It was in the time of the leadership of Aleksandra Kollontai (1920-1922) that the ideology and task of the liberation of the women of the ‘East’ took place. According to Stites, the work of the zhenotdel women faced great difficulty among the ‘eastern’ women, as he writes. He states that the main reason for this is that there was much stronger resistance to their work in those regions (1978, 329-340). Another scholar who wrote on the history of zhenotdel in the Russian context, Michelle Fuqua, explains that in its early creations, some Bolsheviks were skeptical of the establishment of a separate organization for women. But with Lenin’s support, Kollontai, Armand, and Samoilova convinced them of the need for such an organization for women, “whom the Bolsheviks regarded as the most backwards as well as the most oppressed sector of the working class.” (Fuqua, 1996, 11) Fuqua also explains that although the party wanted to influence and shape public opinion and reorganize the domestic and private sphere by altering the conceptions of traditional family structures, the zhenotdel organizations were sometimes forced to change the way they worked, even to change their aims in their activities to transform the private sphere. This is an interesting addition to the resistance of many to the imposed changes in mentality, lifestyle, and women’s own choice to be in the kitchen, for example.

¹⁵⁷ Legal marriage age increased, women living with men were recognized as the wives, and unmarried mothers and their children were protected by Soviet legislation, and so on (Matossian 1962, 64-66).

state was less focused on the liberation of women than on attempting to create “new reserves of skilled and politically conscious labor.” (Stites 1978, 341)

In Armenia, the Soviet state also attempted to break down traditionalism. The most traditional institution or structure in Armenian society was the family, and this became the target of the Soviet state. The *Kinbazhin*, a local branch of the *Zhenotdel*, had one main purpose and that was to “indoctrinate women with Communist principles, to enrol them in the party, to train them for government service, and to help them advance on the job” (Matossian 1962, 65). To implement this objective, the *Kinbazhin* sent its representatives (*delegatkii*) to visit homes and provide ‘scientific’ suggestions and guidance to women on child-rearing, hygiene, abandoning old traditions, craft skills, and helping to raise their educational level and bring them into public life and work (Ibid, 67). These practices were also completely contrary to the collective values of family life of Armenians.

But the efforts of *Zhenotdel* had a contradictory effect on the Caucasian and Central Asian societies. Instead of convincing women to give up their traditional roles and to change the traditional family structure, it had the effect of reinforcing traditional family and kinship norms in these societies. It seems society, and women more particularly, resisted those interventionist Soviet models of reconstructing the family – they often viewed them as attempts to destroy the traditional family structure.¹⁵⁸ In 1930, *Zhenotdel* was formally abolished and the “Woman question” was declared to have been solved. Soon after, the discourse around issues of women was no longer put

¹⁵⁸ Lapidus also notes the other adverse effect of the zhenotdel’s encouragement of divorce, mass public veiling, or even to challenge the traditional roles, especially discussing the Central Asian region. Although these policies might have had more liberating effects for urban women living in the European part of the Soviet Union, the case of Central Asia, and the Caucasus I might add, led to negative reactions from men (1978, 67). Richard Stites, whose study is one of the most informative and detailed on the development of feminism and politics during the early years of the Sovietization of Russia, also makes this point on the reaction of the societies of ‘East’ of the Soviet Union (1978, 339-341).

on the Communist Party table, and the themes considered previously as important such as equality and domestic labour were overtaken by the importance of production and output (Buckley 1989, 13). Following the death of Stalin, women's issues were brought back into state discourse. Khrushchev supported the creation of separate organizations dealing with issues related to women, to purportedly address their needs and interests. These organizations were called the *zhenskii sovety* (or *Zhensovety*) and they aimed at fighting the influence of religion in different parts of the Soviet Union.¹⁵⁹

In general, although the efforts of the state led to remarkable results in educational and professional quotas (see Buckley 1989, 1997), they were not able to relieve the burden of the double duty of paid and unpaid labour. Hence, women worked in factories and farms to increase state production, but also had to care for their homes and families. At the same time, women did not appear in leadership positions throughout the Soviet Union. In fact, this became much evident with the collapse of the Soviet Union, when women almost completely withdrew from the public sphere and politics. Their domain was restricted to the home and hearth (*ojakh*). Interestingly, even though women's involvement in the nationalist movements of the late 1980s was strong and evident and contributed to the success of these protests, their absence from the newly forming anti-communist governments was striking. Although some intellectual Armenian women are well known, such as Silva Kaputikian, the absence of women from the Karabakh Committee, for

¹⁵⁹Although *Zhensovety* was not successful in its initial aim at creating strong communist women leaders, it remained as a consciousness raising group for women, for more information on this issue, see the work by Gail Lapidus, *Women in Soviet Society* (1978, 63-72). According to Richard Stites, *zhenotdel*'s success lies in its consciousness raising of poor and backward women, and this was "proof enough that there was something more to female emancipation than winning the suffrage." The abolition of *zhenotdel*, however, led to the redefinition of politics are defined by men (1978, 345).

example, is noteworthy (see also Chapter Two). None of the leading political positions during the period of 1988-1991 was given to women.¹⁶⁰

Although Soviet attempts to interfere in the structure of the family and alter the traditional division of labour brought strong changes to the Armenian family, especially in the villages, the Soviets were not as successful in their mission to ‘modernize’ the family structure and division of labour inside the household. There was a clear contradiction in the Soviet approach: women were expected and encouraged to partake in the paid labour and in public life, but at the same time, Soviet paternalism continued to encourage the image of women as wives, mothers and household carers. Although these policies brought independence and high literacy rates among women, the double burden problem continued to have strong consequences on Armenian families. In this sense, the extended and close-knit family was yet again an important source of support for many women in Armenia – not only to help women in childcare during work hours, but also as a way to provide the necessary services and goods to replace the Soviet state (See Dudwick 1997, 236; and see Heyat 2000, 192-3, on the case of Azerbaijan).¹⁶¹ One could argue that the problem of the double

¹⁶⁰ To be clear, these men did a great deal in terms of mobilizing people, coming against the Soviet authorities, negotiating with the local Armenian Communist authorities, and so on. Some of the members, such as Levon Ter-Petrosyan, were imprisoned for his activities. However, the absence of women in the Karabakh committee is striking. In addition, the fact that there is not much attention paid in mentioning the important role women played in the early years particularly, during the Karabakh Movement in Armenia and during the war in Karabakh shows that the victory is associated with masculine characteristics, while the feminine aspect of nationalism is attributed a secondary role in achieving successes for the whole nation. The role of women is viewed through the ‘manned’ nation’s eyes. For example, one of my interviewees, Narine Aghabalyan who is the current Minister of Culture of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, explained that in Karabakh, which is considered to be the Soviet Union’s first dissident region in 1988 (de Waal, 2010, 109), it was in fact mostly women who had begun the protests and demands for justice and independence in Karabakh in the early stages (author’s interview, 2011, author’s translation). There are exceptions to this exclusion of women. For example, some of the leading women in the Karabakh movement in Stepanakert are remembered with high praises, such as Zhanna Galstyan. Another striking example is the Museum of the Fallen Soldiers’ depiction of the pictures of women who fought the war. On a general scale though, the discourse around the fighters and soldiers remains strongly masculine.

¹⁶¹ Farideh Heyat, an anthropologist working on women in Azerbaijan, argues that the Soviet state even “encouraged the cohesion and permanence of the family both as a social unit and as the source of emotional and practical support for the individual.” (2000, 192). Heyat (2000, 193), in addition to other scholars, also shows that the Communist Party took a hardline on adultery and divorce. For example, women could complain to the factory manager where their husbands worked in case they suspected of adultery or if their husbands were not spending much time with the family.

burden has not become ‘resolved’ for women in Armenia after independence as will be shown below. Finally – and strikingly in Armenia – these Soviet policies and views of women were combined with the ‘authentic’ traditional social values and roles of Armenian women as the guardians of the hearth and carers of the home (Dudwick 1997, 237), arguably ensuring that an ‘authentic’ Armenian national habitus was maintained even during the Soviet years, and that was importantly also focused on the place of gender and women’s identities and the boundaries of definitions around the construction of femininity (and masculinity as well).

Nation building and Nationalism through the Lens of Feminist Theories

In most post-Soviet cases, and similarly in most transitioning (postcolonial) states, the process of national identity formation takes the categories of “woman”, “family” or “home” as domains where the trajectories of national identity are determined, especially in the debates around tradition versus modernity, or tradition versus western forms of feminism. Issues related to women, such as reproductive rights, employment, participation in public life, manners, dress code, and so on, become extremely sensitive topics around which not only women’s place in society is determined, but the whole national identity is constructed, with women symbolizing a country’s honour and pride.

The literature on post-1989 has emphasized the economic processes of the shift to the market economy and rapid privatization, on the transition of democratization, state formation and (re)structuring, and the birth of a civil society. Within the transition literature, there has also been

an increasing focus on the place of women and the problems they face.¹⁶² Scholars conducting such studies have found that although women have been more excluded from the public space and positions in the public arena in the aftermath of independence in post-Soviet countries, women have chosen to be more active in the non-governmental sector which men have not dominated (on Armenia, see Ishkanian 2004; on Azerbaijan, see Tohidi 2004), creating a feminized space in the public sphere, excluded from the masculine public domain of politics. This chapter takes the latter approach in the attempt to understand not only the constructions of the national habitus in Armenia regarding women, but more so to reveal the self-identity of women and how they relate to their ethnic and national identities through their perceptions of motherhood as a unique Armenian trait. This dual approach on analyzing my data is well explained in my methodology section in the Introduction.

According to some scholars, the post-communist period is marked by a traditionalization of the role of women, whereby the woman is pushed back into the private sphere, with an important role in the social sector. This has been shown, for example, to be the case in much of Eastern Europe (see the edited volume by Kuehnast and Nechemias 2004). Several studies have also pointed out that post-Soviet and more generally post-socialist nation-states share stronger similarities in the nature of the type of gender regimes they have established in the post-independence period. It seems that most of the post-Soviet states have adopted a more traditional outlook on issues of gender and women's role in the nation. There are various terms that are used

¹⁶² For studies of how transition in political and economic spheres affects women and discourses of femininity, see the work of Susan Gal and Gail Kligman (2000); the edited volume on Central Asia and the Caucasus regions by Feride Acar and Ayse Gunes-Ayata (2000); the edited volume by Mary Buckley (1997) which studies the transitional process in Russia and a few other post-Soviet states; the edited volume by Pine and Bridger (1998) that deals not only with transition in the economic and political dimensions but also cultural and border studies perspectives in various central and eastern European countries; Verdery (1996); and the edited volume by Kathleen Kuehnast and Carol Nechemias (2004); Gail Lapidus (2000); Armine Ishkanian (2003); Stephanie Platz (2000).

by different authors to characterize this phenomenon, such as ‘re-traditionalization’,¹⁶³ the ‘revival of masculinity’,¹⁶⁴ and ‘neofamilialism’.¹⁶⁵ Tatiana Zhurzhenko argues that the return to the ideology of the traditional family has been the main strategy of the Ukrainian state to counter the Soviet paternalist communist legacy. One of the ways this happened in Ukraine was through the promotion of less state interference in matters related to family. This return to neofamilialism is not unique to Ukraine. In fact, most of the post-Soviet cases have used the return to traditions in matters of family to set values that are antithetical to the Soviet past. However, this has not occurred without harsh consequences on women, since as families have begun to rely less on state support, the burden of transition has put much pressure on the household, and of course as a result, on women (Zhurzhenko 2004; for the case of Armenia see Dudwick 1997; for the case of the Balkan region for example, see Ugresić 1998; for examples from the post-communist world see Drakulić 1993), be they the mothers, sisters, daughters, or even grandmothers.

In Armenia, there is a stronghold of the traditional view over Western views of modernity and feminism. However, the strong discourse of returning to traditional family values had already begun in the form of resistance to Soviet policies, to a certain extent, but has become accentuated in the independence period, particularly with the conflict in Karabakh that also revived the memory of the Genocide.¹⁶⁶ As Soviet policies infiltrated societies in both public and private spheres, Armenians responded to the imposed values on families, for example, by strongly holding on to

¹⁶³ For example see Katherine Verdery, *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next?* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), pg. 80-81.

¹⁶⁴ See the works of Mira Brody and Anna Giza-Poleszczuk, (2000), “Changing Images of Identity in Poland: From the Self-Sacrificing to the Self-Investing Woman?” in *Reproducing Gender: Politics, Publics, and Everyday Life after Socialism*, ed. by Susan Gal and Gail Kligman.

¹⁶⁵ This term was used by Tatiana Zhurzhenko, “Strong Women, Weak State: Family Politics and Nation Building in Post-Soviet Ukraine,” in *Post-Soviet Women Encountering Transition*.

¹⁶⁶ This revival was did not occur as a result of the Karabakh war, but was already becoming part of the nationalist discourse among the protesters, for example, after the 1988 Sumgait pogroms against Armenians and later the Baku 1990 pogroms, that resulted in a large number of refugees seeking security in Karabakh and Armenia (de Waal, 2003).

Armenian ‘ideals’ and identity (see for e.g., Geukjian 2012; Matossian 1962; Panossian 2006; Suny 1993). During such heightened periods of crisis, nationalists tend to rely on discourses of the home and family to secure the sense of identity that may be threatened by the crisis itself (Moghadam 1994, 16). One of my interviewees, for example, stressed that the best way to encourage men to fight during the war was for women to stay in their hometowns or villages. This would mean that men would fight to protect the women and their villages (Narine Aghabalyan, Author’s interview, 2011).

Nationalist projects against colonial domination often need the presence and support of women to achieve transformative results. In the nationalist movements of the late 1980s, as in Armenia for instance, women were in most cases fighting beside men for their independence and desire to separate from the Soviet Union; in the aftermath of independence in these countries, however, it seems that women were mostly pushed back to their traditional domestic roles (Moghadam 1994; Vickers 2008). This is also formulated as the national role of women, or their duty for the nation, especially for vulnerable nations like Armenia, with a ‘problematic’ neighbourhood and a traumatic history of the partially internationally unrecognized Armenian Genocide of 1915. How can we view the role of women in the nation-building process in the post-Soviet, post-socialist context, more particularly? The mere involvement of women within political space traditionally occupied by men does not necessarily mean that women want to demand rights or struggle to overcome the traditional image of femininity.

The literature on nationalism generally shows that the process of nation-building involves various elements such as language, tradition, religion, and memories. However, in addition to these elements, the images of ‘women’, ‘family’, and ‘home’ are at the core of every national imagining and self-perception, proving the perception of authenticity and uniqueness of the culture and nation

itself that are relegated to the category of the traditional or the inner domain of nationalism (Chatterjee 1993), in opposition to the colonial influence (Abu-Lughod 1998).¹⁶⁷ In the case of the Caucasian and Central Asian societies, the space of authenticity has been maintained, to a certain extent, by rejecting the imposed values and norms on family and women from the Soviets, including through organizational bodies such as the *zhenotdel*. The post-Soviet era witnessed the possibility of bringing out these traditional values protected in the inner domain into the public sphere of Armenian society. Therefore, the woman question becomes almost synonymous with tradition, cultural authenticity, national honour, and image, and these, in turn, are interwoven within the discourse on women, family, and home. All these qualifiers indicate that women are relegated to the private sphere and, in Nagel's words above, the public sphere is 'manned' or masculinized. In fact, a similar process of traditionalization has taken place in the post-Soviet transitional societies, including Armenia, where the

category of "woman" [has] become a pivotal site where tradition and modernization are reconstructed in the name of women. Controversial issues, such as women's reproductive rights, women's employment, and even the manner in which women dress, become symbolic discourses about women's position in society and the nature of national or ethnic identity. (Kuehnast and Nechemias 2004, 3)

Scholars of feminist studies have questioned the nation building project and have shown that nation building is a gendered process, and indeed, state building, nationalism, and national identity formation and consolidation are all gendered processes (Pateman 1988; Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989; Chatterjee 1993; Moghadam 1994 and 2000; Abu-Laban 2008; Weber 2013). The literature on gender and nationalism shows how the perceptions of women within national projects

¹⁶⁷ This inner domain represented the authentic in some sense, the non-colonial, purely Eastern space, where the national image and traditionalism were maintained. Lila Abu-Lughod (1998)'s edited volume *Remaking Women* on feminism and modernity in the Middle Eastern context also captures the perception of cultural authenticity embedded in the post-colonial political notion of the "woman question", relegating all issues related to the nation and its cultural authenticity to the category of the traditional, in opposition to the colonial influence.

is expressed either through an ethnonationalist discourse whereby women are the biological (re)producers of the nation as mothers or through the view that women are the cultural transmitters or the ideological reproducers of the nation (to borrow Yuval-Davis and Anthias' (1989) term). Additionally, women are typically the transmitters of national culture and tradition to the younger generations, particularly in the role of mothers, but also as teachers, for example, which is perceived as a traditionally feminine job. Child rearing is thus not only a familial duty toward her children, but also a national duty and moral obligation of cultural education to the whole nation. In this sense, women are considered also as the ideological reproducers of the nation (Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989). This focus on women as symbols of nationhood makes women's duties confined to the private realm and the domestic sphere of action (Graney 2004, 48). Furthermore, women are the symbol of ethnic and national boundaries within a nation and mark the 'us' (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1989; Yuval-Davis 1997; Abu-Laban 1998; Nagel 2003; Cockburn 1998).

As a national symbol, identified in the language of 'motherland' (*mayrenik*) and 'motherhood' (*mayr lezou*) for example, women have been elevated to an important pedestal of admiration and respect through which the culture and ethnic authenticity are idealized. Women are thus often the image of the nation. It seems that by controlling the limitations, moral boundaries, and duties of women in a nation, men, embodied though the state, are better able to control the way the nation is oriented. Men are also idealized in the nation through the image of the soldiers, the defenders of hearth and home, and the protectors of women. They are those who sacrifice their lives for the sake of the nation, and it seems this gendered view of the nation has implications for both women and men. Gal and Kligman explain the gendered understanding of nation building pointing out that "for instance, feminist writings have explicated nationalism's family imagery that

usually casts the nation as female and the state as male, simultaneously eroticizing the relation between men and the nation. It valorizes motherhood, making women the spiritual representatives of the nation” (*Ibid*, 26).¹⁶⁸ In this sense, women also embody the honour of the nation, and thus become one of the first victims of war and conflicts, as raping and violating women is considered to be dishonourable towards the enemy.¹⁶⁹

These explanations on the links between gender and nation-building may lead to a perception of women as passive symbols. However, the self-perception and role of women as agents in the construction and reproduction of the nation are also significant and should be recognized in the study of women and nationalism. Bourdieu’s conception of habitus is therefore important to understand not only national habitus but also the gendered aspect of this habitus. The social positionality of men and women is different within the national habituses because even though they acquire dispositions within the same field, they internalize the dominant role and expectations through social interactions that set the particular norms, traditions and roles. As such the loci of enunciation of women on the Armenian national habitus will be different from that of men’s, particularly in a patriarchal and heterosexual social order, as in Armenia. Thus, even in their role as the biological producers and the cultural or ideological transmitters, women are actively

¹⁶⁸ On a more general note, it also involves controlling women’s sexuality, which leads to the importance attributed to a woman’s marital status and child bearing capacity into certain categories on a social level. Controlling women’s sexuality entails therefore severe social norms to maintain strict boundaries within which the acceptable actions are defined and through which the ‘ideal woman’ is portrayed. The Armenian anthropologist Svetlana Poghossyan, for example, has extensively studied the way women are perceived in Armenian and Karabakhi societies depending on their marital status: a single mother is often looked upon scornfully. Actually, in many cases where the women behave in socially unacceptable ways, such as single mothers, single mothers who have boyfriends, a woman who dates a lot, so anything that breaks or deviates from the moral code is usually called living in a ‘Russian style’ or referred to as having ‘Russian mentality’ (Poghossyan, 2011, Author’s Interview). Even though I am not focusing on the ways in which women who live outside of the accepted social norms reflect on their own position and self-perception of Armenian women’s identity or role in the Armenian habitus, I am in no way suggesting that these social spaces and counter-narratives to the dominant discourse do not exist. They do and very rarely they have been investigated, and so I believe a more systematic understanding of the social spaces of counter-discourse should be developed.

¹⁶⁹ In addition, in a situation of war and conflict, rape is not just a crime against women but it is against the whole nation, against the “purity and honor of that group” (Gal and Kilgman 2000, 27). Also see Silva Mezneric (1994).

expressing their national identity. Women have agency, expressed in their active participation in nationalist and independence movements, or in the way they choose to identify themselves as members of a particular nation. In some instances, women are actively involved in nationalist movements (Jayawardena 1986; Vickers 2008). In other cases, women actively participate by adopting a particular form of national expression, such as a traditional or cultural dress code (Wilton 2012). In the case of Armenia, women were actively involved in the nationalist movements in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, and they also fought next to the men in the war and actively assisted the fighters in preparation, cooking, caring, and healing. Armenian women seem at first glance to be only playing a passive role in reinforcing the Armenian patriarchal nationalist perspective on women as mothers, caretakers, and guardians of the hearth. In some cases, they are partaking in that but in doing so are, in fact, active participants in the making of the nation from their own subjective perceptions as reproducers of culture and through their roles as mothers and guardians of the hearth (*ojakh*).

Therefore, women's reproductive capacity becomes the main marker of the survival of the Armenian nation and also the primary measure of authenticity and traditionalism in the maintenance of national identity in the face of the traumatic history of genocide, in the 1988

Karabakh movement, and the war with Azerbaijan,¹⁷⁰ which revived the discourse of genocide and Armenian victimhood and the difficulties of adapting and settling into host countries as a result of forced and violent migration from western Armenia.¹⁷¹ In this sense, I take inspiration from Katherine Verdery's argument on subjective identity: "Gender and nation exist in part as an aspect of subjective experience (nation or gender 'identities,' for instance) – as a subjectivity that orients persons in specific, distinctive ways according to the nationness and gender attributed to or adopted by them." (1996, 62) And more importantly for this thesis, this subjectivity is nestled within the "prevailing cultural understandings and people's social situations." (*Ibid.*) This is particularly true in the conception of motherhood among some Armenian women, whose practice of femininity, to use Bourdieu's conception, also shows their disposition as women within the Armenian national habitus.

Armenian women's national self-identification is experienced and felt through the history of a struggling nation. Traumatic periods have a symbolic continuity in national identity and stretch through time in the construction of Armenianness. Armenians in the diaspora faced the problems of

¹⁷⁰ The history and memory of the genocide is tightly linked with the Armenia-Azerbaijan war as the memory of pain and suffering of the Armenian nation was revived when the nation was undergoing a renewed crisis of killings and war. As the Armenian nationalist movement began to organize in the streets of Stepanakert and Yerevan, the Azerbaijani response was triggered in the way of a pogrom in the city of Sumgait, where Armenians were killed in 1988. The experiences of the survivors and the description of the horrific scenes of murder they witnessed are covered in the survivors' account written by Samuel Chahmouradian (1991) who collected the eye-witness accounts. An important work to mention here is *Iconography of Armenian Identity* written by Harutyun Marutyan (2009) who tediously studied the iconographic expressions that revealed the revival of the discourse of the Armenian Genocide around the same time of the beginning of the tensions with the Azerbaijani SSR and later Azerbaijan. A similar point is made by Thomas de Waal in Black Garden, and he writes that "the "Turkish threat" of 1915 was therefore transposed onto the Azerbaijanis and a memorial to the victims of the Sumgait pogroms was put up on Tsitsernakaberd hill near the Genocide memorial (2003, 78-79). There were between 26 and 29 Armenian victims in the Sumgait pogroms, according to de Waal, in addition to hundreds injured. The result was about 14,000 Armenians living in Sumgait to find refuge in Armenia, along with many of the 350,000 Armenians living throughout the Azerbaijani territory preferring to leave and find refuge in Armenia and other SSRs (de Waal 2003, 40).

¹⁷¹ Western Armenia is the term used by many Armenians to refer to eastern Turkey in a geographical sense, and to remember their historical land where they lived before being expelled during the Armenian Genocide of 1915 committed by the Young Turk Ottoman government. For more information on how the Azerbaijani attacks against Armenian in Sumgait and Baku, for example, and the Armenia-Azerbaijan war in Karabakh revived the discourse and memories of Genocide among Armenians, see Marutyan (2009).

assimilation, integration, loss of language and identity. Armenians refer to this problem as white genocide (*djermag yeghern*). Armenians in Armenia also faced struggles to maintain their own identity as Armenians, with their language, their religious identity, and their values and customs. The war with Azerbaijan, which brought back memories and discourses of genocide, created a sense of crisis among Armenians of a threat of losing against the ‘Turkic’ nation. These crises are thus significant in the case of Armenian nationalism and particularly in the way women understand and view their national self-identification. Women emphasize their role as teachers, educators, carers for the family, and, most importantly, as mothers, not simply because these are traditional roles that the patriarchal social norms have imposed through time. But more importantly because women seem to express their national belonging and to self-identify as Armenian mothers particularly in the context of the crisis Armenians face, under the pressures of assimilation and loss of identity and culture, of russification and adopting Soviet values, and under the threat of losing Karabakh against Azerbaijan. It could be argued that women face these threats by protecting ‘Armenianess’ through their sense of motherhood as women’s identity.

Thus, one can see that Armenian women’s involvement in the public life of the nation, be it in the context of diaspora habituses or local Armenia habituses, is embedded within the particular framework of motherhood as an expression of women’s Armenianness. With the conception of motherhood, various characteristics are brought together to construct the ideal woman’s image, as the goddess Anahit or Mary: Anahit, the principal pagan goddess of Armenians, is the symbol of

“sacred motherhood” for Armenians.¹⁷² These can help to understand the particular form of Armenian feminine expression (to avoid using the term feminism) that has been a continuation of centuries of ideas and perceptions based on the conception of motherhood. The Armenian women’s identity as mothers is thus not separate from the context of the crises and traumas that have affected the nation, such as the Armenian Genocide of 1915, the Karabakh war, the threat of assimilation in the hostlands, the threat of disappearance over centuries of imperial presence in the region, and so on. These threats are absorbed into the collective memory and identity of the nation, especially one that is as ancient as the Armenian identity.¹⁷³ The next section shows that the ethnic and cultural self-identification of Armenian women stems from their role as mothers through interviews I conducted with Armenian female politicians, activists, journalists. As will be shown, their rejection of feminism is embedded in those roles that are esteemed.

From Activists, to Fighters, and back to ‘Mothers’: Shifting Roles of Armenian Mothers between Tradition and Modernity

¹⁷² It is interesting that Sona Zeitlian, whose research is on the role of Armenian women in the Revolution movements in the late 19th and early 20th century, begins her book on that topic with the depiction of Anahit, the pre-Christian Armenian goddess of fertility, morality, and maternity. She notes that an understanding of people’s adoration of their goddesses can reveal information on the social and political ideals of that people. Zeitlian describes the qualities of this goddess as such: “She is an affectionate mother goddess, morally pure, caring; she provides guidance and comfort to those in need, clear-sighted and provident; she is the symbol of household prosperity” (1992, viii, my translation). These characteristics, in Zeitlian’s words, demonstrate the importance of the role of women in Armenian society since times ancient. In addition, not only is the women’s role important, but also, as a continuation, the role of family. This is also reinforced by the research of Stephanie Platz in Armenia, where she demonstrates that the role of kinship and family are extremely vital for the Armenians, and that kinship is a central feature of Armenianness. This is equally true in the diaspora societies even in the West, as Anny Bakalian shows that the family is a vital component of the Armenian identity in North America. Zeitlian further argues that much like Anahit’s characteristics reveal her as the guardian of the hearth (ojakh), the Armenian mother is also the “embodiment of the sacred light” (dan luyse/djrake) of the hearth. The Armenian mother is able to sacrifice her own desires and needs for her family, dedicated to her family, loyal towards her husband and morally pure. More interestingly, Zeitlian also shows the continuity of the Anahit goddess’s importance for Armenians even after the advent of Christianity: the ideal image of the goddess of motherhood was transferred from Anahit to Mary (*asdvadzadzin*). The same characteristics of Anahit were referred to Mary, making motherhood the most ideal and virtuous quality of an Armenian woman. Sona Zeitlian, 1992, *The Role of the Armenian Woman in the Revolutionary Movement*, pg. 7-9).

¹⁷³ It is quite significant in this context to state that Armenians pride themselves of being one of the most ancient nations in history, the first nation to adopt Christianity in the early 5th century, with a unique alphabet invented in the same century. Armenians also celebrate some of the most ancient events in their history, such as Vartanants. For a history of the Armenians see Razmik Panossian (2006).

Looking at the images of the 1988 protests, many women were present and stood by their brothers, husbands, sons, and fathers. This was the moment of change for Armenians. It seems therefore very surprising that the many books on the 1988 national movement do not mention the role of women in particular or simply exclude it from discussions of nationalist movement and national identity.¹⁷⁴ Perhaps they do not distinguish the gendered division of labour, and they consider them to be equally dedicating their lives to this cause? Post-Soviet Armenian society conformed to the traditional view of women's role within the nationalist project, and women did not find this situation disturbing and welcomed it for the sake of the nation. This was part of the maintenance of Armenianness (*hayabahbanum*) that had been part of the Armenian post-Genocidal diaspora discourse for decades. In addition, the search for identity has to be contextualized within a global framework including different sides, such as Western (the European Union, especially recently), Russian, and regional influences such as Turkey and Iran. Not least, the strong influence and presence of the Armenian diaspora in different host countries where the diasporans reside is also relevant.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ See the works of Gerard J. Libaridian, 1999, *The Challenge of Statehood*; Levon Chorbajian ed., 2001, *The Making of Nagorno-Karabakh: From Secession to Republic*; Levon Chorbajian et al., 1994, *The Caucasian Knot: The History and Geopolitics of Nagorno-Karabakh*; Mark Malkasian, 1996, "Gha-ra-bagh!": *The Emergence of the National Democratic Movement in Armenia*, which refers, in some sections, on the role of women in organizing some of the protests that began attracting more and more people, such as the march in Yerevan on the fate of Nagorno-Karabakh and the chemical plant in Abovyan. But the rest of the detailed study of the movement does not address much the state of women, their participation and so on. Of course the focus of this study, to be fair, is on the movements and events that took place in 1988 and around that time, which determined the fate of the Armenian nation within the Soviet Union. It is indeed one of the most detailed studies there are on this issue and remains of the most valuable on this topic. Another work worth mentioning here is *Iconography of Armenian Identity* (2009) written by Harutyun Marutyan, a renowned Armenian anthropologist, which covers is great analytical and descriptive rigour the iconographic expressions of Armenians from the early days of the formation of the Karabakh movement in Armenia. A more recent study that portrays the multilocality of the Armenian national expressions and nation building focusing more on the diaspora movements and trends, Razmik Panossian's (2006) work also does not tackle at all the role of women in this process. The focus is on the role of intellectuals and elites and the analysis puts emphasis on the national building and (re)construction process from the early 10th century onwards. This is an excellent study of the history of the nation building process, yet the examination of the theories of nationalism using the mainstream literature has left the study without any focus on women or gender, in all stages of history.

¹⁷⁵ Western film and other media can also be considered as powerful influences today in Armenia. I want to thank one of the reviewers of the journal article for this insight.

The attempts to strengthen post-Soviet identity began mostly in 1988 in Armenia, when Armenianness became more pronounced and consolidated. This Armenianness (or the ‘us’) was shaping as non-Soviet, anti-Turkish (and anti-Azeri), and in many ways non-Western (‘other’). To be Armenian was to be unique, was to be based on traditional values, perhaps stretching back to pre-Soviet values. One of my interviewees, Narine Aghabalyan, the current minister of culture of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, described the role of women during the Armenia-Azerbaijan war and explicitly compared Armenian women – and particularly Armenian mothers – to *otar* by stating that the importance of the role of women becomes accentuated in educating and raising children, while ‘among the Russians and Europeans, it is not the case’ (Author’s Interview, 2011, author’s translation). She compares the ‘qualities’ of Armenian women to the Russian and European mothers and women, stating that it is different in those countries. There seems to be a certain image of Armenian women as different, unique, and of course as non-European (or non-Western) or even non-Russian. This traditional image of the woman as the caretaker and custodian of the hearth is viewed as purely Armenian.

The great challenge of the search for Armenian values as unique was ongoing, amid the pressure for establishing capitalist economic values, rapid changes towards an open market system, and cultural influences from the West, especially through the increased interaction and establishment of Western organizations in Armenia (e.g. USAID). Stretching back to tradition (versus modernity) was important for the consolidation of Armenian identity and for the binding of the nation together as one, undivided. With the war with Azerbaijan already beginning, it became necessary to revert to a strong language of ‘brotherhood’, of unity of all Armenians, both local and diasporan. Women and gender discussions were lost amid the larger brotherhood romanticization, and women did not organize or mobilize into women’s movements to demand gender-specific

rights or changes, and the idea of a women's movement was perceived as highly divisive for Armenians and was deemed counter to the feminine image of women. In fact, many of my interviewees quickly expressed to me that they were not feminists as they began to talk about the role of women in Armenia. As such the distinction between their own perception of their role in society during the 1988 Karabakh movement, during the war and as the memory-keepers of the nation were all contextualized within the discussion that this was not part of any feminist endeavour or action, in the viewpoint of the interviewee. This construction of femininity in Armenia is strongly linked to the internalization of the hegemonic gender roles through habitus, and to the performative reproduction (or, perhaps, empowerment, to follow Lukes's (2005) third face of power?) of the particular conception of femininity (for more explanation on this see Butler 1990 and Bourdieu 1977, 1990). As such, as Runyan and Peterson accurately posit in their work that

the naturalness of sex difference naturalizes dichotomized gender differentiations (pervading all social life) and thinking in hierarchical, categorical oppositions more generally. Insofar as these naturalizations and masculinist (not necessary male) privilege become common sense, their ideological power is then "available" (thorough cultural coding of reason, agency, governing and protecting ,etc., as feminine)... (2013, 64)

Of course, this is not the view all women take in Armenia and there are counter-narratives to this who support a need for a change in the way society addressed issues of equality, but this is

the dominant perspective.¹⁷⁶ So women not organizing separately into their own movements to demand their rights was part of the way Armenian women attempted to construct their femininity and maintain the image of the ‘ideal woman’ who supports her man during the struggle for the survival of the nation. This is the way Armenian femininity is portrayed and engrossed in society, and many women endorsed these ideas. In addition, the strong discourse of ‘othering’ Azerbaijan (and the Turks) necessitated an equally strong discourse of ‘us’ that underscored Armenianness as unique, thus justifying respect for traditional values and customs. In this traditionalism, women were expected to behave in a certain way, strengthening an ‘ideal woman’ image as a model to follow. But this construction of femininity also reinforced a certain image of masculinity. Men were constructed as the fighters, the soldiers, the brave men, expected to sacrifice their lives for their nation and become heroes (Edgar Khatchatryan, Author’s Interview, 2011, author’s translation).

Armenian women actively participated in the 1988 nationalist movement in both Armenia and Karabakh, beside ‘their’ men, to struggle against the Soviet Union. These same women participated in the war alongside men, either by carrying a weapon and fighting together with the men on the frontier, caring for the wounded, or taking care of the family in their absence. But once Armenia became independent, women returned to their traditional role in the family and home, and in many cases this was done with the consent of women. During the war years, referred to by some

¹⁷⁶ A recent law on gender equality entitled “Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women” was adopted in the Armenian Parliament in May 2013. This law was introduced by the Heritage party (Raffi Hovannisian’s party, see Chapter Two. There was a strong backlash against this law in Armenia due to the way in which the term gender was defined in Article 3 of the law: “acquired, socially fixed behaviour of persons of different sexes.” Many in Armenia interpreted this law as a way to break the social norms around heterosexuality. For a perspective on the politician responses to the law, see the coverage by tert.am on July 29, 2013 at <http://www.tert.am/en/news/2013/07/29/parliament-bill/828765>. A survey conducted by the Caucasus Research Resource Centers in the South Caucasus concluded that 96% of the Armenian respondents to the survey believed “Homosexuality could never be justified.” See the link for an explanation of the results: <http://crrc-caucasus.blogspot.co.uk/2013/07/attitudes-towards-homosexuality-in.html>.

as the dark and cold years between 1991-1994,¹⁷⁷ when food, clothing, and fuel were scarce, the struggle of women to keep food on the table, to educate children, and to take care of the husband was extremely demanding. Therefore, the main question that I asked the women I interviewed in Armenia was how they felt about reverting back to their role in the ‘private’ sphere. Why was there this shift from heroines and protesters in the streets, soldiers and nurses in the battlefield, to household caretakers whereby the men took over the public sphere to make decision affecting women’s fate?

In those difficult years (1991-1994) of the early post-Soviet period when men were unemployed¹⁷⁸ or had to migrate to find work elsewhere¹⁷⁹ and women had to take on the burden

¹⁷⁷ I am using the term dark in the literal sense of no light. The years 1991-1994 were quite painful and difficult for the Armenians who had to live, in many cases, with no heat and gas. Cooking, heating the living spaces, accessing the basic necessities such as candles, matches, flashlights, kerosene lamps, and so on were an everyday challenge for the families. Several factors contributed to these difficulties and shortages in Armenia. The December 1988 earthquake in Gyumri, along with the pressure from Armenian environmentalists and national activists who were partaking in the Karabakh movement, led to the closure of the Medzamor nuclear power plant. These factors, in addition to the Azerbaijani economic blockade causing the interruption of fuel and natural gas delivery to Armenia, the Turkish border blockade in support of Azerbaijan, all contributed to the energy crisis in Armenia with severe consequences. See Stephanie Platz for a description on the changes the energy crisis causes in “urban landscapes, domestic spaces, personal identities, and historical memory.” (2000, 124) Moreover, Platz argues that “the energy crisis simultaneously challenged the imagery of national identity, for example, by impeding the practice of hospitality and united Armenians in shared loss: the nation, rather than the individual or the family, was felt to the backsliding.” (2000, 131)

¹⁷⁸ The devastating earthquake of December 1988 in the Gyumri region, the energy crisis, the economic and land blockage of Armenia by Turkey and Azerbaijan, the military conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Karabakh enclave, and the collapse of the Soviet common market and its economic structure, were truly traumatic for Armenians who had to adapt under those conditions. Unemployment rates were extremely high: according to UNICEF, by 1993, an estimate of 1 million people was either formally unemployed or on forced leave (Scott 1994, quoted in Dudwick 1994, 237). Unemployment rates are difficult to find for the early years of post-Soviet Armenia. There are available registered unemployment rates, though these are hardly accurate because in most cases the actual rate was higher or those who were employed were only partially employed (part-time or ‘disguised’ employment) due to the economic crisis in Armenia during those years. According to UNICEF (1999), the registered unemployment rate was 1.6% for 1992, 5.3% in 1993, 6.1% in 1994. Part-time employment in most cases did not provide sufficient income for families because of the inflation Armenia faced during those years: consumer prices increased about 110 times just in 1993 (Suny 1996, 122).

¹⁷⁹ According to Arutiunian, about 700,000 persons migrated from Armenia between 1990 and 1997. This is about a fifth of the Armenian population at the time. During this period, migration was mostly by the men (later women began to migrate) and mostly to the CIS countries, particularly Russia. Migration to Western European and North American countries began in the later years. Due to migration, the women and children were left behind in Armenia, and in many cases, women had to take on the household chores, child care, and employment in order to complement her husband’s income (also see Dudwick 1997, 241).

as both breadwinner and household caretaker,¹⁸⁰ women typically did not devalue their husband's role as 'head of the family', nor did they want to question it.¹⁸¹ As Armenouhi Stepanyan and Svetlana Poghossyan, both Armenian anthropologists at the National Academy of Sciences, stated, women generally kept the men's place as the head of the family and insisted on the full respect of the children to their father as the main head. Armenouhi Stepanyan, recalling her own experience and difficulties stated that:

Armenian women should enter the Guinness book for her deeds in those years, for being the strong pillar of the family, for preserving their husbands' emotional pride as soldiers and men in order to keep them from succumbing into hopelessness and disappointment, and women actively worked to keep their family's well-being under harsh conditions, such as the absence of electricity and heat at home....I myself had two children, and I remember those conditions especially in the first year when there was fuel shortage, I do not know how we heated ourselves, maintained sanitary conditions at home, made laundry with very cold water, only when they [the government] gave us two hours of electricity a day!....When my husband came home with no bread, I remember crushing the wheat with the mortar to make flour and baked blin¹⁸²...this happened in most families, and of course there were those who had better conditions....[The woman] wanted to be the spiritual support for her husband... (Armenouhi Stepanyan, Author interview, 2011, author's translation).

Women during those years typically had to cook and feed their family with anything they could find; different generations of women in one family often helped each other maintain their

¹⁸⁰ This is not to say that Armenian men were very helpful and doing household chores during Soviet times. Quite the contrary, as expressed to me by Poghossyan. The burden of double duty existed even during Soviet times, but what aggravated the situation is the early years of independence in Armenia and the war in Karabakh that caused extreme unemployment (see previous endnote) and lack of available employment in many domains. This pushed women to work in any position, including cleaning and washing dishes, in order to support her family, while her husband would not help at home. I want to thank one of my reviewers for pointing this out to me.

¹⁸¹ Not all women worked at the time, even in cases when the husband was unemployed. In some cases women preferred to stay at home to look after the children by choice, and in others women were forced to do so since the husband was not able or willing to spend money on childcare. Those women who worked (by choice or based on the circumstances) had to juggle household duties with work: often many resorted to part-time jobs or jobs that require less hours of work (Dudwick 1997, 218-219). Women were usually paid much lower, and this situation has not changed in Armenia today. Also, many of my interviewees highlighted the age factor in finding jobs today. The younger (prettier) women are more likely to be recruited than a woman in her fifties, for example (Armenouhi Stepanyan, Svetlana Poghossyan, Author's Interview, 2011).

¹⁸² Blin is a Russian word that is short for blinchiki. Even though this is not the traditional bread, Armenians, like Russians, use the verb to bake (petch or печь in Russian and tekhel or թիւել in Armenian) to explain the cooking of the blin. Blinchiki or blin is more like crêpe than bread, and it is a staple in Russian (and Armenian) cuisine.

families. In addition, kinship ties became one of the most important ways for Armenians to subsidize the shortage of all basic goods and food for their everyday lives.¹⁸³ Power shortages caused difficult winters with no heating source. Generally, women had to wake up in the middle of the night, whenever power was available, to heat water, do laundry, and cook. Schools were closed down, and education was put on hold until the stabilization of the country's economy. These difficulties are remembered and shared today by these women, because they were the 'household builders and preservers'. Men were also heavily unemployed, and did not want to work in any position – it was also an issue of honour and pride, as Svetlana Poghossyan states, "In our society, not all jobs are respectful. In the West, for example, jobs are jobs....[But in Armenia] men cannot take on any job...it is a social issue....so he cannot just work for money" Author's Interview, 2011, author's translation). In the absence of employment for men, due to the blockade imposed by Azerbaijan and the ongoing conflict with it in Karabakh, some women took on the role of breadwinner by working as traders – mostly selling goods at the open market or on the street. It was often this work that allowed her to feed her family, but also to keep her husband's pride intact.¹⁸⁴

Stepanyan, quoted above, recalls these years with great contempt at the role women had played:

¹⁸³ During the Soviet years, with the increasing industrialization of cities, Yerevan became densely populated with about a million residents. This aggravated the shortages of food, housing, and basic needs, a situation so emblematic of the Soviet era. As Stephanie Platz highlights, "Armenians conceived of their traditional kinship as a static and enduring model that was distinctly and uniquely Armenian." (2000, 118) Indeed, Platz argues that kinship for Armenians was not only an expression of daily convenience, but it represented the very way Armenianess was expressed. These kinship ties survived the Soviet attempts to abolish the traditional family structure as highlighted in the first section of the chapter. See Stephanie Platz, "The Shape of National Time: Daily Life, History, and Identity during Armenian's Transition to Independence, 1991-1994" (2000). Armenians continued the practice of the network based economy based on their relationship with the extended family and acquaintances within their circle of kin.

¹⁸⁴ Nora Dudwick notes that women, in many cases, had to borrow money to be able to travel to various countries such as Turkey, Syria, various countries in Eastern Europe, and even to Vietnam and China in some cases, in order to resell their purchases at the open air markets in the city. Some women also formed their own unregistered businesses to make some money on the side. These include activities such as "knitting, sewing, embroidery, potting and baking skills..." (1997, 242-243).

Let us remember the four to five years right after independence and after. In society in those years, the role of women became so important. There was a struggle for survival. The country became independent and became deprived of all economic and political contacts...the Soviet Union was like an organism, everything was linked together in chains and strings. And when one segment leaves, it is as if one organ has been taken from the organism. This brought unemployment, and men could not play their role as bread winners, the men turned ‘outsiders’. This caused a double burden of emotion, especially given the Armenian men’s mentality, and suddenly left him feeling like an outsider. Non-official jobs became prominent, such as dollar exchange, products came in from Georgia such as candles, fuel, matches...the basic needs for the household... This of course is not like Leningrad during WWII, but it was close – no food, shortage [of basic items]....in these burdened and difficult years, the role of women multiplied. She was ready to work, no matter what her education level was, if there was an opportunity, to primarily supply food for her family. (Author’s Interview, 2011, author’s translation)

Indeed, women generally avoided blaming their husbands in those times for being unemployed, or sitting at home, because the situation was the same everywhere. Armenouhi Stepanyan continues to remember those years:

[The woman] wanted to be the spiritual (*abaven*) support for the husband. No one blamed the husband, because the situation was the same everywhere. The Armenian saying “the death with a friend is a wedding” as if it is consoling that you are not alone. In those years with the difficult economy...it seems as if the women returned to her traditional Armenian role with even more responsibilities. [She was] the one who kept the house (*odjakh*), and really kept it alive” (Author’s Interview, 2011, author’s translation).

In a similar light, Svetlana Poghossyan, when I asked her if she believed the Karabakh war had changed the life of women in society, perhaps to show that she, too, could fight, stated:

...to say that it improved her situation, it is difficult to say – she took on much more on her shoulders because of the unemployment of men....and she is not blaming him as well....[Regarding the changes in society as a consequence of the 1988 movement and war] is that the changes at home lead to changes in society – women [and society] understand that they have a role outside the home. But it is supremely the status in the home that matters. The women also do not want to change that, they are happy with it. There is fear of succeeding. [She is] not supposed to succeed in her career, but only at home. So the priority is at home. It is considered very ideal to have success in both

spheres. As I mentioned many women who are successful in their careers try to stress their roles at home, as mothers, and wives. (Author's Interview, 2011, author's translation)

Stepanyan added that women also educated her children at home in those years when schools were closed. Much like many other women in Stepanyan's generation, women who were mostly in their twenties and thirties at the time, she wanted to be the main support for her husband in those conditions,

...the women worked, schools closed and to avoid children's education from suffering, we educated them at home: [there were] not only hygienic and economic difficulties, but we also worked with the children to educate them in order that they not fall behind in their schooling. I worked to teach them Russian and English...and I am not a unique case, it was the same in most cases. (Author's Interview, 2011, author's translation)

Aghabalyan, the current Minister of Culture of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, similarly recounted the story of her own mother-in-law, who, during the peak of the war, had created classrooms surrounded by sandbag walls in the remnants of a bombed building to continue the education of the younger generations. This was inspiring to everyone, and especially to children, and she adds that "the role of women in child education and rearing is extremely valuable," (Author's Interview, 2011, author's Translation), concluding that this is a particularly Armenian trait in Armenian mothers and women, which in her view is distinguishable from other cultures. This is the way these women reflect upon their role and place in Armenian nation-building, and it seems that these constructions of femininity in Armenia centre on the uniqueness of Armenian women and their role in the national project. Going back to the idea of authenticity discussed by Chatterjee, Armenian constructions therefore also focus on the authenticity of Armenianness through the image of the woman as the caretaker and guardian of the hearth and as the support of the husband. This chapter does not aim to establish that Armenian motherhood is

‘better’ than others as the interviewee does here, but the way she describes Armenian motherhood shows that this is how Armenian motherhood and femininity are constructed and that some Armenian women have internalized this image or at least try to portray themselves as conforming to this image in order to look ‘ideal’ in their feminine roles.

This history is important because it registers in comments given by interviewees about nation-building. In fact, these stories (or realities) also reflect the self-image of women in their role as mothers, and their role to stand by their husbands – their men. The work women were doing was not considered a ‘career’, but simply a means to bring back bread to the family, to feed, and to provide a means of survival, and when that need disappeared, the woman would return home as the household caretaker. It seems that this generation of women accept their position as the caretakers of the household, the main preservers of the hearth, and the main supporters of their husband. This is evident in many of the interviews I conducted with various Armenian women who are politicians, non-governmental sector representatives, journalists, and academics, aged mostly in their fifties during the interview, who had survived the extremely harsh years after independence during the war with Azerbaijan when there was food and power shortage, indeed shortage of all basic items.

Aghabalyan similarly described the role women played not only in the protests of 1988 in Stepanakert, but also during the war. She recalled some of her memories of the 1988 protests as she was still a student studying at the university in Stepanakert, in Nagorno-Karabakh. I quote her at great length because her words also describe women’s activism during 1988:

I remember when the movement began here, one of the first fronts to be formed for these struggles and protests were the women. Our intellectual representatives included

women such as Zhanna Galstyan and Arzik Mkhitaryan¹⁸⁵ and there was a woman cook, but they all went to fight, of course also the men. Their voice played such an important role, in these squares and the first protests began right here. I was still a college student at the time, and half of the students approximately were Azerbaijanis at the institute here, and so not everyone had the courage to express their views. When on February 13, 1988, the first protest was to take place, the youth and students were to have an important role then. And you need of course older people sometimes, in high ranks such as the professors or lecturers or intellectuals to set an example to the students. And among the many professors from the university were many women, the (male) rector at the time, under pressure from Azerbaijan and local authorities, closed the doors so we would not go out of the university, but we just jumped from the windows! We did not think whether this might harm us or not. We just jumped and went to the [Lenin] square to the protests. With us were a few lecturers among whom were some women... and especially if it is the women who are raising the flag, then men could not act weakly, they had to join...we spent the night here in the square, no one went home (they were otherwise called traitors). We made tea, we distributed bread to everyone, and of course women had a strong role in that. When they organized the fronts to fight, many women volunteered as equals to men. Even Zhanna Galstyan, [who was] not only shouting and protesting, but was also fighting until the end of the war. And this really inspired men. If women left Karabakh to save their children, then men would not fight this war, they would not have to come to anything (Author's interview, 2011, author's translation).

Hence, in the post-conflict society, the role of women had focused not just on caring for their families, putting food on the table, and educating their children, but also on the role of psychologists who were to help their husbands' transition from the war to their lives as fathers and husbands. Aghabalyan expressed two important issues related to post-war rehabilitation and adaptation that societies undergo. She presented this in light of the role of women in helping the soldiers to transition to their 'normal' lives:

The men had a difficult time adjusting to peace after the war. The readaptation was difficult, their morale had changed (some had lost their friends at war in their arms). Their psychological status needed to be lifted and that required a lot of effort. That effort was taken on by women, who played an important role in that. Women are the

185 Zhanna Galstyan is a well-known Karabakhi actress who fought in the war against Azerbaijan. After the war, she became a Member of Parliament in the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (de facto state). She is also the chairman of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic National Assembly Standing committee for defense, security and law enforcement affairs. In 1988, Arzik Mkhitaryan was a lecturer in the Psychology Department at the Stepanakert Pedagogical Institute, which became the Artsakh State University in Stepanakert in 1992. Today she is the Dean of the Faculty of Pedagogy at the Artsakh State University.

educators in schools in Armenia it seems. And that gives a specific role to women, as if the men can take a more physical and protective role, and women can do more caring, teaching the children, raising them. So the role of women in child education and rearing is extremely valuable. Among the Russians and Europeans, it is not the case. (Author's interview, 2011, author's translation)

Women are also the keepers of memory and sustainers of culture, even under the strenuous conditions of post-conflict readaptation. They kept the memories of the everyday of the war, the memories of the survivors, of the martyrs and heroes. In Karabakh, a mother of a martyr, Galya Arstamyan, decided to found (and currently directs) a museum dedicated to the martyrs (*azadamardig*) and heroes of the Karabakh war. This is the Museum of the Fallen Soldiers. She gathered the pictures of as many as 3355 soldiers who had died during the war (her son among them) and their belongings during the war, making various trips from Stepanakert to Yerevan. She did this to keep "the memory of the boys alive", and in a TV interview with Civilnet, she referred to this museum as a "living legend."¹⁸⁶

Maria Titizian, Director of the Hrayr Marukhian Foundation of the Dashnak party in Armenia, and a Canadian-Armenian who settled in Armenia with her family in 2001, expressed concerns regarding why women revert back to their traditional role. I quote her at great length because what she stated is extremely pertinent to present-day Armenia and reflects a more critical perspective:

There was a conference for ARF [Armenian Revolutionary Federation or the Dashnak party] at 120 years, they asked me to present on ARF women...I spent months going through ARF history and minutes of the meetings...the more I did my research the more I became convinced that history has been so unfair to us as women, of our role, of the critical role that we played not only in the formation of the party itself, but also

¹⁸⁶ Galya Arustamyan is also the chairman of NKR Union of Perished Soldiers' Families non-governmental organization and chairperson of the Mothers of Karabakh Freedom Fighters Union. This quote is taken from a youtube video posted on October 9, 2011. The video is prepared by Civilnet news, and it is posted by 'StudioAshnag' user. I was not able to find the original date of the interview from the Civilnet website.

in Istanbul in the 2nd half of the 19th century, all the organizations that the women were part of, whether they were educational or benevolent organizations. At first that was the intention, but then they became influenced by the Russian and European feminism, then the focus start[ed] to change a bit, it [became] about the rights of women, then of course you have the liberation movements taking place simultaneously....I mean Lola Sassoun, if you read her life story....Roubina Adamian, Maro Magarian, amazing selfless women who put...the survival of the nation above their personal happiness. If you look at any liberation movement, women are always there with the men, and the men want them there because they need them, whether there is tending to the wounded, feeding them, shooting snipers.....but as soon as things revert back to some level of normalcy the women instinctually also revert back to this (Author's interview, Maria Titizian, 2011).

Titizian highlights how women willingly retreat to their traditional roles as mothers and as guardians of their homes, highlighting a sense of women's own perception of Armenianness, which is based on seeing themselves in their traditional roles. Perhaps the question that comes out of the text above is, why has there not been a movement by Armenian women since women were already actively involved in other movements for the nation beside the men? When an intense struggle is necessary for the Armenians, the women are ready to be actively involved with the men – whether in fighting or in assisting, caring for the wounded, cooking, and so on. We can then arguably position women's self-perception of Armenianness within the context of the need to maintain their nation, which had been threatened by disappearance in the Genocide, by the loss of its people and land in Karabakh, and the loss of its identity in the diaspora with different forces of assimilation. Titizian further expressed that preserving Armenianness is always seen as the main responsibility of women who reproduce generations, serve as the educators and the transmitters of culture and identity, based on the dominant discourse of *hayabahbanum*, meaning 'the maintenance of Armenianness' To quote her, '*hayabahbanum* ideology told women indirectly that their role was to educate the children, to ensure that the woman is the transmitter of culture, music, to ensure the sustainability of the nation in exile, and the women took that role upon themselves' (Author's

Interview, 2011). Women can therefore become active agents in reinforcing and maintaining the constructions of patriarchy and the associated perceptions of femininity and masculinity in society that define a woman's role.

An (American) diasporan woman who had moved to Armenia, Salpi Ghazarian, the current Director of the Civilitas Foundation in Armenia, similarly approached the status of women in Armenia in more critical terms. When I asked her what she thought of the role of women in Armenian nation-building, Ghazarian stated: 'My role is whatever I make it to be and it has nothing to do with my gender . . . Self-defined roles of women are atrocious. The social status is awful, not self-evident, and it is often perpetuated by women, teachers and [school] principals. It's awful.' (Author's Interview, 2011) This critical view also highlights that women can play a role in 'perpetuating' a particular set of expectations from women. The performance of gender, or gender performativity to use Judith Butler's (1990) term, is also learned and transmitted by older generations of women in various roles, as the performances become tacitly agreed upon and deviation becomes punishable.

Gender is performed not only by women, but by both women and men who try to fit within their roles as ascribed to them in society. It is not an easy task to challenge these roles, which are almost set in stone. The words of Aghabalyan forward a point of view that seems to be common in Armenia and Karabakh: men had more capacity for physical activities and were thus the soldiers and protectors of the nation and women were more able to take care of children's education, care for the wounded, feed the soldiers and children, and also be mothers. Even when women participated in large numbers in the war in Karabakh, this image remained. In the words of Edgar

Khachatryan,¹⁸⁷ the Director of Peace Dialogue, a non-governmental organization in Armenia, the expectation of society is not just from women but also from men:

The society has expectations on how to be Armenian; it is forcing me (a man and not a woman) to play the ‘right’ role as an Armenian. So this is not just imposed by the government [not top-down], but society also plays its role. For example, I have done my military service, and if [I] want to leave, the ‘military’ is asking [me] to give them the copy of my ticket, of the visa to the country [I am] going to, and I asked why is the military requesting this information from me? And they responded: but we are a country at war, so do you want to come back and fight for your country? . . . And society is not against this behavior, so the rules force me, and society agrees to it because people believe we need it – this is military thinking – we are a country at war, there is the idea of war. And this is gender based because this is told to me as a man, not a woman of course. (Author’s Interview, 2011, author’s translation)

What Khatchatryan means here is that the society has certain expectations not just of women to be pretty, to take care of herself as a woman (her clothing, make-up, and so on), but also of men to be strong, to serve in the military, *to want* to serve and to protect his family. This is the image of the man that is being constructed and internalized. For example, Nona Shahnazarian conducted a gendered analysis of the Karabakhi dialect and concluded that, amid the dominance of a militaristic and heroic rhetoric during and after the war in Karabakh, characteristics such as ‘courage and valour’ are highlighted and valued, and when praising women that have these qualities they are often called *tghamart-kenik*, which literally means ‘a man-woman’. In a similar situation, when this concerns a courageous man, a tautology *tghmart-mart* – ‘man-man’, which

¹⁸⁷ Edgar was one of the only ones who had a dual understanding of gender, meaning he viewed gender roles as both the roles of women and men, and not just women. This is not only a trend evident in Armenia, but also can be found in the Western context as well. There has been a growing focus on studies of masculinity in nationalism studies, especially since the 1980s. See the work of George Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (1991), the edited volume by Michael S. Kimmel et al. (2005), and Joane Nagel’s *Race, Ethnicity, and Sexuality* (2003).

comes to mean ‘real man’ both biologically and spiritually, is used (Shahnazarian 2010, 3).¹⁸⁸ This point was also made by Poghossyan who stated, “Those women who are in politics, business and so on are referred to as *tghamart-kenik*, because only men can be successful in higher positions in society’s perception.” (Author’s Interview, 2011, author’s translation) These constructions of femininity and masculinity correspond to the image of how Armenian men and women ought to behave, to aspire to become, and to perform, constructing it as the ideal Armenian woman or man.

From 1988 until 1994 particularly, Armenian women took on various roles at different stages of struggle. This period and the major events in Armenia and Karabakh, one could argue, had an important impact on the social and gender structure of the Armenian nation. As a result, women were actively part of the struggle and the fight, and were accepted as such by men. These non-traditional roles, sometimes voluntary and other times forced by circumstances, were deemed necessary for the survival of the nation, and were thus accepted within the discourse of national unity and security. One could argue then that the militarization of the national discourse justified the non-traditional roles. This post-Soviet trend in Armenia was justified by the national discourse during the war with the need to reinforce the ‘us’ versus the ‘other’ and build a strong sense of Armenianness. The end of the war and the return to the day-to-day socio-economic matters for Armenia signalled the retreat back to the norm, which called for the traditional place for women.

¹⁸⁸ Some of the consequences of the role ‘reversals’ or the adoption of more masculine roles by some Armenian women were stated by Khachatryan and Poghossyan during interviews with the author. However, there were limits to how much a woman was able to play non-traditional roles, and there was tolerance to some extent of some types of roles and not others. Nona Shahnazarian, a Russian anthropologist whose works focus on gender relations in Karabakh, demonstrates that those women who transgressed ‘stereotypical roles’ – for example those who were high-ranking in the army or in the fronts, those who drank and swore like men, paraphrasing her words – were only accepted temporarily during the time of active war, and were rejected in its aftermath. They were also praised before, but the praise word itself became derogatory when addressed to a woman in the aftermath as well (Shahnazarian 2010:2–3)

Those who stood by the men, who helped in the national struggle, were now expected to follow the model of the ‘ideal woman’. As Poghossyan stated:

Women want to become the sexual ideal. And you can see the trend among women who want to emphasize that they have raised their children, taken care of the families and now that children are older, they can begin their career and start to work . . . If you hear our women politicians here in Armenia, in their speeches and their interviews, they like to stress upon this theme – they represent themselves as fitting the image of the ideal. (Author’s Interview, 2011, author’s translation)

The complexity in understanding the women’s role in Armenia is that the conception of Armenianness is expressed by women through their own identities as mothers, preservers of culture and traditions, and, of course, the guardians of the hearth (*ojakh*). This is not, however, a recent phenomenon but rather a historically tied characteristic of the way Armenian women express their own national identity and feel ‘Armenian’, particularly based on the specific history of the Genocide, Sovietization, Armenian-Azerbaijani war, threats of assimilation, and loss of Armenian identity. Sona Zeitlian’s work on revolutionary women reflects this conception of motherhood among the revolutionary women of the 18th and 19th centuries against the Ottoman Empire (Zeitlian, 1992). Moreover, in many nineteenth and twentieth-century literary works, for example the famous works of Zabel Yessayan and Shushanik Kurghinyan, the concept of motherhood as women’s self-identification is strongly present, as Victoria Rowe puts it beautifully:

[T]he Armenian mother was conceptualized as the creator of the Armenian nation and defender of Armenian culture through her raising of children, which in turn was related to nation-building by providing the nation with responsible and patriotic citizens. The ideological connection between the Armenian mother and the nation has a discernible genealogy in Armenian intellectual history. (2003, 189)

One can conclude here by stating that the particular history of statelessness, the Armenian Genocide of 1915, and the revolutionary struggles against the Ottomans, the more recent struggle

in Karabakh, as well as the movements starting in 1988, are all significant in shaping the identity of women. Women see themselves and are constructed as the mothers in the Armenian nation-building process and as the transmitters of culture and the guardians of memories. Motherhood as agency can therefore be understood not as a passive self-expression of women, but as an active expression of Armenian femininity in the face of influences and changes. Steven Lukes's (2005) groundbreaking conception of *power to*, a positive conception of power in contrast to the traditional perspectives of power as domination in the Weberian sense, for example, is a useful way to understand this agency - one could argue that women perhaps feel empowered by their self-perception of their role as mothers within the hegemonic construction of femininity and masculinity in Armenia. The construction of and self-perception based on motherhood seems to be an identification of Armenianness for these women – an identity that sets them apart from other women. In this sense, then, a woman who does not appreciate her maternal role or does not perform it properly is deemed deviant because motherhood is considered as the most important role within the family for the woman; the woman's place in the family is therefore important in the ideal image. Sona Zeitlian (1992) argues that the sacred motherhood image has impacted and continues to impact ideas about Armenian women's place within the family and society. The idealized image of motherhood sacralizes the role of the mother as the pillar and keeper of the family and hearth, by perpetuating and transmitting national and cultural traditions, values, and customs. Thus the purpose of a woman is to become a mother, firstly, and only after to seek a career or other goals outside the home. Armenian women's subjective national self-identification embedded in the expression of motherhood is extremely pertinent to understanding the Armenian attitude towards national identity construction. Motherhood, as the perception of femininity in Armenia, is also a self-expression through which Armenian women performatively and

unconsciously generate their role through the dispositions that they have acquired based on their particular social positioning as women in the field. As such women's gendered habitus encompasses the "thoughts, perceptions, expressions, actions - whose limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production," meaning within the particular field within which they are generated (Bourdieu 1977, 95).

Conclusion

Although women were active in the struggles in the 1988 nationalist movements in Yerevan and Stepanakert, and although women were ready to protest in the streets and to fight next to men in the battlefield, after things went back to normalcy, the role of women was redefined within the traditional framework of the domestic sphere. It seems that Armenian women generally see themselves as the home builders, transmitters of knowledge and culture, and educators and caretakers. The post-Soviet trend seems to apply to the Armenian case, whereby women have reverted back to their traditional roles in society, probably reinforced by claims that her role is different from those of her Russian and European counterparts. This is important for the dissertation's main argument because dominant narratives and discourses are not just instilled in people, but they are instilled and internalized and also reproduced by those agents – Armenian women – as a way to assert their own perception and understanding of the role and place of women in Armenian society.

The public sector, where state- and nation-building ideas were planned and executed, was reserved for the male heroes of the 1980s' struggle. Women also do not see themselves as actively involved in the public domain, as evident even in the words of women politicians in high-ranking positions, who always emphasize not only their career as politicians but first and foremost their

roles as mothers, caretakers, and educators. A woman is first an Armenian and then a woman, which means that her gender identity and rights are embedded within and delimited by the nationalist discourse, ideas, and beliefs rather than a feminist goal or project. In fact, the process of constructing national identity also idealizes the image of the man as the fighter, the courageous soldier, and the protector of the nation and women.

What is uniquely Armenian in the construction of Armenian femininity as motherhood is that this conception is processed through a distinct history of genocide, survival (early independence years and in the diaspora), war (in Karabakh), and the struggle to preserve Armenianness after the forceful eviction from a historical homeland to a strange host country. Thus, the burden of women in Armenia and in the diaspora has been to bear the consequences of the exigencies of Armenian nation-building on their shoulders and putting the nation ahead of their own needs and desires. This chapter has focused on the self-identification of Armenian women and Armenian constructions of femininity to be able to capture the place of women in the nation-building process in Armenia from 1988 to 2013. The national discourse related to gender, family, and sexuality is linked to through the drawing of strict boundaries in defining what is masculine and feminine. As such, the Karabakh conflict and the memory of the Armenian Genocide, traumatic events in the history of the nation, have shaped the construction of Armenian femininity through the conception of Motherhood. One could thus conclude that there is perhaps an Armenian femininity in the making, one that has been in development for centuries.

Chapter Four. Between the Realities of the Hostland and the Imaginaries of the Homeland: a Critical Look at the Armenian Diaspora-Homeland Relationship

Introduction

The Armenian diaspora is considered to be one of the archetypes or the classical cases of diaspora, along with the Jewish, Greek, Palestinian, and African diasporas. This classical definition is linked to a definition of diaspora as forced exiles due to violence and non-voluntary conditions. The Armenian diaspora had been a stateless diaspora until the independence of Soviet Armenia in 1991, and during the brief period of 1918-1921, when Armenia became independent under the Dashnak leadership. After the Sovietization of Armenia, the relationship of the diaspora with the ‘homeland’ was complicated because even though Soviet Armenia was represented by the Soviets as the Armenian homeland (especially with the repatriation projects initiative from 1920s to 1970s), it was never completely perceived as such by the diaspora though many did repatriate to the homeland. This was due to the complex imaginings of the geography of homeland memory: how could people ‘replace’ the homeland of western Armenia where their whole being was placed, their whole identity constructed, and their memories forever engraved? The stories of pain, loss of homeland and family, survival and rebuilding are quite common to the Armenian diasporic consciousness. The case of the Armenian diaspora reveals that the conception of homeland can be quite complicated even with the existence of an independent state that identifies with the co-ethnics or co-nationals.¹⁸⁹ This complexity shapes the way the Armenia-diaspora relations are built, especially after the Sovietization of Armenia.

¹⁸⁹ The Western Armenian territory is in today’s eastern Turkey and is part of the historical homeland of Armenians that stretches from what is now eastern Turkey to Karabakh. However, as Boghos L. Zekian notes, the homeland of a people “cannot be described with the same precision as one can trace the boundaries of a state” (1999, ft.2)

A conservative estimate of the number of Armenians living outside of the current homeland is about 4 million (Tölöyan 2007, 109), and a more reasonable estimate is closer to 5 million. Some of the diaspora communities formed long time ago in Iran in the 17th century and North America and Europe around the 19th and 20th centuries. According to Tölöyan (2007, 109), about half of the diasporans are descendants of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide who became refugees in Syria, Lebanon, Cyprus, Argentina, and elsewhere. The Middle Eastern diaspora became, to a large extent, the bases of the Western diaspora in the USA, Europe (especially France), and Australia. The rest forms the newer post-Soviet diaspora after 1991 who are mainly economic migrants, mostly to Russia. In addition, the Armenians living in other SSRs also became part of the newly formed diaspora after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the independence of these countries such as Russia, Ukraine, and Georgia, for example.¹⁹⁰

This chapter discusses the relationship between the Armenian diaspora and the homeland and its impact on the nation building process of Armenia. This is an important addition to the current literature that tends to concentrate on the view from the diaspora or the literature that focuses on the formation and history of the diaspora communities. The chapter does not attempt to provide an analysis of the diaspora groups themselves. Instead the focus here is on the relationship between the diaspora groups and Armenia through the perspective of my interviewees who are local Armenians and repatriated diasporans living in Armenia. In addition, the relationship between homeland and diaspora contributes significantly to the redefinition and reconceptualization of the path of nation building, “in other words, the process of constituting diaspora is closely linked to the

¹⁹⁰ There is a need to conduct further studies of these diasporas since for a long time during the Soviet era they were referred to as the ‘internal’ diaspora, and so they were not taken ‘seriously’ as a diaspora group. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, many have moved from their host independent countries towards Russia and other Western states (mostly Los Angeles in the USA) as economic migrants. Further research is needed on these communities living in Central Asia, the Baltic states, and even the Caucasus.

never-ending process of nation-building, where the trajectories of national and diasporic politics complement and feed into each other.” (Barabantseva and Sutherland 2011, 5) These shifting boundaries in turn affect both homeland and diaspora notions of nation and nationalism. Finally, in this chapter reference to some historical considerations is given to provide a wider context within which the diaspora-homeland relationship has evolved and been shaped.

Given the changing social, political, and economic processes that are increasingly affecting various states, the influence and impact of diasporas is evident not only in their ‘hostland’ but also significantly in their ‘homeland’, even after generations have passed in the host country. Obviously, however, it is important to understand the limits of power diasporas can exert in shaping institutions and interests in the hostland and the homeland. In fact, diasporas may be restricted in the way they develop their institutions and act in the host state, and they may also be limited in their influence on the homeland political, economic, and social developments. Diaspora discourses of the homeland and their attachment to it are sometimes shaped by the different events and regime changes at home. This is very evident, for example, in the case of the Armenian diaspora and its attempt to influence and shape the Armenian political, social, cultural and economic landscape through various channels. This could even be extended to the way the diasporans perceive their co-nationals in their home countries and their relationship with them (Winland 2005).

Therefore, any study of diaspora and homeland relations should examine the reciprocity of that relationship, and the constraints imposed by the conditions and nature of the relationship. In this sense, diasporas can be considered as playing the role of mediators, bridging their home and host countries: this is important to note because, although the nation state is the traditional territorial entity that can exercise its sovereignty within those tight borders, diasporas have

challenged this by making their home governments stretch their sovereignty beyond their boundaries. Governments may also take an instrumental approach with the diaspora as an important resource for states in a globalized world. In the twenty first century, it is undeniably true that diasporas have become an important form of capital – economic, cultural, and political capital for states around the world – and this is evident with the extent of outreach of states towards their citizens or groups of co-ethnic members in order to mobilize them or to attempt to establish stronger links with them. In addition, the concept of dual citizenship has also altered our traditional understanding of loyalty to nation states. In fact, today, citizenship has become more fluid allowing many to have multiple citizenships concurrently from different sovereign states. However, this has not been accompanied by opening or loosening of the borders on a global level; quite the contrary, we are today living in a world of tight border control and surveillance, making movement restricted and legalized for fewer people.

Another extremely important factor in the understanding of diaspora-homeland relationship is that the diaspora is diverse not only in the ideological/political perspectives and the way that it relates to the homeland, but also in the ways in which the field of diasporic presence impacts on the diaspora habitus. In this sense, there may be differences between diasporic habituses around the world, and this may be reflected in the way that these communities interact with the homeland. During my field research in Armenia, it became quickly evident when I asked my interviewees to comment on the Armenia-diaspora relationship that the respondents distinguished between the various diasporic communities, and identified this relationship differently, distinguishing one community from another. Given the high level of organization and institutionalization within the Armenian diaspora habituses in the host countries, this is an imperative distinction to make, because these organizations and political parties do not necessarily represent all diasporans, but

they constitute perhaps most the organized segment, so the political parties.¹⁹¹ As such, the Armenian diaspora's influence in shaping the nation building process in Armenia should be understood by looking at the complexities of the contested visions of Armenianness filtered through the diversity of both the diaspora and local Armenians' visions and perspectives. I show that although the Armenian diaspora habituses have attempted to be involved in the nation building process of Armenia from 1988, and has been able, to some extent, to strengthen ties with the Armenian government, this relationship is far from being consistent. I argue that the main problem seems to be the prevalence of competing images of Armenianness and visions of Armenia itself.

The first part of the chapter presents a summary of the theoretical debates on the conception of diaspora in order to attempt to provide a perspective of diaspora theories and definitions that takes into account the particular case of Armenia and its diaspora. The second section presents an analysis of the evolution of the Armenian diaspora-homeland relationship with some historical considerations as context. The points of rapprochement of the diaspora with the homeland are discussed as well as the points of contention and difference. The section captures the changes in the relationship, especially considering the interaction of the diaspora with the post-Soviet Armenians who are immigrating to the diaspora communities, the influence of Soviet propaganda on diasporas, and the interaction of the local Armenians in Soviet Armenia with the waves of 'return' of the Armenian diaspora from the 1920s until the 1960s to Soviet Armenia. During the Soviet era, there were some interactions between the two, with about 170,000 Armenians

¹⁹¹ One has to distinguish between the diasporic communities and the differences they reflect in their relationships with the hostland and homeland. The organized diaspora is predominantly represented by the most significant party, the Dashnak party, in terms of size, strength of influence (particularly since it has established a strong influence of the Armenian Church Catholicosate of Cilicia, membership, and expansion within various fields. In addition, even though the Dashnak party is the largest organized party in the diaspora, it does not necessarily represent the views of the majority of Armenians, since many are only distantly affiliated and many are not linked to the Dashnak party or other parties. In this sense the dominant discourse on diaspora has been the view of the three major parties – reflecting the perspectives of the organized diaspora. However, this should be complemented with other voices that may be influenced by the organized segments but who represent their own views.

‘repatriating’ to the homeland.¹⁹² Finally, in the third section the relationship of the Armenian diaspora with its homeland is presented based on the conducted interviews in Yerevan and Stepanakert in 2011. The section also elaborates on the current diaspora perceptions of Armenia and the ‘local’ Armenians, and vice versa.¹⁹³

Theoretical Outlook on Diaspora-Homeland Relationships

The term diaspora has become closely linked not only to the literature on nationalism, but also to that on cosmopolitanism, transnationalism, migration, and globalization (especially since the 1980s).¹⁹⁴ However, various scholars have felt the importance of trimming down this definition, in order to selectively maintain certain elements that constitute the essentials for a definition of the concept ‘diaspora’ and to determine to which groups the label could and should be applied.¹⁹⁵ James Clifford believes that a diaspora’s main features are “a history of dispersal; myths/memories of the homeland; ongoing support of the homeland, and a collective identity importantly defined by this relationship.” (1994, 305) Rogers Brubaker includes three core elements that are widely agreed upon: “The first is dispersion in space; the second, orientation to a

¹⁹² For the exact number of repatriated per year and the overall counts, see the work of Stepanyan 2010, 356-359. She counts a total of about 170,000 Armenians who repatriated from various countries, mostly Iran, Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, Greece, though the list is longer and there were repatriates even from India, for example. Armenouhi Stepanyan relies on the work of Hovik Meliksetyan. 1985. *Homeland-Diaspora Relations and Repatriation (1920-1980)* [Hayrenik-Spyurk Arenchoutiunner yev Hayrenatartsoutiune (1920-1980)]. Yerevan.

¹⁹³ The details of the interview and with whom they were conducted are in the introduction – suffice it to state here that the interviews were undertaken with both local Armenians from various sectors in society and government and with the repatriated diasporas to Armenia also from diverse representations

¹⁹⁴ Until the 1960s, the term diaspora was used to refer to the Jewish dispersion around the 3rd century B.C.E (also labeled as *galut*), the Armenian dispersion starting from the 11th century, and the Greek diaspora that was formed in the 17th century – these three cases are referred to as the ‘classical’ cases, according to Gabriel Sheffer (2003, 75-77; he also refers to them as the ‘historical’ cases, see 2005, 125). The term diaspora gradually acquired a wider definition to include all those who were coerced into dispersion from their homeland, and organized themselves into communities in the host countries where they established (often in dire conditions), and formed communities (ghettoization) to maintain their identities, and, gradually, in some cases, also managed to establish links with their co-nationals in other host countries. As Khachig Tölölyan argues, starting in the 1960s, the term diaspora became more widespread, as a result of transnationalism and globalization.

¹⁹⁵ This exercise in hermeneutics has been stressed by Tölölyan 1996, 2007; Brubaker 2005; Sheffer 2003 Etchmiadzin; Clifford 1994; Cohen 1997; and Safran 1991; for the case of the Armenian diaspora see Melkonyan 2011.

‘homeland’; and the third, boundary-maintenance” (2005, 5). William Safran (1991), one of the most prominent writers in diaspora studies, has identified six elements, the majority of which revolve around the importance of the homeland for the diasporas. Other scholars have put less weight on the orientation towards a homeland (See Clifford 1994; Anthias 1998; Olwig 2004; and also Darieva 2011, who shows the cosmopolitan approach projected by the Armenian diaspora onto the homeland)

Armenians use many words to refer to the diaspora, one of them is *gaghut* (colony). The older diaspora that began forming since the 11th century or so is referred to more in terms of the Armenian colonies outside the homeland, or *gaghutahayutiun*. Another word is *spyurk* (diaspora) or *spyurkahayutiun* (Armenian diaspora),¹⁹⁶ which is more reflective of the diaspora formed after the atrocities of the 1915 Genocide that almost emptied eastern Turkey of its Armenian population. In fact, the *spyurk* is also referred to as the old diaspora to distinguish from the newer, post-Soviet, diaspora. Approximately 1.5 million Armenians were massacred in the deportation and death marches organized by the Ottoman Turkish authorities in 1915 (Dadrian 2004; Ternon 1990). To explain the impact of the Genocide on the Armenian population, we can say that about half of the Armenian population of Turkey, or one third of the global Armenian population died during the Armenian Genocide (Miller and Miller 1993, 44). Terminology is an important aspect in the Armenian discourse to identify the various waves of diaspora formation, thus terms such as *spyurk*, *gaghut*, new diaspora (the post-Soviet immigration) and so on establish a distinction that is

¹⁹⁶ Khachig Tölölyan (2000) explains the evolution of the Armenian diaspora, its institutionalization and mobilization through the elites and the institutions, and its transformation from an exilic diaspora to a transnational one. The historical Armenian diaspora was formed through two main waves of dispersion, from the 11th to the 14th century.

necessary to capture. The focus in this chapter will be on the *spyurk* and its relationship with Armenia from 1988 until 2013.¹⁹⁷

The organized parts of the Armenian diaspora have built the institutions and bodies that help to sustain the culture and the collective identity and to maintain the language, traditions, customs, and history (sometimes shaped to fit the particular stories of migration) from their place of origin. These factors shape the ‘us’ that is juxtaposed to the ‘them’ of the host society from which the diaspora communities differentiate themselves (or are differentiated by the host society as well). However, the ‘us’ is not a homogeneous group that claims similar historical and national memories, ideologies, and relations with the homeland. Diversity is key in understanding the Armenian case. Therefore an important element in the definition of diaspora is its hybridity, its characterization as diverse (see the edited volume by King and Melvin 1998 on the post-communist diasporas; also Anthias 1998).

Brubaker suggests utilizing concepts such as race, ethnicity, or nation not as groups themselves, which reifies them as essentialist, but in terms of socio-political and cultural processes. This means that the study of national identities, for example, should not be based on the category of group but groupness, which allows us, as researchers, to focus on categories rather than the groups. This is an important conceptual precaution that I follow in this dissertation; it is therefore necessary to take into account the diverse diasporas of one ‘group’. The Armenian diaspora is extremely diverse in terms of its presence in various host countries, with differing (historically

¹⁹⁷ This is not meant to exclude the Russian Armenian diaspora, the largest diaspora outside the Middle East, Europe and the Americas. The diasporas from the latter three regions constitute the ‘external’ diaspora which is referred to as the *spyurk*, or the post-Genocide of 1915 diaspora. During the Soviet era, Armenians living outside of the Armenian SSR were referred to as the ‘internal’ diaspora within the USSR. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the perception of this diaspora as ‘internal’ continues to linger, even though they are now the largest Armenian diaspora. The Russian Armenian diaspora has also not been as structurally organized in terms of institutions, organizations, and structures that bring the community together to preserve Armenianness and also establish ‘lobbying’ organizations. This has been the main feature of the ‘external’ diaspora. However, Russian Armenians are today organized by the Union of Armenians in Russia (Oussatcheva 2002).

shifting) relationships to the host country itself. In addition, there are linguistic differences – some of these communities speak Western Armenian (in majority for the case of the *spyurk*) and some, such as some in Iran and those in Russia and the CIS, speak Eastern Armenian. The table below illustrates this diversity.

Table 4.1: Diaspora Armenians around the World¹⁹⁸

Host Country where Armenian communities and habitus(es) exist	Number of Armenians
Russia	About 2 million
United States (mostly in Los Angeles)	800,000
Georgia	400,000
France	250,000
Ukraine	150,000
Lebanon	105,000
Iran	100,000
Syria	70,000
Argentina	60,000
Turkey	60,000
Canada	40,000
Australia	30,000
Other host countries include: Sweden, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, the Gulf Emirates, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Austria, Romania, Bulgaria, Venezuela, Hungary, Uzbekistan, and Ethiopia	Ranging from 3,000 to 25,000

To capture this diversity in the theoretical and empirical discussion of national identity making of Armenia, the idea of national habitus as the concept used to explain and understand national

¹⁹⁸ Source: Khachig Tölöyan. 2000. "Elites and Institutions in the Armenian Transnation." *Diaspora* 9(1): 107.

identity is extremely useful. As such, each diaspora community can be considered as forming diasporan habituses with norms, custom, traditions, and values, based on their ‘experience’ living in the particular host country. In addition, diasporas exist in a particular context, a host country with its own socio-political and economic peculiarities that shape and sometimes determine the way Armenian communities develop, how much power they have, and whether they have minority rights as citizens, or if they can have political representation in the government. In this sense, the perceptions of Armenians of their own communities, their own identity, and their homeland, are influenced by the host nation. The diaspora habituses’ diversity further accentuates the contested nature of diaspora-homeland relations, especially around nationalist issues related to Karabakh, the Armenian Genocide recognition, and Armenia-Turkey relations : there may be either a clash of habituses or harmonizing of habituses on particular issues at particular times.¹⁹⁹ This shapes the perception of Armenia as homeland differently based on the sense of existing tension or harmony between diaspora(s) and homeland.

In this light, perhaps the most important concept that is attached to inquiries on diasporism is not just the host country, but also the home. What is the home? Where is it located physically or in the imaginary of the diasporic nation? The homeland, real or imagined, is an important element of diasporic identity and its preservation in host societies, because the idealization and romanticization of it instigates many to feel responsible and loyal to help their co-nationals, especially in times of disasters. For example, the December 1988 earthquake, which took the lives of about 100,000 people (out of about 3 million population) in Armenia drew military, moral and

¹⁹⁹ In this sense, the diasporan habituses and the local Armenian habitus(es) may clash or exist in harmony due to the way structural, social, institutional, historical formations, socialization produce different sets of dispositions that are enacted within individuals’ thinking, behaviour, perceptions and are externalized through individual practices of the nation.

financial support. Likewise, there were offers of assistance during the fight for independence (after the initial rejection of independence struggles from the diaspora as covered in Chapter Two) and for reconstruction projects in Armenia and Karabakh. The homeland is the centre of diasporic identity because of the idea of return – whether this is based on a physical return back to the country of origin or a sentiment of longing or desire to return. However, this may be changing and the perception of homeland for the diaspora has, in some cases, transcended the desires for repatriation, and the myth of return is not longer part of the cognitive perceptions of diasporans (especially the youth), which are increasingly establishing cosmopolitan transnational ties with the homeland (Darieva 2012, for the case of the Armenian diaspora; and see the edited volume by Ulrike Ziemer and Sean Roberts 2012, on the Eastern European diasporas).

The idea of homeland in the Armenian nation has also shown some deep cleavages in the perceptions of the diasporan elites, especially in their ties with Soviet Armenia – rejection or acceptance, the ties with the historical homeland, and post-Soviet Armenia. The literature today is divided on the importance of the ‘idea of return’ in the definition of diasporas. This is an important point of contention given that it applies to our case here: the Armenian diaspora can be said to be in a more comfortable diasporic phase today, especially in the past few years. This development necessarily changes the perception of what makes one Armenian – for example whether speaking the language counts as a vital criteria of identity, and it also creates a more comfortable sphere of being in a diaspora, as one who is Armenian but feels absolutely American, and does not want to necessarily ‘return’ home, but wants to visit it or relate to it perhaps in a cosmopolitan spirit. This is an important shift in the contemporary understanding of the Armenian diaspora. The idea of ‘return’ becomes an ideal, one that no longer burdens the diasporan, instead he/she accepts him/herself as a diasporan.

This discourse of ‘comfort’, however, exists in parallel with the one stressing the actual return criteria, as evident in the case of Armenians. The case of the Armenian diaspora presents a salient analytical complexity because of the different layers of diasporic identities and because of the different waves of migration from the (two different) homelands. The ‘first’ homeland is in reference to the Western Armenian homeland that is located in today’s eastern Turkey. The diaspora associated with this homeland are the *spyurk* that had to leave their homeland as a result of the organized genocide by the Young Turk Ottoman government in 1915. The ‘second’ diaspora refers to the post-Soviet diaspora that left the Armenian homeland mostly after 1991 to the USA, Europe, and Russia, in search for better opportunities.

The case of the Armenian diaspora habituses reveals contestations around the perception of the homeland – its physical location, its symbolic reference, and the idea of return. Although the diasporans have had conflicting relations with Soviet Armenia, even the opposing anti-Soviet diasporan organization, the Dashnaks, eventually viewed the Russians as the guarantors of the safety of Armenia.²⁰⁰ In the case of many perhaps this is the real homeland, since this is the only actual physical entity that exists today.²⁰¹ But for many in the diaspora, the homeland remains the Western Armenian territories where their grandparents or great-grandparents once lived before the

²⁰⁰ The small territory of the SSR that was left to Armenians from the historical lands. It is interesting to note that this reasoning regarding the Soviet Union was in fact KGB propaganda that was diffused in the diaspora to all the three political parties (see Panossian, 1998 on this point). It seems that it was successful since even the Dashnaks internalized it and it has since become the discourse on the Soviet Union and even Russia after 1991. Another striking note on the Dashnak party was the KGB infiltration within its leadership ranks, which led to an overall milder position towards the Soviets after WWII, especially after 1965. This was true to the fact that the Soviets promised the return of the territories of Kars and Ardahan to Armenia and called for the ‘repatriation’ of diasporans to (re)populate those lands. This softened the positions of the Dashnaks not because they became sympathetic to the ideology of communism but for nationalist reasons (Suny 1993, 174). These promises by Stalin even drove the Dashnak to encourage repatriation towards Armenia (for more details on this period see the work of Suny 1993, especially chapter 10 and Mouradian 1979, 1990; for ethnographic fieldwork perspectives from witnesses of repatriation, see Pattie 2004;

²⁰¹ This is also true of the Soviet Armenian entity. Even though this was within the Soviet entity, it was still an Armenia that had clearly drawn borders, a government, and its own language. This led many to idealize the idea of homeland, making it sound like it was paradise within those loose Soviet borders. When many of the repatriated Armenians who had moved to Armenia between the 1920s and 1970s returned to the West or their country of origin (mostly in the Middle East), they were blamed for leaving the motherland and many called them traitors. They were not able to comprehend the extent of disappointment the reality presented to those who had repatriated.

Armenian Genocide in 1915. These territories are today located in eastern Turkey, where the majority of the population are Kurds. The homeland, in complement to the country of Armenia and Western Armenia, is also the host country where these diasporans have lived or live. Inevitably, the local habitus shapes diasporan identity, rendering them with a dual and sometimes triple national identity: for example, an Armenian-Lebanese who moves to the United States ‘acquires’ several national identifications and develops a complex sense of belonging.

Apart from these three main criteria for defining and identifying diasporas, the most contested is the element of mobility versus sedentariness of the diaspora groups. Diaspora groups were traditionally identified as mobile groups in a transnational world – and their transcendence of the borders of the nation states and their mobile nature are precisely what makes them important actors in the international community today. However, some scholars have critiqued this view stating that the discourse of transnationalism and deterritorialization has overpowered other parallel discourses of locality and sedentariness (Schwalgin 2004; Tölölyan 2005; Kokot, Tölölyan and Alfonso 2004). The diasporas, especially in the case of the Armenians, are a localized diaspora. There is an attachment to the place of the diaspora, which is not necessarily only in the sense of territorial attachment, but also in the sense of a localized cultural attachment (see Werbner 2002), meaning that Armenians in Lebanon, for example, have developed an attachment and a strong sense of belonging to the local Lebanese society and culture. This shapes the Lebanese Armenian habitus differently and as such contributes to the strong diversity and multilocality of the Armenian diaspora, which is relatively unique in the case of Armenia.

The end of the Cold War and more recently the events of 9/11 triggered a large array of publications on the topic of security and the relationship between diaspora and homeland. The particular interest in diaspora financial support and its role in the militarization of the conflicts at

home grew, in addition to other aspects of contribution that can be deemed as influential, such as recruitment, mobilization, transfer of skills, and so on. The literature on homeland and diaspora relations has focused on the exploration of the impact of diaspora remittances (Lindley 2005; Kapur 2003; Østergaard -Nielsen 2003; Eckstein 2003; Shain and Sherman 2001), particularly paying attention to the political and socio-economic developments that result from the financial flows diasporans and migrants send to their home countries.

Another focus on the role of diasporas (especially conflict-generated ones) has been in the field of conflict and conflict resolution; some view the diaspora as playing a role in supporting conflict in different places, such as Ethiopia, Kashmir, and Nagorno-Karabakh, and others view the potential of diasporas in inducing peace generating opportunities (Vertovec 2005; also see the volume edited by Hazel Smith and Paul Stares 2007; Shain 2002).

Another segment of the literature on the relationship between diaspora and home country focuses on the role of diaspora groups in promoting democratization at home (Danielyan 2008; Koinova 2009, 2011). This literature is particularly significant in this context, since Armenia became independent in 1991, and the transition process after the collapse of communism has been painful and difficult. This literature states that diasporas can play the role of promoter of democracy at home by helping civil society in their homeland through the transfer of funds (Shain 1999/2000). In this sense, diasporas can also establish civil society organizations in the homeland, such as NGOs funded by them, which can help to support various public and private initiatives in the home country to enhance the process of democratization (from the top down or the bottom up). The diaspora financial flows to the home country can also be a tool to exert pressure on the government to allow more space for the opposition voices and opinions in the country, and in this light, they can also be critical of the homeland's government policies, practices and decisions.

Moreover, diaspora groups can use their lobbying leverage in the hostland instrumentally to enforce changes on the homeland.

There is therefore very little attention paid to the effects of the role of these financial transfers home on national identity and on the changes in the understanding of national affiliation and emotions (there are some exceptions, see the work of Shain and Sherman 2001). Moreover, more studies are needed to understand the role of the diaspora in framing the identity-based conflicts at home, not in terms of the diaspora discourse on these conflicts, but in the sense of how it is shaping the discourse in the home country's political environment. In addition, this literature assumes that the influence is one-way and linear, meaning that it is the diasporas which influence the homeland and not the other way around. This is a misconception, and this chapter will show that the relationship between diaspora and its homeland is never unidirectional. It is always reciprocal – the diaspora groups' relationship with the homeland, in terms of influencing financially, politically, culturally, and militarily, is taking place with the homeland government first and foremost especially in the case of Armenia, and thus the perception of this government towards the diaspora and vice versa are two key points to make here.

To further problematize the diaspora-homeland relations, diasporas are usually not located in a single host state, as the case of the Armenian diaspora reveals. This is a factor that can influence one diaspora decision and position vis-à-vis the political status of other diasporas. This is a point that could be more relevant to larger diasporas, such as the Armenian, Ukrainian, and Russian ones, rather than the Georgian, Azerbaijani, or Albanian ones for example. In addition, this might be relevant to diasporas that are more on politically active rather than those that are driven by aims such as cultural sustenance and maintenance, the relationship between the diasporas of various host states can heavily shape the political dynamics and activities in the case of the

Armenian diasporas and their relationship with the homeland and among each other. This may be particular to the Armenian case among the many examples around the world, but this point is vital to analyze and consider given the rapid and increasing waves of immigration in the world and the formation of newer diasporas in host countries.

The homeland can also be influential in the framing of the political issues of the diaspora by imposing constraints on its involvement in the home country, or by limiting the possibilities and opportunities for the re-settlement of the diasporans in their home country. These could be in the form of economic, political, and social participation restrictions, such as difficulties in establishing businesses, voting rights, citizenship rights, for instance. Armenian diasporans' attempts to establish in the homeland and open their private small and medium business have often faced difficulties in the local setting.²⁰²

The discussion below on the Armenian diaspora reveals these above-mentioned angles of communication between the diaspora and the homeland, particularly in the post-1991 period. Even though the diaspora organizations' physical presence in Armenia was felt only after 1991, the infiltration of diasporan organizations and individuals began much earlier, since the independence of Armenia from 1918-1921 and then during the repatriation of diasporans to Soviet Armenia, and once again during the 1988 nationalist movement in Armenia and Karabakh. Each stage of contact and communication has shaped the relationship between and the perception among each

²⁰² The example of the businessman Narek Hartunian, head of the G.H. Storage Enterprise Company and the founder of the Narekatsi Art Union, was arrested on charges of tax evasion and taken into custody for two months in 2011. The accountant of the company were also held in detention (*hetq News* 2011; *ArmeniaNow* 2011). The Narekatsi Art Union was founded in the United States in 2002, but has branches in Yerevan (Armenia) and Shushi (Karabakh). Other cases are also reported, such as the fate of Valerie Ashkhen Gortsunian, the founder of coffee importer and popular coffeeshop *Le Cafe de Paris*. As Gayane Abrahamyan writes, “The main stumbling block for diaspora investors, claimed Chamber of Advocates Vice-President Nikolai Baghdasarian, a member of the Initiative Group for the Protection of Diaspora Armenian Investors’ Rights, occurs when individuals in the elite abuse their ties to the state bureaucracy. ‘Documents are forged and through these ‘legal’ documents everything is seized and appropriated, and when the [diaspora] investor turns to the courts, fake bankruptcy is declared,’ claimed Baghdasarian.” (Abrahamyan, *Eurasianet* 2012).

‘side’ (homeland versus diaspora). The chapter’s aim is to reveal the complex layers of interaction, expectations, desires, and aspirations from each side, especially through the interviewees’ voices and opinions.

What Diaspora and Which Homeland?: Identifying the Defining Elements of the Armenian Diaspora-Homeland Relationship

The communist diasporas are important to study because, unlike the Middle Eastern or Asian diasporas, they were not allowed to communicate freely with their homeland due to heavy intelligence monitoring, and the relationship was thus limited during the presence of communist regimes, in the case of the Soviet Union. Although there were some opportunities for the émigrés to travel back home in the post-Stalinist period, this was extremely difficult under the conditions created by the Soviet authorities to prevent the émigrés’ influence in the country. This had a vital impact on the current relationship between the Armenian (western) diaspora and the (eastern) co-nationals in the homeland. The Soviet government allocated considerable and expensive (or wasteful) resources to penetrate émigré circles and diaspora groups, by controlling radio broadcasts and publications, launching a propaganda and counterpropaganda system, imposing strict border controls, and using large number of informers to control the Soviet population from the influence and ‘manipulation’ of the émigrés (Motyl 1990, 140). In addition, significant resources have also been spent on the émigré organizations, “which have been the targets of assassination, infiltration, cooptation, and disinformation,” although the policy of the Soviet Union has changed throughout the decades of its rule with different leaderships (Motyl, 1990, 140-1).

However, as Alexander Motyl states, the émigrés and their organization and resources helped to create opportunities for collective action against the Soviet state, and this increased especially in the *perestroika* and *glasnost* periods, leading up to independence (1990, 141-145).

But the émigré infiltration by the Soviet Union was not the same in every national republic, and more importantly has not been the same with all the diaspora groups from the same nation (as in the case of Armenia) and thus the post-communist era has seen equally different relationships between the émigrés and the local leadership in the independent republics. In addition, for many of the eastern European diasporas, there were periods of rejection of the homeland based on its communist leadership, and this had much to do also with the host country where the diasporas lived (see Andits 2010). In this sense, the hostland conditions much of the discourse of the diaspora towards its homeland as well. In the case of the Armenian diaspora, the KGB infiltration went as far as planting agents that eventually reached positions of leadership in the major parties such as the Dashnak party. This led to the shift in the position of the party towards a more ‘pro-Soviet’ approach after taking a staunchly radical and nationalist position as an anti-Soviet organization (Kalugin 1994, 193 cited in Panossian 1998, ft. 19). The Soviet era therefore had a significant impact upon diaspora-homeland relations, and the post-communist era witnessed another shift that is marked by feelings of ambivalence in the diaspora approach to the homeland, as it is reflective of complexities of the politics of the host country, the regime of the home country, and the perceptions of the diasporas of themselves and their relation to the homeland (see the works of Panossian 1998; Tölölyan 2007a, b; Libaridian 1999, 2004).

An important phase in the Armenian diaspora-homeland relationship during the Soviet period was marked by the symbolic ‘repatriation’ of many Armenians. It is estimated that from the 1920s until the 1970s up to 170,000 Armenians ‘repatriated’ home (Stepanyan 2010, 356-359). The wording of repatriation (*nerkaght*) is significant here because for the Western diasporan Armenians coming to Soviet Armenia was not really an act of returning ‘home’, since their historic homeland is located in Western Armenia (today’s eastern Turkey). The word repatriation was used by the

Soviet authorities for various political reasons, but they already had the lessons and institutions left to them from the experiences of the first republic leadership (Stepanyan 2010, 35; Melkonyan 2010). The interaction between the Soviet Armenians and the (diaspora) newcomers developed with an initial excitement followed quickly by a disappointment with the imagined Armenia – the Armenian diaspora were disillusioned with the ‘real’ Armenia they witnessed – in addition to stereotyping and negative labelling that sometimes continues until today on both sides.²⁰³ The newly incoming wave of ‘repatriates’ created cleavages in Armenian society in the Armenian SSR, and the ‘foreigners’ were differentiated and labeled. In addition to the local bold regional differences, a new distinction arose based on the local and repatriate distinction, to the point of stereotyping the newcomers as *aghpars*, which literally means brothers but is used in a derogatory tone in this context.²⁰⁴ As Harutyun Marutyan explained to me, when there is a “process of differentiation, *Aghbar* and Armenians: [which means] to make foreign, to make ‘other’” (Author’s Interview, 2011, author’s translation). The immigration of diaspora Armenians in the post-independence period has also been quite shaky and frustrating to many, revealing the lack of institutional and structural readiness of the homeland to welcome ‘repatriates’. Much like the repatriates of the Soviet era to Armenia felt like “strangers in their own land....[because] it was not a home they recognized and the “family members living in that home were not as welcoming as

²⁰³ See Stepanyan, 2010 for an extensive and detailed study of the repatriation period, and the interaction between the two; for a study of one group of Armenians, the *Kessabtsis*, see Pattie 2004, 109-124. The discourse of Soviet Armenia as “homeland” for all Armenians developed during the Soviet era and it was a discourse mostly pushed forward by the Soviets, which was then internalized by the Armenian diaspora – even by the most anti-Soviet of diaspora parties, the Dashnaks.

²⁰⁴ George Bournoutian, a historian, translates it as ‘poor relations’ (1994, 164). Panossian explains his different encounters with the term *aghbar* used in the context of the Ter-Petrosyan’s elections in 1996 and his background as a Syrian Armenian. The disconcerting racism of the interlocutors is something to note (see Panossian 2006, 362-364). Between 2011-2013, when I asked some Armenian friends – *Hayastantsi*, what the term referred to, in their generational understanding (individuals in their 20s and 30s) where the term is not used as often, many told me that there is a deep derogatory connotation to the term. This was a quite interesting terminological stereotyping that was accompanied by social and cultural cleavages. Some of these same tensions continue to surface with the repatriated Armenians who moved after the independence until today, though to a much lesser extent. There will be several examples in this chapter.

they expected” (Pattie 2004, 117), the post-1991 repatriates similarly felt isolated and strangers in their ‘homeland’. These ‘repatriated’ Armenians’ interests and motivations after 1991 are many: establishing (small and large) businesses in a new economy, purchasing (sometimes extremely cheap) real estate in Armenia as a vacation home or just to own a piece of property in the homeland, visiting the country or exposing younger children to the homeland for a ‘healthy dose of national pride’, and sometimes also for education.²⁰⁵ These are not exhaustive, but they encompass common reasons for moving to Armenia for Armenians in the diaspora.

The next section will discuss the case of the Armenian diaspora and its relationship with the local Armenian authorities and people, briefly covering the historical evolution of the relations, focusing on the interviewee perspectives and views on this two-way relationship. This section also brings to light the expectations and conceptions of the role of the diaspora from the locals’ viewpoint, meaning from the perspective of Armenians living in Armenia, the *Hayastantsis*, and repatriated Armenians mostly from 1991 and onwards.

The Soviet Era Perestroika, Revolution, Nationalism, and the Diaspora is (back) in Armenia

The relationship between the Armenian diaspora and Armenia, or officially Soviet Armenia until 1991, is in many ways defined by the Sovietization of Armenia in 1920. This historical turning point shaped the way the diasporans and the organizations in the diaspora communicated with their co-nationals in Armenia, since everything had to be filtered through the Soviet authorities. The problems arose not only due to the ideological schisms between the Soviets and the diasporan political parties, but also largely due to the way Armenianness was defined on both

²⁰⁵ It was (and remains) much cheaper for students, particularly from the Middle East who want to study medicine and dentistry – two popular fields. Today the movement is much less to go study in Armenia, but the Yerevan State Medical University is one of the strongest schools in the region, and it attracts students from 28 different countries, and there are a large numbers of Indian students, see <http://www.ysmu.net/YSMU-at-Glance.php>

sides. The Dashnaks who were in power in Armenia during the brief independence periods of 1918-1920 represent the party most opposed to the Sovietization of Armenia, since they were kicked out of power.²⁰⁶

The year 1988 is a turning point in the history of Soviet Armenia, and it was preceded by the 1965 protests. Both protests were the result of heightened feelings of nationalism and cooperation among the nationals. There was a desire to claim what was Armenian, to remember and commemorate, for the first time during the Soviet period, the Armenian Genocide's 50th anniversary, and to re-claim the reunification of the bit of land that was historically Armenian, Artsakh (Karabakh), as Chapter Two demonstrates. When the protests began, the diaspora was taken by surprise, but it eventually supported the movement that intended to reunite Karabakh and Soviet Armenia. But it did not expect the developments to progress so rapidly – especially for the fact that the diaspora was not really actively involved at the time, in addition to the fact that there was not much understanding of the events on the ground, especially after decades of distance. The protests in Stepanakert were followed by pogroms in Sumgait in 1988 and in Baku in 1990, a strong reminder of the 1915 events. To make things worse, the earthquake in Armenia in December 1988 caused massive destruction and took the lives of 100,000 people.

Initially, the European diaspora groups (especially the French-Armenian diaspora) played an important role by pressuring Gorbachev indirectly through European media outlets and the EU parliament, calling for the release of the members of the Karabakh committee from prison, though this was not without controversies (Ashot Manucharyan, Author's Interview, 2011; Tölöyan 2007, 119; also see Chapter Two for the fuller story). The desire to be active within the homeland,

²⁰⁶ For a detailed study on this period of Armenia's independence and the political, social, economic and cultural issues in the country, see the four volume extensive study *The Republic of Armenia* by Richard Hovannian (1971, 1982, 1996, and 1996, respectively).

especially after centuries of statelessness, was growing stronger. However, when the protests took on a different tone, beyond the claims of the status of Karabakh, the diaspora became lost, confused and did not know what steps to take; the homeland was also out of touch with the diaspora, but it had come to feel the nationalist fervour of the diaspora (especially of the Dashnaks, based on the perception of many local Armenians), and consequently had grand expectations from their co-nationals outside, almost exaggerated, as one of the Karabakh Committee members put it: “The 1988 protest and public gathering created good relations with the diaspora, and there were high expectations, it was not financial in the Soviet Union - this was not expected because people were more comfortable then,” (Ashot Manucharyan, Author’s Interview, 2011, author’s translation). What was expected was support, but the mechanisms and ways of this support were unclear to all. Indeed, how could it be in such times of change and emotional exhilaration?

The biggest blow came from the statement made by the diaspora, addressed eight months after the Karabakh movement had begun. This was, in a rare agreement, a joint statement issued in October 1988 by all diaspora parties²⁰⁷ and heads of churches, who supported the annexation of Karabakh to Armenia from Azerbaijan, but warned people to be calmer in their demands, to end the protests, fearing the possible Soviet response if they sought for full independence – they also asked the Soviet authorities to meet those demands of reannexation (Libaridian 1991; also see Chapter Two). This statement was not received well by many: first, although the Ramgavar and Hunchak parties had lost their legitimacy to some extent due to their association with the Soviet authorities during the previous decades, the Dashnak party’s image followed this and lost its legitimacy among people as the revolutionary and especially nationalist party. The diaspora

²⁰⁷ The three Armenian diaspora parties are the Hunchakian Democratic Party (Hunchaks), the Dashnak Party, and the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (Ramgavars).

organizations and institutions showed “ignorance of the local dynamics combined with insistent advice that was then followed by indignation when diasporic views were not welcomed” (Tölöyan 2007, 119). This statement sums up in many ways the relationship between the larger diaspora organizations (mostly the Dashnak party) and the governments in Armenia, though the highest point of contention came in the Ter-Petrosyan era. In retrospect, the Dashnak party leaders in Armenia look at the event and acknowledge that they had come in ‘late’ to assist Armenians and to involve themselves within the local politics (Vahan Hovhannesyan, author’s interview, 2011). In contrast to those days, the former KC leaders who are today in high positions in the government, express an ‘understanding’ towards the diaspora in making this statement, and state that this was quickly overcome with the help, support and enthusiasm they increasingly witnessed in the following months from the diaspora, especially during the Karabakh war. This is especially true of those KC members who were sympathizers of the Dashnaks, such as Vazgen Manukyan.

The Armenian diaspora’s infiltration into the homeland was not limited to the political activities since 1988, but its role also extended to humanitarian and philanthropic activities. One of the first examples occurred when the tragic earthquake hit Gyumri (Leninakan) in Armenia in December 1988. Gorbachev’s government’s handling of the catastrophe was inefficient and was not quick enough to provide the relief needed to population at the time. This devastating earthquake took the lives of more than 3% of the population of Armenia (Verluise 1995, 32). The diaspora sent medical and humanitarian assistance to help out the victims of the natural disaster. The mobilization level in the diaspora was immense and impressive at a time of need in the homeland. This was not limited to diaspora groups or political parties, but also to individuals who wanted to contribute financially and on humanitarian grounds to their homeland and their co-nationals. Many of my interviewees view the earthquake, a very tragic event for Armenians

everywhere, as a turning point in Armenian nation building along with the 1988 movement. It set the tone of the relationship as the diaspora aiding the homeland, which was in an extremely difficult situation and in much need of help from their diaspora. Richard Giragosian, for example, explains that the “earthquake actually laid the foundation for the diaspora’s perception regarding Armenia as *meghk e* (pity) as victimization; even more than the genocide memories, this was setting the framework for the relationship. The second was the Nagorno-Karabakh as inherently negative” before the victory in the war (Giragosian, 2011, author’s interview). The diaspora began to see its place to give, to support the fledgling nation that was slowly moving towards independence. The idea of financial flows coming to aid the Armenian people from 1988 and onwards in post-Soviet Armenia was not always without expectations from the diaspora leadership. With it, came a strong sentiment of a right to be included and involved in the decision-making process in Armenia, at times as intense as in the early 1990s with the Ter-Petrosyan government in power in Armenia.

The diaspora quickly mobilized itself for the Karabakh war, to which they contributed not as much in terms of volunteers²⁰⁸, but more in terms of moral, financial, and political support. Their lobbying skills were put into force to turn the Western government and media perceptions in favour of the Armenian side. The diaspora’s influence was also evident in the economic dimension of its contribution during the Karabakh conflict. One of the largest foreign contributions to Armenia comes from the US government as a result of the work and effort of two Armenian lobbies in Washington, the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) and the Armenian

²⁰⁸ According to Panossian, fewer than two hundred diaspora Armenians volunteered to fight in the military units in Karabakh between 1992-1994 (1999, 89); Interestingly, others put this number as high as three hundred volunteers (Zürcher 2007, 174). According to Christoph Zürcher, these volunteers were recruited mostly from the Near East and Western Europe. For more information on the total number of soldiers fighting on the side of Azerbaijan and Karabakh, see Zürcher (2007, 174-5).

Assembly of America (AAA), which managed to secure over a billion American dollars from the US government to Armenia since its independence in 1991 (Tölölyan 2007, 122), though this amount has reduced significantly over the years, and in 2015, the American government allocated only under 26 million American dollars.²⁰⁹ Philanthropic contributions from various diaspora organizations (such as Hayastan All-Armenian Fund, AGBU, United Armenia Fund, and so on) around the world have also provided significant amounts of donations, either in monetary value or goods (Tölölyan 2007, 122). The bulk of these contributions go through the Armenian government for reconstruction, rebuilding, road construction (especially in Karabakh and between Armenia and Karabakh), and other aesthetic, educational, medical and many other such structural projects for the country's development. For example, the Armenian diaspora donated 11 million dollars to build the main and only road that connects Armenia to Karabakh - the Lachin corridor. In the absence of rail and air links between the two, this highway is the only way to transport goods and people. Another important source of financial help is due to the large flow of migration from Armenia to Russia and the West for labour led to direct financial contribution to families, to the Armenian people.

This phase of diaspora-homeland relationship can be summed up as follows: the initial stage of uncertainty (and even non-support to the protests out of fear), followed by an excitement with the events which shifted diaspora discourse to a more cooperative one, and finally with the earthquake and the Karabakh war really pushing the limits of the newly emerging post-Soviet state, the diaspora's role became that of the big brother to assist the younger in need of help. The next section details how this patronizing tone in many areas of diaspora-Armenia relations affected the

²⁰⁹ For all data related to the US government aid allocation to Armenia, see <http://beta.foreignassistance.gov/explore/country/Armenia>.

diaspora approach to the homeland, as expressed to me by many of my interviewees. Overall, however, the diaspora expressed interest and wanted to become part of the new Armenian republic and its social, cultural, economic, and of course political life, and today the diasporan enthusiasm is increasingly reflected by single cases of repatriation or a desire to repatriate among the young generation in their 20s,²¹⁰ or a will to assist Armenia through cosmopolitan initiatives (Darieva 2011, 2012). The obstacles are also clearly present, especially with the unfriendly legal, social, political, economic environment towards diasporan initiatives.

Diasporic Influences in the Republic of Armenia and its Nation Building Process: between Imaginaries of Ideal Homeland and Images of Real Armenia

In the post-independence period of Armenia, the diaspora transformed from a stateless transstate diaspora, to a state-linked transstate diaspora (Sheffer 2003).²¹¹ The active role of the Armenian diaspora in the struggling homeland began in the late 1980s, but was more evident and significant in the beginning of the 1990s with the struggle for separation from the USSR, and with the concurrent struggle of the Armenians in the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave for the secession from Azerbaijan and the reunification (*mia'tsum*) with Armenia. This era has been characterized and divided into several turning points to identify the antagonism and uncertain nature of the relationship between diaspora and Armenia. Panossian (1998) divides this period into several timeframes which characterize the evolving relationship. I subscribe to his timeline and add two more phases: the 2009 period of the Protocols, which Chapter Five discusses in much more detail,

²¹⁰ The desire to repatriate to Armenia among the younger generation is not a common feature. However, the desire and serious intention have been expressed to me by various youth in my participation in Armenian community organized activities in Lebanon and Canada, for example. This not a trend, by any means, but there are serious considerations and desires and as such it is important to note these. In addition, studies on this subject are needed from a sociological and anthropological perspective as well (exceptions include Darieva 2011, 2012, Mkrtchyan 2009)

²¹¹ In the case of the stateless diasporas, Sheffer argues that these groups remain more attached to homeland politics for a longer period of time, especially when issues related to national identity and nationalist struggles are at stake (2003; 152-3). State-linked diaspora also remain involved in homeland politics, as they would want to influence the homeland government policies on matters of national interest and especially of national identity preservation.

and the 2013 era of the repatriated diasporan, Raffi Hovannissian, running for the 2013 Presidential elections. Chapter Two in this dissertation presented the relationship between the presidents and the diaspora in the context of the discussion on the Karabakh movement, the resolution of the Karabakh conflict that became and remains a sensitive political issue among the elite and the diaspora, the Armenian Genocide recognition, and Turkish-Armenian relations. Therefore, the context of tensions and contested politics was laid out in Chapter Two. The aim of this section is to portray the nature and problems of the diaspora-homeland contacts from the perspective of the interviewees.

The Armenian diaspora's role can be qualified mainly as focused on two main activities: the first is lobbying the governments of the countries of their residence and citizenship, especially in North America and Europe. Two of the strongest and most influential lobbies have been the American Armenian lobbies, the Armenian Assembly of America or AAA and the Armenian National Committee of America or ANCA, which are composed of diverse views.²¹² The second role is focused within the homeland, with the attempt of the three main diasporic Armenian political parties to play an active role as co-decision makers in the political, socio-economic, and cultural life of Armenia and Karabakh. It is the second role in particular that the chapter pays closer attention to.

Many diasporans were also extremely enthusiastic to go to Armenia and invest in the country, to buy real estate to be able to visit there more often. This was not always met with the same welcoming excitement from the government to accommodate them. But the story is more complex and the complications arose from both sides. The following section is divided into three

²¹² For a detailed study on the diaspora organization's role in the hostland and in the homeland, see the work of Khachig Tölölyan (2000). For a study on the historical formation of the Armenian diaspora, see Panossian (2006).

thematic issues that stood out during my fieldwork in Armenia and Karabakh, based primarily on the content of the interviewees (formal and informal), my fieldwork notes and impressions from what I heard from people in general. I also use the existing literature, where available, to complement my views and thematic divisions on the nature and issues that divide or unite the diaspora and Armenia.

Even though the boundaries of diaspora groups are in a constant process of change as they become increasingly porous, they require a redefinition and reframing of Armenianness (Bakalian 1993 for the case of Armenian Americans, for example). However, it remains clear that these diasporas are strong and their boundaries of identification are still sustained by the members and elites. One could argue that the impact of trends such as globalization, transnationalism, and multiculturalism on the diasporas is that these groups are becoming stronger (Bercovitch 2007, 19–22).²¹³

Analogous to the concern with the attachment to the place of origin and belonging, many authors of diaspora studies argue that locality is no longer relevant in contemporary theoretical inquiry, and in the case of the study of diasporas, the imagined locality obscures the experience of the diasporan with his/her place of residence and attempts to overpower the lived and real locality with narratives of imagination (of the homeland) (Schwalg 2004). In this sense, even when the diaspora communities are mobilized to help the homeland, visit it, and even own property there, this does not automatically imply that the diaspora is not ‘comfortable’ in its location. On the contrary, Armenian diasporans often have a strong local attachment to the physical place of their

²¹³ Home states are also seeking out to cooperate with the diasporas abroad for practical and instrumental purposes. In addition, as Sheffer argues, these processes in the world “have only encouraged diaspora’s emergence, continuation, increase and revival” (2005, 125).

host country (or city/state/province), and they are deeply shaped by the local habitus. It is for this reason that Armenians express a diversity of national habituses, - often a source of clash when Armenians from different host countries come into contact, due to the cultural differences among different diasporan Armenian communities (Talai 1989; Pattie 2005). Conflict in habituses also often occur between the older diaspora or the *syurk* and the newcomer immigrants from post-Soviet (or Soviet) Armenia, particularly around values that the *spyurk* identifies itself with, as Susan Pattie's research in the United States shows, "When new immigrants come and are given what is seen as a "soft ride" by welfare agencies – or worse, try to slip into the cracks and live off the black market – European and American Armenians begin to froth: these people are not really Armenians!" (2005, 60) Often, these statements are made against former Soviet Armenian immigrants. The clash of habituses is not meant to portray an impossible reconciliation and harmonization of habituses for the Armenian diaspora(s), but it is meant to depict the diversity of values, cultures, backgrounds and the different socialization that diasporans experience in shaping their dispositions to become 'Armenians'. The regimes and the countries' system within which diasporas socialize also matter in the understanding of habitus, since it creates a different mental mapping of the social space and different understanding of how things work in a context (see the example below on how some Armenian diasporas feel more 'comfortable' and familiar with the workings of the Armenian system based on their own dispositions and feel for the game.) In addition, the shaping of diasporans' dispositions is also heavily impacted by the denial versus recognition of the state within which they live - for example, in the United States Armenian lobby groups actively strive to get the Genocide recognized on a federal level (see the study by MacDonald 2008 for the case of Armenia in a comparative context).

In the fall of 1990, the three political parties established their offices in Armenia, attempting to find ways to participate politically and become actively involved in the local decision-making processes. Although the Ramgavar and Hunchak parties had more contacts with the Armenian leadership of the Soviet era, the changes in 1988 and with the independence of Armenia, the perception of the people towards these parties changed more negatively – these two parties had established close ties to the Soviet Armenian leadership and cooperated with the Armenian SSR; it seems their initial desire to always remain close to the Armenian people and assist them, even if that meant cooperation with the Soviets, somewhat backfired. The Ramgavars and Hunchaks were not able to establish strong bases of support and membership in Armenia in the early years, and even today. The Hunchaks were also weakened due to a split within their party, not only in Lebanon (their strongest foothold) but also in Armenia, as the head of the party, Lyudmila Sargsyan, explained to me (2011). Today the Hunchak party is closely aligned with Ter-Petrosyan and is a member of the Armenian National Congress in Armenia. The Dashnaks were enthusiastic about their involvement in Armenia, and they came to the homeland's assistance after the 1988 Gyumri Earthquake. The next section depicts the ways in which tensions were built between the diaspora(s) and the homeland, focusing on the main points of disagreement between them.

The Evolution of Armenia-diaspora(s) Relations within the Armenian Political Scene

After his election as president in October 1991, Levon Ter-Petrosyan and his government set off to plan for the coming years, and the government needed a whole new institutional design and the ministries were to be built from scratch. Ter-Petrosyan invited many people from the diaspora to partake in this endeavor and provide assistance with their knowledge, expertise, and experience to Armenia. According to one of my interviewees, Ter-Petrosyan was a believer that the

diaspora should participate in the state building, and he invited many people from the West to help build the state, and this was similar to the experience of many post-Soviet (and post-communist) countries such as Ukraine (Eduard Melkonyan, Author's interview, 2011). For example, Raffi Hovhannisian from California was invited as the Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1991, and Gerard J. Libaridian, a Lebanese-born US citizen and university lecturer at the University of Michigan, became Levon Ter-Petrosyan's main advisor on foreign policy issues from 1991-1997 and became actively involved in the Karabakh conflict resolution.²¹⁴ Raffi Hovhannisian stated how it all began with a few people, who had "not only the challenge for charting of a new policy for Armenia, but also creating an entire institution, it was not as if there was presidential elections and a change of administration [took place], we just came in and provided our own different accent. It was almost like starting from scratch." (Hovhannisian, Author's Interview, 2011). The latter resigned from his position in 1992 over issues on the relationship of Armenia with Turkey, a resignation that weighed negatively on the Ter-Petrosyan administration and further intensified the tensions with the diaspora, especially the Dashnak party.

Inviting disaporans to head ministries and become part of the government was not done on a large scale in Armenia, but the second President Kocharyan also invited Vartan Oskanian, another diasporan Armenian from the United States of America, to become the Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1998 until 2008. This recruitment from the diaspora did not continue for such high ranking positions into the Sargsyan era, though many of the diasporans who were in government continue to have a strong social and political impact in Armenia today, such as Hovannian and Oskanian,

²¹⁴ Gerard Libaridian published several books and articles on Armenia's independence, Armenia-diaspora relations and so on. He is a controversial figure in the diaspora since he was on Ter-Petrosyan's side and continued to support the ideas that were being planned during his own time in Armenia serving the government. He wrote the detailed book *The Challenge of Statehood* to highlight the difficult years of independence in Armenia and the controversies that Ter-Petrosyan's administration faced with the diaspora and other important issues for a new state.

for example. Even the Ministry of Diaspora established in 2008 during the Sargsyan presidency, does not have many repatriated or invited diasporans on its staff – the exception being Vartan Marashlyan, deputy Minister of Diaspora, who is a repatriate from Russia.

Another interesting example on the initial stages of the relationship between the diaspora and the Ter-Petrosyan government was when Vazgen I passed away and the discussion on the successor of the leadership both in Armenia and in the diaspora began. Although the conflict in the Armenian Church is known to the diaspora (especially to the one in North America), the post-Soviet Armenians did not know much about the Cilicia Catholicosat.²¹⁵ This was a unique election for the Catholicos, because for the first time there was no direct pressure from the Soviet Union or Russia, or Ottoman Turkey. Melkonyan continues that “Levon Ter-Petrosyan at some point expressed his view that Karekin II Catholicos should become the Karekin I of Etchmiadzin....also at that time the relationship between HHSh [ANM] and Dashnak party was loose. And here he made that statement in an interview in Hayasdani Hanrapetutiu newspaper: he thought the opportunity was there and so on.” It is possible that what Ter-Petrosyan was trying to say here is that, Karekin II of Cilicia (he was the main Catholicos who played the vital role in administering and insuring the separation of the churches would be achieved) would become the Etchmiadzin Catholicos of all-Armenians to reduce the power of the other Antelias Church, which he stated should return to the 1956 borders. What is interesting here, as Melkonyan points out, is that there was a discussion initiated by the President of Armenia on the issue of the separation of the

²¹⁵ The experts and researchers knew of it but not the people – and even today it remains unknown to many, according to Melkonyan, Author’s interview, 2011.

churches, and even though he did not get a response from Karekin II, it was an initiative that was taken and one wonders what Karekin II would really have wanted.²¹⁶

Levon Ter-Petrosyan's political stances, decisions, and conceptions led to many discords within his administration. The major disagreements were based on four general issues: Karabakh, his economic orientation, the elections in 1996, his rapprochement policies with Turkey, and his negligence of the more 'nationalist' concerns expressed by some parties. Particularly within these discords, his clashes with the Dashnak party, viewed as the main diaspora party, were important, and had a long lasting impact in Armenian politics until today. The clash was at its peak in 1994 when Ter-Petrosyan decided to ban the Dashnak party, and closed its newspaper and offices. In fact, he had already expelled the Dashnak leader in Armenia, Hrayr Marukhian, in 1992. Not only did he ban the party 'temporarily', but he accused them of spying, terrorism, and drug trafficking. In some sense, he wanted to remind the diaspora that this was not their republic to run, and that he was the president. Before the official was announced, twelve Dashnak members were arrested on charges of murder, possession of false documents, and so on; they were tried and found guilty with sentences ranging from three years of prison time to death.²¹⁷ The response was strong and unbalanced, and remains a scar in the very vague and superficial relationship that binds the Dashnaks with the ANM and Armenian National Congress opposition bloc headed by Ter-

²¹⁶ It is the place or time to comment and elaborate on the separation of the Churches and the discussion of their unification or not here, but to briefly explain, the unification of the Armenian Churches, as the one the Russian Church underwent a few years ago, is not an easy process, after years of becoming institutionalized from the Ottoman Empire to the Soviet one. In addition, this institutionalization includes the complex issue of the Church assets and properties accumulated over the years, including buildings, schools, churches, lands, and other assets in the Museums and so on. As Melkonyan commented to me during our interview, "today there is a weak relationship between the churches, and Aram's famous slogan is "one Church and two Catholicoses" (Author's Interview, 2011, author's translation).

²¹⁷ The ban was initiated on December 28, 1994, but the arrests continued into 1995, when Vahan Hovhannisyan (the Dashnak MP today) was also arrested, among 30 other members, who were tried only in 1996. The various diaspora parties and organizations expressed their disapproval and refusal to accept the ban: the Ramgavar party for instance considered the ban as undemocratic, and many other supporters of the Ter-Petrosyan regime became increasingly skeptical of the ungrounded banning of a diaspora party.

Petrosyan (ANC) today. The Dashnak party was no longer able to function legally in Armenia, although it seems the government was tolerant to its activities (Panossian 2001).

The party was reinstated with the coming to power of Kocharyan in 1998, the Dashnak ally. This is thus another turning point in the history of the diaspora-homeland relationship due to the harsh alienation of the Dashnaks from Armenian politics. The Dashnaks, to approach the reasons more critically in terms of the attitude of the party in the early years of independence, were also in a struggle for power with the Armenian state and president – perhaps they believed the incumbent president at the time was not nationalist enough. However, even in a critical mode, the banning of the Dashnak party reflected negatively on the Armenian government. The major issue of dispute between the ANM and Dashnak was based on nationalist grounds, due to Ter-Petrosyan's approach of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution and the issue of prioritizing the recognition of the Genocide as the main aim of the foreign policy of Armenia against its rapprochement with Turkey.

Stereotyping the Relationship: Facing the Realities of Each Other

Visiting Armenia has been an important ‘duty’ for every Armenian since independence, and particularly in the past decade or so. There are several organizations that have created specific programs and channels of facilitating this travel in a way that can connect the diaspora to Armenia

more concretely, such as Birthright Armenia, Ari Tun, and Discover Armenia.²¹⁸ In addition, contributing to all projects and funds to aid Armenia is considered a necessity and, in fact, since 1988 “*sending financial and material aid to Armenia has become the operative paradigm in the homeland-diaspora relations*” (Panossian 1998, 175, emphasis in original). The anticipation in the early years, and to a lesser extent today, is quickly confronted with disappointment with what people saw and experienced, and how they interacted with the locals. There was mutual dislike based on stereotypes, perceptions, and so on. Many other issues came out in this phase of exchange between the two sides: Armenians regarded the diasporans as arrogant, patronizing, ready to teach them how to live, spend, and dress. The impression of the diasporans was not positive either, as they came to understand that their idealization of Armenia was not based on its reality, neither aesthetically, nor in its lifestyle and mentality.²¹⁹ The local Armenian habitus did not seem to please all diasporans, especially those from the Western habituses (for e.g. USA, France, Canada) due to the informal networking ‘culture’ in Armenia, bribing, corruption and the absence of the rule of law, particularly palpable in the business sector for the diasporans. Eduard Melkonyan, a

²¹⁸ Birthright Armenia, which was established in 2003 by Edele Hovnanian, an American Armenian who has been visiting Armenia since the late 1970s, states the following as its mission statement: “it is every Armenian's birthright to not only see Armenia, but also experience their homeland via an enriching, hands-on, life-changing experience,” and it mission is “to strengthen ties between the homeland and diasporan youth, by affording them an opportunity to be a part of Armenia's daily life and to contribute to Armenia's development through work, study and volunteer experiences, while developing life-long personal ties and a renewed sense of Armenian identity.” Available at <http://www.birthrightarmenia.org/en/about-us>. While Birthright Armenia seems to target mostly youth from the Western diaspora, a similar project, *Ari Tun*, which has been run by the Ministry of Diaspora since 2008, seems to attract Armenian youth primarily from Russia, Ukraine, Georgia (including Abkhazia), and some from Europe, the Americas, and the Middle East, according to the *Ari Tun* 2014 participant list available on the website (<http://aritun.am/>) For example, the Hrant Dink Foundation in Turkey has also assisted in finding sponsors in order to send Armenian youth from Turkey to partake in the *Ari Tun* project, see <http://www.hrantdink.org/?Detail=5&Activities=2&Lang=en&Home&Lang=ar> Another similar program is run by the Armenian General Benevolent Union, *Discover Armenia*, which provides “a unique opportunity for Armenian youth from the diaspora to reconnect with their ancestral homeland during a three-week adventure that's filled with exploration, visits to ancient Armenian monuments, meetings with prominent political and social figures, cultural events, and humanitarian and community service activities.” www.discoverarmenia.org/our-program.php

²¹⁹ These impressions were shared with me by several interviewees who spoke both on the record and off the record. In addition, many repatriated Armenians I spoke to informally during my fieldwork in Yerevan, expressed their views about how the local *hayastantsis* (Armenians) had changed, especially referring to *Hayastantsi* women's appearance in the early years of independence in a derogatory tone – that they did not take care of their appearance, what they wore, and so on.

migration and diaspora studies scholar in Armenia, pointed out that the interrelationship between the diaspora and Armenia is complicated due to several issues, and in a way his point relates very well with my comparison of diasporic habituses:

I see a difference between the different communities, in terms of difference of the host community. Syrian Armenian is different from American Armenian, the country affects the person, lifestyle (*kensatsev*), philosophy [of life], expectations, and perception of democracy, corruption, bribery...so the host country is different and this creates differences in the diaspora communities. So the Lebanese Armenian and Syrian Armenian come here [to Armenia] and the [local] culture in Armenia seems familiar to them, the corruption and bribery. The [clash of habituses] is not as big as with the diasporan coming from America or Canada. (Author's Interview, 2011, author's translation)

More importantly, however, many diasporans believed that the way the local Armenians were living was not 'purely Armenian' – in the standards diasporans had imagined it to be (also see Panossian 1998, 170) According to the latter, they were not careful to preserve their culture, they spoke Russian or a mixture, and they were influenced very negatively by the Soviet Union – the clothing, songs, lifestyle, language, and even the cuisine was different. Many referred to local Armenians (and Karabakhis) as lazy, as taking advantage of the diasporan wealth.²²⁰ The diaspora relationship with the homeland Armenians can also be analyzed by looking at their interaction in host countries where both are/become diasporans. For example Susan Pattie explains that in the United States, European and Western Armenians, who identify themselves with values such as 'hard-working' and 'ambitious', often describe ex-Soviet Armenians (and diasporans who do not

²²⁰ I have heard this statement from several diasporan Armenians who have visited Armenia for short term tourist trips. They may or may not have visited Nagorno-Karabakh during these trips, but they had their own understanding of the problems of Karabakh. There seems to be a perception that the money the diaspora sends home (for example through the Artsakh Fund from Lebanon to Karabakh) is not leading to strong socio-economic changes not only because of the existing institutional corruption in Karabakh, but also due to the 'laziness' of local Armenians to work hard on the lands given to them and make changes to their lives. This is often based on misinformation about the local context. The situation in Karabakh is much more difficult and my fieldwork and trips to Karabakh have demonstrated to me the challenges people face.

fit those values) who rely on welfare agencies or earn a living from the black market as “not really Armenians” and “guilty of playing the system and not really working.” (Pattie 2005, 60) As Ulf Björklund also concludes in her study of the diaspora-homeland relations, the Armenian homeland represents “in the minds of many diasporans, a pure and unspoiled Armenianness, [is] now found to the unworthy of such idealization: petty-minded, greedy, crassly materialist, as well as lazy, fatalistic, and lacking initiative – in a word, a rather corrupt version of the Armenian ‘race’” (1993, 356-7; diaspora scholars have found the disappointment of both sides to be quite similar in many cases, see Safran 1991; also see Chan and Tran 2011 for the Vietnamese diaspora).

To sum up, the two discovered each other, and realized that all they had imagined was replaced by the realities of life. There was mutual disappointment, and for the diasporans, many felt that Armenia was not their homeland, as they could not make that connection. Even the way the Armenians commemorated the Genocide in Armenia is different than in the diaspora(s). This was a point that was also raised by Giro Manoyan, who is the Director of the International Secretariat and Armenian Cause (*Hai Tad*) Office of the Dashnak Party in Armenia, and he pointed out that “the Genocide is more of a grieving time [here in Armenia] than in the diaspora.” Manoyan stated to me that many from the diaspora who had attended the commemoration of the Armenian Genocide in Yerevan on April 24th, had expressed disappointment at the ‘style’ of the organization and its content, in his words:

Oh, what is this? Diasporan Armenians expressed to me. There are no protests, no posters, no demands, how come? They [local Armenians] are just walking and commemorating? This is totally based on his or her Los Angeles perspective, and she or he is looking at the situation through these narrow lenses. This [type of commemoration and grieving] is normal here, because the TV channels all day are about the Genocide demands, events, and claims...and people's participation is not with the organizations or organizers, but it is just voluntary. Individual initiatives can reach up to hundred of thousands of people commemorating in Armenia....And we see that since 1965, when protests were organized [in Soviet Armenia], people were

claiming the territories of Western Armenia. We have to accept that in the diaspora it is more a memory issue than a reality....here [in Armenia] it is more a reality because it is related to the territory Ararat – if for the diaspora Ararat is more of a photo hung on the walls, here in Armenia, when the weather is nice, half of Armenia can see Ararat. It has more meaning to see Ararat from here than from the diaspora.” (Author’s Interview, May 2011, author’s translation.)

These are powerful words stated by Manoyan that build the dichotomy of imagined versus lived experience of the Western Armenian territories (in eastern Turkey today), for example. Even though the diaspora feels that it owns this memory, given how strongly its identity is tied to the traumatic experience of 1915 and how powerful its lobbying efforts to get the recognition of various countries has been, it is often forgotten that almost half the population in Armenia is descended from Genocide survivors. In addition, the proximity to the ‘sacred lands’ of Western Armenia does provide a sense of reality to Armenians, something that I personally also experienced from my apartment’s bedroom window in Yerevan. On nice days with a clear sky, Ararat powerfully stands in all its might in the foreground – this is hard to ignore. The diaspora’s whole existence is based on the ideology of survival and sustenance of culture and identity, and, in their view, the local Armenians do not reflect that Armenianness. Even though diasporans visit Armenia and sometimes even interact with the locals (mostly on superficial levels), they remain isolated from them. This is also true of the local Armenians, since they do not see themselves interacting with diasporans who are ‘different’. Obviously some exceptions exist, and many diasporans or ‘repatriates’ have successfully established their lives in Armenia post-1991. Overall, however, the relationship is tainted with superficial knowledge of each other: diasporan Armenians continue to visit Armenia, preferring to stay in downtown Yerevan in Western style hotels and visiting western style restaurants and cafes. But this Armenia is only an abstraction, a museum of

all things Armenian, since diasporans only explore it through touristic eyes. As Salpi Ghazarian put it so eloquently to me:

The diaspora thought and still thinks this is a big picnic, it's a big Church, a big AGBU [Armenian General Benevolent Union], it is a big something, and I want to go and have my picture taken and have a good time, and I want to be buried there, and I want to visit there, and I want to give advice there. That is not nation building, the Armenian connection through the diaspora cannot just be a feel good, it cannot be out of a sense of guilt...of longing...of obligation in its rawest sense. It has to be out of a sense of engagement...of recognition that at the end of the day, what the diaspora is, how it lives, how it's perceived, how it self-identifies...[the diaspora] is intrinsically de facto linked to this place [Armenia]. (Author's Interview, 2011)

Armenia was and continues to encounter many changes aesthetically, demographically, and culturally. The images of Yerevan by the many who visited it until 2001 were more unpleasant (to the diasporan imaginaries) than the post-2002 Yerevan for example. There were many projects of reconstruction in Armenia, especially in downtown Yerevan, contributed to a large extent by the diaspora Armenians. In fact, many of these projects have benefitted from diasporan funding that has changed the image of Yerevan from an old city to a more 'modern' city with several new expensive projects, restaurants, clothing stores, and real estate property. The Northern Avenue is the most known of these extensive projects. Even though the plans included exciting new projects that would make this pedestrian friendly area of Yerevan attractive for locals, it remains a space that simultaneously alienates the locals as it attracts them as a 'hang-out zone'. The alienation is due to the expensive indulgences and especially the expensive real estate, and the Northern Avenue also connects pedestrians to the centre of the city's most touristic zone, where several Western hotel chains surround the Republic Square (e.g. Marriott Hotel). When I visited that area during

my fieldwork in Armenia, the sense of emptiness is felt quite strongly due to the empty buildings with apartments that the large majority of local Armenians (and many diasporans) cannot afford.²²¹

Many families who moved or ‘repatriated’ to the capital around that time faced a great deal of difficulty in integrating, as explained to me by Maria Titizian who moved with her family to Armenia in 2001 from Montreal, Canada. She recollects the early years of pain and difficulty – there were differences between the diaspora and the locals on the financial, cultural, and linguistic levels. In her words:

Repatriation problems [exist] as well. When we [first] came [to Armenia] there were no street lamps, no supermarkets, in 2001. That is still considered to be the good times. It was not only about the physical hardship, certain amenities, everyone can live without those. For me it was the cultural barriers. Very very limited interaction between diaspora and Armenia. First there is the financial barrier – the standard of living was better even though we are not upper class. I made efforts to integrate. If I wanted to invite the parents of [my] children in school...I would serve stuff, our Middle Eastern table, the people were in shock because they could not reciprocate, they did not have the means. Second thing, the *Hayastantsis* hated the diaspora. It was an epiphany for me, how naive I was....we do not speak the same language because we have assumptions about each other. (Author’s Interview, 2011)

One of the stories she shared with me was particularly striking in the case of repatriated diasporans’ relations to their homeland. When her children began schooling in Armenia, the teacher complained to the mother that her children, who spoke western Armenian as most *spurk* diasporans from North America do, were ‘mispronouncing’ the Armenian letters in Eastern Armenian – the linguistic barrier is a palpable factor that becomes a strong identity marker for

²²¹ The destruction of the ‘old’ in Yerevan’s architectural treasures is not solely the diaspora’s responsibility but that of many local wealthy Armenian businessmen. For an interesting and critical report on the changes in city that have prioritized the destruction of the old buildings of Yerevan in order to be replaced with the newer, more ‘modern’ styles, see the report by Liana Aghajanian. 2015. “City of Dust: How an Ongoing Construction Boom Is Destroying Yerevan’s Architectural Heritage” in *ianyan Magazine*. Available at <http://www.iayanmag.com/city-of-dust-how-an-ongoing-construction-boom-is-destroying-yerevans-architectural-heritage/>. Accessed on May 10, 2015.

Armenians in the diaspora.²²² Maria Tiitizian explained to me that she feels more comfortable with her repatriated friends from Lebanon, Syria, Canada, USA because there is “common history, common food, music...” (*ibid.*) What is further important to note in the creation of localized habituses of Armenian repatriates in Armenia is the ‘building’ of territorialized habituses of repatriates who tend to live in the same complexes and buildings. As Marutyan states, the Armenian diasporans, especially from Iran, Lebanon and USA,

as a rule, have preferred to purchase apartments in new ‘elite’ buildings built by diasporans and in line with European standards.²²³ There are apartment buildings that are completely inhabited by diasporans...continuing the example of the “Vahakni” residential community,²²⁴ diasporan Armenians want to create for themselves isolated macro- and micro-districts that...exclude almost any contact with local Armenians. (see Marutyan 2006, 153-154, author’s translation)

The linguistic differences between western and eastern Armenian dialects are based on different pronunciations for some of the same letters, a different grammar, and sometimes different words to describe similar things. This is not a light matter of discord, especially since the western Armenian language is classified by the UNESCO as an endangered language. Language is arguably at the heart of defining Armenianness, especially since the Armenian language, part of the Indo-European language group, has its unique alphabet. For many diasporans, language may

²²² The pronunciation of the Armenian alphabet in western and eastern Armenian differs significantly on a few of the letters. The Armenian language has two writings of the same sound: the letter ‘t’ is written in two different letters in the alphabet. In western Armenian, they are both pronounced similarly, while in eastern Armenian, one of them is pronounced with more emphasis sounding more like a ‘d’. For example, the Armenian currency is ‘tram’ in western Armenian and ‘dram’ in eastern Armenian. There are several other regional dialects as well, such as the Karabakh region’s Armenian dialect that is not comprehensible to an ‘outsider’ who may speak both western and eastern Armenia. See Martirosyan (2008) for a complete explanation of these complexities of the Armenian language. Also see <http://www.lmp.ucla.edu/Profile.aspx?menu=004&LangID=55>

²²³ These buildings are in fact most often constructed by diasporan-owned companies, a business niche that has become acquired by the diasporan businessmen who live and/or invest in Armenia. During my fieldwork in Armenia, I had the opportunity to visit several of these apartments. In many cases, these apartments are built as complexes with a few buildings in one gated area, with a pool, underground parking and an on-site building ‘manager’. The interior architecture of the apartments is designed based on North American and European designs. In most cases, locals cannot afford to buy these apartments, whose prices compete with European market housing prices – between 140,000-200,000USD for an apartment of one to two bedrooms.

²²⁴ <http://www.vahakni.com/index.cfm?objectid=FFD861AF-FB05-72D6-46E835F104C4F6E9>

distinguish them from the ‘others’ in the host countries including the ‘other’ post-Soviet diasporans who have been migrating to the West, particularly Los Angeles.

The Armenian diaspora-homeland relations were also tarnished by the legacies of the Soviet institutions that were inherited by the new government in handling this relationship, of which the Ministry of Diaspora is a revealing example since its establishment in 2008. Even though Armenians have been a diaspora since 1915 (and even earlier) and 1991, the ministry of diaspora was only established in Armenia in 2008. The ministry itself, and the minister Hranush Hakobyan have been the source of tension between the diaspora and the homeland. The website and activities organized by the diaspora are targeted by various diaspora groups. For example, a recent initiative by the Diaspora Ministry was the launch of a section on their website called ‘the Armenian Diaspora Virtual Museum’; this was harshly attacked by various parties in the diaspora and Armenia, some referring to it as a ‘Virtual Embarrassment’.²²⁵ The common criticism I heard from the diaspora was that the Ministry of Diaspora in Armenia cannot and should not speak on behalf of the diaspora. In this sense, perhaps the issue at stake here is regarding the *raison d'être* of this ministry in the first place. What is its role? What does it attempt to do to establish strong links with the diaspora? Who is the audience of its website? Obviously, there are several assumptions behind this Armenian government body regarding the diaspora.

However, there are several also successful projects that have been launched under the umbrella leadership of the ministry and they are considered to be positive collaborations, such as

²²⁵ Hrant Gadarigan, “Armenian Diaspora Virtual Museum Responds to Critique: “We Need Time””, *Hetq*, March 1, 2012, available at <http://hetq.am/eng/news/11951/armenian-diaspora-virtual-museum-responds-to-critique-we-need-time.html>, accessed on January 5, 2015; Hrant Gadarigan, “Diaspora Ministry’s Much Heralded “Virtual Museum” is a “Virtual Embarrassment”” in *Hetq*, available at <http://hetq.am/eng/news/11870/diaspora-ministrys-much-heralded-virtual-museum-is-a-virtual-embarrassment.html>, accessed on January 5, 2015; Simon Maghakyan, “Is Ministry of Diaspora’s New Site a “Virtual Embarrassment”? in *Ararat Magazine*, April 2, 2012, available at <http://araratmagazine.org/2012/04/is-ministry-of-diasporas-new-site-a-virtual-embarrassment/> accessed on January 5, 2015; Ara Khachatourian, “Diaspora Ministry’s Affront to the Diaspora” in *Asbarez News*, March 13, 2012, available at <http://asbarez.com/101597/diaspora-ministrys-affront-to-the-diaspora/> accessed on January 5, 2015.

Ari Tun launched in 2009. About 5000 youth have participated in *Ari Tun* from different countries.²²⁶ Young diaspora Armenians, between the ages of 13-18, come to Armenia, where they stay over a host family home for the period of their stay. According to the website, the goals of the program are “to introduce Diaspora Armenian youth to Armenian history, culture, public life, religion and family traditions; build strong relations with the Homeland; reinforce national identity and establish kin relations between youth of Armenia and the Diaspora.” In addition, the ministry also enjoys positive relations with several diaspora organizations, including the AGBU.

Dual Citizenship: Formality or Real Concerns?

The right of dual citizenship for Armenians is one of the most important topics in the diaspora-homeland relationship, especially in a newly established state, and an important marker for Armenian nation building and its direction. The achievement of dual citizenship was only accomplished in 2007. The Dashnaks have been the strongest advocates of this right, and this caused more tensions in their relationship with Levon Ter-Petrosyan. But Armenian citizenship is not simply a symbolic gesture of emotion to a nation living outside the borders of the homeland, but in this case it also includes a political aim: the Dashnaks believed strongly that the diaspora should have the right to have a say in Armenian political affairs, should be involved in the decision-making process by voting in elections and also being able to occupy government positions by running for office (*Asbarez News* 2005).²²⁷ The bill was proposed by the Dashnak party during the Ter-Petrosyan era (1991-1998), but Ter-Petrosyan and his allies had feared that allowing dual citizenship might lead to a strong increase in the number of votes for the Dashnak candidates

²²⁶ The *Ari Tun* website is available at www.aritun.am/en/about-the-project. The participants came from various countries around the world, including (mostly from) Russia, Georgia, and Ukraine, and also from Turkmenistan, Poland, Latvia, Syria, Lebanon, France, USA, and others.

²²⁷ Available at <http://asbarez.com/blog/archives/52275>

(Danielyan 2007).²²⁸ The Armenian government was not cooperative on this point, and many Armenian diasporans who had served in the government were not given dual citizenship. This was problematic because it meant they had to give up their citizenship from other countries where they still had strong ties.²²⁹ In addition, many who had moved with their whole families to live and work in Armenia, were also not given the citizenship – they were legal residents who had right of property, work and so on. There was a limitation to citizenship – it was only given after proof of 10 years residence in Armenia. In fact, the 10 year residency permit in Armenia gave repatriated Armenians the right to live, work, and even own land. To many diasporans, this was enough to live comfortably in Armenia, while for others, citizenship was a necessary step to confirm their legal belonging and their emotional ties to the new homeland.

Over the years, even after Levon Ter-Petrosyan's presidency, the debate over dual citizenship remained on the table without any clear resolution. It was only on February 26, 2007 that Armenia's parliament adopted the law on dual citizenship, with Republican MPs signing under pressure from the president Robert Kocharyan, who had promised to bring dual citizenship perhaps in efforts to appease the diaspora Armenians – especially the Dashnak party which was his ally. The details of the dual citizenship laws and conditions are debated among politicians, academics, and legal experts both in Armenia and in the diaspora. But today, officially, the Armenian government has opened up the possibility to apply for citizenship whether through the Armenian government in Yerevan, or through the Armenian consulates abroad. The process is relatively simple and does not require much paperwork and it takes about six months to a year to receive

²²⁸ Emil Danielyan. 2007. "Armenia Allows Dual Citizenship amid Controversy." *Eurasianet*. February 25, 2007. Available at <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav022607.shtml>. Accessed on May 10, 2015.

²²⁹ Many of my interviewees raised this problem, for example Raffi Hovannisian (2013 presidential candidate in Armenia and former Foreign Policy Minister 1991-2), Salpi Ghazarian, Maria Titizian, and others.

citizenship. After the struggle to obtain this right, according to Vahan Hovannisian, the MP of the Dashnak party, dual citizenship was not received with a high level of enthusiasm. As he pointed out to me during our interview, even though his party had fought for the right of all Armenians for dual citizenship, there were no lines waiting at the embassies for applications and the number of applicants generally remains very low (Author's Interview, 2011). The situation has changed since the conflict erupted in Syria starting March 2011, for example in traditionally Armenian villages (Kessab, north-western Syria) and cities where Armenians had lived for many years such as Aleppo, especially since the beginning of armed conflict in this city in July 2012.²³⁰ About 11,000 Syrian Armenians have moved to Armenia since 2011, according to *Tert News*, for whom the government of Armenia and the Ministry of Diaspora along with other organizations have decided to build 'New Aleppo' district about twenty kilometres away from Yerevan for the Syrian Armenian families.²³¹ Funding from the diaspora has assisted the Syrian Armenians who remain in Syria and those who have moved to Armenia.²³² But the situation of Armenians who have escaped to Armenia to find refuge has not been without great difficulties, from finding employment, housing arrangements – identified as the primary obstacle for the comfortable integration of Syrian Armenians in Armenia (Balkhian 2014). Citizenship has been easily granted to all Syrian

²³⁰ For the impact of the conflict on Armenians from Syria and the conditions and difficulties they face as they begin their lives in Armenia, see the report by Andrew Connelly from *The Independent*, available at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/syria-conflict-a-century-after-the-genocide-armenians-flee-war-and-return-to-land-of-their-ancestors-10173968.html>. Also see the report by Anna Nigmatulina from *Al Jazeera*, available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2015/04/syrians-armenia-refugee-story-150412132753714.html>. *The Armenian Weekly*, a diaspora Armenian newspaper affiliated with the Dashnak party, has extensively covered this topic as well.

²³¹ There are several organizations in Armenia that are working to make Syrian Armenians' integration in Armenia more comfortable, especially since many of the 'refugees' had to leave everything behind, and are thus without any financial resources to secure themselves. For more information on the Syrian Armenians in Armenia, the difficulties and challenges they face, and about New Aleppo district, see the interview with Lena Haladjyan, the Director of the Centre for Coordination of Syrian-Armenians' Issues NGO in Armenia, available at <http://hayernaysor.am/>. Also see the report by *Tert News* in Armenia, available at <http://www.tert.am/am/news/2014/01/05/lena-alajyan/966659>.

²³² For example the Syrian Armenian Relief Fund which includes donations from Armenian Churches, political parties and organizations from all political spectrums, see <http://syrianarmenianrelieffund.org/about.php>.

Armenians, and there have been some changes in the regulations in Armenia to accommodate their needs and situations. Upon the recommendations by Hranush Hakopyan, the Minister of Diaspora of Armenia, whereas previously those who had been granted Armenian citizenship had to receive their passports at the Passport and Visa Office (OVIR) in Yerevan, the regulation changes now allow ethnic Armenians to receive the citizenship and Armenian passport from the Armenian embassies and consulates in the host countries, according to *News.am* (2012),²³³ and several Syrian Armenians have received citizenship since 2011, according to *YerkirMedia* (2015).²³⁴

Memory of Genocide and Identifying Armenianness

Due to the forced dispersal and massacre of the Armenians from 1915 in the Ottoman Empire, the identity of Genocide survivor is deeply rooted in the self-perception of the Armenian diasporans. The Genocide was the ‘equalizer’ of Armenian identity since everyone, no matter what their social or economic rank was, became a victim (Libaridian 2011, 76).²³⁵ The Genocide of 1915 is therefore considered a “founding event” (Ter-Minassian 1994, 220) or the “founding ‘moment’” of the *spyurk* identity, to use Panossian’s characterization, whereby the “sense of victimhood eased its debilitating hold on the Armenian psyche, martyrdom – mixed with rage and a national cause – [and] drove subsequent generations to pursue national(ist) goals.” (Panossian 2006, 242; also see 236-242)

The Genocide and forced dispersal caused the largest diasporization of the Armenians around the world – the first largest refugee and survivor migration took place to Syria, Lebanon,

²³³ <http://news.am/arm/news/114866.html>

²³⁴ About 422 Ayrian Armenians have applied for Armenian citizens in 2010, 2983 in 2011, 2669 in 2012. <http://www.yerkirmedia.am/%3Fact%3Dnews%26lan%3Den%26id%3D6099?act=news&lan=hy&id=8128>

²³⁵ Chapter Three distinguishes women’s suffering during the Genocide and in the aftermath and the burden they had to carry in the post-Genocide community building and identity maintenance. In this sense, the Genocide suffering and victimhood is not equal.

and other countries in the region as well as in Europe. And it is this diaspora from the Middle East that constitutes the largest migration towards North America, Australia, and Europe as well. The diasporic self-identification of Armenians changed after the “founding event”: Armenians were no longer the diaspora of “merchants, laborers, fortune seekers, intellectuals and political exiles. Rather it was of refugees, starving survivors and a deeply scarred people.” (Panossian, 2006, 239) The victim identity also filters through the activities and being of diaspora groups and organizations. In addition, the mentality of being a diasporan is completely enveloped in the notion of survivor, rendering the loss of Armenian identity, such as religion, language, cuisine, and memory as ‘white massacre’ as Armenians note. The diaspora groups have existed to fight against waves of assimilation and integration in the host society, and, in large part, their efforts have been successful. The conception of Armenianness in the diaspora is in a constant process of change, and the tight boundaries around markers of Armenianness are increasing becoming more fluid and porous (for example, see Bakalian 1993).

The identity of victimhood is not only an issue of existence, however; it becomes a burden weighing sometimes negatively on the Armenian diasporans. This has been the main view from critics, who advocate ways of ‘coming out’ of this state. Harutyun Marutyan, a scholar on genocide identity and memory, is a proponent of this perspective. His research shows that the identity of genocide survivor and victim infiltrated the Armenian nation’s struggle in 1988, especially after the massacre of Armenians in Sumgait, Baku (Marutyan 2005 and 2009). The ‘victim’ identity is directly tied to the present and also future of a nation, according to Libaridian, and the importance of facing forward with the ability to have a debate about the future. He writes:

The Genocide, its exploitation, and its denial by Turkey have paralyzed the collective psyche of the Armenian people. A nation of victims –at first of the violence, and subsequently of its denial – is incapable of sustaining a rational discourse. a nation

cannot imagine the future if the only thing it can imagine the future bringing is further victimization. The denial of the future justifies the denial of the present and mandates an obsessive treatment of an overburdened past....We, in the Diaspora, should have the humility and courage to recognize that our institutions were not built to face the new, and bigger, challenges facing our nation...The time had come to reassess the issues of the past decades, to understand history and act in a way that makes real participation and real change possible. The time had come to distinguish between the real and the ritualistic. (1991, 1-2)

The diaspora existence and continuation was due to the strength of the collective memory of Genocide, which has, to a large extent, unified Armenians in their diasporan identity of Armenianness. This identity, despite the tensions within the diasporan communities, has been the diaspora's identity,²³⁶ and to many this is not how *Hayastantsis* identify themselves in today's homeland (Maria Titizian, Author's Interview, 2011). This memory, in many ways one can conclude is the 'ownership' of the diaspora, and therefore, there have been several circumstances where the diaspora showcases authority in preserving, safeguarding, commemorating, and defining policies based on the Genocide and relations with the Turkish states as falling within its prerogative and not the Armenian state's.²³⁷ This has been so as a result of decades of diasporan foreign policy on these issues, the hard and successful work of lobbies, and the active oral and written collection of memory on the Armenian Genocide (see Tölölyan 1991, 1996); in the sense, there are bases for the sense of authority on the matter by the diaspora.

However, after Armenia's independence, the international community now recognizes the state of Armenia as the main locus of foreign policy enunciation, identity building, and

²³⁶ The memory of Genocide has not always brought Armenians together, and commemorations are not a unified event for all political parties in the diaspora, a point raised by Maria Titizian (Author's Interview, 2011). Titizian made this comment in the context of Lebanon's Armenian communities that were quite divided from 1950s until today, see Picard, 2002).

²³⁷ This controversial point was raised by one of my interviewees in a high ranking public position who preferred to remain anonymous on this particular point. This was the experience of the interviewee in interacting with the diasporans from different parts of the world. This impression is not limited to issues related to the Genocide memory, however, as other interviewees also raised this problem of interacting with the diasporas, and extends to various other issues related to running state affairs and businesses and generally in the way of living of local *Hayastantsis*.

representation on issues related to Armenians. Obviously this does not discount the work of diaspora lobbies in the world, nor does it obscure the attempts of establishing Genocide memorial sites by the diaspora. This tension is felt strongly by the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute director, who now represents the head of the main ‘official’ site for the preservation of Armenian Genocide documents, photographs, artifacts, though by no means is this the only site. The Tsitsenakabert memorial is located in Armenia, and next to it is the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, which houses not only historical documents (proofs) related to the Genocide, but also the research institute that includes scholars working on the topic since 1995.

To many diasporan Armenians, the Armenian Cause related to Genocide was not ‘inherent’ in the way people in Armenian identified their Armenianness. The generations that were raised during the Soviet era of Armenia did not even necessarily hear about the Genocide until 1965, when the Genocide was commemorated for the first time in Soviet Armenia. Many of my interviewees told me that the repatriates between 1920s and 1970s influenced the locals in many ways: they brought the tradition of drinking coffee to the locals, and they also brought with them their sense of nationalism that eventually led to the movement of 1965 in Soviet Armenia – as some of my interviewees commented, “the repatriated Armenians brought more than the tradition of drinking coffee to Armenia” (for example, Armenouhi Stepanyan, Author’s Interview, 2011 author’s translation).

This is an important note, especially because the image of the Dashnak party, though tarnished by the Soviets and even the Armenian Soviet authorities, was a source of inspiration to the many who struggled against the Soviets in Armenia in underground movements or more explicitly (such as Hayrikyan). As Vazgen Manukyan stated to me, “For us at the time in the Soviet Union, when we said nationalism, we understand Dashnaksutun....when we talked of nationalist

ideas, we always understood Dashnaksutiun, without knowing [the party] well.” (Author’s Interview, 2011, author’s translation) Indeed, the Dashnak party became the symbol of nationalist emancipation for the young Armenians struggling for the ‘liberation’ of Soviet Armenia.²³⁸ Panossian explains that the Genocide “did permeate eastern Armenian identity. The Genocide entered Soviet Armenian consciousness as a *learnt* injustice rather than as an experienced reality” (2006, 241).

The signing of the “Protocol on the establishment of diplomatic relations” and the “Protocol on the development of bilateral relations” on October 10, 2009 between Armenia and Turkey was one of the most contentious points in contemporary politics for the homeland-diaspora relations. The tensions that arose during those debates highlighted the discrepancy between the diasporan identity tied to the collective memory of the Armenian Genocide and its recognition and Armenia’s political needs and the realities of geopolitics. This debate and the simultaneous contentious politics arose since Armenia’s independence, meaning since the country’s early search of its identity amid the available geopolitical spectrum of allies and enemies in the region and the world (Western versus Eastern identity). This search for identity has come in opposition (and sometimes in agreement) with some of the diasporan groups and parties, who have their own views about Armenia’s foreign policy and identity. It was a gap between the imaginaries of the homeland for the diaspora and the realities of the homeland for many Armenians. Although some Armenians in Armenia were against the signing of the protocols not only because of the imposed controversial conditions, but also because of the principle itself, generally though, public opinion was not

²³⁸ The idea of liberation is used here but with the precautionary note that this was after all during the Soviet era, and any attempt of nationalism was actively shut down or silenced by the Soviets. However, many did have the courage to organize their own movements, mostly underground, and some within the government of the Armenian SSR managed to be sympathetic towards these movements or more subtle forms of nationalism. Perhaps this was also one of the reflection of the weakness of the Soviet system of affirmative action (Martin,).

strongly opposed. During these protocols, until their signature and after, various points of disputation and disagreement arose: the diaspora organizations and parties organized protests, expressed their disagreement with the way the process was being handled, and the Dashnak party was lobbying for its view within the Armenian parliament.

Some reflections came out of these debates, protests, and positions of the diasporans and the Armenian government, and many interviewees expressed their perspectives on the matter. Although these are covered in much more details in Chapter Five, where the protocols and the subsequent controversy between diaspora-Armenia relations are presented, I would like to briefly touch upon some of the views on the issue of collective memory and its ‘ownership’. For many decades, particularly before the 1965 commemoration of the Armenian Genocide in Soviet Armenia for the first time, the diaspora’s domain was the preservation of Armenian identity, whereby it was the main representative of Armenianness in the international community and in the hostlands where each national habitus existed. Soviet Armenia, absorbed within the Soviet state, was not an independent representative body of Armenian identity, and even though the Soviet state attempted to build the image of the Armenian SSR as the home of all Armenians and painted the picture of the diaspora as needing the homeland of Armenian SSR, the reality was that the diaspora continued to play the role of foreign policy makers for Armenians. This is especially true of the Western diaspora which focuses almost all its activities on lobbying for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by different governments in order to exert pressure on the Turkish state to recognize the Genocide officially (for example, Armenian lobbies in the United States of America, such as the Armenian Assembly of America and the Armenian National Committee of America).²³⁹

²³⁹ For more information, refer to the website of AAA available at <http://www.aaainc.org/index.php?id=2> and the website of ANCA available at <http://www.anca.org/>

The diaspora-homeland relations suffer, according to some of my interviewees, with the problem of ‘dated’ organizations in the diaspora that are currently functioning as a way to help and build bridges with Armenia. For example, Salpi Ghazarian, a repatriated Armenian from the USA and director of the Civilitas Foundation think tank in Armenia, notes that in order to have a fundamental institutional change in Armenia, “it is absolutely essential that our institutional interaction changes,” because “All of our diaspora institutions are post-genocide institutions. They are institutions for refugee or survivor-based societ[ies]....all our institutions are pre-independence ones....Institutionally, the capacities of our diaspora organizations have not adapted to Armenia’s needs...” (Author’s Interview, 2011). Similar perspectives have been addressed by scholars such as Ara Sanjian, Armenian history scholar based at the University of Michigan, who stated that “All members of the elite took the Genocide as the new diaspora’s point of departure and advocated the adaptation of 19th century Armenian nationalist ideals to early 20th century conditions of forced exile” (2001, 8). These organizations have been the main diaspora bodies that have established or have attempted to bridge links with Armenia and vice-versa, though this remains shaky, mostly unsuccessful, and without future prospects for change in sight.

Ghazarian stressed that she does not mean that the diaspora organization need to be forgotten. But what is fundamental, she adds, is that the “diaspora *kidagtsoutioun* [recognition] that their own image and survival identity is tied to this place [Armenia]” (Ghazarian, Author’s Interview, 2011, author’s translation).

In these interactions between the diaspora and Armenia, there is also another aspect related to the memory of the Genocide, one that is a rather controversial topic. Some diasporan organizations (and their members and followers) feels that they own the memory of the Armenian Genocide since they had struggled for decades to lobby many countries to recognize the Genocide,

they organized marches, protests, political gatherings, active discussion and negotiation with different international powers, established research institutes and centres for the study of Armenian history and Genocide,²⁴⁰ and funded the building of about 166 memorials dedicated to the Armenian Genocide in 31 countries. During this same time in Soviet Armenia, the topic of the Armenian Genocide had not been part of the curriculum allowed to Armenian students until the 1960s, and many had not experienced the atrocities, nor did they have relatives who had survived the Genocide. In addition, oral history was not easily transmitted in the Soviet era due to the restrictions and tightening around expressions of nationalism, which made discussions of the Genocide a taboo topic. In addition, the topic of Genocide was publicly introduced to the Soviet Armenian context only in the 1960s, thus the inter-generational transmission was done within families in the private sphere by the survivors and their descendants. When in 1965 Armenians organized the Genocide recognition marches and even the claims for the historical territories, many in Armenia heard about the Genocide for the first time then (Vazgen Manukyan, author's Interview, 2011; also see Chapter Two). For example, famous writer and novelist Mushegh Galshoyan wrote an article in 1977, posthumously published in 1988 and entitled "Ayspes kochvats nasionalizmi masin" (About the So-Called Nationalism), in which he

chastised Soviet Armenian leaders for having denied the Armenian people the knowledge and awareness of the greatest tragedy in their history....Galshoyan attests that the masses not he street were confused, not knowing what the demonstrators were demanding. Many hears the word 'Eghern' [Event/Genocide in Armenian] for the first time in their lives. They repeated the word, first without knowing the exact meaning of it....The word passed on mouth to mouth an with it the improved history was gradually being emancipated. (Galshoyan 1991, 111, quoted in Peroomian 2007 107).

These events in 1965 and the subsequent national identity expressions in Armenia are 'claimed' in some ways by the diaspora as being the main transmitter and instigator of these nationalist

²⁴⁰ For example, the Zoryan Institute, the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR)

feelings. This is perhaps partly true, given the repatriation of many diasporan Armenians to Soviet Armenia with the approval of the Soviet government. Many diasporan Armenians used the repatriation as a positive tool to bring the nationalist capital (to use Bourdieu's term) to the locals in order to instil nationalism among them, by teaching them the non-Sovietized Armenian history and identity.²⁴¹

But this assumes in some way that nationalist expressions were absent among Soviet Armenians. Although many Armenians preferred to be educated in Russian schools and many spoke better Russian than Armenian (particularly the case of the Karabakhi Armenians who lived under the Azerbaijani Republic), it is extremely important to highlight the decades of struggle against the Soviet Union in small moments of dissident politics, or more subtle nationalist writings, or softer expressions of Armenianness on a daily basis, to the uproars of 1965 and 1988 and the years in between that were leading to independence. This section will particularly deal with the contentious politics of identity as linked to the Armenian Genocide memory, one that is considered to be a unifying factor among Armenians since it accentuates a common national suffering and trauma. The Genocide is considered to be a national traumatic and tragic experience engraved in the collective consciousness of Armenians and it is the reason there is such a large and dispersed Armenian diaspora.

The difference between the diaspora(s)' and local Armenian experience vis-à-vis the Genocide history is that the diasporans, even in the third and fourth generation continue to feel that the reason there is a diaspora and the reason their homeland (Western Armenia) is currently not

²⁴¹ The repatriation of the Armenian diaspora from mostly the Middle East and the West between the 1920s and 1970s was met with great disappointment, since the promises of the Soviet state to the repatriates were broken upon their arrival. The repatriates tried to find several ways to send coded messages to their relatives to discourage them from joining them in later years (Stepanyan 2010). Also see Chapter Four for more details on this issue.

theirs is because of the Genocide – their *raison d'être* in this sense is tied to the Genocide memory. The family stories and transmission of memory is also much stronger within the *spyurk* than in Armenia or the new diaspora. Perhaps this is the point that Panossian wants to make with that statement. This explains the strong attachment of the diaspora to the Western Armenian territories, because it represents the homeland they are ‘deprived from’, at the same time that their history is denied due to the Turkish state’s refusal to recognize the Armenian Genocide. The latter is a significant factor that continues to strengthen Armenianness in the diaspora despite the gradual loss of the spoken Armenian language among the third generation diasporans (Bakalian 1993). What is interesting to think about is what would happen to the younger generation of Armenians if and when Turkey recognizes the Armenian Genocide, since this is a fundamental variable in determining their identity as Armenians, especially in the diaspora. However, as Chapter Two and this chapter show, even though the Genocide factor in identity formation for the diaspora and Armenians has different weight and influence, this does not translate into saying that the Genocide is not important for local Armenians, or that it is forgotten. This is a discussion that is controversial and stirs a lot of debate; suffice to look at the response to various newspaper articles or op-eds on the topic and the reactions related to the way Genocide shapes identity differently for diasporans versus local Armenians.²⁴²

Financial, Cultural, and Political Investment of the Diaspora in Armenia: Donations and Funds, Cultural Rapprochement, and Promotion of Democratization at Home

The diasporans have always been eager to contribute to the homeland, especially after 1991, when the reality of a physical homeland for Armenians around the world became real. The

²⁴² For a good example on this point, see the piece written by Razmik Panossian (2010),, especially the comment section at the bottom and Panossian's response to them.

experience of most Armenian diasporans with Armenia, however, remained imaginary, as many aspired to visit their independent country. There were mixed feelings though, since this homeland was, after all, not where the survivors and their grandchildren came from. But it was the only possible homeland today, as Western Armenia remained an unattainable dream to many (or at least a distantly possible one). This section describes the various ways in which the diasporas have contributed to the financial, cultural and political investment in Armenia revealing that this has been far from smooth embellished with criticism, stereotyping, and the competing imaginings of Armenianness in the Armenian habituses.

Every year, Armenians are mobilized to contribute to Armenia through various funds, charities, and telethons, in different forms in the Armenian habituses. The two Armenian lobbies in the US, the AAA and ANCA, have been able to secure over US\$1billion in US government aid to Armenia since 1991, making Armenia the second highest aid receiver after Israel. This amount has been reduced today. Philanthropic sources of funding by organizations or individuals help a great deal in Armenia.²⁴³ Remittances play the most significant economic role in Armenia, especially since remittances are directly transferred to individuals to supply for their basic needs. The largest source of remittances has been and continues to be Russia (about 90%).²⁴⁴ Finally, tourism income

²⁴³ Philanthropic organizations include AGBU, Hayastan Fund, Armenian Relief Society, and the Karabakh Fund, and also more organized telethons. Individual sources include Kirk Krikorian, the American-Armenian, who funded a great deal for infrastructure renovations in Armenia, such as highways (between Armenia and Karabakh for example). Another individual source is the famous French-Armenian singer, Charles Aznavour, who contributed starting from the 1988 earthquake, when he went to Gyumri (or Leninakan) to show his support.

²⁴⁴ According to the World Bank, personal remittances have steadily increased in Armenia from 1990 until 2014. Remittances have become an important source of income for locals starting in the late 1990s. Between 1995-1999 18% of the GDP represented income from remittances, 17% in 2000-2004; 19.2% in 2005-2009 and 21% in 2010-2014. This is a strong indication that Armenians (especially men) continue to seek employment outside of Armenia, mostly in Russia), see <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS>. For detailed studies on the role of remittances, the amounts and origins, see the report by Karapetyan and Harutyunyan 2013; Grigorian and Melkonyan 2011.

– mostly by Armenian diaspora and also post-1988 emigrants visiting family – also plays a role though not as significant as the remittances.

Most of the discussion on diaspora funding in Armenia refers to the funding sent by the Armenian *spyurk* and not the remittances. The way the Armenian diasporas have been sending funds is mostly done through organizations, large funds set up to collect money in the diaspora and sent it home to accomplish projects, such as renovations of buildings or roads. Diaspora funding has also been mobilized to purchase medical and related equipment in order to improve and advance Armenia's technological resources, according to the diaspora.

Even though the funding is highly appreciated, it is also met with strong criticism by many locals, as reflected in my interviews. The diaspora side also feels that their funding is taken advantage of by many local corrupt politicians who pocket much of the funding rather than disperse it where intended or needed, and this is true of funding in both Armenia and Karabakh. The diasporans seem to believe that the financial aid that was being sent was not being used properly because people were not entrepreneurs and hardworking, in their view. As one of the members of the Ramgavar diasporan party who supported the Ter-Petrosyan regime, Edmond Y. Azadian, states the following regarding the financial environment in Armenia, which he believes is corrupt and protects the local versus the diaspora investor:

Although the country is in dire need of foreign investments, it has not yet developed laws to protect foreign capital. Almost all joint ventures have turned sour. Diaspora Armenians who (motivated by patriotism or profit) have tried to start businesses or engage in joint ventures have soon found out that they are being ripped off. But the saddest realization comes when they learn that their corrupt partners enjoy protection from higher echelons in the government...(1999, 117)

Some diasporans thus felt that Armenia was a hostile zone for them to invest in new businesses. This was not because they were not familiar with the context, the local habitus, but

because there was a lack of encouragement for diaspora investment, a constant attack on diasporan businessmen and women. The level of corruption and the presence of many wealthy Armenian families who had made their fortune in the *perestroika* and post-*perestroika* era made it extremely difficult for newcomer diaspora businessmen to invest in certain businesses in Armenia ‘controlled’ by the latter.²⁴⁵

The government in Armenia also did not contribute much to make it easier for the diaspora to come to Armenia, settle, and establish a life in a new country, to create healthy conditions for investments and also for the settlement of the diasporans who wanted to move to Armenia. But Armenia was facing too much as a fledgling state, and already from the first years of independence, tensions arose between the government and the diaspora on issues that are imperative to the Armenian national identity, and that shape the nation building process in Armenia.

But some believe that the problem is not (only) in the attitude and hostile business environment or the Armenian government. Salpi Ghazarian stated to me that the diaspora activities in Armenia are almost always based on symbolic gestures and short-term aims of a feel-good

²⁴⁵ For example the import of certain western products to sell in Armenian supermarkets owned by the oligarchs of today’s Armenia, in addition to the field of construction businesses, which was not a tapped business by the Armenian oligarchs, were both opportunities of investment for many diasporans who sometimes moved to Armenia to start these business opportunities and lives there. One of the most famous of diasporan businesses in Armenia and Karabakh is the Vivacell and Karabakh Telecom telecommunication companies owned by Lebanese and Lebanese-Armenian businessmen. Other successful business opportunities include the opening of Western style cafes or restaurants and so on. Many diasporans have also moved to Karabakh, to establish themselves in the de facto state, based on the state laws of resettlement, although in this case many returned back to their hostlands not being able to sustain the different conditions of life required in Karabakh. An important point to note here is also the distinction of perceptions of corruption and oligarchy from the diaspora coming from different countries. Many of the interviewees noted that those diasporans who had come from the Middle East or Iran were more conforming to the system and their adaptability to the system was higher than those from North America or Western Europe who at times rejected the corrupted environment of investment and did not want to invest. An example of a failed business that had become a target of the Armenian government is the *Café de Paris* bistro that was owned by French-Armenian Valerie Ashken Gortsunian. After a divorce from her husband Vazgen Assatryan, a known Armenian jazz drummer, she lost control of the company when a court in Yerevan granted him half of the company shares. This was despite her marriage contract signed in France that stated her as the sole owner of the company. Vazgen Asstryan apparently used “bribes, acquaintances, connections with the top” according to Valerie Gortsunian, who also had to pay about 200,000USD for unpaid taxes (Abrahamyan, *EurasiaNet* 2012).

approach. In her words, “We build roofs for schools, we do short term projects that are feel-good, and we do not invest in long term ones; what about the teachers, their salaries, their training for example?” She believes that the role of diaspora should extend to policy making and policy changing arena, because “It is possible to pressure the government to make changes, it is not unrealistic if the diaspora were about it” (Author’s interview, 2011). Therefore, some of my interviewees were critical against diasporan funding and aid, in that even though there is a vital need for reconstruction in Armenia, these forms of aids by no means constitute a sustainable approach for the economy and society of Armenia. This is also showing a lack of commitment and long term planning for Armenia, since most of these projects receive one-time funding – who will fund and become responsible for their maintenance, many ask in Armenia? Therefore, diasporas investment approaches also matter in the way they are perceived in the local Armenian habitus. Perhaps there is a need to bring not only the financial capital for these short term ‘fixing’ solutions and renovations in the homeland, but also to invest with the cultural, social, and symbolic capital of the diasporas.

Armenians wonder why particular equity investment funding has not been established by diasporans, in order to train the locals to work in Western standards of professionalism and culture, for example. Samvel Mkhitaryan, former head of the Department of Educational Programs and Relations at the Russian-Armenian Slavonic University, believes in the ability of the changes in the Armenian market and economy to bring forth democratization in the political scene. He explained to me with attention to a more sustainable business model that is long-term:

The diaspora comes and tries to find opportunities; well they should also come and require a clean competitive environment for investments and business development. This will be more beneficial for our country and nation building. For example, Mr. Krikorian and many other Armenians have given much funding to build and rebuild streets...museum renovations and so on– of course we are very thankful. But after

these actions are completed, who should maintain and renovate them again, and how? It would have been much more beneficial, if instead of spending money on such things, they would establish a big business here particularly with a form of open joint stock companies to help with the improvement of investment and business environments and culture. The small business cannot make requirements to the state to improve the investment and business environments, larger businesses can.... [it would be much more helpful] if Mr. Krikorian and other Armenians established large corporations and didn't spent their resources on charity projects and separate small businesses [because] until now the small efforts are not leading to much, so we need to make larger investment and long-term approach with much stronger and more persistent requirements from Armenian investors from the diaspora to improve significantly the political, legal/judicial, investment and business environments in Armenia and considerably decrease the level of corruption, shadow economy and so on. (Author's Interview, 2011, author's translation)

Such initiatives of training the locals with the experiences of Western business models have begun with individual investments. Impact Hub Yerevan is an innovative idea that has been in development by its founder, Sara Anjargolian, an Armenian from Los Angeles, California, where she worked at an attorney and multimedia journalist. She calls this a greenhouse of innovative ideas, whose purpose is to create a space where entrepreneurs can come together to share and collaborate on common projects. Sara Anjargolian was adamant that she insisted to move to Armenia in order to begin working on Hub Yerevan and to contribute to the local social entrepreneurial scene – a point which confirms that in parallel to diasporans who establish cosmopolitan and transnational ties with Armenia, many continue to want to return physically to the homeland and contribute to its development, a point I made in this chapter. She believes that it is important to invest in social entrepreneurship in Armenia, and it is the right time, because as she explains:

although seven of the ten million ethnic Armenians worldwide live outside the Republic of Armenia, hundreds of thousands of members of the large and influential Armenian Diaspora engage with the country on a multitude of levels - investing financially, philanthropically, intellectually and emotionally. Hub Yerevan is, therefore, in a unique position to draw on professionals from all over the world - from Buenos

Aires, Los Angeles, Boston, San Francisco, Paris, Moscow, Beirut - just to name a few of the cities where sizeable Armenian communities reside. Impact Hub Yerevan will serve not only the best and brightest innovators and creators inside the country, but will act as a bridge and a conduit between changemakers in the Diaspora and their counterparts inside Armenia. Although humanitarian assistance was crucial during the early days of independence, it is imperative that Armenia now shift away from a focus on charitable initiatives and instead move towards sustainable development. (Interview with Sara Anjargolian by the Huffington Post Blogger Carrie Rich, 2014)

Sara Anjargolian, similarly to Samvel Mkhitaryan quoted above, stresses the need to focus on sustainable development for Armenia's long-term economic prosperity, instead of the charity or funding based economy that relies on the diaspora's contribution for larger projects in Armenia – which has brought the terminology of the 'milking cow' diaspora (Marutyan 2006; also author's interview with Armenouhi Stepanyan and Harutyun Marutyan, 2011).

Looking Back, Looking Forward: from Idealization to Realization, Towards a more Concrete and Stabilized Relationship

From the start of the chapter, I have set out to capture the diversity within the diaspora: most of the experts and elites I interviewed had a clear sense of this, and in fact, when asked to comment on the relationship, they would bring up the importance of acknowledging diversity. However, the Armenian government seems to be only recognizing this on paper, and when it comes to the recognition of the diaspora and working with it, it seems that, according to some of my interviewees, this is not the case. For example, Maria Titizian expressed that,

the diaspora Ministry is a farce, just the fact that they put someone like Hagopyan, former *komsomol*²⁴⁶....in an interview with her, the diaspora is the diaspora, she said.

²⁴⁶ Komsomol, known in Armenia as *Komyeritmiutium*, was the Union of Communist Youth aged between fourteen to the twenties. The Komsomol "engaged in anti-religious propaganda, in the struggle to "emancipate" women, and in the leadership of extracurricular student organizations....the weakness of the [Communist] Party in the villages [in Armenia] during the Twenties made it necessary for the Communists to use the Komsomol as a substitute for the party in rural districts." (Matossian 1962, 73) In conclusion, Matossian explains that "It is probable that the authority of the family, village, and Church were somewhat undermined in this period [Twenties] among Armenian youth. However, no drastic changes are perceptible." (1962, 77) This applied to the creation of both *Kinbazhin* and *Komyeritmiutium* in Armenia.

The new economic migrants, the traditional diaspora as a result of the Genocide [are all diaspora]. She said the diaspora is the same, she does not understand. Today in Europe, there are Armenians living without legal status...what about them... (Author's Interview, 2011)

The Ministry of Diaspora that was established in Armenia in October 2008 is a striking example of that – this ministry is much of an inheritance of the Soviet HOK, in many ways, the minister herself being a former *komsomolets* (young communist). It is doubtful that this ministry will be able to become the main buttress of the diaspora-homeland relationship, though there are Armenian organizations and individuals who are in a positive relationship with the Ministry, such as the AGBU.

There is an attempt today in the diaspora media to present the real problems and issues in Armenia to the diaspora public in the communities everywhere, and there are also increasingly more local voices being presented to the diasporans through the diaspora media. For example, the *Armenian Weekly* has been actively covering the issue of domestic violence in Armenia, particularly after Zaruhi Petrosyan was beaten to death by her husband and her mother-in-law, according to Zaruhi's sister on October 1, 2010. The news coverage not only covers these important stories but also refer to local newspapers and local journalists or local Armenian contributors to the *Armenian Weekly* in order to reflect local voices.²⁴⁷

The focus of the diaspora parties – particularly to the Dashnak Party here - has always been on the pan-national issues that deal with Nagorno-Karabakh and the recognition of the Genocide, and Turkey-Armenia relations: apart from these, the Dashnaks scored an imperative victory in changing the laws on dual citizenship for Armenians in 2007, which is truly a much needed reform

²⁴⁷ For example see the report by Nanore Barsoumian available at <http://armenianweekly.com/2010/10/10/domestic-abuse/>. For the full story about Zaruhi Petrosyan, see *News.am*'s report by Heghine Manukyan available at <http://news.am/eng/news/33022.html>.

for both diasporans and *Hayastantsis*. In the past decade or so the Dashnak party has headed the important ministries of education, social security, and agriculture, though it has not shown any progress in those domains in Armenia, “In fact, the ARF’s [Dashnak] leadership in these areas witnessed Armenia entering the lowest quintiles of world countries in terms of budgetary spending on education and health” (Grigorian, 2011). In my interview with the local Armenian Dashnak representatives, they emphasized that the Dashnak party is working on those issues, in changing its approach in Armenia to become closer to the problems that need to be addressed in order to bring forward changes in society – though changes are yet to be seen on the ground (Vahan Hovhannesian and Maria Titizian, author’s interview, 2011). The Hunchak party has had a consistent approach in their involvement in Armenian affairs, and they are part of the opposition in Armenia in alliance with Levon Ter-Petrosyan and joined the *Hay Azgayin Kongres* (Armenian National Congress) in 2008 composed of several parties.²⁴⁸ The Hunchak party position and the number of adherents to the party remain relatively small in Armenia (especially compared to another ‘diaspora’ party such as the Dashnak party).

What mainly characterizes the relationship between the Armenian diaspora and Armenia, I suggest, is a less structured relationship that is based more strongly on the inter-personal, individual attempts of cooperation, collaboration, and friendships, in addition to some institutional relations with Armenia and its government and organization on a cultural, artistic, and other levels. Many other projects of such purpose are organized by the diaspora institutions and parties such as the Armenian General Benevolent Union, with various cultural investments linking diaspora and homeland. It seems that parallel to the more transnational relationship established by the diaspora with Armenia today, there are still many youth in the diaspora communities who long to ‘return’ to

²⁴⁸ For information on the Armenian National Congress, see www.anc.am.

Armenia to establish their lives there and begin innovative projects. In fact, this further reinforces the inter-personal and individual initiatives that are increasingly becoming apparent in the diaspora-homeland relationship, though these have not replaced the structured relationships, particularly those that continue to fund and aid Armenia.

The diaspora feels the need to help their co-nationals in the home country, and they feel that by contributing to the telethon, to the Funds to help Karabakh and Armenia, to travel and visit the country and so on, their role is somewhat fulfilled. In many diaspora circles, the understanding of Armenia as homeland or as the centre of all Armenians is weak (Darieva 2012), because their experience of Armenianness is localized in the hostland much impacted by the local habitus, and in this sense their own communities nourish their sense of belonging and home. This has been the trend in North America and Western Europe, and in many ways is also becoming the trend in the Middle East: the attachment of the diaspora to their hostland is strong, and the expressions of belonging to the Armenian community are relatively fluid and based on voluntary choice (see Bakalian 1993 for the Armenian Americans; also see Tölölyan and Papazian 2014 for a wider discussion on Armenian diaspora); the homeland becomes their hostland, while they maintain their family traditions, cuisine, religious holidays, and sometimes language.²⁴⁹ Moreover, the number of intermarriages has increased over the past years (for a study on Armenians in Toronto and Montreal see Kaprielian-Churchill 2004). This is an increasing trend observed in the Armenian diasporic communities, even in the Armenian communities considered most conservative in

²⁴⁹ The loss of the Armenian language is also part of this change, in addition to the increase in the number of Armenian parents choosing to send their children to local (public) schools in the host countries rather than Armenian (sometimes private) schools that are often too expensive. These claims need to be further examined through statistical data from communities in Lebanon, Canada and the United States, among other cases. In some cases, such as the Turkish Armenian communities, the state has created legal and structural impediments to prevent Armenians from sending their children to Armenian schools (Libaridian 2011, 33).

maintaining their Armenian identities such as Lebanon and Syria.²⁵⁰ This localized diasporic experience, however, does not necessarily imply a complete disassociation from Armenia today. The sense of responsibility among the diaspora based on the necessity of helping the homeland, of assisting in reconstruction and development projects, is quite strong, and many Armenians quickly mobilize to send financial, technological, medical, and other types of assistance.

Conclusion

[The diaspora's problem is that it] has an identity crisis, it does not know its role in the greater picture of Armenianness, of the Armenian nation, there has to be a serious discourse among the different organizations, to understand what kind of role they want to play today....because today Armenia needs institutional fundamental structural change... (Maria Titizian, Author's Interview, 2011).

The diasporas, in the early 1990s as they slowly became part of the Armenian political culture, had to take action in building the institutions, in contributing the man and woman power to building the necessary structures in Armenia to be able to have a strong state. The moment was lost then, and it is being more difficult to gain now. It seems that the priorities for the diasporas have always been the Genocide recognition and the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict – both heavily ingrained in the Armenian national habitus.

The chapter covered the nature of the dynamic relationship between the Armenian diasporas and the homeland. Feelings of uncertainty and distrust continue to dominate the relationship. What will become of the diaspora-homeland relationship is also in the hands of the government in Armenia: this relationship has continued to be mandated through the institutional remnants and mentality of the Soviet era, and the Ministry of Diaspora's lack of initiative and

²⁵⁰ This is based on personal observation and stories of 'intermarriages' with Arabs (especially Muslim Arabs) that continue to be frowned upon in the Armenian communities. Studies and statistics on this topic could help to assert the claim made here, and future research should focus on this question.

awareness about the diaspora reflects its weakness to act as a bridge. Maybe the next phase of this relationship should be based upon a change from both sides that might be better able to cope with the demands of the people: but one of the most important changes to be made is to have a more planned transition process towards a healthier system that promotes democratic principles. Indeed, what is really needed today is more planning, cooperation, clearly stated expectations that would help make the relationship between the Armenian diaspora institutions and the homeland more efficient, transparent, and effective. At this point, this is not the case. Perhaps the relationship between diaspora and homeland can begin by reflecting on the policy priorities and needs of each side. As Salpi Ghazarian puts it eloquently to sum up the nature of the obstacle “Armenia’s politics and policies are based on its existential issues, for the diaspora its policies and politics are often based on emotions, on a sense of continuing victimhood, from a defensive position, not a committed engaged involved strategic position.” (Author’s Interview, 2011). Nonetheless, despite their differences, Panossian states that there is a “sense of belonging to the same nation – of being, or feeling, Armenian....[and this] makes it possible to speak of “Armenianness”” (1998, 184). This quote ties well with the main argument of the chapter that there are competing images of Armenianness and visions of ‘Armenia’. These competing images and visions were demonstrated through the various aspects of the relationship of the diasporas with Armenia and vice-versa, based on the expectations, needs, future visions all encompassed in the mutual relationships. But the relationship should be considered beyond the formal structures of the Armenian state and the Armenian diasporas, as there seems to be increasingly interpersonal relationships and involvement of diasporans in Armenia’s social and political scene. Some of these instances include the 2013 protests and other social movements related to environmental pollution (*Teghut*) as we saw in Chapter Two, in addressing issues related to domestic violence and women’s rights especially from

the Western diaspora as covered in Chapter Three and Four, and also in thinking of social entrepreneurship development models to enhance the local social and economic scene in Armenia as demonstrated in this chapter. These strengthen the everyday ties of diaspora-homeland relations in ways that can bring the two closer than the formal relationships, which reflects the changes in the discourses and expressions of relationship between the two. The competing images and visions of Armenianness do not, after all, break the desire of all Armenians to relate, in some way and with some transnational, cosmopolitan or repatriation projects to the homeland. As such, conceptions of Armenianness are not just the reflection of the Armenian state or population but are also the expressions of the diverse diaspora habituses. In this sense, even though today Armenia is the centre of Armenians, especially in the sense that the international community continues to view the state as the main legitimate actor in the international scene dictated by the Westphalian tradition, the diasporas continue to challenge that by having their own ‘foreign policies’ and understanding of Armenianness that seems to be different from one habitus (in the USA) to another (for example Lebanon). The next chapter sets out to discuss the most unifying issue of Armenianness, the collective traumatic memory of the Armenian Genocide of 1915, which is as unifying as it is dividing Armenians in commemoration, Turkish-Armenia diplomacy, territorial demands from Turkey and reparations, and many other issues the chapter covers.

Chapter Five: Armenian Genocide, Collective Memory, and History: Contested and Competing Discourses of Armenianness in the National Habitus.

Introduction

One of the most important pillars of Armenian identity is the collective memory of the Armenian Genocide of 1915. Perhaps this is most strongly expressed within the habituses of diaspora communities, since most of the contemporary diaspora in the Middle East, Europe, North America, and Latin America are the descendants of the survivors of the 1915 Genocide. As such, the essence of their ‘existence’ as diaspora communities stems from being survivors (and descendants) of the Genocide. This group is referred to as *spyurk* (the older Armenian diaspora). Though to say that identity related to the memory of Genocide is stronger among the diaspora does not imply that its importance is measured less for post-Soviet Armenians, among whom many are also the descendants of the Armenian Genocide survivors who continue to identify with the home-village their grandparents came from in today’s eastern Turkey (Darieva 2008).

April 24th, 2015 marks the centennial commemoration of the Armenian Genocide, and it is clear many feel it imperative to discuss the impact of the Genocide on the Armenian national habitus(es), because, to many Armenians (especially diasporans), this is the most important pillar of their identity as part of the Armenian community. As Chapter Two and Chapter Three showed, the memory of the Armenian Genocide has played a significant role in mobilizing Armenians and bringing them together, especially in the post-1988 period in Armenia. For example, the first outburst in the Soviet era in terms of organized protests and marches was in the year 1965, on the 50th commemoration of the Armenian Genocide of April 24th. This led to the construction of the Tsitsernakaberd Genocide memorial in 1967 in Soviet Armenia. The second outburst in 1988 was

also embedded in the discourse of Genocide memory and othering the ‘Turks’ especially after Armenians were attacked and massacred in the city of Sumgait in 1988, which sparked strong reactions from Armenians who marched to the Genocide memorial with banners comparing Sumgait to the Armenian Genocide (see the detailed description by Marutyan, 2009). Hence, the memory of the Armenian Genocide and its commemoration represent points of strong unity between the *spyurk* and local Armenian habituses.

By examining the impact of the memory of Genocide on Armenian identity today, however, I argue that an interesting contestation is revealed. The memory of the Genocide, particularly in the post-Soviet era, plays a significant role in unifying Armenians as a nation that has suffered a common tragedy and trauma, and one that shares a memory and is bonded together with a centuries-long history. However, as I contend in this chapter and in the dissertation as well, the memory of Genocide also plays a divisive role, recently exposed during the Protocols of 2009. This created a strong tension not only between the Armenian state and the Armenian diaspora communities, organizations, and parties, and between diasporans and local Armenians, but also within the diaspora habituses and among local Armenians. In addition, the triangular link between Karabakh/Genocide/Turkey-Armenia relations that was presented in Chapter Two runs through all the chapters and in many ways determines the type of relationship that Armenia has with transnational and international entities and with its diaspora as well. The chapter exposes these contestations more extensively during the time of the Protocols of 2009, based on the interviews, newspaper articles, and speeches and statements by diaspora and local politicians. This contestations also marks the shifts in the discursive constructions of Armenianness from 1988-2013, as this thesis aims to show. In fact all the empirical chapters reflected on this point in one aspect of Armenian identity examination.

The first section tackles the literature on collective memory and looks at the ways in which the collective history and memory of the nation moulds the national habitus (in stateless or state-bound nations). The theoretical aspect of the literature will be complemented with the literature on the memory of the Armenian Genocide and its importance in building Armenian identity in the diaspora and in Armenia. The national habitus of people living in the imagined community is shaped not only by the factors that create the conception of Armenianness, what Suny meant by the construction of primordialism, but also equally by the perception of history, memory, and homeland within that construction. The second section of the chapter discusses the Protocols of 2009, which brought to light some of the contrasts and contradictions embedded in the memory and places of identity and this will be tackled through the interviews conducted in 2011. This section is subdivided into various subsections that are meant to explain the details of the contestations around the Protocols of 2009 and the competing visions of Armenianness and images of Armenia that was presented in the previous chapter.

Collective Memory, Trauma, and Genocide

Memory and history cannot be omitted from any study of nation building, and in fact, they should be included and given full consideration. Chapter One provided a more detailed examination of the literature on collective memory and trauma and links that to the conception of national habitus. This section will refer to the importance of collective memory, particularly traumatic memory, to the study of the Armenian national habitus and foreign policy and transnational relations. As Chapter One explained, the traumatic episodes in collective history and the past shape the way in which the discourses of national identity are constructed and shift over time. The past reappears in the present at moments that shape not only the foreign policy of the

state, but also the perception of people of their own social space - whether they feel threatened such as during the strong resurgence of the Genocide discourse after the Sumgait 1988 pogroms against Armenians in Azerbaijan (see Chapter Two). As Ervin Staub posits in his extensive study on what he terms as the ‘structures on prevention and reconciliation’ (2011, 423), “Mass violence creates a *chasm* between victims and perpetrators that can be reopened. It also becomes part of the history and psychology of both groups that can lead them to violence in response to threat from any source, and perhaps in response to conflict as well.” (2011, 181; also see Kecmanovic 1996; refer to Assmann 2009 on the concept of *mnemohistory* which is applicable in this context; also see the discussion on victimization/perpetration by MacDonald 2009 on the case of the Serbs and Croats in the Balkans) Therefore some discussion on ‘denial’ will shed light on the psychological impact of injustice and non-recognition on the national psyche. The study of collective memory, or the politics of memory which has gained prominence in the past decade or so in the field of political science, is interdisciplinary in its approach and scope.²⁵¹ The politics of memory examines the ways in which national habitus is shaped around narratives and constructions about certain events or times in the past. These memories and traumatic history that are often intergenerationally transmitted become part of the dispositions of Armenians that help them identify their ‘place’ and ‘being’ in the political and cultural systems they live in, within their communities.

Collective memories that are found in symbols, stories, and spaces are the medium through which the metanarratives about the nation are transmitted to people, but it is also through these

²⁵¹ The theorists that are referenced reflect the interdisciplinarity of the field of memory studies. For a discussion on why political science has been relatively ‘late’ to expand its interests to the field of memory politics, see Aleida Assman (2011, 8) and also Bertrand Badie’s encyclopedia of political science volume I, p. 1078. According to him, there are three main reasons behind this, as paraphrased here: 1) memory studies were deemed as too subjective to fit within the confines of the field of politics; 2) memory was considered to be more fit for historians to study rather than political scientists; 3) finally, since memories are embedded within institutions, then it was just more reasonable to study the institutions.

collective memories that a group experiences the nation, and it is in this sense that the process of the internalization of the external occurs in a Bourdeusian sense. This means that sometimes a particular group does not find that its experience fits within the narrative of a nation, and this creates tension as this group (or individuals) attempt to express a desire to be recognized. Therefore, contestations around how the commemoration is carried out, what the commemoration means or should mean come to the surface, in a way that explains the externalization of the internal, much bounded to the particular context and experiences of people in a given national habitus.

Another important point of differentiation is of significance here. Halbwachs distinguishes not only between personal and social or collective memory but also between collective and historical memory (Halbwachs 1950, especially chapter two). Halbwachs believes that collective memory is the representation of the memory of lived experiences, which historical memory tries to preserve (Varjabedian 2007, 144). In this sense, the role of the historian is extremely valuable in building ‘archives’ that hold the stories and the historical details collected in the aim of keeping the lived experience and preserving it in writing or more concrete forms. This applies to the Armenian case of the traumatic experience of the Armenian Genocide of 1915. The lived experiences, though with much difficulty due to the ‘silence’ of the survivors, have been captured by the community and by historians in writing. The oral history has become transported by the work of the historians into the realm of historical memory as well as its presence in the collective memory. As the generation of survivors is almost becoming non-existent, the collective memory of the nation preserves these experiences, perspectives, and lived pain into the historical memory. In this sense, the chapter addresses one of the main challenged points of the Protocols expressed by many scholars, including social scientists and especially historians of the Armenian Genocide, regarding

the condition of the formation of a ‘historical commission’ composed by Armenian and Turkish scholars to examine the Genocide, a point that will be discussed in much detail below.

Therefore, it seems that Karabakh, Genocide, and Turkish-Armenian relations are strongly connected in a way that explains how and why the memory of the Armenian Genocide always comes through in the Armenian domestic, transnational, and international relations. These three main points also predetermine diaspora-Armenia relations not only due to competing images of Armenianness (Chapter Four) but also by the way the Genocide is commemorated, remembered, and has become a way of life and a *sine qua non* (Bakalian 1993). In this sense, to understand Armenian national identity discourse shifts between 1988 and 2013, we have to look at the way the memory of Genocide is ‘conducted’ in politics by examining the competing discourses of Armenianness and the contested nature of politics in the Armenian national habitus. Overall, it seems that the national habitus should be interpreted through the triangular prism of Karabakh/Genocide/Turkey-Armenia relations.

The Armenian Genocide of 1915: Unified or Contested Memory?

If there is one particular tragedy that Armenians collectively remember and (to a large extent) unite under, it is the memory of the Armenian Genocide of 1915, when the Ottoman Turkish state organized and executed the killings of Armenians, or deported them and made them march to the Syrian desert of Der Zor. This is indeed the most traumatic collective event that is engraved in Armenian memory. Families, schools, community organizations, the Church(es) and commemorations play the role of transmitting family and collective stories of suffering and the collective history of the Genocide (in history books for example), and today the transmission also takes place quite strongly on the Internet through various websites, blogs, discussion forums and

social media sites such as Facebook. This transmission and the formation of Armenianness is strongly constructed through the ‘othering’ of Turks, including in many cases Azerbaijanis, particularly at times of war, crisis, or tensions between Armenians and Azerbaijanis. The othering is much more strongly expressed in the diaspora habituses, where there are active attempts, among particularly the members of the Dashnak party, to boycott Turkish products, music, television shows, and soap operas. However, especially to the older Turkish speaking generations (my grandparent’s generation for example), Turkish culture seems to provide a stronger comfort zone than the Arabic soap operas, particularly for those who live in tightly knit Armenian communities in the host countries (in the Arab world, for example). The othering of Turks was strongest in Armenia during heightened moments of crisis, and later war, between the Armenians and Azerbaijanis. This difference is best captured during the 1988 movement’s initial stages, when diasporan political parties sent a joint statement to the Armenian activists that the Turkish threat was still imminent and that the activists were being reckless (see Chapter Two).

The transmission of the survivor stories has been key in maintaining the strong presence of the discourse of survivors, especially with the continued denial of the Genocide by the perpetrators. This has also led to the building of the ‘victim’ identity (Panossian, 2006, 236; Marutyan). Writing in 1986 on the psychosocial impact of the Turkish denial of the Armenian Genocide on Armenian identity, Boyajian and Grigorian state that “It is not that Armenians wish to take on an identity of martyrs and victims; it is simply that those ghosts won’t go away,” especially because the “genocide is not the experience of only a portion of the Armenian people; it is the experience of *all*.” (1986, 183) Moreover, by the burden of remembering what happened, “the continued denial by the Turks of the genocide and...the general lack of knowledge and acceptance of the truth about the massacres, the psychosocial genocide continues,” meaning that justice for

those who were murdered and violently massacred is not accomplished (Boyajian and Grigorian 1986, 183). The identity of victimhood plays actively into the contemporary political behaviour of the Armenian diasporas as well. The Armenian Genocide memory constitutes a central essence of Armenian diasporic identity, making the “official acknowledgment of the Genocide “the sine qua non of the Armenian experience in the twentieth [and twenty-first] century,” as Anny Bakalian’s detailed study on the American Armenians reveals (1993, 154).

Many take the position that this psychological burden is crippling the ability of Armenians to move forward, particularly the ability of diasporans to interact with the Armenian state, with the geopolitical needs and realities of Armenia with its Turkish neighbouring state and people, and very importantly with the connection of Armenians with their ancestral homeland that remains in the virtual domain rather than the reality. Indeed, the Armenian diaspora has focused almost all of its attention on the Genocide recognition by Turkey and much less on the current geopolitical, socio-political, and economic hardships of the current state of Armenia. Perhaps this is not so strange for diasporan behaviour, as Yossi Shain states, “Diaspora hardliners are said to care less about the homeland’s present and future than about the past’s dead.” (2002, 120-1, quoted in MacDonald, 2008, 120) For example, taking a critical view of the current diaspora organizations and institutions and their identity politics, Salpi Ghazarian, director of the Civilitas non-governmental organization stated that the diaspora organizations should be rethink their aims and functions in the diaspora habituses. In her view:

All of our diaspora institutions are post-Genocide institutions. They are institutions for a refugee/survivor based society [for e.g. AGBU, ARS]²⁵². All of our institutions are pre-independence ones. We do not have any new ones....our diaspora organizations have not adapted to Armenia’s needs....the diaspora *kidagtsutun* [awareness], that their own image and survival identity is tied to this place [Armenia] that has not developed.

²⁵² Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) and Armenian Relief Society (ARS).

Those organizations have not adapted to the conditions of independence. They are still the diaspora of a stateless people. They are not the diaspora of a state, and that has not changed. (Author's Interview, 2011, author's translation where needed).

For Armenians in the diaspora, collective remembering of the Armenian Genocide takes place in everyday life. Armenians remember their national tragedy and establish community organizations not only to maintain and preserve their Armenian cultural values, language, religion, and so on, but to also work on transmitting this history to the younger generations. Intergenerational transmission of Genocide memories and experiences of the grandparents or the great-grandparents within the family, or even within the whole community in the case of the diaspora,²⁵³ the commemoration of the Genocide on April 24th of every year in the diaspora and local Armenian habituses, the collection of older family photos (Naguib 2008) or other valued possessions including property deeds of ownership of land in the villages or hometowns of their grandparents in today's Eastern Turkey's region (Miller and Touryan Miller 1999, 166), all reinforce the collective identity of Armenianness. These memories are tied to a place of origin for Armenians, which Armenians have a strong knowledge of and portray a strong attachment to, even though in most cases they have never been to these villages, nor to their ancestral homeland.

Therefore, remembering the Genocide does not take place only through the recalling of the traumatic history, but also through the connection Armenians feel with their lost and currently 'occupied' territories of 'Western Armenia', often symbolized by the Ararat Mountain. It would probably not be an exaggeration to say that almost every Armenian family possesses a picture or

²⁵³ This is found through collected witness accounts in books such as Verjine Svatlyan (2011)'s *The Armenian Genocide: Testimonies of the Eyewitness Survivors*, which is one of the most comprehensive works in the Armenian language. Other scholarly works that have documented oral histories of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide include the publication by Donald E. Miller and Lorna Touryan Miller (1986 and 1999). There are also documentaries that look at the survivor identities such as *Aram* or movies such as *Ararat* by the famous Canadian Armenian director Atom Egoyan.

artistic representation of the Ararat Mountain on their walls at home.²⁵⁴ As such, Mount Ararat has become “the most fetishized symbol” that defines the nation, as Atom Egoyan states in an interview (Naficy 1997, 219) Through these strong connections of narrating Armenian history, telling family stories, and remembering the suffering of the surviving generation, the Western Armenian lands become not only the lands of the ancestors who were the direct survivors of the genocide, but also the lands of the current generation. This is also part of the discourse of reclamation of the territories and the reparation claims from the current Turkish state that the Dashnak party (in particular) and other Armenian organizations long for, and some Armenian and non-Armenian Genocide scholars believe should be part of the recognition process by Turkey.

In addition to the physical connection that survivors and their descendants feel towards the lost homelands located in today’s eastern Turkey, Armenians are connected to their past through postmemory. Marianne Hirsch’s fascinating study on the role of memory and its different forms of expressions reveals that postmemory is an important concept that can help to bridge the historical traumatic events in one’s lives to the younger generations in a family or community, through various symbolic systems. As Hirsch correctly and astutely observes, “‘Postmemory’ describes the relationship that the ‘generation after’ bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before – to experiences they ‘remember’ only by means of the stories, images, and behaviours among which they grew up.” (2012, 5) The transmission of these experiences were

²⁵⁴ These territories are considered to be the homeland of Armenians, a particularly strong discourse in the diaspora. The Western Armenian territories represent the homeland of the Armenians, the homeland of the grandparents or great-grandparents of the current generation of Armenian youth. On an official level, maps of Armenia in many diaspora circles are depicted as including the historical Armenian territories (*Badmagan Hayastan*), which encompass the territories highlighted by the Treaty of Sèvres in addition to Karabakh, Nakhichevan (in Azerbaijan) and Javakhk (Southern Georgia), and these maps are also used in schools, political party youth clubs and centres to educate the diaspora youth and maintain the identity as tied to the memory of that cartography and history. The claims laid on these Armenian territories are repeatedly accentuated at every commemorative event in the diaspora by many nationalist Armenians who want to regain the ‘lost lands’ of their ancestors.

done in a way that left such powerful images and stories in the minds of the younger generations, that they almost “[seemed] to constitute memories in their own right.”

What further stands out in the case of the Armenian tragedy is the role of the ‘hegemonic’ and masculinized post-Genocide national identity building within and by diasporan organizations and institutions that have emphasized that the collective tragedy of the genocide is a unifying trauma for all Armenians, of all genders. However, the reality is different, and women experienced the atrocities in very different ways; this is an important distinction which Chapter Three captures. The experience of women in the post-traumatic stages has also been very different because women had to carry the burden of post-traumatic national reconstruction by marrying and giving birth to the new generation of Armenians, after suffering rape, slavery, and sometimes even after having to abandon their own children from their Turkish or Kurdish captors (and saviours). There was no psychological healing for these women. These stories and experiences have not surfaced in the recollections of the lived experiences, and are only coming to light today, particularly in the past decade or so, as the scholarship on the topic and documentaries reflect. It is for this reason that the emphasis on women is necessary here, without dismissing the idea that collective memory of a trauma has a strong impact on all members of the community, beyond gendered or religious differentiations.

In addition to the silence on the particular suffering of women, the absence of academic work on Armenians who converted to Islam raises serious questions about who is included in the conception of Armenianness, and, controversial as this may be, of who is included in the category of Armenian victim. This silence on the Muslim Armenians has been noticed not only in Turkish scholarship, but strikingly in Armenian scholarship on the Genocide of 1915 – so in this sense, there is a dual silencing, both of women and Islamized Armenians from the ‘official’ narratives of

the Armenian Genocide (Altinay 2014). This silencing has tremendous costs on the national remembering and especially on the national boundaries that determine inclusion (and exclusion). More recent literature on gendered memories of the Armenian Genocide and its aftermath is extremely important to capture the gendered nature of Armenian nation building and the inclusion of ‘particular’ women. As Vahe Tachjian notes in his work on the reintegration of female survivors of the Armenian Genocide, the Armenian nation in the post-Genocide community rebuilding era adopted exclusionary principles toward the women who were raped or had to sell their bodies to survive. Tachjian powerfully argues that the situation is one “in which men, women and children attempted to survive in degraded circumstances and were subject to the most brutal forms of tyranny. Methods of coping in the face of this machine of destruction and eradication were many and varied.” (2009, 77) Instead, Tachjian proposes to look at women as resistors and survivors of a horrible period through means including marriage to their Turkish or Kurdish protectors, conversion to Islam, prostitution, slavery (including labour in factories) (2009, 77).

The year 1965 represents an important year for both Soviet Armenians and diaspora Armenians. The year symbolizes a ‘rebirth’ for the diasporan efforts in their communities against the strong international and Turkish pressures to quiet the issue of the Armenian Genocide and the survivors’ desire for justice. As Hovannisian observes on this point, “The wave of demonstrative commemorations swept across international frontiers, driving the usual reserved Soviet Armenians and the diaspora Armenians alike into the streets...a new, partially assimilated generation of Armenians in many countries began to express the pain and aspirations of the survivor generation and to place the Armenian question among other human rights issues.”(1986, 121) Even though 1965 is important for all Armenia, the Soviet Armenians in particular were facing a different level of repression from speaking out. In this light, for Soviet Armenians, 1965 represents an important

turning point in national identity expression. This was expressed to me by various interviewees in Armenia, and many Armenian scholars confirm this perspective (see for example, Marutyan 2006). The year 1965, the 50th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, represents the first time when Moscow allowed the Armenians to commemorate the Armenian Genocide in Soviet history. Approximately 100,000 to 200,000 people gathered outside the Opera building in the Theatre square in Yerevan, demanding Western Armenian lands ('Our Lands! Our Lands!' referred to Western Armenia) and Genocide recognition (Panossian 2006, 320; Peroomian 2007, 107; Geukjian 2012, 121).²⁵⁵ It is hard to give one main reason why Moscow allowed these protests, because there are several interlinked factors that were at work here. The lobbying of the Soviet Armenians and the involvement of the diaspora in the commemoration and the private remembering both played a crucial role. The 50th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide was also a big event in the diaspora, since it became the year Armenians began to be awakened politically to fight for justice and the recognition of the Genocide by Turkey and internationally (de Waal 2015; see MacDonald 20008 for the Armenian-American lobbying efforts and how the Holocaust became an example of their strategic politics).

Panossian reflects on these protests in terms of their importance for the Armenian nationalism in the Soviet era; he identifies three significant impact points. First, Soviet Armenia was now exposed to nationalistic issues on the preservation of identity and the remembering of the past, and this nationalism was directed and 'accepted' by the Soviet Armenian authorities, becoming part of the Soviet Armenian discourse. Second, because Moscow eventually allowed these protests to take place (after much lobbying behind closed doors), Armenian diasporan

²⁵⁵ According to Panossian, these developments were the result of "intense behind-the-scenes lobbying by the republic's leadership." (2006, 320)

habitus focused more on anti-Turkish discourses rather than anti-Soviet or anti-Russian ones – which shows to some extent why the anti-Soviet orientation was not as strong in Armenia as in other places in the Soviet Union for example. Finally, the 1965 commemoration of the Genocide at the Opera building in Yerevan immensely impacted the way Genocide became perceived, as it was shifted from individual consciousness to the “collective, official and political levels” (Panossian 2006, 321-22; also see Halbwachs 1950 and Ahmed 2015 on the necessity to understand memory as social and collective memory), and as Panossian eloquently writes:

Explicitly politicized in the diaspora, and implicitly in Armenia, the Genocide became the core of what it meant to be Armenian in the political domain (it was already central in the cultural, religious and psychological domains)...in addition to the traditional realm of ‘grandmother stories’, the Genocide was placed squarely in the realm of collective identity (2006, 322).

As part of the commemoration of the Armenian Genocide in the post-Stalin era, there were several monuments constructed in the Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia to honour the victims of the Armenian Genocide of 1915. The most famous one, the one that symbolizes the whole of Genocide victimhood is the Tsitsernakaberd monument (meaning the Hill of Swallows). After the independence of Armenia, a museum was built in 1995 and developed in order to transform the site into a stronger commemorative location, where there are collections of documents, photographs, and artistic pieces that are related to the Armenian presence in the eastern portion of current Turkey during the Ottoman reign, and the museum is expressly dedicated to the Armenian Genocide and the traumatic history that has since shaped Armenian national identity in its depth and scope.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁶ The two other monuments that are symbolically tied to the commemoration of the Armenian Genocide are the Musa Lehr (Musa Mountain) monument and the Sardarabad monument that is dedicated to all those who fought the Turkish forces in 1918.

After the first strong expression of nationalism in Soviet Armenia in 1965, the second national outburst came in 1988 and brought back the powerful discourse of Genocide on the public level, especially after the massacres of Armenians in Sumgait, Azerbaijan, in 1988 (Marutyan, 2009). However, the 1990s saw a return of the ‘dormancy’ of the Armenian Genocide memory in Armenia, as Marutyan explains: “That memory [of the Armenian Genocide], remaining a most significant manifestation of national identity, yet at the same time, having become a component of Armenia’s foreign policy, was mostly transformed into a tribute of respect, a way of commemoration, and no longer had the same revolutionary, reformatory capacity it had had in 1988-1990” (2011, 28).

The next section tackles the memory of the Armenian Genocide in the conception of national identity through the discussion of the Protocols of 2009 that aimed at creating diplomatic relations between Armenia and Turkey and at opening the border between the two countries, after about 15 years of Turkish imposed closed borders in support of Azerbaijan and the situation in Karabakh in 1994. The significance of this discussion is to reveal the contested nature of identity and the differing perceptions of Armenianness as related to territory and memory. The collective memory of the Armenian Genocide is considered to be the strongest unifying point for Armenians in the diaspora and in Armenia. Even though this is true to a certain extent, the following section shows that the memory of the Armenian Genocide can also be a source of contestation in defining Armenianness. The Protocols of 2009 and the discussion preceding and following the signatures in October 2009 reveal these tensions in the place of the memory of the Armenian Genocide within the Armenian national habitus.

The PROTOCOLS of 2009: Unity and Divisions among Armenians on the Genocide-Armenianness Link

After two years of negotiations, two Protocols were agreed upon and were signed on October 10, 2009. The first one, “Protocol on the establishment of diplomatic relations”, is on the establishment of diplomatic relations between Armenia and Turkey, and the second, the “Protocol on the development of bilateral relations”, is on opening the borders and initiating bilateral relations between the two countries – cooperation and relations on political, economic, energy, transport, technical, cultural, scientific issues.²⁵⁷ The Protocols of 2009 and the preceding year of negotiation revealed many tensions in the priorities, values, and ideas of various Armenian parties, organizations, and individuals, reflected in the strong criticism against Serzh Sargsyan, the President of Armenia, and his administration since 2008. The tensions were not only between some diaspora Armenian groups or individuals and the Armenian state, but also among diaspora groups and individuals and among different parties in Armenia. Several protests were organized in the diaspora and some in Armenia to express disagreement and dissatisfaction with the way the negotiations had taken place and the concessions the Armenian state was making by agreeing to sign the Protocols.

It is obviously not very easy to generalize the experience of all Armenians since Armenian habituses have had different histories of political and social struggle depending on the socio-political and economic context where they are and depending on whether or not they live in a state that denies or recognizes the Genocide: for diasporans, it has depended on the hostland Armenians migrated to after the Genocide; for Armenians in Armenia, the context has been determined by the Soviet presence. Nonetheless, the experience of the Genocide is in some way a unifying identity marker, that is somewhat more significant for the diaspora only because the existence of the

²⁵⁷ See the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs website for the timeline of the development of relations between Armenia and Turkey. Accessible at http://www.mfa.am/u_files/file/20091013_protocol1.pdf in Armenian, and available in English translation.

diaspora itself is due to the Genocide and the forceful expulsion of Armenians from their homeland in Western Armenia, today's eastern Turkey.. The Genocide as identity marker is also important for local Armenians since many are the descendants of Genocide survivors who settled in Armenia. However, for the current generation of young Armenians, the issue of Genocide as identity is experienced very differently in Armenia, compared to the commemoration in the diaspora – this different commemoration ‘styles’ have also been an important source of tension and othering within the Armenian nation (diaspora versus Armenia habituses, in particular).

This section tackles these contested aspects of Armenianness that became accentuated during the Protocols discussion and the Turkish-Armenian rapprochement phases that had begun with the ‘football diplomacy’ in 2008.²⁵⁸ The diversity of opinions presented here reflects the extent to which Armenianness is debated and judged based on one’s views on the Turkish-Armenian relations – the Genocide, then, constitutes the standard test upon which Armenianness is evaluated. Hence, the main focus of the remainder of this chapter is on the contested nature of identity and memory and competing perceptions of Armenianness.

This was not the first reconciliation attempt between Armenians and Turks. TARC or the Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission, a private ‘civil society’ initiative was formed with the support of the governments of Armenia and Turkey on July 9, 2001, and it was also strongly supported by the Armenian American Assembly (AAA), a Washington-based advocacy

²⁵⁸ The problems embedded in the Turkish-Armenian relations and rapprochement did not begin in 2008 or 2009 with the Protocols, it started right after Armenia's independence as a new post-Soviet state in 1991. The experiences and problems of the earlier years are well depicted by Gerard Libaridian who was Levon Ter-Petrosyan's foreign policy advisor from 1991-1997. He writes that the relationship between Turkey and Armenia was complicated because of the diaspora. Libaridian asserts that LTP's position not to make the Armenian Genocide recognition a priority on the agenda and a condition for relations with Turkey were not due to his lack of knowledge of the history or his lack of its appreciation and understanding. But the realities on the ground, in the geopolitics of a region, and Armenia's fledgling economy required something different. Libaridian portrays the struggle between the ANM (LTP) and the diaspora as the former having a different perception of the future for Armenia.

organization. TARC was the target of heavy criticism by many who opposed its main purpose. For example, Razmik Panossian stated in 2002 that

The principal cause of TARC's demise...was not the genocide issue per se, but the commission's confusion about how to deal with it. TARC was designed as a private "civil society" initiative with no formal links to governments, and was largely promoted on the Armenian side by the [AAA]. Turkish commissioners saw TARC as an alternative to European efforts at acknowledging the genocide through parliamentary resolutions. None of the Turkish commissioners considered the events of 1915 to be genocide, while those on the Armenian side did. Instead of dialogue, there was an impasse. (In Suny and Göcek 2002)

Another initiative was an academic one: two dozen scholars gathered at the University of Michigan and organized the workshop entitled 'The Workshop for Armenian/Turkish Scholarship' that began in 2000.²⁵⁹ The premise of the workshop was "to understand why the massacres occurred, the larger historical context – the tensions between the Armenians and the Turks, the ways in which the Turks constructed the Armenians as subversive and dangerous elements, the defeats and threats of the world – [all these themes] had to be explored." (Suny and Göcek 2002) This project, however, is very different from TARC and is an academic workshop. It was headed by three main Armenian Genocide experts, Gerard Libaridian, Ronald G. Suny, and Fatma M. Göcek. This workshop also became the target of critics, particularly because it did not include participants and voices from the larger public. The reasoning of focusing on the Protocols in this chapter is explained by the fact that it was the first large official initiative between the two governments to begin dialogue over diplomatic rapprochement. Clearly, this was imbued with extreme controversy, especially over the conditions of rapprochement (and intentions) and the wording of the Protocols, as will be shown.

²⁵⁹ For more information, see the link from the University of Michigan website available at http://www.ii.umich.edu/asp/academics/specialprojects/theworkshopforarmenianturkishscholarshipwats_ci

Perhaps the best place to start this discussion is to explain what the principal aspects of disagreement and contestation were around the Protocols' text that both the Turkish and Armenian side were signing in 2009. The Protocols process started with the 'football diplomacy' between Armenia and Turkey in September 2008, when Turkish head of state Abdullah Gül accepted the invitation of his Armenian counterpart Serzh Sargsyan to visit Yerevan and attend the football match between the two national teams. The public negotiations that took place after this benchmark in international relations, meaning the first official visit of the Turkish President to Armenia, had already begun in secrecy in the capital city of Bern in Switzerland, facilitated by Swiss diplomats in September 2007.²⁶⁰

To the many opponents of the process whom I interviewed, the objection is apparently not on opening the borders between the two countries – for example, the Dashnak representatives in Armenia accentuated that point. It is the wording of the agreements that caused most controversy between the diaspora and local opposition, on one side, and the Armenian State, on the other, a perspective shared by most of my interviewees. Indeed, there were reactions to the Protocols by various political parties in Armenia, the diaspora, and various scholars and journalists, in the form of protests, sit-ins, letters, op-ed articles, and so on. In this sense, the Protocols were not only about opening up the borders with Turkey to increase trade relations between the two countries²⁶¹ and

²⁶⁰ According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Armenian state website, the initiative to establish diplomatic relations was taken by the Armenian President in 2008, see <http://www.mfa.am/hy/country-by-country/tr/> Also see the European Friends of Armenia for more articles and news reports on the Protocols and the early beginnings of the Turkish Armenian relations: <http://www.eufoa.org/fr/newsroom/24/23/Breakthrough-or-diplomatic-tactics-Armenia-and-Turkey-could-solve-first-bilateral-dispute-in-the-region/>

²⁶¹ For the trade import and export between Turkey and Armenia on the official level, see the website of the Armenian Foreign Ministry at <http://www.mfa.am/en/country-by-country/tr/>. Although many Turkish products are sold in Armenia today, as well as Azerbaijani products in Armenia and Karabakh, the point was that trade flows would increase once the borders would be officially open and this could boost the Armenian economy since more Armenian products could also be sold in Turkey. However, this would still be very disproportionate, and trade would not really benefit the Armenian side as much, as many critics. Trade relations began to expand after the 2008 presidential elections in Armenia, according to Fiona Hill and Kemal Kirişci 2015.

increase tourism²⁶² or to have better neighbourly relations in the region, but the borders would really implicate much more.²⁶³ Opening them would de jure legitimize, make official the borders between Armenia and Turkey, and would render claims for Western Armenia, Ararat or even the territories of Kars and Ardahan, that were once part of Armenia until 1918 when Armenia was still in the Russian empire, void. One more issue that the borders would address is the status of illegal Armenian immigrants currently working in Turkey. Neither the opposition and the supporters of the Protocols, nor the Armenian government, raised this issue or discussed the implications of the Protocols for the Armenians who are already working as illegal immigrants in Turkey. Nor did they raise the provision of better conditions for undocumented Armenian workers' families and children; in order to ensure they are schooled, that family members can visit, and that the temporary workers can also go to see their families in Armenia.²⁶⁴

²⁶² After the failed attempts to establish bilateral and diplomatic relations between Armenia and Turkey, mostly due to Turkey's preconditions on Karabakh and the last minute changes, as discussed in this chapter, Armenians did not want to visit Turkey and the tourism advertisements for Turkey, especially the beaches, decreased, see (Grigoryan, *Eurasianet* 2010).

²⁶³ Direct flights between the two countries are not available, and there are only indirect flights through Moscow, Kyiv, Athens or other cities in Europe. Many opt for the land travel with buses between Tbilisi-Istanbul, though this requires tourists to first go to Tbilisi – this is also a much cheaper option, see TourArmenia Central website, for example http://www.tacentral.com/getting_in_bus.asp?story_no=2.

²⁶⁴ This is a sensitive topic, one that does not seem to be addressed publicly because no Armenian party nor the Armenian government would like to acknowledge that Armenian citizens, mostly women in this case, go to Turkey to work illegally, and most of the time resort to jobs that are not deemed appropriate socially, such as house cleaning and keeping for Turkish families. In most cases, the women migrants for example prefer not to mention where and how they work to their families back in Armenia, due to these social taboos. This does not mean that they are happy in their work, but that they need to do this in order to send money home to their children and husbands. In some cases, the husbands also move to Turkey illegally with their wives, though they only go to protect them and they do not usually find work. For a coverage of these stories of illegal Armenian migrants in Turkey and their everyday struggles, see the reports compiled by Marianna Grigoryan and Anahit Hayrapetyan, "Turkey: Armenian Illegal Migrants Put National Grievances Aside for Work" *Eurasianet*, September 2, 2011, at <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/64116>, accessed on May 28, 2013; Gayane Mkrtchyan and Aline Ozinian, "Turkey: Erdogan Threat Alarms Armenian Migrants", *Institute for War and Peace Reporting*, CRS Issue 539, April 10, 2010, at <http://iwpr.net/report-news/turkey-erdogan-threat-alarms-armenian-migrants>, accessed on May 28, 2013. The vulnerability of these illegal migrants was exposed in the aftermath of the protocols when Turkish prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan threatened to expel Armenian illegal immigrants from Turkey after problems with the interpretation of the protocols surfaced between the two countries and after attempts done by the Armenian communities to push for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide, for example in the United States where efforts led to putting a resolution in the United States Congress's Foreign Affairs Committee hands in March 2010 (*Ibid*). These were covered also by the diaspora newspapers and weeklies as a way of exposing the Turkish side's continuous targeting of Armenian communities in Turkey, see Nanore Barsoumian, "Turkey Moves to Deport Armenian Workers after French Vote", *Armenian Weekly News*, January 26, 2012, at <http://www.armenianweekly.com/2012/01/26/turkey-moves-to-deport-armenian-workers-after-french-vote/>, accessed on May 28, 2013.

We can conclude that the Protocols caused various disagreements and contestations on the following factors: First, the idea of the Armenian state conducting agreements in the name of all Armenians was a strong point of contention. Other points dealt with the contents of the Protocols and the preconditions imposed by Turkey both explicitly written and implicitly implied in the negotiation phases. Second, the establishment of diplomatic ties prior to Turkey's recognition of the Armenian Genocide was an issue. Third, the second Protocol's proposal for the creation of a historical subcommission to examine the history of the two nations in an 'objective' way was controversial. Fourth, the Karabakh conflict resolution became part of the protocol discussions. Finally, some opponents argued that the Protocols could lead to Armenia de jure accepting its international borders with Turkey, which, for many Armenians especially in the diaspora, is equivalent to abandoning the land claims in Western Armenia and Ararat.²⁶⁵ These are not all perspectives that Armenian communities who are against the Protocols share, but they are the general viewpoints that seem to be repeatedly stated by the representatives of Armenian communities (and individuals as well). These points are interrelated in this context and the following discussion will tackle them in more details in order to bring out the nature of the tensions around perceptions of Armenianness. But before I set out to discuss these points, it is critical to contextualize them within the wider contestations and protests expressed by Armenians in the diaspora and in Armenia before the signing of the Protocols. These are also pertinent because they came up in the responses of many of my interviewees when they discussed the Protocols and it marks the shifts and contestations in the discourses around the conception of Armenianness as well

²⁶⁵ In the words of the public rally organizers in Los Angeles on September 27, 2009, the protocols will lead to Armenia officially recognizing in a separate agreement with Turkey of the border, which is not acceptable because it is seen as a "concession of [the Armenian] people's historic, territorial, moral and legal rights, in the name of establishing unequal and unjust relations." This is quoted from the text of the resolution of the rally organizers in Glendale (Armenian Weekly, "Public Rally Resolution Urges End to Protocols Process, September 30, 2009) accessed on May 28, 2013. www.armenianweekly.com/2009/09/30/public-rally-resolution-urges-end-to-protocols-process/

- especially when dealing with such a sensitive topic as the Armenian Genocide and Turkey-Armenia relations. This Protocols discussion will present various examples of politician's interviews, newspaper articles (including op-ed pieces), and my own interviews, in order to reflect that contestation. This will therefore address the main question of the thesis related to the construction and the discursive shifts of Armenianness from 1988-2013.

Sargsyan's Consultation Tours in the Diaspora and the Negative Reactions Towards the Armenian State

Serzh Sargsyan and members of his administration organized various 'tours' to visit major Armenian diaspora communities in October 2009, days before the Protocols were signed, which means that the decisions on the Protocols were most likely a *fait accompli*.²⁶⁶ The purpose, according to the government, was to 'consult' with the pan-Armenian community before making a decision and to listen to the concerns of the community representatives. To many this tour was not based on a consultation, due to the timing of the tours. The Armenian government explains that it took this opportunity to present its perspective, perhaps to explain why it is important for Armenia to take these steps, and to reassure that the Genocide and Karabakh causes are not 'abandoned'. Many saw these steps as a political strategy by the Armenian state to portray a certain desire to cooperate with the large diaspora and perhaps to show the international community that it was willing to be inclusive of diverse opinions. It seems that even though the discussions with the President of Armenia indeed gave the opportunity for the opposition in the diaspora, mostly represented through the Social Democrat Hunchakian Party, the Armenian Revolutionary

²⁶⁶ According to the official site of the president, Serzh Sargsyan and members of his administration went to several Armenian diaspora communities, including Paris, New York, Glendale, Beirut and Rostov-on-Don. The press release explains the visits and quotes the president as stating the following to the diaspora members and representatives: "I want to hear concerns of the Armenians from all over the world. Such concerns are bound to exist regarding a painful issue such as this one. I want to mentally compare them to my own worries, to double check if there are any aspects that have been omitted or have not been considered..."

Federation Dashnak Party, and the Armenian Democratic League-Ramgavar Party, to voice their concerns and disagreements, this did not lead to any changes in the Armenian government position regarding the Protocols, and the discussions were perhaps not intended to do this in the first place.

In Rostov-on-Don, the final city in the tour, Armenian community representatives from Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova met with Sargsyan to express their concern and disagreement with the Protocols. There were various perspectives on the objections. Ara Abrahamyan, the chair of the Union of Armenians of Russia, for example, conveyed that the Turkish-Armenian Protocols signatures would delay the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by Turkey. He also stated that such decisions should be based on expert analysis of the Protocols, before decisions are finalized by the Armenian government. Muscovite Armenian Yuri Navoyan, chair of the Russian-Armenian Cooperation Union, also believed that more consultations in the form of a Public Council adjunct to the president would allow for stronger dialogue between the Armenian state and the diaspora (A1+ News, October 8. 2009).²⁶⁷ Navoyan explained that there are two problems with the Protocols: the first one is that they “confirm the Armenia-Turkey border de jure. Second, the Protocols fail to affirm the Armenian Genocide; instead, Armenia acquiesces to the creation of a historical commission, or, in other words, agrees to create a controversy about the incontrovertible fact of the Armenian Genocide.” (Hakobyan, *Armenian Reporter*, 2009)²⁶⁸ Ara Abramyan stated that even though he is not against Turkish-Armenian dialogue in principle, he does not believe there should be concessions on issues related to Armenian national security, such as the recognition of the Genocide, Karabakh, and the border with Turkey (*Ibid*). In this sense, we

²⁶⁷ A1+ New Internet News Broadcasting, ““Serzh Sargsyan’s Last Stop in Rostov-On-Don”, October 8. 2009, at <http://www.a1plus.am/en/politics/2009/10/8/erkramas>, accessed on May 28, 2013.

²⁶⁸ Tatul Hakobyan, “In Moscow and Istanbul, Armenians React to Protocols with Caution and Concern,” September 10, 2009, at <http://www.reporter.am/go/article/2009-09-10-in-moscow-and-istanbul-armenians-react-to-protocols-with-caution-and-concern--updated->, accessed on May 28, 2013.

can see that whether it is the ‘western’ diaspora or the ‘eastern’ diaspora, the perspective of Turkey as a threat and an enemy and the mistrust towards its initiatives are shared by both of them, notwithstanding similar opposing voices within Armenia of course.

After announcing that he would consult with the (local) Armenian representatives before signing the Protocols on September 17, Sargsyan held a round-table discussion with the Armenian politicians to initiate the so-called consultations. This round-table discussion did provide the Armenian opposition parties and coalitions a platform to directly express their strong disagreement with the decision of the ruling Republican Party of Armenia to proceed with the Protocols. However, many did not see this as a productive and honest step. Levon Ter-Petrosyan’s Armenian National Congress (ANC) coalition coordinator, Levon Zurabian, explained that Serzh Sargsyan is not dedicated to creating a dialogue with the opposition in Armenia and is instead only interested in appearances –to ‘show’ cooperation and inclusiveness to the international community. The ANC’s position is that Serzh Sargsyan had already made his decision regarding the Protocols before the consultations began (Grigoryan, *Eurasianet*, 2009).²⁶⁹ The meetings organized by Serzh Sargsyan with the local Armenian opposition and the diaspora community representatives came after both himself and his Turkish counterpart agreed to have six weeks of ‘consultations’ to prepare the public to the signing of the Protocols (*Ibid*). This position indicates that Serzh Sargsyan’s intention was never to discuss and share opinions or listen to the opposition voices in Armenia and in the diaspora, and instead his aim was to convince the public that his administration’s decision will lead to the betterment of Armenia in the region. This is an opinion shared by many in the opposition.

²⁶⁹ Marianna Grigoryan, Eurasianet, September 27, 2009, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insightb/articles/eav092809b.shtml>, accessed May 28, 2013.

An interesting point of contention on the diaspora-Armenia front is that some of the opposition members perceived the tours to be an attempt to bypass local opposition views. Instead the government uses the diaspora cities tours to create a seeming dialogue with the diaspora as a more powerful way to validate the Protocols. Suren Surenyants, from the Republic Party which is in the ANC coalition, who supports the Protocols, considers that the trips Sargsyan made to the five diasporan cities reflect the government's disconnection and disengagement with its own people in Armenia in the decision-making process regarding relations with Turkey. Surenyants stated that "It's very insulting when, instead of substantiating his policy within his own society, Serzh Sargsyan is trying to do it abroad." (Ibid)

Even though the feelings and thoughts of some in Armenia were against Sargsyan consulting the diaspora, the major political parties in the diaspora felt, on the contrary, that the government of Armenia had to consult with them because issues related to Turkey and Armenian-Turkish relations really belonged to the Armenian people (and not the Armenian state). In a public rally organized in Glendale on September 27, 2009, in opposition to the Armenia-Turkey Protocols, major diasporan political parties, the Social Democrat Hunchakian Party, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, the Armenian Democratic League (Ramgavar Party), and the United Young Armenians jointly organized and issued a unanimous statement, again in a rare moment of unity of these parties in the diaspora:

Whereas the recognition of the Armenian Genocide and the pursuit of the Armenian Cause (*Hai Tahd*) are the sole responsibility of the Armenian people, be they in Armenia or the diaspora, this is not an issue of our ancestors or our generation; rather it is an issue of rights of our future generations. The Armenian authorities do not have the legal right, in the name of the Armenian people, to bargain during negotiations with Turkey, the just right of the Armenian people, especially the issues of the Armenian

Genocide, our occupied historical territories, and reparations (Taken from the *Armenian Weekly*, 2009).²⁷⁰

In New York, Serzh Sargsyan and his delegation, which included the Minister of Diaspora, Hranush Hakobyan, former President of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, Arkady Ghoukasyan, Chairperson of Armenia's Constitutional Court, Gagik Harutunyan, and others, met with diaspora representative parties and several organizations including the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), archbishops and other clergy from the Eastern and Canadian dioceses and prelacies of the Armenian Church, the Armenian Assembly of America, the Zoryan Institute, the Fund for Armenian Relief, the Armenia Fund, Birthright Armenia, the Congress of Canadian Armenians, and the three main diaspora parties (*Sanamyan, The Armenian Reporter*, 2009) According to the report by Sanamyan in *The Reporter*, the discussion in New York was tense, and the views expressed by the participants were quite diverse, ranging from supporters to highly critical perspectives in the room. There were other such meetings in the cities where the president toured in, such as Paris, Beirut and Rostov-on-Don. It is clear that the diaspora therefore does not present a unified voice on the Protocols, Armenia's decision on normalizing ties and establishing diplomatic relations with Turkey. Those who were against the Protocols organized protests, sit-ins, hunger strikes, meetings, and so on in the 'diaspora cities' and in Armenia.

On October 2, 2009, in Paris, French-Armenians organized protests shouting "Traitor!" to the President of Armenia and "Votch! Votch! [No! No!]" to mark their opposition vis-à-vis

²⁷⁰ Armenian Weekly, "Public Rally Urges End to Protocols Process", September 30, 2009, at www.armenianweekly.com/2009/09/30/public-rally-resolution-urges-end-to-protocols, accessed on May 28, 2013. Armenian Weekly estimates the attendance of the rally of 10,000 participants. On the other hand, Armenian News (News.am) reports that multi-thousands attended. See Armenian News, "Protests on Protocols in Glendale", September 28, 2009, at <http://news.am/eng/news/5344.html&usg=AFQjCNEimHMpjJHsQR4kgET-7KLzWGMO-Q>, accessed on May 28, 2013.

Sargsyan's decision to go ahead with the Protocols.²⁷¹ In New York, similar crowds of Armenians held picket signs reading "Turkey is Guilty! Turkey Must Pay!". The anger addressed was mostly directed against the establishment of a historical commission to 'study' the facts and determine the veracity of Genocide. This was indeed outrageous on the political and psychological level for the survivor generation (almost disappeared today) and for the second and third generation of the children and (great)-grandchildren of the survivors.

Apart from those points however, as Giragosian highlights, it seemed that there were some problems in the process that created further tensions between the Armenian state and those opposed to the Protocols (within Armenia and in the diaspora):

...the secret diplomacy [between Turkey and Armenia], the asymmetry of power between Turkey and Armenia even with the Swiss and American help, and the lack of information provokes disinformation and misinformation. And the biggest problem is what we see now: there was no attempt by Armenia or Turkey to prepare public opinion first, and that is a mistake, and in fact what we are doing now on the Armenian side is working with Turkish civil society in broadening the constituency in favour of the Genocide recognition and in favour of normalization... (Author's interview, 2011).

The lack of information around the Protocols confused the Armenian public. The Protocols were released only after secret negotiations between Armenia and Turkey, and the text of the Protocols were released on August 31, 2009 and sent by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia to the diasporan and Armenian media. The consultation tours were announced in September 2009, and the actual tour only began in October 2009 a few days before the signatures were finalized by

²⁷¹ European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity, "Massive Protests in Armenian Diaspora against Armenia-Turkey Protocols", October 8, 2009, at http://www.europeanforum.net/news/743/massive_protests_in_armenian_diaspora_against_armenia_turkey_protocols, accessed on May 28, 2013. This source presents the number of protesters at 200 though the location is not specified. However, the *Armenian Weekly* mentions about 1000 protesters when Sargsyan went to the Gomidas statue, one of the monuments in France dedicated to the memory of the Armenian Genocide, to lay wreath in the memory of the Genocide. See "Demonstrators Against Sarkisian [Sargsyan] in Paris Are Met with Police violence", October 2, 2009, available on <http://armenianweekly.com/2009/10/02/demonstrators-against-sarkisian-in-paris-met-with-police-violence/>, accessed on April 15, 2015.

Eduard Nalbandyan, the Foreign Minister of Armenia. The public was not prepared for the news and the rapid process, and as Giragosian states, this created room for misinformation about the whole process. Onnik Krikorian also states that the environment around the Protocols within the different oppositions in Armenia, for example, also became a source of confusion for Armenians. But what seems to be most concerning and angering for the diasporans is the way the consultations were done at the last moment, signalling the disinterest of the Armenian government to actually discuss the process and content, especially since relations between the Armenian government and the diaspora have not always been friendly and amicable.

In addition to the concerns addressed by all three diasporan parties against the Protocols in letters addressed to the Armenian government, the Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia in Lebanon, Aram I, who is the head of the Armenian Orthodox Church in Antelias, strongly affiliated to the Dashnak party, also voiced his disagreement in a letter to Sargsyan. He asked the President to involve the Armenian people on such an important issue for the whole nation. According to him, any decision regarding the Protocols and the normalization of relations with Turkey should be discussed by Armenia, Karabakh and the diaspora altogether. The major opposition parties in Armenia were also against the Protocols, such as the Heritage Party, the ANC bloc, and also the Dashnak Party that resigned from the ruling government coalition in April of 2009, after discussions on normalization of relations with Turkey had begun.²⁷² Despite the strong reactions from the diaspora parties and organizations and the local Armenian parties and organizations over the Protocols, many felt that these voices were not as influential and effective as anticipated by the

²⁷² There are several questions in terms of the motives of the ANC in expressing its rejection of the Protocols, since Levon Ter-Petrosyan, the head of the bloc coalition of the ANC, has been positive about opening borders and normalizing relations with Turkey by creating diplomatic ties. He has expressed this position since he was president of Armenia between 1991-1998. Similar doubts are expressed against the position of Vartan Voskanian, the head of the Civilitas Foundation and former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia. He is a diasporan repatriate to Armenia.

opposition vis-à-vis the Protocols from their inception.²⁷³ According to journalist Onnik Krikoryan, the number of protesters was not high in proportion to the number of Armenians living in those major diasporan cities. In Los Angeles, which has one of the largest Armenian diasporas in the world, for example, only about 3000 protestors took part, according to the LA Police Department estimates.²⁷⁴ However, these numbers are contested by other sources that claim around 10,000 to 12,000 protestors were in the streets of LA. Protests also took place in Yerevan against the Protocols, and twelve political parties and some organizations took part in these protests, and about 10,000 people took part in these protests to voice their concern.²⁷⁵ Onnik Krikorian reports that the Dashnak party “even called off its round-the-clock strike held outside the two main government buildings on Yerevan’s central Republic Square....It did so the day before the historic

²⁷³ Richard Giragosian, quoted below, explained in my interview with him that the reactions from the diaspora were not as strong as expected. Hayk Demoyan also expressed during my interview with him that the reactions from the diaspora in general were negative towards the Protocols; however, in his interactions with diasporans during his trips to give talks on the Armenian Genocide, he felt that there was a strong misinformation and lack of understanding of the content of the Protocols documents.

²⁷⁴ Shahane Martirosyan, “Protocol Protest in LA: Sargsyan Los Angeles visit met with disapproval outside his reception”, October 5, 2009, *ArmeniaNow News*, at http://armenianow.com/news/10582/protocol_protest_in_la_sargsyan_lo, accessed on May 28, 2013. The numbers are different depending on the news agency one refers to. Asbarez News for example estimates more than 12,000 protestors on October 4, 2009 in opposition to the protocols and Sargsyan’s visit to the city.

European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity, “Massive Protests in Armenian Diaspora against Armenia-Turkey Protocols”, October 8, 2009, at http://www.europeanforum.net/news/743/massive_protests_in_armenian_diaspora_against_armenia_turkey_protocols, accessed on May 28, 2013. Also see Muriel Mirak-Weissbach, “Armenia-Turkey Rapprochement Puts Ideologies to the Test”, November 11, 2009, at <http://www.globalresearch.ca/armenia-turkey-rapprochement-puts-ideologies-to-the-test/16026>

²⁷⁵ The twelve parties that were protesting included the following in Armenia: the Dashnak Party that became an opposition after the protocols disagreement with the government; Ramgavar-Azatagan Armenia Party; New Times Party; People’s Party, Armenian Democratic Party, the Heritage Party of Raffi Hovhannesian, the presidential candidate in 2013; Goyamart Party; Mother Armenia Party; Socialist Labour Party of Armenia; United Armenians; National Unity Party; Armenian Aryan Union. Not all these parties are major parties in Armenia, since some of them only comprise 35 members. Nonetheless they did join these protests and expressed their discontent with the protocols and the way the Armenian government was handling the negotiations.

agreement....over an issue considered central not only to local ethnic identity, but also its own ideology.” (Krikorian, *Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso*, 2009)²⁷⁶

Richard Giragosian, the director and founder of the Regional Studies Center and a repatriated Armenian and renowned expert in the Armenian political scene, explained that he is in support of the Protocols and has been “deeply involved in supporting the process” (Author’s Interview, 2011). What he found interesting in the process, he continued, is that “the diasporan reaction was much less than what was feared and expected....And the whole issue of the Protocols [rejection] was also less than expected in Armenia, because it failed to unify or mobilize the opposition in any meaningful way, so the government won on both fronts, and it actually gave it greater confidence.” The problem of the Armenian opposition being so fragmented is nothing new in Armenian politics and revealed to be the main source of another failed protest against the disputed presidential elections in Armenia in 2013. This has been the case since independence, with the different oppositions arising or forming depending on the political climate and the ruling party. In the diaspora, the three main political parties, Dashnak Party, the Ramgavar Party and the Hunchak Party, jointly participated in protests and issued unanimous statements to the president of Armenia. Yet there were other organizations, political and non-political ones, which were in support of the Protocols. Looking at the situation today, the strongest diasporan political party is the Dashnak party, with several organizations, media resources, funding, and various other

²⁷⁶ Onnik Krikorian, “Armenia-Turkey Protocols Signed While Critics Claim Betrayal”, *Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso*, October 21, 2009, <http://www.balcanicaucaso.org/eng/Regions-and-countries/Armenia/Armenia-Turkey-protocols-signed-while-critics-claim-betrayal>, accessed on May 28, 2013. According to Asbarez News and YerkirMedia Youtube, about 60,000 protesters were gathered to express their disagreement with the Protocols. The Armenian Weekly reports that there were more than 50,000 protesters. The Armenian Weekly, YerkirMedia and Asbarez News are Dashnak party affiliated media, and thus the exaggeration in the numbers they provide (versus 10,000 protestors in another source) reflects a more partisan perspective than accuracy in the coverage in this case. See Asbarez News, “More Than 60,000 Protest Protocols in Yerevan”, October 9, 2009, at <http://asbarez.com/71694/more-than-60000-protest-protocols-in-yerevan/>, accessed on May 28, 2013. Armenian Weekly, “Thousand Protest Against Protocols in Yerevan”, October 17, 2009, at <http://www.armenianweekly.com/2009/10/17/thousand-protest-against-protocols-in-yerevan/>, accessed on May 28, 2013.

affiliated bodies such as cultural and artistic organizations. The diaspora, however, does not only consist of the organized political parties and there are many who are either supporters or sympathizers of these parties and not members. Others are part of humanitarian organizations such as the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) and the Armenian Assembly, or those who belong to the diocese of the Armenian Churches, though not all these groups are apolitical, and some of them seem to be affiliated with one Armenian political party or against it. In sum, then, the diaspora did not have a unified stance against the Protocols and the local Armenian opposition also failed to speak with a unified voice that could have perhaps strengthened its countering force and enlarged the power of protests.

Despite this opposition in Armenia and in the diaspora against the Protocols, it is not as simple to measure the intensity of the opposition on the ground among people, to understand why there were so few people in the streets protesting in some cities, even though the opposition to the Protocols came out very strongly in newspapers, press conferences, and other media from the diasporan parties. However, perhaps one factor that could be behind the relatively low numbers is that many Armenians in the diaspora are increasingly shifting away from the nationalist rejection of Turkey and beginning to embrace the idea that some dialogue and relationship with Turkey is essential in order to work with the Turkish people to pressure their government to recognize the Genocide. These are ideas that many diasporan and Armenia-based organizations have embraced – such as Civilnet, Armenian Assembly of America (with its local office in Armenia). It is also a perspective shared by various Armenian intellectuals. A strong proponent of this position is Levon Ter-Petrosyan himself, and he continues to support this view today. In addition, Richard Giragosian and Salpi Ghazarian (Civilitas) also support the position that it is necessary to work with Turkish

organizations, non-governmental organizations, and individuals, in order to have a grass-roots call to dig out the buried and suppressed history of the Armenian Genocide.

Contested Issues of Belonging and Representation between Armenia and the Diaspora: The Armenian State as a Representative of all Armenians?

Many who supported the Protocols initiative from politicians to analysts in Armenia and the diaspora have different views on the consultations and the Protocols more generally. They believe that the state of Armenia is the main negotiator of Armenian interests, and that the president himself ‘consulted’ with these communities, according to the official website of the president, and listened to their opinions on the Protocols. For example, in a statement issued by the AGBU Central Board of Directors on the occasion of the release of the draft of the Protocols, they state the following regarding the Armenian State:

We recognize the great geopolitical challenges faced by Armenia – its concern for its national security, the need to improve the accessibilities and communication links vital to its economic development, the desire to participate in regional programs of political and economic cooperation....We believe the official governmental authorities in Armenia are both the administrators of the state and the guardians of its future. Therefore, they must be guided by pan-national goals and aspirations in making these difficult and far-reaching decisions.

In an interview with *Azad-Hye Middle Eastern Armenian Portal*, the President of AGBU, Berge Setrakian, states that he is in favour of the process and believes in the State of Armenia as the representative of the Armenian position and interests and the main negotiator on behalf of Armenians:

In connection with the normalization process of relations between Armenia and Turkey and the opening of the borders, we believe that the President of the Republic of Armenia has exercised strong leadership and a realistic understanding of the state of affairs of regional and international diplomacy. He has acted as a responsible leader taking a bold and somewhat difficult step forward. We know that this process was not easy to engage, as it represents significant challenges for the President and for all

Armenians. We believe it important for the Armenian authorities to have the trust, support, and feedback of the people in order to be able to negotiate from a position of strength (Kevork Yazjian, *Azad-Hye Middle East Armenian Portal*, October 30, 2009).²⁷⁷

It seems that there is also a critical perspective in Armenia regarding the diaspora relations with Armenia. Hayk Demoyan, the head of the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, believes that the diaspora feels a certain sense of entitlement to decide on Armenia's strategic line of action because it provides financial support to Armenia. He believes that even though the diaspora has the right to voice its opinion, the state of Armenia is the main negotiator of its own interests. In his words:

The very concept of statehood without homeland still prevails. The diaspora considers itself as a statehood of some kind, which is by default in opposition to the state of Armenia....Where is the capital [of the diaspora]? In Beirut, of course. And this attempt to oppose Beirut-Yerevan is part of this mentality and Western Armenian culture, literature, publications....But many still oppose for Yerevan to be considered as the main centre of Armenianness and Armenian statehood. Yet many things changed because of the civil war in Lebanon, a lot of Armenian communities are now weak, in Iran and Iraq, it is not the same as in the 1960s...(Author's Interview, 2011, author's translation for Armenian words)

Demoyan stated that during his regular travels to the diaspora communities to give lectures and talks as head of the Armenian Genocide Museum Institute, focusing on the individual interactions he has had in the diaspora, the common position he heard was that "Armenia does not have the right to sign a document in the name of all Armenians." He also expressed the main problem behind this way of thinking, in his view, which is that "...Armenia signed a document, as a document between states. I am always asking people who criticize: who read the Protocols? No

²⁷⁷ Kevork Yazjian, "AGBU President Berge Setrakian Addresses Questions on the Protocols for the Process of Normalization of Relations Between Armenia and Turkey," *Azad-Hye Middle East Armenian Portal*, October 30, 2009, at <http://www.azad-hye.net/news/viewnews.asp?newsId=621aaf41>, accessed on May 28, 2013.

one. Someone told them that this is dangerous. Well of course it is. There are many complications. But this shows that there is inclination to consider negatively more than positively. And negatively first" (Author's Interview, 2011). The Armenian diaspora political parties oppose the Protocols, though for different reasons. So it is not unusual that people in general, especially those who follow certain parties or are more inclined towards certain parties' ideologies, tend to be against the Protocols, and without reading the documents because they form their perspective upon the parties' position and final words.

Regardless of whether or not they supported the Protocols, many of my interviewees expressed that, by going on these tours, the President of Armenia had shown he had an upper hand in the discussions with the diaspora. The main official representative of Armenian interests, in the sense of the Armenian state and citizenry, is the state of Armenia. Reflecting the perspective from the government, Karine Kazinyan, the late deputy Foreign Minister of Armenia and former ambassador to Berlin, spoke to me about the Protocols and the diaspora position on it. She stated that "the diaspora was upset about the football game [or the football diplomacy of 2008], the [Dashnak] member of our coalition was also against. When our president embarked on the trip to meet with members of the diaspora, the demonstrations against the president [organized] by diaspora Armenians...was much unexpected to me. But it is important for us to make the diaspora understand. And I appreciate [what was done] by the President. This was a real act of a statesman" (Author's Interview, 2011). Richard Giragosian also believes that the President made the right decision to organize the consultation trips to the diaspora, as he states in his interview, which I quote at great length here due to its importance:

In fact, I got into an argument with the President [of Armenia], my advice to him was not to go to the diaspora, as he did that multi-city tour, because 1) [he] is elevating the diaspora to the same level as the state, then he would lose, and 2) [he is] not going to

be able to change anyone's mind, so politically it is a lose-lose situation. In my next meeting, I had to say that [he was] right and I was wrong, and the reason it was so successful was that when he went there, he listened and he said you are against the Protocols and against the process, then what alternative do you propose? There were no alternatives, and this exposed the emptiness of the argument against the Protocols. And in fact, it strengthened the Armenian government in terms of confidence. And to the credit of the Armenian government (I am a critic of it, except on this issue)...they later took a harder line against Turkey because [the latter] was not being sincere, and because they are not weak or stupid as they were in the 1990s...and all the expectation and burden is still on Turkey, [which] tried to ship it back to Armenia, but this has not worked (Author's Interview, 2011).

However, Giragosian also highlights an aspect of the Protocols that could help to further analyze why the government was interested in these Protocols at this time in particular. In his words:

...the interesting thing that you may want to cover is to look at who was negotiating from the Armenian side...and the whole reason for the Armenian Turkish gamble is very interesting, and in my opinion, I am fully convinced there is only one reason, March 1st [2008]. The Armenian President's lack of legitimacy, forced him and his government out of desperation, to seek for [sic] legitimacy first and foremost externally and also internally, by taking this bold move and courageous step in foreign policy, but that is not exactly the best reason (*Ibid*).

In a world designed as state-centred in international affairs, negotiations, and international representation, the state is the main body or entity through which treaties, agreements, deals, and so on are made. The stateless status of the Armenian diaspora after the first Armenian republic was absorbed by the Bolsheviks (1918-1920) challenged the notion of the state-linked diasporas. Indeed, the statelessness of Armenians around the world created the need for a strong diaspora in order to organize and mobilize people, to bring them together under the banner of Armenianness, to create a community of schools, clubs, parties, to maintain Armenianness after the victims of the Genocide had lost all their belongings, and family members. The work was not an easy one, but from the beginning, it was done along political divisions that replicated the Armenian communities

in eastern Turkey (see Chapter Four).²⁷⁸ Therefore, the divisions within the diaspora are reflected in the depth of what it meant to be Armenian – the construction of Armenianness, which contributes to a sense of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ within Armenian communities in the diaspora.²⁷⁹ However, when it came to the issue of the Protocols, the traditional Armenian diaspora parties quickly united in their rejection of them, despite their (sometimes strong) political differences. The Dashnak party, the Hunchak party and the Ramgavar party organized protests in the diaspora and issued unanimous statements. This is not a common occurrence for these three parties.

This should not imply that the diaspora is a homogenous block that thinks similarly and has similar visions about Armenia and the Turkish-Armenian relations. Even though perhaps almost all diasporans would agree on the recognition of Turkey as the perpetrators of the Armenian Genocide as a necessary step in the Armenian-Turkish relations, they differ significantly, some more than others perhaps, on the conditions and the nature of this relationship and the issue of reparations (symbolic and physical or land based). The debates around the Protocols brought those disagreements into the fore. This is most probably due to the fact that these Protocols were one of the first instances in recent decades when the issue of opening borders and establishing diplomatic ties were put on the table into concrete international agreements.

But there is another level of the Armenian-Turkish rapprochement that worries many in the diaspora. There is a fear and lack of trust of Turkey and ‘Turks’, embedded in the memory of the Genocide; more recently, this mistrust strongly reappeared among the diasporan and local

²⁷⁸ The Armenian diaspora organizations and institutions continue to play an extremely important role in raising awareness on the Genocide in the various host countries through lobbying and research. It also plays a strong role in securing financial aid to Armenia and Karabakh not only by fund raising within the Armenian community but also through lobbying governments, such as the case in the United States of America, France, and other countries.

²⁷⁹ However these differences are not limited to the party one belongs to or supports and can be related to the host country one is from, so the divisions between Iranian Armenians and Lebanese Armenians, or Los Angeles Armenians and Iranian Armenians and so on. There are also very explicitly expressed by many Armenians in discussions about Armenians from certain host countries. See Chapter Four for more information on this.

Armenians after the Sumgait and Baku massacres in Azerbaijan.²⁸⁰ In a statement made by the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) in October 2009, ANCA states that it joins the Armenian American community in order “to stop the intense pressure by Turkey and its allies to force Armenia into accepting a flawed and dangerous set of Protocols that threaten the security of Armenia, surrender the rights of the Armenian nation, and insult the dignity of the Armenian people” (*Asbarez*, October 2, 2009).²⁸¹ To most of the diasporan Armenian groups, relations with Turkey have to do with the national security of Armenia and Armenian people. As such, diplomatic or other relations with Turkey are approached with suspicion and emotion from past experience. In addition, diasporan organizations and lobby groups face confrontation with ‘Turkey’ on an everyday basis, through lobbies in the United States, through research institutes funded by Turkey to deny the Genocide,²⁸² through the denial by Turkey of the Armenian Genocide of 1915, and through the continuous threat to the Armenian community in Turkey especially of the hidden Armenians. For Hayk Demoyan, this fear of Turkey is the main obstacle that divides the diaspora from local Armenian mentality. He states that

the approach in Armenian [state] was between two states, one weak and one strong... who committed Genocide. The mentality in Armenia was different: of course there were critiques, and this is important, but what the diaspora said was – [the state] has no right to sign this....We are citizens of a country which has to survive, and we have to find the ways. I am not saying Protocols are good and this is our only chance. Of course not, but [they present] the way of moving forward for the sake of the security and well-being of the people here...we have two neighbours and they are strong (Author’s Interview, 2011).

²⁸⁰ When the fear of Turkey winning the war in 1920 was increasingly becoming evident, the ruling Dashnak party in Armenia at the time decided it is better to be under Soviet rule than Turkish attacks. And so the Dashnaks left the government and Armenia became Sovietized soon afterward.

²⁸¹ *Asbarez Armenian News*, “ANCA Protests Protocols Pressure on Armenia,” October 2, 2009, at <http://asbarez.com/71389/anca-protests-protocols-pressure-on-armenia/>, accessed on July 27, 2013.

²⁸² See the Turkish Coalition of America website (<http://www.tc-america.org/>) for more information of who is funded. One example is Dr. Hakan Yavuz from the University of Utah who is referred to as a denier by the Genocide studies scholar community.

What is notable in Demoyan's statement is his perception of the role that statehood plays in the psychology of a nation. Local Armenians, he believes, do not feel the same threat from outside today because they are part of a state, and they were part of a powerful entity during the Soviet period. For (part of) the stateless diaspora, the imagination of what is Armenia cannot constitute a reality, a concrete experience, or a place where they comfortably call homeland (due to the absence of Western Armenia from the current homeland borders). However, this position of Armenia as a state seems to be exaggerated by Demoyan's view since Armenia remains a small country in a region that is surrounded by Russia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey – three geopolitically strong states (Author's Interview, 2011). Although Turkey is less alien to many Armenians in Armenia rather than the diaspora – given the proximity and shared borders, tourism from Armenia,²⁸³ trade with Turkish businessmen, and products entering into Armenia from Turkey – the feeling of distrust, though some still refer to 'fear', vis-à-vis Turkey is also strongly present in Armenia. Since 1988, this threat is perhaps associated with Azerbaijanis, and the war strengthened that view while many Armenians refer to Azerbaijanis as 'Turks'. Therefore, to generalize, there is a lack of trust in all dealings with Turkey or Turks for many Armenians (Iskandaryan, Author's Interview, 2011).²⁸⁴

Due to the continuous Genocide denial by Turkey, along with the absence of any reparations and justice associated with the recognition of Genocide, diasporans feel vulnerable to make any deal with Turkey that involves preconditions. The Dashnak party, in opposition to the Protocols, did state that it is not against the establishment of some relationship between Armenia

²⁸³ According to Fiona Hill and Kemal Kirişci (2015), "Nationals of both countries [Armenia and Turkey] enjoy relatively free travel through electronic visas or visas obtained at international border crossings. This practice was introduced by Turkey in 2003 as part of what was then the Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission and eventually reciprocated by Armenia." According to them, The number of Armenians entering Turkey increased from about 5,500 to 32,000 between 2000-2004, and the number reached to 73,000 by 2013.

²⁸⁴ This is evident for example in an analysis by Thomas de Waal on the current situation in Syria and the possible attack of the West on Syrian territories. Alexander Iskandaryan (2011, 40) also expressed that there is a sense of "mistrust in Armenia society, including among intellectuals, most nationalists and a few political groups."

and Turkey, as long as this relationship is not based on any preconditions, especially those related to the Armenian Genocide and Nagorno-Karabakh and the border recognition by Armenia. Those who support the Protocols in the diaspora and inside Armenia, on the contrary, feel that opening the borders is fundamental for the survival of the Armenians in Armenia, and for the betterment of the Armenian economy. Karine Kazinyan, for example, stated the following on closed borders:

The Protocols were signed because we agreed that there were no preconditions (Genocide and NK, for example). This was clearly stated and [Turkey] agreed and this is why we [Armenian government] agreed to go ahead. In the twenty-first century, I do not understand closed borders....Opening the borders will help us diversify our economy. [President Sargsyan] explained this to our compatriots abroad, you live somewhere else, and we live here, you have to understand us. Genocide is a crime against humanity, and we will never forget our history, but the establishment of ties [with Turkey] is a must [for Armenia]. (Author's Interview, 2011)

Alexander Iskandaryan, the director of the Caucasus Institute, states that contrary to some intellectuals, nationalists, and political parties, “Armenia’s ruling elites are in support of normalization of relations with Turkey and they have stated repeatedly that Armenia is ready for that without preconditions.” (2011, 40) There is a particularly positive reaction towards the Protocols from Turkish and Armenian businessmen: “Turkey is Armenia’s seventh largest trading partner. Due to the lack of official ties, however, either Russia or Georgia is marked as the destination on Turkish goods intended for Armenia....Local officials from the struggling Eastern parts of Turkey often express their enthusiasm about the potential opening of the border and the beginning of direct trade and cooperation with Armenian businesses.” (2011, 43) However, Iskandaryan notes that there are mixed feelings about this in Armenia, since many businessmen fear that “open borders may leave Armenian producers unable to compete against cheap imports from Turkey and make Armenian trade too dependent on Turkish route.” (Ibid) Nonetheless, most trade exporters and experts believe that this will benefit the Armenian economy.

Vazgen Manukyan, the current head of the Public Council of Armenia and a strong supporter of the Protocols on Sargsyan's side, thought the difference of opinion between the diaspora and the people of Armenia was quite normal and revolved around two main issues vis-a-vis the Turkish-Armenian relations:

The first issue is the relationship with Turkey, and for the people of Armenia, this is an issue of life, of future, and also of dignity. [The second one is] the Genocide issue. But at the same time, we are living on these territories and we should be able to have good neighbourly relations to establish trade relations, and other relations. The diaspora is firstly formed through the Genocide, and they hear about the Genocide from the day they are born, whereas in Armenia it was not allowed to speak about the Genocide for decades....We received different training and education from the diaspora. And if every issue is going to be tied to the Genocide issue for the diaspora, *then that is very bad for them, but the Armenian people think a bit different about this*. The second issue is whether or not Turkey should enter the European Union (EU). For the diaspora, this is not a good thing because otherwise it would mean that it has forgiven Turkey the Genocide and the [occupation of] lands....For some Armenians living in Armenia, the situation is a bit different because they believe that if we want to live in security and we want to have economic development then we need to have borders with the EU. If Turkey becomes a member of the EU then it will not be a threat to us, we will feel more secure...(Author's Interview, 2011, author's translation, emphasis added).

Manukyan's quote reveals some interesting factors of disagreement he considers between the diaspora and Armenians in Armenia. He highlights the differing backgrounds in education and identity formation, especially around the Genocide issue. Much like Demoyan's reference above, Manukyan also believes that the diasporan identity is closely tied to the Genocide issue, and it is thus difficult to understand diasporan formation, mentality, and identification with Armenianness without the factor of Genocide. In fact, this is shared by most scholars on Armenian diaspora studies, who consider that the Genocide memory is central to Armenian diasporic identity, making the struggle to achieve Turkish recognition of the Genocide the *sine qua non* of Armenianness in

the twentieth century (See Bakalian 1993; also see Panossian 2006; Hovannisian 2007; MacDonald 2008).

The situation is different in Armenia, especially since Armenians share a border with Turkey, they travel to Turkey, they see Ararat every day, and they can directly reap the benefits of open borders, after already having lived two decades of blockade, and live in a relative peace with a friendlier neighbour in terms of business development and tourism, for example. Another striking point raised by Harutyun Marutyan is that the “Protocols showed that people (not organizations or institutions) of diaspora countered the process, and this opposition was used to differentiate the Armenian diaspora and the state and ‘us’ [Armenians in Armenia], we are different – ‘you’ and ‘us’....there comes the process of differentiation, ‘Aghpar’ and Armenians. To make foreign – to create ‘other’, to confirm self...and you try to use whatever you have at the time - ...like joker in English, so they try to find a joker” (Author’s Interview, 2011, author translation). These differentiations based on us (diapora) versus them (local Armenians) are well captured in Chapter Four. They also became an important factor of discussion among diaspora Armenians, one that was not officially emphasized by the institutions and organizations of the diaspora but mostly by people. Stepan Safaryan, Heritage Party Member of the National Assembly in Armenia, expressed this differentiation as he reflected on his view of the diaspora-Armenia relations. He explained to me that, in his view, the Protocols revealed that

the position of the Armenian state was dangerous and challenging to the diaspora, because Armenia [as a state], indirectly or directly, was saying that your issue is yours and our issue is ours, and you have your issue and we respect it but do not impose it on the state [of Armenia]....The diaspora reaction was very normal on this issue: [the diaspora political parties] said that by establishing a free state, we thought that our issue of justice should be the same as Armenia’s issue of justice. And we worked on strengthening this ‘Armenia’ [as a state] in order for it to be able to solve the issue of Armenia and diaspora. Because whether we like it or not, Armenia is the successor of

all the previous historical ‘Armenias’ that we have had (Author’s Interview, 2011, author’s translation).

This was the diaspora position according to Safaryan, based on his interactions during his trips to Europe in particular. The diaspora expectation was for the Armenian state to listen and follow the desires and (foreign) policies of the diasporan groups. Whereas for Sargsyan, as Safaryan explained to me, “Armenia has its own agenda and the diaspora has its own. We do not interfere in their decisions and they should not interfere in ours.” So there is a clear separation of ‘foreign policies’, so to speak.²⁸⁵

Taking a different critical approach on the diaspora-Armenia relations, Razmik Panossian suggests that it might be best to look at the diaspora and the Armenians state as having different foreign policies regarding the Protocols issue or even the Genocide issue more generally,

If the Armenian government feels that it needs to negotiate about the Genocide, then that is its prerogative. Importantly, with this prerogative comes the responsibility to respect the rights of the opposition to voice its concerns. But it is also the diaspora’s prerogative to assert its own diverse views and pursue policies regarding Genocide recognition, irrespective of Armenia’s calculations. Both are legitimate pursuits, and one does not exclude the other (*Ararat Magazine*, June 20, 2010).

Obviously after 1991, the Armenian state foreign policy and the diaspora foreign policy have come into opposition against each other and compete for recognition, though the Armenian state has precedence in a world dominated by state politics. However, in countries where interest-based politics or the politics of multiculturalism continue to play an important role, diaspora lobbies are powerful bodies that impact foreign policies and shift the hostland policies, such as in

²⁸⁵ This perspective on the different foreign policies of the Armenian diaspora and the Armenian state is also discussed in the work of Khachig Tölölyan (1991), who wrote about the Armenian diaspora during the Soviet Armenian era as being a government-in-exile and functioning like a state with its own foreign policies. This is an interesting perspective and is touched upon in this chapter and the previous one. Razmik Panossian uses the terms ‘foreign policy’ for the Armenian diaspora groups as mentioned in Tölölyan’s work (1991).

France, the USA, Canada, and other countries. Perhaps then, it is important to state that the solution to the tensions and oppositions between some segments of the diaspora and the Armenian state is not to push for a unified position on all issues, since this is an impossible endeavour. On the contrary, efforts should be invested on all sides to present their own foreign policies, especially regarding the Armenian Genocide issue and memory, and a dialogue between all parties could lead to a better understanding of the best approach to the issues at hand.

In the end, it is beneficial to the Armenian state and people to have open borders with Turkey, to normalize the relationship between the two peoples especially. This might also help to increase awareness about the Armenian Genocide – the 100th commemoration of the Armenian Genocide was organized in Istanbul in 2015, and this is not the first commemoration to take place in Turkey. Some of my interviewees argued that the idea is not to have two separate foreign policies, but the diaspora should use its financial and other leverages in order to “pressure the government to make changes, [and this is] not unrealistic if the diaspora is serious about it,” according to Salpi Ghazarian, the director of Civilitas non-governmental organization in Armenia. She is critical of the diaspora activities in Armenia, stating that “the diaspora does almost everything symbolically. [For example,] I do not buy Turkish goods, really?....We do things because we feel good...symbolic. We build roofs for schools, we do short term projects that are feel good, and we do not invest in long term ones, like about the teachers, and their salaries, for example.” Instead, she advises that it would be

far more effective if they [the diaspora organizations and parties] realized that working in tandem with the government, perhaps good cop/bad cop, perhaps different priorities, but in tandem....The government [in turn] must realize the incredible power these organizations and their constituencies have and use them....As a result, you end up with two sides of sometimes seemingly contradictory agendas. Certainly, seemingly differently weighted agendas. (Author’s Interview, 2011)

In this sense, the diaspora could use its lobbying tactics and efficient techniques to pressure the Armenian government into adopting certain perspectives and policies, especially on the international level. After discussing the tensions between the diaspora and Armenia over larger issues that relate to the Armenian Genocide, Turkey, and memories, the next section turns to a more in-depth analysis of the Protocols documents through the main points of disagreement between the Armenian state and those opposed to the Protocols.

The Content of the Protocols and What the Opposition's Issue Is

The previous discussion has already set the background for this subsection in terms of the renewed tensions that were created between the Armenian opposition and the state, and the joining of new parties to the opposition in Armenia such as the Dashnak party and the Ramgavar Party. The main disagreements between the Armenian and diasporan opposition, on the one hand, and the Armenian state, on the other, are based on the following points regarding the Protocols' content: the establishment of diplomatic ties with preconditions imposed on Armenia; the second protocol document proposal of a 'historical' commission; Nagorno-Karabakh; territorial integrity versus the right of self-determination and the problems with de jure acceptance of Armenian-Turkish borders by Armenia.

Diplomatic Ties with Preconditions

Raffi Hovannisian, the 2013 presidential candidate and the head of the Heritage Party in Armenia which joined the opposition group against the Protocols in 2009, is opposed to the Protocols because, as he explained to me, all the preconditions that Turkey imposed on Armenia during the early years of independence when Armenia was joining the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE, now the OSCE), are today embedded in the Protocols: "recognition

of the 1921 borders, withdrawal of Genocide claims, and at the time there was also an issue of terrorism as opposed to Karabakh which entered the agenda later...as a precondition" (Author's Interview, 2011). Hovannisian was the Foreign Minister of Armenia at the time between 1991-1992, and his office did not consent to those preconditions and Armenia entered the CSCE despite veto threats by Turkey. Hovannisian believes that these preconditions have not changed over the years for Turkey and this is one of the main obstacles in signing an agreement with the country: "twenty years later into the third administration, we have the Protocols now between Armenia and Turkey, which I am opposed to because I feel that several of those preconditions have entered the Protocols. You cannot achieve state building, nation building, or a normalization of relations with neighbours by running away from history..." (Author's interview, 2011).

Similarly, the Dashnak perspective has usually been that in order to establish diplomatic ties with Turkey, the latter has to recognize the Armenian Genocide. According to Giro Manoyan, the director of the International Secretariat and Armenian Cause (Hai Tad) Office of the ARF Dashnak Party in Armenia, stated in his interview with me that this position has changed over the years: "...we recognize the politics in this and we understand that if no preconditions are imposed, we can begin relations between the two countries." However, he continues, this was not the case of the Protocols, since they were not without preconditions on Armenia. He explained that preconditions have always been part of the Armenia-Turkey relations since 1991 when the Turkish ambassador visited Moscow. At the time, Turkey imposed three preconditions on Armenia,

...so that in the event that Armenia becomes independent, they can begin establishing diplomatic contacts and relationship with each other. 1) Armenia should give up its claims of Turkey's recognition for the Genocide; 2) Armenia should declare that it does not have territorial claims from Turkey and it recognizes the borders as de jure; 3) Nagorno-Karabakh should be resolved to Azerbaijan's advantage. Over time, the tone and focus might have changed, but the preconditions have generally remained the

same. Two of these are in the Protocols (Author's Interview, 2011, author's translation).

It seems that from the outset of the independence of Armenia, Turkey was cautiously preparing to impose those claims that dealt with the Genocide recognition – since one can argue that modern Turkey is built upon the silenced and buried memories and tragedy of the Armenian Genocide of 1915. Since 1991, Turkey's position seems to have remains fixated on the same preconditions, including the support it has lent to Azerbaijan. This in itself seems to be the cause of mistrust of dealings with Turkey on the side of the opposition.

Diplomatic Ties at the Cost of a 'Historical' Commission

This is by far one of the strongest points that significantly heightened the tensions between the Armenian government and the opposition, both in the diaspora and in Armenia. The wording of the second protocol document is as follows regarding the formation of a commission:

...on the historical dimension to implement a dialogue with the aim to restore mutual confidence between the two nations, including an impartial scientific examination of the historical records and archives to define the existing problems and formulate recommendations, in which Armenian, Turkish as well as Swiss and other international experts shall take part.²⁸⁶

This text has been interpreted by the opposition as the formation of a historical subcommission that will examine the truthfulness of the Armenian Genocide. The main issue for the opposition is that for there to be good neighbourly relations between the two countries, Turkey must first recognize the Genocide. Giro Manoyan explained from his standpoint and that of the

²⁸⁶ Protocol on Development of Relations Between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Turkey", Signed on October 10, 2009.

Dashnak party that the protocol text states in some way that this is a historical subcommission, and that

It is obvious that this will be presented as a commission used to study facts. It is obvious that Turkey has no problem but to study the historical facts itself; this is not an argument between the Armenian version and the Turkish version; this is an argument between the Turkish version and the rest of the world's version – if it wants to study, let it study, it does not need to have a subcommission with Armenia. But Turkey has laws that prohibit [the study of the Armenian Genocide].... It is obvious that the real aim of such a commission would not be to study the facts even. We can analyze other issues but this does not have to be inter-governmentally done.... This is the prime minister of Turkey's political ego result.... There are no experts or historians today that doubt the Armenian genocide. One issue: does the 1948 genocide convention retroactively apply to the Armenian genocide? Legally there can be this argument, but not whether or not there was genocide. But it is one thing to study the historical event (how it happened) but to study whether genocide happened or not is another issue (Author's Interview, 2011, author's translation).

In fact, all opposition in Armenia, the Dashnak party and eleven others and the ANC bloc, are all opposed to the historical subcommission. In the diaspora, various voices also strongly countered this part of the Protocols. Other than the views of the diaspora political parties in the West, Latin America, and the Middle East, Ara Abrahamyan, the president of the Union of Armenians in Russia, also showed concerns over the historical subcommission, even though he agrees with the efforts of President Serzh Sargsyan to normalize relations with the Turkish neighbours. Abrahamyan stated that:

They say if you want to bury an issue, give it to a committee. With the creation of the sub-commission on the historical dimension, we are legalizing the postponement of the recognition of the Genocide. Until now, we were yelling and screaming for countries to recognize the events as genocide. Now, even the United States will say, ‘You have formed a committee, you’re studying it; what is it you want from us?’ (Hakobyan, *The Armenian Reporter*, 2009).²⁸⁷

²⁸⁷ Tatul Hakobyan, 2009. “In Moscow and Istanbul, Armenians React to Protocols with Caution and Concern”, September 10, 2009, at <http://www.reporter.am/go/article/2009-09-10-in-moscow-and-istanbul-armenians-react-to-protocols-with-caution-and-concern--updated->, accessed on May 28, 2013.

Those who support the Protocols explain the historical subcommission differently. Artak Zakaryan, for example, ruling Republican Party of Armenia MP and National Assembly Standing Committee on Foreign Relations Chairman, emphasized that the Turkish-Armenian rapprochement is an “important process for Armenia, and through this the world saw that Armenia was not a weak nation, but a strong negotiator who knows its interests. When Turkey started to relate the Protocols to the Genocide and Karabakh causes, our president froze the process” (Author’s Interview, 2011, author’s translation). Although this is a step that Sargsyan took when the linkages were made explicit, Manoyan from the Dashnak party and Hovannisian from the Heritage Party, both opposition, explained that these preconditions should have been clear since Turkey has always put the issue of Karabakh within the realm of Armenian-Turkish relations. Razmik Panossian, renowned Armenian political analyst and current director of the Gulbenkian Foundation, advised that:

Armenians should not be “hung up” on the historical commission mentioned in the Protocols. Such initiatives can be rendered ineffective and dysfunctional, if necessary. My point here is that we should view Armenian-Turkish relations (which are much bigger than Armenian-Turkish relations), the Protocols and the associated possible commission, from a broader and longer-term perspective, and strategize accordingly. Instead, much of the current discourse in the diaspora does the reverse: it looks at the relationship from the narrow parameters of the historical commission. It is understandable, given that the commission is the code for examining the Genocide (*Ararat Magazine*, 2010).

Richard Giragosian who is in favour of the Protocols agreements, but not the process of the negotiation, explained that one of the strongest critiques against these documents was based on the Armenian Genocide issue: “Well, the Protocols propose the creation of a historical subcommission, now the reason I do not buy into the argument is firstly that it is too soon to judge whether this is good or bad. We do not know the members, the mandate, or the scope of this commission. We can

say that the subcommission should limit its discussion on the post-Genocide.” This focus on the post-Genocide is an important point that the opposition voiced by Manoyan above would not object to. Even the president of Armenia, Serzh Sargsyan, issued a statement on the day of the signing of the Protocols, though before actually signing the documents, that “the historical subcommission should evaluate issues – on the Turkish side, this is interpreted as evaluating the truthfulness of the Genocide” (Author’s Interview, 2011, author’s translation). Manoyan highlighted that the main problem is the president did not submit the Armenian side’s interpretation on the subcommission or an official part of the Protocols but left that interpretation as a vague statement because he signed the documents nonetheless.²⁸⁸

In fact, the issue of the debates and discussions on the Armenian Genocide is an extremely sensitive topic in the Armenian community. Since Turkey has taken a strong initiative in countering Armenian diaspora lobbying, which aims to get the Genocide recognized by the international community and to increase international pressure on Turkey. The latter has spent great sums in funding scholars from various institutions in Europe and the United States to study the history of the Ottoman Empire from the viewpoint of denial.²⁸⁹ There is controversy over what is acceptable to talk about in terms of the Genocide. The scholarship on the Armenian Genocide focuses not on

²⁸⁸ So the right step would have been to present those interpretations officially to be included in the Protocols so as to have a clear position from the start in writing.

²⁸⁹ Several prominent scholars in the United States have taken the financial bait by writing about the history of the Ottoman Empire in a denialist tone. Although many would claim that this falls under academic freedom of expression, the denialist scholars have been actively funded by Turkey to deliberately write such history, and this cannot be qualified as freedom of expression. The Turkish Coalition of American (www.tc-america.org) is a strong example of the active funding by Turkey to scholars, programs and universities, particularly to Turkish studies centers or to scholars who work on the history of the Ottoman Empire or the history of the Turks and so on (see the reference on that website to the scholars funded in the USA, such Hakan Yavruz). For an example on what such discussions within the Armenian community, see the piece by Armenian Weekly, “The Case Against Legitimizing Genocide Deniers: Scholars Speak Up” June 7, 2013, at <http://www.armenianweekly.com/2013/06/07/the-case-against-legitimizing-genocide-deniers-scholars-speak-up/>, accessed on August 28, 2013; Jirair Libaridian, “Scholars and the Politics of Genocide Recognition”, *Armenian Weekly*, July 30, 2013, at <http://www.armenianweekly.com/2013/07/30/libaridian-scholars-and-the-politics-of-genocide-recognition/>, accessed on August 28, 2013.

whether or not the events of 1915 are ‘Genocide’, since this is already agreed upon, but the discussions are usually about particular events in the Genocide, the way they took place, and so on. So the interpretation of the international community and of Turkey regarding the wording of the protocol text on the historical subcommission and its inclusion in the first is extremely controversial and a reckless step the Armenian government took in order to accomplish the signatures. Gerard Libaridian, the advisor to former President Levon Ter-Petrosyan of Armenia and a scholar in Armenian studies at the University of Michigan, explains the following on the politics behind the historical subcommission:

...the two countries decided to go ahead and sign these Protocols by splitting the difference on the two issues of Karabagh and Genocide recognition. That is, Armenia accepted the idea of a sub-commission that would look into the events of the past to find “the truth,” thus raising the possibility that what we know as the truth may not be the truth; and Turkey agreed to eliminate any direct reference to Karabagh in the written text. Thus, if we were to borrow a modified scoring system from football, Turkey scored one and half points, and Armenia scored one point....Turkey got Armenia to appear as if it was questioning the Genocide; Armenia got Turkey to appear as if it was no longer thinking of Karabagh. That is the height of opportunism. (Nalci, *Agos Newspaper*, March 2010)²⁹⁰

Unwritten Preconditions Over Nagorno-Karabakh Peace Settlement

What is striking upon reading the protocol documents is that Nagorno-Karabakh is not mentioned explicitly in the document. There is no precondition based on its resolution from Turkey’s side that is written anywhere in the documents. But this is one of the main points of contention between the Armenian state and the opposition; there is a mistrust of Turkey on this point. This is most probably due to the fact that Turkey supported the Azerbaijani side during the Armenian-Azerbaijani war of 1992-1994, and imposed a blockade of the borders in 1993 in

²⁹⁰ Aris Nalci, “Agos Interviews Armenia about Turkey-Armenia Relations”, March 1, 2010, at http://www.keghart.com/Nalci_Libaridian, accessed on August 28, 2013.

support of its ally. The Azerbaijani government has a strong influence on Turkey's politics, since the former represents a strategic geopolitical presence for Turkey in the region.

Svante Cornell, a scholar who specializes on Azerbaijani politics, explains that some of Turkey's strategic considerations of its ally's presence include Azerbaijan's population size - three times that of Armenia's, its gross domestic product - about four times that of Armenia's, its "extensive energy resources that are delivered to...Turkey," and its "[strategic location] as Turkey's gateway to Central Asia" (2011, 386). Cornell also writes that since the 1990s Turkey has continuously shown that "the normalization of Turkish relations with Armenia [is] an element in the peace process between Armenia and Azerbaijan – essentially offering to open its border with Armenia at some point in a coordinated sequence of events that would contribute to resolution of the conflict....Thus linking the Turkish-Armenian relationship with the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict remained conventional wisdom in both Turkey and Azerbaijan" (2011, 385).

Vicken Cheterian, a journalist and political analyst, argues that the rapprochement policy with Armenia should be understood through the wider geopolitical angle of Turkey's

....effort to ease tensions in the Caucasus's several conflict-zones, especially that of Karabakh. They [Turks] believed that ameliorating Ankara's relations with Armenia would facilitate negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Instead, they were confronted by a vehement reaction from Azerbaijan that accused Turkey of betraying Baku's interests. Baku threatened to suspend relations with Ankara and to cancel future hydrocarbon deals. As a result the Turkish leadership insisted that Armenia made concessions over Karabakh on the grounds that this would enable the Protocols to be ratified by the Turkish parliament (*Open Democracy*, 2011).²⁹¹

Therefore, the Armenian opposition is addressing a serious concern regarding the inevitable inclusion of the Karabakh conflict resolution within the discussions of the preconditions on

²⁹¹ Vicken Cheterian, "Armenia-Turkey: the End of Rapprochement", *OpenDemocracy*, December 30, 2011, available at <http://www.opendemocracy.net/vicken-cheterian/armenia-turkey-end-of-rapprochement>, accessed May 28, 2013.

Turkey's side. Perhaps the Armenian government was hoping this would not come up in the negotiation phases since the precondition was not explicitly cited in the Protocols. On the other hand, it seems Turkey was naively also hoping that Azerbaijan's reaction to this would not be strong and would not hinder the process of establishing ties. As Gerard Libaridian states in an interview with the Agos Armenian newspaper in Turkey:

Armenia's success was in eliminating any direct reference to Nagorno Karabagh from the documents and thus ending the linkage between the two issues—bilateral relations and the Karabagh conflict. The de-linking of the two issues too has been a goal of successive administrations in Armenia. This is where the opportunism I mentioned comes into play....The government of Armenia and its negotiators should have known that the absence of a direct reference to Karabagh in the documents does not signal a change of policy in Ankara. Ankara made that clear in so many ways. One can even "smell" Karabagh in the many principles related to non-interference in the affairs of other countries stressed in the Protocols, even if one does not wish to consider the pronouncements by public officials from Ankara, before and after the signing of the documents. While many Turkish diplomats and government officials have regretted the linkage they made in 1993 between the development of bilateral relations and the Karabagh issue, the policy has been difficult to get rid of (*Nalci, Agos Newspaper*, March 2010).²⁹²

Cheterian also makes the case that there was misjudgment on both sides regarding the opposition and the geopolitical considerations: “Yerevan's diplomats proceeded to sign the Protocols without consulting diaspora communities, amid protests by diaspora communities against the president of Armenia for the first time since independence. Ankara similarly misjudged its capacity to resist opposition from Baku, and even a reversal of its policy has not allayed Azerbaijani suspicions” (Open Democracy 2011). In all cases, these naïve considerations and the international community’s pressure in this matter did not lead to positive results since the

²⁹²Aris Nalci, “Agos Interviews Armenia about Turkey-Armenia Relations”, March 1, 2010, at http://www.keghart.com/Nalci_Libaridian, accessed on August 28, 2013

opposition parties strongly retaliated against the possibility of this precondition coming up in the negotiations due to historical experience with Turkey since the 1990s.

Others believe that because the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was not mentioned in the Protocols, Armenia gained a few points since Turkey was unable to reintroduce these preconditions without looking ‘bad’ in the eyes of the international community. As Giragosian states, “Turkey decided to remove it as a precondition and a prerequisite at that time. And in fact now, it is in a weaker position trying to reimpose it, and even Moscow and Washington say ‘no’. And this is a success for the Armenian foreign policy” (Author’s Interview, 2011).

Signing Protocols as de jure Acceptance of Armenian-Turkish borders by Armenia

The issues of de jure acceptance of the borders between the two countries is another fundamental issue that the opposition to the Protocols in Armenia and especially in the diaspora raised as part of their critique of the agreement. According to them, Armenia was giving up too much compared to Turkey in these agreements, including the acceptance of the international border with Turkey by Armenia. The wording of the first protocol document is very clear, and it states explicitly that this is “confirming the mutual recognition of the existing border between the two countries as defined by the relevant treaties of international law.”²⁹³ The borders with Armenia remain a sensitive issue not only for Armenians, but also for many Turks who were opposed to the Protocols agreement. According to Svante Cornell, a scholar who specializes on Azerbaijan and Turkey, many in Turkey do not trust Armenian irredentist claims, mostly put forth by the Armenian diaspora, and so the Turkish government wanted to secure Yerevan’s recognition of the borders

²⁹³ From the second protocol document entitled “Protocol on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations Between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Turkey” signed on October 10, 2009.

between Armenia and Turkey before proceeding further with the agreement (2011, 385). Indeed, for the Armenian diaspora and some of the Armenian opposition in Armenia, the Western Armenian lands remain an unresolved source of tension between the two countries, one that is also directly tied to the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by Turkey and the subsequent reparations that may follow this recognition. All three diasporan political parties and some of the lobby organizations in the diaspora were against the recognition of borders. One of the strongest lobby groups in the United States of America, ANCA, has continuously been deeply opposed to Armenian concessions on recognizing the borders with Turkey, as stated in the previous section.

Giro Manoyan explained the territorial issue is the second precondition imposed by Turkey in the Protocols that is one of the remnants of the past in its relations with Armenia.²⁹⁴ He states that

...the text is written stating that the two sides recognize the borders as de jure. The president explained this part declaring there are territorial issues between Armenia and Turkey that should be resolved according to international legal standards. His interpretations are good, but they were not declared on the last day, and, accordingly and logically, the signatures should not have taken place (Author's Interview, 2011, author's translation).

According to ANCA, the cost of losing and surrendering the rights of the Armenian nation is great. Indeed, for a nation that has been suffering the repercussions of the denial of the Genocide by Turkey for over a century, the topic of giving up the lands is very sensitive. Ara Abrahamyan, the president of the Union of Armenians in Russia, also expressed concerns over the acceptance of borders, all by acknowledging that there are obvious economic benefits that Armenia will reap from that decision. He states that they are not in support of opening the borders if

²⁹⁴ The first precondition is the historical subcommission.

that is at the cost of putting an end to our demands. That means we are once and for all acquiescing to the borders that exist. We believe that justice will prevail and we will receive our lands in Western Armenia. In this matter, there is no unanimity of opinion; this is an open question for us (Tatul Hakobyan, *The Armenian Reporter*, September 10, 2009).²⁹⁵

The Western Armenian lands are invaluable as a source of memory, an attachment to grandparents and ancestors from those lands, though there is also no unanimous Armenian position on this, as the chapter demonstrates. However, there are increasingly many Armenians who think differently about the borders and the land claims. This became evident to me during my informal communications with diasporans and Armenians in Armenia. Indeed, many believe that this is not a realistic expectation from Armenia and might also be a source of tension that can aggravate any chance of Turkey recognizing the Genocide. Others take a more optimistic approach on the issue of lands and believe that even though the land claim may not be realistic to push for, there could be ways that Armenia could have access to those lands, visit them, even live there or have business if and once there are official diplomatic relations between the two countries. Richard Giragosian, for example, explained that prior to the discussion of the Protocols, when negotiations between the two countries were taking place in secrecy, what was interesting in that process is that the

Turks in that diplomacy were very innovative, very creative, some of the interesting issues on the table were Turkish citizenship for...the descendants of Genocide survivorsThe other issue to their credit is Mount Ararat....They used the Turkish proverb, they basically said we look at the other side of the mountain, and it is not as beautiful as the one you see from Yerevan....They were proposing some kind of ‘condominium’ [arrangement] for Mount Ararat, or a visa free tourist area around it, free access from Armenia, and they did not want to give it back because it would open doors for more claims. And the condominium approach [included] joint management and environmental and archeological [cooperation]....this is how flexible they were. (Author’s Interview, 2011)

²⁹⁵ Tatul Hakobyan, “In Moscow and Istanbul, Armenian react to protocols with caution and concern: Normalization, but at what price?”, *The Armenian Reporter*, September 10, 2009, at http://www.reporter.am/go/article/2009-09-10-in-moscow-and-istanbul-armenians-react-to-protocols-with-caution-and-concern--updated_, accessed on August 28, 2013.

It is difficult to imagine that such discourse on land sharing can come out of the Turkish authorities, since there has been systematic oppression and control of the hidden and Islamized Armenians post-1915, expensive lobbying attempts to promote the denial of the Armenian Genocide, and suppression of Armenian identity within the eastern Turkish boundaries that is undoubtedly imbued with Armenian memories. But if this perspective spreads more widely across the Turkish elite and, more importantly, people, then might there really be a chance to envision a deterritorialized imagining of the homeland of Western Armenia through a shared responsibility to care for the land? This is difficult to imagine among those whose discourse remains entrenched in land claims, or among those who ask for land reparations as part of the Turkish apology to Armenians. However, there is a growing trend of a certain form of deterritorialized connection with their ancestors' lands and grandparents' villages, which have become their own places of origin.

Conclusion

The Turkish-Armenian rapprochement process and the Protocols of 2009 created a strong debate that reflected not only the deeply absorbed and active memory of the Armenian Genocide, but brought back to the table the strong disagreements that exist between the Armenian diaspora and the Armenian state, within the diaspora communities and organizations and within Armenia as well. These disagreements centred on the issue of borders, Western Armenian territory, on the representative entity/body for all Armenians and whether or not the Armenian state can embody that role, and various points regarding the content of the Protocols that were covered in this chapter. It seems perhaps that we can sum up these disagreements into two main issues: the first

concerns the contestation on the commemoration of the Armenian Genocide, the style and content of commemoration is particularly of focus here. Second, and more generally, there is disagreement regarding the ownership of memory.

There is no doubt that the Protocols agreement and discussion/dialogue around it, no matter how futile and ineffective regarding the final goal of signing the agreement by the state, brought forward a much needed discussion on the memory of the Armenian Genocide, the necessity of opening up the borders for Armenians, the need to create stronger bridges with the Turkish people, the historical and cultural links that exist – no matter how painful and tragic, between Armenians and Turks. The Protocols of 2009 highlighted the need for a real deliberation on a national scale regarding: 1) Turkish-Armenian relations, 2) tensions between Armenia and the diaspora regarding the Armenian Genocide memory; 3) the ownership of the memory of Genocide and the preserver of Armenianness; 4) the readiness to move forward, 5) the geopolitical and domestic realities that Armenians face everyday versus the idealized image of Armenia, an abstract concept alive only within the imaginaries of the Armenian diaspora.

The ‘ownership’ of the history is also a point of contestation. Since the diaspora has been the main preserver of Armenianness during Soviet Armenia, and sees itself as the main body that maintained the culture, values, traditions, cuisine, and language from their ancestors who had survived one of the most traumatic events in history, they also see themselves, in many ways, as the educators of this identity and the transmitters of this identity to Armenia. The interactions between (Soviet) Armenia and the diaspora, though extremely limited and under strict control during the Soviet era, brought to light the differences between the two. The increased post-Soviet era interaction between the diaspora and local Armenians (both official and everyday interaction) reveals that the way Armenianness is expressed both during the Soviet and post-Soviet era is very

different in both contexts – this perhaps reveals the continuous tension between the ‘imaginary’ versus the ‘real’ Armenia, meaning Armenia as an abstract homeland imaginary versus the reality of the lived Armenia. The diaspora-Armenia relations are tainted by the way Armenianness is perceived and idealized, highlighting the shifting discourses around the constructions of Armenianness. The diaspora parties and organizations put a lot of effort into lobbying for the Armenian Genocide recognition, particularly in the United States, France, and Russia, and various other parts of the world. To most diasporans, the memory of Genocide is fundamental to their Armenian identity (as living outside of their homeland) and in their identification with Armenianness.

Even though the diaspora’s role is extremely important in assisting Armenia, in sending donations, in building infrastructure, and so on, it is equally necessary for the diaspora to recognize the geopolitical and domestic realities of the Armenian state and people. In this sense, a national deliberation is perhaps more needed than at any other time, especially in 2015 (and afterward) as the Armenians commemorate the centennial of the Armenian Genocide.

This chapter looked at the discourses around the memory of the Armenian Genocide, especially in light of the Armenian Centennial of the Armenian Genocide in 2015. The discourses around memory in the Armenian nation habituses in the diaspora locations and in Armenia reveal that this is not necessarily a unifying factor for all Armenians, even though it is incontestably a turning event that shapes Armenian national identity and sets the *time* of 1915 as the time of the nation. The main argument of the chapter is that the memory of the Armenian Genocide plays a divisive role, inasmuch as it is a unifying collective traumatic memory for Armenians, strongly exposed during the Protocols of 2009. The contested national identity around the memory of Genocide exposed different visions of Armenianness and differing images of ‘Armenia’. It seems

that these different visions and images are constructed through the triangular perspective that links strongly the Karabakh concept, the Turkish-Armenia relations, and the collective traumatic memory of the Armenian Genocide, as has been discussed as well in Chapters Two and Four in particular. The next chapter provides a conclusion that binds the various chapters together in a way that reflects the discussion between theory and empirical analysis of the case of the discourses around Armenianness from the different Armenian national habituses.

Concluding Chapter

The world is closing in
Did you ever think
That we could be so close, like brothers
The future's in the air
I can feel it everywhere
Blowing with the wind of change
Take me to the magic of the moment
On a glory night
Where the children of tomorrow dream away (dream away)
In the wind of change
Walking down the street
Distant memories
Are buried in the past forever
I follow the Moskva
Down to Gorky Park
Listening to the wind of change

The Scorpions, 1990, *Wind of Change* (Mount of Glory album)

This is a song that many people would be familiar with in the West and parts of the post-Soviet world where the music of the 1980s and 1990s was/is quite popular. This song was in fact written by the Scorpions lead singer, Klaus Meine, to symbolize the changes that people brought forward in 1989. It symbolizes the fall of the Berlin Wall and, by extension, the symbolic end of the Iron Curtain. This is so very reflective of the 1987-1990 movement in Armenia and in the South Caucasus region. The wave that the change brought to the politics of these countries – due to several structural and individual factors, can be called a ‘wind of change’. However, these days are hardly ‘distant memories...buried in the past’. The dissertation chapters set out to investigate what the most important factors in the process of national identity making are in the case of Armenia from 1988 until 2013. The factors, referred to as the four main pillars of Armenian identity in this thesis, that strongly shape that process are the Karabakh movement of 1988, the role of women in

the Armenian national habitus, diaspora-homeland relations, and the attempts by Turkey and Armenia to establish diplomatic ties. The main argument of the dissertation is that the traumatic collective memory of the Armenian Genocide of 1915 directly and indirectly shapes the shifts in expressions of Armenianness in Armenia from 1988 until 2013 through its link with the four main pillars of Armenian identity. Every chapter (Chapter Two-Five) aimed to show how the discourses around Armenianness are constructed with a focus on the memory of the Armenian Genocide through each pillar of Armenian identity. This link is further strengthened when looking through the triangular relationship between Nagorno-Karabakh/Armenia-Turkey relations/the traumatic memory of 1915. It seems that the continued denial of the Turkish government of their ancestor's crimes continues to weigh heavily on the Armenian psyche. Hence, the *time* of 1915 consciously and unconsciously shapes the process of Armenian nation building. As Jack Danielian, an academic who works on the psychological trauma inflicted by the Genocide, writes expressively,

The wound of genocide in the human psyche exists in the fluctuating, chaotic and often dangerous world between memory and forgetting, between knowing and not-knowing, between seeing and not-seeing, between terror and nothingness. Traumatologists have come to recognize this process in victims as the 'conspiracy of silence.' It exists in both the conscious and unconscious layers of memory... (Danielian 2010, 247).

Emotions, such as the experience of traumatic pain and suffering in genocide among those who experience it and those who hear the stories and become the bodies that internalize the transmission of these traumatic stories, are not just about what happens within the bodies. More importantly, Sara Ahmed (2015) argues, these emotions should be understood by looking at what happens between bodies, and as such, the power of affect and traumatic emotions is embedded in social relations. Emotions, therefore, exist within and strongly shape social relations within the confines of the discursive nation (Ahmed 2015). Emotions also play a strong role in the

expressions of foreign policies of states (Edkins 2003; also Langenbacher and Shain 2010; Becker 2014). This thesis project considers the study of emotions and identity as extremely important in the understanding of the way that discourses around national identities are produced and reproduced in the social context, particularly in a contested national context – post-Soviet Armenia and its diaspora. The theoretical building blocks of the dissertation that shape my own views about nation building fall at the intersection of several larger scholarly bodies that have addressed nation building from various angles. The advantage of such a theoretical framework adopted here is that it provides us with a tool to be able to study the case of Armenia not only horizontally across time, but also across several issues that shape the political and social environment of post-Soviet Armenia.

Moreover, the main argument of the dissertation is based on the concept of national habitus to denote the nation building process of Armenia. Through the investigation of the four pillars of identity that shape the Armenian national habitus, we can note that the way that nationalism, considered in this project as a social process, is a dynamic phenomenon that is created and recreated not only through the state socialization mechanism, but also socially through the reproductive and generative capacity of actors – whether they are part of the elite or not. As such, the shifting discourse on Armenianness from 1988-2013 highlights the contested politics of nationalism even in a seemingly ethnically homogeneous nation. The contestations are strongly focused on the importance of several factors tied to ‘what is important’ for the Armenian identity in the different and divergent habituses.

This is precisely what has shaped the Armenian habitus, much more strongly in the diaspora since the *raison d'être* of the Armenian diaspora habituses around the world and, as such, their *sine qua non* and their struggle for identity maintenance has been wrapped around the

Genocide of 1915 and its continuous denial by the Turkish state which exists as a dark cloud on the Armenian psyche. The diaspora habituses and the local Armenian post-Soviet habitus(es) have come to co-exist either in exerting harmony of habituses or clash of habituses related to the definition of Armenianness. As such the discourse of Armenianness in post-Soviet Armenia can only be studied by looking at the interaction of the transnational organizations and the Armenian state.

The Armenian national habitus has been moulded based on the collective memory and transmission of the Armenian Genocide, particularly after the 1960s and 1970s when the silence was finally broken on talking and remembering the suffering flowing from the Genocide. According to Danielian (2010), this is the beginning of the healing process. However, as the recent Turkey-Armenia Protocols of 2009 demonstrated, many Armenians (organizations, parties, or individuals) are not yet ready to engage in dialogue with Turkey before the Armenian Genocide is recognized, and for some, before subsequent reparations are made – even when these parties agree to open borders with Turkey. For others, activism in the aim of Genocide recognition should not be focused on the American government or other governments, in the aim of achieving international recognition. In the opinion of those activists, international pressure on the Turkish state to recognize the Armenian Genocide of 1915 and perhaps pay reparations of some kind to the descendants of the Armenian Genocide survivors is a more effective and efficient way of reaching justice. Finally, the discourse around the responsibility of the Armenian Genocide reparation claims is also important – who should make those claims, the diaspora organizations and the diaspora Churches or the Armenian state?

In this sense, activism and collaboration should be focused more on the grassroots levels in Turkey, where many individuals and organizations are talking about their past, about the Armenian

Genocide, and about the need to reveal what really happened. In addition, the careful ‘coming out’ of the hidden Armenians themselves has also made many changes on the ground in Turkey (Altinay and Çetin 2014). The Centennial of the Armenian Genocide was commemorated not only in Yerevan, Beirut, Los Angeles, Toronto, Boston, or Moscow, but also in Istanbul in 2015.²⁹⁶

This dissertation project explored, with in-depth focus, the politics of post-Soviet Armenian national identity formation since the rise of the nationalist ‘liberation’ movements of 1988 in Armenia. As the Introduction explained, the literature on Armenian studies has been more heavily focused on the study of diaspora communities, particularly in the Middle East, Europe (especially France and the UK) and North America, and the study of Armenian nationalism and identity formation over centuries (see Introduction). The examination of the Armenian Genocide has also been more centred on historical, anthropological, and sociological perspectives. Finally, there are studies that have examined post-Soviet Armenian politics, but none have looked at the national identity formation over the years, especially from different angles. This dissertation examined the “nation-building” process focusing on identity and discourses Armenianness in Armenia in order to unravel the contested nature of the discourse of nationalism within an ethnically ‘homogeneous’ nation state and to understand the dominant discourse in the national habitus on Armenianness. In this light, the project was based on an interdisciplinary perspective based on the use of a very diverse literature from various disciplines. In conclusion to the thesis study, I claim that it is important for a study of this scope to integrate a multidimensional and

²⁹⁶ This is not the first commemoration of the Armenian Genocide in Istanbul, where commemorative events have been taking place since 2010 in Taksim Square, but this event was very important in the Armenian nation because many diasporans and many local Armenians travelled to Istanbul in order to partake in the centennial commemorative events. There were also events in Diyarbekir, whose former Kurdish mayor, Osman Baydemir, had recognized the Armenian Genocide and had apologized on several occasions for the Genocide. As a concrete example of his apology, Baydemir provided his support and assistance to the restoration of the Surp Giragos Armenian Church of Diyarbekir. See the report by Katie Vanadzin (2013) in the *Armenian Weekly* and Raffi Khatchadourian (2015) in *The New Yorker*.

interdisciplinary approaches to the study of national identity by integrating the study of collective traumatic memory into the conception of national habitus. The traumatic expressions are not only reflected in the domestic policies of Armenia but also contextualize the transnational (diaspora-homeland in particular) and the foreign policy direction of Armenia in determining its relationship with other states and with its diaspora. As such, what is extremely important about this thesis is that not only is this a study that encapsulates contested perspectives of Armenian national identity discourses examined through different factors, but it is that this study also integrates diaspora and repatriate perspectives and voices in the study of identity discourses from post-Soviet Armenia. This is an important contribution the thesis makes in Armenian studies in general.

My thesis project on Armenian national identity formation began with the key research question to set the framework and focus of the study: *How is ‘Armenianness’ constructed in the period 1988-2013? and a second but complementary question that attempts to understand how the constructed has occurred in this study: Has the dominant discourse on ‘Armenianness’ shifted or changed in this period and if so, how and why?* The study was based on the consideration that national identities are in a continuous process of shifts and contestations in discourses. To analyze the discourse shift around the perception and construction of Armenianness, the dissertation was organized into a total of seven chapters, including the introductory and concluding chapters. Chapter One provided the theoretical discussion of the dissertation in order to present the main framework through which the case-study analyses are done. The dissertation is located at the intersection of four different literary bodies that are interlinked themselves and not exclusive. These are the literature on the theories of national identity, the gendered nation building, the literature on habitus and national habitus, and finally the study of collective memory and Genocide. In addition to the larger theoretical framework, each chapter included a more elaborate

theoretical discussion that ties the examined Armenian identity factor with the general literature on that topic. This is also useful to further contextualize the Armenian case in the wider literature and to link each chapter to the main theoretical discussion.

Why national habitus? Our understanding of nationalism and nations benefited from the perspective of linking the objective and subjective elements of nationalism – and as such a dialectical relationship of structure/agency. This highlights the necessity to explain and understand nationalism not as an epiphenomenon of larger forces such as industrialization, modernization and so on – as stressed by the modernization literature - but a social phenomenon that exists and is practiced on a daily basis. This is what Bourdieu's habitus can contribute to the study of nations and nationalism by highlighting not only the internalization of the norms in society in a way that makes individuals perform them unconsciously, but more importantly perhaps, how this internalization is then externalized in reshaping the habitus. In this sense, national dispositions are a product and a producer, to put it simply. The methodology of the dissertation complemented this perspective in the way that the interviews were used for this study: the interviewees' perspective was analyzed as their subjective perception of the events, factors, and expressions of national identity – interviewees are then not the elite/privileged producers of these narratives, but they are both the product and producers in a generative way that can contribute to powerful social change within the limits of the field, as Bourdieu's theory of practice demonstrates – also, obviously not all of them have equal symbolic capital and abilities/resources to do the same change. These four main bodies interact and shape my own work based on the empirical study of the Armenian nation building process. Diagram #3 at the beginning of the dissertation visually showcases this first point. The four empirical chapters were examined through the concept of national habitus.

Findings of the Dissertation

I use national habitus to denote national identity expression in an attempt to create a link between the objectivism/subjectivism debate in the study of nations and nationalism, whereby the conception of habitus (and field) allows us to understand national identity based on intersubjective human experience that can be translated into practice. Another finding is that national habitus can contribute to the understanding of national identity through elite perspectives based on a more balanced approach that avoids the view that elites are the ‘manipulators’ and ‘fabricators’ of national discourse for their own interest, though this does occur and the Armenian case is not an exception by any means. The focus here is on elites as both powerful actors that shape national identity discourses and also participants with agency to create social change. This is by no means making elites look powerless, but elite in general do not constitute people in similar or equal positions of power, though they may have different levels of symbolic capital in the nation-state. Therefore, the methodology of the dissertation is linked to the theoretical framework through the conception of national habitus.

The detailed study of Armenian nation building through interviews and other data collection techniques reveal that the chosen four pillars of Armenian identity reflect the dominant discourses around which the Armenian national habituses are constructed in Armenia (and in the diaspora in some sense). The intersection of these four main pillars of identity demonstrates that the discourse around the Armenian Genocide, its prioritization, its place in the Armenian foreign policy agenda, the political claims around it, and the ‘style’ of commemoration, are all both actively and indirectly present in the contested perspectives within and between Armenians in Armenia and in the diaspora. The Genocide in this sense continues to shape the relationships and becomes, at times, an obstacle to further cooperate or collaborate in political or social matters. The

most difficult question to ask here is, how can we overcome this? How can the Genocide continue to be a vital symbol of Armenian identity, but at the same time become located in a secondary position after the domestic issues that continue to burden Armenia? Perhaps more importantly, is there such a need to prioritize in that order to achieve real development in Armenia and the more committed (though transnational or cosmopolitan) participation of its diaspora, as Chapter four argued?

The second, third, fourth, and fifth chapters presented a detailed analysis of the case of Armenia based on the chosen four pillars of Armenian identity. Chapter Two argued that Karabakh as an abstract concept that shapes the Armenian political scene through the prism of Genocide and Turkey-Armenia relations is an important factor in shifting the discourse around victimhood, linked to the Armenian Genocide, to victory. The successful change brought forward by the 1988 nationalist movement and the Armenian victory in the war with Azerbaijan in the region of Nagorno-Karabakh instilled that sense of a victorious nation, who took (back) some of the lost historical territory of the Armenian homeland. The importance of Karabakh is better contextualized by looking through the triangular relationship that includes the Karabakh region itself, the Armenian Genocide of 1915, and the Turkish-Armenian relations. In fact, this triangular relationship was evident during the Karabakh movement itself in 1988. In addition, the question of the Karabakh conflict, the diaspora-homeland relations, and Armenian foreign policy were all shaped by the discourse on the Karabakh region, the Armenian Genocide, and Turkish-Armenia relations and whether or not the Genocide recognition and land reclamation should be included in the policy agenda of the newly formed government of Armenia.

The third chapter examined the role that women play in the imagined community. The chapter argued that Armenian women identify with their ethnic Armenianness as the mothers of the

nation. Armenian women's identification with their motherhood is uniquely expressed through the history and memory of the Armenian Genocide and more recently the Karabakh conflict as revealed by the interviewees in Armenia and Karabakh. This is what made the construction of femininity as 'motherhood' for some of the interviewed women seem unique for the case of Armenians. As such the interrelations of Genocide memory, the 1988 nationalist movement and the Karabakh conflict have shaped the discourse of motherhood in the construction and reproduction of Armenian femininity. The triangular relationship was also revealed to be an important prism through which to understand the constructions of post-Soviet Armenian femininity.

The fourth chapter captured the 'local' Armenians' perceptions of the Armenian diaspora, a fundamental component of the Armenian nation since it is the largest segment of the Armenian population. The chapter showed that there are competing images of Armenianness and this is creating heightened tensions between Armenia and the diaspora (and within each). This is particularly evident in the existence of strong stereotypes that have tainted the relationship between them and I demonstrated this by looking at the various 'types' of relationships that define the diaspora-homeland links. The memory of the Armenian Genocide, the Karabakh conflict and its recognition, and the homeland needs beyond the necessary yet superficial financial contributions all shape the relationship of the Armenian state and define the impact of the transnational organizations and institutions. As such, the discourse of Armenianness is in constant competition and contestation due to the different visions of Armenianness and images of Armenia between the Armenian state (and its people) and the Armenian diaspora(s). Ultimately, it seems that, as Chapter Four concluded, the relationship would benefit from more interpersonal, direct diasporan-homeland relationship that would exist outside the institutional and structural bodies. The fifth chapter highlighted the contested nature of nation building around the memory of the Armenian

Genocide of 1915 committed by the Ottoman Turks. The Protocols of 2009 demonstrated that this contested national identity is evident even around such a seemingly unifying historical and collective memory as the Armenian Genocide. The nationalism of the victorious expressed in Chapter Two and discussed above was also reinforced earlier in the monument of the Tsiternakaberd Memorial Complex in Yerevan in 1967. The monument's architecture encapsulates not only the memorialisation of the victims, but also symbolizes the "survival and rebirth of the Armenian people," according to the website of the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute in Yerevan. As such, the monument symbolically stands for hope and living. In addition, the monument is also a symbol of the unity of the Armenian people, though this may be more of a symbolic nationalism rather than one that reflects the contested nature of national identity in the Armenian habitus.

The contested approaches and positions vis-à-vis the most deeply engraved issues in Armenian identity – the four pillars – demonstrated that within a single nation there are extremely different variations and perspectives on what is vital, what is a priority, and how to ensure that historical memory is safeguarded against realpolitik? In fact, the dissertation uncovers an even further interesting point about the Armenian case, which is that often national identity is a state-centric endeavour in this modern world; we are *homo nationis*, to borrow from Andreas Pickel. However, in parallel to this centre of national identity, there is an equally important centre(s) of diaspora: for example formerly Beirut was perceived to be the centre from where most Armenians emigrated to the western countries in Europe and North America (and Australia), which shifted the diasporic centre from Beirut to Los Angeles in the West, through probably Moscow today should be the real centre with the largest Armenian diaspora. The diasporic centres are vital, because they form the loci of enunciation from where the Armenian diaspora continues to be politically

powerful in lobbying efforts on what they consider to be the most important policy issues for Armenians and for Armenia: the Armenian ‘Cause’ (*Hay Tad*) for the recognition of the Genocide and the development of Armenia. These two centres of power that are constituted by heterogeneous national habituses are thus always at competing positions to assert their interests, opinions, and priorities. Perhaps this is the new form of politics for diaspora groups? In this sense, then, it is not the unity of positions of diaspora and homeland that should be sought after, but the diversity itself that is necessary perhaps to ensure the possibility of expressing disagreement and diversity of views. However, respect of divergent views is not always the outcome witnessed in the case of the Armenia diaspora and homeland politics - between the various habituses and within each.

The constructivist perspective is important to consider more seriously as the findings of the thesis reflect, particularly in Chapter Five, in order to understand state politics and state foreign policy, because of the constructivist focus on identity in guiding the state in international relations (Weber 2013, Wendt 1992). Linked to the identity of the state is the memory and history of the state and its people, particularly the contextual historical experience of the post-Soviet experience in the case of Armenia and the collective traumatic memory of the Armenian Genocide that continue to run through state politics and foreign policy. As much as identity is a fluid concept that is in constant process of change, identities tied to memory and collective trauma experiences are also shifting, particularly due to the transmission of memory intergenerationally.

The intergenerational effect of memory transmission is an area of research that is important in gender studies as well. Chapter Three showed how Armenian women reproduce the construction of femininity by highlighting their traditional role as mothers of the nation. This is strongly tied, as argued in the chapter, to the memory of the Armenian Genocide and to the Karabakh conflict. As such, the transmission of Armenianness to the younger generations includes this conception of

motherhood. The discourse of motherhood has been historically tied to the importance of Armenians to preserve themselves amid ‘foreign occupation’, in the Ottoman Empire and the Russian empire. This has been the domain of safeguarded authenticity for the Armenian nation in the colonial era and in the postcolonial reconstruction of identity (Chatterjee 1993). Gendered analyses of Armenian nation building both in the diasporan communities and in post-Soviet Armenia are strikingly lacking in the literature. Studies have been published recently in Armenia, but these have been inspired by international funding organizations from the US (USAID) and Europe and have focused mostly on women in politics in terms of numbers. The gendered or feminine perspective of politics is not incorporated or given any attention as Chapter Two showed. In addition, gendered perspectives and analyses of the Armenian Genocide are not part of the national discourse and community discussions. This is quite noticeable when looking at the centennial commemorations of the Armenian Genocide in April 2015 and the various conferences held on that occasion. Only one major conference addressed the topic of gendered memories. The conference entitled “Gender, Memory and Genocide: An International Conference Marking 100 Years Since the Armenian Genocide” took place in Berlin in June 2015. Several prominent scholars of Armenian Genocide were featured on the programme as keynote speakers. However, the mainstream literature on the Armenian Genocide continues to present a ‘unified and non-distinguishing’ perspective of the impact of the Genocide. Instead, one can argue that the effect of the (often sexual) violence against women and girls (and children) has a strong, often unexplored, impact in the Armenian post-genocide national identity making (also see Tachjian 2009 on this point). The voices of women were lost and their experiences shamed in the communities, which meant that it was preferable not to speak of the particular violence and inflicted on women and

children (see Tachjian 2009 who was one of the first scholar to address the gendered violence and the reintegration of female survivors in the Armenian communities).

The dissertation raises some pertinent questions to the field of political science and international relations. The challenge of state sovereignty strongly embedded in the western Westphalian discourse is an important angle to look at through the diaspora-homeland relations, particularly for states that have strong and powerful advocacy oriented diasporas in locations that can be useful to the state, such as Europe, the Middle East, the United States, and Russia. For the approximately seven decades of Soviet Armenia, the diaspora of post-1915 played the role of the state (see Chapter Four) and held a ‘monopoly’ of Armenian foreign policy. The latter became strongly linked to the Armenian Question (or *Hay Tad*), which sought the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide, the recognition by the Turkish state and its subsequent apology and reparations payment. As Chapter Two showed, many from the diaspora were invited to head ministries, advisor positions, and other high ranking positions in the Armenian government, which demonstrates that they had the chance to shape the direction of the foreign policy of the Armenian state, to build it and to determine its focus. However, these were not so easily achieved due to the strong presence of the Karabakh power Ministries that had their own interests in the state. Ultimately, the shift toward the Kocharyan era shows, however, that the diaspora has a strong influence in Armenian politics and can make a change. But the nature and type of change it can achieve depends or will depend on the way the diaspora political parties, institutions, and organizations (and also individuals) choose to prioritize policies linked to Armenia. There are important changes in Armenia as Chapter Two discussed, linked to the birth of social movements of different kinds in Armenia. Some of these are led by political parties and others are more grassroots. The grassroots movements are extremely significant to investigate more closely in

order to understand the way local politics is changing and what the newer generation who has not witnessed the Soviet era is seeking to realize. This is an important area of future research for Armenian politics and the changing face of Armenia with the growing of the second generation of post-Soviet youth.

Possibilities for Future Research

Several possible areas of research were uncovered as I was writing my dissertation. Some of these are linked to each factor that the chapters set out to investigate. Other topics seem to be evolving from these bases to ask larger empirical and theoretical questions linked to Armenia and the post-Soviet region. To complement the work on the constructions of femininity in Armenia for women who were active in the 1988 movement and during the war in Karabakh, the role of gender constructions among the current generation of youth in Armenia, particularly those who were involved in the most recent social movements across the country, is an important research area that would supplement the current work. If the role of women is identified strongly with the conception of motherhood as Chapter Three argues, then have the recent social movements with many young women in leading positions in them changed that image? Such a study could also note the way social boundaries around femininity and masculinity segregate and exclude those who do not fit within those boundaries. This highlights the presence of a gender narrative that favours the dominance of the heterosexual and patriarchal family structure.

Another important field of inquiry that can be extended from this dissertation, particularly from the discussion in Chapter Four, is on the repatriation experience in Armenia. I interviewed some repatriated Armenians who had moved in the 1990s and 2000s, and their experiences were distinct. Since the eruption of conflict in Syria in 2011, many Armenians have fled their homes and

country to come to Armenia as ‘refugees’, the sad irony of not only being refugees in their ‘homeland’, but also refugees for the second time after the Armenian Genocide of 1915. Many have decided to settle in Armenia or Karabakh due to the total or partial destruction of their homes and villages, or due to the continued tense situation in their cities and villages in Syria (and Lebanon). Future research could examine the settlement and repatriation of many of these families to understand the process and implications: Where have they gone and why? What has the Armenian state or other non-state organizations done to welcome them? This could contribute to the wider diaspora and migration literature on repatriation and return, and to the nation building literature as well, to understand how the ‘returnees’ cope with the new *habitus* and what the impact of their return is on the Armenian national habitus.

If *Mimino*²⁹⁷ showed a strong sense of friendship between two South Caucasian people, then one can say that those living in that region are necessarily tied not only by bonds of friendship, but also perhaps by the bonds of ‘faith’ that brought them to live in such proximity, albeit with their differences. Armenia is located in such a diverse region and it would be significant to study the nation building process in both Azerbaijan and Georgia in order to comparatively examine the main issues that each country faces. This would be a useful exercise in order to determine regional peculiarities and differences that may contribute to the theories of nations and nationalism. Particularly, it was quite striking that there is a large gap in the literature on gendered approaches to the study of Georgian and Azerbaijani nation building and other political issues. This is very similar to the Armenian case, as Chapter Three noted. In this sense, this is definitely an area

²⁹⁷ This is a Soviet movie released in 1978 that was extremely popular, and remains so, among the people of the Former Soviet Union. It is remembered fondly for its portrayal of strong friendship, love of homeland, and some of Soviet social delicacies. The movie centres on the friendship between an Armenian and a Georgian who meet in a dormitory that was supposed to house only geologists. But based on network relations, they are able to each secure a bed and end up becoming roommates. This is the irony of the Soviet system - that one can get things through informal networking channels and that nothing works as planned.

of valuable research that could reveal important information regarding the nation building process in Georgia and Azerbaijan looking at the period of 1988-2013 and beyond as well.

In a similar light, the field of diaspora studies is also lacking research on the cases of Georgian and Azerbaijani diasporas. Admittedly, the post-Soviet Georgian and Azerbaijani diasporas are relatively newer immigrants than the *spyurk* Armenian diaspora of 1915, for example. The former have settled in Europe, North America and elsewhere, and have only recently began to increase in numbers and mobilize to form diaspora communities. Their increasing strength as a group is evidently growing: for example, in 2012, the Azerbaijani diaspora lobbied the city of Calgary, in the Province of Alberta, to ask the mayor of the city, Naheed Nenshi, to recognize the 20th anniversary of the Khojali/Khojaly massacres committed by the Armenian military in February 1992, during the Karabakh war (see Geukjian, 2011, 190 on the Khojali massacres).²⁹⁸ Therefore, the diaspora lobbies of both Georgia and Azerbaijan are gradually becoming more politicized, and the states are gaining the ‘experience’ of having diasporas. This is definitely an important area that needs further investigation in future research. Future research on Armenia and in a comparative lens with other cases in the South Caucasus region and the post-Soviet region as well will help to shed more light on a region that is often lost amid the literature on ethnic conflicts and violence. The complexities of the region and the lessons that it can teach us in scholarship are important resources to uncover.

This project is therefore an important beginning in the inquiry of national identity, in understanding the habitus of national identity, in exploring the way nationalism is reproduced socially by agents. The dissertation’s focus on national habitus is a strong contribution to the

²⁹⁸ Naheed Nenshi officially recognized February 25-26, 2012 as the 20th anniversary of the Khojali/Khojaly massacres, for more information on the the various commemorations, see <http://www.azembassy.ca/news/2012/N1204%20-%20Newsletter%20-%20March%201%202012.pdf>

literature on national identity, due to its incorporation of both gendered perspectives and especially collective traumatic memory studies. The mainstream literature on national identity, most prominently represented by the works of Benedict Anderson, Anthony Smith, and Ernest Gellner who each contribute through a different understanding of nationalism, seems to continue to deny a space to perspectives of nationalism that are directly tied to gender and trauma. Even though gendered perspectives have been strongly represented in the literature of the past two or three decades, as Chapter Three presented, the incorporation of traumatic experiences in national identity studies need to be further examined through more case-studies that can contribute to the theoretical discussion on the impact of traumatic experiences in national identity discourses.

Memory, identity, and state domestic and especially foreign policies are all interlinked in the examination of the discourse of national identity and contribute to a fuller understanding of national identity. The collective memory of traumatic experience shapes the production and reproduction of the discourse on ‘Armenianness’ and determines the transnational and inter-state relations of the Armenian state. As such, trauma and memory become the context through which the thread of Armenian identity is weaved. The collective traumatic memory of the Armenian Genocide is thus the main thread that weaves the four pillars of Armenian identity together to present the whole narrative of Armenianness from 1988 to 2013. The interaction of trauma, memory and national identity presents a strong prism through which to analyze the national habitus and opens more channels of future research and follow-up work to determine the way memory continues to shape the post-Soviet Armenian state. In addition, future research on the concept of national habitus is important to continue to reflect the increasing presence of diaspora(s) and as a consequence, the diversity of loci of enunciation. The conception of national identity should therefore benefit from research that transcends the limited confines of the Westphalian nation-state

to understand the competing and contested claims over the discourse production of national identity.

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List of Interviewees

1. Abrahamyan, Shahe, Professor of Philosophy, Karabakh State University, Stepanakert, Nagorno-Karabakh, May 19, 2011,
2. Abrahamian, Levon, Professor of Ethnography, Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, Yerevan, Armenia, May 10, 2011.
3. Aghabalyan, Narine, Minister of Culture of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, Stepanakert, Nagorno-Karabakh, May 19, 2011.
4. Atachanyan Vasilii, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Karabakh, Stepanakert, Nagorno-Karabakh, May 19, 2011.
5. Avetisyan, Sergey, Chief of Staff, Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, Armenia, May 6, 2011,
6. Chookaszian, Levon, Director, UNESCO Chair of Armenian Art History, Yerevan State University, Yerevan, Armenia, May 6, 2011.
7. Darbinian, Armina, Country Director, Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh, American assembly of America, Yerevan, Armenia, April 15, 2011.
8. Demoyan, Hayk, Director of the Armenian Genocide Museum Institute, Yerevan, Armenia, April 26, 2011.

9. Kaprielyan, Mkhitar, Vice Dean and Ethnologist, Faculty of History, Yerevan State University, Yerevan, Armenia, May 10, 2011.
10. Ghukassyan, Andreas, Political analyst and activist in Armenia, Chairman of the “Radio Hay” Board, May 4, 2011.
11. Giragosian, Richard, Founding Director of Regional Studies Center, April 19, 2011.
12. Harutyunyan, Anahit, President of “Spiritual Armenia” NGO; Center of Gender Studies, April 26, 2011.
13. Harutyunyan, Hamlet, Head of the Department, Institute of History, National Academy of Sciences, Yerevan, Armenia, May 16, 2011
14. Haruyunyan, Tsovinar, April 2011, Senior Democratization Assistant at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Office in Yerevan, Armenia, April 14, 2011.
15. Hayrikyan, Paruyr, former Soviet Armenian dissident, Head of the Union for Self-Determination Party in Armenia, May 5, 2011.
16. Hovhannesyan, Vahan, Member of the ARF (Dashnaktsutyun) Bureau, leader of the ARF-Dashnaktsutyun Parliamentary Faction, National Assembly of Armenia, Yerevan, Armenia, May 10, 2011.
17. Hovhannesian, Raffi, Head of the Heritage Party, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, May 27, 2011.
18. Iskandaryan, Alexander, Director of the Caucasus Institute in Yerevan, Armenia, April 28, 2011.
19. Kazinyan, Karine, late deputy Foreign Minister of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, Armenia, April 20, 2011.
20. Khatchatryan, Edgar, Director, Peace Dialogue non-governmental organization, Vanadzor, Armenia, May 2, 2011.
21. Kharatyan, Naira, Journalist for Gortsarar Russian Armenian Magazine and Poet, April 8, 2011.
22. Lalayan, Mushegh, Chairman of the Ideological Commission, Republican Party of Armenia, Yerevan, Armenia, May 3, 2011.
23. Manoyan, Giro, International Secretariat of the Office of Armenian Cause and Political Affairs Bureau, Dashnaktsutyun Party Office, Yerevan, Armenia, May 11, 2011.
24. Manucharyan, Ashot, Former member of the Karabakh Committee and former national security advisor to Levon Ter-Petrosyan, May 13, 2011.
25. Manukyan, Vazgen, Former Prime Minister and Defence Minister of Armenia, and President of the Public Council of Armenia, May 17, 2011.
26. Marashlyan, Vardan, Deputy Minister of Diaspora of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, Armenia, May 26, 2011.
27. Margaryan, Yeranuhi, Chief Specialist of the Department of Cultural Heritage and Folk Crafts, Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, Armenia, April 29, 2011.
28. Marutyan, Harutyun, Professor, Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, Yerevan, Armenia, April 14, 2011.
29. Mayilian, Masis, President of the Foreign and Security Policy Council, Stepanakert, Nagorno-Karabakh, May 19, 2011.

30. Mkhitaryan, Gayane, Professor, Department of History of the Armenian language, Institute of Language, Armenian National Academy of Sciences, Yerevan, Armenia, May 12, 2011.
31. Mkhitaryan, Samvel, Head of Department of Educational Programs and relations, Development Deputy Vice Rector on Education Development, Associate Professor, Russian-Armenian Slavonic University, Yerevan, Armenia, April 12, 2011.
32. Melkonyan, Eduard, Doctor of Philosophy in History, Armenian National Academy of Science History Institute, May 9, 2011.
33. Minasyan, Sergey, Head of Political Studies Department, Caucasus Institute, Yerevan, Armenia, April 28, 2011.
34. Poghossyan, Svetlana, Ethnologist at the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, and Assistant Director of Sardarapat Memorial, Ethnographic Museum of Armenia, April 11, 2011.
35. Sahakyan, Svetlana, Head of Department of External Affairs, Ministry of culture of Armenia, Yerevan, Armenia, April 29, 2011.
36. Sargsyan, Lyudmila, President of the Social Democrat Hunchakian Party, Yerevan, Armenia, May 3, 2011.
37. Safaryan, Stepan, Member of Parliament and Head of the Heritage Faction, National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, Armenia, May 14, 2011.
38. Sargsyan, Manvel, Director of Research, The Armenian Centre for National and International Studies, Yerevan, Armenia, April 29 and April 30, 2011.
39. Stepanyan, Armenouhi, Professor, Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, Yerevan, Armenia, April 14, 2011.
40. Ter-Gaprielyan, Gevorg, Country Director of Eurasian Partnership Foundation, Yerevan, Armenia, April 27, 2011.
41. Ter-Petrosyan, Levon, Former President of the Third Republic of Armenia from 1991-1998, Head of the Armenian National Congress opposition bloc, Yerevan, Armenia. May 27, 2011.
42. Titizian, Maria, Vice-President of the Socialist International, and Chair of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnak Party) Women's Group, Yerevan, Armenia, April 15, 2011.
43. Zakaryan, Ardash, Member of the Armenian National Assembly, Republican Party of Armenia representative, and member of the Standing Committee on Science, Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Yerevan, Armenia, May 16, 2011.
44. Zohrabyan, Razmik, Vice-President of the Republican Party of Armenia, Yerevan, Armenia, May 3, 2011.
45. Anonymous, Faculty of History and Political Studies, Artsakh State University, Stepanakert, Nagorno-Karabakh, May 20, 2011.
46. Anonymous, Department of Journalism, Yerevan State University, Yerevan, Armenia. April 11, 2011.
47. Anonymous, May 2011, Ministry of Education of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, Armenia, May 13, 2011.
48. Anonymous, High-ranking official in the Government of the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh, Stepanakert, Nagorno-Karabakh, May 20, 2011.

Appendix #1 List of (semi-structured) Interview Questions

Armenia and the Armenian Diaspora

- 1- How do you see the evolution of the relationship between Armenia and the diaspora from the Soviet era until today?
- 2- How important is the Armenian diaspora's role as a mediator and the extent of their influence in the decision-making process regarding all matters of identity, especially referring to the recognition of the Armenian Genocide?
- 3- What is the status of the relationship of the current government with the diaspora? How do you interpret the reactions of the diaspora vis-à-vis the recent Turkish-Armenian Protocols? Is it possible that the diaspora is not able to grasp all the political and economic circumstances in Armenia?
- 4- What unifies, in your view, the Armenian nation? If Armenians are divided in the West (diaspora) and the East (Motherland), what factor unites them? Should they always agree?

Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh

- 5- What has been the major impact of the Nagorno-Karabakh or Artsakhian Conflict on the country in your opinion? How do you interpret the relationship between the de facto state of Karabakh and Armenia?
- 6- How important is territory to the Armenian national identity?
- 7- Focusing on aspects such as the prospects of peace, what are the possible foreseeable consequences on the Armenian state? What is, in your view, the best possible scenario for the reunification of Karabakh with Armenia?

From Soviet to post-Soviet Armenia

- 8- What is today the role of religion in the Armenian national identity and how does it differ from the past?
- 9- Do you believe that Armenia managed to keep its identity and language during the Soviet era against the wave of forced Russification from the Soviet centre? Did the Soviet-appointed Armenian leaders contribute to that effect, meaning to maintain these values and traditions or not?
- 10- The role of women in the construction and strengthening of the national identity is of great importance in the literature that has analyzed women in nationalist movements and women as nationalist heroes. In the case of Armenia, there are some women who fought in the Karabakh

war, there are some women in the parliament today and those who are active in society. What do you think is the role of the “Armenian” woman in Armenia, what is her major contribution to society?

11- Were there any reforms that took place in the post-independence period in Armenian history and social studies textbooks? What are, in your opinion, some important reforms that took place since 1991 in the Armenian history and social studies textbooks regarding the Armenian national identity, the diaspora, Nagorno-Karabakh?

Armenia and its Neighbours

12- In the recent discussions of the Turkish-Armenian Protocol, why did the state decide to go ahead and sign the treaty with Turkey? What was the major reasoning behind that decision? Do you think it is necessary for Armenia to start opening its borders? Do you think it would change the economic well-being of the people?

13- What is the relationship of Armenia with Russia and the Western European and North American worlds? What is the ‘right’ choice for Armenia in terms of alliances today, considering the current political events regarding for example Nagorno-Karabakh, the recognition of the Armenian genocide and other economic interests (and national interests of Armenia)?

14- What is the status of Armenians in Javakhk? Recently the Armenian Church received some level of freedom to function in that zone. Does this signal a step-by-step improvement in the relationship of the two countries Armenia and Georgia?

15- What are the prospects for peace between Azerbaijan and Armenia? There have recently been discussions in the literature on the need to bring the peoples of the two countries closer to be able to imagine a peace treaty. Do you think this is an important step in the establishment of future relationship between Armenia and Azerbaijan?