Literature Review:

The role of nation states in managing memories of disputed territories

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The role of diaspora in fostering the memory of the Armenian genocide abroad - Philippe Lecrivain

Focusing on the case of Armenia, lawyer Philippe Lecrivian (Educational and Cultural Bridges, Armenia), discusses the role of diaspora in supporting and challenging domestic politics and foreign policy. Philippe sets out how, from the 1960s onwards, the Armenian diaspora intensified their efforts for genocide recognition internationally and influenced politics of the 'homeland'.

In his article *Qu'est-ce que les diasporas* ['What are diasporas'] and his book 'Diasporas', Stéphane Dufoix (2006) defines the root of the term 'diaspora' as the dispersion of the Jews and, by extension, that of other religious groups. Subsequently, this concept expanded to include those living outside their homeland and structured trade networks.

Nicholas Van Hear (1998) recommended using three basic criteria to define diasporas:

- The population is dispersed from a homeland to two or more other territories;
- The presence abroad is enduring, although exile is not necessarily permanent, but may include movement between homeland and new host;
- There is some kind of exchange – social, economic, political or cultural – between or among the spatially separated populations comprising the diaspora.

In her article *La diaspora arménienne* ['The Armenian Diaspora'], Anouch Kunth (2007) noted that, in the early 1920s, Ottoman Armenians who had survived the genocide in 1915 made up the largest share of the Armenian diaspora in France. In parallel, there were also several hundred Armenians from the Russian Caucasus, many of whom had fled to France to escape the Bolshevik conflict at home. A comparison between the Ottoman Armenians and those from the Russian Caucasus reveals one overarching Armenian community with different traits.

This diaspora has elements in common, including the fact that individuals have had to flee their homeland (the Ottoman Empire or the Russian Empire) and above all the memory of

the home they have had to leave behind. However, they are the product of very different social circumstances. The Russian Caucasus Armenians come from a privileged social class and speak Russian, while the Ottoman Armenians are often from poor, agricultural backgrounds.

Russian Caucasus Armenians moved to Paris (to neighbourhoods on the west side of the city) because they had the financial means and continued to speak Russian. Ottoman Armenians went to France and earned very little as labourers. They tended to settle in industrial towns, continuing to speak Armenian as they were ashamed of speaking Turkish, viewed as the language of their persecutors.

Despite some considerable disparities across the Armenian diaspora in North America (mainly in the U.S.) France and Russia, two common elements existed: the Armenian Apostolic Church and the 1915 Genocide.

Anson Rabinbach (2008) examines the notion of genocide as proposed by Raphael Lemkin in his article to once again push Armenians both at home and abroad to seek genocide recognition. This term was invented to denote the premediated elimination of the Jews in Europe at the hands of Hitler's regime. In her book, 'Problem from Hell. America and the Age of Genocide', (2013) Pulitzer Prize winner Samantha supported Lemkin's theory stating that the Genocide Convention could be considered "Lemkin's Law".

According to the second article of the UN convention on the prevention and punishment of crime of genocide, "genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."

By inventing the term 'genocide', Lemkin did not simply set out to label a crime that had, until then, gone unnamed; he also wanted to denote two different types of crime – murder and ethnocide – using a single term.

Gérard Chaliand's foreword to Raymond Kévorkian's (2006) book includes a quotation from a speech delivered by Lemkin in 1949: "It was only after the extermination of 1,200,000 Armenians during the First World War that the victorious allies promised the survivors of this abominable massacre both a law and a hearing. Nothing ever came of this promise." Indeed, this is what the Treaty of Sèvres set out to do. Rabinbach (2008) explains that in Lemkin's memoirs, he was particularly marked by two genocides: the Kishinev pogrom and the Armenian Genocide of 1915.

Following the assassination of Taalat Pasha, the Turkish Interior Minister, the perpetrator, Salomon Telieran, was tried and acquitted by a court in Berlin in March 1921. Indeed, to this day, no prosecutions have occurred and the lack of recognition by Turkey drives the Armenians who are still in their homeland and the diaspora to seek acknowledgement. The desire for the wider recognition for the Armenian genocide began to be expressed more vehemently only in the 1960s and this was for two reasons:

- Until that point, Armenians in the diaspora wanted to become integrated in their host country;
- The death of almost every member of the Armenian elite during the genocide partly explains the delayed mobilisation of the Armenian people.

New elites created by the process of integration now had the chance to demonstrate their influence, thanks to the widespread demand for recognition of the Armenian Genocide. Vahakn Dadrian and Raymond Kévorskian are prime examples of the new elites that started to mobilise in the 1960s. Marian (2015) argues that Vahakn Dadrian studied the archives of diplomats allied with the Ottoman Empire. He discovered that the Armenian Genocide had its own Schindler: Leslie Davies, the American Consul in Kharpert. Raymond Kévorkian (2006) collected statements from survivors, which revealed that the Syrian camps in Deir ez-

Zor were used as concentration camps. Much later, these studies on the genocide, along with numerous others, would bear fruit.

In his article, 'History, memory, and international relations: The Armenian diaspora and Armenian-Turkish Relations', Vicken Cheterian (2010) describes the influence of the diaspora on Armenia. He also states that Armenian researchers and activists intensified their efforts in the 1980s, making it more difficult for people to deny the genocide. Furthermore, they maintained that an increasing number of analyses carried out by researchers who were not Armenian made it possible to discern a general pattern in genocide studies, thereby making it even harder to negate the genocide.

Some researchers began this process as early as the 1960s. The year 1965 saw the first commemorations of the genocide in Armenia, which was then still part of the Soviet Union. The memory of the genocide gradually started to return. In the 1970s, the fight for recognition of the genocide took a more violent turn in the form of acts of terrorism. One of the first of these acts was committed by Gourgen Yanikian (who happened to be a survivor of the genocide) in 1973 who murdered two Turkish diplomats in Los Angeles.

In 1975, the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) assassinated several Turkish diplomats. Vicken Cheterian (2010) states that the "ASALA's terrorist campaign managed to mobilise an entire new generation of young Armenians and to breathe new life into the political mobilisation of the diaspora." This mobilisation was both financial and political.

In his book, *Le génocide arménien: De la mémoire outragée à la mémoire partagée* [The Armenian Genocide: From Outraged Memory to Shared Memory], Michel Marian (2015) describes the way in which diaspora Armenians were able to exert a political influence that sometimes had an impact. In democratic countries where there are many Armenians, they have an influence mainly at a local and then national level. Monuments in memory of victims of the genocide were built in towns or cities that were home to many Armenians. In France, the mayors of large cities with a strong Armenian presence raised the matter of genocide recognition with François Mitterrand. Michel Marian (2015) states that "whatever

the experience and skill of the Armenian lobby groups, their power is not based on their skill or even on their activists or leaders; it lies in the voluntary service of a considerable number of members of the community who are always prepared to meet politicians and to lobby them or write to them in defence of the same simple objective that they have shared for decades."

This lobbying paid off. In 1985, the "Whitacker Report" by the UN Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities recognised "the Ottoman massacre of Armenians in 1915-16" as genocide. This lead to the parliaments of around twenty countries recognising the genocide, including Russia, France and Lebanon. Other nations have yet to recognise the genocide, including the U.S., UK, Israel and Turkey.

Despite not officially recognising the genocide, the U.S. has discussed recognition several times. President Reagan was the first president to utter the word "genocide" on 22 April 1981. Barack Obama vowed to recognise the Armenian Genocide but broke his promise by talking not of genocide but of "Meds Yeghern". Samantha Power (2013) fiercely criticises the American government, not only because it has refused for 40 years to ratify the Genocide Convention but also because it has neglected to apply pressure to set up international, legal and military mechanisms to prevent and to sanction genocide. The American Congress almost voted to recognise the genocide but failed to do so because the concept of genocide was limited to extermination carried out by a radical ideology.

Subsequently, in 1987, the European Parliament made the accession of Turkey to the European Union dependent on it acknowledging the Armenian Genocide. Then, in 2001, France publicly acknowledged the genocide with a declarative law.

Returning to Vicken Cheterian's (2010) article, since Armenia became independent in 1991, a large number from the diaspora were elected to join the Armenian government from 1991. For example, Raffi Hovanessian, the first Foreign Affairs Minister of Armenia. Moreover, the first President of Armenia, Levon Ter-Petrossian was from a diaspora family that returned to Soviet Armenia in 1948. However, these representatives of the Armenian diaspora had a moderate influence on Armenian politics.

As part of political negotiations to normalise relations between Turkey and Armenia, two bi-lateral protocols, referred to collectively as the Zurich Protocols, were signed on 10 October 2009 by the Armenian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Edward Nalbandyan and his Turkish counterpart, Ahmet Davutoglu. The Protocols failed to mention the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno Karabakh or a deadline for ratification, which was required from parliaments of both countries. Criticisms from within Armenia and across the Armenian diaspora, particularly vocal in the US, centred on the Protocols' mutual recognition of existing borders without Turkey's acknowledgement of the Armenian genocide. These protocols, signed by both parties, yet never ratified in their respective parliaments, demonstrated the divergence between the Armenian diaspora and the Armenian State. It is also important to note that during his world tour in October 2009, before signing the protocols, President Serzh Sargsyan had to face fierce protests particularly in France, Los Angeles (12,000 people) and Bayreuth. Phillips (2012; 89) goes as far as to argue the negotiations around the Protocol 'renewed the Diaspora's engagement in Armenia's future'.

Indeed, the diaspora sought genocide recognition at all costs, which was no longer feasible with the signing of the protocols. For Armenia, the genocide was one of many ways of forming a modern political identity that would later take on several layers: the Sovietisation of Armenia and the purges under Stalin; the Second World War and the loss of 160,000 Armenian fighters; the struggles of the Breshnev era and especially the rise of the Karabakh movement, which provided the ideological basis for the independence of Armenia.

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