*THE EVOLUTION OF ARMENIAN
IDENTITY THROUGH RECENT HISTORY
AND THE
LEBANESE SOCIO-POLITICAL SYSTEM*

Between (Home)land and (Host)land: Lebanese-Armenians and the Republic of Armenia

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Introduction

The Armenian Diasporas that existed for centuries have witnessed many cycles of identity formation throughout the last two centuries. Enlarged as a result of the 1915 Genocide, these communities have spent over 75 years trying to redefine, reshape and negotiate their own identity not only vis-à-vis the very conception of an ethno-national distinctiveness but also vis-à-vis their homeland. In the case of the Armenian Diasporas and especially for the second and third generations of these Armenians, "homeland" or "*hayrenik*" has been a conceptual idea, which more often than not has been distinct from Armenia or "*Hayastan*." With the independence of Armenia, the Diasporas faced a new challenge of negotiating their already confirmed and reconciled Diasporan identities with the reality of a new (home)land. To complicate things further, this identity negotiation had a "hostland" component added to it where these communities had to find ways of defining their existence not only between two homelands (Armenia and their host country) but also between the concepts of Armenia and homeland.

This analysis is an attempt to look into the case of the Lebanese-Armenian Diaspora and the impact of Armenia's independence on that community. The impact will be analyzed in the context of the community's (in)ability to place itself within the larger context of new international and national developments that disrupted the equilibrium of the dual (Lebanese and Armenian) identity and forced this community to re-evaluate its raison d'être.

Some basic definitions

In order to make it easier to discuss ideas relevant to the Lebanese-Armenian community and its identity formation, it is important to set the ground for some basic concepts that will be used throughout this chapter. It should be acknowledged that the choice of some concepts are arbitrary and serve to support and coincide with the Lebanese-Armenian case. However, the existence of different definitions should not be a reason to shun the attempts to create and adopt new variations of these concepts. To quote a

major tenet in Vulcan philosophy (from the science fiction show Star Trek) there is an "infinite diversity in infinite combinations."

Diasporas as traumatic dispersions

One of the first concepts that need to be identified is the problematic idea of Diaspora. Semantically, the root of this word is Greek and is composed of the verb "*sperio*" (to disperse) and the preposition "*dia*" (throughout). Many traditional Diasporas (such as the Jewish and Armenian), refer to dispersion as a result of traumatic and brutal events.[1] Many scholars view Diasporas to be dispersed communities of guest workers, ethnic and exiled groups, refugees and expatriates.[2] A more ethno-centric definition of Diasporas is provided by Israeli political scientist Gabriel Sheffer who defines a Diaspora as being *social-political formation, created as a result of either voluntary or forced migration, whose members regard themselves as of the same ethno-national origin and who permanently reside as minorities in one or several host countries.*[3]

While this definition could be ideal for a theoretical discussion of Diasporas, in the Armenian context the component of trauma and violence is focal in the making of Armenian Diasporas. Thus some scholars put an emphasis on the notion of trauma as an axial part of the creation and maintenance of some Diasporas, arguing that the traumatic experience of mass killing and deportations create a sense of a collective memory of a lost homeland,[4] which in turn helps in the creation of a common national identity. In the words of the renowned French philosopher and writer Ernest Renan:

> *More valuable by far than common customs posts and frontiers conforming to strategic ideas is the fact of sharing, in the past, a glorious heritage and regrets, and of having, in the future, [a shared] programme to put into effect, or the fact of having suffered, enjoyed, and hoped together. These are the kinds of things that can be understood in spite of differences of race and language. I spoke just now of "having suffered together" and, indeed,* **suffering in**

[1] Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: an introduction*, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1997.

[2] See Khachig Tölölyan, "The nation state and its others: In lieu of a preface", in Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, eds., *Becoming national: a reader*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 426-455.

[3] Gabriel Sheffer, *Diaspora politics: at home abroad*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 9.

[4] Thomas Faist, "Transnationalization in international migration: implications for the study of citizenship and culture" p. 197, in *Ethnic and racial studies* Vol. 23, No. 2, March 2000.

common unifies more than joy does. Where national memories are concerned, griefs are of more value than triumphs, for they impose duties, and require a common effort.[5] *(Emphasis added)*

Based on these definitions, the Lebanese-Armenian community could be categorized as a Diaspora created by conflict and trauma and hence one that strives to keep a memory of the past alive by perpetuating the hope and aspirations of returning to the homeland from which it was violently expelled.[6]

The experience of the Genocide has been vivid in the first generation of Armenians who settled in Lebanon. The memory of the traumatic experience and relation to the lost homeland was passed on and kept alive in the minds of second, third and now fourth generations through carefully maintained commemorations—such as remembering the victims of the Genocide on April 24, or Armenia's independence day on May 28,—and symbols—such as the images of Mt. Ararat and maps of historic Armenia.[7] In fact one of the main functions of Lebanese-Armenian organizations—political or otherwise—has been to ensure that the new generation of Armenians born in Lebanon would not forget the reason why they are in that space and not back in the "old country" and that the collective memory of the trauma continues to be passed on to subsequent generations of Armenians. This memory of forced dispersion has been the main source of political mobilization of the Lebanese-Armenian community and a central point for the definition, creation and maintenance of Armenian identity.[8]

Other than the traumatic nature of the creation of Diasporas, another set of criteria that could be used for our current discussion is summarized in the following indicators that define Diasporic groups as expatriate minority communities:

1. that are dispersed from an original centre to at least two peripheral places;
2. that maintain a memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland;
3. that see the ancestral home as a place of eventual return, when the time is right;

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[5] Ernest Renan, "What is a nation?" in Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, eds., ibid., pp. 52-53.

[6] See for instance Gérard Chaliand, ed., *Minority peoples in the age of nation-states* London, Pluto, 1989, p. 14.

[7] For a detailed discussion on the role of symbols and commemorations see Vamik Volkan, *Bloodlines: from ethnic pride to ethnic terrorism*, New York, Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1997.

[8] This concept is analyzed in Alejandro Portes, "Toward a new world order: the origins and effects of transnational activities" in *Ethnic and racial studies* Vol. 22, No. 2, March 1999, pp. 463-77.

4. that are committed to the maintenance and restoration of this homeland;
5. and of which the group's consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by this continuing relationship with the homeland.[9]

Homeland and hostland

In the case of the Lebanese-Armenian Diaspora, the main issue of defining their identity is contingent on the recognition of the distinct and separate notions of homeland and hostland. Yet another dimension that renders this exercise more difficult to handle is the distinction between homeland (*hayrenik*) and Armenia (*Hayastan*). Here it is important to note that the usage of the term "hostland" to designate Lebanon is meant only to clarify the distinction between the two notions of Armenia and Lebanon. It serves a purpose only within the frames of theoretical discussion, since for many Armenians—in both internal public domain and in private—Lebanon is always referred to as "our second homeland" (*yergrort hayrenik*). For instance, in an interview with a journalist from a foreign news service one Armenian announced:

> *We'll stay here to the very end. I'm staying until we are kicked out.*
> **Outside, I'm a stranger. In Lebanon, I'm a native.**
> *So far, none of my family has left. I have many relatives in Australia, Canada and America. But we stayed…. **Here I feel among my friends in my country**.*[10] *(Emphasis added)*

The fact that the Lebanese-Armenian community is made up of descendants of those who were uprooted from Western Armenia, and also considering the fact that up until the creation of the Third Armenian Republic in 1991, there has been limited contacts between the Lebanese-Armenians and Soviet Armenia, the notion of homeland has been very much a virtual concept where the community identifies Armenia with a homeland rather than a nation-state, albeit a Soviet one. The idea and role of land and territory in the collective psyche of the Armenian Diasporas is accentuated more because of the forced nature of their dispersion. In many instances, the lingo of Diasporan communities and organizations include concepts and words which, when referring to the homeland, use terms such as "roots" and "soil" to make

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[9] William Safran, "Diasporas in modern societies: myths of homeland and return", in *Diaspora 1*, no. 1, Spring 1991, p. 83-84.
[10] See "Armenians stay in Lebanon despite war and economic problems" in The Associated Press, May 11, 1987.

the symbolic idea of homeland more "real."[11]

As mentioned above, Diasporas formed as a result of traumatic experiences initially develop a sense of temporary status condition and cultivate a strong sense of returning to their homeland. In the case of the Lebanese-Armenian community, this is best exemplified by the mass enthusiasm to (re)patriate to Armenia during the 1946-1947. Thus, the intensity and mass of Armenians wanting to "return" to Soviet Armenia indicates that the concepts of *hayrenik* and *Hayastan* were superimposed on each other. However, with the passage of time, the inherent importance of territory was weakened, which in turn resulted in an increased value of the homeland as an imagined and symbolic space, in the identity-making process of the Diasporas.[12] Over time, homeland becomes a highly valued but symbolic concept whose symbolic value is acknowledged and reiterated by intellectuals for the "education" and mobilization of the community. In the words of one Armenian scholar: *I am Armenian-American, but my Armenian identity has nothing to do with any real experience in Armenia. Until I visited Armenia in 1994, at the age of fifty, no member of my family had been there since 1598, when my ancestors left it.*[13]

Other than the identity-making value of the "return" concept, still another function that the concept of "going back to the homeland" plays, is that it helps legitimize the role of various Diasporic organizations by giving them the "task" of preserving the nation with its values, culture and traditions, until it is time for return. This "white man's burden" of Diasporic organizations results in tension between Diasporas and their homeland, when the homeland becomes reachable and open since:

> *Whilst things in the occupied homeland may have "moved on," the diasporan communities will tend to desperately cling to pre-diasporan customs and structures, because they view themselves as the custodians of the national heritage, the repository of the "true believers," at least until such time as the homeland is able to take*

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[11] See Hamid Naficy, "The poetics and practice of Iranian nostalgia in exile" in *Diaspora* 1, No. 3, Winter 1991, pp. 285-302.

[12] See for instance David Newman, "Real spaces, symbolic space: interrelated notions of territory in the Arab-Israeli conflict" p. 13, in Paul F. Diehl, ed., *A road map to war: territorial dimensions of international conflict*, Nashville, Tenn., Vanderbilt University Press, 1999.

[13] Khachig Tölölyan, "Rethinking Diaspora(s): stateless power in the transnational moment", in *Diaspora 5*, no. 1, Spring 1996, p. 6.

over this role.[14]

With the fall of the Soviet Union and the independence of Armenia, a new nation-state appeared that was considerably different from the symbolic *hayrenik* and *Hayastan* with which the Diaspora Armenians identified themselves. This, in turn, forced the negotiating process of Diasporan Armenian national identity to undergo an accelerated transition from exilic nationalism to Diasporic transnationalism.[15] Some manifestations of this transition led a few members of the Diasporas to return to Armenia, while others adjusted their relationship with the homeland by taking into consideration the dictates of the new realities.

In-between homeland and hostland

In this section, the discussion will shift towards a theoretic approach and examination of the concept of the "in-between." This exercise is useful to be able to place the Armenian community, individual and the negotiation of their identity, between the homeland and hostland.

The invention of the "in-between"

The colonization and then the de-colonization of non-western countries within less than a century (19th-20th centuries), brought about new realities that are unique to regions such as the Middle East. Out of this massive amalgam of different peoples and events, two phenomena came into being: first the radical birth of nations and later on the idea of the in-between space.[16] The space of the in-between was the manifestation of the after-effects of a complex process of social, cultural, and physical displacements. The limitless possibilities of the postmodern era presented mobility, voluntary or involuntary exile, emigration, and internationalization of the self. Thus:

> *The demography of the new internationalism is the history of postcolonial migration, the narratives of cultural and political diaspora, the major social displacements of peasant and aboriginal*

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[14] Armen Gakavian, "The reimagination of American-Armenian identity since Gorbachev", PhD dissertation, University of Sydney, 1998, available at http://www.realchange.nareg.com.au/phd.htm . While this discussion is for the American-Armenian community it certainly holds true in the case of the Lebanese-Armenians.

[15] See a detailed discussion in Khachig Tölölyan, "Elites and institutions in the Armenian transnation", in *Diaspora 9*, No. 1, Spring 2000, pp. 107-136.

[16] The discussion will forgo the issue of nation since it is outside of the confines of this paper.

communities, the poetics of exile, the grim prose of political and economic refugees.[17]

Through these sorts of displacements the process of cultural and psychological inbetweenness starts. The repetitive and continuous tension between the individual and her/his social and moral environment allows the shaping of the in-between space. In the natural and instinctive pursuit of identity and belonging, the exiled does not find personal or communal comfort and protection in her/his original or new social entities. In neither location is that individual completely at home in terms of moral values, perception of the world, way of life, language, etc. Initially, the not fully matured and not completely understood notion of the double vision of the exiled creates a constant struggle and clash between him/herself and the fixed values of either society to which (s)he tries desperately and hopelessly to belong.

The question of identity acutely emerges as the displacement of the individual expands in time and space. The notion of identity as a solid, fixed, and eternal quality becomes problematic to the exiled who finds her/himself in a situation where the essence of her/his own life is in constant physical, social, moral, and cultural flux. In the context of this uncontrollable mobility of the most basic values, the very idea of a pure identity seems ridiculous. It is not until much later that (s)he realizes that pure national or cultural identity *can only be achieved through the death, literal and figurative, of the complex interweaving of history, and the culturally contingent borderlines of modern nationhood.*[18] The acceptance of such perception comes with a great effort of the exiled to mature and to absorb the essence and realities of each of the societies where (s)he is neither an integral part nor a complete outsider. Thus, with certain surprise, (s)he comes to the realization that the location of a more global understanding and acceptance of reality is this ambiguous point of inbetweenness. Simultaneously, a standpoint and viewpoint enable the possibility of an accurate critical distance. Through emotional and intellectual labor of the exiled, the space between cultures, nations, and ideologies becomes inhabitable. Here the boundaries become places where movements are born.

When this argument is applied in the case of the Lebanese-Armenians, one needs to make some clarifications and amendments. Thus during the 1920s and 1930s, when Armenian refugees started settling in Lebanon, they

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[17] Homi K. Bhabha, *The location of culture*, New York, Routledge, 1994, p. 5.
[18] Ibid.

did not have the luxury to negotiate the concept of inbetweenness within the new Lebanese society since the dictates of the day were basic physical survival. This did not leave enough time for intellectual exercises for the community to make sense of its new-found identity. During the mid to late 1940s, the negotiation of the inbetweenness starts and it seems that the term Lebanese-Armenian community receives its meaning as we know it today. During that time national consciousness and identity were forged from the diverse and fragmented sub-identities of the Armenian refugees in Lebanon by political and cultural organizations.[19] Furthermore, the ideas defining and distinguishing *hayrenik* (homeland) and *Hayastan* (Armenia) gathered new meaning, be it symbolic or actual/practical. Perhaps a good indicator of this inbetweenness and the already negotiated identity of the Lebanese-Armenians are the events of 1958, when as a result of the existing tension in Lebanon between various political groups, the Armenian community also took part and the different political groups in the community tried to "settle scores" akin to the general atmosphere prevailing in the country at large. While this example indicates the sad nature of individuals and groups to "borrow" violence, the fact that the Lebanese-Armenian community was involved in the fighting could be used as an indicator that the community was not insulated and was, to a great extent, integrated into the socio-political fabric of Lebanon. Thus in a matter of 20 years the newly established community of Armenians in Lebanon achieved what Edward Said describes as contrapuntal identity and awareness. Thus according to him:

> *Seeing "the entire world as foreign land" makes possible originality of vision. Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, and awareness that—to borrow a phrase from music—is contrapuntal…. For an exile, habits of life, expression or activity in the new environment inevitably occurs against the memory of these things in another environment. Thus both the new and the old environments are vivid, actual, occurring together contrapuntally.[20]*

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[19] Ronald Grigor Suny discusses this in *Looking towards Ararat: Armenia in modern history*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1993, pp. 218-220.

[20] Edward Said, "Third World intellectuals and metropolitan culture" pp. 48-50 in *Raritan 9*, No. 3, Winter, 1990, pp. 27-50.

Managing dual identities

By the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war in 1975, the Lebanese-Armenian community was fully integrated into the Lebanese socio-economic and political fabric. There were also initial attempts to venture into the cultural domain. The war itself and the determination of the Armenian community to remain in the country strengthened the establishment and consolidation of the Lebanese identity and belongingness in the local Armenian community. One of the papers presented in the conference deals with the policy of "positive neutrality" that the Armenian community adopted during the Lebanese civil war. While this policy was regarded by some Lebanese groups as a sign of Armenians being "outsiders" because they did not want to partake in the war or take sides, one could argue that on the contrary, "positive neutrality" stems from the extreme sense of belongingness that the Lebanese-Armenian community had towards its adopted homeland.[21] In this respect, the geographic proximity of Lebanon to Armenian ancestral land should not be undermined—at least it was not underestimated by the Lebanese-Armenian community itself. Furthermore, this geographic proximity acted as glue for the Lebanese-Armenian community to develop stronger ties with its hostland as it becomes clear in an editorial appearing in 1986:

> And the raison d'être for the continuation of this community during these difficult [Lebanese civil war] days goes beyond the here and now. This community survives not for its own sake nor for the sake of the Diaspora as a whole but for the sake of eternal and everlasting Armenia. This raison d'être is the driving force that keeps us attached to this homeland close to the other homeland (in Arm. "hayrenamerts ays hayrenikin") and it does not allow us to abandon our national [in Lebanon] structures and leave.[22]

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[21] This section is based on a phone interview with an individual who was active in Lebanese-Armenian communal life during and after the civil war. In one of the interview sessions this individual mentioned about a conversation where Khachik Babikian—the late Armenian MP and one of the engineers of the concept of "positive neutrality"—expressed his frustration on the inability of the various Lebanese warring factions to understand that "positive neutrality" stemmed from the Armenian community's devotion, rather than indifference, towards Lebanon.

[22] See "Oreroon het, oreren andin" (in Arm. for "With and beyond the days" author's translation), *Zartonk,* February 27, 1986.

The dual supra identities of the Lebanese-Armenian community [23] survived the Lebanese civil war only to be challenged by an event that coincided with the end of the war in Lebanon. Thus the declaration of Armenia's independence from the Soviet Union on September 21, 1991, signaled a new reality that the Lebanese-Armenians had to face and even start to (re)define their identity vis-à-vis *Hayastan*. After over 70 years of romanticizing about the homeland (*hayrenik*) and keeping the past glories and grievances alive as a way of asserting continued belonging to the original homeland,[24] the Lebanese-Armenian community now had to choose to make a distinction between the ritualistic (or symbolic/imagined) and the real homeland. This new reality brought into discussion the concept of long-distance nationalism, where followers of a certain nation living outside the physical space of that nation-state tend to be unreliable and negligent. Benedict Anderson argues that:

> *While technically a citizen of the state in which he comfortably lives, but to which he may feel little attachment, he finds it tempting to play identity politics by participating (via propaganda, money, weapons, any way but voting) in the conflicts of his imagined Heimat [homeland]–now only fax time away. But this citizenless participation is inevitably non-responsible–our hero will not have to answer for, or pay the price of, the long-distance politics he undertakes.*[25]

Quite a few members of the Lebanese-Armenian community viewed their relations with the homeland through the superimposition of rights over obligations in the new republic, passive entitlements, and the assertion of an interest in the public space without a daily presence there.[26]

Yet another dimension of the dual identity making process that the Lebanese-Armenian community went through was the conflict of *Nagorno-Karabakh* and its quest for unification with Armenia. The unification movement, which started in Armenia in February 1988, and subsequently

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[23] The reason I use "supra" to indicate the Lebanese and Armenian identities is because there are many subidentities at play as well. Some of these sub-indentities include political affiliation and location of residency in Lebanon (west or east Beirut, north Lebanon, *Bekaa* valley, etc.).

[24] Cohen, ibid., p. 185.

[25] Benedict Anderson, "The new world disorder", in *New left review,* 193, May-June 1992, p. 13.

[26] This concept is used in David Fitzgerald, *Negotiating extra-territorial citizenship: Mexican migration and the transnational politics of community*, La Jolla, Calif.: Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, Monograph Series no. 2, 2000, p. 106.

escalated to tension and war with neighboring Azerbaijan, was an important catalyst for the identity negotiation process for the Armenian community. *Nagorno-Karabakh* came to symbolize the attachments of a transnational group to a symbolic concept of territory and land. It reignited the focal point that territory plays in the identity-making process of a dispersed group. However, this same issue also raised an idea of duality between the symbolic vs. "real" value of territory for the Diasporas and individuals living on that territory, and to some extent, created tension between Diasporas and their homeland (or in this case nation-state). According to one scholar:

> *For example, consider a state that gives up its claim to a piece of historically significant territory in order to achieve peaceful relations with a neighboring state. Diaspora and homeland citizens often have different attitudes toward the implications such policies have for ethnic and national identity. For many homeland citizens, territory serves multiple functions: it provides sustenance, living space, security, as well as a geographical focus for national identity. If giving up a certain territory, even one of significant symbolic value, would increase security and living conditions, a homeland citizen might find the tradeoff worthwhile. By contrast, for the diaspora, while the security of the homeland is of course important as well, **the territory's identity function is often paramount. Its practical value (and, indeed, the practical value of peace with a former rival) is not directly relevant to the diaspora's daily experience**.[27] (Emphasis added)*

By mid-1988, the Lebanese-Armenian community was engulfed with the political and military developments in Soviet Armenia and *Nagorno-Karabakh*. Posters, pamphlets and daily news articles constantly reiterated the mantra "*Karabakh* is ours." Posters, pocket calendars and pamphlets in English and Armenian announcing "*Karabakh* belongs to Armenia" became a common sight in Armenian-populated neighborhoods such as *Bourj Hammoud*. An interesting observation about the content and location of these posters might factor in the identity-negotiation role of land and territory in the Lebanese-Armenian community. Thus, the fact that these posters were written in Armenian and English and were mostly located in Armenian neighborhoods, forces one to ask the question, who is being targeted with this propaganda? A conscious and general answer would be: "the international community;" however, it is quite possible that subconsciously, Armenian

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[27] Yossi Shain, "The role of Diasporas in conflict perpetuation or resolution", p. 134, in *SAIS Review 22*, No. 2, Summer–Fall 2002, pp. 115-144.

political organizations were renegotiating their own—and by extension the Lebanese-Armenian community's—identity by (re)introducing the concept of land and territory, and this time, it was far from being symbolic, into the equation of feeling and being Armenian. Furthermore, the superimposition of historical events and images onto the modern day realities kept appearing in an attempt to explain the present through the prism of the past. For instance, an editorial in one of the Armenian newspapers in Lebanon was titled "The defense of modern day *Avarayr*: *Artsakh*." It equalized the conflict in *Nagorno-Karabakh* with the battle of *Avarayr* in 451 AD, when the Armenians fought the Sassanian Empire of Persia to preserve their newly established Christian faith as state religion.[28] Another newspaper equalized the issue of Genocide and the conflict in *Nagorno-Karabakh* considering the latter a form of restitution of the former.[29]

Even as the final rounds of the Lebanese civil war were raging, crowds of Armenians would gather in various clubs and community centers to watch tapes roughly edited and sometimes with poor quality images—mostly because they were taped from Soviet Armenian TV—about the ongoing war in the Armenian enclave in Soviet Azerbaijan. It seemed that the symbolic values of land, territory and homeland were being "materialized" in the eyes and minds of the Lebanese-Armenians.

This newly introduced component of land and territory in the identity negotiation formula eventually subsided as the war in *Nagorno-Karabakh* came to a stalemate and a new cycle of Diasporas-Armenia relations developed based on increased interaction between elements from both entities. Initially the increased contacts between Armenians from Armenia and the Diaspora created some stereotypes. For instance, Armenians from Armenia viewed the Diasporan communities as arrogant, condescending, and eager to dispense advice and being culturally corrupted, while the Diasporans perceived Armenians from Armenia as lazy, opportunist as well as shaped and corrupted by Soviet rule.[30] These stereotypes gradually subdued when more interaction between the two entities made it possible for both groups to look beyond stereotypes and hearsay although some of the negative images associated with Armenia still remain in the minds of some Lebanese-

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[28] See "Nororya Avarayri, Artsakhi pahpanoume" (in Arm., for "The defense of modern day Avarayr: Artsakh"), in *Zartonk*, February 18, 1993.

[29] See "Jardararin hatootsoome Hayastani amboghjatsoomn eh" (in Arm., for "The territorial integrity of Armenia is the revenge from the perpetrator), in *Aztag*, March 10, 1988.

[30] See Razmik Panossian, "Between ambivalence and intrusion: politics and identity in Armenia-Diaspora relations", in *Diaspora 7*, No. 2, Fall 1998, pp. 169-170.

Armenians.[31]

This new relation between Lebanese-Armenians and Armenia, which was based on the imperative that the Diasporas should support the infant Armenian Republic, eventually gave way to a feeling of malaise identified as "Diasporan fatigue."[32] It is during this period—roughly after 1997—that the symbolic connection between Armenia and Lebanese-Armenians became tangible when the community gradually came to view the existence of Armenia as just another component in the already complex formula of Lebanese-Armenian identity. In other words it seemed that the negotiation process was more or less complete and the duality between being Armenian and Lebanese was transformed into a hyphenated condition. This condition *does not limit itself to a duality between two cultural heritages…. [it] requires a certain freedom to modify, appropriate, and re-appropriate without being trapped in imitation.*[33]

Conclusion

The Lebanese-Armenian community has gone through cycles and stages of identity preservation, redefinition and negotiation. While the formative years of the community in the 1920s and 30s were conditioned by the trauma of the Genocide, the community was soon integrated into the Lebanese fabric first economically, then politically and eventually socio-culturally. One of the main indicators of this integration was the fact that during the days of heaviest fighting of the Lebanese civil war, the local Armenian community did not leave the country—at least not more than any other confessional group—and pursued a policy of dissociation from the cycles of violence based on the concern of self-preservation as well as based on the community's dedication to their adoptive homeland (since the theoretical discussion is over, I choose to substitute the term "hostland" with "adoptive homeland").

The main challenge for the Lebanese-Armenian identity was the reemergence of independent Armenia and the transformation of the notion of *hayrenik* from the symbolic and ritualistic domain into the real. This event,

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[31] In December, 2003, while visiting Lebanon, I talked with an acquaintance who expressed the view that Armenia is not the place to be for business and that the only time he would go to Armenia was to die and be buried there.

[32] For a case study of Diasporan—although in Ukraine's context—fatigue of their homeland see "Ukraine's bitter Diaspora", in *The Economist*, January 18, 2001.

[33] Trinh T. Minh-ha, *When the moon waxes red: representation, gender, and cultural politics*, New York, Routledge, 1991, pp. 159, 161.

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which coincided with the end of the Lebanese civil-war and the subsequent "depletion" of the community,[34] had an impact on the identity formation of the community in a way that the identity negotiation process of the community has reached a more or less "stable" juncture.

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[34] While figures indicating the correct number of Armenians in Lebanon are dubious at best, it is safe to say that the number has dropped from a pre-war high of 200,000 to a current 100,000 at best. In an online article ("Armenians and the 2000 Parliamentary Elections in Lebanon" in *Armenian News Network/Groong: Review and Outlook*. Available at http://groong.usc.edu/ro/ro-20000907.html) . Ara Sanjian puts the number of qualified Armenian voters in Lebanon in the 2000 parliamentary elections at 116,214. This number includes the absentees as well, so a safe estimate of the overall population would put the number of Armenians in Lebanon somewhere between 60,000 and 80,000.

Résumé

Entre la patrie et le pays-hôte : Les Arméniens-Libanais et la République d'Arménie

Le chapitre traite des problèmes et des dilemmes que l'identité arménienne a dû affronter d'abord après la perte de la patrie ancestrale et l'installation au Liban dans les années 1920, ensuite dans les deux décennies suivant l'indépendance de l'Arménie en 1991. L'expérience du génocide était vive dans la mémoire de la génération des réfugiés venus s'installer au Liban. La transmission du trauma aux deuxième, troisième, et quatrième générations s'est faite à l'aide des commémorations (le souvenir des martyrs le 24 Avril), ou/et d'images et de symboles (l'indépendance de 1918 avec l'image du Mont Ararat).

Les contacts ayant été rares avec l'Arménie soviétique jusqu'à 1991, la patrie correspondait à un concept relevant plus du symbolique que d'un territoire réel et praticable. Après 1991, l'identité nationale arménienne d'exilique qu'elle était, devient diasporique.

La décolonisation a donné lieu à la naissance de nouveaux États-nations et par suite de nombreux déplacements de population et de complexes processus sociaux, elle a aussi donné cours au concept de l'hybridation des cultures, de l'espace de l'entre-deux cultures (culture inbetweenness). La notion d'une identité solide, fixe et éternelle devenait étrangère aux migrants. D'où le dépassement du concept de l'identité pure.

L'application de ces concepts au cas des Arméniens libanais ne peut se faire qu'après les années 1940, quand la psychologie identitaire de la "survie" est graduellement remplacée par une identité relevant de la mixité culturelle. En 1958 déjà, la communauté sortie de son isolement, "participait" à la guerre civile. En 1975, à la veille de la guerre du Liban, la communauté est entièrement intégrée au "système" socio-économique libanais, et sa "neutralité positive" adoptée durant la guerre, décriée par certains, en est bien au contraire la preuve.

Seule l'indépendance de l'Arménie en 1991 crée une situation dans laquelle, une nouvelle identité cherche à se définir par rapport à ce pays. Le conflit du *Nagorno-Karabagh* accentue encore plus l'expérience de la double identité. Le sentiment de l'appartenance territoriale, en sus d'une appartenance culturelle se réveille.

Néanmoins la fin de la guerre libanaise et les quelques contradictions ressenties entre les identités arméniennes telles que vécues au Liban et en Arménie montrent – à notre avis- que l'identité hybride arméno-libanaise a atteint son degré de stabilité.