Armenians in the Middle East

Nalbantian, T.; Rowe, P.S.

20

ARMENIANS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

From marginalization to the everyday

Tsolin Nalbantian

Scholarly works on Armenians in the Middle East focus on the events and consequences of the Armenian Genocide considerably more than on Armenians' economic, political, and social involvement in the Middle East. This chapter adds to the growing scholarship on that involvement and traces how Armenians' senses of belonging and identities have shifted over time. While covering the Middle East as a whole, it will focus on Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, and Turkey. It begins with a short historic introduction of the Armenian communities in the Ottoman Empire and its subsequent break up, and then examines how Armenians lived in the Middle East in the era of the nation-state.

The first written reference to Armenians dates back to the sixth century BCE, with the majority living in areas that became part of Turkey and Iran.[1] As a country, Armenia was rarely a regional power (a notable exception is the rule of King Tigran the Great, 95-55 BCE); rather, it was perennially lodged between larger rival empires, including the Roman, Parthian, Sassanid, Safavid, Ottoman, and Russian ones; also, it was subject to Mongol and Turkic tribal invasions from Central Asia.[2] Nevertheless, Armenians developed their own language, "an independent, one-language family within the Indo-European group."[3] Also, they often used Christianity – they were the first people to collectively adopt that faith, in the fourth century – to determine who is Armenian and who is not. In fact, Armenian church sees have historically played, and continue to play, powerful roles not only in religion but also in local and transnational politics, identity construction, and society.

During the Ottoman Tanzimat reform period, in the mid-nineteenth century, Armenian participation in the economic and political spheres greatly depended upon their location, class, and party affiliation.[4] Although the empire experienced a constitutional revolution in 1908, soon thereafter, the now governing Young Turks' policies became increasingly xenophobic; Armenians were increasingly suspected of foreign loyalties and subject to discriminations.[5] During World War One, the Young Turk government mass deported Armenians and perpetrated genocide, an event that has become the pivot of modern Armenian history.[6] The Armenians who survived created new communities in Europe, the Middle East, and the Americas.[7] This dispersion, and attendant political and sectarian divisions, have accentuated the diverse character of Armenians' lives worldwide.

Marginalization

Seminal studies on modern Middle Eastern history have often focused on the political relationship between the state and its population.[8] Many works understand this relationship from the top-down, dividing state and society without considering their overlap, intersections, and co-dependence. They separate the state from its population, and understood the inhabitants of the nation-state in a singular sense, without taking into consideration variances in class, ethnicity, religion, and gender. Consequently, they dedicate less attention to the formation of minority populations, and how they acquire, articulate, and wield forms of agency. They likewise fail to consider adequately how minority populations have used both self and externally rooted identities in internal, domestic, regional, and transnational struggles for power that simultaneously challenge and uphold the authority of the state.

Moreover, few studies of minority populations in the Middle East explore the formation of minority groups within the nation-state and their social, political, and economic contributions.[9] Instead, they analyze how minorities are victimized by the majority and persecuted by the state, flattening differences within the population and ignoring internal dynamics. These studies, while attempting to center the given population, in fact further marginalize them, reducing them to victims or populations in need of protection.[10] In such examinations, the minority population may also be seen as foreign and inauthentic to the nation-state, suggesting that it is their presence within a particular geographic boundary that is the problem. Such studies also maintain the nation-state as a natural political organization and reinforce it as a standardized entity.

This is not to deny the very fact of discrimination and persecution of minority groups in contemporary nation-states. Rather, I contend that the scholarship on minorities in the Middle East often mirrors that discrimination in examining the given population through the singular lens of "minority." For example, the labeling of a population as a minority often precludes their inclusion within national historiographies. Categorizing a population as a minority without analyzing its construction and examining how the state and other communities have deployed the label, and how and why that status has changed over time, ensures their historiographic marginalization.

Double marginalization

Middle Eastern historians have neglected Armenians perhaps more than other minority populations. Armenians intersect with the historiography of the region mostly through the genocide. The destruction of the Armenian *millet* in the Ottoman Empire and the survivors' dispersal in the Arab Middle East (and the Russian Empire and Western countries) altered the ethnic and religious composition of various Middle Eastern areas including Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, and Israel/Palestine.

Moreover, spaces that were de-Armenianized, as it were, after the genocide have repeatedly resurfaced in sometimes unexpected forms. Take the Gezi Park protests in Istanbul in 2013, during which environmental and social activists opposed the neo-liberal policies of the AK Party and of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and in particular the planned destruction of a green space in central Istanbul and the proposed building of a shopping mall. Many protestors, however, were unfamiliar with the park's former incarnation: it had been an Armenian cemetery.[11] While this unawareness is related to the Turkish state's denial of the Armenian Genocide, it also manifests a lack of knowledge of the everyday life of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire (and beyond, for that matter). However justified, the study of the

Middle Eastern Armenians is too often reduced to the study of the genocide. While disregarding the Armenian Genocide would be both irresponsible and impossible, scholars need to adopt prisms other than violence and ethnic cleansing, examining Armenians' everyday life and articulations of belonging. To return to the Gezi Park example, a focus on the everyday would have revealed the presence of burial plots to Istanbulis. This engagement – not only a historiographic but also, necessarily, a political one – would link activists, environmentalists, and opponents of the AK Party's neo-liberal economic policies with Armenians in Turkey and beyond.

People's unawareness of the Gezi graveyard demonstrates a broader unfamiliarity with Ottoman Armenians and, in this case, with the power of Istanbul's Ottoman Armenians, who possessed a graveyard at the center of the imperial capital. In sum, the Gezi protests illustrate the double marginalization of Middle Eastern Armenians. The Armenian Genocide acts as a prism of studies of those Armenians and hinders studying the community's pre-Genocide modern life. In addition, few studies on Lebanon, Syria, and Israel/Palestine consider the articulation of belonging of the Armenian communities outside the psychological legacy of the genocide.

This historiographic situation stands in marked contrast with key contemporary events such as the commemoration of the centenary of the Armenian Genocide in 2015, which demonstrated the active presence of Armenians in the Middle East.[12] In Beirut, Damascus, and Cairo, demonstrations commemorated the genocide; the Kurdish autonomous region in Iraq passed a parliamentary resolution acknowledging the genocide; and the Israeli Knesset discussed such a motion. Moreover, annual commemorative protests had happened in capitals including Beirut, Aleppo, Damascus, Cairo, Jerusalem, Baghdad, and Amman in earlier years, too. While these demonstrations are a response to the Turkish government's refusal to acknowledge the genocide, Armenian participation in them – along with their organization and procurement of their permits from the local government – is an articulation of their citizenship and local understandings of belonging. Middle Eastern Armenians' ability to lobby governments to acknowledge the genocide, along with the spectacle of protests in front of governmental buildings and Turkish embassies, demonstrates their organizational and political prowess.

Despite Middle Eastern Armenians' by now well-established belonging to the region, both Armenian and Middle Eastern historians often associate Middle Eastern Armenians with national spaces outside the region. In parallel, they describe those Armenians as newer arrivals and hence as temporary residents, as people "trapped" in the region having fled from and survived the genocide. These approaches do not simply fail to consider Armenians' contribution to local Middle Eastern societies. They also suggest congruence between authenticity and the nation-state: some inhabitants of the nation-state "naturally" belong, while others, such as the Armenians, do not.[13] This marginalizes Armenians doubly: first, as a minority that is not included within the larger historiography of a given nation-state; and second, when mentioned, as either victims or temporary residents.

Positioning the Armenian Church

To better engage with Middle Eastern Armenians' everyday activities before and after the genocide, we must examine the role and power of the Armenian Orthodox Church. It has two functioning sees. One is located in Lebanon, the other in Armenia. Both trace their very origins back to the apostolic age of St. Thaddeus and St. Bartholomew. Historically, the Armenian Church in Lebanon, also known as the Catholicosate of Cilicia, was located in Sis, in

the present-day Turkish city of Kozan, which was the seat of the Armenian Church during the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia (1198–1375).[14] It remained in Sis until the genocide. By 1936, that see had been relocated to Antelias, a northern suburb of Beirut, where it is still today. The other see, the Catholicosate of Echmiadzin, was located in the eponymous village.[15] In 1920, Echmiadzin became part of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR), an independent republic since 1991. The Armenian Orthodox Church also has two surviving patriarchates, one in Jerusalem, the other in Istanbul.[16] While independent, they recognize the authority of both sees. Generally, neither see nor patriarch claimed jurisdiction over the other's congregations, each maintaining its own autonomy.

Church and nation

Now and in the past, the Armenian Orthodox Church has played both religious and secular roles, a pattern rooted in Ottoman times. As the representative of the Armenian *millet*, Armenian church officials automatically assumed secular and religious powers. While at times an important buffer between the state and subjects, they also capitalized on the authority bestowed upon them by the Ottoman state, commanding allegiance from Armenians. Because the Ottoman Empire required an intermediary, the church *ipso facto* represented Armenians, regardless of faith. Given the authority of this categorization system, and the lack of an alternative, it is not surprising that the Armenian Church in the Ottoman Empire capitalized on such authority.

The Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul continues to be an adaptive institution in Turkey today. While it no longer acts a representative of the Armenian Turkish citizen to the state, it continues to wield secular power. The acting Patriarch, Aram Ateşian (the official Patriarch has been incapacitated for years due to health issues), often meets with Turkish and foreign politicians and with other religious dignitaries.[17]

With regards to representation, Ateşian sometimes echoes the actions of the Patriarch in late Ottoman times. For example, when asked about the so-called Islamicized Armenians – Armenians who converted to Islam, sometimes under duress, during the genocide and its aftermath – Ateşian explained that the Patriarchate could not represent them, as they are not Christians.[18] He defined Armenians as members of the Patriarchate congregations – and these congregations included only Armenians. This tautological understanding limits the authority of the Armenian Patriarchate. But it also assuages any Turkish governmental or nationalist concerns of an Armenian institution increasing its authority, particularly outside Istanbul. And by engaging with such issues and questions, Ateşian keeps the Armenian Patriarchate relevant. The continued presence and engagement of the Patriarchate allows Armenians to be considered beyond the genocide and firms up their existence in Turkey.

In Lebanon, too, the Armenian Church plays both secular and religious roles. In fact, the Catholicosate of Cilicia has only increased its power, domestically, regionally, and internationally. This fact in a way continues a century-old pattern. While the Kingdom of Cilicia ended with the death of its last king in 1393, the Catholicosate continued to function, and fulfilled some political functions *vis-à-vis* the new, Mamluk state.[19] Similarly, a bit earlier, in the fourteenth century, when Armenian notable families dispersed, the Cilician see filled the void they left and used their absence to act as the steadfast protector of the Armenian population.[20] The Armenian Church constructed itself *of* and *for* the Armenian nation, then, and identified the populace as central to the future of its own survival and of the nation itself. Ironically, this type of nation-building came often in the wake of the destruction of Armenian communities. Such events reinforced the Armenian Church as both a secular and

religious authority, a role that was accepted and used by the church to maintain its relevance and power. Once reestablished in French Mandate Lebanon following World War I, the Cilician See first became the spiritual and secular authority for Armenians in Lebanon and Syria. While economically an underprivileged population, the extension of citizenship to Armenians by 1924 likewise fortified the role of the church within the domestic political affairs of both countries. In Cilicia, the Cilician See had largely enjoyed a regional importance. In Lebanon, however, even in the first years after the genocide, it attained a transnational status. And its realm of authority and power only increased – sometimes quite dramatically – in the following years.[21]

By 1957, some Armenian churches outside Lebanon and Syria, namely, in Greece, Cyprus, Iran, and Iraq, chose to switch their spiritual allegiance from the Catholicosate of Echmiadzin to the Catholicosate of Cilicia, in Lebanon. This increased the number of congregations and broadened the Catholicosate of Cilicia's realm. With adherents in multiple countries, it started to directly challenge the Catholicosate in Echmiadzin, a move that had been unprecedented throughout Armenian history. Moreover, the Catholicosate of Cilicia in Lebanon used its newfound power to accept parishes outside the Middle East and beyond the Mediterranean: parishes around the world that chose to distance themselves from the Catholicosate of Echmiadzin ostensibly for political reasons related to ongoing Cold War rivalries between the Soviet and American spheres of influence. Accepting numerous parishes in the United States and Canada, it indeed became not only a regional power, but also a global one. It supplied those parishes with priests from its monastery, along with its liturgy and Sunday sermons. And in addition to these religious displays of power in North America, it grew much richer, receiving required dues and donations from parishes worldwide.

My focus on the power dynamics of the Armenian Church is not meant to remove from view other elites or non-elite Armenians. Rather, I would like to demonstrate that in addition to the continuation of Armenian presence in the region, certain institutions modified and in some cases gained authority in the wake of the community's destruction. While it is paramount to recognize the ruin and tragedy of the genocide, its survivors used its aftermath to create a space to articulate new sites of power. This can be seen in the actions of the Catholicosate of Cilicia in Lebanon, and within the understandings of belonging employed by Armenian inhabitants of newly created mandates and later citizens of the nation-state, to which I now turn.

Gathering Armenians in the post-genocide Middle East: Anjar, Qamishle, and Kessab

As mentioned earlier, the overabundance of works dedicated to studying the genocide is a key explanation for the absence of studies on Middle Eastern Armenians' everyday experiences. Still, a note on the genocide is necessary, if only to demonstrate that Middle Eastern Armenians' lives not only changed but also experienced continuities after the genocide. The genocide depopulated the Ottoman Empire's Armenian provinces, in eastern Anatolia; survivors were either forced south, toward the Arab provinces, or further east into the Russian Empire. In camps in Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt, and in Jerusalem's Armenian quarters, people hailing from myriad villages, towns, and cities – that is people who, though categorized as Armenian by the Ottoman leadership and host states, had never lived in close proximity or even communicated with one another – were brought together.

All this prompted new interactions among Armenians and between Armenians and their new compatriots. In the initial years following the genocide, survivors found refuge in

Aleppo and in towns and villages around Raqqa, Der Zor, and the largely Kurdish inhabited towns of Hasaka and Qamishle. While some survivors stayed in French Mandate Syria, many traveled further southwest, to Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine. In Lebanon, they were housed in refugee camps mostly along the coast: in the Beiruti areas of Qarantina, Sanjak, Sin al-Fil, and Bourj Hamoud; and, further south, near Sidon and Tyre. Survivors from various towns and villages came together in these quarters, and divided camps according to origin. For example, many survivors, and later their descendants, from Marash lived in a single street in Bourj Hamoud.[22] They had never, in Ottoman times, been so close to their new neighbors. Marash intersected with Arax – and both were less than a kilometer away from Hajn, and even closer to Sis, two towns that, back in Turkey, were 85 kilometers apart. Moreover, while survivors originally married within the same "street" (read: village), they also soon intermarried across places of origin. Once localized customs became mixed in entirely novel ways.

In consequence, a more inclusive and coherent Armenian identity came into being. Previously distinct patterns of language, history, communal living, food, and religious customs became more homogeneous. For instance, in the Ottoman Empire, Armenian inhabitants had not spoken one common language. Some Armenian-inhabited villages had been monolingual in Turkish, others spoke Armenian village dialects, and yet others – some with a missionary presence – spoke a more standardized Armenian. In Lebanon, however, the gathering of genocide survivors, along with their descendants, weakened localized dialects in favor of a more standardized Armenian. The presence of the Cilician See in Lebanon also played a role in this process. Sermons were given in standardized Armenian, and the church administered death, birth, and marriage rites. Spaces ranging from Armenian schools to cemeteries administered by the Cilician See were from the start never separated by village origin; and eventually the living quarters were just as mixed.

While the Armenian camps near Lebanon's coastal cities encouraged Armenians from different origins to mix and mingle, Armenians in Anjar, a town located in the Biqa Valley, between the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon Mountains, remained homogenous. Almost all hailed from the mountainous village of Musa Dagh, in southern Turkey. Resettled with help from the French, they arrived in Lebanon under circumstances different from Armenians on the coast. One of the only recorded incidents of resistance to the genocide, the inhabitants of Musa Dagh staved off a better-armed Turkish garrison and were rescued by French boats docked on the coast of the Aegean Sea. They were first interned at a camp in Port Said, in Egypt, for two years. Prevented from leaving the camp by armed guards, they formed a singular community.[23] Subsequently – that is, after the success of the Turkish war of independence in 1922 subverted the creation of a French Mandate State in Cilicia – they were brought to Anjar. France decided on this move because those Armenians helped increase the Christian population in Lebanon and in general supported French interests. Once in Anjar, isolated from the coast by mountains, they preserved some of the customs of Musa Dagh, including its local dialect. At present, there certainly is interaction and intermingling between Anjar residents and the Armenian population located along the coast of Beirut. Anjar's priests are educated in the monastery connected to Catholicosate of Cilicia in Antelias, and their church and schools are under the auspices of its authority. Still, Anjaris remain fiercely proud of their origins. They built a commemorative monument to the Musa Dagh resistance in the center of the town; and each year, they celebrate that event in a ritual. And yet, even this "local" ritual connects them to other Lebanese Armenians and to Armenians in Syria, for many Armenians, regardless of their ancestral lineage, visit Anjar to take part in that celebration.

Anjar is not the only town in the region whose Armenian inhabitants hail from a single town or village in the Ottoman Empire. Qamishle, a town in the northeast of Syria, has a similar history, albeit with a few notable distinctions. The Armenians of Qamishle hail from the villages surrounding Batman, in the southeast of Turkey. While it was the French who brought the Armenian population of Musa Dagh to Anjar, the establishment of Qamishle was a direct result of the actions of Mehmet Mishte, a leader of the Reshkota Kurds. He refused to carry out the genocidal order of the governor of Diyarbakir, Mehmet Reşid, and arranged for the safe passage of Armenians. In addition, while Armenians form the majority of Anjar's inhabitants (the rest being Sunni Muslims), Qamishle is divided between three ethnic groups: Armenians, Assyrians, and Kurds, whose religious sects vary between the Catholic, the Orthodox, the Sunni, and the Alevi.

Although Qamishle is a site of survival, Armenian residents neither celebrate nor commemorate it as space of national resistance. It does not occupy a particular place in Armenian national historiography either. But this may be changing. While the inhabitants of Batman never resisted the genocidal orders before arriving to Qamishle (they did not need to), the deed of Mehmet Mishte has become more recognized. In 2015, the first official commemoration in his honor took place at his gravesite, attended by an international delegation. It was small, and Qamishle's Armenians did not participate in the event; still, it emulated the large communal commemorations of the resistance of Musa Dagh in Anjar by Armenians living outside of the town.[24]

Kessab, a largely Armenian-populated village northwest of Aleppo, in a sense melds the histories and characteristics of both Qamishle and Anjar. Both the inhabitants of Kessab and Armenians from across the region celebrate the actions of Kessab's population during the Armenian Genocide as a form of national resistance. Like Anjar, Kessab has the characteristics of a closed community: its location is isolated and mountainous, which has historically prevented the development of an extensive network with towns and cities along the coast.[25] But unlike Anjar and Qamishle, which were established by Armenian refugees, Kessab's Armenian population dates back to at least the nineteenth century, according to American evangelical missionaries who established a presence there at that time.[26] And while Kessab's Armenian population fluctuated dramatically due to the Genocide in 1915, surviving Armenians returned to the village by 1918, when French troops entered the region.[27]

Another major difference between Kessab and Qamishle concerns Syria's very recent history and its prolonged civil war. While Qamishle has largely avoided sustained direct involvement in the Syrian civil war, al-Qaeda's al-Nusra Front, Sham al-Islam, and Ansar al-Sham forces overran Kessab in 2014.[28] The flight of over 2,000 Armenians to Latakia, along with stories and documentation of the destruction of Kessab's churches, helped galvanize the global Armenian population and brought forth a #savekessab Internet campaign.[29] By connecting these recent attacks, and especially the reported support provided by the Turkish military, to the genocide, the #savekessab campaign became a new transnational call to rally Armenians worldwide, and reinforced the significance of Kessab as global site of Armenian struggle.[30]

Adapting to Mandate and nation-state power

Although Armenians were certainly the victims of violence and were forced to relocate, they still adapted to their new environments. Their new articulations of belonging and identity merged with a new legal status, first as residents of European Mandates, later as citizens of nation-states. In 1924, the French conferred citizenship onto the Armenian population in

Lebanon and Syria to buoy the country's Christian population.[31] This, in turn, augmented Lebanon's Christian-led government and reinforced the Christian presence in the Syrian government, policies favored by the French state. In British Mandate Palestine, the growth of the Armenian population in Jerusalem did not change the division of that city, whose Armenian quarter was a product of the Byzantine period. Still, it did buffer Armenians' presence in the city in particular, and in Palestine in general.[32] The arrival of more Armenians reinforced their authority over religious spaces, including in contentious holy sites such as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Church of Nativity.[33] Nevertheless, the presence and naturalization of Armenians, while used by some populations to claim authority and power, was neither encouraged nor welcomed by all. Tolerated at best, Lebanese newspapers and journals frequently ran cartoons depicting Armenians in an unfavorable light – as uneducated, poor, and squalid.[34]

Since the mandate period, Armenians also constructed their own representations through the Armenian language press published in Lebanon and distributed throughout the Levant. Each newspaper and journal imagined a particular Armenian community in accordance with the ideology of the political party with which it was connected. Because these parties held rival political positions and differed in how they envisioned the Armenian national struggle, their distribution resulted in the proliferation of different configurations of Armenian belonging, identity, and citizenship.[35] The export of the Lebanese Armenian publications to communities in Syria, Palestine, and Jordan (countries that did not have local Armenian publications) privileged the Lebanese Armenian community, making it one of the principal architects of Armenian identity in the Middle East.

(Dis)United in Representation

On rare occasions, the Armenian press and associated political parties closed rank. An example was the 1946–49 repatriation movement, the organized population transfer of Armenians from around the world to the ASSR, one of 15 republics of the Soviet Union. Initially, all Armenian newspapers in the Middle East, and specifically in Lebanon, independent of their political persuasion, heralded the announcement as a "final homecoming."[36] Unsurprisingly, the newspaper of the Armenian communist party, *Joghovurti Tzayn*, was particularly eager and in particular thanked the USSR and its leader, "Father Stalin," for facilitating this final and long-awaited return.[37] The Socialist leaning *Ararad* of the Hunchak Party was similarly supportive.[38] *Aztag*, the main newspaper of the rightist nationalist Dashnak party, while outlawed in the USSR, and *Zartonk*, the newspaper of the capitalist Ramgavar party, also strongly backed the project. While this may not be particularly surprising given the repatriation movement's rhetoric of a final and long-awaited homecoming, it does demonstrate that occasionally Armenian national imagination trumped political ideology.[39]

Armenian political parties with competing ideologies were not the only ones to support the departure of Armenians to the ASSR. The Cilician See, too, backed the process, although the Soviet Union championed atheism, decried the dominant social system and opulence of the Armenian Orthodox Church, and criticized the faithful as ascribing to irrational beliefs.[40] This cooperation was so explicit that the Catholicos, or head of the Cilician See, boarded the first caravan that sailed from the Lebanese port of Qarantina filled with 1,500 repatriates to offer his official religious blessing.[41] Further, the Catholicosate of Cilicia was not the only Armenian religious institution that seemed to overlook the inconsistencies between its official dogma and the ideology of the ASSR. The Armenian Protestant Church also supported repatriation.[42]

By the end of this population movement, in 1949, over 100,000 Armenians had voluntarily renounced their citizenship and elected to become Soviet Armenians.[43] Many Armenian populations decreased throughout the world, most notably in South and Southeastern Europe (Romania, Bulgaria, and Greece) and the Middle East (Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Palestine, and Iran).[44] Smaller Armenian populations in the Middle East, like the communities of Egypt, Jordan, and Iraq, felt the decrease more than others.

Still, even in Syria and Lebanon, where a significant Armenian population remained, repatriation had far-reaching consequences. With the departure of Armenians from Lebanon and Syria, the political configuration of the Armenian community dramatically changed. Although repatriation initially enjoyed nearly universal support, those ideologically supportive of the Soviet Union were the first to depart *en masse*. Their exodus resulted in the consolidation of the right-wing Dashnak party's political power in Lebanon and Syria and in the region at large. The Dashnaks categorically assumed a leadership role in the representation of the remaining Armenian population, and perhaps in an effort to distinguish itself from its rivals, intensified its anti-Soviet rhetoric.

Previous tensions and rivalries resurfaced and were refashioned by the Dashnak party to express doubt about the success of repatriation. Ramgavar, Hunchak, and Armenian Communist parties in turn voiced their mistrust of the Dashnak party. Soon, all sides were accusing each other of working against the Armenian nation and thwarting national aspirations. The press outlets of the Armenian Communist Party and the Socialist Hunchak Party accused the Dashnak Party of hindering the repatriation project by publishing inaccurate information on life in the ASSR and accused Dashnak supporters of treason. The Dashnak Party, on the other hand, went from actively supporting and covering the movement to charging its Armenian political party rivals of relinquishing the dream of a Greater Armenia, one that would include the formerly Armenian-inhabited areas of Turkey.

By 1949, with repatriation slowing down, *Aztag* became an ever more vocal opponent of the ASSR. This happened for two reasons. First, as fewer and fewer Armenians were interested in repatriation, *Aztag* could express its opposition to the ASSR more comfortably, as its readership were no longer engaged with the movement. Second, the most avid supporters of repatriation and Soviet Armenia had already departed Lebanon, allowing *Aztag* and the Dashnak Party to solidify their power over the remaining Armenian inhabitants of Lebanon and the region. After all, and not surprisingly, most repatriates were members and supporters of the communist, Hunchak, and Ramgavar Parties. This allowed the Dashnaks more effectively to "represent" the remaining Armenian inhabitants.

Moreover, there was a transnational dimension to this competition over who represents the Armenian community's interests best, that is, who could claim power and authority over its inhabitants. These Lebanese Armenian political parties, while confronting each other within the Lebanese domestic scene, reached Armenians far outside of the region, in Europe and North America, too. Armenian political parties considered themselves representatives of a larger (trans)national Armenian narrative – and Armenians used Lebanon as a site to define and articulate Armenian identification and belonging.

Post-Consolidation

With the end of repatriation, the Middle East became the core site of the articulation of the Dashnak Party's understandings of Armenianness. And although one should be wary of

adopting the view that the global Armenian community became divided between supporters of Soviet Armenia and of the Dashnak Party, a few key events do reinforce this perspective, demonstrating the Dashnak Party's prowess in the Middle East and beyond.

When in 1956, some contested the election of the Catholicos of the Cilician See, the result was the appointment of Zareh I, an anti-communist supported by the Dashnak Party. His success demonstrated the failure of the Catholicos of Echmiadzin, who flew to Beirut in an attempt to prevent his selection. Zareh's consecration, after months of conflict, did not assuage the tension between Armenian political parties and community members. In fact, the rivalry among them only expanded, enveloping locations far outside of the region. In 1957, a group of American-Armenians that had been prevented from attending the Armenian Church in America since 1933, sought assistance from the Armenian Church in Lebanon.[45] They thereby rebelled against the authority of the Church in Echmiadzin, which, up to 1957, had been the only official religious authority over Armenian-American Churches. It also marked the arrival of the Cilician See in Lebanon, in the United States and Canada. The Lebanese-based institution utilized the excommunication of that group of U.S. Armenians, some twenty years earlier, to contest the sovereignty of the Armenian Church in Soviet Armenia and to assert its authority over communities in the United States and Canada.

Unsurprisingly, transnational spread of Armenian power struggles did not assuage the tension amongst Armenian political parties and their supporters in Lebanon. When civil strife broke out in Lebanon in 1958 over the question of a second (non-constitutional) term for then President Camille Chamoun, Armenian political rivals mirrored the conflict between the president's supporters and opponents. The ensuing intra-Armenian fighting was prolonged, continuing even after the main Lebanese belligerents had laid down their arms. It ended only when the Lebanese Minister of Interior, Michel Eddé, intervened directly, successfully negotiating a cease-fire.[46] Nevertheless, tension remained. In fact, the rivalry between the Armenian political parties only shifted, in Lebanon and the Middle East, as well as outside the region.

The tactics of the Dashnak Party, their supporters, and of other Armenian political parties again changed with the influx of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and with the politicization of the Palestinian struggle in the region after the Six-Day War of 1967.[47] Power struggles and the question of support of, or opposition to, Soviet Armenia gave way to far more militarized activities. Targets now included Turkish consulates and diplomats. The activities of the PLO proved to be a new impetus for the articulation of Armenian belonging and identification in the Middle East. As Palestinian militants ramped up their military resistance, many Armenians pushed for similar action. The formation the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) challenged Dashnak leadership and its rhetoric of armed struggle, pushing it to "respond" against both Turkish interests and ASALA's challenge. Splinter movements within the Dashnak Party first created the Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide, which was later replaced by the Armenian Revolutionary Army (ARA). In addition to carrying out violent "missions" against Turkish officials, they published their own set of press journals and enjoyed popularity from supporters of their cause. The Dashnak vs. Ramgavar / Hunchak rivalry started to give way to a competition between ASALA and ARA as the best defenders of the Armenian cause. Simultaneously, articulations of Armenianness in the Middle East continued, with the press remaining a preferred site for developing and testing contrasting Armenian identities. In fact, just like the established political parties, so the revolutionary groups had their own publications, for instance, ASALA's *Hayastan*.

Adaptive Articulation

By the mid-1980s, the targeting of Turkish officials and points of interest started to subside. Nevertheless, press outlets from a variety of organizations and political parties based in the Middle East continued to debate and fashion belonging for Armenians, locally, regionally, and transnationally. By 1988, the Kharabagh movement, the organized effort to sever this Armenian-inhabited mountainous region from the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic and attach it to the ASSR, provided an additional issue for the press to define one's Armenian belonging.[48] Armenians in the Middle East, most notably from Lebanon, not only went to Kharabagh to fight, but also used the armed struggle to express ideal Armenian behavior and actions.[49] In addition, many periodicals combined former Armenian identity articulations and power struggles to link past and present. The press, along with these varies articulations, is ensuring that the Middle East generally, and Lebanon more specifically, continues as a site to form and fashion the meanings and identifications of Armenians locally, regionally, and transnationally.

Conclusion

How Armenian belonging is articulated has continued to change, depending on the given political moment. Some articulations, such as the repatriation movement, highlighted Armenians' minority standing. After all, its popularity must be attributed in some form to a collective sense that Soviet Armenia was indeed a homeland for Armenians worldwide. The decision of over 100,000 Armenians to repatriate also recognized their (former) presence as diasporic Armenians, indicating a minority status and a dependence on a host society. Nevertheless, repatriation simultaneously demonstrated how deeply Armenians are involved in the Middle East. Many stayed and used repatriation to gauge their Armenian rivals' sense of loyalty not only to the Armenian nation but also to the respective nation-state. In this way, repatriation was but one way for Middle Eastern Armenians to articulate belonging and identity. When Armenians are understood exclusively as minority members, and solely as Armenian Genocide survivors or its remnants, their continued everyday presence and activity go unnoticed, reinforcing their status as a minority. This tautological reasoning limits how we can engage with the Middle East's varied inhabitants.

On a final note, it bears mentioning that some moments and sites articulating Armenian identity that have been mentioned in this chapter have resurfaced in recent years. This demonstrates their adaptability. The Karabagh movement flared up again to express Armenian belonging in the Middle East in 2016. In the Armenian-populated neighborhood of Bourj Hamoud, just north of Beirut, Armenian and English language graffiti in support of Armenian forces in Karabagh have proliferated. There also have been fund-raising rallies/concerts in Bourj Hamoud in support of Armenian forces in Karabagh.[50] The hashtag "#artsakhstrong" has been used to gather Armenians worldwide virtually, too; thus, it was flashed from the monitors at Boston Garden during a Celtics basketball game.[51]

Notes

1 On the geographic description of Armenia, see, for example, Robert Hewson, *Armenia: A Historical Atlas* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times,* Vol. 1 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997); and D. M. Lange, *Armenia, Cradle of Civilization* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1970).

2 Hovannisian, *Armenian People*, I: 1–17.
3 Lange, *Armenia*, 37.
4 For a detailed study on how Armenians, Arabs, and Jews engaged with the Ottoman reform period, see Bedross Der Matossian, *Shattered Dreams of Revolution: From Liberty to Violence in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014).
5 Der Matossian, *Shattered Dreams*, 149–172.
6 On the Armenian Genocide, see, for example: Taner Akçam, *The Young Turks' Crime against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013); Raymond Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide: A Complete History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011); and Ronald Grigor Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else: A History of the Armenian Genocide* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015).
7 Iran's Armenians did not experience the dispersion and violence of Armenians in the urban centers of the Ottoman Empire and in Anatolia. See Houri Berberian, *Armenians and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905–1911: The Love for Freedom Has No Fatherland* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001).
8 On Syria, see, for example: Philip K. Hitti, *History of Syria: Including Lebanon and Palestine* (New York: Macmillan, 1951) and Philip S. Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism, 1920–1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987). On Jordan, see Kamal S. Salibi, *The Modern History of Jordan* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1993) and Joseph A. Massad, *Colonial Effects: The Making of National Identity in Jordan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001). On Lebanon, see Kamal S. Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988) and Fawwaz Trabulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon* (London: Pluto, 2007). On Palestine, see Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two Peoples*, second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), amongst others.
9 Highly notable exceptions include: Anthony Gorman and Sossie Kasbarian, *Diasporas of the Modern Middle East: Contextualising Community* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015); Laura Robson, *Minorities and the Modern Arab World: New Perspectives* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2016); and Cyrus Schayegh and Andrew Arsan, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of the History of the Middle East Mandates* (London: Routledge, 2015).
10 See, for example, Joshua Castellino and Kathleen A. Cavanaugh, *Minority Rights in the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) and Robert K. Hitchcock and Alan J. Osborn, *Endangered Peoples of Africa and the Middle East: Struggles to Survive and Thrive* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002).
11 The crucial and daring exception to this amnesia is Ayşe Parla and Ceren Özgül, "Property, Dispossession, and Citizenship in Turkey; or, The History of the Gezi Uprising Starts in the Surp Hagop Armenian Cemetery," *Public Culture* 28, no. 3 (2016), 617–653, which explicitly connects the Gezi public protests to state confiscation of Armenian properties.
12 Tens of thousands Armenians marched in Northern Beirut as reported in *The Daily* Star, the English language Lebanese daily: www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2015/Apr-24/295635-lebanese-armenians-mark-genocide-centennial-with-mass-rally.ashx; members of the Armenian community in Egypt commemorated in front of Egypt's Unknown Solider Memorial in Cairo: http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/128556/Egypt/Politics-/Armenian-Genocide-centennial-commemorated-in-Egypt.aspx. A good aggregate of worldwide Armenian Genocide commemorations appeared in the *Huffington Post*; see www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/04/24/armenian-genocide-anniversary-world-photos_n_7137936.html.
13 I should note here that I am not advocating that specific populations "belong" to particular nation-states. Rather, I am pointing out that both regional and Armenian historiographies construct an understanding of Armenians as perpetual foreigners, while maintaining that other inhabitants rightfully belong within a given geographic boundary.
14 For the history of the Catholicosate of Cilicia in English, see Seda Parsumean-Tatoyean, *The Armenian Catholicosate from Cilicia to Antelias: An Introduction* (Antelias, Lebanon: Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia, 2003).
15 For more on the history of the Catholicosate of Echmiadzin in English, see Maghak'ia Ōrmanean, *The Church of Armenia: Her History, Doctrine, Rule, Discipline, Liturgy, Literature, and Existing Conditions,* second (revised) English edition (London: Mowbray, 1955).
16 For the history of the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul, see Ronald T. Marchese and Marlene R. Breu, *Treasures of Faith: Sacred Relics and Artifacts from the Armenian Orthodox Churches of Istanbul*

(Eden, South Dakota: Nettleberry Publications, 2015). On the Armenian Jerusalem Patriarchate in English, see Haig A. Krikorian, *Lives and Times of the Armenian Patriarchs of Jerusalem: Chronological Succession of Tenures* (Sherman Oaks, CA: H.A. Krikorian, 2009) and Roberta R. Ervine, Michael E. Stone and Nira Stone, *The Armenians in Jerusalem and the Holy Land* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2002).

17 It should be noted that acting Patriarch Aram Ateşian resigned at the end of February 2016. After months of tension between him and Bishop Shahak Mashalian, the head of the Istanbul Patriarchate's Religious Council, the Catholicos of Echmiadzin, Karekin II, summoned them both to a meeting along with the Armenian Primate of Germany, Archbishop Karekin Bekdjian. Along with his resignation, it was decided that the Religious Assembly of the Istanbul Patriarchate would elect a new acting-patriarch. http://armenianweekly.com/2017/02/24/ateshian-to-step-down/.

18 Interview held with author and acting-Patriarch Aram Ateşian, Istanbul, March 2014.

19 Razmik Panossian, *The Armenians: From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2006), 65.

20 I am alluding to the fall of the Bagratuni Dynasty, which led to the migration and displacement of several noble families and the eventual establishment of the Kingdom of Cilicia. Panossian, *Armenians*, 63.

21 While I will go into detail about this expansion of power later on in the chapter, I will note here that Armenians in Lebanon and Syria both used and surrendered to the political bifurcations of the Cold War. The Catholicosate of Cilicia also articulated its political inclination by both ensnaring itself and instigating domestic, regional, and international ideological conflict.

22 For a welcome intervention that engages in the everyday in Bourj Hamoud, see Joanne Nucho, *Everyday Sectarianism in Urban Lebanon: Infrastructures, Public Services, and Power* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016).

23 And yet a small group of Armenians found their way to Cairo and joined the existing Armenian community there, mostly located in and around the neighborhood of Ramsis. It is unclear how they did so, considering the camp was locked and under guard. The descendants of these Armenians are unaware of how their parents and grandparents were able to leave the camp and settled in Cairo. As far as they knew, they did not have any existing networks within the Armenian population in Cairo. Personal interviews were conducted by author with descendants of Iskouhi Boyadjian.

24 The current political situation in Turkey additionally complicates this comparison. While the intention was to commemorate and visit the graveyard of Mehmet Mishte yearly, the tension and sustained violence of the Turkish state in southeastern Turkey has prevented this recurrence.

25 At present, Kessab's Armenian educational and religious institutions are under the jurisdiction of the Armenian Prelacy of Aleppo, which operates under the auspices of the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia in Lebanon.

26 Fran Markowitz and Anders H. Stefansson, *Homecomings: Unsettling Paths of Return* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2004), 109–110.

27 The Armenian population dropped once more in 1947, as approximately 2,000 of the 5,000 inhabitants participated in the repatriation movement, the global movement organized by the Republic of Armenia's communist party and supported by the Soviet Union to "gather" the worldwide Armenian population in the Soviet Republic. The repatriation movement will be detailed further in this chapter.

28 Still, Qamishle has suffered during the Syrian War. Two large car bombs in July 2016 resulted in the death of over fifty inhabitants, and over fifteen people died in December 2015 as a result of three bombings: www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/07/syria-civilwar-50-killed-isil-attack-qamishli-160727092723452.htmlandhttp://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-mideast-crisis-syria-kurds-idUKKBN0UD1WZ20151231. To complicate matters further, Turkish military actions against its Kurdish population in the area around Nusaybin, just across Qamishle's border in Turkey, have further mired the area in conflict. Turkish shells often end up hitting and damaging Qamishle's civilian structures: www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/06/turkey-nusaybin-war-qamishli-syria-war-neighboring-cities.html. For further detail on the assault on Kessab see: www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-idUSBREA2L0G020140323 and http://time.com/40378/syria-kessab-christians/.

29 See for example, https://twitter.com/trendkessab, www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/03/31/kim-kardashian-butts-into-syria-s-online-civil-war-with-savekessab-campaign.html, and https://anca.org/young-filmmaker-wins-awards-for-save-kessab-documentary/.

30 In addition to news sources such as http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/19173, countless Armenian blogsandnewssitesmaintainedasimilarconnection.See,forexample,https://amindinfinite.wordpress.com/2014/04/26/turkey-continues-the-genocide-of-armenians-in-kessab/ and www.facebook.com/1915-Armenian-Genocide-and-Kessab-2014-315808005232950/app/195646697137509. It is likewise interesting to note that as Armenian national historiography maintained an appreciation for the French troops who were seen as protecting the Armenian inhabitants of Kessab in 1915, the institutions of the Armenian Church, news outlets, and organizations similarly acknowledged the relief provided by Syrian government troops that retook the town a few days after the assault. See, for example, www.mirrorspectator.com/2014/06/20/syrian-forces-retake-armenian-village-of-kessab/.
31 Nicola Migliorino, *(Re)constructing Armenia in Lebanon and Syria Ethno-Cultural Diversity and the State in the Aftermath of a Refugee Crisis* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008), 54–55.
32 Adrian J. Boas, *Jerusalem in the Time of the Crusades: Society, Landscape and Art in the Holy City under Frankish Rule* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 88–89.
33 For a greater overview on Armenian of Palestine, see Bedross Der Matossian, "The Armenians of Palestine 1918–48," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 39, no. 1 (Autumn 2011), 24–44.
34 See, for example, the weekly satirical magazine, *ad-Dabour*, 1927. Many thanks to Ghenwa Hayek for bringing these cartoons to my attention.
35 Even though some other communities, such as Egypt's, had their own Armenian press publications, they did not import their newspapers and journals to surrounding communities. In this way, the Lebanese Armenian community's representations exhibited transnational elements, extending their realm of authority.
36 See the issues of the daily newspapers of the Armenian Communist *Joghovurti Tzayn*, the Socialist Hnchak *Ararad*, the Capitalist Ramgavar *Zartonk*, and the rightist-nationalist Dashnak affiliated *Aztag*, 23 November 1945.
37 *Joghovurti Tzayn*, 23 November 1945, front page.
38 *Ararad*, 23 November 1945, front page.
39 For example, the Dashnak Party did not address the fact that the party and its associated publications were banned in the USSR. Neither did the capitalist Ramgavar party address the economic futures of its followers. After all, many Ramgavar supporters in Lebanon were business owners, entrepreneurs, and financiers. Would they be able to adjust to the state-run economy of the ASSR. *Zartonk* never addressed these concerns. Rather, it repeated the need for this economic set to move to the Soviet Republic.
40 Walter Kolarz, *Religion in the Soviet Union* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966), 160–173.
41 *Aztag*, 26 June 1946, front page.
42 See, for example, its publication *Tchanasser* 3, no. 9 (March 1946): 67. *Avedik*, the publication of the Armenian Catholic Church did not use the medium of the magazine to express its thoughts about repatriation or a homeland.
43 Ronald Suny, *Looking Towards Ararat* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), 163–169.
44 Suny, *Ararat*, 163–169.
45 On 24 December 1933, Archbishop Leon Tourian was assassinated as he walked down the aisle performing mass in the West 187th Street Armenian Orthodox Church in Washington Heights in New York City. In the days following the murder, 300,000 American-Armenians were "kicked out" of their Armenian churches in America for their alleged opposition to the Soviet status of Armenia. This action, in turn, created a need for this population to seek assistance from the Cilician See in Lebanon. See *The New York Times*, 14 July 1934, front page.
46 "Nergin Nakharari Koch'ě Libanahayut'yan" [The Minister of Interior's Declaration to the Lebanese Armenians], *Aztag*, 12 December 1958.
47 Khachig Tololyan, "Martyrdom as Legitimacy: Terrorism, Religion and Symbolic Appropriation in the Armenian Diaspora," Paul Wilkinson and Alasdair Stewart, eds., *Contemporary Research on Terrorism* (Aberdeen University Press, 1987), 89–103.
48 For historical overview, see Khachig Tololyan, "National Self-Determination and the Limits of Sovereignty: Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the Secession of Nagorno-Karabagh," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1995), 106–128. Many Armenian outlets use the Armenian term for the enclave, "Artsakh," rather than Karabagh.
49 Nicola Migliorino, *(Re)constructing Armenia,* 180–181, and Markar Melkonian and Seta Melkonian, *My Brother's Road: An American's Fateful Journey to Armenia* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005).

50 https://wn.com/bourj_hammoud_april_2016_artsakh_strong_viken_dishgekenian such actions were not limited to Lebanon. There was a worldwide fund-raising call by the Armenian Relief Society that solicited donations for relief aid for Armenians in Karabagh. See http://ars1910.org/tag/artsakhstrong/. There were also telethons organized in various countries, including Australia, to solicit relief aid for Armenians www.youtube.com/watch?v=yP9GlU5gbf0. In addition, over 15 million dollars were raised globally through the Armenia Fund's annual telethon in 2016 that aided those affected by resuming of violence in Karabagh: http://armenianweekly.com/2016/11/27/15-4-million-raised-in-2016-armenia-fund-telethon/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+ArmenianWeekly+(Armenian+Weekly).

51 www.facebook.com/ArmenianWeekly/photos/a.204821052880070.57365.113243582037818/1250209388341226/?type=3&theater. It is possible that the inspiration of this hashtag was the result of the success of #savekessab.