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Armenian Diaspora and the Quest for Armenian Genocide Recognition

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Abstract

One of the major roles of the diasporas is to act as a bridge between the population of the home country and the international arena. It also acts a lobby of foreign policy for the home country which helps to initiate its national interest in the region of its concerns. Another role connected to the foreign policy and the home country is the maintenance of memory and recognition of various important events of the home country.

One such nation which has strong linkages between the memory, recognition and foreign policy is Armenia. One of the major components of the Armenian Foreign policy has been the recognition of the Armenian Genocide of 1915. The Armenian Genocide Recognition has been a demand which has been a focus for by Armenians in Armenia as well as the diaspora for more than a century. The diaspora with respect to genocide recognition have played a very important role particularly seen in various countries including the United States of America, Russia and France.

Various organizations like the Armenian National Committee of America are prime example of diaspora involvement in the recognition process. Famous Armenians of the diaspora in the political sphere and social sphere play an important role in the recognition process. This article will focus on the role played by the Armenian diaspora when it comes to the recognition of the Armenian Genocide ranging from its successes to its various limitations and what is the future of the recognition of the Armenian Genocide with respect to the Armenian diaspora.

Keywords: Armenian Diaspora, Genocide and Hamidian massacres

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Armenian Diaspora and the Quest for Armenian Genocide Recognition

Jason Wahlang

1. Introduction

Diaspora, derived from the Greek verb *speiro* meaning to sow and the preposition *dia* which means over. There were many implications when it came to the Greeks diaspora was a sense of migration and colonisation whereas the Armenians, Jews and Palestinians the meaning was more sinister and brutal it was meant to signify a collective trauma where one dreamt of home and was in exile (Cohen, 1997). There have also been cases of individuals who have maintained strong identities who do not fit the above two situations and defined themselves as diasporas.

Cohen further states that until recent years the major characteristics of diasporas focused on their catastrophic origins and uncomfortable outcomes. He states that after decades and decades the opposing notion to this description of diaspora mainly on the adverse experiences on behalf of the first explanation (Cohen, *Diasporas and the State*, 1996).

Another description of the term diaspora comes from the American Heritage Collage which states that the diaspora is a dispersion of the people from their homeland and a dispersion of an originally homogenous entity such as language and culture (Dictionary, 2020).

Until the few decades the debates and discussion on Diaspora had been limited to the Jewish discussions, in recent decades the debates have shaped into a sort of political engagement. This political engagement has shaped the idea of the homeland both the real and the imagined as part and parcel of everyday politics around the world (Adamson, 2016). One of the major reasons for this emergence in the diaspora debates has been the globalised world which with the help of the enhanced global connectivity led to diasporic engagement that cross over state borders.

2. Armenian Genocide

Before discussing the main debate of the topic, one must first understand the Armenian Genocide. One of the most painful memories for the Armenian people has been the history of the Armenian genocide which they had suffered during the Ottoman Empire rule. The Genocide which can be traced back to the Hamidian massacres of 1894-1896 which lead to an estimate of 80,000 to 300,000 Armenians being killed under the leadership of Sultan Abdul Hamid II (Akçam, 2006).

The date which has been engraved into the minds of the Armenians however has been the 24th April 1915 when the Turkish government under the leadership of the Committee of Union and Progress decided on the genocide of the Armenians with the party beginning the deportation and the killing of the Armenians.

The Armenian genocide has also been known as the forgotten genocide, with the Armenians still facing a battle for the recognition of the genocide for more than a period of 100 years. The Turks refusal to recognise the crimes committed by their former leadership further hurts the sentiments of the Armenians whose ancestors had suffered under their hands. Despite the recognition of the genocidal character of the massacres of the Armenians in scholarship, civil society, some governments have been restrained to officially acknowledge the massacres as genocide because of *realpolitik* (good relations with Turkey) the successor state of the Ottoman Empire (Oktem, 2011).

The recognition of the genocide has been a connecting bridge between the Armenians who live in Armenia and the diaspora and there has been open involvement of the Armenian diaspora in the recognition process especially in the Russian Federation and the United States of America.

The Armenian genocide has shaped the whole identity of the Armenians and its diasporas across the world. It is an essential part of the Armenians regardless of

the generations ranging from the individuals who had suffered under the genocide or the present generation of the Armenians. This identity created by the quest for recognition of the genocide has led to the establishing of a narrative in relation to the Armenian Genocide.

One major debate that occurs when it comes to the Armenian Genocide recognition is whether the Armenian Genocide fit to be called a Genocide. When Rafael Lemkin began his quest for the acknowledgment of what a Genocide means, one of the most important incidents was the massacres of the Armenians by the Ottoman Empire, he mentions it in his autobiography *Totally Unofficial* (Balakian, Raphael Lemkin, *Cultural Destruction, and the Armenian Genocide*, 2013). This show that the person who coined the term Genocide also had kept in mind the Armenian Genocide when he went to the United Nations Convention.

Another point to support the calling of the Armenian Genocide is that the massacres killed a large population of Armenians which would have meant a direct impact on the group about 1.5 million Armenians were killed during the genocide (Saikia, 2021). In order to consolidate, Turkish rule, the ruling establishment under the Committee of Union and Progress devised a secret plan for the extermination of the Armenians, from the viewpoint of their ideology the Armenian population stood on the way of their Pan Turkic nation (Adalian, *Young Turks and the Armenian Genocide*, 2021). There were some of the reasons which come in support of calling the Armenian massacres as a Genocide.

3. Armenian Diaspora and the Armenian Genocide.

The Armenian Diaspora refers to the Armenians across the world outside the Armenian homeland. The term diaspora in Armenian is referred as *spyurk* (Dufoux, 2008). The word *spyurk* has replaced the word *gaghut* which was an inspiration from Aramaic meaning colony which was the term used in the past to describe the diaspora (Meilvin Ember, 2004).

The Armenian Diaspora has been present for period of over 1700 years making it one of the oldest diasporas in the world (Edmund Herzig, 2004).

Being one of the oldest countries across the world whose influence has been there through the annals of history the Armenian Diaspora has been in existence since time immemorial and it's a futile attempt to trace its original beginnings. It has been a part of the Armenian gene the travelling and migration (Atabekyan, 2017). The expansion of the Armenians first leads to the

establishment of the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia (Nersassian, 1962). The middle ages marked some of the first organised forms of Armenian diaspora, with many Armenian's belongings to the traders' class moving across the world including India (Marichal, 2020).

The trading Armenian community helped develop trade relations with the help of the trade associations which were created by the Armenian merchants in the respective countries.

The diaspora before the 20th century was formed mainly force under the rule of various empires, it was formed by survivors escaping their attackers or families sending out their representatives along trade routes and seeking educational opportunities. These progressive relocations during early period helped shaped a new chapter of the diaspora (Adalian, 1989). Many of the present-day Armenians can trace their origins in the lands in South and Central Turkey, Syria and Iran which is now considered as outside of the ancient Armenian homeland.

The Armenian communities which were outside Armenia had existed for centuries ranging from Singapore to Venice and from Esfahan to Amsterdam. These communities were engaged like most Armenians on trade and did contribute largely to the community as well as identity maintenance, political mobilisation and knowledge transfer (John Block Friedman, 2017). There is an estimate of 2.5 million Armenians who had lived in the traditional Armenian homeland partitioned between Russia, Persia and Ottoman Empire in the year 1914 when the genocide occurred. Another 2.5million lived in the intra state diasporas within the empires (Istanbul, Izmir, Tiflis, Tabriz and Isfahan) and 200,000 or so the remainder of the diaspora (Panossian, 1998).

After the Armenian Genocide in 1915, there has been drastic change in the diaspora both in the number and the nature, the diaspora always diverse they have become more radically dispersed and attained a great sense of fragile permanence (Pattie, 2004). Despite having a strong active colony abroad, the formation of the diaspora or the diasporisation of the Armenian nation came after the Turks committed the genocide of 1915 (Martirosyan, 2014). After and during the genocide many Armenians were deported to many close locations particularly in Aleppo than to other cities of Syria, and other regions of the Middle East in Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Palestine and Egypt (Edmund Herzig, 2004).

By 1921, 150,000 Armenians were left in post Genocide Turkey, approximately 500,000 refugees settled in the diaspora and a little over a million lived in the newly formed Soviet Armenia and about half a million in other parts of the Soviet Union (Panossian, 1998).

The Armenian Diaspora is active in the international arena, and is involved in preserving the memory of the Armenian Genocide and it is one of the major pillars for the genocide recognition across the world. The diaspora is not only involved in the Genocide debate but it is also politically invested in various issues of Armenia ranging from the recent Nagorno Karabakh conflict in 2020 with many Armenians from the diaspora communities wanting to come back to Armenia to fight in the conflict.

According to data based on the United Nations there is about 3 million Armenians residing in the territory of Armenia (Nations, 2019). In recent times the Armenian communities are in Russia an approx. of 2.25 million, the United States of America has about 1.5 million approx. and France has about 450,000 Armenians approx. Other major countries where the Armenian population is concentrated has been Georgia, Lebanon, Iran, Ukraine, Germany, Canada and Australia (Martirosyan, 2014).

Another important country which had a strong Armenian population was Syria but due to the major conflict in the region the Armenians have fled the country many of them asking to return back to Armenia (McGuinness, 2013). Another important country has been India though the concentration of the Armenian population in India is small compared to most countries but it still a decisive population with a long-shared history.

According to a report in the New York Times in 2008, of the nine million Armenians across the world about a third are in the traditional homeland Armenia. The bulk live in Russia, the United States of America and France with a smattering along the trading routes of Asia (Apcar, 2008). The Recognition of the Genocide plays an important role in the lives of the Armenians and the diaspora, a feeling of justice, compensation It would become an important step in healing transgenerational trauma (Roache, 2021).

4. American Armenian Diaspora.

With a strong Armenian population in the United States of America, there is a lot of influence in the social, political, and cultural aspects of the country. Many

Armenians have become part of the American political structure with senators of Armenian origins having become part of the government. The presence of the American Armenians in the social and cultural sphere further shows the influence of the community in the American sphere.

Historical Background

The first recorded visit of an Armenian to the United States of America can be traced to 1618 with an Iranian of Armenian descent came to United States with the purpose of growing and selling tobacco, later some Armenians were invited to the colony for assistance (Papazian, 2000).

A few other Armenians were recorded to have arrived in the United States in the 17th and the 18th centuries, many moved as individuals and not with the purpose of establishing communities. By 1770's about 70 Armenians had settled in the colonies (Bakalian, 2011).

One of the first Armenians to step foot in one of the major metropolises of the United States was Khachadour Vosgianian who step foot in New York in 1834 with a purpose of gaining an education, many Armenians followed suit to study in universities (Matirossian, 2012).

A good number of Armenians had come to the United States with the purpose of education and trade, but eventually with the conditions of the Armenians having taken a turn for the worse in the hands of the Ottoman Empire many Armenians for their safety headed to America.

After the Hamidian Massacres of 1893-1895 which lead to the loss of many Armenians being killed by the Ottoman Emperor with some scholars chose to place the genocide as a continuum of these massacres (Bloxham, 2003), many Armenians fled to America for their own protection.

The Armenian Genocide was one of the major reasons for Armenians leaving their homeland and migrating to the United States (Hovannisian, 1997), before the mass migration due to the genocide there were about 1500-3000 Armenians in the United States (Vartan, 2015).

According to data estimates there was about 77,890 Armenians living in the United States by the 1919 many coming during the period of the genocide (Vartan, 2015). As a result of the genocide about 100,000 Armenians fled to the United States until the United

States immigration restrictions were implemented in the 1920's (Bolsajian, 2018).

The Armenians who had arrived in the United States and those who immigrated elsewhere during the genocide were mainly from West Armenia from the region which was part of Turkey as opposed to East Armenia (Kasbarian, 2015).

One of the greatest tragedies of the Armenian Genocide apart from the loss of lives was the disruption of the Armenian history, with Armenian intelligentsia being wiped out. The survivor generation took years to revive the intelligentsia and the generation also turned inward, in order to preserve any left Armenianness and Armenian culture. The now survived migrated children of the genocide now had a new conflict that of being torn between two cultures, the Armenians turned in stages from being Armenian the immigrants, to feeling Armenian the progeny of immigrants (Bakalian, 2011).

The second wave of immigration came later after the formation of the Soviet Armenia under the Soviet Union after the second world war. Most of the Armenians who were involved in the migration were ancestors who were part of the first wave of the diaspora (Bolsajian, 2018). In 1974 roughly sixty thousand Armenians belonging to Soviet Armenia fled to the United States (Kasbarian, 2015).

The third wave of the Armenian migration to the United States has its links with the Nagorno Karabakh conflict and the Armenian earthquake of 1988 which lead to a large number of Armenians leaving the region to move to other countries including the United States of America (Rainer Munz, 2003).

The Nagorno Karabakh conflict and in particular the Sumgait massacre was seen as part of a continuation of the genocide of 1915, this was also seen as an extension of the Armenian Genocide (Bolsajian, 2018).

Armenians in America post-Soviet collapse

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the new independent Armenian republic was formed under the leadership of their first President Levon Ter Petrosyan (Armenia, 2021). Before the collapse of the Soviet Union many Armenians as mentioned had fled to the United States for a better life mainly due to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, therefore in the newly independent Armenia the population of the Armenians comprising of 3.5 million people look forward to the contribution of the Armenian diaspora across the world (Manaseryan,

2004).

American Armenians comprise a large number of the diaspora population second to Russian Armenians, have a strong connection to the Armenian homeland and due to many of them having belonged to a generation to have survived the genocide or the generation just after the genocide they have a strong connection to the genocide.

With the emergence of many popular socio-cultural individuals who focus on the Armenian Genocide the American Armenians play an important role in the recognition of the Armenian Genocide in particular (Affairs, 2021). These diasporic Armenians also play an important role on the various issues which plague their homeland.

For the American Armenians one of the most important steps would be the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the American federal government. Over the years several states as well as several United States documents have taken an initiative to recognise the genocide. The first official mention of the Armenian Genocide by the United States Government was in 1951 in a document submitted to the International Court of Justice (Sassounian, 2010).

Resolutions for Armenian Genocide Recognition.

While there are some international Armenian Genocide Recognition based resolutions like the European Movement resolution to recognise the Armenian massacres as Genocide (International, 2005). There is also the European Court of Human Rights and the trail of *Perincek vs Switzerland* on the denial of genocide, which however voted in support of a Turkish chairman of the Turkish Workers Party who had made a statement which could be considered genocide denial (Unit, 2015).

A resolution in 1975 (Joint Resolution 148) was adopted which led to the House of Representatives to recognise the genocide (Representatives, 1975). Another resolution was adopted in 1984 (Joint Resolution 247) as well with regard to the Armenian Genocide to designate the date of 24th April which marks the day of commemoration of the genocide as a "National Day of Remembrance of Man Inhumanity to Man" (Representatives, Joint Resolution 247, 1984).

Then President Ronald Reagan also had described the incidents in 1915 as genocide when discussing about the Holocaust he mentioned about how the sufferings

of the people of Armenia was a genocide (Reagan, 1981). Though Ronald Reagan took up such a step his former general counsel of the Federal Communications Commission Bruce Fien has taken the other route and has been openly critical about the Armenian Genocide (Fien, 2021).

Another important step for the recognition in the United States was during the campaign trail of Barack Obama when he mentioned that the Armenian Genocide was a Genocide and promised to recognise it as President which he refused to do when he did become President (Knox, 2014). Though he never the mentioned the term genocide after being elected, he however did send a Presidential delegation to Armenia in 2015 to commemorate the 100 years of the Armenian Genocide (Secretary, 2015).

Though never officially passed by Congress, the Armenian Genocide was recognised by 49 out of 50 states in the United States with each state passing out individual proclamations (Museum-Institute, 2013). It was only in 2019 when for the first time United States House of Representatives passed a resolution with a vote of 405 to 11 making it the first time a chamber of Congress to officially recognise the Armenian Genocide (Gladstone, 2019).

The recent recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the President of the United States is a huge step in the right direction in the quest of the Armenians for the Genocide Recognition. The press statement of the White House states “We honour the victims of the Meds Yeghern so that the horrors of the what never happened are not lost in history. The American people honour all those Armenians who perished in the genocide that began 106 years ago today” (House, 2021).

Memorials.

Memorials have one major purpose when it comes to an individual or to a collective that is to preserve the memory of the past. The main aim of any memorial is to remember the past either to celebrate it or to commemorate various examples include various memorials to remember victories during a war or the Holocaust memorials to commemorate the lives lost. One of the most steps taken by the diaspora when it comes to the recognition of the Armenian Genocide has been the establishment of the Genocide memorials with the purpose to commemorate and educate. With the presence of 60 genocide memorial all across the United States of America (Institute, 2020), the memorials range from plaques asingle cross stone popularly

known as the Khachkars to monumental sculptures and entire edifices placed in Armenian Church yards and public parks (Net, 2012). Apart from the memorials present in Armenia, the memorials in the United States of America happen to be one of the largest number of memorials to be found.

Institutions and Organisations.

Institutions and organisations play an important role when it comes to preserving the memory of the past ranging from museums, institutes or various organisations established to the cause. Various organisations have been set up with that main purpose some of the them include the Holocaust Museum (Yad Vashem) or the Partition Museum in Amritsar or the German Holocaust Institute. The same can be said about the preservation of the Armenian Genocide memory, with the establishment of various groups across the world with the same purpose.

a) Armenian National Committee of America

When it comes to the American Armenian Diaspora the connection with various organisation has been one of the major reasons for the quest for Armenian Genocide recognition. One of the most important diaspora-based organisations in the United States has been the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA). The ANCA is the largest and most influential American Armenian grassroots political organization, it has a network of offices, chapters and supporters throughout the United States with the main purpose is to address to concerns on various issues of the American Armenian community (America, 2020).

When it comes to the Armenian Genocide, the most important priority has to be the recognition of the Armenian Genocide and the leverage the near unanimous United States Congress resolution of 2019. ANCA believes that with American recognition it would push Turkey to abandon its denials and accept its responsibilities and engage with Armenia and the Armenian stakeholders (America A. N., 2020).

ANCA has taken various initiatives with regard to the Armenian Genocide including blocking of Genocide denier Dick Hoagland appointment as the Armenian Ambassador.

Other initiatives include working with various organizations in media, academia and entertainment to educate and establish facts on the Armenian Genocide. There have also established educational centres with

regard to the Armenian Genocide across various states of the country.

b) Armenian Assembly of America

The Armenian Assembly of America is another important organisation for the American Armenians, with its headquarters in Washington DC the American Assembly of America is one of the largest non-partisans Armenian-American advocacy organisation. Since its establishment in 1972 the assembly main aim has been to promote public awareness to issues which are Armenian, and ensuring the strengthening of the United States – Armenia and assistance in humanitarian issues in Armenia (America A. A., 2020). When it comes to the topic of the recognition of the Armenian Genocide its main aim is to expand the organisation research, education and advocacy campaign for universal affirmation of the Armenian Genocide and secure Diaspora wide consensus for the government of Armenia to deal with the consequences of the Genocide this crime against humanity (America A. A., 2020).

c) Armenian General Benevolent Union

The Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) formed in 1906 in Egypt with the aim of the spiritual and cultural development of the Armenian people. The main aim of the organization was to protect and assist Armenians across the world. In 1914 it was also set up in the United States, despite losing many chapters during the Genocide the organization still managed to protect the survivors. It is at present one of the largest organizations when it comes to upholding the Armenian heritage through culture, educational and humanitarian programs (Union, 2020). When it comes to the recognition of the Armenian Genocide, the AGBU donates computers, scanners, printers and various important research tools to the Armenian Genocide museum with its main aim to further research and education about the Armenian Genocide, the resources are digitized thus making it available online making it more accessible to the world (Union, Genocide Museum, 2020). This contribution done by the AGBU allows the world to understand about one of the most forgotten genocide and makes it accessible for the world thus furthering the cause for recognition not just in the United States but also worldwide.

d) Armenian National Institute

The Armenian National Institute (ANI) one of the most important institutions for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide. The ANI with the help

of various educators, scholars and journalists and through conferences, publications and documentation projects and institutionalized materials aim to help the recognition of the Armenian Genocide as well as prevent future genocides (Institute A. N., 2020).

The nonprofit institution based in Washington DC has dedicated itself to the study of the Armenian Genocide. Its main aim is to promote understanding of the genocide through various platforms public and academic and research and analysis. Another aim is to collect and organize documents based on the genocide to maintain its memory and it also aims to bring about public awareness of the genocide (Institute A. N., 2020). Another initiative taken by the ANI has been the online museum Armenian Genocide Museum of America, the ANI along with Armenian Genocide Museum Memorial and Armenian Assembly of Armenia took up the initiative to establish this online museum to further educate the people about the Armenian Genocide (America A. G., 2020).

Individuals

Apart from institutions, organizations and memorials, another important aspect for the recognition of the Armenian genocide by the diaspora has been the work of individuals whether it be the political, social and cultural fields. The American Armenians community has been described as the most influential Armenian community in the world even though it is not the largest Armenian community in the world (Voss, 2007).

The American Armenians lobby according to former National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski is one of the most influential foreign ethnic lobbies in the United States (Jaffe, 2014). With the presence of Armenian politicians in the Senate and House of Representatives, the main aim of the lobby has been to ensure that the United States government does initiate steps to recognize the Armenian Genocide and also to ensure that the government does have an idea about the Armenian interests.

When it comes to the field of literature, there has been a common trend of Armenian literary figures to work on common themes one such has been the Armenian Genocide. With one of the most famous names being Peter Balakian who had written the poem “Home” where he describes the emotion of the survivors of the Genocide who have lost their homes and never can return to the place, they call home and eventually living as a diaspora in a place they cannot call home

(Balakian, 2016).

Another work of Peter Balakian on the Armenian Genocide 'The Burning Tigris The Armenian Genocide and America's Response', this book brings about a narrative of the origins of the idea of the Armenian genocide with the focus on the massacres of the Armenians in 1890's and leads to the Armenian Genocide of 1915.

Another famous work of Peter Balakian has been the memoir of his family. In the memoir Balakian explores his family and writes on three of the members and himself which includes the situations faced by him, his mother, father and grandmother. The book brings about a view of the truth of what happened during the 1915 Genocide and how his family has been impacted by it.

Another famous writer of Armenian descent is William Saroyan who wrote the short story "The Armenian and the Armenian", the story is famously known for the last two paragraphs which Saroyan discussed on the ability of the Armenian Nation to survive even after the genocide (Saroyan, 1936).

Other famous names apart from literature has been a contribution of Armenian diaspora from music as well with the famed System of a Down rock band campaigning for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide, the band also rallied along with ANCA and Armenian Youth Federation to support various resolution for recognition of the Armenian Genocide (Asbarez, 2005). Another famous musician of Armenian descent is Cherilyn Sarkisian popularly known as Cher who had urged the Turkish government to recognise the Armenian Genocide during the 100 years of the Armenian Genocide (MassisPost, 2015).

The American Armenian diaspora has been one who is closely connected to the issues of the Armenia and has been connected to maintaining the memory of the Armenian Genocide and plays an important role in the recognition demands and initiatives.

1. Russian Armenian Diaspora.

The Russian Armenian population makes up the largest diaspora population when it comes to the Armenian ethnic groups. The Armenian population in Russia exist not only in the major cities of Moscow and St Petersburg they also are said to have settled in the east of Russia like Vladivostok and Krasnodar Krai towards the Northern Caucasus region. With over a population of two million approx. they are one of the largest diaspora

communities in the Russian Federation (Putin, 2020).

The first immigration of the Armenians to Russia can be traced back to the period of the Middle Ages with Armenian traders and merchants came to the North Caucasus for trade and commerce. There have been traces of many Armenians conducting business and settling during the period of the Czars. Due to improvement of the trade relations between Armenia and the Russian empire, Catherine the Great also invited Armenian merchants from Crimea to Russia which led to establishment of a settlement at Nor Nakhichevan (Suny, 1993).

Over the years Armenians in Russia began to prosper and took advantage to further evolve in particular when it comes to the entrepreneurial skills which help them gain such prosperity.

One of the reasons for further movement of the Armenians to Russia and its empire was also the situation and conditions of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. Any mass atrocities or genocide has some connections to the contexts of war such as the Holocaust and the Second World War, the Bangladesh war of independence and the massacres during that period. The Armenian Genocide is one more such example, the Genocide though said to have begun during the period of Abdul Hamid II and the Hamidian Massacres, the most major atrocities were during the period of the Young Turks who were involved in the First World War.

During the first world war there was a division among the powers with Russia opposed to the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, the Ottoman who main aim was pan Turkism on suspicion that the Armenians would act as the fifth column for the Russians decided on the complete annihilation of the Armenians thus leading to the Armenian Genocide (Encyclopedia, 2020).

After and during the Genocide many Armenians fled to Russia in order to protect themselves from the Ottoman Empire. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the formation of the Soviet Union in 1921, a wave of Armenians to Soviet Armenia repatriated which were about a limit of 150,000 (Shahnazarian, 2013). This led to continuous repatriations of the Armenians to the Soviet Union to become a part of the Soviet Armenia, many from Greece, Turkey and Syria. The second wave of repatriations came during the period of Stalin after the second world war as a part of his territorial acquisition objective of return of Armenian lands (Shahnazarian,

2013).

During this period of there was less debates on the issues of Armenian Genocide as mostly now the focus of the memory was more focused on soviet memory and historical events (Garagozov, 2008). The first major step taken by the Armenian population during the Soviet Union was the establishment of the Genocide Memorial in Yerevan. The Memorial completed in the year 1967 by the Soviet Union has become a pilgrimage site for Armenians all over the world and at the same time has acted as an integral part of the Armenian architecture.

The memorial was established during a period when it was almost impossible to divert oneself for an ideological base already present in the country, the memorial brought solace to the families of the victims of the genocide after its establishment who for a long period of time compelled with silence (Complex).

The establishment of the memorial came into process after strong agitation of the Armenians in Soviet Armenia demanding a memorial monument be constructed in order to commemorate the victims of the genocide as the Armenian diasporas had managed to commemorate in other parts of the world. These agitations lead to the establishment of the memorial in 1967 on 24th April which is considered as the day of commemoration for the Armenians. Since its establishment every year Armenians on the 24th April come to the memorial in Yerevan to commemorate the victims of the genocide.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Armenian diaspora when it came to the Armenian genocide emerged to pressure the government of Russian Federation to discuss on the recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

Russia became one of the nations to pass the resolution for recognition of the genocide in the State Duma in 1995 when the Duma stated that the atrocities which occurred with the Armenians fit the definition of the term Genocide as per the United Nations (Federation, 1995). Due to the resolution passed in the Duma 24th April is observed in Russia as a day remembrance for the victim of the genocide.

Russia on April 24th 2015 sent its President Vladimir Putin to Yerevan to attend the commemorations of the victims of the Armenian Genocide (100 years commemoration), where he visited the Armenian Genocide Museum and also spoke in the ceremony

(Russia, 2015).

The proactive steps taken by Russia has not taken well with Turkey with Recep Tayyip Erdogan openly criticising Russia for recognising the Armenian Genocide after the 100 years of commemoration of the Armenian Genocide in 2015 (News, 2015).

There were further steps taken with Russian politician Sergei Mironov the president of the Just Russia party had submitted a bill to parliament to hold into account any genocide deniers of the Armenian Genocide (Staff, 2015).

When it comes to the recognition process for the Armenian genocide the diaspora in Russia did not need to put as much as effort as their American diaspora groups as its Russia provided a space for recognition as early as 5 years from its formation after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

2. Indian Armenian Diaspora.

The association of Armenian and Indians and the presence of Armenians in India can be traced back to long period of history and there has been a mutual cooperation, both economic and cultural between the two. The first trace of Armenian Indian interaction came with the coming of Armenian Indian diplomat and merchant Thomas Cana when he reached the Malabar coast (Parthasarathy, 2013).

There are however historical statements which state that one of the earliest visitors to India even before Vasco De Gama was Thomas Cana who had landed on the Malabar Coast in 780 A.D. (Zenian, 2001)

The Armenians came as merchants to India, many of the Armenians who came as diasporas to India were descendants to the Armenians who were brought to Persia under the rule of Shah Abbas. These Armenians moved to India in search of wealth and fortune, these traders were quite successful in their work and became very rich in the process (Caplan, 2012). The first traces of Armenian settlement in India can be seen in Surat (Gujarat) during the 13th century with the concerned Armenians fearing prosecutions came from Persia and the Armenians Highlands to settled in India.

The Armenians over period of time were stationed in the areas of present-day Chennai, Kolkata and Mumbai, with the Armenians though less in numbers still settling in these regions even in the present period and mostly

now concentrated in Kolkata.

The Armenians in Madras played a significant role in the establishment of the Armenian nationalism, they are even considered as one of the first Armenians to propagate the idea of the Armenian nationalism (Govindarajan, 2017).

There has been historical evidence of the first Armenian printing press in India was established in Madras. Shahamir Shahamarian an Armenian merchant was said to have been the inventor of the Armenian printing press (Panossian, 2006).

In the present era, the population of the Armenians have reduced with many Armenians leaving the country after Indian independence in 1947 and after the disintegration of the Soviet Union with the formation of independent Armenia (Roychowdhury, 2020).

When it comes to the Armenian Genocide, the presence of groups like the Armenian Cultural Centre and a small diaspora population there is a help to educate Indians of the Armenian Genocide. In 2019 with the help of the Russian and Central Asian Studies Centre in Jawaharlal Nehru University, the Armenian Cultural Centre New Delhi organised a conference related to the Armenian Genocide on the 24th of April the date of commemoration of the genocide (India, 2019).

Though the number have reduced in the recent years they are still an important diaspora, with most of them concentrated in Kolkata it was only justified that a Genocide Memorial be located in Kolkata with respect to the genocide.

With a proactive population, good relations among the nations and a concerned generation dedicated to the recognition of the Armenian Genocide it won't be a long wait till initiatives would begin for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide in India as well.

3. French Armenian Diaspora

Armenians in France form the largest Armenian community in the European Union and also the third largest population after Russia and United States of America (Zenian, The Armenians of France, 1995). Though the presence of Armenians in France can be traced to the Middle Ages with a meeting of an Armenian bishop by the name of Simon met Gregory of Tours in city of Tours (Heinzelmann, 2001).

While the connection between the Armenians and the

French can be traced back in the annals of history one of the main periods where Armenians settled in France was after the Armenian Genocide where it can be seen that in the early 1920 many Armenian refugees settled in France second largest city of Marseille with around 60,000 of them settled in the city in camps (Cogan, 2019).

Over a period of time the Armenians have settled in the region with peace and have maintained a good relation and have had strong influence in the region. When it comes to the Armenian Genocide France is one of the earliest countries to recognise the Armenian Genocide, it recognised the Armenian Genocide in 1998 (Paris, 1998).

With a strong Armenian population in the country, it was not surprising that the recognition came about so early. In 2006 the French Parliament submitted a bill to create a law that would punish any person who deny the Armenian Genocide with a five-year imprisonment and a fine, this step led to Turkish protests but the French ensured that the bill would be passed that denial of Armenian Genocide would be a crime (Assembly, 2006). This bill however did not survive and was dropped in 2011 before going to the Senate (Zaman, 2011). There was another chance for the Armenian Genocide bill to be passed in 2012 it had reached the parliament but it was considered unconstitutional and against the freedom of speech (24, 2012).

In 2019, French President Emmanuel Macron declared 24th April as Armenian Genocide Commemoration Day in France (Am, 2019).

Criticism of the Diaspora.

Though there has been a lot of positives to come out of the participation of the Armenians Diaspora when it comes to the Armenian Genocide Recognition, there are also some negatives when it comes to misuse of force in order to gain some popularity towards the recognition of the Genocide. One such example could be seen in Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide (JCAG), the JCAG were part of the left-wing Armenian nationalist and Pan Armenian political party called the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF)(Hyland, 1991). Over a period of time there has been incidents of killing of 20 Turkish diplomats or their families where the involvement of the JCAG was there (Gunter, 2011). The JCAG were involved in Europe and North America, and one such incident was the assassination of a Turkish Consul General in Los Angeles by a member

of JCAG (Gunter, 2011).

Another example of the misuse of violence by the diaspora were the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA), who were involved in one of the major terror attacks related to Armenians on Orly airport, Paris which led to the loss of eight tourists including Turks (Gauin, 2011). There were just some examples of the misuse of force and violence in order to gain the recognition of the Armenian Genocide, the steps taken by these groups did impact the recognition of the Armenian Genocide particularly in Turkey who still does not recognise the genocide.

5. Conclusion

It can be seen that the Armenian diaspora has a strong connection to the Armenian cause and the Armenian homeland. The active participation of the Armenian diaspora when it comes to issues of the Armenian homeland and its history has been easily detected particularly in the present scenario when it comes to the conflict in Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh). With many Armenians from the diaspora to be involved in the conflict it can be seen how strong the connection is with the homeland.

When it comes to the Armenian Genocide there has been ample support from the diaspora for the recognition process even when they are small in number like in India there has been strong efforts to educate individuals and establish memorials to keep the memory of the genocide alive. Countries where there has been a large presence of the Armenian diaspora there has been ample efforts for the recognition particularly in major countries like Russia, France and the United States of America.

The presence of foreign policy relations with Turkey of many countries does complicate the recognition process but with the changing global scenario there is still a possibility for the recognition. Though there is still a long way to go for the recognition process the diaspora along with the homeland Armenians are at the right track.

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The GRFDT works as an academic and policy think tank by engaging national and international experts from academics, practitioners and policy makers in a broad range of areas such as migration policies, transnational linkages of development, human rights, culture, gender to mention a few. In the changing global environment of academic research and policy making, the role of GRFDT will be of immense help to the various stakeholders. Many developing countries cannot afford to miss the opportunity to harness the knowledge revolution of the present era. The engagement of diaspora with various platform need to be reassessed in the present context to engage them in the best possible manner for the development human societies by providing policy in-put at the national and global context.