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**Individuality, Collectivity, Locality and
Transnationality in Armenian Genocide Processing**

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1. Significance of the Topic, Explanation of the Phenomena Mentioned in the Title

The Armenian genocide is one of the well known large-scale collective traumas of the 20th century, one that still has an active impact today. Due to repeated and in many cases similarly structured genocides, the problem has remained pertinent for century. The often forbidden or restricted processing of the trauma is still a serious source of conflicts. The phenomenon has therefore been present in scientific and political discourse in various countries for the past century.

For readers less familiar with the Armenian genocide, its effects are most visible in the field of international politics. The relations of various countries are often determined or influenced by the actual states' approach to the event. Armenian genocide recognition, denial or avoidance may cause conflicts between states with different approaches. This is a quite significant dimension of the aftermath of the genocide. However, this historical trauma does not influence only the actors mentioned above, but first and foremost the communities of survivors and their descendants. Occasionally some international political actors are strongly influenced by the activities of these Armenian communities and vice versa. Naturally, the traumatic event has had the strongest impact on ethnic Armenians.

The mass trauma and exile has led to the memory of the Armenian genocide becoming a core element of post-genocide Armenian diaspora communities' identities. The genocide and further difficulties in the homeland

made the Diaspora communities grow rapidly. Examples of such include Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's war redrawing the Sèvres borders of Turkey and the Soviet occupation of the short-lived democratic Republic of Armenia. These political events were paralleled by a constant humanitarian crisis. This crisis was the main cause of further emigration. According to Levon Abrahamian this post-genocide exile is equivalent to the modern origin myth for the Armenian diaspora. (Abrahamian [2006] p. 328.) Therefore it is not surprising that Armenians sharing the memory of this trauma have tried to react on both individual and collective levels.

Besides influencing Armenian communities and countries in conflict the Armenian genocide also contributed to a serious improvement in international law. Reflecting on this large-scale tragedy as well as the extermination of Assyrians during World War I, Raphael Lemkin created the term *genocide* (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum [2014]). The Armenian genocide later appeared in various UN documents. In The United Nations War Crimes Commission Report of May 28, 1948 and in the report of the the UN Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities issued on July 2 1985, known as the Whitaker report. (Whitaker [1985]) The most recent international legal debate around the Armenian genocide is the *Perinçek v. Switzerland* case at the European Court of Human Rights [ECHR]. The verdict shall be announced around the time of submitting the related dissertation. (ECHR, Registrar of the Court [2015])

Some current examples, also from the political field, are worth mentioning. It is well known to the public that Turkey recalled its ambassador to the Vatican after Pope Francis recognised the Armenian genocide. (Karadeniz, Dolan [2015]) The same step was repeated in the case of the ambassador to

Austria upon recognition by the Austrian Parliament (Austria Presse Agentur [2015]), to that of Brazil after the recognition by the Brazilian Senate (Yackley, Pomeroy [2015]), and to that of Luxembourg similarly because of parliamentary recognition (Agence France-Presse [2015]). Similar problems occurred in 2011 when the French National Assembly voted in favour of criminalising Armenian genocide denial, even though the Senate had not confirmed it at the time (Chrisafis, Hopkins [2011]).¹

The aim of the related dissertation is to analyse the basis of relations among various actors in the field of international politics with a focus on the motives of various Armenian communities. The main question is how final political developments were related to the inner socio-political progress of various Armenian communities and how these paths of progress can be derived from individuals processing the Armenian genocide. The latter constitute the phenomena indicated by the term 'individuality' appearing in the title. Collectivity means the reactions to the Armenian genocide by Armenian organisations or groups of Armenians to be examined in the present dissertation. Exact definitions for the latter expressions are provided further down in the introduction.

Many of these organisations constitute transnational networks, the framework within which they had the possibility to communicate with each other. Under the term 'trans-nationality,' relations are understood as being between Armenian non-state organisations or between Armenian non-state organisations and states and for cases of cross-border relations. (For a summary of the rich sources and conceptual debates on the issues and definitions of

¹ The Senate finally rejected the move.

transnational relations and non-state actors see: Szörényi [2014] p. 15-20) In this particular case Armenian political parties working in the diaspora—besides political parties being involved in Lebanese legislation and the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic [SSR] or future Republic of Armenia – religious organisations, charity and cultural organisations can be mentioned as Armenian non-state organisations. The relations between them will be analysed in detail in the present dissertation.

Most of these organisations have established local branches in the Armenian diaspora. These are not only organisations which aim for the preservation of Armenian identity, but are also subjects of the state in which they are established. Therefore, the environment determined by the host state and host society has a significant impact on their work. This factor is understood under the term ‘locality’ in the title.

2. Scientific Background

Large-scale scientific processing of the topic started only after 1965 in various Armenian communities due to a strong social influence. The socio-political environment in the United States ensured a relatively free and democratic environment for scholars. Nowadays the United States is one of the most significant centres of Armenian genocide research. Albeit there was an Armenian university in Lebanon and an armenological review well before that, research on the Armenian genocide started in the 1970s, relatively late in the country, which was the cultural centre of the Armenian diaspora in the period

when Armenians lacked a free and independent homeland. In the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic the issue depended mostly on the actual political approach. Scholarly research on the Armenian genocide started after the change of regime and the introduction of a new minority protection system in Hungary. Besides the work of the few scholars dealing with the topic also translation of foreign language sources to Hungarian is also present. Scholarly activity concerning the holocaust and other mass traumas also organically competes the research about Armenians.

There have been numerous attempts to prove that there is a connection between individual psychology and certain social and political phenomena throughout human history. Most of the scholars who have prepared such analyses are convinced that the connection is obvious. On the other hand, each approach to this issue depicts the roots of it in different psychological phenomena or different processes between individual and collective phenomena. (Kiss [2011] pp. 18-43.) After World War II Bowlby and Ainsworth created attachment theory, which supposed that the loss of basic family and social ties results in searching for these ties in a broader social context. The initial phenomena leading to the creation of this theory were mass trauma suffered during World War II and the great number of orphans. (Kiss [2011] p. 38) Armenians also went through a mass trauma and started new life after the genocide with masses of orphans. Using the explanation offered by this theory seems plausible for analysing the connection between individual and collective responses of Armenians to the genocide.

New Aspects of the Study, Methodological Framework

On the one hand there were visible phenomena which naturally led scholars to results expressing the cyclical nature of Armenian genocide trauma processing. On the other hand, it also becomes clear that in each cycle described by various scholars, there was at least one community in the leading role and there were always exceptions. For instance, repression, or as it is also named, the period of collective silence did not end at the same time in each community. The third generation revenge movement attracted Armenian youth from many countries, but its centre was certainly the radical wing of the Lebanese Armenian community. Many Armenians also kept their distance from such violent steps even in Lebanon, just as in other countries of the diaspora or in the homeland. A certain kind of solidarity has been present though in each Armenian community.

1. Hypotheses

The question is how the double-faced nature of the process can be exactly characterised and measured, and what exactly internal and external effects influenced the developments of processing. There are three main factors to be taken into account: the systems of the host societies, the power of Armenian identity and the historical background in which Armenians found themselves in different periods after the genocide.

1. The different ways in which host societies accepted the Armenian communities influenced them to follow diverse directions in genocide trauma processing.

The way of being accepted as an independent variable contains public opinion on Armenians in the host country, the relations of majority and Armenian minority society and their institutions. These factors will be analysed in order to show how much the social, political, economic and cultural environment provided a chance for local Armenians to express their opinions at a social level. It is a question of how and whether the four dimensions listed above ensured Armenians' ability to establish Armenian NGOs, cultural associations, press products, schools, institutions of social science and religious, political, lobby and revenge organisations. The function of such minority institutions differs from that of the host societies' in that beside their ordinary activity they have the extra aim of preserving Armenian identity.

As already mentioned, there have been several signs of solidarity between different Armenian communities. Such reactions are possible for two reasons. The first is the common experience which caused similarities. The second is communication between Armenian communities. It contributed to ensuring that the memory of genocide did not fade. The latter statement suggests the second hypothesis.

2. The more intensive communication the present between Armenian communities, the more similarly they acted.

Possibilities of communication can be measured through pan-Armenian press or publishing, inter-community mass-migrations, social and political events which were organised by more communities. These might also influence the ways of processing the trauma by approximating reactions.

Surveying Armenians in the United States in the late 1970s, Donald E. Miller and Lorna Touryan Miller found that six individual processing strategies

exist. They conducted another study in Armenia and Mountainous Karabagh in the early 1990s. They again reflected on the mass trauma of the genocide in addition to the Karabagh conflict, and the 1988 earthquake in northern Armenia. They found the same results in these different Armenian communities in different periods, related to various traumas. They also note that these traumas had endangered the same human and social values. (Miller, Touryan Miller [2003] pp. 32, 79, 81-82, 103.) Thus it is highly probable that these individual processing strategies are present in each Armenian community affected by the traumas mentioned above.

It is highly possible that collective traumas have similar effects in each human being and in each group subjected to such traumas. We cannot excluded the possibility that the memory of later traumas affecting a certain group – let it be ethnic or social – is tied to earlier traumas either. In their studies Miller and Touryan Miller only surveyed Armenians, and their definitions are presently applied to this specific ethnic group. Still, it is highly probable that similar responses to various traumas are much more general than those described when particularly characterising groups of ethnic Armenians.

The supposable existence of all individual approaches in contrast to their apparently periodic and geographically different manifestations on the collective level suggests the third hypothesis.

3. If the experience had the same effects at the individual level in different host countries and historical periods, but different results at the collective level, it suggests that the demand for processing and the potential of collective responses following all six approaches were present in each Armenian community, irrespective of their location or social-political-historical

background. On the other hand the ways of collective processes differed by host countries.

Having examined the first two hypotheses, it will become clear which effects were caused by host societies and which resulted from Armenian common experience. Based on this examination the third hypothesis can be also reasonable and confirmable.

2. The definitional framework

Before analysing the results of collective processing, individual processing strategies must be listed and defined first. These were examined by Miller and Touryan Miller through interviews conducted long after the genocide and describing the events of the genocide and the survivors' views on it, thereby these are named narrative reactions. This label is going to be analysed and explained in detail together with the strategies. The primary psychological reactions of survivors before they started interpreting the trauma for themselves were mostly symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder [PTSD]. PTSD after similarly massive traumas also influences the following generations. Survivors frequently have problems in establishing normal relations with their children. The next generation is either considered reparation for the lost lives or as the ones who will take revenge. (Molnár [2005] p. 536) In the latter case it must be noted that international recognition and jurisdiction in the given case most probably eliminates the reasons for revenge. This can be observed in the Jewish case, for example. If the first generation chooses repression and transmits it to the second, the third generation may break with its ancestors. This shift may

result in radical responses often called third generation syndrome. (Molnár [2005] p. 725.)

In the specific case of Armenian survivors, as Miller and Touryan Miller have observed [1.] **avoidance and repression** mean that the survivor is not able to deal with the traumatic experience. This may also mean a conscious avoidance of occasions that can re-evoked the experience. [2.] **Explanation and rationalisation** is the chosen strategy if the survivor starts to find rational explanations of the disaster. Examples can vary from belief in a divine plan or the historical fate of the nation to rational explanations. [3.] **Resignation and despair** can be observed if a given survivor, confronted with the relentlessness of the traumatic experience, consciously refuses to speak about it. In contrast to conscious repression, this does not mean avoidance, but active refusal of dealing with the trauma and pressuring others to refuse it as well. The author of the present dissertation also lists under this strategy the phenomenon cases where a given person refuses to deal with the trauma for other reasons. [4.] **Reconciliation and forgiveness** works analogously with the healed wound. This means that the survivor still feels the pain caused by the experience, but thinks optimistically about the future. This strategy does not necessarily mean reconciliation with the perpetrators, but rather with the traumatic experience. [5.] **Outrage and anger** is an extreme feeling of anger although it does not lead to physical aggression. Usually it has verbal manifestations. The last strategy is [6.] **revenge and restitution**, whereby a given survivor uses physically aggressive means to deal with the experience. Miller and Touryan Miller also list symbolic aggression under this definition. For example, this is the case where survivors consider negative phenomena in the perpetrators' lives a form of divine revenge. (Miller, Touryan Miller [1991] pp. 191–199, [1999] pp. 158-

160.) While such symbolic revenge does not have physical manifestations, the author of this study considers it outrage and anger. These strategies may appear independently from each other and do not create a scale. Hereinafter the usage of one word from Miller's and Touryan Miller's double-worded expressions is equal to their original term. The term rage shall also be considered equal to outrage and anger.

A seventh reaction is introduced by the author of the related dissertation, based on Card's definition of genocide.² If genocide is the destruction of social vitality of a given group then reconstructing this vitality explicitly in return for what is lost, i.e., social, political, intellectual and institutional networks and activities, for instance, then these are a reaction to the genocide. If the survivors or the succeeding generations try to reach peaceful jurisdiction or reach the recognition of the event, including official commemoration by the host state and condemnation of the genocide, these can be also considered [7] **reconstruction**. Aida Alaryarian also confirms similar tendencies of trauma processing and commemorating in other fields and in general as well. (Alayarian [2008] p. 54.)

The base for analysing individual responses are collections of individual interviews, while examining collective reactions are based on the responses found in social life, ie. in literary works, the press, activities of charity and church organisations, education and scientific institutions, in politics ie. In the activity of Armenian political parties, lobby and revenge groups and in the official party-state approach.

² According to Card, genocide is an action that aims to destroy a certain community's social reviving potential. (Card, Marsoobian [2007] pp. 10, 69.)

Taking into consideration the results derived from testing the first two hypotheses, it becomes clear which factors were responsible for which collective output. Thereby it will become possible to state whether each of the examined factors contributed to the demand or the means of articulation of trauma processing. Thus, the truth value of the third hypothesis also lies in the factors proving the first and the second.

3. Temporal and geographical scope of examination

Four Armenian communities in countries with different political and social backgrounds are examined in the related dissertation. Its aims and frameworks would be exceeded if all Armenian communities were examined. Parts of the sample are Armenians of the Armenian SSR, Lebanon, the United States and Hungary.

Concerning the temporal scope of the examination, the starting point is the collapse of the Republic of Armenia in 1920. From that moment on Armenians were incorporated as a minority by all host countries. Despite their ethnic majority in the Armenian SSR they constituted a political minority in the Soviet Union. The latter had minor influence on the centralised imperial system. This also means that they had to follow the politics of Moscow, hence they were not allowed to outline and realise their own political actions.

4. Results of the Analysis

Hereby a general overview of the verification of the hypotheses is provided. In addition, further methodological suggestions shall be made for

future analysis of the same or similar issues. The experience of the author of the present dissertation suggests various specifications and new questions connected to the hypotheses, terms and methods used while completing the analysis.

Hypothesis 1

The hypothesis was verified in each period. Limitations to it were most frequently the lack of data. In case of the first generation revenge movement one more serious limitation to the validity of verification was present. There was no other similar movement to which Operation Nemesis could have been compared. Still, locality of the assassins and certain phases of operation all depended on the given environment in host countries.

(1. a.) Collective responses to the trauma were mostly present in environments where establishing associations and various institutions, such as schools, publishing companies, political parties, etc., was allowed for Armenians. Naturally these institutions could become the sources of collective responses. These could also organise the sharing of individual responses for a broader audience.

Generally, **(1. b) financial security also supported the appearance of collective responses to the genocide.** In countries and periods where Armenians struggled for their everyday financial well-being or physical security, the quantity of responses was much lower than in the former case. Such examples can be the United States between the two World Wars or Lebanon during the second civil war. As the example of the Armenian community in Hungary frequently showed, **(1. c) the size and political and social influence and significance of Armenians in the host countries also influenced the quantity of collective responses.**

(1. d) The social and political system in the host countries also influenced their Armenian communities and the Soviet communist environment influenced the ways of processing in the homeland too. The most obvious examples in following the host society's solutions were the evolution of Armenian third generation revenge organisations in Lebanon, where such violent actions also became part of everyday life in the country. In this case, following new norms appearing in the host environment was voluntary. Similarly, adapting the speakout about the Armenian genocide in the 1960s in the United States to social and racial equality movements indicated a similar process. The latter also show that **(1. e) adaptation to the major social processes could raise the effectiveness of Armenians' message to the host society.**

Besides these two examples of voluntary adaptation, several processes from Hungary and the Armenian SSR indicate that **(1. f) adaptation could also have been motivated by force.** It turned out in the 1930s in Soviet Armenia that the memory of the genocide must be repressed at the collective level. Later, during the Khrushchev thaw reconciliation became the processing strategy accepted by the party-state. Opting for other strategies would have resulted in exile, imprisonment or the labelling of one as an enemy of society. In Hungary, where social and political order was determined according to Soviet norms, it was rational to apply genocide processing strategies already accepted in the Soviet Union. Emphasising the existence and accepted nature of the latter, official documents and correspondence with state institutions also became crucial for the Armenian Catholic Parish in Budapest. Some documents of the parish included defence from possible claims against clerical individuals and the institution itself. This is indirect proof of how the religious organisation was

treated among others in Hungary, and also how proving the protection of communist values could be realised in these documents. In a political system pursuing religions and religious institutions to follow principles accepted in the Soviet Union and emphasise them was not only a feasible solution but also physical protection.

The key idea here is that **(1. g) not even direct regulation for trauma processing was needed** to achieve different collective responses in the Armenian communities observed. **The mere way Armenians were accepted and treated in their host country or the host environment in the Soviet Union resulted in a variety of collective trauma processing strategies.** Even in the latter totalitarian regime, Armenians were able to find a way that was feasible and acceptable within the ideologically determined social and political environment.

An interesting result can be also observed concerning literary and political reactions in the United States in the 1980s and Domonkos Korbuly's book on the Armenian question in Hungary from the 1930s. From these reactions it becomes clear **(1. h) that if Turkish denialism was strongly present in a given host state and there was at least a certain level of freedom of speech granted, Armenians actively proffered counteractions.** This resulted in the struggle for reconciliation in the United States in the 1980s and in Domonkos Korbuly's harsh statements about the evolution of politically supported pro-Turkish public opinion in Hungary. He did not use the word recognition, but practically encouraged his readers to be aware of the Armenian genocide and to raise solidarity towards Armenians.

The above-mentioned facts suggest that host states and societies, or a centrally shaped host environment in the case of the Armenian SSR, had a

central role in paving the path for Armenian genocide trauma processing, both for the possibility and also for the directions of it. Even without directly regulating the life of Armenian communities or genocide trauma processing, the basic social and political establishment of the examined countries could effectively influence the evolution of collective processing strategies. Voluntary and forced adaptation both resulted in a variety of collective trauma processing strategies.

Hypothesis 2

In contrast to the first hypothesis, results of the analyses attempting to validate the second led to less obvious results. The hypothesis was found to be true in the case of first and third generation aggression. It also proved to be partly true in the phase of collective repression specifically concerning the effect of **(2. a) the Great Home Turn** and how it **could cause approximating views of ‘re’-patriated Armenians and locals of the Armenian SSR**. The fact that communication of the Armenian community in Hungary was not intensive with Armenians from elsewhere resulted in a processing strategy completely different from other communities. It may also have partly been caused by the lack of knowledge about existing means of trauma processing. However, even in this case it is highly probable that **(2. b) collective repression in the United States and the Armenian SSR was not caused by communication. The temporal proximity of the trauma and socio-political circumstances discouraging other collective processing strategies in two different ways in the two countries was a more significant force.**

(2. c) In other cases it proved to be true that the social and especially political environment of each community, and especially pressure on them, was much stronger than the power of inter-community communication. This statement was true in the case of the Armenian Catholic Parish in Hungary, which chose to represent reconciliation and adapted the commemorations to communist anniversaries not mainly because they knew the reactions represented in the Soviet Armenian public. The role of political pressure on them was much more forceful: relying on processing strategies of the home state was only a feasible way already adapted to the communist party-state environment. Naturally, they had to know about collective processing in the Armenian SSR, but the low intensity of such kind of communication was most probably enough only for finding a way to adapt to the host state's needs.

(2. d) There was a broad scale of communication networks ensuring that Armenians in the home state and in the diaspora could exchange their thoughts and information. In the examination period these networks were represented by Armenian press products, publishers, political parties, charity organisations, cultural and sport associations, church organisations and even revenge organisations. These ensured a transnational flow of information and ideas between communities. The overview of the analysis of this hypothesis shows that **those networks that preferred very different opinions and ideologies from other networks could not always effectively 'convince' organisations preferring another type of response to the genocide if the values and principles were not similar in each network of organisations.** There were exceptions, for example, in how the Dashnak party created a revenge organisation during the second Lebanese civil war in response

to the creation of ASALA, while the principles and even sometimes the targets of the two organisations were totally different.

Another issue to be examined further concern the fact that the flow of information globally was not constant in the examination period. It appears that in the 1970s, when mass media started to quickly process news for television broadcast, an indirect boost was given to Armenians to exchange information and experience others' views about ways of processing. The third generation revenge movement even used this as a tool. The same kind of intensive and rapid worldwide broadcasting also created solidarity with the homeland in the case of the northern Armenian earthquake and the Karabakh war. Still, in the latter case, **solidarity was not enough to create similar collective trauma processing strategies in the homeland, in the United States and Lebanon.**³ Therefore, such indirect channels of spreading information shall be considered in a further analysis, i.e., not only those of the Armenian organisations. In contrast to these examples, in the case of Operation Nemesis there were no such news providers available, **but the power of the trauma was enough to create solidarity towards the organisation.**

To sum up, the examination and partial rejection of the second hypothesis raises further questions. The above-mentioned issues may serve as bases for further analyses. Examining the questions raised by partial rejection may shed light from new perspectives on the transnational networks of Armenian organisations and communication within and between them.

³ Only the need for Armenian solidarity is known in Hungary from this period, trauma processing strategies – if they existed – can be found in documents of the Armenian Catholic Parish of Budapest not yet catalogised.

Hypothesis 3

Verification of the third hypothesis was possible in each case. Besides some cases where there were limited amounts of data about individual responses available, several types of trauma processing strategies were shown within each examined Armenian community at the individual level. This suggests that various responses at the collective level could possibly have been present, even all those existing at the individual level. Still in each period of examination only a part of trauma processing strategies appeared at the collective level. This frequently meant only one in a given host country or in the home country. This shows that the appearance of some strategies or one certain collective trauma processing strategy at the collective level is not a merely occasional result. It has been stated concerning hypothesis 1 that various social and political environments in the examined countries resulted in various collective processing strategies. It also became clear from the analyses completed that **(3. a) at the individual level processing strategies other than massively apparent ones were also maintained.**

(3. b) Besides the first generation of survivors it could be observed that the following generations also felt the need for trauma processing, even in collective forms. Many of the protesters at the 1965 demonstrations in Yerevan were children of survivors, as has been mentioned. Also, numerous members of third generation revenge groups – as the name indicates – were grandchildren of survivors. In Hungary even **Armenians who were not relatives of survivors**, such as Father Kádár, **also felt the need to deal with the issue.**

Even if host countries' and the home country's environment influenced the types and sometimes even the quantity of obviously articulated responses, **(3. c) there has been no evidence during the examination period that demand for trauma processing was totally absent from any given community**, including Armenians living in the strictest totalitarian regimes. The demand has also been independent from generational differences. Therefore it is apparent that demand for processing the trauma caused by the genocide has been present in each community and obviously existed in each society examined.

Contrary to this, the ways Armenians realised trauma processing at the collective level were clearly influenced by the environment where the given community of Armenians lived. Many examples were touched upon when discussing the results concerning Hypothesis 1. It was also mentioned that the types of collective responses were shaped by the norms of the given host or home state's society's norms, the political environment, their way of accepting Armenians and economic conditions in the given country. These factors contributed to achieve uniformity or filtering of collective responses to various extents in each country observed. The uniforming force of host environments appears much stronger than that of intercommunity communication or solidarity in shaping collective responses.

Following the issues concerning the hypotheses, suggestions and new directions for dealing with Armenian genocide processing will be described. The final chapter also attempts to reflect on practical issues in connection with the Armenian genocide's aftermath, handling mass traumas and especially man-made traumas. At the time of completion of the present dissertation Armenian communities, various cultural, political, scholarly, religious and social

organisations, associations, local administrative bodies and states are commemorating the hundredth anniversary of the beginning of the Armenian Genocide. New directions of the results of the centennial commemoration that are related to the present study are also introduced.

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