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Nicole M. Campos

University of San Francisco, nmcampos@usfca.edu

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Historical Trauma and Refugee Reception: Armenians and Syrian-Armenian Co-Ethnics

Nicole M. Campos

University of San Francisco

November 23, 2016

Master of Arts in International Studies

**HISTORICAL TRAUMA AND REFUGEE RECEPTION:
ARMENIANS AND SYRIAN-ARMENIAN CO-ETHNICS**

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

in

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

by

NICOLE M. CAMPOS

November 23, 2016

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this thesis project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

APPROVED:

Lindsay Gifford
Advisor

Date

Academic Director

Date

Dean of Arts and Sciences

Date

Abstract

This thesis considers the ways in which Armenian history has influenced integration of Syrian-Armenian refugees into Armenia due to the ongoing Syrian War. Ethnic Armenian outlooks were analyzed relative to the influx of Syrian refugees, particularly co-ethnic Syrian-Armenians. Field work in Armenia found a sustained cultural impression of Armenians' Soviet membership and genocide. Findings suggest that recognizing the importance of history as it may or may not affect migration reception policies and attitudes is important to developing sustainable resettlement environments, at least until repatriation or third-country resettlement becomes an option to migrants. Ultimately, this thesis argues that more attention must be paid to the impact of delaying comprehensive migration reform on states with struggling economies and enduring concerns regarding historical trauma.

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Part One: Introduction

One out of every 113 persons on Earth, just under one percent of the world's population, is considered internally displaced, an asylum seeker, or a refugee; if these people were to form a country, it would be the 21st largest on the planet (McKirdy, 2016). The highest number of externally displaced people originates from Syria as a result of the ongoing Syrian War; a total of about 11 million Syrian people are both internally and externally displaced, equating to more than 50 percent of the Syrian population (McKirdy, 2016; Ardhaldjian, 2015). Further, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), over 4.8 million Syrians have registered as refugees since 2011 (2016a).

The top host of refugees total is Syria's northern neighbor, Turkey, with more than 2.5 million displaced Syrians (McKirdy, 2016). One of the largest hosts of Syrian refugees per capita is the neighboring Republic of Armenia (European Union (EU), 2016). However, given the lack of international aid and the country's own lackluster socioeconomic situation, the Armenian government faces considerable challenges to the resettlement of incoming Syrian refugees. The existing programs and integration strategies are not enough to absorb the large population into the labor force and have proven unable to adequately "satisfy the needs of the socially disadvantaged" (Atamian, 2016). As such, this thesis aims to illuminate the challenges facing Armenian hosts as the state independently grapples with the immense task, international obligation, and historical responsibility to support incoming Syrian refugees.

Presently, an estimated 80,000 ethnic Armenians, descendants of survivors of the 1915 Armenian Genocide, have become displaced for the second time in a century

because of the Syrian War (inhabitants; whereas, in Germany, there is one Syrian refugee per 1,000 German inhabitants (European Friends of Armenia (EuFoA), 2015). Of this population, 20,000 refugees, a small fraction of the total 4.8 million, have migrated to Armenia so far, making the country the third largest host to Syrians per capita (EU, 2016). With a local population of three million Armenian citizens, the current count is equivalent to six Syrian refugees per 1,000 Armenian (EuFoA, 2016). Among the 20,000 Syrians are 17,000 ethnically Armenian refugees (ACT Alliance, 2016). An important consideration to make about Syrian-Armenians migrating to Armenia is that these co-ethnics seem to be using Armenia as a final destination rather than a transit point before reaching another host country (Österreichisches Rotes Kreuz, 2016).

A welcoming attitude on behalf of the state is portrayed by its newly revised migration legislation. As a result of recent legislative amendments, a majority of the Syrian-Armenian refugees resettling in Armenia has chosen to obtain Armenian citizenship or residence permits; in fact, of the 17,000 Syrian-Armenian migrants moving into Armenia, approximately 15,000 have been granted Armenian citizenship and only about 630 migrants have obtained official refugee status (EuFoA, 2015). Due to this and other similar legislative modifications, Armenia has managed to avoid placing incoming refugees in camps and actively works to integrate newcomers by providing them with basic needs like housing, healthcare, and education (Ardhaldjian, 2015).

The largely accepting attitude that Armenia enshrines starkly diverges from that of many states in the region and around the world. In the region, there are responses like that in Hungary, which has closed borders, raised fences, and installed razor wire, all in the name of national economic, religious, and security protections (Kavic & Sekularac,

2015). In France, another dialogue occurs; this time, it regards the preservation of French culture in the face of admitting Islamist Syrians (Investor's Business Daily, 2015). In the United States, President-elect Donald Trump has proposed the creation of a Muslim registry modeled after the policy that failed to identify any domestic terrorists during the George W. Bush administration (Terkel, 2016). Despite the drastically negative response to Syrian refugees worldwide, the Armenian government has employed various strategies to cope with the comparatively large influx of refugees since the very start of the crisis, seemingly in part because of its own history tied to displacement and genocide.

However, although the impact of the Armenian genocide on the people has created a sense of togetherness and strength among Armenians and members of the Armenian diaspora, the lack of international recognition and support of the recorded genocide in Armenia has dramatically impacted Armenians' ability to heal from their intergenerational wounds (Alayarian, 2008). According to limited research specifically investigating Armenian transgenerational trauma, the phenomenon "has a multigenerational impact within families and communities and affects the feeling of membership and belonging within that community" (Mangassarian, 2016, p. 371). Therefore, it is critical to examine the ways in which trauma may shape current generations of Armenians, Armenian state policy, and Armenian host and diasporic relations.

It is also important to consider that Armenia's GDP is estimated at 10.5 billion USD with a declining growth rate of 2.9 percent (World Bank, 2015). This is ten times lower than the European Union's average GDP (EuFoA, 2015). Additionally, Armenia's unemployment rate is currently 17 percent (up from 16 percent in 2014) and the average

annual income is about 8,000 USD annually. The lack of access to jobs and affordable housing affects Syrians and Syrian-Armenians at a disproportional rate because, as refugees, they generally arrive in host countries with little to no resources or savings and subsequently spend most of their funds on rent (UNHCR, 2014). These economic realities currently pose significant difficulties to the state's ability to independently and adequately fund programs that manage the continuing flow of refugees.

Armenia's economic capacity is further tested by a general lack of positive international attention as well as a severe lack of humanitarian funding. For instance, Armenia has been gaining attention due to popular culture celebrities like the Kardashian family and films like *The Promise*; however, Kim Kardashian brought the Armenian genocide into the American limelight because of an ad featuring the genocide denial; *The Promise* continues to face distribution challenges due to severe anti-genocide sentiment worldwide (Bryant, 2016; Lang, 2016). Controversy and confusion about historical truth continues to plague the state as it makes serious pleas for economic assistance in the face of the Syrian refugee crisis (Hooton, 2016). In that vein, from 2012 through 2015, the United States granted five billion USD in humanitarian assistance specifically to Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq, and Egypt; 11 million USD has been allocated to the remaining "affected region," presumably including Armenia (US Department of State, 2016). Further, USAID has provided Armenia with just over 370,000 USD in humanitarian aid; however, the funding is largely designated for environmental disasters and agricultural emergencies (2015). With more positive political media attention to the Armenian state, it is possible that the push for international support to the country could increase.

Because of this severe lack of international financial support, the Armenian government has requested 6.4 million USD to help fill the 48 percent funding gap required to support incoming refugees (UNHCR, 2015). Meanwhile, grassroots organizations like the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) and the Syrian Armenian Relief Fund (SARF) have begun addressing humanitarian needs by raising more than 1.2 million USD during a telethon and calling for 10 million USD more from the US government (Atamian, 2016). Considering the ratio of refugees to local inhabitants, this thesis argues that Armenia requires much more international support from non-Armenians than it is currently receiving in order to sustain aid to Syrian arrivals.

In all, examining the ways in which Armenia is managing the influx of Syrian refugees is significant because Armenia is one of the largest hosts of Syrian refugees in the world. If the Armenian state cannot sustain the aid to incoming migrants, the people will likely seek alternative resettlement locations. Further, understanding race and ethnic relations between migrants and host populations seems key to determining the extent to which citizens' fears become actualized; whether locals' fears are rooted in logic is irrelevant because the apprehension they feel can guide their opinions and actions which, in turn, guide the state's reception policies. Local fears become an especially important consideration when the state exudes a welcoming demeanor despite its citizens' domestic grievances regarding problems like unemployment and other resource constraints. The tension that can build between host community members and the incoming migrant population must be monitored and mediated. Further, considering the challenges of resettlement between groups who are not co-ethnics appears common throughout the

forced displacement literature. As such, this thesis works to help fill the gap that examines the experiences of refugees moving into co-ethnic host communities.

Methodology

This thesis is supported by field research conducted in the spring of 2016 in Tsaghkadzor and Yerevan, Armenia. The location was chosen by the Global Village organization, which took potentially violent protests regarding the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh territory into serious consideration. Some participants were recruited based on friendships created during the principal investigator's volunteer events. Others were recruited through a local connection in San Francisco, California. Interviews began in July 2016, after IRB approval was obtained.

In all, a total of eight interviews were conducted with ethnic Armenians living in and outside Armenia. Participants were asked to sign consent forms and return copies via email. Semi-structured interviews were conducted primarily using Skype software and transcripts were created from audio-recordings. Questions focused on participants' thoughts and opinions about Armenian history as well as the Syrian refugee crisis; these questions included, 'How does your knowledge of Armenian history make you feel' , 'What do you know about the situation of Armenians in Syria?' , and 'How do you feel about Syrian-Armenians migrating to Armenia or resettling there?' (See Appendix A for a complete list of the interview questions.) The interviews lasted from 20 minutes to over an hour, depending on how much the participant was willing to discuss.

In addition to conducting interviews with ethnic Armenians, ethnographic observations of locals and Armenian culture were recorded on camera and through daily note-taking. More detailed descriptions of the participants and research are included in

the Field Work section. In all, the research aims to provide a deeper understanding to the underlying emotions and attitudes that ethnic Armenians retain about their history and their relationships with members of the Armenian diaspora. The research question of this thesis asks specifically, ‘How does Armenian history and cultural identity impact Syrian-Armenian refugee integration in Armenia on a state and local level?’

Part Two of this thesis overviews relevant Armenian history, including recent cultural developments. This section also includes a more comprehensive synopsis of the Armenian state’s response to the Syrian refugee crisis. Part Three describes the literature relevant to Syrian-Armenian integration into Armenia. The major themes discussed include Armenia’s transition from existing as part of the Ottoman Empire and the Soviet Union, to Armenian Independence, diasporic relations, refugee host reception patterns, and historical trauma recovery. Part Four incorporates the field work in Armenia and Part Five discusses the complex and contradictory dynamics between the literature review topics as they pertain to Syrian-Armenian integration in Armenia. Part Six contains concluding remarks, along with a discussion of this study’s limitations and avenues for further research.

Chapter Two: Background

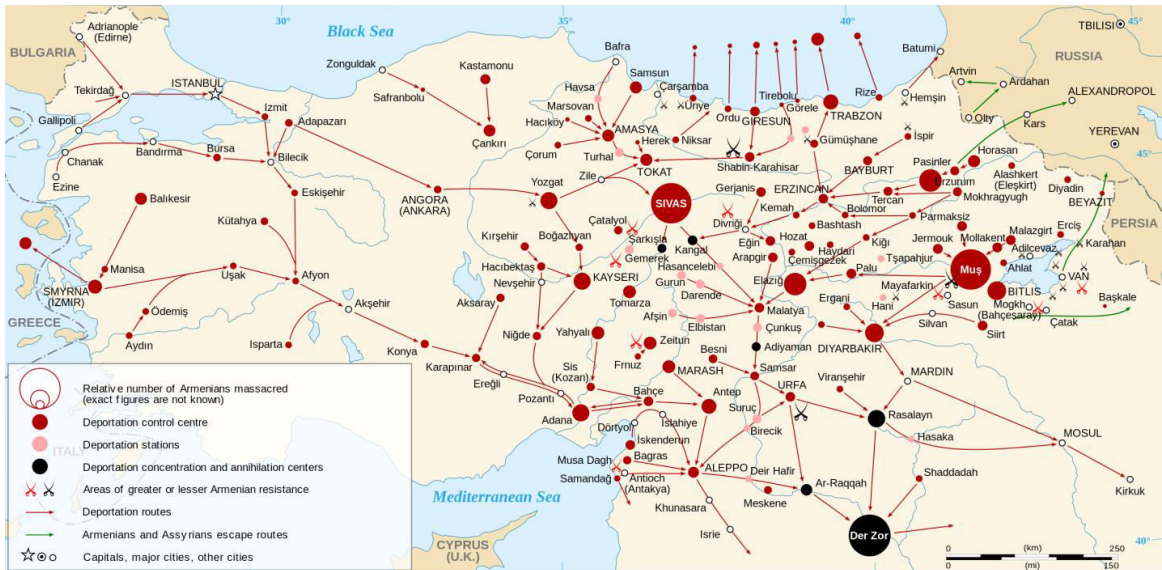
The modern Armenian experience is a long journey comprised of years of tragic atrocities and survival against seemingly insurmountable odds. Through a series of border changes and disputes with neighboring nations, the current Armenian government is facing further challenges with regard to the current Syrian War. To follow is a brief overview of nearly a century of history relating to Armenians' expulsion from and return to Armenian territories.

Armenian Genocide

According to the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute archives, between 1914 and 1923, ethnic Armenians were systematically relocated, deported, and killed after years of failed negotiations between the Ottoman State and Armenians living within Ottoman borders regarding government reforms and promotion of Armenian equality in the Islamic empire (2013). While the Ottoman Empire struggled to maintain power in the shifting political landscape following the First World War, the government incited suspicions that the better-educated Christian Armenians sought to seize political control. Claiming a threat to security, in 1914 the Ottomans declared a war against all Christians and their allies, specifically targeting Armenian writers, journalists, doctors, clergymen, and intellectuals. At the same time, a new government known as the "Young Turks" called for nationalization of the state to be achieved through the removal of all non-Turks.

The Young Turks' intentional extermination of the Armenian people involved the mass murder of children, women, and the elderly through concentration camps and death

marches into the Red and Black Seas and the Syrian and Iraqi deserts, as seen in the figure below.

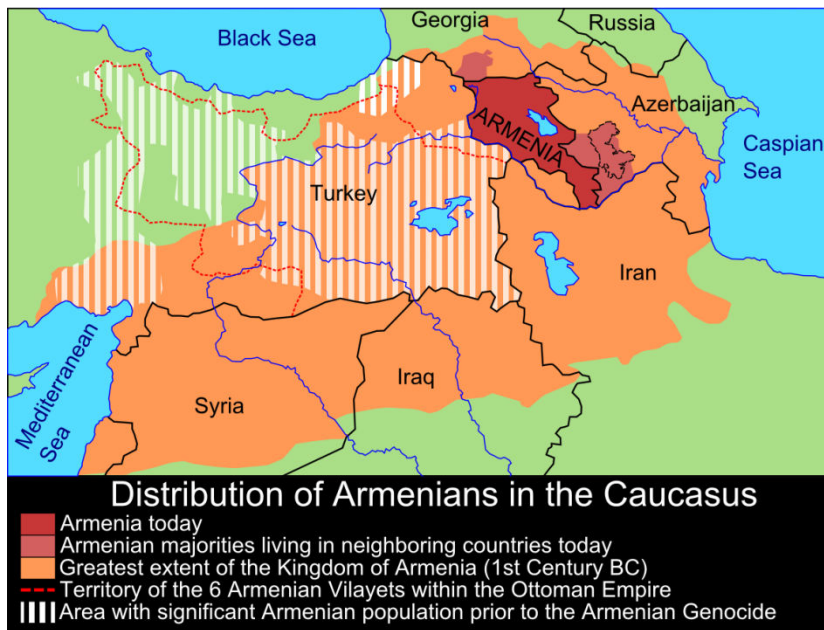


Mapping Genocide (armenica.org, 2013).

While tens of thousands of women and children were forced to convert to Islam, thousands of others were subjected to extreme forms of violence, including rape, forced marriage, forced prostitution, sexual slavery, sexual mutilation, and torture (Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, 2013).

Many interviewees for this thesis relayed their family histories that are congruent with such powerful reports. One participant, age 24, described how his great grandfather's older brother, a teen during the genocide, tried hiding from the Turks. When they found him, they brutally beat him; they arrived to attack him another day and he ran fearfully and jumped into a well for safety. The well was empty and he died. The participant's grandfather, then a child, discovered his body. When the child was placed in an orphanage, he could not speak anything but his brother's name. So, the staff added the Armenian suffix "yan" to the end of it and created the family's current surname.

An estimated two million Armenians were living in the Ottoman Empire prior to the massacre. During the Armenian genocide, roughly 1.5 million Armenians were killed. Unable to return to their former homes, most Armenians resettled predominantly in the Middle East, Europe, and the United States (Laycock, 2016). According to the President of the Republic of Armenia’s website, the Armenian diaspora now comprises more than ten million Armenians spread throughout 100 countries, not including the three million that inhabit Armenia (2016). The largest Armenian diaspora resides in the Russian Federation, standing at about two million people (Russian Federal State Statistics Service, 2013). Presently, more ethnic Armenians live in diaspora than in Armenia itself. The figure below depicts the massive population reduction Armenians underwent because of the genocide.



Distribution of Armenians in the Caucasus (Jones, 2015).

Armenian Independence

The First Republic of Armenia was formed with the fall of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, almost immediately following the Armenian genocide. The map below

illustrates the territory Armenians claimed in the wake of World War I. The territory appears markedly larger than that of Armenia's current borders (as seen in the above figure).



The first Armenian Republic (edmaps.com, 2016).

The state existed for two years before being invaded and defeated by the Soviet's Red Army; the First Republic of Armenia joined the Soviet Union and became the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1922 (BBC, 2012). In 1936, Joseph Stalin, leader of the Soviet Union ordered the Great Purge, or the Great Terror; seeking unwavering loyalty to the Union, Stalin ordered the mass murder and deportation of any who might threaten the stability of the government, including writers, intellectuals, and artists (CQ Researcher, 2016). A similar internal effort occurred during the 1941 Great Patriotic War, which claimed more than 175,000 Armenian lives (Payaslian, 2007). For the duration of its Soviet membership, Armenia remained an underdeveloped region, lacking sufficient communication systems, transportation networks, and agricultural investment (Payaslian, 2007).

Stalin, however, was able to maintain positive relations with Armenians by authorizing mass repatriation of Armenians back to Armenian territory from 1921 to 1948; this resulted in the largest-ever repatriation effort for Armenia, returning 135,000 Armenians to their traditional homeland (Payaslian, 2007). Armenians were offered various incentives to return even though local inhabitants openly resented the idea of sharing little resources left after WWII (Bournoutian, 2006). In the end, Armenia's economy was bolstered heavily by this move, largely due to the investment in industry (Payaslian, 2007). By the late 1970s, Armenia's peasant economy transformed into one of industry (Bournoutian, 2006).

To garner further support from Armenians, Stalin simultaneously promised the territory of Karabakh to Armenia; however, Stalin also promised the territory to Azerbaijan as a strategic move to please Turkish diplomats (Fisk, 2016). After the Soviet Union collapsed in 1987, the newly independent Republic of Armenia continued to dispute borders with Azerbaijan regarding the territory and they ultimately descended into war in 1988, claiming 30,000 lives on both sides (BBC, 2012; Nigmatulina, 2015). Remarkably, Armenia is one of only ten Soviet Union successor states that have managed to avoid civil war (Fearon, Laitin, 2006). However, Armenia persistently engages in clashes over the region of Nagorno-Karabakh. Since a 1995 ceasefire, Armenia has continued to occupy and protect the region, an effort which has only been "adding additional strain to the post-communist, post-war economy" (Nigmatulina, 2015).

Through it all, Armenians retain a uniquely Russian "mentality" and political connection that stems from a shared history during the Soviet era (Cavoukian, 2013). To this day, Armenians speak Russian as their second language, host Russian cultural events,

and erect monuments to commemorate fallen Russian soldiers who fought for Armenian freedom (Mkhoyan, 2016). In fact, many elderly Armenians refer to the period under Soviet rule as the “golden age”; others, conversely, see the current Armenian government’s corruption and lack of transparency as legacies of the Soviet Union (Mkrtchyan & Melkumyan, 2011). None will argue, though, against the impactful nature of Armenia’s Soviet membership on Armenian national culture and policy.

The Armenian Diaspora in Syria

Although Armenians’ presence in Syria can be dated back to the first century BC, Turkey’s targeted massacre and deportation of Armenians in 1915 appears to have laid the foundation for an Armenian enclave in Syria, called *Hayy al-Arman* (Ar., Armenian Quarter), that was home to approximately 220,000 Armenians (Bulghadaryan & Sindelar, 2012). By the time the Syrian War began, the Armenian population consisted of about 100,000 people, many of whom lived and worked in Aleppo (Harutyunyan, 2016). Although they were a minority group, they contributed to the demographic and cultural diversity of the Syrian state.

Armenians appear to have greatly cherished Syria’s generally “merciful embrace” after the trauma of the Armenian genocide (Bulghadaryan & Sindelar, 2012). The surviving Armenian diaspora worked hard to rebuild their lives while retaining Armenian culture and traditions despite their tragic past; Middle East historian at the University of California, Davis, Keith David Watenpaugh, notes that the first generation of Armenians in Syria succeeded in launching the Armenian General Benevolent Union and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, which supported Armenian businesses for jewelry and carpets, hospitals, libraries, Armenian cultural and language centers, theaters, and

sports clubs (Bulghadaryan & Sindelar, 2012). Furthermore, Firdus Zakaryan, the head of the Armenian Ministry of Diaspora commission for Syrian refugees described Syrian-Armenians as “long-established and law-abiding Syrian citizens – wealthy merchants, craftsmen, doctors” (Harutyunyan, 2016). Although many perceived the new Armenian quarter as playing a positive role in Aleppo, others strongly disagreed; this sentiment became more and more evident during the lead-up to the Syrian War.

The Assad Regimes and the War in the Syrian Arab Republic

Largely a product of the Ottoman “millet practice” and subsequent French colonization, the Syrian state served as a diverse yet “overwhelmingly Muslim” sanctuary for small religious and ethnic groups, including Alawis, Ismailis, Yazidis, Kurds, Jews, Druze, and Armenians (Tas, 2014, p. 498; Polk, 2013). Amidst Syrians’ struggle to define statehood emerged the Assad regime; the Assad family’s roots originate from the Alawi minority, a group that considered itself “the chosen people” (Polk, 2013). Rather than encouraging division between minority groups and the Sunni majority (74%), Hafez al-Assad courted minority groups (including Alawis and Armenians) and followed the Ba’ath (Resurrection) Party’s secular, nationalist movement to power (Central Intelligence Agency, 2016; Bulghadaryan & Sindelar, 2012; Polk, 2013). One example of Assad’s efforts is when he worked to change the Syrian Constitution; because the Constitution required the president to be Muslim, Assad and his government associates amended the Constitution to accept a new definition of “Islam” that would include Alawis like himself (Polk, 2013). Considering that Alawis were largely considered nonbelievers or “outlaws who could be legally and meritoriously killed,” factions like the Muslim Brotherhood were infuriated (Polk, 2013).

Inspired by the conditions of economic collapse as well as religious fervor, the Muslim Brotherhood carried out an uprising against president Hafez al-Assad's regime that peaked in 1982. Assad quelled the dissent in what is now known as the Hama Massacre; his three-week attack on opposition insurgents resulted in an estimated 7,000 to 40,000 casualties as well as the end of the rebellion (SHRC Admin, 2006). Additionally, in their rage against the Assad regime, members of the Muslim Brotherhood allegedly attacked Armenian school children in the streets, because they represented members of the minority groups that Assad worked to protect (Bulghadaryan & Sindelar, 2012). Interestingly, Hafez al-Assad began reconstruction of highways, schools, hospitals, parks, and mosques soon after the assault ended (Polk, 2013). The message he sent to the general population was not to challenge the government; whereas, to the Armenian people, it was to fear those who would rebel against the government.

Hafez's son, Bashar al-Assad, developed support for his presidency using similar ploys to appeal to the people. However, he regularly struggled to maintain amicable international relations, particularly with Israel, the United States, and the European Union. Such troubled diplomatic relations, resulted in a number of sanctions which stifled Syrian economic growth (Polk, 2013). When paired with a severe lack of political participation and violence against civilians, resentment against Bashar and his regime grew among the Syrian people and foreign powers like the United States. Acts of government subversion in pursuit of regime change occurred regularly; although Syrian-Armenians remained largely unaffected by fighting in cities like Aleppo, many left to neighboring countries to wait out a potential Sunni backlash (Bulghadaryan & Sindelar, 2012).

In 2008, exacerbating the fragility of the Syrian state, a drought of tragic proportions drove approximately two to three million Syrians from their farms to major cities and towns (Worth, 2010). Soon, hostility erupted between the locals and the newly impoverished and starving landowners; resources like water, food, and jobs rapidly grew scarce, and the government had to import products like wheat just to keep its citizens alive (Polk, 2013). On March 15, 2011, about 20 children protested against the Syrian government by writing anti-regime graffiti on a wall in Dara'a (The New York Times, 2011). Much like his father, Assad responded violently. The situation escalated throughout the country as pro-government groups and police arrested and used water cannons and live ammunition against protestors; soon, riots broke out throughout Syria and the civil war began to take shape (Sterling, 2012).

The goals of the warring factions seem increasingly unclear as the war continues. Rather than being about the resource constraints that sparked the war, or about freedom of the people versus tyranny of the government, the battle seems to revolve somewhat around religious concerns that are shrouded beneath a veil of ethnic differences (Polk, 2013). Having primarily Christian, Catholic, and Orthodox traditions, Syrian-Armenians have occupied a particularly complex position in Assad's dictatorship (Harutyunyan, 2016). Appreciators of Assad's protection of minority groups and refugees, Armenians have been targets of attacks by ISIS as well as the Free Syrian Army (Polk, 2013; Nigmatulina, 2015). One Syrian-Armenian who was a member of a civilian group that formed to protect sacred Armenian sites and local Armenian businesses described the situation as "the second genocide" (Farid, 2013). The severe amount of in-fighting appears to increase incoherence to the already chaotic conflict.

Currently, more than 1,000 armed units comprise the anti-Assad forces (Chulov, 2013). Such a web of perspectives has contributed to an exceptionally challenging environment for peace negotiations. This dispute is compounded by the perpetuation of the war by additional, external forces fighting for territorial dominance, including the United States, France, Russia, Turkey, Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Hezbollah, and ISIS. The lack of cooperation between the divided rebel groups, in addition to the intervention of international players has created stagnation. Since the war began, more than 4.8 million Syrians have fled Syria, including more than 20,000 ethnic Armenians (Syrian Refugees, 2016; Asbarez, 2016; Atamian, 2016). Ceasefires come and go; there seems to be no end to the war in the near future. In just over a century after Armenians were forced to flee their homes in historical Armenia, they are now fleeing their homes once again, this time from Syria to Armenia.



“Mother Community” (BBC, 2015).

Syrian-Armenian Diaspora

According to the UNHCR, Armenia takes in six Syrian refugees for every thousand Armenian inhabitants, making it the third largest host of refugees per capita (Atamian, 2016). Not only is Armenia party to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees as well as the 1967 Protocol, Armenia has been characterized as having a “moral and historic duty” to offer Syrian-Armenian refugees with sanctuary from the Syrian War (UN, 2016a; 2016c; Atamian, 2016). In fact, the chief of staff of the Armenian Ministry of Diaspora insists that “we don’t treat them as refugees. They are our compatriots. They are the descendants of those who suffered in the Armenian genocide and found shelter in Syria” (Farid, 2015). While some Syrian-Armenian refugees perceive their flight to Armenia as the “easy” choice, the realities of refugee life in Armenia are quite complex (Nigmatulina, 2015).

Over the course of the Syrian War, the Armenian government has worked hastily to process incoming refugees; the government simplified the naturalization process, covers health insurance costs, allocates funds for education, and subsidizes housing until a person in each family finds a job (Harutyunyan, 2016). Further, Armenian consular offices in Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon are now authorized to issue free Armenian citizenship, passports, exemptions on state duties, and asylum on Armenia’s behalf (Nigmatulina, 2015; BBC, 2015). The government also provides newcomers with a one-time winterization allowance, additional financial support for the most vulnerable of refugees, and provision of psychosocial support (UN, 2015).

In an interview with UN Armenia, UNHCR representative, Christoph Bierwirth, recently described how both local and international organizations like the UNHCR,

Oxfam, KASA, Mission Armenia, The Armenian Redwood Project, Save the Children International, and The Armenian Red Cross Society have all offered various services in addition to those provided by the Armenian Government (2015). Additionally, the Armenian General Benevolent Union and the Armenian National Committee of America have assisted in funding efforts that address the migration crisis (Davtyan, 2016). To describe a few, Mission Armenia focuses on local humanitarian assistance by engaging community members in an “integration soup kitchen.” The Red Cross and the Armenian Redwood Project are engaged in small business grant-writing, job training, and additional services related to resettlement. The KASA Swiss Humanitarian Foundation’s “Adopt a Family” project links refugees with local families willing to assist them with integration (UN, 2014). Save the Children confronts education and integration challenges for refugees, especially for children and adolescents. There appears to be a broad range of partnerships in Armenia that, with the help of organizations like Oxfam, increasingly develop cooperative strategies to support incoming Syrian-Armenians.

The Republic of Armenia, however, is currently suffering from economic woes that impact locals and incoming refugees alike. Although many families report great success in their business ventures, others continue to struggle against Armenia’s steep cost of living, poverty rate¹ (30%), unemployment rate (17%), and local assimilation expectations (Nigmatulina, 2015; The World Bank, 2016a; 2016c). These problems are barriers to integration, especially regarding labor, and raise a concern regarding sustainability of programs and resources offered specifically to Syrian-Armenians.

Interestingly, in comparison to neighboring countries also hosting large numbers of Syrian refugees like Turkey, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, and Egypt, Armenia is receiving

¹ \$1.90 per day

the lowest sum of aid from international governments (when accounting for differences in GDP and the number of refugees accepted per capita) (Atamian, 2016). Although the Armenian government appears obligated to accept every Syrian-Armenian refugee, the question remains: Can the Armenian state continue to support the increasing number of refugees resettling in Armenia?

Part Three: Literature Review

From Empire to Nation-State

Although empires are generally created through different means, e.g., militarily or peacefully, a common theme among them is the support for multitudes of autonomous groups “under a single rule” (O’Neill, 2016). For instance, according to Latif Tas, a researcher and consultant at the University of Oxford Diasporas Program, territorial autonomy was key to the success of the Ottoman Empire (2014). Under the Ottoman’s “millet practice,” a “pluralistic system” of rule enabled diverse ethnic and religious groups to adopt legislation according to their own customs and traditions (p. 500). Moreover, Tas argues that, despite severe oppression of certain minority groups in the Ottoman Empire, its rulers often pressured ethnic and religious groups to follow their respective customs and wear traditional clothing, rather than demanding assimilation to a unified Ottoman identity. Tolerance and protection of community autonomy enhanced the Ottoman Empire’s political stability which, in turn, supported expansion and longevity of the Empire, as depicted by the figure below. These empire building and maintenance strategies are paralleled by other empires, including the Chinese Han Empire and that of Alexander the Great (O’Neill, 2016).



Expansion of the Ottoman Empire from 1300 to 1699 (Shaw & Yapp, 2016).

The empire political organization practice differs from the world’s current nation-state framework. In fact, some historians and political scientists have declared the “end of empire” because of the rise of the “age of nationalism,” which entails the emergence of “a more centralized, bureaucratized state in which laws, economic practices, and even customs and dialects were homogenized by state elites” (O’Neill, 2016; Suny, 2001, p. 30). Benedict Anderson describes this “modern” phenomenon, the transition from empire to nation-state, as a “stretching [of the] short, tight, skin of the nation over the gigantic body of the empire” (2006). Correspondingly, Grigor Suny suggests that, contrary to empires, “the modern ‘state’ (basically post fifteenth century) is characterized by relatively fixed territorial boundaries, a single sovereignty over its territory, and a permanent bureaucratic and military apparatus” (2001, p. 5-6). Although some nation-states are said to have empire-like qualities in this age of globalization—the United States

of America, for example—most states are believed to fit within this theoretical framework (O’Neill, 2016).

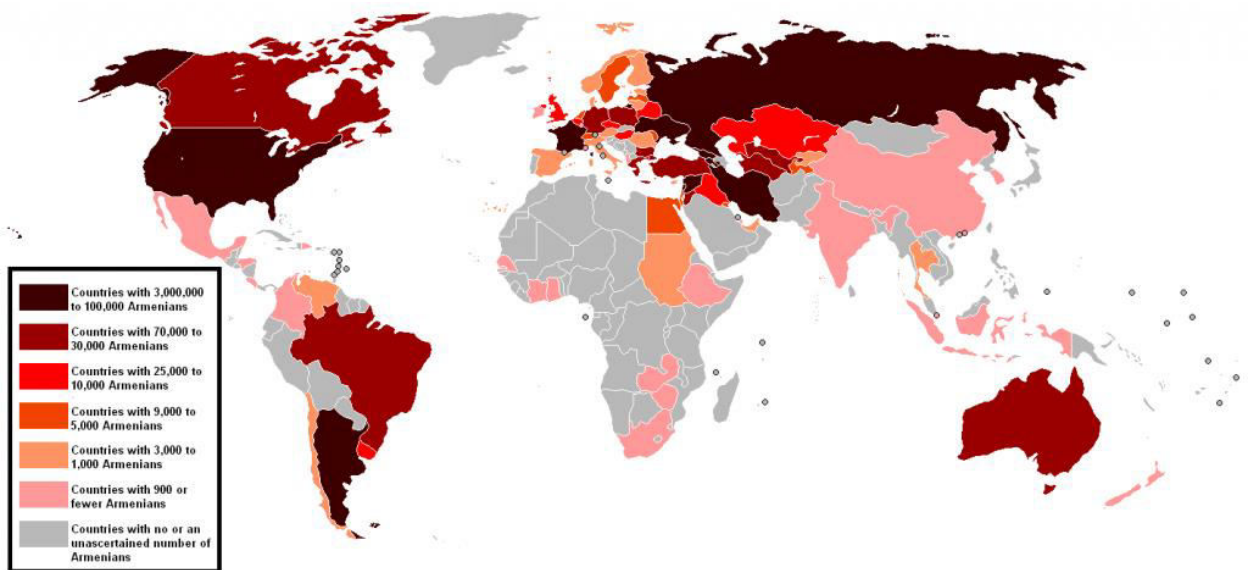
Formed in 1991, the Republic of Armenia did not veer far from theorists’ expectations during its state-building process. As a result of the fall of the Ottoman, Russian, and Soviet Empires, Armenia came to develop a coherent identity as both an historical homeland and a sovereign territory with a centralized power (Suny, 2001; Danielyan, 2008). The Armenian state maintains self-determination and finite borders that are not expected to include large populations of non-Armenians (Suny, 2001). Further, Benedict Anderson’s theory of “imagined communities” describes how people within a state form “deep, horizontal comradeship” among themselves without having to literally meet or interact with most of their neighbors; in accordance with that theory, the people residing within the Republic of Armenia are perceived to share similar origins, values, historical experiences, language, religion, territory and other elements that define cultures generally in an ideal sense; Anderson dubs these tools of collective identity formation “imagined resources” (Suny, 2001; 2006).

Additionally, expressions of nationhood and patriotism can be seen through the communication of these shared characteristics, whether through national symbols like flags or through the establishment of a national ceremony like Independence Day (Elgenius, 2005). These nationhood expressions can work to preserve the identity of the state and its people. Interestingly, nationalism can be perpetuated both within and outside of states, as described by Ulrike Ziemer (2010). His work on “long-distance nationalism” showed that the Armenian diaspora in Russia “bridge[s] the gap between the local and the global” by intergenerationally retelling Armenian history to one another and

keeping in touch with news pertaining to Armenia, including the country’s dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh with Azerbaijan (2010, p. 291; Cohen 1996, p. 516). This transnational exchange of Armenian-ness remains essential to both diasporic and Armenian identities and re-frames the typical social, nationalistic boundaries of the nation-state.

Diaspora

About two-thirds of the Armenian populations are currently living in diaspora (Danielyan, 2008). The worldwide distribution of Armenians is depicted in the map below.



Armenian Diaspora Distribution (Lewis, 2012).

The term “diaspora” is generally understood as resulting from a group of people’s displacement from their original homeland, and their subsequent formation of new community in a new homeland. The meanings of the term are highly debated among scholars; some define diaspora as a theoretically “lifeless” concept overburdened by assumptions, while others deem the term useful for “giv[ing] coherence to a group” with specific national loyalties (Cirillo, 2008, p. 341; Éigearthaigh, Howard, & Getty, 2007).

The origins or driving forces behind diasporas are many: some are forced out of their homelands or choose to migrate for religious, cultural, economic, environmental, or political reasons (Karpát, 1998; Addis, 2012). Additionally, academics often problematize the concept of “home,” which can be defined as having “mythical, idealized” characteristics, as well as “fractured, discontinuous” qualities, complicating peoples’ understanding of diasporan identity formation (Éigeartaigh, Howard, & Getty, 2007, p. 6).

This concern is widely salient to the experiences of Syrian-Armenians making the decision to “return” to Armenia. As of 2016, there are approximately 45,000 members of the Syrian-Armenian diaspora still residing in Syria (Davtyan, 2016). For many, their choice to “return” to Armenia is complicated by the fact that their “homeland” is actually located in what is present-day Turkey, not Armenia (Collard, 2015). It is clear that legal-national connections to those specific homeland communities in historic Armenia have been reconfigured along with the memories of those who fled them and survived the genocide (Kasbarian, 2015). According to some, Armenians’ “movement of return” is one result of a diasporic glorification of the “homeland” turned political ideology, or reclamation (Karpát, 1998). Nonetheless, the concept of “diaspora” can be used to highlight the complexities of the identity formation and maintenance practices of Syrian-Armenians “returning” to Armenia because of the Syrian War.

Another prominent discussion regarding diasporic subjectivities regards the potential to develop a multiplicity of identities. It has been argued that the ability of diasporans to belong to multiple cultures can be both cause for concern and celebration (Berg & Éigeartaigh, 2010; Ashcroft, 2004). As one researcher writes, “Diaspora does

not simply refer to geographical dispersal but also to the vexed questions of identity, memory, and home which such displacement produces” (Ashcroft, 2004, p. 217-8). These questions can lead those living in diaspora to feel “torn between two identities” (Çevik-Ersaydı, 2011, p. 99). In turn, potential fears of acculturation and assimilation to the secondary homeland can lead to a threat to what are considered to be one’s core identities; in an attempt to preserve these multiple identity linkages, many seek out transnational religious, educational, political, social, and cultural organizations “where they will feel just like ‘at home’” (Çevik-Ersaydı, 2011, p. 99).

Members of the diaspora also regularly carry on cultural traditions and memories of Armenian history. Whether it’s celebrating Armenian Independence Day or conforming to Armenian ideals of masculinity, diasporans display their concern of maintaining allegiance to their homeland (Ziemer, 2010). However, researchers have argued that various competing perceived roles of diaspora communities among locals and returnees can be “conflict-promoting” (Baser & Swain, 2009). For example, although the “homeland” is often used as a “source of cultural sustenance and pride,” discussions about diasporans’ involvement in “homeland” affairs have become increasingly controversial (Addis, 2012, p. 985; Sassounian, 2016). Diasporans’ support for particular lobbying groups and political agendas has upset locals who have “urged them to move to Armenia if they are truly interested in reforming the country” (Sassounian, 2016). Additionally, diasporans can find their return highly dissatisfying because of vast “in-group diversity” (Jendian, 2008, p. 629). In other words, the Armenia diasporan identity is described as “endlessly hybridized and in process” because of the massive, worldwide diaspora population that continues to develop primarily “imagined” visions of what it

means to be Armenian in their host country (Jendian, 2008, p. 630). Diasporan expectations and imaginings do not always or often coincide with realities upon return.

Repatriation and Host Reception

Although repatriation, or the voluntary return of refugees to their country of origin, is promoted by the UNHCR as a “durable solution,” the process of returning refugees to their homeland is far from easy (2016b). The UNHCR’s Policy Framework and Implementation Strategy handbook outlines the process of refugee reintegration, where refugees might attempt to rebuild their previously-existing networks, and reacclimate to their homes (2008). According to the text, for the average refugee, this process is neither quick nor simple; in protracted situations, refugees may have been displaced in a host country or refugee camp for multiple generations. Being born in exile complicates processes of reconnection to cultural communities and networks; they may not speak the language of their ancestral home and may be perceived as foreign by nationals. Returnees’ struggle to assimilate to their homeland communities sometimes leaves many affected by critical livelihood instabilities, such as chronic poverty. For many, the process is slow and difficult, but is generally supported by governments and local organizations. At the same time, certain privileged groups may be welcomed instrumentally into the national fold, such as elites or business interests.

Indeed, network-building for Armenian diasporans is largely supported by the Armenian government as well as independently-funded organizations. In addition to diasporans’ possible individual desires to “return” to Armenia, international and national institutions actually advocate for their visit and eventual relocation to Armenia. Such organizations and agencies include Armenian Volunteer Corps, Birthright Armenia,

Repat Armenia, the Armenian Ministry of Diaspora, the International Diaspora Engagement Alliance, the Society of Orphaned Armenian Relief, World Vision Armenia, and many other organizations worldwide (Darieva, 2011; Repat Armenia, 2016; Grigorian, 2012). Many Armenians, including some interviewed for this project, take advantage of these well-funded opportunities, and eventually make the decision to move. When Armenia joined the Soviet Union in 1920, for example, about 90,000 Armenians in diaspora “returned” to help rebuild their “homeland,” hopeful for a bright future (Lehmann, 2012).

However, even with state and international organizations’ support, the challenges Syrian-Armenian diasporans face when “returning” to their ancestral homeland are quite pronounced. As described by Maike Lehmann,

Repatriates were constantly reminded of their foreignness in a society trained to look out for spies, class enemies, and socially harmful elements. They became mocked as aghpars (brothers), a derogative term signifying both the claim and the negation of national unity. The clear distinction locals drew between themselves and the “aliens” arriving from abroad caused indignation among repatriates to the extent that it caused a traveling Sovinformbiuro correspondent to write a lengthy letter to [government representatives] (2012, p. 172).

Through Lehmann’s work, it is clear that there existed “socially negotiated limits and possibilities of integration of outsiders” in Soviet Armenia (p. 174). For this reason, many repatriates experienced a high degree of disillusionment until they were able to integrate to meet Soviet cultural expectations.

Today, Syrian-Armenians’ statements describe a similar expectation in migrating to Armenia, hoping a shared ethnicity would lead to fewer problems in their “repatriation.” However, examples are rife within recent news reports which describe unexpected barriers and hostilities between the local Armenian population and incoming

Syrian-Armenian diasporans. As one migrant, a former spice shop owner, stated, “They [locals] start mixing Russian into the conversation without even thinking. We speak Western Armenian and they speak Eastern Armenian, so we knew there would be a few complications, but not like this.” Another Syrian-Armenian echoed this sentiment, saying, “They ask: Why are you here? Why did you come? There’s nothing for us here, either” (Schwartzstein, 2015). In addition, the director of Repat Armenia, an organization that promotes diaspora immigration, seemed to chastise the newcomers, saying “For many, their heads are still in Aleppo, which means they’re not devoting all their energy to integrating” (Schwartzstein, 2015). The cultural divisions between diasporans and Armenian natives seem to provide an extra layer of challenges to repatriation.

Historical Trauma

This paper explores the ways in which a specific variant of Historical Trauma (HT) may affect diasporic repatriation and refugee reception. Generally, HT is a concept used to often describe social developments within cultural communities that struggle to transcend a history of trauma. This concept is linked to that of transgenerational, or intergenerational, trauma, which occurs “when the effects of trauma extend to other generations in the same family beyond the generation of the person experiencing primary trauma” (Phipps & Degges-White, 2014, p. 175). Although transgenerational trauma can occur as a result of individualized traumatic experiences, this paper focuses on historical traumatization resulting from mass collective trauma (Mohatt, Thompson, Thai, & Tebes, 2014). Henceforth, the term *historical* trauma refers to “cumulative emotional and psychological wounding across generations resulting from massive group tragedies”

rather than individualized instances of trauma (Muid, 2004, p. 9). Examples of HT include the Jewish experience of the Holocaust, enslavement of African-Americans, South African apartheid, the Native American and Cambodian genocides, immigration experience of Mexican-Americans, and other cultural and community groups with histories of mass oppression, victimization, and/or trauma (Crawford, 2014; Mohatt, Thompson, Thai, & Tebes, 2014).

HT has been recorded to affect individuals, families, and communities; at times, HT is transmitted through epigenetics (change in gene-expression), disrupted child-rearing practices and traditions, social ruptures at the community level, and breakage in cultural traditions (Crawford, 2014; Hughes, 2014). Although responses to HT vary across cultures and time, they can include depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, anger, alexithymia (emotional detachment), ‘survivor guilt,’ and the development of a ‘victim identity’ (Crawford, 2014, p. 342). These responses are processed through a “narrative” lens that assists traumatized populations in processing HT; “at a collective level, hearing about others’ experience recounted in narrative can fashion, confirm, or modify related cultural or collective understandings” (Crawford, 2014, p. 343). Although this is not a comprehensive list of the potential effects of HT, they are particularly pertinent to Armenian identity formation.

One major unifying component of Armenian identity relating to HT appears to be the common conception of the “other.” As an example of narrative transfer in the Armenian diaspora, political psychologist, Bahar Senem Çevik-Ersaydı, discusses the Armenian creation of the “other” with respect to Turkish nationals (2011). The created “other” serves as a source of group cohesiveness across the world, allowing Armenians

and members of the diaspora to build and maintain an ethnic identity based on the shared experience of their culture's destruction by the Turks. These narrative developments can be transmitted across generations via "socialization instruments such as family, church, or media" (p. 94). Further, because Armenian identity appears largely impacted by genocide and enmity toward Turks, Çevik-Ersaydı states, "the "other" or the enemy becomes a *necessity* and a *need* for the group that owes its existence to the "other" through a process of mutual constitution (p. 94). Thus, it appears that Armenian and diasporic identity can be greatly influenced by the collective memory of victimization and trauma.

The extent to which people are affected by HT is highly researched and debated by mental health academics and practitioners. For example, although it has been found that many Holocaust survivors transmitted their trauma to their children because of parenting challenges brought on by post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), subsequent controlled studies found a dearth of maladaptive psychological transmissions across generations, such as attachment disorders. Rather, findings show that a person's mere awareness of family history as well as availability of strong personal and cultural attachments with deceased family members can assist descendants of traumatized people in developing adaptive coping strategies, leading to post-traumatic growth (Kidron, 2014). Another paradoxical effect of HT comes to light as a result of efforts to achieve justice through documentation and memorialization. For instance, disseminated information including photographs, memorial construction, news, ceremonies, and other public symbols have shown to foster both anxiety and healing among affected populations (Mohatt, Thompson, Thai, & Tebes, 2014).

Some researchers, like anthropologist Krista Maxwell, further problematize the generalized application of HT in the mental health sphere, saying that contemporary mental health and child development professionals often seem to “promote an oversimplified, universalizing understanding” of what can be described as a complex “continuation of colonial structures and relations” (2014, p. 407). Similarly, Allison Crawford, Assistant Professor of Psychiatry, emphasizes that HT may be cautiously acknowledged in clinical settings. She states that an emphasis on HT can detract from present social struggles and can lead to stigmatizing assumptions (2014).

Summary

In all, these themes of empire to nation-state development, diasporic relations, host reception complexities, and historical trauma recovery as they resonate throughout Armenian history inform discourse of current government policies and community relations. Failing to consider debates on these topics and other related literature might serve to constrain approaches to comprehensive, sustainable migration policy reform. This project seeks to understand how and why the government’s migration policies fail or succeed, as well as the contours of how and why Armenian citizens reject or support Syrian-Armenian migration into Armenia. Combining the literature with raw data in the following section can further enhance this understanding.

Part Four: Fieldwork Data Analysis

The lure to Armenia for Syrian-Armenian refugees seems clear; they are ethnically tied to Armenian territory, having been forced out of Historic Armenia on a death march to Syria during the Armenian Genocide. For generations, Syrian-Armenians have salvaged what they could of their ethnic heritage by developing an ethnic enclave. In the Nor Gyugh, Aleppo, they established one of Syria's most prominent Armenian quarters known as "Little Armenia" (Lomsadze, 2015). Today, there is now a similar congregation in Armenia comprised instead of former Syrian-Armenian residents; a new region in the South Caucasus is known as "Little Syria" or "New Aleppo" (Lomsadze, 2015).

According to the Armenian government, Armenia has received about 20,000 Syrian-Armenian refugees (Asbarez, 2016; Atamian, 2016). About 90 percent of these Syrian-Armenian refugees are not entitled to benefits that normally accompany legal refugee status (Calin-Stefan, 2014). This is due to one of the major differences between Armenia's approach to Syrian refugee resettlement and that of neighboring countries: Armenia does not have refugee camps. Instead, both the Armenian government and non-governmental organizations have stepped in to help Syrian-Armenian refugees afford housing, access education, and secure jobs throughout Armenia (Ardhaldjian, 2016). This integrative method supports Syrian-Armenians in obtaining citizenship rather than refugee status; they are de facto refugees, not de jure refugees.

Because these newcomers are not in a segregated encampment, they inevitably interact with the local population. Despite being ethnically Armenian, Syrian-Armenians and Armenian locals experience great challenges to full integration. As such, the focus of

this study is on the Syrian-Armenian diaspora currently returning to Armenia in search of safety from the ongoing Syrian Civil War. Interviews with Armenians in Armenia and in the United States diaspora shed light on the complexity of Armenian identity as well as their perceptions of the worldwide Armenian diaspora. In turn, these opinions largely influence institutional refugee management frameworks as well as the overall social climate in local host communities. The following case study is an examination of how Syrian-Armenian refugees are received by a state and a people in which they belong to the same ethnic majority, but whose historical experience has largely diverged over the past century.

Methods

Participants. A total of eight interviews were conducted with English-speaking individuals Armenian ethnicity. Among the participants, six reside in Yerevan, Armenia and the remaining two reside in the United States. Those living in the United States reported regularly visiting Armenia. Half of the participants are men and half women. The average age of the participants is 27.5, with the eldest participant being 32 and the youngest 19. All but one participant completed university degrees at the baccalaureate level. Highly educated participants were more dominant in this study because the less-educated people the Principal Investigator (PI) interacted with were generally also at the poverty line and were thus deemed too vulnerable to participate in the study.

Some of the interviews have direct connections to Syrian-Armenian refugees (one interviewee, in fact, is a Syrian-Armenian's fiancé), while others have none. One ethnically Armenian participant migrated from Syria with his family in 2014. Their insights are influenced by their personal experiences and position.

Procedures. All interviews were conducted online, using Skype and email. Interviews were conducted after receiving digital copies of signed consent forms. Most interviews were arranged via email after a visit to Armenia in May 2016. The remaining interviews were organized via Armenian networks within California's Bay Area, also through email. This collection method may have created a biased sample of interviewees. However, once the PI transcribed the audio recordings from each of the interviews and recorded emerging themes, the data disconfirmed personal perceptions.

Results

Language. From the interviews, it is clear that Syrian-Armenian refugees face obstacles to integration related to differences in culture. One primary challenge interviewees emphasized is that of language. Without hesitation, local Armenians pointed to language as being the principal difference between locals and Syrian-Armenian refugees. To the question "How do you think you are different from Syrian-Armenians?" one female interviewee, age 27, stated bluntly, "Language. For the most part, I guess it's the fact that yeah, history to some extent, but language is more pronounced here because the local population all speaks Eastern [Armenian], while we all speak Western." Another interviewee echoed her observation,

First of all, it's because of language. Western Armenian, Eastern Armenian. Our language in Armenian is Eastern Armenian, which is different by grammar as well. So, for children, it is different. It is very difficult to study in school. It's difficult to talk normally. And that's just the beginning of the problems. (Age 30).

A similar issue with language that was highlighted in the interviews had to do with the collapse of the Soviet Union, whereby Armenia gained independence in 1991. Because of this connection to Russia, many Armenians today speak Russian as their

second language; also, in primary school, Armenians are asked to pick a third language, which is typically German or English (according to inquiries during field work). One interviewee's statements linked the language barrier to culture acquisition from the Soviet era, rather than to the divisions that occurred during the Armenian Genocide: "When they [Syrian-Armenians] come here and suddenly it's eastern Armenian and they know Arabic, but instead it's Russian and English, they're like, 'What?'"

Additionally, one participant (male, age 24) noted that locating the Syrian-Armenians around town is quite easy: "You just need to walk in the center of Yerevan and just listen to them 'cause they have specific accent." The participant stated, "I like it really a lot. I don't really like Iranian-Armenian accent, but Syrian-Armenian is hilarious...Like, Indian people speak English in a funny way. Kind of like that." His perception of Syrian-Armenian accents illustrates a unique power that locals retain over migrants who cannot speak Eastern Armenian without an accent. It appears possible that the Syrian-Armenian minority group is disenfranchised by this subtle system of power.

This is interesting because the Armenian state professes no such difficulties due to language; in July, Thierry Girard, Armenia Red Cross delegate in the South Caucasus, said "Syrian Armenians share common values and cultural heritage with their fellows from Armenia. They speak occidental Armenian dialect which is different from the oriental dialect of Armenia but does not prevent proper communication. Therefore, the integration is noticeably facilitated" (Red Cross, 2016). In that light, another common theme among the interviewees was the differences between the state's perceptions versus those of the people.

State/Society Perspectives. The current government's overall position on the incoming refugees is surprisingly inviting. On June 18th, 2016, in celebration of World Refugee Day, the Minister of Diaspora, Hranush Hakobayan, welcomed the refugees in saying,

Dear Syrian-Armenians, it is my pleasure to express my greetings to you in your Homeland. The smartest decision that you made during the first days of the Syrian war was your decision to return to your Homeland. Thank you...All of us, the state, the Ministry of Diaspora, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and international organizations, have to do everything we can to be able to work, become strong, and empower our Homeland. Today we are marking World Refugee Day, which is and is not your day. You are not refugees. You are in your Homeland (Ministry of Diaspora of the Republic of Armenia).

This rhetoric is echoed in the government's policies and partnerships structured to support Syrian-Armenians specifically by tackling immediate problems relevant to their resettlement, including providing them with rental subsidies for affordable housing and granting them free healthcare and education services (Asbarez, 2016).

Although the Armenian government's policy currently actively welcomes members of the Armenian diaspora, locals' claims contradict one another, saying that the government is both doing too much and not enough about regulating incoming Syrian-Armenian refugees. One interviewee (female, age 27) seemed to imply that the government's assistance is unequal when compared to aid given to other refugees in Armenia:

There is some assistance in medical, so if you need to go through surgery or anything, it does get covered quite a bit by certain government sectors. The Ministry of Health does try to help you get the best service possible and if anybody dies here, then a plot of land, a funeral, everything is for free. So, it is quite a bit of aid if you think about it... Lower tuition rates... So, if you're Syrian-Armenian – Actually, other refugees have not received the same things as Syrian-Armenians have.

Conversely, some locals feel that the government's laws fail to be implemented, contributing to the difficulties in local Armenian communities. In this sense, it appears that the government could be performing better when working to help refugees resettle in local Armenian communities:

Now, Armenia is a country that, we have laws, but laws never function in most of the cases... I know that Syrian-Armenians are quite independent. They used to have their own businesses in Syria, but coming back and seeing that you can't do it here...how else you can live otherwise? ... The government doesn't let you – you know, some people own big things, and they don't let your business grow and work, unless you know someone who may help and support you with – I'm sorry, this is not a complaint, this is the real situation!! (Laughs). (Female, age 32).

Interestingly, a shared criticism of the refugee regime was that the government's failures were due primarily to "corruption." This feeling is supported by Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, where, out of 100, with 100 being least corrupt, Armenian people rank their government at 35 (2016). Although the Armenian government is supremely welcoming to Syrian-Armenian refugees, there appears to be a shortage of trust and support for its policies and implementation strategies.

Host community experiences and discourse. The aforementioned Red Cross representative, Thierry Girard, acknowledged that despite the prominence of Syrian-Armenians' integration success, "the limit of this integration is the lack of economic opportunities" (Red Cross, 2016). Correspondingly, a highly professed source of tension among the locals and Syrian-Armenian refugees regards access to work.

One interviewee (female, age 30) summed up the state of affairs briefly by saying, "People complain that they [refugees] came and they [locals] see the other's business and that somehow that bothers their [locals'] business and their lives." Another interviewee shared a personal anecdote:

They [Syrian-Armenians] tried to open a garage for these cars. They start their job, they were doing it very well. They had customers and after a couple months, the other guys from that street who had a garage as well, they came to them. They said, "You should close it because you are new! Who you are to – you are stealing our customers!" They are telling, "Because we are doing good service." They said, "No, we will not accept it. Because you are different. Who you are? We were keeping this country for many, many years. You just came here and you will take everything? Just go out. We don't need you."

The statement that “we were keeping this country for many, many years” brings to light a community divide based on territorial “rootedness” (Malkki, 1996). It appears that, in being displaced by the Turks during the genocide, members of the Syrian-Armenian diaspora were forced to relinquish their Armenian identity; or, at least, they haven’t been stewards of the new nation-state because they lived outside Armenia. Remarkably, although it has been observed that “natives are not only persons who are from certain places, and belong to those places, but they are also those who are somehow incarcerated, or confined, in those places,” Syrian-Armenians broke that trend of encapsulation to their Homeland, resulting in some locals’ perception of a “spoiled identity” (Appadurai, 1988, p. 37; Malkki, 1996, p. 35).

Almost counterintuitively, Armenians seem to oppose governmental support for incoming Syrian-Armenian refugees who need more assistance to integrate:

It's the same way with refugees going to Europe and Europeans responding badly to that because refugees feel entitled to receiving social benefits. And the locals are saying, "Why on earth would you be receiving social benefits for years on end?" I understand that when you get here somebody helps you get on your feet. But not sitting on welfare for two years and not working at all while I pay all the taxes! ...They expect that people are going to open their arms and give them everything (female, age 27).

In frustration with such anti-immigrant attitudes, the only Syrian-Armenian respondent said, “We definitely share the identity with the locals...[but] locals don’t

know what it means to be a survivor of genocide and how it feels to be a diaspora Armenian.” This participant appears to feel a lack of empathy from Armenian locals, and draws a distinction between Armenians in the diaspora and local Armenians, where members of the diaspora are portrayed as the “true” survivors of the genocide, a sentiment that was not at all mentioned by any locals in this study. While it is true that populist anti-immigrant sentiment characterizes many states with large incoming migrant populations, it is noteworthy that common ethnic heritage does not necessarily bridge the acceptance gap between locals and incoming refugees.

Sociocultural boundaries and outmigration. The aforementioned challenges altogether ultimately contribute to a division between locals and incoming refugees, despite their shared history. As one interviewee stated,

From Soviet times, we used to that our neighbors are Armenian, they are talking the same language, they have the same culture, they are thinking the same way. Now, they came, the refugees, to Armenia. They are Armenians, ok, but they are different and this population here feels that they are different. They don't like it. It's like psychologists say that they will not accept them there easily even if they are feeling that it's our brothers (female, age 30).

In all, the aforementioned struggles Syrian-Armenians face appear to contribute to the refugees' decisions to stay or leave Armenia. This is because, although the Armenian government professes extensive support systems for incoming refugees, the fieldwork data show that Syrian-Armenians feel disenchanting by the lack of governmental support and often leave Armenia in search of more promising opportunities. For example, one interviewee (female, 32) stated that, “A lot of people want to migrate from Armenia just to find a better future for their kids because it's very small here and the market, at some

point you're ready to grow, but you don't have this opportunity in Armenia." She continued,

Whoever has a chance to go somewhere else, they go somewhere else because they know about the situation in Armenia and so, people, when they come back, they see the situation, and they just migrate to somewhere else, where there is an Armenian community, and there is more opportunities... But I don't think we are ready to accept all of them. We are ready, but we can't provide them the basic care that they need. That's why I think that people go somewhere else, like the United States, if they have the opportunity to go somewhere else. I know that some people came to Armenia and when they saw the situation some people went back to Syria. That means that it was that bad here that they even agreed to go back to Syria (female, age 32).

Additionally, many refugees seem to remain in Armenia with the hope that the Syrian Civil War will soon end, allowing them to return home. As one interviewee (female, age 28) noted, "A lot of them are using this as a stopping point to go abroad... A lot of them want to keep a close eye on their home, Aleppo. But, slowly that idea is deteriorating and they're trying to figure out what to do next." The refugees' choice to reside in Armenia seems to relate to the idea that they will return to Syria soon; with time, however, the choice to find a more permanent home becomes increasingly real.

These findings are supported by a comprehensive study that assessed the effects of Armenian government "interventions" focused on housing, education, employment, entrepreneurship, healthcare, and others (Călin-Ștefan, 2014). The research found that "the discrimination of minority [i.e., non-Islamic] religious communities is currently driving Syrian Armenians away from the country, seeking refuge in other countries or even returning to Syria" (p. 61). In sum, the anecdotes professed by the government are largely positive, while the interviewees pointed to the array of challenges concerning the Syrian-Armenian resettlement situation.

Assimilation. Another common concern among locals regarding incoming Syrian-Armenian refugees dealt with worries over diaspora assimilation and loss of Armenian identity. It seems that, although many Armenians claim that their country should incorporate ethnic Armenians, refugees struggle to re-assimilate to local Armenian culture because of the assimilation they were required to endure as part of the Syrian diaspora. One interviewee, age 32, elaborated on her apprehensions:

People from Armenia, they migrate, and after, let's say 100 years, if this continues, after 100 years, there will be no Armenians living in Armenia. Just a very small nation. I think it will be nice if they come back and there will be less assimilation going on and they will keep their Armenian ethnicity.

Another interviewee, age 27, expressed the same sentiment candidly when she exclaimed, “I hate the assimilation rate!”

In all, it appears that local Armenians are experiencing opposing needs for assimilation and also differentiation, as is consistent with what is called the optimal distinctiveness theory (Brewer, 1991). This theory posits that individuals seek collective identity because of “opposing needs for assimilation and differentiation” (p. 475).

Family history and intergenerational trauma. An interesting commonality across all the participants is that no one remembers when exactly they learned about the Armenian Genocide. However, most can recall their reactions to learning of family histories. Their continued emotional reactions to Armenian History reveal a possible imprint of trauma passed down intergenerationally. For example, one interviewee, age 32, recalled her childhood experiences with her family history:

Of course, I heard many stories from people from grandparents and people that lived in the area – I used to live in a village. There were many survivors, people that talked about this. I mean, those pictures and that movie... I was just crying all the time.

Similarly, other interviewees became emotional during the interviews. One noted, “I’m actually getting teary-eyed right now just talking about it;” another quietly said, “I can’t hear about all this stories without crying, without, you know, tears.” One interviewee, age 32, even noted that an emotional trigger occurred when viewing a comedic Conan television segment about Armenia, “I remember watching that and crying at how poignant it was.” When I asked the interviewee why he felt emotional about that episode, he answered, “It’s tough to explain.”

Further, some families refused to teach their children about their histories; yet, the interviewees persist in learning as much as they can about their families. One interviewee, age 28, described her family history:

And on my mother’s side, her grandmother was a little bit older, she was an orphan and nobody knows the story, they never talk about it, so...The more I dig, like, in terms of what could’ve happened, it’s very tragic. They never talk about it. Somebody knew something and it just was not talked about.

When talking about her family, another interviewee showed that she, too, continued her search for information about her family history after asking her family about their origins:

I’m going to dig into this because I feel I can’t find somebody who know this because my father’s parents, brothers, and sisters, they’re not alive now. So, as soon as I find someone, I’m going to get deeper into this because I’m interested in this.

This active search for information regarding family ancestry is uniquely Armenian in that the realities of the Armenian Genocide continues to be debated among states today; so, the history that Armenians relate to one another is not recognized across the world. In fact, only 26 countries currently recognize the Armenian Genocide (Armenian National

Institute, 2016). Families' historical narratives seem to be subsequently used as both a coping mechanism and an instrument of identity and truth. By confirming the truth among each other, Armenians can help the collective memory of their people survive; this is known as social memory, as it is "bound up with the lifespan of the individual and the generation" (Üngör, 2014, p. 149). In this way, research findings that "the Turkish attempt to establish a unitary political memory has failed...in the face of Armenian social memory" appear to be upheld (Üngör, 2014, p. 149).

Discussion

The data show the complex and sometimes conflicting nature between local Armenians as well as between the locals and their government. Further, the intergenerational traumatization of Armenians due to the Armenian Genocide appears consistent across the majority of interviews. Members of the Syrian-Armenian diaspora experience continued trauma because of the Syrian Civil War and the sometimes contentious life of integration to their historic Homeland.

Further, although local Armenians claim to be accepting of Syrian-Armenian refugees, they also seem to be struggling with competition for resources as well as the cultural differences resulting from Armenia's territorial division by Turkey during the Armenian Genocide and the government's split with the Soviet Union. Interviewees seemed knowledgeable of these histories, maintained that they are "brothers" with Syrian-Armenians, but also that they are inherently different from them after generations of assimilation.

Additional fieldwork notes indicate the immanence of Armenian history in everyday lives of Armenians in Armenia. For example, during dinner toast, a father

exclaimed gratitude that people from all nations can come together in peace, especially in the face of the Armenian Genocide. Also, many billboards merely had “1915” menacingly etched on them; other billboards had minimalist images of Hitler beside a man with a fez:



“1915 – Tools of Massacre”



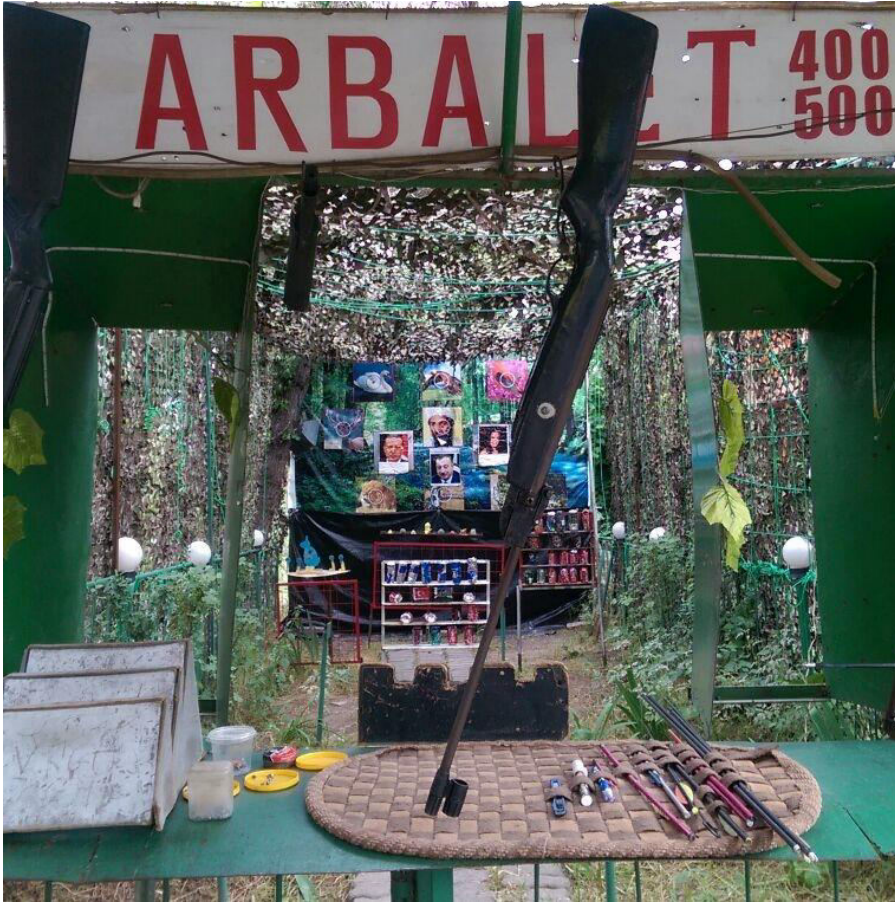
“191.5 million – I Remember and Demand”



“1915, 1939 – By condemning the previous, we could have prevented the following.”

One can see that the text on the billboards contains descriptions in Armenian script and Russian Cyrillic, in line with cultural norms.

In a more satirical tone, a shooting-range carnival booth had photos of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev as targets alongside images of wild game:



“Crossbow 400, 500”

In Armenia, the immensely political vocalizations of Armenian people stand out dramatically, and in various forms. The pervasiveness of these political, cultural, and historical discourses seems to be perceived as a necessity, considering the world’s reluctance to accept their truth.

Part Five: Discussion

Language and Integration

According to relevant research, the difference between Syrian-Armenians' language and local Armenians' is stark and presents distinctive challenges to integrating refugees. Serving as a symbol of cultural unity and division, language has been used as a tool to expose those demonstrating or lacking "true" Armenian identity. The following section discusses how integration of incoming Syrian-Armenian refugees into Armenia is affected by the historical evolution of the Armenian language, conservation strategies of Armenian language (Eastern and Western), legislation related to a culture of linguistic purism, and reported attitudes of local Armenians.

To begin, in the 18th century, Modern Eastern Armenian language began its divergence from modern Western Armenian due to linguistic differences, like phonology, morphology, and syntax, as well as historical and political factors like the influence of neighboring languages (Dum-Tragut, 2009). Although many diasporan communities in the Middle East (primarily in Beirut, Aleppo, and Baghdad) launched comprehensive efforts to preserve Western Armenian language as a part of Armenian culture, regional instability often rendered these efforts ineffective (Chahinian & Bakalian, 2016).

To that end, conservation efforts of Western Armenian language have led to the language's endangerment. The decline of Western Armenian is exacerbated by the fact that Eastern Armenian, designated the official language of the Republic of Armenia, is spoken by about 98% of Armenians (Dum-Tragut, 2009). Conversely, the stateless language of Western Armenian, spoken by an estimated 250,000 people in the world, is listed as "Definitely Endangered" by the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural

Organization's (UNESCO) Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger (Dum-Tragut, 2009; Moseley, 2010). This classification falls in the center of a six-point scale that ranges from "extinct," "critically endangered," "severely endangered," "definitely endangered," "vulnerable," to "safe" (Moseley, 2010). With respect to language, it appears that the nationalizing regime undercuts the ability of diasporan Armenians to connect to their home country.

Further, Armenia's membership in the Soviet Union almost indisputably impacted Armenian linguistic values, contributing to Syrian-Armenian integration difficulties. During the Soviet era, pro-Russian language policy resulted in linguistic "loans" words from Russian, including numerous "internationalisms;" at the same time, the ability to speak Russian became a prerequisite for higher education and became a sign of high social prestige and modernity (Dum-Tragut, 2009, p. 5). The rate of Armenians in Armenia who consider knowledge of Russian to be "very important" remained at a stable 75 percent since 2006; in fact, 97 percent of Armenians consider Russian their "mother tongue" in addition to Eastern Armenian (Gradirovski & Esipova, 2008).

In all, there is compelling evidence that the division between Eastern and Western Armenian has been systematically enforced for decades. A "purist" element to Armenian written language is prevalent in Armenian culture, largely owing to the fact that Article 3 of the Armenian Language Law includes citizenry obligation: "In the official conversation, citizens of the Republic of Armenia shall be obliged to ensure the purity of the language" (Dum-Tragut, 2009; Ter-Petrosyan, 2014). The law was put forth in 1993, shortly after the state's declaration of independence, and is currently implemented obediently in Armenian schools, as is required by Article 5 of the legislation (Dum-

Tragut, 2009; Ter-Petrosyan, 2014). Rather than encourage a long-term multilingual landscape comprised of varying dialectical differences, this type of legislation serves to narrow the definition of what it means to be Armenian and oppress those who do not fit within its parameters.

In all, it seems that efforts to reinforce the state-established Armenian identity are working against incoming co-ethnics, raising questions among locals about what it really means to be “Armenian.” As an example, when the Armenian government opened schools for children with Arabic curriculum, one media outlet asked, “Does Armenia, which sustained its national identity through the ages, need such a school?” (Hakobyan, 2013). In response, Syrian-Armenians expressed deep pain because of their considerable efforts to preserve Armenian traditions in an Arab nation; one Syrian-Armenian claimed Arabic to be “the language of the country that hosted our grandparents who escaped from genocide and provided Armenians with all chances for a worthy life,” and wondered why any hostility is directed toward the language (Hakobyan, 2013). Evidently, although Armenia is the diasporan “homeland,” a clear language barrier stirs resentment among some Armenian locals.

Combined news reports and research regarding diasporan integration support the notion that the ability to speak Eastern Armenian, and in many cases Russian, separates native Armenians from “repatriating” diasporan Armenians. One research participant’s reported laughter at the way Syrian-Armenians speak Eastern Armenian demonstrates a degrading attitude toward new residents. Further, one female respondent noted the differences in grammar between Western and Eastern Armenian; she noted that the differences between them are so pronounced that it is difficult for diasporan Armenian

children to excel in school. Lastly, code-switching also occurs (from Armenian to Russian) without warning and confuses incoming refugees who have not been exposed to Soviet language or culture. The symbolic nature of language functions to limit refugees' power and social opportunities, which, in turn, limits their ability to fully integrate into the host nation.

Solidarity and Ambivalence

Contributing to Syrian-Armenian refugees' ability to integrate are the government's migration programs and the locals' personal interactions with the newcomers. The government's integration projects leave much to be resolved, highlighting the state's inability to follow through with its welcoming rhetoric. At the same time, the mixed reactions by Armenian locals go against the expected unity between co-ethnics that were separated by the tragedy of genocide. The following section explores potential reasons behind the state's inadequate responses to the influx of Syrian-Armenian migrants, focusing on the anticipated temporariness of the migration situation. The effects of Armenian locals' reactions to the migrants' relocation on the generally perceived solidarity between Armenians around the world are also discussed. What emerges is a distinction between "homeland" and "home" that the government, Armenian locals, and Syrian-Armenians seem to have failed to consider until now.

According to Georgia Călin-Ștefan, an International Relations and Intercultural Communication researcher at Babes-Bolyai University, a pragmatic sequence of circumstances led to the state's current mishandling of diasporan migration resulting from the Syrian War (2014). She argues that the manner in which the Syrian conflict progressed resulted in the state's slow reaction to the influx of refugees. Călin-Ștefan

states that, at the war's inception, both the Armenian government and Syrian-Armenians saw their relocation as temporary. The expectation that Syrian-Armenians would soon return to their homes in Syria created a layer of unforeseen difficulties to the Armenian government's migration management process.

For example, in 2011, confident that Syrian-Armenians would return to Syria, the Armenian government temporarily offered free basic education in Arabic to Syrian-Armenian children to bridge any gaps in their education. As time went on, however, the Armenian government began allowing Syrian-Armenian children in local public schools, where specialized Arabic and Western Armenian curriculum was not available and children began to fall behind (Harutyunyan, 2014). Further, family expenses piled up and many Syrian-Armenians began to run out of their savings, especially because employment opportunities were slim. Unprepared to provide for such immense welfare needs, the Armenian government struggled with the transition from short-term to long-term solutions to Syrian-Armenians' difficulties.

Moreover, the anticipated temporariness of Syrian-Armenian refugees' relocation was echoed by participants in this study. For example, the only Syrian-Armenian participant of this study mentioned that his Syrian friends who had been on vacation in Armenia in 2012 decided to unexpectedly stay in Armenia because of the escalating violence of the Syrian War. Another participant, a local Armenian and PhD candidate, mentioned that some of his Syrian-Armenian classmates entered higher education in Armenia just as any student; but, upon seeing the conflict intensify, they, too, chose to remain in Armenia for safety. Although this choice was initially seen as temporary by

both Armenian locals and the migrants themselves, they found themselves waiting for the end of a war for months and years longer than anticipated.

Overall, the Armenian government's efforts have produced mixed results. Fortunately, the Armenian government's efforts to expedite citizenship processes and provide other resettlement benefits worked in tandem with those of local NGOs and long-term approaches to managing the refugee inflow were developed over time. Yet, as Armenian locals continue to serve as messengers of the past for the world, their heightened ambivalence regarding Syrian-Armenian migration to Armenia cannot be ignored. As the war continues, the tensions between refugees and locals are likely to rise, especially as resources and jobs remain scarce and refugees' return to Syria becomes less likely.

This tension is important to consider because it goes against the commonly held perception that the "homeland" is "a tool to build group cohesion and identity" (Kasbarian, 2015, p. 359). Flying in the face of the Armenian collective memory of genocide, many Armenian locals remain hesitant in their acceptance of Syrian-Armenian refugees. This reality that Syrian-Armenians are facing serves to dismantle the overall imagined mystic quality of the Armenian "homeland" and, instead, reinforce the permanence of diasporic communities around the world (Kasbarian, 2015). Thus, the "messenger" role of Armenians is called into question because their understanding of the Republic of Armenia as a symbol of peace and unity (as opposed to political and ethnic divisions) is being challenged as they themselves confront ideas of what it means to be "Armenian."

As a nation largely defined by its past experience with forced displacement, one would expect a larger integration effort on part of both the government and the people. Unfortunately, it is evident that many Syrian-Armenians are struggling to integrate into Armenia, going against expectations that co-ethnics with a shared history of trauma would easily get along and show the world the unifying power of the past. However, whether it be because of linguistic differences or job stabilization challenges, the challenges Armenians face do not appear to align with the welcoming message that the Armenian government projects. This study's Syrian-Armenian participant suggested that the reason for their difficulties might be a lack of empathy among Armenian locals. An Armenian local conversely proposed that the challenges have to do with logistical difficulties, like high Armenian unemployment rates. Whatever the reason, the locals' apparent ambivalence to actively assist their ethnic "brothers" diverges from the expected discourse resulting from Armenia's experience with genocide.

Part Six: Conclusion

This thesis considers the ways in which Armenian history has influenced integration of Syrian-Armenian refugees into Armenia due to the ongoing Syrian War. The experiences of Syrian-Armenians are unique because the country they are fleeing to is the nation-state of their ethnic group. It seems that Syrian-Armenians may have expected that the integration process would have been simple since they share cultural values and traditions with the host country. However, unexpected complications have arisen in light of the fact that Armenian inhabitants are coping with high unemployment rates and a lackluster economy. In addition, in the last century, the populations have experienced a distinctive cultural divergence.

Examining this occurrence is important because Armenia is one of the largest hosts of Syrian refugees per capita in the world. Because refugees entering into Armenia are struggling to cope with resettlement challenges, they are reportedly seeking alternative resettlement opportunities. This occurs despite the fact that they are connected with the host population through a deep-rooted knowledge of tragedy, bringing to the forefront the question of how populations determine who is in their ingroup and who in the outgroup. Considering the challenges of resettlement between groups who are not co-ethnics appears common throughout the forced displacement literature. This thesis works to enter the gap that examines the experiences of migrants moving into co-ethnic host communities.

Field work in Armenia explored ethnic Armenian outlooks, which were analyzed relative to the influx of Syrian refugees, particularly co-ethnic Syrian-Armenians. This research found a sustained cultural impression of Armenians' Ottoman and Soviet

membership and genocide. Notably, Armenian nationals speak Eastern Armenian whereas incoming Syrian-Armenians speak Western Armenian. The impact of Armenia's membership in the Soviet Union is evident in its policies of language "purity" as well as local tendencies to engage in Russian code-switching. Finally, whether or not the world agrees that the Armenian genocide occurred, it is evident that Armenians have integrated tragedy as a keystone of their culture. The common heritage between local Armenians and incoming Syrian-Armenians appears to create an interesting tension between the state policies and the locals' experiences.

Findings also suggest that recognizing the importance of history as it may or may not affect migration reception policies and attitudes is important to developing sustainable resettlement environments, at least until repatriation or third-country resettlement becomes an option to migrants. As it stands, the current economic and cultural situation in Armenia often works against integration strategies that the state and non-governmental agencies are attempting to implement. Syrian-Armenians and locals alike could greatly benefit from job training programs, as well as cultural orientations outlining connections and differences between the local population and the incoming refugees. Considering that entrepreneurship has proven an important aspect of Syrian culture, local inhabitants may benefit from their new businesses, which create jobs for which anyone may apply (Bulghadarian, 2015).

Ultimately, this thesis argues that more attention must be paid to the impact of nationalism and resource constraints on state and local refugee reception. The construction of difference among co-ethnics requires state legislators to consider the extent to which homogeneity encourages or discourages trust among neighbors. This is

particularly critical for states suffering from severe resource constraints, which, in this case, appear to usurp ethnic ties. As the global migration crisis continues, nationalism's ability to unite and divide nations is becoming increasingly clear, forcing academics and policy-makers alike to challenge assumptions regarding national unity and ethnic ties. It is vital for people everywhere to reconceptualize what it means to be an "insider" or "outsider" in ethnic terms, specifically with respect to immigration.

Also, it appears that international discounting of enduring concerns regarding historical trauma discourages healing among Armenian people. The data suggest that Armenians continue to struggle to process the horrific events that largely define their republic. In worldwide acknowledgement of the genocide, Armenians might not need to seek validation of the historical truth, giving them the power and the freedom to move beyond their intergenerational trauma. Additionally, state leaders worldwide must consider the ongoing impact of Armenian genocide denial, especially considering that ethnic Armenians are undergoing trauma for the second time in a century as they migrate from Syria to Armenia.

Furthermore, regional delays in establishing comprehensive migration reform on states with struggling economies highlight intolerable inadequacies of international law, law that is primarily enforced according to the conscience and consent of participating member states. Enforcement of international refugee resettlement laws throughout the globe has proven nearly impossible as the states neighboring warring nations like Syria continue to absorb the highest numbers of migrants (Kritzman-Amir, 2009). This lack of accountability jeopardizes the viability of the international human rights regime, and so, international responsibility to "share the burden" of refugee distribution cannot be more

critical. If all states were to abide by their obligations under international law, countries forced to host mass populations of refugees, like Armenia, would likely face less problems regarding resource limitations because they would be hosting smaller populations of migrants. Whether the resettlement is temporary or permanent, international state governments must step in and respect their legal commitments to protecting the vulnerable.

However, because attention to the country is lacking, Armenian government agencies reside outside the stream of global humanitarian assistance. They may apply for additional financial assistance through channels like the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and other similar tools; but, the state has long struggled with resource constrictions and government corruption that continue to work to limit the capacity of immigration reform and resettlement support (EuFoA, 2015). Ultimately, the Republic of Armenia could better handle the immense refugee burden with increased international attention and financial backing. As it stands, the country's independent efforts are admirable but inadequate.

Limitations and Future Research

Overall, a number of limitations to the field research are evident. First, the four-month time frame of the research severely restricted the number of participants who could be interviewed by a sole principal investigator (PI). The small sample size limits the generalizability of the data, as interviewees' perspectives serve as anecdotal evidence. Second, the PI's deficiency in Armenian language further limited the variety of participants who could be interviewed for this study; also, communicating in Armenian and understanding cultural references could contribute to development of trusting

relationships and better understanding of various perspectives reported by participants. Access to interpreters in Armenia was available, but contact with them was excluded since IRB approval was not yet obtained. Third, the “snowball” participant collection methods were primarily relegated to English-speaking individuals personally connected to the PI, which limits the responses to potentially biased perspectives. Last, because of the recency of the topic, literature specifically pertaining to the plight of Syrian-Armenian communities in Syria and Armenia appeared somewhat limited. The need for future research in the region is clear.

Additional limitations presented themselves in relation to the data on Syrian-Armenian migration to Armenia. For one, there is no centralized database containing coordinated, comparative information between all the governmental, local, and international humanitarian aid agencies managing the migration and resettlement processes. Although data is meant to be managed under Armenia’s “Action Plan for Implementation of Policy Concept for the State Regulation of Migration in the Republic of Armenia” and other decrees modeled after compliance procedures in the EU, information gaps persist and conflicting data proved to be a common problem (Migration Policy Centre, 2013). Therefore, estimations were cross-referenced using various sources and inaccuracies may be present.

The potential of prospective research pertaining to refugees migrating to Armenia is broad in scope. It is apparent that Syrian-Armenians’ *de facto* refugee status may contribute to their inability to qualify for assistance through international organizations like the UNHCR; the effects of citizenship on the resettlement and integration processes should be explored and possibly compared to refugees who arrive in Armenia who are

not co-ethnics (Călin-Ştefan, 2014). Closer examination of local Armenians' attitudes regarding nationalism and Syrian-Armenian co-ethnics could assist in the understanding of Armenian identity politics, which appears to have been affecting the refugee integration process.

Additionally, research on Armenia's internal refugee management procedures must be conducted. Specifically, progress of efforts for improvement in physical and mental health, education, language law, employment, housing, financial aid, and cultural integration must be monitored as the war continues for an unknown period of time. Also, the particular needs of Syrian-Armenians, as well as local Armenians, must be assessed so that organizations' execution of solutions can be improved. Making this data freely available to any participating actors (NGOs and government municipalities alike) should be prioritized to prevent duplication of services and support interfunctional coordination. In all, the Syrian refugee crisis is a collective, global concern that must be solved collectively.

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Appendix A

During interviews, participants were asked the following questions:

- What do you know about the history of Armenia (generally)?
- Why do you think Armenia became an independent state?
- Is it important to you that Armenians have their own country? If yes, why?
- Has your family always lived in Armenia?
- Did you or your family move to Armenia? If yes, from where and when?
- When was the first time you learned about the Armenian Genocide (e.g. from family, in school, etc.)?
- How does your knowledge of Armenian history make you feel?
- Do you talk about Armenian history with people in your community or family?
Can you tell me about these discussions?
- Do you have any connections to Syria, such as family members, friends, or business interests?
- Do you follow the news on the war in Syria?
- What do you know about the current conflict in Syria and the Syrian refugees?
- What do you know about the situation of Armenians in Syria? About their history?
- Do you know any Syrian-Armenians who have migrated to Armenia personally?
If so, can you tell me about their decision to move to Armenia? If you are Syrian-Armenian who migrated, can you tell me about your decision to move to Armenia?

- How do you feel about Syrian-Armenians/your migrating to Armenia or resettling (t)here?
- Do you talk about Syrian-Armenians/your moving to Armenia with others in your community or family? Can you tell me about these discussions?
- Would you like to (have Syrian-Armenians) resettle in your city or community? What about in Armenia? Why or why not?
- To your knowledge, what is the Armenian government's policy toward Syrian-Armenians?
- Is the Armenian government inviting Syrian-Armenians to migrate to Armenia? Is the government discouraging Syrian-Armenians from coming?
- Do you feel that you share an identity with Syrian-Armenians/Armenians?
- Do you feel that you share a history with Syrian-Armenians/Armenians?
- Do you feel that Syrian-Armenians/Armenians are different from you? If yes, how so?
- Is there anything else regarding Armenian history, identity, and Syrian-Armenians/Armenians you would like to share?