

IN ARMENIA'S TRACES: TOWARD A NEW ARMENIAN PERSPECTIVE OF RECONCILIATION

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Abstract: *This paper focuses the concept of Armenian-ness beyond its legal recognition in the last constitution of the Republic of Armenia and its usage in everyday politics and public statements. In the pursuit of conducting a cross-country identity analysis, the term "Armenian-ness" is employed to point out both political and cultural potentialities for facilitating prevention for vulnerable Armenian groups living in marginalized borderlands and for creating a "crisis-mode-management" in order to unfreeze historical rivalries and conflictual relations with neighbouring countries.*

Key words: *Armenian-ness, Antonio Gramsci, Recognition, Identity, Circle of Humanity*

1. Introduction

*"The Armenians who find themselves scattered throughout Europe should make Armenia known, bring it alive for the unformed, for those who do not know and pay a heed"*³. By these words, in his article titled "Armenia", the Italian thinker Antonio Gramsci noted how the aftermath of the First World War had stirred up the "Armenia question" in the light of the mass-scale massacre conducted by Ottoman Turks against the Armenian population from the Mediterranean region to the Caucasus. While Gramsci's brief article reveals his unequivocal empathy for oppressed peoples and subalterns, whose images recollected to his mind his father family's experience of escapees from their historical land of origin⁴, his commentary seems to have historically imprinted the collective

³ Signed A. G. "Il Grido del Popolo", 11 Marzo 1916, anno XXII, n.607, ora in *Opere di Antonio Gramsci. Scritti Giovanili* (1914-1918). Translation, Ara H. Merijan, 2015.

⁴ His father's family descended to from the people: Albanian Christians who began to settling parts of Italy in the fifteeneth century following Ottoman occupation of their native land.

identity of the diaspora-Armenian descendants and their Armenian-based peers.

Almost three decades onwards the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the transition of power in Armenia has recently elicited great public and international interest in the light of the already well-known »Armenia's Velvet Revolution« triggered upon Pashinyan's call for civil disobedience against the State apparatus. , Therefore, the latest mass-scale protests have facilitated the ongoing transition of power that began with the institutional transformation of the former presidentialto parliamentary system and two-constitutional reform processes aimed at establishing a more stable political regime in the path of a full-fledged democracy. Moreover, Armenia has taken a more active role in the political attempts to project itself as protector of some of ethnic groups that belong to Armenian heritage as well as those that do not but continue to live nowadays within the formerly Soviet Republic's territory. As mandated under new constitutional text, Armenia's Kurdish, Yazidi, Assyrian and Russian national minorities have been represented in the National Assembly with three members among the Republican Party and one with the Bloc Tsarukyan. Interestingly enough, while Armenia's political parties and institutions have expressed a high level of socio-political and cultural respect towards non-Armenian ethnic minority groups, kinship with scattered and broken segments of the ethnic Armenian communities has been stressed in order to foster definitive appease with "other Armenians". Since 2006, indeed, the approved dual citizenship law and the creation of a new government body of the Ministry of Diaspora began to mobilise emotional ties to the homeland and to implement cultural and spiritual interconnectedness among worldwide ethnic Armenians on behalf of the policy of *hayadardzutyun* (e.g., back to the roots)⁵. Although what means *being or feeling* Armenian (Bakalian 1993) today is different from the past and it has constantly changed in each of the historical time mainly due to Armenians diaspora, latest constitutional reforms and referendums have mutually opened the doors to the debate over understanding otherness in a (un-)conscious process of sharing and feeling common experiences of historical upheavals and forced dispersals. In this instance, Armenians' and Assyrians' experiences of trauma triggered by 1915 Genocide during the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, and today's Armenian solidarity towards "forgotten Armenians" in Syria and Iraq who have been forced to flee due to ongoing turmoil across the Middle East, have come to embrace otherness and diversity more than in the past within a set of previous experiences.

⁵ Darieva 2018.

Throughout this paper, I will pin down what differentiates the identity of the third and fourth diaspora-born generation of Armenians and that of their Armenia-based peers by employing the concept of Armenian-ness beyond its legal meaning, whose recognition in the Armenian constitutional text refers the Article 19. By doing so, I will attempt to implicate cultural aspects of Armenian-ness with a so-called *philosophy of praxis* that may bring Armenian culture to flourish as a whole. In pursuit of pointing out such dynamics of this reemerging communitarian identity, I will use the historical relevancy of the so-called “Armenian question” that Antonio Gramsci had raised in his short contribution “Armenia” for the Turin-based newspaper “Il Grido del Popolo” in Italy on 11 March 1926. From his philosophical viewpoint, Gramsci succeeded to bring to publicly light the “Armenian massacres” carried out by the Young Turks across Europe, describing at the same time what really happened throughout the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. In tandem with this article from his juvenilia, which remains decidedly minor in comparison to a larger contribution of his cultural theory and political economy, I shall point out how Gramsci’s *wider circle of humanity* may potentially unravel process of recognition to those diverse forms that Armenian-ness that has taken (Cornell et al. 1998) in time in tandem with policy of inclusiveness and recognition of otherness. In particular, I will use philosophical and cultural insights by Smbat Hovhannisyan, Narek Mkrtchyan and Ara Merjian among others, in order to lay Armenian-ness out with what Gramsci referred to *philosophy of praxis*, which may culturally be oriented towards the creation of a prevention model for scattered and broken segments of Armenians at risk, and a “crisis-mode-management” aimed at unfreezing historical rivalries with neighbouring countries and strengthening future international alliances.

Of particular note is the central section of this paper, in which I will shortly present the main broken and scattered segments of Armenian communities and their re-production of Armenian culture and life norms diffused and borrowed in their both cultural everydayness and political practices. Hence, in the light of the current migratory phenomena that began recently to impinge on the Republic of Armenia, the apparently never-ending “life of purgatory” within which enrecognised Armenians live in the de facto Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh, and the deep mourning sense of “a society of loss”, I shall define Armenian-ness as result of a hyphenated identity that – beyond its legal recognition – may bring Armenia out from economic and demographic crises by turning its geographically unlocked position and nostalgia into a future policy of reconciliation and cooperation.

In this attempt, I use to theoretically reject the idea of uniqueness and straightforward essence of a given identity that self-embodies the one and

only community. In the light of specific-group and intersectional issues that arise from within, such as LGBTQI and feminist perspectives, disabled people's issues, in the case of Armenian-ness I argue over the stable and pristine understanding of such identity, deriving from a preordained essence that would have schematically been racially, ethnically, linguistically, culturally or ontologically definable. On the contrary, I will define Armenian-ness as well as the cultural overview of "one's people" as a dynamic, complex, fluid, plural, multiple, overlapping, socially constructed and perhaps contradictory identity exposed to a selection of a set of available archetypes which, in turn, are evolving in time and tend to change.

However, I remain far from desecrating the Armenian identity, but at the same time I will define today's Armenian-ness as a form of new politics for potential perspectives for the young Caucasian Republic. In conclusion, rather than using Gramsci's relevant *denuncia* to pointed out once again how "*nothing was done, or at least nothing of any substance*" for recognizing the crime against Armenians, I shall try to avoid vivid images of individuals in flesh and blood by presenting Armenian-ness into a result of potential (re-)/interpretations of a millennial and transnational identity(-ies) and (trans-)/formations of form of politics through the mirror of culture, literature, history, and philosophy itself (Mkrtchyan 2016).

2. Between Nostalgia and Endurance

Historical upheavals Armenian communities have passed through have never softened the rise of a powerful nostalgia for the partial loss of their historical lands of origin. While Abdul al-Hamid's massacre launched against the Armenian population within the Ottoman regions, forced expulsions of Armenians from the so-called "Western Armenia", the further Soviet takeover over the Caucasus and reallocation of Armenia-historically inhabited regions of Nakichevan and Karabakh to SSR Azerbaijan have framed an Armenian "society of loss" (Fedoseeva 2012).

Since 1960, the Armenia National Unification Party's requests sent to Moscow for re-allotting Turkey's Western-controlled territory and the majoritarian Armenian-inhabited regions of Nakhichevan and Autonomous Oblast of Nagorno-Karabakh back to SSR Armenia have been reduced to insignificance, remaining unvoiced due to the politics of the Cold War and Soviet inertia. Within this, a consequently increase of a strength sense of community began to shape more and more a nostalgia and collective perception of living across a fragile boundary zone in between Soviet outskirt and Turkish-NATO controlled-territory. All of these increased a

communitarian sense of insecurity over contested borderlands accordingly, bringing Armenians to live under pressure of the Soviet central power on the one side and Turkish enemies on the other one. At the same time, migratory outflows reduced dramatically the Armenian population after the Second World War, shaping a “communities in exiles” have never interrupted political campaigns for achieving recognition, revenge from history and preserve their faith.

As the time went by, the demise of the Soviet administration and the achievement of independence did not paved immediately the path towards potential reconciliations between Armenians and their previous experiences. By contrary, the breakup over Nagorno-Karabakh came to negatively (inter-)/play a crucial role in Armenian consciousness in shaping a collective sorrow and mourn based on the idea of endless experience of suffering. After the definitive dissolution of the Soviet regime, indeed, Nagorno-Karabakh’s rivalry with Azerbaijan has come to constitute the condition for the possible emergence of an Armenian-ness as an entity aimed at uniting that regional unfamiliarity that Western Armenians and Eastern Armenians have always experienced. With the eruption of the conflict within the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave, an enchanted space whose meaning is based on the historically communitarian act of self-embodiment in defence of “one’s community”, the Karabakh Movement stirringly campaigned to transfer the enclave to Armenia, coalescing afterwards into a self-defencing force against Azerbaijan’s attempts to keep the disputed territory inside its de jure national borders.

While unsurprisingly endurance has been the Armenian legacy (Goldenberg 1994, 133), unconsciously Armenians did not give up in Gramsci’s suggestion to make Armenia known and bring it alive for the unformed, for those who do not know and pay a heed.

However, such historical experiences have allowably taken Armenians to be prudent in processes of integration of non-Armenian communities at first and in political engagement historical disputes and rivalries with Turkey and Azerbaijan at second. Moreover, uncertain prospects of brighter cooperation with Caucasian countries and other communities of the Armenian diaspora have showed unexpected concerns and further restrictions. In this instance, as Anny Bakalian pointed out in his survey on American Armenians, while the Armenian diaspora has lent Yerevan a certain stability over how much material support post-Soviet Armenia can count on from the émigré community, Armenian diaspora’s focus on restitution for the 1915 Genocide have been inflated. The rise of nationalism across the South Caucasus brought Armenians to suffer the rise of national campaigns, such as in Georgia, shifting

into a marginalized position of ethnic minority groups or hidden unvoiced conditions due to the risk of ethnic cleansing and violence, such as in Azerbaijan and Eastern Turkey.

More recently, however, the policy of potential return to the motherland for Armenian descendants seems to open among Armenia-based citizens a way for (re-)thinking a closer comparison and deeper understanding with the Armenian identity. Although all of these have come to concern Armenian descendants who in time have acquainted cultural intimacy and got used with different sets of social practices and intercultural relations (e.g., mixed marriages, different languages, social practices, different religions), which have been considered (arguably) to be far from a pristine and real Armenian-ness, the application of the so-called *hayadardzutyun* seems prompt to potentially foster from within a more and more close ties among Armenians from all over the world. Recent political events, which have shaken Armenian communities across the Caucasian region and Middle East and discovered other, have indeed gone beyond the constitutional framework and legal application of Armenian-ness by touching other related issues of communities that *feel* and *are* Armenian.

3. Armenian-ness: whose identity?

Since the last Armenian constitution came into force, Armenian-ness seems to trigger a process of self-(re)identification of what makes and who is “an Armenian”, impinging not only on the sphere of law due to the introduction of the legal term “Armenian-ness” (Article 19) but also in the attempts to rethink what Gramsci had introduced. In other words, whether the historically Armenian identity question was forcedly reduced to a narrowly political discussion that ended up into a voiceless position, the comprehensive linkage with the worldwide Armenian diaspora in order to preserve their millenarian native heritage and facilitate a return “home” may go beyond its legal reference.

While it may be too early to define any definitive conclusion, there are solid grounds for thinking that the policy of Armenian-ness and its cultural conception among Armenia-based citizens will be one of the cornerstones of future full-fledged democracy.

In this regard, in the past two years the application of Armenian-ness has brought the Ministry of Diaspora to handle the impact of an unexpected movement of a relevant number of people from Northeast Syria, Lebanon and Iraqi Kurdistan with Armenian origins through a herculean policy of resettlement aimed at facilitating their comeback to their “motherland”.

Although the application of such legal framework has already harboured about 22.000 refugees who have heartbreakingly decided to leave family members and friends behind in order to seek refuge in Armenia, the strategy itself seems to challenge the political purpose of such welcoming policy, whose aftermaths (i.e., integration, inclusion, participation and so forth) may seriously challenge the contemporary Armenian society. While unsurprisingly the majority of refugees decided to permanently remain in the country as they represent the third and fourth diaspora-born generations of those Armenian survivals of the mass-scale massacre occurred in 1915, the decision of a few hundreds of them to resettle their life down in the contested region of Nagorno-Karabakh, supported by Armenian Minister of Diaspora, remains arguable. Despite potentially military escalation and hostilities with Azerbaijan's military attempts to retake control over the region might impinge the newcomers' everyday life, in the modest village of Ishkhanadzor 15 miles north of the Araxes river alongside the Iranian border, about two hundred Syrian and Lebanese Armenians joined the local community living in the uncertain area⁶. On the one hand, their willingness to live within another region under fire shows how Armenian diaspora continues to feel attached what is still considered their historical land of origin. On the other hand, while recently Ministry of Diaspora affirmed that the Armenian Syrian problem is a pan-Armenian concern to tackle, the Republic of Artsakh's⁷ representative authorities envisage to give ownership right to land to those Armenian countrymen who express their desire to contribute to the agriculture and horticulture sector of the contested region.

Besides politically-oriented interests of the policy of Armenian-ness, the former outlines prominent and diverse forms of Armenian identities. To a certain extent, this outlines Bakalian's argumentation concerning the fact that Armenians have not lost their identity of being community, whereas they have held onto it and transformed it (Bakalian 1993). When hundreds of thousands of Armenians were targets of pogroms throughout the demise of the Ottoman Empire that took place since the Hamidian massacre between 1894 and 1896 with the slaughter of 200-300.000 Armenians until up to the end of First World War where 1.500.000 Armenians died, a significant

⁶ See more "Ghettoization, Insecurity and Destabilization: Refugees Crisis in Southeast Europe and South Caucasus"-©HOLDS Foundation | IISA 2017, p.9.

⁷ In 20 February 2017, the popular referendum held in Nagorno-Karabakh approved the change of name to the "Republic of Artsakh". According to the Artsakh Central Election Commission, 79,314 voters participated in the voting - 76.44% of eligible voters, at final tally.

number of survivals flew out moving to United States. By 1900, 12,000 Armenians had taken refuge on the American soil, while by 1915 other 60,000 Armenians continued to come from various parts of the Middle East because of a variety of reasons. Nowadays, the Armenian-born third and fourth generations have marked a relevant shift in the concept of the so-called “Armenian-ness”. Within this, those Armenian Americans who are descendants of the first wave of Armenians have marked a relevant shift by reducing their “Being Armenian” without stopping themselves of “feel Armenian”. As Anny Bakalian notes in his survey conducted among Armenian Americans who currently live in US, if “Being Armenian” is referred to sharing a distinct language, living with a distinct lifeworld, carrying a common and identifiably culture, and living one’s life within predominantly set of social rules and relations (i.e., marriage, friendship, faith and so forth), “feeling Armenian” is different. Similar to Armenian descendants who came back home from the Middle East after the breakup of the latest turmoil across Syria and Iraq, Armenian American great-children of the immigrant generation continue to maintain a high level of Armenian-ness, whose identity-oriented affiliation is proudly expressed by a cultural bandage with their ancestral heritage and a strong sense of “we-ness” and peoplehood.

Nevertheless, despite politically limited and culturally exposed to changes, Armenian communities living across the Caucasus and worldwide diaspora have tended to proudly keep their “being Armenian” rather than showing an erosion of it. Armenians of Georgia, for instance, majoritarian in the region of Samtskha-Kvemokartly in the districts of Akhalkalak, Akhaltska, Aspindza, Borijom and Ninotsminda, in Tbilisi, Shulavari and Manuli and in the province of Kutaisi, Gori, Javakhk, have historically expressed their sense of belonging to Armenia-ness in spite of the stereotypic and pejorative epithets of “Bosha” (literally empty or vacant from the Turkish folk-term *boş*) and “Gypsies from Caucasus” with which they are named and addressed even by other Armenia-based peers. Although such identification undermines their affiliation with the Armenian heritage, Armenians of Georgia have maintained their sense of belongingness in time. Besides being adherents to the Armenian Apostolic Church and having a strong Armenian-speaking attitude, their low level of political participation and civic engagement in the Georgian political landscape shows one of the most typical attitudes of national minority groups bounded in a clan system based on familiar and friendship relations (ECMI – Caucasus 2015), has never eroded their Armenian sense of membership. Moreover, their sedentary and rural lifestyle excludes any involvement in borderless lifeworld such as the one of the Roma populations and defies the term “Gypsies from the Caucasus”. However, the term *Hay Bosha*, which refers

an “Armenian Gypsy”, is used for addressing bad attitudes in sociality as well as social differences between city-dwellers and villagers who belong either to the Armenian city of Giumri or its surrounding rural areas. The Apostolic Armenian Church, too, refers to Armenian peasants by using the term “Maghegarts Hayer”, which means Armenian-sieve maker. Because of that, Armenians in Georgia do not often say publicly their origin even though such term is nowadays tolerable and tightly connects the Armenian community, whose members have Armenian ancestors from past generation (Marutyan 2011, 311) living in the Ottoman Armenian millets.

With the demise of Soviet administration, the issue of Armenian communities and their Armenian belonging began to address those territories that in the post-Communist state-building processes impinged human security within disputed borderlands, such as in Marneuli Bolnisi and Abkhazia in Georgia and in the Armenian enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh in de jure territory of former SSR Azerbaijan. While in Georgia the declaration of independence and the breakups of armed conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia truncated the country, in the territory of former SSR Azerbaijan the eruption of the conflict in the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO) exposed Armenians to a wide range of abuses, such as in Baku, Sumgait and even before in Kirovabad.

In both cases, Armenians have stood up in defence of their unique identity. Throughout the Georgia for Georgians campaign carried out by Gamsakhurdia’s followers, which paved the way to a Bosnia-like scenario, Armenians began to protect the Armenian St. Nsham Church in spite of the imposed change of their suffix surname from *-yan* to *-dze* or *-shvili* (Goldenberg 1994). Meanwhile, Karabakh Armenians began to impinge on Azeri national-building process until coming to entirely control the former Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO) and militarily occupying surrounding buffer zones in protection of Armenians and in connection with today’s territory of Republic of Armenia. However, many ethnic minority groups belonging to Armenian milieu, namely Armeno-Udis and Armeno-Tats, have consequently suffered the military hostilities with Azerbaijan. Alike Armenians in Georgia, indeed, in the agricultural areas of Nij Armeno-Udis has shed the *-yan* of their surname and were forced to serve the Azerbaijani army.

According to the census dated 1999, the Armenian community living in de jure Azeri territory amounted to around 120.700, with at least 120.000 living only in the Armenian enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh. Others, who belong to Armenian milieu, live around the rural areas of Mədrəsə and Kilvar within the Province of Baku and Sumgayit, the village of Nij, in the region of Qabala, in

the former province of Vartashar and Oğuz, suffering a high level of discrimination and living under the line of poverty. In retrospect, they have apparently lost their Armenian identity due to the separation from relatives and families that came as consequence of the exacerbation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Most likely, they represent the last members of the second and third generation of mixed marriages during the Soviet era. From a historical prospective, the so-called “Armeno-Udis” and “Armeno-Tats” have gained intimate acquaintance with Old-Armenian religious affiliation and linguistic roots. Since 13th century, for instance, Udis inhabited the old province of Owtickc between the Kura river and the region of Artsakh, today’s province of Tavush. Despite largely contested by Azeri historians who argue that a few similarities cannot completely prove such double tight bondage amongst Udis and Armenians, most likely Old-Udi culture has never undergone a process of modernization. Within this, both processes of Sovietisation and the creation of SSR Azerbaijan came to produce a cross-fertilization between Udis’ language and Oriental loans of Lezgian and Northwest Iranian dialects, shaping today’s Modern-Udi language in turn. Indeed Azeri literature, which considers a wide range of Russian studies on Udis of Karabakh, claims that those territories between Sevan Lake and the Kura River including a mountainous region in between belong to Caucasian Albanians with turksöy origin. Because of that, Azeri historians have kept arguing that Albanian Udis have never been Armenian but they got involved in a process of Armenianisation instead. By contrary, the Armenian historian Kirakos Gandzaketsi has dedicated a specific section to Caucasian-Albanian congeners and coreligionists within his “History of Armenia” in spite of their disputable identity.

In addition, Armeno-Tats address another historical issue of belonging alike Udis. Due to the conquest of the country by Arabs in the VII century, the entire Tat community was divided into three main groups along religious lines. The first and largest group, whose members adopted Islam became part of the Azeri ethnos, while others living in the northeast of today’s Azerbaijan adopted Judaism and are named “mountain Jews”. The third and least numerous group of Tats, adopted Christianity of the mono-physite direction which made them closer to Armenians. In the early nineteenth century, they lived in Khachmaz, in the settlements Kilvar (modern Devichi district) and Madrasa (Shemakha district) having preserved themselves as a distinct ethnicity. However, the number of Armenians that moved increased and that considerably accelerated the process of Armenianisation among Tats. As a result, although they spoke the usage of their Tat dialect in private life within the community, by the end of the 1920s about 90 percent of Kilvar inhabitants

spoke Armenian, especially those young people who emigrated for seasonal jobs to Baku (Volkova 1969, 38). The same process of Armenianisation also took place among Tats living in the village of Madrasa, where in the 1920s only the elderly knew the Tat language. In Soviet times, that group of Tats was completely Armenianised and when the Karabakh conflict flared up in 1988, they were perceived by those around them as Armenians and soon left Azerbaijan for Armenia and Russia.

4. Instead of Conclusion: Armenian-ness as a Form of Cultural Politics and Reconciliation

As discussed above, Antonio Gramsci's epistemological, phenomenological and more generally philosophical denuncia of the post-1915 upshot is key to look beneath surface of the issues of today's Armenian identity(-ies). In my opinion, Gramsci's suggestion to all "*Armenians [to] make Armenia known, bring it alive for the unformed, for those who do not know and pay a heed*" seems to have created a mixture of socio-political and cultural aspects (i.e., sociality, history, memory) that are interplaying in Armenia's international relations and national phenomena. Historically, whether unrecognised crimes against Armenians have come to directly alienate their worldwide community from what Gramsci himself called circle of humanity, Armenian-ness in tandem with the last recognition of otherness may trigger in day-by-day politics a so-called *philosophy of praxis*. In this instance, the cultural aspect of *hayadardzutyun* (e.g., back to the roots), namely Armenian-ness beyond its legal and judicial application, is first and foremost a direct result of Gramsci's *denucia* in defense of Armenians. Besides such historical perspective, Armenian-ness seems to bring to light also a new perspective of opportunities that would possibly achieve reparations (Havhannisyan 2016) for historical rivalries. To put it simple, Gramsci's philosophical approach to history and collective memory is as directly as indirectly related to ongoing Armenian political campaigns for recognition (e.g., 1915 Genocide in what is today Turkey) and millennial claims over their historical land of origin (e.g., Nagorno-Karabakh within *de jure* territory of Azerbaijan). Within this loop of a wider circle of humanity, in which everyone is involved if recognized, Armenian-ness has come to interplay a crucial role over issues of Armenian identities. In order to trigger such recognisability, according to reconciliation from historical trauma and worsening experiences from the past, transnational processes of society are especially indicated. Thus, as even Antonio Gramsci stated, for an event to interest us, to move into it, it must be something recognizable, it must affect a people of whom we have heard

spoken before⁸. Thereby, Armenian-ness seems here to label a transnational paradigm of identity that transcends the (mis-)/conception of imagined communities delimited by contemporary nation-state boundaries (Glavanakova 2016, 26), namely today's Republic of Armenia. Rather than an object of distress and symbol of sorrow, which has (self-)/embodied a community of victims and shape a deep sense of victimhood, current Armenian-ness in all its forms of expression brings those who are and feel Armenian to be agents, actors, authors of a perspective of opportunities oriented to set up a new international and national dialogue.

Despite the fact that the Armenian-ness deserves to be legitimately questioned (Cornell et al. 1998) in the light of the millennial claims over cultural and political recognition, the former involves Armenians into a circle of humanity whose becoming does not stand only in theory, but rather it concerns practice. Armenian-ness, whose recognition in the constitutional law goes beyond, is also a presence of a political and cultural force. In regard with the Hegelian-Marxist understanding of force that Gramsci borrows from phenomenological tradition, Armenian-ness is (inter-)playing the role of a force aimed at decisively reconciling and (re-)/thinking a transnational community in all its difference forms of existence with the purpose of bringing consciousness from "one" to the "also", and from "also" back into the "one" (Bhattacharyya 2011). In other words, Armenian-ness seems to be aimed at creating a new participatory space with the purpose to make the Armenians' community perceivable (with-)/in itself, for itself and for otherness. In addition, Armenian-ness is a form of manifestation of participatory process within which perspectives of getting Armenians involved a practical humanism. In fact, not only political practise carried out by ministers, government institutions and politics, but also those cultural-ideological institutions (i.e., mass-information, literature, church, school) are interplaying a decisive role. In fact, Armenian-ness is apparently fostering closer ties among Armenian communities - in both its Armenia-based and worldwide diaspora entities - by strengthening cultural connection over identity understood as a whole, e.g., literature, history, art, music, language, lifeworld and so forth.

In this instance, what Gramsci referred as a philosophy of praxis is indeed the mirror of culture, literature and philosophy itself (Mkrtchyan 2016, 121), which seem to provide a deep sense of humanism among Armenians by even raising collective awareness towards otherness. Due to this Armenian-ness's *philosophy of praxis*, whose activity functions mutually as process of

⁸ Antonio Gramsci, Armenia, op.cit.

alienation (re-idealization) of Armenian community considered to be a part of humanity are provided with an opportunity to not only get involved in the circle of humanity, but also to establish their transnational and national presence in tandem with its millennial heritage, legacy and potentiality.

For instance, this explains the inner sense of solidarity surmounted among Armenians towards Syrian and Lebanese and Iraqi Armenian refugees, the majority of whom have had opened the doors of integration in Armenia and the opportunity to seriously reconsider their Armenian belonging while turning their feeling of “being Armenian” into a deeply recognised “being-ness” in all spheres of sociality. In confrontation with Bakalian’s argumentation over his survey on American Armenians and their “feeling Armenians” instead of being, Armenian-ness does not attempt to culturally reduce the dichotomy between those who *feel* with those who *are* Armenians, but also it is paving the path toward a “becoming”. Accordingly, by conceptualising Armenian-ness through ancestral belongingness and recollection of worsening memory from previous traumas (Denishinko 2015), Syrian-Armenian refugees and Boshia-Armenians of Georgia and tiny crypto-Armenian communities in Turkey and Azerbaijan alike could trigger a historical change of a “community in exile”, whose identity depends on their historical one’s positing. In few words, the cultural force of Armenian-ness is not essentialist here. Since Armenian-born third and fourth generations’ individuals differ in their personal experiences of intercultural exchange and contacts, they also differ in what cultural elements they choose in order to adopt and internalise. This, however, does not cease those Armenian descendants to all links with being Armenian.

All of these could have the potentiality to turn Armenia’s society of loss with its “blood of innocents” into a new path of a community in (re)making. In the perception of oneself as another, affiliation and attribution assigned to the other are after internalised by the Self in the act of self-identification. Here, a clear example could be the view of those Armenians have of those American or Russian or Middle Eastern Armenian descendants whose Armenian identity has been changing in time and they have internalised as different. Within, Armenian-ness, which is nowadays bringing today’s idea of Armenian nationhood to light under a different shade, will come to challenge the position of the country within the international arena. By feeling those who are just feeling to be Armenian, such as in the case of Syrian, Lebanese or American descendants of Armenians, Armenia-based peers would establish new cultural connections without portraying their feeling as “foreign” to them.

Concerning the longest post-Soviet conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenian and Azerbaijani refusal to look for a peaceful solution has in time shaped a collective inability to forget the horror and worsening pages of collective traumas. Although the youngest generations of Armenians have never had experience of encountering the “Other” because they have never personally experienced the war, nor they are descendants of Armenian or Azeri displaced families from Karabakh, nor former Soviet Karabakh dwellers, their sense of “being wounded”, which seems impossible to heal, continues to deeply-rooted intertwine images of war in their collective consciousness. It followed that all emotional and psychological patterns and objects of gross violence, a “life of purgatory” and heroic struggles for survival and resistance have strengthened and exacerbated a negative process of persuasion towards the image of “Otherness” understood as “enmity” or “theft”, whose responsibility for the death of innocent civilians must receive an appropriate punishment. In this instance, political discourse and conflicting memories around which the narrative of Nagorno-Karabakh’s rivalry has been in time (re-)constructed, has constantly maintained an unsustainable status quo without which it would be impossible for Armenians to maintain their coherent struggle for self-determination and for Azerbaijanis to keep campaigning for having Qarabağ back.

However, in the same way Armenian-ness and its *philosophy of praxis* found answers from history and shaped a deep sense of humanity (Marjian 2016) for assessing welcome policies for Syrian and Lebanese Armenian refugees, Armenian-ness may trigger future forms of involvement with the Other will be not reducible to simply binary opposition “us-against-them”. Also for constitutional recognition of Armenia’s Assyrian, Yazidi and Kurdish groups to ensure their positions in the country, such appropriate respect towards otherness may mutually assure respect from others (Kymlicka 1995, 105) by finding a path for reconciliation, hence repentance, forgiveness, healing and renewal, that in the first instance nation-building has avoided. With regards the so-called hidden Islamised Armenians of Turkey who began to recently come out from the shadow they have been living since Genocide 1915, such recognition could be key to unfreeze Armenia-Turkey hostile relations.

Such new Armenian attitude towards otherness and diverse forms of Armenia-ness have increased Armenia’s role over the region in the attempt to flee the landlocked position that nowadays affects the potential development of Armenia in the region. For instance, the official statement by the self-proclaimed Artsakh Republic to welcome Iraqi Kurds’ claim for independence shows how Armenian-ness has already come to formalise a form of politics.

Within this, rather than a policy of Armenian unity understood as a remembrance of “Great Armenia”, which remains seriously problematic (and might provoke serious security issues across the region), the recognition of tiny ethnic minority groups can lay grounds for bridging Armenian descendants and meanwhile trying to reconcile historical and political upheavals with neighbours. Besides Georgia’s deepening economic relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan and a few historical upheavals Armenians of Georgia have passed through, Armenian-ness could strengthen positive memories based on religious faith and good-neighbourly relations for fomenting friendly people-to-people images within both societies and politically even beyond. In other words, by shaping Armenian-ness as a form of politics within its different articulations and expressions, such Armenian identity could shape a new collective subjectivity and direct the worldwide community towards a path of political opportunities in order to foster new actors, agents and authors rather than perpetuating Armenian identity in terms of distress and victimhood.

In conclusion, Armenian-ness might offer to scattered (i.e., Armenian diaspora) and broken (i.e., Turkey’s hidden Islamised Armenians, Tat-Armenians and Udi-Armenians in Azerbaijan) segments of Armenian societies to become self-organised through theoretical and practical. It might be unique, long, but promising way to overcome voiceless-ness, humbleness and subordination. In this way, Armenians would not be forgotten in a world animated by new political, cultural and social phenomena that will be challenging Armenian identity and culture as a whole in the future.

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