

**LEBANESE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY**

The Role of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the  
Lebanese-Armenian Identity Formation

By

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A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts in Migration Studies

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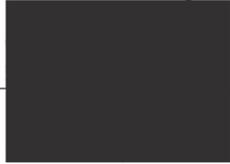
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# The Role of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the Lebanese-Armenian Identity Formation

Karnie Kendirjian

## **ABSTRACT**

Research on migration studies has been mostly aimed to understand diasporic communities and their identity. Abundant research has been conducted to explore the various factors contributing to the Armenian identity preservation in Lebanon. Karnie Kendirjian's thesis titled "The Role of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the Lebanese-Armenian Identity Formation" aims to examine the hybrid identities of diasporic communities. As it takes the Armenian diasporic community in Lebanon as a case study, this thesis focuses on the role of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the Lebanese-Armenian identity formation. The analysis is based on thorough literature review and key informant interviews. This thesis contends that the Armenian Apostolic Church, with its cultural and political objectives, is the fundamental factor behind the Lebanese-Armenian identity formation.

Keywords: Armenian Apostolic Church, Identity, Lebanon, Consociational System, Armenian Political Parties.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

Lebanon is a diverse religio-cultural and socio-political country. Its society has a pluralist nature with a multi-party system which combines various ethnic and religious communities and makes each one of these ethno-religious groups or sects a minority. In contrast to having a dominant group dictating the political, economic and structural processes in a country, Lebanon's system acknowledges a large number of competing interest groups that share the power and voice their opinions and ideas, as a model of democracy, however, structured in a way that promotes conflict.

The Armenian community joined Lebanon's pluralist system not long after its settlement in the country. At the time, their experience remarkably differed from the experience of Palestinians in Lebanon. The latter, despite having certain ethnic, linguistic, and religious similarities with the Lebanese, never fully integrated into the local society. In contrast, the Armenians had a unique process of integration regardless of showing numerous distinct characteristics from the bulk of the Lebanese population. First, the Armenians were not Arab in ethnicity. Second, even though they were Christians, they belonged to their own exclusive Church. Third, they communicated in their own language, the Armenian. Finally, they had a historical and cultural experience not shared by the Lebanese population. These characteristics did not turn out to be impediments for the Armenians to become an integrated part of the Lebanese community, but rather some of them were the core reasons why they became so. The major characteristic that was the incentive to the political decision made to facilitate the Armenian integration into the Lebanese society was their religion, Christianity.

The naturalization of the Armenian community, in execution of the Treaty of Lusanne, had positive consequences on both the Lebanese and Armenian communities. First, it maintained the demographic balance in favor of the Christian sector in the country. Second, Armenians enjoyed the granted rights and privileges equally as the Lebanese citizens.

To have a fair view of the evolution of the Armenians as an immigrant community from refugees to citizens, it would be significant for a fair view of the Armenian history in Lebanon. In this respect, it is important to view the Armenians as citizens of the nation from two different aspects. First, as an ethnic Armenian diasporic community, they have their national goals and responsibilities to preserve their national identity and have several contributions to their homeland. In parallel, they have equal duties and responsibilities to the various facets of living and being as any other group in Lebanon. In summary, “the qualifications of a community as effective diaspora are not simply due to the preservation of identity, but equally the quality of its integral contribution in its local scene, in our case, Lebanon.” (Tagesean, 2017).

This thesis examines the institutional structure of the Armenian diasporic community in Lebanon with the intention of identifying the most crucial entity that contributes to the Lebanese-Armenian identity formation through national identity preservation strategies and simultaneously, strategies to integrate into the Lebanese system. In this context, it investigates the main tenets upon which the Armenian Apostolic Church is the significant factor behind the Lebanese-Armenian identity formation. These tenets have to do with the cultural and political objectives of the Armenian Apostolic Church based on preserving the Armenian national identity and projecting a loyal Lebanese citizenship. Thus, it reveals the dual role of the Armenians Apostolic Church. On one hand, it examines the cultural context through which the Church tackles the issue of identity preservation that gave the Armenian Apostolic Church an obligation to adopt tools to enhance its role as an

organization responsible for the national identity preservation. On the other hand, the thesis explores how the Armenian Apostolic Church maintains their relations with the communities in Lebanon, through the Armenian political parties.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

The main question of this thesis is “What is the role of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the Lebanese-Armenian identity formation?” To abet, several minor questions have been introduced:

- 1- What is the dual role of the Armenian Apostolic Church as an official sect in the Lebanese sectarian system?
- 2- Have the identity preservation tools previously initiated by the Armenian Apostolic Church changed with time, i.e., when the Armenian community integrated into the Lebanese society?
- 3- In what ways does the Armenian Apostolic Church keep the Armenian community an integrated part of the Lebanese one?

The aim of the first question is to understand the structure of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Lebanon. To answer this question, it is critical to underscore the following important aspects: a) the Armenian Apostolic Church is the representative of the Armenian sect in the Lebanese sectarian system b) it oversees the organization of social and cultural life of the Lebanese Armenian community, considering matters related to the communal purposes such as Armenian national identity preservation and the future of the Armenian Diaspora. This thesis argues also that the power of the Armenian Apostolic Church derives from the confessional power-sharing system of Lebanon’s institutions. Moreover, it considers how it took the confessional nature of the Lebanese sectarian system into their favor, and how it protected its own opportunities. The second question intends to examine if the role of the

Armenian Apostolic Church, as an organization responsible for the Armenian preservation in Lebanon, is being affected with the now hybridized identity of the Lebanese Armenians. Previously, the Armenian diasporic community in Lebanon was kept in ghettos, detached from the Lebanese polity. With time, as Armenians were granted and enjoyed all civil rights, and as they contributed to the social, economic and the political life of the country, they were integrated into the Lebanese society. This thesis discusses how the Armenian community adopted the Lebanese identity and how this integration of the Armenian diasporic community is alarming to the extent that it updated the adopted tools for identity preservation. The third question aims to study the efforts of the Armenian Apostolic Church through the Armenian political parties, to keep the Armenian community an integrated part of the Lebanese society. This thesis examines the legislative basis and the process of how the Armenian Apostolic Church acts as an intermediary between the Lebanese Armenians and the Lebanese government.

### **1.3 Methodology**

This thesis adopts on a qualitative approach because its purpose is to inspect the thorough history of the Armenian community in Lebanon and emphasize the role of Armenian Apostolic Church in their hybrid identity formation. First, comprehensive research is conducted to offer a theoretical background of how a national identity is hybridized as communities settle and integrate in host societies. Second, this thesis uses secondary resources, such as articles, to examine the history of Armenians in Lebanon, their naturalization and their contribution to the social, economic, and political life in the country. Moreover, various articles are used to study the distinctive feature of the Armenian community, i.e., their language. Third, to examine the role of the Armenian Apostolic Church, this thesis relied on primary sources such as the Armenian newspaper (Aztag), and

the archives available at the library of Armenian Prelacy of Lebanon. Moreover, five key informant interviews with Church representatives in Lebanon were conducted. The interviewees were chosen specifically from the Armenian Apostolic Churches in Lebanon, to learn to what extent various tools and policies determined to keep the balance between the preservation and integration of the Armenian community into the Lebanese polity after their settlement in the country.

## **1.4 Map of the Thesis**

The thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter one presents the thesis, its aim, the research questions, and explains the approach, sources, and the methodology of the research process. Chapter two presents the existing and theoretical considerations of the terms “diaspora” and “diasporic identity”, discusses how diasporic communities struggle to preserve their ethnic identity and later explains how these exact communities are integrated into the host society, how they adopt their culture and thus form a hybrid identity. Chapter three offers a historical overview of the Armenians in Lebanon including their naturalization and later examines their integration and contribution to the social, economic and political life in Lebanon. Chapter four unpacks the dual role of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Lebanon, highlighting its role as the representative of the Armenian community in the country. The chapter is composed of two sections: how the Armenian Apostolic Church preserves the Armenian identity through cultural practices in Lebanon. Second, how the Church preserves its share in the Lebanese cabinet to articulate its policies. The fifth and final chapter provides a summary of the findings and brings the thesis to conclusion.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **DIASPORIC IDENTITY**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

To fully fathom the ideological meaning of a diaspora and a diasporic identity, this chapter will explicitly introduce the theoretical considerations of these terms and will define the terms of my research. Furthermore, the chapter will discuss how the efforts of identity preservation and non-integration into the host society are transformed by the unavoidable process of hybridization. It creates an overview of the efforts of the first migration generation in preserving their national identity and the notion of difference between them and the host society. Moreover, the concept of hybridity, through the upcoming generations, will be elaborated along with their sense of belonging to both the home and the host country.

#### **2.2 What is a Diaspora?**

Despite the emerging field of diaspora studies and the exponential increase in scholarly research about migration in recent years, the ideological meaning of a diaspora has been extensively discussed with no clear definition and characteristics that make it a distinct category. Migration is an innate quality that has been commonly found in human beings upon since the dawn of time. This natural impulse to move has differed throughout our existence because of the various circumstances people had to face. Existential motives were basic reasons for human movements to search for security i.e. fleeing from natural disasters and in search for food. In the distant past, a vast wave of humanity migrated to the South to populate the Americas. However, their descendants are not studied as a diasporic community, otherwise, all humanity may be considered part of the African diaspora (Butler,

2001). If not all human beings in motion result in diasporic communities, then what differentiates a diaspora from other movements of people?

The term “diaspora” was an ancient Greek word meaning “to scatter about” and was coined to depict the experience of the Jewish people dispersed after the Babylonian captivity. The classical definition of this term accentuated on a forcibly displayed group of people that have a distinct collective memory and a myth of return to their homeland. Their collective identity is sustained by establishing controlling boundaries around it, and through maintaining communication within the group, with other similar communities and the ancestral homeland (Panossian, 1998). Thus, the classical definition reflects the historic ideal type cases of diasporic communities and extends to refer to the extensive historiographies of the Armenian, Greek and African diasporas, who were involuntarily diffused to regions out of their home country such as the African experience in Europe and the Americas and the Armenian experience following the Genocide.

However, the term “diaspora” has been discussed widely since the boom in scholarly research about migration since 1960s. The diaspora discourse encountered conceptual changes in the new millennium and considered “diaspora” not only those fleeing wars and violence but also all chain migrations, motivated by economic reasons, who temporarily or permanently live outside the country of their birth or ancestry. Thus, it encompassed diverse populations who live outside their homeland or country of origin, including ethnic minorities, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants, expellees, and expatriates. Despite having a common definition mentioned in the book *Developing a Road Map for Engaging Diasporas in Development: A Handbook for Policymakers and Practitioners in Home and Host Countries*, prepared by IOM and the Migration Policy Institute in 2012: “Emigrants and their descendants, who live outside the country of their birth or ancestry, either on a temporary or permanent basis, yet still maintain affective (emotional) and

material ties to their countries of origin” (IOM, 2013), most conceptualizations of the term have been reassessed by ethnographic research through the various case studies of diasporas conducted to discover its main characteristics.

William Safran identifies and presents a list of defining characteristics of a diaspora. For him, a diaspora is an expatriate minority community that 1) is scattered from an original location to two or more peripheral places, 2) maintains a memory or myth about its ancestral homeland", 3) is alienated or cannot be fully accepted by the host community, 4) idealizes the eventual return to the ancestral homeland, 5) is committed to the protection or restoration of this homeland, and 6) maintains an ongoing relationship with it (Clifford, 1994). Tololyan comes to agree with Safran’s understanding that a diaspora is not the scattering that is the consequence of the individual or chain migration motivated by economic reasons, but rather it’s born of a catastrophic event which becomes a community with a work of memory, commemoration, mourning and a shaped cultural production and political commitment. In relation to the fourth, fifth and the sixth characteristics offered by Safran, Tololyan discusses that diasporas have a sustained and an organized commitment to uphold relations with the kin communities and with the homeland, however, for him, what is more common than the actual return is the “re-turn without actual repatriation” i.e. the diasporic communities turn to their homeland through various ongoing efforts such as travel, remittances, cultural exchange and political lobbying. While both Safran and Tololyan agree that diasporic communities maintain a collective identity through the preservation of homeland’s elements such as the language, religion, social and cultural practices, Safran’s considers that there is alienation between the diasporic communities and the host society. In contrast, Tololyan emphasizes that the national identity preservation is not necessarily intact, but rather, as time passes, it continues to be in mixed, bicultural forms, i.e. the diasporic communities integrate into the host community through maintain their own national identity in addition to adopting

the identity of the society they have settled in. While Walter Connor defines diaspora as the “segment of a people living outside the homeland”, Tololyan argues that this restrictive definition neglects the prospect that after decades, the descendants of the dispersed first generation cease to be a “segment” of the homeland’s population claiming that “they continue to be such a segment only because they share a (n increasingly mixed) gene pool incurs a certain danger of biologism” (Panossian, 1998; Tololyan, 2007). Robin Cohen’s features of a diaspora share some of the same problems as of Safran’s, such as a troubled relationship between the two communities and possible lack of acceptance. Developing Safran’s list, Robin Cohen stresses on another feature, strong ethnonational consciousness, and, significantly, on whether a diasporic community had the option of choosing between return to the homeland and making a permanent home in diaspora (Butler, 2001). Ethnonational consciousness or ethno-group consciousness is explained by the sense of distinctiveness, common history and cultural or religious traditions and belief in common fate that diasporic communities maintain over a long period of time.

A middle ground position, taken as the basis of defining a diaspora for this thesis, is presented by Gabriel Sheffer: “Modern diasporas are ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin – their homelands” (Brinkerhoff, 2006). However, it is useful to add some other features. It is significant to include the members of subsequent generations in the definition of a diaspora. These ethnic minority groups continue to be a diaspora only if the subsequent generations, who have been born outside the ancestral homeland, are self-aware and identify themselves as part of their ethnic community. In other words, as Marinova puts it, subsequent generations “must have professed such an affiliation (i.e., by identifying as “Lebanese-American”, “Armenian-American”, etc.) or be members of a diaspora organization (either non-political, i.e. heritage club or charitable organizations,

or political), or conduct activities whereby they identify as being connected to the homeland of parents, grandparents or ancestors” (Marinova, 2017). This strong sense of belonging will not only possess deliberate connections with the homeland but will also raise the flag of patriotism through the diasporic community’s preservation of the ancestral identity by the unity with ethnic groups to maintain their original culture, speak their own language and learn their history.

Consequently, throughout this research, the term diaspora will refer to the first-generation individuals, born in a country of origin and residing in a different country, and their subsequent descendants who have been born outside their ancestral homeland, who self-identify as belonging to a diaspora, have the ability to imagine and construct relevant transnational linkages and those who maintain dual adherences to ancestral and adopted homelands.

### **2.3 What is a Diasporic Identity?**

As colonialism, wars, political and religious persecutions, massacres, hunger, natural and man-made disasters ran the nation-states historically, the uprooted population, coercively expelled from their homeland, was understood as a social formation who settled in neighboring foreign countries with alien host societies and struggled to preserve its national identity to sustain its difference from the host societies. These ethnic minorities, as generations of survival, were known as diaspora who suffered trauma and to which commemoration and mourning became a central element in their collective identity along with the cultural elements as language, religion, social and cultural practices (Tololyan, 2007). In this classical diaspora perspective, the migration trajectory was unidirectional i.e. there was a “sharp break” from the homeland that was characterized by the assimilation in the host societies and the remembrance of homeland. When integration was permitted, these

diasporic communities often created the “socio-cultural image” of their homeland, through which the diasporic communities maintained the memory and the vision of their homeland and generated the perception of difference to prevent assimilation into the host society (Naujoks, 2010). Moreover, in this new diaspora context, the migration trajectory is no longer considered as a “sharp break” but rather a “sharp transformation” with strong political and cultural connections along with economic and social networking with the homeland. In other words, globalization has facilitated in building a multidimensional bridge between the home country and the diaspora that encompasses diversity of cultures and destinations (Shirazi, 2018).

In both the classical and the new diaspora discourse, the national identity preservation is a key element for these diasporic communities as it symbolizes their difference from the host society and is a strategy to bind them together in solidarity and unity. Here, it is important to note the subjective nature of the diaspora identity and the sense of belonging it implies. As previously mentioned, this makes the diaspora community conscious of its existence not just as an ethnic minority group but also as a diaspora. It acts as the basis for the sense of connectedness, be it real or imagined, between the dispersed parts of diasporic communities and between it and the homeland. In its turn, this feeling of connectedness offers a sense of unity as one nation, and a sense of belonging to a collective identity, despite the diversion of the various communities. However, the diasporic identity cannot be described as a fixed concept because it is a “process of collective identification marked by ever-changing differences” which arises because of the integration with the host community and thus blurs the original limits of the national identity. Even though the diasporic communities have the impulse to keep a separate identity in the host community, their “walls” are not as rigid and the difference between both communities is not a clearcut as cultural differences between them are not too stark. This makes diasporic identities fluid

constructs that shift and overlap between and within communities (Panossian, 1998). Moreover, the upcoming generations of both the host and the diasporic groups alleviate the matter of “difference”, which becomes the exact reason of integration. In other words, the participation and integration of new generations of the diasporic communities into the same social space as the host community, is accomplished through adopting their norms and way of life, while conserving their identity and culture as a mean of protection and unity. Here, the diasporic identity, inevitably, takes the characteristic of bicultural form, known as hybridity (Tololyan, 2007). The diasporic identity can be characterized by two different components: cultural identity and political identity.

As identity is understood as being a process i.e. dynamic, multidimensional and not fixed to a specific characteristic or group, it is redefined and renegotiated when diasporic communities are integrated in a new social environment. This hybrid identity carries traits both from the original and the host country. The change in an identity is clearly explained by the Cultural Identity Model (CIM) developed by Sussman that elucidates the pre-, post results and the consequences from a psychological point of view (2010). As per the model, the subsequent shifts in the home culture identity are characterized by cultural transitions and thus, considers three elements during the transition process:

- 1- Identity salience: During their settlement in the host community, individuals become aware of the differences between their original and host culture. Upon the cultural reaffirmation phase, their cultural identity awareness and the notion of the “outsider status” strengthens the identification of the home culture.
- 2- Sociocultural adaptation: In the initial phase of their settlement, individuals suffer “confusionism” because cultures are diverse, and it is difficult to comprehend the framework of another one. As the discrepancies between the home and host culture are revealed, individuals understand the cultural differences and gradually adapt to

the new culture through modifying their behavior, thought or both. This helps them achieve “a better fit” within the new country of settlement.

- 3- Cultural identity change: During the integration phase in the host community, the individuals utilize the values, beliefs, behaviors and thought patterns of the host community. Upon their repatriation, the changes in the cultural identity become obvious and can no longer be applied in the home culture.

In addition, the CIM offers four different types of identity shifts that occurs after the settlement in the host country which result in emotional, spatial or no distress (Sussman, 2010):

- 1- Subtractive: When the individual’s identity shifts away from the home culture. This results in emotional and cognitive distress. They experience depression, anxiety, isolation, and confusion.
- 2- Additive: When the individual’s identity becomes more like the host community. This is when the hybrid identity is formed. Here, individuals are often in conflict with the host society because of the distinct values and also experience spatial i.e. physical and personal distress.
- 3- Affirmative: When the home identity is maintained and strengthened upon settlement in the host country and no distress is experienced.
- 4- Intercultural/Global (Hybrid): The individual is recognized as a “world citizen” because his/her identity represents different cultures. This results in positive emotional responses and little distress.

## **2.4 Identity Preservation & the Notion of “Difference”**

Fleeing the brutal and inhuman incidents in the homeland and after settling in the neighboring or host states and readjusting to its new state of existence, the uprooted population, later known as a diasporic community, is often concerned with the emotional wellbeing of their families, their deprivation of civil rights and of access to healthcare and education, in addition to their subject to discrimination, sexual and physical abuse. This experience is reflected in Safran’s defined characteristics of a diasporic community. as previously mentioned, according to him, a diasporic community is understood as the expatriate minority community, vigorously scattered from its country of origin, and believes that it is not and cannot be fully welcomed and accepted by the host community. In response, this diasporic community struggles to preserve its identity through policing its own communal boundaries and strictly adhering to the homeland traditions to enhance the internal coherence and unity within the community. This characteristic of the diasporic community, which is constituted of various groups of the same ethnicity, is also understood as per the definition of an ethnic group: “a human social collectivity, [sharing] named identity-groups, based on shared quality of social behavior, thought or feeling... and, even more critically, an ideology of continuity with that past, that ‘traditional culture,’ or that blood or kinship is regularly maintained.” (Nziba Pindi, 2018). The cultural distinctiveness between the diasporic community and the host society is often reflected by the various elements of the many cultural components such as the language, food preferences, music, norms, and values. In the case of the Armenian diaspora, the 1915 Genocide caused the first huge migratory wave that scattered the Armenians into distinct host states and societies. For them, the homeland was entirely destroyed i.e. physically lost, the expectation of return was remote and their survival was only associated with a lost dignity and the need to gain a post-genocide Armenian identity that would maintain their “Armenianness” outside their home

country. In this constant fight of Armenian identity preservation in the host communities, there were many factors that contributed to the fight and succeeded in uniting the Armenian communities while strengthening in them the emotional sense of loss of homeland and thus importance of national identity preservation in foreign communities (the factors will be discussed in the next chapter).

In their efforts of preserving their own identity in the foreign host states, the diasporic communities often focus on the most viable option in the framework of preservation of cultural and thus ethnic identity. After their settlement in the host societies, the diasporic communities are exposed to the native or dominant language of the host society itself. This exposure to the foreign language is not only during their communication with the host community but also it is through the obligation to include the dominant language in the school curriculums. The specific effort of the diasporic communities is challenged not during the settlement of the first migrant generation, but with the later generations born and raised in the host states with the constant attempts of the first generation to teach them and ensure their sense of responsibility in its retaining through its continuous use while communicating within the society.

All the aforementioned endeavors by the diasporic communities serves their purpose of preserving their national identity outside the home country which in turn, produces the notion of “difference” between them and the host communities. However, this notion of “difference” is not only created by the diasporic community to prevent its assimilation into the host one, but also it is created in the countries of settlement by majority of the host communities by persecution and rejection of these minorities. As a result, the interactions and the stereotypical questions, most often by the host society, targeting the diasporic communities are not considered to be as mundane and innocent as they appear, but instead they are “micro aggressions” which position the diasporic communities as “the exotic

others” (Nziba Pindi, 2018). Here, it is significant to acknowledge the diasporic identity as a double-edged sword, as it can be together “support and oppression”, “emancipation and confinement” and “solidarity and division” (Ang, 2003). In other words, it is true that the diasporic identity serves as the symbolic capital of difference and unity within the diasporic community to fight the marginalization, but also it restrains them in the oppressive national hegemony and hostility by the host one.

The diasporic identity preservation acts as the remedy to the trauma and the chaos that the uprooted population face and as the lights that channel these people towards emotional recovery. It best serves as a countermeasure in order to diminish any internal problems within the community itself, and thus, ensure their unity against discrimination and insecurity from the host society. Moreover, it prevented their ingress into the melting pot. In other words, the diasporic communities’ efforts to conserve their identity stopped their assimilation into the host communities i.e. adopting the latter’s traditions and triggered the sense of the difference between them and the host communities.

## **2.5 Hybridity and Belongingness**

As diaspora and ethnicity endure as powerful forces of identification, the forces of hybridization undermine their effectiveness. To understand cultural globalization today, where homogenous communities in nation-states are transforming into heterogenous ones with the increase of multiculturalism, and where marginalized communities are transcending national boundaries through their diasporic transnational connections, it is significant to put the process of hybridization at its very center. Hybridity, created by the interaction and the intersection of different communities, recognizes both the “differences within the subject, fracturing and complicating holistic notions of identity” and the “connection between subjects by recognizing affiliations, cross-pollinations, echoes and

repetitions” (Ang, 2003). This allows it to formulate interconnecting axes of affiliation and differentiation that will soften the boundaries between these communities and create a social space where differences are negotiated, the old binary maps of cultural differences are deconstructed and the perception of “us” and “others” is alleviated. Mutual entanglements and exchanges between the host and the diasporic communities result in the creation of new forms of identities i.e. a hybrid identity shaped by the two distinct cultures. As the multiple layers of the hybrid identity work simultaneously to construct the cultural hybrid subjects in the diasporic communities, the identity, as an “unstable entity”, performs in-between two or more worlds or a so called third space (Nziba Pindi, 2018). The latter is the result of deviation of diasporic identity between the past, the present and the unavoidable crossings of various cultures. Of course, the experience of third space is mostly relevant to the second or third migrant generations born and raised in the host community and thus is a significant concern for, at least the first migrant generation, who struggle to preserve their national identity in the host state. Moreover, it is a contradiction to the concept of diaspora which “depends on the maintenance of an apparently natural essential identity to secure its imagined status as a coherent community” (Ang, 2003). In other words, hybridity and the resulted third space are uncomfortable, challenging and threatening to the diasporic community in terms of their national identity and coherence belonging.

According to Ang, hybridity, unlike vital notions in the existing politics of difference such as diaspora and multiculturalism, focuses on complex entanglements between people rather than their identities, in addition to their togetherness-in-difference rather than isolation and apartheid (Ang, 2003). In other words, hybridity is a salient practice in the globalized world today, where lines are not drawn between “us” and “them” and where it is impossible to absorb all differences into a dominant level of homogeneity. Moreover, the gradual mix-up of these different communities, or as Ang puts it “entanglement of

togetherness in difference”, because of daily and multiple interrelationships where identities evolve and take similar shapes, it is impossible to consider it as an exception but rather it has become the rule of the globalized world today. In this concept of entanglement, diasporic communities not only adopt the lifestyle of the host societies by cooking their food cuisines, using their native language or enrolling in their schools and organizations, but also they experience change in their personality characteristics and the increase of intermarriage which is a critical threat in itself.

Having the Armenian diaspora as an example, it is worthy to consider how hybridity challenges the efforts of Churches in identity preservation. Despite these long-lasting and effective attempts in the host states, the Armenian diaspora, as any other, is facing inevitable complicated entanglements with the host societies. The Armenian communities, across many states, have strongly attached to their historical roots and have unbreakable transnational bond with their homeland, which in turn creates a positive identification and powerful sense of belonging to their home country. Despite this robust relationship within the Armenian communities and with their homeland, they have integrated into the receiving society and accept it as an inseparable link between their past migration history and their sense of co-ethnicity. In fact, the second and third generations of Armenian migrants voluntarily identify their “Armenian roots” and acquire keen joy from the rediscovery of the Armenian heritage often by visiting their homeland, Armenia. This ethnic self-discovery is an emotional power for the Armenian diasporic generations which increases the cohesion and solidarity of the global Armenian diasporic community. However, their sense of co-ethnicity and the hybrid in-betweenness sometimes leads to their indifference and ignorance towards their Armenian ancestry. In this sense, many Armenians around the world consider themselves, for example, more American, Lebanese or French than Armenian which leads to major concerns in dealing with the issue of identity preservation. This may be the result

of their lack of altruistic or emotional tie towards their homeland which in turn, would have enhanced their sense of responsibility and duty in Armenian identity preservation and in their contribution of the homeland's growth and development.

As hybridity weakens the cultural power relations and is considered to be a process of “boundary-blurring transculturation” rather than just throwing out the boundaries of “us and them”, diasporic communities are challenged in recognizing their belonging. Living in two worlds simultaneously and questioning their identities and belongingness to two different nations, tracing their roots back to their homeland meanwhile permanently living in the country of birth, these communities experience dual ethnic, national and civic identities. In other words, this in-betweenness make these diasporic communities feel embedded in the host state yet partially disengaged from it and disembedded from the home country yet perennially attached to it emotionally. This constant transformation of identity has made the latter become fluid and thus, ever since, belonging has become a contested state. This sense of lack of belonging comes not only from the perception of the diasporic communities themselves, but also from both the host and the home countries. Despite their integration and co-ethnicity, diasporic communities will never fully become part of the host society, and the tension or the perception of “other” will always remain in the multicultural state even if it has decolorized with time. On the other hand, despite the diasporic communities' interactions with their homeland, focusing on ongoing processes which can be through economic and financial developments, political empowerment and emancipation and last but not least through social mobility, when returning back to their homeland either temporarily, through tourism, or permanently to settle, they will always be distinguished as “diaspora” and never as population of same ethnicity. For the Armenian diasporic community, this is no different. “Who am I?” “Where do I belong?” “Am I enough for both countries?” are the common questions that fill the minds of the Armenian diasporic

communities living in two worlds and questioning their identities and belongingness to the host and the home countries, simultaneously. In spite of the Armenians' critical state in the Lebanese confessional system, their naturalization and integration into the Lebanese society, they are still looked at "Armenians" rather than "Lebanese" in the mentioned society. Of course, as mentioned earlier, this is also caused by the Armenians themselves, who have different factors fighting for their identity preservation. Concurrently, when visiting Armenia, they are always identified as "Lebanese", "American" or "Syrian" rather than "Armenians" in their homeland. This duality generates fuzziness of belonging, where they are too foreign for here, as the host country, too foreign for home, as the motherland and eventually never enough for both.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

The experiences of the diasporic communities in diaspora's both old and modern discourse, have caused "a new world order" (Kocaoner, 2009). The latter is the age when migrants cross hegemonic borders and enable interaction and negotiation between different cultures. Moreover, it is described as when migration becomes a normal movement in the world which collapses and redraws the national boundaries. In this new world order, migrants strive to conserve their national identities by establishing their institutions and preserving their cultural traditions. With time, as these diasporic communities intersect with the host communities, their identity transformation, that is accomplished through adopting the host communities' way of life, becomes inevitable and thus results in hybridity. This is a critical concern for the diasporic communities that are no longer able to fully preserve their national identity because of the transnationalism, integration and co-ethnicity. Therefore, in the globalized world today, the identity of the communities is complex and multifaceted and results in challenges for the diaspora.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

# **THE ARMENIAN SETTLEMENT, CONSOLIDATION & INTEGRATION IN LEBANON**

### **3.1 Introduction**

As scattered yet closely knit diasporic communities, the Armenian diaspora held the advantages and endured the hardships of refugees or of minority groups within the receiving societies. They perpetuated their differentiated ethnic and religious characteristics to remain distant from the dominant cultures yet, with time, integrated and contributed for mutual wellbeing and development. One of the challenges of their integration, which is also considered to be a symbol of their ethnic identity and national solidarity, was their native language, the Armenian. Being linguistically distinct from the dominant community, the Armenians were able of self-preservation and prevention of blending with them. Despite their intentional efforts of national unity within the dominant society, they never engendered disloyalty to the latter but always remained faithful to their values and national interests. This chapter presents the history of the Armenian Diasporic community in Lebanon. After discussing the different migratory waves of Armenians into the region, it explains how this community shifted from being refugees into legitimized minority within the Lebanese society. In the third part, the social, political and the economic integration of the Armenians is discussed, highlighting their significance in Lebanon's demographic and economic prosperity. Finally, the use of their native language as a distinct feature will be elucidated.

### **3.2 Historical Overview**

The uninterrupted presence of the Armenian communities in the Middle East has been mentioned in the history of the region since the Ummayyad times. However, the expansion of these communities was unprecedented both in character and in scope before their massive influx in the twentieth century. Fleeing the massacres and deportations organized by the Turkish government during the World War I, the survived Armenians concentrated in the Transcaucasia or in the Arab provinces south of the historic Armenian lands. The Arabs, who themselves encountered the harsh Ottoman domination for four centuries, welcomed and granted sympathetic asylum to the oppressed Armenians in exile. By 1925, over 200,000 Armenians scattered into the Arab lands under the British and the French rule. Approximately 100,000 Armenians settled in Syria, 50,000 in Lebanon, 40,000 in Egypt, 25,000 in Mesopotamian towns and refugee camps and the remaining 10,000 in Palestine and Transjordan (Hovannisian, 1974). Of course, these figures augmented or decreased with the change in the political circumstances or in mandates of the world powers. The periodic turmoil in the Middle East i.e. the nationalist movements, the intercommunal troubles and the civil wars forced successful waves of Armenian emigration from these regions despite their non-aligned or apolitical stands.

Immediately after settling in these host states and readjusting to their new state of existence, this Armenian group became a diasporic community that suffered nostalgia, trauma and collective mourning and fought for their solidarity and ethnic identity conservation (Tololyan, 2007). While thousands of Armenian women and children were abducted during the death marches in the barren deserts of Syria, known as Deir Zor, and forced to take new identities in the Turkish communities, the ones settled in the Arab regions revealed the complete opposite in defiance to the Turkish attempts to wipe off the Armenian. Despite living humiliating conditions in the refugee camps and crowded small towns of large cities

with the already existing Armenians, each community showed a vibrant nationalism and prioritized preservation of its national identity. As the legacy of the Ottoman Empire, the Armenian national life was based on various characteristics of the millet system. The latter organized the people of the empire by their religion and explicitly defined the rights and duties of each sectarian group in the community. Thus, this system expanded the religious aspect in the Armenian national identity and consolidated the power around the Armenian Church (Herzig et al., 2004). In other words, these communities considered their religion the most significant factor which contributed to their identity preservation, put forward the perpetuation of the society as a whole and established Churches, schools and youth-oriented associations for forestalling large scale assimilation and ensuring national unity while increasing the use of the Armenian language through education and literacy. Education remained highly desirable in these scattered communities, large proportion of the youth attended Armenian schools of higher learning and concentrated on professionals to be practiced anywhere if the socioeconomic conditions in the Arab regions became indefensible. Literacy rate was high which permitted prosperous output in poetry, numerous daily or weekly newspapers and literary papers in Armenian language focusing on the traumatic events of the Genocide, exile as well as the social and political experiences in both the home and the host countries (Herzig et al., 2004). Moreover, the poor living conditions and the various barriers of self-improvement urged the Armenian communities in the Middle East to enter the labor force of the receiving countries and secure their livelihood. Even though many of them were farmers back home, they became known as successful and talented merchants, tradesmen, skilled artisans, and professionals. Relying on their native skill that had been refined through centuries of economic migration and blossoming trade networks, the Armenian craftsmen and merchants entered the hearts of the bazaars and

markets while simultaneously establishing separate shopping districts in their own Armenian regions.

Despite the significant role the Armenian communities played both in the Arab regions and as part of the larger Armenian Diaspora, the Armenian community in Lebanon proved to be a distinctive one with its unique experience. Lebanon, characterized as “The Improbable Nation, offers a sharp contrast to the pattern of decline manifest in most other communities” (Hovannisian, 1974). In other words, the settlement of the Armenian refugees in Lebanon, as a nation in exile, changed from its temporary nature to permanent residency and led to the enlargement of this community in Lebanon due to various sociopolitical reasons in the region. A central point here, which is later inspected in the present study, is the political rationale of the Armenian naturalization in favor of the Christian sector in the country. In fact, the Armenian community in Lebanon was present long before the series of massacres and the Genocide of the Armenian population. Ever since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Catholic Armenians, as a target of persecutions by the Ottoman Authorities, had sought refuge in the mountains of Kisrawan, Lebanon. With the permission of the locale Maronite community, they had founded the Armenian Catholic Communion in 1742, in the village of Bzoummar. This community affiliated with the Lebanese Maronite community and failed to establish Armenian schools. Their intermarriage with the mentioned community and attendance of Maronite schools, exposed that they considered themselves as Catholics more than Armenians. During the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Protestant Armenians, converted either by the American missionaries or by the recent Armenian converts, resided in Lebanon with small numbers. In around 1880s, the Armenian community enlarged after the Apostolic Armenians joined the community. The first wave of the Apostolic Armenians was a voluntary mobilization, they came in to establish firms while the youth came to pursue their studies in the Lebanese higher institutions of learning. However, the second wave

constituted the Apostolic Armenians who fled the 1894 Hamidian massacres. The fled community enhanced the Armenian character after their settlement in Lebanon as they established schools, social and philanthropic organizations and the political corollary of the Tashnak party in Beirut. However, the main migratory wave of Armenians to Lebanon was after the 1915 Genocide. Approximately 40,000 Armenians resided in Beirut and the Northern region of Mount Lebanon, and many others joined them because of the continuing instability of the interwar period. In fact, their number grew at an unprecedented pace, not attributed to the high birthrate but rather to the uninterrupted immigration and settlement in the country. In 1922, the French withdrew from the occupied Cilicia when Turkey accepted its control over Syria, and thus the ancient Armenian kingdom became the Southwest Turkey which led to the escape of the remaining Armenian population to Lebanon, in fear of the resumption of the Turkish oppression. The second main migratory wave of Armenians to Lebanon was to two regions of Tyre and Anjar, during the 1930s when the French yielded Sanjak to the Turks and Armenians were obliged to leave Anatolia and Alexandretta under the Turkey's threat. Moreover, the Palestinian Armenians and the Syrian Armenians joined the contemporary Lebanese Armenian community in 1948 and during 1956-1966 respectively (Der-Karabetian et al., 1984).

### **3.3 Legal Status of Armenian Refugees in Lebanon**

According to Amberson, the migratory rush of the Armenian refugees into Lebanon was considered a temporary residence but the only reason behind their permanent stay was the procurement of lands in Bourj Hammoud to make it the heart of the Armenians isolated from the Lebanese society (Abramson, 2013). However, Geukjian claims that the conception of stay of this community changed after the Armenian refugees were given a legal status in Lebanon according to the Treaty of Lusanne between the Allies and Turkey.

In execution of article 30 of the Treaty of Lusanne which states, “*Turkish subjects habitually resident in territory which in accordance with the provisions of the present Treaty is detached from Turkey will become ipsofacto, in the conditions laid down by the local law, nationals of the State to which such territory is transferred.*”, the French High Commissioner in Lebanon issued the decree no. 2825 on 30 August, 1924, conferring the Lebanese affiliation to all those residing in the territory of the Greater Lebanon on that day (*Treaty of Lausanne - World War I Document Archive*, n.d.) (Refugees, n.d.). This was both critical to the reinforcement of Armenians in the region and to the preservation of the dominant political power of the Maronite (Geukjian, 2009). The requirement of this treaty to grant the Armenian refugees with the citizenship of the former Ottoman territories, was suitable for the French authorities to alter Lebanon’s demographic and increase its Christian sector. Of course, the French policy of adjusting the Armenian status in Lebanon served the several strategic goals it had to pursue in the Middle East. First, by granting them the Lebanese citizenship, the French ensured the Armenian permanent stay in Lebanon and thus their permanent separation from the newly established Turkish country. Second, the treaty appeased Turkey and legitimized the French rule over the former Ottoman territories. Finally, by creating a Christian majority in Lebanon, the French ensured a long-term ally in a large Islamic region (Ghobeira, 2017). In other words, as Bedoyan puts it, their “sheer number altered the balance in favor of Christian majority” (1983). The decision of the naturalization of the Armenian refugees in Lebanon became a public matter. While the naturalization and the permanent settlement of the Armenians was publicly supported by the Christian Maronite community, it triggered strong opposition by the Muslim leaders. The latter considered the French act as an empowerment of the Christian community in the newly established Greater Lebanon. These opposite perspectives were highly debated in the country’s Representative Council, the predecessor of the Lebanese Parliament, as well as in

the newspapers. Moreover, motivated by the shared Christian identity, the Maronite Patriarch's generosity grew towards the newly naturalized Armenian refugees, and thus the latter were embraced while more funds were allocated for their welfare by the Lebanese government (Ghobeira, 2017). The naturalization of Armenians gradually developed a sense of loyalty to their "second fatherlands" (Bedoyan, 1979).

### **3.4 The Integration of the Lebanese Armenian Community**

After their naturalization, Armenians not only shifted from being simply an alien and unintegrated element into an officially recognized minority group but became a fully enfranchised, composite society in Lebanon and a major player in the Lebanese confessional system while various opportunities stood at their door. This led to their successful integration in the social and the political life and their prosperous contribution to the economic life in Lebanon.

#### **3.4.1 Social Integration**

Considering Lebanon's multi-religious society, it would be evident that the religion itself determines the self-identity of a group. Thus, the deported Armenians, who sought refuge in Lebanon as prosecuted Christians and identified themselves by their religion rather than by nationality, were embraced by the various Christian local sects. The 1926 Constitution legalized and institutionalized the confessional system in Lebanon granting all the communities with equal opportunities in establishing their religious and ethnic belonging. As a result, the Armenian community in Lebanon fully enjoyed the rights and the freedom to expose its religious associations and establish cultural and educational institutions. Subsequently, the Armenian Catholic and the Armenian Orthodox churches were recognized as official religious communities in Lebanon in 1936. Both Churches had

already established their prerogatives, the Patriarchate of Bzoummar in 1749 and the Catholicosate of Cilicia in 1930, respectively. With the relocation of the official See of the Armenian Catholic Patriarch in Bzoummar and the relocation of the Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia, Lebanon became the main center of the Armenian Catholics and the most significant spiritual center of the Apostolic Armenian diaspora. In addition to the two officially recognized churches, the Armenian Evangelical Church is considered “a minority within a minority” and follows the Lebanese Protestant community (Papikyan et al., 2017). The three churches serve as important spaces of communion and for connecting the community’s historical and spiritual emergence. They authorize both the organization of social life i.e. schools, charities and cultural activities, and family related issues i.e. divorce, marriage and fosterage. They perform their prayers in the Armenian language and coordinate the schools to follow a specific curriculum in which the Armenian history, language, literature, and religion are considered priorities. Three social/community centers were established which belong to the Catholicosate: The Armenian Orphanage Birds’ Nest, the Sanatorium (hospital) and the Old People’s Home. According to Ter-Matevosyan, the legitimacy and authority of the Armenian churches gives the latter the ultimate power in the preservation of the Armenian identity (Ter-Matevosyan et al., 2017).

Besides from the religious institutions’ significance, Lebanon was considered the educational and the cultural center of the Armenian diaspora. The Lebanese Armenian community was widely known because of its cultural endeavor and its countless efforts of Armenian identity preservation more than any other Armenian diasporic community. For example, in 1924, the first Armenian newspaper in the Arab region, called “Nor Piunik”, went to press and by 1944, it issued 57 Armenian publication in Lebanon (Abramson, 2013). Thus, “Lebanon became in the Armenian diaspora what it had always been in the Middle East at large: The premier publishing capital of a multinational people.” (Abramson, 2013).

In addition to this characteristic, the Lebanese Armenian polity was distinctive by its intelligentsia in the Armenian literary and journalistic scene in Lebanon. Later, many intellectuals fleeing the Soviet Armenia and the oppressive regimes in the Middle East joined this group to avail themselves with freedom. As in the case of education, Lebanon has served as the main educational center of the Armenian diaspora. The communities settled, before the major migratory wave of 1915, attended major higher education institutions such as the American University of Beirut (AUB) and the Saint Joseph University (USJ). However, with the influx of massive number of Armenians after WWI, the Armenian community established its own Armenian schools and most of the parents preferred to send their children to Armenian academic institutions. One of these was “Jemaran”, established in 1930 and known as the leading education institution of the Armenian diaspora. Moreover, this community addressed itself to higher education and thus established the Haigazian University in 1955, the only institution of higher learning in the Armenian diaspora. Those who wished to pursue Armenology could do so at the two major institutions mentioned earlier i.e. AUB and USJ. Additionally, Lebanon was the center of religious education. Armenian Apostolic and Catholic ordinands and clergy came to Lebanon from the dispersed Armenian communities all over the world, to study at the Cilicia See’s in Antelias and Bzoummar’s seminaries. By 1948, 59 Armenian schools had established to serve nearly 11,000 pupils in Lebanon (Ghobeira, 2017).

### **3.4.2 Political Integration**

What is specific to Lebanon and its confessional system is that it created the sectarian identity of the Armenian community in Lebanon, both as an administrative legal category and a felt identity (Abillama, 2019). The diverse and the fragmented order of the confessional sectarian system in Lebanon, in addition to the 1932 Lebanese census, has

served the Armenian community to become a permanent element of the society and have an impact in its public life through their official political representation in the Lebanese state. In other words, the increase in the number of the Armenian population paved the way to solve the issue of the Armenian presentation in the Lebanese Parliament. This was highlighted in the L'Orient-Le Jour French newspaper in 1929: "the Armenian community in Lebanon needs a parliamentary seat. At first, this demand was considered irrelevant. However, there is something not being taken into consideration. These Armenians are Lebanese. [...] The Lebanese voters, who represent a significant community by their population number, demanded their participation in the Lebanese parliament. [...] If the National Constitution is adopted to serve the communities in the national equally, then the Armenian in Beirut have the right to have at least one parliamentary seat..." (L'Orient-Le Jour, 1929). One of the major political impacts of the naturalization was that Armenians were given the right to play a role in politics and participate in the national elections (Migliorino, 2008). According to Abramson, Lebanon, of all the other host countries, is the only state that guarantees Armenian parliamentary and ministerial representation (Abramson, 2013). In 1929, Abdullah Ishaq, the first Catholic Armenian in the Lebanese Parliament, was elected as the representative of minorities in Lebanon. This paved the way for the Armenian participation in the Lebanese political life. The three political parties operating in Lebanon are the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), the Armenian Liberal Democratic Party (ALDP) and the Social Democrat Henschag Party (SDHP). These three parties, based on the consociational democracy to fulfill the quota, have representatives in the Lebanese parliament. The Lebanese census of 1932 granted the Armenians a part in the political structure of the country. Prior to the official recognition of the Armenian Churches, in 1934, one seat was earmarked for the Armenians in the Lebanese Parliament. However, this figure of Armenian quota increased during the consecutive

Parliamentary elections even though the Lebanese political system did not equate the Armenians with the other six predominant sects. In 1972, the Armenian Apostolic community had the right to elect four and the Armenian Catholic had one seat in the parliament to better articulate their interests. However, after the Taif agreement in 1989, the Lebanese Armenians were recognized as a main community equal to the other six dominant ones: Maronite, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Sunnis, Shiias and Druze. Thus, they were granted a sixth seat by the President Elias Hraoui i.e. five for the Armenian Orthodox and 1 for Armenian Catholics (Geukjian, 2009). In addition, they are guaranteed with a ministerial portfolio. It is significantly true that the political participation of the Armenian parties in Lebanon's political order granted them the freedom and the right to exercise control over the Armenian community by established their own institutions, it also posed a forbidding challenge, described as triangulation (Abramson, 2013). This means that the Armenians in Lebanon could pursue their community interests through the organs of the political system but should be aware of not alienating the other sects of the country. Despite its challenging requirement, the Armenian community succeeded in keeping this balance. In other words, they tried to detach themselves from the nation's bitter political dissents and refrained from supporting or rejecting political positions except those that directly influenced their community. In due course of time, the early hostile opinion of the Muslims and the prejudices of the indigenous population decreased as Armenians contributed to post WWI reconstruction process and led a strategy of "least interference" in the Lebanese confessional politics. Even though the Lebanese Armenian community adopted triangulation, neutrality, and consensus stances in most of the political quarrels, it did not always end up in good terms with the supporters or the opponents of that issue. For example, even though the three Armenian political parties agreed to have a "positive neutrality" posture during the second Lebanese civil war, their stance was charged with ingratitude and betrayal towards the

Christians, specifically the status quo forces, who considered the Armenian position closer to the Muslim contingency and thus attacked the community (Ghobeira, 2017). However, as the Muslims began to experience Christian dominance in the political sphere, “Armenians declined to throw their full weight behind the Christians” (Der Karabetian et al.,1984). The details of the Armenian political participation will be discussed in chapter four.

### **3.4.3 Economic Integration**

Just as the Armenian integration to the social and political systems of Lebanon was crucial, their economic integration and contribution to it was also vital in the Lebanese history. Until 1975, when Lebanon was experiencing remarkable economic growth and the Armenian community constituted approximately only eight percent of the Lebanese population, their contribution to the national economy was recorded almost fifteen per cent. Of course, this contribution was reflected in the increase of the income households of the Armenians. Thus, their income per capita was forty percent more than the Lebanese average national income (Üstün, 2016). The Lebanese Armenians thrived as artists, merchants and professionals of every variety and gained a good reputation for their honesty and industry. They dominated several service professions in parallel with the bustling activity of the Lebanese commercial sector. For example, Armenian shopkeepers and merchants dealt in every line of hardware and apparel. They owned fully a fourth of the world-renowned gold bazaar of Beirut, and the craftsmen in the workshops above and behind the dazzling window displays were predominantly Armenian. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, Armenians were highly productive in publishing, in which the contribution of the political parties and churches cannot be ignored. Each of them possessed their publishing house, newspapers, radios and TV stations. For example, Aztag, Ararat and Zartonk were well-known newspapers circulated among Armenians, each belonging to each of the political parties.

The two main printing houses ran by the Armenian community were named Antelias and Hamazkayin. Despite the economic crisis and the limited budget of these parties, around 3000 copies of these newspapers were printed daily and circulated among the community. However, their participation in the public sector was minimal and rarely reached their quotas in the confessionally divided public sector of Lebanon.

### **3.5 A Distinctive Feature of the Armenian Community in Lebanon**

The social, political and economic integration of the Armenian community was contributory to the Lebanese society and to the overall advancement of the country. What differentiated them from the remaining population was their native language. According to Alzayed, a native language is referred the language which is spoken by the refugees, immigrant families and the indigenous people, which is any language in principle but the language other than that of the host community (Alzayed, 2015). Historically, the Armenian language developed not to only serve the faithful nation in its religion and beliefs, but also the new alphabet was disseminated through and in the schools where education and scholarship became the “new fighting ground” for the Armenian people, as an embattled nation (Moskofian, 2010). Thus, they considered the Armenian language a tool of survival during and after the 1915 Genocide which was the main migratory wave of the Armenians as a start to a nation in exile. As cited in the Moskofian’s *Literature and Survival*, Shant, an Armenian writer in diaspora, summoned the death march of the Armenians in the Syrian desert of Deir Zor where Armenian mothers taught the Armenian alphabet to their children, on the sands of the desert. For them, the homeland was entirely destroyed i.e. physically lost, the expectation of return was remote and their survival was only associated with a lost dignity and the need to gain a post-genocide Armenian identity that would maintain their “Armenianness” outside their home country. This was only achievable by holding on to

their language as a main tool of difference from the host community members. They considered the Armenian alphabet and thus the language the only feature that differentiated the Armenian community from others, the only legacy that would ensure their survival and the only effective component that would prevent the Armenian assimilation into the host societies. The practices of the Armenians' native language was embedded mostly in the families and the home environment as well as in the society i.e. with the peers in schools, during extracurricular activities and at work. As previously mentioned, the Armenian language was prioritized and used in all the Armenian churches, schools and social institutions. Moreover, most of the Armenian parents enrolled their children in Armenian schools not only to maintain the cultural heritage but also to expose their children to the Armenian environment and help them associate with Armenian peers to guarantee their use of the Armenian language (Phinney et al., 2001). As the "bedrock" of the Armenian community's survival, the Armenian language was the key factor of their national culture that came to ensure their unity and differentiate them from the "others".

### **3.6 Conclusion**

The Armenians in Lebanon established a distinct community. Until today, the generations of the refugee population succeed in preserving their national identity and culture. However, this community is not isolated, it has become an integrated minority that enriches Lebanon in several aspects. Needless to mention that this it was upon the confessional sectarian system of Lebanon that this community became an organic and economically viable one. Identified as Christians, the Armenian community was naturalized through which it had significant impact on Lebanon's demographic and thus served the interests of the Christian community. After which, two of its sects were recognized as

official sects and were granted seats in the Lebanese Parliament. This community thrived in the economic sector and played a major role in flourishing Lebanon.

# **CHAPTER FOUR**

## **THE CULTURAL & POLITICAL OBJECTIVES**

### **4.1 Introduction**

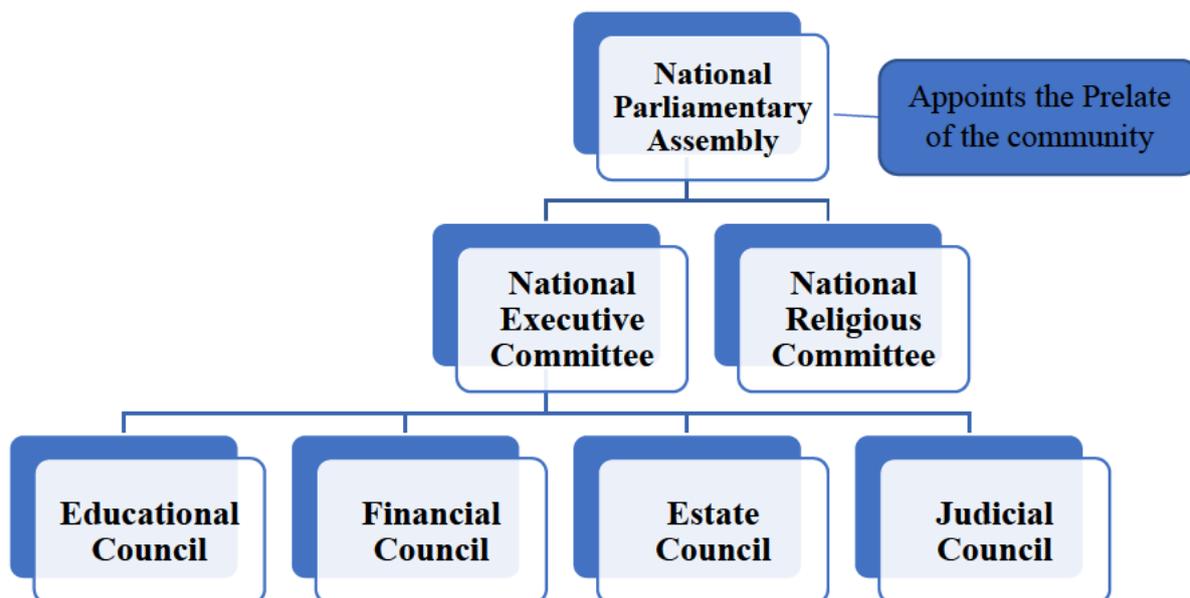
The Armenian Apostolic Church in Lebanon has ultimate legitimacy; it is authorized by the Lebanese state to be the entity governing the everyday life of the Armenian community settled in Lebanon. In its turn, the Church has various institutions under its umbrella to manage its own work. This chapter presents the structure of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Lebanon and discusses the legislative basis upon which it resolves the Armenian issues in Lebanon. The second part of the chapter unpacks the cultural and political objectives of the community, which is the foundation of the Lebanese-Armenian identity formation. In this context, the dual role of the Armenian Apostolic Church is discussed which contributes to the combination of the Armenian (cultural) identity and the Lebanese (political) identity; First, to discover how it contributes, through its social organizations, to the national identity preservation in Lebanon. Simultaneously, how it articulates the communal interests in the Lebanese government, through the Armenian political parties.

### **4.2 Armenian Apostolic Church in Lebanon**

Religion is a significant factor in negotiating a community's position in a host society. It contributes to forming diasporic social organization and to shaping and preserving diasporic identities. The Christian affiliation of the Armenian community resided in Lebanon was a great advantage regarding their integration in the Lebanese sectarian

composition and in this respect, the Armenian Apostolic Church became the community's representative figure, responsible for the communal solidarity.

The Armenian Apostolic Church performs based on the "Constitution of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Lebanon". This was developed based on the law on "Determining the Powers of the Doctrinal References for the Christian and Israeli Sects" dated 1951, that mandated the Christian and Israeli sects in Lebanon, among which falls the Armenian Apostolic sect, to have their own constitutions, provided that they do not contradict the Lebanese national laws. As a result, and with the intention of not refuting the traditional laws and beliefs of the Armenian Church, the known sect developed the Constitution of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Lebanon as per the National Constitution adopted by the patriarchy of Constantinople in 1873. According to Archbishop Shahe Panossian, every Armenian is represented in the Church's own parliament and councils. In other words, this constitution's purpose is to give every Armenian, with diverse political backgrounds, the possibility to engage in the communal affairs by joining one of the bodies such as Financial, Estate, and Educational Councils or by being voted to its own parliament (Ter-Matevosyan et al., 2017). As per this Constitution, the legitimacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church extends not only to include the examination of the social affairs of the Armenian community in Lebanon, but also grants it a judicial status, executed by the Judicial Council. The decisions are taken by the Armenian Prelacy of Lebanon, under the Church, and implemented by the Lebanese government. Thus, the Armenian clergy control the personal status of their communicants in their own religious courts, without government interference. To understand the process by which the Armenian Prelacy of Lebanon, under the Armenian Apostolic Church, manages the communal issues, it is significant to examine its hierarchical structure.



*Title: Hierarchical structure of the Armenian Prelacy of Lebanon*

The “National Parliamentary Assembly” is the ultimate assembly of the Armenian Prelacy of Lebanon. The assembly has the Prelate, as its president, and has 42 members from which 1/7 are religious and the remaining 6/7 are secular. The official term of the members is 4 years. This assembly has several rights and obligations including the following: drafting and adopting laws and regulations concerning the Prelacy’s mechanism for the various social fields. These laws should be in line with the National Constitution and the beliefs of the Armenian Apostolic Church; Electing the Prelate, who is the official representative of the sect in the Lebanese government and the spiritual leader of the Armenian community in Lebanon; Nominating the members of the National Religious Committee and of the National Executive Committee in addition to verifying their action plans and budget.

1. The National Religious Committee consists of 7 priests who are selected by the National Parliamentary Assembly, for a term of two years. The role of this committee includes preserving the laws and beliefs of the Armenian Apostolic

Church to ensure regular and proper spiritual ceremonies; Overseeing the conservation of religious and national traditions; Appointing a commission responsible for the religious education of the children and the youth of the community and publishing relevant books; Cooperating with the Educational Council to supervise the religious curriculums in the Armenian schools.

2. The National Executive Committee consists of 7 or 9 secular members who are selected by the National Parliamentary Assembly, for a term of two years. The role of this committee includes protecting the rights of the sect; Appointing Educational, Financial, Estate, Judicial and other Councils and supervising their work; Examining and implementing decisions regarding establishing new Armenian schools, shutting existing ones and changing curriculums; Secures and suggests means to improve the budget of the Prelacy.

- Educational Council: It consists of 7 or 9 members, with a two-year term. It steers and supervises the Armenian schools and develops their curriculums as per the Armenian identity preservation requirements and the Lebanese curriculum.
- The Financial Council consists of 7 or 9 members, with a two-year term. It prepares the annual Budget which considers the activities and budgets of the other councils. Moreover, it organizes the receiving of the national tributes and the financials of national estates and specifies the prices of judicial and other expenses.
- Estate Council: It consists of 5, 7 or 9 members, with a two-year term. It plans and supervises construction projects, specifies the values of the national

properties, and sets their selling or rental prices. Moreover, it retains the lists of the national properties, the maps, and evidentiary documents.

- **Judicial Council:** The Armenian Apostolic Sect in Lebanon resolves its judicial matters based on two laws adopted by the Armenian Church Catholicosate of Cilicia and the Lebanese government. The Judicial Council consists of the Prelate, as the president, three priests and three secular members.

The diverse organization of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Lebanon permits every member of the society, coming from the various well Armenian-populated areas of Lebanon, to be presented. As “Lebanon tolerated the organization of cultural and political outlets”, the Armenian Apostolic Church sustained a dynamic cooperation with its own chain of Armenian schools, youth institutions organizations and political parties to efficiently manage the Armenian community in Lebanon (Geukjian, 2012). This cooperation resulted in processes of Lebanese-Armenian identity formation that could never occur outside cultural and political contexts.

### **4.3 Dual Role of the Armenian Apostolic Church**

Generally, religious communities in a sectarian society enjoy a huge degree of autonomy, specifically in the field of personal status legislation and jurisdiction, and in the field of education. Armenian communal life is organized through the Church. In the absence of civil and personal status codes, the community relies on its religious laws and courts and regards the church “as one of the principle strongholds of Armenian nationalism in preserving the Armenian national heritage and identity” (Bedoyan, 1983). However, the Armenian Church, as the only vibrant organization of Armenian life, does not only perform its religious role, but also carries the national-political character since the loss of Armenian

political independence in 1375. As the religious-political character of the Armenian Church is highly reflected in the Armenian diasporic community settled in Lebanon, it is crucial to state that the confessional political system of Lebanon advocated the role of religious authorities and institutions. As a result, the role of the Armenian Apostolic Church, as the official representative of the Armenian Apostolic community in Lebanon, is emphasized in its cultural and political objectives that lead to the Lebanese-Armenian identity formation.

#### **4.3.1 Cultural Objectives**

The Armenian Apostolic Church raised critical concerns after the dispersion of the Armenian communities and their settlement in different foreign host countries, including Lebanon. These concerns were mainly social and cultural. The fear of losing the national ethnic identity and the decay of the Armenian families on foreign lands shook and thus aroused the Armenian Apostolic Church to set cultural objectives for the preservation of the Armenian identity and for addressing their immediate and basic needs. The diasporic identity preservation acted as the remedy to the trauma and the chaos that the uprooted Armenian population faced and functioned as the lights that channeled these people towards emotional recovery. It best served as a countermeasure to diminish any internal problems within the community itself, and thus, ensure their unity against discrimination and insecurity from the Lebanese host society. Moreover, it prevented their ingress into the melting pot. In other words, the attempts of the Armenian Apostolic church to conserve the national identity stopped their full assimilation into the host communities i.e. adopting the latter's traditions and triggered the sense of the difference between them and the Lebanese community. The Church concentrated on the reorganization of the Armenian diasporic community through the religious, national, cultural, and educational life. Hence, the Armenian Apostolic Church performed not just as a religious institution but also as a

spiritual entity that oversaw the cultural, lingual, and religious aspects of the Armenian diasporic community in Lebanon. Despite the hardships, that the Church encountered, of preserving the community, the set cultural objectives of enhancing the Armenian character were accomplished through the establishment of multiple Churches in the regions where Armenians were concentrated, along with the private schools and the social and philanthropic organizations that conducted extracurricular activities including Sunday schools. These institutions included the seminary (1930) and a printing press (1931). They created the socio-cultural image of their homeland in Lebanon to preserve their national Armenian identity. First, the established Churches maintained their ways of performing prayers and traditions. They conducted their rituals in Armenian language and celebrated or commemorated holidays or events as they did in their homeland. Clergymen prepared their sermons weekly to preach the importance of unity and conservation of Armenian language and traditions in foreign Lebanese societies and lands. For them, the community was a minority and thus it was difficult to protect the rights if any conflict occurred with the host society, as they are not “on their lands”. Second, the Armenian schools, the seminary and the Sunday schools adopted a specific curriculum in which Armenian history, language, literature, and religion were considered priorities and the Armenian language was the basis for all subjects. To achieve its objectives, the Armenian Apostolic Church did not only honor the national traditions in the Churches but also, included their practice in the schools. They considered the children and the youth the future of the community who they should pass on the Armenian cultural traditions, for them to carry and pass on to their descendants as second and third generations of a diasporic community. They believed that the cultural identity, as distinctive features, was what would unite the Armenian community in Lebanon. In addition to the considerable work done by the Armenian Apostolic Church in the Armenian schools

and philanthropic institutions, the magazines were also printed in Armenian language covering both homeland and host land issues.

The efforts of the Armenian Apostolic Church were highly effective for at least the first and second generations of the Armenian community in Lebanon. However, while the Armenian community in Lebanon moved out of their ghettos and spread to various areas in the country, numerous factors resulted in the decrease in social distance between the two communities and the growing acculturation i.e., integration into the Lebanese society. Acculturation is when the values, beliefs, attitude, and behaviors of a minority community are affected as the individuals become accustomed to the dominant society. This is most often negotiated between the minority community's value of preserving its ethnic identity and the value of adapting to mainstream society (Iskandar Baba, 2017). Research is conducted on the integration of the ethnic minority Armenians before 1977. To assess this, the researchers had studied the change in the lifestyle and in the personality characteristics of the Lebanese Armenians. The Edwards Personality Preference Schedule (EPPS) was run in 1956 and in 1973 to 37 males, 32 females and 32 males, 32 females of the same ethnic background, consecutively. Based on the results, the study found out that the Lebanese Armenians in 1973 shared more characteristics with the Lebanese Arab Christians than in 1956 which concludes that they were socially well adapted and integrated into the majority culture overtime. Their flexibility increased with the great receptivity for change and with the decline in their need for orderliness. According to researchers, the integration into Lebanese society was affected by various factors: the similarity between the home and host cultures, the age and the number of the immigrants, their socio-economic status, their educational level, their tendency to change and finally the attitude of the Lebanese towards the Armenians as foreigners. Between this period of 1956 and 1973, there were several socio-cultural influences that stemmed this acculturation. First, the Armenian Church found

it necessary to include the Arabic language as a requirement in the Armenian schools for the development of the community because the condition of those desiring to enter the Lebanese higher education institutions was to pass the Lebanese baccalaureate exams. This curriculum was added to the Armenian curriculum that was already adopted by the Armenian schools and incorporated Arabic language, literature, and history. As more students enrolled in Lebanese higher education institutions, they more often spoke, read, and wrote Arabic. Second, the political incidents, especially the revolution of 1958, revealed a greater acknowledgement of the role Armenians could play in bolstering the position of the Lebanese Christians in the Lebanese confessional sectarian system. Third, as the expectation to return to Armenia became far-off, the Armenians took the Lebanese identity seriously, their socio-political status improved from that of refugees to a recognized community in Lebanon where they were more prone to participate (Melikian et al., 1977). As the integration into the Lebanese polity is enhanced, the Armenian Apostolic Church faces wider challenges in its role. As a result, the Prelate of the Armenian Apostolic Church announces the year 2022 to be “Diaspora’s year” with the purpose of prioritizing the reorganization of the Armenian diasporic community in the intercultural societies and the globalized world today. The concerns and the challenges of the present Armenian diasporic community include the following:

- 1- Remaining Armenian in the Diaspora is a matter of preference and, consequently, daily anxiety and struggle. In the recent past, being different from the host society was a criterion and an effective means of preserving the Armenian identity. How can Armenians living in the Lebanese multicultural and multi-religious environment of a globalized world, where there are no more walls separating them from others, where these “others” are their neighbors, friends, partners and sometimes even family members, preserve their identity? Armenians in Lebanon do no longer

consider themselves as migrants. They are full-fledged citizens of the country, fused with the environment and mixed with the local culture. Fortunately, the Armenian identity continues to express itself strongly because of the collective and organized presence of Armenian life in Lebanon. However, it is still necessary to preserve the Armenian roots, language, religion, traditions, historical events, and the demands with new approaches.

- 2- Western Armenian, the language spoken by Armenian diasporic communities, is in decline. The gradual reduction and distortion of its use have become widespread and obvious. The reasons are clear, and the consequences are dangerous. Language is one of the strongest elements of a nation's identity, especially for minorities. The educational and cultural structures and intellectuals have a vital role to implement practical steps in the mission of language preservation.
- 3- The practices of identity preservation previously adopted are ineffective. The tools and standards of preserving the Armenian identity, in fact, do not correspond to the conditions of the current world and the approaches and expectations of the new generation. The new generation has begun to leave our institutions, and is far away from our values and traditions, they have lived as “Armenians” in different approaches. New ways are required to unite the new generation around the Church.

The prevailing concerns and challenges made the Apostolic Church recognize that it can no longer reorganize and revitalize the Armenian diasporic community with weakened structures, and outdated agendas or approaches. Thus, it is significant to have regulations and practices in line with the challenges of the new times. The assessment of the current situation shall be the starting point and the driving force in their work. As the communal structures are established under the Church’s umbrella, the reorganization of the community

will start from the Prelacy itself: give priority to a) Christian upbringing through the revitalization of Sunday schools, the teaching of religious subjects in Armenian schools using up-to-date tools and the implementation of spiritual and moral values in the Armenian family; b) humanitarian work, making it one of the essential areas of the church's mission; c) the Armenian school, re-emphasizing the mission of its Armenian community preparation.

In conclusion, findings reveal that the Armenian Apostolic Church, through its cultural objectives, along with the social and philanthropic organizations under its shadow, is the principal institution that forms the Lebanese-Armenian identity. However, its objectives heavily affect the Armenian wing of this hybrid identity with minimal attempts to involve the Lebanese face, as it happens automatically with acculturation. This formation is accomplished directly as the Church perpetuates the Armenian heritage in the Armenian diasporic community and indirectly as it incorporates the Arabic language in its schools.

#### **4.3.2 Political Objectives**

The political objectives of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Lebanon are directed towards preserving the Lebanese confessional political system and power sharing formula to articulate the community interest while sustaining its relations with the other communities in Lebanon. The power sharing formula entails a political regime based on the sharing of power between the numerous religious communities in Lebanon, i.e., the arrangements of this formula give religious communities the responsibility for the daily life of each Lebanese from schools to marriage, from inheritance to professional and political life. Thus, under the burdensome circumstance that the Armenian diasporic community faced in Lebanon, the Church was not silent or absent from the political sphere. However, with the rise of the three Armenian political parties in Lebanon that tried to make the Church act with its influence

and authority in favor of their own interests, the Armenian Apostolic Church suffered and stopped playing an overarching role in the Lebanese political system. It had a conservative quietist tradition based on historical constraints and mode of settlement, that prevented it from the wider involvement in Lebanese politics (Mazzucotelli, 2020).

The Armenian diasporic community established its political institutions in Lebanon, including the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), known as the Tashnak party (1904), the Social Democratic Hunchakian Party, known as the Hunchak (1912), and the Democratic Liberal Ramgavar party (1921). These three parties gradually emerged and aimed to organize the political life of the newly settled community, to ensure that the Armenians remained loyal and dutiful citizens in Lebanon while in parallel, to contribute to the Armenian Apostolic Church's cultural objective of identity preservation through their sister organizations. Despite their different beliefs and affiliations with the different local political parties in Lebanon, the three mentioned parties had one certain determination in common. They were all determined to circumvent to "become party to interconfessional rivalries in Lebanon or be exploited by foreign forces in a manner which would threaten their collective security and well-being" (Schahgaldian, 1979). In other words, along with the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Armenian political parties held a low profile and followed a cautious communal policy in their relations with the local confessional groups and political parties. They mostly cooperated with the liberal Christian forces which were more acceptable to the Sunnis sect in Lebanon. In the same manner, when the Lebanese were vigorously nationalist against the alien rule after 1930, the Armenian political parties stopped its connections with France and pro-France local groups and actively participated in Lebanon's independence movement. This solidarity neutralized, to a large extent, the threat coming from the Muslims towards the Armenian community. Thus, the Armenian political parties projected a loyal citizenship as they did not have strong participation in the

Lebanese domestic politics. They adopted a pro-government approach, not sided with one group against the other and gained the confidence of the authorities. This is better articulated in the congresses of the Armenian political parties. During its 18th World Congress held in Lebanon in 1963, the Tashnak party announced that Armenians actively participate in the diaspora to preserve the independence and freedom of their second homeland, remain faithful citizens, and strive for the country's economic development. Likewise, during its 20th World Congress, the known party reiterated that each Lebanese-Armenian has the responsibility to endeavor for the independence of his/her second homeland, and remain a loyal and dutiful citizen, as in the past (Bedoyan, 1983). In parallel, during the General Congress of the Ramgavar party, the latter echoed the article 8 of its program, which states that this party guarantees that the Armenian community in the diaspora remains loyal and law-abiding citizens in their host countries. The Hunchak party's attitude was like the above mentioned two parties.

Irrespective of their distinct ideologies, the three Armenian political parties had the same pro-government position. However, this stance changed after the independence period and later during the Ta'ef agreement, when the Armenian community decided to become more involved in Lebanese politics.

#### *Armenian Politics in Lebanon after Independence*

The dynamics of Armenian political participation in Lebanese politics was marked after the first elections held after the independence, in 1947. The repatriation campaign, which aimed the return of the Armenian refugees to Soviet Armenia, launched in 1945, offered many Armenians to end their experience as refugees and to contribute to the "territorial solution". Despite their differences, the local Armenian political parties collaborated in the repatriation programs, however, ended up with tension and communal

unrest among them. The isolation of the Tashnak party from the repatriation committees, had a negative impact on the Lebanese Armenian diasporic community which was under its direct influence. As a result, the Armenian political spectrum was divided between the Tashnak party and the others.

Ever since the beginning of the Independence era, the Tashnak party adopted a pro-government policy and supported the pro-Lebanese nationalist political parties, while the Hunchak party sided with the anti-government political forces and the Ramgavar party was in the middle. With the radicalization of the Tashnak party, the latter strongly engaged with the Apostolic Church in Lebanon. In 1951, as the parliamentary seats were raised from 55 to 77, the Armenian quota also increased, and the Apostolic community was granted three seats. The Tashnak party's two apostolic candidates were re-elected in Beirut with no chance to obtain the 3rd apostolic church in the Metn area (Migliorino, 2008). The already existing division between the Armenian political parties deepened as the parliament was dissolved and the electoral law was amended, reducing the Armenian apostolic community seats into two, one in Beirut and the other in Metn, in 1953. However, in 1957, these numbers were re-increased to four seats. At the time, the Armenian political parties were split again between the Tashnak party, who sided with the government, and the others which sided with the opposition.

The 1958 civil conflict created a critical hostility between the Armenian opposing sides. This, of course, was concerning and had a severe impact on the Armenian community level since for them, their only salvation lay in the power of their unity. As per Schahgaldian, the Armenian community was divided into two factions, the ordinary interpersonal relations and the intermarriage within the society ceased completely. The schools, public centers, and Armenian neighborhoods of one faction did not accept the members or sympathizers of the other faction. As a result, a good number of Armenian families had to change their place of

residence (1979). Moreover, each political party had its own principles that governed the policy of its system. For the Tashnak party, the preservation of the Lebanese confessional sectarian system was fundamental. It was committed to the country's independence and territorial integrity while adopting a pro-government approach. On the contrary, the Hunchak party had a negative attitude towards President Chamoun and his government. It claimed that the internal policy of the president was the reason behind the civil war in the country. Similar to the political perspective of the Hunchak party, the Ramgavar party criticized the government's role in the elections (Bedoyan, 1983). The hostility between the Armenian political parties in Lebanon was ceased in 1958, with the direct intervention of the country's Minister of Interior (Migliorino, 2008). Under the new presidency, the re-establishment of the consociational system increased the Armenian share, allotting four seats to the Apostolic sect in 1960.

#### *Armenian Positive Neutrality and the Ta'ef Agreement*

For Bercovitch, diasporic communities can have a constructive or a destructive role in any domestic conflict, either by supporting reasonable positions or by provoking hostile attitudes (2007). However, in the case of the Armenian diasporic community, neither applied. As the three Armenian political parties created the "Armenian National Front" for mutual understanding and cooperation, they united and adopted positive neutrality in the beginning of the 1975 civil war (Eblighatian, 2005). This common policy aimed to face the war dangers and to ensure the communal interest. Despite the continuous conversations with leaders of local parties to explain the motive behind this stance, the latter was considered a betrayal and a suspicious position by the Christian and Muslim communities respectively. However, the Armenian stance was only acknowledged by the Lebanese Druze leader who said that the attitude of the Armenian community was truly liberal and patriotic. According

to him, the Armenian nationalism was fully compatible with their loyalty to Lebanon (Bedoyan, 1983). Of course, the fundamental reasons behind the positive neutrality of the Armenian parties goes back to their original objectives of identity preservation, least interference policy adoption and the Armenian Genocide recognition. Moreover, the Armenian parties were determined not to repeat the mistakes of the 1958 crisis, not to harm the Armenian community in Lebanon.

With the outbreak of the 1975 civil war, the Lebanese power-sharing system was collapsed. The distinct political groups in the country put forward a series of initiatives and proposals to solve the consequences of the war and thus ended with the basic material of the Tae'f agreement. Of course, as part of this confessional system, the Armenian community participated to promote peace and termination of the local conflict. For them, it was necessary to maintain the unique consociational system in the country to further preserve the community rights and freedom that they previously enjoyed, including the preservation of their national identity and cultural practices. Generally, the made proposals were divided into two major categories: a) change the political system to make it more accommodating to the social and political divergences; b) maintain the system and the status quo. The Armenian community supported the second category of the made proposals. In fact, they presented two peace proposals to emphasize their stance, one in 1983 during the Geneva talks and the second in 1986. The proposals highlighted three key arguments. First, political reforms; Here, the Armenian community stressed on maintaining the consociational system in Lebanon as it assisted in preserving their national identity. In parallel, the community proposed adjustments to the Lebanese Constitution to institutionalize the confessional allocations in the unwritten 1943 Lebanese National Pact, while also arguing for granting the Armenians effective roles and positions in the said structure. Second, Lebanon's national identity; For them, it was necessary to maintain the Lebanese identity and the international

relations without undermining the country's independence and sovereignty. Third, Lebanon's sovereignty. They promoted the liberation of the territories from all foreign forces (Avsharian, 2009).

In its turn, the Armenian Apostolic Church, as the foundation of the community, gathered the religious leaders, party representatives and the Armenian parliamentarians in 1983 to reiterate the community's core beliefs and principles. This meeting aimed to explain the necessity of participating in the national dialogue, as it feared marginalization. Consequently, in 1984, the Maronite Church invited the Armenian community representatives to a meeting in Bkerki where the leadership reiterated its position of reconciliation, cooperation, and coexistence between the confessional communities in the country.

Finally, the Ta'ef's new power sharing arrangement established a confessional balance between the Christians and the Muslims. In fact, the re-arrangement was in the Armenian community's favor. In addition to not losing any of their privileges, the Armenian community was indicated as the seventh main community in Lebanon. Moreover, the Ta'ef agreement improved the community's representation in the parliament and the cabinet. As the electoral law no. 154 was signed by President Hraoui, the Armenians were awarded a sixth seat in Bekaa, increasing the total seats of the Apostolic Armenians to five (Geukjian, 2009).

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

The Armenian Apostolic Church is the representative of the Armenian community in Lebanon. With the intention of practicing the numerous rights and freedom it has been granted to preserve the national identity and cultural norms, it has established fourteen Churches and nine Armenian private schools in different areas of the country along with the

several philanthropic institutions. Its role in the formation of the Lebanese-Armenian identity is fundamental and is divided into two groups. First, its cultural objectives are accomplished through the mentioned organizations which in turn, enriches the Armenian cultural part of the community's hybrid identity. Second, its political objectives are achieved through the participation of the political parties representing the Apostolic Armenians in the Lebanese system, this in turn, develops the Lebanese political identity of the community. The combination of the cultural and political identities of the Armenian diasporic community in Lebanon has conceived the Lebanese-Armenian identity.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

The Armenian history is complex and interwoven with several migratory waves throughout the years. Upon their settlement in different parts of the world, they have struggled to preserve their national identity. Among many Armenian diasporic communities scattered all around the world, Lebanese Armenians are used as a case in this research because of their unique representation in the country, their well-established organizations, and the consideration of them being the “beating heart” of the Armenian diaspora. This paper investigates the role of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the Lebanese-Armenian identity formation. The research objectives are threefold: to present a diaspora and a diasporic identity; to examine the experience of Armenians' integration into the Lebanese society; to explore the substantial factors behind their hybrid identity today.

The methodology used to answer the research question was a two-step process. First, a literature review was conducted to introduce terms such as diaspora and diasporic identity and to examine the Armenian history in Lebanon. Second, several key informant interviews with Apostolic Church representatives in Lebanon were conducted. This study aimed to fill the gap on the factors affecting the Lebanese-Armenian integration.

Chapter two concludes that the ethnonational consciousness, which diasporic communities maintain during their settlement in host countries, does not prevent them from developing loyalty and connection to their adopted homeland. In fact, these communities become characterized by their hybrid identities which carry traits both from the ancestral homeland and from the country of settlement. The Armenian diasporic community in Lebanon adopted several factors to preserve its national identity. However, the latter was

redefined during the transition process, and today, it shall be characterized as “sociocultural adaptation” which forms the hybrid Lebanese-Armenian identity.

Chapter three explores the different migratory waves of the Armenians in Lebanon and concludes that their status change from refugees to citizens of the country was heavily due to the political decisions in the region. To maintain the demographic balance between the Muslims and the Christians in addition to the Maronite political power in Lebanon, the Armenians were naturalized by the Treaty of Lusanne, and were granted the rights and privileges of the Lebanese citizens. This positively affected their social, political, and economic integration into the local dominant community and led to their hybrid identity. Thus, three chapter concludes that the newly settled Armenian community in Lebanon preserved a certain amount of communal solidarity through the creation and maintenance of boundaries. However, as they were no more kept in ghettos after their naturalization, they integrated into the Lebanese community not only socially, but also economically and politically. Thus, adopting the Lebanese traditions and practices or the intermarriage between the two communities became a usual manner and thus, Armenians experienced multiple “selves”. The formation of the hybrid Lebanese-Armenian identity (cultural and political) is the central point here. Of course, there are various factors that have facilitated this integration and hybrid identity formation.

Chapter four discusses and concludes the most significant factor that eased the Lebanese-Armenian identity formation. The consociational system in Lebanon is the core reason behind the Armenian Apostolic Church’s autonomy and legitimacy today. As Christians, the Armenian community had positive impacts on the demographic balances of Lebanon and has well served the Christian community interests in the country. The Lebanese 1926 Constitution legitimized and institutionalized the Lebanese society pluralism. It set two major doctrines. First, all Lebanese citizens are equal before the law

i.e. they enjoy the same rights and duties, without distinction (Articles 7 and 12). Second, the confessions shall be justly represented in public offices and in government according to their numerical ratio of the total population (Article 95). This constitution paved the way for the Armenian Apostolic Church to lead and establish different educational and philanthropic organizations. Generally, the said Church's objectives revolved around national identity preservation while maintaining the confessional political system of Lebanon to better articulate the community's interests.

The cultural objectives of national identity preservations were accomplished through the educational and philanthropic organizations where the Armenian language was the basis for all operations. The national norms and traditions were celebrated, and the memory of the nation's martyrdom was commemorated annually. Despite the challenges that the Church faces today with the integration of the Armenians into the Lebanese society, it still prioritizes the national identity preservation and considers it as its instrumental role. In this context, the Armenian apostolic church has planned to adopt new and adapted tools to unite the Armenian youth and enhance the national identity among them.

As for the political objectives of the Armenian Apostolic Church, the latter maintains good connections with the rest of the confessional groups in Lebanon. However, the Armenian political parties also contribute to the achievement of these political objectives. Most of the time in the Lebanese history, the Armenian political parties have sided with the government and showed loyalty as citizens of the nation. They have contributed to drafting the Ta'f agreement which was adopted after the 1975 civil war and did not deprive the community from the rights and freedoms they previously enjoyed. Here, it is necessary to mention that the political parties operate under the realm of the Church. In other words, it was the consociational system in Lebanon that gave the Armenian Apostolic Church its cultural and political rights to serve the community within the state. Thus, the Armenian political parties

represent the Church and are considered as part of the network that the Church established to achieve its objectives.

The cultural and political objectives of the Armenian Apostolic Church create cultural and political identities in every Armenian in Lebanon. This makes the said Church the fundamental factor behind the Lebanese-Armenian identity formation.

In terms of limitations, the interviewees participated in this research were all Apostolic Church representatives and did not include leaders of Armenian political parties. Their participation may have had further supported the hypothesis and conclusions of this study. Moreover, the newly adopted preservation tools by the Armenian Apostolic Church are still not fully implemented. This raises the question of whether they will be as effective on the new generations integrated into the Lebanese society, as the traditional tools were on the newly set Armenian community in Lebanon. Today, the Armenian Apostolic Sect is one of the seven main communities in Lebanon. However, it is burdened with its dual loyalties towards the community's two homelands: Lebanon and Armenia. Further research needs to be carried out to investigate how the efforts of the Armenian Apostolic Church are affected with the recent socio-political obstacles in both Lebanon and Armenia.

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## APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL OF RESEARCH



Institutional Review Board (IRB)

لجنة الأخلاقيات

### NOTICE OF IRB APPROVAL

**To:** Ms. Karnie Kendirjian  
Dr. Jasmin Lilian Diab  
Assistant Professor  
School of Arts & Sciences

**NOTICE ISSUED:** 25 March 2022  
**EXPIRATION DATE:** 25 March 2023  
**REVIEW TYPE:** EXPEDITED – INITIAL

**Date:** March 25, 2022

**RE:** **IRB #:** LAU.SAS.JD2.25/Mar/2022

**Protocol Title:** *The Role of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the Lebanese-Armenian Identity Formation*

The above referenced research project has been approved by the Lebanese American University, Institutional Review Board (LAU IRB). This approval is limited to the activities described in the Approved Research Protocol and all submitted documents listed on page 2 of this letter. **Enclosed with this letter are the stamped approved documents that must be used.**

#### APPROVAL CONDITIONS FOR ALL LAU APPROVED HUMAN RESEARCH PROTOCOLS

**LAU RESEARCH POLICIES & PROCEDURES:** All individuals engaged in the research project must adhere to the approved protocol and all applicable LAU IRB Research Policies & Procedures. **PARTICIPANTS must NOT be involved in any research related activity prior to IRB approval date or after the expiration date.**

**PROTOCOL EXPIRATION:** The LAU IRB approval expiry date is listed above. The IRB Office will send an email at least 45 days prior to protocol approval expiry - Request for Continuing Review - in order to avoid any temporary hold on the initial protocol approval. It is your responsibility to apply for continuing review and receive continuing approval for the duration of the research project. Failure to send Request for Continuation before the expiry date will result in suspension of the approval of this research project on the expiration date.

**MODIFICATIONS AND AMENDMENTS:** All protocol modifications must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation.

**NOTIFICATION OF PROJECT COMPLETION:** A notification of research project closure and a summary of findings must be sent to the IRB office upon completion. Study files must be retained for a period of 3 years from the date of notification of project completion.

**IN THE EVENT OF NON-COMPLIANCE WITH ABOVE CONDITIONS, THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR SHOULD MEET WITH THE IRB ADMINISTRATORS IN ORDER TO RESOLVE SUCH CONDITIONS. IRB APPROVAL CANNOT BE GRANTED UNTIL NON-COMPLIANT ISSUES HAVE BEEN RESOLVED.**

If you have any questions concerning this information, please contact the IRB office by email at [irb@lau.edu.lb](mailto:irb@lau.edu.lb)

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The IRB operates in compliance with the national regulations pertaining to research under the Lebanese Minister of Public Health's Decision No.141 dated 27/1/2016 under LAU IRB Authorization reference 2016/3708, the international guidelines for Good Clinical Practice, the US Office of Human Research Protection (45CFR46) and the Food and Drug Administration (21CFR56). LAU IRB U.S. Identifier as an international institution: FWA00014723 and IRB Registration # IRB00006954 LAUIRB#1

**Dr. Joseph Stephan**  
Chair, Institutional Review Board

**DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED:**

IRB Initial Protocol Application	Received 1 March 2022
Research Proposal	Received 1 March 2022, amended 25 March 2022
Informed Consent	Received 17 March 2022
Interview questions	Received 17 March 2022
<b>IRB Comments sent:</b> 18 & 22 March 2022	<b>PI response to IRB's comments dated:</b> 25 March 2022
CITI Training – Jasmin Lilian Diab	Cert.# 34264807 Dated (5 December 2019)
CITI Training – Karnie Kendirjian	Cert.# 38790769 Dated (24 March 2022)

