

# **Comparing Visions of the Nation: The Role of Ethnicity, Religion and Diaspora Nationalism in Armenian, Jewish, and Sikh Relations to the Homeland**

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## **Diasporas and Homelands**

Nationalisms, like nations, are not constructed *ex nihilo*. The rise and mobilization of national collective identity—aiming at the politicization of that identity and, ultimately, the building or rebuilding of a “nation-state”—is based on a number of cultural and symbolic elements or ethnosymbols, among which the following are most frequently listed: religion, territory, and the collective memory of major events.<sup>1</sup>

No single theory of ethnicity, nationalism, and nation-building is suitable for all situations. We can, however, contribute to further study by exploring nation-building in comparable cases and assessing the weight of symbols and ascriptive variables in the shaping of ethnonational identity. It is the contention of this study that there are clear differences between diaspora and homeland communities with respect to the relative importance of these elements, and, more specifically, that religion is the most important one in the diaspora, and territory in the homeland.

Three specific *ethnies* are examined: those of the Armenians, Jews, and Sikhs. These have been chosen because of their commonalities. In all of them, religion, kinship, language, territory, and historical memory play a role. Their collective identities are based to a significant extent on the consciousness of having originated in a specific land; they are marked by the existence of ramified diasporas; they have experienced oppression and statelessness; and they have been engaged in a quest extending over many generations to gain or regain political control over their homelands.

Diasporas maintain their connections with the homeland whether its independent statehood has been in existence for long or has been recently regained. These connections not only provide a degree of autonomy, but they also help to assuage problems such as discrimination, alienation, and the internalization of negative stereotypes held by the majority in the host country. Many members of the diaspora attribute these problems to their lack of legitimacy, and they want to gain self-respect by embracing a “hyphenated” status that would link their own identities with a “homeland” that enjoys a positive image.<sup>2</sup>

From a distance the homeland is often easier to imagine in a more pleasant way than from inside the homeland itself. Thus, diaspora Armenians had a romantic vision of the homeland as a sort of paradise consisting of verdant fields and flowing streams.<sup>3</sup> For Jews in the diaspora, especially in eastern Europe, the Holy Land—and later, Israel—was a place of orange groves, kibbutzim, and self-reliant pioneers. This explains the iconic character of Yerevan to diaspora Armenians and the Israelocentrism of many American and Western European Jews.

The ethnic identity described above is a symbolic one because it does not necessarily inform the quotidian behavior of a person. It is considered irrational insofar as it is not guided by considerations of concrete gain. Sometimes, to be sure, ethnicity is not merely symbolic, as in the case of persons who stand out as being different from the rest of society in a given hostland because of a physical marker such as skin color or behavioral marker such as dress. Such differences, as well as numerous ethnic symbols mentioned above, constitute the rallying points around which people mobilize. Yet in the majority of cases, ethnic identification is voluntary and can be periodically set aside.<sup>4</sup>

Diasporas are not the same as “state-nations.”<sup>5</sup> The former are *trans-statal* ethnonations, whereas the latter contain *transethnic* elements clustered around what Anthony Smith has called

a “core *ethnie*.” Both diaspora and core ethnies share a number of symbols, which include language, customs, rites, food, artifacts, narratives, and myths, including the myth of common descent. Most, if not all, of these symbols originated in the homeland.

A nation differs from a diaspora *ethnie* in that it territorializes and politicizes the “myth-symbol complex”<sup>6</sup> that it shares with the diaspora. In so doing it may incorporate the symbols of other ethnies or it may suppress them. There is an open question: are ethnosymbols in the diaspora more pristine than in the homeland? On the one hand, ethnies in the diaspora may be more isolated from their immediate political surroundings and have fewer political constraints than in they have in a homeland whose nationalism has become “civic” and which is preoccupied with practical tasks; on the other hand, ethnic symbols in diaspora have become more syncretic under the influence of surrounding hostland culture, whereas in the homeland such symbols enjoy special protection.

Ethnic diasporas are communities that are not fully absorbed into the modern nation—whether ethnic or civic—as defined in terms of the majorities in their respective host societies. As such, they are more determined to preserve their particular identities than immigrants *tout court*, and they have equipped themselves with various means for doing so. It is perhaps the failure of diasporas to dissolve that has led John Breuilly to regard them as pre-political and pre-modern and as “[having] little in the way of institutional embodiment beyond the local level” and argue that their identities are expressed in a language that is important only to a narrow cultural elite.<sup>7</sup> In fact, however, diaspora *ethnies* are far from local; they are part of a transborder, and often highly organized, global communication network; many of their institutions are transnational, and they use a language that is disseminated far below an intellectual elite or a church hierarchy and far beyond the confines of their host countries.<sup>8</sup> It is difficult to pinpoint

the basic communicative elements in this network. At one time, language played a major role, but with the global dominance of English and the decline of the use of the homeland language among diaspora ethnics and the homogenization and massification of popular culture, religion may be the only thing left standing. It is, however, a secularized religion, dominated not by theology or scholarship, but by physical ethnosymbols.

Therefore, diasporas are almost ideal-typical intermediaries between ethnic and nation. The array of ethnic symbols listed above as well as notions of “sacred territory” have served the diaspora’s own purposes as well as the purpose of state (re)building. In the latter process, diasporas have been leading actors. They have done the advance work of the modern “nation state” in institutionalizing and codifying ethnic symbols to a significant degree. In the absence (and anticipation) of a restored nation-state, diasporas have been functioning as cultural storage chambers in the sense that they are more autonomous both with respect to the dominant hostland culture and the homeland (which may be under the political control of an authoritarian regime or a foreign power).<sup>9</sup> As Gurmit Singh Aulakh, a leader of the Sikh diaspora in the United States, put it (in 1999), “The Indian government’s true intention...[At least] the Sikh diaspora is free. India can’t threaten them, torture them, or violate their dignity and rights. They are the ones who will provide leadership to the [the community of believers].”<sup>10</sup> The belief that the diaspora is needed to preserve the nation in case the homeland is attacked by neighbors and its people threatened with annihilation is not unique to the Sikhs. The destruction of Israel is the daily fear of diaspora Jews, many of whom feel that Jews are safer outside Israel than in it. In their view, the diaspora constitutes a sort of demographic sanctuary.

Although the homeland is normally regarded as the origin of the diaspora, it is not the only cultural locus of the ethnonational community. The Jews, Armenians, and Sikhs each have two

cultural and religious centers—the homeland and the diaspora—and these complement one another. The reciprocal nature of the relationship is manifested in the widespread belief among Armenians that there are “two poles of the Armenian nation, which are Armenia and the diaspora”<sup>11</sup> and in the notion of the “centrality of the Jewish people,” which replaced the traditional Zionist insistence on the “centrality of Israel” a few years after its founding.<sup>12</sup> In the case of the Jews, the homeland-diaspora linkage is reflected in the Law of Return, and in the case of the Armenians, not only in a right to return but also in a bill introduced in Yerevan in 1995, which granted Armenian citizenship to diaspora Armenians;<sup>13</sup> and in both cases, in the existence of transnational organizations. After the restoration of independence in 1991, Armenia’s relationship with the diaspora was restructured; at a meeting in Yerevan of 1200 delegates from all over the diaspora, it was decided to create juridically defined coordinating agencies.<sup>14</sup> Recently, some Israelis have even proposed the establishment of a second parliamentary chamber in their country to represent the interests of the diaspora.

The diaspora is not merely a subaltern or extension of the homeland, but it is also a site for the cultural creation of symbols that are subsequently exported to the homeland. That includes ethnoreligious practices (e.g., non-Orthodox forms of Jewish worship, *landsmannschaften*, ethnically specific synagogues) introduced to Israel, and even aspects of quasi-religious syncretism, such as the celebration of Christmas (as a secular holiday)—a pattern analogous to the observance of Hindu festivities by Sikhs, especially outside Punjab. Imports have also included elements of language, such as Yiddish idioms, which resulted in Hebrew back-formations or were taken over wholesale (though in translation) by Israeli Hebrew.<sup>15</sup>

Brian Axel’s statement that “diaspora has produced the homeland”<sup>16</sup> need not be taken literally, if only because the Chinese, Greek, Polish, and Cuban homelands have continued to

exist independently of diasporas and have preceded them. Nevertheless, diasporas have helped to mobilize *stateless* homeland peoples toward achieving political independence. In this process religion and historical memory have played crucial roles. It is in that sense that one can accept Lord Acton's remark that "exile is the nursery of nationality."<sup>17</sup> The nurturing role has included not only the preservation of the homeland culture (adapted to hostland conditions) and diplomatic support, but also the activities of political formations oriented primarily to the concerns of the homeland, such as Zionist parties in prewar Poland; the Armenian Revolutionary (Dashnak) Federation in France and Greece; and a variety of pro-Israel organizations in the United States.

An independent Jewish state was conceived by Theodor Herzl in the diaspora half a century before it materialized; and it was from the diaspora—the Armenian National Congress meeting in Tbilisi—that Armenia was declared independent on May 28, 1918 (a date whose anniversary was still celebrated by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation even after 1920, when Armenian independence came to an end). As in the case of the State of Israel, the construction of the post-Soviet Armenian Republic would have been more difficult without the efforts of the diaspora. Diasporas, however, are often unable to help, as attested by the Kurdish, Tibetan, and Sikh diasporas. Khalistan was declared an independent state by diaspora Sikhs, meeting in the Panthic Committee in 1987—but this was no more than a symbolic act.

### **The Factor of Religion**

Whereas the older nationalisms were imbued with religion,<sup>18</sup> the modern nationalisms of the Armenians, Jews, and Sikhs developed in an age of secularism. Yet there has been a resurgence

of religious nationalism: belief systems and systems of religion-based rituals and practices are still able to mobilize people in our secular age.<sup>19</sup>

The role of religion must be studied in context. The relationship among ethnonationalism, territory, and religion is complex, reciprocal, and confusing. Religion was a common ingredient of ethnic or tribal nationalism; as Lewis Namier once remarked, “religion is a 16<sup>th</sup> century word for nationalism.”<sup>20</sup> Whereas ethnic nationalism was not sufficiently political, most modern nationalisms are marked by a declining role of religion. Religions become national movements: they serve as the major instruments of nation-building for a stateless nation; but once the state is (re-)built, religion becomes less important for the homeland. In this respect, newly formed states follow the pattern of long-established ones, such as England, France, and Russia, where the once solitary official churches, respectively Anglicanism, Catholicism, and Eastern Orthodoxy, are no longer needed as the primary glue of national identity.

Modern nationalism tends to be secular. Modern nation-builders may invoke religion and use selective religious symbols for purposes of social and political mobilization; or, as Kedourie has argued, as an aspect of the past “in order to subvert the present,” subversion in this case meaning the replacement of one (tribal or imperial) political order by another, a national one.<sup>21</sup> The modern nation, however, is an ideal-type. It has not been easy for modern nations to cut themselves off from their ethnoreligious moorings—as attested by Poland, Israel, and Ireland, whose existence has been heavily associated with its religious past. Nor has it been easy in the most advanced secular and “civic” nations such as France and the United States. In France, which is officially committed to *laïcité*, the literary and common languages contain Christian references, and most national holidays are Catholic. (The promise made by President Chirac during the debate concerning the Islamic headscarf that a Jewish and a Muslim holy day would

become part of the official calendar was quickly forgotten.)<sup>22</sup> In the United States, too, Christianity remains culturally dominant, as reflected, for example, in school calendars and Sunday closing laws.

If religion declines as *ethnies* turn into nations, as Anthony Smith has argued, it does not disappear among diaspora communities. Since such communities are ethnic rather than national (insofar as national is defined in political terms), ethnosymbols are still largely religious, or serve as mimetic representations of religion. This includes the use of physical, printed, and ritual symbols—amulets, artifacts, books and recordings of folktales—and the celebration of ethnoreligious festivals. All these are easier than a full cultural or religious commitment involving time and effort; and so is the support of the homeland in the form of political pressure or financial contributions. The ethnosymbols connect the diaspora with the homeland in one way or another. This applies to language as well. Language may not always be necessary for state-building in the homeland itself (as the case of Ireland illustrates), but it helps to maintain a sense of community outside the homeland. In the diaspora, the pressures of the dominant hostland language are difficult to resist,<sup>23</sup> but to the extent that ethnonational languages—Armenian, Yiddish, and the Punjabi spoken by Sikhs—continue to survive in the various hostlands, they are heavily impregnated with religious vocabulary.<sup>24</sup>

In the state-building efforts of the homeland, territory is a substitute for religion, but in the diaspora, ethnosymbols evoke religion and territory and are substitutes for both. To what extent does that argument apply to *ethnies* in the diaspora? Not all of them wish to make use of religious symbols to subvert the present, especially where the present is tolerant of diversity and makes possible a considerable degree of autonomy. They may, however, use religion to perpetuate the identity and communal cohesion of the diaspora; to promote solidarity with fellow



ethnics globally, and to lend support to “nation-building” in the homeland. Ethnonational symbols are emphasized by diaspora elites, including those who, while nominally adhering to their respective religions and marshalling religious justifications for political mobilization in favor of the homeland, may themselves be secular. This applies to most Zionist leaders and Armenian intellectuals. It applies also to Sikh diaspora politicians (some of whom occupy official positions in the governments of their homelands), who organize campaigns and protest marches in favor of Sikh separatism in India.<sup>25</sup>

Homelands, too, have instrumentalized religion. In Israel, participation in religious services is not needed for Jews to affirm their membership in the national or even the Jewish community. This is also true in Armenia itself, where the church is free, but no longer needed to assert national identity. Nevertheless, despite the trend to secularization in both the homeland and the diaspora, religion continues to provide a connecting link between the two communities. No matter how secular, homeland political leaders know that the ethnonational religion enjoys a considerable degree of legitimacy in the diaspora. This explains why political leaders in Armenia (many of whom reached adulthood in a Communist context and are not guided by religious values), pay lip service to the church; and why Israeli diplomats serving abroad (to promote relations between homeland and hostland and act as liaisons to Jewish communities) are encouraged to attend synagogue in order to show solidarity with the diaspora.

The diaspora has played a significant role in keeping alive, promoting, and politicizing ethnonationalism. Diasporas often use religion and language to do this, although original language competence has been weakening and religious sentiment has been increasingly replaced by secularism. Ethnic symbols, which function as “*mythomoteurs*,”<sup>26</sup> are often institutionalized. Among the Jews, they have included numerous festival observances and

religious ritual objects; among Sikhs, the turban and the “five Ks”—the *kes* (hair and beard), *kara* (bracelet), *kangha* (comb), the *kach* (knee-length breeches), and the *kirpan* (sword)—the scabbard worn at their sides by men (to symbolize the drawing of the sword centuries ago in defense of their religion);<sup>27</sup> among Armenians, the *khachkar* (a representation of the carved stone crosses that dot the homeland’s cemeteries and churches) and the Armenian church’s instantly identifiable dome architecture, which marks not only a place to pray, but also an institution symbolizing Armenian ethnicity.

Religious symbols have served multiple purposes in homelands and diasporas. To cite the example of the Passover seder: For Orthodox Jews everywhere, the ritual, and the *Haggadah*, the accompanying narrative, has both a religious and an ethnotribal reference, as it recalls the founding of a nation. For secular Israelis it is a celebration of a national holiday; and for “emancipated” diaspora Jews, it refers to an event—the Exodus—that has universal meaning, namely, the liberation of oppressed peoples. In the Armenian diaspora, churches—often imposing edifices—may lack worshipers; yet the Church remains important even for the non-practicing, because it is the most visible institutional expression of Armenianism, and Armenians identify with it out of a sense of ethnic loyalty. (The Church’s robed, instantly identifiable clergy have been the only continuously present Armenian “bureaucracy” since 301 A.D.). It is under church auspices that charities and other communal activities are organized. A similar purpose is fulfilled by the Sikh gurdwaras in the diaspora, which are not only places of worship but also social and educational centers as well as venues for the cultivation of the Khalistan idea.<sup>28</sup> In diaspora, especially in the West, more and more Sikhs are only nominally Sikh; and many confine their attendance at prayer services to the holy days. This is comparable to the numerous synagogues that exist in the Jewish diaspora, which may be equally sparsely attended.

## **The Territorial Dimension: Holy Places and Sacred Spaces**

The above suggests that among the ethnic symbols dealt with here, religion is the most important. It serves to hold the community together, especially in the absence of other unifiers. Religion has a number of dimensions: tribal, spiritual, and spatial. The tribal dimension cannot survive forever the assimilative process at work in modern states, as ethnic symbols lose their power and relevance, a reality that has led a number of religious leaders in the diaspora to stress the spiritual aspects of their faith. Moreover, not all Jews, Sikhs, and Armenians in the diaspora have been happy with the “ethnification” and politicization of their fundamentally religious communities. They argue that such a transformation detracts from the universalistic claims of their religions and threatens the protection of their communities qua religious ones that they enjoy in the diaspora, in particular in those host countries committed to religious liberty and pluralism. Some Sikhs have insisted that the belief of the founding gurus that “Sikhs are here to serve the interests of the entire humanity” does not accord with the idea of Khalistan.<sup>29</sup> Some Armenian theologians, to be sure, assert that Armenians are Christians like others and therefore argue that the Apostolic message can be delivered anyplace and in any language. Anti-Zionist Jews have opposed the founding of Israel on the grounds that it detracts from the prophetic mission of Judaism; this is true in particular of Reform Jews, who insist that the essence of Judaism is not ethnically specific and does not need a homeland of reference.

In the cases examined here, ethnonational identity is “tribal” not only because it is associated with a minority religion, itself characterized by Eric Hobsbawm as tribal. These ethnies are tribal also because, he argues, they have lacked a common polity and, more important, because they have “resisted” the formation of a nation state.<sup>30</sup> In fact, however, most

diaspora ethnonations have not opposed the formation of such a state, but they have been unable to achieve it. This was true in the past of the Jews, the Armenians, and the Sikhs, and it is true today of the Kurds and Parsees.

According to Hobsbawm,<sup>31</sup> modern religions do not accord well with *modern* nationalism, because, unlike tribal religions, they aspire to be world religions and must transcend the bounds of ethnonationalism. This view reflects wishful thinking; for all religions, even globally diffused ones, are “operationalized” in ways that differ from one society to another. One reason for selective attempts of diaspora communities to de-ethnicize their respective religions and to stress their spiritual aspects is to promote easier adaptation to the hostland;<sup>32</sup> but such attempts have had only partial success, because de-ethnicized religions have been too “abstract” and anemic to have wide emotional appeal. Most religions, like most nation-states, have core ethnies. Even world religions, such as Roman Catholicism and Islam, convey their respective messages in an “ethno-tribally” specific fashion. The Armenian church is not just a branch of the world religion of Christianity, and Judaism cannot be envisaged as totally separated from its ethnocultural and territorial source. It may be true that Israel has a special role in human history, but, as the Biblical prophets insisted, that role can be best performed in the Land of Israel and not in the diaspora, which is an abnormal condition.<sup>33</sup>

It is difficult to disaggregate the ethnic and religious components of the ethnonational communities discussed here. It is rare (if not impossible) to find a Muslim or Jewish Armenian, a Hindu Sikh, or a Christian Jew. All adherents of Judaism are Jews, all adherents of Apostolic Christianity are Armenian, and all adherents of Sikhism are, in terms of origin, Punjabi Sikhs.

It is equally difficult to disentangle the spiritual and territorial aspects of religions, and it is almost impossible to ignore their dualism—namely that of their universalistic and particularistic

dimensions. Thus Judaism has been regarded by many of its adherents—both Orthodox and Reform—as “a light unto the nations”; Christianity—whether Catholic, Evangelical, or other—as bringing salvation to all who embrace it; and Sikhism, as a religion of perfect and universal love, aimed at establishing brotherhood for the whole global community.

Most of the religions dealt with here are focused on selected ethnocommunal groups, all of which have territorial orientations. The spatial dimension is used to advance claims upon the homeland, which is regarded as sanctified soil because of its association with revelation and/or with a nation-building figure, and because it is the locus of sacred sites. This applies to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem for Jews, the Apostolic cathedral and monastery in Echmiadzin for Armenians, and the Golden Temple in Amritsar for Sikhs.

Sometimes the sacred character of a specific site is extended to territory around it and then serves as a basis for the claim of the country in which it is located, which then becomes a “holy land.” The clearest case is that of the Jews. Most of the Jewish holidays observed in the diaspora, no matter how secularized, relate to the Land of Israel. Thus, the three “pilgrimage” festivals focus on Jerusalem; Hanukka recalls the struggle of the Maccabees against the Syrians; the fast of the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av commemorates the destruction of the Temple, as does the breaking of a glass during marriage rites; all synagogues in the diaspora face toward Jerusalem; and at Passover seders, which recall the exodus of the Jews from Egypt, the hope is articulated for “Next Year in Jerusalem.”<sup>34</sup>

For the Armenian diaspora, too, the homeland is the main focal point and “*mythomoteur*” of its ethnic identity, which is evinced in collective hopes as well as religious symbols and folk arts.<sup>35</sup> Just as Jews pray daily for a return to Jerusalem and for the restoration of temple sacrifice, so many Armenians sing Van songs that contain geographical references and some pray for

“Next Year at [Lake] Van,”<sup>36</sup> and so Sikhs chant in their daily prayers that “the Khalsa (i.e., the community of the pure) shall rule.”<sup>37</sup> Sikhs need a state where their distinctive identity can be maintained.<sup>38</sup> As Gurmit Singh Aulakh, president of the Council of Khalistan in Washington, DC: put it, “Only a free and independent Khalistan will insure that the Sikh Nation can live in peace, prosperity, and freedom.”<sup>39</sup> Gobind Singh Ji, a prominent guru, has echoed this position, arguing that “sovereignty is a must in order for religion to survive; otherwise religion perishes.”

In the Sikh case, “sovereignty” has a dual connotation. On the one hand, it refers to Khalistan, a territorially defined Sikh state; on the other hand, it refers to the well-being of the Khalsa Panth, the community of believers, specifically the adherents of a spiritual leader or guru. The territorial definition, by its very nature political, is a much more recent one, proposed in the context of the partition of India after World War II and revived in the 1970s in the diaspora. The spiritual definition can be accommodated within the existing boundaries of India. In any case, the community in terms of both definitions is focused essentially on the Punjab.<sup>40</sup>

The religion-based territorial focus is found also among many Jews in the diaspora, who are convinced that a full Jewish life can be lived only in a Jewish homeland, a conviction shared even by those who are themselves not religious but who realize that non-religious ethnicity cannot survive by itself. This does not necessarily mean that the homeland must be fully sovereign; rather, it must serve as a place where ethnonational culture, religion, and values can be maintained and perpetuated and which, in the view of “cultural” Zionists like Ahad Ha’am, would be a source whence these values would be disseminated to the diaspora. In any case, both cultural and religious Zionists share a belief in the importance of national existence, and therefore some sort of physical presence in the homeland.

The idea of sacred space extending to a whole country does not, however, have the same importance in all cases and at all times. In the case of the Sikhs, the idea of the Punjab as a sacred land developed only in the 1940s, in reaction to the policies of the Indian government that were viewed as impeding the free exercise of their religion.<sup>41</sup> It is invoked by spokespersons of the ethnic community in their fund-raising efforts. The Jewish, Armenian, and Sikh diasporas in time became rival hubs of religions regarded increasingly as polycentric in terms of hierarchies and sources of learning. Both the Armenian and Hebrew languages were modernized and standardized in the diaspora; and most of those who were involved in this process were inspired by religious considerations.<sup>42</sup>

In any case, the homeland serves as a focus of ethnonational orientation and identity where the notion of “return” (e.g., the Jewish *aliya* and the Armenian *nerkaght*) has played an important role. This does not mean that members of ethnic diasporas are preparing to pack up and move to their homelands. As Jivan Tabibian, the Armenian scholar, remarked: “We [Armenians] are not place bound, but we are intensely place conscious.”<sup>43</sup> In fact, it is often difficult to go to the homeland, or a part thereof, because it may be inaccessible. Before the Six-Day war, the Old City of Jerusalem, with its Western Wall, could be seen from a distance, but Jews could not go there. Mount Ararat, a landmark of Armenian identity, can be seen from Yerevan, but it is under Turkish rule. Yet the territorial element is more than imaginary; it is an enduring reality, in the sense that the presence of members of the ethnonational community in the homeland has continued in some fashion and that diaspora communities are in touch with it. The homeland has been most important for Sikhs—who have always been there; for Armenians, whose continuing presence in contemporary Armenia is due to the escape of this region’s

inhabitants from the Turkish genocide by virtue of its being part of the Russian Empire; and for Jews, small numbers of whom remained in the homeland after the various expulsions.

A physical return to the homeland, although not always easy, is at least possible today, and in all cases there have been waves of “returnees.” But there is a difference between the fact and the myth of return, which has led to ambivalence. On the one hand, there are reasons for not returning, or for leaving, the homeland: for Armenians, that the homeland has become “a landscape of sadness and misery,”<sup>44</sup> and, more important, that it is run by leaders perpetuating the legacy of Communism; for Sikhs, that life in the Punjab is too difficult, and Sikhism has been “polluted” by the inroads of Hinduism; and for Jews, that Judaism has been denatured by an elite consisting of “Hebrew-speaking gentiles” (or, conversely, that progress is being impeded by an ultra-Orthodox and intolerant rabbinate). On the other hand, Armenians who have left the homeland are regarded as deserters and even traitors,<sup>45</sup> and for many years, Jews leaving Israel were viewed with displeasure, and those leaving a diaspora country but not completing their voyage by settling in Israel were labeled “dropouts.”

### **Narratives as “*Mythomoteurs*”**

The homeland is not a totally “imagined community”; it is historical, and narratives about it are based on real events that become part of the patrimony of nation states and serve as the identitive basis of diasporas. This applies above all to religious and national leaders such as Moses; to Guru Nanak (1469-1539), the founder of Sikhism; and to St. Gregory, whose conversion (ca. 301 A.D.) led to the founding of the Armenian Apostolic church and the first Christian nation.<sup>46</sup> These events are in each case associated with holy books, which deal with the founding of a religion, contain rules of conduct based on revelation and/or law and provide for initiation rites.



In two of the cases, the scriptures (the Adi Granth and the Old Testament) set the framework for the founding of new nations as well. Some of the narratives refer to periods of glory in the homeland, such as the achievements of the Jewish kingdom under Solomon and the Maccabees' victory over the Syrians; the independent kingdom of Armenia; and the early period (1710-1716 and 1765-1849) of Sikh rule in the Punjab. Others refer to major catastrophes, such as the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem and the forced exile of the Jews. To reinforce and supplement such distant episodes, there are more recent events: the establishment of Israel and the Six-Day and Yom Kippur wars; the Amritsar massacres of Sikhs and the destruction of the Golden Temple in 1984 (observed by Sikhs as "Martyrdom Day"), and selective incidents of Hindu domination, including persecutions;<sup>47</sup> and the genocide and expulsion of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, and Soviet rule, and, more recently, a major earthquake in independent Armenia. These events took place in the homeland, but they served to mark the ethnonational consciousness in the diaspora as well, especially events of a negative nature, such as the *shoah* ([Nazi] holocaust) or the earlier *hurban* (destruction of the Second Temple) for the Jews; the Armenian *yeghern* (catastrophe), the Turkish genocide; and the Sikh *ghallughara* (great destruction), the battle fought between the Sikhs and the Afghans under Ahmad Shah Durani, which cost thousands of human lives. There were events of a positive nature as well, such as the so-called "golden age" of Hebrew culture in medieval Spain. Much of the Jewish diaspora literature produced at that time focused on the Holy Land, but it was not associated with political mobilization leading to the restoration of an independent homeland, because such a scenario was considered unrealistic.

The various nationalist revivals were sparked significantly by fairly recent events. The Dreyfus Affair sparked the beginning of political Zionism in Western Europe; the Holocaust

transformed German Jews from “German nationals of the Mosaic faith” into “Jews in Germany,” and Jews in France from “*Français d’origine israélite*” into ethnically redefined *Juifs*.<sup>48</sup> The massacre in Amritsar in 1984 transformed many Punjabi Sikhs from loyal citizens of India to ethnonationalists. The massacre “blurred the usual divisions between the Jat, Mazahabi, urban Khatri and Arora Sikhs and merged them into a single ethnic identity: that of a persecuted Sikh minority.”<sup>49</sup> This is similar to what happened to the divisions between German and “eastern” Jews, which were erased in the face of the Holocaust; and the divisions between Zionists and anti-Zionists, which diminished significantly in reaction to that event.

The above suggests that exogenous factors are an important part of the ethnonationalist narrative. Zionist mobilization in the diaspora was heavily influenced by hostility to the Jewish state; the political activities of the Armenian diaspora (including terrorism) were responses to the betrayal of Armenian hopes for an independent state after World War I and to the denial of the genocide by Republican Turkey; the nationalism of the Sikhs grew in the wake of what they perceived to be international indifference to their political aspirations and betrayals by the great powers. Another exogenous factor is the ethnonationalism of neighboring or competing countries or communities, which functions as a contagion. Punjabi Sikh nationalism was a response to Muslim and Hindu nationalisms. The Armenians Revolutionary Federation (Dashnak), founded in neighboring Georgia in 1890, was strongly influenced by Russian revolutionary intellectuals.

Furthermore, there is a contextual factor: events, often unforeseen, providing opportunity structures that facilitate the politicization of ethnonations. The breakup of the Ottoman Empire helped to advance practical Zionism; the decolonization of India and the creation of a multiethnic and multireligious federal state marked by internal conflict opened up possibilities for the Sikhs; and the collapse of the Soviet Union made possible the creation of an independent Armenia, a

development that, in turn, made communication between the diaspora and the homeland much easier. In other cases, such as those of the Kurds and Tibetans, the geostrategic context has made it impossible for diasporas to promote homeland independence.

The narratives of each of the ethnonations discussed here have been used by them to further their political aspirations. It is difficult to separate the theological, ideological, and historical elements of these narratives. The sacred writings (and/or their subsequent textual interpretations) of all three ethnonations are used not only to buttress claims upon their homeland territories, but also to explain their diaspora conditions. The Old Testament is replete with references to exile as the consequence of sins committed by the community. As for the Armenians, “there is no single Armenian text that testifies to an early understanding of diaspora as divine punishment. But there is a strong tradition, certainly established by the 11<sup>th</sup> century, when diasporization began in earnest, that show that Armenians had a general tendency to attribute their miseries to God as punishments for their sins. Lamentations penned on the occasion of major massacres after cities fell to the Seljuk Turks . . . attest to that.”<sup>50</sup> It is curious that the Armenians have used the term *gaghut*, from the Hebrew *galut*, to refer to their exile.<sup>51</sup> The Jewish case is unique, however in the sense that, unlike the Armenian and the other diasporas dealt with here, there is a theological justification for the diaspora condition embraced by *outsiders*, i.e., eternal wandering as punishment for deicide. Secular Jews, like secular Armenians, Jews, and Sikhs, have preferred to use a “post-colonialist” narrative.

In the promotion of the fortunes of the homeland, its sacred character is often conjured up. It is doubtful whether all diaspora leaders actually believe in that sacredness, but in all cases it is stressed for mobilization purposes. The impetus for a territorially focused politicization came primarily from the diaspora—an illustration of the diffusion effect of ideologies dominant in the

host countries; but there has been disagreement about the precise location and boundaries of the original homeland. Still, there is agreement about the location of the “holy places.”

Whereas in the homeland, the territorial factor has become paramount once independent statehood was achieved or regained, in the diaspora, the existence or restoration of the homeland has continued to be associated with religion. This has been true in particular of the politically mobilized elements of the diaspora.

The territorial views of the diaspora have often been more religiously inspired, less realistic, and more “maximalist” than that of their coethnics, including the builders and leaders of the “ethnonation,” in the homeland itself. Exaggerated territorial claims are often based on the past presence in the area in question. For the Jews, the kingdom of Solomon represents the greatest geographical extent of national power; and although this was invoked in the past by Zionist revisionists,<sup>52</sup> this is not claimed even by the so-called “Greater Israel” advocates. Historical Armenia at its height extended into what is now Turkey, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Iran (and under Tigranes the Great [ca. 70 B.C.] even into Syria); the territory inhabited by the Sikhs once extended into West Pakistan, Kashmir, and the Indian province of Haryana.<sup>53</sup>

### **Changing Relationships**

The disconnection of the homeland from the diaspora implies a selective distancing of the latter from the former, signaling a growing divergence of interests. Members of a diaspora community may feel superior to the homeland because they may have greater economic and professional opportunities than are available in it. Some diaspora Jews argue that Judaism is freer and more pluralistic in the (North American and Western European) hostlands than in Israel. Others, in particular anti Zionist Jews who are hostile to that country, argue that it is less cultured and/or

that it is more hostile to religious practice than are the diaspora communities.<sup>54</sup> Neither this argument, nor the analogous assertion made by some that Canada is “more Punjabi than the Punjab,”<sup>55</sup> is to be taken seriously; but an ethnic community may have more freedom to mobilize in the diaspora than in the homeland, especially if there is greater political freedom in the former than in the latter. This is attested by Armenian political parties in Europe and the Middle East.<sup>56</sup> During the Cold War, the Catholicosate in the diaspora, the religio-administrative center based in Antelias, Lebanon, was much freer to voice its opposition to Communism than the compromised Church of the Armenian Soviet Republic; and it played an important role in presenting the Armenian cause in international circles. The promotion of Jewish settlement in Palestine and the establishment of a Jewish state were the task primarily of organizations in the diaspora. Some observers have argued that the claim for an independent Khalistan has in recent years been promoted more insistently in the diaspora than in Punjab itself.<sup>57</sup>

The influence of diaspora religion on state-building is not necessarily the same in all instances. In the Jewish case, for example, the evidence is ambiguous. On the one hand, Judaism, as ethnified and secularized, has contributed to a concrete homeland consciousness. But Judaism as a de-ethnified religion with universalistic pretensions has been relatively detached from Zionism. Finally, ultra-Orthodox Judaism, whether in its “fundamentalist” or ethnic guise, has been opposed to a physical return to the homeland and, *a fortiori*, to state-building, arguing that such a position preempts the eschatological task of the messiah.

The above indicates that the territorial aspect of diaspora is not without problems. More specifically, there is a discordance of views between the diaspora and the homeland regarding religion and territory, which is related to the distinction between *people* (community) and *nation* (a more political concept), the former applying more comfortably to the diaspora, and the latter

generally associated with statehood. To illustrate: there are three “narratives” of the Sikh community: as a nation, in terms of ancestry, memories, culture, homeland, and solidarity;<sup>58</sup> as a diaspora; and as followers of a world religion.<sup>59</sup> The Sikh idea of a “community of the pure” is comparable to the Jewish notion of “a nation of priests and a holy people.” The Sikh *panth* (community of believers) is transpolitical, whereas the *qaum* (nation) may be transreligious.<sup>60</sup> This is analogous to the Hebrew distinction between *‘edah* (religious community), *‘am* (the [Jewish] people collectively); and *le’um* (nation), the latter having a more clearly political connotation; and the Armenian *azg* (nation) vs. *zhohovourt* (people).<sup>61</sup> This is apart from ordinary Israeli “citizenship” (*ezrahut*), which is extended not only to Jews, but to Christians, Muslims, and Druze as well and is based on *jus soli* or naturalization.

Religion extends beyond ethnicity and does not always substitute for it, nor vice versa. Many, if not most, Jews in the diaspora are secular and define themselves increasingly in an ethnic fashion. There are non-Sikh Punjabis in the homeland, but it is a moot question whether there are non religious Sikhs in the diaspora in the same sense that there are “dejudaized” Jews.

The relationship between ethnicity and religion is even more complicated in the case of Armenians. Around 90 percent of the Armenians in the diaspora are nominally members of the Apostolic church; but within that church there are two Catholicosates—that of All Armenians in Etchmiadzin, Armenia and that of Cilicia, centered in Antelias, Lebanon. Until the breakup of the Soviet Union, the latter was frequently able to play a more prominent political role than the latter. Until Armenians got a state of their own, the Apostolic church was a “surrogate state,” and it was focus of their collective self-image. Church attendance of Armenians today is higher in the diaspora than in Armenia itself, but it has slackened—and is often limited to holiday celebrations and rites of passage. As Charles Aznavour, a prominent Frenchman of Armenian origin, put it,

“our religion is Armenianship.”<sup>62</sup> The Armenian republic provides a vicarious secular identity, so that religion is less needed by the diaspora. Indeed, interest in the homeland territory has been eclipsing the church as a glue of collective diaspora identity. And as in the case of diaspora Jews, who have mobilized for economic and diplomatic support for Israel, so in the case of the Armenian diaspora, where organizational life has focused on the homeland.<sup>63</sup>

In the diaspora, religious practices have undergone changes, often under the influence of practices of society and of dominant religions in host countries—among Jews, the growth of Reform, a German and subsequently American adaptation of Judaism, resulting in a sort of Protestantism without the cross; and among Armenians, sermons in the hostland language, and, though fiercely contested, increasingly in prayers. Among Sikhs in diaspora gurdwaras (especially in Canada and the United States) there has been a selective adaptation to Christian practice.<sup>64</sup> Religion remains the principal identity marker of the Sikhs; one scholar, however, when referring to the Sikh diaspora, speaks of “interethnic solidarity” and the support by overseas Sikhs of their *coethnics*—rather than their *coreligionists*—in the Punjab.<sup>65</sup>

The watering down of religious observance in the diaspora—whether as a consequence of secularization or the replacement of one’s ethnic religion by another—inevitably speeds up the de-ethnicization process and the weakening of ties with the diaspora. For most Armenians, conversion to another Christianity is the beginning of assimilation.”<sup>66</sup> Similarly, the primacy of the ethnic marker in United States and France will in the long run be insufficient for preserving Jewish identity. Communities in the homeland, however, can more easily afford this watering down, because the “thickness” of their cultures, whose original matrix is religious, is such as to preserve the Apostolic, Jewish, and Sikh identities respectively in Armenia, Israel, and the Punjab. In the case of the Sikhs, ethnocultural identity can probably be preserved much longer, in

part because the wearing of the turban as an ethnosymbol makes the feeling of “otherness” particularly pronounced. The ethnic identity of diaspora Jews is likely to linger because of widespread anti-Semitism, once theologically inspired and disseminated by the political Right, but now largely ideological, and increasingly associated with the political Left.

In the face of secularization, ethnically defined identity, expressed in a “hyphenated status,” is increasingly taking the place of religion among Jews and Armenians. But such identity is flimsy because it is insufficiently informed by cultural content, such as language or knowledge of ethnonational history. Religion-based identity, however, has its own problems. In the case of the Armenians in the American diaspora, for example, the Apostolic church is not very dynamic; its leadership has not been able to connect well with parishioners; there is no theology of exile; and the church has been marked by a lack of textual reinterpretation, an avoidance of a clear position on social issues, and an increasing use of English in liturgy. An ethnically flavored approach to religion is periodically replenished by immigrants, but their sources are drying up. Nevertheless, in the face of the growing secularization of both diaspora and homeland and the fact that each of these is pulling in opposite directions, religion remains the only effective connecting link. In the words of Tölölyan, “the Church remains the domain in which all other non-religious Armenian conflicts finally find expression.”<sup>67</sup> This, however, does not mean the theological aspects of the religion but rather the use of religious symbols, that is, a selective orthopraxy rather than orthodoxy.

Much of the ambivalent relationship between religion and ethnicity that obtains in the diaspora is replicated in the homeland, due to the “mixed” and pluralistic character of its population. Although the majority religion has a dominant status in the homeland, its position is weaker than it might be in view of internal divisions. In Israel, these divisions are reflected not



only in the existence of different religious streams, but also by the existence of separate chief rabbis for Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews. In Armenia, the Apostolic church, and specifically that of Echmiadzin, enjoys special legitimacy, but many members of the hierarchy were politically socialized under the Communist regime; moreover, there are also secular nationalist Armenians, the consequence of forced religious or ideological conversions aimed at weakening *national* identity.

Even among Sikhs, a secularizing “ethnification” has taken place. True, in the diaspora, clean-shaven Sikhs are in the minority, and Sikh life still strongly revolves around religion. The Punjab, too, continues to be strongly marked by Sikh religion and culture, but that region also contains many Hindu and Muslim inhabitants. That explains why there is a growing tendency among Sikh politicians and intellectuals to speak of a territorially-based Punjabi identity that includes all residents of the area, that is defined by language, and in which non-religious minorities share equally in the destiny of the province (and, it is hoped, a future independent state). This was the view especially of the Akalis, who tended to define Punjabi identity in *national* rather than religious terms; but even they paid lip service to the Sikh religion for purposes of political mobilization.<sup>68</sup>

This heterogeneity explains the development of homeland cultures going beyond the Apostolic, Jewish, and Sikh religions respectively. The exigencies of state building and modernization have been such as to make it more necessary than before to focus on the task of creating and mobilizing common collective identities in increasingly “civic” and secular nations.

For the diaspora, modernization has produced a different set of challenges. The common argument that the more modern a hostland, the greater the pressure for ethnic groups to give up their identities, has a certain intuitive validity. But this argument must be reexamined. Diaspora

ethno-religious communities are just as likely to survive in modern hostlands as in traditional ones, if not more so, because they constitute one of the few remaining escapes from functionally oriented societies and one of the few substitutes for the extended family or *Gemeinschaft*.

The ethno-religious orientation in the homeland, however, becomes much less important. Once statehood is achieved, other commonalities assume primacy, such as patriotism, political values, and the rights and duties of citizenship. The responsibility of maintaining political unity results in a process that diasporas can avoid more easily: economic growth, modernization, keeping domestic peace, defending state borders, and acquiring international legitimacy. In this process, the territorial dimension becomes dominant, and national identity becomes increasingly secular and transreligious. Members of the political community are Israelis more than Jews,<sup>69</sup> and Armenians more than members of the Apostolic church.<sup>70</sup>

In the diaspora, too, the secularization trend is such that religion alone is not enough to keep alive the ethnonational consciousness of minority communities. Nor is language, due to the fact that the languages of the diaspora hostlands have crowded out the homeland languages. There is a question about one ethnosymbol that has played an important role in the homeland and the diaspora, namely, historical memory. Both Israel and Armenia have institutionalized the commemoration of the genocides of their respective peoples—in the form of remembrance days, eternal flames, and documentary collections. At the same time, homeland governments are often too preoccupied with state-building to spend much time evoking unpleasant memories. In the interest of realpolitik, the Armenian government spends less time berating the Turks for their past misdeeds than it does dealing with more immediate challenges, such as relations with neighboring countries. Similarly, the Israeli government has been less uneasy cultivating good relations with Germany than have Jewish communities in the diaspora. In the diaspora, in

contrast, the memory of the past, and especially of genocides, continues to fulfill an important role in the maintenance of collective identity. But there, too, historical memory tends to fade, especially in hostlands whose culture is basically ahistorical (as, for example, the United States).

Nevertheless, the two communities cannot easily separate from each other. As was pointed out above, there is a reciprocal need—of the homeland for financial and diplomatic support; and of the diaspora for infusions of culture and people. There is a symbiotic relationship between homeland and diaspora: during the nation-building process, homeland leaders feed on the diaspora religion; thereafter, the diaspora nourishes its identity on the secular achievements and needs of the homeland. Equally important, diaspora communities are held accountable by hostland and international opinion for the perceived misdeeds of the homeland. Thus diaspora Jews are stand-ins for Israelis, and anti-Israel attitudes are quickly translated into anti-Semitism.

The relationship between homeland, or ancestral, nations and diasporas will remain a matter of interest in the foreseeable future, because the latter are still growing as individuals continue to leave the homeland for economic, political, and security reasons. Due to the growing permeability of international frontiers and improvements in global communication, it is now easier than ever for diasporas to be connected and identified with their homelands. This dual orientation has provoked a debate about “double loyalty,” a phenomenon that, in turn, calls into question not only Gellner’s notion of nationalism, according to which culture and nation are congruent and leave ethnoreligious communities no options between assimilation and exclusion,<sup>71</sup> but also traditional notions of national sovereignty and citizenship. This debate is not confined to diasporas; it applies equally to the multiple loyalties of officials of multinational corporations. Unfortunately, while communication between diasporas and homelands has

become easier in the technical sense, it has become more difficult in the cultural sense because the identity markers between the two communities are becoming increasingly differentiated.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Anthony D. Smith, “Nations and History,” in Montserrat Guibernau, ed., *Understanding Nationalism* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001), p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Darshan Singh Tatla, *The Sikh Diaspora: The Search for Statehood* (London: UCL Press, 1999), p. 201. Compare this to the preference for the self-designation of “African-American” by American blacks, a hyphenated ethnicity analogous to “Italian-American” or “Irish-American.”

<sup>3</sup> Taline Ter Minassian, “Erevan, Ville Promise,” *Diasporas* 1 (2<sup>nd</sup> trimester 2002), pp. 71-81.

<sup>4</sup> It is a matter of debate whether Sikhs can set aside their appearance—whether the traditional turban can simply be dispensed with. Yet diaspora Sikhs are increasingly losing their distinctiveness, leaving only the most militant Sikhs behind.

<sup>5</sup> The term “state-nation” is a translation of *Staatsvolk*, used by Marx, Hegel, and other (mostly German) writers to refer to a collectivity that, unlike a mere *Volksgemeinschaft* (i.e., ethnic community) is sufficiently “evolved” to “reach their destination,” i.e., to maintain a state. See Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 48.

<sup>6</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p. 15.

<sup>7</sup> John Breuilly, “Approaches to nationalism,” in Gopal Balakrishnan, ed., *Mapping the Nation*. (London and New York: Verso, 1996, p. 150.

<sup>8</sup> See Brian Walker, “Social Movements as Nationalisms” in *Rethinking Nationalism*, edited by Jocelyn Couture, Kai Nielsen and Michel Seymour (Calgary, Alberta: University of Calgary Press, 1998), p. 541.

<sup>9</sup> During the Soviet and Nazi periods, exiled Russian and German intellectuals argued that they were better custodians of the authentic culture of their respective homelands than those who stayed behind. A similar argument can be made in the case of Tibetan exile culture today.

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.panthkalsa.org/panth/press\\_khalistan.html](http://www.panthkalsa.org/panth/press_khalistan.html)

<sup>11</sup> Martine Hovanessian, “La diaspora arménienne et l’idée nationale,” in *Les diasporas* (Cahiers d’études sur la Méditerranée orientale et le monde Turko-iranien, no. 30, November-December 2000), p. 93.

- <sup>12</sup> Yossi Beilin, *His Brother's Keeper: Israel and Diaspora Jewry in the Twenty-First Century*. (New York: Schocken, 2000), p. 59; and World Jewish Congress, Economic and Social Commission, *Issues Facing World Jewry*, ed. Louis J. Walinsky (Washington, D.C.: Hershel Shanks, 1981), pp. 68-69.
- <sup>13</sup> Hovanessian, pp. 87, 103.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102. These organizations were not entirely new; between 1925 and 1939 there already existed a philanthropic organization, the *Hayastani Oknoutioun Komité* (HOK), which had a branch in Armenia.
- <sup>15</sup> See William Safran, "Language and Nation-Building in Israel: Hebrew and its Rivals," *Nations and Nationalism*, forthcoming 11:1 (spring 2005).
- <sup>16</sup> Brian Axel, *The Nation's Tortured Body: Violence, Representation, and the Formation of a Sikh Diaspora* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2001), p. 199.
- <sup>17</sup> Cited in Benedict Anderson, "Long-Distance Nationalism: World Capitalism and the Rise of Identity Politics," Working Paper No. 5.1, presented at conference on Nation, National Identity, Nationalism, Washington, D.C. September 10-12, 1992, p. 4.
- <sup>18</sup> See Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion, and Nationalism* (Cambridge University Press 1997).
- <sup>19</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism* (London & New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 227.
- <sup>20</sup> Cited by Anthony W. Marx, in *Faith in Nation: Exclusionary Origins of Nationalism* (Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 25.
- <sup>21</sup> "Moses was not a man inspired by God in order to fulfill and reaffirm His covenant with Israel; he was really a national leader rising against colonial oppression. Muhammad may have been the seal of the prophets, but even more important, he was the founder of the Arab nation." Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), p. 70. As Gellner (*Nations and Nationalism*, 107) remarked, "Religion [was] used by Zionists for political ends. In the diaspora, the Jewish religion referred to Jerusalem; once back in Jerusalem, semi-secular Zionism for a time used the dated socialist populist clichés of nineteenth century Europe."
- <sup>22</sup> Note that the Panthéon, the "temple" of the laic republic, is topped by a cross.
- <sup>23</sup> In Turkey, Iraq, and Iran, the state has made the teaching of the Armenian language virtually impossible by imposing a state curriculum on Armenian parochial schools funded entirely by the community. But because these are essentially Muslim societies and inheritors of some version of the millet system and the *ahlu ul-kitab* ("people of the book") syndrome, they permit several hours of teaching of religion. During those precious hours a mélange of religion, history, and, to a lesser extent, language is taught.
- <sup>24</sup> Even the Yiddish of the Bundists, who were socialist, anti-Zionist, and anti-religious, was impregnated with Biblical expressions, and "secular" shtetl culture was permeated with allusions to the Holy Land.
- <sup>25</sup> Amardeep Singh, "Sovereign Cybernation of Sikh Diaspora," *Samar Magazine* 12, Fall-Winter 1999.
- <sup>26</sup> Term employed by John Armstrong and cited by Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p. 15 and *passim*.

- <sup>27</sup> Ishtiaq Ahmed, "Religious Nationalism and Sikhism," in David Westerlund, ed., *Questioning the Secular State* (London: Hurst, 1996), p. 263. See also Axel, *The Nation's Tortured Body*, p. 182 and "Sikhism, Punjab," <http://www.cet.edu/earthinfo/sasia/punjab/Pjtopic5.html>. See also.
- <sup>28</sup> Tatla, pp. 223, 227.
- <sup>29</sup> <http://www.earchsikhism.com/issues/khalistan.htm>; and Tatla, *The Sikh Diaspora*, pp. 195-196.
- <sup>30</sup> Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 64.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.
- <sup>32</sup> See Will Herberg's notions concerning the "American religion" in his *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An essay in American religious sociology* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1960).
- <sup>33</sup> For example, Ezekiel 20:33-38, 40, 42; see also Martin Sicker, *Judaism, Nationalism, and the Land of Israel*. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), pp. 30-37.
- <sup>34</sup> Reform Jews, in an attempt to "detransferize" Judaism, eliminated references to the ingathering of exiles and to Temple sacrifices, and even the general use of Hebrew in prayers, but in the past generation may Reform congregations have returned toward these and other "Zion-centered" practices.
- <sup>35</sup> Levon Abrahamian and Nancy Sweeney, eds., *Armenian Folk Arts, Culture, and Identity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001). See especially the chapters by Hamlet Petrosian, "The Temple," "The Sacred Mountain," and the "Khachkar or Cross-Star."
- <sup>36</sup> Gaïdz Minassian, *Guerre et terrorisme arméniens* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2002), p. 27. Note, however, that this practice is localized. "Van" people, and those from the region of Vasburakan or Vaskpuragan around it, have exceptionally strong local commitments and memories. (Khachig Tölölyan, personal communication).
- <sup>37</sup> Khushvan Singh, vol. 2, p. 294.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>39</sup> Cited by U.S. Representative Philip M. Crane...*Congressional Record*, June 7, 1995, p. E1184.
- <sup>40</sup> See Giorgio Shani, "Beyond Khalistan? The Sikh Diaspora and the International Order," paper presented at the annual convention of the International Studies Association, New Orleans, 27 March 2002.
- <sup>41</sup> Tatla, *The Sikh Diaspora*, p. 195f.
- <sup>42</sup> This is true of Yiddish, a diaspora language, as well; but the widespread use of that language as a rival to the "Zionist" Hebrew, it kept all of its Hebrew vocabulary and spelling (except for Soviet Yiddish, which was emptied of its religious content and de-Zionized by the phoneticization of Hebrew words. See William Safran, "Language, Ideology, and State-Building," *International Political Science Review* 13:4 (October 1992), 402-403.
- <sup>43</sup> Quoted by Frank Viviano, "Armenia Reborn," *National Geographic*, March 2004, p. 40.
- <sup>44</sup> Taline Ter Minassian, loc. cit., p. 72.

- <sup>45</sup> Susanne Schwalgin, "Why Locality Matters: Diaspora consciousness and sedentariness in the Armenian diaspora in Greece," in Waltraud Kokot, Khachig Tölölyan, and Carolin Alfonso, eds., *Diaspora, Identity and Religion* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 87.
- <sup>46</sup> Specifically, the breaking away from Byzantine doctrine of Christ's dual nature, as expressed at Council of Chalcedon in 451.
- <sup>47</sup> "Two holocausts in the 18<sup>th</sup> century," "WaheGuru Ji Ka Khalsa," <http://desix.5ucom>. For narratives of Sikh glory and displacement, see Axel, *The Nation's Tortured Body*.
- <sup>48</sup> William Safran, "France and her Jews: From 'culte israélite' to 'lobby juif,'" *Tocqueville Review*, 5:1 (spring/summer 1983), 101-135.
- <sup>49</sup> Dipankar Gupta, *The Context of Ethnicity* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 73. See also Tatla, *The Sikh Diaspora*, pp. 196-200, who uses the term "holocaust" as metaphor for the "impact of the critical event" when he discusses the transformation of the attitudes of the Sikhs.
- <sup>50</sup> Personal communication from Khachig Tölölyan, March 2004.
- <sup>51</sup> Khachig Tölölyan, "The Armenian Diaspora," forthcoming in *Encyclopedia of Diaspora*, vol. 1.3, to be published by Kluwer.
- <sup>52</sup> A slogan of the Revisionist Zionists before the establishment of Israel was "The Jordan has two banks; both of them are ours."
- <sup>53</sup> See maps in Axel, pp. 101-102.
- <sup>54</sup> See Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997).
- <sup>55</sup> See Gurmukh Singh, *The Global Indian: The Rise of Sikhs Abroad* (New Delhi: Rupa, 2003).
- <sup>56</sup> Soviet Armenia had only the Communist party, while the diaspora had the ARF or Dashnaks, the bourgeois liberal ADL, and the socialist H'nchaks. See Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963); Minassian, *Guerre et terrorisme arméniens*; and M. Hovanessian, "La diaspora arménienne," p. 90.
- <sup>57</sup> <http://www.fact-index.com/k/kh/khalistan.html> In fact, The very idea of Khalistan was first put forth by Sikhs in the North American and British diasporas. Ahmed, "Religious Nationalism and Sikhism," pp. 277-278.
- <sup>58</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and memories of the nation* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 13.
- <sup>59</sup> Tatla, *The Sikh Diaspora*, p. 11.
- <sup>60</sup> Axel, *The Nation's Tortured Body*, pp. 4-5.
- <sup>61</sup> The concept of "Israel" itself has multiple connotations to both the homeland and the diaspora. It refers variously to the land, the state, and to the Jewish people everywhere and its common destiny. See Jonathan Sacks, *One People?* (London & Washington: Littman Library of Jewish Civilisation, 1993), p. 8.
- <sup>62</sup> Paper read at the First Educational Seminar of AGBU Schools, May 1993. <http://gardentowerhotel.com/MBWritings-SemEng93.DOC>.
- <sup>63</sup> Cf. Minassian, *Guerre et Terrorismes Arméniens*.
- <sup>64</sup> Tatla, *The Sikh Diaspora*, pp. 76-78.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Khachig Tölölyan, personal communication, March 2004.

<sup>67</sup> Khachig Tölölyan, "The Role of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the Diaspora," *Armenian Review* 41:1 (1988), 55-68.

<sup>68</sup> Tatla, *The Sikh Diaspora*, pp. 22-27.

<sup>69</sup> Note, however, that Christian missionary activity is frowned upon even by secular Israeli Jews.

<sup>70</sup> Since 1991 and the collapse of the Soviet Union, about 4-5% of Armenia's population has converted in response to financial and spiritual incentives brought in by Pentecostal and Adventist evangelizers and Jehovah's Witnesses.

<sup>71</sup> Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*.