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THE ROLE OF THE ARMENIAN-AMERICAN LOBBY IN ADDRESSING THE
STRATEGIC CHALLENGES OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- AAA – Armenian Assembly of America
- ACIA – American Committee for the Independence of Armenia
- ADL – Armenian Democratic Liberal Party
- AGBU – Armenian General Benevolence Union
- ANCA – Armenian National Committee of America
- ANI – Armenian National Institute
- ARAMAC – Armenia-American Action Committee
- ARF – Armenian Revolutionary Federation
- FMF – Foreign Military Financing
- H. Res. 106 – House Resolution
- IMET – International Military Education Training
- TARC – Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Committee
- The Assembly – Armenian Assembly of America
- US – United States

ABSTRACT

The recent decades witness that the ethnic communities of many multinational democratic countries have become influential enough to affect foreign policy decisions concerning their countries of origin. The Armenian-American lobby is one of such ethnic lobbies of the United States. It appears to have established the fundamental factors that condition the success of any lobbying group, be that backing up by larger public, high level of political activity, or coalition building capability. The Armenian lobby plays a significant role in proving why Armenia is important to the United States, taking into consideration that US national interests towards the Caucasus do not suggest that Armenia is the most important state to target in that region.

The purpose of the present study is to discover the role Armenian lobby organizations play in addressing the strategic challenges of the Republic of Armenia. Specifically, the study dwells upon the methodology, that is, the tools and strategies applied by the Armenian-American lobbying groups in achieving their goals.

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Introduction

One of the principal premises of democratic theory is the active and informed participation of citizens in their governance system. This is essential for optimal functioning of the various governmental units as far as it helps establish an accurate picture of public opinion, engage citizens in the planning and implementation of programs, at the same time assisting the public in influencing policies as far as the major objects of impact in most governmental projects are the citizens themselves.

Lobbying organizations are a type of interest groups that play an increasingly important role in various democratic processes, and specifically, in public policy formation. They are essential for ensuring the political mobilization and inner congruence of the community the concerns of which they advocate. Lobbying is first of all a communication channel through which citizens' voice reaches their representatives in the government, and hence, policy makers. The lobbying groups initiate legislation on issues of concern to those in the lobby, by which they increase the representativeness of the government to its constituency – an inherent factor for democracies.

The so-called ethnic lobby is the main focus of the present Policy Internship Paper. The recent decades witness that the ethnic communities of many multinational democratic countries have become influential enough to affect foreign policy decisions concerning their countries of origin. Remarkable from this perspective are the United States. Here, lobbying groups seem to be especially successful in getting their demands onto the Congress's agenda and attaining the outcomes they advocate for. Congress believes that it has to listen to its voters, and U.S. citizens' voice makes a difference. The Armenian-American lobby is one of such ethnic lobbies of the United States. It appears to have established the fundamental factors that condition the success of any lobbying group, be that backing up by larger public, high level of political activity, or well-established internal network. It plays a reciprocal role

by promoting legislators' understanding and awareness of Armenian-American issues on the one hand, and providing voters with up-to-date information about the proceedings in the Congress on Armenian-American issues, on the other. The Armenian lobby plays a significant role in proving why Armenia is important to the United States, taking into consideration that US national interests towards the Caucasus do not suggest that Armenia is the most important state to target in that region.

Thus, the purpose of the present Policy Internship Project is to discover the role Armenian lobby organizations play in addressing the strategic challenges of the Republic of Armenia, on the one hand, and in strengthening the relationships between the U.S. and Armenian governments, on the other. Specifically, the study is aimed at identifying the tools and strategies applied by the Armenian-American lobbying groups in achieving their goals. This is a case study concentrating on one of the major lobbying organizations in the United States – the Armenian Assembly of America (AAA or the Assembly). It is one of the major advocacy organizations of the Armenian-American community the strategies and techniques of which are characteristic of the ethnic lobbies of the United States in general and the Armenian-American lobby in particular.

The research dwells upon the methodology of the Assembly in attaining its main current policy objectives which can be broken down into 1) U.S. government recognition of the Armenian Genocide, 2) U.S. government recognition of Nagorno Karabagh independence, 3) continued U.S. aid to Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh, 4) U.S. military assistance parity to Armenia and Azerbaijan, and finally 5) Turkey's and Azerbaijan's blockades of Armenia. The paper also discusses whether the Assembly cooperates with other ethnic lobbies in the U.S., including Armenian ones, and what is the relationship between lobbying and mass media. Besides, emphasis is put on the challenges that impede the realization of the goals of these groups and on finding ways to fill those gaps.

Hence, here are the research questions the study focuses on:

RQ1: Why the US is considered to have the “favourable environment” for lobbying?

RQ2: What are the conditions for ethnic-group success on foreign policy?

RQ3: What are the tools and strategies applied by the Armenian Assembly of America in achieving its policy objectives?

RQ3(a): How does the Assembly succeed in motivating and getting the community involved in the actions initiated?

RQ3(b): Does the Assembly effectively cooperate with other ethnic lobby groups in the United States?

RQ4: What is the role of the mass media as an inherent tool for the success of lobbying?

RQ5: Are there issues addressed by the Armenian lobby that have global implications as well?

RQ6: Does the Armenian lobby in the US impact the relationships between Armenia and the US?

RQ7: What are the challenges faced by the Assembly in attaining its goals?

All in all, the study of lobbying tools and strategies can contribute to better understanding of the role lobby groups play for the effective functioning of both established and developing democracies. It can help elicit certain recommendations for the lobbying groups of young democracies, in general, and for the Armenian-American lobby, in particular.

METHODOLOGY

The study is based on content analysis. The main sources of observation and analysis are the archive data of the Armenian Assembly of America and the Positions Papers of the Armenian National Committee of Armenia.

Another important source of analysis constitute the interviews conducted with the representatives of the two lobby groups and the vast information provided by the official websites of the corresponding organizations.

Finally, different books and articles from scholarly journals are also used as a basis for analysis.

Chapter One: Interest Groups

It is important to make a general overview about what interest groups are. There are many titles given to interest groups. Sometimes they are also called “pressure groups” or “special interest groups”. When defining interest groups, it is important to note that they are an organization of people united with shared policy goals, who try to get government to respond to their opinions. They exist to persuade public officials to respond to the shared attitudes of their members. Interest groups try to influence public policy wherever those policies are made or can be influenced, at all levels of government, from local to federal (McClenaghan 1988; Lineberry, Edwards, Wattenberg 1991).

This multiplicity of policy arenas makes easier to characterize interest groups in comparison with political parties which are alike made up of people joined together for some political purpose. First of all, despite parties, who fight election battles, interest groups do not put up candidates for public office; they enter the political process seeking to impact government policy or legislation. Hence, a second difference between parties and interest groups: political parties are chiefly interested in winning elections and controlling government. Interest groups are primarily concerned with controlling or influencing government policies (McClenaghan 1988; Lineberry et al. 1991).

Another key difference between political parties and interest groups is that interest groups are often policy specialists, interested in questions directly affecting the interests of their members, whereas parties are “policy generalists”, concerned with the whole range of public affairs (Lineberry et al 1991, 338; McClenaghan 1988). Interest groups do not face the constraint imposed by trying to appeal to everyone (Lineberry 1991).

Practical politicians and scholars alike generally have concurred that interest groups are natural phenomena in a democratic regime – that, individuals will band together to protect their interests (Cigler and Loomis 1995). Danielian (1922) in her article underlines that these

institutions are fundamental parts of democracies, and democratic theory postulates that all organized interest groups should have equal opportunity to participate in politics.

Interest groups perform several valuable functions in democracies. First, they help to stir up public interest in and discussion of public affairs, by developing and pushing policies they favour and opposing those they see as threats to their interests. Second, these groups represent their members on the basis of shared attitudes rather than on the basis of geography, thus reflecting what their members think as opposed to where they happen to live. Third, interest groups often give useful, specialized, and detailed information to government. These data can be important to the making of public policy and often cannot be obtained from any other source. This process is “a two-way street”, however (McClenaghan 1988, 276). Interest groups often get information from public agencies and pass it along to their members. Fourth, these groups add another element to the check-and-balance features of the political process. On the one hand, groups very often oppose each other and restore balance to the system. On the other hand, many interest groups keep fairly close track of public officials and help to make sure that those officials carry out their tasks in a responsible fashion (McClenaghan 1988).

All in all, it can be summed up, that interest groups are an essential dimension of any democracy. Interest groups play an important role in political processes. They are involved in public policy making and are aimed at influencing government decision making. Most importantly, they are means by which citizens can participate in politics, and they communicate their members’ opinions to those in government. Thus, interest groups, as public opinion reflectors, enable people with shared attitudes to unite and influence policy-making processes.

Ethnic Lobby Groups in the US

There are many types of interest groups, especially in the United States, where most people are engaged in many political associations, as interest groups, through which they try to influence the actions of their government. The interest-group type that is of concern to this paper are ethnic lobby groups, organized on the basis of ethnic identification, which lobby the government of their citizenship for policies favourable to their countries of origin.

Diasporas, indeed, can be active actors, influencing the foreign policies of their hostlands. Diasporas, especially those in liberal-democratic societies, often organize as interest groups in order to influence the foreign policy of their hostland vis-a-vis their homelands. This phenomenon is best exemplified in the United States where we encounter a number of ethnic groups engaged in intense lobbying activities. So, let's see which are the two most prominent theories on ethnic lobbying, and discuss why U.S. is argued to have the "favourable environment" for lobbying per se.

There are two broad camps in the literature that focuses on the role of ethnic groups in influencing foreign policy and determining the national interest. One sees that ethnic lobbies are highly influential and a threat to US foreign policy and national interest; the other camp challenges this view and sees ethnic lobbies as moderately influential but largely good, promoting American interests abroad (Gregg 2002).

Representatives of the first camp, Samuel Huntington and Tony Smith, warn against the narrow policy agenda of diasporas that "promote the interests of people and entities outside the United States," and undermine the nation's "common good" (Shain and Barth 2003, 454). According to them, the impact of ethnic lobbies is considerable on the US foreign policy decision making, moreover, carrying rather negative than positive effect on the national interest (Gregg 2002).

The second camp, represented by Yossi Shain and Michael Clough, argue for the usefulness of ethnic lobbies in promoting US values, such as spreading democracy, back in the homeland. On the other hand, the inclusion of ethnic groups in foreign policy making is a sign of opening foreign policy making up to a wider body of population, thus fulfilling the democratic postulate of popular participation in the “nation’s destiny” (Gregg 2002, 4). To the proponents of this theory, ethnic lobbies are part of American pluralism or even “counterweights to traditional political elites”, whose involvement should be only welcomed (Shain and Barth 2003, 454).

The theories deliberated above leave us with two questions to answer: whether the impact of ethnic lobbies is considerable or small, and whether the impact, if there, is “good” or “bad” for the national interest.

The latter is hard to measure as it is difficult to say with certainty what domestic and international factors cause foreign policy decisions (Gregg 2002). We can only assert that no one group is likely to become too dominant or overrepresented because of the counterbalance brought by the competing groups on the subject matter.

What is more important to the purposes of this paper, is the first question concerned with the extent of ethnic-group impact on foreign policy making. To answer it, we are going to delve into a case study discussing the organization of the Armenian Assembly of America, one of the major ethnic lobbies in the US, the agendas it sets and strategies it employs. But before passing to it, let’s see why US is considered to have the “favourable environment” for ethnic-group lobbying, as said above, and which are the success factors for ethnic lobbying in general.

U.S. Factor

Ethnicity may be an influential element in contemporary American foreign politics. There are many powerful ethnic interest groups, such as Jewish, Greek, Armenian etc., which are increasingly trying to exert influence on the foreign policies dealing with their country of origin (Huseynov 2003).

Many scholars (Huntington, Cigler, Loomis) tend to emphasize the multiculturalism within the American population as an explanation for how ethnic lobbies gain influence in Washington. However, as Smith argues, it is not only the ethnic composition of the US but also factors as the structure of its political system, party organization, and wider state-society relations, that explain the role ethnic actors play in foreign policy formulation (Huseynov 2003).

The political system in the U.S. is largely decentralized based on the principle of 'checks and balances' as defined by the U.S. founding fathers. This democratic principle enshrined in the U.S. Constitution prevents separate branches of government from becoming too powerful by means of endowing each of them with powers to oversee the actions of the other. How this system facilitates the effectiveness of ethnic interest groups is best illustrated by Watanabe:

"While unquestionably lodging the political authority for the governance of foreign affairs in the president and Congress, acting either apart or together, the actual demarcation of many responsibilities is left unclear. ...In the effort to resolve imprecision and irregularity in the division of foreign affairs powers, the courts, especially the Supreme Court, have been noticeably silent. ...The courts' reluctance to act has thrown these disputes into political rather than judicial arena. In this context, the activities of organized interests, such as ethnic groups...may be as decisive in defining the distribution of foreign policymaking responsibilities as would be a large body of court judgements" (as cited in Huseynov 2003).

It follows that, while the president and the Congress do not have clear-cut responsibilities with regards to foreign policy making, and thus, form the source of untidiness in policy making process, interest groups' lobbying in the Congress has the chance of not being void of results.

The following factor, as mentioned above, is the political party organization. As Smith indicates, "because the Congress and the President can be of the same mind or the same party, it is conceivable that the institutional struggle built into politics by the Constitution might not occur and thus, the government would enjoy relative autonomy in the face of social pressures" (as cited in Huseynov 2003). Therefore, the party system has been built, in which the public officials are not named by the party but nominated through primaries, whose results are decided by local electorates (Huseynov 2003).

This specific party organization makes public officials responsive to their constituents as to their party leadership, opening the opportunity for interests even with small social base to find their way onto legislation.

It is these two factors of political and party organization that make the U.S. be characterized as a typical "weak state" with "the extensive network of group representation" (Huseynov 2003).

As for the state-society relationships, the U.S. is a society-dominated domestic structure as proof of which are the arguments brought above. Public opinion and the societal groups are important actors in foreign policy formulation. And even though elitists would stipulate for elite manipulation of public opinion, and hence, elite representation in the Congress, interest groups may exert similar influence, moreover, on elites as well as on public opinion, notwithstanding the cases when interest groups and elites both use each other's support and resources for their own, and at the same time, mutual benefits (Huseynov 2003).

The American public knows it has the right to put an issue on the agenda, and Congress believes it has to listen to its voters. So, as far as Congress is impacted by its public's opinion and there are forces who affect the public opinion, interest groups will be within these forces influencing and even shaping that opinion, thus making their voice heard.

All in all, the US indeed creates the opportunities for ethnic and other interest groups' lobbying. However, to conclude that being "located" in the US itself already guarantees the success of the group will be erroneous. The US political and party systems along with the society-dominated structure of relationships delineate the outer vehicle for lobbying activities, admitting the possibility of influence. But the specific success of a particular group in influencing American politics per se is tangible across another continuum composed of a number of factors.

Success Factors for Ethnic Lobby Groups

Mohammed E. Ahrari suggests four conditions designated for ethnic group success on foreign policy. First, the group must press for a policy in line with American strategic interests. Second, the group must be assimilated into American society, yet retain enough identification with the old country so that its foreign policy issue motivates people to take some political action. Groups that stand outside the mainstream of American life cannot mobilize for political action. Yet something more is required, the third condition: a high level of political activity. Fourth, groups should be politically unified (Uslaner 1995)

To Ahrari's list Uslaner adds several additional criteria. The group's policies should be backed by the larger public. The group must be sufficiently numerous to wield political influence. Finally, the group must be seen as pursuing a legitimate interest. "Speaking on

behalf of one's ethnic group is acceptable as long as others do not think you have divided the loyalties or somehow will profit from your lobbying efforts" (Uslaner 1995, 374)¹.

A thorough and comprehensive discussion of ethnic group success is given by Haney and Vanderbush in "The Role of Ethnic Interest Groups in US Foreign Policy".

The first proposition is that a powerful ethnic interest group should possess organizational strength. This refers collectively to organizational unity, a professional lobbying apparatus that provides useful information, and political activism. Membership unity, placement, and voter participation are important sources of organizational strength because of the electoral implications of these factors. A group will be more influential to the extent that it enjoys a large and unified base of politically active members who vote in a concentrated bloc (Haney and Vanderbush 1999).

The ethnic lobby organization may not have a separate organized community, say, in Detroit but important here is the link between the organization and the people of that nationality living in Detroit. When an action is to be taken, organizational strength appears to be the ability to gather those people and involve them in the lobbying process. And this depends on how organized is the internal network of the lobbying group, its professionalism, and the extent to which it can mobilize popular participation.

Beyond these internal and membership factors, of no less importance are the salience and resonance of the message a group promotes. As far as the government is not the only target of lobbying; so too is the broader public, ethnic interest groups will be more successful if their message has salience and resonance with the broader public (Haney and Vanderbush 1999).

¹ From this perspective, lobbying by churches and ethnic groups is considered quite legitimate as far as, in contrast to economic interests, these groups do not "expect to gain something from lobbying for themselves" (Cigler 1995, p.373).

Policy makers want to follow their constituents; that is why involvement of the public at large is of utmost importance. For that, it is essential to show how deeply the lobby group cares for the issue in question. On the other hand, the ethnic lobby group has also to show the relevance of the issue not only to itself but to the broader public, the relevance of the issue to the latter's history and to its future.

Another argument about the roots of ethnic interest group success follows from the previous one and focuses on the permeability of and access to the government. The suggestion here is that to be successful these groups must be able "to find the door", whether it is open or not. Groups are more formidable to the extent that they are politically proximate to the "locus of decision-making". However, ethnic interest groups are more likely to be successful when the policy in question requires a congressional role since it is usually more "porous" than the executive. "Interest groups are more likely to be influential when congressional involvement is necessary and presidential popularity is low" (Haney and Vanderbush 1999, 345).

A less common though provocative argument is that for interest groups to be successful they must establish mutually supportive relationships between themselves and policymakers; they need to establish "symbiotic relationships" (Haney and Vanderbush 1999, 345). While groups need policymakers to do something for them, policymakers also need the ethnic interest groups. Ethnic interest groups may provide a host of valuable resources to policymakers, including information, votes, and campaign contributions. Policymakers may encourage ethnic interest group activity as a way to receive valuable support and resources and may "aggressively court ethnic groups and encourage their activism" (Haney and Vanderbush 1999, 345).

What seem to be omitted from the list described above are financial resources as another success factor for ethnic lobbying. Arpi Vartanian² believes that though financial resources do not condition success per se, they are inherent for the actions taken by the lobbying group. You need to have the professional staff that will deal with preparation and presentation of information, organization of conferences, demonstrations and other lobbying techniques. Money is needed to bring delegations to the country you lobby for. Activities, after all, need to be financed to take place.

Of no less importance, she adds, is the coalition formation capability, i.e. a lobby's ability to acquire political allies among societal groups outside of its ethnic community. This appears to be a further step in relating the issues of concern to the lobbying group to the interests of those targeted by lobbying.

All in all, the success factors cannot be viewed separately. There is no one of them being more crucial than the rest. Success is a combination of both internal and external factors provided that the message reaches both in the policy-making process as well as the broader public.

The Armenian-American lobby from this perspective seems to have established the fundamental factors that condition the success of any lobbying group, be that backing up by larger public, high level of political activism, or well-established internal network.

² Country Director of the Armenian Assembly of America.

Chapter Two: The Armenian Diaspora and Political Activism in the US

Armenian political advocacy in Diaspora has, through its history, been largely the result of the Diaspora's political party movement and has drawn its strength from individuals and institutions inspired by the Armenian Cause and motivated to act in the service of their homeland, their Diaspora communities, and their national aspirations.

The early Armenian-American community organized itself around political parties, four of which were of particular importance in this regard. These were Hunchakian Revolutionary Party, Dashnaksutiun or Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), Ramgavar or the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL), and the Armenian Progressive League. Each of the parties was shaping religious and social organizations that would reflect their separate ideologies (Gregg 2002).

The political and ideological divisions within the Armenian community widened with the founding of the Republic of Armenia in 1918 and its fall to the Soviets in 1920. The developments created two camps within the Armenian-American community. The first camp consisted of the ARF, which formed the government of the Republic and was exiled with Soviet takeover. Importantly, they adopted an anti-Soviet, anticommunist rhetoric. The opposing camp was formed by the Hunchags, Ramgavars, and the Armenian Progressive League, which aligned against the ARF to support the Soviet take-over of the Republic, even though for different ideological reasons (Gregg 2002).

In addition to these methods of political, social and religious activism, the Armenians formed lobby groups aimed at influencing foreign policy in Washington. The ARF cites the American Committee for the Independence of Armenia (ACIA), formed in 1918, as their first lobby group. Their current lobby organization, the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA), evolved from the ACIA. In 1970s, influential members in the anti-ARF community in the US founded the Armenian Assembly of America (the Assembly) with the hope of

forming “a new Armenian organization in which leaders from various Armenian groups would participate for the benefit of the community as a whole” (Gregg 2002). To date, these two lobby groups continue to function independently of one another.

Thus, the activities of the Armenian lobby in the U.S. are coordinated by several Armenian organizations among which ANCA and the Assembly are the most significant ones. This study will focus mainly on the latter, but as far as ANCA is also a major actor in addressing the strategic challenges of the Republic of Armenia, some basic information will be provided on this organization as well. This would further allow to come to generalizable conclusions.

AAA and ANCA

As already said, ANCA traces its origins back to the American Committee for the Independence of Armenia, the organization that lobbied on behalf of the ARF-governed Republic of Armenia, beginning in 1918. It remained the only one Armenian lobby for more than 50 years (Gregg 2002).

Today, ANCA initiates legislation on issues of concern to the Armenian-American community and participates in the American electoral process at the federal, state and local levels by educating elected officials about Armenian-American issues and providing Armenian-American voters with up-to-date information about the positions of candidates on Armenian-American concerns. Its main goals are “to foster public awareness in support of a free, unified and independent Armenia, to influence and guide U.S. policy on matters of interest to the Armenian-American community, and to represent the collective Armenian

American viewpoint on matters of public policy, while serving a liaison between the community and their elected officials” (www.anca.org).

In 1972, two Armenian-American professors at George Washington University supported by major contributors to the AGBU³ came up with the idea of a new lobby group that would incorporate other already-existing Armenian organizations, would represent and promote Armenian interests and would be dedicated to promoting public understanding and awareness of Armenian issues (www.aaainc.org).

The Assembly’s goals tend to parallel US foreign policy ideals (Gregg 2002). Through research, education and advocacy, the Assembly works to strengthen the U.S.-Armenia and U.S.-Karabakh relationships, promote Armenia’s and Karabakh’s democratic development and economic prosperity and seek universal affirmation of the Armenian Genocide (Annual Report 2005).

Both ANCA and the Assembly place their national headquarters in Washington, DC, and have offices in Yerevan and Stepanakert. They also have regional offices (two for ANCA and one for the Assembly) that appear to be an extension of the Washington DC and Yerevan teams and are engaged with the local communities (www.aaainc.org; www.anca.org).

Policy Objectives

The current policy objectives of ANCA and the Assembly, which are nearly identical, can be broken down into 1) U.S. government recognition of the Armenian Genocide, 2) U.S. government recognition of Nagorno Karabagh independence, 3) continued U.S. aid to

³ Armenian General Benevolence Union

Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh, 4) U.S. military assistance parity to Armenia and Azerbaijan, and finally, 5) Turkey's and Azerbaijan's blockades of Armenia.

Both ANCA and the Assembly name US recognition of the Genocide as one of their primary policy objectives. Since 1982 both lobby groups have fought for the passage of legislation that would officially recognize the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1922 and honour its victims with a Day of Remembrance on April 24th (www.aaainc.org; www.anca.org).

Each year the Resolution has been thwarted, usually with the claim that recognizing the Genocide will strain relations with Turkey and threaten strategic security interests of the US. And although both lobby groups are rigorously campaigning for US recognition of the Genocide, each group employs different strategies and tactics for pressuring the resolution's passage. ANCA employs a "bottom up" strategy towards attaining US recognition of the Armenian Genocide. In addition to lobbying for its official recognition on Capital Hill, ANCA also lobbies at the state and city levels for recognition and the Day of Remembrance. It also works towards international recognition of the Genocide and is more vocal on demands for territory and reparations from Turkey than is the Assembly (Gregg 2002).

The Assembly, in addition to its lobbying efforts among members of Congress, concentrates its efforts on increasing documentation around the Armenian Genocide (Gregg 2002). It has established the Armenian National Institute (ANI) to provide academic backing for its lobbying activities. Now, ANI is a separate body cooperating with many organizations, and is the leading source of comprehensive information on Genocide. Currently, the Assembly works towards the establishment of the Armenian Genocide Museum.

As a result of lobbying efforts of both organizations, to this day, 41 US states have adopted resolutions, proclamations and official statements recognizing the Armenian Genocide and commemorating its victims (AAA Fact Sheet on the Armenian Genocide).

The latest achievement of the Armenian lobby on the issue of Genocide is H. Res. 106, passed by the House Foreign Affairs Committee by a vote of 27 to 21, stating that the U.S. government should officially acknowledge that Turkey committed genocide against the Armenian people early in the 20th century (AAA Fact Sheets on the Armenian Genocide). The resolution calls upon the President “to ensure that the foreign policy of the United States reflects appropriate understanding and sensitivity concerning issues related to human rights, ethnic cleansing, and genocide documented in the United States record relating to the Armenian Genocide, and for other purposes” (H. Res. 106 Document).

On Nagorno Karabakh issue, ANCA is actively pushing for recognition of Karabakh’s right to self-determination: “the United States should formally recognize the independent Republic of Nagorno Karabagh, affirming its right to self-determination within secure borders” (ANCA Position Papers). Again, it lobbies on international as well as on federal and state levels (Gregg 2002).

The Assembly lobbies for the Karabakh cause through other means. The Assembly stresses its commitment to “confidence building measures” between Armenia, Azerbaijan and Karabagh, which would enable all parties “to address the region’s urgent safety and development needs jointly, while also working toward a negotiated settlement” (AAA Issue Briefs). The Assembly’s approach to the Karabakh conflict, therefore, is far less direct than ANCA’s, adopting a cooperative and conciliatory tone towards the issue (Gregg 2002).

ANCA and the Assembly are similar in their strategies for securing US financial and technical aid to Nagorno Karabagh as well as to the Republic of Armenia. They give testimonies before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations and make every effort to get bipartisan support. Both organizations claim credit for securing the aid to Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh, which by the end of 2005, was approved by Congress to be \$75 million in assistance to Armenia and \$3 million in humanitarian aid to Nagorno

Karabagh. For fiscal year 2008, the Assembly continues to urge the Congress to maintain US assistance to Armenia and Karabagh at the 2005 level, while ANCA claims a hard earmark of at least \$90 million for Armenia and \$10 million for humanitarian and development programs in Nagorno Karabagh. The Assembly, moreover, lobbies for attaining additional federal aid through different development projects (AAA Issue Briefs; ANCA Position Papers).

As for U.S. military assistance to Armenia and Azerbaijan, both lobbies urge Congress to maintain parity in assistance to Armenia and Azerbaijan. ANCA states that “the US should maintain parity in all US military aid to Armenia and Azerbaijan, and prohibit any sales or transfers to Azerbaijan of US equipment, training or technology that could be used against Armenia or Nagorno Karabagh” (ANCA Position Papers). The Assembly is more concrete on the issue and requests \$4.3 million in Foreign Military Financing (FMF), and \$1 million in International Military Education Training (IMET) assistance to Armenia. The Assembly encourages Congress to carefully monitor military assistance given to Azerbaijan, through other assistance programs, such as the Caspian Guard initiative as well, to ensure that the principle of military and security parity is maintained throughout all funding areas (AAA Issue Briefs).

Nevertheless, Armenia’s full economic potential cannot be realized as long as its eastern and western borders remain under blockade by Azerbaijan and Turkey. In this regard, ANCA has called for the suspension of US military and economic aid to Turkey under the Humanitarian Aid Corridor Act, designed to block aid to any country that obstacles US aid to a third country. ANCA further calls for withholding military aid to Turkey under the Code of Conduct legislation, which restricts arms sales based on human rights abuses. Along with the blockade on Armenia and Nagorno-Karabagh, ANCA names Turkey’s denial of the Armenian Genocide, their treatment of Kurds, occupation of Northern Cyprus, and finally,

their treatment of Christians within their borders as grounds for prohibiting arms sales (ANCA Position Papers).

The Assembly, on the other hand, states that the United States must ensure that concrete steps are taken to remove the blockades, that is, the Congress is urged to “institute new report language requiring a full accounting of the steps the U.S. has taken and the responses therein to eliminate the Turkish and Azeri blockades of Armenia” (AAA Issue Briefs).

The Assembly, moreover, lobbies against regional projects that isolate Armenia, such as the Turkish-Georgian-Azeri railway link bypassing and marginalizing Armenia. The Assembly has lobbied for prohibition of U.S. taxpayer dollar spending on this Azeri-proposed project, which runs counter to stated U.S. policy goals of regional cooperation and economic integration. The Assembly urges the Congress to undertake measures that combat these counterproductive actions and ensure that Armenia has the resources to overcome such obstacles. For example, funding should be made available to provide for minor repairs needed to open the existing Kars-Gyumri rail link that connects Turkey, Armenia, and Georgia, and which would serve to foster regional cooperation (AAA Issue Briefs).

All in all, the achievements stated above, such as House Resolution 106, the high levels of US foreign aid to Armenia and blocking of the rail bypass evidence that the Armenian lobby indeed impacts US foreign policy towards Armenia, taking into consideration that US national interests toward Caucuses do not suggest that Armenia is the most important state to target in that region. Thus, the ANCA and the Assembly employ different strategies but as far as they are directed towards the same end goals, it adds to the salience of the Armenian issues in Washington.

Interesting from this perspective is how the two lobbies succeed in motivating and getting the community involved in the actions initiated, provided that policy makers, after all,

want to follow their constituents. On the other hand, it is important to discuss different coalition building strategies of the Armenian lobby and see whether it cooperates with other ethnic groups in addressing issues they have in common. The questions will be elaborated on in the section below.

Public Mobilization, Cooperation Scope, Mass Media, and Challenges Faced

ANCA stresses its essence as a “bottom-up” organization. It claims to be “the largest and most influential Armenian-American grassroots political organization,” as one of its primary goals is the mobilization of support at the local level (www.anca.org). Its chapters across the United States work to ensure the involvement of local community as “the community is the fuel on which ANCA and any lobbying organization run on,” to cite Giro Manoyan⁴.

The Assembly employs a bit different strategy in this regard. On the one hand, the Assembly attracts and targets prominent Armenian-American professionals and businesspeople, who would support the organization financially, and it has launched a grassroots advocacy program which is the Armenian-American Action Committee (ARAMAC), on the other (Gregg 2002). ARAMAC mobilizes Armenian-American organizations and voters in all 50 states to contact their members of Congress and the White House on pending legislation and policy issues. Thanks to ARAMAC efforts the Armenian-American community receives more timely information and is able to react to local and regional elected officials and media (AAA Report 2006).

⁴ ARF Bureau International Secretariat.

In educating and keeping the public informed on issues affecting the US-Armenia and US-Karabagh relationships, both lobbies use similar strategies, preparing legislative updates, briefings and action alerts. These provide a summary of the issue or problem, give background information both on the upcoming votes in Congress or the status of issues that concern Armenian-Americans. They discuss the action that should be taken, that is explain how exactly their members can get involved. After that, activists inform Members of Congress about issues important to Armenian-American community through letters, e-mails, fax, and phone calls (www.aaainc.org; www.anca.org).

In this way, lobby groups establish the link between Congress and the latter's constituency. ANCA and the Assembly increase awareness on key Armenian-American issues and mobilize strong response in support of them by means of educating the interested public on how to approach policy makers and get issues on the agenda.

Further, the Assembly holds meetings and conferences aimed at educating the Armenian-American community. The National Advocacy Conferences, cooperated with ANCA and held each spring in Washington, DC, since 2000, bring Armenian-American activists from all over the country to Washington. In addition to being briefed on current issues, they also learn how they can influence the legislative process through advocacy and media, and they meet with their members of Congress (www.aaainc.org).

To cite Arpi Vartanian⁵, "advocacy conferences are critical for supporters". This is an important educational factor. On the one hand, the community members learn what to say and get the opportunity to listen to and speak to their representatives invited. The public officials, in their turn, get the opportunity for a better understanding of the Armenian-American community and at the same time have the chance to present and explain their own position.

⁵ Country Director of the Armenian Assembly of America.

A key means of mobilization for both lobby groups are publications. Publications represent the history, what has been and will be done. They are vital for both the public and the policy makers to be aware and understand the policies advocated.

ANCA uses its website and emails to inform its constituents and circulate Position Papers. It also publishes the monthly “TransCaucasus: A Chronology,” which is a chronological summary of the significant economic and political events in the lower Caucasus, as reported by local media and selected sources in the region (www.anca.org).

The Assembly, on the other hand, has developed the Karabagh White Paper. The document describes Karabagh’s development in the Soviet and post-Soviet eras, explains the history of the conflict and the current situation on the ground, and comments on why international efforts to negotiate a settlement have failed. The White Paper is being circulated to members of Congress, administration officials and the press, as well as to members of the Assembly and its grassroots arm, ARAMAC (www.aaainc.org).

Further, the Assembly prints its own “news” (*The Advocate* and *Assembly This Week*) and, through broad distribution of its newsletters, reaches its members as well as the correspondents of major newspapers, government officials, Members of Congress, scholars, and foreign policy analysts. Fact sheets, issue briefs and press releases are updated regularly and disseminated widely – again to government officials, congressional staff, policy analysts, researchers and journalists (www.aaainc.org).

The Assembly website itself is an important tool for researchers and journalists as well as for the public. Assembly’s press releases and media alerts promote Armenian-American issues and make the Assembly an important source of reliable information on the Caucasus. Moreover, there is a special section for the Hill Staff on the website from which the Congressmen can get the relevant factual information and be able to use that specialized expertise when issues arise concerning Armenia and Karabagh (www.aaainc.org).

Mobilizing Armenian-American youth is another important feature of both lobby groups. ANCA supports the Capital Gateway Program, designed to give qualified students an opportunity to explore various part-time internship and full-time job opportunities in the nation's capital (www.anca.org).

The Assembly offers the Terjenian-Thomas summer internship program, launched in 1997, which gives college students of Armenian descent an opportunity to live and work in Washington, DC, gaining exposure to the policy-making process. In 1999, the Assembly began a summer internship program that places Armenian-American students in offices in Yerevan. The aim of the internship is to introduce college-aged students to life in their ancestral homeland, and to foster the skills needed to help them become the next generation of leaders (www.aaainc.org).

The internships are aimed at mobilization of the young generation through making them understand policy-making processes and the ways the matters can be influenced. Interns get information, knowledge and skills necessary to forge ahead issues affecting their homeland.

An important tool in lobbying is alliance building, both with those in Congress, different organizations and other ethnic lobbies. The lobbying efforts of ANCA and the Assembly are united in Washington by the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues. Established in 1995, the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues is an informal, bipartisan group of legislators dedicated to maintaining and strengthening the US-Armenia relationship. The Caucus works within the House of Representatives “to help elevate Armenian-American issues to a much higher profile on Capitol Hill, before the Administration and the US public” (www.aaainc.org). As of October, 2007, 156 Members of the House of Representatives are members of the Caucus (www.aaainc.org).

In the effort to get support from public officials in the US, the Assembly has organized U.S. delegations to Armenia and Karabakh so that the visitors can get acquainted to the situation directly. The representatives of the Assembly follow the notion that one picture is worth thousands words. In fact, every possible situation is used to get the officials involved, be that contacting government officials directly to present a point of view or engaging in informal contacts, like at conventions, over lunch, etc.

The Assembly goes further advocating for issues pertaining not only to Armenians but which have global meaning as well. To strengthen its commitment to honor the Armenian and other genocides against innocent people, as well as to prevent future genocides from occurring, the Assembly joined with many other groups to create a coalition called “kNOw Genocide.” The coalition is grounded in the understanding that denial of genocide is the final stage of the crime. The coalition was launched in April, 2006, following a commemoration ceremony in Boston marking the 91st anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. Similar ties exist with Human Rights organizations as well (AAA Annual Report 2006).

This year, the Assembly has participated in the Dream for Darfur International Torch Relay initiated by the “Dream for Darfur” organization as a manifestation to the genocides that took place in Darfur, Rwanda, Armenia, Bosnia, Germany, and Cambodia. In Armenia the event took place through September 23-26, being started on August 8 on Darfur/Chad border, and it will end in Hong Kong in December.

Both lobby groups have established certain relations with other ethnic lobbies in the US. ANCA has been cooperating with the Greek and Kurdish communities towards blocking military and economic aid to Turkey based on human rights violations of Armenians, Kurds, and Greek Cypriots, and the Assembly still has allies within the Jewish lobby organizations, however only few of them support Armenians in the issues connected to Genocide. There are also cooperation links with Hungarian, Baltic and other communities, but this kind of

cooperation is rather weak. The Armenian lobby groups should pay more attention on and try to establish links with those ethnic lobbies with which they have common grounds to advocate for.

Interesting from this perspective are the relations and bounds of cooperation between ANCA and the Assembly. The two groups used to manifest close collaboration, unity and organized manner of lobbying. With the waiver of Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act⁶ after 9/11, the different reactions to the event for the first time demonstrated the emphasized differences in the approaches and strategies of ANCA and the Assembly, which were however, already apparent early in that year when they disagreed on the mission and expedience of TARC⁷. In case of the waiver of Section 907, the ANCA expressed its disappointment and announced its readiness to continue educating members of Congress about the negative impact that weakening Section 907 would have for US interests in the Caucasus region. The Assembly declined to sign the community letter, choosing instead to publicly state, in press releases, community letters, and on its website, its refusal to support the community-wide effort to defend Section 907, emphasizing that a conditional waiver was the only way to protect Armenians.

However, during their interviews, the representatives of both lobbies witnessed for cooperation between the groups, the most recent being H. Res. 106: “Despite the disagreements existing during Section 907 proceedings, we cannot escape cooperation as far as we have common policy goals and the end results we want are the same. We support each

⁶ In 1992, Congress responded to Azerbaijan's attempts to isolate and cripple Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh by enacting Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act, a law prohibiting certain types of direct U.S. assistance to the government of Azerbaijan until it has ended its aggression and lifted its blockades against Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh.

⁷ Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Committee, aimed at promoting mutual understanding and good will between Turks and Armenians and encouraging improved relations between Armenia and Turkey. Assembly was calling the launch of TARC a major advance while ANCA was extremely critical towards the idea and was condemning the committee. It is for the creation of this organization that many critics accused the Assembly in waging a policy towards converting Armenia into “Turkey’s satellite” (Harutyunian 2005).

other if there is an issue pending in Congress and cannot ignore each other if we want to achieve something”.

Besides coalition building, of utmost importance is the appropriate utilization of mass media. In a society as large as the United States, if a group does not have access to an interested mass medium, its concern will simply never be learnt of. So, the role of the mass media is huge; its significance and power cannot be underestimated. Groups use the media as a device for defining problems and for creating awareness about issues for the community at large in order to affect decision making, however, most interest groups do not gain access to the news easily, conditioned by the media-related resources the group possesses (Danielian 1922).

The Assembly has establishes contacts with print, online and broadcast media outlets both in Armenia and the US. The Assembly provides news to journalists about its programs, as well as serves as an expert source of information on issues related to Armenia and US-Armenia relations (AAA Annual Report 2006). The job is easier with Armenian-American and Armenian media, as they readily accept information and very often count on the Assembly for the latest Western news, commentary and information. Another topic is the mainstream media in the US. Armenian issues are not always on the top on the media agenda. You must work hard in order to be paid attention. It is like advocating the media. When news of particular interest breaks in Washington, Assembly immediately alerts all media and backs up such notice with analyses and factual material. Every single chance is used to build relations with separate media outlets, contact the editors and meet with the journalists in order to establish some kind of cooperation links.

The Assembly effectively uses official reports of World Bank, United Nations, different Human Rights and other organization to bring facts on the issues in question. Actually, this is a strategy of ensuring the US Administration that the policy proposed by the

lobby is in line with the American national interest. The facts and statements given in the reports are provided by non-Armenians and hence add to the objectivity of the information.

All in all, through grassroots programs, coalition building, and presentation of objective information the Armenian lobby has all the preconditions, at least theoretically, to succeed in ensuring that the message they promote has salience and resonance with the broader public. It employs the appropriate strategies to show the relevance of the issue to the broader public, that it has a global meaning and flows from the national interest of the country they live in.

However, the representatives of ANCA and the Assembly identify internal and external challenges in attaining their goals. The internal challenge is public engagement and mobilization. It is very important to convince the public to join and to take an action. A challenge is to get supporters who would back up both financially and politically. Externally, the lobby groups face the global political powers that impede the realization of their own objectives.

Conclusion

Many critics doubt the influence the Armenian lobby has in the US. To them, the power conferred to the Armenian lobby is the result of Turkish and Azeri diplomacy and “campaigning”, and the latter’s allies in the US, in order to show the respective countries in the role of “victims”. To them, the US has its own geopolitical interests in the region and all the advances in the relationships between the US and Armenian flow from this interest and the consideration of the conditions for security in the region (Ayvazian 2004, Harutyunyan 2005).

To agree, there is some kind of such a tendency, but it cannot be totally denied that the Armenian lobby does constitute a role in addressing the issues concerned by the Armenian-Americans. As a proof to this, is the passage of House Resolution 106, dwelled upon in the previous section. And although the protests against the resolution showed the effects a day later, with many representatives admitting that perhaps it was not the best of the timing, the prominence of the issue of the Armenian Genocide, and many others, itself is due in large part to the efforts of the two lobbying groups.

The Armenian lobby in the US has all the preconditions of being successful. It is assimilated into American society along with retaining enough identification with the old country. Based on the latter, its foreign policy issues motivate people to take political action. Through different mobilization and outreach strategies, the Armenian lobby is able to prompt the public towards political activism and political unification. It employs a number of strategies to explain Armenia’s and Karabagh’s needs, actions and perspectives in the context of the US national interest. Important from this perspective are the coalitions built with many Congressmen, international and domestic organizations.

In addition to all the above mentioned factors, the inter-community rivalry within the Armenian-American population represented by ANCA and the Assembly has led to hyper-

mobilization of this ethnic group's resources. Their different approaches to lobbying have mobilized more Armenians than would one organization alone and have doubled outreach projects and resources on Armenian issues. Yet, the internal competition has promoted the causes and successes of Armenian lobby efforts because, although the two lobbies have different approaches to influencing Washington, they mostly agree on policy objectives, and hence, present a unified front.

Armenia is a small country and could avoid being so closely looked at. “Imagine what the Armenian diaspora might have accomplished had it worked as hard for democracy in Armenia as it did for congressional recognition of the genocide Armenians suffered nearly a century ago” (Armenians Who Need Help Today).

Recommendations:

Although ANCA and the Assembly present a unified front in Washington and have proved to form a force in US foreign policy making due to high degree of organization, clearly stated policy demands, alliance building within Congress, such as the Armenian House Caucus, alliance building with different non/US, Human Rights and other organizations, and finally, the created hyper-mobilization due to the two lobbies acting separately but towards the same end results, the research tends to the following recommendations, in line to the challenges faced:

- Establishment of more constructive ties with the mass media which is a huge factor in shaping both public opinion and that of the officials. With the H. Res. 106, it clearly became evident that the mass media strategies of other forces are more effective.

- Cooperation with other ethnic lobbies in the US that have similar experience with Turkey should be brought to a higher level. The cooperation with the Greek and Kurdish lobbies is insufficient, along with the Assembly mainly maintaining ties with the Jewish lobby which has different agenda and cannot be a reliable ally.
- More close cooperation between Armenian lobby groups acting in the US. This would give the opportunity to overcome each other's weaknesses and vice versa emphasize the strengths.
- Cooperation with Armenian ethnic lobbies outside the US, that would on the one hand appear as a back up for lobbies not as influential and experienced, and on the other hand, it is about global politics and enhancement of Armenian issues.
- Finally, there should be a definite strategy with regards to fundraising, in order to be able to employ all the resources and programs possible, including delegations of Congressmen to Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh as presented above.

All in all, the recommendations given above are aimed at increasing public awareness and involvement of as many human resources as possible.

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