

**AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF ARMENIA**

**ARMENIANS IN LEBANON AFTER ISRAELI INVASION IN 2006:  
A COMMUNITY UNDER THREAT OF VANISHING**

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## **List of Abbreviations**

ARF	The Armenian Revolutionary Federation
EU	- European Union
IDF	- Israeli Defense Forces
MFA	- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NAS	- National Academy of Science
NATO	- North Atlantic Treaty Organization
ROA	- Republic of Armenia
UN	- United Nations
UNIFIL	- United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
US	- United States
USA	- United States of America

## **Abstract**

The main purpose of this Master's Essay is to study the current volatile situation of the Armenian community in Lebanon, their changing place and role in the Lebanese society and politics. It reveals the dangers that the community may face in the conflict-prone settings of modern Lebanon. The historical background is briefly presented; the diminishing numbers of Armenians residing in Lebanon is specified. The reasons for their demise are discussed.

The essay further examines the current situation of the Armenian institutions such as schools, church, political parties and the like and the role of Armenians in Lebanese political system. It talks on the culture and language and their influence in all facets of Armenian life in Lebanon. It also covers the Lebanese-Turkish relations namely the presence of Turkish peacemaking forces in Lebanon and its potential impacts on the Armenian community.

## **Introduction**

Armenian communities in the Middle East, especially in Lebanon, unwillingly became victims of constant wars, which have negatively affected the Armenian existence and increased the concern about their future. This resulted in the reduction of communities in their numbers. The foreign policy of Armenia cannot treat the current developments in the Middle East with indifference. Moreover, it is interested in strengthening the peace in those regions thus protecting the Armenian communities in the regions. As Andranik Margaryan, the late prime minister, would claim, conditions for the return of emigrants should be created so that they are able to participate in building up a free state with the Republic of Armenia. Moreover, the late prime minister has provided “state support” namely to the Lebanese Armenians and other Lebanese residents who wished to take refuge in Armenia. In this regard, two Armenian diplomats have been sent to Lebanon and Syria to assist in their voluntary evacuation in those days when Lebanon was in war with Israel in 2006. Vahan Ter-Ghevondian, the Armenian ambassador in Beirut, was scheduled to hold a special news conference for Lebanese-Armenian media (Radio Liberty 2006).

The paper is discussing the issue of diminishing and vanishing of the Armenian community in the conflict-prone settings of modern Lebanon trying to reveal the causes and decide on the appropriate short and long-term solutions of the existing problems.

The Armenian community of Lebanon is one of the oldest and weighty ones throughout the Diaspora. Thousands of Armenians fled to Lebanon after the Genocide, and grew in numbers over time, thus creating an important center of Armenian Diaspora. During the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Lebanon hosted one of the largest concentrations of Armenians in the world. Since mid-eighties, due to the political unrest in Lebanon and its surrounding neighbors, many changes have taken place thus reducing the number of Armenians residing there. Moreover, after the Israeli invasion in July 2006, the community is

under the threat of vanishing not only because of the war, but also because of the new internal and external political realities that are being developed in the region.

Despite the political-historical issues, the community also suffers the danger of assimilation, though slowly but the process is going on.

Lebanon had a respected Armenian community from the 1900s onwards. Moreover, Armenians in Lebanon have proved themselves to be operative, diligent and disciplined and they are very much respected by Arabs till now. Being the center of Armenian Diaspora till the 1975 civil war, the Armenian community in Lebanon made a big contribution in Lebanese political, cultural and social life. The valuable role of this very community has still been preserved, the proof of which is the fact that today the Armenian community is presented with five deputies in the Lebanese parliament and one minister in the government. The contribution of Armenian communities is big also in establishing close relations between the Armenian and Lebanese states.

Thus, the Armenian community has successfully integrated into Lebanese political, cultural and social life simultaneously preserving its nationality. Then, the question arises as to whether there really exist hazardous issues for Lebanese Armenians, which may result in the demise of the community. If so, then what are the causes and reasons for it? Is it because of the external factors, particularly Israel-Lebanon war, and/or internal factors, particularly tense political situation within Lebanon, that affect Lebanese political life thus creating unpredictable future for Lebanese people and Armenian minority among them? Moreover, what are the continuing efforts for national consensus aiming to sustain the Lebanon's internal unity, if there are really any? Subsequently, what is the role of Armenians today in the Lebanese political system and what do the Armenian institutions in Lebanon (such as Schools, Church, and Political Parties) do in this regard? What is the influence, if any of the



cultural and linguistic situation of the Armenian community on the political and social aspects of the Armenian life in Lebanon?

As regards to the presence of Turkish peacemaking forces in Lebanon, it represents potential threats. Then again the question arises as to whether it may have direct impacts on the Armenian community in Lebanon. Furthermore, there appear strong doubts about any trends and perspectives for the development of Armenian community in Lebanon. In fact, how do the Lebanese Armenians view their future and what place Armenia occupies in it? Accordingly, what is the Armenian state and political parties' strategy as well as what are the contingencies in regard to the Lebanese Armenian community? These are the most vulnerable questions that today have become an issue for the Armenian community in Lebanon. Hence, the study uncovers the issues and provides arguments in this regard. The challenge is that the Armenian government does not take enough measures in working out an appropriate strategy and organizing repatriation especially for the Diaspora in the Middle East.

Diaspora has not been studied at all from the standpoint of Armenia's national security. The widely spread view in Armenia and abroad is that having a Diaspora is a blessing. It means welfare or comfort (Ayvazyan 2004, pp. 161-169). Moreover, some officials even consider that Diaspora should be formed in countries lacking them, thus forgetting about the dangers that these kinds of ideas may bring.

Furthermore, being a foreign citizen, a Diasporan often takes the responsibility of protecting the interests of the resident country. In this regard, they have to act very often against the interests of their country of origin otherwise their career or well-paid job is under the danger or they may face other social issues. Thus, setting strong and dynamic relations with the Diaspora is one of the prerequisites for solving the challenging problems for Armenia and Armenians. Therefore, the Armenia-Diaspora relations are directly connected to

the sphere of Armenian national security and need a deep and thorough study (Ayvazyan 2004, pp. 161-169).

As the essay will further discuss, the issues revealed above are well reflected in the life of Armenian community residing in Lebanon.

Thus, the Armenian community in Lebanon faces a wide variety of difficulties in their daily social, political, economic and cultural lives. Though some congruencies were found during the in-depth interviews with the Diaspora Armenians and Armenian officials to decide about ways to support the community, the study provides indicators that officials and political parties of Armenia do not fully appreciate and contribute to the problems that the Armenian community faces in Lebanon today. The areas that are considered real problems by Lebanese Armenians, like repatriation procedures and the absence of legal proceedings in this regard are not taken seriously by the Armenian officials and political parties. They mostly consider that the adoption of citizenship status is enough for solving the issue for Diaspora. The Armenian political parties were also interviewed in this regard and interestingly their responses were mostly alike. Their approach to this issue is quite simple as they consider that if the Diasporan Armenians want they can easily return to homeland. Moreover, they consider that the 10-year special residency status is enough for them to return. They ignore the possible psychological issues that the community might face while repatriating and that there is no appropriate agency to help with giving legal, psychological advice or any kind of training that will help the newcomers from a different culture to easily get assimilated with compatriots. If such kinds of obstacles are not taken care of, it is most likely that as a result the emigration of Diasporan community into another Diasporan community will continue to increase and this time in more huge numbers. Moreover, if the perceptions of the community such as the poor quality of life in Armenia and discriminatory barriers to the job market are true, it is difficult to imagine that Armenia will become a united nation one day.

Concisely, the integration into the social, economic and political life of the motherland is a serious problem that is mostly ignored by the Armenian government.

In order to reserach and understand the existing situation of the Armenian community in Lebanon as a minority being under threat, moreover, to argue that the Armenian community faces the prospect of diminishing and vanishing in the conflict-prone settings of modern Lebanon, the study has tried to asnwer the following research questions:

1. What are the causes for the diminishing numbers of Armenians residing in Lebanon?
2. What is the relationship between the current situation of the Armenian institutions such as schools, church, political parties in Lebanon and the role of Armenians in Lebanese political system?
3. How the cultural and linguistic situation of the Armenian community in Lebanon affects the political and social aspects of the Armenian life there?
4. Does the presence of Turkish peacemaking forces in Lebanon represent any potential threats and negative impacts on the Armenian community?
5. What are the current trends and perspectives for the development of Armenian community in Lebanon?
6. How do the Lebanese Armenians view their future and what place does Armenia occupy in it?
7. What are the Armenian state and political parties' strategy and contingencies, if any, in regard to the Lebanese Armenian community?

## **Review of the Literature and Methodology**

The essay utilizes comparative historical analysis and policy analysis as main methods for conducting this research. The main sources for observation and analysis were books, articles, newspaper archives, Internet information, as well as historical records. News monitoring has been done continuously. To broaden the understanding of the attitudes and values of Lebanese Armenians, a review of the articles, interviews and important discussions published in press and the Internet articles has been completed. In-depth interviews have also been conducted and notes following the conversations taken. They were further transcribed and analyzed. Then, the data have been studied and theories related to the research found.

In general, at a preliminary stage, the relevant literature about the topic has been collected. During the second stage of the research the sources with direct relation to the topic and the research questions have been selected and analyzed. During the third stage in-depth interviews have been conducted with Armenians living in Lebanon, Armenian government officials, and active individuals of some political parties in Armenia.

In particular, for the purposes of this study a search was made to get the data on Lebanese Armenians residing in Armenia at present with no official document being found. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Migration Agency of the RA Ministry of Territorial Administration and the Red Cross organization were contacted unsuccessfully for information on the exact number of Lebanese Armenians who were granted either 10-year special residency status or temporary asylum status. The explanation was that the government did not collect data on the number of non-Armenian citizens living in Armenia for different political reasons.

Some local political parties<sup>1</sup> were also contacted unsuccessfully for the information about the programs they have for Diaspora communities mainly the Armenian community in Lebanon. A questionnaire<sup>2</sup> was developed in order to collect data via in-depth interviews with Lebanese Armenians already removed and settled in Armenia or having a short visit, some Armenian officials in charge of Armenia-Diaspora relations and migration issues and some major political parties in Armenia. The officials and political parties were selected purposefully.<sup>3</sup> A snowballing technique was used to find a sample of 17 Lebanese Armenians who currently reside in Armenia for various reasons.

For the sake of brief introduction some of the sources are referred below while reviewing the literature related to the topic.

The conflict between Lebanon and Israel re-started on the 12<sup>th</sup> of July 2006 thus again creating uneasy situation for Lebanese people from different confessional communities. The tense situation in Lebanon is becoming hazardous especially for Christian communities, the Armenian community being among them.

Due to historical, geographical, multi-cultural and other factors, Lebanon has always been unique with its complex and irregular internal political life. In this tiny nation of less than four million inhabitants 18 separate denominational communities reside. Despite the linguistic and other commonalities, these communities also possess distinct cultural and lifestyle values and characteristics. However, due to its small size and vulnerability, as well as to its internal contradictions and other factors, Lebanon has constantly been subjected to foreign interference. In addition, the crisis in Lebanon is also the result of the struggle amongst regional and international forces (Tovmasyan 2007).

Hence, currently Lebanon that is well known for its political instability and civil wars is facing one of the most difficult periods of its history. Specifically, it has to overcome the

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<sup>1</sup> As the contacted persons preferred to remain anonymous, their names are not mentioned in the paper.

<sup>2</sup> See the interview questions in Appendix A.

<sup>3</sup> See the list of interviewees in Appendix B.

postcolonial legacy of a country divided between 18 religious sects and ethnic groups including Christian, Sunni and Shia Muslim, Druze, and Armenian. Accordingly, the concern is because of the divided society of Lebanon. Though the Lebanese model had once been considered as one of the most successful cases of “consociational democracy”<sup>4</sup> thus allowing the society divided into many religious communities to regulate its conflicts, today “it has ended up disclosing deep inherent imperfections as well as a dangerous addiction to external allegiances and a peculiar vulnerability to foreign pressures” (Fakhoury-Mühlbacher 2007).

Yet, instead of looking for peaceful solutions to the issue, different explanations to the causes of the war are being argued by local and international thinkers.

Tami Amanda Jacoby’s, Fellow of the Canadian Defense & Foreign Affairs Institute and Assistant Professor, Department of Political Studies and Research Fellow at the Center for Defense and Security Studies University of Manitoba - Winnipeg, MB, “Conflict in Lebanon: On the Perpetual Threshold” provides the most interesting description of the Lebanon-Israel conflict. “The conflict between Israel and the Hezbollah in the summer of 2006 showcased some of the most turbulent trends in Middle Eastern politics today.” Jacoby considers Lebanon as a “microcosm” of the Middle East inclined to “instability, deterioration of secular-governing institutions, external interference, proliferation of weapons, and lack of democracy, ethnic conflict and sectarian violence.” Moreover, Jacoby considers that the kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers made the situation to grow to crisis thus bringing to the exchanges of fires and strikes between Hezbollah and the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). While describing the attitude of the international community, she indicates “the lack of willingness

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<sup>4</sup> Consociational democracy is the technical term for powersharing democracy, and is defined as a model of governance in a plural society, which tries to reconcile the quintessence of democracy with political stability. This model entails a sharing and a division of power among communities.

to disarm militant groups, extend the sovereignty of the Lebanese state over all its internationally recognized territory and prevent the resumption of conflict” (Jacoby 2007).

Despite its impressive resourcefulness, it should be noted that Tami Amanda Jacoby’s interpretation of the situation in Lebanon is deficient. Yet, the main concern of this paper is not to criticize Jacoby but to demonstrate other approaches as well that will help to further construct and develop the topic.

Equally important is, Asat Apukhalil’s (Professor of the California State University) consideration that the crisis in Lebanon is a result of international conspiracy. Based on this definition, he further explains that Israel’s invasion into Lebanon was not by chance and Israel’s actions were not just without preparation. Israel, after partly leaving from Lebanon in 2000, has not only constantly been occupying southern Lebanon but also has broken Lebanon air, water and land territories (Zartonk Daily 2006).

While there are different dimensions of explanations on whose fault was the war: Israel or Lebanon, and why the capture of three soldiers was converted into a deep and widespread conflict, the US media and the International Crisis Group have described Lebanon as “a country awash in arms” that is on the edge of a risky political transition. This message aims at reporting that conditions in Lebanon are grown enough for “a reprise of the civil war and that cooler heads will not prevail for long” (Laurie King-Irani 2005).

Middle East Report No 57 defines the crisis in Lebanon as follows:

“...local ones like Hamas’s struggle to govern and Hezbollah’s desire to maintain its special status in Lebanon; regional ones, notably the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict, Syria’s interests in Lebanon, and the growing Sunni-Shiite divide; and wider international ones, especially the confrontation between Washington and Tehran” (Middle East Report 2006).

As a result, the peaceful residential population suffers. Moreover, the war has caused also sound unrest within the confessional communities.

The Armenian community together with other Lebanese ethnic groups has faced hard times namely in domestic and healthcare demands, food, water and electricity needs. Economic hardship and unemployment have increased the level of poverty among the communities. Moreover, unstable and insecure political situation in Lebanon as well as the fear of fratricidal war urges Armenians and Lebanese people as well, for the sake of their future to look for appropriate and safe shelters.

However, a closer look into the history reveals that having a very large Armenian community and a Catholicosate in Lebanon, Armenia cannot monitor the war there without interest or concern (ACNIS 2006).

According to Ara Sanjian's, the Director of Armenian Research Center at the University of Michigan-Dearborn and Assistant Professor in History at Haigazian University in Beirut, Lebanon, data in Encyclopedia of Armenian Diaspora, the number of Armenians in Lebanon today is about 70-80 thousand. Dr. Sanjian indicates that in the area of present Lebanon the Armenians have lived from ancient ages (Sanjian 2003). The Armenian community in Lebanon, as Dr. Nikolay Hovhannisyan states (2006), the director of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Armenian National Academy of Science, has lived flourishing years and experienced decays. The current community has been formed mostly all through the First World War and during the years that followed. The first and the largest influx of Armenian migrants were after the Armenian Genocide of 1915. The second flow of Armenian migrants was from Cilicia when France ceded the Cilicia to Kemalist Turkey, and Armenians had to move to Syria and Lebanon. The Armenians were grouped mostly in Beirut, as well as Anjar, Jbail, Jounie, Saidai, Tripoli, Zahle and elsewhere. During the years of 20-30s the number of Armenians living in Lebanon was about 85 thousand. At the beginning Armenian migrants have encountered hard times, but little by little Armenians overcame the difficulties and distinguished themselves with their diligence, technical skills



and practice. Gradually Armenians settled their national-cultural life. Various national and cultural unions were formed, schools had been opened, and newspapers and magazines were published in Armenian language. In Antilias the Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia was established, Armenian political parties such as Hunchag, Tashnag and Ramkavar started their activities. Armenians played a leading role in establishing the Communist party in Syria and Lebanon. Thus, little by little the Armenian community got involved in the social-political and economic life of Lebanon and year-by-year enlarged its cooperation with the Arabs (Hovhannisyan 2006).

No official census has been conducted since 1932, mostly to keep the confessional (religious) balance thus leaving alone the political sensitivity in Lebanon. Lacking the official figures, it is likely that 600,000-900,000 persons fled the country at the beginning of the civil war (1975-1976). Although some people have returned back to Lebanon, even more people have emigrated because of the continuing conflict, casting even more doubt on population figures. Moreover, some of the population was killed during the civil war between 1975 and 1990 and some people are still missing or unaccounted-for from the civil war period (Background Note: Lebanon 2007).

As Radio Liberty reports, according to the RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “160 Armenians and dozens of Lebanese citizens of Armenian descent have already escaped to Armenia since the start of devastating Israeli raids on civilian and guerilla targets in Lebanon on July” (Radio Liberty 2006). According to Azg Daily, starting from July 18, 2006 six hundred forty two people have immigrated into Armenia through five stages (Azg Daily 2006).

## **Chapter 1: Diminishing Numbers of Armenians in Lebanon and the Reasons for Their Demise**

As it has been said, the population statistics is notorious in Lebanon, mostly conditioned by confessional politics in order to preserve peace among the communities, which is the reason why the paper lacks more updated official data in this regard.

“While there is no consensus over the confessional breakdown of the population for this reason, it is safe to say that the Muslim sects as a whole make up a majority, and that Shiites, Sunnis, and Maronites are the three largest groups” (Background Note 2007).

However, based on the comparative historical analysis and news monitoring the following data has been revealed. It was found that the size of the Armenian community was at its highest just before the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war.

Nikolay Hovhannisyan’s (2006) book “History of Arab Countries” discusses the developments from 1918 to 2005 and provides the following data about the existence of Lebanese-Armenians in the region. Thus, according to the author, as of 2005 95 percent of the population of three million eight hundred twenty six thousand (3,826,000) were Arabs and only 4 percent were Armenians, the remaining 1 percent comprises other nations. The data on the Ethno-confessional groups shows that Muslims were 60 percent (Shi'a, Sunni, Druze, Isma'ili, Alawite or Nusayri), Christians were 39 percent (Maronite Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Melkite Catholic, Armenian Orthodox, Armenian Catholic, Syrian Catholic, Syrian Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Chaldean, Assyrian, Copt, Protestant).

However, a thorough analysis enables to construct the following historical demography of Armenian community in Lebanon from the year of 1920 to 2000 based on different estimates.<sup>5</sup> Thus, in 1920s – 1930s there were about 85,000 Armenians. The number was reduced in 1932 up to 26,682 and increased from 1945 (up to 61,063) to 1953 (up to

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<sup>5</sup> Sources: 1. N. Hovhannisyan, *The History of the Arab Countries*, vol. III, 2006. 2. H. Ayyazyan, A. Sargsyan, *Encyclopedia of Armenian Diaspora*, 2003. 3. Migration Agency of ROA Ministry of Territorial Administration.

84,000). In 1975 there were already more than about 200,000 Armenians residing in Lebanon. However, the estimates show that in 1997 the number of Armenians was reduced up to 60,000 - 100,000 and as of 2000 there are 70,000 – 80,000 Armenians left in Lebanon. It infers from the presented analysis that out of 200,000 Armenians only 70-80,000 are residing in Lebanon at present and it is quite possible that after Israeli invasion in 2006 the number is lessened even more.

While studying the Armenian cultural and educational institutions such as schools, colleges, and universities in Lebanon the facts reveal that if in 1955 the number of students at these institutions were 1,400 in 1975 it got up to 21,000 and the number was reduced again up to 8,418 students as of 2002. In 1975 there were 57 Armenian schools in Lebanon. In 2002 their number has been reduced up to 33. As respondents stated unofficially, there are 21 Armenian schools and 8000 students out of which 5-6 thousand are foreign students as of today. Thus, the data again shows sound decline of student and school numbers, which is a result of the community decline. Meanwhile, an increase of mixed marriages has happened as well.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, as Sanjian states, a sharp increase has been recorded in marriages between Armenians and other Christian sects in Lebanon. Of 272 marriages blessed by the Armenian Apostolical Church in Lebanon in 1961, 7.3 percent involved Armenian males marrying outside of their community. A decade later, in 1971, this percentage had risen to 10.7. Figures on the “outmarriage” of Armenian females were unavailable as these marriages are usually registered under the denominations of their spouses. A significantly large number of these mixed marriages occurred among couples from higher socio-economic brackets. However, the recent press reports put the rate of mixed marriages among the Armenians of Lebanon in

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<sup>6</sup> Sources: 1. A. Der-Karabetian and E. Oshagan, ‘Ethnic Orientation of Armenians in Lebanon’, *Armenian Review*, vol. 30, no. 2, 1977. 2. J. Danielian, ‘Libanahay dprots: tiver yev mtorunner’ (The Lebanese Armenian School: Statistics and Reflections) 2002.

1997 at around 40 percent, a clear indication that a mixed marriage is no longer the preserve of the upper classes (Sanjian 2001).

The problem is bigger than stated so far, because the data displays the arguments for the demise of a community. As a result, the Armenian Community faces the prospect of diminishing and vanishing in the conflict-prone settings of modern Lebanon.

The following quotes from *Ararad* daily newspaper describing the constant migration of Armenians deserves an emphasis: “If the Genocide was a red massacre, aiming at extirpating Armenians, the white massacre is the life we are living. The white massacre is the transfer of Armenians into foreign places, migration, assimilation, forgetting national customs and traditions little by little” (*Ararad* daily 2006, p.1). This is an issue that should bother Armenians all over the world and make them decide on proper ways of addressing this issue.

Some local Armenian and Lebanese Armenian officials object the fact that the Armenian community has been reduced in numbers stating that those who left the country were simply looking for temporary protection and the vast majority has already returned back to their permanent residencies. However, it is quite obvious from the thorough study that the number of Armenians living in Lebanon has declined steadily and the process is still going on. Even if they try to make an effort, unfortunately, the community has lost the interest in the importance of retaining the community once signified so firmly.

Based on news monitoring as well as the interview results namely with the Migration Agency of the RA Ministry of Territorial Administration<sup>7</sup>, out of about 600 Armenian citizens of the countries at war who have migrated to Armenia and were granted the status of temporary protection 390 were from Lebanon. However, the Agency failed to provide the updated official exact data in this regard, stressing that they do not have full data about those

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<sup>7</sup> The interviewees preferred to remain anonymous.

Lebanese Armenians who migrated and/or left either back to Lebanon or migrated to another foreign country. This, as it was later explained, is conditioned by the fact that these people in most cases do not inform the Agency about their arrival and/or departure. However, it was stressed that almost all the citizens have already left back to Lebanon by now.

According to “Hayastani Hanrapetutyun” Armenian daily, as of September 1, 2006, 472 citizens have applied for the temporary asylum and protection status and only 32 have been granted the temporary asylum status. The rest of the applications were being discussed. The asylum seekers complain of the situation that gets more and more worsened in Lebanon as well as of the possibility of starting a new civil war (Hayastani Hanrapetutyun Armenian daily 2006).

What are the causes for the diminishing numbers of Armenians residing in Lebanon and the reasons for their demise?

The following is the detailed evaluation of the causes of the demise of Lebanese-Armenians based on the results of the in-depth interviews conducted with the emigrated community members:

- Political turmoil
- Absence of security (war and bombings)
- Economic crisis
- Continuing regional conflicts
- Rise of fundamentalist Islam
- Lack of opportunities, corruption
- The danger of assimilation
- Absence of the rule of law
- Unavailability of education for children
- Feeling of being temporary guests in Lebanon.

## **Chapter 2: Dangers the Community Faces in the Conflict-Prone Settings of Modern Lebanon**

As Vahan Ter-Ghevondyan, Armenian ambassador in Lebanon, stated in his interview with special correspondent of “Azg,” “any weakness of the Armenian community in Lebanon has its impact on the whole Armenian nation” (Azg daily 2006, 5). No one can deny that the Armenian community in Lebanon has an importance for the whole Diaspora, namely for the ones in the Middle East. However, some diplomatic officials and political parties would usually argue that though the community is living a hard time in Lebanon, there is no need to cause confusion among the community and force them to mass emigration. This kind of statement is deficient and one goal of this essay is to show why. Yet the main concern of the essay is not to criticize the officials, but to demonstrate general deficiencies of such kind of arguments and to suggest a strategy for more adequate and more complete actions.

Thus, the statement that “the Armenian community in Lebanon has an importance for the whole Diaspora” is true if we take into consideration that this community has numerous spiritual, political, cultural, educational, sport centers, several dailies and other publications in Armenian in Lebanon that played a crucial role in forming, strengthening and maintaining Armenian national identity in the whole Middle East region.

In addition, this community cannot just forget its 300-year presence in the country and make an impression that they have easily left it in such a tough situation. The case is really hard, however, it is not fair for the community to suffer from the constant wars and live a life full of fear and lack of future. The issue is much more serious namely because of the fact that if the Armenian government does not organize the repatriation, the community will emigrate elsewhere. As a result, the community faces the danger of diminishing and vanishing within the borders of warring Lebanon. The government cannot afford to hold the Armenian community in Lebanon as a goal. And once the war in Lebanon was a cause to seriously think about the Lebanese Armenians, the government should take the advantage of this situation

and work out an appropriate strategy to fully assist those emigrants who preferred the motherland as a permanent residence. Mr. Gevorg Yazichyan, Lebanese Armenian, PhD in History, deserves an emphasis. He signifies the danger that Islamic state will take roots in the country and then the massacre of Armenians in Lebanon will definitely take place. The government should take this statement into serious consideration and avoid any further innocent victims because of its complementary policy.

As Shahan Kandakharyan, the Editor-in-Chief of Azdak, the largest Armenian newspaper of Lebanon, stated, although hostilities did not touch towns and blocks populated by Armenians, the huge damage and economic crisis had their impact on the community. A country, which has experienced a war, finds itself in a situation, in which emigration increases and economy falls into decay. The Armenian community cannot stay and live under those conditions (PanArmenian Network 2007).

Another danger is embodied in the problems of inter-community levels that were found out as a result of interviews and are summarized in the following points:

- Emigration of educated and skilled young Armenians as well as well-known Armenian businessmen and manufacturers (mainly to the USA, Canada, Europe).

Educated and wealthy Armenians in general are being alienated from community organizations (less and less young men and women are willing to participate in the community organizations). The gap is widening between the political, religious, and social authorities on one hand and ordinary people on the other.

- Financial problems of community institutions and organizations, especially the schools.
- Decreased enrollment in the community's primary and secondary schools.
- A decrease in the readership of Armenian books and periodicals.

- A decline in the publication of Armenian language literary works and newspapers as well as Armenian Studies.
- The challenges facing the Armenian theater in Lebanon.
- A continuous increase in mixed marriages.
- The challenges faced in establishing firm position within Lebanese political life.
- The challenge of preserving cultural and political identity of Armenians in Lebanon.
- The loss of competency of Lebanese-Armenian institutions and organizations as compared to Lebanese institutions and organizations.
- The loss of confidence in cultural, social and political institutions conditioned by the diversity of views and beliefs.
- The danger of fratricide war because of politicized community divided into followers of Lebanese authorities and opposition.
- The cultural and religious distinctions as well as political neutrality creating problems for the Armenian community, which is viewed by the rest of Lebanese as an alien and undesirable element.

As a result, Armenian institutions and organizations are about on the decline. People are more and more losing their confidence in them. This sharpens the alienation and brings about stagnation. Financial means are scarce. Moreover, they are not spent according to the priorities.



### **Chapter 3: Changing Place and Role of Armenian Community in the Lebanese Society and Politics**

Armenian churches, schools, political parties, social and cultural organizations continue to function, although the level of activity has declined to such an extent that Armenians in Lebanon no longer feel that they live in the ‘capital’ of their Diaspora (Sanjian 2001). This is mostly conditioned by the uncertain condition of present Lebanon.

What is the relationship between the current situation of the Armenian institutions in Lebanon and the role of Armenians in Lebanese political system?

The study showed after the Israeli invasion in July 2006 the most of the Armenian institutions in Lebanon performed noticeable weakness. According to Mr. Yazichyan, the Armenian institutions and the Cilician Armenian Catholicosate have adopted the wrong announcement that Lebanon is our new motherland and that the community is firm in Lebanon thus trying to improve the state of weak institutions. People have no future, announces Mr. Yazichyan.

Yet, according to the historical analysis, the Armenian institutions in Lebanon once have been the most respected centers in strengthening and preserving Armenian national identity in the Middle East region.

Church: Called to serve as Primate of the Armenian Community of Lebanon during the Lebanese Civil War, His Holiness reorganized parishes and schools, restructured and reactivated church-related institutions, and renewed community leadership. His Holiness became a strong voice for mutual understanding among religions, cultures and civilizations (<http://www.armenianorthodoxchurch.org/v01/index.htm>).

However, the results of the interviews showed surprisingly interesting arguments concerning this important role of the church being declined. A defense of this claim needs to have certain historical background in this regard.

The Armenian Cilician Catholicos, the Patriarch of the Catholic Armenian Church and the Chairman of the Union of Armenian Protestant Churches in the Middle East reside in Beirut. Though there are also Armenian Catholic and Evangelical Churches, the majority of the Lebanese Armenians are Apostolic Armenian. Although the Apostolic Church is located in Antilias, Beirut since 1929, it is called by its middle age name ‘the Cilician Church.’ The Cilicia Catholicosate plays an important role in the life of Lebanese Armenians. It directly patronizes “Trchnots Buyn” orphanage in Jbail, national dispensary in Azunie, the Armenian nursing home in Bourj Hamoud (Sanjian 2003).

However, it was strange to discover through the interviews that currently the church is not strong enough in preserving the Armenian culture and identity it used to care of once. There is less propaganda organized by the church in this regard. Moreover, the interviewed Lebanese-Armenians claimed the activities have lessened as compared to the historical past. It was hard enough to find out that Aram Catholicos accepts the fact that Diaspora migrates to Diaspora, but when the point comes to migrate into Armenia the Catholicos is speaking against it (Zartonk 2006).

Thus, the findings showed that the church has lost its traditional role within the Armenian community in Lebanon.

It is important to speak about the Armenian Relief Cross in Lebanon as an institution that implements income generating activities: fund raising; donations; project proposals; crop production center; preserves the Armenian cultural heritage and provides learning and working opportunities for needy women.

However, the findings revealed that not only the church but also the current Armenian institutions in Lebanon in general are failing to modernize.

Political Parties: Based on the historical analysis, it was found out that three Armenian political parties exist in Lebanon:

- the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaktsutiun or the Dashnaks),
- the Social-Democratic Hunchakian Party (the Hunchaks),
- the Democratic Liberal (Ramkavar Azatakan) Party (the Ramkavars).

The first Armenian political institution in Lebanon was a branch of the Dashnak Party set up in 1901 by the students of the American University in Lebanon. The proclaimed aim of the Dashnaks is to create an independent Armenia by uniting the present Armenia with the western Armenian territories currently under Turkish control. The Hunchaks and Ramkavars share this goal.

However, the reality of the current politics in Lebanon makes the interpretation of the situation of the Armenian community rather different. This is especially true for political parties' involvement in the local political life as compared to the historical past when the community would follow the strict policy of positive neutrality during the civil war in 1975. The interviews with the Lebanese Armenians who are members of these parties revealed that the political parties in Lebanon lack any consensus causing:

- divided community,
- instability within the community,
- traditional rivalry and differing views.

As a result, as Mr. Yazichyan states, there is the fear of fratricidal war among the Armenians in Lebanon because of traditional rivalry and differing views. This is conditioned by the fact that the community is too much involved in the political life of Lebanon. The political parties are divided into followers of the Hezbollah<sup>8</sup> and Hariri's<sup>9</sup> followers. Moreover, there are contradictions within the single party as well, namely the Hunchaks of

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<sup>8</sup> Hezbollah is a Shi'a Islamic political and paramilitary organization based in Lebanon.

<sup>9</sup> Rafik Hariri was the Prime Minister of Lebanon from 1992 to 1998 and again from 2000 until his resignation, October 20, 2004. Hariri was assassinated on February 14, 2005.

Syria are Hezbollah followers unlike the Lebanese Hunchaks. This is the evidence of the fact that the party itself is disrupted.

The Lebanese Armenians have been devoted citizens of Lebanon during the Lebanon's crisis for 30 years. They were very much respected for this. However, the picture is quite different this time with the new political developments. It is very important that the political parties are uniting with each other instead of holding different ideologies and protecting different interests.

The challenge for the Armenian political parties in Lebanon is well described in Kandakharyan's statement in the interview with PanArmenian Network on the life of the community and situation in Lebanon. He states that traditionally the Armenian organizations are wise enough to distinguish Lebanese problems from Armenian national problems and reach a common ground on the issues, especially if the matter concerns the security of the community (Kandakharyan 2007). The case is much desired to be as it is stated.

Schools, Colleges and Cultural Centers: The first Armenian school in Lebanon is considered to be the Armenian catholic seminary in Zmari abbey opened in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which still functions though with intervals. Only Armenian books were used in the seminary and they were published in Venice. Over time, the number of such schools and kindergartens has been increased. The number of Armenian schools functioning in Lebanon has increased especially after the First World War. In 1922 the Armenian Apostolic church had already 15, Armenian Catholic Church 8, and Armenian Evangelical Church 6 schools. Furthermore, in 1975 there were already 60 six-year schools, high and secondary Armenian training centers and other educational institutions with twenty-one thousand students. However, because of the emigration caused by the civil war the number of students has been reduced and in 1991 only 42 Armenian schools were functioning out of which 16 were pre-schools, 10 high schools and 16 secondary schools, as well as 5 vocational schools and 3

seminaries. Impressively, was the number of students continued to reduce because of the low birth rate within the community and large number of those attending foreign educational training centers. It is cleared up that as of 2003 there were about 30 Armenian schools (8 primary schools, 9 high schools, 12 secondary schools, 5 vocational schools and 2 seminaries) and about 4-8 thousand Armenian children were studying in Lebanese Arabic and foreign missionary training centers. Moreover, the tendency to send their children to non-Armenian educational institutions is mostly seen in wealthy families. However, the families with low income who send their children to state Arabic schools where the education is free are numerous (Danielyan 2002, Sanjian 2003).

A substantial percentage of third- and fourth-generation Armenians in Lebanon doubt about the usefulness of Armenian community schools. These schools belong to the local dioceses of the Armenian Apostolical Church, the Armenian Catholic or Evangelical communities, or to cultural and educational associations affiliated to the political parties. They have received very little assistance, if any, from Lebanese government and usually balance their budgets using donations from wealthy Armenians in their own communities or in the West (Sanjian 2001). It should be noted that the United Armenian Fund has donated a total of \$4.5 million to all 28 Armenian schools throughout Lebanon through a generous grant from The Lincy Foundation. As the English supplement of Azdak daily newspaper inofrms, the UAF funds contributed to these schools are designated for three specific purposes:

1. \$3.2 million to pay full or partial tuition for 5,092 needy Armenian students, which constitutes close to 75% of the 7,029 students enrolled in all 28 schools during the 2006-07 academic year;
2. \$757,000 to cover the salaries owed by most of the schools to 536 teachers and staff for the past academic year;

3. A total of \$513,000 for the general operating expenses of these schools (Azdak 2006).

Definitely, the issues like affiliation to the religious and political institutions, especially the various cultural associations reflecting the confessional and political diversity within the Armenian community as well as financial issues weaken the role of the Armenian educational institutions that once played a crucial role in forming, strengthening and maintaining the Armenian national identity. In addition, the recent war and post-war developments in Lebanon also have their negative impact on the Armenian educational institutions.

To stress the role of the educational institutions in preserving the Armenian nation, the following institutions deserve an emphasis: “Trchnots Buyn” national high school and orphanage, St. Hripsime college – a secondary mixed educational institution, Armenian Evangelical college – a mixed secondary school, Sahakyan-Levon Mkrtichyan college – a mixed educational institution, National Melankton and Hayk Arslanyan seminary – a mixed secondary educational institution, Daruhi-Hovakimyan secondary school, Vahan Tekeyan high school – a nine-year mixed high school, National Yeghishe Manukyan college – a mixed twelve-year secondary educational institution, Haykazyan University – the only state Armenian higher educational institution in Lebanon as well as the only Armenian university functioning within Diaspora, and National Armenological higher institution – an Armenological specialized educational institution. Moreover, it is important to note that in Lebanon the Armenological Department of French Jesus Fathers’ “Sen Joseph” University and AGBU “Ervand Hyusisyan” Armenological institution established by Italian-Armenian Ervand Hyusisyan’s donation played a great role in training the Armenian language and literature and Armenian history teachers (Danielyan 2002, Sanjian 2003).

Armenian-language theater has had its prized place on the Lebanese arts scene. From theatrical performances organized by itinerant Armenian actors in the 1920s and 1930s,

Armenian-language theater in Lebanon grew to have in the 1960s and early 1970s its regular theatrical groups and its special theater halls (Sanjian 2004). Two of these theatrical groups, those of the Armenian Youth Association (affiliated with the Armenian General Benevolent Union) and the Hamazkayin Cultural Association (close to the Dashnak party) do still continue to present at least one new production each year, however, they are facing a lot of difficulties such as finding qualified actors, decline of the audiences for an Armenian-language performance and the attendant revenues.

Radio, TV and Mass Media: The first Armenian newspaper in Lebanon was published at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It should be noted that in 1913-1914 the Armenian students of the American University of Beirut had their handwritten periodicals (Sanjian 2003). However, today, only three Armenian dailies are issued in Lebanon. These are Azdak (ARF Dashnaktsutyun), Zartonk (Ramkavar-Azatakan party) and Ararat (Hunchakyan party). Moreover, the recent data states that only “Azdak” (Dashnak party), and “Ararat” (Hunchak party) dailies are issued as of 2007. “Zartonk” the Ramkavar party’s daily, published for 70 years, has suspended its publication from January 2007 (Hakobyan 2007).

Yet, 685 titles and periodicals and 4 daily newspapers have been published from 1975 to 1984 (Danielian 1986) in Beirut among them being “Azdarar,” “Kaytser,” “Kanch,” “Hask,” “Haraj” and “Ayg” social-political, cultural newspapers, “Akos” monthly journal, “Ahekan” cultural quarterly journal, “Ani” monthly journal of literature and art, “Aravot” political, national, literary and sport weekly newspaper, “Avetik” and “Zvartnots” religious journals, “Arin” periodical for youth, “Artsiv” literary, religious social periodical, “Bjishk” medical and healthcare monthly newspaper, “Lebanon” and “Kayts” sport social journal and etc (Sanjian 2003).

In his interview, Kandakharyan admittedly stated that the activities of the Diasporan TV and press have always been targeted at preservation of nation and language. However,

there exist certain urgent issues that need to be spoken loud about. It is not a secret that the press experiences hard times nowadays. New alternative media structures fill in the information space with comments and reviews. Furthermore, the number of readers decreases. Under the circumstances the mission of the Armenian press should be changed. With the help of electronic media the information will be easily available to the audience. As most respondents claim, the Armenian language newspapers in Lebanon that are mostly controlled by these three political parties prefer not to write about internal problems of opposing parties in order to keep harmony within the community. They do not reveal inner problems. This is quite encouraging in the case of Lebanese Armenian political parties.

Moreover, as young Armenians become more fluent in Arabic and foreign languages and correspondingly less fluent in Armenian, Armenian-language periodicals published in Lebanon are seeing a reduction in their readership. They are thus under increasing financial strain and are being kept afloat only by the financial and human resources of the political organizations they tend to represent (Sanjian 2001).

Another reason for why the number of readers decreases is that print media suffers a decline as compared to TV in general. As the respondents noted, the only Armenian channel in Lebanon is H-1. However, since 1999 the Lebanon Prime Minister Rafik Hariri's "Al Mustak Bal" ("Future") TV station has been broadcasting everyday Armenian news. In 1996, for a short period "ICN" Arabic TV Company launched Armenian news and other programs. As for Armenian Television Network, it has started telecasting since 1992 (Sanjian 2001).

As *Ararad* daily judges to the point, to protect the Diaspora and the bridges between the Diaspora and Armenia it is necessary to connect the Diaspora with Armenia by its culture. Diaspora has enough of American cheap soap operas and songs having Turkish elements. The newspaper claims H-1 TV station to return the magnificent culture, which educated



generations with wonderful art and patriotism, without any political colorings (*Ararad Daily* 2006, p.1).

G. Yazichyan also states that, in general, the print media is losing over TV. In its turn, the Lebanese Armenian TV is in bad shape. Being the only Armenian channel in Lebanon, H-1 is more negative than positive propaganda. For example, the soap operas that are too far from being Armenian hardly can pass any information about the Armenian identity or the ideology of Armenian state. Moreover, there is no information on what is happening in other Armenian Diasporan communities, which is quite important as a joining link. Instead, the Diasporan communities themselves implement the news update by personal means such as passing books, newspapers, and cultural publications to each other through visits or airmail. As of 2002, there were 50 publications, which were unaware about each other's existence. And this, admittedly claims Yazichyan, should be taken care of by the Armenian Government.

As for the Radio, it should be stated that after the weakening of state control because of the civil war of 1982 in Beirut a number of radio stations started their activity among them being "Radioparadize," "National Voice of Lebanese Armenians," "Radio Melody," "Vana Voice," "Radio Sevan," "Radio Nairi," "Armenian Voice," and "Radio Hay" (Sanjian 2003). However, as the respondents stated, today only radio station "Vana Voice" is performing its activity. The efforts to preserve the cultural centers are big and the radio station "Vana Voice" does a good job in this regard, state the respondents.

Another sacred institution for the Diaspora, the Armenian family, has also come under threat. As already discussed earlier, a sharp increase has been recorded in marriages between Armenians and spouses from other Christian and Muslim sects in Lebanon. What was interesting, a significantly large number of these mixed marriages occurred among couples from higher socio-economic brackets (Der Karapetian and Oshagan 1977, Sanjian 2001).

And finally, the most important institution, the Embassy of Armenia in Lebanon, as the most respondents claimed, is not functioning effectively. The relations with the Ambassador and the Embassy are very restricted. However, the importance of the relations between the Armenian Embassy and the community is obvious all the more as the issue concerns the Middle East region.

As the respondents stated, the Armenians do not live in peace together in Lebanon, mostly in Beirut. They are much divided community nowadays holding different convictions.

Thus, the findings proved the decline of the traditional Armenian community in Lebanon. The facts of the study reveal the reduction of political and cultural weight of the community within Lebanese social, political and cultural life.

#### **Chapter 4: Culture and Language and Their Influence on the Armenian Life in Lebanon**

The Israeli invasion into Lebanon in 2006 and the recent social, cultural and political developments in this country made the Lebanese Armenians feel that their ethnic identity will gradually become even weaker.

How the cultural and linguistic situation of the Armenian community in Lebanon affects the political and social aspects of the Armenian life there?

As some of the respondents stated, the whole Armenian wealth – spiritual, cultural, educational and political continues to exist despite the financial difficulties thus trying to protect national features, peculiarities and protect the civil, community and national rights of all Armenians in Lebanon.

However, while studying the educational system in Lebanon, it has been revealed that it endangers the cultural and linguistic situation of the Armenian community in Lebanon. This argument is well expressed in the following fact: before entering the university, the students in Lebanon were obliged to pass the government Baccalaureate examinations which tested proficiency in Arabic language, literature and history. This requirement automatically made the thorough teaching of these Arabic-language subjects mandatory in all Armenian schools. However, the Armenian community came to believe that the task of safeguarding Armenian culture and identity in the Diaspora fell primarily upon their shoulders (Danielian 2002, Sanjian 2001).

Moreover, some respondents claimed that social and political assimilation is not a threat at all. On the contrary, it strengthens the positions of Armenians as individuals, as groups and community. The major problem they see is developing the Lebanese Armenian cultural identity.

In this regard Sanjian states that most Armenians now agree that they should acquire greater knowledge of the local language, culture and history. Educated Armenians believe that taking a more principled stand on the socio-political issues affecting their host countries will help them to assert their place in local society and politics. The problem, however, is that this necessary acculturation has been gradually weakening their traditional definition of Armenian identity. The urban environment of the Arab world in which most Armenians live also contributes to the subtle erosion of their ethnic orientation (Sanjian 2001).

This discussion reveals G. Yazichyan's convincing idea that the role of the cultural mission of the church is quite big. However, the culture, as already seen, is living a digression these days in Lebanon.

In the past the Armenian Diasporan communities used to rely upon their ethnic Armenian brethren in the Middle East for direction. The teachers of the Armenian language and priests serving in Western dioceses originated almost exclusively from the Middle East. Now it has become extremely difficult to persuade the Armenian youth in the Middle East to choose such careers (ARF Zavarian Students' Association 2003, Danielyan 2002, Sanjian 2001).

As it has been already said, the Armenian educational institutions in Lebanon do not have the same number of students as in early years because of the emigration. Moreover, as Sanjian notices, this is due not only to emigration and the new tendency among the Armenians to have smaller families, but also to an ever-increasing number of Armenian students in non-Armenian schools (Sanjian 2001). This tendency to attend the local educational institutions is seen in the respondents' statements, which they consider as a good opportunity to get easily integrated into the local life of the country. It is much easier to find a job after graduating from the local institutions than the Armenian ones. Besides, as already discussed, the factor of being cheap has its direct affect as well. According to the

respondents, parents, while sending their children to such schools hope that they will acquire a much better knowledge of Arabic, French and English, and will make friends with classmates who will form part of the country's future. Another reason for this is mixed marriages, since one of the spouse being non-Armenian urges the kid attend Arabic or any other foreign language school other than Armenian, state the most respondents.

The number of mixed marriages has been increased again conditioned by the social and political issues. Though the majority is using the Armenian language when communicating, there are signs of decrease in this regard.

Sanjian admittedly notices that these kinds of factors have helped to foster the emergence of a new type of Armenian Diaspora in Lebanon, which does not share many of the premises of the Diasporan Armenians. This new Diaspora, he claims, does not accord absolute priority to the perpetuation of the Armenian language and a distinct Armenian culture. Rather, it believes that Armenians should be more interested in local politics and try to address Armenian communal interests from within the Lebanese political system. The traditional Diaspora observes this trend with disgust and a sense of resignation. However, the members of the competing new Diaspora are usually richer and better connected to Lebanon's other religious communities (Sanjian 2001). This hardens the case even more. Moreover, the church and other institutions do not assist in forming a certain strategy on "how to accomplish a necessary level of integration while delaying an ultimate assimilation." Thus, there is the concern that the means to preserve Armenian identity are insufficient to end the threat. The continued membership in Armenian political parties and their affiliated organizations or attendance of Armenian schools is "no more than pain relievers." This sense of pessimism has always been part of the Armenian Diasporic existence which prepares ground for the cultural and linguistic situation of the Armenian community namely in Lebanon and affects the political and social aspects of the Armenian life.

## **Chapter 5: The Arrival of Turkish Peacemaking Forces to Lebanon and Potential Impacts on the Armenian Community**

Around 260 Turkish soldiers arrived in Lebanon on Friday, October 20, 2006 as part of the forces that Turkey, together with other interested countries, is providing to the United Nations (UN) peacekeeping mission. They were the first Muslim land forces to join U.N. peacekeepers monitoring a ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah. Two ships carrying around 95 personnel and 46 vehicles came in at Beirut port. As the article in Reuters (2006) informs, some 160 more soldiers flew later as well (Reuters 2006).

The entrance of Turkish peacemaking forces caused deep anxiety and serious concern among the Lebanese Armenians. The concern was fair and was coming out from the bloody experience at the hands of Turkey. The Armenian political parties in Lebanon, community heads, Lebanese-Armenian deputies and ministers expressed the concern of all the Armenian community in Lebanon in the public announcements, reports *Ararad Daily* (2006).

As the various historical sources would prove, the Arabs and Armenians in Lebanon have dozen of common reasons to convince that a country like Turkey cannot implement peaceful actions in the territory. This is mostly conditioned by the simple fact that from old times up to now Turkey is well known in the history with its massacres, violations, occupations, deportation and other horrible crimes against humanity. Moreover, the armed treaties signed with Israel assure that this intervention with “peaceful intentions” can only attract Israel but not Lebanon.

This argument is well expressed in the following discussion by Asbarez online (2006) which admittedly notices that no country participating in the international forces should be an ally of a conflicting party: Turkey, however, has a military treaty with Israel, which also includes a cooperation of special services. That treaty threatens the peace process in the region and has a history of enmity with many countries and nations that demonstrates the bloody core of Turkey’s relations with those nations. In addition, Turkey's history of violence

in Lebanon does not help this country to deserve such acceptance considering that the Lebanese people in their collective memory still endure the consequences of the Turkish crimes and tyranny. Conditioned by these realities, the Armenians urged the Lebanese government to refuse the inclusion of Turkish troops in the peacekeeping forces and include the Armenian position in its agenda, taking into account that all the communities in Lebanon should be respected equally (Asbarez online 2006).

The following comments regarding the arrival of Turkish peacemaking forces to Lebanon deserve an emphasis. While commenting on the decision of the Turkish Parliament to send peace-keeping forces to Lebanon, Ruben Safrastyan, Director of the ROA National Academy of Sciences (NAS) and Oriental Studies chair stated that “by allocating forces in Lebanon Turkey is trying to enhance its position in the region.” According to the historian, “this is also an attempt by Turkey to flatter the USA and the EU.” This statement was mostly conditioned by the concern that these forces might collide with “Hezbollah” (A1+ Armenia 2006).

The respondents hurried to state that the presence of Turkish peacemaking forces in Lebanon is conditioned by Turkey taking the advantage of the fact that Lebanon has applied for peacemaking forces. They also stated that Lebanon, without any agreement with Armenians, should not allow the entrance of Turkish peacemaking forces since the Armenian community is one of the general and respected communities in the confessional politics of Lebanon.

According to *Ararad* daily (2006) correspondents, sending Turkish peaceful forces to Lebanon is the decision of the US, Israel and NATO to follow and implement the joint regional programs.

Turkey has sent its peacemaking forces to Lebanon to strengthen its influence in the region. They remember very well that in the past this territory was once under Turkey. People

living here also remember those times, including the oppression. Thus, the Arabs are angry about Turkish and Israeli armed cooperation. It is also conditioned by the fact that Turkish armed forces are Sunni and Hezbollah's warriors are Shiite. Of course, international forces are of great importance to fence the Lebanon-Israel confrontation. However this does not mean that the Turkish involvement is necessary. There are lots of other countries that can send their forces without causing any danger to the local people. It is quite important that the Armenian officials in Lebanese government should work on this issue. However, international community has allowed such an irresponsible action, which even worsened the situation in the Middle East (Sassounian 2006, p. 5).

The news monitoring enables to claim that the European Union (EU) is implementing its neutral policy in sending peaceful forces to Lebanon thus trying not to get interfered in the US and Israeli dark and uncertain programs.

Does the presence of Turkish peacemaking forces in Lebanon represent any potential threats and negative impacts on the Armenian community?

The findings of this research question showed two different views the first one being "no potential threat" conditioned by the fact that the activity of Turkish peacemaking forces is mostly in the south and limited under the United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

As the representatives of the Middle East Department of the ROA Ministry of Foreign Affairs explains, the arrival of the Turkish peacemaking forces contains the emotional aspect in itself. They consider natural that the Lebanese Armenians do not want to see the Turkish interference. As regards the threat, they do not think there is any.

In his interview Mr. Hovig Eordekian (preferred not to provide his position) states that Turkish peacemaking forces are acting in the south of Lebanon and under the UN thus



they do not cause any threat with their presence. However, he adds that the Turks have their interests.

The second view witnesses “negative impact” which is explained as follows: it will make the Lebanese government more loyal to the Turkish positions in Armenian Question issues and cause restriction of Armenian community’s anti-Turkish activities in Lebanon.

Moreover, it is quite obvious that Israel is very interested in setting firm relations with Azerbaijan and very much willing to help the latter with lobbying for Azerbaijan’s favor in such issues as the Kharabakh conflict. One agreement with the article in Azg daily in this regard deserves an emphasis. In his article Harut Sassounian, the Publisher and the Editor of the American-Armenian newspaper “California Courier” reveals the Israel’s role in American-Jewish organizations advocating in favor of Azerbaijan and against Armenia. He hurries to state that following the Turkey’s example Azerbaijan tries to use Israel’s and American-Jewish political authority in Washington to fight against Armenia’s interests. Israel satisfies Azerbaijan’s requests since the latter imports oil and gas as well as different goods such as weapons. Israel also needs Azerbaijan for the purposes of political investigation of Iran (Azg daily, 2006 p. 4).

As the most Armenian Lebanese and Armenian newspapers report, all Armenians in Lebanon showed activity in expressing their opposition to the proposed deployment of Turkish troops as part of the United Nations mandated cease fire resolution. The Lebanese Armenian political leaders rejected the participation of Turkish forces in the peacemaking activity with their messages and meetings. Even all the political parties despite their controversies reunited and together published one publication to claiming against these forces. The spiritual leader of Lebanon's Armenians, Catholicos Aram I, released a statement calling Turkish participation in the peacekeeping mission morally unacceptable. However, as Yazichyan states, they met a political defeat in this regard.

Another serious political setback for the Armenians was the naming of a square after Sultan Abdul Hamid in the second largest city of Lebanon in 2006 on the commemoration day of the Armenian genocide. However, it was not less painful to hear the explanation by the Lebanese Government: this kind of action was coming out from overall Lebanese interests.

As Asbarez online (2006) informs, ARF delegation met with Lebanese prime minister Fuad Siniora to express its opposition to a proposed deployment of Turkish troops to southern Lebanon explaining that this collective opposition signaled a community-wide consensus on the issue. It was emphasized that an agreement to deploy Turkish troops in Lebanon will create across the board dissatisfaction and outrage within the community, which has continuously and historically supported the government. Siniora's answer to the delegation was quite simple: there were not sufficient international forces available to fulfill the needs of the international peacekeeping force and that he fully comprehended the expressed position of the delegation (Kalashian 2006).

Moreover, what was the most offensive is that Lebanon has requested not to make a big noise of this, since the Turkish forces will be settled in Lebanon in any case.

As almost all newspapers observed, another painful occasion in this regard was that the Lebanese-Armenian print media noticed the absence of the representatives of the ROA Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the state TV in political-diplomatic-humanitarian processes taking place in Lebanon, while Turkish TV with its dozen of journalists was everywhere in Lebanon and Turkish Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs tried to enter into Arabic world though Turkey has been the supporter of Israel from ages.

Armenia has national interests here – the large-scale war in the Near East is a direct threat for Armenia. The Lebanese-Armenian relations were set up and developed in an atmosphere of friendship, confidence, and mutual assistance. Besides, the Armenian community in Lebanon had a great role in the entire continent bridging the Armenian

communities. Today, the Armenians of Lebanon need protection, and Armenia must take appropriate actions to support the community.

The news monitoring reveals another fact: the Ramkavar political party has announced that Turkey which has rich past of genocides and massacres cannot take part in peacemaking process especially when it has armed treaty with Israel that is destroying Lebanon. However, as Mr. Yazichyan states, these very Ramkavars together with Hunchaks have shared the late Prime Minister Hariri's interests, yet, the latter was openly calling for Turkish peacemaking mission.

Thus, the discussed issues provide the starting ground to believe that the Turkish presence in Lebanon represents a real threat and has negative impact on the Armenian community in Lebanon. This is mostly coming out from the very fact that Azerbaijan, following Turkey's footsteps, tries to use the political clout of Israel and American-Jewish organizations in Washington, D.C. to counter Armenian interests. Israel obliges the Azeri demands out of an interest in importing oil and gas from Azerbaijan and exporting various products, possibly including weapons. Israel also needs access to Azerbaijan in order to collect intelligence on neighboring Iran (Topchian 2006). It should be noted that the details of the close cooperation and the ties between Azerbaijan, Israel and American Jewish organizations are not usually made public. Another article in Azg daily (2006) reveals that one should agree with the fact that the presence of Turkish forces is directly connected to the present and future geopolitical issues of Armenia. As stated in the article in Azg daily, the 15-16 years Isreal-Azerbaijan cooperative relations were somehow familiar to erverybody, however, the presentation of the details in this regard will reveal that this kind of cooperation can have a serious impact on the future of Armenia and Armenians all over the world (Burtman 2006, pp.1, 4-5).

## **Chapter 6: The Future of Armenian Community in Lebanon**

Lebanese should decide on and construct their future, and if they fail in this, moreover, if they fail in coming up with a proper presidential candidate acceptable by the confessional (religious) communities in the short term, it is quite obvious that an uncertain and dark future awaits the whole nation. In that case, the future of the Lebanese Armenian community, like the other ones, will be uncertain too and moreover endangered.

However, the research showed that even if the Lebanese Government succeed in acquiring positive outcome in this regard, it would be still hard to foresee a bright future for the Armenian communities in Lebanon as well as in the Middle East at large as well conditioned by the recent developments in the region that has undergone fifteen years of internal warfare, continual economic crisis and worsened and uncertain political situation.

As Aram Tovmasyan, Armenian journalist, states in his article, the wave of emigration to the West continues and even if an internal political compromise were reached in Lebanon, this exodus would be difficult to stop. The phenomenon of assimilation was unheard of in Lebanon in the past, he states. But in recent two decades assimilation has steadily become an ordinary phenomenon in Lebanon and will surely continue to gather momentum. In the next 20-30 years little will remain of the Armenian communities in Lebanon and other Middle East countries. Repatriation is the only remaining rational solution. The question remains: is Armenia ready to receive its children, and does it want to? (Tovmasyan 2007).

In his interview Yazichyan admittedly distinguished the following points that bother the Armenian community in Lebanon and make them emigrate:

1. the formation of Islamic state,
2. the fear of being considered traitors by Christian communities of Lebanon,
3. the momentum toward a new civil war

4. the concern about the weakening of the Armenian community that once gained political neutrality during 1971-1991. The Dashnaks are protecting Hezbollah and Hunchaks and Ramkavars are against. If the civil war starts the same fight could happen within the Armenian community. This is another reason for the Armenian community to leave the country. According to Mr. Yazichyan, the 2/3 of the community has decided to leave the country while 1/3 cannot and does not want to leave. The remaining part is already assimilated, and/or is not sure what to do. This uncertainty is mostly conditioned by the fact that the Republic of Armenia is lacking a program for repatriates. Those who had their education in Armenia or those who have relatives or close friends here, take certain actions to settle in Armenia. Moreover, some have already got own apartments. And the same should be said about those who have relatives and friends abroad.

As one of the respondents stressed, the Lebanese Armenians feel Lebanon is not their country. The Muslims are increasing in numbers, thus causing the emigration of Lebanese Armenians. Those who have enough money have already repatriated. The respondent was quite sure that those who will be confident of earning money in the homeland will come for sure, but still they are holders of big properties in Lebanon and the conditions in Armenia are bad enough for them. They claim that, though it is a peaceful place, they need to live their social life. Besides, they feel alienated in Armenia. There are some people who think that this is their chance to finally come to homeland, speak the mother tongue. However, many of them return back to Lebanon very disappointed just after the first visit. Those who have already settled challenge psychological and language problems in both communication and finding job.

The following direct quotation of a respondent “the future of Lebanon is unpredictable, and the situation is very painful” deserves an emphasis. As the respondent

claims, the youth live with no purpose, they do not know whether to build a house or not since after being built it might get ruined. They would think the situation will be improved, but no, Lebanon is not the country for them to live. “That is why I decided to come to Armenia. Let it happen whatever will happen. Though I will live though in bad conditions but in homeland. Since 2005 I am here and do not think of anything.”

Mr. Eordekian’s statement was quite interesting in this regard. He holds that the repatriation and uniting the nation is everybody’s concern. However, the Diaspora will continue to exist and it is wrong to empty the Lebanese Armenians from the country. Moreover, the Armenians are free in Lebanon as compared to the other countries in the Middle East thus there is no need to artificially force them to repatriate.

Then, the question is what are the current trends and perspectives for the development of Armenian community in Lebanon?

There are two different views in this regard the first one being the “continuation of community life and activities in traditional ways” and the second one - “the emigration of Armenians to third countries or their organized repatriation.” As the most respondents mentioned:

- The present community environment is not very attractive to the educated Lebanese Armenian young people: as a result, they have fears about their future. The traditional Diasporan elite in Lebanon seems to lack any clear prescription on how to preserve the community, while emigration, acculturation and assimilation have hit unprecedented highs.

Kandakharyan (2007) underscored that unless the Middle East crisis gets its political solution, forecasting the developments is difficult (Kandakharyan 2007).

The representative of the Middle East Department of the ROA Ministry of Foreign Affairs reports that the number of Lebanese Armenians is reducing, which is a natural

process and depends not only on the worsened social conditions in the country but also the other religious communities. However, the community as itself has no problem as a minority within the country. The community has a problem because the future of Lebanon is under question. Moreover, in conditions where the political tense situation is a continuing process, which causes joblessness and other social issues, and the tourism and trade are suffering, it is natural that the Armenian community also faces the same. Thus, the community seeing no future in this country leaves it. Some Armenians have already transferred their businesses temporarily into other Arabic countries for safety. However, they do not want to lose the Lebanese citizenship. As the respondents explained the community is comprised of people of different living standards – those who live in economically good conditions and those who hardly earn for living. These people are looking for ways to survive. One of the ways is to send their children to local Arabic schools, which are free of charge. However, to depriving children of a good Armenian education, simply because of material problems is not a good reason. There are also benevolent schools in Lebanon one of them being established by Aghbalyan. Moreover, the Armenian schools are well known with their high quality of education. Many students come from Cyprus, Syria to study in these schools and universities.

The Middle East Department of the MFA comments in this regard that the Lebanese Armenians get socialized with the Arabs and they have to speak the language: also much importance is given to English language and this is natural in this globalization process.

It should be concluded that the community is trying to survive and not to develop. How do the Lebanese-Armenians view their future and what place does Armenia occupy in it?

The Armenians of Lebanon consider themselves ‘Prisoners’ in the tense political environment in the Middle East region. They have to tolerate an apparently unending, deep

economic collapse in Lebanon. The community encounters the following problems in this regard. They lack:

- lack of leadership to ease the negative impact from the latest developments;
- inability to remedy the existing situation on their own;
- feeling of abandonment by other community members and the motherland.

Thus the future of Lebanon is quite uncertain because of the tense political situation in the country. The issues like neighborhood, big communities having different political views and convictions, the fact that Lebanon does not have a constitution, the confessional status of Lebanon (different community members occupy the official positions) do not speak about any future in Lebanon. It is obvious that the Armenian community could not step aside ignoring all these kind of developments. Besides, since this community forms a significant part of the country's electorate, their votes are of importance. Consequently, they get involved in the political processes of Lebanon. Though the community has once proved its neutrality towards the Lebanese political disagreement, it cannot avoid further developments and participation. Moreover, being the most visible linguistic minority, they occupy places in Lebanese government. Besides, as most respondents stated, recently the Lebanese Armenians performed even more involvement in local politics of the country, which is conditioned by the reality that this kind of involvement will make them become more and better integrated with the locals and enable them to solve their social and in some cases political problems as well, also put the Armenian community interests on Lebanese political agenda. As a result, these kinds of developments weaken the community while dividing it into groups that are followers of different political convictions. This comes to prove the very fact that like other communities in Lebanon, Armenians also implement most social activities through their churches and affiliated social, cultural and athletic organizations, which in their turn are affiliates to different parties. As a result, they fail to build any political and ideological



agreements with each other. Thus, this kind of situation creates socially and politically hard situation for the whole community.

However, the respondents stressed that the community has no problems in Lebanon, the Armenian community is very much respected and it does not suffer indignity as a minority. The problem of the community exists because it is related to the problem of the future of Lebanon. In addition, they stated that they have no basis to say that Lebanon will have any future. Moreover, the recent developments come to prove just the opposite. However, there is a fear to say that Lebanon will never again have future again, because this kind of statement would weaken the Lebanese even more. The Lebanese have proved to have deep-seated faith throughout all these years of war and they have to overcome future obstacles.

As Mr. Yazichyan states, if there is an organized program of repatriation (providing long term credits, status of citizenship, and temporary living status) the half of the community will repatriate to Armenia. However, Mr. Yazichyan also states that as an ideology this does not exist neither in Lebanese Armenian institutions nor in Armenia, thus he considers thinking of it useless. It will take several years for them to understand all that.

Not only Mr. Yazichyan, but also most respondents confirmed that Lebanese Armenians face psychological issues while repatriating. There is a formed stereotype of Armenians living in Armenia being thieves, pilferers, and liars and these kinds of negative characteristics hold them away from the homeland. Thus, here the importance falls on the awareness that Republic of Armenia and mostly diplomatic agencies fail to provide the Armenian communities with not only in Lebanon but also all over the world. The government provides no consultation and does not encourage repatriating. Moreover, in no state agency the repatriates can solve their problems such as in case a child is living psychological hardship because of the language problems. If these kinds of issues are solved and it is

propagandized people will come. As regards to the future of the community Yazichyan is concerned by the fact that the community is quickly assimilating and bringing them to homeland is urgent.

The Middle East Department of MFA in this regard states that the stronger the Republic of Armenia the better for the Diasporan future.

Mr. Ralph Yirikyan, General Manager of VivaCell company, sees no language barrier, he considers that there is no difference in letters. The only problem is the pronunciation and everyone will get used to it in a very short period. He is pretty sure that if a Lebanese Armenian studies the life in Armenia and likes it s/he will definitely go back to Lebanon and bring the family to homeland. He is also pretty sure that with such developments in the world of global notion of terrorism it is hard to migrate abroad and definitely all those who will do will come back to Armenia sooner or later. The Diasporan Armenians are very crafty and need no help. The first months will be hard for them but then they will get used to. He agrees with the idea that there is no proper propaganda regarding repatriation. However, he considers that it will be shameful for repatriates to wait for a special call from homeland.

What are the Armenian state and political parties' strategies and contingencies, if any, in regard to the Lebanese-Armenian community?

As the Middle East Department of MFA reports, the state has the policy to support the Diaspora especially the ones in the Middle East. Moreover, Armenia is ready to print textbooks for Diasporan Armenians in the Middle East but there is the language problem as well as the need for teachers. Therefore, they organize trainings for the Diaspora teachers which are implemented jointly with the Ministry of Education. There are other joint programs to improve the Armenian language, history literature, religion programs so that they can meet the Diaspora needs in preserving the nationality.

Moreover, as Armenia Liberty (2006) reports, the government is ready to grant asylum to any Lebanese regardless of their ethnic origin. The Armenian diplomatic missions in Lebanon and Syria have been instructed to issue three-month entry visas and residency permits without delay and free of charge (Stepanyan, 2006).

In addition, the interviews with Armenian government officials who kindly requested to remain anonymous enabled to summarize the government actions in regard with Diasporan Armenians in this case from Lebanon in the following points:

- Ten years of residency status (renewable).
- Provisional asylum and refugee status.
- Trainings for Lebanese-Armenian teachers.
- Free education in the field of Armenian Studies in higher educational institutions of Republic of Armenia.
- Joint curriculum on teaching Language, Literature, History, and Religion.
- The satellite broadcast of Armenia's Public Television programs, distribution of newspapers.
- Pan-Armenian Youth Assembly activities: Pan-Armenian games; "Baze" Yearly Assembly which are aimed at integrating the Lebanese Armenian youth into the compatriots.
- Lack of proper actions for the integration of the repatriates in the Armenian society:
  - Linguistic assistance;
  - Psychological assistance related to anxiety, fear, loneliness, absence of future planning;
  - Advisory assistance.

However, certain description about the points stated above through investigation for the purposes of this research deserve an emphasis. Despite the fact that ROA government

grants provisional asylum and refugee status, it is given for a year even if it is renewable. This kind of status gives the right to legally live in the territory of the country only. The state does not provide the refugees with an apartment. Moreover, no help is offered with transportation, education and healthcare etc. However, in case the Lebanese Armenians appear completely homeless, they are offered the special dormitory on 70 Molodovakan Street in Nor Nork region. It should be stressed that the dorm can only host 8-10 families not more. In addition, the refugees can host only 8-10 families and not more. In addition, the refugees can live there only for 3 months, after which they have to leave the dormitory (Article 8 of the ROA Law on Refugees 1999).

As most newspapers report, and the records of the Migration Agency of the Ministry of Territorial Administration show, according to the law, the Lebanese Armenians should be given lump sum of fifteen thousand Armenian drams and they can also expect from the Armenian Red Cross twenty thousand as monthly allowances in Armenian drams. However, it should be noted that the allowances are given to those families who meet the Red Cross standards such as families having many children, or aged people and infants. Red Cross will help the young people in finding job. Even if this kind of action is carried out in practice, the interviewed Lebanese Armenians find it impossible to survive with such little amount of money and are quite unsatisfied with the help provided in finding jobs.

The Migration Agency helps Lebanese Armenians with free education and health care by giving out recommendations to the appropriate institutions, if of course the refugees apply with such requests of course. However, there is a contradiction between the statement of the Migration Agency and the Lebanese Armenians interviewed for the purpose of this study. The respondents stated that while being students of the state higher educational institutions they pay the full tuition fee like all local students. As the Department of Middle East of the

MFA of RA informed, free education is provided only in the field of Armenian Studies in the state higher educational institutions of RA.

As a result of news monitoring and interviews at Red Cross, the latter is ready to help the refugees from Lebanon with financial and food aid, provide with legal, psychological, and healthcare consulting. However, there is a defined list of food aid that includes oil, rice, and sugar - overall about nine food species. Yet, Red Cross complained that no refugee from Lebanon has applied to their office for any kind of aid (Azg Daily 2006). However, both Red Cross and interviewed Lebanese Armenians find the problem in lack of appropriate information. The respondents were unaware about this very source of aid. However, it is rather easier to provide the needy with aid than to find and solve the problem.

Thus, the state lacks any strong program in this regard. Moreover, the state does not send a lawyer, psychologist and social anthropologist to study the Diaspora especially in the Middle East that could help in forming a proper strategy in this regard.

As for the political parties the interview results reveal that they lack any strategy.

Though the political parties chosen purposefully to be interviewed stated certain points in regard with the issues of Armenian Diaspora, mostly designed by words “must” and “should” however, these were statements only and no clear action was listed in their programs in this regard. For example, most of them stressed about the elaboration and implementation of programs of repatriating to homeland, support educational-cultural institutions with necessary programs, books and materials. However, they have implemented no action in this regard. The outcomes of the interviews reveal that political parties of Armenia stated completely nothing in regard with any major issue as discussed throughout the paper about Lebanese Armenians and no need to talk about any expectation of providing with a strategy. The Armenian parties like to react, not to act. Hence, they are always late to be there where they were mostly needed to be.

As most respondents recalled, during the Soviet Union there was a Committee of Cultural Relations which was dealing with Diasporan Armenians. After the independence this committee was abolished. Today, in such harsh political developments that have direct or indirect impact on the Armenian nation, there is one Department at the ROA Ministry of Foreign Affairs, one Department at the ROA Ministry of Youth and Culture and one Department at the RA Ministry of Education. Moreover, the activities they implement do not correspond to the needs of Diasporan Armenians especially in the Middle East region.

Being a member of the Armenian community in Lebanon, Mr. Yazichyan states: “the Armenian community in Lebanon expects a lot from the homeland.”

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

It should be noted in the conclusion that for the safety of Armenian Diaspora and Armenians it is high time for Diaspora and Armenia to cooperate with each other, thus transferring this cooperation into the field of actions. It is the very time that the Diasporan and Armenian officials awaken and seriously think of the happenings around themselves and instead of protecting their political convictions and interests in holding proper posts in the political arena all over the world try to properly examine and evaluate these very international developments, thus concentrating on the national interests and deciding on ways to protect these interests all together. They need to fight against the difficulties that may harm the nation and patriotism. It is high time that the Diasporan political thought brings its contribution to the homeland and the homeland in its turn welcomes this kind of participation.

In a nutshell, it is high time to think of forming a joint Armenia-Kharabakh-Diaspora strategy, shared responsibility and confidence in fighting against difficulties.

Based on the discussions and conclusions that have been made through the essay the following points are the recommendations of actions to be taken in short and long run:

- Facilitate the repatriation and installation of sick or vulnerable persons through financial and administrative means.
- Provide medical and social follow-up.
- Provide financial and medical care.
- Provide legal assistance.
- Improve lodging conditions and provide immigrated repatriates with housing. Provide parents with financial and technical help for the schools.
- Provide immediate humanitarian assistance for daily problems.
- Provide social support for the repatriates in order to reduce the inequalities.

- Provide information about the migrants and the refugees.
- Provide social care such as awareness sessions, home visits, integration of students, care for sick persons, and handicapped and old people.

For the long run the following points may serve as the best recommendations to the Armenian government and political parties:

- Create close ties between the Diaspora communities through newspapers, radio and TV by improving the news, articles and programs in order to make the Diaspora economically, socially, culturally and politically more aware of the Armenian life not only in the republic but also among Diaspora communities all over the world. Implement research to study and understand the interests of the Lebanese-Armenian youth and take appropriate measures in propagating Armenian culture, thus increasing the love and attachment to it.
- Conduct research in Lebanon to check the exact data in regard with increasing assimilation processes.
- Take actions to reduce the growing tendency of assimilation and emigration to Western states by redirecting the flow of emigrants into the homeland.

To conclude it should be noted that all of the discussed factors in the essay have reduced the political clout of the Armenian community in Lebanon to an extremely low level.



## APPENDICES

### *Appendix A: Interview Questions*

1. How would you define the present situation of the Armenian community in Lebanon? What do you think are some of the major problems that community faces today in Lebanon?
2. Do you think Armenians living in Lebanon are losing their identity?
3. What are the causes and reasons for the diminishing numbers of Armenians residing in Lebanon?
4. How would you briefly describe the political situation in Lebanon?
5. What are the external and internal factors affecting Lebanese political life?
6. What is the role of Armenians in Lebanese political system if they have any?
7. What is the role of Armenian institutions (e.g. schools, church, political parties) in Lebanon? What contribution do these institutions bring to the issue of the demise of Armenian community in Lebanon?
8. How would you describe the influence of the cultural and linguistic situation of the Armenian community on the political and social aspects of the Armenian life in Lebanon? Do you consider assimilation of Armenians with Lebanese as a threat to the further existence of Armenians?
9. What are the potential threats that the presence of Turkish peacemaking forces in Lebanon represents?
10. What are the impacts on the Armenian community that the presence of Turkish peacemaking forces in Lebanon represents?
11. What are the current trends and perspectives for the development of Armenian community in Lebanon?
12. How would you comment on the future of Lebanese Armenians? How do they envisage their future?
13. Do you think there are any continuing efforts for national consensus aiming to sustain the Lebanon's internal unity?
14. What is the place that Armenia occupies in the future of Lebanese Armenians?
15. What are the Armenian state and political parties' strategy and contingencies in regard to Lebanese Armenian community?

*Appendix B: List of Interviewees<sup>10</sup>*

Mr. Shahan Kandakharyan, Editor-in-Chief, “Azdak” daily (the largest Armenian newspaper of Lebanon)

Mr. Gevorg Yazichyan, PhD in History

Mr. Mihran (last name not provided), Caricaturist

Mr. Hovig Eordekian, (position not provided)

Mr. Ara Sanjyan, Director, Armenian Research Center at the University of Michigan-Dearborn

Mr. Arsene Kdenyan, AUA MBA 2004 graduate

Mr. Ralph Yirikyan, General Manager, VivaCell company

Mr. Tigran Gevorgyan, 1<sup>st</sup> Secretary, Middle East Department, RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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<sup>10</sup> Thirty-one in-depth interviews were completed with appropriate persons. Ten Lebanese Armenians temporarily living in Armenia for various reasons as well as three respondents from the RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Middle East Department, Diaspora Agency, and Migration Department) requested to remain anonymous. The representatives of eight political parties and one representative of the Migration Agency of the RA Ministry of Territorial Administration preferred not to provide their names. One representative of the Red Cross organization was also not willing to be referred to in the report.

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