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**THE CASE OF ARMENIA:
REPATRIATION AS AN OPTION FOR DEVELOPMENT**

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INTRODUCTION

The massive emigration of Armenians from the homeland in the years following the independence of the Republic has continued to the present on a smaller or larger scale. This has created demographic challenges for the country directly threatening the development of Armenia. The continuing emigration and declining rates of the population imposes the need for new policy solutions and actions that take into account the necessity of increasing the size of the population. One possible option for achieving that is to consider a migration policy intended to encourage the return or repatriation of Armenians back to the homeland.

While considering repatriation as an option, one ought to take into account the “open doors” that the independent Republic of Armenia has offered since 1991 to Diaspora Armenians living in various parts of the globe. At certain times, this “open doors” stance turned to encouragement or invitation for Armenians to consider returning to their country of origin or choosing to move to Armenia even if they were born elsewhere. However, despite the fact that dialogue between Armenia and Diasporan communities was clearly pronounced in this regard, especially in the first years of independence, repatriation did not become a part of the official political agenda as such. The government consistently welcomed foreign direct investments by individuals or groups of Armenians from the Diaspora (henceforth DDI — Diaspora direct investments), but the repatriation option was not articulated as an evident option offered to Diasporan Armenians.

Thus, unlike countries with precise repatriation agendas, Armenia did not develop regulatory policies to support repatriation (and also to regulate massive emigration). The repatriation provisions in the Law on Citizenship of the Republic of Armenia and related

migration policies were only established in 2007. The introduction of dual citizenship in 2007 was the first governmental step towards the promotion of repatriation. In 2008, Diaspora-homeland relations became more institutionalized with the creation of the Ministry of Diaspora. Among other Diaspora-related issues the initiation of repatriation policies also was a part of the latter's objectives. In that regard, the Ministry established the Department of Repatriation and Investigation with the articulated goal *“to develop a corporate state policy on repatriation, to participate in the supervision and implementation of the policy and to develop programs promoting repatriation”* (RA Department of Repatriation and Investigation, 2015).

Although the Republic of Armenia has adopted programs and legislative provisions on repatriation, during the 25 years of independence the political construct of repatriation did not result in regular repatriation inflows, probably because the whole process of return has not been adequately defined despite the fact that the policy articulates that it would promote the development of the country.

It is worth noting that the topic of repatriation has not attracted the attention of researchers, whether in Armenia or elsewhere, and lacks comprehensive studies that would address the issue from a policy perspective. There are a limited number of studies that discuss “return” from a historical point of view mainly focusing on the repatriation of Armenians during Soviet times, which do not pay adequate attention to the regulatory and procedural issues related to appropriate policy solutions.

The new constitution of the Republic of Armenia, adopted by a nationwide referendum in December 2015, brings the issue of repatriation to a constitutional level of significance. Article 19 of the revised constitution stipulates that the Republic of Armenia implement a comprehensive policy towards the development of homeland-Diaspora relations

and the preservation of the Armenian identity; it also encourages the repatriation of Armenians (Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, 2015). This is the first time that repatriation has been addressed constitutionally affording the need to raise the question of related policy formulation on the issue. This research study is aimed at drafting a policy paper that will evaluate government repatriation efforts to date, to investigate the importance of repatriation for Armenia, identify the problems hindering the development and realization of repatriation policy and to try to offer substantiated practical recommendations based on successful repatriation policies of other countries.

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

What is Repatriation?

Broadly defined, the repatriation policies of a state articulate the provisions, including rules and regulations designed to promote and facilitate repatriation, and are distinctly aimed at encouraging persons to return to their homeland or “*place of origin*”. Such policies are a part of the overall position of a state on issues of immigration and, in most cases, articulate the preferential treatment of a particular ethnic group by way of special accommodations, thereby encouraging immigration. The policy targets people of the same ethnic origin as the titular ethnic group of the homeland, in other words, the policy is based on blood ties and ethnic associations (Skrentny et al. 2007; Zeveleva 2014). The terminology used in the literature on this topic varies across countries. The repatriation policies are also called “*migration of ethnic affinity*”, “*co-ethnic migration*”, “*return-migration*”, ethnic priority immigration and “*ethnic return migration*” (Cassarino 2004; Oka 2013).

Related international law; the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, place the “*right of return*” at the core of repatriation provisions — a right that entitles every person to reside in the country that they consider homeland (Tsuda 2009; Zeveleva 2014). Approximately 40 countries of the world have implemented or are in the process of formulating repatriation policies and programs. Notable among those are Israel, Greece, Kazakhstan, Russia, Germany, and France (Zeveleva 2014; Shevel 2011).

Generally, repatriation policies are adopted by post-conflict states or by those that have large diasporas (Joppke 2005; Harutyunyan 2010). The goals of such states with

repatriation policies vary across countries. Some countries prioritize the ideological intent of the policy, some of them place emphasis on the impact of repatriation on demographic problems, and others use the policy to import financial, social and human capital thereby fostering economic growth (Skrentny et al. 2007; Zeveleva 2014).

In a book entitled The End of the Refugee Cycle? Refugee repatriation and reconstruction, Black and Koser (1999) emphasize the importance of repatriation policies in overcoming refugee problems. Since the 1990s, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the explosion of numerous ethnic conflicts in the world, a growing number of refugee flows were unavoidable. Noticeably, repatriation became an often preferred solution to refugee-related issues and more countries adopted repatriation strategies and policies to tackle such problems (Black and Koser 1999).

There are studies that comparatively analyze the repatriation policies of different countries arguing two primary points related to repatriation as the core of the policy solution: (a) ideological considerations; and (b) development of the homeland (Tsuda 2009; Ohlinger and Rainer 2003). Countries that enforce return-migration policies with ideological considerations view the policy as a part of their nation-building agenda, based on the notion that the homeland state has an obligation to its co-ethnics living abroad (Bonnenfant 2012; Steinbach 2001; Black and Koser 1999). The ideological considerations also include the idea of building a strong homeland that can guarantee the safety and security of the state and promote the preservation of national identity of repatriated people by encouraging them to return and live in the homeland.

This line of reasoning emphasizes the importance of the connection between homeland and ethnic kin living abroad and the central role of the homeland in making the country appear safe and secure in the eyes of potential returnees. Those countries that

prioritize the ideological component do not put any requirements for future repatriates except for their ethnic affiliation (Kalshabaeva and Seisenbayeva 2013). On the other hand, other countries that enforce the policy on the basis of development considerations pay more attention to the capacity of the migrant to contribute to the economic, social and political development of the homeland placing special requirements for repatriation, such as level of education, area of expertise and experience, social status, etc. (Skrentny et al. 2007).

Elements of Repatriation Policy

No doubt the role of the homeland in the formulation and implementation of repatriation is essential. Kaczmarczyk and Lesinska (2013) argue that in the process of repatriation the state policy can be active or passive, i.e., government intervention can be in the form of an action or reaction. Homeland states are more prone to take an active role when the scale of emigration is very high and create problems for the development of the country; and also when the policy is considered as a potential tool for tackling these problems. These authors also divide policy instruments into three main categories: promotional, supportive, and supplementary (Kaczmarczyk and Lesinska 2013). Along this argument, Zeveleva (2014) argues that repatriation policies are sustainable only if they contain both ideological and practical components.

A repatriation policy includes two main stages of implementation: the organization of immigration and the integration of repatriates into society. For the sustainable implementation of each stage, the homeland government creates special legal and institutional frameworks. The legal basis of the policy can be formulated either as a separate legislative act or as a constituent element of other laws and regulations, most frequently as a part of migration or citizenship laws. For instance, the repatriation policy of Israel is based on the Law of Return that ensures the manifestation of the “*right of aliyah*” granting every

Jewish person the right to return to Israel and obtain Israeli citizenship (Law of Return 1950). Unlike Israel, the repatriation policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, another country with a well-functioning repatriation policy, is regulated by the provisions of migration and citizenship legislation.

Rules and regulations on immigration are intended to clearly define the individuals eligible for repatriation (whether the policy is an open door policy or is restricted to a certain number of people), the application procedures, the process of repatriation, and the requirements of citizenship. Policy instruments also address issues concerning the smooth integration of return migrants to the social, economic and cultural life of the homeland. The literature defines the integration of repatriates as “*a sustained mutual interaction between newcomers and the societies that receive them*” (Bonnenfant 2012). The argument is that the proper integration of repatriates is important for the success of the policy considering that most negative consequences of repatriation (including social and economic tensions between newcomers and locals) occur in this phase. Thus, in this phase the state provides short-term and long-term assistance to returnees, such as housing, medical and welfare assistance, trainings, etc (Gmelch 1980).

The other important tool embedded in repatriation policy is the identification or formation of a dedicated regulatory institution for the implementation of the policy, including the provision of assistance to repatriates especially in the process of adaptation and integration. Thus most governments of receiving countries set up institutions with the responsibility of coordinating immigration and integration. Along with dedicated state institution(s), policy components also include the explicit and implicit cooperation with and by other government institutions, such as ministries of foreign affairs, education, labor and

social affairs, as well as the embassies of the receiving country, local authorities, and NGOs (Kaczmarczyk and Lesinska 2013, Ivanova 2013, Bonnenfant 2012).

International Best Practice: Repatriation Policy of Israel

The policies concerning the immigration and integration of Jewish Diasporans into Israel have always been a part of the political agenda of the country. The Republic of Israel is an exemplar of successful implementation of repatriation policy. Being a country with the largest Diaspora in the world, the Jewish state presents a unique example of a nation state that has a population mostly comprised of citizens that have come to Israel as a result of the implementation of the Israeli repatriation policy (Schneider 2008).

Before and after the formation of the independent state of Israel in 1948, the inflow of Jews from different parts of the world drove a significant increase in the population up to 8.1 million (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics 2015). From the first years of independent statehood, the demographic imperative made the political authorities of the state to take precise actions towards repatriation of people with Jewish origin to Israel. The declaration of independence and the creation of the independent Jewish state have systematized the process of the continuous immigration of the Jewish people from different parts of the world to the land of present Israel. The 1948 declaration of independence served as the foundation of the ensuing repatriation policy. It proclaims that "*The State of Israel will be open for Jewish immigration and the in-gathering of the exiles*" (Declaration of Israel's Independence 1948).

In 1950, the Parliament of Israel (Knesset) unanimously enacted the Law of Return as according to which "*every Jew has the right to come to his country as an Oleh (immigrant)*" (Law of Return 1950). The law has been formulated not merely as an instrument of immigration policy, but as an endorsement of the "natural" right of every Jew to move and reside in the historical homeland (Joppke and Roshenhek 2001).

Starting from the first years of implementation of repatriation policy, the Jewish Agency was the main organization responsible for it. The Immigration and Absorption Department of the Jewish Agency was responsible for carrying out the functions related to housing, employment, teaching Hebrew, and health insurance of repatriates. Currently, the activities of the Jewish Agency mainly cover the promotion, facilitation, and organization of return migration. The Agency has Aliyah Centers and Departments in many countries of the world that provide information and advice on repatriation-related procedures, the assistance, and opportunities offered by the government of Israel. The Agency also organizes various programs of Hebrew language courses (Ulpan Etzion, Ulpan Kinneret, TAKA), helps young repatriates to get prepared for studying in the higher education institutions of Israel. The organization also has Job Centers that provide information to the immigrants prior to arrival about job market and available positions and helps with employment-related issues (“The Jewish Agency” 2016). Another Jewish organization that deals with repatriation and works in conjunction with the Jewish Agency is Nefesh B’Nefesh. The organization works only with potential repatriates from the US, Canada, and the UK with the purpose to minimize the social and financial obstacles of returnees (“Nefesh B’Nefesh” 2013).

With the establishment of the Ministry of Aliyah and Immigrant Absorption in 1968, the Government of Israel assumed a central role in the organization and implementation of repatriation policy (Bonnenfant 2012; Zeveleva 2014). Since then the government of Israel has taken complete ownership of the integration process related to repatriation and has developed various strategies for the implementation of the adopted repatriation policy. The coordination of the integration of Israeli repatriates has since evolved. Until the 1990s, there have been two main models of integration: *indirect absorption* and *direct absorption*. In the first model (now defunct), the immigrants were settled in dedicated absorption centers for six months and received consultations in employment, taxes and customs, as well as learning

Hebrew. This model failed to provide a smooth integration of immigrants and made them too dependent on government support. In the *direct absorption* model, the government allocates subsidized rental apartments to immigrants. The drawbacks of this second model are in the absence of assistance with finding jobs in the same areas as immigrant residences. At the end of the 1980s, the Israeli government introduced a new *direct absorption* method of integration policy (Bonnenfant 2012).

Citizenship and Status

In 1952, the Nationality Law of Israel defined the right of the immigrant to become an Israeli national, meaning that the *aliyah* (immigrant) is eligible to obtain Israeli citizenship with all the rights and obligations thereto upon arrival (Woolf 2015, Toren 1978). Along with getting citizenship, the repatriates also receive special status of repatriate for the whole duration of integration period that lasts up to three years. The status of repatriates includes the following five groups: new immigrants (*oleh hadash*), children of immigrants (*ben olim*), returning minors (*katin hozer*), immigrant citizens (*eizrach oleh*), and returning residents (*toshav hozer*) (Woolf 2015).

Integration

The distribution of financial assistance is an important component of integration of the return migration policy in Israel. The Ministry of Aliyah and Immigrant Absorption in cooperation with other government bodies provides various types of assistance based on the status and needs of the returnees (Lav 2009). The Ministry of Aliyah and Immigrant Absorption is the provider of Absorption Basket that constitutes the initial governmental assistance to the newly arrived immigrants, comprising assistance in the first year of immigration. The Absorption Basket includes two portions of allocation. The first is provided at the airport upon arrival in order to finance the initial necessary arrangements. The second portion includes the transfer of financial assistance from the Ministry of Aliyah to the bank

account of the immigrant. The allocation of Absorption Basket is carried out in six monthly payments in the first year of arrival. Subsequently, immigrants may be granted a new portion of assistance (assured income) from the Ministry if they still are unemployed or are unable to work due to the health reasons (“The Ministry of Immigrant Absorption - Home Page” 2016).

The Government of Israel also provides financial assistance to immigrants to overcome their language barriers, to find a permanent job and smoothly integrate into the Israeli society. The latter types of assistance include tuition subsidies and travel expenses related to studies. The subsidies are granted on a one-time basis for six months during the 18 months period after *aliyah* (Woolf 2015) .

The allocation of housing assistance is implemented by the Ministry of Aliyah and Immigrant Absorption in conjunction with the Ministry of Housing and the Ministry of Finance. The returnees with the status of new-immigrant, immigrant citizen, returning minors are eligible for the housing assistance. An immigrant should be considered as “*without housing*” in order to be eligible for the assistance. “*Without housing*” means that a person does not possess ownership or partial ownership of an apartment in Israel and holds a Certificate of Eligibility. The Certificate of Eligibility (*te’udat zeka’ut*) is a document that is issued by the Government of Israel establishing the eligibility of a person to receive government assistance for housing (“The Ministry of Immigrant Absorption - Home Page” 2016). This assistance is provided in the form of rental subsidies, public housing, and/or government mortgage for purchasing an apartment. The rental subsidies are included in the Absorption Basket during the first year of immigration. However, they can be extended for a period of five-years. The size of the subsidy depends on the number of family members and the length of time in the country. Over time, the amount of subsidy decreases. The government mortgage for housing is another type of housing assistance that provides

immigrants with loans with more favorable conditions than commercial financing institutions. The government also provides public housing or shelter assistance mainly to elderly couples (Woolf 2014).

The other important element of repatriation policy that ensures the successful absorption of returnees is the assistance in finding satisfying employment. In this area too, the government of Israel has a variety of instruments for assisting the repatriates. Starting from the first days of *aliyah* the personal absorption counselor helps to develop an employment plan and organizes vocational training and retraining of repatriates to prepare them in the process of finding jobs (Woolf and Shetreet, 2014).

CHAPTER 2: DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Objectives of the Study, Problem Statement and Questions of Analysis

The primary goal of the study is to examine the current repatriation-related realities in Armenia, to identify the major problems in the field and draw practical recommendations by using international best practices (namely focusing on the case of Israel). For this purpose, the study incorporates the principles of scientific research and policy analysis and starts from defining the problem as a starting point for investigation.

The following problem statement has been developed as the starting point of investigation: *The potential of the Armenian Diaspora in terms of human capital is not used effectively for solving the development issues in Armenia.*

The goal of the study triggers the following questions of analysis:

Q1: Why does Armenia need a repatriation policy?

Q2: How is repatriation regulated in Armenia?

Q3: What factors hinder the implementation of repatriation?

Q4: What problems do repatriates face in Armenia?

Design and Data Collection Strategy

The study uses both qualitative and quantitative methods of research to answer the questions of analysis stated above. The research design is sequential transformative that is intended to collect and analyze qualitative data first and incorporate the results into the quantitative data collection stage.

The process of research comprises two phases. The first phase of the research was conducted having the purpose of investigating the Israeli repatriation policy as a model

primarily for identifying the fundamental components and features of the repatriation policy of Israel, its legislative, institutional and procedural arrangements, as well as for understanding how the repatriation processes should be conducted in order to be successful. To this end, the academic literature and the official guidelines of the Israeli repatriation policy were analyzed.

The second phase of the research was intended to shed light on the return related realities of Armenia. For this purpose, the research analyzed related documents, transcripts of in-depth interviews with relevant public officials and NGO representatives dealing with repatriation issues, and subsequently surveyed repatriated individuals. The document analysis included all governmental documents referring to the Diaspora-homeland relations and regulations of repatriation.

As stated earlier, in the second phase of data collection in-depth interviews were conducted. The sample interviewed included a representative from the Ministry of Diaspora, representatives of political parties currently represented in the Armenian parliament, representatives of Diaspora organizations, and scholars of Diaspora-homeland studies. The interview sample included 13 interviewees.

The data collection also employed a survey of repatriated individuals. In the context of the current study, an repatriate was defined as someone who: a) was born in Armenia but has lived outside of the country for more than ten years, after which he/she has returned to Armenia permanently; and b) was born in the Armenian Diaspora and has voluntarily moved to Armenia. Thus, Syrian-Armenians who have moved to Armenia fleeing the conflict and are registered as refugees were not considered as repatriates for inclusion in the sample surveyed. Considering that the exact number of repatriates is not available, the survey used snowball chain-referral sampling up to 100 respondents as a minimum sample size. At the

same time, the sample was controlled to make sure that the respondents come from different Diasporan communities. The survey questionnaire was built upon information from the earlier qualitative analysis of documents and in depth interviews and included both open-ended and closed-ended questions. The analysis and findings from both phases of the study was used for making policy recommendations.

CHAPTER 3: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Document Analysis

The document analysis aimed at identifying the efforts of the Republic of Armenia with respect to repatriation. The literature review and examination of the Israeli case of repatriation helped to develop the descriptors used for document analysis. To this purpose the following documents were analyzed:

- 1. The Concept of the Development of Armenia-Diaspora Cooperation*
- 2. The draft of the “Law on the Repatriation of RA”*
- 3. The Charter of the Ministry of Diaspora*
- 4. Projects of the Ministry of Diaspora 2010-2016*
- 5. The governmental decisions concerning the repatriation*

The repatriation related documents were analyzed to identify the extent to which the Israeli repatriation policy components are included in the Armenian documents that directly or indirectly contribute to repatriation. The intensity of government actions was measured using the scale described in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Intensity Measurement Scale	
Intensity scale	Measurement
1	Total absence of any action
2	Presence of actions that indirectly contribute to repatriation
3	Presence or use of actions that directly target repatriation

The results of the analysis presented in **Table 2** illustrate the inclusion of some repatriation policy components in the laws and regulations of the RA as well as in government actions taken towards the practical implementation of respective repatriation components.

Table 2. Results of Document Analysis		
Descriptor	Provision in laws, regulations, and programs	Intensity of actions
Dissemination of information about Armenia and provision of consultations on repatriation	+	2
Homeland-discovery visits	+	1
Granting citizenship	+	3
Granting special status of repatriate	+	1
Language courses	+	2
Housing assistance	+	1
Employment assistance	-	1
Tuition assistance	+	1
Vocational trainings and retraining	+	1
Customs recession	-	1
Taxation recession	-	1

The analysis of RA government projects in 2009-2015 revealed that namely the Ministry of Diaspora contains certain provisions aimed at dissemination of information about Armenia. Since its creation in 2008, the Ministry of Diaspora has implemented programs that are intended to increase cooperation between the Diaspora communities and the homeland. One of the components of these programs is the intensification of the interaction between the Diaspora Armenians and their compatriots living in Armenia having the intent to increase the level of awareness of Diasporans about Armenia. To this purpose, the Ministry established the multilingual electronic newspaper "Hayern Aysor" in 2009 with the aim of increasing the Diaspora-Armenia informational environment. The Ministry also organizes conferences with the participation of Diasporans on different issues concerning Armenia. In 2014, the

Government created an Internet informational portal **tundardz.am** that provides information about the legal procedures of return. Although the above mentioned programs serve as important channels for disseminating information throughout the Diaspora, they do not directly target potential repatriates. Consequently, the intensity of government action towards this policy component received a mean score of 2.

The document analysis of the Ministry projects also shows that the government of Armenia focuses on homeland discovery programs for Diaspora Armenians. Together with the efforts of dissemination of information about Armenia, the Ministry implements programs aimed at inclusion of Diaspora Armenians in homeland discovery visits. In 2009, the Government of Armenia established the program "Ari Tun" that provides opportunities for young people from Diaspora to visit Armenia. Within the framework of the "Ari Tun" project Diasporan youth visit the historical sights of Armenia, take courses in Armenian language, and become acquainted with the realities of Armenia. Although the main objective of the program is to promote the preservation of national identity among the youth of Diasporan communities, it appears that the program indirectly contributes to repatriation (*See Table 2, Intensity of government action has a mean score of 2*).

From the analysis of the related documents it became apparent that the Republic of Armenia has established special provisions for granting citizenship to Diaspora Armenians. The Law on Citizenship of the RA contains a simplified procedure for ethnic Armenians in acquiring citizenship of the Republic of Armenia, i.e., a person of Armenian origin can obtain citizenship only by providing proof of Armenian origin.

In addition, in 2007 the Government of Armenia introduced the institute of dual citizenship, according to which a person can obtain Armenian citizenship without renouncing his/her citizenship of another country, whether acquired at birth or naturalized (*See Table 2,*

Intensity of Government action has a mean score of 3). The main purpose of the policy change is to facilitate the repatriation of Diaspora Armenians without deprivation from another citizenship.

The draft "Law on Repatriation of the Republic of Armenia" that was designed by the Ministry of Diaspora and was approved by the Government in 2012 affords special "status of repatriate" upon return. According to the law, a person of Armenian origin is eligible for the special 'status of repatriate' if (1) he/she is a citizen of another country and is voluntarily returning to Armenia, or (2) he/she is a former citizen of Armenia who has lost Armenian citizenship over a period of 15 years before repatriation. The special status remains until the end of the integration process, which cannot exceed three years. However as the "Law on Repatriation" has not been ratified by the Parliament of Armenia and is not currently enforced, the Government does not grant any special status to repatriates (*See Table 2, Intensity of Government action has a mean score of 1*).

Subsidies for language trainings are also a component of repatriation policy. The language trainings can be provided before the return through the cooperation of the Government of homeland and Diaspora community organizations or after repatriation in special language centers. The RA Law on Repatriation does contain provisions concerning free language trainings for repatriates after repatriation. However, as was mentioned earlier, the law has not yet been considered for discussion and ratification by the RA Parliament.

Moreover, the analysis of the projects of the Ministry of Diaspora in 2009-2015 reveals that language courses specially designed for repatriates have not been provided by the Ministry to this date. At the same time, within the framework of cooperation between the Ministry and Diaspora organizations, Armenians in Diasporan communities are offered courses of Eastern Armenian. Although these courses are not designed only for potential

repatriates, they positively affect knowledge of Eastern Armenian language among Diaspora Armenians (*See Table 2, Intensity of Government action has a mean score of 2*).

As is the case with the Israeli repatriation policy, the RA Law on Repatriation also contains special provisions for housing assistance, tuition assistance, and vocational training and retraining to be made available to repatriates. However the analysis of the projects shows that the Republic of Armenia has not taken any actions towards this policy components (*See Table 2, Intensity of government action has a mean score of 1*). On the other hand, unlike the Israeli case, the Armenian law does not envisage any component referring to tax and customs recessions and consequently there are no actions in this component (*See Table 2, Intensity of government action has a mean score of 1*).

Content Analysis

To understand the importance of repatriation for Armenia and the factors that currently hinder actions in that regard, the study used content analysis of the in-depth interviews conducted. Given the necessity to have a complete picture of repatriation in order to be able to offer recommendations, the study solicited the opinions of people engaged in Diaspora-homeland relations and others responsible for decision making in this area. Hence, interviews were conducted with members of political parties that are currently active in the National Assembly of Armenia, representatives of Diaspora organizations, scholars of Diaspora studies with focus on homeland-Diaspora relations, and the head of the Repatriation Department of the Ministry of Diaspora. The total of interviews completed is 13. The content analysis of interview transcripts focused on the position of each interviewee concerning the importance of each descriptor. The intensity mean of each descriptor was measured by the scale described in **Table 3**.

Table 3. Intensity Measurement Scale

Intensity scale	Measurement category
1	Did not appear or vaguely appeared in text
2	Appeared once or twice in text and was not deemed important at all
3	Appeared more often in text but with little importance attached to it
4	Important, but not dominant
5	Very important, representing the core argument

The analysis of the interviews showed that all participants (100%) consider the implementation of repatriation policy an important step for the development of Armenia. All representatives of political parties except for one party stated that the issue of repatriation has always been on the political agenda of their respective parties. The representatives of the Diaspora organizations also stated that from the first years of independence of Armenia the need for increasing opportunities for repatriation has been one of the main topics of Diaspora-homeland cooperation. The head of the repatriation department of the Ministry of Diaspora also stated that the development and realization of repatriation policy was one of the main reasons for the creation of the Ministry in 2008.

In addition, if and when interviewees did address the importance of repatriation policy for Armenia, they were asked to rationalize the aspects of repatriation that could contribute to the development of Armenia. The results of the analysis presented in **Table 4** reveal that the most important aspect of repatriation policy that the interviewees emphasized was the potential capacity of the policy to allocate resources to its implementation (*mean intensity equals 4.7*). The interviewees stressed that in the event of large-scale emigration, Armenia loses the pool of expert human resources necessary for the accurate formulation and design of policy that would contribute to the repatriation of Armenians. Thus, the interviewees also

noted that repatriation policy should be accompanied by measures of preventing emigration. In this context, many underlined that in order to ensure the effective integration of repatriates as a value-added human resources, the policy should be based on frequent needs assessments intended to fill existing gaps in the capacities of local Armenians.

Table 4. Importance of Repatriation for Armenia	
Descriptor	Intensity
Brain gain	4.1
Human recourses	4.7
New investments	2.5
Preservation of Armenian identity	4.3
Political development of Armenia	2.1
Social impact on Armenian society	2.3
Impact on national security	3.6

An equally important aspect of repatriation discussed by the interviewees is the potential of brain gain (*See Table 4, mean intensity equals 4.1*) in the sense of importing highly qualified professionals in different fields that could boost the development in various sectors of the economy (especially referring to the IT sector) and raise the quality of education in Armenia.

The content analysis also showed that the importance of the repatriation for ensuring new investments in the Armenian economy by repatriates was not stressed by the majority of interviewees (*mean intensity equals 2.5*). The majority of those interviewed indicated that members of the Armenian Diaspora who have the means for investing in Armenia are already doing so. The others who this element of repatriation important rationalized their position by stating that the past practice of the 1990s showed that the effectiveness of investments can be ensured only if the investor also has direct control over its management to ensure that it is not misused. That can only be achieved by residing in the homeland.

Similar to the economic impact of repatriation, the role of repatriation policy in the preservation of the Armenian identity also was given high importance (*mean intensity equals 4.3*). The members of political parties interviewed, as well as the representatives of Diaspora organizations, the scholars of Diaspora studies, and the head of the repatriation department of the government clearly mentioned that with every next generation growing in the Diaspora there is increasing tendency of mixed marriages and assimilation that often threaten the preservation of identity among Diaspora Armenians. Moreover, the latest developments and instability in the countries of the Middle East where the Armenian communities were strong as a result of the multitude of programs and events organized for protecting their identity can only be replaced by the repatriation of Armenians from those places.

With regard to the political development of Armenia, the repatriation policy was not mentioned as an important means, i.e., that repatriation would not necessarily contribute to the political development of the country (*mean intensity equals 2.1*). The only interviewees that emphasized this potential benefit from repatriation were the representatives of two opposition parties, who stated that currently there are many Diaspora Armenians who have repatriated from different countries and are actively engaged in Armenian political processes, namely in the observation of elections, initiation of events intended to ensure the protection of democratic governance, etc. The repatriates coming from more developed and democratic countries bring with them the practice of political participation and are more knowledgeable in issues related to protecting their rights.

The social impact of repatriation also was not intensely mentioned by the majority of interviewees (*mean intensity equals 2.3*). However, those who thought that repatriation is an important investment in the social development of Armenia emphasized the positive impact of interrelations between the Diasporans and locals. By bridging the gap between the two

pillars of the Armenian nation through repatriation policy, a new cultural mix would be created that would contribute to the social development of Armenian society.

The importance of repatriation as an instrument for gaining human capital was also stressed in terms of strengthening the national security of the homeland (*mean intensity equals 3.6*). The interviewees referred to the ongoing conflict with Azerbaijan and the importance of focusing on national security issues related to the Armenian armed forces and the criticality of growing the local population. In this regard a sound repatriation policy could provide a needed solution.

The interviewees were also asked to identify the factors that hinder repatriation and define the extent to which the given hindering factors would affect the process of repatriation. The intensity of each obstacle was measured using the same scale that was presented earlier in **Table 3**.

The results depicted in **Table 5** reveal that the most intensely articulated obstacle is the absence of state budgetary resources (*mean intensity equals 4.8*). All interviewees mentioned that in order to ensure a consistent and successful outcome from repatriation the government should allocate a great amount of money to develop and implement attractive integration packages. These should include financial assistance for meeting the necessary needs during the initial stage of repatriation, such as housing, healthcare, education, etc. As was intensely mentioned by the interviewees, the limited size of the current Armenian state budget would not allow the implementation of massive repatriation. In this context, however, it is worth noting that the representative of the Armenian General Benevolent has publicly expressed readiness on different occasions to support the government of Armenia with financing of repatriation programs. One of the interviewees representing an opposition party similarly noted that financial resources can be found if the government takes decisive action

and demonstrates the necessary political will for the development and implementation of a sound repatriation policy.

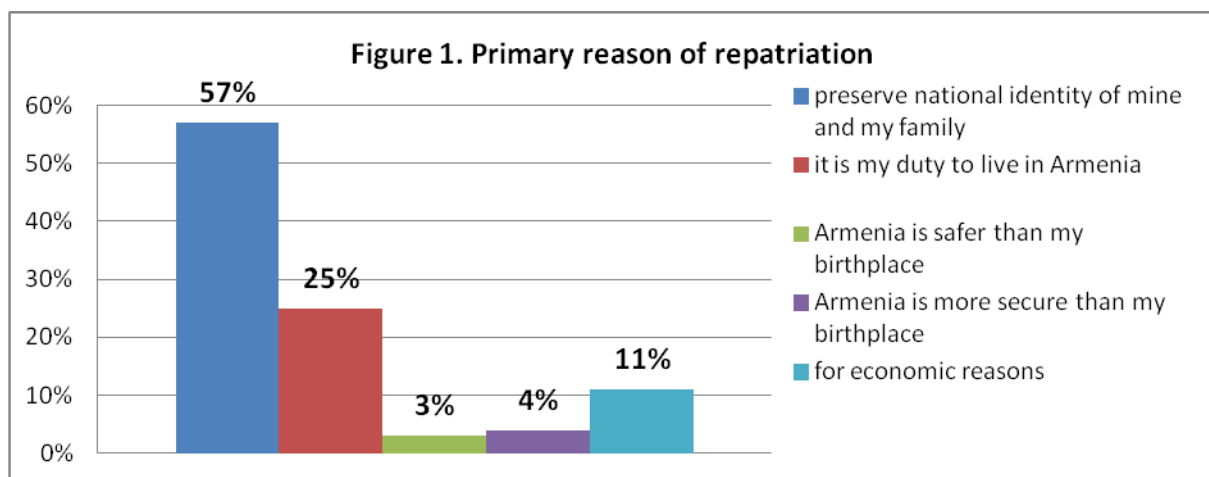
Table 5. Factors hindering repatriation in Armenia	
Descriptor	Intensity
Absence of state budgetary resources	4.8
Deficiencies in the labor market	4.8
Social issues	4.1
Image of Armenia in Diaspora communities and absence of aspiration among Diasporans	3.4

Another factor that was viewed by interviewees as an obstacle to repatriation is the existing deficiencies in the local labor market (*mean intensity equals 4.8*). All those interviewed argue that the main reason of emigration from Armenia is the lack of well-paying jobs in the country. Having such conditions in the labor market minimizes the possibility of an effective implementation of repatriation policy. Hence, if the government decides to start a process of repatriation, it should first assess the needs and potentials of the market. Otherwise, the policy will fail to achieve its goal of placing or assisting repatriates in finding jobs that will help them in the integration process.

The interviewees also referred to various existing social issues, such as the high level of corruption, the archaic bureaucracy, favoritism in the business environment, rampant nepotism and cronyism in the public sector, etc. Those, they observed, are factors that make Armenia unattractive to potential repatriates (*mean intensity equals 3.4*). Also, as mentioned by some interviewees, in order to implement large-scale repatriation the Republic of Armenia should work closely with Diaspora organizations to reshape the image of Armenia and to create the right environment that would nurture the idea of return.

Survey Analysis

In this phase of the research 100 repatriates were surveyed to gain an understanding of their experiences in the process of repatriation and to learn about the problems they faced prior to repatriating and after arrival in Armenia. As mentioned earlier, snowball sampling was used and the sample was controlled in a way to include repatriates from different countries and to exclude Syrian Armenians who came to Armenia to flee the Syrian conflict that broke in 2011.

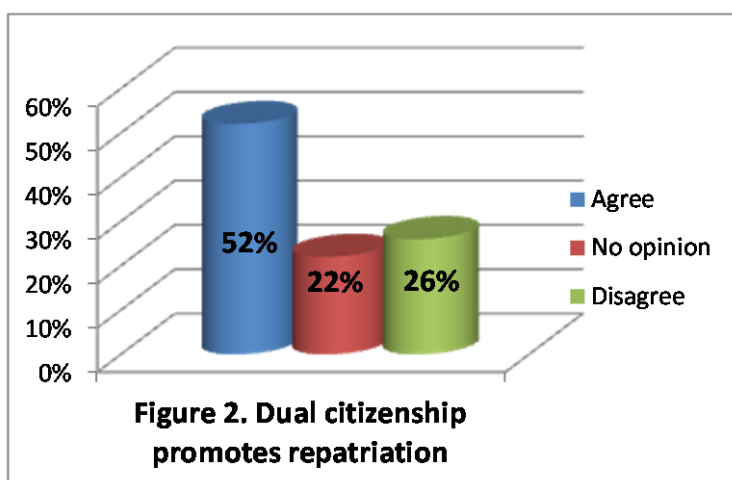


The survey first analyzed the reasons behind the decision to repatriate. As **Figure 1** depicts 57% of 100 respondents indicated preservation of national identity as the primary reason of repatriation; other reasons mentioned by the respondents were sense of duty to live in Armenia (25%); economic reasons (11%); considerations of the safety of Armenia (3%); and considerations that Armenia is more secure than where they came from (4%).

Table 6. Cooperation between repatriates and government		
Question	yes	no
Had you ever approached the RA Government with repatriation related issues before moving to Armenia?	2%	98%
Have you ever approached the RA Government with repatriation related issues after moving to Armenia?	4%	96%
Did you get any assistance from the Government?	1%	99%

Did you get any privileges from the Government as repatriate?	0%	100%
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The study also looked at the cooperation between repatriates and the government of Armenia. As **Table 6** shows, the majority of the repatriates surveyed did not approach the government of Armenia with repatriation related issue prior to (98%) and after (96%) arrival. It is also apparent that the majority of them did not get any assistance (99%) and privileges (100%) from the government.



As was mentioned in the earlier document analysis, Armenia introduced dual citizenship in 2007 to facilitate the repatriation of Diaspora Armenians. The survey questionnaire asked the respondents to indicate their

opinion on whether or not the law of dual citizenship promotes repatriation. **Figure 2** shows that the majority agreed with the statement that dual citizenship does promote repatriation; 22% have no opinion; and 26% think that dual citizenship does not promote repatriation.

Table 7. Contingency table for pre-repatriation visits and effectiveness of homeland discovery programs				
Homeland discovery programs of the Ministry of Diaspora promote repatriation	Pre-repatriation visits are essential for making final decision			
	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Total
Agree	26	1	5	32
No opinion	9	3	2	14
Disagree	49	2	3	54
Total	84	6	10	100

The analysis of the survey question concerning the importance of pre-repatriation visits for making final decision to move showed that for 84 respondents or 84%, it is essential

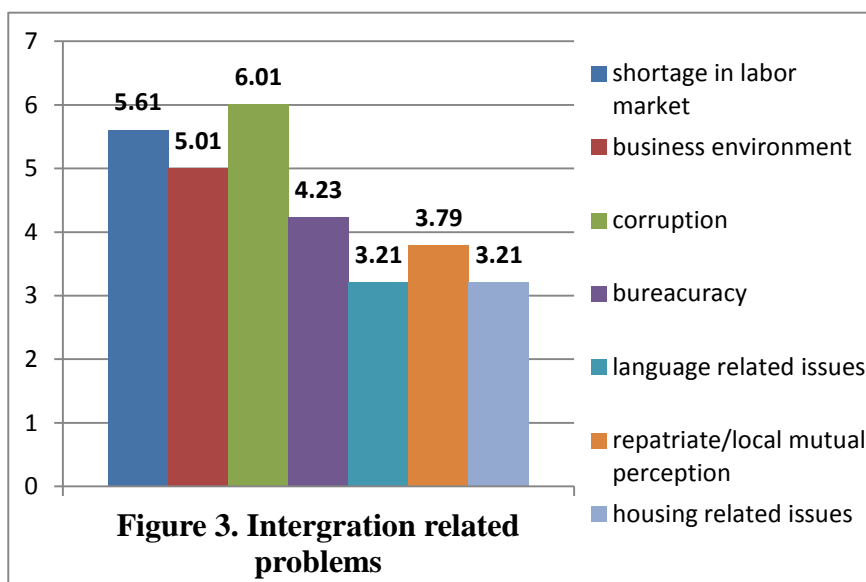
to pay pre-repatriation visits before making their final decision to repatriate; 10 (10%) respondents do not consider such visit essential; and the other 6 (6%) respondents do not have any opinion on this question. Considering the fact that the visits organized within the framework of the homeland discovery program of the RA Ministry of Diaspora could serve as pre-repatriation visits, the study also asked the opinion of respondents on the effectiveness of the homeland discovery programs with respect to promoting repatriation. **Table 7** shows that 49 respondents disagree with the statement that homeland discovery programs of the Ministry of Diaspora promote repatriation. The contingency table illustrates that 49 respondents who think that pre-repatriation visits are essential do not consider the homeland discovery programs of the Ministry of Diaspora as channels promoting repatriation. For 26 participants who think that pre-repatriation visits are essential also think that the homeland-discovery programs of the Ministry are effective in promoting repatriation.

Table 8. Contingency table for dissemination of information and negative image of Armenia in Diaspora				
The negative image of Armenia among Diaspora Armenians hinders the repatriation.	The Government of Armenia acts effectively to disseminate credible information about Armenia among Diaspora Armenians.			
	agree	no opinion	disagree	Total
agree	6	4	<u>69</u>	79
no opinion	0	5	1	6

disagree	11	1	3	15
Total	17	10	73	100

The results of the in-depth interviews showed that one of the obstacles of repatriation is the lack of aspiration among Diaspora Armenians conditioned with the negative image of Armenia. The survey data analysis also confirmed this. As seen in **Table 6**, 79 respondents expressed agreement with the statement that negative image of Armenia among Diaspora Armenians hinders repatriation. On the other hand, the table also shows that 73 respondents think that the efforts of Armenia in disseminating credible information about Armenia among Diaspora Armenians are ineffective. Moreover, as the contingency table shows, 69 respondents who think that the negative image is an obstacle to repatriation also think that the Government of Armenia acts ineffectively to provide credible information about Armenia in the Diaspora. Combining these two statements, it can be assumed that the negative image of Armenia is conditioned by the lack of information about Armenia among Diaspora Armenians.

In order to understand the problems that repatriates have faced in the process of integration after arrival, the survey instrument also asked the repatriates to indicate the integration-related problems and evaluate the seriousness of the problem on a scale of 1 to 7. The average mean of each problem was calculated for this analysis, as shown in **Figure 3**.



The results reveal that the most serious problem identified by repatriates is the high

level of corruption in Armenia.¹

The survey results are congruent with the results from the interviewees concerning the deficiencies of the labor market in Armenia. As **Figure 3** shows, the mean of the seriousness of this variable is 5.61, which is the second most serious problem for repatriates. Hence, any policy intended to promote repatriation should also consider periodically assessing the needs of the labor market.

Another problem that was mentioned by repatriates surveyed is the unhealthy business environment in Armenia (*mean 5.01*). This finding is reason to think that some repatriates have tried to do business in Armenia and were not enthusiastic with the existing business environment. The bureaucracy also was indicated as a significant problem suggesting that repatriates face problems in their interactions with state public authorities.

The survey analysis showed that language related issues (*mean 3.21*), the repatriate-local mutual perception (*mean 3.79*), and housing related issues (*mean 3.21*) also present problems of integration, but not at high levels of concern.

¹ It is important to note that the instrument did not ask whether they faced any corruption incident or just think that corruption is serious problem in Armenia.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The study tried to explore the repatriation related realities in Armenia, to understand the importance of repatriation and the challenges hindering the formulation and implementation of return-migration or repatriation policy, as well as to investigate the problems that repatriates face prior to arrival and during integration after arrival.

The document analysis showed that currently the Republic of Armenia makes very little effort in encouraging the repatriation of Armenians living throughout the Diaspora. Since independence, the country has not developed proper institutional and legislative ground and basis for repatriation. In 2012, the Law on Repatriation was drafted by the Ministry of Diaspora but it has not been ratified by the RA National Assembly. The policy components of the Law of Repatriation of Armenia (although not in effect), reflecting nearly the same policies of Israel, establish massive repatriation without taking into account the capacities of state financial resources and readiness for providing smooth integration.

In the absence of dedicated regulation the RA government has implemented certain programs that are indirectly intended to contribute to repatriation. However, it was shown that the existing provisions and programs that the government implements are ineffective in facilitating the repatriation of Armenians. Moreover, it was found that there are many problems that create difficulties for repatriates after arrival in the homeland. As was demonstrated, there is an absence of support by the Government during the process of integration of repatriates that could be encouraging to others to also repatriate.

The findings from the interviews portray complicated realities related to repatriation. The in-depth interviews, on one hand, reveal that repatriation policy is essentially important for the development of the country in terms of growing human capital, ensuring brain gain, and contributing to the preservation of Armenian identity. On the other hand, the results present various factors such as the absence of state budgetary recourses, deficiencies in the labor market and various other social issues that hinder the implementation of repatriation on a large scale.

Taking these realities into consideration, the study argues that given the importance of a repatriation policy for Armenia, the Government should start a process to work out special arrangements for assisting already repatriated people in order to send a positive message to other potential repatriates.

Within this process, the following recommendations are presented for consideration:

1. The Government should expand its cooperation with repatriates in Armenia to have a clear picture of their experiences. Any rational policy should incorporate feedback from those who have been through the process of repatriation.
2. The Republic of Armenia should activate its cooperation with Diaspora organizations with special focus on issues concerning repatriation. Such cooperation should be intended to disseminate credible information about Armenia and generate a positive image of Armenia in Diasporan communities. To this purpose, the presence of the embassies of Armenia should be considered as a reliable resource.
3. The homeland discovery visits organized by the RA Ministry of Diaspora should include specific discussions about the opportunities of repatriation.

4. As the study found that the main problem is the lack of state budgetary resources for the implementation of repatriation, the Government should revise the draft Law on Repatriation, drafted in 2012, to adjust to existing limitations. A new legislative arrangement should introduce the quota system for repatriation that implies the establishment of an annual number of repatriates afforded by available state resources.
5. In order to ensure the successful integration of repatriates, the Government should conduct periodic assessments of the labor market in Armenia and articulate eligibility by giving priority to the most needed shortages of specialists. Special provisions for professionals in fields most important for growing Armenian industry would ensure brain gain for the country and would sustainable new streams of support.
6. To facilitate the integration process of repatriates, the government also should provide counselling services by appointing special agents and/or organizing trainings in domestic laws and regulations.
7. Taking into account that the business environment in Armenia is the most frequently criticized and the most negatively scored factor that serves as an obstacle to the integration of repatriates, the government should address this issue in a way that addresses tax incentives and other privileges, such as subsidized loans for those repatriates who wish to create their businesses in the country.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1- Survey Questionnaire

1. Please indicate your age group

- a) 18-24
- b) 25-45
- c) 46-66
- d) 67 and above

2. Please indicate your gender

- a) Male
- b) Female

3. Please, indicate where did you repatriate from?

4. Please indicate the year of your repatriation.

5. Please indicate your status in Armenia?

- a) dual citizen
- b) citizen
- c) temporal registration

6. Had you ever been to Armenia before repatriation?

- a) Yes
- b) No

7. If yes, who was the initiator/facilitator of the visit?

- a) Own initiative
- b) Government of Armenia
- c) Diaspora organization
- d) Other

8. Please indicate the primary reason of your return.

9. Have you ever participated in the homeland-discovery programs of the Ministry of Diaspora before moving to Armenia?

- a) Yes
- b) No

10. Have you ever participated in the courses of Armenian language offered by the Ministry of Armenia?

- a) Yes
- b) No

11. Had you ever approached the RA Government with repatriation related issues before moving to Armenia?

- a) Yes
- b) No

12. Have you ever approached the RA Government with repatriation related issues after moving to Armenia?

- a) Yes
- b) No

13. Did you get any assistance from the Government?

- a) Yes
- b) No

14. Did you get any privileges from the Government as repatriate?

- a) Yes
- b) No

15. Please indicate to what extent you agree/disagree with the following statements

Statement	Strongly disagree	disagree	no opinion	agree	strongly agree
Homeland-discovery programs organized by the Government of Armenia promote repatriation.					
Dual citizenship promotes repatriation.					
The Government of Armenia acts effectively to disseminate credible					

information about Armenia among Diaspora Armenians.					
I think the Ministry of Diaspora should undertake more precise steps with respect to repatriation.					
Repatriation has a bigger potential compared to the scale in which it is being realized at the moment.					
The negative image of Armenia among Diaspora Armenians hinders the repatriation.					
Pre-repatriation visits are essential for making final decision.					

16. Please indicate the integration-related problems and evaluate the seriousness of the problem on a scale of 1 to 7

Problem	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
shortage in labor market							
business environment							
language related issues							
repatriate/local mutual perception							
compulsory conscription							
housing related issues							
others problems							

Appendix 2- Interview Questionnaire

1. Do you think that the Republic of Armenia needs repatriation policy? Please specify why.
2. Is the development of repatriation policy in the political agenda in Armenia? How will you evaluate the country's efforts in promoting the repatriation?
3. What problems the repatriation policy can solve in Armenia?
4. Do you think that repatriation can promote the development of Armenia? Please specify your opinion.
 - 4.1 Please speak about the economic impact of repatriation.
 - 4.2 Please speak about the political impact of repatriation.
 - 4.3 Please speak about the social impact of repatriation.
5. What are the main factors that hinder the development and implementation of repatriation policy in Armenia? To what extent the existing factors serve as obstacle for the implementation of policy?

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