

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF ARMENIA

A STUDY OF CULTURAL IDENTITY, COMMUNITY SOLIDARITY, AND RELIGION:
THE ROLE OF THE ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH WITHIN THE ARMENIAN
COMMUNITY OF JERUSALEM

A MASTER'S ESSAY SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
FOR PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

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MAY, 2013

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Acknowledgements

To write about such abstract ideas as Religion and identity in any given society, let alone one which is geographically located elsewhere from my place of study proved to be a difficult endeavor, one which would have been near impossible without the help of certain people. I would like to firstly express my deepest gratitude to my faculty advisor Dr. Khatchik Der Ghougassian, for taking me and my topic on, helping me both in narrowing down the topic, leading me in the right direction time and time again, constantly giving valuable advice and words of encouragement. I am pleased to acknowledge the support of all the faculty and staff, particularly that of the School of Political Science and International Affairs, and most especially the Program Chair, Dr. Douglas Shumavon. The knowledge bestowed upon us during the course of two years of study at AUA holds endless value, for which I am truly grateful. I would like to extend special thanks to Ms. Suzanna Hagopian for helping me in finding the right contacts for interviews, for sending me materials specific to my study and for her continuous support, without which this paper could hardly be possible. I would like to thank all the interviewed persons who shared their knowledge, expertise, viewpoints and information with me for the purpose of this study, their cooperation was very valuable to me. Finally, I would like to express my deepest appreciation for my friends, colleagues and family who have made this learning experience not only a fruitful endeavor, but a precious one.

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Abstract

The focus of study of this paper is the role of Religion and the creation, development and maintenance of a cultural identity, as well as the protection of a commune's internal cohesiveness. The case for this study is the unique one of the Armenian Apostolic Church and the role that it has as one of the fundamental elements which maintains the Armenian community's cultural solidarity. There are two thematic tracks for the purpose of this paper: (1) the role that Religion (particularly the Armenian Apostolic Church) has in the creation, molding, development, and maintenance of a given ethnic community (i.e. the Armenian community); (2) the level of influence, power, legitimacy and strength the Church (i.e. the Armenian Apostolic Church) has in its external relations with other ethno-religious groups (i.e. the relations between Armenians, Muslims, Jews, Greek Orthodox, Latins etc.). The study is conducted primarily through a literature review, content analysis, and expert interviews.

Introduction

The issue of the ‘comeback of faith’ is one which has become a subject of increasing interest. In the face of Western modernity, why is it that we are noticing a gradual resurgence of religion in international relations? Further still, how is it that, in spite of existing in an age of secularization, for some societies, religion has become the intersection of identity, power and legitimacy? “Issues of faith now frequently dominate the headlines in a way that would have been in- conceivable in the 1960s, when, it was thought, secularization was an irreversible trend and, after centuries of persecution and holy war, religion was safely relegated to the private sphere” (Armstrong, 1998, p. 6). One may dare to claim that institutionalized religion, in some respects, offers an alternative to modern institutions i.e. those of science, technology, bureaucracy, etc., of which, it is quite possible, the world is becoming more and more disillusioned by (Thomas, 2007). “The late twentieth century has seen a revival of religion on a global scale. The type of religiosity that is often-misleadingly-called ‘fundamentalism’ has erupted in all the major world faiths and is largely dedicated- to breaking down the secularist distinction between politics and religion” (Armstrong, 1998, p. 6). Whatever the case, religion is an aspect of society that has had a fair amount of significance in the past and one which continues to have its significance in the present. Religion can be considered a key component of such concepts as social tradition, community solidarity, collective norms, rules, and values, group identity and legitimacy. It is therefore imperative that the relationship between societies and religion continues to be studied in order to gain a better understanding of its influence and potential. “Formation and maintenance of values are greatly influenced by language, religion, and history. Cohesion may be based on race and kinship as well as these three factors. ...The

essential communal bonds and/or values stem from language, religion, or race,” (Wyszomirski, 1975, p. 434). It can therefore be argued that, in its own right, religion can be a chief organizing factor for a given group of people, helping to form an identity, acting as a central core to the community and a basis for its survival when contending with the world. The main themes that this paper wishes to explore are twofold:

- 1) the relationship between Religion and the formation of a collective identity
- 2) the weight of religion in the representation of that identity in relations with other identities.

It will do so by studying the particular case of the Armenian people and the intricate ties which bind its ethnic identity to its religious institutions. Armenia, having been the first country to adopt Christianity as its official religion in 301 AD, has a history rich with Church-Society relations, where the Church has possessed a great amount of authority, as well as responsibility. This paper will look into the historical aspects of the Armenian Apostolic Church vis-à-vis preserving the ethnic and cultural identity of the Armenian people (both in Armenia and abroad). It will however take up the case of the Armenian’s in Jerusalem more specifically, where a comparative analysis can be attempted, in drawing up the similarities and differences of the Armenian Apostolic Church measured against other Christian communities within the Holy City. Since the focus of this paper emphasizes the impact religion has on maintaining social cohesion, the case of Armenians in Jerusalem is rendered appropriate, both in terms of being a community which has the qualities represented in the Armenian Diaspora (including all the challenges it faces regarding maintaining its identity, culture and traditions) and as a society greatly influenced by the Armenian Apostolic Church. It is also appropriate to study this particular community as it gives an opportunity to compare it with other religio-ethnic societies living

within the same city walls. “Nowhere has ... religious renewal been more dramatic than in the Middle East,” (Armstrong, 1998, p. 6). A quick glimpse into the state of Israel, the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Holy City of Jerusalem and its various religious components will elucidate as to why the case of the Armenians of Jerusalem is so fitting. The Arab-Israeli conflict is one which revolves around issues of mutual recognition, borders, security, rights to water (a resource which has always been scarce in these lands), settlements, freedom of movement, and of course, control over Jerusalem. Jerusalem, being a holy site, attracting vast amounts of tourists and pilgrims, and being of great value to all three monotheistic religions, has always been one of the key issues on the Arab-Israeli peace process agenda. Unsurprisingly, many of the qualms presented from both sides of the conflict take on a very religious overtone. The Israeli side fears a time similar to that of when Jerusalem was under Jordanian control and Jewish holy places, including the Western Wall, were closed off to the Jews. Similarly, Palestinians share concerns regarding Christian and Muslim holy places which are under Israeli control. The issue of Jerusalem is that the various religio-ethnic neighborhoods are so interwoven that it would be near impossible to separate under a two-state plan. The Status Quo is also a unique enterprise which ought to grab the attention of IR scholars for its ability to set a standard of sharing of contested jurisdictions and power. Before delving into the case, however, it is prudent to gain a better understanding of the conceptual framework under which it will be analyzed. Thus, the first section of this paper will review and discuss the various literatures on concepts and interpretations put forth by scholars regarding the issue of religion and identity as a whole.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used frequently throughout this work and so are defined here for the purposes of clarity and consistency.

Cohesion- Cohesion will be henceforth defined as the formation of a whole, as in a unit in the structure of a community. Here we concentrate on the realization and recognition of the existence of a unity by the members of the group in question.

Religio-ethnic- similar to the term ethno religious, it is defined as a group of people whose members are bound by a common religion. As such, these communities may define their ethnic identity based off of the religion, though not necessarily exclusively on those grounds.

Therefore religio-ethnic groups are connected by a common identity, be that on the basis of cultural tradition, common ancestors, common language, but with a particular emphasis on common religion.

Legitimacy- In terms of this paper we will be speaking of political legitimacy, that is to say, the acceptance of authority, a governing law or regime, or the approach put forth by British social theoretician John Locke, whereby the governing body is considered legitimate by having gained consent from the governed. Also taken to consideration is the ability to defend, justify or make valid the position of governance. Therefore legitimacy is a combination of acceptance, consent and justification of power and influence of a governing body (be that from the part of a political or religious institution).

Power- Once again the concentration here will be that of political power and more specifically legitimate or positional power. This entails the ability to exert influence on people and exercise

authority which is interpreted as legitimate by the social structure. It is not necessarily gained through the instrumentality of coercion rather it is simply the ability to be influential, particularly within a social setting. Legitimate power specifically is granted based on the duties and position of the power-holder given the role that they are meant to play.

Research Problem

The role of religion in politics within the modern world has been a subject of debate for pundits such as Samuel Huntington, Irving Horowitz, Francis Fukuyama, Emile Durkheim, Jonathan Fox etc. Questions regarding the legitimizing power of religion, the role of religion and identity, religion as a cause and cure for conflict, and the intricate relationship between religion and power have been circulating the minds and works of researchers for decades, if not more. As Jonathan Fox argues (2001), religion is an often overlooked element in International Relations, despite it being an issue closely tied to that of other realms of IR (e.g. globalization, conflict management, political culture etc.), and that it is arguably a source of legitimacy on the international stage. The Armenian community in Jerusalem may serve as an interesting case study, given their situation of resting on the fault lines of a major international struggle (that of the Arab-Israeli conflict), and the deep connection between religion and issues of identity, legitimization, ethnicity, political prowess, and community preservation. The relationship between the Armenian identity and the Armenian Apostolic Church is in many ways unique, as it is one in which the Armenian identity was maintained throughout times of historical tumult, whereby the Armenian people were denied a central state, therefore forcing the Church to take up the responsibility of preserving the Armenian culture, language and history.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this study is to evaluate different theories pertaining to the role of religion in the creation and preservation of an ethnic identity, and try to fit them within the scope of the case of the Armenian community in Jerusalem. It aims to do so by not only describing the history, and current state of community life, but also by comparing the Armenian's of Jerusalem with the various other existing religio-ethno communities which live within the walls of the Holy City, as well as by examining their interactions.

Research Question

Q1: How can we identify when religion plays the role of being an incremental part of defining a group's ethnicity, identity, legitimacy and internal cohesiveness?

Q2: How does the Armenian Apostolic Church as an institution represent the religious-ethnic community of Armenians vis-à-vis other communities (i.e. Greek Orthodox, Latin, Syrian etc.) in Jerusalem?

Literature Review

For the purpose of this paper, two dimensions of identity will be examined, that is the internal aspect (i.e. how an identity is formed/defined, recognized, strengthened and maintained within a group of people) and the external aspect (i.e. how a group identity is presented, differentiated, accepted and recognized in terms of other existing groups). As such, the main focus of identity in this paper will be that which revolved around the bond between cultural and religious identity. As previously mentioned, this paper aims to explore both the internal and external role that religion plays, within a community, and vis-à-vis relations with other communities. Accordingly, these two themes are repeatedly reflected in the literature reviewed. While this paper will attempt to explore these concepts primarily through the study and analysis of the case of the Armenian community in Jerusalem, the following literature covers a variety of discoveries and perceptions regarding these same themes, offering them in a range of contexts. Their views will be presented in a cascading format starting off from the broader topic of the role of religion in IR theory, narrowing down to the religious power struggle exemplified in Jerusalem, eventually narrowing down further to the state of the Armenian community within the city of Jerusalem. Therefore, the following literature review will attempt to break down these complex, and quite often, interlinked issues into two main parts, in accordance to the two principle themes discussed above, and further break down into sub-parts, according to chronological discoveries in the subject, while at the same time providing the necessary background regarding the religious and political climate in Jerusalem, including the Armenian factor.

The concept of the legitimating property of religion in IR theory is a topic of debate

among various scholars, not least of which being Nikos Kokosalakis, who in his work “Legitimation Power and Religion in Modern Society, Sociological Analysis,” (1985) claims that the concept of separation of religion and politics is a false starting point in analyzing the legitimating power that religion may have. He argues that “separation of Church and State has led to the assumption that, although legitimation and power are closely related, religion has little or nothing to do with either” (Kokosalakis, 1985, p. 369). In defining what legitimacy is, Kokosalakis adheres to the definition brought forth by Paul Lewis whereby legitimacy is a “political condition in which power holders are able to justify their holding of power in terms other than those of the mere power holding” (Kokosalakis, 1985, p. 371). Consequently, legitimating factors are many and include such actors as state institutions, churches, trade unions etc. One of Kokosalakis’ main points is that religious elements should not be entirely ignored in the broader theoretical fields of political study, though he equally believes that it would be difficult for religion to act as a standalone factor in modern society as the sole legitimating institution.

Bernadette Hayes in her work “The Impact of Religious Identification on Political Attitudes: An International Comparison” (1995) argues simply that religious identification is a decisive factor in distinguishing political attitudes. She also posits that “contrary to the transitory nature of attitudes towards many political issues, religious identification is a relatively stable attribute, the manifestations of which remain fairly consistent both over time as well as across sub-population” (Hayes, 1995, p. 179). In her study she used data from the International Social Survey Program’s (ISSP) Religion survey, which was conducted in 1991, and included 8 countries (the United States, Great Britain, Norway, the Netherlands, West Germany, East Germany, Northern Ireland and Italy). The data represented randomly selected samples of

citizens aged 18 and above, who were subjected to a survey with the intent to investigate the extent of which differences in religious identification are associated with a range of political attitudes regarding controversial issues such as abortion, working women, capital punishment, confidence in institutions, and the role of religion in politics. The results of the study showed that there are some notable differences between the religious groups in relation to political attitudes (Hayes, 1995). However, it is essential to point out that such results are not particularly generalizable and clear cut due to the factor that several other variables exist which may equally influence a persons' political attitude. That is to say, Hayes makes note of the fact that "preferences and attitudes do not exist in isolation; they are determined in interaction with a number of sociodemographic factors such as gender, age, marital status, education, and occupation" (Hayes, 1995, p. 188). This work is relevant as a means for supporting the arguments expressed above, and still to be expressed further below, regarding the undeniable interaction and inseparable ties between politics, identity and religion.

Yet another scholar who looks at the ties between religion and identity is William Miles, who in his work "Political Para-Theology: Rethinking Religion, Politics and Democracy," (1996) covers a vast array of topics within ten pages including: the definition and comparison of such concepts as para-theology and sacralised politics, the role of religion in the creation and interpretation of constitutions as a form of nationalism and the capabilities it has versus those of the nation state. He endeavors to define the connection between religion and politics and its ability to define identity, claiming that religion must be categorically differentiated from ethnic identity. This, he argues, is particularly the case when dealing with religious conflicts. Without this differentiation "one is hard pressed to recognize the critical distinction between religious revolts against the state, which are truly inspired from theology, and pseudo-religious ones, in

which religion is merely a referent for group identity” (Miles, 1996, p. 533). He elaborates by describing religious identity as a belonging to a shared theology, ritual, and belief, whereas ethnic identity is a belonging to a common ancestry, descent, history, language, culture and also (though not necessarily) religion (Miles, 1996). Miles contests that without making this distinction it would be very difficult to discern ethnic from religious conflict (Miles, 1996). Similar to Kokosalakis, Miles states that religion has its impact on democracy and democratic theory beyond that which is defined in its secular analysis. He also agrees that political behavior is authentically religious in motivation (Miles, 1996). From his viewpoint, religion and nationalism can be complimentary and are not necessarily the opposing forces which they are depicted to be by many scholars. An example of this can be seen in nations within the Muslim world, whereby the Koran is a source of defining not only an identity but a way of life. In the Muslim world politics and religion are not separated, quite the contrary, it holds a legitimating power which combines the public and private life and merges the individual to the community, and in turn, the society with the state. In such countries, Miles confirms, secularism is tantamount to heresy, and “governments must have Islam as their *raison d'etre*. Otherwise they are illegitimate and need to be overthrown” (Miles, 1996, p. 528). Legitimacy questions aside, Miles dares to claim what others argue, that religion and religious institutions do indeed have power, and in fact require it in order to survive. He finds that “populations throughout the developing world (including former Communist states) are rediscovering the religious dimension to group identity and statist politics,” once again raising the argument that the politics of the Church and that of the State are interlinked in a condition of co-existence (Miles, 1996, p. 525).

In one particular work, “Religion as an Overlooked Element of International Relations,” (2001) Jonathan Fox argues, as did his predecessors, that religion is a wrongfully neglected

component in International Relations. His belief is that religion should be taken into consideration in equal terms as would other intrinsic parts of IR theory, such as, for example, the notions of statism, survival, self-help, rational behavior, security dilemma, anarchy, interdependence, democratic peace etc.,. His work delves into the mindset of the past, where there was a firmly held belief that secularization is a movement synonymous to that of modernization. As Fox points out, a popular thought among political scientists in the 1950s and 1960s was that modernization would significantly reduce the political significance of such basic phenomena as ethnicity and religion” (Fox, 2001). This belief was influenced primarily through the arguments of influential 19th century social scientists such as Auguste Comte, Emil Durkheim, Max Weber, Karl Marx etc., all of whom clung to the belief that eventually the influence of religion would disappear (Fox 2001). However, Fox goes on to argue, modernization was quite possibly the main impetus which lead to a “resurgence of religion.” In fact, Fox speculates that modernization has brought further development in governments as well as in religious movements overall, expanding the spheres to make them capable of reaching the general public, thereby making the clashes between the two spheres more apparent.

In a world where religious fundamentalist movements are growing more common and sectarian violence in conflicts more intense, it becomes increasingly difficult to turn a blind eye to the effect of religion on international actors. As opposed to the previously discussed works, Fox strives to get into the heart of defining the various ways in which religion exerts its influence in politics. Thus, he associates two potential approaches. “The first is that these belief systems can influence the outlook and behavior of policymakers,” (Fox, 2001, p. 61). The second is one which reflects the arguments of Miles and Kokosalakis, that religion is strongly connected to issues of identity, which in turn has a substantial influence on (international) politics. One

example that Fox offers is that of the Arab-Israeli conflict, where “both of the conflict have made exclusive claims to the same territory, based at least partly on religion” (Fox, 2001, p. 62). In his paper Fox acquiesced to a few pitfalls in his study, chiefly of which being the simple fact that religion is a nearly immeasurable variable. There has also been very little attention given to religion from a political perspective in previous scholarly works, mainly due to the lack of inclination to merge the two fields. Fox chose to look at the following variables “measures for religious legitimacy, religious discrimination, and religious institutions” (Fox, 2001, p. 58).

Once again the repeating subjects of identity, religion, secularism and politics are evident in Friedrich Kratochwil’s work “Religion and (Inter-)National Politics: On the Heuristics of Identities, Structures and Agents, Global, Local, Political” (2005). In quoting Scott Appelby he points out that, "seldom does 'the secular' eliminate 'the religious' in society", emphasizing that the relationship between the two is actually “mutually transformative” (Kratochwil, 2005, p. 118). Kratochwil agrees with Miles on a point regarding the divergence of public and private lives, or in this case, the lack thereof, and how such an ideal which is pronounced in the concept of secularism is unattainable in reality. Instead Kratochwil speaks of the existence of a “fusion of religious goals with political strategies” (Kratochwil, 2005, p. 130). While the subject of religion in conflicts was touched upon by all the preceding mentioned literature to some extent, Kratochwil takes a deeper look into the role of religion in the instigation and mitigation of conflicts. Here again the importance of identity, within the context of a conflict between societies, is stressed. Religion is considered one of the deciding categorizes which separates communities into distinct groups, emphasizing both internal cohesiveness and external differentness.

“There is no personal identity without a ‘we’ and without ‘others’ that do not belong to us. Only the balances between the ‘I’ and the ‘we’ and between the ‘we’ and ‘others’ (be they friends, strangers, or enemies) vary, when the specific content and not only the constitutive connections among the concepts enter the picture” (Kratochwil, 2005, p. 124).

Kratochwil’s piece is valuable, as it lays down the framework for a theoretical base describing a specific factor of religion and its role in society formation.

Thus far, the point of concern has been about the relations between religion and politics in a general scope. Presently, the intent is to zoom into a more regional perspective. The following pieces of literature deal with the nature of religion in conflict, particularly taking a look at the conflict-ridden state of Israel, and more specifically still, the religious center of the country, Jerusalem. Jerusalem is unique in the sense that it is the crossroad between all three major world religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam). Quite possibly the most interesting object of study within the walls of Jerusalem is the implementation of the Status Quo policy, which is described in depth by Chad Emmet in his paper “The Status Quo Solution for Jerusalem” (1997). The aim of his paper is that of conflict resolution, by taking as a model the Status Quo policy covering the various Holy Sites in the Old City. “For more than a century Greeks, Latins, Armenians, and Copts have shared the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in an interlocking system of scattered sovereignty. Such a system also could work between Israelis and Palestinians as they share the sacred space of Jerusalem” (Emmett, 1997, p. 16). His work serves as a valuable informant on the intricate workings of the Status Quo system and how it can possibly pertain to a solution for larger scale conflicts. It also exemplifies how religious struggles are prone to erupt in such ways which are similar to that of state struggles. “For

centuries the religious communities of Jerusalem have struggled either to maintain or to gain rights of worship at and control of certain sacred sites” (Emmett, 1997, p. 19). This means there is an inherent struggle among religious institutions over land, jurisdiction, and on the whole, power. His paper strives to compile a variety of solutions for the Arab-Israeli conflict; however he primarily chooses to take the example of Status Quo in Jerusalem and theoretically apply it to a two-state Status Quo solution to Israel-Palestine at large. A drawback of such a model, Emmett admits, is that the literal application of the Status Quo model to the city of Jerusalem is, simply, not possible”(Emmett, 1997).

Michael Dumper in his piece “The Christian Churches of Jerusalem in the Post-Oslo Period” takes another look at the city of Jerusalem, but this time analyzing it through a more theological perspective, than one concentrating on the rifts of conflict alone. This work exposes the interplay between the three main monotheistic religions within the territory of Jerusalem through a political/theological lens. Dumper speaks more about the influence that religion has on the various communities living within the Old City, as each have to hold on to their identity and struggle to maintain whatever control they have. Unlike our previous literature, Dumper’s expresses that religion is suffering what he calls “the crisis of the churches,” and claims that “the religious leadership are no longer major figures in the political scene in Jerusalem” (Dumper, 2002, p. 51). He makes a particular distinction between the influence of ethnicity and that of religion, as within the Arab-Israeli conflict there are other communities which do not fall in either ethnic context per se.

“It is important to remember that while many of the laity are Palestinian or identify both politically and socially with the Palestinian society, but many senior clergy are often non-Palestinian or non-Arab. This is particularly the case in the

Greek Orthodox community but also exists in milder forms in the Roman Catholic churches and institutions and the Armenian Orthodox and Catholic Church. This often leads to different approaches to dealing with Israel and Israeli government officials” (Dumper, 2002, p. 51).

In fact, he goes on to discuss the possibility of a “tactical and strategic Muslim-Christian religious coalition” (Dumper, 2002).

Yet another example of how religious institutions play a political role in the Arab-Israeli conflict is that of the independent action taken by the churches to sign the Fundamental Agreement (FA) between the Vatican and the State of Israel, and the Basic Agreement (BA) between the Vatican and the PLO (Dumper, 2002). The 1994 ‘Memorandum on the Significance of Jerusalem for Christians,’ can also be a basis for examination, which, according to Dumper, is important for 4 primary reasons (1) “it is the most recent and most official joint Christian contribution to the debate over the future of [Jerusalem]. To this end it is the definitive reference point for any discussion on the Christians and their role in Jerusalem. (2) The Memorandum expresses an inclusive vision of Jerusalem by recognizing the sanctity of Jerusalem for Judaism, Islam and Christianity. (3) It re-affirms the centrality of an unreformed Status Quo arrangements in the Christian Holy Places, thereby re-assuring the Greek Orthodox and Armenian Orthodox Patriarchates of the Vatican and hence the Custos and Latin Patriarchates commitment to the Status Quo. (4) The Memorandum proposes a “special statute” for Jerusalem that gives concrete and political form to its call for recognition of a Christian role in the city” (Dumper, 2002, p. 58). As is evident this particular piece of literature focuses mainly on the historical figures attesting to the presence and influence of the Christian churches (including that of the Armenian Gregorian and Catholic churches) in the Post-Oslo period. This piece illustrates

the interaction between the three main monotheistic religions within the territory of Jerusalem from a political/theological perspective as opposed to one which attempts to understand a particular community based on ethnicity/race. It provides a more recent history, beyond the 1940s and well into the 1990s and the millennia, describing in detail the various peace treaties, accords, resolutions and frameworks developed within that time period, including that of the pivotal Special Status proposal.

In the joint work of Sandler and Frisch entitled “Religion, State, and the International System in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” (2004), the themes of the role of religion and state in the international system pertaining to the Arab-Israeli conflict is taken on a slightly broader scale. This piece provides rich historical background, and a detailed analysis on the Oslo events, the Intifada and the future status of Jerusalem. To some extent there is a parallel in opinions between these authors and Dumper regarding the weight that religion has in political affairs in the case of resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict peacefully. The argument is that “the dominant actors on both sides focused on issues of security, sovereignty, and self-determination rather than on theocratic claims such as creating the Sharia or halachic state” (Frisch & Sandler, 2004, p. 78). However, both works concede that this is not an implication that religion is unimportant in international affairs. “To the contrary, the attention religion has received in the current literature is very much in order (Huntington, 1993, 1996; Juergensmeyer, 1993; Fox, 2001)” (Frisch & Sandler, 2004, p. 79). Religion, Frisch and Sandler argue, is deeply rooted in nationalism. “...much of Palestinian or Israeli nationalism, as with many other nationalisms, is imbued with religion” (Frisch & Sandler, 2004, p. 79). They call upon Fox and his argument whereby a state which has an official religion is more likely to use religion as a means of legitimacy in political discourse. And there is no question of the religious nature of the Arab-Israeli conflict as, “Holy

sites, both under Israeli rule and in areas under the Palestinian Authority's jurisdiction, have continued to be arenas of intense intercommunal violence” (Frisch & Sandler, 2004, p. 81). Frisch and Sandler go on to express the mobilizing power that religion has, and how this power is taken into consideration by political leaders. However there is a firm belief that when dealing in international relations, religion is not the way to go. In fact, Fischer and Sandler believe that regardless of the influence that religion has in political affairs (be it direct or indirect) it has less success in being taken seriously on an international stage when presented in a purely theocratic format. “Parties that adopted a theocratically oriented foreign policy, such as the NRP, lost their place in power-sharing arrangements even in a right-wing coalition, as was the case of the Sharon 2001 unity government” (Frisch & Sandler, 2004, p. 93).

While one of Michael Dumper’s works has been discussed above, this particular piece named “Multiple Borders of Jerusalem: Implications for the future of the city” (2008), concentrates less on the historical aspect of the Arab-Israeli conflict resolution, rather it focuses mainly on the territorial aspect of the conflict, providing a distinct mapping out of the city of Jerusalem and the political implications of such borders. Here the reader gains a better understanding of the territorial interests (as well as challenges) which comprise a major part in the resolution of the conflict, and which has acute ramifications for the diverse communities within the borders of Jerusalem (i.e. the Armenian community). In this work Dumper attempts to suggest means for attaining peace in the region, arguing that “a solution for Jerusalem will need to be based upon a framework encompassing four overarching principles: compatibility, reciprocity, and both a retrospective and a prospective perspective” (Dumper, 2008, p. 19). He also makes note of the special status the Jerusalem and its Holy Sites should have, claiming that by being the home to Holy Places for three religions “the requirement for compatibility should

not exclude some special arrangements for Jerusalem. The agreement would need to address questions over access to holy places, taxation on religious property and the operations of embassies in a way which reflects this special status” (Dumper, 2008, p. 19). This work also addresses the many internationally debated peace proposals and the possible outcomes if they were to be implemented, concluding that some of the key components which need to be kept in mind are the state of the separation Wall, the question of access to and control of various Holy Sites, and negotiations for clearing up any ambiguity regarding details which are all too often overlooked by peace process solutions to date.

One final look at Jerusalem, politics and religion (for the purpose of this literature review) will be taken in Samuel Kuruvilla’s, “The Politics of Mainstream Christianity in Jerusalem” (2010), which discusses, not religion as a whole, but the particular role that Christianity has in the region of conflict. In this work we get a descriptive glance at the Christian community which makes up only 2.4% of the population of Israel/Palestine (Kuruvilla, 2010). The main interest of the Christian population is to preserve their ancient rights and privileges, which as we have seen in other works is a mutually expressed interest across all three prominent religions. Kuruvilla also analyzes the Status Quo policy explaining that it is comprised of three main elements (1) a fixed area, (2) precise rights and (3) certain groups or individuals to whom the rights belong. He then divides these rights into three subsequent groups: (1) those related to the foundation of religious institutions in the Holy Land, (2) rights that deal with the particular religious groups, and (3) rights that are connected with the particular Holy Sites (Kuruvilla, 2010). This work is for its description of the various sub-groups within the Christian community that of the Orthodox Church, Protestant, Catholic, Greek, Melkite, Uniate, and most interestingly for the purpose of this research paper, the Armenian Church. He

also makes note of the political interests of the Holy See in the Vatican regarding the state of Jerusalem and the religious importance it holds.

In this work Kuruvilla analyzes the interests and proposals supported by each of the various Christian communities, the way they compared, contrasted, and in some cases overlapped. “The Churches on the other hand have never been able to formulate a coherent or single policy with regard to territorial acquisition policies on the part of the Israeli State” (Kuruvilla, 2010, pp. 219). Unlike the opinions expressed above whereby religion and state do not necessarily have to be antagonistic, Kuruvilla believes that the churches face a joint threat from a common enemy, in this case the State, and “has adopted a common platform on major issues and to project a unified stand as necessary for their common survival” (Kuruvilla, 2010, pp. 219). He proceeds to say that

“what we have seen in the Holy Land is that cycles of intense violence have alternated with periods of intense diplomacy and peacemaking, though the ‘attrition syndrome’ has not allowed peace a real chance as yet. In the midst of all this, the churches have also been active trying to make their presence felt through a series of historic joint declarations reflecting a newfound unity in action as well as deeds” (Kuruvilla, 2010, pp. 220).

To narrow the scope down even further in order to deal with the subject for the research’s case study, the following literature will be honed in on the Armenian community in Jerusalem. These works primarily describe the community, its history, its unique qualities and characteristics, the role of religion in both formulating and holding together the community etc. We begin with a work written by a Jerusalem local of Armenian descent, Assadour Antreassian in his work “Jerusalem and the Armenians” (1969). Here Antreassian clearly informs the reader

of the close relationship between the church and the Armenian identity, claiming that “The Armenian Church has been a national organization, her history is the history of Armenia politically, socially and religiously” (Antreassian, 1969, p. 20). Even after the creation of the Armenian alphabet, the first use it was put to was towards the translation of the bible (Antreassian, 1969). He acknowledges that the Armenian Church played a pivotal role in the political life of the country throughout its history. The bond between the Nation and the Church was further illustrated by the fact that the Seat of the Catholicos was always in the capital of the country (Antreassian, 1969). Antreassian depicts a picture of the Armenian community in Jerusalem which at the time of this piece reached a number of about 2,500 people, the number of which has been decreasing substantially as years go on. “At present Armenians are mostly settled in and around the Monastery of St. James, due to the fact that the Armenian Secondary School, youth clubs, libraries and other cultural institutions are all located within the compound of the monastery. It could perhaps be noted that the Armenians in the Diaspora are always grouped around their churches and schools,” (Antreassian, 1969, p. 52). In summation Antreassian argues that the Armenian Church is one of the fundamental elements which maintain the Armenian community’s internal cohesiveness. This is an argument that, to some degree is agreed upon by the author of the following piece.

Historian Kevork Hintlian in his writing “History of the Armenians in the Holy Land” (1989) gives us a more in-depth historical based background into the lives of the Armenians in the Old City. His writings date further back than any of the works reviewed so far. He expresses the legitimacy of the Armenians’ belonging to those lands by having established their presence from as far back as the 7th century (Hintlian, 1989). He gives a more recent depiction of those areas in Jerusalem which belong to the Armenian community. “At present, Armenians own in

addition to their rights in the Holy Places, about a dozen convents and churches in the Holy Land with vestiges of many others” (Hintlian, 1989, p. 16). Like Antreassian, Hintlian makes note of the strong ties between religion and the growth of national values, specifically during the Golden Age of Armenian culture in the 5th century where the “monasteries were strongholds of literacy and knowledge, [and] the scriptoria were destined to play a historical role in Armenian scholarship” (Hintlian, 1989, p. 47). Hintlian’s work proves to be useful in that it helps to gain a better general knowledge of the community, its formation, and how it came to be an intricate part of the history of Jerusalem.

In contrast to the previous two works, Oded Peri does not look into the Armenian’s of Jerusalem as an entity by itself, rather takes a look at the varying Christian populations of Jerusalem as a whole, throughout history, including the Armenians. His work “Christian population of Jerusalem in the late seventeenth century: Aspects of demography, economy, and society” (1996) is yet another historical descriptive work which will help to gain a better idea of the socio-economic and demographic side of Christians in Jerusalem. Peri collected data from early versions of censuses, originally in the form of a poll tax which was paid by non-Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire (Peri, 1996). A shortcoming of this data however is “this survey was concerned only with that part of the non-Muslim population which was Ottoman, free, male, adult, and able to earn a livelihood. In other words, a good part of the population consisting of women, children, aged, needy or disabled people, as well as slaves and foreign subjects, was excluded from the survey and is therefore missing from the [Jerusalem poll-tax] register” along with Christian men of religion, priests and monks, who were also excluded (Peri, 1996, p. 401). The value in this literature lies in the data regarding the Armenian community, the influx, migration, decrease and overall demographic changes which it experienced. It helps to picture

the stability of the community or otherwise, the flexibility. In contrast to the previous similar works describing the Armenian community, this particular study bases its information on solid data, making it equally important in depicting a realistic picture of the Armenian community in Jerusalem. The book “Armenians in Jerusalem,” (2000) by yet another local Armenian, Garo Sandrouni is another informative work, which not only delves into the history of the Armenian community in the Old City but one which describes the monastery life in detail. Like Hintlian and Antreassian, Sandrouni confirms the close ties between the Armenian Church and Armenian daily life asserting that “The Armenian Patriarch in Jerusalem oversees not only spiritual matters, but also administers vast amount of real estate holdings” (Sandrouni, 2000, p. 5). Sandrouni describes the laity life, the school, medical center, library, and the brotherhood of St. James in detail. He also described the rise and fall of the various Patriarchs and their individual contributions to the Armenian community.

Hratch Tchilingirian’s article “Dividing Jerusalem: Armenians on the line of confrontation” (2000) gives an in depth account of the Armenian perspective regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict. It discusses their struggles, their interests and their methods of maintaining stability in such a hostile climate. In an interview with historian Hintlian, Tchilingirian was able to get information about the spiritual and political aspects of the Armenian community. “Moreover, our interest in Jerusalem is not only spiritual, but we are also a community with assets and properties. The 28-acre (150 dunum) Armenian section represents one-sixth of the Old City; and the final status talks (about the one-square-kilometer plot of land that has become the most complex and contentious issue in the Middle East for over 50 years) are very important for us” (Tchilingirian, 2000, p. 40). In his article, we learn that one of the most pressing problems the Armenians face is the continuous and gradual loss of land. “Based on decades of

experience, we know that Israelis' eyes are on Armenian properties. In fact the only direction for Jewish territorial expansion inside the Old City is in the direction of the Armenian Quarter....for years Israeli authorities have refused building permits to the Armenian community” (Tchilingirian, 2000, p. 41). In a series of interviews with the local laity we gain a more sociological perspective of the effects that both religion and politics has on the lives of the average citizen.

“‘It seems that the Armenians are going to pay the price for peace. Besides, we are not landed immigrants. We are indigenous people and have been here for hundreds of years, long before Israelis came.’ And in case the Armenian Quarter is placed under Israeli sovereignty... ‘Why should we be obligated to become Israeli citizens and lose our right to travel to Arab countries -- especially Jordan, Lebanon and Syria — where we have so many ties’” (Tchilingirian, 2000, p. 43).

The unique view of the Armenians and their interests and goals and proposals regarding a solution for Jerusalem amidst the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is perfectly delineated in Tchilingirian’s article, where he describes the Armenian preferences, regardless of the fact that these opinions are not generally taken into consideration during the negotiation process. “The first choice of the Armenian community is international status for Jerusalem under the control of such bodies as the UN or a combination of multinational entities” (Tchilingirian,2000, p. 43). For future reference it would be interesting to see the extent in which such preferences are brought to reality.

Bedross Der Matossian writes yet another historical piece which serves the purpose of addressing the Armenian presence in Jerusalem dating back from the influx of Armenian refugees into Jerusalem after the Armenian Genocide of 1918 on till the period of 1948. In his

work “The Armenians of Palestine 1918–48” (2011), Matossian supports much of what was established by Hintlian, Tchilingirian, Antreassian and Sandrouni, however he does manage to get even more detailed about the lifestyles of the Armenians in Jerusalem in the past. He descriptively records the livelihoods of the Armenians which were mainly “employed as barbers, blacksmiths, carpenters, builders, shoemakers, goldsmiths, tailors, and bankers, among other trades. They also played a political role well beyond the confines of their community. Boghos Effendi Zakarian, for example, was the deputy governor (Mutassarif) of Jerusalem, Sahag Nersessian was chief of police, and Hovhannes Khatchadourian was the city’s tax collector” (Matossian, 2011, p. 26). His work is important in the sense that it describes the fluctuation of Armenian involvement in politics in the past and in more recent terms. He argues that “while the Armenians under the Mandate were far less involved in the political life of Palestine than they had been during the late Ottoman pre-World War I period, British rule witnessed a real flourishing of Armenian civil society organizations and institutions” (Matossian, 2011, p. 34). It is now a question to understand how that civil society has developed and is put to use in our modern world, and how much of the civil society is dependent on politics, such as established “Armenian clubs and associations—the vast majority of which were *zuwwar*—[which] were founded in the 1930s” or if it has more rooted bases in the religious institutions (Matossian, 2011, p. 35).

To conclude this literature review I would like to discuss that which we have understood, and that which raises more unanswered questions. Firstly, it is safe to say that while there is much debate as to the degree in which Religion carries clout when it comes to politics and international relations in particular, that it undeniably has influence, be that direct or indirect, and is not under question. An issue that branches from this conclusion is one which asks where

religion is stronger and why. In terms of understanding if religion is a keeper of cultural identity again there is debate as to if it remains to be true and if so, how much. While some claim that religion is most definitely a deciding factor, others propose that it is merely a small variable in a constellation of variables. Due to its extensive history and cultural uniqueness, the assumption of this paper is that religion has more weight in the Armenian community, as can already be inferred from the literature above. That is to say, the Armenian Apostolic Church helps to keep the central cohesiveness of the Armenian community and plays the role of a small State, so to speak, within the Armenian convent and among the Armenian people. More descriptive data representing this argument will, therefore, be delved into. There is also a question of how strong the Armenian Church is outside of the Armenian community in comparison with similar religious communities in Jerusalem, which is also an issue of valid interest with regards to attempting to measure the influence of Religion in society as a whole. In short, while there are hints leading us to make postulations regarding the research questions, many unanswered questions remain. This research project will attempt to dig further into the subject in hopes of gaining interesting insight regarding these issues.

Methodology

Under the context of a Master's Essay, the subject of study has been analyzed in an exploratory, explanatory as well as descriptive fashion. The main method has been that of a historical /comparative analysis, whereby literature has been used as a primary source of information and enlightenment. As such, it is primarily a qualitative research, based on the writings of historians, political scientists, philosophers, theorists, etc., in the form of books, articles, and other works. Secondary data also includes sources such as the official websites of the Ministry of Diaspora and the Armenian Apostolic Church where analysis will be conducted based off of the content (mainly news articles and official statements) issued by these websites, for the purpose of further bolstering the arguments previously made in the review of literature and synthesis of analysis. Furthermore, primary data will be collected via the conduction of semi-structured interviews with representatives of the religious, academic, political spheres. Here true insight can be gained pertaining to the actual influence religion has in terms of the formation and maintenance of the Armenian identity in Jerusalem. Based off of the information collected during the interviews are hopes to confirm or disclaim the conclusions and inferences made during document analysis. Participants of the interviews include representatives of religious bodies, a community leader, and an academic, all sharing their own unique perspective on the same issues.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited in the sense that it would have been more thorough had it been conducted in the form of a true case study over a long period of time and in complete immersion within the community. Thus, both the short-term nature of the study and the distance in proximity with the

case made it difficult to extract the type of data which would have made the study even more solid and sound. Aside from a more thorough observation, the study was lacking some quantitative data which could have been used to further support the argument. As such, in hindsight it would have been beneficial to the study to conduct an opinion poll questionnaire with the lay people, in order to understand their perception of the role of the Church in their society.

Framework of the Study

Within the frameworks of this paper, the Armenian Apostolic Church is viewed as a religious institution. This religious institution, as such, goes beyond being simply a house of worship or an organization which serves primarily spiritual purposes. It is common to view the Armenian Apostolic Church in an almost romantic and poetic light. "The poet Vahan Tekeyan called it 'a shining shield,' while to Patriarch Malachia Ormanian, the church was 'the visible soul of the absent fatherland,'" (Dekmejian, 2004, p. 440). In fact, there is a widespread argument that in the case of the Armenian Apostolic Church, its status as an institution goes well beyond the above mentioned traditional definitions, by carrying a further function or "mission" of maintaining and spreading the cultural and identity-related characteristics of the Armenian people both within the Republic of Armenia and abroad among its Diaspora (Kouymjian, 2004; Dekmejian, 2004). This is mainly due to the fact that Armenians have frequently found themselves in a condition of being stateless or otherwise scattered in host countries distant from the homeland. "With the removal of the political forces that shaped and nurtured Armenian society, the continuity and direction of the nation henceforth resided almost exclusively in the Armenian Church," (Kouymjian, 2004, p. 32). Even after the independence of Armenia the Church continued to play a key role in Armenian society. This was explicitly obvious within the Armenian constitution whereby it is mentioned in Article 8.1 "The Republic of Armenia recognizes the exclusive historical mission of the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church as a national church, in the spiritual life, development of the national culture and preservation of the national identity of the people of Armenia," (RoA const. art. 8 § 1). Essentially, this shows that the

Armenian Apostolic Church played a great role in not only complementing the state but at times replacing it with regards to fulfilling identity retention related functions, functions regarding cohesiveness, and to some degree societal regulation.

“The patterns of migration, settlement, survival, and extinction over the last fifteen centuries of dispersion point to the epicentric role of the Armenian Apostolic Church as preserver of ethno cultural identity. The church followed the immigrants wherever they went, and church buildings functioned as the centers of Armenian cultural life. Consequently, the Armenian Church was called upon to transcend its spiritual mission to become the cultural steward of the Diaspora," (Dekmejian, 2004, p. 440).

This is particularly true presently for the still existing Diaspora, among whom one of the highest priorities is the prevention of assimilation, or the very least, the mitigation of that process. “The natural response to life in the dispersion was to make intensive and protracted efforts to maintain ethnic identity through communal insularity against overwhelming odds...” (Dekmejian , 2004, p. 436). The Armenian Apostolic Church was therefore given the mission to forestall the process of assimilation to the best of its ability by becoming a platform for joint community life, social unity and ethno-cultural maintenance. It was charged with this duty as being one of the only institutions which remained stable during the span of otherwise tumultuous seventeen centuries of Armenian history. In this perspective, one could even argue that the Church acted in the stead of the State when the State was weak or nonexistent. It took on some of the responsibilities of the State and, thus, can be considered an “interim state.” It is for that reason that great thinkers, such as German sociologist J. Habermas, consider the newfound role that religion plays in contemporary society as one which influences not only individuals but

delves into spheres such as culture and even politics in what he defines as a "post secular" society (Habermas, 2006). The Church was bestowed with a state-like power, a legitimate hegemony, and an undeniable influence which came hand in hand with its mission and responsibility to the Armenian society. Given this argument it is an interesting topic of study to see if the Church, in essence, shares the same level of influence, power and to a certain degree, function of a state as an actor in such spheres as International Relations. The subject of the resurgence of religion in International Relations has become a growing topic of interest among scholars; one where many attempts have been made for analysis through various theoretical lenses. Throughout this paper examination of the differing theoretical perspectives pertaining to the subject of religion and the various functions that it serves will be addressed, the main argument being that by means of the institutionalized Church, religion is in fact, fully engaged in society as one of the key actors.

The role of the Armenian Apostolic Church was one which was ingrained with an internal dichotomy. It had to pursue not only spiritual ends, as a religious institution, but also social ones, as an ethnic institution, where sometimes the undertaking of the latter took priority over the former. Dekmejian argues, however, that this was a natural course given the circumstances. "Despite the contradiction between these dual roles, the church had no real choice—since without securing the cultural identity of its faithful it would be left without a flock to spread Christ's message," (Dekmejian, 2004, p. 440). Other scholars, such as French philosopher Auguste Comte, feel that religion inertly has two main functions, which is to regulate and to combine members of a society, thereby establishing social order (Comte & Lenzer, 1998). Here, the position is such that religion *should* naturally be concerned with social matters, as it is a product and integral part of society. Thus, the argument of the existence of a

contradicting internal dichotomy no longer holds. Similarly, French sociologist Emile Durkheim argued that religion aims to strengthen bonds between individuals within a particular society (Durkheim,1994). This can be particularly true for the Armenian society (especially the Diaspora) where cultural bonds are of the utmost priority. “While economic ties are quickly established with the larger society, Armenians tend to view excessive social and cultural relations with non-Armenians as being inimical to their survival as a close-knit community,” (Dekmejian, 2004, p. 438). Here the role of the Church takes the forefront as being a binding institution which helps to sustain the connectedness of the individuals within the Armenian community. The efforts of the Church in this direction are not assumed to be standalone, as there were various other institutions which played a key part in fulfilling this function, however to reiterate, the Armenian Apostolic Church has been the most *stable* institution which worked to that end. In his work “The Principles of Sociology,” English philosopher and sociologist, Herbert Spencer attempted to analyze how different institutional structures, be they political, professional, economic or religious serve the purpose of maintaining society (Spencer & Andreski, 1975). According to Spencer, religious institutions preserve and fortify social linkages, thereby conserving the social collective. Religion epitomized in the form of institutional structures, give the opportunity for legitimizing its exercise of competency in situations of competition between different societies. In the case of the Armenian Diaspora the overarching fear of assimilation has evolved into a kind of paranoia, whereby the practice of “othering” is particularly strong.

To take the concept one step further, religion is not simply a means of differentiating one’s social group from another, or binding members together; rather it serves the purpose of creating a higher ideology, a source of pride, and distinctiveness. Some may argue that it is for

this reason that the Armenian people were able to survive as a society despite existing under the pressures and subordination of foreign rule. “It was significant that Armenians through the ages have regarded themselves not simply as a ‘people’ – *zhoghovurd*—but as a ‘nation’ – *azg* – even after the loss of independent statehood. This sense of ancient nationhood has also persisted in diverse Diaspora settings throughout the centuries,” (Dekmejian, 2004, p. 438). One of the instruments through which the Church established and legitimized its hegemony was through the elementary level of education. According to Italian political theorist and sociologist Antonio Gramsci one of the most essential institutions for the organization of a society and the enrichment of a culture are churches and schools (Simon, 1982). This is why some scholars argue that the Church will find itself being more influential in such communities where education is poorly developed and there is a lack of strong political organizations as an alternative (Dekmejian, 2004).

“The Armenians established a national republic under Russian protection and world-wide organizations which encourage the Armenians in Jerusalem to cherish their national identity and historical and cultural heritage. Despite internal dissensions the Church has a major role in the preservation of their communal cohesion. It provides its flock not only with spiritual guidance but also with educational and cultural institutions as well as with shelter and material support in times of crisis,” (Tsimhoni, 1984, p. 366).

Simply the act of protecting and preserving the Armenian monasteries, historical literature, cultural art and craftsmanship, the Armenian Church gathered strength and influence as the central force binding the Armenian community. “The evidence for the existence of numerous scriptoria and the survival of illuminated manuscripts from the eleventh century, some relatively

crude but others displaying the skill and richness of the Gospel of Gagik-Abas of Kars, preserved in Jerusalem, provide similar support for the enduring artistic tradition of Armenian masters,” (Garsoian, 2004, p.194). The combination of knowledge, language, and culture culminates into an expression of power and the creation of a hegemon. This school of thought is widely promoted by French social theorist Michel Foucault, who in his works focused mainly on the relationship between knowledge and power within an institutional apparatus (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982). That is to say that, simply for the reason that the Armenian Apostolic Church was the keeper of ethnic knowledge, reflexively, the institution of the Church acquired a vast amount of power for the community. "The Armenian Church remains potentially a powerful spiritual and organizational force in both the homeland and the dispersion," (Dekmejian, 2004, p. 440). This is expressly true for the Armenian community of Jerusalem where the patriarchate was endowed with certain duties and powers, including the function of serving as a beacon of national/cultural study for Armenians not only in Jerusalem but internationally. “Despite periodic persecutions under Muslim rule, the patriarchate survived as protector of Armenian rights in the Holy Land and as a center of scholarship,” (Dekmejian, 2004, p. 427). The purpose of this theoretical framework was to review the various conjectures made by philosophers, sociologist, political theorists, historians etc., regarding religion, power, and identity, in order to better frame these concepts within the scope of the case of the Armenian community in Jerusalem and the role of the Armenian Apostolic Church. Despite the rich and explanatory nature of the information provided on various theoretical discourses, it is incomplete without being applied to the case at hand. For that purpose the following section will provide the necessary historical background and present day situation of the case to be studied: The Armenians of Jerusalem.

Scope of the Study

A center of cultural tumult and political strife, Jerusalem, the unofficial capital of Israel, is a city which has always attracted international attention. It is a city with a dramatic and even violent history, having been “destroyed at least twice, besieged twenty three times, attacked an additional fifty two times, and captured and recaptured forty four times,”(Cline, 2004, p. 2). The fundamental motive for many if not all of these clashes lies within the city’s spiritual significance for all three monotheistic religions. Jerusalem, in fact is best known as the nexus for followers of Judaism, Christianity and Islam worldwide, which is furthermore exemplified in its being the home of about 1204 synagogues, 158 Churches, and 73 mosques (Guinn, 2006). Since medieval times, Jerusalem, also known as the Old City, has been divided into four quarters; Jewish, Muslim, Christian and Armenian. In terms of demographics, as of 2009, Jerusalem had a population of 772,900 where 64% were Jewish, 32% Muslim, and 2% Christian (Choshen & Korach, 2011; Guinn, 2006). Attracting pilgrims from all over the world, Jerusalem has always been a city of diversity. “Over forty languages are spoken among Jerusalem's fifty thousand souls. The nationalities and races represented it would be difficult to count” (Merrill, 1892, p. 296). Of the Christian communities in Jerusalem the Arab Orthodox have always been the largest, however the Greek Orthodox is also ranked as one of the largest and wealthiest denominations (Kuruvilla, 2010). The focus of this work nonetheless will be that of the unique case of one of the oldest communities of Jerusalem, boasting having claim to one of the quarters of Jerusalem, the Armenians.

The Armenian quarter of Jerusalem has been described as the “nucleus of the Armenian communities in Palestine [as well as]... a major spiritual center and principal pilgrimage site for Armenians worldwide” (Der Matossian, 2011a, p. 24). Its history dates back to the early Christian era through the Byzantine period (4th and 5th centuries), during which time Armenian monks and pilgrims settled in the holy land (Der Matossian, 2011b; Tsimhoni, 1984; Oshagan, 2004). “Following the rejection by the Armenian Church of the official dogma adopted at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 it seceded from the Church of Byzantium and became a principal factor of Armenian national unity,” (Tsimhoni, 1984, p. 352). A connection between Jerusalem and Armenia was since established and has continued to develop and gain strength as the Holy Land became an important center of for the purposes of spiritual and cultural learning (Oshagan, 2004). The argument of this essay is that the Armenian identity within the walls of Jerusalem achieves its coherence primarily through the Armenian Apostolic Church, via the enactment of its mission, by means of its religious leadership and institutions. As illustrated above, religion has been debated as a central factor in terms of identity creation and legitimization for various different cases, and has been a subject of growing interest among many scholars. Religion can be a chief organizing factor for a given group of people, helping to form an identity, acting as a central core to the society and a basis for its survival when pitted against the world, the region, or simply, “others.” “People also can use religious language to construct civic identities and relationships – that is, define insiders and outsiders – as well as to legitimate action goals,” (Lichterman, 2008, pp. 85). This can be particularly exemplified in the case of Armenians in Jerusalem, within the context of various interacting and clashing religious and ethnic identities. Since early times communal life was centered in the Armenian Quarter of the Old City, dominated by the patriarchal monastery of St. James, which was generously endowed throughout

the centuries by Armenian royal and princely families and wealthy benefactors,” (Dekmejian, 2004, p. 427). Firstly, I would like to look briefly into the history of the Armenian people of Jerusalem, how its commune was formed, and the capacity of the Church during and after its formation. Secondly, I will define some of the current challenges that the Armenian population in Jerusalem faces. Finally, I would like to describe the position of the Armenians within the greater framework of Jerusalem as a whole, and attempt to conduct a comparative analysis of the Armenians and other communities (i.e. Greek, Catholic (Latin/Italian), Syrian etc.).

The central core of the Armenian populace is the Armenian convent, which congregates around St. James cathedral, the heart of the convent since the 12th century. At that time, the cathedral and convent was acquired by the Armenians, and eventually expanded into what is now known as the Armenian Quarter (Tsimhoni, 1984). The current Patriarchate came to form in the 14th century, when Bishop Sargis was proclaimed the head as Patriarch by the Sts. James Brotherhood (Der Matossian, 2011b). Since its inception the Armenian Patriarchate exercised a great amount of authority. Its dominion eventually spread throughout Palestine, southern Syria, Lebanon, Cyprus and Egypt, while also encompassing over the non-Chalcedonian communities, that is to say, the Syrians, Copts and Ethiopians within Jerusalem proper (Der Matossian, 2011b; Tsimhoni, 1984). It was during this time that the Armenian Patriarchate also established its jurisdiction with regards to various holy places. The Armenian Church took its place alongside the prominent Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic/Latin Churches, holding ownership to various lands, buildings, and shops, including the Armenian quarter itself. Very little has changed in this regard since the 17th century (Der Matossian, 2011a). Armenians took residence, mainly in Jerusalem, with smaller communities existing in Haifa, Jaffa, Ramle, and Bethlehem (Der Matossian, 2011b). The demographic dynamics changed, however, during the period of

World War I, when in 1915 a major wave of Armenians escaping the massacres in Anatolia, sought refuge in Jerusalem (Der Matossian, 2011a; Der Matossian, 2011b; Oshagan, 2004).

“Several thousand Armenian refugees settled in Palestine after World War I, but the community was shaken by the 1948 Arab-Israeli war and the partition of the country. During the war, most Armenians living in the coastal towns and the New City took refuge in the walled monastery, but after the armistice were prevented from returning home by the Israelis” (Oshagan, 2004, p. 427).

By 1925, there were about 15,000 Armenians in Palestine the majority of which having had taken up residence in Jerusalem, causing a sudden shift which somewhat strengthened the Armenian position relative to other communities in Palestine (Der Matossian, 2011b).

Armenians engraved themselves into the woodwork of Jerusalem, forming a part of its rich history, culture, social and economic life. They began to successfully take up occupations which emphasized their traditional skills and craftsmanship as jewelers, photographers, artisans, teachers, doctors, tourist guides, skilled workers, while other society members worked as librarians, printing press workers, porters as well as clerks within the patriarchal institutes (Tsimhoni, 1984). The uniqueness of the Armenian community, a point which will be repeated and emphasized throughout this work, lies, in part, with its relative homogeneity. This is a characteristic which is shared by the Armenian Diaspora at large and not necessarily unique to the religious-ethnic society of the Armenians of Jerusalem.

“As is the case of other ethnic groups, Armenian communities tend toward social insularity in Diaspora settings. “Moreover, there existed an inverse relationship between hostile Diaspora milieu and the rate and likelihood of assimilation. In other words, the more inhospitable the host country, the greater the probability of Armenian survival,” (Dekmejian, 2004, pp. 436-437).

This is arguably the case for the Armenians in Jerusalem as well, considering the hostile environment in which they find themselves in. Religion here, also plays a key role, as a key part of the ethnic identity of all the communities within Jerusalem is based off of religious affiliation. The Armenians have been successful in maintaining their distinct identity, by preserving the Armenian language, heritage, and culture. In fact, one could even say that while they have become a part of Jerusalem as a whole, they managed to separate themselves to a point of near isolation, rarely intermingling with other communities save for the purpose of business affairs. The same can be said about the Armenian Church. “This is a strictly ethnic Church, and has never received converts,” (Freeman-Grenville, 2005, p. 222). Armenians are not known to participate in the general political life of the West Bank, feeling satisfied to live in their own separate collective. “The Armenians form the most compact and segregated community in Jerusalem and the West Bank. Nearly 90 per cent of the community resides in the old city of Jerusalem, and 80 per cent of these in St James convent,” (Tsimhoni, 1984, p. 353). The Armenian population in Jerusalem is represented before the state by the Patriarch, who not only plays the role of spiritual leader, but also the internal regulator of the lay people within the monastic order, the president of all Church assemblies, and the proprietor of Church assets (Tsimhoni, 1984). “Its possessions include one-sixth of the Old City... [and] its Patriarch ranks with the Orthodox Patriarch,” (Freeman-Grenville, 2005, p. 222).

The Armenians of Jerusalem built a center that soon grew to become one of the strongest in terms of Armenian culture and religion throughout the Middle East. “In the nineteenth century it opened the first printing press in Jerusalem, and provided liturgical books for Armenians all over the world,” (Freeman-Grenville, 2005, p. 222). Aside from the printing press, the convent had established one of the largest Armenian Libraries in the world in 1929.

The Gulbenkian Library, boasted of a collection of over 50,000 volumes, and fulfilled its charge of maintaining and preserving Armenian manuscripts, newspapers, and magazines (Tsimhoni, 1984). Another praiseworthy accomplishment was the establishment of the St. Tarkmanchatz school in the same year (1929), which served as an educational center for Armenian children, not only in terms of languages and sciences, but also in terms of “extensive Armenological subjects which [had and continues to] have a major role in forming the communal and national identity of the students,” (Tsimhoni, 1984, p. 356). These institutions were established and maintained not only through funding of Diaspora philanthropists but also by the Patriarchate and other religious leaders, emphasizing the interconnectivity of the Church with the cultural and academic growth of the Armenian community. “Unlike the Greek case, laity and clergy equally shared duties within the Armenian fold, and the Armenian quarter with its Church and monastery of St. James was unique in that it provided a mixed residential ambience for monks, priests as well as laity” (Kuruville, 2010, p. 215). The bond between the Church and laity life was (and is today) so intense that it has become nearly an unavoidable characteristic. In the words of a resident of the Armenian convent “Religious rituals were a part of life, forced on us in school and in the family. There was no way out” (Aghazarian, 1993, p. 14). Both spiritual and cultural education were key focal points for the Armenians of Jerusalem, who went beyond the aspirations of merely maintaining their own Armenian identity as a part of the Diaspora, but who embraced the responsibility as pioneers to spread the Armenian tradition and culture to other Diaspora populations worldwide. One could also argue that given the attention bestowed on Jerusalem by the international collective, the Armenians of Jerusalem were given another leading platform to represent Armenia outside of the homeland.

Political and Social Clubs in the Armenian Community (of Jerusalem)

The influence that the Church had on the society in the past was unequivocally clear, as religion was deeply engraved in the everyday lives of the lay people, however, that is not to say that there was a lack of secular organizations. Quite the contrary, many Armenian secular voluntary associations and clubs were established within the Armenian quarter, which claimed membership from nearly all its residents (Tsimhoni, 1984; Der Matossian, 2011a; Dumper, 2002). Still, religious entities were never shut out altogether. “Being distinct secular organizations the clerics [were] not accepted as members but [were] often invited as honorary guests,” (Tsimhoni, 1984, p. 356). The most prominent groups were the Hoyetchmen (est. in 1933) and the Homenetmen (est. its branch in Jerusalem in 1935). Both clubs were centers for youth, coordinating activities for sports, culture, and heritage. The clubs worked to organize lectures regarding Armenian history, performed Armenian plays, taught the youth traditional Armenian songs and dance and brought the Armenian people together in preparation for and celebration of religious and national holidays (Tsimhoni, 1984). “[These clubs] distinguished themselves in soccer, basketball, and boxing, competing not only against each other but also against Arab, British, and Jewish teams” (Der Matossian, 2011a, p. 35).

The clubs are split, however, in terms of political lines, and to some extent serve to divide the Armenian population more so than unite it. “To some extent they [internal conflicts] were exacerbated by the political divisions within the Armenians in exile over the future of Armenia and the means to achieve it,” (Dumper, 2002, pp. 54-55). The politics involved revolved around not the fate of the local Armenians, but the fate of Armenians in Armenia proper.

“Homentmen identifies with the Tashnak party, which is opposed to the communist regime in the Soviet Armenian Republic; it favours an activist

struggle in order to achieve complete Armenian independence. Hoyetshmen which identifies with the Ramgavar party, although disapproving of the regime in Soviet Armenia, considers it an internal issue of Soviet Armenia which should be determined by its citizens alone,” (Tsimhoni, 1984, p. 358).

While presently, i.e. after the Republic of Armenia gained its independence, such political affiliations no longer hold as great zeal as in the past, the rivalry, and to some extent animosity, between the two groups is generally upheld within families as per tradition. Despite the crisis of a dwindling population starting from 1948, particularly due to emigration of its youth, these internal divisions remain to be cemented within the social frameworks of communal life. “There is neither the possibility of membership in both nor an initiative for unity stemming from the decline in the size of the community,” (Tsimhoni, 1984, p. 358). By no means does this intend to imply that an overarching cohesion within the commune does not exist. Quite the opposite it can be argued that when contended against other communities a certain sense of ‘self’ vs. ‘others’ springs to the surface, emphasizing the strength of basic solidarity. “Despite [political] tensions the Armenian community remains a close-knit community based almost entirely inside the Monastery of St James or in the immediate vicinity of the Armenian quarter,” (Dumper, 2002, pp. 54-55). Interestingly enough, in the face of being secular, many of the day-to-day activities organized by the clubs for the youth were still inadvertently tied to the Church. For example, the scouting groups for both clubs unite on Easter, Christmas and other religious holidays to lead the Armenian procession through the streets of Jerusalem. It is important to note, once again, that the unifying quality of the Church is undeniable, as it seems to be the principal plane on which the members of the Armenian society agree to come together and be representative as one. “The close living conditions of the community have meant that lay

influence in the affairs of the Patriarchate is strong,” (Dumper, 2002, pp. 54-55). There is however one minor exception which lies within the division of the Armenian Apostolic (Orthodox) and the Armenian Catholic Churches (an occurrence which took place in the 18th century).

The Armenian Catholic Church

The formation of the Armenian Catholic congregation in Jerusalem was parallel to that of the Armenian Orthodox one. The community is relatively small, comprising a population of about 800 adherents as of 2008 (Annuario Pontificio, 2008). Mostly finding residence outside of the convent in areas surrounding the Catholic Church, only a few families can be found living within the boundaries of the Armenian Quarter (Tsimhoni, 1984). Despite not being accepted as part of the Armenian Orthodox solidarity the Armenian Catholics were also successful in retaining their language, culture and heritage. In fact, the Armenian Catholic Church has a rich history, and is chiefly acknowledged as initiating what can be considered a “second Golden Age of Armenian Culture.” This is particularly true for the case of the Mekhitarist Congregation in Venice which was established in 1717 by Mekhitar of Sebastia (Oshagan, 2004). The salience of this congregation lies in its commitment to preserve and develop traditional Armenian culture, faith, and language for the purpose of national survival. Mekhitarists were responsible for the translation of valuable texts and a current of publications which were spread throughout the international community. The Armenian Catholic community in Jerusalem however, shares little part in this history, and is comparably quite weak to that of the Apostolic Church. “Half of the community's children attend the Armenian Orthodox school and the rest attend various Catholic schools,” (Tsimhoni, 1984, p. 359). The Armenian Catholics also had its own affiliated club, which, when compared to the Hoyetchmen and Homenetmen clubs, was not secular, rather was

tailored particularly for the Armenian Catholic congregation. The Armenian Catholic Club (also known as Arax) was established in 1935, and was closely aligned to the Church. "Its meeting place is within the vicariate and the vicar as a rule is its spiritual guide. The club is headed by an annually elected committee of nine which, since 1963, has included women as well. It finances its activities through membership fees, subscriptions and support of the vicariate," (Tsimhoni, 1984, pp. 359-360). It too shared the same goals as the other clubs, that is, to instill a sense of Armenianness in the community's youth. For those youths which did not attend the Armenian school, Friday Armenian classes were held.

This society pales in size when compared to the central community of Armenians belonging to the Orthodox Church. For that reason, the children of the Catholic population were generally found joining Arab Catholics in events and activities of a religious nature and then joining the Armenian Orthodox during those carrying a more nationalistic/cultural nature (Tsimhoni, 1984). That is not to say that the two Armenian communities are largely disengaged from each other. The Armenian Catholic community, much like the greater Armenian community in Jerusalem, remains homogenous and segregated from other non-Armenians. "In general, there was an inverse relationship between the rate of assimilation and the incompatibility of the religio-cultural environment. For example, the rate and likelihood of Armenian assimilation was much lower in the Muslim lands than in the Christian countries," (Dekmejian, 2004, p. 436). Grant it, this quality is one shared by the Armenian Apostolic Community, the Armenian Catholic Community may be seen as slightly more vulnerable as its members are not located within the protection and isolation of the St. James Monastery walls. Being more immersed in daily interactions with other religious and ethnic entities, the Armenian Catholics face a bigger challenge in terms of assimilation.

In terms of cohesion of the Armenian community, the Armenian Apostolic and Catholic divide seems to have little to no effect. While one can see a clear division among the political lines within the Armenian society, the same cannot be said for the religious division between the Churches. That division seems to exist exclusively among religious authorities, and less among the Armenian lay people. “[The Armenian Catholic’s] main contacts outside their community have been with the Armenian Orthodox, on whom they depend for their Armenian education and national celebrations,” (Tsimhoni, 1984, p. 360). Once again, we can come to the conclusion that the Armenian Orthodox Church officially bore the weight of maintaining, developing and spreading the Armenian heritage, even to those Armenians who did not share the same branch of religious belief. In fact, one could potentially call their cooperation one exemplifying a greater Christian unity, or even bolder still, an Armenian unity sans religious implications. This gives rise to the question of viewing institutionalized religion as a platform for spiritual convergence in the eyes of God, or as a venue with a greater purpose of unification and legitimization. “The cordial relations between the two Armenian communities, despite the Church division, were the outcome of their notion of a common national and cultural heritage and fate and, above all, the memory of the Turkish massacre of World War I,” (Tsimhoni, 1984, p. 360).

Threats facing the Armenian Community

Along with a shared history and culture, both the Catholic and Apostolic branches of the Armenian society also share problems which threaten the Armenian population of Jerusalem as a whole. The greatest issue that it has faced and continues to face is that regarding the Armenian land and property in Palestine as well as the declining Armenian population. The two issues are deeply interlinked. Because of the dwindling population, the decline of which began when the British rule ended in 1948, with a second wave of emigration in 1967 (Israel’s Armenian

Heritage, 2010), the Armenian community stands weak against the hard line property related policies carried out by the Israeli government. “The Armenians were terrorized by concern for their land and property, should they come under permanent Israeli rule as portrayed by the failed settlement at Camp David” (Kuruvilla, 2010, p. 216). These lands, as previously mentioned, were acquired starting the second half of the 19th century, however with a decreasing population and persistent Israeli policy, the potential loss of these lands prove to be a point of growing apprehension among the Armenians.

“Now the Armenians in Jerusalem itself, many descended from refugees, fear their own 1,500-year-old Christian presence may disappear, too. Their society and extensive landholdings risk becoming collateral damage in a demographic conflict for land and power in the holy city between Israel and the Palestinians” (Israel’s Armenian Heritage, 2010).

Logically, one would assume that the fight for communal survival would naturally rest on the shoulders of the Church, and some do indeed share this view. As expressed by Armenian resident (aged 97) Arshalouys Zakaryan, “it’s a dying community. Only the Church holds us together” (Israel’s Armenian Heritage, 2010). In terms of loss of land, however, reality would show that the Armenian Apostolic Church has little to no influence in the matter. In fact, quite the opposite phenomenon occurs, whereby the Church has adopted a very unpopular practice of selling and, so to speak, “renting” these lands (Kuruvilla, 2010), (Israel’s Armenian Heritage, 2010). “The Churches ... have never been able to formulate a coherent or single policy with regard to territorial acquisition policies on the part of the Israeli State,” (Kuruvilla, 2010, pp. 219). Consequently, many members of the Armenian population feel growing pressure to migrate abroad. This is particularly true for the Armenian youth who have aspirations for

receiving a higher education and/or career opportunities abroad. The obstacle lies greatly in the process of their return however, due to the policy of the withdrawal of ID cards; a tradition which in essence is equivalent to taking away a person's right to return to their country as a resident. Historian and former Patriarchate secretary George Hintlian characterizes the topic of withdrawn ID cards as a very serious matter, one which greatly affects the greater issue of an increasingly diminishing population (Israel's Armenian Heritage, 2010). "Five local-born Armenians lost residence rights last month," said Hintlian when describing the gravity of the situation of the Armenian populace (Israel's Armenian Heritage, 2010). As such, we find that it is not only a question of lands, but has developed into a greatly demographic one. Thus, in point of fact, the issues of lands, population and identity are greatly interlaced.

It is no new matter that the Armenians of Jerusalem are dwindling in terms of figures, and this greatly influences their role and weight within the greater society. The smaller the population, Hintlian claims, the more justified actions, such as seizure of lands, are. "The basic struggle is to have numbers...Diplomats say, 'Look, the Armenians have a lot of space and very few people...'" (Hintlian as cited in Israel's Armenian Heritage, 2010). However, the temptation to migrate is not limited to prospective students alone, but is also shared by various businessmen as well. The working climate is such as to hinder growth and development for the Armenian people. "The lay community...does question whether future generations will be here; residents say Armenians feel disadvantaged in getting work with Jewish or Arab employers and so move abroad and then face Israeli refusal to allow them back" (Israel's Armenian Heritage, 2010). Furthermore, many of the population feel that they are isolated from their family members and friends who reside in countries throughout the Middle East, particularly Lebanon and Syria, where the option of travelling is strictly prohibited (Israel's Armenian Heritage,

2010). The issue of identity for the Armenian population is complicated further still by the way the Israeli government and people view it. As Hintlian aptly worded it, "for the private Israeli, we are full-time genocide survivors, but for the Israeli bureaucracy, we are full-time Palestinians," (Hintlian as cited in Israel's Armenian Heritage, 2010).

Comparative Analysis: Armenian Church and Other Religious-Ethnic Communities in Jerusalem

The issue of land pressures from the Israeli government is not one which is unique to the Armenians as it is shared by the Greeks as well. Together, the two communities had ownership rights to some of the most valued and sought after pieces of real estate within the city of Jerusalem (Kuruvilla, 2010). The course of action taken by Church leaders to sell or lease these lands, therefore, is one which is rejected by the laity (Kuruvilla, 2010; Israel's Armenian Heritage, 2010; Katz & Kark, 2005). Church lands have very great importance from varying and intricate viewpoints.

“The topic of Church real estate is considered within the contexts of Church and land, or the mode and dynamics of real-estate accumulation and ownership by the Church, the tenorial status of the Churches, the spatial distribution of property, and settlement and landscape development processes; Church and community, or the relationship between the Church establishment and its lay community, including aspects of internal social, religious, and economic divisions and power struggles within Churches; and Church and empire/state, with its political, administrative, legal, and economic ramifications.” (Katz & Kark, 2005, p. 511).

As mentioned above, this state of affairs rings true for both the Armenian and the Greek communities however, while they do share many similar qualities, they are at heart different. One of the main differences between the Greek and Armenian communities is that of the existence of internal conflict in the Greek Orthodox structure, based on the lack of homogeneity. This is mainly due to the fact that, as previously argued, the Armenian Church is an institution which is diligent in implementing cultural activism, thereby slowing the assimilation process, a characteristic not shared by the Greek Orthodox Church. It is for this reason that the Armenian community is far more homogenous and faces little risk of internal conflicts, whereas the Greek community is more prone towards clashes of this nature, based on a division which goes back in its cultural history. Thus, one of the biggest problems the Greek population faces is the divide between the laity and the heads of Church, which often than not, do not share the same ethnicity. Consequently, there exists a deeper question of defining and understanding a shared identity. Commonplace practice in many Middle Eastern countries, including that of Palestine, is one in which the heads of Churches, which originally were of a different ethnic origin than the congregation (i.e. customarily among Greek, Anglican, Lutheran, Catholic Churches), over time have become, as Katz and Kark coined it, “Arabized,” through the replacement of such foreign priests by those from the local population (Katz & Kark, 2005). This however has not been the case for the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem, which stands firm to the tradition of giving these positions of status to ethnic Greeks alone. “No local Arab priests serve in key roles in the Church,” (Katz & Kark, 2005, p. 509). This became a cause for internal struggle within the congregation, as the lay people “sought to free their Church from the domination of the ethnically (and linguistically) Greek higher clergy by demanding a larger role in managing the affairs of the Patriarchate and the community, especially with regard to education and real

estate,” (Der Matossian, 2011a, p. 29). The Armenian community is distinct, in effect, as being one of the only from the communities which does not share this concern. Whereas in other communities, the concept of identity can be defined along strictly ethnic or strictly religious lines, the Armenian identity is defined by the intermingling of both ethnicity and religion. As such, it would be difficult to compare the two communities along the same variables however, an attempt at a comparative approach is necessary for a better understanding, if nothing else, of the unique situation in which the Armenian community in Jerusalem finds itself. The task becomes even more challenging due to the lack of research in the area. Professor Rehav Rubin from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem duly noted that Eastern Christianity and their communities, that is to say, those which include the Greek Orthodox, Armenian, Russian or local Arab, have been greatly ignored by the academic circles in terms of a focal point of study (Katz & Kark, 2005). According to him only two such pieces of literature were noteworthy, one being focused on smaller Eastern Christian communities such as the Copts, Ethiopians, and Syrian Orthodox within East Jerusalem and Bethlehem, whereas the other was a work mainly focused on the “spatial distribution and structural characteristics” of the Greek Orthodox monasteries from the Byzantine times (Katz & Kark, 2005, p. 513). In any case, little to no work has endeavored to analyze the collective, social and organizational characteristics of these societies.

To reiterate, while it is true that the Armenians and Greeks share the same issue regarding land pressures from Israel, they differ in essence due to there being more homogeneity in the Armenian community whereas the Greek Orthodox community in Jerusalem is chiefly split along clergy-laity lines where there is a conflict which “is increasingly fueled by powerful economic incentives, as well as by political-national, social, and communal interests,” (Katz & Kark, 2005, p. 509). This is not a matter of contention for the Armenian community however, as

previously discussed, and as Kuruvilla argues, mainly due to the fact that the Armenian community is “a highly close-knit group and more-over one that had little or no clergy-laity problems, both being of the same racial creed and stock, the Armenians provided a different picture from what traditionally has come to be associated with Jerusalem Churches and indeed Eastern Churches in particular” (Kuruvilla, 2010, p. 215). Other Churches which share a similar fate as that of the Greek Orthodox includes the Latin (or Catholic) Church, whereby the congregation is comprised primarily of people of Arab (Palestinian) ethnicity, yet the clergy (particularly those who rank higher in the echelons of the Church) is greatly composed of those of a foreign (i.e. Italian) ethnicity (Kuruvilla, 2010).

Yet another large religious congregation which would be imprudent to ignore is that belonging to the Syrian Church. Maintaining inhabitation in Jerusalem from as far back as 1465, the Syrian community also lays some claim to properties and rights in the Holy Places in Jerusalem, however, these rights regardless, the Syrian Church is de facto subject to the Armenian Patriarchate within the framework of the Status Quo (Tsimhoni, 1984; Kuruvilla, 2010; Tchilingirian, 2000). Part of why the Armenian Patriarchate may have more power and influence could be due to the reality that the Syrian Church has no true territorial center to speak of. The Syrian population is mostly converged at St. Mark’s convent, where accordingly the sense of shared identity is similarly formed on the basis of the Church and its linguistic, cultural and historical characteristics (Tsimhoni, 1984). Saying such does not connote that the two communities do not have commonalities. Quite the reverse, they share much of the same core characteristics pertaining to the maintenance of their ethno-religious coherence. “They have remained clustered around their Churches and their cultural and social life has been centered in their communal organizations. While being fully integrated into the economic and commercial

life of their Arab environment, they have kept their residential and social segregation,” (Tsimhoni, 1984, p. 366). Yet upon deeper analysis you would find that the Syrian community is still lacking in comparison to the Armenian one in terms of unity. This is mostly due to the fact that the Armenians of Jerusalem receive an abundance of support from the Diaspora. While it is true that there exists a Syrian Diaspora, it is not as supportive, added to the dilemma that the Syrian Church lacks the resources necessary for sustaining the community (Tsimhoni, 1984). “All these factors have led to a certain residential integration of the Syrians into the general society as compared with the total segregation of the Armenians,” (Tsimhoni, 1984, p. 366).

Inter-communal Relations and the Status Quo

Having thus far provided a fairly detailed description of the various ethno-religious groups in Jerusalem in comparison to the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Armenian people, it is now prudent to move forward and attempt at describing the interactions between these groups within the larger construct of the city. These interactions are best regulated under the context of the Status Quo, where the three main Churches share rights to the most pivotal Holy Places in Jerusalem (and elsewhere in Israel). The concept of “Status Quo” dates back to 1852 when clashes between mainly Franciscans and Orthodox Churches rose over rights to the usage of certain Holy Places. This was particularly true for the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. The Status Quo essentially established territorial divisions among the various communities. The key point of these divisions emphasize that no kind of rearrangement may be made without the consent from all the communities. The three main custodians of the Holy Places are the Greek Orthodox Church, the Franciscans/Roman Catholic Church and the Armenian Apostolic Church (Kuruvilla, 2010; Tchilingirian, 2000).

“In its 1993 fundamental agreement with Israel establishing reciprocal diplomatic relations, the Holy See made an extraordinary ecumenical concession in promising to respect the Status Quo in the Holy Places, that labyrinthine compilation of decrees and agreements allocating time and space among the competing Christian communities in their sacred places. The Catholics thereby agreed to remain in a very disadvantaged position vis-a-vis the Greek Orthodox and the Armenians. Because of the Status Quo, for example, in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the Catholics must celebrate their Easter New Fire ritual of lighting the paschal candles and blessing the baptismal waters very early on Saturday morning, not at midnight between Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday as everywhere else in the world” (Friedland & Hecht, 1998, p. 146).

In the 19th century the Coptic, Ethiopian and Syrian Orthodox Churches gained less significant rights and responsibilities, being subordinate to the above mentioned three Churches. Given such, the Armenian Patriarchate takes on the role of what Hintlian described as a “semi-diplomatic status,” by bearing the responsibility as one of the three main guardians of the Holy Places (Tchilingirian, 2000).

In terms of the greater politics of Palestinian-Israeli relations the role of the Church is significantly diminished. The Holy Lands have been an issue of contestation for both sides of the conflict, thereby putting these ethno-religious communities at the fault lines. As mentioned before, there exists a fierce struggle over scarce lands in the Holy City. The Israeli government has been principally adamant in the process of buying off lands from the various landowners. Bearing the brunt of these pressures are the Greek and Armenian communities (among others), as these Churches have lands in their possession which date back to when these communities

first settled in the lands. There has been a controversial process of buying and leasing lands, which culminated in the incident of St. John's Hospice, where a group of fanatical settlers of the Ateret Cohanim faction took over the building (Kuruvilla, 2010). This resulted in a catastrophic setback in terms of interreligious peace in Israel, as demonstrations and rallies ensued from the discontent Christian population.

“Following the seizure of the Greek Orthodox Hospice of St. John in 1990, the Holy Sepulcher was closed in protest for 24 hours – the first time this was to have occurred in 800 years. For three years running, between 1987 and 1989 Christmas celebrations were curtailed and public services suspended. These were significant steps not only in terms of expressing solidarity with the Palestinian national movement and the suffering of the people, but also in demonstrating the degree of intra-Church coordination” (Dumper, 2002, p. 55).

While not explicitly noted, there is a sense of solidarity between the Christian communities with the Arab/Palestinian population. “‘The Armenian Quarter belongs to us and we and the Armenians are one people,’ said Yasser Arafat, Palestinian Authority President in contradicting reports that he had agreed to Israeli annexation of the Armenian section” (Tchilingirian, 2000, p. 40). This is also particularly true for the Greek Orthodox Church, whose congregation, as mentioned above, is mainly that of Arab ethnicity. “As Arabs, they [Greek Orthodox community] played an important role in the consolidation of the Palestinian national movement” (Der Matossian, 2011a, p. 29). The Greek Orthodox community was vastly involved in Palestinian politics, playing a key role “in both macro and micro political developments,” (Der Matossian, 2011a, p. 28). The resulting coordination of the various Christian communities against the Israeli government, for the case of the St. John Hospice event, proved to be an

unexpected impediment to the Israeli policy, which was to divide and conquer (Dumper, 2002). The Armenians however, once again found themselves in a situation whereby they represented the minority. This was due to, in part, their Armenianness. “British policy had particular consequences for the Armenians. The coalescence of politics in Palestine along Arab (Muslim plus Christian) versus Jewish lines in reaction to Mandate priorities left them marginalized; by virtue of not being Arab, they stood apart from the dominant issue of the day” (Der Matossian, 2011a, p. 28).

The Armenian Apostolic Church was not as active in politics outside of their internal community, and was for the most part disengaged from local Palestinian politics (Der Matossian, 2011a). The reasoning behind it was twofold (1) the Armenian community was comprised of mainly refugees who were focused on Diaspora politics more so than local affairs, (2) while the Armenian people did sympathize with the Palestinian as can be noticed in their rhetoric, their primary concerns bore an internal focus (Der Matossian, 2011a). “Within the two communities, the Armenian consciousness of a separate identity is the stronger. They had a highly developed national consciousness already in their homeland in Asia minor, based on language and cultural revival and encouraged by their contacts with the West before World War I and before the settlement of the majority of the contemporary Armenian community in Jerusalem,” (Tsimhoni, 1984, p. 366). Yet another moment in history where the influence (or once again, the lack thereof) of the Armenian Apostolic Church was put to the test was that of the Camp David negotiations. “The Armenians’ existence as a separate ethnic community within an overwhelmingly Palestinian Christian setting almost cost them dear at the Camp David negotiations between Arafat, Barak and Clinton when there were moves to separate the well-defined Armenian sector within the walled city and combine it with the Jewish sector as part of

the area that would be under Israeli sovereignty, pending division of the city in a future peace plan,” (Kuruvilla, 2010, p. 216). The various Patriarchs of Jerusalem were not informed or involved in the negotiation process of Camp David, and once notified of the intent to separate the Armenian lands from the rest of Palestine were both shocked and outraged. The heads of the Christian Churches of Jerusalem jointly sent a letter to the agents of the negotiations in protest against such a decision, and also demanding that future negotiations include their input. “The clerics demand to have representatives from the Churches at the Summit was never fulfilled,” (Kuruvilla, 2010, p. 216). This incident, along with others, shows that despite being a good forum for internal organization, mobilization and identification, the Armenian Apostolic Church has little to no influence on affairs of a larger scale, i.e. external of the community on even a regional scale. The following sections of this paper will include analysis of expert interviews conducted with religious figures, historians, students, lay people etc. of the Armenian community in Jerusalem in order to put into perspective the lessons learned above.

Findings

Content Analysis

This section of the paper aims to answer the research questions based off of the results of a content analysis, mainly analyzing news sources regarding the activities of the Armenian Apostolic Church both in Etchmiadzin and abroad. There will also be a brief overview of the general Armenian-Israeli relations as published by the Ministry of Diaspora website. First and foremost, the official website of the Armenian Church will be brought to attention, whereby claims are made on behalf of the Church regarding the historical and ongoing role it had played for the Armenian people. “The Armenian Church has created a wealth of arts, language, architecture and music throughout history. She has helped to shape the face of the Armenian nation and people, and to keep our heritage alive, all through the centuries” (“Education”, 2013). It proceeds to speak of its current methods of spreading the word of the Church, emphasizing the use of such means as radio, television, and the internet to reach its people. “Our Holy Traditions, Beliefs, Sacraments and Services, are meant to serve the spiritual and educational needs and requirements of the faithful,” (“Education,” 2013). This argument very much so reflects the question posited at the beginning of this research, whereby the mission of the Church, and the role that it is to play goes beyond merely spiritual elements and takes on a more ethnic character. Further still, when examining the importance of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem among the ranks of the Armenian Apostolic Church, it soon became evident that it plays an almost equal role to the effects mentioned above. In fact its position is so great that seminaries which exist abroad seek an exchange of faculty and students from the seminaries which exist both in the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin and the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem (“Fr. Mardiros Chevian,” 2012).

Similarly, more initiatives are encouraged whereby these students are given the opportunity to study at length in the seminaries of Armenia and Jerusalem (“Fr. Mardiros Chevian,” 2012). To delve further still into the subject the paper will in chronological order analyze various news articles regarding the relationship between Armenia and Israel and more importantly the activities of the Armenian Apostolic Church leaders internationally.

To begin, specific attention was made to the RA Ministry of Diaspora, which is assigned with the task to maintain Homeland-Diaspora relations and which, it could be argued, shares an overlap of responsibilities with the Armenian Apostolic Church. It is perhaps for that reason that the two institutions are commonly seen working in partnership. In November 2012, the Minister received General Vicar of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, Archbishop Aris Shirvanyan, and noted that the ministry would start working more closely at the task of strengthening the ties between the Armenian community of Jerusalem in cooperation with the Holy See and the Homeland (“RA Minister of Diaspora,” 2012). Hranush Hakopyan also met with the Chairperson of the Armenian Youth Association of Jerusalem, Hagop Antreassian, who had come to Armenia in September 25, 2012, with the intention of raising several issues concerning the Armenian community of Jerusalem (“RA Minister of Diaspora receives Chairperson,” 2012). These issues mainly revolved around the preservation of the Armenian identity and language (“RA Minister of Diaspora receives Chairperson,” 2012). As expected, one of the primary concerns of the Ministry of Diaspora is the encouragement of Armenian education among Diaspora children. This is achieved not only through collaboration with youth organizations but also in partnership with Church institutions. Accordingly, the ministry has in the past offered willingness to support the Zharangavorats theological seminary by sending textbooks and professionals from Armenia (“The RA Minister of Diaspora received Archimandrite,” 2010),

("RA Minister...taking part in seminars,"2013). This discussion took place in May 2010 during a meeting with the representatives of the Armenian community in the Zharangavorats Seminary's hall ("RA Minister...taking part in seminars," 2013)Yet another discussion took place in July 2010 between Hranush Hakobyan and Archimandrite Emmanuel Atajanian, Abbot of the Holy Savior Monastery of Jerusalem ("The RA Minister of Diaspora received Archimandrite," 2010). Without exception during any of her visits to Jerusalem, the Minister of Diaspora pays a visit to the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem, the Honorary Consul of Armenia in Israel and representatives of the Armenian community of Israel ("RA Minister...paid a visit," 2010).

The next important secondary source is the official website of the Armenian Apostolic Church where analysis was conducted of the various press releases and news articles. Here attention was placed on the relations between the Church and its representatives and an assortment of secular organizations. The first example of such a case is that of a meeting which took place between His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians and Ms. Conny Lenneberg, Regional Leader of World Vision International, and Mr. Derek Bowie, Region Director for World Vision ("Catholicos of All Armenians," 2012). "The representatives of "World Vision" expressed their appreciation to His Holiness for the hospitality, and highlighted that the Armenian Church is an important partner in the implementation of the organization's mission" ("Catholicos of All Armenians," 2012). His Holiness also expressed his gratification regarding programs involving different departments and programs of the Armenian Church which are specifically directed to youth and Christian education ("Catholicos of All Armenians," 2012). It is interesting to see that despite being a religious institution the Armenian Church is fully involved, interacts, and cooperates with many

secular institutions, organizations, bodies and actors. Another such example is that of the meeting between His Holiness Karekin II and the delegation members of the Armenia Friendship Group in the European Parliament which was accompanied by such figures as Mr. Artak Zakaryan, Chairman of the Standing Committee on Foreign Relations of the National Assembly and Mr. Avec Adonc, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Belgium to the Republic of Armenia (“His Holiness Karekin II Received,” 2013). The focus of this meeting was to discuss the cooperation between the various actors in defending Armenian rights, working together to help Armenia's efforts to join the European Union, as well as voicing the issue of recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide (“His Holiness Karekin II Received,” 2013).

It is of no surprise that the Church is also actively involved in foreign affairs, organizing meetings with representatives from countries worldwide. One such an example is a meeting which took place between His Holiness Karekin II and the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Cyprus, Dr. Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis. While the discussions mostly revolved around the successful and long-term bilateral relations between Armenia and Cyprus, some remarks were made regarding organizations which helped to cultivate a sense of mutual security. Furthermore, "the Catholicos of All Armenians extended his appreciation to the government of Cyprus for their constant attention to the Armenian community’s spiritual and national life, and care of their educational and cultural institutions" (“Catholicos of All Armenians...Cyprus,” 2012). It is important to note that in this instance the emphasis is not only placed on spiritual and national life but also on educational and cultural aspects, in short, the attention to retention of the Armenian identity among the members of the Armenian community in Cyprus. This exemplifies how involved the Armenian Church is pertaining to its two missions (i.e. spiritual and cultural).

The Armenian Church also has its place in the World Armenian Congress, which deals with Armenia-Armenia Diaspora relations. Among its many goals and agendas are attempts to benefit Armenia's economy, work towards the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict and activities aimed towards the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide. During the second assembly of the World Armenian Congress his Holiness had the opportunity to speak about the challenges that Armenia faces in terms of political and economic development and called out for cooperation in resolving them (“His Holiness Karekin II Participated,” 2012). He also spoke of the problems facing the Syrian Armenian population, resulting from the current military conflict, and the need for the Armenian community of Syria for material, political and moral support (“His Holiness Karekin II Participated,” 2012).

Zooming in on Jerusalem relations, some level of cooperation seems to exist between the Armenian community and Patriarchate of Jerusalem and Armenia. This cooperation is one which is generally limited in terms of making actual progress to solve the community’s most critical problems. This is especially so when comparing the strength of the Armenian community both in material terms and those of political protection, to that of the Latin and Greek Churches. "In this most difficult task the patriarch relied upon the moral and material support of the local monastics and secular community, the other hierarchical sees of the Armenian church, pilgrims, and the Armenian people as a whole,"(Sanjian, 1999). For the purpose of analysis of the documents in this section several major themes or categories were deemed to have taken priority among both Church and Ministry officials. In the category “twofold mission” there were 13 mentions of a “cultural” nature (being that about maintaining, developing, or cooperating on issues of education, history, culture, language, heritage, identity, the Armenian Genocide, etc.). In terms of “spiritual” references, only four mentions were made. This demonstrates how the

Armenian Apostolic Church is involved arguable more so in matters pertaining to the Armenian culture and therefore identity than that of spiritual affairs. In the category of “cooperation” the aim was to determine where cooperation was stronger, “Yerevan/Etchmiadzin-Jerusalem” relations and actions of cooperation was mentioned seven times. Similarly, statements cutting along the lines of “Armenian Apostolic Church-International Organizations” were also recorded seven times. This demonstrates that cooperation is spread both internally and internationally regardless of it being of secular or of spiritual nature.

Two fold mission	
Cultural	13
Spiritual	4
Cooperation	
Yerevan/Etchmiadzin-Jerusalem	7
Armenian Apostolic Church- International Organizations	7

It is interesting to note however, the contrast between what can be inferred from analysis of internet-based data from the official websites and what can be inferred from the expert interviews, which will be elaborated more on in the following section.

Expert Interviews

Similar to the content analysis section, the interview analysis section of this paper paid close attention to some recurring themes which would help to better understand the main arguments of the paper. The interviews were all held over the internet using Skype. They were semi-structured interviews. Five interviews were conducted in total. Two of the interviews were

conducted with priests from within the Armenian Monastery in Jerusalem, one priest from Canada, one Armenian political scientist who was born and raised in Jerusalem, and one Armenian community leader from Jerusalem. The hope was to gain both a religious and secular perspective on the spiritual and cultural life of the Armenian community in Jerusalem. The first person interviewed was Arch-Priest Reverend Father Keghart Garabedian of Canada. Originally born in Iraq, Fr. Keghart graduated from “Tarkmanchats Azkayin Varjaran” Armenian Elementary/Secondary National School and from the Art and Education Post Secondary School in Baghdad then went on to serve in both the compulsory regular and reserve Iraq’s Army. He attended and graduated with honors from Kevorkian Theological Seminary in Holy Etchmiadzin, Armenia, 1985. For his thesis, the Reverend presented the topic “Islam – According to the Armenian Historians Evaluation.” Fr. Keghart’s primary mission is preaching the Word of God from Asdvadzashunch` Breath-of-God, the Holy Bible, and the Church Sainted Fathers’ teachings and the teachings of the Armenian Holy Apostolic and Oriental Orthodox doctrine to anyone who asks. The focus of the interview with Fr. Keghart was to get a broader perspective on the role of religion both in general and for the Armenian Diaspora as a whole. He expressed his opinion on the “comeback” of religion, saying that based on his experience, this is not the case, primarily because people do not go to the Church for purely spiritual reasons. He did however agree that the Armenian Church is a cultural center, where traditions are maintained. He compared the religious ceremonies as something like a play for the congregation. “To the people it’s just acting, it’s something pretty to look at, it’s not spiritual or real anymore, it says nothing about faith,” (Fr. Keghart, personal communication, May 2013). On the other hand, he expressed that the Church has its input of the life of the community in promoting the identity of the people no matter where they live in the Diaspora. One example he emphasized was the fact

that all Church activities are conducted in Armenian. Churches contribute a lot to the community through their Sunday schools, cultural events, feasts dedicated to historical/cultural characters, promoting donations for Armenia, fundraising for the local community etc. The Church is the center of almost every single Armenian Diaspora community, as they acted as a government body would act (embassy etc.) during the time in which Armenia was not independent. Even today in Canada, despite the fact that the Church has no political affiliation, it is invited to go to Capitol Hill of BC to share its representativeness in government, it is invited to participate in events where there are Armenians participating (i.e. genocide commemoration) etc. One of the main issues, which any Armenian Diaspora community faces, is the shrinking population size. “Whenever the Armenian community shrinks then gradually they cannot afford maintaining a day school,” (Fr. Keghart, personal communication, May 2013). As for receiving support from the Ministry of Diaspora, Fr. Keghart admitted that while he did meet with Hranush Hakopyan, and there was discourse regarding cooperation and support, he has yet to see the fruits of that labor.

To get a clearer perspective on the situation in Jerusalem a second interview was held with Reverend Father Norayr Kazazian, who is a member of the Jerusalem Brotherhood of the St. James Armenian Monastery in Jerusalem. He is also the Dean of the Gulbenkian Library within the Armenian Patriarchate and was recently assigned the position of Director of the School of the Holy Translators of the Armenian Patriarchate. In his perspective, throughout history religion has been a core element to any given collective. As mentioned numerous times before, he reiterated that the case of the Armenian Church is one where it serves both a spiritual and cultural purpose. “We as Armenians work to keep our language and history *through* the

Church,” (Fr. Norayr, personal communication, May 2013). The Church continues to work to unite the community even today by continuously organizing events and commemorations.

In the Armenian Quarter especially the whole living experience is that which blends the social and the spiritual. Every day they walk past the Church in the morning, they are a part of it; they cannot be separated from it. Furthermore, the Church has for centuries acted as the representative of the Armenian community in the Holy Land. Further still, the Patriarchate acts as the main authority in the community. “Everything is run by the Patriarchate. *It is the governing body in this case,*” (Fr. Norayr, personal communication, May 2013). Fr. Norayr began listing a number of examples as to the detail in which the Patriarchate exercises its authority. Considering the fact that the lands in the Armenian Quarter belongs to it, they simply rent it out to the lay people. Given this fact, permission must be granted by the Patriarchate for any kind of renovation to be made to the houses/apartments. The local school is run by the Patriarchate. From great to small, whether it is the act of legally ratifying a marriage, setting a curfew for the lay people, or setting rules according to which the children of the convent were not allowed to ride bicycles, play ball, or eat seeds in the main courtyard. This kind of micromanaging makes the presence of the Church unavoidable for the lay people. The Church, of course, has other greater issues to attend to, particularly the Israeli policies of land procurement. The Armenian Church, as well as any other Church in the Holy Land, faces the danger of losing their property to the Israeli government. “Up till now there have been some but no major confiscations,” (Fr. Norayr, personal communication, May 2013). Fr. Norayr also mentioned the issue of a dwindling population, claiming that the biggest problem is to have or not to have people, not only as lay people but also as a clergy. “In our history, after 1948, or even 1967 when Israel took control of Jerusalem, the number of Armenians went down from

20,000 to 2,000,” (Fr. Norayr, personal communication, May 2013). Little to no help is expected from the Ministry of Diaspora on this issue. As for Etchmiadzin, while there is a connection to the Patriarchate spiritually, it is safe to say that the Patriarchate is fairly autonomous.

Yet another member of the religious community in the Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem is Father Tiran Hakopyan. As a young priest living in Jerusalem for about 14 years, Fr. Tiran’s perspective was slightly different. “I am not happy with what we have now, it isn’t enough, the cultural events are not enough to tie today’s youth and people to the Church,” (Fr. Tiran, personal communication, May 2013). Participation in Church activities by the youth only occur on holidays in a show of identity, to represent Armenians and to show the Armenian presence, their motives lack in the spiritual. In terms of politics, the Church does not have that much power or influence. “We currently have a newly elected Patriarch whose position is as of yet unclear. The Israeli government does not recognize the Patriarchate and is holding off on giving the necessary documents (it has been 5 months and we are still waiting for the documents), we suspect that they want something from us, but we cannot go into compromise or discourse with them on the matter because electing a Patriarch is part of our rights,” (Fr. Tiran, personal communication, May 2013).

To get the perspective from a more secular light Mr. Hagop Antreassian, a native member of the Armenian community in the Holy Land he graduated from the School of the Holy Translators of the Armenian Patriarchate and is currently a leader of the 2,000-member Armenian community in the Holy Land, was interviewed. Mr. Antreassian is the Chairperson of the Armenian Youth Association of Jerusalem. He has grown from being a member of the Ramgavar political party, to a member of the Central Board and Vice-Chairman of the Board. His profession lies in the art of ceramics, and his work has been displayed in exhibitions all over

the world. The picture that he paints describing the Church and community relations is far different from any of the opinions reviewed thus far. His belief is that the Church focuses far too much on the spiritual aspect of its mission and pays little attention to the cultural. Most of the cultural-related efforts are carried out by the various secular clubs and organizations (i.e. Homenetmen, Hoyetchmen, and Paresirats). Hoyetchmen is the only club sponsored by the Armenian Apostolic Church; however Mr. Antreassian notes that this sponsorship is more symbolic than anything else. Of course during any kind of event organized by the clubs there must be Church approval, and moreover a representative of the Church is usually invited to participate, but this is a formality which is exercised by all the clubs and not particularly Hoyetchmen alone. In terms of Church participation for the development of the community Mr. Antreassian believes that they have the potential to do much more and what they do achieve is comparably little.

The problem lies in the fact that the Church has all the legal authority, the unions are not able to register, they are not able to open a bank account or to take donations out of their taxes etc. In political terms the community must always be careful so as not to tip the balance. The Armenians must show neutrality in the Arab-Israeli conflict. If we register as an organization under the Arab jurisdiction the Israelis would get upset and vice-versa. As for the Israeli policy on taking of lands, Mr. Antreassian notes that if there is no one to sell the lands, there wouldn't be anyone to buy it. Of course numbers is a problem, as mentioned several times before. In international law you cannot justify having that much land if it is empty, which is why we currently have a numbers struggle. We need to implement a policy which brings more people into the area. This is particularly difficult when the already small existing community is divided as it is. "Imagine one of the clubs organizing an event, then on the same night a second club

organizes its own event, and eventually the third club organizes its event, all on the same night at the same time, splitting the already small community into three,” (Mr. Antreassian, personal communication, May 2013). The entire Diaspora is divided into political parties and ideologies, and sadly it is difficult to unite them. The Church does however set the rules of the convent for all of the lay people to obey regardless of their political or ideological beliefs. This idea, as reflected by Fr. Norayr, is restated by Mr. Antreassian. His example was one of doves. During weddings it is tradition for the newlyweds to send a pair of doves to flight. Those doves began nesting in the trees of the monastery and began to reproduce. The Patriarch set a rule against the doves, claiming that they needed to be relocated because of the noise and mess that they were causing. “I don’t particularly agree that those residing in the convent must obey the rules put out by the Church officials, but that is how it is both here and among other religious communities in Jerusalem, even the Jews,” (Mr. Antreassian, personal communication).

Finally, to get a more academic view, Dr. Bedros Der Matossian was interviewed. Born and raised in Jerusalem, Bedros Der Matossian is a graduate of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, in the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies. He completed his Ph.D. in Middle East History in the Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies at Columbia University in 2008. His dissertation, entitled "Ethnic Politics in Post-Revolutionary Ottoman Empire: Armenians, Arabs, and Jews in the Second Constitutional Period (1908-1909)," dealt exclusively with inter-ethnic politics during the first year of the Second Constitutional Period (1908-1918). From 2008 to 2010, he was a Lecturer of Middle East History in the Faculty of History at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology where he taught a variety of courses pertaining to World History, Islam and the West, Political History of the Modern Middle East as well as the Arab-Israeli Conflict. For him, in order to understand the

relationship between the Armenian Church and community in Jerusalem and the State, one needs to go back into history, back into the Ottoman period. “There are four periods that are crucial for us [as Armenians in Jerusalem], (1) 19th-century Ottoman Empire, (2) the period of the British Mandate, (3) under Jordanian rule, and (4) the current administration of Israel” (Der Matossian, personal communication, 2013). Up until the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Armenian National Assembly had the right to interfere in the affairs of the Armenian community of Jerusalem, however after the collapse the situation changed and the St. James Brotherhood became an autonomous entity. Accordingly, the election of Patriarch Yeghishe Turian (1921-1929) was then ratified by the British Queen. Hand in hand with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire was the occurrence of the Armenian Genocide, which resulted in the influx of the Armenian population in Jerusalem. The constitution of the St. James Brotherhood was then modified in the ten year period of Patriarch Torkom Koushagian’s reign, bestowing the authority for the election of the Patriarch exclusively in the brotherhood’s General Assembly. Very little changed during the British Mandate and business was as usual, however change occurred after British withdrawal and Jerusalem became a contested region between Jordanians and Israelis.

One could say that the Armenian community at this point attempted neutrality and avoided getting too involved in politics. “There are instances where the Armenian Patriarchate is led, along with the Greek and Latin Patriarchs, to take public stances on popular issues, and has co-signed a number of ‘common declarations’ with the other Christian communities on the status of Jerusalem and on the political situation in general,” (Der Matossian, personal communication, May 2013). While the Patriarch represented the Armenian community as a whole, Der Matossian claims that the lay community was never unified under one body. Like Mr. Antreassian, Der Matossian made note of the various ideological currents which existed not only

in Jerusalem but among the Armenian Diaspora elsewhere. In fact, according to Der Matossian, the Armenian community in Jerusalem is mainly sustained by job security and its dependency on the Patriarchate. “The lay people of the Armenian convent are provided housing with little to no rent, and many are employed by the Patriarchate,” (Der Matossian, personal communication, 2013). Der Matossian also shares views with Mr. Antreassian in terms of the land crisis facing the Armenian community. “The Armenian Patriarchate has been involved in land scandals which branch from the abuse of position and the mismanagement of real estate holdings due to the lack of transparency in the Patriarchate’s management of its real estate,” (Der Matossian, personal communication, May 2013). Similar to the content analysis section of this paper, a type of content analysis was conducted with the data collected from the interviews above. Themes ran along much of the same lines, but also expanded, touching such issues as “unity,” “division,” “lands,” and “population.” The numbers counting how many times a specific theme is mentioned are displayed in the table below.

Cultural	14
Spiritual	8
Unity	1
Division	5
Population	4
Loss of Lands	4
Ministry of Diaspora Helps	1
Ministry of Diaspora Doesn’t Help	5

Thus giving us a very different picture from what we have seen in the content analysis phase.

Conclusions

Based off of the various sections above, the paper would like to conclude by highlighting the following thoughts. In response to the themes of this study it can be determined that there exists an intricate relationship between Religion and the formation of a collective identity, and that this relationship can be exemplified in the case of the Armenians in Jerusalem. As already mentioned, this relationship exists regardless of which religion the community adheres to and there is no distinction in strength of faith, rather strength of influence based off of the number of population and its financial resources. The case of the Armenians of Jerusalem is one where religion plays an incremental role in defining the group's ethnicity, identity and internal cohesiveness. Upon further investigation one would argue that no such cohesiveness exists, due to the communities division according to political and ideological lines, however, in the case of the church the community does indeed come together, if not for spiritual purposes, then for the sake of cultural identity, belongingness, and representativeness under the overarching umbrella of the Church and its organized activities. The Armenian Apostolic Church and the Patriarchate in Jerusalem is the sole official representative body of the Armenian community in the Holy Land in the eyes of both the Palestinian and Israeli government as well as among other Church leaders (i.e. Greek Orthodox, Latin, Syrian, Muslim, Jewish, etc.). While there does exist a process of othering, the focus of the community is growing to be one of creating more cohesiveness and solidarity among the Armenians. The spiritual role of Religion in the case of the Armenian Apostolic Church has taken a back seat to the prioritized mission it holds regarding the maintaining the cultural identity of the group. Its influence on cultural and social matters is vast, however in terms of its political influence it can lay no claim to truly tangible power.

Further Study

Based off of the current research, it would be interesting to take the study one (or a few) steps further and delve deeper into the dynamics of the various secular institutions (i.e. the various politically affiliated clubs, Homenetmen, Hoyetchmen, and Paresirats) both in competition and/or cooperation with the Church pertaining issues of identity, culture, and unity in the Armenian community in Jerusalem. A comparative analysis of the Armenian community in Jerusalem vis-à-vis other Armenian communities in the Diaspora would also be the prudent next step in the study in order to see how the situations are similar and/or vary.

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