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ON IDENTIFICATION, IDENTITY, AND SECURITY ISSUES IN MODERN ARMENIA

Abstract

In the current era of constant change, it is necessary not so much to rely on the past with its value system but to surmise the development tendencies of the civilization and clarify one's place and role. In the modern world, it is a shift of identification crisis followed by identity crisis as values change due to the global economy, creating a consumer character for whom identification and identity issues are secondary. A human strives to be in a security zone where a free-market economy and better living and working conditions are possible.

The authors of the article aim to propose and substantiate the idea that the above-mentioned makes the observation of security, identification, and identity issues in Armenia relevant.

The following methods have been used parallelly during the study: general-worldview, dialectical, general-scientific (of analysis, combination, comparison, and systematic, logical and historical), private-scientific, and descriptive.

The authors have concluded that the achievements that withstood the test of time should be preserved while upgrading the national identity in modern Armenia. The Armenian society should be transformed with the right measured steps priorly. Afterwards, the transformation of political institutions will proceed more naturally and properly.

Keywords: security, identity, identification, globalization, crisis, state-centeredness, culture, civic consciousness.

Introduction

The threats of the modern world are severe, the state of the world order is unstable, and various crises are taking place successively or at the same time. Globalization, information explosion, dangers of man-made and natural disasters, racial, political, religious, and the expected ongoing world reconstruction on economic and geopolitical grounds. Here is an incomplete list of external challenges to national identity in any country, often compounded by rather severe domestic political issues.

European countries, the United States, China, and Russia, are currently in a transition phase. Due to that fact, Armenia is no exception. The geopolitical and geo-economic place of the country in the world, the preservation of its own identity, sovereignty, and territories, i.e. the preservation of the state, depending on the solution of this situation and the formation of national-civil identity.

National identity is directly related to national security issues, and it is the condition of having a solid state. According to Francis Fukuyama (2018), the absence of development of national

identity can lead to the division or destruction of the state and civil war.

In addition, national identity within a state or nation increases the trust between its members, maintaining dialogue, harmony, and consensus and reducing the likelihood of a critical escalation of a constant struggle for resources and power among different groups.

The existence of a national identity can also be one of the conditions for the country's economic prosperity. It is a vital factor for the existence of a stable state, and in crises, it is a condition for maintaining statehood. The absence of national identity can lead to a crisis of state institutions, the aspiration of local elites for autonomy or independence, and an increase in irreversible emigration flows. At the same time, other forms of identity (racial, religious, regional clan, etc.) may become more pronounced, which ultimately leads to a decline in state governance or obstacles to development.

Living in politically and socio-cultural conditions that are significantly different from the past, the question of the national identity characteristics also becomes an issue for the development of strategies following the development trends of the civilization. In the current era of intercultural competition and geopolitical conflicts, superpowers and geopolitical centres present often impose their concepts of political, economic, and socio-cultural organization of life, where the emphasis on the use of national systemic factors changes, especially when it comes to political culture. In such a situation, when it is difficult to fully ensure the continuity of national identity and socio-cultural security through a system of traditions and customs, the problem of making political-cultural choices in alternative situations arises, as the organization of national life has become a political choice and orientation in modern civilization.

In addition to the mentioned external factors, we notice two "opposite" tendencies in Armenia, which are more pronounced, especially in recent years. Society is faced with the dilemma of national-patriotic romanticism (which expresses the

homeland) and political realism (which expresses the state) (Harutyunyan, 2004). In the first case, we are dealing with the notions of the historical homeland, the Armenian Genocide, and the claims. In the second case, we are dealing with pragmatic notions. Moreover, this debate is accompanied by mutual labelling. The former considers the latter "anti-national", and the latter considers the former "adventurous". The following question arises: why the claimant cannot be pragmatic and why the pragmatic should be anti-national. From the well-chosen synthesis of these two "opposite" theses, one can derive a new vision of the political future and perhaps the modernization of national identity.

National identity is not a perpetually immutable phenomenon, although many believe that we have been formed for a long time as an ancient nation, and we have formed a final national identity. Here is the delusion that the formation of national identity is a continuous and constant process which occurs spontaneously and due to the conscious efforts of the leading members of society.

Factors of Preservation of National and Cultural Identity

The word "identity" has many meanings and can have different meanings in different philosophical contexts. A person's identity is formed due to the human features, the peculiarities of the culture, and the integrity of the individual characteristics of a specific person. National identity as a whole, like individual self-identification, is not a purely objective phenomenon, but "national identity presupposes an identity of national thinking" (Abrahamyan, 1995, p. 22). In traditional societies, individual identities are formed collectively under the influence of cultural identities. National identity presupposes devotion to the ideals of that identity. It can, of course, change, constantly being replenished by various conditions and factors. Due to modern social developments, particularly globalization processes, the state's former role and significance are also

being transformed (Atoyan, 2014). At the same time, the layer of culture typical to the nation also loses its “vertical borders”.

Furthermore, as globalization is a process of increasingly transparent economic, social, political, and cultural boundaries, “anti-cultural” and “anti-national” identities can emerge. The individual identification of persons bearing these identities is shaped not by the influence of a cultural layer that has been strengthened over the centuries, tested over time, to ensure the fullness of a given ethnicity or nation, but by various symbols, heroes, traditions, and values imported from abroad. This is often done without even the individual’s realization through the “mass mediators” of the information society, i.e. through the Mass Media (Petrosyan, 2012, pp. 11-12).

In the past, a unified system of symbols, rituals, heroes, and values was used to guide people who had not achieved the integrity of identity, enabling them to develop a sense of belonging to that community. That means forming a stable collective identity was possible without forming an individual identity. Meanwhile, in the modern era of globalization, people who have not yet reached the integrity of individual identity are stalked by a variety of thoughts, worldviews, and spiritual groups originating in different parts of the globe that seem to be more attractive in conditions of quasi freedom of choice removing a person from the collective identity historically given to him/her.

Peculiarities of Armenian Identity Crises

Transformational processes are taking place both in the world and in the Armenian society, as a result of which the old identities are being reinterpreted, becoming the basis for the formation of new identities. The transition from the old to the new is usually expressed in crises. At the same time, referring to identity crises, we should note that they have a wide demonstration area, expressed in the context of both individual and national identity. An identity/identification crisis

often appears in breakthrough situations when an individual or nation goes through transformative and transitional stages. For example, social upheavals, revolutions, transitional societies, etc. Identity crises arise when the pillars of identity – *the language, the religion, the culture, and the national thinking and mentality* – are in danger of losing their independence.

Armenians have experienced various stages or shifts in national identity crises from the past to the present, which have arisen in critical times when foreign culture has taken precedence and the danger of assimilation appeared. Then the issue of self-identity definition raised questions that did not have clear answers (for instance, “Who is an Armenian? How does an Armenian national identity differ from the identities of other nations? What are the state, the nation, etc.?”).

To highlight the manifestations of the identity crisis in Armenian, it is necessary to consider the apparent stages of the identity crisis, which can be presented by the example of the analysis of *the language crisis*.

From the past to the present, the Armenian identity has gone through several stages of an identity crisis. The observation of the identity crisis can be conditionally started from the invention of letters, which was the first manifestation of the language crisis. When the ideas of Christianity were even spread in Greek and Assyrian in the 4th century, there was a danger of assimilation and loss of identity, so it was necessary and urgent to create the Armenian script first to overcome the identity crisis and then to avoid assimilation. The first stage of the identity crisis was overcome when a considerable amount of translated literature was created, and writing and literature experienced an awakening. Subsequently, national life had a linguistic basis in terms of identity, and somehow *national self-consciousness* was formed, which became the cornerstone of the preservation of identity in later centuries.

The second stage of the language crisis in identity is manifested in the XVIII century when a nation deprived of statehood for many centuries was in danger of losing its national identity.

Classical Armenian (Grabar) was incomprehensible; the connection with the past was shattering, being Armenian was identified as a Christian, and the notions of *nation, homeland, and identity* were pushed out of this chain. There was a need to create a linguistic connection between the past and the present. This identity crisis was overcome thanks to *Mkhitar Sebastatsi*. By establishing the Mekhitarist Congregation and giving a boost to the creation of translated literature and studying the heritage of the past, he once again linked the Armenian to his/her historical memory, culture, and language of the time. The criterion of considering oneself an Armenian has changed: the principle of serving the nation was promoted regardless of religious denomination.

However, this crisis of identity was overcome only in linguistic terms. As already in the XIX century, the identity crisis had different manifestations, which were united around the following issues: *forming a national mindset and creating statehood*. In the XIX century, the basis for these two ideas was defining and forming the ideas of nation, homeland, national thinking, and mentality. Attempts were made to educate patriotic and compassionate individuals through education and upbringing and finally to become independent and restore statehood. These ideas, however, were not fulfilled. The transition ultimately overcame the linguistic stage of the identity crisis from Classical Armenian (Grabar) to Modern Armenian (Ashkharhabar), which, on the one hand, seems to have solved the linguistic crisis and, on the other hand, deepened it (this issue, however, is not included in this study). At this identity crisis stage, the need to develop a national self-consciousness emerged.

At all stages of the formation and preservation of the Armenian identity, the identity crisis seems to have been latent. At each stage, “surviving” the loss of identity, the Armenian, not overcoming the identity crisis, again and again, isolated himself/herself from the world, waiting for the turning point of his/her history when, through the efforts of prominent intellectuals, the Armenian will preserve his/her identity for a

moment, isolating himself again and waiting for the next identity crisis.

The Post-War Stage of the Identity Crisis

The other turning point in Armenian history was expressed by the identity crisis that arose against the background of the existing acute conflicts of 2020. The independence of 1991 pushed the collective image of the Armenians into a “sleep mode”, bringing them to a state of self-deception about illusional security. Living in a transitional and transforming society, the ideas of nation, homeland, and state were again subordinated to “Me” - individual, family chain. In a state of war, the ideas of *Homeland, Nation, and State* were to be pushed forward, but when the collective image of the Armenians was isolated from the world, that same world was rapidly transforming, quickly becoming technocentric. A new paradigm appeared, and reality's socio-cultural and economic picture changed. Subsequently, the identity crisis, which manifested itself within the Armenian society, turned into incapacity. It became apparent that the Armenian society's image of itself and its means of distinguishing the world were no longer relevant. The early XX century's call to awaken self-consciousness by the famous Armenian philosopher Hayk Asatryan (2020) was up-to-date. The awakening would bridge the Armenian to the reality of his/her time, aware of the crisis and the lack of a national vision. It is known that the Jews said goodbye to each other and wished each other “the next meeting in Israel” because they had a national vision. The Armenian needed such a national vision, which could be realized only by awakening the consciousness.

In the state of a post-war or ceasefire, Armenian society needs updated content of the “the national ideal”, which is lacking. As a result, when there is no tool to recognize the world or express oneself in it when the pillars of identity are uncertain, identity modernization becomes urgent.

In general, one of the problems arising from the transformation of identities in Armenia is that if the political balance in Armenian society differs significantly from the balance of geopolitical forces competing in Armenia and the region, they pose significant threats to Armenia's national security and national interests.

However, there is not only a completely logical process of forming a new identity in Armenia but also a serious identity crisis. The crisis of identification is generally one of the most painful life experiences. An individual experiencing such a crisis doubts the value system he/she has previously practised, alienating himself/herself from his/her formerly loved ones, which in turn exacerbates the crisis. Thus, a process of "inventing the spirit" (Oshakan, 1982, p. 444), which must define and establish the Armenian identity, becomes primary and urgent. Moreover, national identity crises occur when a person, for one reason or another, becomes disillusioned with the values and behaviours relevant to his/her relatives, denies national identity through memory loss, and disbelief in a shared future or other forms. Such a crisis is experienced, e.g., by our compatriots who, living abroad, accept its existing value systems, and returning to Armenia and meeting with some realities contradicting their values and ways of behaving, begin to reject the basics of Armenian identity. However, these negative realities (social injustice, corruption, etc.) cannot be identified with the whole Armenian identity. Sometimes, such conclusions justify their aspirations to emigrate and live in more comfortable conditions. Another example of self-denial is the ignorance of national cultural heritage and the desire to identify immediately with certain favourable circumstances in foreign cultures. The crisis of modern Armenian identification is connected with the third reason - the non-acceptance of the defeat in the war and the desire to get away from it as much as possible. K. Zaryan's (1987) statement is correct: "Armenia is a country that has no direction. It has a height. At every step there is a wall, on the wall a piece of sky - stars, sun, and under it - a gorge, an abyss, a

chasm" (p. 59).

Ways to Solve the Current Crisis of National Identity

Avoiding the approach of asking questions and leaving their answers pending, let us try to point out the ways that may be the way to overcome the identity crisis. Z. Freud (2020), explaining the question of the relationship between the unconscious and the conscious, puts forward the concepts of "resistance" and "expulsion", which mean the following: when the aspirations of the unconscious are resisted or not expelled, from that moment on, in colloquial language "dead spots" and neuroses in the language of psychoanalysis, arise (pp. 8-9). Carrying this theory of Freud into the field of national identity, it becomes clear that to overcome the local crisis in the Armenian identity, and one must first start from the path of turning the national unconscious into consciousness. That is, to bring the ideas of power, invincibility, being the best attributed to the Armenians to the field of consciousness, to evaluate and leave in the national memory, modernizing the formation of "living" ideas of the homeland, nation, and state, for instance, "What is the perception of the Armenian society about the Homeland? Is it material or spiritual? How should these two be embedded in the nation's ideas? How should they become the pillars of the state?"

If in the past the basis of Armenian identity was the following components: national religion, language, national culture, Genocide memory, and traditional Armenian family, now the new foundations of national identity can contribute to the implementation of our national challenges: the idea of Armenian statehood, Armenian culture, the question of the restoration of historical justice.

The idea of Armenian statehood. One of the most painful crises observed in modern Armenia is connected with the state mentality. Centuries-old absence of statehood was manifested in the absence of "state thinking skills" (Melik-Shahna-

zaryan, 1999, p. 32) at both the individual and national levels and in the presence of “political naivety” (Shant, 1925, p. 15). The function of making political choices is particularly emphasized because the culture of organizing the domestic life of the Armenian people does not have a clear political orientation. Due to historical circumstances, the Armenian people did not live in the conditions of statehood permanence, and its historical and political homelands did not coincide. “At the same time, the moral and aesthetic absolutism of the historical homeland has created an ideal that embodies the past, in comparison with which the political homeland loses its attractiveness and value for many people because of its troublesome daily life, endless problems, and new challenges” (Demirchyan, 2021, p. 28). The mentioned facts prove that the Armenian does not have a consistent state thinking and does not consider the state as a precondition and guarantee of his/her own socio-cultural identity and continuity. Armenians tend not to improve their living within their state but seek a more prosperous life outside the state (Demirchyan, 2013). At the same time, he is always accompanied by the indelible image of the historic homeland, which often deviates from the critically vital and urgent issues the state is facing and from the need to find ways to solve them. Hence the mentality that it is possible to remain Armenian in foreign countries by preserving the language, the culture, the historical memory, and the religion. Like-mindedness indicates a clear political orientation and a lack of political thinking, whereas, in today’s competitive world, pre-political nations must become political, heading for the future, reviewing the path rather than rejecting some traditional notions.

It is noteworthy that the Armenian people treat the world with “We”, with an identification, the peculiarities of which are the definitions of “sacred country” and “national originality”. Nevertheless, in the modern processes of globalization, the “society of habits” is no longer viable. Misunderstandings of national and civic identities and unfounded and unnecessary contradic-

tions do not contribute to the establishment of harmony between national and civic interests. In the case of national identification, human attitudes and responsibilities towards the state are based on patriotism, while in the case of civil identification, they are based on laws. In Armenian society, a gap has been formed between the “political elite” of the people and between the national and civic affiliations of the people.

To resolve the “dilemma” of the homeland and the state, the nation should become a bearer of civic self-consciousness. Therefore, in the XXI century, *the idea of national statehood* can become the basis of the national identity of the Armenian people. In a general sense, it leads to the idea of creating a solid Armenian state as a guarantee of existence and development of all Armenians, as independent statehood on one’s soil is the main guarantee of physical and mental survival and prosperity, preservation of national identity (Hakobyan, 2002; Katchaznuni, 1979). The idea comes to the image of state-centeredness because, in this case, the interests of the state, its security, and development issues take precedence over the individual, group, party, and other interests. The primary concern of every Armenian or group of Armenians (whether in the Homeland or the Diaspora) should be strengthening Armenia as a national state of all Armenians. National identity indeed has many components and bases, but the idea of state-centeredness differs as it has no divisive nature and is free from sectionalism. On the contrary, it unites Armenians of different languages and religions, belonging to or sympathizing with different parties, living in different regions and countries around one common idea (Hovyan, 2019).

Samuel Huntington (2004, p. 29), one of the most prominent representatives of American political thought, distinguishes two national identities: civic and ethnic. Armenia is the case where the two mentioned types of identity do not oppose each other and are harmoniously combined. Due to the historically formed and strengthened national self-consciousness of the Armenian people at the level of individual and collective

perceptions of ethnic unity of Armenia and Artsakh, the civic-territorial ethnic-genealogical forms of identity unite to form a whole.

Armenian culture. At the core of the cultural layer are values. This means that they are the most ingrained in the identity of the people who bear the culture, hence the least endangered, because “national identity contains the feelings, ideas and institutional memory formed in the past” (Harutyunyan, 2019, p. 4). The current level of the historical development of national culture is manifested in a new form of the state, which, along with culture, is one of the factors for the preservation and development of national identity. The development of culture creates an opportunity to search for ways of defining and pursuing national interests. “In our world striving for cultural homogeneity, though the role of the nation’s historical and cultural heritage may be crucial in organizing “spiritual self-defence” in the context of modern civilizational transformations, the role of historical and cultural heritage is not so much to build socio-cultural barricades as to be receptive to those transformations and the ability to modernize national life” (Harutyunyan, 2019, p. 6).

To adapt to the modern processes of globalization and the rapidly changing reality, it is necessary to subject the social way of life to rational analysis and re-assessment. The basis of a traditional society is a traditional culture, the core of which is the norms passed down from generation to generation through the same traditional upbringing. In a traditional society, the culture is the primary factor in people’s socialization, which is difficult to undergo changes or modernize because every change in the norms of mentality and lifestyle, rooted in the centuries, is perceived as a threat to identity. The closed system, guided by habits, fears a free-thinking civic lifestyle, accessible relations, and the attenuation of traditional and moral viewpoints. In the prolonged absence of statehood, the Armenian society tended to operate in isolation from the outside world, which, in turn, led to the formation of a stable cultural system. Meanwhile, in the con-

text of modern processes of globalization, national and cultural models must move from a stable state to a dynamic model to maintain their viability. The way to transform from a traditional nation to a political one presupposes a rational analysis of the traditional cultural system and identity modernisation.

On the whole, the discussion of national issues at the state level is credible only in the presence of free thought, in the absence of ideological control, so it is not accidental that “during the years of independence, it was possible to prioritize national interests, which is because only in the state system all the national creative potential is revealed” (Demirchyan, 2018, p. 31).

The question of the restoration of historical justice. Especially in the last century, the most influential factor uniting Armenians living in Armenia and outside the Homeland is the collective historical memory connected with historical justice, ensuring the vitality of the nation and its claims. All this can be presented as a national interest. This can be presented as a national interest. At present, along with the need for international recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide, the question of historical justice may also relate to the demand for the realization of the right of the people of Artsakh to self-determination and security.

Moreover, these are the challenges for implementing both the Armenian state and the Diaspora can jointly fight. Though the existence of an independent state has created a qualitatively new situation for the Armenians, not all national problems can coincide with the problems set by the state. According to A. Voskanyan (1995), the Artsakh movement, which began in 1988, was a fundamentally new attempt to understand national identity, which sought to oppose the reasonable assessment of the current political events to the abstract vision of a united Armenian homeland, aiming at the practical problem of real statehood in the preserved territory. “Certainly, it did not intend to give up the historical memory, the issues of the Armenian question (the Artsakh issue itself refers to that sphere). However, the

Movement, at least in the first stage of its development, assumed that the traditional problems of the Armenian question could be temporarily “enclosed in brackets”, unequivocally distinguishing between politically and legally recorded state interests and emotional experiences of national history” (p. 19).

Conclusion

Changes in the world are also reinterpreting the essential concepts, prioritizing the terms of security, identification, and only then the term of identity. The formation of national identity is a continuous and constant process that occurs both spontaneously and due to the conscious efforts of the leading members of society.

The crisis of identity and identification often manifests itself in breakthrough situations when an individual or nation goes through transformative and transitional stages. At all stages of the formation and preservation of the Armenian identity, the identity crisis seems to have been latent.

In the final turning point of Armenian history, during the 44-day war in 2020 and afterwards, when a new paradigm was established in the world, it became clear that the Armenian society's idea of itself and its means for distinguishing the world were clearly no longer relevant.

In the state of a post-war or ceasefire, Armenians need updated content of the homeland, nation, state, and national ideal, which is absent. As a result of not having the means to distinguish the world and express oneself in it, and when the pillars of identity are uncertain, the process of identity modernization becomes urgent. If in the past the basis of Armenian identity was the following components: national religion, language, culture, Genocide memory, and traditional Armenian family, now the new foundations of national identity can contribute to the realization of our national identity: the idea of a solid Armenian statehood, Armenian culture, the question of the restoration of historical justice.

The idea of national statehood, in a general sense, comes from the idea of creating a robust Armenian state as a guarantee of the existence and development of all Armenians. The idea comes to the character of state-centeredness. It has no divisive nature and is free from sectionalism; on the contrary, it unites Armenians of different languages and religions, belonging to or sympathizing with different parties, living in different regions and countries around one common idea.

The development of culture creates an opportunity to search for ways of forming and pursuing national interests. In the context of modern civilizational transformations, the role of historical and cultural heritage is not so much to build socio-cultural barricades as to be receptive to those transformations and the ability to modernize national life.

Especially in the last century, the most influential factor uniting Armenians living in Armenia and outside Armenia is *the collective historical memory connected with historical justice, ensuring the vitality of the nation and its claims*. This can be presented as a national interest. In addition to the need for international recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide, the issue of historical justice may also relate to the demand for the realization of the right of the people of Artsakh to self-determination and security.

In the conditions of the modern challenges of globalization, the national culture, the historical pillar of the Armenian national identity, and its core, the Armenian language, are seriously endangered. There are tendencies not to analyze the Armenian history and destroy the historical memory. Therefore, today we must add one phenomenon to all the rest that unite Armenians for a tremendous potential for unification: i.e. the principle of a shared future and vision. It ignores factors that separate society and individuals: territorial, religious, linguistic, and other factors within the nation.

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