

## TRAUMATIC PAST AND THE POLITICS OF MEMORY: WHAT SHOULD BE AND SHOULD NOT BE THE ARMENIAN APPROACH?

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**Abstract.** Armenia has a history marked by traumatic and harrowing events. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it endured the Armenian Genocide, recognized as the first genocide of such magnitude committed against an ethnic group by a state government with the intention of erasing all existence and memory of it from the land where the Armenian people originated. A nation that has endured genocide must learn lessons to prevent such atrocities from happening again. Failure to draw the right conclusions and implement appropriate policies in a timely manner can result in similar threats reemerging. Every nation must remember its traumatic events in a manner that enables and encourages necessary policies and actions. If similar risks and threats reappear, it may indicate that the nation has either failed to remember its traumatic past in a way that serves it instrumentally and pragmatically or has not remembered it at all. Have Armenians adequately remembered their Genocide? If so, why is there a resurgence of the risk of another genocide affecting the Armenian population, not only in Karabakh but also in Armenia, in modern times? Do Armenians need to reconsider their politics of memory in this context, and if so, are they doing it correctly? This paper critically addresses these questions, accompanied by a brief conceptual exploration and case studies.

**Key words:** *Culture of memory, models of memory, politics of memory, identity, Genocide prevention, Armenia*

### Three Levels of National Memory

A nation's past, especially its traumatic history, often directly shapes its future, particularly in the aftermath of tragic events like wars, genocides, and disasters. This influence persists even when people choose not to recall or remember those events. This is why when younger generations, and even children, claim that they are descendants (and perhaps even victims) of a genocide that occurred a century ago, they are correct: their lives would have been different if that genocide or Holocaust had never taken place.

Not delving deeply into theoretical disputes concerning the issue of memory and the politics of remembering/forgetting (Nascimento, Sepúlveda dos Santos, 2009; Verovšek, 2016), the politics of memory “considers how political debates can be generated by disturbing dominant understandings and narratives of the past, and how these hegemonic



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views of historical events can be modified for new sociopolitical settings. The politics of memory concerns how political and social elites often make appeals to the past to justify their actions” (Ranger, Ranger, 2023: 456). In other words, the politics of memory is about transforming the past into the present and future.

Every memory is selective, implying that forgetting is an integral part of remembering and its representation. Remembering and forgetting are not neutral; individuals remember or forget to take certain actions today and in the future. Otherwise, memorization becomes futile, as in **the case of an elderly person who continually recalls their past but regrettably can do nothing to shape their future.**

In this context, we would like to emphasize three levels of memory related to a nation. The three levels of memory are interconnected and mutually influential, reflecting the three levels of existence in a national context:

1. **Individual Memory:** This pertains to how an individual perceives, knows, understands, and accepts their connection with a nation and its history.
2. **Group Memory:** This involves how a group experiences, preserves, explains, and accepts certain narratives related to the nation it belongs to.
3. **National Memory:** This encompasses the collective history of a nation, represented in historical museums, history books, memorials, monuments, artworks, and other cultural expressions.

The macro-level of national memory affects the lower levels through institutions designed to keep/protect/construct/reconstruct and broadcast historical facts and events for domestic and international audiences. Schools are among those institutions maintaining and transferring national history through teaching. Museums exhibit national history in the form of material objects. Memorials and monuments convey history through architecture.

Most often, such monuments are constructed at the locations where significant historical events occurred. They serve both as a means to commemorate these events and to emphasize their symbolic significance (Maurantonio, 2014). Art exhibitions and films that depict history contribute to remembrance through an artistic and sometimes even entertaining approach, following the idea that ‘We don’t remember; we rewrite our memories’ (Scotini, Galasso, 2015: 15). Without storytelling, visual representation, and educational efforts, the process of constructing, reconstructing, and passing down memories between generations would be incomplete.

The institutional level of memory is the only one that allows for the involvement of larger groups of people in storytelling and the interpretation of historical facts consistently. A shared or similar interpretation of common history, as embraced by the majority of a group’s members, is essential for memory’s functionality. When shared and understood similarly, collective memory can unite and mobilize people. Common memory plays a crucial role in the construction of national identity. Questioning common memory and its interpretation may challenge the primary adhesive that binds members of a group, including ethnic ones. Groups not only transmit common memory from top to bottom, acting as intermediaries between the macro level (the state and its institutions) and the micro level (individuals), but they also generate memory.

Without these groups, many historical facts would be lost. Each group has its unique stories connected to the overarching narrative, as well as specific details. For instance, every family possesses its distinct history preserved in photographs within family

albums, displayed on walls, or recorded in family videos. This history is passed down through generations, from grandparents and parents to their children and grandchildren. These material objects and family narratives are partially related to the country's history and partly unique to each family. Despite the national level of memory being the most influential due to institutions and state mechanisms, its impact on individuals would be incomplete without the group level. Families, friends, classmates, colleagues, neighbors, and relatives all contribute to the preservation, absorption, interpretation, and assessment of the constant and ubiquitous information that surrounds us.

The politics of memory designed at the top of the pyramid relies on information sources from the lower levels of groups and individuals who live their lives and provide their nation with facts, stories, and objects. On an individual level, memory accumulates through education and experience and is reproduced either exactly or with some modifications. When attending school or university classes and responding to questions related to the past, pupils and students 'recall' in a manner akin to real participants in these stories. Memory transports us to the past.

Memory serves not only a retrospective but also a proactive function. It can guide us toward the future as well. For example, when reading about national heroes, individuals might seek to demonstrate their own heroism by attempting to replicate the lessons learned, thus adding another chapter to the history of their group or nation.

Remembering the past can help us avoid certain actions in the present and future that were painful, unsuccessful, or wrong in the past. This involves learning not only from theoretical and literary lessons but also from practical experiences at the levels of strategies (national memory), tactics (group memory), and everyday behavior (individual memory).

For instance, if factors such as domestic political conflicts, misunderstandings among national parties, corruption at all levels, misconduct, poor organizational practices, incorrect human resource management, lack of cooperation among community members, and egoism among its members contributed to the past threat of genocide to a nation, then these and similar characteristics of individuals and groups within the same nation must and should be discouraged at the national, group, and individual levels to prevent the nation from facing the threat of genocide once again.

### **The Armenian Case**

Remembering traumatic events and national tragedies doesn't always suffice, and neither does forgetting if a nation, encompassing its various groups, communities, and people, doesn't invest adequate energy, resources, and efforts into preventing similar risks in the present and future. Are Armenians effective in their politics of memory?

An effective politics of memory must be built and executed at the highest level of governance and within groups and institutions. It should work to prevent the repetition of past mistakes, extract lessons from bitter experiences, and unite the nation's representatives for constructive and proactive cooperation. **An effective politics of memory must serve the future.** Just as a family album loses its significance over time when it comes to an end with no more children to add their photos, the politics of memory should keep the flame alive, providing warmth and light without causing everything to burn or be extinguished.

Have Armenians managed their politics or culture of memory correctly? When we use the word 'correctly' here, we mean that **the national politics of memory is**

**developed and passed down to future generations in a manner that helps prevent the recurrence of past mistakes and secures a brighter future for the nation through the collective efforts of individuals and groups.**

Among the paradoxically rare attempts to self-assess Armenian politics of memory, including memory of the Genocide (Dadrian, 1995; Kévorkian, 2011), I would like to highlight one made by a non-Armenian scholar, providing an early and objective external perspective. The Israeli philosopher Avishai Margalit, who was a child during the Holocaust, dedicated his book "The Ethics of Memory" to his parents, whom he introduced at the beginning of the book by reconstructing their dialogue (Margalit, 2004). His parents discussed their family members being gradually destroyed during the Second World War.

When explaining the ritual of lighting candles in memory of those Jews who were destroyed, Avishai's mother used to say:

*"The Jews were irretrievably destroyed. What is left is just a pitiful remnant of the great Jewish people [which, for her, meant European Jewry]. The only honorable role for the Jews that remains is to form communities of memory – to serve as 'soul candles' like the candles that are ritually kindled in memory of the dead"* (Margalit, 2004: XIII-IX).

This discussion touches on an approach to the politics of memory. However, consider how Avishai's father addressed it:

*"We, the remaining Jews, are people, not candles. **It is a horrible prospect for anyone to live just for the sake of retaining the memory of the dead. That is what the Armenians opted to do. And they made a terrible mistake**<sup>1</sup>. We should avoid it at all costs. It is better to create a community that thinks predominantly about the future and reacts to the present, not a community that is governed from mass graves"* (Margalit, 2004: XIII-IX).

As an Armenian, I understand what Margalit means and what his father meant by saying that Armenians made a terrible mistake with their approach to the memory of the Genocide and their national memory in general. Since my childhood, like all other representatives of my highly literate nation, I have been surrounded by an abundance of information about Armenian and world history. The history of each century and each period of our history has been taught in detail in schools and universities, broadcasted on TV, depicted in movies, and sold in bookstores. Every Armenian knows their national history, at least its major events, both heroic and tragic. The memory of the Genocide is a key element of Armenian national identity.

However, since my childhood, I have been asking myself and others: What should we do to prevent becoming victims again, to avoid losing our statehood again, and to avoid making the same mistakes again (if there were mistakes)? A logical question to the authors of textbooks on Armenian history has always been: Why don't you conclude each chapter about specific parts of our history, including the traumatic ones, with lessons on what was correct and what was mistakenly wrong, what we should and should not do to avoid a similar tragedy in the future? Indeed, "Historians were not always so willing to see memory's potential to enhance historical practice" (Maurantonio, 2014: 5), and this is not only an Armenian phenomenon. **Continuously discussing our**

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<sup>1</sup> Highlighted by A. Atanesyan.

**traumatic past without providing solutions keeps the traumas collected during our long history inside us, making us gradually weaker, misguided, and unwell.**

Again, forgetting is an alternative to remembering (Kaasik-Krogerus, Čeginskas, Säskilähti, 2020). But as the phrase mistakenly attributed to Winston Churchill states, "A nation that forgets its past has no future" (Cornejo, 2020). Indeed, many representatives of various diasporas in the world, including Armenians, chose to forget their past and have already forgotten it to avoid living with national trauma. However, as representatives of their nation, they have no future. Therefore, forgetting is not the answer, and the majority of Armenians still remembers and carries their heavy history, with its heroic and traumatic past, on their shoulders. How can we move forward without forgetting our ancestors and preserving their memory with pride? How shall we learn the lessons properly, be strong and positive, and move forward? To paraphrase Avishai Margalit's father, how should Armenians light their candles in memory of the dead, spreading the light forward and brightening our present and future?

For the Armenian nation, including Armenia itself, the Armenians from already lost Armenian Karabakh (Artsakh), and the Armenian Diaspora, learning from the approaches taken by others regarding their traumatic past and politics of memory might help uncover the Armenian model(s) that are already in practice and formulate a potentially more effective approach. This is especially crucial in light of current developments concerning security in Armenia, as the threat of genocide is once again becoming a real concern (Lemkin Institute, 2024). We must acknowledge that the previous efforts to prevent vital threats to the Armenian nation have, at least partially, failed due to the reappearance of similar problems (Von Joeden Forgey, 2023). To apply the "**Never again**" (Guterres, 2020) formula to these threats to our security, we must first admit that the national politics of memory regarding the Armenian Genocide of the last century and similar traumatic and tragic events in other nations did not mobilize Armenians in Armenia, Karabakh, and the Diasporas in the necessary way and intensity to collaborate effectively and formulate an Armenian politics of memory grounded in realpolitik.

**Models of memory**

In her works, Aleida Assman introduces four approaches to collectively address a traumatic past (Assmann, 2011). These approaches are potentially adopted by governments and national institutions at the highest level, as well as by groups and individuals who may later elevate them from the micro and middle levels to the national politics of memory, if they are accepted and embraced by the majority. The central idea here is that every traumatic event in the past is to be framed within collective memory, both by the victim and the perpetrator. Otherwise, the politics of memory will not be shared and will fail to contribute to reconciliation. These models, used either individually or in combination with each other, either consciously or unconsciously, reflect the experiences of many countries, particularly in post-World War II Europe and Israel. They are highly applicable to the Armenian traumatic past as potential options for adoption or rejection.

The models of memory proposed by Aleida Assman include:

1. **Dialogic Forgetting:** This model describes an approach practiced by parties involved in previous conflicts who are not interested in further violence and contradictions. Instead, they choose to remain silent to pave the way for a shared future. This model was embraced by European countries after both World War I and World War II. The vision of a "European family" and the European Union necessitated and allowed former adversaries to reconcile and open state borders for free trade and travel. A similar approach was employed within the Soviet Union among republics that had previously held territorial claims. For this model to be adopted effectively, all parties involved must have equal and robust guarantees.

2. **Remembering in Order to Never Forget:** This model is relevant to situations in the history of two nations where one committed unprecedented and asymmetric violence against the other. In such cases, the victim remembers in order never to forget, ensuring that the past is not erased from memory to prevent a recurrence ("Never again"). However, implementing this model can be challenging because the perpetrator may either accept or continue to deny their guilt. Consequently, the victim must carry the burden of trauma and pass it down through generations.

3. **Remembering in Order to Forget:** This model can be applied when a perpetrator of crimes confesses their guilt, and the victim accepts their sincere apologies as a form of absolution. Both parties revisit the tragic events of their past, not to remember them anew, but to ultimately forget. This model is considering an approach to overcoming a traumatic past and moving forward.

4. **Dialogic Remembering:** In cases where both parties share guilt for tragic events in the past, they may engage in discussions and analyses of what transpired. By accepting their own culpability as part of the tragedy, both parties contribute to each other's reconciliation.

Now, let's examine the Armenian experience and approach to framing its traumatic past in the context of the memory politics models proposed by Aleida Assman.

### **The Armenian Way**

As demonstrated by the Soviet example, the model of "Dialogic Forgetting" has been effective as long as all parties uphold the agreement and refrain from revisiting their traumatic past with claims against others. During Soviet times, Armenians succeeded in preserving the memory of the Armenian Genocide, using it as a compelling argument in negotiations with Soviet elites to construct a memorial complex. This complex would serve as a symbol of remembrance for the Genocide and Armenia's role in uniting Armenians worldwide.

After extensive diplomatic efforts, the Tsitsernakaberd Memorial Complex was inaugurated in Soviet Armenia in 1967<sup>2</sup>, quickly becoming a central site of remembrance for the Armenian Genocide, not only for Armenians but also for other nations. **Soviet Armenia became a unique example by fostering a model of *Dialogic Remembering* despite operating under conditions of officially enforced *Dialogic Forgetting***, embodying the pursuit of truth and justice for all oppressed nations. Across the Armenian Diaspora, museums and memorials dedicated to the victims and survivors of the Genocide have been established

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<sup>2</sup> Tsitsernakaberd Memorial Complex: Description and History. "The Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute" Foundation. URL: [http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/Description\\_and\\_history.php](http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/Description_and_history.php) (accessed 23.11.2024).

worldwide<sup>3</sup>, often with the support of nations that acknowledge the genocide committed against Armenians in Ottoman Turkey - an atrocity that remains unacknowledged by its perpetrators.

The last leader of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, opened the door to breaking the silence by introducing another approach to collective memory - Glasnost, which encouraged open and critical discussions on every issue. However, history shows that this approach did not lead to effective solutions. In essence, by advocating for open dialogue, Gorbachev replaced dialogic forgetting with asymmetric remembering. Under this model, every party to previous conflicts began asserting claims against others and against the Soviet Union as a whole. The voices from Soviet Armenia were among the most prominent in this regard. Consequently, many armed conflicts, including the Karabakh conflict, erupted with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The victory of Armenia in the first Karabakh war (1991-1994) can be interpreted as a stage in the transformation of memory from dialogic forgetting to remembering in order never to forget, which proved effective for Armenians at that time.

The model of “Remembering in Order to Forget” has long been on the agenda. However, despite Armenia’s and Armenians’ worldwide efforts to compel Turkey to acknowledge the genocide committed against 1.5 million Armenians in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, 34 countries around the world, but not Turkey, have officially recognized this historical fact and crime<sup>4</sup>. Turkey has neither expressed remorse nor offered apologies for the deliberate destruction of Armenians, as well as Greeks, Assyrians, and other minority groups within the Ottoman Empire. For this model of memory, these actions by Turkey fall far short.

Instead, Turkey has sought to engage Armenia in discussions about their “mutual guilt and violence during WWI,”<sup>5</sup> sidestepping the use of the term “genocide” and attributing the mass crimes against ethnic minorities in the Ottoman Empire to the context of war. This aligns with what Aleida Assman refers to as “Dialogic Remembering.” As part of this politics of memory, Turkey has proposed that Armenian historians collaborate with Turkish counterparts to jointly analyze the historical events.

Before the “Velvet Revolution” and the new government led by Pashinyan in Armenia, the Armenian elites and the Armenian Diaspora worldwide had rejected this proposal. Turkey’s attempt to erase the term “genocide” and reframe the politics surrounding the annihilation of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, not only from Turkish memory but also from the collective memory of Armenians, including descendants of genocide victims, was met with strong resistance and could not be accepted.

The model of “Remembering in Order to Never Forget,” as defined by Aleida Assman, is most likely the approach Armenians adopted after the Genocide of 1915, both at the state, group, and individual levels. Countless individual and family stories have been recorded, displayed in museums and documentaries, supported by official statements, factual evidence, depicted in books, and explored in research papers. However, the pivotal question remains: What should be done, and what should be

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<sup>3</sup> For example: Armenian Genocide Museum of America. URL: <http://www.armeniangenocidemuseum.org/#home> (accessed 24.11.2024).

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia. Recognition. URL: <https://www.mfa.am/en/recognition/>

<sup>5</sup> The Events of 1915 and the Turkish-Armenian Controversy over History: An Overview. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Turkey. URL: <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/the-events-of-1915-and-the-turkish-armenian-controversy-over-history-an-overview.en.mfa>

avoided, to prevent the recurrence of similar events? This is the fundamental query that must be framed and addressed by the politics of memory.

The Genocide Memorial and Museum in Yerevan (Tsitsernakaberd Memorial Complex) features an exceptionally informative and meticulously curated collection on the Armenian Genocide. It vividly illustrates the cruelty and calculated nature of the Genocide, as well as the unbearable fate endured by its victims—not only Armenians but also Assyrians, Greeks, and Yezidis living in Ottoman Turkey. The exhibits are well supported by contributions from international scholars and legal experts, emphasizing the importance of preventing any act resembling genocidal conduct against any group of people. As visitors ascend the hill holding flowers purchased at the entrance, ascending hundreds of steps reminiscent of Jesus's journey to Golgotha, burdened with the weight of tragic thoughts about life and death, they eventually place the flowers at the eternal flame beneath the steles symbolizing Armenia divided into Eastern (modern Armenia) and Western parts, including twelve lost Armenian provinces now in Turkey. This journey evokes immense pain and sorrow, often accompanied by tears.

However, after this emotional experience, visitors exit the monument without a clear sense of what actions should be taken or avoided to prevent a recurrence of such a tragedy. The crucial question remains: What should Armenians and other nations do to prevent such a tragedy from occurring again? Regrettably, there is no answer.

When we leave the Complex, we are left adrift and isolated with the weight of collective trauma and the haunting memory of the Genocide (Atanesyan, 2016). It becomes evident, even palpable, that for millions of visitors every year, including Armenians and international guests, there is no concrete answer to the vital question encapsulated within the "Remembering in Order to Never Forget" model, with its resounding motto, "Never again." There is no answer regarding what actions we should take or avoid to prevent a return to such a tragedy. Instead, there lies ahead a long descent down the hill through the park, where there is no information about our destination or what to anticipate next. Eventually, we reach the bustling heart of the city, marked by intersections, bus stops, and traffic. **This journey offers no response to the pressing question of how to coexist with this harrowing collective memory while ensuring that similar tragedies do not befall Armenians or any other group.**

There is an absolute absence of any continuation in the exhibition regarding the post-genocidal history of Armenia and Armenians worldwide. Nothing is presented about the hundred years that followed the Genocide, during which Armenians painstakingly rebuilt their country in Eastern Armenia. They reconstructed old cities and erected new ones, developed agriculture, established universities and schools, and nurtured and educated their children.

A continuation of the exhibition dedicated to the theme of recovery and rebuilding could be represented by a series of posters gradually unfolding along the path leading down from the Armenian Genocide Memorial. These posters would chronicle the subsequent history of the first Armenian Republic, followed by Soviet Armenia, and culminating in the current third Armenian Republic. They would showcase the heroic endeavors of the Armenian nation in battles, nation-building, reconstruction, creation, and cultural dissemination following the Genocide.

The question arises: Why haven't Armenians exhibited any information beyond the culminating point represented by the eternal flame of the Tsitsernakaberd Memorial Complex, commemorating the victims of the Genocide and the lost territories? **Why**



**have we not showcased the remarkable recovery and revival of the Armenian nation?** Why haven't we shown ourselves and the world that we stand among the nations that emerged victorious in World War II, and subsequently, emerged triumphant in the first Karabakh war? Why have we not continued to tell the tragic story of the Genocide while also imparting inspiring lessons from those Armenians who displayed heroism, and who have propelled the Armenian nation to prominence once more? However, this time, it would not be for our tragic past, but for our dedication to hard work, contributions to classic and folk art, music, painting, culinary arts, sports, and military achievements in the present era. This is precisely what we all should have done, and still have the capability to accomplish together.

On the contrary, among most Armenians, the Genocide Memorial is informally referred to as "Yeghern,"<sup>6</sup> so on April 24<sup>th</sup>, people often say, "we are going to Yeghern," which essentially means **"we are going to the Genocide."** It's a ritual repeated year after year. However, **instead of moving away from the threat of genocide, Armenians are moving toward it. This mentality is not conducive to preventing another genocide.**

The pragmatic and patriotic answers that serve the interests of the Armenian nation within the framework of the "Never again" approach and in the context of the current security challenges facing Armenia after the 2020 Karabakh war (Ocampo, 2023) are still lacking.

Instead, the prime minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan and his government, following the Velvet Revolution (Atanesyan, 2018), seem to be erasing core elements of Armenian identity, including territory, history, and symbolism. The territorial losses suffered by Armenia and Artsakh are significant in comparison to the size of the country, and the threat of further losses looms large. Moreover, Pashinyan has initiated a public discourse that downplays the significance of these territories. He even referred to the city of Shushi as "a bleak, dark, and dreary city" unworthy of defense<sup>7</sup>, while Azerbaijanis call it their "cultural capital." By relinquishing historical Armenian territories, Pashinyan and his government accompany their actions with populist critiques of statehood. One recent example is Pashinyan's public statement that the symbols depicted on Armenia's coat of arms no longer hold meaning<sup>8</sup>. This is how post-revolutionary elites in Armenia, as well as their supporters, both within the country and in the diaspora, are implementing another politics of memory, which I would describe as **"Forget as if it never happened."** The so-called "peace negotiations" with Azerbaijan and Turkey are also conducted within this framework, and this model of memory is subordinated to the real politics.

The proposal of forgetting the Armenian Genocide, the Armenian Karabakh/Artsakh issue, and other significant milestones in Armenian history and identity, as if they never occurred, is presented as a 'healing' approach - 'no memory, no pain' - and as a means of 'reconciliation' with Azerbaijan and Turkey. It is logical that the process of 'Armenian

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<sup>6</sup> Another version of the word "Genocide" in the Armenian language, also used in the annual statements of the presidents of USA commemorating the Armenian Genocide – "the Meds Yeghern - the Armenian genocide." Statement by President Joe Biden on Armenian Remembrance Day. The White House, April 24, 2024. URL: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/> (accessed 24.11.2024).

<sup>7</sup> **Khachatourian, A.** (2021) Pashinyan Doesn't Comprehend Shushi's Vital Importance. *Asbarez*, January 22. URL: <https://asbarez.com/pashinyan-doesnt-comprehend-shushis-vital-importance/>

<sup>8</sup> See, for example: **Sassounian, H.** (2023) PM Pashinyan disparages Armenia's coat of arms and national anthem. *The Armenian Weekly*, June 20. URL: <https://armenianweekly.com/2023/06/20/pm-pashinyan-disparages-armenias-coat-of-arms-and-national-anthem/>

forgetting' would entail a reevaluation of Armenian history and the rewriting of textbooks. The model of forgetting is primarily advocated by Armenia's post-revolution government. However, public polls demonstrate that the majority of the Armenian population does not support this approach, as they realistically consider Azerbaijan and Turkey as the primary security threats (Atanesyan, Reynolds, Mkrtichyan, 2023; Atanesyan, Mkrtichyan, 2023).

The current politics of memory promoted by the Armenian government reflects a model of **Dialogic Remembering**, initially proposed by Turkey but now transformed into **Dialogic Forgetting**: Turkey has largely forgotten the events concerning Armenians, and it suggests that Armenians should do the same 'for the sake of peace.' However, the application of the Dialogic Forgetting model by the current Armenian government is not only due to insufficient national efforts to remember but also a response to the use of force and the threat of force by Azerbaijan and Turkey if Armenians continue to remember their history. We should not follow this path: even in the Nazi German concentration camps, where people of various nations were imprisoned and devastated, they still remembered their names, nationality, and history.

### **Conclusion**

Any new political environment can pose either an opportunity or a threat to collective memory, potentially healing or deepening psychological wounds. Modern times present a complex array of examples that demonstrate collective efforts to either confront a traumatic past or neglect it in favor of the interests of a nation - whether perpetrator or victim.

The case of the Armenian Genocide, along with its political, socio-psychological, cultural, economic, demographic, and other consequences, remains unresolved. The painful past continues to echo in the present, with new events - such as the 2020 Karabakh War - rekindling memories of historical trauma. Armenian society and the Armenian diaspora are being encouraged, both by Turkey and their own government, to adopt a model of collective forgetting. This approach, shaped by pragmatic considerations following the defeat in the Karabakh War, conflicts with the deeply ingrained national identity of Armenians, which has been forged through coping with external threats, including the Genocide and similar risks.

Accepting a model of collective forgetting, especially in the absence of acknowledgment or accountability by the perpetrator, risks enabling future genocides and similar crimes - not only against Armenians but against others as well. Conversely, the model of "Remembering in Order to Never Forget" must evolve to balance the interests of all parties involved while reflecting the Armenian nation's responsibility to advocate for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide in the interest of all nations.

Armenians, historically seen as exemplars of coping with a traumatic past, must equally commit to constructing a vision for the future - balancing tragedy with optimism. In this regard, self-assessment (but not self-blaming) should be the cornerstone of reconstructing their collective memory, transforming it into a proactive force for reasonable resilience and reconciliation.

Nonetheless, the model of "Remembering in Order to Never Forget" can be applied in Armenia and among Armenians in a more pragmatic and effective manner. We must collectively reevaluate our public policies and behavior at the national, group, and individual levels, always with the goal of preventing another genocide or disaster from

befalling the Armenian nation. Any divisions between Armenia, the Armenian Diaspora, and Artsakh Armenians, provoked by words or actions, should be regarded as threats to the nation and addressed accordingly. Hate speech, name-calling, bullying, and similar social ills as representations of self-blaming, unfortunately prevalent among Armenians, must be actively discouraged as they erode the unity of the nation. Any instances of corruption, especially within public institutions, should be met with severe consequences, as they directly undermine the functionality of the state security apparatus and pose a threat to the Armenian armed forces. Additionally, we must not only teach history, including the history of the Armenian Genocide, but also impart knowledge about how to prevent genocidal actions against ourselves and other nations in the future. We have all dreamed of a stronger Armenia, but dreams can only come true through individual, collective and institutional efforts.

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**Conflict of Interests**

The author declares no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

**Ethical Standards**

The author affirms this research did not involve human subjects.