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ABOUT THE JOURNAL

The POLITNOMOS is a multi-disciplinary scholarly peer reviewed and international fully open access journal that covers all areas of political science, law, political and legal philosophy. It aims to serve as a scholarly platform for research papers' findings, discussions, and debates and introduce promising researchers and studies to the political and legal scientific communities.

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**POLITICAL STUDIES,
POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY,
LEGAL STUDIES**

SOUTH AFRICA'S ROAD GAME TO INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE: AN AGENDA FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY?

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Abstract

This paper interrogates and reflects on South Africa's journey to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The objective was to seek justice for the besieged Gazans by Israel in the occupied territory. While the war in Gaza is an exothermic reaction by Israel to Hamas's brutal attack on October 7, 2023, the conduct of the war on Gaza has been the indiscriminate bombings, disproportionate, and collective punishment of civilians in the overcrowded enclave. Despite all attempts by the international community (e.g., UNSC, EU) to halt the Gaza onslaught, Israel has thus paid no heed to calls for a humanitarian ceasefire to ameliorate the suffering masses in the Gaza Strip.

It is in the light of the inability of the UN to resolve the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza that prompted South Africa to turn to the International Court of Justice to deliver to world leaders its responsibility to prevent possible acts of genocide or crime against humanity. This study surveyed various documentary evidence and observations to justify the need for this study.

This paper argues that South Africa's journey to the ICJ was primarily to halt the humanitarian crisis and also to bleach the conscience of world leaders on Israel's war in Gaza. The paper concludes that South Africa's court action was primarily to prevent a possible genocide and never intended to hurt the feelings of the Jewish state and her staunch allies.

Keywords: International Court of Justice, Israel-Hamas war, Middle East crisis, pogrom.

Introduction

South Africa's Road game to the International Court of Justice represents a rare ray of light for an African country to venture into a thorny geographic-internationalised arena (e.g., Israel-Hamas war) where states in the global system 'fear' to tread to avoid spiting allies of Israel – e.g., the US, the UK, France, Germany, the Netherlands among others. The objective of South Africa was to prevent possible acts of genocide from being perpetuated by Israel in light of the exothermal reaction to Hamas's horrific attack on October 7, 2023. South Africa's foreign policy nous in global affairs has been consistent since the dismantling of the apartheid regime in 1994. Modern lethal conflicts with international security reverberations include the Russia-Ukraine and the ongoing Israel-Hamas wars (Braithwaite, 2024b; Bulut Aymat, 2010). In these conflicts, South Africa has proactively employed diplomatic optics to de-escalate tensions and promote global peace, security, and respect for human dignity. For instance, South Africa led some African leaders to Moscow to discuss the need to de-escalate the former's war on Ukraine even though South Africa is a key ally of Moscow (e.g., BRICS). This policy consistency on global affairs (that is, the use of multilateral diplomacy to resolve international conflicts) is needed by nation-states worldwide to uphold the universality and equal application of international law and values.

Hamas's magnitude attack on Israel was a strategic surprise, not only to the Jewish state but to the world at large. The event courted global sympathy and support for the Jewish state. However, the exothermic reaction of Israel to Hamas's pogrom alarmed the world on several fronts – indiscriminate aerial bombardment, disproportionate, collective punishment, starvation of internally displaced persons, and the extermination of all categories of people including women, children, and babies in incubators (Braithwaite, 2024a; Hobson, 2019; Braithwaite & Mbowura, 2018). The international community, including some of Israel's closest allies, is increasingly horrified at the scale of the violence inflicted on civilians in Gaza to atone for the 'sin' of Hamas (Kottasova & Koplewitz, 2024; Braithwaite, 2024a). The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) appalled by possible acts of genocide in Gaza, convened three emergency meetings to 'force' a humanitarian ceasefire. All efforts by the UNSC to restrain Israel's brutal war on civilians in Gaza were predictably vetoed by the US. The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) also convened an emergency meeting on the same Israel-Hamas war to signal the detestation of member-states to the dehumanizing war on Gaza. Yet the war in Gaza continues unabated. This is where South Africa's case against Israel at

the International Court of Justice draws its relevance and justifies the need to conduct further studies on the actions and inactions of powerful states in the global system. Hence, the main objective of this study was to examine the alleged Israel's genocidal acts in Gaza and their repercussions on humanity. Based on Israel's alleged genocidal acts on Gaza and subsequent referral to ICJ by South Africa, this study was prepped by the following denudated research questions: (1) Why did South Africa haul Israel before the International Court of Justice? (2) What acts constitute genocide in the realm of international law? (3) What are the global ramifications of the Israel-Hamas war?

The method used in this study is largely hinged on qualitative approaches (secondary research sources). The secondary research method is adopted for this study because it allows the researcher to gain greater insights into the subject matter understudy and to draw logical inferences or conclusions. Again, the secondary research method is based on tried and tested data which is previously analysed and filtered to make sense in the present study involving Israel and Hamas (Bhat, 2019). In this perspective, this study utilised multifaceted materials related to the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict. Data and information gleaned from observation, credible media reportage on the Israel-Hamas imbroglio, journal articles, newspaper publications, magazines, and speeches by Israeli and Hamas officials. The study analysed the immediate past events which triggered the Israel-Hamas war, the conduct and escalation of the war in the bird's eye of international public law, United Nations Security Council attempts to broker a peace that is mainly vetoed or undermined by global politics of allies versus adversaries (i.e., the ideological hack of the UNSC), and the key analysis of South Africa's Road game to the Hague. This study comprehensively made good use of legal debates of renowned scholars on acts that qualify to be considered genocidal in the realm of international law. Data and information gathered were scrutinised and thematically analysed based on the denudated research questions.

Theoretical Framework

What are the obstacles that hinder the international community from reaching a ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas? This paper adopts the *Security Cooperation or Alliances* explanatory model to anchor the complexity, sensitivity, controversy, entanglement, divisiveness, and the "poisoned boil" of global political leadership and institutions in enforcing a humanitarian ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war.

Global states formed security cooperation or alliances as *strategic hedging* to safeguard their sovereignty or general security guarantees from other states (e.g., North Atlantic Treaty Organization). 'Weak' or 'fragile' states

customarily joined forces with powerful states ostensibly to secure their support or protection in the event of attacks from real or perceived adversaries. Such security alliances are transnational and are normally regional-based, geographic, or maybe bilateral security pacts (e.g., US-Israel) formed against perceived threats from regional adversaries or an emerging global power. By so doing, states that have security cooperation with other states tend to promote economic interests beyond national security calculus. The alliance is supposed to be a positive-sum game (a win-win phenomenon) for members of the security pact. In the words of Sherwood-Randall (2006):

“Alliances are binding double security commitments between two or more nations. The critical ingredients of a meaningful alliance are the shared recognition of common threats and a pledge to take action to counter them” (p. v).

In the context of Middle East relations, the US is a staunch ally of the Jewish state, and *ipso facto*, Israel has become an ally to US allies (e.g., the United Kingdom, France, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, and other petit states across Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa). Undoubtedly, the US and its partners in Europe represent the voices of the world in terms of ‘policing’ the application of international law, and universal values just for the promotion of human dignity or security. Yet these countries have largely failed to stop the ongoing Israel-Hamas war in Gaza. This was what prompted South Africa to step in to fill the vacuum by invoking the jurisdiction of the ICJ legal processes to stop the carnage in the Middle East. Altruistically, some members of the European Union (EU) have loudly decried the dehumanizing acts of violence in the Gaza war (Bulut Aymat, 2010). The continuous shipments of military hardware and financial resources to aid Israel’s war in Gaza by the US is not because Israel’s war on Gaza is in tandem with international law, it is because the US and its allies feel obligated or bound to aid an ally despite the glaring violation of the international law of war in Gaza. For instance, the Biden administration decried and condemned the atrocities committed by the governments of countries such as China, Russia, Syria, Myanmar, and Iran but has turned a blind eye to those committed by the government of Israel (Yager, 2024). The UK, for example, presented a detailed report to the ICJ with animus intent to indict Myanmar for genocide against the ethnic Rohingya population in the case of *Gambia v Myanmar* in November 2019, while it supports Israel war in Gaza in the *South Africa v Israel* case before the World Court. This creates the impression that acts that violate international humanitarian law are always right on the condition that the state concerned is an ally or a member of a security pact. Still, the same acts are wrong with states perceived as adversaries in the global system.

Security cooperation among countries per se is not a bad strategic move for reasons of the principle of *collective security*, as is the case of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). However, the tendency of states to unrepentantly support an allied state that is violating international humanitarian law (e.g., using starvation as a weapon of war, collective punishment of civilian population, forced evictions, attacks on ambulances, medical staff, hospitals, the elderly, women and children, the sick, places of worship, dehumanizing acts) blindly as in the case of Israel's war in Gaza is a recipe for world disorder. Security and economic alliances of states worldwide are formed as deterrence to would-be adversaries while aggressively pursuing the national interests of member states. Hence, states have become inextricably entangled either militarily or bankrolling preventable wars abroad with the pretext of pursuing national interests that have never been appropriately defined for decades. On October 19, 2023, President Biden requested Congress to provide \$14 billion in security assistance and another \$10 billion in funding for some logistics of humanitarian character to Israel. According to President Biden:

“In Israel, we must make sure that they have what they need to protect their people today and always. The security package I’m sending to Congress and asking Congress to do is an unprecedented commitment to Israel’s security that will sharpen Israel’s qualitative military edge, which we’ve committed to – the qualitative military edge. We will make sure the Iron Dome continues to guard the skies over Israel. We’re going to make sure other hostile actors in the region know that Israel’s stronger than ever and prevent this conflict from spreading” (Congressional Research Service Report, 2023, p. 6).

President Biden’s speech above showed the ally and non-ally in the US Mideast policy. The support extended to Israel, including arms sales to its ally to prosecute its agenda ostensibly against the Palestinian people, is mind-boggling. However, it is important to note that arms sales to allies should be used responsibly. The US and its allies that are supplying weapons to Israel have a responsibility to ensure they are not used indiscriminately to destroy other states with no just cause. It is significant to note that, the designation of Hamas and Hezbollah as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) does not make every citizen in Gaza and Lebanon a terrorist. However, the Israel Defense Forces’ (IDF) indiscriminate bombardment with the intent to exterminate the whole population in Gaza with the US, France, the UK, Germany, the Netherlands and other European states’ ammunition only fuel or exacerbate the war situation from ‘bad’ to ‘worse’ since October 7, 2023. Also, there is a need for global actors to work collectively to cut the supply

routes of ammunition to Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis against Israel as a first step toward securing a ceasefire deal.

The Case of South Africa v Israel?

South Africa assumed the role of a global peace broker in the geographic-internationalised conflict where the major players in international affairs (e.g., the US, the UK, France, Germany, the UNSC, the UNGA, and the EU) have tried fruitlessly to secure an endgame to Israel's onslaught in Gaza. Besides, the efforts of the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, and other dovish or pacifist states to halt the Israel-Hamas war via multilateral diplomacy, have also failed to glitter. The global controversy, divisiveness, and diplomatic wedge on the Israeli-Hamas war is a stain on the 'conscience' of the global community. In other words, the repercussions and the global reverberations of the war continue unabated, while global political actors are ingrained in public *faux pas* about the seismic conflict (Braimah, 2014).

To bleach out the stain of the failures of global actors to stop the killings and destruction in the Israel-Hamas war, the Republic of South Africa sought the ICJ's intervention in the contentious matter of Public International Law (i.e., alleged acts of genocide being committed by Israel in Gaza). As a corollary, the ICJ is one of the 'principal organs' of the UN that is mandated to adjudicate contentious cases of public international law (e.g., international treaties and conventions, customary international law). In this perspective, the court has the jurisdiction to hear contentious cases within the remit of the global environment and conditioned upon parties' consent (Braimah, 2023; Bullock et al., 1999). The consent may be expressed in a special agreement; by accepting the court's jurisdiction in a treaty; or by undertaking under Article 36 (2) of the Statute to accept as compulsory, about any other state accepting the same obligation, the jurisdiction of the court concerning (i) *the interpretation of a treaty*; (ii) *any question of international law*; (iii) *the existence of any fact which, if established, would constitute a breach of international obligation*; and, (iv) *the nature or extent of the preparation to be made for the breach of an international obligation* (Bullock et al., 1999, p. 440).

Fortuitously, the Republic of South Africa and the State of Israel are both signatories to the ICJ's Convention and therefore duty bound to undertake all necessary measures, including referral of states whose actions or inactions tinges the "Genocide Convention" to the ICJ. The object is to uphold the 'universality' of public international law of preventing alleged acts of genocide from being committed or preferred punishment to acts of genocide. The Republic of South Africa draws its inspiration from the provisions of the

World Court by dragging the State of Israel to ICJ for allegedly committing violent crimes against humanity in the Gaza Strip. Excerpts from the Republic of South Africa's application of *the convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide* in the Gaza Strip against the State of Israel at the World Court in the Hague states among others. South Africa "respectfully requests the Court to adjudge and declare:

1. *that the Republic of South Africa and the State of Israel each have to act under their obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, to the members of the Palestinian group, to take all reasonable measures within their power to prevent genocide, and*
2. *that the State of Israel:*
 - (a) *has breached and continues to breach its obligations under the Genocide Convention, in particular, the obligations provided under Article I, read in conjunction with Article II, and Articles III (a), III (b), III (c), III (d), III (e), IV, V and VI;*
 - (b) *must cease forthwith any acts and measures to breach those obligations, including such acts or measures which would be capable of killing or continuing to kill Palestinians, or causing or continuing to cause serious bodily or mental harm to Palestinians or deliberately inflicting on their group, or continuing to inflict on their group, conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part, and fully respect its obligations under the Genocide Convention, in particular the obligations provided under Articles I, III (a), III (b), III(c), III(d), III(e), IV, V and VI;*
 - (c) *must ensure that persons committing genocide, conspiring to commit genocide, directly and publicly inciting genocide, attempting to commit genocide, and complicit in genocide contrary to Articles I, III(a), III(b), III(c), III(d), III(c), III(d), and III(e) are punished by a competent national or international tribunal, as required by Articles I, IV, V and VI;*
 - (d) *to that end and in furtherance of those obligations arising under Articles I, IV, V, and VI, must collect and conserve evidence and ensure, allow, and not inhibit directly or indirectly the collection and conservation of evidence of genocidal acts committed against Palestinians in Gaza, including such members of the group displaced from Gaza;*
 - (e) *must perform the obligations of reparation in the interest of Palestinian victims, including but not limited to allowing the safe and dignified return of forcibly displaced or abducted Palestinians to their homes, respect for their full human rights, and protection against*

further discrimination, persecution, and other related acts, and provide for the reconstruction of what it has destroyed in Gaza, consistent with the obligation to prevent genocide under Article I; and

- (f) *must offer assurances and guarantees of non-repetition of violations of the Genocide Convention, in particular the obligations provided under Articles I, III(a), III(b), III(c), III(d), III(e), IV, V and VI.*” (South Africa v Israel, 2024, pp. 2-3).

Even though the Republic of South Africa did not succeed in all of its requests against the State of Israel as “the state of Israel shall immediately suspend its military operations in and against Gaza” (South Africa v Israel, 2024, p. 3), which was expected by many people around the globe, the application theoretically, achieved some modicum of success in the form of interim measures the ICJ directed (by sixteen votes to one) at the State of Israel, as stated hereunder:

The State of Israel shall take all measures within its power to prevent and punish the direct and public incitement to commit genocide against members of the Palestinian group in the Gaza Strip.

And

The State of Israel shall take immediate and effective measures to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance to address the adverse conditions of life faced by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v Israel, 2024, p. 25).

In practical terms, the State of Israel seems evasive with the directives of the ICJ. On the contrary, the Israeli bombardment in the Gaza Strip has since intensified and expanded to other parts of the Gaza enclave, with no sign of humanitarian ease. The death toll of the Palestinian group is almost doubled while starvation is effectively used as a weapon of war by the State of Israel in the aftermath of the ICJ’s directives. The indiscriminate bombardment of the Gaza enclave by the IDF has resulted in the extermination of foreign aid workers (e.g. seven aid workers from the World Central Kitchen, who were killed in one of the several Israeli airstrikes in Gaza) whose mission in Gaza was to prevent starvation and/or famine of Gazans who are neither members of Hamas nor civilian combatants in the Gaza Strip (Khalil & Abualouf, 2024; Najjar et al., 2024). The IDF also besieged and raided two hospitals – Nasser and Al Shifa – contrary to the special protection under international humanitarian law of war. In these medical complexes, civilians and *hors de combat* in those hospitals were allegedly killed and buried in mass graves that were discovered in the besieged enclave after the withdrawal of the IDF (Nasser & Mendonca, 2024). In the same vein, Hamas, Hezbollah and the Houthis continue to attack the state of Israel with rockets. The actions and inactions of Israeli forces and the “axis of resistance” are setting a ‘bad’

precedent for other states to pursue similar gross disrespect for international law if not properly and effectively investigated. In all this disregard for international humanitarian law by the IDF, powerful states such as the US, the UK, Germany, France, and other petit actors still provide ammunition to Israel to continue the war in Gaza, while the Islamic Republic of Iran is accused of arms shipment to Hamas, the Houthis, and Hezbollah to attack Israel in multiple fronts. The ongoing Israel-Hamas war hugely exposes the double standards in foreign policy decision-making of states around the world. It also reduces the coded array of humanitarian laws of war as ‘legal fiction’ that is skewed and partially applies differently to allies, and real or imaginary adversaries. This is an ugly spectacle for global peace and security, human rights, and sustainable development.

The UN and International Peace and Security

One of the core functions of the United Nations is to ‘maintain international peace and security’. This responsibility is vested in the UNSC, a key organ of the United Nations Organization (UNO). In recent times, the UNSC has struggled to live above water in the performance of its core mandate – i.e., maintaining international peace and security – as a result of the ideological hack of the five permanent members (China, France, Russia, the US, and the UK) on the Security Council. The veto system has been repeatedly abused and impeded efforts to maintain and resolve conflicts around the world. The recent cases in which the veto system has been invoked severally to thwart the efforts of the Security Council to immediately halt hostilities is the ongoing Israel-Hamas war and the Russia-Ukraine war. These wars have sharply divided political leadership around the world. While the Security Council is embroiled in post-Cold War political gymnastics, the death toll in Gaza – the majority of whom are women and children – continues to rise steadily. The veto system in the activities of the UNSC is effectively being used by allies and adversaries to further their political agenda. The setup of the UN system needs a total overhaul or reform to meet the growing challenges in the increasingly complex and “poisoned boil” world system. Hence, until the UNSC is democratised or powerful actors within the UN system approach global issues with open minds and policy consistency within the remit of international law, the contemporary circus of chaos in the global system will continue to recur with devastating consequences for populations worldwide.

Results and Discussion

Despite international concerns about the unfolding violence on civilians and other vulnerable groups in the Gaza Strip, and northern parts of Israel, there is an uptick in the escalation and expansion of lethal violence across the Gazan

enclave and Israel's northern borders with Lebanon despite the ICJ ruling for the State of Israel to take all necessary steps to minimize humanitarian catastrophe. The focus of this section discusses the findings of the study which are thematically analysed based on the three research questions posed to anchor the study.

Why did South Africa haul Israel before the ICJ?

Hauling of the State of Israel to ICJ by South Africa is rooted in its international obligation to work in concert with other governments to prevent possible acts of genocide anywhere in the world. In the unique case of the Israel-Hamas war, countries such as South Africa, Bolivia, Spain, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar construed Israel's disproportionate bombings and collective punishment of non-combat civilians, destruction of civilian homes, starvation as a weapon of war, hospitals, places of worship, the rising death toll of women, children, the weak, the sick and the wounded as acts that infringe international humanitarian law of war. It is in the backdrop of this 'dehumanizing' ambiance that 'compelled' the Republic of South Africa to seek the intervention of ICJ in the matter (i.e., a charge of committing genocidal acts).

However, critics of South Africa's Road game to ICJ – mainly Israel, the US, the UK, France, and Germany – opine that the move was borne out of hatred for the Jewish State. These critics wondered why the Republic of South Africa failed to report similar incidences like Russia's war on Ukraine, the Azerbaijani assault on Armenia, and Saudi Arabia's involvement in Yemen among others to the ICJ. Despite the level of the criticism led against South Africa's move to ICJ to avert a possible 21st century 'acts of genocide' in the Middle East, the cusp of allies' supply of weapons to Israel, and the usual coterie of "ironclad" support for the Jewish state must not override the substance of South Africa's international obligation in working with other states to prevent a possible 'genocide' in Gaza. As Martin Luther King Jr. (1963) succinctly indicates, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere". World leaders must prevent a possible 'genocide' irrespective of geographical location, culture, ethnicity, religious inclination, or race. Regrettably, the rulings of the Court on the Israel-Hamas imbroglio have been treated with contempt by the Jewish state while nation-states around the world look on helplessly. The implication is that the ICJ decisions are undermined if they involve allied states but will push for the indictment of perceived adversaries and that is the dangerous cornerstone for international peace and security regime.

What Acts Constitute Genocide in International Law?

The international security architecture has set up certain benchmarks – international humanitarian laws of war – to guide nation-states at war. These principles are intended to protect human dignity and rights before and during the conduct of war. These humanitarian laws of war should guide warring factions or belligerents on the “dos” and “don’ts” of armed conflict regardless of the circumstance in the uptick in violence. A state or a warring faction that goes contrary to these “don’ts” is deemed to have engaged in acts of genocide. Article II of the Genocide Convention defines genocide as *any of the following acts committed with the intent to destroy in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group, as such:*

- a. Killing members of the group;
- b. Causing serious bodily harm to members of the group;
- c. Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- d. Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group (De Lupis, 1987).

A combination of two or more of the above-stated acts may be termed ‘genocidal’ per international law guiding armed conflict. In the case of the ongoing Israeli-Hamas war, both Hamas and the State of Israel are guilty of perpetuating ‘acts of genocide’ root and branch. Hamas’s pogrom in Israel on October 7, 2023, was premeditated, sleazy, and calculated to destroy life and property. Despite Hamas’s ‘miscalculation’, the emotional bromance of President Biden and Prime Minister Netanyahu and their allies have fueled Israel’s war on Gaza to catastrophic levels. The US and its allies are aiding Israel’s (i.e., supply of modern military ammunition) indiscriminate bombardment, disproportionate, collective punishment, killings, and starvation of the Gazans, including women and children angst several states who denounce Israel’s brutal war on Gaza and publicly support South Africa’s application to the ICJ to restrain the Jewish state from unleashing further mayhem on the people of Gaza. The ICJ orders have since been ignored by the Jewish State with the tacit support of the US, and its allies. Israel’s transgression of the prohibition of the law of war by Israel has the propensity to ignite a broader war in the Middle East with its consequences on humanity, politics, economics, and disruptions in global supply chain management.

Closely connected to the above is a lack of respect for humanitarian rules or “general ethics of war” by the Jewish state and Hamas. In this paper, the humanitarian rule is narrowly construed as the protection or exemption of non-combat civilians, the vulnerable in society, including women and children, the elderly, the sick and weak, places of worship, medical staff, hospitals, ambulances, civil defence personnel, religious personnel, prisoners

of war and journalists from being military targets – they are to be taken care of as specially protected groups and civilian installations. Protocols I and II of the Geneva Convention (1977) catalogued other forbidden practices that belligerence must adhere to escape liability for serious violations of the laws of war (De Lupis, 1987, pp. 271-290). These prohibitions include the following:

- a. Murder
- b. Torture of all kinds, whether physical or mental
- c. The taking of hostages
- d. Acts of terrorism
- e. Collective punishment
- f. Outrages upon personal dignity, in particular, humiliating and degrading treatment, rape, enforced prostitution, and any form of indecent assault
- g. Pillage
- h. Threats to commit any of the preceding acts.

In armed conflict, warring parties normally pivot away from the humanitarian rules or general ethics of war, even though they cannot run away from accountability in the long run. In the Israel-Hamas war, the Jewish state with its sophisticated weaponry, seems to repeatedly offend the rules of engagement on the humanitarian laws of war. The collective punishment being meted out to the whole group of civilians from the Gaza enclave, the wanton extermination of entire group or family, destruction of places of habitation, starvation or food as a weapon of war, dehumanizing behaviours by the IDF, arbitrary arrest, detention, and mistreatment of people of Gaza and the West Bank, murder of civilians at the West Bank, expropriation of Palestinian lands and construction of housing units for Israelis amid war, rape, mass graves discovered in areas in Gaza formally occupied by the IDF, are some of the ugly spectacles in the aftermath of the October 7, 2023, attack on Israel. Without any prejudice, this article lacks the capacity to judge whether Israel has crossed the red lines of humanitarian law of war, and possible ‘acts of genocide’. The onus to pronounce a state of engaging in acts of genocide, as it stands, lies in the bosom of the ICJ to determine – this determination may take the ICJ a couple of years to arrive at a conclusion on South Africa’s application.

What are the Global Ramifications of the Israel-Hamas War?

The Israel-Hamas-Hezbollah-Houthis war and conflict has a wider global ramification irrespective of a state’s geographical location. For example, since Israel’s war on Gaza, the Houthis have carried out over 100 attacks on commercial ships belonging to or linked to the US, the UK, France, and Israel

in the Red Sea. These attacks have thwarted global trade, and the reverberations of the activities negatively impact the global economy. Prices of goods and services across states, including food stuffs, have soured, while inflation continues to fluctuate with its repercussions on the living standards of the world population.

Shipping damaged in attacks off coast of Yemen

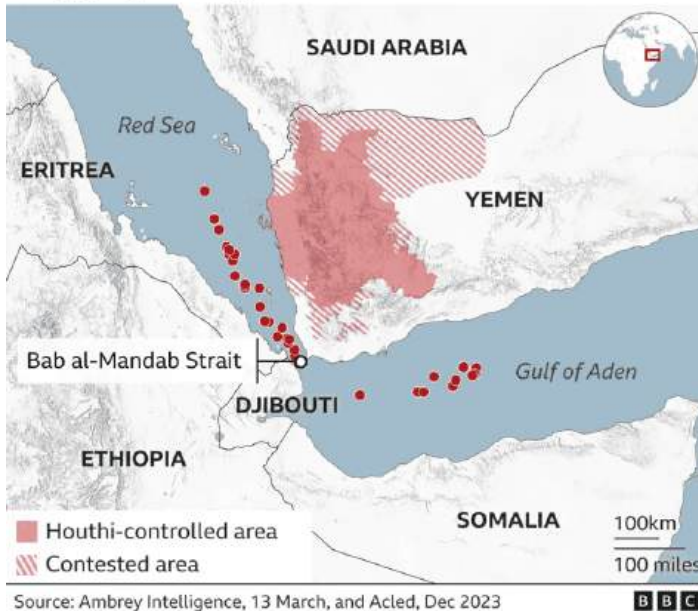


Figure 1: Shows Houthis' Attacks on Commercial Ships in the Red Sea

While the 'powerful' global political leaders appear to do little about ending the war and viewing Israel's war on Gaza in the eye of an ally doing the damage, its political, social, and economic ramifications are untidy and have no boundaries in the international system. Israel's war on Gaza is aimed at getting the US and its allies embroiled in the Middle East crisis. Israel does this through a labyrinth of mechanisms – escalation of the war on Gaza to rope in Iran, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen. This is a war snare for the US, the UK, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and other allies that must be avoided to save humanity from another scourge of global war. An expanded war in the Middle East that entangles the US and its allies in favour of Israel may have far-reaching consequences for the world – Russia, China, North Korea, and other allies of Iran may directly or indirectly intervene in any combined aggression against the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Russian Federation for example will be interested in the US military entanglement in the Middle East

as a fitting retribution to pay the US by backing Iran with arms as the latter continuously provides arms to Ukraine.

Again, the ongoing war in the Middle East will have far-reaching consequences in other inter-state conflicts in parts of the world. It establishes an undesirable “might is right” precedence in international relations. States with military wherewithal besides the US, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany, among others, may fund, fan, or arm their allied states to unleash mayhem on their perceived adversaries. For example, Azerbaijan is allegedly being aided militarily by Turkey to destroy and usurp a territory from Armenia (i.e., Nagorno-Karabakh war, September 2023). Russia sells volumes of some of its sophisticated weapons to Azerbaijan even though superficially, the Kremlin appears to be *de jure* ally of Armenia. Another simmering conflict is in the offing as China is fretting about Taiwan’s annexation to be a yolk of mainland China with the US and its allies bracing up with a possible military showdown with the former (Braumah, 2024). North Korea’s incessant test of ‘dangerous’ ballistic missiles of various forms in East Asia is evoking simmering tensions with its neighbours – specifically South Korea and Japan.

In furtherance, the world will probably witness an upsurge of acts of terrorism with no boundaries in the aftermath of the Israeli-Hamas-Hezbollah-Houthis imbroglio. The Israeli escalation of the war in the Middle East and the diplomatic cover being offered to the Jewish state has already battered the image of the US and its allies as credible peace brokers in the Middle East and around the world. The US and its allies’ interests abroad will be the target for destruction or attacks, and Jews living everywhere across the globe are now exposed to attacks more than ever. Antisemitism is on the rise within the US, Europe, the Persian Gulf countries, and around the world. This controversial, contentious, and divisive war in the Middle East has divided the world order and defeated the purpose of establishing the United Nations Organization – to promote international peace and security. The UN is now a platform for world leaders to talk shop on global affairs based on phantasm or idealistic, provocative, and hate speeches. The present and past global interlocutors (e.g., the UNSC, the US, the UK, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the EU) seem to tap and dance around the root cause of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that has become an albatross on the conscience of global politics. The occupation and suppression of a people have never endured without fatalities to both the superior or domineering force and the weakest side. In such asymmetric relations, the weakest party may exact an unimaginable and surprising pain on the occupation force and the reverse will continue unabated. The only viable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the “two-state” option on the table that must thrive on liberal democratic values or perpetual

war for generations yet unborn (Braimah & Forson, 2023; Arian et al., 2010; Allegra & Napolitano, 2009). As succinctly indicated by Neslen (2006), *occupation is not just a state of forced control. It is also a state of mind, a way of keeping busy and passing the time.*

Conclusion

The world of (dis)order in contemporary times is a result of ‘double standards’ in foreign policy decisions of powerful states, international security alliances, and ideological hack of the supranational and regional organisations (e.g., The UN, UNSC) in the global system. Hence, locking down the efficacy, respect, and universal application of international law for the sake of humanity (Braimah, 2020a, 2020b). The road game of the Republic of South Africa to the ICJ was primarily to remind world leaders of the collective responsibility of preventing the war in the Middle East from degenerating into another genocide after Rwanda. World leaders must never allow a rebirth of modern holocaust in Palestine reminiscent of what happened to Jews before the founding of the State of Israel in 1948. The State of Israel suffered from the historical injustice where millions of Jews were exterminated with the intent of wiping out the entirety of the group.

Altruistically, the asymmetrical war between Israel and Hamas has sharply divided the world into undesirable standpoints of “ironclad” signalling the *Déjà vu* of the *Cold War*, with its resulting carnage and policy shifts among states around the world. The continuous vetoes by the US for a humanitarian ceasefire between Israel and Hamas at the UNSC are borne out of its unstinting commitment to back a key ally (i.e., “ironclad” support for Israel) in the Middle East against a commitment to promote global peace and security. The veto system by the five permanent members of the UNSC is with all intent and purposes, paralysis of the application of international law, and promotion of world peace, and security. The global political leadership has a responsibility to save humanity and not allies alone, uphold the sanctity or the universality of international law, and engage in acts that uproot disease, poverty, hunger, and promote sustainable international peace and security for global development. These can be achieved by employing multilateral diplomacy to resolve inter-state and international disputes that are flinging out divisiveness, food insecurity, disruptions in the global supply chain, and hatred toward a group of people or nation-states around the world.

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THE DIALECTIC OF ETHIOPIAN UNITY

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Abstract

This research is meant to show the philosophical secrets lying behind the persevering stance of Ethiopian unity despite the mounting negative factors that has been in force since the downfall of the Dergue regime in 1991. The attempt to uncover the philosophical underpinnings that can explain the saddeningly amazing bitter fact that Ethiopian unity somehow holds onto its existential unit in the face of a relentless, structural and intentional acidic factors being strewn unto it in the hands of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) government would rely on the theoretical framework of Hegelian dialectic. To the success of this philosophical research, I helped myself profoundly to the rational and critical methods that are touted as the warps and woofs of a philosophical treatise and research. Following the hefty and strict application of the aforementioned methods coupled with the theoretical framework of analysis the Hegelian dialectic offers, I arrived at the conclusion which holds: The dismantling of cancerous and utterly divisive legal ideological and structural threats the EPRDF government has been serving for nearly three decades against Ethiopian unity stands as the total negation or antithesis of Ethiopian unity; an antithesis which gave birth to its own negation instead of dismantling into smithereens Ethiopian unity. Hence, we do have this time around the Hegelian negation of negation which comes in the form and name locally known as Fanno.

Keywords: Ethiopian unity, Hegelian dialectic, negation of negation, Fanno, antithesis.

Introduction

When the concept of dialectic is heard such German giants as Hegel, Marx, Engels, and Feuerbach come to mind. No one comes anywhere near Hegel in giving the very concept a cosmic stance as he applied it to the stygian mode via which the whole universe is supposed to move in rhythms that know no

hiatus. No one as well comes anywhere near Marx in giving the very concept a materialist twist. For Hegel, reality which is the absolute spirit, the Big Idea, is in the state of constant change. The change which in its constant stance and dynamism defines reality is not fortuitous though. On the contrary, the very change is noted with a well-known pattern that subscribes to law. The law that governs the change which keeps the entire reality alive and meaningful is touted dialectic (Hegel, 1977; Engels, 1940; Marx, 1964; Katen, 1973). For Hegel, the spirit is in a state of sadness for it doesn't know itself at the initial stage. In order that the spirit can know itself it has to fashion itself into the subject and object of knowledge; into the knower and the to be known. This can be achieved through a dialectic process which makes it imperative for the spirit to deny itself, to negate itself and thereby change itself into its stark opposite, so that it can finally achieve the goal of self-consciousness, self-knowledge, self-realization and freedom.

“These two moments, – *itself* as independent object and, and this object as a mode of consciousness, and hence its own essential nature, – fall apart. ... We are in the presence of self-consciousness in a new shape, a consciousness, which as the infinitude of consciousness, or as its own pure movement is aware of itself as essential being, a being which thinks, or is a free self-consciousness” (Hegel, 1977, p. 120).

And this universal law of motion and reason, in a word this law of reality comes in well-defined patterns dubbed thesis, antithesis and synthesis.

For Hegel, the world was a place of constant change, but the change itself was not arbitrary, for it was to proceed according to a well-defined pattern or method. Method was fundamental, for the pattern of the universe was revealed in the unfolding of the dialectical process. The procedure of the dialectical process was as follows:

- Thesis: assertion of a position – affirmation
- Antithesis: assertion of the opposite position – negation
- Synthesis: the blending of the two opposite positions into a unity on a higher level (Katen, 1973, p. 153).

Hegel's belief in the pattern laden nature of reality is so thorough that he saw logic and reason in everything near and a far, in everything that appears, in everything that is there in and about the phenomenon. He saw reality living logic like none other. In fact, he saw logic in everything except in logic itself. To make this point clearer, for Hegel the real is the rational and the rational is the real. Put otherwise the real is but just another version of the ideal and vice versa. Nonetheless, there is one thing Hegel couldn't see eye to eye. And that thing is what since the times of Aristotle has been enshrined as the

untouchable truth, as truth given no to be challenged come what may. The point I am at is that what is known in most pages of logic as the three laws of thought. The said laws of thought come under the heavy fire power of Hegelian dialectic. These laws of correct thinking are: the law of identity, the law of contradiction and the law of excluded middle.

By Aristotelian light the law of identity can be presented as $M=M$. Providing something is true then it is true. Way too easy to miss, and way far too easy not to go remiss of it, according to Aristotle. The law of contradiction holds that no statement can be both true and false. The third law of thinking is that of the excluded middle. In concert with Aristotle, the third law holds that any statement can either be true or false (Miller, 1984; Katen, 1973).

However Aristotle must have foreseen, it seems that somehow some thinkers in the times ahead might come up with something that sets a catch to his belief in the efficiency and certainty of the three laws of thought and writes a rough sounding warning which borders on a diatribe:

“Some indeed demand to have the law proved, but this is because they lack education, for it shows lack of education not to know of what we should require proof, and of what we should not. For it is quite impossible that everything should have a proof; the process would go on to infinity. So that even so there would be no proof” (Aristotle, 1946).

The foreboding nuance in Aristotelian defensive diatribe came true as his laws of thought were at least partially rejected both by Hegel and Engels, not to mention Marx. It is a situation the Ethiopian adage describes down to a note: *Yeferrut yderssal, yetellut ywerssal* – which would roughly mean in Amharic that which is feared would come true and he who is hated would overtake it.

Hegel rejected Aristotelian laws. He did not reject them entirely, to be sure, nor did he fail to understand them. Rather, he believed that reality is such that it cannot entirely be comprehended by these principles. Often when we try to fit reality into our Procrustean bed of logic, we distort it. There is a method of Reason (*vernunft* in German) that includes but goes beyond the method of logic or understanding (which he called *verstand*). The understanding or *verstand* is that part of the mind that is always trying to obtain clear distinctions. It has an obsession to make everything precise and cut and dried. But reality is not precise and cut and dried. Reality is a process. It doesn't still. It is a flow. Life is not static. At the deepest level 'to be or not to be' is not the question. Life constantly sees a passing from one stage of being to another so that to be is not to be, and not to be is to be (Katen, 1973).

In the heavy blow Aristotelian logic suffered in the hands of Hegelian *vernunft* we can see that Hegel's logic is indeed the metaphysics of becoming wherein reigned supreme is change which runs in the face of the law of contradiction. Accordingly, we have witnessed how to be is not to be, and not

to be is to be. In Engels' materialist metaphysics, wherein as well change reigns supreme, the Aristotelian laws of thought are cornered as follows.

There are three laws of dialectic:

1. The law of the transformation of quantity into quality and vice versa.
2. The law of the interpenetration of opposites.
3. The law of the negation of negation (Engels, 1940, p. 26).

As put unequivocally above dialectic in the hands of the Marxists with a material tint setting off from the spirit-bound stance of it in the hands of Hegel carries on the legacy of change. But then one thing should be made clear. Hegel might have stood in stark contradistinction to Aristotelian logic. Likewise, in a bit modified sense, Marx gave some of the same medicine to Hegel much as Hegel had given to Aristotle, though in a shade different form. “Marx appreciated the fact that Hegel was a powerful thinker. Indeed, this made it all the more important to crush Hegel’s idealistic excesses. Marx believed that Hegel saw things upside down, and he assigned himself the task of turning them right side up” (Katen, 1973, p. 155).

Applying materialistically the essentials of dialectic, Marx successfully left the footprints of historical materialism on the pages of metaphysics. Marx applied dialectic in his socio-economic analysis of capitalism where he debuted the concept of alienation. By his light, a radical change or revolution is a must in the heydays of alienation. In a social system where a given class or group of people is subjected to the harsh gories of reality a revolution, at the very least, is a must. Marx put the horrific gories of reality, or of a given socio-economic system that are visited upon a given people come into play when, “people are alienated from the results of their work, when people are alienated from themselves, when people are alienated from their nature and when people are alienated from fellow people” (Marx, 1964, p. 121).

The structural denial perpetrated against Ethiopian unity, the stark and nefarious negation visited upon Ethiopian longstanding unity, is probed deeper within the framework of the various facades of dialectic whose thumb-nail-sketch I have given above. The mounting intensive structural acts of saturated hatred towards Ethiopia notwithstanding, the bloody rankling and divisive and twice as destructive alienating and exterminating measures taken by the Woyanae – (the household name of the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF)) led, Woyanae – baked and daubed government of EPRDF notwithstanding, Ethiopia’s unity has proved its quintessential to be one of perseverance interspersed with resilience which merits at this hiatus a closer philosophical delving.

The Dialectic of Ethiopian Unity

As soon as the regime that named itself the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Forces came to power in May 1991, the first thing it got hell-bent on putting into effect was the dismemberment of Ethiopia. To this end, the EPRDF government set out to write a new constitution which could provide, and it did a formidable legal basis for its effort to dismantle Ethiopia such that the only black nation that maintained its independence by beating colonialism would totally dissipate from the world map and get erased from the pages of world history. Side by side with the diabolic and quisling work which the EPRDF knew would bury Ethiopia alive, the government gave its all to the fabrication of new sovereign entities or powers, as endorsed by the constitution. Article 8 of the constitution clearly and unashamedly takes away the inviolable right of Ethiopia to sovereignty and gives it to the new de facto countries which in the EPRDF's parlance are termed as nations, nationalities and peoples. Article 8 of the constitution holds that: "All sovereign power resides in the Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples of Ethiopia" (Constitution of the FDRE, 1995, p. 7). Needless to add that flags are therewith fabricated so that at least fourteen of the eighty-five Ethiopian population groups would fly under and identify themselves with them. Hence it went great guns in breaking Ethiopia at least into fourteen de facto states that are warranted and even encouraged by the constitution to break away from Ethiopia any time they please. Pursuant to this bitter, treasonous and abashing fact Article 39, the most notorious of all the articles of the constitution, stirs up, encourages and bravadoes with a thumbs-up gesture all attempts by any group or clan in the country to break away from Ethiopia any time they feel like walking away from this ancient country of independence, this ancient state that is the pride and joy of all black people the world over and the hope of all oppressed people across the globe. Article 39 of the EPRDF Constitution boldly babbles out, without batting its eyelids, and cries out its quisling-flavored and traitors-go-ahead edict as follows. Article 39, "Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has an unconditional right to self-determination, including the right to secession" (Constitution of the FDRE, 1995, p. 33). Sadly, and in outright self-defeat every ethnic group in Ethiopia has not just the right to secession, but the unconditional right to do so. Unconditional right being an operating term, in this Quisling besotted, treason enshrined and betrayal soaked constitution, it is nothing less than an open call for the total dismemberment of Ethiopia. With this constitution in general and Article 39 in particular the negation of Ethiopia, as per the Marxian parlance, is set in motion.

With the highly racist and divisive constitution in full swing, with the establishment of fourteen ethnic-based regional states in place, and with

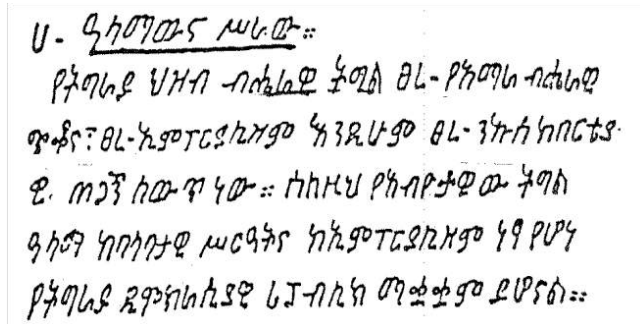
fourteen flags at whose beck and call stood respective and extremely cancerous, hate-laden ethnic anthems cutting a blazing trail of ethnic hatred, the arena was complete for the full-fledged antithesis in contradistinction to Ethiopian unity (Mindaralew, 2013, 2014, 2016). Thus, Ethiopia as we know it in history, Ethiopia noted for being the shining beacon of independence, the land of the patriots who prefer their immediate death to their being colonized or enslaved, Ethiopia as the only black nation that maintained its independence thanks to its gallant sons and daughters and wise kings was going to be relegated to the repository of history. Everything the EPRDF government did exuded an out-and-out anti-Ethiopian unity, to say the least. Put in different phrasings, EPRDF came to be a stark negation of Ethiopian unity, which in Hegelian terms amounts to the antithesis of the Ethiopian unity.

Side by side with the cancerous development of the aforementioned treasonous events, racism and open, rankling and unashamed hatred towards the Amharas has become the de facto ideology of the EPRDF government. If anyone has the effrontery to puke in broad daylight a gamut of diatribes against the Amharas, then he will scurry at his/her fastest the up-hills of power ladder. Everything EPRDF touched exuded racism at its worst and hatred at its ugliest.

The question of philosophical import at this juncture would therefore be one of delving into the underlying reason that can explain why and how Ethiopia has survived to date, maintaining its unity intact despite the leviathan big negative, racist, divisive, hatred-driven, and vengeance-laden challenges piled against it by the very government that has been in power for an odd and solid three decades? The philosophical answer to this question would take us right into the hub of Hegelian as well as Marxian dialectic, wherein nestled among other things are the precepts of change and the laws that govern the process of change.

While everything, by EPRDF's light, was put in place for the total dismemberment of Ethiopia, and while the negation of Ethiopia was in full swing, the government in power saw a catch to the plan it considered its heart's bent, to the plan it has invested its all, to the plan for the realization of which it has promulgated a constitution. And that catch turned out to be the Amharas (Muluken, 2016). As long as the Amharas are extant, the government envisaged, there will always be a challenge thrown at every attempt geared towards dismembering Ethiopia. Hence, the EPRDF government started to put into effect measures that would, in the long run, at least dwindle the impact of the Amharas on Ethiopian politics, and at the most whittle down the Amharas into an extinct ethnic group. It was a policy they pursued right from their very inception. TPLF the spiritual and political father of the EPRDF government as well as the godfather of the Prosperity Party now in power in Ethiopia made it

a point of its creed, the heart of its ideology, and the essence of its struggle to target the Amharas every step of their way. This was made unequivocally clear when they enshrined their utmost hatred and venomous animosity for Amharas in the 1976 manifesto of TPLF. The said manifesto of hatred and brawling animosity for the Amharas was handwritten, as shown below.



ሀ. ዓካማውና ሥራው።
 የትግሉ ህዝብ ጠላቱ ደብዳቤ ፈጣሪ ፀረ-የክማሌ ጠላቱ
 ጭቆና፣ ፀረ-ኢምፐሪያሊዝም ነፃነታችን ፀረ-ጎረቤትነትን
 ደ. ጠጋኝ ሰው ሆኖ። ሰፊ የክብር ያለው ትግል
 ዓካማ ከጥገና ሥርዓት ከኢምፐሪያሊዝም ነፃ የሆነ
 የትግሉ ደምብክሲያ ሪፖርት ማድረግ ይሆናል።

Figure 1: Paper clipping from the TPLF's 1976 Manifesto. p. 17.

Roughly translated, the above excerpt from the original handwritten TPLF Manifesto means, in Amharic, the overall objective of their struggle was an anti-Amhara national oppression, anti-imperialism and anti-petit-bourgeoisie reform meant to establish a free democratic republic of Tigray.

The very manifesto tells us that the perpetrators of hatred and the bearers of vengeance against the Amharas were back then in the formidable hideout the desert of Dedebeit in the Tigray province offered them. Like anyone could see the manifesto was handwritten; you don't expect them to have a typewriter or any other machine that they could help themselves to in matters of writing. Even if they did it seemed they didn't know how to write with it. Put differently, the TPLF, even when they couldn't find themselves in a position to write with a typewriter, they had deep in their hearts written, they had deep in their minds carved the hatred for Amharas. As could easily be learned from the above excerpt that TPLF had three inveterate enemies to fight against: the Amharas, imperialism, and petit bourgeoisie. And of these enemies the Amharas come first and foremost, as per the 1976 TPLF manifesto. This manifesto, with minor embellishments, later became the EPRDF constitution. Being guided by this manifesto, which in effect is the manifesto of hatred and venomous animosity, the covenant in which they vowed to fight the Amharas to the last man standing, to the last breath of their lives, the TPLF came to power in 1991. By the time they assumed power, they had already metamorphosed themselves into the EPRDF. Ever since they came to power there has been no measure, they have not taken to wipe out the Amharas from the surface of Ethiopia (Muluken, 2016).

While the negation of Ethiopian unity was still the government's number one project, as was blessed by the constitution of 1995, the EPRDF came to a stall in 2018 when it was forced to metamorphose itself into a new form publicly known as the Prosperity Party. Despite a few run-ins the members of the front, EPRDF have undergone to the point of changing their political tag into Prosperity Party, nothing of essence has really come into being where Ethiopia's unity, sovereignty, and continuity as a state that has persevered the challenges hurtled at it from the smudged hands of colonialism and the bloody hand of fascism is concerned. The creed to dismember Ethiopia was still on the agenda of the Prosperity Party. I could be justified to argue in this tint because the most lethal and cancerous of all tools, which has been in place where the continuity of Ethiopian unity and sovereignty is concerned, namely the constitution is still in place. It has been viewed by Prosperity Party, now the ruling party, in manners that border on idolatry worship and protected with ferociousness known only to a buffalo at the sight of her encroached calf by a pride of lions.

The new government under the leadership of the Prosperity party beefed up its efforts by way of staying loyal to the creeds of Woyanae and the front, Woyanae has been galloping for nearly three decades. What Woyanae used to see as a threat to their efforts meant to dismember Ethiopia, viz., the Amharas are still seen by Prosperity party with blood in its eyes, and with fire in its hands. Accordingly, the Prosperity party pursued the longstanding creed of Woyanae with zeal known only to fanatics. Thus, the zeal to do away with anything and anyone that might stand in their way that is supposed to take them to the realization of Article 39, to the total dismemberment of Ethiopia has gathered momentum. It follows that the Amharas who have been considered by Woyanaes as the utmost anathema of any divisive and parochial act, have now become target number one of the Prosperity party. In satanic compliance to this bloody momentum, the government in power makes it a point of honor with it to evict Amharas from Addis Ababa, the city built from scratch by Emperor Menelik II. That explains why 500,000, at the very least, Amhara residents of Addis Ababa have seen their homes bulldozed and their properties destroyed right before their eyes and hopelessly found themselves in a long desperate march away from their home soil, their city, and their homeland.



Figure 2: Hundreds of thousands of Amharas being evicted from Addis Ababa during 2022/23.

What is more, the Amharas were subjected to unlawful killings in almost all provinces of Ethiopia. Such is the scale and berth of atrocity being visited upon the Amharas, that in Benishangul Gumuz regional state alone the Amharas were buried in a ditch dug by excavator. As could be seen below, in a country where it is customary that the dead is given the utmost respect and obsequies are more honorable than the respect given to kings, the dead bodies of the Amharas were piled to a mound from which a loader scoops them to the capacity of its blade and drops them later into the ditch excavated by a machine. This fascistic way, both Christian and Muslim Amharas were buried in a single ditch.



Figure 3: A pile of the massacred Amharas in the Benishangul region, western Ethiopia, in December 2022.



Figure 4: The dead bodies of the massacred Amharas loaded into the blade of a loader.



Figure 5: The dead bodies of massacred Amharas being unloaded into the ditch dug by a bulldozer.



Figure 6: The tire marks of the loader clearly suggest that it had brought and offloaded the dead bodies here before returning to the pile (Fig. 3) of massacred Amharas to fetch another round of dead bodies for this bulldozer-dug ditch.

In a deadly bid to do away with the Amharas, whom the government in power considered to be one stygian, incorrigible, and indomitable force that can stand in its divisive way, the government in power ramped up its effort to get it over with the Amharas for once and for all. To this end, the government waged a full-fledged war on the Amharas in July 2023.



Figure 7: Roughly translated, this is an official request sent by the governor of the Amhara region to his party leader, the prime minister, asking for an out and blatant war to be waged against the Amhara region he is supposed to lead.

It was a war in which four of the five national commands of the country were deployed to wipe out the Amharas from existence and erase them from history. It was a measure that spiked the three decades long cumulative acts of antithesis or negation to their natural conclusion. It was an act that brought out, in a dialectic parlance, a force that turns out to be the negation of the previous negation, in a word the negation of negation. This new force of the second negation will, as it did, play the role of an anti-dote such that Ethiopian unity and sovereignty will be put back on track. And when it is put back on track, it will assume, as it does, a higher notch of unity which supersedes the previous berth of unity.

The new force that stands to be an antithesis of the previous negation, or what is the same thing to say the negation of negation assumes within the

context of Ethiopian politics the name and organizational identity popularly known as FANNO.



Figure 8: Despite all other ethnic organizations in Ethiopia, such as TPLF and OLF that create their own new flags, the Fannos are noted for their unwavering love, respect, and honor for the Ethiopian flag. This flag – the green, yellow, and red – has become a definition of the icon of freedom also among brother Africans and other oppressed peoples worldwide.

The Fannos are the political realization of the dialectic, which among other things makes it imperative that in the stage of the negation of negation, the past is preserved in all its positive forms and contents, the present is superseded by a stance that freed it from all its cancerous, divisive, and backward elements, and the future is mapped out with a better and higher notches of development (Engels, 1940).

The Fanno forces appeared on the scene and eventually rose to a power notch such that they became not only a force to reckon with, but also a force that definitely has a big say in the East African power setting.



Figure 9: Fannos displaying a remarkable array of weapons they captured following an outstanding showdown and feat of bravery in their existential fight against government forces.

The Fannos organized themselves into a freedom fighters stance following the beefed up hatred driven, and an open racist war waged against the Amharas. Thus, the Fannos organized themselves along an ethnic line. A question might suggest itself at this hiatus: How can a force that organized itself all along an ethnic line be, by any measureable standard, different from the TPLF, EPRDF, OLF and the Prosperity Party, which are also known for organizing along ethnic lines? It is true that the Fannos are organized along the Amhara ethnic line. However, the nationalism upheld among the Fannos, on one hand, and the nationalism advocated by the Woyanaes, EPRDF, OLF and the Prosperity Party, on the other, are two widely different things. They are as different as paradise is from hell, as widely apart as earth is from the sky. The nationalism held near and dear by Woyanae, EPRDF, OLF, and the Prosperity Party and the likes is a racist ideology driven animosity that has no room for inclusion, no room for unity to swing in, no room to see even eye to eye with other Ethiopian ethnic groups. Theirs is a nationalism whose be all, and end all is setting a homogenous demographic group at the detriment of all other ethnic groups, and break away from the motherland Ethiopia, and establish their own banana republics. In stark and dialectic contradistinction to this wrong-footed nationalism as exalted by Woyanaes, EPRDF, OLF, and many other liberation fronts and the Prosperity party, the Fannos nationalism, a.k.a. the Amhara nationalism, is a completely different type of nationalism, a negation of all the previously known Ethiopian narrow-minded, and parochial nationalisms. The Fannos represent a nationalism which does not fight for secession under the cloak of liberation, as is the case with nearly all other nationalist groups. On the contrary, the Fannos fight for survival. They fight to counter the fascistic and genocidal war waged against the Amharas. In effect, the Fannos represent

a new brand of nationalism which is meant to stop the genocidal nationalism of the groups and governments in power for the last thirty-something years in Ethiopia and supplant them by a government that reasserts Ethiopian unity on a new, reinforced, all inclusive and all benefitting notch of dialectic. The Fannos, in a word, are noted to represent a nationalism which stands in dialectic negation of the negation resulting in the synthesis of a higher unity and a well-founded Ethiopian sovereignty. The Fannos, put otherwise, are not here to repeat the destructive, vindictive, racist, exclusivist, selfish, and nihilistic creed of the nationalism exalted by Woyanae, EPRDF, OLF, the Prosperity Party and the like. The Fannos are here to bring into play, which they did, a new species of nationalism which supersedes the first negation and metes out the second negation, hence the negation of negation, the negation of the former brand of nationalism which proves to be cancerous in any part of the world it appeared. The Fannos thus are the synthesis of or the double negations of the entire negative stances and nationalisms that have been let loose all over Ethiopia for the last three decades and some.

Conclusion

Ethiopian unity has been dangerously threatened by the divisive, destructive, racist, and extremist nationalisms upheld as an ideology by various groups and governments of Ethiopia for well over three decades. Everything these nationalisms represent is noted for being an antithesis of Ethiopian unity and sovereignty. This is what philosophers called the negation of a status quo – the negation of the previous stance, the negation of a being (Hegel, 1977; Engels, 1940; Marx, 1964). A negative act against the being from within which it has sprung, would, on its own machination, give birth to its own negation, the second negation, which will come to be a force dubbed as the negation of negation. Long before Engels, Marx, and Hegel stated their theories in favor of the negation of negation, Ethiopians have had a saying which has it to say: '*Eshohhn be'eshoh*,' which, when roughly translated, would mean in Amharic, 'the negation of negation', the approaching of something by somehow its own like, the dealing and pulverising of something by its own kind, serving someone or smoothing some of its own medicine. This is exactly what happened when we see how the Fannos emerge to stop the racist, divisive, Quisling-like hatred driven negation of Ethiopian unity which nearly precipiced on dismemberment, on dissipation and nonexistence. The Fannos are being replenished by the springs of Amhara nationalism, which is a nationalism of different brand, as it is a nationalism not against Ethiopian unity, not against the existence and honor of any other ethnic group but against those forces, those nationalisms and their agents that vowed to dismember Ethiopia in general and the Amharas in particular. In fine, the

Fannos act in ways and dints that philosophers touted as the negation of negation and thereby maintain and build Ethiopian unity on a better, higher and more advanced level than heretofore.

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THE INTERRELATION BETWEEN THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE OF ARMENIA AND THE CONSTITUTION WITHIN THE PARADIGM OF STATE SOVEREIGNTY

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Abstract

The scientific issue of this article is the analysis of two main constitutional acts of the Third Armenian Republic, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, as cornerstones of the sovereignty of the Armenian state. Particularly, using historical-legal, comparative and systemic methods of research, the author has presented theoretical and institutional landscape of interrelations between the Declaration of Independence, which is the institutional basis and historical symbol of regaining of sovereignty by the Armenian people, and the Constitution, which is a legal and political “roadmap” of functioning of a sovereign Armenian state. As a result, the author has substantiated, that during the evolution of the Armenian statehood the Declaration of Independence ceded its constitutional role to the Constitution, as after adoption the latter assumed the status of the prime regulator of social relations within the state. Accordingly, the author has presented plausible scientific evidence, claiming, that the Declaration of Independence has no autonomous existence within the legal system of Armenia, since the relevant (but not all) principles of organization of sovereign state, in pursuance of the Preamble of the Constitution, are incorporated in its body text, whereas the remaining postulates, which do not have legal meaning per se, remain solely as political provisions without legal effect.

Notwithstanding all the above, the author has elaborated upon political and value significance of the Declaration of Independence, both before and after the Constitution’s adoption, negating any public debate, which aims at or results in confrontation between two main legal and political acts, effectuating the sovereignty doctrine of Armenia.

Keywords: Declaration of Independence, Constitution, sovereignty, parliament, nationwide goals, fundamentals of organization of sovereign statehood.

Introduction

The Declaration of Independence is the institutional source of the process of re-establishing Armenia's sovereignty, which makes its multidimensional study relevant especially nowadays, taking into consideration internal and external political and institutional challenges, faced by our country.

In essence, both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution are system-creating factors of Armenia's sovereignty, being in the mode of evolutionary, historical-political and legal relationship with each other, while the native legal and political thought has not yet formed a unified or at least general approach to these two fundamentals in terms of succession and complementarity of these two constitutional acts, as well as the content transformation of the Declaration of Independence in the current period of Armenia's relatively mature constitutional statehood.

Therefore, an attempt will be made below to make some observations on the aforementioned issues, using historical-legal, comparative and systemic methodology, with the aim of promoting a constructive professional debate, which will undoubtedly positively affect public perceptions of the normative content and institutional symbols of sovereign statehood, gradually overcoming non-state irrational stereotypes.

The Legal and Political Nature of the Declaration of Independence as the Founding Act of the Sovereignty of the Republic of Armenia

The Declaration of Independence is the starting point of formation of the constitutional order of a sovereign state and expresses dominant political, social, and cultural views and trends of a society.

There are proponents of the point of view among scholars, that the declaration of independence politically, morally and legally directs the content of the constitution, adopted afterwards, serving as one of the bases for interpretation of the constitution (Strang, 2008, p. 422). For example, several profound constitutional amendments were made in the US, such as the abolition of slavery, the acknowledgment of women's electoral rights and non-discrimination, that were rooted in the Declaration of Independence (Strang, 2008, pp. 417-422).

The above-mentioned approach reflects Armenian reality and particularly, stems from the high level of legitimacy of the Declaration of Independence of Armenia and the analysis of its content.

The Declaration of Independence of Armenia was adopted by the newly elected Supreme Council (parliament) of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) on August 23, 1990. For the first time, since establishment of the Soviet rule, parliamentary elections were free and competitive. Thus the Supreme Council was granted the direct mandate of the people, thus acting in

the capacity of the highest representative state institution. Under this new status the Supreme Council adopted the Declaration of Independence of Armenia. As a result, the Declaration of Independence indirectly, through the parliamentary “conduit” expressed the constitutive will of the Armenian people.

From the analysis of the actual text of the Declaration of Independence, it follows that it is not only a political document, but also a legal one, because *inter alia* it contains compulsory provisions, that shall be executed. In particular, under Clause 12 of the Declaration: “This declaration serves as the basis for the development of the constitution of the Republic of Armenia and, until such time as the new constitution is approved, as the basis for the introduction of amendments to the current constitution (ASSR Constitution of 1978); and for the operation of state authorities and the development of new legislation for the Republic” (Official Website of the Government of the RA, n.d.).

The quoted provision means that both the Supreme Council and other state institutions were constrained in their activities by the provisions of the Declaration of Independence and were unconditionally obliged to follow them. Accordingly, it may be deduced that before the adoption of the Constitution of sovereign Armenia, the Declaration of Independence in fact had the status of a Constitution, as it had a higher legal force, than the Constitution of Soviet Armenia, then still officially valid. The institutionalization of this new reality was enhanced by the constitutional law “On legislative acts, adopted in accordance with the Declaration of Independence of Armenia”, adopted by the Supreme Council on October 12, 1990. Under this law, provisions of the 1978 ASSR Constitution that contradicted laws enacted by the Supreme Council pursuant to the Declaration of Independence were suspended until the adoption of a new Constitution.

There is a widespread opinion among jurists, that the ASSR Constitution of 1978, which was in force in already independent Armenia until 1995, was essentially a weak normative act, because there were no legal and political institutions that were even formally called to preserve and implement the norms of the Constitution. The government, operating in the new socio-political conditions, had the discretion to give force or not to give force to the Soviet acts, adopted under the conditions of the previous social order (Ghambaryan, 2021, pp. 93-94).

The unique legal nature of the Declaration of Independence does not end with this. As stated in Clause 12 of the Declaration, quoted above, it serves as a basis for drafting a new Constitution. In other words, the new Constitution had to conform to the provisions of the Declaration of Independence.

Based on the mentioned Clause and to emphasize the evolutionary and legal connection between the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, the

Preamble of the Constitution, adopted by popular referendum on July 5, 1995, refers to the Declaration of Independence, as an orientational document, underlying the constitutional will of the people. For sure, this reference has an important peculiarity in terms of legal formulation and legal interpretation thereof. In the Preamble of the Constitution, as an expression of the sovereign will of the Armenian people, reference was not made to the Declaration of Independence, as a set of norms with the same normative level, but to “the fundamental principles of Armenian statehood and nationwide goals established in the Declaration of Independence”. Such an approach does not indicate the mechanical implementation of the Declaration of Independence in the Constitution, but rather, the substantive direction of the sovereign will of the people to adopt the Constitution in conformity with the provisions of the Declaration of Independence, at the same time differentiating provisions thereof, based on their normative-semantic weight – fundamental principles of statehood or nationwide goals.

The Declaration of Independence is a catalog of legal, political and ideological principles of a sovereign state, the lack of which will deprive the concept of sovereignty of material content. Clause 2 of the Declaration, which defines the concept of sovereignty of the Republic of Armenia, is noteworthy. It states: “The Republic of Armenia is a self-governing state, endowed with the supremacy of state authority, independence, sovereignty, and plenipotentiary power. Only the constitution and laws of the Republic of Armenia are valid for the whole territory of the Republic of Armenia.” Clause 3 of the Declaration connects the state sovereignty with the principle of democracy, defining that: “The bearer of the Armenian statehood is the people of the Republic of Armenia, which exercises the authority directly and through its representative bodies on the basis of the constitution and laws of the Republic of Armenia. The right to speak on behalf of the people of the Republic of Armenia belongs exclusively to the Supreme Council of Armenia” (Official Website of the Government of the RA, n.d.). Accordingly, a democratic political regime is declared in the Republic of Armenia, under which the highest state institutions are formed by the direct or indirect political will of the people. The Declaration of Independence singles out the legislative body of the state, the Supreme Council, to which the Declaration assigns the status of an exclusive state institution, implementing the representation of the people. This indicates that, regardless of the form of government established by the Constitution, the parliament with its legal and political status shall occupy a central role in the system of state institutions, participating in the solution of issues of national importance. Furthermore, the terminology of the Declaration establishes that only the “bearer of statehood” – the constitution-making entity, the people – ranks superior to the parliament. Clauses 1-10 of the Declaration provide for

the legal, political, diplomatic and economic guarantees of the sovereignty of the Republic of Armenia, which in one way or another were included in the Constitution of 1995 and as a result of two constitutional amendments remained unchanged. These guarantees include: the organization of the state, based on the principles of democracy and the rule of law; the recognition and protection of natural and inalienable human rights by the state; the creation of national armed forces, police and security bodies; the implementation of a sovereign foreign policy; the ownership of natural resources by the people; the state language and national education and the foundation of a scientific and cultural system. Without these guarantees, legal, political, material and value base, needed to organize the Armenian people's political existence free from foreign rule, will be missing. When adopting the Constitution, these guarantees in their entirety, according to the Preamble of the Constitution, were enshrined by the peoples "fundamental principles of Armenian statehood". Together, these guarantees form the substantive core of Armenia's sovereign statehood. Accordingly, legal essence of the preconditions, stipulated in Clauses 1-10 of the Declaration of Independence has been normatively reflected in the Constitution, becoming an integral part of the constitutional system. Consequently, it can be concluded, that the principles, set forth in Clauses 1-10 of the Declaration of Independence, have a clear constitutional-legal significance by virtue of being reflected in the Constitution.

At the same time, the Declaration of Independence also contains extraneous provisions, – provisions outside the system of fundamentals of the organization of sovereign statehood, which, due to the wording of the above-mentioned reference in the Preamble of the Constitution, are not fundamental principles of statehood, but "nationwide goals" and, thus, do not constitute legal norms. This refers to the Preamble of the Declaration, which indicates the joint decision of the Armenian SSR Supreme Council and the Artsakh National Council on the "Reunification of the Armenian SSR and the Mountainous Region of Karabakh," and Clause 11 thereof, which defines the state's commitment to support the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide. Unlike the legal-structural foundations of Armenian statehood discussed above, the aforementioned provisions have only historical and political nature and, accordingly, lack direct constitutional-legal significance. They are not prerequisite for the existence of the state as a political structure, but refer to the directions of the state's political agenda, derived from the extent of the actual potential of the state sovereignty, the intensity, extent and efficiency of which cannot be constitutionally determined.

Considering the above, the inclusion of the listed provisions in the Declaration of Independence creates a need to clarify their nature and relation, if any, to the sovereignty of the state.

In general, any constitutional act, whether it is a declaration of independence, a constitution or another act of a constitutional nature, contains not only legal norms, especially principles, but also political ideas and value assumptions. The latter do not cause direct legal or political consequences, whereas, the emergence of indirect consequences and the extent thereof depend on the state's potential, internal and external political environment, political opportunities, alignment of internal and external political forces, and other circumstances. Political ideas or value orientations express the social ideals or ideas, being dominant in a given historical period. These are propagated to the general public and made widespread by the political elite in a condensed and determined manner through various channels of communication with society (mass media, parliament, rallies, literature, etc.). It is not by chance that the adoption of any constitutional document is preceded or accompanied by deep political processes, that lead to transformations of the social order with the resulting re-evaluations*.

The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, as a rule, reflect the political and value changes in society, giving them the appearance of certain legal principles or political-value paradigms. In the latter case, in order for political paradigms or guidelines to become reality, internal and external transformations involving the entire state, political agendas, and uniting the society and often a favorable foreign-political environment are necessary. Otherwise stated, the direct or indirect non-application or violation of the constitutional-legal principles and other norms underlying the sovereign state, leads to a constitutional crisis and, sooner or later, also a crisis of statehood. This is because the very essence of society-state, human-society and human-state relations are directly concerned, whereas, political ideas and value orientations do not imply being brought into reality in a relatively short-term historical perspective. As mentioned, such ideas are to a certain extent the result of the self-interested activities of the political elite, as a social stratum,

*For example, in 1918, a new constitution was adopted in Russia, which reflected the change in the socio-economic formation and the form of the state caused by the socialist revolution.

In 1958, the Fifth Republic was proclaimed in France with the adoption of a new constitution. The constitution made a transition from a parliamentary form of government to semi-presidential one. The establishment of the Fifth Republic was due to the defeat of the French colony of Algeria and the deep economic and political crisis that brought France to the brink of a military coup.

After the democratic revolution in Georgia in 2011, the Georgian Parliament adopted a constitutional law called the "Freedom Charter", which banned communist and Nazi ideologies and propaganda as violations of human rights and freedoms, and also banned the use of symbols of communism and Nazism. Employees of the Soviet special services and extraterritorial agents, as well as members of the Communist Party, were deprived of the right to work in legislative and executive bodies.

forming the political agendas, meanwhile, the interests or political ideas, why not, the political elite can also change, affecting the consolidating capacity of these ideas. That capacity may increase or decrease also as a result of foreign political transformations and the effects caused by them, because self-isolation of states as such is not realistic in the modern interconnected global world. Therefore, when studying the possible constitutional-legal aspects of any political phenomenon, it cannot be abstracted from the paradigm and internal logic of the development of historical-political processes. Otherwise, the result will be legal fetishism and an under-perception of the political consequences of social phenomena, the result of which is the rejection of the inevitable interaction between law and politics, and thus the paralysis of the structure of raising and implementing the public interest.

The Declaration of Independence, being a political document as well, expressed the logic of the political processes of the relevant historical period. In particular, until the final milestone of achieving independence was clarified, the means and methods of reaching that goal were being fermented, and in order not to give the central government of the USSR a pretext to start a new wave of repressions, the Declaration of Independence announced the beginning of the process of Armenia's independence, rather than declaring independence as an established legal and political fact. In this regard, professor A. Vagharshyan also mentioned the Nagorno Karabakh issue as a reason for the caution, shown by the leadership at that time in the legal and political process of Armenia's independence (Vagharshyan, 2015, p. 3).

The process of Armenia's independence was finalized on September 21, 1991, when the Armenian people, as the constitutional and political authority, decided to declare independence from the USSR through a referendum.

The reference to the joint decision of the Armenian SSR Supreme Council and the Artsakh National Council on the "Reunification of the Armenian SSR and the Mountainous Region of Karabakh" of December 1, 1989, in the Preamble of the Declaration of Independence reflected the political reality of the time, when the political unification of the Republic of Armenia and Artsakh had taken place, and, according to point 6 of the aforementioned decision, the political integration of Nagorno-Karabakh into the Armenian SSR had begun (Joint Decision of the Armenian SSR Supreme Council and the Artsakh National Council, 1989, point 6). Meanwhile, as is known, on September 2, 1991, the joint session of the representative body of Artsakh, the regional council of deputies and Shahumyan regional council of deputies adopted the Declaration of Independence of Artsakh, and on December 10 of the same year, following the results of the referendum, the people of Artsakh declared their independence. Under such conditions, the decision on the reunification of the Republic of Armenia and Artsakh automatically lost its force, since, from

the perspective of domestic constitutional law, the people of Artsakh, having exercised their right to self-determination, separated from Armenia. As for the commitment of the Republic of Armenia to support international recognition of the Armenian Genocide is concerned, it also does not have the status of a constitutional principle of state sovereignty. Instead, it represents a national-political goal, related to holding the Republic of Turkey, the successor of Ottoman Turkey, to international political and legal responsibility for the unprecedented crime that thwarted national-political aspirations of the Armenian people. This commitment, undertaken at the state level, has the significance of an idea as well, which unites both Armenians in the motherland and those in the Diaspora. At the same time, the scope and means of support to the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide are variable and determined by Armenia's political potential as a sovereign state and the international context. Therefore, the commitment to support the recognition of the Armenian Genocide has no impact on the content of the sovereignty of the Republic of Armenia, but is more a political "promise", derived from the potential of substantive realization of sovereignty.

From the above, we can conclude that the provisions on the reunification of Armenia and Artsakh, as well as the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide in the Declaration of Independence, do not constitute a constitutional guarantee of the sovereignty of the Republic of Armenia. It is out of question that the greater the potential of the Republic of Armenia to influence the external environment, the more ambitious political goals can be set and implemented by the Armenian government. However, having a broad or limited opportunities cannot be a factor that characterizes the sovereignty of a state, just as being rich or poor cannot affect the legal union of a man and a woman, being defined as a family.

The legal significance of the Declaration of Independence was naturally emphasized during the five years preceding the adoption of the Constitution, when it was the exclusive basis of the new state and legal order. Meanwhile, it is conceptually and practically important to elaborate upon the status of the Declaration of Independence in the "post-constitutional" period, as well as the current regime of the relationship between these two fundamental constitutional acts.

The Issue of the Relationship between the Declaration of Independence of Armenia and the Constitution

It is well known that the Constitution has the highest legal force and stands at the top of the pyramid of a state's legal system. At the same time, the Constitution performs the function of a public alliance, which unites members of society as citizens around common goals and values. It establishes mutual

rights, duties and responsibilities between citizens and state authorities, enshrining the principles of the organization of state power and the system of supreme state authorities, their powers, and mechanisms of mutual counterbalance and restraint. From all this, it is clear that with the adoption of the Constitution, a shift in the founding documents of sovereign Armenia's legal order took place, and the Constitution came to the forefront.

For a comprehensive analysis of this issue the decision of the Constitutional Court of September 26, 2024 (DCC-1749, pp. 8-9) is of paramount importance. The decision in question within the context of the analysis of the constitutional and legal content of the territory of the Republic of Armenia, addressed the issue of the interrelationship between the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. In particular, the Constitutional Court essentially noted that any principle or goal enshrined in the Declaration, within a framework different from that set forth in the Constitution, does not have an independent meaning, different from the semantic framework, enshrined in the Constitution and conveyed by the Declaration, whereas the opposite approach directly contradicts the goal of ensuring constitutional stability and security through constitutional certainty, guaranteed by the adoption of the Constitution. In this regard, Clause 12 of the Declaration outlined one of the significant milestones of the independence process – the adoption of the new Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, which has been the only normative legal act with the highest legal force since its entry into force. Accordingly, the Constitutional Court has excluded a situation, where the holder of supreme constitutional authority – the people – without enshrining in the Constitution any principle or goal, mentioned in the Declaration, at the same time pursued the goal of including them in the scope of the Constitution, forming a system of legal regulations in which the principles and goals, set forth in the Declaration, as a part of the content of the Preamble, would have obvious inconsistencies with other provisions of the Constitution. In other words, the Constitutional Court did not consider the Declaration of Independence in its entirety to be a part of the Constitution and, accordingly, gave constitutional significance to those provisions of the Declaration of Independence, that were included in the text of the Constitution, thus becoming its principles. This approach crystallizes the emerging paradigm regarding the constitutional value of the postulates, summarized in the Declaration of Independence: in fulfillment of the constitutional and founding will of the people, the Constitution, in essence, includes those provisions of the Declaration of Independence that have the meaning and significance of organizing principles of sovereign statehood, while the above-mentioned points, which do not have a state-forming nature and fulfill exclusively political goals, were not included in the scope of the Constitution, since they have no constitutional significance, moreover, they are

not subject to constitutional determination. Therefore, the latter have not become part of the constitutional paradigm of state system by the will of the people.

In any case, the Declaration of Independence, even after the Constitution's entry into force, continues to have the status of a historical and political symbol of Armenia's sovereignty. In this regard, it is appropriate to mention the "matryoshka effect", known to the theory of constitutional law, when the fundamental constitutional acts of a state, based on the chronology of their adoption and the subject of regulation, logically follow each other and form a single system. Accordingly, the historical, political and legal function of the Declaration of Independence in the pre-constitutional period and afterwards its role as a legal and conceptual basis for the development of the Constitution endow the latter with historical, political and ideological significance.

As Professor A. Ghambaryan has characterized, the Declaration of Independence is a state-stabilizing (state-preserving) document. According to Ghambaryan, in practice it means, that the Declaration of Independence is a criterion for determining the state balance of the new draft Constitution, that is, a criterion for determining the state-preserving capabilities of a draft Constitution and diagnosing risks. More simply, a new draft Constitution must comply with the state-preserving provisions of the Declaration of Independence (Ghambaryan, 2020, pp. 36-37).

Essentially, the issue is about Clauses 1-10 of the Declaration of Independence, mentioned above, which serve as principled and institutional bases of the sovereign Armenian statehood. At the same time, the status of the Declaration of Independence and its relationship with the Constitution are confirmed by the reference made in the Preamble of the Constitution, to the principles of statehood, defined by the Declaration of Independence, which are also included in the text of the Constitution. Hence, it provides grounds to assert that, under the fundamentals of statehood, the framers of the Constitution meant the fundamental constitutional principles enshrined in Clauses 1-10 of the Declaration of Independence. These principles are adequately reflected in the Constitution as the foundations of the constitutional order. Moreover, several fundamental provisions directly derived from the Declaration of Independence, and in particular, the provisions, defining the sovereign, democratic, and legal nature of the state, have been included in the Constitution as immutable norms (Pursuant to Article 203 of the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, Articles, 1, 2, 3 and 203 of the Constitution shall be unchangeable.).

Conclusion

As presented above, the Declaration of Independence is the legal and political starting point of Armenia's independence process and, prior to the adoption of the formally written Constitution, it performed the function of a Constitution, playing the role of an institutional "blade" during the transition from a single-party communist totalitarianism and a socialist socio-economic formation to a liberal-capitalist democracy and promoting the overcoming of the systemic barriers of the past by political, state and civil society institutions. However, after the adoption of the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence "ceded" its status as the highest source of state law to the Constitution, embodying the principles of the organization and functioning of a sovereign state in the Fundamental Law, adopted by the people. This circumstance is not an extraordinary phenomenon but a natural stage in the evolution of a sovereign constitutional order, since the Declaration of Independence affirms the emergence of a sovereign state, and the Constitution establishes the legal and structural form of functioning of a sovereign state, including the principles of the relationship between the components of the state organism: state power, society, and individuals. The opposite approach, namely, recognizing the self-sufficient existence of the Declaration of Independence in the post-constitutional period, would mean "constitutional dualism," which calls into question the existence of the constitutional order of a sovereign state in general. Moreover, it is unacceptable, based on the very paradigm of a sovereign state: just as the existence of two equal state authorities is excluded within the territory of a sovereign state, so there cannot be two equal "fundamental laws", defining the foundations of a sovereign state's organization and operations.

The above affirmations in no way diminish the historical and supra-political value of the Declaration of Independence: the Declaration of Independence is an eternal and legal monument, characterizing the essence of the Third Republic of Armenia. At the same time, the characteristic of being a supra-political act suggests that the Declaration of Independence has ceased to perform the function of a normative act, regulating institutional existence of the state, since there is no constitution and constitutional act outside of politics. The issue, however, lies in the cultural and value-based dimension: the enduring significance of the Declaration of Independence for the sovereign Republic of Armenia has never been primarily determined by its inclusion in the formal jurisprudence paradigm. Instead, it carries within itself the value orientations of the Armenian people's political existence, adherence to which is a testament to the maturity of consciousness and will of every citizen. Therefore, contrasting the Declaration of Independence with the Constitution is in itself a false agenda for public debate, and, accordingly, the legal primacy of

the Constitution over the Declaration of Independence in no way diminish the paramount importance of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence and the values of a sovereign state, embodied therein for evolution of public consciousness and rooting of the so-called “culture of sovereignty”. Therefore, in terms of historical perspective, it is time to “reconcile” the Declaration of Independence of Armenia and the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia.

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THE VELVET REVOLUTION IN ARMENIA IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF HANNAH ARENDT'S POLITICAL THEORY

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Abstract

This research paper critically analyzes the 2018 Armenian Velvet Revolution, examining its non-violent nature and impact on society. This paper is written largely on the basis of my master's thesis at the European University in St. Petersburg, which I defended in 2023. The paper consists of two parts. The first part is devoted to the events preceding the Velvet Revolution in Armenia and is written primarily from the perspective of the history of public protests in Armenia. The second part contains reflections on the revolution from the perspective of Hannah Arendt's philosophy and political theory.

Assessing the revolution through the lenses of two models – the destructive French and transformative American Revolutions – it explores the revolution's alignment. Despite initial optimism, the post-revolution period reveals declining political interest amid external crises, raising questions about the sustainability of change. The task will be to formulate Hannah Arendt's vision of the political as a sphere of common life and to see why, in Arendt's perspective, it is revolution that contains the true spirit of the political, why it is revolutionary enterprises that contain the charge that will restore politics to its true meaning, to see to what extent Arendt's vision is idealistic, utopian or on the contrary, it allows us to see and grasp what otherwise would have been missed, the spirit that was contained and actualized in the Armenian Velvet Revolution, even if it was lost later on.

Keywords: Velvet Revolution in Armenia, political philosophy, public participation, grassroots initiatives, Hannah Arendt, revolutionary council.

Part 1. The 2018 Velvet Revolution in Armenia: Its Prerequisites and Historical Context

To understand the Velvet Revolution, it is necessary to navigate through Armenia's post-Soviet journey, including the challenges of nation-building,

economic restructuring, and geopolitical complexities. It must be said here how the political field has been transformed within Armenia from independence to 2018, and mainly how political participation is being reimagined and taking on new forms and meanings. However, before addressing the culture of political participation in Armenia, it is necessary to understand how and from which recent past Armenian modernity emerged.

The 1990s marked a tumultuous period as Armenia asserted its independence, grappling with internal strife and external pressures. The twenty-five years that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union in Armenia are called by the American historical sociologist G. Derluguian no differently than the twenty-five years of postmodernism (Derluguian & Hovhannisyan, 2018). Postmodernism is manifested here by the complete mixture of forms and epochs, the absence of stable narratives, and the cultural and political syncretism that so often characterizes the South Caucasus region.

As Prof. Derluguian notes in his paper, in Armenia, the 1990s are associated in people's memories with a difficult economic situation, the blockade and the war in Nagorno-Karabakh, for which they are called "cold and dark years", but also with a certain optimism inherent in the decade, which is associated with the Armenian people gaining their own state and winning the Karabakh war (Derluguian & Hovhannisyan, 2018). Because of this, the decade is sometimes characterized by the words "There was no light, but there was hope", contrasting with subsequent decades, when light had already appeared, but hope had faded.

Independent Armenia announced a course towards building a democratic society, with the rule of law and the development of market relations. However, in reality, the society faced many problems and challenges that could not be solved. One of them was the lack of experience manifested in the absence of stable political traditions in a country that had been deprived of independence for many years. The political sphere had not yet had time to develop in the conditions of many years of being a part of other powers. The formation of political institutions took place on the basis of former Soviet institutions either with the support of the Armenian Diaspora or from scratch after gaining independence.

Prerequisites of the Velvet Revolution: Social Protests

One of the characteristic features of Armenian society in recent decades has been the undying passion for street protests. At various times, on different occasions, on the streets of Yerevan one could find groups of people chanting slogans, voicing social and political demands, and urging curious citizens – who watched the progress of the protest columns from the windows of houses, public transportation, or restaurant verandas – to join them.

Ten years before the 2018 Velvet Revolution, in February 2008, a series of mass protests followed the presidential elections, demanding an investigation into election fraud. The opposition, led by Armenia's first president, Levon Ter-Petrosyan – who had returned to politics – argued that the elected candidate, Serzh Sargsyan, had not legitimately won the presidency and that Armenia was at serious risk of becoming an authoritarian state.

According to various sources, the number of protesters ranged from 40,000 (according to the authorities) to 650,000 (according to the opposition), with many traveling from other cities to express their discontent. Anger was the predominant effect of those gathered, they were united by a sense of injustice, and these emotions were fueled by the slogan “Struggle, struggle until the end!”. The personality of the first president, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, who also led street mass protests at the time of Armenia's independence in 1991 and at that time enjoyed great authority against the background of corrupt, unpopular politicians in power, also played a major role here.

The situation was aggravated by the fact that a significant part of public figures, representatives of civil society, the majority of political parties, and even public servants – officials, diplomats, and, most importantly, the military, including the heroes of the Karabakh war from “Erkrpah” – an organization of volunteers, which by that time had about ten thousand participants – were also moving to the side of the protesters.

The situation heated up very quickly. Thousands of protesters did not intend to disperse and announced that they would stay in an improvised tent city on Freedom Square until the opposition's demands were met. In response, the Armenian government, led by President Robert Kocharyan, imposed a state of emergency in the country and then deployed the army to Yerevan.

On March 1, the police and army forcibly expelled protesters from the tent city and then began beating and arresting protesters. Live grenades, lethal weapons, and water cannons were used. Two police officers and eight protesting citizens were killed as a result of the clash between the protesters and the army and police. More than a hundred people were hospitalized with injuries of varying severity (Human Rights Watch, 2009).

The authorities and police officers involved in the bloody events were not prosecuted until 2018. Armenia's second president faced a “subversion of constitutional order” case starting in 2018 for his role in the March 1 events, but trials are still ongoing. More than a hundred protesters were arrested in the March 1 case. Among them was one of the opposition leaders and then a supporter of Levon Ter-Petrosyan – future Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, who, however, was released by a presidential amnesty in connection with the anniversary of independence in 2011.

The tragic events of March 1 became not only a day of national tragedy, but also, importantly, a way to inaugurate Armenia's third president, Serzh Sargsyan. The events of March 1 also increased tension and intolerance within the society. They became a hard and negative lesson for Armenian society. It should also be noted that the leader of the opposition Levon Ter-Petrosyan, who was placed under house arrest on the day of these events, gradually lost political influence, and various forces accused him of irresponsibility and deliberate escalation in order to seize power.

And, of course, the protests did not stop there. On the contrary, the next decade of Serzh Sargsyan's rule also took place in a stormy atmosphere of protests, and looking back at the protests of March 1, we should recognize that they were a kind of catalyst for mass political participation. However, the subsequent protests were qualitatively different from the previous ones. It is appropriate to talk about the growing level of self-discipline on the part of the protesters, about their greater creativity and, which is also very important, about the much more restrained and, in some respects, cunning actions of the police and the government led by S. Sargsyan. It is also relevant to recall that protests of various nature and reasons have now accompanied most of the decisions and reforms of S. Sargsyan's government, often paralyzing state activities. But the dynamics of street protests were most clearly formalized in the post-election period. The credibility of the authorities was very low, and there was a consensus in the society that the main instrument of self-reproduction of the authorities was bribes and corruption.

In the 2013 presidential elections, Raffi Hovhannisian competed with S. Sargsyan. Sargsyan got 58.6% of the votes, which was not enough for a politician with a dictatorial entourage, while opposition politician R. Hovhannisian got as much as 36.8% of the votes. At the same time, the opposition media reported that Hovhannisian allegedly had won or at least made it to the second round and only falsification of results had saved S. Sargsyan (Tamrazian et al., 2013). The traditional series of post-election protests surprised the public and even Hovhannisian himself with their massive scale, according to his own words. Hovhannisian, who was little known to the general public as the leader (chief) of the opposition, differed greatly from Ter-Petrosyan in his gentleness, friendliness and inability to lead the protesters to a violent confrontation with the authorities. Raffi Hovhannisian managed for a short time to interest that part of Armenian society, which was not sympathetic to the previous political elites for their radicalism and craving for forceful confrontation.

Anyway, this episode with the 2013 elections is interesting because, firstly, it showed that the Armenian public is still strongly dissatisfied with the authorities and that even a little-known politician can achieve results on this

wave. And secondly, it showed that mass protests do not always bring destruction and human casualties. Of course, the result was that the protest potential of those gathered did not translate into anything, and the people who came out to the squares of Yerevan went back to their usual life without significant changes. At the same time, there was growing disillusionment with the political elites, and old political brands, whose main activity took place mainly during the election periods and quickly faded afterwards.

In 2001-2012 there were very rapid processes of construction in Armenia. Due to the nature of the influx of investments, the price of land in the center of the cities, especially Yerevan, was constantly rising, and the City Hall was selling more and more urban space for private business. Former parks, buildings of cultural and historical value were taken over by developers and turned into restaurants, hotels and other commercial establishments, of which there are countless in Yerevan. The very procedure of transferring the city space, already flooded with all kinds of shops, construction sites owned by the business elite, which had enriched dramatically, caused resentment of the citizens, and all kinds of corruption schemes and nepotism, which were flourishing at that time, played a role in the conclusion of contracts, resulted in dissatisfaction of the citizens and protests. The most vivid such episode can be called the passions around “Mashtots Square”, which, according to the plan of the mayor’s office, was also to be transferred to the ownership of private business and to be built up with all kinds of objects (Saroyan, 2016).

These protests were characterized by spontaneity, the absence of leaders and political parties, strong solidarity among protesters, and, of course, the role of the Internet. The initiative “We own this city” emerged on Facebook, and as a result of its activity, the threat of demolishing the public garden became, for a time, the most discussed event in the country.

Another feature of the protests was that citizens felt empowered and the police – who arrived on the scene very quickly – found themselves having to negotiate with the protesters. The result was inspiring. The protesters not only managed to preserve the square but also turned it into a center – a platform for various activities and political debates. The communities that formed around these protests have survived and become the authors of various initiatives to this day. It is also worth mentioning that the protests were increasingly attended by young people, who, disillusioned with existing political brands, did not stop participating in street protests but rather became more creative in their approach. Here, we should also recall the protests in Yerevan in the summer of 2013 related to the transportation reform, which can hardly be called popular. As a result of the reform, the fare for public transportation was to be raised from 100 drams to 150 drams. The protests quickly became massive. Protesters partially blocked the central streets, walked around the city

center, and urged citizens not to pay and public transport drivers not to charge 150 drams!

The protests were also accompanied by many grassroots initiatives. For example, many people with passenger cars offered to transport their fellow citizens for free. But undoubtedly, the main internal motive of the protests was to once again express distrust in the government at the time and to show that public discontent had only grown stronger.

The summer protests of 2013 were also successful, and the reform was canceled. As of 2024, the fare for public transportation remained 100 drams, which was quite comical considering a number of circumstances, such as inflation and the unprofitability of the transportation industry.

It is especially characteristic that one of the protest participants, while talking in an interview about his emotions at the news of the reform's abolition and the victory of the protesters, expressed... sadness: "We were very sad on the day the decision was suspended, although the public was very happy and excited. On the days of the movement, we thought about transforming the problem and solving as many problems as possible, such as raising gas prices, etc. And on the day the decision was suspended, it was clear that most citizens would go about their daily business with the thought of victory, and it would be very difficult to motivate them to fight injustice again" (Papazyan, 2021).

This kind of sadness and disappointment remained the main emotion of the Armenian public despite similar small victories. Having felt its own power, its huge potential, and most importantly, the great joy (one could say euphoria) from the atmosphere of solidarity and the prospects of joint action, the protesting part of the public did not get a full opportunity to apply this energy in a political direction. Disillusionment grew in society, and more radical calls to overthrow the government were heard. Successes in some local protests and failures in others led to the formation of broad networks of protesters, which politicized larger and larger spaces.

In 2015, the protests that started because of the increase in electricity prices, called "Electric Yerevan", were already very different from the protests in the 90s and even from the 2008 protests. Sociologist G. Derluguian compares these protests to the 1968 student protests in the West (Derluguian & Hovhannisyan, 2018).

In 2015, the protesters won again, and the electricity price hike was canceled. However, such a victory was again rather disappointing. Thus, the enthusiastic citizens returned to their usual lives, with the feeling that their potential had not been realized, and the unusual feelings that had united the protesters, the unusual format of the carnival, into which protests often turned and where each participant could show himself from some unexpectedly new, somewhat pathos-heroic, or theatrical side, went nowhere. In fact, as a result

of the protesters' victory, the protest sites – squares or large roadways – lost their special atmosphere.

Thus, the series of street protests actualized the great potential that had accumulated in the Armenian people for a long time. The most energetic and resourceful protesters managed to “awaken” and interest the public to participate in the life of the country, but all their efforts and initiatives remained grassroots, while negative emotions and the gap between the established elites and the ordinary people grew, and this contrast of sentiments was reinforced by the generational conflict.

The Velvet Revolution of 2018

The events of spring 2018 forever transformed the face of the country – unexpected and crucial for some observers but quite natural and expected for others. The Armenian parliamentary opposition, represented by the “My Step” initiative and headed by the opposition leader Nikol Pashinyan, managed to achieve the resignation of the then-government led by Serzh Sargsyan through street protests from April 13 to May 8 and to achieve the appointment of new elections. During these elections, the leader of the opposition was elected Prime Minister of the country.

The peculiarity of the revolution was its exceptional non-violent nature. During several weeks of protest actions, the central streets of major cities were transformed. Crowds of people walked from morning until evening, chanting the slogans of the revolution, which was also called the “Revolution of Love and Solidarity”: “Take a step, reject Serzh”, “Put down your weapons, reject Serzh!”, “Policeman, join!”. The street actions were preceded by a two-week march from Gyumri to Yerevan. The protests themselves were related to the intentions of incumbent President Serzh Sargsyan, who had been elected for two consecutive terms and had now intended to remain in power as Prime Minister. The reforms he initiated, according to which the Republic of Armenia transitioned from a presidential to a parliamentary form of government, were accompanied by his public promises not to run for another term and, most likely, to retire from politics (“Epress.am”, 2014). The president, who failed to keep his promise, was elected prime minister on April 18 with the support of 77 out of 97 deputies of the National Assembly. The election of the Prime Minister, who by that time had already bored the public at large, sparked violent protests, manifested in mass marches and blocking of key streets of Yerevan. As mentioned above, the protests were peaceful. This was not the least facilitated by the actions of the opposition leader Nikol Pashinyan, who from the very beginning ruled out the violent format of the protests and accompanied every day, every public speech with this message. However, there was also merit of the authorities and the police: the authorities,

represented by the Republican Party and its leader Sargsyan, urged the opposition figures to return to the parliament to resolve the crisis, while the police reacted rather sluggishly to the protests in the first days. In later days, they began to escort the protesters (although they rarely succeeded in doing so because the procession was often divided into many different columns), and at some points used non-lethal weapons such as stun grenades, batons and arrests.

These protests exhibited many of the strategies we have seen in previous protests. The protesters developed a high degree of discipline that allowed the protesters to come together and split up again while maintaining communication and control over the situation. The protesters were diligent in creating an image of revolution, helped by famous figures in science, art, and other influential people, the so-called “opinion makers”. At some point, the protesters were joined by representatives of the church and even military personnel.

Although the protests had a carnival-like atmosphere, a sense of anxiety prevailed. Many people were cautiously waiting for the strategy of pacification and dispersal of protesters to be applied by the authorities. On April 22, in an atmosphere of high tension, opposition leader Nikol Pashinyan and Armenian Prime Minister Serzh Sargsyan met. Pashinyan’s position was that “reality has changed” in the country, that “Sargsyan no longer has power”. He therefore accepted an invitation to negotiate Sargsyan’s resignation and a non-violent transfer of power, followed by a new vote. Sargsyan, however, reminded that the “Exodus” faction (which Pashinyan led), which had scored only 7% in the parliamentary elections, had no mandate to speak on behalf of the people. Sargsyan then added that Pashinyan had not learned the lessons of the tragic events of March 1, 2008, and saying that he had no intention to listen to ultimatums in his address left the meeting. The arguments for Sargsyan’s staying in power were also the difficult political situation, the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis. In the face of such a major challenge, Sargsyan considered the opposition’s actions as deeply irresponsible.

Anyway, in April 2018, Pashinyan, the leader of the protests, after a meeting with Sargsyan, called for a redoubling of the protesters’ efforts. On the same day, police arrested Pashinyan and took him to an unknown destination. However, after his arrest, the protests continued with even greater effort and participation, with the number at the rally reaching up to 200,000 according to various estimates. A day later, on April 23, Nikol Pashinyan and his arrested associates were released, and a few hours later Serzh Sargsyan announced his resignation: “Nikol Pashinyan was right. I was wrong. There are several solutions to the current situation, but I will not go for any of them. It is not mine. I am leaving the position of the leader of our country... The

“street” movement is against my staying in this position, I fulfill your demand. Peace, harmony and logic to our country” (“Hetq.am”, 2018).

However, the protests did not end with Sargsyan’s resignation. Then they demanded the resignation of the incumbent ruling party and the rescheduling of new elections. Karen Karapetyan, the former general director of ArmRosgazprom CJSC, who tried to pacify the protesters and apparently had ambitions to stay in power, became the country’s prime minister for a short period of time.

On May 8, Nikol Pashinyan was elected Prime Minister of the country by the National Assembly to the tumultuous cheers of the citizens, which marked the victory of the Velvet Revolution.

The period of 2018-2019 was quite turbulent in terms of statements and new initiatives. However, in reality, it found out that the old problems have not gone anywhere either. First, a small “garbage crisis” appeared, when it discovered that with the change of government, elementary amenities of life, such as the cleanliness of the city did not respect, and it was not possible to solve this crisis immediately.

The Pashinyan-led government soon declared an “economic revolution” (which, however, only achieved a noticeable effect in the form of an increase in living standards after 2022, with the influx of relocates from Russia). During this period, the euphoria subsided, and the carnival lifestyle for many was replaced by a routine series of obligations. Publicity and transparency of the authorities and politics in general, as a powerful trend achieved in 2018-2019, went into internal Internet immigration due to the outbreak of COVID-19. As a total lockdown was imposed, many initiatives and civic communities lost momentum, unable to function in a live, interactive format. Then the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war caused a great shock. The war, which had seemed impossible in this form yesterday, became the most tragic event in the history of 21st century Armenia, traumatizing and killing thousands of young men and plunging the public into a deep mourning, depression and crisis from which it cannot recover to this day.

The faded, devalued and seemingly insignificant acquisitions of the Velvet Revolution have already left the spaces of public interest and discussion. However, as it often happens, failures, defeats, and general pain became the background for public reflection: reflection on the mistakes of the past, on the challenges of the present, and on the challenges of the future. This form of public reflection is already characterized by greater maturity, not naivety.

Part 2. Reflections on Revolution

The term “revolution” has been at the center of attention of many thinkers of the last centuries. The epoch itself, from the Great French Revolution

(1789) to the October Revolution (1917) was so saturated with events that claimed to be revolutionary that the term revolution (from Late Latin revolution) became a kind of marker of the epoch, or as we would probably say today, a brand of the epoch. The most striking in this respect was the Great French Revolution, which, we can safely say, gave rise to a whole genre of intellectual excursions, reconstructions, and reflections on its causes, outcome, and influence in the European perspective. Revolutionary were events, regimes, self-names of parties or elites, revolutionary could be decisions, actions, counteractions, speeches, programs, and of course it is not only about political connotations of the term, but also in a number of spheres of human relations, including the sphere of culture, economy, art, science, ideas about beauty, fashion, technology, the world – modern or future, and many others. Finally, the notion of “revolution” has fostered a rich field of debate and discussion about this concept. We can see that in this epoch there are many works on the essence of the term, on the content of the concept of revolution, and a rich palette of forms of attitude (subjectivation) to it. In different societies, (pro) revolutionary, counter revolutionary, skeptical and other political camps appeared.

The era of revolutions has been replaced by the era of world wars, the emergence of mass regimes, totalitarianism, great historical narratives, their (probable?) collapse, and much more. However, interest in the concept of “revolution” has not disappeared. Moreover, in the modern world we notice that the events that are marked by the word “revolution” or “revolutionary” have significantly expanded their localization and play a major role not only in the bosom of European societies and cultures. Here, for example, it is appropriate to recall the revolutions in Iran, of which there were as many as three in the twentieth century, and the most significant today is the Islamic Revolution of 1979. The term revolution was also used to describe a series of ideological and political campaigns in China called the Cultural Revolution in 1966-1976. We can also think of the events of the Arab Spring since 2010, to which the term is also often applied, as are numerous others across the world.

And all these events raise the question about the meaning of the term revolution, its content, or rather the appropriateness of its use after the era of revolutions. Moreover, the fact that many people around the world continue to think about the events around them and themselves, including through this term, already indicates that the term is in great demand, if not to say that it has a great influence on the minds and moods of contemporaries.

And here I would like to ask a question about the relevance and meaning of the term in the perspective of the Armenian Velvet Revolution. On the surface, the question is “what did the Velvet Revolution change? (of course, if it changed at all)”. What fundamental shifts did it bring that could not have been

achieved by other means? Does it make sense to speak of a revolutionary regime or a revolutionary agenda in this perspective? Does the revolution have a beginning but no ... end? And how did it happen that the revolution took place fundamentally without violence, without a major political vendetta against the old elites, and even without a formal violation or abolition of the current Constitution of the Republic of Armenia? Such and other questions are very often addressed, for example, in various articles, mostly small, of the world's authoritative political, news, and analytical journals, when they refer to these events.

Hannah Arendt on Revolution: The American Revolution and the Great French Revolution

Of course, the answer to such a question would not only be related to the description of the situation but also to the lens through which we look at the concept of revolution. And here, within the framework of this research, I would like to look through those ways of understanding revolution that Hannah Arendt developed over a long period of time. The notion of revolution plays a large, very ambiguous, and complex role in Arendt's creative legacy; revolution becomes the subject of reflection in many of her works, including "The Human Condition"*, "The Promise of Politics"*, and the work "On Revolution", in this sense, becomes the culmination of these reflections.

In many ways, however, in order to understand Arendt's complex, ambiguous vision of revolution, it is necessary to take into account the multifaceted nature of this concept. Moreover, what is very important, through this concept Arendt forms, as we would say today – a positive political program, the theory of elementary republic, the foundation of which is connected with the system of power of councils, which, if we already speak in an antique way, in Arendt's perspective is the best form of government.

The work "On Revolution" compositionally consists of contrasting the two revolutions, the Great French Revolution and the American Revolution, and what legacy (Ethos of Revolution) they left, and how they influenced subsequent generations.

Arendt begins with the history of the concept of revolution and tries to trace how the meaning of the term has historically changed, and then gives her own formulation. The term itself, being borrowed from astronomy, paradoxically meant not a radical change, but on the contrary a return or circular movement, and it was closer in meaning to the notion of restoration – the return of the old order. Arendt insists that up to the 19th century, the authors of the revolutions

* See more in detail in Arendt. (1998).

* See more in detail in Arendt. (2005).

really thought of their actions in this way – as restoration. When they became convinced of the impossibility of revolution as restoration, they came up with the idea of a new beginning, something that had not existed before (Arendt, 1990). The idea is somewhat paradoxical, but it is confirmed by the fact that many of the current leaders of the revolutions did indeed very often, at a certain point in their lives, consider themselves royalists – Robespierre being a prime example. But in the future, they became convinced of the value of seeking other, not necessarily existing forms of political existence.

And this is the first very important feature and content of the revolution – novelty, the need to lay the foundation for something new, a new beginning. The second important feature is the motive of freedom. In all the diversity of this term, freedom was declared the main goal, the main result of the revolution. Whether it was the despotic arbitrariness of the absolute monarchy or the colonial authorities, they would be accused of trampling on (old) freedoms. And it is the union of these two categories – novelty and freedom – that characterizes the trends of the epoch and revolution.

Arendt explains that freedom and emancipation are far from being identical concepts, although the latter gravitates towards the former. The motives of the struggle for freedom, which were in fact a struggle for liberation, have been known since antiquity, but it is in the new times and revolutions that the establishment of freedom as a principle becomes a central demand: “This pathos of novelty connected with the idea of freedom is necessary for the idea of revolution. Though the ancients had experienced insurrections, this pathos sets apart revolutions. Though these insurrections share with the violence included in revolutions, ‘only where change occurs in the sense of a new beginning, where violence is used to constitute an altogether different form of government, to bring about the formation of a new body politic, where the liberation from oppression aims at least at the constitution of freedom can we speak of revolution.’ And this is ‘unprecedented and unequalled in all prior history’” (Arendt, 1990).

Arendt names the American Revolution as an example of such a revolution and, unlike the French Revolution, she calls it a successful revolution. The success of the American Revolution, which, as Arendt writes, did not receive due attention and recognition of the world, unlike the Great French Revolution, consisted of several very important achievements.

The first major achievement was the establishment of liberty. It was encapsulated in the creation of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States (then thirteen colonies). During the French Revolution, the constitution had been rewritten 14 times, causing it to be seen as just a “piece of paper”.

The second achievement of the American Revolution was that violence did not become the way to hold on to power. The revolution did not “devour its children”, nor did it turn into tyranny. Violence was used here to defend independence and political space, but not to fill it with violence, to make violence the main content of politics, here already meant in domestic politics.

A third very important and not obvious at first glance achievement was what Arendt calls fixing the present state of affairs, or one could say how the American Revolution knew where and where to stop. It is known that after independence, the fathers of the American Revolution were puzzled about their future, and even considered the option within the framework of the revolution, as a restoration, to invite the monarchy and the aristocracy. However, all this did not happen, and the Americans legitimized the current situation, the post-revolutionary government, which was actually the power of the most influential, authoritative, very different people with very different political views, who using the support of the people conducted public policy, public debates. And this Arendt calls it a happy accident, because, as we will see below, for most revolutionary enterprises, including the French Revolution, establishing freedom would not be enough. There were often additional motives to reorganize the new order that emerged as a result of the revolution, sometimes to such an (anti-)utopian degree that the revolution ultimately turned into the opposite of what it originally sought to achieve. To put it very coarsely, it turns out that the American Revolution not only succeeded in its goals, but also clearly articulated them, and making them a principle for the entire community and with the consent of the entire community, whose political participation in the life of the community was preserved and became central.

Arendt describes the main tragedy of the French Revolution as the fact that at some point the essence and content of the revolution becomes the notion of happiness. It is very important to record here that the revolution did not begin with a call to “make everyone happy” or to create an administration that would make everyone happy accordingly. The motif of happiness was invented during the revolution. Arendt consistently shows this in Robespierre’s addresses. Moreover, happiness here was understood as providing for the physical wants and needs of the poor.

The social question (and its solution) became especially closely linked to the notion of revolution and, thanks to the great influence of Marx, to the objective course of history – progress.

Thus, we see two aims of revolution, two very different contents of the concept: the foundation of freedom in the American perspective and the building of a society of abundance in the European perspective.

A series of revolutions in Europe, mostly unsuccessful, led to the emergence of a whole class of revolutionaries, mostly of the Marxist persuasion. Revolutionaries are no longer active freedom fighters, but rather wait-and-see intellectuals and agitators who wait for the moment when the centralized government weakens and falls for reasons independent of them (such as economic crises, wars, or the objective course of history) and they will be able to seize and hold power.

The Ethos of Revolution: The Power of Councils, the Elementary Republic

The key to understanding Arendt's attitude to revolution, revolutionary projects and their prospects is to understand the power of the councils as a form of government in Arendt's perspective.

On the one hand, as has been noted, there are two mainstream visions of revolution and the one that originated from the Great French Revolution and then had as its main goal to solve the social question and became dominant in Europe and then the rest of the world, including America. Moreover, having experienced a strong Marxist influence, this understanding of revolution began to understand the political sphere in a very peculiar way and to appeal to such categories as human nature (it is important to emphasize that we mean man in the singular, human plurality has a much smaller role here), the objective course of history – progress, (universal or class) happiness, and others.

Still, Arendt insists that, historically, almost every time, such a vision of revolution is shattered when it meets reality. That such an optic cannot and does not provide for such an important category of human existence as spontaneity. And here Arendt's perspective is very interesting. Arendt shows that almost every time we talk about revolution, we notice this phenomenon of spontaneity – spontaneity in politics. In the collapse of the previous weak, unauthorized government, which has no credibility in the eyes of the citizens and, as a result, is powerless, in what is probably a short-lived, fleeting but very meaningful period in the history of revolutions, we see that new forms of political experience emerge – councils. The power of councils emerges not as a result of seizing power and/or trying to hold it, but as a spontaneous grassroots initiative, where the most interested, authoritative people try to act as creators of political reality themselves at localized levels.

Councils are spaces where fundamentally different people, in their diversity and with very different beliefs and views on reality, enter the public arena and try to orient themselves in a rapidly changing reality through words, persuasion, agonal debates, speeches and actions to manage the community. In such councils, the central category is not a place in the hierarchy (which most likely collapsed with the previous regime-government) but the ability to

influence the minds and hearts of the public. The public is not just a silent observing public, but a living, active environment that very closely follows, reacts to and participates in the activities of councils. And the councils have power, and only that power, which is not based on violence against dissenters, but the power of joint action, action with consent, which will echo in the hearts of the people, and actions that will not be forgotten or confused in the chaos of the revolution. And has as its model the power of the councils not utopian vision of the future but rather the polis of ancient Greece, with its agonal politics. And this is the true spirit of the revolution. The power of the soviets always means unpredictability, because the person who reveals himself to the public is both recognized and recognizes the perspective of another, the perspective of a person who is not identical to himself. The fruits of people's joint activity on the political stage are not a fulfilled testament, a forecast, a program, but a space where action is not predetermined – a space of freedom. Political freedom, where man himself is the master of his own destiny, for once he has tasted it, he will not wish for another.

The power of councils, through this form of experience, has been known to all truly revolutionary enterprises. During the American Revolution, the so-called “town hall meetings” appeared, as well as the “ward-republic” system, the convention system and others, where local initiatives were used to make decisions at the different levels of cities, as communities and then states. It was the power of these platforms that formed the basis of the American model of government – the United States.

We see the fleeting appearance of the council system during the Paris Commune and the 1905 Revolution in Russia, as well as the power of the councils during the February Revolution of 1917. The system of soviets had a great influence on Lenin, who spoke with the slogan “All power to the soviets!” Moreover, as Arendt points out, we know his definition of communism as the power of the soviets plus the electrification of the country (Arendt, 2013). However, coming to power, Lenin faced the problem of preserving his power and the power of the Bolsheviks. During the Kronstadt Uprising, the soviets formed there from former military sailors with a true spirit of revolution, even called by Trotsky “the beauty and pride of the Russian Revolution”, opposed the party dictatorship of the Bolsheviks. And here was the key moment for the whole revolution – the confrontation of the (decrepid) hierarchical party system against the new agonal system of the soviets. As a result of heavy fighting, the Bolshevik troops took Kronstadt and drowned the city in blood. From that point on, the Soviet power was only in words Soviet, the rule of the Soviets was out of the question, in reality it was, of course, a totalitarian system born of terror.

Arendt's solution, however, is to realize an elementary republic, where the power of councils is fixed and spreads further at different levels. The elementary republic is well within the spirit of the American Revolution, in the Jeffersonian perspective, which sees this model as a system where the activity of the political field and community participation on many levels are ensured, and moreover, secured for generations to come.

Such ideas of an elementary republic, that of Arendt and that of Jefferson may seem somewhat utopian. There are very few examples of the power of councils being consolidated and then remaining as an elementary republic in history. Furthermore, history shows that the power of soviets, alas, has always been short-lived. Even after the American Revolution, later, we see how centralization – the strengthening of the centralized state – gradually takes place, and local initiatives lose their power (although some echoes, of course, remain in the system of states and their autonomy). Politics becomes the domain of professionals. The sphere of political life becomes poorer, and the prospects for political participation – as a form of power over one's own destiny and as a form of public reality that manifests itself, being shared, with the others – become rarer.

Conclusion

In the first part of this paper, we tried to reconstruct the course of events of the Velvet Revolution in Armenia – its preconditions and consequences. In the second part, we turned to Hannah Arendt's political theory, her understanding of revolution as presented in the opposition of two revolutions – the American and the French. In conclusion, it remains for us to compare Arendt's models of political theory with the actual events of the Velvet Revolution in Armenia.

The first variant, when the revolution sets one goal, very quickly mobilizes the broad masses and then, failing to fix them, changes the goals and so on until it is quite difficult to find out what the revolution was about. Most often, the motive of freedom is replaced by the motive of happiness, and happiness is understood here as abundance, availability of material goods. As a result, at some point there remains a bare necessity to retain power, to create such an administration that would satisfy the (material, not political) needs of the people. Further, with the collapse of such a project, there is the need to put an end to the revolution with an iron hand to avoid even greater sacrifices. A revolution that is replaced by a counter-revolution, and the counter-revolution is followed by a civil war, and after the war by a vertical of power, terror, tyranny, which already uses violence for self-reproduction. This was the model of revolution in the French Revolution, the October Revolution, and many others. From Arendt's perspective, such a model of revolution, because

of its destructiveness and fruitlessness, can be seen as a failure, as a catastrophe.

To what extent can the Velvet Revolution in Armenia be characterized by such a model, which we have also considered above?

There is probably an interesting point here: the fundamentally non-violent nature of the revolution – its course and consequences, the absence of major political vendetta and repressions – highlighted the fact that the revolution, in the sense of the first model, was avoided. The revolution did not intensify the crisis, deep disagreement, and confrontation within society, but on the contrary, it contributed to a relative de-escalation of the situation. Conflicts were resolved at least without violating or rewriting the constitution.

Moreover, which is not often the case, the revolution knew where to stop, and managed to fix certain gains. Here we do not see radical leaps, a reorganization of the world, of the state, of identities, we do not see a redistribution of capital, a social revolution. Rather, we see the “normalization” of several everyday practices, primarily political or, one could even say, psychological, in the form of no pressure on the media, on the rights of parties or other political groups; no more arrests or beatings of civil activists; no more direct pressure on the courts, honesty and transparency of election procedures. On the economic front, the practice of taking bribes at various levels became less frequent, the country began to grow in macroeconomic indicators, first of all, salaries and pensions were raised, corruption decreased significantly, etc. And if you look at all these processes and a number of others, the revolution here was that the parties resolved the crisis without resorting to the traditional for revolutionary enterprises (in the sense of the first model) of sacrifice and destruction. And if we simplify it even further, from the perspective of the first model, there was no revolution at all, but only the change of an illegitimate government with a legitimate one in a rather colorful, carnival-like way. And in this sense, the joy, euphoria from the (non-)revolution can be perceived as the fact that the revolution (as a source of potential destruction) was avoided. Having solved the issue of the legitimacy of the government, which was lost somewhere at the turn of the millennium and was clearly usurped during the tragic events of March 1, 2008, society had to develop towards the same stated goals, in the same direction, but now with a more or less legitimate government.

The second model of revolution, designed to be a beginning, to establish institutions of freedom, to build power based on local initiatives, platforms, the power of councils, which will become the foundation for the political community, as noted above. A revolution that possesses the true spirit of the political, as Arendt notes. The model here is the American Revolution. This

understanding of revolution is what Arendt calls the true understanding of revolution. How true is it in the case of the Armenian Velvet Revolution?

It is worth noting that the revolution was indeed largely inspired by grassroots initiatives, a number of other protests and discourses about them. Many of the protests that we examined in the beginning turned into localized political platforms that were already setting their own agenda. The Velvet Revolution managed to unite and interest many political activists, concerned citizens, academics and cultural figures. However, after the resignation of Sargsyan's government and the Republican Party of Armenia, the most important thing in Arendt's perspective did not happen in the American Revolution – namely the power of local grassroots initiatives, with their inherent spontaneity and agonality – was not fixed. It did not become the central, determining factor of the political field. In this sense, the old system, where professional politicians (systemic or institutional) were in charge of the future of the country, taking care of the people's welfare, and the people could only passively observe and occasionally participate in elections, has not changed. Moreover, the very institution of elections, although it became more transparent and fair, almost completely lost its competitiveness. Five years after the revolution, we see that the same old political brands, now called by the people simply “current and former”, perform with the same methods and goals. As a result, we see that the interest in politics is strongly declining, the existing brands do not have much support.

Thus, five years after the Velvet Revolution, we can see that the interest not only in political brands, but also in politics in general has decreased among the citizens of Armenia. The very low turnout at the elections and sociological surveys* can be considered as confirmation here.

Several factors contributed to this. First and foremost, a series of crises followed the Velvet Revolution. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in Armenia and worldwide, we see that public actions become impossible. The new revolutionary government, which built its image on publicity, transparency, and people's participation in governing has now been forced to impose quarantine, curfews, and restricted movement of citizens. The 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh showed that security and stability are more important than democratic transformation. The very policy of the ruling forces began to rely more and more on the authority of the head of state, Nikol Pashinyan, to legitimize their power. The government's logic and rhetoric have become increasingly in the vein of political pragmatism, realism and cynicism. In a sense, the old regime with its categories of politics was recreated – now with other faces.

* See more in detail in IRI Center for Insights in Survey Research. (2023).

Still, certain gains of the revolution remained, although they were not fixed. Perhaps the main achievement of the revolution is that the notion of power was perceived differently that violence was rejected as a political means, but that no other sustainable institutional means of politics has yet been developed.

Looking at the Velvet Revolution in Armenia from Hannah Arendt's perspective, the main conclusion is the concept of movement from grassroots initiatives and the creation of spaces, platforms in which political freedom could exist. Arendt shows that historically such spaces – councils – emerged during revolutions, but most often were not fixed, were lost. Once fixed, such spaces do not need to be legitimized by hierarchy and do not need violence. Such spaces do not need legitimization through elections, because their legitimacy and power come from a living, active public environment in which human plurality can manifest itself. Once fixed, such spaces together constitute what Arendt sees in Jefferson's ideas as an elementary republic. As noted, this perspective may seem utopian and may contrast with the dire situation in the world and in the region, but it holds great potential, it holds the solution to the demand made during the Velvet Revolution – “We are the masters of our country”.

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THE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA AND THE HELLENIC REPUBLIC IN THE DEFENCE SPHERE*

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Abstract

Diplomatic relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Hellenic Republic were established on January 20, 1992.

Since the 1990s, strong military-political relations were created between the two Republics. Particularly, the cooperation in the defence sphere includes not only military education and military-technical directions, but also an international peacekeeping mission.

Strong military-political relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Hellenic Republic have also contributed to strengthening defence cooperation between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Cyprus. As a result of which the Armenia-Cyprus-Greece trilateral cooperation was initiated in 2019.

The defence cooperation between Armenia and Greece, especially in the military-technical sphere, creates a possibility for Armenia to get access to new western advanced military technologies and thanks to which the armament of Armenian army is diversified.

Keywords: defence sphere, military education, military-technical cooperation, Armenia, Greece, Cyprus.

Introduction

For centuries, Armenia and Greece have old historical relations. Particularly, the Armenian-Greek military-political relations developed during the Age of Hellenism (late 4th century B.C. – early 1st century A.D.) and the period of the Byzantine Empire (Eastern Roman Empire, 4th – 15th centuries)*.

* In this research paper we continue researching the diversification policy pursued by the Republic of Armenia in the defence sphere. In the previous two papers, we have already touched upon the Armenian-Indian and Armenian-French cooperation in the defence sphere (Nazaryan, 2023, 2024).

* See more in detail in Ramazyan, S. (2010). pp. 29-135.

Armenian-Greek military-political cooperation between the First Republic of Armenia and the Kingdom of Greece was demonstrated in the Armenian-Turkish war (1920) and The Greco-Turkish War (1919-1922)*.

Diplomatic relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Hellenic Republic were established on January 20, 1992 (Official website of the MFA of the RA, 2024b). Political relations between two republics grew rapidly, which is also contributed to the development of the cooperation in the defence sphere.

The Main Directions of Cooperation between Armenia and Greece in the Defence Sphere

Since the 1990s, strong military-political relations have been established and have grown rapidly between the two republics. In this context, on June 18, 1996, an Agreement on Military Cooperation was signed between the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Armenia and the Ministry of National Defence of the Hellenic Republic. Two years later, on February 17, 1998, an Agreement on the Order and Conditions of Training of RA Citizens in Military Educational Establishments of Greece was signed between the two ministries (Official website of the MFA of the RA, 2024b).

At the beginning of the 2000s, Armenia and Greece also started to cooperate within the framework of an international peacekeeping mission. Particularly, on July 9, 2003, Memorandum of Understanding concerning the allocation of an Armenian Rifle Platoon under the Hellenic Armed Forces Contingent in Kosovo was signed between the Republic of Armenia and the Hellenic Republic (Official website of the MFA of the RA, 2024b). As a result, in February 2004, a contingent of 34 Armenian peacekeepers was deployed to Kosovo to carry out a peacekeeping mission as part of a Greek unit. Armenia's participation in the NATO peacekeeping mission in Kosovo continues to this day, and every year about 70 Armenian peacekeepers carry out their mission in Kosovo (Official website of the MoD of the RA, n.d.).

Within the framework of bilateral cooperation, on November 10, 2008 an Agreement on the Training of Armed Forces Staff of the Republic of Armenia in Military Training Establishment and Training Centers of the Ministry of National Security of the Hellenic Republic was signed between the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Armenia and the Ministry of National Security of the Hellenic Republic (Official website of the MFA of the RA, 2024b).

The parties also began to develop military-technical cooperation, including in the sphere of the military industry. As a result, the Armenian-Greek company "LT-PYRKAL" was founded in Armenia in 1999. Its founders were

* See more in detail in Ramazyan, S. (2010). pp. 157-234. Nazaryan, H. (2020). pp. 199-234.

the Closed Joint-Stock Company “Laser Technology” from the Armenian side (holding 51% of the shares) and “Hellenic Defence Systems” company from the Greek side (holding 49% of the shares). “LT-PYRKAL” is a fully state-owned enterprise, as each of the founding companies subordinates to the Ministry of Defence of its country. The company has been engaged in particularly complex projects for the development and production of laser and optoelectronic systems for the military needs of Armenia and Greece (“Vpk-Armenii”, 2013). Particularly, the Armenian company developed and produced the LH-01 Laser Rangefinder, the 2D02 Optical-Electronic Artillery Reconnaissance System, and the “Shumits” Optical-Electronic Artillery Reconnaissance and Fire Control System, which was developed jointly with the South Korean company “C&S Security” (“Vpk-Armenii”, 2015).

In 2012, a military contract for the re-export of Franco-West German “Milan” anti-tank guided missiles systems (ATGMs) to Armenia was signed between Armenia and Greece. These systems were supplied to the Armenian Army in 2013 (“RAZM.info”, 2015).

On March 29, 2018, the delegation headed by Greek Defence Minister Panayotis Kammenos arrived in Armenia for a two-day visit. Greek Defence Minister had a meeting with Vigen Sargsyan, Minister of Defence of the Republic of Armenia. The next day, the Greek delegation visited the ArmHiTec-2018 International Exhibition of Armament and Defence Technologies, which was held in Yerevan. During a press conference, Panayotis Kammenos announced the following: “Tomorrow, representatives of the Armenian defence industry companies will meet to Greek companies. That meeting means that the two states will open their doors for defence markets. This means that if we have products that can be used in the Greek Armed Forces, that product can get an EU certificate” (Official website of the MoD of the RA, 2018).

The Formation of a Trilateral Cooperation Format between Armenia, Greece and Cyprus

Strong military-political relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Hellenic Republic also contributed to the development of cooperation between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Cyprus in the defence sphere. Particularly, on February 21, 2002, an Agreement on Military and Military-Technical Cooperation was signed between the Government of the Republic of Armenia and the Government of the Republic of Cyprus. Later, on November 30, 2010, a Memorandum of Understanding on Military and Military-Technical Cooperation for the implementation of the Protocol on Cyprus Intergovernmental Committee was signed. As a result, two years later, a session of the Intergovernmental Commission on Military and Military-

Technical Cooperation was held on October 21, 2013, in Nicosia (Official website of the MFA of the RA, 2024a).

On February 12-14, 2019, a delegation led by the Minister of Defence of the Republic of Cyprus, Savvas Angelides, paid an official visit to Yerevan. After the official welcoming ceremony at the RA Ministry of Defence, Savvas Angelides held a tête-à-tête meeting with Minister of Defence of the Republic of Armenia, Davit Tonoyan. During the meeting, the results of last year's bilateral cooperation in the military and military-technical fields were evaluated, as well as the main directions of cooperation in 2019 were outlined. At the end of the meeting, a Bilateral Cooperation Program for 2019 in format of two ministries was signed (Official website of the MoD of the RA, 2019b). On February 13, 2019, the delegation headed by Cyprus Defence Minister Savvas Angelides also visited the Mathematical Machines Research Institute of Yerevan, where they studied the high-tech defence projects developed in the Institute (Official website of the MoD of the RA, 2019a).

One year later, on February 28, 2020, a delegation led by the Head of the Defence Policy Department of the RA Ministry of Defence, Levon Ayvazyan, participated in the discussions of the Armenian-Greek cooperation programs and military-political consultations in the field of defence in Athens. As a result of the consultations, the Bilateral Cooperation Program for 2020 between the RA Ministry of Defence and the Greek Ministry of National Defence was signed. The program included 21 events in Armenia and Greece: training programs in the directions of special significance forces, military-medical and tactical preparation, exchange of experience in the fields of cybersecurity, engineering, and other fields, military-political consultations, exchange of information. On the same day, a Trilateral Action Plan for 2020 was signed by the representatives of the Ministries of Defence of Armenia, Greece, and Cyprus. The action plan contained dozens of events to be carried out in Armenia, Greece, and Cyprus that concern trilateral training programs and military-political consultations in various fields (Official website of the MoD of the RA, 2020).

After the 44-day war of 2020 in Nagorno-Karabakh, cooperation between Armenia and Greece, as well as Armenia and Cyprus, in the field of defence gained new momentum. It was due to some main reasons:

1. The strengthening of Turkey's positions – as Greece's main geopolitical rival and Azerbaijan's ally – in the Mediterranean Basin and South Caucasus region.
2. Azerbaijani aggression against the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia in 2021-2022.
3. Russia's inability to fulfill military contracts – following the Russian Armed Forces' invasion of Ukraine, the Russian Federation has been

unable to supply Armenia with armaments, therefore Armenia is trying to find other sources of supplement for recovering its heavy losses of military equipment after the 44-day war.

On April 25, 2021, the Minister of Defence of the Republic of Armenia, Vagharshak Harutyunyan, received a delegation led by the Minister of Defence of the Republic of Cyprus, Charalambos Petrides. During the meeting, issues related to the development of bilateral and trilateral Armenia-Cyprus-Greece cooperation in the field of defence were discussed. The Defence Minister of Cyprus noted that the two countries have similar security challenges, taking into account the experience gained by the Armenian side during the hostilities, and stressed the need for joint work to meet the challenges (Official website of the MoD of the RA, 2021).

A few months later, on January 18, 2022, a delegation led by the Head of the General Staff of the National Guard of the Republic of Cyprus, Lieutenant General Demokritos Zervakis, arrived in Armenia. After the official welcoming ceremony on January 19 at the RA Ministry of Defence administrative complex, Lieutenant General Demokritos Zervakis first met with the Head of the General Staff of the RA Armed Forces, Lieutenant General Artak Davtyan, and then with Suren Papikyan, the Minister of Defence of the Republic of Armenia. The Cypriot side was presented the post-war situation following the 44-day war and the security challenges in the region. The meeting also reviewed the bilateral and trilateral Armenia-Cyprus-Greece cooperation initiated in 2019, within which several joint events had already been conducted in 2021 (Official website of the MoD of the RA, 2022).

The next year, from November 6 to 10, 2023, within the framework of trilateral cooperation, the special forces of Armenia, Greece, and Cyprus conducted joint military exercises in the Greek region of Attica (“First Channel News”, 2023).

One month later, on December 12, 2023, a delegation led by the Minister of Defence of the Republic of Armenia, Suren Papikyan, embarked on an official visit to the Republic of Cyprus, and with the Minister of Defense of the Republic of Cyprus, Michalis Giorgallas, discussed various issues related to Armenian-Cypriot cooperation in the defence sphere (Official website of the MoD of the RA, 2023b). Two days later, Suren Papikyan traveled from Cyprus to Greece. During the meeting with the Minister of National Defence of the Hellenic Republic, Nikolaos Dendias, the issues related to the Armenian-Greek defence cooperation were discussed and reached an agreement to invigorate cooperation across various dimensions, encompassing military-technical engagements, experience exchange, educational initiatives, training programs, tactical training, and other directions. At the culmination of

the meeting, the Defence Ministers of Armenia and Greece signed an agreement titled “On Military-Technical Cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Armenia and the Government of the Hellenic Republic” (Official website of the MoD of the RA, 2023c).

At the end of the same year, on December 18, bilateral consultations were conducted between Armenia and Greece, as well as Armenia and Cyprus, alongside trilateral discussions involving Armenia, Greece, and Cyprus, held at the premises of the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Armenia. The Head of the International Organizations Section of the Hellenic National Defence General Staff, Brigadier General Vasileios Tsamis, led the Greek delegation, while the Cypriot delegation was headed by Colonel Alkiviadis Alkiviadis, Head of the International Cooperation Department of the Cyprus National Guard General Staff. Levon Ayyvazyan, Head of the Department of Defence Policy and International Cooperation of the MoD of the Republic of Armenia, presented a detailed overview of the ongoing reforms within the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia to his colleagues. Regional and international security issues were also discussed. Concluding the consultations, the participating parties formalized agreements by signing the Armenia-Greece, Armenia-Cyprus, and Armenia-Greece-Cyprus Military Cooperation Programs for 2024 (Official website of the MoD of the RA, 2023a).

On June 12, 2024, the Armenian Parliament debated and, the next day, ratified the agreement “On Military-Technical Cooperation between the Governments of Armenia and Greece”, which had been signed on December 14, 2023, in Athens by Greek Minister of National Defence Nikolaos Dendias and Armenian Defense Minister Suren Papikyan. The agreement included such an important areas of cooperation as the production of weapons and ammunitions, the transfer of technologies and the technical support, as well as the exchange of experience in the spheres of ammunition production, military researches and assessments, the establishment of joint organizations for production of military goods, the implementation of professional education training and qualification programs in the sphere of military industry (Official website of the National Assembly of the RA, 2024).

In the same year, the Armenian Armed Forces participated in the “Olympic Cooperation-24” military exercises in Greece. Other participating countries included Greece, Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, France, Georgia, Jordan, and Cyprus. The exercises took place from November 9 to 22 (“Armenpress”, 2024).

In November 2024, the Greek information portal “Enikos” reported that Greece was negotiating with Armenia for the sale of Russian-made S-300PMU-1, Tor-M1 and Osa-AKM anti-aircraft missile systems. It is

noteworthy that the strengthening of Armenia is not a purely Greek initiative, but a product of cooperation with France. “Enikos” also added that the leadership of the Armed Forces is determined to continue the de-Russification of the Greek arsenal and the radical renewal of old systems with new Western technologies (“CAWAT”, 2024).

During the 2024, mutual visits and negotiations between the heads of the defence ministries of Armenia and Greece, as well as Armenia and Cyprus, continued intensively. Particularly, on March 4, 2024, Minister of Defence of the Republic of Armenia, Suren Papikyan, welcomed Minister of National Defence of the Hellenic Republic, Nikolaos Dendias, who arrived in Armenia for an official visit (Official website of the MoD of the RA, 2024a). On September 25, 2024, Minister of Defence of the Republic of Armenia, Suren Papikyan, held a tête-à-tête meeting with Minister of Defence of the Republic of Cyprus, Vasilis Palmas (Official website of the MoD of the RA, 2024c). On December 4, 2024, within the framework of his working visit to the United States, Minister of Defence of the Republic of Armenia, Suren Papikyan, met with Minister of National Defence of the Hellenic Republic, Nikolaos Dendias, at the Embassy of Greece in Washington, D.C. (Official website of the MoD of the RA, 2024d).

At the end of the year, on December 19, 2024, Armenia-Greece bilateral and Armenia-Greece-Cyprus trilateral defence consultations were held in Athens, where the delegation, led by the Head of the Defence Policy and International Cooperation Department of the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Armenia, Levon Ayvazyan, participated from the RA Ministry of Defence. During the consultations, the work carried out in the direction of defence cooperation in 2024 and the tasks to be done in 2025 were discussed (Official website of the MoD of the RA, 2024b).

Conclusion

Thus, in recent decades, strong military cooperation in the defence sphere has been established between the Republic of Armenia and the Hellenic Republic. At the same time, solid foundations have been laid for the development of military relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Cyprus. As a result, trilateral Armenia-Cyprus-Greece cooperation in defence sphere continues to develop.

Armenia and Greece have successfully developed cooperation in key areas such as international peacekeeping missions, military education, military-technical cooperation, and the military industry. As a result, Armenian Army officers get the opportunity to receive military-level education at the Hellenic Army Academy. Furthermore, military-technical cooperation has enabled

Armenia to access advanced Western military technologies, diversifying the armament of the Armenian Army.

Cooperation with individual European states also creates favorable foundations for Armenia to deepen its relations in defence sphere with the EU, particularly within the framework of the support of the European Peace Facility*.

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JERUSALEM: A COMPLEX TAPESTRY OF RELIGIONS AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

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Abstract

Jerusalem, one of the world's most historically and religiously significant cities, embodies a complex tapestry of cultures, faiths, and geopolitical dynamics. As a sacred city for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, it has been a focal point of spiritual devotion, political disputes, and cultural exchange for millennia. This article explores the multifaceted history of Jerusalem, tracing its evolution from ancient times to the present day. It examines the city's role in shaping religious identities, its contested status in international politics, and the interplay between historical narratives and contemporary conflicts. Special attention is given to the impact of colonial interventions, territorial divisions, and demographic shifts on the city's unique character. Furthermore, the article highlights key religious landmarks, including the Temple Mount, the Western Wall, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and the Al-Aqsa Mosque, underscoring their significance in both historical and modern contexts. Through an interdisciplinary approach, the study analyzes Jerusalem's position as both a unifying symbol and a source of division, reflecting broader regional and global tensions. By understanding the city's past and present complexities, this article aims to contribute to a more nuanced discussion of its future, emphasizing the need for dialogue and coexistence in a city revered by billions worldwide.

Keywords: Jerusalem, Temple Mount, Jewish Quarter, Old City, UN resolution, West Bank, Palestinian Authority.

Introduction

Jerusalem stands as one of the most historically and religiously significant cities in the world, deeply intertwined with the spiritual and cultural identities of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Its complex history, spanning over three millennia, has made it a focal point of religious devotion, geopolitical tension, and cultural heritage. This article seeks to explore Jerusalem's religious,

historical, and political significance, particularly emphasizing its role within Jewish history and identity, as well as the broader Arab-Israeli conflict.

The Jewish connection to Jerusalem dates back to biblical times, with its prominence cemented as the capital of the ancient Kingdom of Israel under King David. The construction of the First and Second Temples established the city as the epicenter of Jewish worship. Despite multiple conquests and periods of exile, Jewish communities have maintained an uninterrupted presence in Jerusalem. Since the 19th century, Jews have constituted the majority of the city's population. However, political disputes and conflicting territorial claims have made Jerusalem one of the most contentious issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Beyond its Jewish heritage, Jerusalem holds profound significance for both Muslims and Christians. For Muslims, the city is home to the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third holiest site in Islam, associated with the Prophet Muhammad's Night Journey. Christians revere Jerusalem as the site of Jesus Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, with numerous holy sites attracting pilgrims from around the world. These overlapping religious claims, coupled with historical events and political rivalries, have fueled debates over the city's governance and sovereignty.

This article critically examines various aspects of Jerusalem's history, including demographic changes, religious significance, and political disputes. It challenges common misconceptions about the city's past and present by analyzing historical records, religious texts, and international policies to provide a comprehensive understanding of Jerusalem's enduring importance. Ultimately, the discussion underscores the city's unique role as a religious and cultural epicenter, while highlighting the complexities that continue to shape its status in the modern world.

Jerusalem's Population. Arab or Jewish City?

For over three millennia, Jewish communities have continuously resided in Jerusalem, constituting the largest demographic group since the 1840s. The city is home to the Western Wall, a remnant of the ancient Temple Mount and the most sacred site in Judaism. Despite its historical and religious significance for the Jewish people, Jerusalem has never served as the capital of any Arab entity. Under Muslim rule, it functioned as a peripheral administrative center rather than a primary seat of governance. While the entirety of Jerusalem holds profound religious importance for Jews, for Muslims, the primary revered site is the Al-Aqsa Mosque. As British historian Christopher Sykes observed, there exists a marked distinction in the religious significance attributed to Jerusalem compared to the centrality of Mecca and Medina in Islamic tradition (Lewis, 1968).

In 1844, Jerusalem's population consisted of 7,120 Jews, 5,000 Muslims, and 3,390 Christians, with a total of 15,510 people. By 1876, the Jewish population grew to 12,000, the Muslims to 7,560, and Christians to 5,470, bringing the total population to 25,030. In 1896, there were 28,112 Jews, 8,560 Muslims, and 8,748 Christians, resulting in a total of 45,420 people.

By 1922, Jerusalem's population had increased to 33,971 Jews, 13,411 Muslims, and 4,699 Christians, totaling 52,081. In 1931, the Jewish population reached 51,222, Muslims numbered 19,894, and Christians grew to 19,335, with the total population at 90,451. In 1948, the Jewish population surged to 100,000, Muslims to 40,000, and Christians to 25,000, bringing the total to 165,000.

In 1967, the Jewish population had increased to 195,700, Muslims to 54,963, and Christians to 12,646, resulting in a total of 263,309. By 1987, the number of Jews reached 340,000, Muslims 121,000, and Christians 14,000, making the total population 475,000. In 1990, the population increased to 524,400, with 378,200 Jews, 131,800 Muslims, and 14,400 Christians.

By 2009, Jerusalem's population had grown to 476,000 Jews, 247,800 Muslims, and 15,200 Christians, totaling 760,800. In 2011, the Jewish population reached 648,900, the Muslims 302,600, and Christians 16,400, bringing the total to 967,900. Finally, in 2012, the population consisted of 660,200 Jews, 310,700 Muslims, and 16,500 Christians, with a total of 987,400 people (Oesterreicher & Sinai, 1974).

A prevailing misconception is that the Temple Mount has always been an exclusively Muslim holy site. During the 2000 Camp David Summit, Yasser Arafat denied the historical presence of a Jewish temple at this location (Hume, 2002).

Similarly, the Palestinian Authority-appointed Mufti of Jerusalem, Ikrima Sabri, asserted in an interview with *Die Welt* that there was no historical evidence linking the site to Jewish heritage (Reiter, 2008). These claims, however, stand in contrast to earlier Muslim documentation. Sheik Raed Salah, a leader of the Islamic movement in Israel, has stated: "The Zionist movement has invented that this was the site of Solomon's Temple. But this is all a lie" (J. Uris & L. Uris, 1981, p. 13).

A 1930 publication by the Supreme Muslim Council, titled *A Brief Guide to al-Haram al-Sharif*, explicitly acknowledges the Temple Mount's association with Solomon's Temple. The guide described the site as one of the oldest places of worship, affirming its sanctity since ancient times. It also referenced the historical account of Josephus, who documented the site's use during the Roman siege of Jerusalem in 70 CE (Supreme Muslim Council, 1925). Further supporting this historical link, the Quran itself acknowledges Solomon's

construction of the First Temple (34:13) and the destruction of both the First and Second Temples (17:7).

Jerusalem's centrality to Jewish identity and spirituality extends back over three thousand years. According to biblical tradition, Abraham prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac on Mount Moriah, now identified as the Temple Mount. The First Temple housed the Ark of the Covenant and was the epicenter of Jewish religious and communal life until its destruction by the Babylonians. The subsequent Second Temple, rebuilt in the same location, remained the focal point of Jewish worship until its destruction by the Romans in 70 CE. Control over the site changed hands numerous times, and in the seventh century, early Muslim rulers constructed the Dome of the Rock atop the ruins of the Jewish temples.

Throughout history, Jerusalem has remained the heart of Jewish aspirations. The city occupies an unparalleled position in Jewish culture, religion, and national consciousness. Even during centuries of exile, Jerusalem continued to symbolize spiritual fulfillment and national renewal for Jews worldwide. Former Mayor of Jerusalem Teddy Kollek encapsulated this sentiment by asserting that Jerusalem serves as the singular, definitive symbol of Jewish history (Kollek, 1990, pp. 19-20).

A common argument suggests that Jerusalem does not need to be the capital of Israel. However, the city has held this status since King David established it as Israel's capital over three thousand years ago. It remains the focal point of Jewish prayer and veneration. Traditional Jewish liturgy reinforces this connection, with prayers expressing a longing for the return to Jerusalem recited multiple times daily. The Psalmist's declaration, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her skill" (Psalm 137:5).

Contrary to another widespread misconception, the Arab leadership did not support the 1947 United Nations recommendation to internationalize Jerusalem. While the Jewish leadership reluctantly accepted this proposal in hopes of preventing conflict, Arab states vehemently opposed it. In May 1948, Jordan invaded and occupied East Jerusalem, forcibly expelling its Jewish residents and restricting Jewish access to holy sites, including the Western Wall.

Consequently, the UN partition plan, including its proposal that Jerusalem be internationalized, was overtaken by events. As Winston Churchill said: "You ought to let the Jews have Jerusalem; it was they who made it famous" (Shuckburgh, 1987).

The subsequent division of the city persisted until the 1967 Six-Day War, when Israel reunified Jerusalem. Some have proposed internationalizing Jerusalem as a solution to competing territorial claims. However, no precedent exists for such an arrangement. During Jordanian rule (1948–1967), there was

little international advocacy for the city's special status, despite severe restrictions on Jewish and Christian religious freedoms. Furthermore, the idea of an international city has proven problematic in practice, as seen in post-World War II Berlin.

Another misperception is that Jordan ensured freedom of worship for all faiths during its control of East Jerusalem. In reality, Jordan violated the 1949 Armistice Agreement by denying Jewish access to religious sites. Jewish graves on the Mount of Olives were desecrated, and synagogues in the Old City were systematically destroyed. Christian institutions also faced restrictions, including limitations on the establishment of new schools and religious land purchases.

Following the reunification of Jerusalem in 1967, Israel abolished these discriminatory policies and enacted laws protecting religious freedom for all groups. Under Jordanian rule, "Israeli Christians were subjected to various restrictions during their seasonal pilgrimages to their holy places" in Jerusalem, noted Teddy Kollek. "Only limited numbers were grudgingly permitted to briefly visit the Old City and Bethlehem at Christmas and Easter" (Kollek, 1990, p. 15).

In 1955 and 1964, Jordan enacted laws that significantly curtailed the autonomy of Christian schools, imposing stringent government controls. These measures included restrictions on the establishment of new institutions, state oversight of school finances, government authority in the appointment of teachers, and a mandate for the teaching of the Quran. In addition, in 1953 and 1965, Jordan passed legislation that revoked the right of Christian religious and charitable organizations to acquire real estate in Jerusalem (Bard, 2017, p. 212). Further illustrating the oppressive nature of these policies, in 1958, the Jordanian authorities forcibly removed the **Armenian Patriarch-elect** and deported him, facilitating the election of a patriarch aligned with King Hussein's regime. As a consequence of such repressive actions, a significant number of Christians emigrated from Jerusalem, with their population decreasing from 25,000 in 1949 to fewer than 13,000 by June 1967 (Kollek, 1990, p. 16).

These discriminatory laws were subsequently repealed following the reunification of the city under Israeli control in 1967.

During Jordan's occupation of Jerusalem from 1948 to 1967, significant desecration of Jewish holy sites occurred under King Hussein's regime. One of the most notable acts of desecration was the construction of a road to the Intercontinental Hotel across the Mount of Olives cemetery, resulting in the destruction of hundreds of Jewish graves. The highway, which could have been routed elsewhere, led to the desecration of these sacred sites. The gravestones, which had honored the memory of prominent rabbis and sages,

were repurposed by the Jordanian Arab Legion's engineering corps as paving material and latrines for army camps. The inscriptions on the stones remained visible until Israel's liberation of the city in 1967 (Bard, 2017, p. 213).

In addition, the ancient Jewish Quarter of the Old City suffered extensive damage. Fifty-eight synagogues, some of which were centuries old, were either destroyed or severely damaged. In some cases, these synagogues were repurposed as stables and chicken coops. Furthermore, slum dwellings were constructed in close proximity to the Western Wall, further exacerbating the erosion of Jerusalem's Jewish heritage during this period (Kollek, 1990, p. 15).

The Christian Heritage in Jerusalem: Armenian and Greek Religious Influence

For Christians, Jerusalem is revered as the place where Jesus lived, preached, died, and was resurrected. While the Church emphasizes the heavenly Jerusalem, numerous sites mentioned in the New Testament have drawn pilgrims for centuries. Key locations include the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the Garden of Gethsemane, the site of the Last Supper, and the Via Dolorosa, home to the fourteen Stations of the Cross. Jerusalem holds an unparalleled significance in Christian history, serving as the sacred heart of Christian faith, traditions, and pilgrimage. Among the many Christian communities that have left their mark on the city's spiritual and cultural landscape, the Armenian and Greek traditions stand out due to their deep-rooted historical presence, religious institutions, and contributions to the preservation of Christian heritage.

The Armenian Christian Legacy in Jerusalem

The Armenian presence in Jerusalem dates back to the early centuries of Christianity. Armenia was the first nation to adopt Christianity as a state religion in 301 AD, and Armenian monks and pilgrims soon established a strong presence in the Holy City. By the 5th century, an Armenian Patriarchate was formally established, making Armenians one of the oldest Christian communities in Jerusalem.

A key aspect of Armenian heritage in the city is the **Armenian Quarter** – one of the four quarters of the Old City. Unlike other Christian communities, Armenians have maintained a distinct and self-contained religious and cultural presence, centered around the **St. James Cathedral** – one of the most beautiful and historically significant churches in Jerusalem. The Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem remains an important religious authority, preserving Armenian Christian traditions and manuscripts (Mutafian, 2022, p. 25).

Armenian monks and scholars have also played a crucial role in preserving Christian heritage by producing illuminated manuscripts, theological writings, and historical records. Their contributions to the arts, including mosaic work and religious iconography, have enriched Jerusalem's Christian artistic traditions.

The Greek Orthodox Presence in Jerusalem

The Greek Orthodox Church is one of the most influential Christian denominations in Jerusalem, tracing its roots to the earliest Christian communities. Since the Byzantine era, Greek clergy and monastic orders have played a central role in maintaining and administering Christian holy sites, particularly the **Church of the Holy Sepulchre**, one of the most revered places in Christianity, believed to be the site of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection (Zeidan, n.d.).

Under Byzantine rule (4th-7th centuries), Greek influence expanded significantly. The construction of major churches, monastic institutions, and theological schools in Jerusalem helped shape Christian worship and pilgrimage traditions. Even after the Islamic conquests and the Crusader period, Greek clergy maintained control over key religious sites, including the **Patriarchate of Jerusalem**, which remains the custodian of many sacred places.

Today, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem continues to oversee numerous churches and monasteries throughout the Holy Land. Greek Orthodox liturgy, iconography, and monastic traditions remain central to the Christian character of the city. The Greek language is still used in many religious services, maintaining a direct connection to early Christianity and Byzantine heritage.

The Interwoven Christian Heritage

While the Armenian and Greek Christian traditions in Jerusalem have their distinct characteristics, they are deeply interwoven through shared religious sites, pilgrimages, and historical events. Both communities have contributed to the preservation of the **Church of the Holy Sepulchre**, along with other Christian denominations, maintaining a delicate but historically significant balance of custodianship over the site.

Additionally, both the Greek and Armenian communities have faced challenges throughout history, including political upheavals, wars, and demographic shifts. Despite these obstacles, they have remained steadfast in their mission to uphold Christian traditions in one of the most sacred yet contested cities in the world.

The Relationship between the State of Israel and the Christian Communities of Jerusalem

The relationship between the State of Israel and the Christian communities of Jerusalem is complex, shaped by historical legacies, political dynamics, and religious considerations. Since the establishment of Israel in 1948 – and especially after the 1967 Six-Day War, when Israel took control of East Jerusalem – Christian communities have had to navigate a challenging and evolving relationship with Israeli authorities. This relationship is influenced by issues related to governance, religious freedom, property rights, demographic changes, and geopolitical factors:

1. **The historical context of Christian communities in Jerusalem**
2. **Religious freedom and governance under Israeli rule**
3. **Visa and residency issues: Some foreign clergy members, particularly those from Arab countries, report difficulties obtaining long-term visas, limiting their ability to serve Christian communities in Jerusalem.**
4. **Challenges faced by Christian communities**

Christian communities in Jerusalem have been steadily shrinking due to emigration, driven by economic hardship, political instability, and pressures related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Christians, who once constituted a significant percentage of Jerusalem's population, now represent less than 2% of the city's inhabitants. Many Palestinian Christians cite difficulties in obtaining housing, employment opportunities, and residency rights as contributing factors to their departure. Christian institutions, particularly the Greek Orthodox and Armenian Patriarchates, own significant properties in Jerusalem. However, disputes over land ownership have arisen, especially regarding controversial property sales to Israeli settler groups. One high-profile case involves the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, which has faced legal battles over the sale of properties in the Old City, leading to tensions between church authorities and Israeli courts.

5. **Religious tensions and attacks on the clergy. Relations with the government and diplomatic efforts**

There have been occasional reports of harassment or attacks against Christian clergy and institutions by radical Jewish extremists. Some churches, monasteries, and cemeteries have been vandalized with anti-Christian graffiti. Christian leaders have periodically called on Israeli authorities to ensure better protection and uphold Jerusalem's religious diversity.

Despite tensions, Israel maintains diplomatic engagement with Christian institutions:

- **The Status Quo Agreement:** The Israeli government upholds the historical "Status Quo" agreement regulating Christian holy sites,

ensuring that various denominations retain control over their respective properties.

- **Relations with the Vatican:** Israel and the Holy See have formal diplomatic relations, with ongoing discussions about taxation, property rights, and the legal status of Christian institutions in Jerusalem.
- **Interfaith and Tourism Initiatives:** The Israeli government promotes Christian pilgrimages and tourism, recognizing the importance of Jerusalem as a global Christian center. Thousands of Christian pilgrims visit Israel annually, particularly during Easter and Christmas celebrations.

6. Christian perspectives on Jerusalem's political future

Christian leaders often advocate for a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that ensures religious and political stability in Jerusalem. Many churches, particularly the Latin Patriarchate and the World Council of Churches, support a negotiated settlement that protects Christian heritage and guarantees access to holy sites for all.

The issue of Jerusalem's status remains central. Christian leaders emphasize the need to preserve the city's multicultural, multi-religious character. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, security restrictions, and settlement expansion in East Jerusalem continue to impact Christian communities, influencing their future in the Holy Land.

Despite claims that Israel restricts religious freedoms in Jerusalem, Israeli law explicitly upholds these rights. The government ensures access to religious sites and entrusts their administration to respective religious authorities. The Muslim Waqf, for instance, manages daily affairs at the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock. Israel's legal system enforces stringent protections for religious access, stipulating severe penalties for obstructing worship. The US Department of State has consistently recognized Israel's commitment to religious freedom within Jerusalem (US Department of State, 2016).

Additionally, the assertion that Israel limits Muslim and Christian access to their holy sites is unfounded. Since the reunification of Jerusalem in 1967, hundreds of thousands of Muslims and Christians, including those from countries hostile to Israel, have freely visited their places of worship in the city. Even during periods of heightened security concerns, access to religious sites has been largely maintained (Jackson, 2023).

In Islam, Jerusalem holds particular importance due to its association with the Prophet Muhammad's miraculous journey from Mecca to Jerusalem, from where he ascended to heaven. The Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque, both constructed in the seventh century, solidified Jerusalem's identification as the "Remote Place" referenced in the Quran, thus securing its status as the

third holiest site in Islam after Mecca and Medina. Muslim rights to the Temple Mount, the site housing these shrines, have remained intact.

From an Israeli perspective, Jerusalem is indivisible, and its sovereignty is non-negotiable. As Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin emphasized: “Jerusalem was ours, will be ours, is ours, and will remain as such forever” (Bard, 2017, pp. 207-225).

Following the Six-Day War, Defense Minister Moshe Dayan allowed the Islamic Waqf to continue its civil authority over the Temple Mount, despite the site’s significance to Judaism. The Waqf maintains control over day-to-day operations, while Israel ensures access to the Temple Mount for people of all faiths. Arab leaders, including Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1977, have been free to visit Jerusalem for prayer. Although security concerns occasionally prompt temporary restrictions on access, the right to worship has remained unimpeded, with mosques continuing to be accessible even during periods of high tension.

The legal framework defining Christian custodianship of holy places in Jerusalem was established in the 19th century, during the Ottoman Empire’s rule, and was maintained under the British Mandate. This “status quo arrangement” continues to govern Christian holy sites in Israel today.

A common myth suggests that Israel has refused to negotiate a compromise regarding Jerusalem’s future. However, the fact remains that Jerusalem has never been the capital of any Arab entity. While Palestinians seek Jerusalem as their capital, Israel recognizes the city’s significance to Muslims and the large Palestinian population residing there. Israel has considered potential compromises on the sovereignty of the city to mitigate conflict with Palestinians, although reciprocal acknowledgment from Palestinian leaders regarding the Jewish connection to the city and Israel’s capital status has been lacking.

Yasser Arafat’s statement that “Anyone who relinquishes a single inch of Jerusalem is neither an Arab nor a Muslim” reflects the heightened political and religious sensitivities surrounding the city’s status. The Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles (DoP), signed in 1993, left Jerusalem’s final status unresolved, specifying it as one of the issues to be negotiated in permanent status talks (Bard, 2017, p. 215).

Although the majority of Israelis oppose the division of Jerusalem, efforts have been made to explore potential compromises. Notably, during the period when the Labor Party was in power, Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin proposed a tentative agreement allowing Palestinians to claim the city as their capital without Israel relinquishing sovereignty over its own capital. His proposal included the establishment of the Palestinian capital in the West Bank

suburb of Abu Dis, where the Palestinian Authority subsequently constructed a parliament building.

Regarding Jerusalem's political status, it is often argued that Israel has been inflexible in negotiations. However, multiple Israeli leaders have proposed compromises concerning the city's future. During the 2000 Camp David Summit, Prime Minister Ehud Barak suggested that Arab neighborhoods in East Jerusalem could serve as the capital of a future Palestinian state, while the Palestinian Authority would be granted control over Muslim holy sites on the Temple Mount. This proposal was ultimately rejected by Yasser Arafat. In 2008, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert extended a similar offer, which Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas declined.

The historical and religious significance of Jerusalem, particularly in the context of Jewish heritage, is well-documented and enduring. Efforts to challenge this narrative frequently contradict both historical records and Islamic sources. The city remains central to Jewish identity, national history, and religious tradition, making it a unique and irreplaceable component of Israel's sovereignty and cultural heritage.

Now about the myth, that Israel has restricted the political rights of Palestinian Arabs in Jerusalem. The fact is that Palestinian Arabs in Jerusalem enjoy extensive political rights, in addition to religious freedom. Following Israel's reunification of Jerusalem in 1967, Arab residents were granted the option to apply for Israeli citizenship. While the majority initially chose to retain their Jordanian nationality, recent years have witnessed a growing number of applications for Israeli citizenship. This trend reflects an increasing preference among Palestinian residents to integrate into Israeli civil and political frameworks. Regardless of their citizenship status, Palestinian residents of Jerusalem retain the right to participate in municipal elections and engage in the city's governance (Lubell, 2015).

Even in the event of the establishment of a Palestinian state, a significant portion of Palestinian residents in Jerusalem would opt to remain under Israeli sovereignty. According to a poll conducted by the Palestinian Center for Public Opinion in June 2015, 52% of Palestinians residing in East Jerusalem expressed a preference for Israeli citizenship, whereas only 42% indicated a desire to become citizens of a prospective Palestinian state. These findings suggest that, despite political tensions, many Palestinian residents perceive advantages in Israeli governance, including economic opportunities, social services, and political stability (Pollock, 2015).

Regardless of whether they are citizens, Jerusalem Arabs are permitted to vote in municipal elections and play a role in the administration of the city. "I'll urge the Muslims to launch jihad and to use all their capabilities to restore Muslim Palestine and the holy al-Aqsa Mosque from the Zionist usurpers and

aggressors. The Muslims must be united in the confrontation of the Jews and those who support them” said the Saudi king Fahd (Bard, 2017, p. 216).

There is another myth that under UN Resolution 242, East Jerusalem is considered “occupied territory”. But the fact is that one drafter of the UN Resolution was US ambassador to the UN Arthur Goldberg. According to Goldberg, “Resolution 242 in no way refers to Jerusalem, and this omission was deliberate... Jerusalem was a discrete matter, not linked to the West Bank”. In several speeches at the UN in 1967, Goldberg said, “I repeatedly stated that the armistice lines of 1948 were intended to be temporary. This, of course, was particularly true of Jerusalem. At no time in these many speeches did I refer to East Jerusalem as occupied territory” (Bard, 2017, p. 217).

Because Israel was defending itself from aggression in the 1948 and 1967 wars, former president of the International Court of Justice Steven Schwebel wrote, it has a better claim to sovereignty over Jerusalem than its Arab neighbors (Schwebel, 1970, p. 346).

US President George H. W. Bush declared “The basis of our position remains that Jerusalem must never again be a divided city. We did not approve of the status quo before 1967; in no way do we advocate a return to it now” (Bard, 2017, p. 217).

A common misconception suggests that East Jerusalem should be incorporated into a future Palestinian state on the grounds that no Jewish communities have ever resided there. However, historical evidence contradicts this assertion.

Prior to 1865, the entirety of Jerusalem’s population lived within the confines of the Old City walls, which today is considered part of eastern Jerusalem. As the city experienced population growth, both Jewish and Arab communities expanded beyond the walls, establishing new neighborhoods.

By the time of the United Nations Partition Plan in 1947, a well-established Jewish community resided in the eastern part of Jerusalem, particularly in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City. This area also encompasses numerous sites of profound religious and historical significance to Judaism, including the City of David, the Temple Mount, and the Western Wall. Additionally, significant academic and medical institutions, such as Hebrew University and the original Hadassah Hospital, were founded on Mount Scopus, located in eastern Jerusalem.

The only period during which East Jerusalem was exclusively inhabited by Arabs occurred between 1949 and 1967, following Jordan’s occupation of the area. During this time, the Jewish population was forcibly expelled, and access to Jewish religious sites was restricted.

This historical overview demonstrates that Jewish presence in East Jerusalem has been continuous for centuries, with the exception of the period

of Jordanian control. Therefore, any assertion that Jews have never resided in East Jerusalem is historically inaccurate.

A common misconception is that the United States formally recognizes Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. However, international law establishes that sovereign states have the authority to determine their own capitals. Despite this principle, Israel remains the only country among the 190 nations with which the United States maintains diplomatic relations whose capital was not officially recognized by the US government. The US Embassy, like those of most other nations, is situated in Tel Aviv, approximately forty miles from Jerusalem. However, the United States operates a consulate in East Jerusalem, which provides services to both Israeli Jews in Jerusalem and Palestinians in the surrounding territories. Notably, this consulate functions independently of the US Embassy, reporting directly to Washington, and its consul general is not accredited to the Israeli government. Furthermore, a set of diplomatic protocols has been implemented to avoid any implication of US recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital (Bard, 2017, p. 218). These measures include prohibiting official vehicles from displaying the US flag in the city and listing the birthplace of Americans born in Jerusalem as simply "Jerusalem", rather than specifying "Israel".

On June 1, 2017, President Donald J. Trump signed a presidential waiver in accordance with the provisions of the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995, thereby postponing the relocation of the United States Embassy to Jerusalem for an additional six-month period (US Department of State, 2017). Subsequently, on December 6, 2017, President Trump officially recognized Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Israel, marking a significant shift in longstanding U.S. foreign policy in the region ("The White House", 2017).

In addition to refusing to establish its embassy in Jerusalem, the United States actively discouraged other nations from doing so. In 1990, the US Congress passed a resolution affirming that "Jerusalem is and should remain the capital of the State of Israel" and that it "must remain an undivided city in which the rights of every ethnic and religious group are protected" (Public Law 104-45, 1995).

During the 1992 US presidential campaign, Bill Clinton expressed his recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's undivided and eternal capital, along with his support for relocating the US Embassy to the city. However, once in office, President Clinton did not reaffirm this position, and official US policy remained that the final status of Jerusalem should be determined through diplomatic negotiations. "I would be blind to disclaim the Jewish connection to Jerusalem" said the Sari Nusseibeh, president of Al-Quds University (Bard, 2017, p. 218).

In an effort to change this policy, Congress overwhelmingly passed the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995. This landmark bill declared that, as a statement of official US policy, Jerusalem should be recognized as the undivided, eternal capital of Israel and required that the US Embassy in Israel be established in Jerusalem no later than May 1999. The law also included a waiver that allowed the president to essentially ignore the legislation if he deemed doing so to be in the best interest of the United States (Bard, 2017, p. 218).

Successive US presidents, including President Clinton and his successors, have exercised their authority to waive legislation mandating the recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital when deemed necessary for national interests. Critics argue that congressional efforts to compel such recognition could harm the peace process. Former Mufti of Jerusalem Ikrema Sabri declared, "There was never a Jewish temple on Al-Aqsa (the mosque compound) and there is no proof that there was ever a temple" (Seid, 2007).

However, proponents contend that a clear US position affirming that Jerusalem, or at least West Jerusalem, should remain under Israeli sovereignty could temper Palestinian expectations and thereby facilitate a final agreement.

The Allegation: Israel Seeks to Destroy the Al-Aqsa Mosque Historical Context and Recurring Accusations

Since the early 20th century, claims that Israel seeks to destroy the Al-Aqsa Mosque have been used to incite unrest. In 1929, the Mufti of Jerusalem spread rumors of Jewish plots against Muslim holy sites, leading to violent riots in which 135 Jews, including eight Americans, were killed, and more than 300 were wounded. This marked the first instance during the British Mandate in which religious tensions played a direct role in fueling conflict in Palestine a pattern that has since been repeated. That is why Bassam Tawil remarked: "We all know perfectly well that Al-Aqsa mosque is in no danger. Ironically – I am ashamed to admit it – thanks to the Israel Police, Al-Aqsa is the safest mosque in the Middle East" (Bard, 2017, p. 218; Tawil, 2015a).

More recently, calls to "liberate Al-Aqsa" have become frequent. On September 29, 2000, the Palestinian Authority (PA) used its official radio station to call on Palestinians to "defend Al-Aqsa Mosque", resulting in widespread rioting and the eruption of the Al-Aqsa Intifada. Similarly, Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi of the Muslim Brotherhood has framed Al-Aqsa as an existentially threatened site, asserting that Muslims worldwide must defend it as part of a broader struggle (Bard, 2017, pp. 219-220).

Archaeological Research and Political Tensions

Excavations in Jerusalem, particularly those conducted near the Western Wall, have often been met with accusations that Israel seeks to undermine or destroy the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Despite rigorous archaeological standards aimed at preserving all historical layers of the city, opponents argue that such research may uncover evidence affirming the Jewish historical connection to Jerusalem, contradicting narratives that seek to deny such links.

Paradoxically, some of the greatest threats to the Temple Mount's stability have come not from Israeli authorities but from actions taken by the Islamic Waqf, which administers the site. In the mid-1990s, the Israeli Islamic Movement initiated extensive construction at the site known as Solomon's Stables, converting it into a mosque (Shragai, n.d.). Similar projects have raised concerns about the destruction of archaeological evidence.

Often the Palestinians will regurgitate the libel even when Israel is engaged in activities outside the Temple Mount and nowhere near the mosques. For example, an Islamic group protested Jewish activities in the nearby village of Silwan because it is "the gateway to Al-Aqsa Mosque". The group also believed that the Jews planned to destroy the mosque and rebuild the Temple (Bard, 2017, p. 220).

Political Manipulation and Incitement

Accusations concerning Al-Aqsa are frequently leveraged for political purposes. In 2010, the restoration of the Hurva Synagogue in the Jewish Quarter – far from the Temple Mount – was nevertheless framed as part of a supposed plot against Al-Aqsa, leading to two days of rioting. The 1996 inauguration of an exit from the Western Wall tunnel sparked violent protests, despite the fact that the project did not directly affect the Temple Mount. Palestinian leaders, including Mahmoud Abbas, have consistently called for mass protests, framing Jewish visits to the Temple Mount as acts of desecration.

Although the construction had been ongoing for some time, the catalyst for widespread rioting and international condemnation was Prime Minister Netanyahu's decision to open an exit from the Western Wall tunnel at a location along the Via Dolorosa in the Muslim Quarter of Jerusalem. Prior to this development, visitors to the tunnel had to retrace their steps through a narrow corridor, which barely allowed passage for individuals traveling in the opposite direction. The new exit, however, provided an alternative route, enabling thousands of additional visitors to access the site without the need to backtrack.

The factual context was largely disregarded by those seeking to criticize Israel and demonstrate solidarity with Arabs and Muslims. The Arab League

erroneously claimed that “Israel’s aim in opening this gate is to cause the collapse of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, so that it can build the Third Temple in its place” (Bard, 2017, p. 221). As a result, Palestinians engaged in violent riots, leading to attacks on soldiers and civilians, which ultimately caused the deaths of fifteen Israeli soldiers.

Since 1967, Jews, like other non-Muslims, have been visiting the Temple Mount, though the Israeli government places restrictions on their access. Non-Muslim visits are permitted only during designated hours, with an expectation that visitors show respect for Muslim traditions by dressing modestly and refraining from bringing sacred Jewish objects.

The Israeli Supreme Court has affirmed that Jews have the right to pray at the Temple Mount, but police have the discretion to prevent any actions that could provoke unrest. Extremist Jewish groups suspected of plotting against Muslim shrines are either barred from the Temple Mount or closely monitored by law enforcement. Those who have been found conspiring against the mosque have been arrested.

Despite Jews’ legal right to visit their holiest site, Palestinians often resort to violence under the guise of defending the mosque. In 2013, tensions intensified as Palestinians began protesting and, in some instances, attacking Jewish visitors with stones, bottles, and other projectiles. They falsely accused the visitors of desecrating the site and planning to build a Third Temple there.

The recurring accusations, which seldom reflect the actual behavior of Jewish visitors, are typically employed for political ends, such as rallying support, inciting violence, or diverting attention from unpopular actions taken by Palestinian leadership, such as re-engaging in peace talks without meeting preconditions.

The inflammatory rhetoric extends beyond Jerusalem, with Israeli Muslims holding an annual “Al-Aqsa is in Danger” festival. The 2013 rally in Umm al-Fahm, attended by thousands, featured a speech by Sheikh Raed Salah, who condemned any perceived concessions regarding Al-Aqsa, equating them with treason. As geopolitical tensions in the Middle East have drawn attention away from the Palestinian cause, leaders have continued to invoke the “Al-Aqsa libel” to garner support. For example, in July 2015, PA Minister of Religious Affairs Sheikh Yusuf Ida’is claimed on official PA TV that Israel was intent on destroying the Al-Aqsa Mosque to build the alleged Temple. This rhetoric is further exacerbated by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who called for a ban on Jewish entry to the Temple Mount, asserting that the site is a “Noble Sanctuary” and that Jews have no right to desecrate it (Bard, 2017, p. 222).

Many Muslims, with the approval or even encouragement of the Waqf and the Palestinian Authority, have desecrated their own holy places, turning them

into armories and using them as sites to incite violence against non-Muslim visitors and the police protecting them. Middle East scholar Bassam Tawil has noted that the real desecration of Islamic holy sites comes not from Jewish visitors, but from those who bring explosives, stones, and firebombs into Al-Aqsa. Tawil further emphasizes that the desecration stems from violent actions by Muslim youth, not the actions of Jews visiting the Temple Mount (Tawil, 2015b).

Palestinian violence at the Temple Mount is often strategically orchestrated to provoke an Israeli response, which can then be used to tarnish Israel's reputation. Palestinian leaders are seen as benefiting politically from these riots, as they can accuse Israel of suppressing "innocent" Palestinians and garner international sympathy. The political motivation behind these actions is clear: to embarrass Israel and draw attention to Palestinian grievances.

The invocation of the "Al-Aqsa libel" is also a means of galvanizing the Muslim world against Israel, particularly as other pressing issues in the region have taken precedence over the Palestinian cause. The Palestinian plight has increasingly been sidelined by other regional crises, including Iran's nuclear ambitions, the rise of ISIS, and the Syrian conflict.

The irony lies in the failure of international and Muslim leaders to condemn and prevent the abuse of Islamic holy sites by Palestinians, who are more focused on using Al-Aqsa as a military stronghold than as a place of worship.

The Role of Violence and Internal Palestinian Politics

The use of Al-Aqsa as a rallying point extends beyond political rhetoric. Palestinian rioters have repeatedly used the mosque as an armory, stockpiling stones and incendiary devices. Some analysts argue that these actions are designed to provoke an Israeli response, thereby providing an opportunity to depict Israel as an aggressor. Political leaders in Ramallah, meanwhile, have been accused of encouraging such unrest to bolster their domestic standing or distract from governance challenges.

Moreover, as broader geopolitical crises – such as Iran's nuclear program, the Syrian civil war, and the rise of ISIS – have diverted international attention from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Palestinian leaders have resorted to the "Al-Aqsa is in danger" narrative to rekindle support and reassert their cause on the global stage.

The Abraham Accords and Jerusalem

The Abraham Accords, signed in 2020 between Israel and several Arab states – primarily the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, followed by Sudan and Morocco – marked a historic shift in Arab-Israeli relations (Makovsky, 2020). While the agreements centered on diplomatic normalization and

strategic cooperation, the status of Jerusalem remained a latent but significant concern (US Department of State, 2020). The accords were signed in the aftermath of the US recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel in 2017 and the subsequent relocation of its embassy in 2018 – actions that generated considerable opposition in the Arab and Islamic world (United Nations, 2017). Despite this, the Arab signatories proceeded without securing commitments regarding the Palestinian claim to East Jerusalem, thereby departing from the long-standing Arab Peace Initiative 2002, or Abdallah plan which conditioned normalization on the establishment of a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital (Chtatou, 2022). The Accords were thus criticized by the Palestinian Authority and others for undermining Palestinian interests and sidelining Jerusalem's contested status. Nonetheless, signatory states argued that normalization could offer new leverage to moderate Israeli policies and foster regional stability.

How the Accords relate to Jerusalem?

- **No Concession on Jerusalem:** Although normalizing ties with Israel, the Arab states did not gain any concessions on the status of Jerusalem or progress in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.
- **Palestinian Response:** The Palestinian leadership strongly opposed the Accords, arguing that they bypassed the Palestinian issue and weakened the Arab consensus (as laid out in the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative) that normalization should follow a resolution to the conflict, including the status of East Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state (Al-Ketbi, 2021).
- **UAE's Justification:** The UAE argued that the deal helped prevent Israel's planned annexation of parts of the West Bank, which indirectly protected Palestinian interests – though this claim was debated (Abdulla, 2021).
- **Religious Sensitivities:** Some Arab and Muslim leaders and communities were concerned that normalizing relations with Israel without addressing Jerusalem's status and access to Islamic holy sites would undermine Islamic claims and stewardship over the city.

Conclusion

The recurring assertion that Israel seeks to destroy Al-Aqsa remains a central theme in regional discourse, yet a critical examination of historical and contemporary evidence suggests that this narrative is largely politically motivated rather than grounded in verifiable fact. The Israeli government has consistently enforced strict regulations concerning access to the Temple Mount, including limitations on Jewish visitation and prayer, in an effort to preserve the site's religious integrity and avoid exacerbating tensions. These

measures demonstrate an official policy aimed at maintaining the delicate status quo rather than undermining the sanctity of Al-Aqsa.

Nevertheless, the use of Al-Aqsa as a political symbol continues to shape both Palestinian internal dynamics and broader regional conflicts. Various factions within Palestinian politics, particularly those seeking to bolster their legitimacy or rally public support, have strategically employed the claim that Al-Aqsa is under existential threat. This rhetoric often serves as a mobilizing tool, reinforcing collective grievances and fueling periods of unrest. Additionally, regional actors, including state and non-state entities, have leveraged this narrative to advance geopolitical agendas, sometimes intensifying hostilities rather than fostering dialogue.

Given the deeply entrenched historical and religious significance of the Temple Mount, any discussion regarding its status remains inherently sensitive. While tensions surrounding the site persist, a nuanced and evidence-based approach is essential to disentangling political manipulation from factual realities. Future diplomatic efforts aimed at reducing conflict over Al-Aqsa must acknowledge the intersection of religious sensitivities, national identities, and geopolitical strategies that continue to shape its contested status. While the Abraham Accords did not directly change the legal or political status of Jerusalem, they shifted regional dynamics in a way that marginalized the centrality of Jerusalem and the Palestinian question in Arab-Israeli diplomacy. This normalization without addressing the core status of Jerusalem marked a departure from traditional Arab policy, though Jerusalem remains a critical and unresolved issue in the broader peace process.

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Secondary sources

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