

UNIVERSITY OF TARTU
Faculty of Social Sciences
Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies

Ilaha Huseynova

**THE POLITICS OF MEMORY AND COMMEMORATION: CENTENNIAL
ANNIVERSARY IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS**

MA thesis

Supervisor: Prof. Andrey Makarychev

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I have written this Master's thesis independently. All viewpoints of other authors, literary sources and data from elsewhere used for writing this paper have been referenced.

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Abstract

This study attempts to explore the alteration of historical narratives on centennial anniversary according to existent political situations in the South Caucasus. Drawing on the literature developed by several scholars of the politics of memory and commemoration, the thesis argues that coupled with national memory and cultural memory, political memory lead historical narratives to be impacted by states' actions. What is more, national/collective memory, national/collective identity and political interest are interdependent, whereas foreign policy derives from the political interest. All things considered, the theoretical background brings to the conclusion of the possibility of narratives to be shaped by political situations. The thesis aims to dig into narratives provided and make a comparison with historical narratives to find out altered (highlighted or concealed) narratives. The research uses narrative analysis as a technique of qualitative method. Primarily based on chosen state-run media materials, as well as other primary sources of three countries of the region, narratives are being studied here for the first time. Some of the contributors here are celebratory speeches of countries' officials and conducted elite-interviews of local experts from Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. The results show that all three countries shift their historical narratives owing to the political situation existent.

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Introduction

Every nation is idiosyncratic in its own way. This uniqueness derives from the peculiar path of the community in the form of history, identity, collective/national memory, national consciousness and other characteristics constructing an image of the Self. In order to preserve already founded, but still malleable collective/national memory, States by political tools (re)construct, record, discard and make specific events remembered using the politics of memory and mnemonic practices. It includes commemoration days and anniversaries, holidays within the national calendar, school textbooks and distinct institutions of memory collectivization. It is significant as well to acknowledge that commemoration and remembrance can simultaneously serve as a legitimization of power, ideology promotion or States' current foreign and domestic policy orientation.

On May 2018 Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia marked the 100th anniversary of the establishment of independent republics in the South Caucasus, back in 1918. Following political situation and disintegration within the Russian Empire during the end of the First World War, these entities declared their independence. Over this time, newly established states either tackled with challenges towards (regional) powers or develop gradually bilateral relations with the latter. This thesis maps out to draw apparent parallels between mutual relationship of states during First Republic and those nowadays. Specifically, major powers as Russia, Turkey, Britain are observed coupled with less important, but still influential actors. Moreover, the dissertation sheds light on bilateral relation in between three countries of the region.

Although these republics were short-lived as sovereign states, their impact on current republics' collective identities and collective memories are noticeably high. For a long time, countries of the region were unable to mark this date due to the restrictions imposed by the Soviet Union. The latter did its best for obliterating the First Republic from the national consciousness and instilled silence. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union and restoration of independence, three states gradually began to recover the heritage of the First Republics. Nevertheless, the acts of commemoration have not been marked annually, and some of the countries still were reluctant in their memory decisions. Depending on a political situation and political regime in power, the attitude

towards the First Republic varied from one country to another as well as from one particular period to the other.

Throughout of the past year, three countries marked the anniversary on a large scale, hosting more than hundred of events within and outside of countries along with internal movements and military parades in different parts of the republics. Armenia symbolically celebrated the day of the occasion at the Sardarapat Memorial which stands at the top of Armenian narrative on centenary anniversary, emphasizing the military victory in Sardarapat, Bash-aparan and Gharakilisa coupled with the genocide/massacre¹ in the role of independence establishment. In Azerbaijan similarly wide-range movements were held in Istiglaliyyat street symbolized the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic and official visit has been made to the monument erected in its honour. Furthermore, the small-scale military parade took place therein. At the Freedom Square in downtown Tbilisi a show-force military parade has been displayed with symbolical oath-taking process. Moreover, the historical reenactment of the proclamation of independence has been illustrated in Tbilisi. More important, the occasion has been performed at the National Youth and Children's palace and at the same local time when the independence had been announced. Commemorations have been accompanied by a number of academic conferences in three South Caucasian countries with numerous publications devoted to the occasion.

The centennial anniversary became an important platform for South Caucasian states to promote their images internationally and strengthen memory politics domestically. Applying a set of concepts on the politics of memory and commemoration, this thesis focuses mainly on international aspect, but will touch upon domestic aspect as well. The latter involves how states using memory politics display themselves on international arena. For instance, both Azerbaijan and Georgia use westernization of the politics of memory, highlighting the democratic values and credentials of the First Republic. Countries also make a bridge between the values founded and their current political orientation as a successor of founding fathers. Hereby, Georgia foregrounds the importance of the constitution, the first democratically elected woman and being

¹ In order to maintain objectivity and avoid expressions which do not concern the field of my expertise both terms massacre and genocide would be used in this thesis.

historically European. Azerbaijan accentuates on then-newly established first secular and democratic state in the Turkic/Muslim world and gender equality, giving women same right to vote as men.

People are usually aware of these basic facts and witnesses of commemoration rituals and anniversaries, nonetheless having superficial knowledge on the process implementation in-depth. People generally remain uninformed on how and why States produce particular narratives about events sticking on some, hiding the others and what are the motives behind this. The novelty of this dissertation project, thus, lies on engaging in the recent centenary anniversary took place in the South Caucasus that is new and have not been explored before. What is more, the dissertation employs comparative few case study, covering all three countries of the region. The focus of the thesis will be given on the alteration of the historical narratives according to political circumstances, at the same time touching upon incentives of doing so and commemoration patterns. Thus, my research question based on this context is following How were the historical narratives about centenary anniversaries in the South Caucasus shaped by the contemporary political situations? My primary expectation is that narratives circulated by state-run media outlets as well as in the speeches of the official figures carry on the interest (political or national) and follow the (foreign) policy orientation of chosen states.

Yet, in particular no study has yielded on the centennial anniversary in the South Caucasus, analyzing the narratives of all three countries. In a sequel, the references will be based on previous studies examining the politics of memory and commemoration in other events and countries' experiences. The importance of the work lies in a possibility to understand the region profoundly. More important, their attitude towards the First Republic gives a message on their identity, perception of Self and Other. For instance, analyzing the narratives can provide an overview on how states see the future of the country, how states are going to construct collective memory and try to predict the near future actions in bilateral relations. Furthermore, through the narratives for both international and domestic audience, the state implicitly insinuate certain content.

The objective of this thesis is to analyse the alteration of historical narratives as related to political situations within each of these three countries. Therefore, it is my intention, first, to pick historical narratives on centenary anniversaries from the state-run online media outlets. Second, to compare them with the historical narratives proposed by local historians. Third, to relate the mainstream political celebration discourses with the dominant political agendas in each South Caucasian countries. Finally, to observe parallels in historical narratives by state-run media and the state's policy orientation in order to find out how actually were historical narratives shaped.

The thesis is based upon a few case comparative studies of most similar systems design in three countries of the South Caucasus. Qualitative research through the narrative analysis would be employed step by step according to Bal's narrative analysis strategy. Timeframe for picking the narratives is going to contain date of anniversary in given countries and one month (May) prior to the usual strategy of governments to spread specific narratives beforehand. Because Azerbaijan had two additional events (military parades) related to the centennial anniversary, the narratives from both of them would be examined later. The main data consists of three parts: speeches of governmental officials, narratives from three state-controlled online media outlets for each of the countries (and additionally, Armenian diaspora) separately, and interviews with local practitioners, scholars and experts.

By and large, thesis comprise the table of contents, introduction, four chapters, findings/conclusion, appendix and bibliography. Here, the first chapter consists of theoretical framework, while revealing the prominent theoretical concepts which expected to be built in the form of chain. More precise, I will opt for the concepts through which I would be able to account for the outcome reached in the conclusion. The second accounts for the research design and methodology used. The third gives background information on the analogies from local historians. The fourth chapter will immerse into analysis of each country and answer posed research question, being concluded with the conclusion section. Finally, the finding and concluding remarks coupled with appendix and bibliography are given in the end of this dissertation.

1. Theoretical Framework

In recent years the literary on memory has been grown sharply. In this chapter, some of the main concepts indispensable for understanding the operation of the politics of memory and commemoration as well as how political agendas and priorities can influence the shape of historical narratives will be briefly sketched. More precisely, in the first sub-chapter the necessary forms of memory facilitating a clear overview on the topic will be described. Switching to national master narratives, their peculiar role in states and nation-building process to be scrutinized; and how all these are fortified by national commemoration and remembrance. The second sub-chapter accounts for identity and memory politics; the interdependence of national collective memory and national identity with the political interest. Finally, in the last sub-chapter the ways of celebration the occasions by local media as ‘public historians’ to be explained.

1.1. The notion of memory, national master narrative and commemoration

Memory serves as a linkage between remembering and forgetting, thus building a framework of the past commonly shared by a particular community. Simultaneously, it is what contains the prominent part of nation-building process via specific tools and mechanisms masterminded by national elites. There is no one single historical or collective memory within a community, but rather diverse narratives and feelings about the past, which reflects the variety of political or social interest groups striving for power. Through national master narratives, elites create particular collective/national memory which has undergone the filtering of remembering or forgetting. This constructed collective memory embeds the past, the present and the future of a social group forming its national identity. However, both collective/national memory, national identity and narratives are fluid and changeable depending on circumstances or political needs. In that case, commemorations have been always successful in fortifying these memories. Thus, being an inherent part of commemoration, anniversaries function as an assistant for events to survive and remain alive.

Collective memory is a socially constructed notion, based on knowledge that is shared among members of a social group. Memory can be altered over time, involving its signifiers such as shared history, memories, power and collective consciousness [Durkheim's conscience collective] (Durkheim 1893/1997; Halbwachs 1992: 38). Altogether they trigger solidarity within a group and form its identity. Maurice Halbwachs connected to the concept of social frame pointing out that "No memory is possible outside frameworks used by people living in society to determine and retrieve their recollections" (Halbwachs 1992: 43). Shared concerns of people, their values, experiences and narratives are parts of implicit or explicit construction that is called a social frame. Keeping the track of Halbwachs, Assmann continues that the life of human beings in fact lasts not only in the first person singular, but also in plural where are going to be involved in groups and accepting communities' "We" (Assmann 2008: 51). Moreover, shared experiences and discourses that build precise boundaries construct actually this "We" with defining "the principles of inclusion and exclusion" (Ibid, 52). Assmann adds that "the individual participates in the group's vision of its past by means of cognitive learning and emotional acts of identification and commemoration" and pre-mentioned past actually cannot be remembered, but it ought to be memorized (Assmann 2008: 52). For Halbwachs, memory is interconnected to how minds of people work together in society: "it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize and localize their memories" (Halbwachs 1992: 38). Binding this with the topic of this research, a commemoration of the First Republic in the South Caucasus, the event of which took place back in 1918 and have not been witnessed by anyone individually, is a memory acquired in society and boosting solidarity and identity construction.

Nevertheless, neither institutions nor groups are capable to enshrine a memory as individuals do. To put it another way, rather than having a memory deriving from the neurological system, institutions and groups, involving nations, churches and leadership constructs memories via specific mnemonic signs such as commemoration ceremonies, texts, images, symbols, monuments, memorial places and rites. Therefore, such a memory serves as a springboard for both institutions and groups to build a particular identity (Assmann 2006). Furthermore, on the basis of selection and exclusion a

memory can be sorted out by a split of relevant and irrelevant memories. This is why collective memory is also considered as a mediated memory upheld by the media-promoted, symbols and practices immersing into people's minds, consciousness and hearts. At the same time, their effectiveness depends on political factors on the one hand, and ethnic patriotism and fervor from the other. However, for a more comprehensive picture, I will opt for narrowly proposed by Assmann concepts of cultural, political and national memory which do not discard the concept of collective memory, but differentiate them as distinct *modi memorandi*, ways of remembering .

According to Assmann, cultural memory is a form of collective memory due to the fact of being shared by a community and “that it conveys to these people a collective, that is, cultural, identity” (Assmann 2008: 110). Here, external objects play role either on the level of personal memory or on social memory. Besides constant interaction, there are also ambient symbols that lead to the existence of collective memory. Jan Assmann clarifies:

With respect to things such as Marcel Proust's famous madeleine, or artifacts, objects, anniversaries, feasts, icons, symbols, or landscapes, the term “memory” is not a metaphor but a metonym based on material contact between a remembering mind and a reminding object (Assmann 2008: 110).

Even if they do not possess their own memory, they boost ours via particular narratives, images and stories, commemorations, rites and texts. Same is more significant on the social level for those social groups which do not have memory (or complete, memory) and which are going to build one using commemorative dates and practices, monuments, mnemonic institutions, ceremonies, museums, libraries and archives that would carry on their memories. Altogether comprises a form of collective memory, as outlined, cultural memory. This concept specifically suits the case of the South Caucasian countries, the independent statehood of which is considerably young and memory of which are still under construction.

The concept of political memory is a type of memory backed up and constructed with political purposes (by political agents or institutions). That includes the construction of identity via specific memorial signs such as texts, monuments, ceremonies, images, myths and rituals. Meanwhile, a narrative that has emotional tone is noteworthy in making political memory. For its successful implementation, one narrative should have a thrust, demonstrating the significance of the nation and strengthen its self-image; emphasizing mostly achieved goals, triumphs and victories, while hiding failures (defeats) which do not fit into the heroic image of the nation. Jan Assmann in her work *Transformations between history and memory* gives an insight into top-down political memory being scrutinized by scholars engaged in political studies who analyses the role of memory for the formation and promotion of ideology, building such a collective identity usable for political actions (Assmann 2006: 56). Nevertheless, it should be taken into account that even if memory agents are creators of memories, they themselves are affected by memories formed within society. Thus, they may alter of focuses and meaning, but cannot create absolutely new collective memory (Aguilar, Humlebaek 2002). The similarity between political memory and cultural memory is being reproduced from one generation to another, making collective memory transferred as well (Assmann 2008: 56).

As stated by Gedi, national memory is the spirit and the psyche of the nation (Gedi 1996: 35). Originally national memory comes from and is a part of political memory, distinguished by its unique shared experiences, culture and remembrances of the national past. Both remembering and forgetting in national memories are prompted by certain political incentives for strengthening national identity. National memory is defined by Confino as “constituted by different, often opposing, memories that, in spite of their rivalries, construct common denominators that overcome on the symbolic level real social and political differences to create an imagined community”, where he meant that an explanation of what national memory is flew from what they both forget and remember (Confino 2017: 183). Thus, national memory is constitutive for the nation-building process, where national collective memories has been used for mobilization, inventing a more distant past with founding myths (Muller 2002: 9).

Muller also clarifies that collective or national memory establishes “a social framework through which nationally conscious individuals can organise their history” outlining that it also could hardly be appropriate to dub this memory a form of myth (Muller 2004: 3). Because, according to him, national/collective memory and national identity are mutually constitutive. At last, national/collective memory simultaneously can shape and conflict with individual memories. For scrutinizing the function of national memory in bilateral relations, Heiko Paabo underlines two levels: consciousness and unconsciousness use of collective memory. He identifies conscious use of memory happening “when the national elite consciously uses the symbols of the past to legitimate their policy or strengthen their support among masses” (Paabo 2011: 63). Here, Paabo determines unconsciousness use of memory based on beliefs constructed by national memory. Unconsciousness use of national memory in the state’s foreign policy, according to Berger is a segment of political culture, coming up with specific foreign policy issues and decision-making (Berger 2002: 81).

In Bal’s understanding, narrative is found in a text where an agent or narrator tells a peculiar story in a medium (1985/1997: 5). A chronological sequence of events inferred from the text is, in other words, a story, whereas the plot, which has beginnings, middle and ends, portrays a path of how the event of past is narrated. As such, in order to successfully reach its goal, narratives should comprise “interesting storyline and impressive heroes” (Misztal 2003: 10). “Storytelling transforms private meaning to public meaning” writes political theorist Hannah Arendt and narrator is key factor due to what story he/she is telling, because this narrative and people who listen are actually “where the power lies” (Jackson 2002: 36). By the same token, national master narratives are inevitable where they tell unique stories of the nation, unifying a group through history even if some interpretations do not reflect the real circumstances (Zerubavel 2011: 238). One may see that national narratives and national identity are inseparably connected, where one builds another providing with uniqueness of the group and defining its “Others”. National narratives, as Heisler puts it, “tell itself about itself, indicate and form its self-image - its collective identity or sense of collective self” (Heisler 2008: 203). The affirmation of national narratives being a basis of national memory comes from the fact that citizens having their own national consciousness

accept this national narrative. These national narratives that are shared commonly based on national consciousness will show up their reflections in media, education, commemorations and rituals with society carrying the same narratives.

Classic conceptualization of commemorations is unpacked by Durkheim: commemorations serve to “sustain the vitality of a social group’s beliefs, to keep them from being effaced from memory, and ... to revivify the most essential elements of the collective consciousness” (Durkheim 1915: 420). It is what is interlinked with the identity and memory historically: “Identities and memories are not things we think about, but things we think with” (Gillis 1996: 5). Acts of commemoration fulfil two main goals as first, to remind and facilitate a group self-awareness on their identity and second, to give a moral importance to the events. Gillis elaborates this thought pointing out that the acts of commemoration from its roots are “social and political, for it involves the coordination of individual and group memories, whose results may appear consensual when they are in fact the product of processes of intense contest, struggle, and, in some instances, annihilation” (Ibid, 5).

Every single act of commemoration replicates a commemorative narrative (Zerubavel 2011: 237). As such, commemorative narratives maintain a story which reflects a nation’s idiosyncratic past expounding the process of ritualized remembrance which alarms members of one group with a clear moral message. Commemorations influence the segments of the past. They structure an existent collective memory because commemorations are conducive to a master commemorative narrative formation. Ensuing from collective memory which highlights an idiosyncratic identity of a group, national master narratives analyze the events that demarcate the emergence of a group as a self-sufficient social entity and order preconceived relations towards other nations (Ibid, 238). However, what is necessary apart of commemoration is the participation of people in the acts of commemoration as its imminent part. Casey specifically makes detailed review where he outlines that this participation “occurs via the mediating presence of various commemorabilia, material or psychical; we remember through these translucent media; but we could just as well say that we participate with them in honoring a common memorandum” (Casey 2011: 184). There also other people we

participate with which he calls “horizontal” and commemorator who makes possible the commemorative proper. Commemoration did not separate us for our differences, in turn, it unifies us as a strictly social being, rather than individual. Thus, acts of commemorations gather those who intertwined, not who merely go to commemorate out of guilt, recurrence or fellow feeling. Here, even commemorators are intensely bonded at the most profound stage.

The sites of memory are identified by Zerubavel, Accordingly, “Libraries, bibliographies, folk legends, photo albums, and television archives ... history textbooks, calendars, eulogies, guest books, tombstones, war memorials, and various Halls of Fame. Equally evocative in this regard are pageants, commemorative parades, anniversaries, and various public exhibits of archaeological and other historical objects” (Zerubavel 2003: 6). The politics of memory makes it clear that the acts of commemorations are much more important than merely symbolic rituals for awareness of the past. The state’s role in the process is asserted by Hite, where commemoration is inevitable - it “aided by a loyal citizenry, to doing the re-memory work of structuring a nation, of shoring up nationalism and patriotism in order to build the state stability and represent state in a non-violent, even glorious way” (Hite 2013: 4). Thereby, the process of memorization reshapes the perceived meaning of the past with an ability to mobilize (and depending on political infrastructure to influence the future). Anniversary commemoration, like other types of commemorations, works as, dubbed by Etzioni, “seeds of virtue” (Etzioni 2011). The process of anniversary commemoration cause to memorize and fortify shared beliefs that are formed within society and increase the sense of togetherness. The formal explanation of the concept of the anniversary is given by Kitch, for whom the anniversary “a ritual celebration of the community who observes it, serving to strengthen its identity and values through the remembrance of an event” (Kitch 2002: 48). Complementing this thought, such commemorations foster what is called “emotional energy” intensifying mnemonic depiction of past events and “respect for symbolic objects” (Collins 2004: 67).

However, anniversaries do not contain only a symbolic object, but also foundational myths and selective discourses of the past. All of these narratives have to be strongly

associated with both the nation itself and the political regime, maintaining a balance between two. Unlike historical science, myths do not reflect what has actually happened, in spite of myths being a historical narrative. Myths have the ideological function to “promise us ‘a conclusion’ to the community’s narrative identity in the form of a future utopian horizon” (Kolvra 2015: 74). They serve as a narrator of emergence, foundation and beginning of the nation’s road (or in this case the road its independence). Political myths that are widely used in centenary anniversaries replicate the origin of the community, the events related to the foundation and co-existence. The infinite grounding principles, characteristics, and features of one society are posed in the narrative of origin. In memory studies, politically instrumental national narratives are often discerned as national myths, hence national memory and a national myth. As stated by Snyder, through the national myths that national memory comprises, it is easier for the nationally conscious individual to comprehend the past and present (Snyder 2002: 50). Nonetheless, Gildea separates narratives set out as myth from other stories from the narratives that have historical ground and rebuild history due to the current political infrastructure. Anyway, narratives that are a segment of the national memory create a bridge between individuals of a group and outside world.

1.2. Memory and identity politics: Interconnection between collective/national memory and policy orientation

In this sub-chapter, I am trying to scrutinize the role of identity and memory politics and their necessity in international relations and commemoration activities. I argue that all three categories - national/collective memory, national identity, and political interest - are deeply interconnected and dependent on each other as well as how thereof commemorations are taking place. Ritualized days of commemorations are primarily conveyed for remembering the prominent past events by individuals of a society or a state. It can be either a traumatic event or, as in this case, a celebration. As it was pointed out in the previous chapter, usually commemoration and commemoration activities work for strengthening solidarity and the feeling of togetherness and trigger social mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion. Commemoration days play a crucial role for political actors through involving heads of the states and politicians and boosting

national prestige either in the region with its neighbours or in the world (Onken 2007: 24).

Interaction between states, current relations, and their past experiences contribute much on their identities. It also shaped the state of identity's alteration and further reconstruction. The vision of actors has a potential capability in influencing the construction of the relations' framework which consequently determines their identities. Identity is usually explained as an expression of a group's uniqueness and outlining people's belonging to one peculiar community. Put another way, identity is a composition of practices, values, and ideals which have been built based on memories. By memory here is meant a narrative telling us about the past, self-perception, what is the truth and what is not. It creates a relationship between nation and positive or negative experience, thus differentiating "Us" from "Other" and assists to put together those who enter the same system of "Self". Similarly to collective/national memory, national identity is defined as a social representation, where a national group keeps on not merely for itself, but also to other national groups.

The backbone of the national identity formation is laid on the group's historical transformation into a nation, where a nation's identity is built up based on national master narratives and collective memory. National collective memory is thus interdependent with the national identity and facilitates national identity's strengthening. Reconsideration and reshape of collective memory occurs constantly the historical occasions and benchmarks promulgated by a regulatory agency that alter the content of national identity. Furthermore, identity is a legitimate existential backbone of a nation-state. Thus, one of the main tasks of the state (or its political interest) is to safeguard the national identity. Along with the linkage collective memory and national identity with each other, they also interdependent with the political interest. As it has been mentioned upper in the first sub-chapter, the state feels the necessity in creating institutions of memory collectivization as mnemonic practices (textbooks, military service, calendar and holidays, museums, monuments, specific theatres, etc). Because for fortifying the collective memory process, one memory should be promoted, discussed, scrutinized and invoked. To keep the existence of the nation, it is also

important for the state to foster the real heroic people and their images, antiheroes, narratives of victimhood, suffer and resistance. However, there are also counter-memories within society, which oppose to the regime's interests. A slight difference between the interest of political force and national/state interest should be pointed out. When the former concern only one political group, the national/state interest involves all layers of society. Above-mentioned counter-memory can also be transformed into the collective memory, but only when the regime's interest reshaped by the new regime. This process is well suits into the case of Georgia and how commemoration practices and relation to the First Republic varied from one political force into the other.

Furthermore, Snyder outlines that national memory is "a means of organizing the past such as to preserve the dignity of the group with which we identify, and thus bolster our prides as individual human beings" (Snyder 2002: 55). Likewise, the other factor that should be taken into account is the national prestige. The goal of foreign policy is to promote the country's "historical truth", facilitate its national prestige, victimization of a nation and relations with other states in the international arena. National memory thus influences mass mobilization and strong national identity, which in its turn handles with symbols boosting national pride and prevents any kind of threats to the state's ontological security and national prestige.

Herewith, Social Constructivism devotes particular attention to the collective memory, not merely as something that works for hard interests, but a segment that identifies these interests (Wendt 1987: 355). Social Constructivism demonstrates the linkage between the collective memory and identity as self-awareness of human agents not like being a deliberation of interests, but as a component that is capable to shape and identify them. Thus, the very past experiences do influence society's and state's perception of one other country. Thus, sometimes negative collective memory that has formed within society influences the political force in foreign policy choices. It can be exposed by the case of Azerbaijan, the perception of Russia within society and its reflection on official narratives on the centenary anniversary. Nevertheless, both collective memory and political interest are interdependent, what means not only collective memory is capable

to shape the political interest, but also being influenced, transfigured straightaway by political interest. Furthermore, depending upon a political interest of the regime in power, the collective memory and foreign policy can be altered, opposing sometimes, thereby, the state's national interest. Additionally, the memories which contravene the national interest that involves existential threat, fragility of territorial integrity and sovereignty (see Table 1).

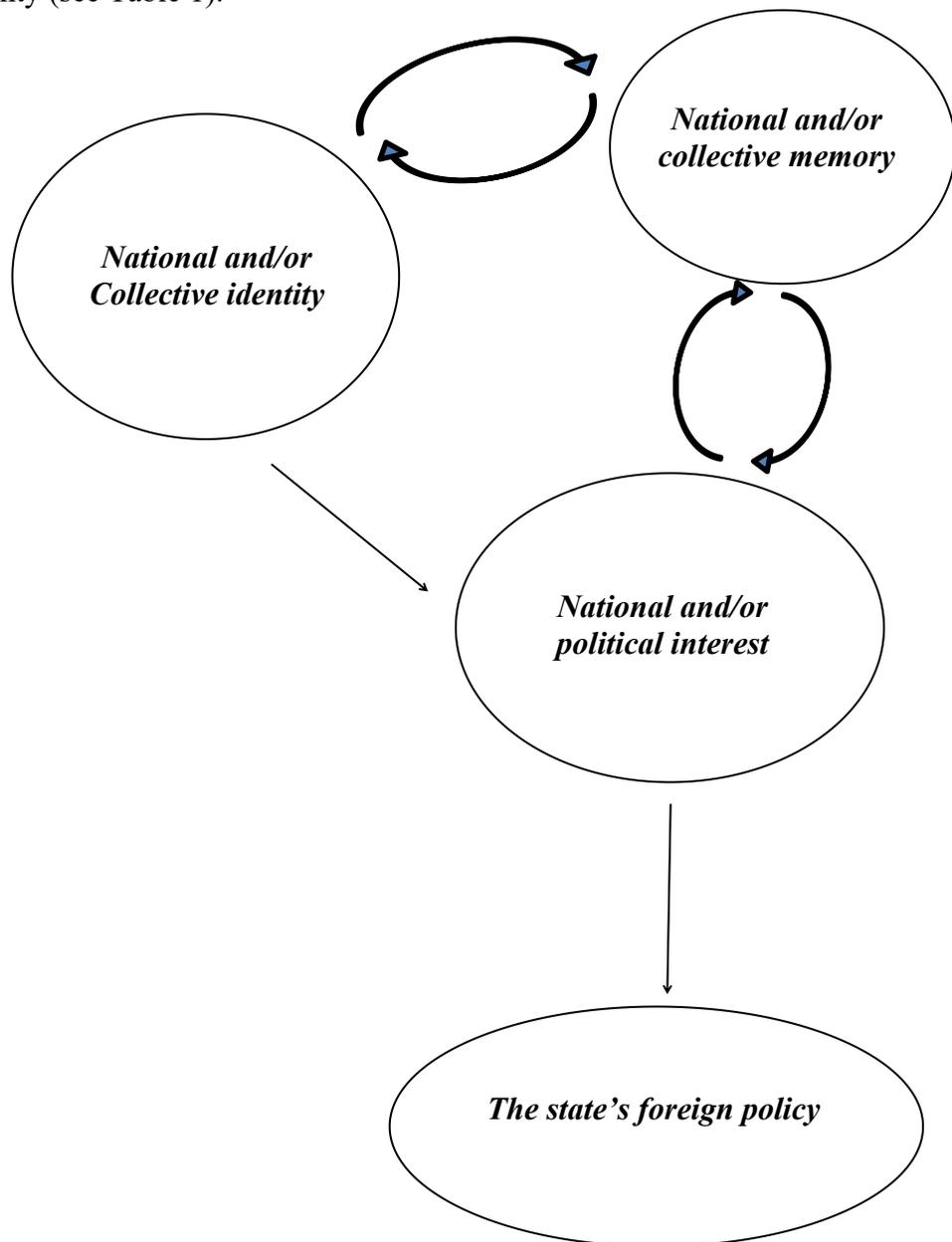


Table 1: The interaction between national/collective memory, national/collective identity and political/national interest, and the influence on the foreign policy.

Identities account for “who or what actors are”, whereas interests imply “what actors want” with demonstrating their motivations of behaviour. Wendt explains interests as “presuppose identities because an actor cannot know what it wants until it knows who it is, and since identities have varying degrees of cultural content so will interests” (Wendt 1999: 231). Alexandre George and Robert Keohane delineate three categories of national interest: physical survival or life, autonomy or liberty and economic or property (George&Keohane 1980: 221-30). The first - physical survival as a state-society complex is about territorial property and whether the state allow to surrender or secession the property to preserve national interest. The second, autonomy or in other words liberty includes state-society complex to have a supremacy over its resources and government choice. Being deprived of liberty, the states would not be able to meet its internal needs and external necessities. The third economic growth, due to Wendt, is a sufficient “maintenance of the mode of production in a society and, by extension, the state’s resource base” (Wendt 1999: 236).

Regardless numerous scholars reckoning the economic growth as the main interest of the states, Wendt distinguish the fourth national interest dubbed “collective self-esteem”. This is “a group’s need to feel good about itself, for respect or status” that hinge on positive and negative collective self-images (Wendt 1999: 336-7). Collective self-images are produced from the significant Other and how the state (Self) see itself in relation to Other. As a consequence of perceived disrespect, distrust or scorn by the Other, the negative self-image is to be emerged. On the contrary, mutual respect and cooperation leads to the construction of the positive self-image (Wendt 1999: 336-7).

Memory is inevitable politically since political establishment can opt for it as an instrument for the power and policy orientation. To gain support for their policies, they usually draw historical analogies and refer to the crucial events within national memory (Konig 2008: 27-33; Olick 2007: 122). Nora argues that national memory is “in permanent evolution, a perpetually present phenomenon” and an ongoing process that never stops to be constructed and reconstructed selectively (Nora 1989: 8). Due to the constant flexibility and ambiguity of memories, they are able to be manipulated and used as a tool for mobilization (Muller 2002: 21-2). Extensive use of memory politics to

forge national identities has started in all South Caucasian countries immediately after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Simultaneously, memory has contained the main segment of the nation-building process in the background of footprints remained from the previous regime. Defining their policy orientation states set off to clarify their national memories. As Halfdanarson states “States have created or fortified national sentiments through national school systems, military service, national health service, symbolic actions, and the eradication of regional cultures, inculcating the idea that all their citizens have something in common” (Halfdanarson 2000: 22). Over time, an established national memory has been shaping according to policy orientations and interests of political elites as well as the national interest.

Another view on this issues comes from Eva-Clarita Onken who clarifies three main levels of analysis of memory and politics: domestic policy, bilateral relations and supranational level (Onken 2007: 26). In this thesis due to the limitations occurred the main emphasis would be given particularly on the bilateral relations. Altogether these concepts mentioned upper account for how and why political situations affect the historical narratives Thus, with the provided theoretical framework and demonstration of the main historical discourse that appeared right after the independence I will scrutinize how the same historical narratives have been shaped in line with the contemporary political situation in practice.

1.3. Journalism’s memory work: Anniversary journalism

For transmuting a short-term memory into long-term collective memory with a purposes of it being maintained from generation to generation, it should be fleshed out in distinct forms. Those are: a) creation of narrative that mobilizes with events emplotment; b) verbal and visual signs that will keep up a memory; c) expanding of mass media and specific institutions of learning; d) monuments and sites; e) commemoration rituals sporadically reviving and reawakening memory and collective participation (Assmann 2008: 55-6). In case of anniversaries, it is important to reckon the expansion of the mass

media which spread specific national narratives through the countries contributing to nation-building process and last point of Assmann regarding commemorations rituals being revived during anniversaries as well. Assmann thinks that commemoration operates by permeating the past with its present meaning and it also serves to “restore the mnemonic quality of historical knowledge, to bring it back to popular consciousness, and to reconnect it with the realm of lived experience” (Corning, Schuman 2015: 191).

Anniversary journalism is a demonstration of the media’s role in collective memory and collective memory’ role in journalism (Kitch 2000 :62). In that sense, state-run online media outlets that have been chosen for analysis are particularly important taking into account their national reach, the style of presented narrative, and as Kitch puts it “they physical permanence make them important sites of meaning-making, community-building, and reminiscence” (Kitch 2000 :45). For preserving the past, therefore, one social group or journalists should retell the story of an important event and constitutive narrative. The story that they come up with already contextualized the past within the contemporary stage and present as well as future within a past, producing a narrative course that involves national meaning (Kitch 2000: 48). Thereby, in that context, anniversaries work out as a reminder of both journalists and audience of being one part of this occasion in time and place, showing them the future. Likewise, Barbie Zelizer underlines that “the study of collective memory . . . is much more than the unidimensional study of the past. It represents a graphing of the past as it is used for present aims, a vision in bold relief of the past as it is woven into the present and the future” (Zelizer 1995). Media journalists use techniques of personalization and narrative, especially highlighting an event or scene from the past. The journalists of state-run media outlets spotlight the event primarily according to the state’s main agenda, policy orientation, and advocate regime’s ideology. The study state-controlled media outlets thus will open up an opportunity to observe the parallels occurred in policy orientation and alterations in historical narratives.

As it was mentioned above, journalists who have reckoned also as public historians select (or being directed to select) the events and people of the past, accounting for their historical importance within a particular social group. In their job, they concentrate in

present and fix their narratives accordingly with setting “their collective recollections and reconstructions of the past in place by attending to their own agendas” (Zelizer 2008: 81). During anniversary commemorations, journalists as they do throughout ceremonies and public speeches are provided with a “legitimate, culturally sensible peg” (Schudson 1986: 103). Therefore, anniversary journalism updates reinforces and build a “social cite of memory”, where the main goal is not to inform, but rather reiterate social values and fortify collective identity (Nora 1989; Zerubavel 1996; Kitch 2000). Consequently, one version of events is going to be reaching those who are not witnessed, amplifying a certain social memory.

Furthermore, political elites sort out and choose selective discourses that cause and strengthen social cohesion forging identities. These national master narratives are going to be spread during the anniversaries via subsidiary means such as media (the main ones, state-run media sources), fiction, depending on the case monuments erections, informal digital space (Facebook groups, Twitter, Instagram where people share their solidarity). By and large, these national narratives operate based on political myths (with heroic intervention, founder fathers and so forth) which articulate during the period of anniversaries (particularly centenary anniversaries). Nevertheless, one should be pointed out, there are also unofficial actors that forge identities such as media personalities and epistemic communities playing while constructing national memory (but, of course, states or political leaders still preserve their primacy). Quite relevant example on state spreading such narratives can be demonstrated by the case of Georgia. The government of Georgia funded a project “Revive History” dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the First Republic of Georgia. The main characters of the First Republic would have portrayed with their personal stories, videos and pictures on Facebook. The pages included full information on these characters and achievements of the First Republic of Georgia (GPB 2018). First Channel also contributed in creation microfilms about heroes of the First Republic, covering the historical figures such as the first female MPs and others. For instance, one of them is Maro Makashvili died throughout the Soviet invasion Georgian army nurse (Agenda 2018).

2. Research Design and Methodology

By and large, this thesis will conduct a few case comparative case studies focusing on how historical narratives on centenary anniversary were modified by political situations in the context of the South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia). The key criterion for the case selection was similar parallels occurred in the histories of the countries. The independence of all three countries has been gained with the collapse of the Russian Empire and two revolutions involved. Moreover, South Caucasian states lost their short-lived independence accordingly with the takeover of the Soviet Union. As Przeworski and Teune pointed out the MSSD is appropriated for engaging in area studies which is specifically relevant here (1970:33). It poses a comparison of very similar cases which have differences in their dependent variables (in this case historical narratives) and will assist to find out those independent variables that, thus, accounts for this dependent variable. The key criterion for the selection was having the similar history (control variable) back in hundred years ago, taking also into account few other common features. The central point here is that albeit of having the similar history, the historical narratives vary from each other based on political situations what proves selected for the thesis most similar system design.

The dissertation follows the logic of a narrative analysis of qualitative research using Mieke Bal's narrative analysis strategy. Before moving to the case studies, the (historical) background information will be given. Thereby, the brief historical background will facilitate further comparison of narratives and help to find out which narratives underwent alterations. All data for the background information will be taken from the local historians (Armenian for Armenia, Azerbaijani for Azerbaijan and Georgian for Georgia) or foreign historians focused on this particular country. The empirical grounding of the analysis is based primarily on narratives produced by the state-run online media outlets as well as the congratulatory speeches of each president (or prime-minister) and two conducted elite interviews with experts per country. The data were gathered by sorting out and collecting stories from online media sources, subsequently deducing one single narrative that the state reckons as a priority to allocate. Due to time constraints, the attention will be paid to the news coverage of celebration

on 26th of May for Georgia, and on the 28th of May for both Armenia and Azerbaijan. Timeframe for picking the narratives devoted to the anniversary is going to contain one month (May) owing to the usual strategy of governments to spread specific narratives beforehand. The attention will be paid also to how these states celebrated and what is the role of the First Republics in people's consciousness. Furthermore, as in case of Azerbaijan two additional dates will be analyzed. Both of them closely related to the centennial anniversary and comprise a part of the contemporary general narrative of Azerbaijan. Any other information that is considered important in conducting the research will be used.

Specifically, three government-controlled online media outlets are chosen for the analysis: *EVN report*, *Armtimes*, *Armenpress* from (post-revolutionary) Armenia, *Trend*, *Inews*, *Azertag* from Azerbaijan, *Agenda*, *GPB*, *Adjara* from Georgia. The decision was made based on the content of news of the media outlets, the information of the ownership in the web-page and reports with the indicators from the Transparency International. Taking into account the specificity of Armenia, its diaspora and the situation which overlapped with the centenary anniversary three *The Armenian weekly*, *Asbarez*, *The Armenian mirror-spectator* diaspora and three pro-government sources *Azg*, *Iravunk*, *Golos Armenii* serving the previous regime have been opted for. Hansen's set of criteria is followed for selecting online media outlets, including being a formal authority, clearly articulated and widely read (Hansen 2006). Albeit distinct influential factors (mass media, NGOs, civil society and academia), the state or political regime still keeps its precedence in accession collective/national memory formation, while being in power. That was the main reason for me picking concretely those online media sources that are funded by states themselves.

Then, the celebratory speeches of presidents (or prime-minister) are scrutinized and would be incorporated into the single narrative derived from the analysis. The selection of the speeches are also followed the same criteria given by Hansen. The first figures of the state have significant capacity in shaping people's perception. Most probably, the narratives shared by the authorities will circulate in the chosen online media sources. An analysis would be fortified by elite interviews to get a local perspective and what can be

missed during the study. To see clear-cut patterns of narrative elements, all interviews have been particularly conducted in a written form to examine narratological specificities in depth.

2.1 Qualitative narrative analysis as a technique

The dissertation offers an overview of the narrative analysis of inquiry, an approach that concentrates on the use of stories as the foremost data. The strategy I am going to use in analyzing this data is originated from Mieke Bal's method of examination. News is deeply rooted in the existent tradition of storytelling (Lule 2002a). Narratives are "the primary way by which human experience is made meaningful" and what arrange the world of ours (Polkinghorne 1988: 1). Grand narratives, on the other hand, sort out which meanings are appropriate or in other words rational meaningful and which are, on the contrary, irrational and pointless. The given approach utilizes the instruments taken from narratology and literary analysis to figure out resemblance in structure. Although there are a number of definitions of narratives mostly from the literary perspective, Bal identifies the notion of narrative that widely fits alternative fields as well:

A narrative text is a text in which an agent or subject conveys to an addressee ('tells' the reader) a story in a particular medium, such as language, imagery, sounds, buildings, or a combination thereof. A story is the content of that text, and produces a particular manifestation, inflection, and 'colouring' of a fabula; the fabula is presented in a certain manner. A fabula is a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors (Bal 2009: 5).

According to Bal, various general statements and weakly narratives assist us in formulating, making comparison and contrast diverse interpretations. It means that not only "purely" narrative statements and text, but also any texts that have narrative elements are eligible to work with. Bal categorizes three layers of analysis, including fabula (content), text (medium) and story (presentation). Fabula account for the sequence of events, actions and actors that formulates appropriate narrative. The story is content of

text narrated, the angle and the zest added to it. The text is a framework of signs and symbols that serves for the presentation of the narrative. As a whole, all layers facilitate a comprehensive picture and gives a detailed overview of components of the text analyzed.

As I have chosen a considerable number of narrative texts and texts that have narrative elements within, I would not probe all of them separately, but rather will extract, compare and find out the single narrative the state maps out to be conceived. Engaging in the text or Bal's meaning of the narrative, the selected texts would be analyzed by means of imagery, sounds and language signs (Wibben 2011: 47). Then, switching to the story of fabula, I will analyze parts of the narratives such as focalization and focalizers, ordering processes, frequency, and repetition as well as ellipsis (Bal 1997: 6; Wibben 2011: 47-8). Lately, the content of the narrative or fabula which as Wibben points out serves as a plot having the beginning, the middle and the end would be scrutinized (Wibben 2011). Despite the fact that Bal does not use the plot as a part of her strategy, all three countries' narratives would be reviewed from this perspective as well. In general, plot implies a sequence of events within a story where other events are influenced by the structure of cause and effect.

One of the main components of the narrative analysis is the agent of the textual layer or to put it differently, a narrator which presents itself via the language comprising the text. Equally important are the ordering principles of in which form the events are getting presented with changing their chronological order between past, present, and future by moving back and forth (Wibben 2011: 48). Here, frequency and repetition adds features of the significance of the reiterated events and alludes to its "correct" meaning. Simultaneously, the general presentation of events has its own "vision" (or a point of view) from which the narrative is presented. Being referred as a focalization, it often shaped the meaning of the fabula. The terms focalization is derived from the photography and film, implying the relations between the elements presented and the vision through which they are presented" (Bal 2009: 145-6). The point is that, even if the ideology or a perspective is not directly expressed, we could reconstruct it from a narrative structure.

Using news, which are often narrative, and they have a specific structure, or, rather different structures: in the case of news and other media reports it is often important how, in which order the events are presented - i.e. the plot is more important than the fabula, but it could be compared with the fabula to see which events are prioritized and foregrounded and which backgrounded. For instance, while doing the media narrative analysis, a classical structure of the news “inverted pyramids” should be taken into consideration. Accordingly, first, the most urgent or newsworthy events are presented (who did what, when, where and why). Then the report focuses more narrowly on details. Finally, background info is presented. This approach is necessary because not all chosen online media contain fully-fledged narratives, but rather news with narrative elements.

3. Background information

A little earlier before independence, three states of the South Caucasus for quite a long time have been included in a Russian Empire. The unstable situation within the Russian Empire and two revolutions opened up a path for the creation of a new Council in Tbilisi, known as Transcaucasian Seim. The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and Trabzon peace conference as well as disagreements within, have led Seim to establish Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic that started to function on April, 1918. Due to the contradictions and clashes of national interests, the Republic of Transcaucasia has soon broken up. Consequently, on 26th of May Georgians declared their independence, and right after, on 28th of May the same has been done by Armenians and Azerbaijanis. However, unlike others, Armenia was reluctant to leave the protection of Russia and continue to coexist independently with the enemy (Turkey) and two “unreliable” neighbours (Kurkjian 2008). Simon Vratsian adds that Turkey - the winner of the situation urged Armenians to proclaim the independence as a prerequisite to further peace. Meanwhile, the political forces under the leadership varied from country to country. In Armenia, the nationalist but also socialist-leaning Armenian Federation of Dashnaktsutyun was dominated. The power in Georgia was concentrated in the hands of the Menshevik wing of the Russian Social Democratic workers’ party. In Azerbaijan, the control was asserted by the Turkist national forces preponderated in Azerbaijan’s Musavat Party.

With Aram Manukian as a founding father and prime-minister Hovhannes Kajaznuni, First Republic of Armenia declared itself as an independent, self-governing state and plenipotentiary power. The constitution of the republic gave suffrage to all citizens who were above twenty years old. The first national elections took place on June 1919 and 80 members could pass into the Armenian Parliament. According to Armenians, it was the crucial achievement to establish the republic after the massacre/genocide Armenians faced a couple of years earlier. The new Georgian state was established by the leadership of Noe Ramishvili - the head of the government and the minister of internal affairs. Janelidze writes that Georgia did not follow the Soviet model, but rather went for “a democratic way of development that separated the legislative, executive, and

legal power from one another” (Janelidze 2018: 171). The Georgian Democratic Republic managed to publish the republic’s first constitution in February 1921. According to him, constitution of Georgia was also based on the model used by Western countries and giving rights to women, ethnic and religious minorities. Another achievement is an active role of women in Georgian politics. Thus, the Constituent Assembly comprised of 130 members five of which were women. Identical to Georgian historiography, Azerbaijani discourse considers western values as fundamental principles of the established statehood. Almost all discourses within Azerbaijani historiography outlines the importance of ADR as the first democratic republic with the parliamentary model of management in both Turko-Muslim and Oriental world. Shaffer states that “In almost all movements they joined, the Azerbaijanis continued to be at the forefront of Muslims advocating the adoption of liberal values and enlightenment. One example of this is the insistence on the emancipation of women advocated by political parties in both north and south Azerbaijan”. Thus, Azerbaijan under the leadership of M.E.Rasulzade was among those states who granted women the right to vote and equal political rights to women and men, along with the secularity came from Azerbaijani intelligentsia.

Later, all three countries determined their own path and allies according to the existent situation. Georgia went for the alliance with Germans which is logically understandable since at that moment only Germans could pose a counterbalance against Ottomans. Armenians pursued assistance from Russia on one hand, and France and Britain from the other. In turn, Azerbaijanis sought Turkish support and its eagerness to collaborate at the root was related to the harsh relationship between Armenia and Azerbaijan and massacre against Azerbaijanis in Baku. At that time, Baku was multiethnic and it was the only place in the Caucasus where the Mensheviks did not dominate, and rather Bolsheviks took the main control over. Under the leadership of Baku Bolsheviks run by Stepan Shaumian, the situation was even messier. The native population was completely excluded from the power: no places were given to the representatives of Musavat or Hummat therein. Simultaneously, the gradually growing strength of Musavat party among workers and peasants set off to frighten the socialist forces.

Paradoxically enough, but before independence the interests of Bolsheviks and Musavat for the short period of time overlapped, involving the consensus over the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. However, forthwith concentration of all power under the Bolsheviks run by Shaumian aggravated the relationship with Musavat. The deterioration has led to the ethnic tensions between Musavat party, the Armenian Federation of Dashnaktsutyun and Baku Soviet. The struggle was going over the Transcaucasia's largest city, where, as Kazimzadeh puts it, Bolsheviks tried to use one people [Musavat and ARF] against each other. In March 1918, Soviets disarmed Azerbaijani crew of a ship dubbed Evelina, via which officers were transported from Lankaran to the funeral in Baku. Cornell notes that Musavat has asked for help from Dashnaktsutyun, but the latter declared its neutrality, and then unexpectedly joined the Bolsheviks at night of March 31. Fighting continued in several Azerbaijani cities and regions, including Baku which further outgrown into a massacre of Azerbaijani people (which is one of the central narratives in contemporary Azerbaijani discourse, mainly referred as a genocide).

The first state with whom Democratic Republic of Georgia has built international relations was Germany. In the discourse of Georgia, Germany is prescribed as a protector and guarantor of independence. On May 1918 two sides reached an agreement on the military, economic and trade issues. However, the central role has been in the protection of Georgia against Turkey. On June Turkey entered the south of the country and Germany was one who stood against together with Georgians. Accordingly, the image of Turkey in Georgian historical discourse is shown as an occupant and enemy. The treaty of Batum was perceived as unacceptable with the only positive aspect of Turkey recognizing Georgia as an independent state. Janelidze exemplifies the occupation with the promise of the Turkish government to help Georgia against Red Army which turned into unexpected consequence "the Turks occupied Batumi. Muslim Georgia was declared part of Turkey" (Janelidze 2018: 181).

Unlike Georgians, Armenian historians outline the help of the British to the newly established government. Thereby, with the assistance of Britain Armenia could have captured some territories in May 1919. Moreover, the British made a contribution in opening the road between Tiflis and Yerevan thereafter. Armenian National Council did

not recognize the treaty of Batum between Armenians and Turks, consequently joining Bolsheviks in capturing Baku. However, with the Russian withdrawing forces from there, the Council asked for the British help, which was refused. Opposed to Armenia, certain ambiguity existed in the relationship between ADR and Britain. Although the early period continued turbulently for the obvious reasons since general William Thomson with its military units entered the Caucasus the situation has slightly changed. Azerbaijan accepted the British forces on its territory with the provision to not let White Russians to the city. Initially, the National Government did not want to agree on that because it would put in question the sovereignty of the state. Afterwards, Thomson supported democratic credentials, assisted in balancing the order in Baku and was willing to recognize the government.

In Armenia, the image of Turks is portrayed negatively. Armenian history describes Turks as the main threat to the existence of the Armenian Republic before and during the independent period. The friendship treaty cropped up between Russia and Turkey in January 1918 and the overall rapprochement between those two, as Kurkjian puts it, became “disastrous” for Armenia. In a sequence, clashes between Armenia and Turkey dragged on ever since. While Bolsheviks were signing a treaty with Germany in Brest-Litovsk, Turks made a pressure on Sejm to proclaim the independence of Transcaucasia from Russia. Afterwards, simultaneously with other wars Turks were involved in, prominent three battles for Armenians have happened. The battle of Bash-Abaran launched on 21th of May and resulted with Turks backing down to Hamamli on 29th of May. Two other - the battles of Sardarapat and Gharakilisa started on 22nd and 25th of May respectively. According to the Armenian discourse, the battle of Sardarapat was a backbone of the establishment First Republic of Armenia and it is a victory in Sardarapat and Gharakilisa led Turks to leave the territories. Furthermore, Armenians state that with the victory over Turkey they prevented the complete destruction of Armenia and Turks’ takeover in Transcaucasia.

Within the framework of Azerbaijani historiography, one of the central historical events is the liberation of Baku. In the early stages of a new government, the aim of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic was to liberate Baku from Bolsheviks and Dashnaks.

Simultaneously, it was impossible to achieve the goal with the military capability of solely National Government. Azerbaijani representatives, in no time, asked for help from Turkish government and Nuru Pasha has been sent from Tabriz to Gandja. Accordingly, in June 1918, two sides signed a treaty on “military assistance and friendship”, where Turkey marked its military assistance to Azerbaijan. The broke down of Baku Soviets and their resignation on July opened up an opportunity for eser-mensheviks and dashnaks to create Central Caspian Dictatorship with inviting British troops under the leadership of Dunstervill. Due to Azerbaijani historians, Armenian National Council was very much consonant and waiting for British troops to arrive in Baku. Attempts of National Government and Caucasian Islamic Army to liberate Baku has started already on August and on September two-days military operations kick off resulted with the defeat of Central Caspian Dictatorship and the victory of Azerbaijani-Turkish cooperation. In a sequel, on September 16 the joined military parade in honour was held.

After independence, Caucasian countries have tackled with a number of disputes (territorial, demographical) between each other. Azerbaijan reached an agreement with Georgia and signed several documents with Iran. According to the leader of ADR M.E. Rasulzade, Azerbaijan built “very friendly relationship with the Democratic Republic of Georgia - one of our Christian neighbours” (Rasulzadeh 1990: 58). Agreeing on disputed areas, mutual relations included the joint lobby for being internationally recognized in the international arena. Hereafter, for promoting economic relations between France and the republics of Transcaucasia, the France-Caucasus Committee was established in 1919. The same year became a start point for joined Azerbaijani and Georgian governments to sign a document with William Chandler US Congressman on boosting them in the West as well as getting support from the United States (Shiriyev&Kakachia 2013: 9). Cooperation was expanded in the Paris Peace conference and a military pact between two countries has been certified. The defensive military pact presupposed mutual help in case of a military attack against the territorial integrity (Armenia had also invited to join the pact within two weeks, but the invitation was refused). Azerbaijan and Georgia could reach the common ground, despite the fact that in the beginning relations between two were strained and disputes were involved.

However, the relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan remained tough enough and resolution has not been achieved until nowadays.

A considerable place in Armenian historiography occupies the dispute between Armenia and Georgia that consequently turned into the war on December 1918. According to Armenians, during the four-week military conflict, Georgians had a more advantageous geographic position when the line from Batum was shut off and led Armenians of Tiflis to be oppressed. The involvement of the British in Batum has thus resolved the violent relations between two neighbours. Failed to reach an agreement on disputed areas, the war erupted between Georgia and Armenia. According to Georgian historian, on December Armenia invaded Borchaly and fortified in some strategically important places. Janelidze adds that Georgia mobilized its forces, including Azerbaijanis of Borchaly district who voluntarily joined the Georgian population. The war lasted till late December and the mutual agreement was reached on November 1919, where sides decided to resolve disputed areas peacefully.

As it was mentioned before, Azerbaijan Democratic Republic had close ties with the Ottoman Turkey. Cornell mentions that for him contradictory fact is that in 1918 Turkey recognized the independence of Georgia, but not the independence of Azerbaijan. This step has been accepted by Azerbaijani leadership frostily, nonetheless realizing that Turkey is the only option for liberating Baku. Cornell argues that Turkey did not see Azerbaijan as an independent state, rather as a path for reaching the creation of Turanian Empire (Cornell 2015: 26). This question still remains questionable within Azerbaijani historiography as some Azerbaijani historians claim that Turkey, in fact, recognized newly established Azerbaijani Republic (Hasanli 2009: 81-2).

From the beginning, ADR had strained relations with Russia. The presence of Bolsheviks and their cooperation with Dashnaks has worsened the situation even more (Mustafazade 2006: 42). During the 23 months of the existence of the republic, Russia did not recognize the state as a legitimate government and did not establish diplomatic relations with the latter as well. Although the relationship between Russia and Armenia during the First Republic can be described at times ambiguous with their up and downs,

by and large, there was historically a strong alliance between those two. Russia has been Armenia's main protector both against Turkey and existential future of the nation. Petrosyan outlines that eastern Armenians were sure on Armenia's unstable independence and its reunification with Russia. According to him, some of the members of the parliament did not recognize Armenian independence at all. Petrosyan exemplifies this with Mamikonyan's appeal to other members of the parliament: "Is not the existent of the Armenian Republic a catastrophe?" Nevertheless, in the further periods, Armenia tried to keep a balance and avoided the closeness with Russia to not to irritate West on one hand and Turkey on the other. Alike Azerbaijan, Georgia had complicated relations with both White and Soviet Russians. The clashes between Georgia and White Russians took place, resulted in the occupation of various Georgian territories. Nonetheless, due to Janelidze White Russia has failed and later was defeated by Soviet Russia. After all, Denikin's White Russia de-facto recognized South Caucasians' sovereignties. In spite of Soviet Russia being "hostile" against its southern neighbour, Georgia had intentions to develop relations with Bolsheviks, but vainly. Bolsheviks did not recognize Georgian statehood. Furthermore, they restricted the presence of Georgian representatives in Russia and put in jail Georgian ambassador. Only in 1920, a peace treaty was achieved by the sides, recognizing the independence of Georgia. Already at the end of the year, the progress in bilateral relations was noticeable. Nonetheless, in February 1921, Russia rescinded peace treaty militarily and ceased the independent statehood of Democratic Republic of Georgia. Two other Caucasian countries Azerbaijan and Armenia lost their independence in April 1920 and December 1920 respectively.

4. Analysis

The empirical framework began by describing commemoration patterns in Armenia and narratives precluded therein. Considering all peculiarities of this case, collected narratives from current (revolutionary) and former regime's government-controlled media outlets as well as Diaspora's leading media outlets are analyzed. The sub-chapter that follows moves on to consider the case of Azerbaijan. Differ from two neighbouring countries, Azerbaijan held two more military parades linking them to the historical past. On account of pre-mentioned circumstances, both military parade dedicated to the 100th anniversary of Armed Forces and centennial military parade on the liberation of Baku is reviewed. In the next sub-chapter, the analysis of narrative and the specificities of commemoration acts in Georgia will be presented.

4.1 The case of Armenia

In the beginning of 2018, Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia announced 2018 as a "Year of Independence" for all Armenians worldwide. Four year ago, in 2015, Armenians have marked the anniversary of the Armenian genocide/massacre. To mark this day, almost all Diasporan organizations and the government were involved in order of remembrance to be memorized all across the world. For this purpose, a state commission has been created four years earlier in 2011 with the privilege to coordinate the events dedicated to the 24th of April. Nonetheless, Serj Sargsyan established a state commission for the celebrating the day of independence only on April, 2017. A commission should have combined two occasions: centennial anniversary of the First Republic and the battles of May 1918 (Sardarapat, Bash-Aparan and Gharakilisa). Prime Minister of Armenia has been appointed responsible for the events and only one representative of Diaspora, Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), was included. After a while, under the coordination of the Ministry of Diaspora, Armenia-Diaspora Forum and Armenian Fund has been asked to get involved.

The celebrations of centennial anniversary of the First Armenian Republic overlapped with the period of power transition from one political force to another in the aftermath

of revolution. Starting in the end of March, dozens of Armenians flooded the streets of Yerevan with the demand of resignation of then newly elected Prime Minister Serj Sargsyan. He had just served two terms as a president of Armenia and changed the constitution which would have opened up an opportunity to prolong his term as a Prime Minister to stay in power. Unexpectedly, the massive protests and civil disobedience have sparked under the leadership of the opposition leader Nikol Pashinyan. On 23th of April Serj Sargsyan stepped down and Nikol Pashinyan was sworn in as an Armenian new Prime Minister.

Before comparing the patterns of narratives of two political forces, one should be primarily pointed out. By and large, there was no time for the new regime to work on the alterations of narratives. The commemorations followed the blueprint of previous regime and just slight changes are noticed in the narratives circulated by Pashinyan's government. To the similar conclusions came Armenian experts who shared their thoughts during the elite-interview. Thereby, Armenian expert Armen Grigoryan stated that "The commemoration, still following an old script, rather reflected the former regime's, mostly the Republican Party's eclectic ideological approach, with a mixture of old mythology, Christianity, some memories about the First Republic, Soviet clichés and so forth. The change of narrative mostly reflected the assessment of the events of 1998-2018, i.e. the period before the revolution". According to the director of the USC Institute of Armenian Studies Salpi Ghazarian "The previous regime had planned to erect the statue of the founder of the First Republic, Aram Manougian. The statue was erected but by the time it was opened the April 2018 revolution had already taken place. Under the old regime the house of Aram Manougian had almost been demolished to free up space for new construction and it had become a point of contention between the people and the authorities. The new government did not seem to alter anything significantly, more like let the things ran their course. In a sense, no major revision of the place of the First Republic in the national consciousness has taken place".

The day of Independence has been marked at the symbolic Sardarapat memorial with the key figures of contemporary Armenia. In contrast to two other neighbours, Armenia presented the anniversary as a day of Republic Day and heroic May battles. All

narratives along with the official speeches referred to them both. The celebratory speech of the president Armen Sarkissian stated:

“100 years ago, our people who saw genocide, and stood on the edge of life and death, restored the independent Armenian statehood with highest effort – declaring the birth of the First Republic of Armenia. Although it was short-lived and faced numerous problems, it was the basis for further development of the country’s economy, education, science and culture, an educated and versed society emerged, which in turn led to new independence and new victories in 1991. Today we must with special depth realize the significance of Armenian statehood. As a result of the latest changes in Armenia we have the chance of a drastic kickoff, and the requires sufficient human and institutional resources are available. We must unite these efforts, we must act more tactically and flexibly, because breakthrough moments create the chance to soar.”²

In the fabula the dilemma between the victory and hardship is foregrounded. As it was mentioned in the theoretical part, a note that has emotional tone is necessary in implementation of political memory (strengthening self-image, emphasizing on harsh but achieved goals and triumphs). Herewith, the president outlines that albeit all hardships tackled, they could achieve the independence and continue to move forward towards new achievements. In the narrative presented by the president the fact of the Soviet Union is completely backgrounded. However, there is a gap between the “restoration of independence” and “new victories”. He does not reckon the period of the Soviet Union as independent, but simultaneously does not see this period negatively “it was the basis for further development of the country’s economy, education, science and culture, an educated and versed society emerged, which in turn led to new independence”.³ In the end the initial narrative of triumph despite of hardship is reiterated “breakthrough moments create the chance to soar”.

An equal discourse was followed by Nikol Pashinyan, emphasizing the specific role of Armenians, the genocide and important wars Armenia went through. For him, there is a resolution of any Armenian triumphs that should be continued further “we have won

² ‘We have the chance of drastic kickoff’ - President says on Republic Day (2018, May 28), *Armenpress*. Retrieved from <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/935164.html>

³ Ibid

and will win in all cases when we decide to win when we put our hope on ourselves and not on others when we do not give up on any difficulty when we love to love our homeland and each other when we do not try to tie our narrow personal interests to the will of our own people and to the state when every citizen realizes that he is the master in his own country, not the subject, when the feeling of the master is not only the right but also the duty, whenever we look at every corner of the homeland with the hate, another with respect, patience and dignity”.⁴ This is a telling example of the political memory, where the political leader again stresses the strength of the nation, its capacity and endurance to overcome and “will win in all cases when we decide to win”. Analyzing the whole narrative provided by the Prime Minister, the ordering processes and plot are noteworthy to mention. The beginning of the narrative outlines the emergence of the First Republic, battles, genocide, and people who played role in triumphs. The middle of the narrative gives an overview on the resolution of the victory, the similarities between Armenia hundred ago and now. Whereas, the end of the narrative concentrated on the contemporary Armenia and the view of the Armenian future. In his speech, he lately touches upon the Soviet Union, where he asserts the importance of both republics ”It was thanks to the existence of the First Republic that Armenia was incorporated into the Soviet Union as a full-fledged republic. And it was only thanks to this status that Armenia was able to get out of the USSR and get the status of internationally recognized independent country”.⁵ Similarly to Armen Sarkissian’s narrative the Soviet Union is depicted rather positive. In the fabula, Armenian people (including historical figures) and Turkey are foregrounded, in contrast, Russia and other actors are backgrounded.⁶

By and large, even though majority of narratives of both regimes are overlapping, there are still some minor differences. For instance, in the aftermath of Pashinyan’s celebratory speech, the (spokesperson) member of Republican Party of Armenia Eduard Sharmazanov has criticized the president’s appeal.⁷ The issue was that the president

⁴ “Century of Victory” in Sardarapat (2018, May 28), *Armenians Today*. Retrieved from <http://hayernaysor.am/en/archives/283635>

⁵ Ibid

⁶ “Century of Victory” in Sardarapat (2018, May 28), *Armenians Today*. Retrieved from <http://hayernaysor.am/en/archives/283635>

⁷ Garegina Nzhde ne upomyanuli (2018, May 30), *Golos Armenii*. Retrieved from <http://www.golosarmenii.am/article/66981/garegina-nzhde-ne-upomyanuli>

Pashinyan in his speech has not touched upon Garegin Nzhdeh, a person presented by RPA as one of the main heroes of Armenia (earlier the previous regime erected a monument in his honour). Second, in contrast to the new regime, the previous regime has made considerable emphasis on the battle of Sardarapat. Indeed, the battle is included to absolutely all narratives presented by both sides, however, the repetition of the battle separately demonstrates its special place within the former regime's narrative.

By and large, there is a strong cohesion between two narratives regarding Turkey. Both of them depicts Turkey as an occupant and an existential threat to the Armenian republic. Nevertheless, in the fabula the invasion of Red Army and Bolshevik takeover is backgrounded. There is a positive and/or neutral depiction of Russia in the narratives. Both regimes emphasize on the Russian participation in the military parade alongside Armenian soldiers in Sardarapat. The relation with two neighbours is in general downplayed as well (Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is usually mentioned referring to the Third Republic, but also foregrounded). However, in one of the publications about the First Republic, Iravunk elaborates both Armenian-Georgian and Armenian-Azerbaijani then-territorial conflicts. Additionally to the Georgian narrative and historical background presented, Iravunk mentions that in September 1920 when the new Armenian-Turkish war has sparked, Georgians seized that opportunity and "captured not only the neutral zone, but also some populated areas in Lori and Javakhk" (Armenians call the region of Samtskhe-Javakheti - "Javakhk"). Concerning Azerbaijan, the narrative covers territorial disputes over Karabakh, Zangezur, Nakhchivan, but says nothing on events happened in Baku (for example, in the end of March). Nevertheless, the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan exist in most of Armenian narratives. Iran is usually backgrounded, however, the previous regime describes Iran as a country with which Armenia did not have territorial disputes, rather had trade and diplomatic relations.⁸

To get a local opinion on this issue, respondents shared their views on the perception of regional powers and how has their image been changed since independence. According to Salpi Ghazarian "Russia has been perceived as the historical ally sharing with

⁸ Armenia otmechaet 100-letiyu Pervoy Respubliki (2018, May 28), *Iravunk*. Retrieved from <https://www.iravunk.com/ru/news/8529>

Armenia two centuries of fraternal relations spanning the imperial, Soviet and the modern-independent periods. Iran had historically entered the national consciousness as the foreign invader and the overlord that had ruled over Armenian territories for centuries. However, since independence, Iran has emerged as Armenia's solid ally in a volatile region and during the early years of independence at times was Armenia's sole connection to the outside world due to the blockade imposed by Turkey and Azerbaijan and the civil war in Georgia. Unlike Turkey, Iran did not play the religion card and remained a neutral neighbor. Turkey has been viewed as the power that committed a great crime against the Armenians in the form of the genocide and that looms over the national perception. During the initial years of the independence, there was a moment where the perceptions could have changed by the opening of the border but the subsequent blockade imposed on Armenia by Turkey extinguished that possibility. The attitudes differ in Armenia and in diaspora. The diaspora often sees Turkey as the unapologetic criminal (although that's changing now and coming closer to the Armenia attitude, where there are also the views that Turkey is also the regional neighbor and a change of attitudes and relations could be beneficial for Armenia".

In addition to Salpi Ghazarian, Armen Grigoryan adds that "Since the early 1990s, Iran established friendly relations with newly independent Armenia, and the perception has been influenced by that relationship. Older grievances related to the former Persian rule are not significant. Russia's perception was not so positive during the struggle for independence and in the early 1990s but then changed with the 'strategic partnership' narrative and a partial revival of the Soviet narrative about Armenia being exposed to an existential threat and needing Russian support. There is a pro-Western segment of the society which views Russia less favourably, as a threat and an impediment to trade and cooperation, particularly after the pressure by Russia in order to abandon the EU association agreement in 2013. Currently, the likely approach is more or less: not getting Moscow strongly annoyed and just waiting until it faces an internal crisis, like the USSR did, in order to achieve a higher level of independence. The image of Turkey as an existential threat, sustained in the Soviet period, was challenged in the early 1990s. Since 1998, the change of political situation, including a growth of significance of the Dashnaktsutyun party, resulted in a revival of the older narratives, although paired with

rhetoric about border opening. Then, Serzh Sargsyan's 'football diplomacy' with Turkey in 2008-2009 briefly reinforced the rhetoric about developing relations without focussing much on the past, but Sargsyan's main interest in the process was probably international legitimisation of his regime after the contested presidential elections in 2008."

Meanwhile, the First Republic looms large over the Diasporan consciousness. The centennial anniversary was widely celebrated in Diaspora with dozens of events and academic conferences which shed light into the legacy of the First Republic. First and foremost narrative that considerably emphasized in the Diasporan discourse is Armenian genocide/massacre. It can be reckoned as a central narrative with the decisive role of victories in Sardarapat, Bash-Aparan and Gharakilisa over Turks. Notwithstanding Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is always backgrounded in Diasporan narratives, where the main emphasis is given to the genocide and relations with Turkey. However, there is also division of opinions within Diaspora about the period 1918-1920.⁹ As I have mentioned before, the dominant force in Armenia at that time was Dashnaksutyun party. But in Diaspora there were two other parties which had to some extent different approach to the First Republic: Social Democrat Hunchakian Party and Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (Ramkavar). Two parties were a part of "coalition" opposed to Dashnaks' political symbolism and were favourable towards the Soviet Union. They avoided any public activities with the symbols of the First Republic and did not mark the 28th of May annually. The First Republic were usually associated and called "Dashnak Republic" (widely used in the Soviet Union as well). Under these circumstances, the main common factor was Armenian genocide/massacre. Thus, "elite settlement" happened when all three parties decided to unify against Turkey. The dispute over the First Republic is important, because it finds the reflection in the narratives provided by sides.

In the online media outlet of Ramkavar Armenian Mirror-Spectator, these parallels can be explicitly seen: "The victory at Sardarapat belongs to all Armenians as well as to the

⁹ Centennial minus one (2017, May 28), *EVN Report*. Retrieved from <https://www.evnreport.com/politics/centennial-minus-one>

fledgling republic, which was born from the blood and sweat of heroes”.¹⁰ Above, the point is meant that the victory and the Republic itself is not only a merit of Dashnaks. The same discourse comes next: “For a long time, Dro and Aram Manoukian had been depicted as the only true heroes of the battle, sometimes overshadowing the professional military, who were the real architects of the victory, because those military leaders did not have political heirs. Today, they are all on a pedestal for the entire Armenian nation. They were the ones who collectively fought without distinction, saved a piece of historic land from calamity and created an ancestral homeland for posterity”.¹¹ The division of opinions over the Soviet Union comes up with the outlining that “For a long time, there was also historic injustice when comparing and contrasting the first independent republic to the Soviet-era republic. As we revisit historic facts without prejudices and biases, we realize the three republics complement each other in unity. As much as the Soviet-era leaders are maligned as corrupt communists, many of them harbored true patriotism and nationalism in their hearts to generate pride in the battle of Sardarapat and inspire respect for our martyrs”.¹² Thereby, the narrative of Ramkavar party included only the negative image of Turkey, positive image of the Soviet Union backgrounded, whereas do not mentioning either two neighbours or other actors.

Asbarez and Armenian Weekly media outlets, in contrast, belong to the Armenian Revolutionary Federation. Comparing to all general Armenian narratives, both of them give more attention to the role of Church. The fabula of the Church narrative foregrounds the role of Turkey and their survival “A century ago, our people were on the verge of life and death. Ottoman Turkey, taking advantage of the confusion of World War I, carried out its Armenian Genocide program. Western Armenia and Armenian settlements were ruined in Turkey, the Turkish troops even entered Eastern Armenia, thus threatening the existence of our people” and downplays the Motherland-Diaspora relations and the army.¹³ Moreover, Diasporan narratives focus on the centennial anniversary of US-Armenia relations, which in fact is often absent in

¹⁰ The Battle of Sardarapat and its Aftermath (2018, May 24), *The Armenian Mirror-Spectator*. Retrieved from <https://mirrorspectator.com/2018/05/24/the-battle-of-sardarapat-and-its-aftermath/>

¹¹ Ibid

¹² The Battle of Sardarapat and its Aftermath (2018, May 24), *The Armenian Mirror-Spectator*. Retrieved from <https://mirrorspectator.com/2018/05/24/the-battle-of-sardarapat-and-its-aftermath/>

¹³ Karekin II Issues Encyclical on 100th Anniversary of Armenian Independence (2018, February 8), *Asbarez*. Retrieved from <http://asbarez.com/170326/karekin-ii-issues-encyclical-on-100th-anniversary-of-armenian-independence/>

the inter-Armenia narratives.¹⁴ However, even though, in general, Russia is portrayed neutrally. Some of the narratives contain Russia being depicted as an occupant “When the abrupt, but not unexpected, end of the First Republic came amid its occupation by the Russian army, not all Armenians viewed that event with trepidation. Admirers of the Bolsheviks were pleased. Others firmly believed that being part of the Soviet system would provide Armenians with the security and respite they needed—especially, as it seemed, with an unrepentant and resurgent Turkey as a neighbour. Yet, there were also those who held that the end of the First Republic was an irreconcilable loss, and that there could be no justification that would allow the ARF to accommodate the existence of a Sovietized Armenia”.¹⁵ According to the latter “In the interim 70 years during which Armenia had no independent voice, the ARF was an effective proponent for Armenian issues, for a free and independent Armenia, and for the development of Armenian-centric communities”.¹⁶ The narrative also does not contain any information on two neighbours of Armenia and only mentions Iran as a country where majority of survivors lived in.

Last but not least, there is a thought circulated that is noteworthy to mention. Director of the USC Institute of Armenian Studies Salpi Ghazarian point out that “most of the centenary celebrations took place in the diaspora where those are still nostalgic affairs of the glory of 1918. In Armenia, the role of the First Republic or its centenary played a not-more-than-a-symbolic role. More and more however, there is a call to learn from the mistakes of those years”. The overlapping narrative appears in the Diaspora “Just a few days ago, the Centennial of the first Armenian Republic, the first Armenian state in 543 years, was grandly celebrated right where its founding was secured, at Sardarabad, along with Gharakiliseh and Bash Aparan... supposedly. Based on people’s accounts, while pomp and circumstance abounded, they was somewhat misdirected. Music – mostly Russian, with the focus not on 1918 but Armenian achievements during WWII

¹⁴ The Centennial of the First Republic and a Century of U.S-Armenia Relations to be Celebrated in D.C (2018, May 26), *The Armenian Weekly*. Retrieved from <https://armenianweekly.com/2018/05/26/the-centennial-of-the-first-republic-and-a-century-of-u-s-armeni-a-relations-to-be-celebrated-in-d-c/>

¹⁵ The ARF Response to the Demise of the First Republic (2018, May 26), *The Armenian Weekly*. Retrieved from <https://armenianweekly.com/2018/05/26/the-arf-response-to-the-demise-of-the-first-republic/>

¹⁶ Ibid

and the Artzakh liberation struggle”.¹⁷ Then, it is mentioned that “It seems that the allergies certain sectors of Armenian society have to the Armenian Revolutionary Federation render it more important to disrespect and denigrate the 1918 republic, given the two are inextricably intertwined. Never mind that its birth was the highest expression of Armenians’ will to survive, come together, fend off the attacking Ittihadists-cum-Kemalists, and start building the state which served as the basis for what we have today”¹⁸. According to the thought, the centennial celebration did not recognize the role of Armenian Revolutionary Federation in formation of the First Republic, but rather had merely a symbolic role where only Nikol Pashinyan asserted the importance of First Republic and ARF.

4.2 The case of Azerbaijan

The president of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev declared 2018 as a “Year of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic”. Similarly to the first case, the president issued a decree “On the 100th anniversary of the Azerbaijani People’s Republic” only in May 2017. The coordination of the occasion was given to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and from over 200 suggestions, 100 events have been approved. Beside domestic celebration, a new website devoted to the centennial anniversary planned to be created and international events are regulated. Oppositional groups, on the contrary, asserted that little attention has been paid to the overall celebrations and the First Republic. According to the oppositional figures, current government see as a father of the nation the former president of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliyev and oversees the importance of founding fathers and the First Republic. Coupled with government-funded projects, Baku welcomed a march (with the government permission) dedicated to the centennial anniversary initiated by civil society activists and members of oppositional party ReAL.

On 28th of May, the president Ilham Aliyev has attended an official reception on the occasion of centennial anniversary, where he made a speech to mark the 100th year of

¹⁷ Centennial Lookalike (2018, June 4), *Asbarez*. Retrieved from <http://asbarez.com/172519/centennial-lookalike/>

¹⁸ Ibid

independence. By and large, the narrative of the president has not concentrated merely on the First Republic but also the Third Republic until nowadays. “The establishment of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic is a historic event. A democratic republic was created for the first time in the Muslim world. We are rightfully proud of the fact that the Azerbaijani people created this republic. This shows again that the Azerbaijani people are a great, freedom-loving and progressive people. The Azerbaijani state has great respect for the memory of the founders of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic”, says Ilham Aliyev specifically pointing out Azerbaijan being the first democratic republic in the Muslim world. Making a bridge between the First and Third Republics, the president characterizes Azerbaijanis as “great, freedom-loving and progressive”.¹⁹

Then he continues “I want to say again that we are rightfully proud of this historic event. The Azerbaijan Democratic Republic existed for 23 months but managed to do a lot during this time. The state flag of Azerbaijan was established, citizenship of Azerbaijan was established, our national army was established. Next month, we will celebrate the 100th anniversary of our army. In September 1918, the national army of Azerbaijan, together with the Islamic Army of the Caucasus, liberated Baku from the occupation of Armenian-Bolshevik detachments and returned our ancient city of Baku to the Azerbaijani people. The Democratic Republic created a border detachment. The historical name of Ganja was returned to this city. More than 200 laws were adopted in a short time. A special place among them, of course, is held by the law on granting women the right to vote. Baku State University was established, and this shows that the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic intended to do a great deal of work in terms of training national personnel and developing education. Our native Azerbaijani language was adopted in all educational institutions.”²⁰

The achievements of the First Republic are highlighted and the repetition of “proud of this historic event” contributes an emotional tone to the overall narrative. Lately, the main “Other” according to Ilham Aliyev’s narrative comes up “liberated Baku from the

¹⁹ President Ilham Aliyev attended official reception on centennial of Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (2018, May 28), *Azertag*. Retrieved from https://azertag.az/en/xeber/President_Ilham_Aliyev_attended_official_reception_on_centennial_of_Azerbaijan_Democratic_Republic_VIDEO-1167079

²⁰ Ibid

occupation of Armenian-Bolshevik detachments”. Here, the victory with the liberation of Baku is foregrounded, but occasions such as March Days are backgrounded. The beginning of the plot is telling about the importance of the First Republic and success of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic in realization of its policy. In the middle, the president gives a general outlook on the Azerbaijan after restoration of the independence and the role of Heydar Aliyev in the future of the country. The end of the plot narrates on the accomplishment of Azerbaijan at the current stage, steps and success in international arena. Here, he also denotes Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and how the army has developed since the war has erupted.

Differ from both Armenia and Georgia, Azerbaijani president does not mention why particularly the ADR fell after 23 months. For instance, “The Democratic Republic sought to create a strong state so that the Azerbaijani people could live in the conditions of freedom and calm. Unfortunately, the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic did not exist for long – the republic fell after 23 months. This is a great tragedy for us. I am absolutely sure that if independence had not been lost in 1920, Azerbaijan could be among the richest and most developed countries of the world now, because our natural resources and geographical location enabled us to effectively use these natural resources”, “Unfortunately, we lost our independence. This shows again that it is more difficult to preserve independence than to gain it. The flag raised in 1918 was lowered in 1920, but it was raised again by great leader Heydar Aliyev at a session of the Nakhchivan Supreme Majlis 70 years later”.²¹ In all three mentioned times, nothing is told about the reason behind the fall of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. What is more, the whole narratives kept largely silent about the Soviet Union, more precisely, the period Azerbaijan has been incorporated to the Soviet empire. This gap is notably visible here “This shows again that it is more difficult to preserve independence than to gain it. The flag raised in 1918 was lowered in 1920, but it was raised again by great leader Heydar Aliyev at a session of the Nakhchivan Supreme Majlis 70 years later”,²² where the Soviet Union is downplayed. However, even if the silence of this period

²¹ President Ilham Aliyev attended official reception on centennial of Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (2018, May 28), *Azertag*. Retrieved from https://azertag.az/en/xeber/President_Ilham_Aliyev_attended_official_reception_on_centennial_of_Azerbaijan_Democratic_Republic_VIDEO-1167079

²² Ibid

exists, the president implicitly demonstrates Azerbaijan was under the Soviet occupation. Further, he shows more explicit the Soviets as “Other”, - “Immediately after the bloody January tragedy, on 21 January 1990 [Azerbaijanis commemorate Black January annually], he went to the permanent representative office of Azerbaijan in Moscow and condemned the Communist Party for the crime it had committed”. At the end of the speech, the president elaborates pre-mentioned standpoint asserting that “Despite all these resources [natural resources are meant], Azerbaijan was the most backward republic of the Soviet Union before Heydar Aliyev came to the leadership of the republic in 1969. Why? Because we were not independent! They were not masters of our own destiny”.²³

Media narratives put an emphasis on Azerbaijan being the first secular and democratic republic in the Muslim world. The image of Turkey is portrayed fairly positive, where due to media narrative, then-Azerbaijani government approached Turkish authorities with a plea for aid and joined Azerbaijani-Turkish troops several times got the victory. The narrative depicts the treaty between Turkey and Azerbaijan, however, does not give any information on the historically debatable topic on Ottoman Turkey’s (un)recognition of Azerbaijan. In contrast, Russia’s image varies from relatively neutral to often negative. Over this time, media landscape was predominantly narrating the strategically important geographic place of Azerbaijan and natural resources of Baku as a reason to “become the main target of the Soviet Russia” in the Caucasus. In the mid-April, the Red Army entered the northern borders of Azerbaijan and shortly occupied Baku. What is interesting, in the near past two consecutive years, state-run media landscape carried on a strong negative view of Russia. The news-story is called “Harsh moments of history: if not the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic...” and focused on Russia’s role in Azerbaijan’s history. “In 1918, after more than 100 years of South Caucasus being occupied by Russians, the Azerbaijani nation could restore its statehood”, “New generation of occupants - bolsheviks did not have any choice, but to tolerate with the historical fact”, writes an author, pointing out that there were positive

²³ President Ilham Aliyev attended official reception on centennial of Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (2018, May 28), *Azertag*. Retrieved from https://azertag.az/en/xeber/President_Ilham_Aliyev_attended_official_reception_on_centennial_of_Azerbaijan_Democratic_Republic_VIDEO-1167079

relations between medieval Azerbaijanis states and their northern neighbour [Russia], however the deterioration has come with the expansionist policy of Russian Empire”.²⁴ A narrative set off from the deep historical background of the relationship; the path of remaining under the Russian occupation and forceful inclusion into the Soviet Union. Other than that, a story has been written in Russian intended for both Russian speakers within the country and international audience. The last four-five years, the emotional tone of narratives comparatively melted down, yet still either neutrally or negatively portraying the Russian image. Mutual parallels have been drawn by Azerbaijan and the USA. Azerbaijani narratives outline the role of Wilson (relations with the delegation of Azerbaijan, coupled with the democratic credentials given by then-US side) and Paris Peace Conference. Same narrative appears in the statement issued by the US embassy, pointing out that “delegates left a lasting impression on American President Woodrow Wilson.”, having values close to Wilson’s own.²⁵ The statement gives attention of the founding document that guaranteed rights to all citizens, regardless of differences (religion, ethnic origin, gender and class).

On account of Baku-based expert, who said, on the condition of anonymity, “De-jure depiction of the regional powers has never been radically negative in the official narratives, albeit small-scale displeasures between Azerbaijan and each of these powers. Whereas, in general, there is usually the negative view of Russia (due to historical patterns such as Russian traces in Black January Massacre (1990) and Khojaly Genocide (1992), support to Armenia in the context of NK conflict). Whereas, both official and society narrative towards Turkey is quite positively ideological and ideologically positive due to ethnic and cultural kinship, as well as due to Turkey’s role in the promotion of Azerbaijan’s recognition and sovereignty and in supporting the latter’s territorial integrity. Less has been changed in the memories of entire society regarding the attitudes of all regional powers, as their foreign policies attitudes (which

²⁴ Povоротные моменты истории: Эсли бы не Азербайджанская Демократическая Республика (2015, May 28), *Inews az*. Retrieved from <http://www.1news.az/news/povorotnye-momenty-istorii-esli-by-ne-azerbaydzhanskaya-demokraticeskay-a-respublika>

²⁵ Azerbaijan Democratic Republic 100 Years Later: Our History, Looking to the future (2018, May 22), *Official website of the US embassy in Azerbaijan*. Retrieved from <https://az.usembassy.gov/the-azerbaijan-democratic-republic-100-years-later-celebrating-our-history-looking-to-the-future-william-r-gill-charge-daffaires/>

ultimately generates a public reaction in Azerbaijan) have not been changed either”. As argued by another interviewee Lala Aliyeva, “The centenary anniversary of ADR had much of an impact on the Azerbaijani government. Specifically, they were cautious on the possibility of march devoted to the 100th anniversary to be expanded into the large scale protests (at the same time, it became a reason of elections being held before the occasion)”.

Yet, there is a riveting account of Britain and Israel in official narratives. Referring back to background information, the relationship between ADR and Britain has been relatively dubious. Notwithstanding, state-run media outlets devoted news on Britain, especially British writer published a book on the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. Conducting the interview with the writer, the media outlet enquired the relations between Britain and Azerbaijan as well as the role of Dunsterville and Thomson therein. Owing to Graeme Wilson “Britain’s involvement in Azerbaijan was, at best, calamitous. General Lionel Dunsterville strikes me a buffoon and his intrusion into this story, the defence of Baku, with capitalist Britain allying itself with the Soviet-Dashnak administration, cost thousands of lives in prolonging the nation’s struggle for independence. Dunsterville’s diaries make interesting reading as he repeatedly, and with great frustration, refers to the cowardice of the Dashnaks. By contrast, I find the personal journey of Lieutenant General Sir William Thomson quite illuminating. He entered Baku at the head of an occupying force and was belligerent toward the government of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. However, as he grasped the prevailing circumstances, he became supportive. His relationship with the Azerbaijani government matured quickly to become benevolent and productive”.²⁶ Media outlets also refer to the London Post, publishing the reportage on the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, yet do not bring up Azerbaijani-British relations “Significance of Azerbaijan

²⁶ Graham Wilson tells about the history of Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (2018, May 30), Inews az. Retrieved from <http://www.1news.az/news/graham-wilson-tells-about-his-fascination-about-the-history-of-azerbaijan-democratic-republic>

Democratic Republic (ADR), which existed only almost two years, will live on forever”.²⁷²⁸

Due to the narrative “The first state that recognized the independence of ADR was the Ottoman Empire and legal basis of relations between these countries was laid by the Treaty of Batum which was signed on June 4, 1918” and “Iran became the first country that de jure recognized the ADR on March 20, 1920”, all the same, “Only recognition by the Great Powers could help to fully rebuff the existing threats: aggression of Denikin’s army and Soviet Russia, etc”.²⁹ Much like Armenia and Georgia, the Azerbaijani narrative put an emphasis of the Soviet Union making the First Republic forgotten “For a very long period of time, the history and legacy of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic were among the forbidden, almost taboo topics. Many representatives of the Republic were “forgotten” on purpose by the Soviet government”.³⁰ Concerning Georgia, the narratives dwell on first democratically elected Muslim Woman - Peri-khan Sofieva, who was ethnically Azerbaijani from predominantly Azerbaijani populated village of Georgia.³¹ The general Azerbaijani narrative also contains the positive Other - Israel. Media outlets highlights “the brotherly relations between Azerbaijan and Israel”, meetings of Jewish, Christian and congressional leaders on the occasion of the 100th anniversary with Azerbaijani officials, the devoted reportages of Israeli broadcasting as well as reports in “The Jerusalem Post”. It is mentioned that in the newly established secular and democratic republic there were three Jewish ministers (the minister of health, deputy-minister of finance and minister of religious affairs) in Azerbaijani government.

²⁷ 5 fact about Azerbaijan Democratic Republic - First Western Democracy of the Muslim World (2018, May 27), *The London Post*. Retrieved from <https://thelondonpost.net/5-facts-azerbaijan-democratic-republic-first-western-democracy-muslim-world/>

²⁸ 5 fact about Azerbaijan Democratic Republic highlighted in the London Post (2018, May 28), *Trend news agency*. Retrieved from <https://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/2909357.html>

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ 5 fact about Azerbaijan Democratic Republic - First Western Democracy of the Muslim World (2018, May 27), *The London Post*. Retrieved from <https://thelondonpost.net/5-facts-azerbaijan-democratic-republic-first-western-democracy-muslim-world/>

³¹ The world’s first democratically elected Muslim Woman was from Azerbaijani village of Georgia (2018, March 9), *Inews az*. Retrieved from <http://www.1news.az/news/the-world-s-first-democratically-elected-muslim-woman-was-from-azerbaijan-i-village-of-georgia-photos>

In 2018 centennial anniversary of two more events have been marked on a large scale within Azerbaijan. First, a military parade dedicated to the centenary anniversary of the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan has been held at the Azadlig (Freedom) Square on June 26. Over 4000 servicemen took part in the military parade and more than 240 military equipment and 70 aviation assets have been presented therein. Moreover, up to 100 servicemen from Turkey, Israel, Georgia, Belarus, Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Bahrain, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Russia joined the centennial military parade.³² It is stated in one of the narratives “Despite that Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, established on May 28, 1918, existed only 23 months, it did a lot in a short period of time. The country started the creation of the national army, understanding that its own armed forces were needed to protect the achievements of the young republic. At the same time, the situation in the region was extremely tense. The neighbouring countries were openly expressing their plans to partition the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic and take away its territories. Azerbaijan achieved significant results in creating its own armed forces in a short period of time. The created army repeatedly and successfully beat off the aggressive attacks of the Armenian militarists”.³³ Here, in the fabula, the enemy through the “Armenian militarists” is foregrounded, whereas remained negative actors are downplayed “the neighboring countries were openly expressing their plans to partition the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic and take away its territories”.³⁴ In the narratives presented both on a centennial military parade and joined Azerbaijani-Turkish parade, there is always a bridge built between the narratives of the First Republic and Azerbaijan restored its independence. Therefore, the emphasis on victory presented above is linked this the contemporary Azerbaijan “The April fights are our glorious victory. The Azerbaijani soldiers, officers, generals, the Azerbaijani army showed real heroism, professionalism and valor”.³⁵

³² A military dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the armed forces of Azerbaijan to hold (2018, June 25), *Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Azerbaijan*. Retrieved from <https://mod.gov.az/en/news/a-military-parade-dedicated-to-the-100th-anniversary-of-the-armed-forces-of-azerbaijan-to-hold-23189.html>

³³ Azerbaijan marks centenary of Armed Forces (2018, June 26), *Trend News Agency*. Retrieved from <https://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/2920941.html>

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ President Aliyev: April battles dispelled myth created by Armenia about its army (2018, June 26), *Trend News Agency*. Retrieved from <https://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/2921520.html>

Second, in September 2018 both Azerbaijan and Turkey celebrated, as Azerbaijani media landscape puts it, the date which is one of the symbols of Azerbaijani-Turkish friendship and brotherhood. In honour of this date, the military parade has been held with the joined Azerbaijani-Turkish military troop and participation of the president Ilham Aliyev and Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Owing to the narrative, there were several potential occupants to resist - “Armenian dashnaks, Bolsheviks, eser-Mensheviks and English invaders”. On the contrary, the saver in that situation was Turkey. The ordering process starts with the 1905-1906 and the narrative covers March Days, the historical developments took place until the victory of sides. In the fabula, Armenians (Dashnaks and Bolsheviks) are foregrounded, however, Britain is downplayed. Moreover, the story gives information on active communication between Stepan Shaumian and Moscow. The language of the narrative has a strong emotional tone, stressing on the mutual glory and pride.

4.3. The case of Georgia

2018 was announced by the president Margvelashvili as a year of freedom. The reception has been held at the Presidential palace accompanied with the exhibition on the 100th anniversary dubbed symbolically “From Independence to Freedom”. The speech was given reviewing the past year and touching upon some remarkable points on the importance of centenary anniversary: “As soon as they were given the opportunity, they established the republic, the state based on European standards. Georgia was one among ten countries in which elections were held by universal suffrage and gender equality was promote. Our ancestors protected these values hundred years ago. We have founded independent judiciary and National Bank and established all those high standards that at that time have been controversial even in Europe: abolition of death penalty, prisoners' rights and other human rights.”³⁶

One of the central points of the Georgian narrative is an aspect of Europe and being European. The statement makes an emphasis on the advanced features of the newly

³⁶ President Margvelashvili Declares 2018 Year of Freedom (2017, December 19), *Official web site of the President of Georgia*. Retrieved from

<https://www.president.gov.ge/en-US/pressamsakhuri/siakhleebi/saqartvelos-prezidentma-2018-celi-tavisu flebis-cla.aspx>

established republic “based on European standards” with feeling of pride and honour, standards that “have been controversial even in Europe”. Simultaneously, considering themselves as a part of Europe, but also not enough European (“even in Europe”). Margvelashvili continuances, however, that “These years are followed by 70 years of occupation; our exhibition clearly shows that Georgia has never been entirely conquered because there were people who defended the idea of independent Georgia through own personal heroism and dedication under the extreme conditions in the totalitarian state”.³⁷ The fact of the occupation is highlighted, but in the fabula the information of who occupied is backgrounded twice (“70 years of occupation” and “totalitarian state”). Furthermore, the president concludes his speech with pointing out the direction of Georgia “Our goal is to transform independence to freedom”, which looks not at past (independence), but freedom (future). Moreover, there is a point directly related to collective memory. In his statement, the president appeals as “we have founded”, however meaning the First Republic. This is what, according to Assmann, the cohesion and collective memory. When those who have not experienced and witnessed the events, talk from the first person as they did.

Throughout the year there were various events devoted to the 100th anniversary of Independence of Georgia. Nonetheless, the majority of them took place only at the end of May closer to the day of independence. With the initiative of the Naming and Symbolic Commission of Tbilisi Sakrebulo (City Assembly) has been decided to rename the Rose square into the First Republic square. The decision was not welcomed by the National Movement and European Georgia parties due to the obvious reasons as their participation in the Rose revolution and acceptance of this step as an erasure of the part of Georgian history. Quite symbolic and significant in terms of influencing the society was a theatrical show of historical reenactment of the proclamation of independence. Even more allusive is that the occasion has been performed at the National Youth and Children’s palace (crucial for memory politics) and at the same local time when the independence had been announced. The narrator describes the first

³⁷ Ibid

republic as the “newly born state as a democratic republic, its neutrality in international conflicts and aspiration for friendly relations to all countries”.³⁸

During a week of independence dressed in costumes, Georgian artists facilitated an artificial flashback by moving back to 1918-1921 and demonstrated historical figures with scenes for their visitors. Several cafes and avenue have been turned into historical areas; it was possible to send anniversary postcards and take the sight on a 1920s market with an exhibition. Furthermore, the Foreign Ministry held an exhibition regarding Georgia’s diplomatic history.³⁹ Similar event has been held in different regions and cities across Georgia. The government of Georgia launched a new project “Revive History”, where the main actors and historical figures (Noe Jordania, Noe Ramishvili, Ekvtime Takaishvili, Giorgi Kvinitadze, Akaki Chkhenkeli, Maro Makashvili, Christine Sharashenidze, Zakaria Paliashvili, Sandro Akhmeteli, and Ivane Javakhishvili) were deeply introduced to the population via created profiles on Facebook.⁴⁰ Moreover, for the same purpose, specific microfilms have been prepared and presented by the First Channel.⁴¹ These are appropriate indicators of cultural and political memory: they spread out the narratives which re(construct) the collective/national memory and influence the national identity. Both cultural and political memory used in the ceremonies facilitates these narrative to circulate and be transformed from one generation to the other.

The same found its reflection in the answers of the respondent which pointed out the peculiar role of the cultural and political memory in the resurgence of the First Republic. For instance, according to Senior Fellow at the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies Giorgi Badridze “In Soviet times the memory of the First Republic

³⁸ Century-old proclamation of Georgia’s independence reenacted in Tbilisi (2018, May 26), *Agenda Ge*. Retrieved from <http://agenda.ge/en/news/2018/1136>

³⁹ Find highlight events celebrating Georgia’s First Democratic Republic centennial (2018, May 22), *Agenda Ge*. Retrieved from <http://agenda.ge/en/news/2018/1089>

⁴⁰ Historical figures from Georgia’s First Democratic Republic unveiled on Facebook (2018, May 14), *Agenda Ge*. Retrieved from <http://agenda.ge/en/news/2018/1030>

⁴¹ Saqartvelos Demokratuli Respublikis 100 wlis iubile (2018, April 26), *First Channel, Georgian Public Broadcaster*. Retrieved from https://1tv.ge/show/saqartvelos-demokratiuli-respublikis-100-wlis-iubile/?tab=video&video_category=0

was deliberately erased, or at best ridiculed. Since the late 1980-s it gained huge importance in the public life – its symbols (flag, anthem, maps) were eagerly used as the symbols of the national independence movement. However, the society was split in their appraisal of how well the leaders (Social Democrats) used the historic opportunity to rebuild the statehood that was lost 100years before, and whether they did everything they could to stop the Bolshevik invasion in 1921. In any case, 1918 republic is viewed as the main source of legitimacy of the current republic”. Due to the second respondent Zviad Abashidze, the First Republic had “only on very minor [impact] of the population [national consciousness], especially only on those who had some personal contacts with political of cultural elites by those times. The popularity of the first republic is coming mostly from the construction process of political institutions and establishments education and culture.”

In addition, new armed forces recruits arrived in Tbilisi from six distinct regions for the oath-taking ceremony at the Freedom Square. Joining the ceremony, prime-minister Kvirikashvili particularly outlined the role of the First Republic on the fate of Georgia, “May 26 a hundred years ago was exactly this kind of day for Georgia. That day was the result of logical development of the nation’s history, eternal national energy and great efforts of many generations. I cannot but recall the historic role of the national liberation movement of the 60s in the 19th century. Georgian political and legal reasoning was step-by-step forwarding towards the establishment of the Georgian state. If not the people who laid the foundation for Georgia’s independence, if not the notable Georgian figures, if not the special role of the Georgian Church, if not the unified national consciousness, there would not be 26 May 1918 and or present Georgia”.⁴² This example is sufficient enough to demonstrate the plot of the narrative with explicit causes and effects. The process sets off with the national liberation movement and lasts till nowadays. Starting with this particular period, “people who laid the foundation”, “Georgian figures”, “Georgian Church”, “unified national consciousness” make the existence of contemporary Georgia possible. In the fabula the question of politics is totally background: there is no information on what political circumstances led to the

⁴² Giorgi Kvirikashvili - I am sure oath took 100 years ago will fulfilled (2018, May 26), *First Channel, Georgian Public Broadcaster*. Retrieved from <https://1tv.ge/en/news/giorgi-kvirikashvili-sure-oath-took-100-years-ago-will-fulfilled/>

existence and the end of the First Republic, however, the peculiar role of the Georgian people is foregrounded.

By and large, the analysis of the state-run online media outlets' shows that the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the First Republic is highly de-politicized. In all three websites, there are no full-fledged narratives: only declarative statements, weakly narratives or texts with narratives elements which were in fact analyzed further. Although the narrator is considered as the journalist, the focalizer has remained the state (which perspective is dominant). The central narrative in the majority of media narratives is the factor of Europe, referring directly to focalizer. As a whole, the language of the narratives (of media itself) are formal and lack of emotions. The next narrative that displays the link between being European and the 100th anniversary of statehood is the speech given by the president of the European days in Tbilisi:

“There are two very important moments in European civilization – individualism and freedom to maintain this individualism in the whole society. We are the part of this culture naturally and I congratulate all those free people who are toiling selflessly for free Georgia, free Europe and Georgia to become the part of this Europe. European countries are providing serious support for Georgia. This support will be even more clear on May 26, when we together with our European like-minders will celebrate the first 100th anniversary of the First Republic of Georgia”⁴³

Notable that individualism and freedom have been chosen as two very important moments, but even more notable is the year is being called by one (Freedom) of these important moments, where the statement illustrates the reunification of Georgia with the naturally associated European civilization. Thus, the road from independence to freedom is the indicator of Georgia's reintegration with its roots. Same is applicable to the other similar narrative which was referred on the opening of the Arch of 26 May and quoted from the Justice House's press-release, “The arch which is installed at the entrance of the Justice House is a symbol of the road that Georgia has passed over a

⁴³ Giorgi Margvelashvili - Europe will strengthened Georgia joins European Union (2018, May 5), *First Channel, Georgian Public Broadcaster*. Retrieved from <https://1tv.ge/en/news/giorgi-margvelashvili-europe-will-strengthened-georgia-joins-european-union/>

century to return to Europe. Citizens of Georgia who come to take a modern biometric passport will have to symbolically pass through the same road, which Georgia has passed since 1918”.⁴⁴

The statement explicitly confirms previous thought on the road from the independence to freedom that “Georgia has passed over a century to return to Europe”. The similar narrative comes up from the conducted interview with Giorgi Badridze who points out that “In Georgia, the main lesson of the restoration of independence both in 1918 and 1991 is that Georgians choose to try to build a European type of state with strong pro-Western/European aspirations. This suggests that “Return to European family” is not a tactical choice of a particular political group in just one historical moment but a will of the Georgian people that any government would have to respect”. Identical patterns are seen in the response of Zviad Abashidze as well “In Georgia in most of the cases, the historical narrations are strongly concerned with the West and European culture. There are only a few exceptions among the elites, who are hoping on Russian orientation, but among the public, the position is highly discredited”.

Nonetheless, in the contemporary official narratives not only Europe is significantly depicted, but also the United States of America. In 2018, Georgia held the symbolic conference “US – Georgia Strategic Partnership Conference ”, emphasizing on the historical relations between those two. “We have survived so much to arrive here today and, of course, the Georgian people are the heroes of this story. 100 years ago this month, Georgia took a leap into the future. We gave birth to the Democratic Republic of Georgia, as turmoil, revolution, and civil war swirled around our small country, powered by forces much larger than ourselves. Our predecessors may or may not have realized at that exciting moment that Georgia’s independence—our freedom—would be delayed still further, for nearly two-thirds of a century more. The Red Army swept into

⁴⁴ 100 years of history of Georgian passports showed in new Arch of 26 May (2018, May 263), *Agenda Ge*. Retrieved from <http://agenda.ge/en/news/2018/1094>

Georgia just three years after we reclaimed our statehood, and, at least temporarily, swept our independence away”.⁴⁵

Here, the same parallels in narratives occur, where the occupant is given (Red Army), but the actor of who is the occupant is backgrounded. “But we have been good and persistent stewards of our dream of independence and freedom. A century ago, Georgia set its course inseparably with the West. Georgia is not a between-land. Our culture is European with strong American accents; our outlook is Western and transatlantic, as are our values and politics... We are proud and active member of the transatlantic community, and will only grow more so over time. The United States was among the first to recognise Georgia’s independence in 1991. America supported us when we most needed it - during some of the most trying episodes of our own national consolidation. Georgia is honoured to be one of America’s strategic partners”.⁴⁶

Further, prime-minister highlights Georgia’s choice on the Western direction “our culture is European with strong American accent”. The repetition of “We” is equally observed therein, where the concept of collective memory comes up. In the fabula, Kvirikashvili used “Georgia is not a between-land”, where Georgian direct path is foregrounded, and its neighbours one of which tries to keep a balance, and the other stay neutral is backgrounded. Concerning the overall narratives with the historical parallels, there were no narratives containing the information on historical relations with almost any of neighbours. Turkey (or Ottomans) is totally hidden from the context, Russia is implicitly foregrounded as an occupant (Russian Red Army, Soviet invasion) without a direct quote. The relations between Armenia and Georgia are presented as historical, but no details are given.^{47,48} Same can be said for the relations with Azerbaijan, where the

⁴⁵ Georgia PM opens US-Georgia Strategic Partnership Conference (2018, May 23), *Agenda Ge*. Retrieved from <http://agenda.ge/en/news/2018/1101>

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ Nikol Pashinyan - Armenian-Georgian relations have historic and human grounds (2018, May 30), *First Channel, Georgian Public Broadcaster*. Retrieved from <https://1tv.ge/en/news/nikol-pashinyan-armenian-georgian-relations-historic-human-grounds/>

⁴⁸ Giorgi Kvirikashvili - Armenians are actively involved in country’s building (2018, May 30), *First Channel, Georgian Public Broadcaster*. Retrieved from <https://1tv.ge/en/news/giorgi-kvirikashvili-armenians-actively-involved-countrys-building/>

reportage displays historical relations without mentioning any details, e.g. mutual signed military pact, with concentration only on contemporary period.⁴⁹

To get a broad insight, the question on how the regional powers are perceived according to Georgian national master narratives and whether their images have been changed since independence (and the Soviet Union) was asked. As states by Zviad Abashidze “Since the Soviet Union, the image of Turkey and Iran developed to better side in spite of tough historical memory. Russians are strongly presented as occupants. In certain circumstances, Iran and Turkey bear also the image of historical occupants and enemies, but mostly they are presented as economic (both) and strategic (Turkey) partners”. The answer very well fits into the general theory: albeit of the harsh collective memory, the relations are presented positively according to the contemporary foreign policy orientation.

Giorgi Badridze, having a similar standpoint, elaborates this thought separately by powers “The absolute majority views Russia negatively. Such feelings are reinforced by the realities of post-independence relations with Russia: Russian support for separatists from the very beginning, their participation in the wars in the early 1990-s which resulted in the ethnic cleansing of hundreds of thousands of Georgians, war 2008 and ongoing occupation of 20% of Georgia’s territory etc”. According to Badridze, “Iran will always be viewed with caution” and “Attitudes toward Turkey are varying: most people understand the benefits of the political and economic partnership (Turkey is N1 trade partner), however, there are forces who are trying to disturb old wounds and often spread pure fake news about Turkey’s intentions vis-a-vis Georgia: for years pro-Russian sources claim that in 2021 the Kars Agreement defining Turco-Georgian border will expire and that Turkey will annex Adjara”. Noteworthy to outline that these replies give a general overview on the situation in Georgia, not precisely how it is portrayed in the state-run journalism. It describes the actions of the state in general, but not how the relation has been reflected in the media narratives.

Nevertheless, there is another view on why the government treats the memories of First Republic cautiously. As specified by historians specialized in studying the First

⁴⁹ 100th anniversary of the People’s Republic of Azerbaijan (2018, May 28), *Ajara Ge*. Retrieved from <http://ajaratv.ge/news/en/29258/100-anniversary-of-the-people'.html.html>

Republic of Georgia, the reason is laid in the rulers being social-democrats and the history deliberately hidden during the Soviet Union. Stephen Jones mentions that since independence quite usually the First Republic was accepted just like socialists, the term which had a negative linkage with the Soviet Union. Accordingly, under the Zviad Gamsakhurdia there was a complete rejection of socialism, and therefore the First Republic (even the constitution). Later, the constitution has been restored, however, the attitude still remained negative. Jones argues that under Saakashvili the First Republic was criticized and only now the situation starts to slightly change.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Q and A: Why are Georgians still suspicious of the First Republic? (2018, July 21), *Civil Ge*. Retrieved from <https://civil.ge/archives/246979>

Findings and Concluding Remarks

Through this thesis, I set out to comprehend the dynamics of memory politics and commemoration in three countries of the South Caucasus, whether these patterns can alter the narratives originally written by historians. Thus, one of my objectives was to outline the historical background information and analyze the narratives circulated mostly in May 2018. I sought to examine the ways how the contemporary centennial narratives from the state-run media outlets have been changed in contrast to historical narratives according to the existent political situation within countries.

In order to shed lights on the research question proposed, I utilized a set of theoretical frameworks and narratives that are ultimately interconnected; involving national, cultural and political memory, the triangle of memory-identity-interest and their impact on the foreign policy, and therefore on the construction of future narratives, as well as a notion of journalism anniversary usually dubbed as public historians. The elite-interview with the 2 local expertise (expert and academician) from each country are conducted to get a local view on the patterns gained.

The importance of memory occurs in the overall celebrations of the centennial anniversary. In the South Caucasus, the day of independence has been marked in a wide range, including military parades, theatrical scenes, concerts, museums and so forth. People who have not witnessed individually and lived in the First Republic, unconsciously identifying themselves with the part of history, being a constructed “We”. The day of remembrance, therefore, boosted solidarity and contributed to the identity and nation-building process. A whole process is facilitated by states adding a symbolic spirit via military parades (and the story on the background), theatrical scenes at the same place and the same time (thus, making an artificial flashback back to hundred years ago), patriotic concerts and museums. Both political and cultural memory used in three states opened up a window of opportunities to fortify newly produced memories through the generations. And what is important here is the participation of people in the acts of commemoration.

The past and current interaction between states contribute to the identities of states. And identities which are a composition of values, practices, and ideas have been built based on peculiar memories. As it was mentioned in the theoretical background collective/national memories are interconnected with the collective/national identities. Whereas there is an interdependence between the collective/national memory and political/national interest, according to the social constructivism, the collective/national identity, in contrast, has an impact on political/national interest. In a sequel, the political/national interest influence the foreign policy, making it possible to narratives being shaped by the current situation. For instance, in the case of Azerbaijan, the negative perception of Russia is a chance for the government to alter narratives with time (more highlight and present in a more mild way). It can be seen in the current narratives portraying neutrally negative and in 2014, 2015 (during the strained relations between two) with a strong negative tone against Russia. Moreover, in addition to the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, part of the narratives outline the role of the former president Heydar Aliyev in the Third Republic. Nevertheless, the political equilibrium relatively exists, owing to awareness of the government on the special place of Azerbaijan Democratic Republic in Azerbaijani national consciousness. It opened up an opportunity for getting a wider sympathy from considerable part of society pursuing the founders of ADR as an idol and an inspiration.

The contradictions between political interest and national interest shape how historical events are represented. Quite telling is a Georgian case, where previous regimes due to their perception and view of the system treated the First Republic. For example, Gamsakhurdia's rejection of socialism, and past comparison of the First Republic with socialism led to complete refuse of the memory of the republic. Under Shevarnadze the attitude remained relatively negative, whereas Saakashvili at all criticized the Georgian Democratic Republic. Only afterwards, the shift has occurred in general narratives in a more positive way. In case of Armenia, the interest has been reflected in the representation heroes as Garegin Nzhdeh in the previous regime and being completely overseen in post-revolutionary Armenia. The clash of interests influenced the memory construction of Diasporan Armenians as well. According to distinct parties, for some,

the First Republic is an inspiration and the proud of the party (Dashnaksutyun), whereas for others it is merely an indicator of independence overseeing the ruling party.

Since one of the objectives was to compare the history with the current narratives, it provided knowledge of which particular event is either highlighted or concealed. From the broad historical literature, only the attitude towards the main actors and occasions (to which historical attention is mostly paid) of that period were chosen. Accordingly, the history of Armenia and Georgia portrayed Turkey as an occupant and an essential existential threat to the newly established republics. Differ from them, historians of Azerbaijani studies estimated the relationship diversely: mostly Azerbaijani historians stressed on a positive historical image of Turkey, whereas other historians assessed the relation as dubious (the issue of recognition of Azerbaijan Democratic Republic or the cooperation between two sides).

Albeit of particular difficulties in Armenian-Russian relationship, Russia is depicted as a strong and inevitable ally of Armenia and a crucial force against Ottoman Turkey. Though in a more mild way than Turkey, Russia still is presented negatively in Georgian historiography. Tough relations between two, only melted down relatively at the end of the existence of the First Republic of Georgia until the Bolsheviks have occupied the former. In Azerbaijani historiography, Russia's image had strong negative emphasis (bolshevik-dashnak cooperation, unrecognition, and occupation by both White Russia and Bolsheviks). In all three countries, Iran is described in a relatively neutral way. Germany occupies one of the central places in historical narratives of Georgia as a saver and facilitator of gaining independence, staying neutral towards Britain. Yet, Britain is reckoned by Armenian historians as a country which helped the new state. Azerbaijan delineates Britain rather ambiguous: notably negative in the early stages of the republic and relatively positive in the end.

By examining the implications of the subtext of background information, it became evident that contemporary centennial narratives are shaped by political circumstances. The image of Turkey in the contemporary state-run media landscape's narratives in Armenia is substantially negative. What is more, the narratives foreground the three

battles more than the Democratic Republic of Armenia, because battles led to the emergence of the republic. Turkey's image, however, is completely hidden (though Turkey was the main "Other") from the state-controlled media what is understandable in contemporary bilateral strategic relations between Georgia and Turkey. The narratives of Azerbaijani media towards Turkey are estimated as highly emotional and positive, emphasizing on kinship and victories gained together. Nevertheless, according to the existent positive relationship between two political forces, the narrative was highlighted more with the holding a military parade in honour of the common victory. Armenia's state-run media does not portray Russia as an occupant, rather narrates on the incorporation of Armenia into the Soviet Union which, due to both officials and media, contributes to the restoration of independence in the early 90s. Georgia's state-controlled media is quite cautious in depicting Russia. Although the narratives, in general, are relatively neutral, Russia in anyway is implicitly portrayed as occupant and the Soviet Union as a period of occupation. Even though the last couple of years Russia's image melted down in Azerbaijan's government-controlled, it still remains negative. The Soviet Union is either ignored or described as an occupation and a forceful inclusion therein. What is interesting, Russian troops participated in Armenian and Azerbaijani military parades. Nevertheless, when Armenia dedicated several separate storylines (previous and current regime) to their participation, Azerbaijan mentioned it merely in the line with different countries' troops took part herein. Britain is backgrounded in Armenia's and Georgia's narratives, but highlighted in Azerbaijani - and can be assessed more positive than negative.

Diasporan Armenians in contrast to Armenians living in Armenia foregrounds the historical relationship between the USA and Armenia, whereas in Armenia's narrative the USA is downplayed. Notwithstanding, Armenia's narratives outlines the help of Americans in the early stages of the First Republic. The peculiar role of the USA is included both in Georgian and Azerbaijani as well. All three narratives try to build a bridge and draw apparent parallels between the current situation. Despite the historical relationship between Georgia and Germany, the media also comparatively downplays Germany. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan highlights the friendship and build a bridge between Israel and Azerbaijan, and Jews living in Azerbaijan back to 1918-1920 and the First

Republic. The Armenian-Georgian war is downplayed in both countries' narratives as well as the cooperation of Azerbaijan and Georgia. The territorial disputes are highlighted in both Armenia and Azerbaijan; in addition, media outlets of Azerbaijan put a crucial emphasis on liberation of Baku from Dashnaks and Bolsheviks, but Armenian media landscape does not touch upon either the liberation of Baku or March Days.

By and large, all three countries stress on gaining independence, but also restoration of statehood. This narrative is more obvious in case of Armenia, in almost all narratives of which Armenia restored its statehood is highlighted. Self-image has been explicitly strengthening in all countries of the regions, but the overall view was different. For instance, Armenia focuses on the past: achieved victories and importance of past experiences. Azerbaijan dwells on the present, underlining the developed army (with three military parades) and improvements. Georgia prioritizes the future (a year "from independence to freedom") and nearest reunification with Europe. Notions as glory, pride, victimization, and trauma are part of all national narratives of these states. Armenia, meanwhile, narrates on the significance of democratic values of the First Republic, while Diasporan Armenians put a great emphasis on the overall celebration of the republic. Both Azerbaijan and Georgia westernize the politics of memory, outlining gender equality (first democratically elected woman in Georgia and first in Turkic/Islamic equal woman rights in Azerbaijan).

In conclusion, the expectations made in the introduction have been proved and the research question answered. The memory of the First Republics have considerable impact on countries' national consciousness (despite the Soviet Union has been trying to erase this period). Thus, the remembrance is highly immersed into the national consciousness of Azerbaijanis and Diasporan Armenians. Its is relatively high in Georgia and less important in Armenia. According to findings, albeit of having a similar history, all countries of the South Caucasus shift their narratives owing to political situations in a different way. Nonetheless, the political situation included the structure of memory-identity-interest (and foreign policy orientation), which, in a sequel, facilitated the process of shaping historical narratives.

Limitations

During the research, there were a couple of limitations and challenges I tackled with. Firstly, there was no chance to be a witness of the centennial celebrations as a participant to dig into the atmosphere. Secondly, an important limitation was the language barrier. For instance, in the case of Georgia, where the government of Georgia created specific projects on Facebook and Public Broadcaster with videos (for domestic audience), but in Georgian. Hence, it was the main reason for taking the international direction in analyzing the narratives.

Appendix: Interview questions

Central/Research question: How were the historical narratives about centenary anniversaries in the South Caucasus shaped by political situations?

Subsidiary questions:

Question 1: By and large, what role does the First Republic play in Armenian/Azerbaijani/Georgian national consciousness? (strong, weak or maybe population does not perceive the First Republic as the successor of independent statehood)

1a: Are there any differences in perceiving the First Republic between Armenia and Armenian diaspora?

Question 2: How do you assess the significance of centenary anniversary commemoration on Armenia/Azerbaijan/Georgia's nation-building process?

Question 3: How did domestic situation and the interest of the political regime reflect the representation of centenary anniversary commemoration (its celebration, narratives, etc)? **3a:** Specifically, in the aftermath of revolution, how were the historical narratives articulated by previous regime altered under Nikol Pashinyan?

Question 5: Currently, Georgia keeps strong pro-West orientation, Armenia tries to preserve a balance between Russia and the West, whereas Azerbaijan maintains the position of neutrality in its foreign policy orientation. Does the same parallels occur in narratives about centenary anniversary presented by elites? Which historical events do elites consequently highlight more and what do they try to conceal?

Question 6: How are the regional powers (Russia, Turkey, Iran) perceived according to Armenian/Azerbaijani/Georgian national master narratives? Has their image in the country's collective/national memory been changed since the independence (or the Soviet Union)?

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