

## Seeking Historical United Armenia; a Critical Analysis of Post-Soviet Armenian Ethno-National Movement

**Dr. Muhammad Asim (Corresponding Author)**

Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science at the Government Graduate College Asghar Mall, Rawalpindi and Honorary Vice-President at the Pak-Iran Intellectuals Forum (Islamabad Office)

Email: [asimsheikh62@yahoo.com](mailto:asimsheikh62@yahoo.com)

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### Abstract

Historical Armenian highland belongs to several Armenian kingdoms during different centuries while some ethnographers present the modern history of the Armenian ethno-national movement since the Armenian Genocide under the Ottoman Empire in 1915. It elevated during the Stalin regime but got strength in 1988 when the pro-Armenian Nagorno-Karabakh Movement was initiated. Till then, Armenian ethno-national sentiments have prevailed in the entire regime. This study not only found the historical roots of emerging Armenian ethnic nationalism but also analyzes its post-Soviet strength. Similarly, the impacts of this movement on Armenian neighboring countries like Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia are also being evaluated in the study whereas; the political economy of this movement is discussed in the last.

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## Introduction

Post-Soviet Armenia has strong Armenian ethno-nationalism not only in the entire country but it is also existed in traditional Armenian highland where different factions interpreted the Armenian ethno-national movement with diverse orientations. It has not only been stimulated by the de-facto Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (currently recaptured by Azerbaijan), and, the Armenian population in Eastern Turkey and Samtskhe-Javakheti region of Georgia but also encouraged by the central government of Armenia, several Armenian nationalist political parties like Armenian Revolutionary Federation, and, Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) (Herb, 2008, P.897).

Although Azerbaijan has taken control over the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh once again in 2020 with the help of Russian and Turkish peacekeeping forces, history tells those Armenian relations with

Azerbaijan have been deteriorating since the war over Nagorno-Karabakh. In 2008, Azerbaijani President declared that “Nagorno-Karabakh will never be an independent country. Armenia will have to accept this reality. It was a great mistake to grant Yerevan to Armenians because the Khanate of Iravan was the Azeri territory while Armenians were just guests there”. On April 05, 2016, Even Azerbaijan declared a unilateral cease-fire but technically both countries remained at war. however, Turkish open support for Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region always forced the Armenia government to avoid any confrontation against its any other neighboring country. Otherwise, supporters of “United Armenia” not only claim over the territories of Eastern Turkey, the Javakheti region of Georgia, the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic and the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan but sometimes, they raise their voices for claim over the Iranian Azerbaijan Region by referring this region as the “Pars-Armenia” (or Parsarmenia) province under ancient Persian Armenia (428-646 AD) (Hobbs, 2016, P.197). However, Iranian support for the Armenian claim over the Nagorno-Karabakh region (due to the fear of strengthening the “United Azerbaijan Movement” in Iranian Azerbaijan Region) made Armenian ethno-nationalists silent over their claim on historical Pars-Armenia (Kingston, 2016, P.viii).

This study not only presents a political history of this movement for centuries but the impacts of the Post-Soviet Armenian ethno-national movement in the region is also evaluated. Similarly, the official differences between Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia with the Armenian government along with the political economy of this movement are also discussed in the last.

## Literature Review

Herb (2008) analyzes Armenian ethnic nationalism in contemporary territories of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey while Payaslian (2007) discusses the history of emerging Armenian ethnic nationalism. He also highlights the Armenian genocide under Ottoman Empire in 1915. Similarly, Cornell (2005) illustrates Treaty of Batum which was signed by Ottoman Empire and the First republic of Armenia on June 04, 1918. On the other hand, Bakalian (1993) emphasizes upon Armenian ethno-national movement under the Stalin regime.

Kocharli (2004) focuses on Karabakh Movement and the migration of Azerbaijanis of Armenia and Armenians of Azerbaijan in their respective countries during 1988. He also discusses the consequences of Nagorno-Karabakh’s declaration of independence on September 02, 1991. Similarly, Ishkanian (2008) points out the territories claimed by Armenian Revolutionary Federation for getting “United Armenia” while Nee (2014) defines Armenian-Turkish relations in the light of existing Armenian ethnic nationalism. At the same time, Panossian (2013) analyzes Armenian internal politics in Nagorno-Karabakh region while Demirdjian (2015) explains the desire of the Heritage Party for establishing five sovereign Armenian states in the region.

Coene (2009) evaluates the history of Armenian ethno-national movement in Kavakheti region of Georgia while Salmassian (2012) discusses the role of United Javakhk Democratic Alliance regarding getting demanding autonomy within the federation of Georgia. On the other hand, Schrodtt (2014) finds the historical roots of Armenian ethnic nationalism in Eastern Turkey while Freedman (2008) defines the terms “Wilsonian Armenia” and “Kemalist Turkey” in this regard. Moreover, Geukjian (2013) presents the contemporary strength of Armenian ethno-national movement in Armenia and Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan while Payaslian (2011) describes the critical political economy of this movement.

## Historical Background

United Armenia or Greater Armenia Movement is actually an effort for fulfilling the Armenian nationalist concept denoting to traditional Armenian homeland (also called “Armenian Highland”) which is

historically or currently populated by Armenians mostly. This concept was introduced first during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century which is also called an era of Armenian national awakening. At that time, Armenian population was divided in Ottoman Empire (called Western Armenia) and the Russian Empire (Eastern Armenia). This concept is also used in the phrase by the “English Society of Friends of Russian Freedom”. In its edition published in 1899, it quoted a confidential report of Grigory Golitsin; the Russian Governor of this region (called the Caucasus at that time) sent to Tsar Nicholas II. This report contained some suggestions for future policy about this region. Golitsin told Nicholas II about the existence of a nationalist movement in this region; “having ambitions for restoration of independent Armenia of the past, and, their goal is to achieve one united and great Armenia” (Payaslian, 2007, PP.76-118).

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, this concept was the major objective of the Armenian National Liberation Movement. A limited armed conflict between Armenians<sup>1</sup> and Ottoman Empire had occurred during 1890s. This conflict along with the demand for reforms in Ottoman Armenian Provinces motivated Sultan Abdul Hamid II to crush Armenians in this region which resulted in almost three lac casualties from 1894 to 1896 (called Hmidian massacres). During the Second Constitutional Era, when Sultan Abdul Hamid II restored the Ottoman Constitution of 1876, Armenians thought that Ottoman Government may announce some reforms in the Armenian region but Adana massacre deteriorated Armenian-Turkish relations once again. At last, Ottoman Government accepted to introduce reforms in its Armenian provinces in 1914 but, indirectly, it initiated pre-planned Armenian genocide in 1915 that caused estimated 1.5 million killings of Armenians. Through this genocide, Armenians were replaced successfully from this region after two thousand years (Payaslian, 2007, PP.76-118).

Russian Empire captured Ottoman Armenian region (Western Armenia) in 1916 but the Russian Army left this region due to the Revolution of 1917. Ottoman Empire regained this region quickly. Although Bolshevik Russia and Ottoman Empire signed an agreement to stop combats in Turkish Armenia when the Transcaucasian Commissariat of Bolshevik Russia in the Caucasus proclaimed its independence<sup>2</sup> from Russia in 1918, confrontation was again started with Ottoman Empire. This federation also collapsed when Armenian National Council announced the independence of Armenian Province in 1918 (also called the First Republic of Armenia). It was recognized by Ottoman Empire on June 04, 1918 by Treaty of Batum (Cornell, 2005, P.57) (Payaslian, 2007, PP.76-118).

At the end of the First World War, the defeated of Ottoman Empire forced it to sign the Armistice of Mudros with Allied forces, through which, Turkish troops left its Armenian region (called Caucasus or Western Armenia). Republic of Armenia established its control over Igdir city and its surrounding territory, Kars Oblast and Mount Ararat. On May 28, 1919, the Republic of Armenia symbolically announced the unification of Eastern Armenia and Western Armenia. Another Sevres Treaty was signed on August 10, 1920 regarding portioning of Ottoman Empire and border settlement between Armenia and Turkey that was not acceptable to Turkish nationalist forces led by Mustafa Kamal. His forces recaptured Kars on October 30, 1920. At the same time, Bolshevik Russia invaded remaining Armenia and declared it as Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia on December 02, 1920. The mountainous region of Nagorno-Karabagh, Nakhchivan and Zangezur were documented as integral parts of the Armenia but Nagorno-Karabagh and Nakhchivan were kept under the control of Azerbaijan SSR for another eight months. Similarly, Treaty of Moscow was signed on March 16, 1921 by which, Ardahan and Kars and Ardahan were returned to Turkey

<sup>1</sup> There were three major Armenian parties confronting against Ottoman Empire for “United Armenia”. These were Armenakan, Hnchak and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (also called Dashnak or ARF) (Payaslian, 2007, P.76).

<sup>2</sup> New state was called “Transcaucasian Federation” which comprised Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia (Payaslian, 2007, P.76).

while, Nakhchivan declared as Protectorate of Azerbaijan (Cornell, 2005, PP.57-58) (Payaslian, 2007, PP.76-118).

Movement for United Armenia under Soviet patronage was again stimulated after Second World War when Stalin's claim for repopulating Armenians in their native areas-imposed pressure on Turkey to redefine borders with Armenia. Stalin also demanded receded Ardahan and Kars with Armenia SSR. As this demand was never an agenda of Soviet Union before 1947, it was also no more after the death of Stalin in 1953. While, this movement was again raised when the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Armenian genocide in Ottoman Empire was celebrated in Yerevan (capital of Armenia SSR) on April 24, 1965. These celebrations motivated several military groups to start secret militant activities against Soviet Union and Turkey for unification of Armenian region. Some militant groups like National United Party (NUP), the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA), Armenian Revolutionary Army (ARA) and Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide (JCAG) were some of them. A series of efforts regarding destabilizing others from both sides remained to continue till 1988 within the historical Armenian highland (Bakalian, 1993, P.23).

### **Armenian Ethnic Nationalism in Nagorno-Karabakh Region**

The idea of "United Armenia" was again elevated in 1988 when the Karabakh Movement emerged in Soviet Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast within Soviet Azerbaijan. The basic objective of this movement was to the reunification of both regions. Similarly, Nagorno-Karabakh Supreme Council requested to Moscow Government for transferring this region from Soviet Azerbaijan to Soviet Armenia on February 20, 1988. Although this request was declined by the Moscow Government, Supreme Council of Soviet Armenia recognized Nagorno-Karabakh as its part on June 15, 1988. This recognition was rejected by Soviet Azerbaijan and declared this region as its part. Several leading members of the Karabakh Movement Committee were arrested by Soviet Azerbaijan Government December in 1988 but released in May 1989. On the other hand, the Supreme Councils of Soviet Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast declared the unification of both regions on December 01, 1989 that resulted in migration of Azerbaijanis of Armenia and Armenians of Azerbaijan in their respective countries (Kocharli, 2004, P.42).

In 1991, as other Soviet republics declared their independence from USSR, Nagorno-Karabakh Supreme Council also announced their independence on September 02, 1991 and declared it to be Nagorno-Karabakh Republic. In reaction, Azerbaijani Parliament abolished its autonomous structure on November 26, 1991 but, Nagorno-Karabakh held an independence referendum on December 10, 1991 that was boycotted by Azeri minority in this region. Overall, 99 percent of votes were cast in favor of independence. This becomes the situation deteriorated and Armenian forces not only captured the original territory of Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast but the area in the surroundings to the border of Iran. This confrontation ended through a ceasefire agreement, signed in Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan) on May 05, 1994. Since then, de-facto Nagorno-Karabakh Republic has been established in this region which is recognized by only the countries with limited recognition<sup>3</sup> (Kocharli, 2004, PP.42-44) (Krikorian, Accessed on April 12, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (internationally recognized as a part of Azerbaijan), Republic of South Ossetia and the Republic of Abkhazia (internationally recognized as the parts of Georgia), and, Transnistria (internationally recognized as a part of Moldova), are the countries called de-facto countries with limited recognitions. These de-facto states recognized each other while the Republic of Abkhazia is also recognized by Russia (Ishkanian, 2008, PP.113-120).

Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) which is a left-wing nationalist party (also called Dashnak) is not only an advocate for “United Armenia” since its foundation in 1890 but during announcing its party program in 1998, once again it claimed the territories of Western Armenia (eastern Turkey), de-facto Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic (Azerbaijan) and Javakhk (Javakheti region of Georgia). The slogan of this party is still “A Free, Independent and United Armenia” (Ishkanian, 2008, PP.113-120). Similarly, the Bureau Chairman of this party; Hrant Markarian stated during the party congress in 2004 that,

“We are against any kind of relation among Turkey and Armenia that would mean recognition of any preconditions by us that would require us to give up our rights upon any part taken by them. We will put up pressure upon Turkey until we attain full victory, until international recognition of the fact of Armenian genocide, until the creation of United Armenia” (Nee, 2014, PP.211).

On the other hand, there are several criticisms of Heritage Party about its giving up “United Armenia” ideology. Three times in 2007, 2010 and 2012, this party introduced the bills for recognition of Nagorno-Karabakh Republic in the Armenian National Assembly but was voted down by the majority of Republican Party because of controversial myth regarding leaving ideology about territorial integrity among both regions (Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh) (Panossian, 2013, P.109). Although, a leading member of Heritage Party; Zaruhi Postanjyan showed his orientation about the restoration of territorial integration of the historical Armenian homeland in April 2015 during a conference on Armenian Genocide’s 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. While, several leaders of Republic Party consider that Heritage Party wants to acquire five sovereign Armenian states (Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, Republic of South Armenia or Western Armenia, Nakhchivan and Javakh) instead of Armenian historical territorial unification (Demirdjian, 2015, P.189).

### **Armenian Ethnic Nationalism in Javakheti Region**

Like Nagorno-Karabakh, Javakhti region of Georgia is also claimed by Armenian ethno-nationalists. This region is called Javakhti for Georgians while Javakhk for Armenians. In fact, this region is comprised of two districts; Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda. Both districts are the part of Georgian Province; Samtskhe-Javakheti. Although there is almost 54 percent Armenian population but generally, Javakheti Armenians stay here with reasonable inter-ethnic harmony. Usually, foreign visitors argue that at first, they feel difficulties in determining which country they are in. On the other hand, inhabitants of this region are experiencing wide cultural autonomy and have a strong fear for their future due to the Armenian expansionist orientation for “United Armenia”. Historically, this armed conflict had taken place between Georgia and Armenia in December 1918 for the Armenian claim over Javakhti region along with Borchali and Lori. The conflict remained to continue till the Soviet occupation in 1920 (Coene, 2009, P.159).

During the last decade of Soviet Union, United Javakhk Democratic Alliance (a local civic organization founded in 1988) is demanding for an Armenian autonomy in this region. Several times, it campaigned for a referendum in this regard. There is also a contradiction among scholars and proponents of “United Armenia” about the role of this organization. The most common perception that is prevailed in Georgia that it has close links with the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) which claims Javakhk as a part of United Armenia. On the other hand, several Armenian politicians and scholars believe that it is demanding for high degree of self-government and autonomy within the federation of Georgia which would sustain this region politically and economically along with better Armenian-Georgian regional relationships. Bureau Chairman of ARF; Hrant Markarian also showed his consent to this idea in the 2004 party congress. He said that “We want a stable, strong and autonomous Javakheti region that is a part of Georgia and enjoys state care” (Salmasian, 2012, PP.08-09). On the other hand, Vahagn Chakhalian; one of the activists in the United Javakhk Democratic Alliance was imprisoned in 2008 on accused of working against

the federation of Georgia and freed in 2013. While, as per the official report of Georgian Government in 2014, this organization has lost its influence in this region now (Demirdjian, 2015, PP.40-41).

During the first Post-Soviet democratic regime of President Zviad Gamsakhurdia (April 14, 1991 to January 06, 1992), this region remained de-facto semi-independent (Salmassian, 2012, PP.08-09). Only in November 1991, Georgian Government appointed its governor here. While the region had clearly been perceived as the most dangerous part of Georgia for ethnic conflicts during 1990s. However, no armed conflict ever arose in this regard (Kamptan, 2002, P.110). At the same time, post-Soviet bilateral relations between Armenia and Georgia are also very careful regarding avoiding any tension. Besides movement for “United Armenia”. Armenian Government officially neither claimed this territory nor demanded the autonomy of this region within Georgia. Although in recent years, the status of Armenian churches and Armenian language in Georgia had been a matter of dispute but generally, both countries are experiencing friendly relations till now (Salmassian, 2012, PP.08-09).

### **Armenian Ethnic Nationalism in Eastern Turkey**

As the Movement for “United Armenia” claims Eastern Turkey as its western part, officially, there is no Armenian living in this region during the 21<sup>st</sup> century. While two ethnic groups still live in the region that can be counted ethnically as Armenians. One group is called “Hemshin Peoples”, lives in the surroundings of Black Sea coast, especially in the Trabzon, Rize and Artvin provinces. Another group is called “Crypto-Armenians” (or Secret Armenians), who live in the entire Turkey but especially in its eastern parts. Since Armenian Genocide, they tried to hide their ethnicity. Therefore, it is impossible to determine what actual number of their population. While, this area has mostly been inhabited by the Turks, Azerbaijanis, Kurds, Georgians and Laz people after First World War (Schrodt, 2014, P.85).

Generally, the supporters of “United Armenia” claim the area which was drawn by Woodrow Wilson in the Treaty of Sevres for Armenian-Ottoman/Turkish border. Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) argues that the Treaty of Sevres among Ottoman Empire and the Allies (including Armenia) is only the legal document that determined the border between Turkey and Armenia. Similarly, Former Deputy Foreign Minister of Armenia; Ara Papian claims that the granted territory to the Republic of Armenia by Wilson in the Treaty of Sevres is still a de-jure part of Armenia today, and, we have to acquire “Wilsonian Armenia”. He also stated that the Treaty of Kars which determined the current Armenian-Turkish border has no legal worth because it was signed among two unrecognized subjects. There were Kemalist Turkey and the Bolshevik Russia. He suggested that the Armenian Government can and should file a suit to dispute the border between Turkey and Armenia in the International Court of Justice. Similarly, several Armenians are still celebrated anniversary of Wilson’s Arbitral Award each year in Armenian Capital; Yerevan (Freedman, 2008, P.17).

Although, Armenian Government did not claim over Eastern Turkey since its independence in 1991 but never showed its explicit recognition of the existing Armenian-Turkish border also (Demirdjian, 2015, P.201). During the conference on the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Wilson’s Arbitral Award in 2010, Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan said that,

“It was undoubtedly one of the most historic events for Armenian nation during the 20<sup>th</sup> century which was called up to re-establish historic justice and eliminate consequences of the Armenian Genocide committed in the Ottoman Empire. The Arbitral Award recognized and defined Armenia's borders

internationally within which the Armenian people, who had gone through the hell of Mets Eghern<sup>4</sup>, were to build their statehood” (Demirdjian, 2015, P.201).

Similarly, on a question about the future of Western Armenia by a student during the meeting on July 23, 2011, Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan responded that,

*“It depends upon you and your generation. I believe, my generation has achieved the assignment in front of us. As it was necessary during the start of the 1990s regarding defending a part of our fatherland Nagorno-Karabakh from the enemy, we did it. I am not telling this to humiliate anyone. My viewpoint is that, each generation has its duties, and, it has to be carried out with honor. If you girls and boys of your generation spare no effort, if those younger and older than you act the same way, we will become one of the best countries in the entire world. Trust me, the country's progress is not limited by its territory in many cases. The country must be modern. It must be safe and prosperous. These are the conditions that allow any nation-state to sit next to the reputed, powerful and respectable nations of the world. We should simply fulfill our duty, must be active, hardworking, and, must be able to create bounty. We can do that. We can do that very easily, and, we have done it more than once in our history. I am sure about it, and I want you all to be confident also. We are a nation that always rises from the ashes like phoenix again and again” (Demirdjian, 2015, PP.201-202).*

Turkish officials measured Sargsyan's these statements as an encouragement for Armenian youth to accomplish the task of occupying Eastern Turkey. Therefore, Turkish Prime Minister Tayyab Erdogan condemned these statements and labeled them as "aggravation" during his visit to Baku after the few days. He also claimed that Sargsyan indirectly advised Armenian youth to be ready for a war with Turkey in the future. Erdogan officially demanded Sargsyan's confession; declaring his statements as a "blunder". In reaction, Deputy Foreign Minister of Armenia; Shavarsh Kocharyan detailed that “Sargsyan's statements were interpreted out of context” (Demirdjian, 2015, P.203).

Similarly, during 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Armenian Genocide organized by the Armenian Ministry of Diaspora on July 05, 2013, Armenian Prosecutor General Aghvan Hovsepyan made an extraordinary statement. He stated that,

*“Definitely, losing territories of the Republic of Armenia should have returned and material compensation should be paid to the victims of the Armenian Genocide. However, all these claims should have unspoiled legal grounds. I intensely believe that the families of genocide's victim must be compensated, and, churches and their lands which are unbelievably preserved still in Turkey must be returned to the Armenian Church and the Republic of Armenia” (Demirdjian, 2015, PP.203-204).*

In this statement of Armenian prosecutor general, one of the journalists in ArmeniaNow news agency; Naira Hayrumyan wrote on July 11, 2013 that,

*“This was perceived as the first Armenian official territorial claim to Turkey. As the prosecutor general is considered as a highest legal authority in any country, his statement is equal to an official statement in this regard” (Demirdjian, 2015, P.204).*

Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs showed its response on July 12, 2013. It denounced Hovsepyan's statements and released a statement that “Hovsepyan's statements highlight the dominant problematic mentality in Armenia against the territorial integrity of its neighboring Turkey. One must be well attentive that no one can believe to claim of returning land from Turkey” (Demirdjian, 2015, PP.204-205).

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<sup>4</sup> A particular word used for highlighting Armenian Genocide by Ottoman Empire as Jews use the word “Shoah” for describing Holocaust by Nazi Germany (Demirdjian, 2015, P.201).

### **Armenian Ethnic Nationalism in Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic**

As the contemporary Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan is also a part of the Movement for “United Armenia”, it is a historical truth that Armenians have been living in this region since ancient times. Contemporary region of Nakhchivan was part of Vaspurakan, Ayrarat and Syunik provinces within the Kingdom of Armenia established under the Artaxias I in 189 BC. Safavid Dynasty of Persia captured this region in 16<sup>th</sup> century. During Ottoman-Persian Wars, this region was frequently suffered due to its geographical location. Ottoman Empire took control over this region in 1604-05 under the regime of Shah Abbas I. he forced around three lac local Armenian inhabitants to migrate south of the Aras River (contemporary Iranian Azerbaijan region). Ottoman regime was finished here on an order of Shah Abbas II (1642-1666) when he advised Turkic Kangerli tribe to move back. This event became the reason of establishing Khanate in this region. Initially, contemporary territory of Nakhchivan was the part of Erivan Khanate but in 1747, a separate Khanate was established under the name of Nakhchivan Khanate under the Safavid Dynasty of Persia. This region became the part of Imperial Russia during the last Russo-Persian War 1826-28. Persia was forced to sign the Treaty of Turkmenchay due to the Russian threat of capturing Tehran. This occupation motivated almost 1,228 Armenian families to return to their homeland once again from different regions of Persia (Kocharli, 2004, PP.14-30).

During Russian Revolution of 1905<sup>5</sup>, the final year of First World War and the Bolshevik Revolution, Nakhchivan faced heavy bloodshed among Armenians and Azerbaijanis. Both were claiming this territory until the Soviet occupation. The Soviet Union established Nakhchivan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic on March 16, 1921 which was itself a republic but became a part of Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic on February 09, 1924. This affiliation created pressure on Armenians in Nakhchivan once again to leave this region. During Soviet census of 1979, just 3,406 Armenians were measured here. It was just 1.4 percent of the total population of this region. While the remaining few thousand Armenians left Nakhchivan during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in 1988. Proponents of “United Armenia” always highlight the “de-Armenianization of Nakhchivan” till now. On the other hand, close bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey stopped Armenia to initiate direct war in this region while, the destruction of Armenian cemeteries, monasteries and churches was observed here since 1990s in reaction to occupying Nagorno-Karabakh region by Armenian forces (Kocharli, 2004, PP.14-30).

Although Armenian Government never claimed the territory of Nakhchivan during 21<sup>st</sup> century, unofficially, it has been advised Armenian ethno-nationalists to annex this region in case of Azerbaijani attack over Nagorno-Karabakh. Similarly, in 2007, the Director of Nizami Museum of Azerbaijani Literature; Radael Huseynov claimed in the Committee of Ministers of Council of Europe that, “to occupy Nakhchivan is one of the main military objectives of Armenia” (Kocharli, 2004, PP.14-30).

### **Political Economy of the United Armenia Movement**

Economic study for the movement of “United Armenia” illustrates that the entire Armenian highland has a lot of natural resources and capacity for investment in the industrial, tourism and agriculture sectors. Besides Javakheti region of Georgia, all the regions claimed in “United Armenia” are economically developed. As the estimated economy of “United Armenia” is still under criticism and not evaluated properly, political economists measure the contemporary Armenian Republic’s economy by adding contemporary statistical figures of economic development in Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, Javakheti region, Nagorno-Karabakh region and Eastern Anatolia region issued by central governments of Azerbaijan, Georgia, de-facto Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and Turkey respectively (Payaslian, 2011,

<sup>5</sup> Mass social and political unrest that led constitutional reforms in Russian Empire including multi-party system, State Duma of Russian Empire and the Constitution of 1906 (Kocharli, 2004, PP.14-30).



PP.195-278). As the contemporary South Armenian (or Eastern Turkish) region has almost been divided into eleven provinces, economically, the entire region has full of resources. Elazig Province has silver, salt, gold and coal resources while, economy of Kars Province is subjected by forestry, livestock breeding and agriculture. 85 percent energetic population of Kars Province belongs to the profession of farmers. Similarly, it is the biggest province of Turkey for cattle breeding and livestock trade. Although, ore beds of arsenic, perlite, gypsum, magnesite (magnesium carbonate), asbestos and rock salt have been explored in this region but only rock salt is extracted. On the other hand, Erzurum Province produces wheat and linseed. Its annual production of linseed is almost grossed 1,000 to 1,500 tons while, honey is also produced here for local use. Its 75 percent of land is based on agriculture while, 8.8 percent land is covering forests. Industries largely manufactured and produced related to agriculture, mining, textile, chemistry and forestry. There are almost 81 active industrial plants in the province now, among which most of them are located in the central district of Erzurum. Zinc, chromium, copper and lead have also been explored in this region while, perlite, rock salt, marble, diatomite, manganese, gypsum, fire clay and magnesite already exist here. The GDP of Erzurum Province is 1.16 US billion dollars, constituting less than just one percent of the total, and, standing 40<sup>th</sup> among all Turkish provinces. This region is also linked with remaining Turkey through highways, railways and international airport (Darke, 2014, PP.23-24).

Moreover, the economy of Nagorno-Karabakh is no doubt small but rapidly growing. Its war-torn economy shows a relatively confident and quick recovery. Its GDP figure was US 59 million dollars in 1999 which were 80 percent down as recorded during Soviet times. While, its GDP reached at US 114 million dollars in 2005, US 260 million dollars in 2009 and US 320 million dollars in 2010 (International Business Publications Report, Published on June 01, 2015).

According to the Nagorno-Karabakh Statistical Service's official estimate, GDP consisted upon agriculture 16 percent from agriculture, 15 percent from manufacturing industries, 09 percent from construction and 57 percent from the service sector during 2007. On the other hand, a trend of local and international investment has converted to jewelry, diamond polishing, gold mining and telecom industries in this region. As it was the largest per capita producer of grapes during the Soviet regime, this region is also famous in the entire world for mulberry vodka<sup>6</sup> (International Business Publications Report, Published on June 01, 2015).

On the other hand, Javakheti region is more economically less-develop than the other Georgian regions but, can get progress after the completion of the highway constructed by the US Foreign Aid Agency Millennium Challenge Corporation for linking other regions of Georgia. Similarly, a Turkey-Georgia-Azerbaijan railroad is planned from Kars (Turkey) to Baku (Azerbaijan) via this area. In the case of completing this project, this region can also be a hub for international and regional trade that will further grow the regional economy as well. But, the local Armenian population of this region is opposing this project because it is isolated and excluded Armenia. However, major regional economic activities are based on agriculture and raising livestock. At the same time, international tourists become the reason for generating a lot of revenue from this region. There are two cave monasteries of Vardzia and Vanis Kvabebi located in this region for tourist attractions while, Khertvisi fortress is also visited by hundreds of tourists each year (Nuriyev, 2007, PP.212-215).

## Conclusion

To analyze all these economic and political factors behind the movement of "United Armenia", it is concluded that Armenia has been failed to initiate any confrontation with its neighboring countries

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<sup>6</sup> an alcoholic beverage that is produced commercially and exported under the brand name "Artsakh" by the Artsakh-Alco Brandy Company in Askeran District of Nagorno-Karabakh (Nuriyev, 2007, P.212).

(especially after lost over the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh). Otherwise, orientations for establishing “United Armenia” still exist in the minds of several political elites and workers. While any effort regarding supporting this idea officially by Armenian Government can force Armenia to be alone in this region as somewhat it has already happened through initiating a railroad project between Turkey, Georgia and Azerbaijan; called the Kars-Tbilisi-Baku railroad (assumed to be completed in 2017).

Similarly, current facts show that the idea and movement of “United Armenia” are just prevailed among the Armenian ethno-nationalist parties of the contemporary Armenian Republic or within Armenian Diasporas (Geukjian, 2013, P.122). An Armenian American historian; Gerard Libaridian wrote about this ideology in 2007,

“However, it is correct that not all the Armenians in Diaspora share the visualization of United Armenia as a political program, territorial ambitions were sustained, nonetheless, by the deep sense of injustice that Armenians generally felt (such as Turkish disowning of the genocide and lack of any kind of material compensation for the genocide losses)” (Geukjian, 2013, P.08).

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