

a combination of all the forces at work to obstruct the Armenian people's right to perpetuate, to become whole, a nation rooted in its historic homeland.

The concept of ethnicity in a person's identity is a complex structure with common history, language, race, religion, traditions, and a territorial belonging among the elements with the most impact at its core. Common history and especially the collective memory of that history, "the dammed up force of our mysterious ancestors within us,"<sup>3</sup> is chosen as the building block as well as the vantage point of this study. I do believe that "history is a crucial element in the making of identity," and "people without history... are people who have been prevented from identifying themselves from others."<sup>4</sup> In the case of the Armenians, an ancient people with a rich history of cultural output, military victories and defeats, prosperities and tribulations, the element of common history in their identity gains added importance. Moreover, I believe that the impact of history or the collective memory of that common history, on the concept of ethnicity and the construct of ethnic identity, is

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their function after WWI. The postwar small Republic of Armenia established in the easternmost part of historic Armenia was Sovietized and locked behind the Iron Curtain. As a result of these historical changes, the face of the classic Diaspora changed too. There was no Armenia to maintain the umbilical cord that spiritually nourished the Armenian communities abroad.

<sup>3</sup> See Olick and Robbins, "Social Memory Studies" (1998), p. 106. The authors cite T. Schieder (1978) who quotes Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1902) as the first to use the term "collective memory," referring to this force as "piled up layers of accumulated collective memory."

<sup>4</sup> Friedman, "History and Politics of Identity" (1994), p. 117.