

Armenian Diaspora Main Lobbying Agendas in the United States in the 21st Century

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This article is an introduction to the subject matter of the main points of interest for the Armenian lobbying groups in the United States of America. This ethnic community has become the second-largest group of Armenians living outside the Republic of Armenia and currently the most politically active. Not only do they affect their host country policy and economy of the homeland, but Armenian Americans aim to act on behalf of the whole global diaspora. In particular, they are lobbying for the recognition of the Armenian genocide and adopting specific policies towards Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan, and Turkey. The involvement of the Armenian minority in the United States of America goes beyond political and economic issues. Diaspora has managed to create academic centers at American universities researching Armenian culture, history, and language, as well as funding collections of Armenian art. In 2020 the construction of the Armenian Americans Museum will begin. The mission of the center will be to document the experience of Armenian migration. These initiatives are part of specific ethnic "soft power." Armenian Americans lobbying groups have succeeded in passing Resolution 150 in the United States of America. Congress that recognizes as a genocide mass killing of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. This is the result of almost 50 years of diaspora operations, always blocked by the Turkish lobby. Although relatively few, compared to the entire United States of America population, the Armenian Americans community continues to pursue their goals successfully. In 2015, as part of the celebration of the anniversary of the Genocide, the Armenian diaspora established a series of charitable events and funded the Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity. Today, the largest number of American Armenians live on the West Coast of the United States of America, and Los Angeles has become the center of the diaspora. As a result of the actions of its social organizations, state schools have created classes for pupils speaking Armenian. Since 2010, the days of remembrance of Genocide have been officially celebrated in California. To identify the most critical factors, this article is based on various data from official United States of America government sources, monographs, and scientific articles, as well as press materials and geopolitics web portals.

Keywords: Armenian Americans, diaspora, ethnic group, minority, United States of America, ethnic lobbying

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Introduction

The primary purpose of this article is an introduction to the most crucial lobbying agendas for the Armenian minority in the United States. This topic may be an exciting contribution for Ukrainian researchers to the scientific knowledge of the 11 million global Armenian diaspora. The Armenian minority in Ukraine is currently the fifth largest community living outside the Republic of Armenia and, in many ways, related to action priorities in the pan-Armenian movement. Armenians have lived in Ukraine for centuries, and as an ethnic minority are the subject of many analyses. The following paragraphs will present the phenomenon of the second in number in the world and the most known Armenian community and its achievements and policy guidelines.

Three decades since gaining independence, the population of the Republic of Armenia is about 3 million people (Armenia Population, 2020), while the size of the global diaspora is estimated at 11 million. This disparity continues to widen. In the years 1992–2014, the country's population fell by one million citizens, and the main reason for this process has become emigration (Armenia's Diaspora, 2014). After the catastrophic effects of the Spitak earthquake in 1988 and rapid changes that began in the 1990s, the living conditions in Armenia drastically worsened. Unemployment and inflation increased, society became impoverished, food was scarce, and blackouts were frequent. Besides, due to the Karabakh conflict and the tense situation with Turkey, trade contacts with the world could only be maintained via the northern border with Georgia or by air. All these factors have intensified the process of economic emigration.

Artem Yerkanian distinguished four main groups among those leaving Armenia: 1. refugees from Azerbaijan, 2. ecological emigrants after the earthquake in 1988, 3. members of ethnic minorities (in 1988 — 1989 mainly Azeris), 4. and the largest group of economic emigrants, of whom about 1/3 were teachers, scientists, technicians, engineers and economists (Yerkanian, 2000). By 2014, over 100,000 people have chosen the United States as their final destination (Armenia's Diaspora, 2014). Their massive influx in the first years after the collapse of the USSR was possible thanks to the preferential legal regulations of the U.S. government. The Armenian Relief Society was actively involved in helping this new and numerous waves of immigrants.

The modern Armenian diaspora

At the beginning of the 21st century, the largest concentrations of Armenians outside their homeland are in Russia — 2.3 million, the U.S. — 1.5 million, France — 400 thousand, Lebanon — 230 thousand (Charkiewicz, 2012) and Ukraine — 100 thousand (Struminsky, 2011). Until independence, the mainline of division between *we* and *they* ran between immigrants and host countries. Nowadays, the differences are more clearly marked between Armenians living in the Republic of Armenia, the Russian Federation and former Soviet republics, and the so-called *old* diaspora in the Western countries.

The first pan-Armenian conference dedicated to relations between the global diaspora and the Republic of Armenia was held in Yerevan on September 22-23, 1999. In total, 6 similar meetings were since organized, the last one in 2017. Laurence Ritter states that today's idea of homeland does not have only to mean geographical Armenia (Ritter, 2009: 106). Permanent restoration of *Armenianness* for diasporas scattered around the world is as essential as their attachment to the real territory of the country of origin. In 1999 and 2002, the diaspora submitted

the need to create a committee, which would include representatives of emigration, providing the Armenian government with its opinions and proposals. Recognizing diasporas' inalienable role in shaping the future of the country and to coordinate mutual contacts, on October 1, 2008, the Armenian Ministry of Diaspora was created. According to Ritter, one of the biggest challenges is the fact that Armenians cannot refer to a common political philosophy, because for a very long time they defined themselves mainly as an endangered minority, first in their territory and then outside it. This form of self-description is still the most important for them. Despite the emphasis on the language, culture, or religion, none of these above definitions was able to re-define the entire nation (Ritter, 2009: 108). She argues, that "neither the Church, nor the parties, nor individuals can solve the crisis of identity that appears in the sensitive area of the diaspora's relationship with Armenia." For Ritter thinking about yourself mainly in two dimensions of threat and self-protection has made the idea of the Armenian people impossible. There is no "positive Armenian nation", but a community that is "a slave to the identity dimension based on being a victim" (Ritter, 2009: 110-111).

The government of the Republic of Armenia maintains such a narrative, continually reminding the diaspora that the homeland is in a challenging situation as the result of historical conflict with Turkey, the current frozen conflict with Azerbaijan and the economic blockade on the part of both neighbors, that has been going on for years. Turgut Kerem Tuncel believes that this is an element of intentional manipulation. On the grounds of necessity, there is no room for critical voices from the diaspora, but global mobilization in the form of political support and material assistance (Tuncel, 2014: 265). Indeed, the diaspora had suspended discussions several times, especially after the tragic earthquake of 1988, when Armenian organizations from around the world focused on helping victims. Then came the joint effort to rebuild the country after regaining independence. During the recent refugee crisis, homeland borders have been crossed by 17,000 people, mainly Armenians, from the Syrian diaspora (Gevorkyan, 2016). Armenian communities have once again engaged in global support by organizing fundraising events. The Syrian Armenian Relief Fund has been created, with the help of the Armenian Church from the U.S.

U.K.'s Foreign & Commonwealth Office has collected data indicating that in recent years, most likely, the most significant contribution to the Republic's economy has been made by diaspora from Russia. According to analysts, in 2008 alone, it amounted to 15% of the total official GDP of the country, although the numbers may be twice as high, taking into account the transfer of money outside the banking system (Armenia's Diaspora, 2014). Due to the problematic situation in the Caucasus, bilateral relations with the Russian Federation are a priority because Armenia fears stronger cooperation between Turkey and Russia. Armenia has become a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, and the Russian 102 Military Base is located on its territory. At the same time, which is causing great controversy among Armenians, the Federation has been selling weapons to Azerbaijan (Repetowicz, 2017).

Armenian Americans and the ethnic lobby

Armenian Americans have supported the country of origin with several billion dollars in various forms since 1991. Only one organization — the California Lincy Foundation, managed by billionaire Kerk Kirkorian, has invested over \$ 300 million in the Republic. Armenian lobby active influence on the U.S. administration has resulted in transferring funds of over 2 billion dollars to the homeland since 1992 (Armenia's Diaspora, 2014). The Armenian minority

sponsors scholarship programs for young generations to enable them to acquire education and experience in an international environment. A particularly valuable form of support is technological consulting and activities directed at improving the health care system and public roads in the Republic.

The pan-Armenian community is constantly lobbying on several issues. The most important are: recognition of the massacres of the Armenian population by the Turks in the Ottoman Empire and support for Armenia in the modern conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. This conflict has a very complicated background because apart from economic issues, i.e., the exploitation of oil and natural gas deposits located in the Republic of Arcach, it has primarily symbolic significance for all Armenians. It became a manifestation of support for one of the endangered diasporas and breaking the role of a passive victim. It is as well a form of response to the resentment associated with the loss of ethnically Armenian lands to their neighbors. Anny P. Bakalian claims that for the pan-Armenian community, it is crucial to emphasize the survival of physical extermination (“red genocide”) and the recovery of the parts of historical territories of Greater Armenia (Bakalian, 2014: 2). Ritter adds that to this day Armenians are accompanied by the metaphorical sense of “passing a double death sentence,” because Turkish negation concerns not only the Genocide itself but the very presence of Armenians in areas where they lived for 25 centuries.” (Ritter, 2009: 113).

The province of Arcach has been included in the borders of Azerbaijan, but most of the territory was inhabited by Armenians, who in the late 1980s constituted about 75% of its population (Azerbaijan, 1994). In 1987, a wave of demonstrations swept across Armenia calling for the region to be returned, and a year later, Armenians in Arach began to submit petitions to the Azeri authorities to hold a referendum on the province’s status. In 1988 Armenian pogroms took place in Sumgait, in which at least several dozen people died, according to various sources. In response, a military conflict broke out in which the Armenian citizens became involved. The riots have been supported by volunteers from the diaspora and the Republic of Armenia with Russian participation. The ceasefire was finally signed in 1994, and Arcach became an autonomous province as the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic or the Republic of Arcach. To this day, it is not recognized internationally, even by Armenia itself. Armenian subsidies cover 50% of its total budget, and the current situation in the region is described as “an unstable, frozen conflict” (Nagorno-Karabakh, 2016). This conflict resulted in a massive outflow of refugees and economic migrants from Armenia, as it significantly contributed to the country’s difficult situation.

At the end of 2019, the topic of the Armenian ethnic minority and the Republic of Armenia appeared in the global media and public debate. It was possible due to the Resolution 150 that recognizes as a genocide mass killing of an estimated 1,5 million Armenians between 1915 and 1922. The U.S. House of Representatives had passed the Resolution in October, and the Senate on December 12. This historical event, which has a deep symbolic meaning for all Armenians, harmed bilateral relations between Turkey and the U.S.

Achieving this goal was possible due to the 50 years of the constant activity of the Armenian community, especially the ethnic lobby. These groups can consolidate despite the structural differences and the competition for potential members.

Zbigniew Brzeziński — an adviser to the U.S. administration, already included the Armenian lobby together with the Jewish and Cuban ones, among three the strongest ethnic lobbies in the U.S. A pioneer, who laid the foundations for his functioning was an immigrant from the Ottoman Empire Vahan Cardashian — a lawyer and political activist (Vahan

Cardashian founder, 2020). He came to the USA in 1902, not speaking English, but two years later he began studying law at Yale University, which he graduated in 1904. Until 1915, one of his clients was the Consulate of the Ottoman Empire in New York, with whom he broke off cooperation after the beginning of ethnic cleansing. In 1918, he founded the Armenian Committee for the Independence of Armenia, associated with the Tashang party, which in the 1940s evolved into the Armenian National Committee of America (Vahan Cardashian biography, 1969). In 1982, the Armenian National Committee established the Zoryan Institute operating in the U.S. and Canada.

In 1972, a second interest group was created to represent the opposite side of the Armenian Assembly of America. The next step was to bring to life the Armenian National Institute, which aims to document Genocide and the virtual Armenian Genocide Museum of America.

As Konrad Oświęcimski mentions, for the next decades the main goals of the above organizations were: financial and humanitarian aid for Armenia; recognition of the fact of the Armenian genocide, recognition of the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh, maintaining the so-called Clause 907, limiting American assistance to Azerbaijan and the U.S. support to Turkey (Oświęcimski, 2014: 138). The activity of the Armenian minority is primarily based on grassroots movements. It is not financed by the Armenian government, while the Turkish lobby has a steady inflow of funds from the homeland and employs professional public relations companies. The Armenian interest groups reached their peak of influence in the 1990s. An independent political circle has been created that works solely for the benefit of the Republic of Armenia and the diaspora. A huge success was U. S. Congress passing in 1992 a 907 amendment to the “Act in support of freedom,” which forbade providing any support to the Azerbaijani government. It was suspended after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. In its efforts to recognize the 1915 genocide, the Armenian lobby is supported by Greek interest groups.

It is currently estimated that there are up to 1.5 million Americans of Armenian origin (Armenia’s Diaspora, 2014) against approximately 329 million of the total population of the U.S. Official results of ACS and U.S. Census give much lower numbers. Still, the diaspora organizations claim that the actual Armenian group can reach up to 2 million people. This fact indicates the possibility of the existence of a large group of Armenians with undocumented status, especially among the latest wave of immigrants. According to World Atlas, most Armenian Americans live in California — 204,631, Massachusetts — 28,595, New York — 24,460, New Jersey — 17,094, and Michigan — 15,746 (U.S. States, 2019). In 2015, per capita income (PCI) in the U.S. was estimated at 29,979 dollars, and for the Armenian group, it was 36,644 (Totolyan, 2005: 45).

Nowadays, Los Angeles has become the city with the largest Armenian population in the U.S. The oldest Armenian ethnic district is called Little Armenia in Hollywood, where there are numerous clubs, headquarters of Armenian organizations, and restaurants serving traditional cuisine. However, it is Glendale that has the most significant percentage of Armenian Americans. In 2001 Armenian street signs were introduced among Spanish and English (Rocha, 2011), and soon the construction of the headquarters of the Armenian American Museum will begin. This institution aims to document the history and experience of Armenian migration, as well as run programs supporting the maintenance of ethnic identity in the future generations of the diaspora. This fact is an essential agenda of the Armenian Americans’ activity, which focuses on the threat of loss of Armenian culture, the so-called “white genocide” (Tuncel, 2014: 266), or “white massacre” (Bakalian, 2014: 2).

A significant initiative at the local level has been the diaspora organization's effort to influence the primary schools education system. The first private primary Armenian school in the U.S. was opened in 1964 in Encino, San Fernando Valley. There are currently a few schools in Little Armenia, Pasadena and Glendale, but the last wave of Armenian immigrants have increased the demand for school classes with the Armenian language. The ratio of students in the Glendale school district reached more than 30% in 2004, which became the reason for a decision to include in the school calendar Armenian holidays as well (Pang, 2004).

The large group of Armenians in California also has an impact on other state administration decisions. During Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's term, not only the Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day was announced in Sacramento, but weekly celebrations were introduced in 2010. In 2015, around 130,000 people marched in Los Angeles during the jubilee. Within a few months, an information campaign was also conducted, which involved the purchase of 100 billboards by the diaspora. They were used for presenting posters informing about the Armenian genocide and an aid campaign — Near East Relief, which collected over 100 million dollars for the Middle East refugees in the 1920s. The Peace of Art Foundation has got involved in this project, and since the mid-1990s, Daniel Varoujan Hejinian's private funds have paid for similar campaigns in the states of the East Coast. These types of activities have brought extensive coverage in the media and guaranteed a presence of the Genocide in the consciousness of American society.

The essence, the culture, and history of Armenia are manifested in Los Angeles in the artistic activities of the young generation of the diaspora. Apart from the System of a Down band, which is known globally, most of the albums that can be listened in both the Republic and Armenian emigrant communities, are released by music studios at Glendale.

The U.S. academic centers as an element of Armenian “soft power”

The emergence of Armenian Studies is an exceptional success of the Armenian minority in the U.S. and a manifestation of prestige. Studies on history, culture, art, and language are now offered at first-class American universities. They promote knowledge about Armenians and shape the perception of this minority as a group with a precious contribution to world heritage. They were formally included in the academic programs in the 1950s, although in a less defined form, *Armenology* has functioned much earlier. Harvard University lecturer Robert P. Blake who pioneered efforts to introduce Armenian subjects as a separate curriculum, offered the “Armenian Historical Documents” course as soon as in the 1928/1929 academic year. In 1946, the American — Armenian Cultural Association was founded, publishing the journal *The Armenian Quarterly*, and two years later, efforts began to create the Armenian Collection as part of the Library of Congress. In the same year, classes for Armenian students at Columbia University have been launched. In the spring of 1954, Dr. Armen V. Jerejian became a visiting lecturer at Clark University. Over time, there were more lectures on Armenia and Armenian language at Harvard, Princeton, Cornell, and Wayne University (Mamigonian, 2012: 153-184).

Over half a century later, the approximate list of study programs and scientific units with the subject of Armenian Studies in the U.S. includes Arizona State University, Boston University, California State University, Clark University, Columbia University, Glendale Community College, Harvard University, Iona College, Tufts University, University of California, University of Chicago, University of Michigan, University of Southern California, University of Wisconsin — Milwaukee, Wesleyan University, Worcester State College.

Besides, there are numerous international associations of researchers and teachers, for example, the Society for Armenian Studies, operating since 1975 in Fresno, California, which publishes the *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies*, the Armenian International Policy Research Group, the Armenian National Institute located in Washington, Armenian Library and Museum of America at Watertown, National Association for Armenian Studies and Research at Belmont, Zoryan Institute at Cambridge and the American branch of Gomidas Institute at Princeton. The Armenian Library and Museum of America coordinates works on Project SAVE, which involves collecting and cataloging photos to establish continuity between the past of the diaspora, present, and its future. In 2010, the Armenian Heritage Park was opened with the monument commemorating the Armenian Genocide.

The most famous collections of Armenian art and memorabilia in the U.S. are located in Belmont, East Coast, in the Armenian Library and Museum of America and the Ararat — Eskijian Museum in Mission Hills, California. A private Armenian Cultural Foundation operates in Arlington with a small chamber of remembrance. All these initiatives are a manifestation of a relatively small minority, which consistently engages in efforts to mark its presence in the host country and to maintain its identity and culture for a long time.

Genocide centenary celebrations as a promotion of the Armenian agenda

The jubilee of the century of the Armenian genocide in 2015 has become a platform to promote the Armenian agenda in the U.S. and abroad. It has been accompanied by a series of activities in the humanitarian space, involving scattered diaspora communities and the homeland. On behalf of the survivors and as an expression of gratitude to those who helped to save them, Vartan Gregorian, Noubar Afeyan, and Ruben Vardanyan created the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative. The name of the foundation refers to the Aurora Mardiganian and aims to honor her contribution to promoting the awareness of the Armenian genocide. The main goal of the organization is to help those in need around the world in a project that will last until 2023. The campaign includes the Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity, which will be annually awarded to a person who has made an exceptional contribution to saving human life, 100 LIVES Initiative that maintains the memory of remarkable characters and events in the history of Armenians, Aurora Dialogues, Aurora Humanitarian Index and the Gratitude Project. The opening gala took place on April 24, 2016, and Marquerite Maggie Barankitse from Burundi has become the first winner of the Aurora Prize.

The U.S. and conflict over Turkish-Armenian interpretation of history

Thanks to the Wiki Leaks publication and open access to the U.S. administration documents, it is possible to analyze reports of the American diplomatic service regarding the Armenian diaspora and answer the question of how the host country perceives the Armenian American diaspora and its postulates. The U.S. Embassy in Istanbul Report raises the issue of genocide and the relationship between the Republic of Armenia and Turkey. Its authors note that the Armenian genocide and its recognition is an essential element of Armenian identity. The negation of massacres in the Ottoman Empire was one of the main reasons for the emergence of terrorist organizations, seeking compensation in the 1970s through bombings (Armenian Genocide, 2004)

For the substantive discussion to take place, the Turkish side must make available documents that are part of the Ottoman Archives today. The U.S. analysts also confirm the correctness of complaints submitted for years by the researchers, that access to these materials is limited, and Turkish administrations may have intentionally destroyed a large part of them. The embassy calls for American intervention to resolve this situation. The report indicates the U.S. knowledge about the activities of nationalist political groups and elements of the Turkish administration supporting state propaganda of denying the Armenian genocide. Subsequent governments need to continue the existing historical narrative depicting the Turks as victims entitled to defense and occupation of Armenian territories. To admit that the murders of Armenians were intentional genocide, would at the same time call into question the shape of the current borders of the Turkish state and open the way to Armenian compensation.

It is worth adding that despite the knowledge of the lack of interest in the substantive discussion on the subject of genocide on the part of Turkey, and even its active obstruction, the U.S. has limited possibilities of intervention. For years, the U.S. has been in a situation of dependence on Turkey, an ally in the war against a terrorism. The Turkish government is also providing the Incirlik Air Base in the Adana area for the American Armed Forces. This base, critical for the U.S. presence in the Middle East, has become the storage facility for nuclear warheads. Therefore, Turkey is a strategic partner in the region.

Mediation role of the Armenian Americans

The report of the U.S. Embassy in Yerevan made available by Wiki Leaks is a comprehensive analysis of the Armenian American diaspora. It draws attention to the significant influence of this group on the policy of the government of the Republic of Armenia, which results from both the cultural impact and generated cash flows. Armenians in the U.S. have capable pressure instruments that make policymakers in the homeland to aware of their power. These mainly include personal connections and real help for individuals and organizations. As a result, Armenia strives for close cooperation with the American diaspora (Deciphering the Armenian-American, 2004).

The analysis emphasizes the very high organizational level of the Armenian Americans group manifested in the number of secular and church associations. It also draws attention to the involvement of diaspora members in grassroots activities and strong ideological links between political groups, the Armenian Church, and lobbying organizations. The report identifies community priorities, which are: recognition of the genocide, financial support for the Republic of Armenia and shaping relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan. The authors highlight the mediation influence of the diaspora both on the U.S. administration and the government of the homeland.

Armenian diaspora in the U.S. and Armenian terrorism controversy

The decade of Armenian terrorism in the U.S is a controversial chapter in the history of Armenian Americans. The first terrorist act, the murder of a Turkish consul, took place in Santa Barbara in 1983 (Ślubowicz, 2009). Multiple attacks were carried out in 1980, 1981 and 1982, in New York, Boston, and Los Angeles. These tragic events resulted in many deaths and lawsuits, especially in Paris and Los Angeles, that drew the attention of the media and decision-makers to the problem of the mass murders of Armenians in 1915 (Global Terrorism, 1984). Radical ideas found fertile ground, especially among immigrants from the Middle East

who arrived in California. The evidence collected by the FBI in the 1980s indicated that the headquarters of one of the essential terrorist groups were located in Los Angeles. This place is also where the most significant number of arrests were made in 1982. The diaspora publicly distanced itself from terrorists, but unofficially they were treated almost like heroes. As Ritter writes, referring to conversations held in France, “Armenians from France, Lebanon, and the United States supported terrorist movements by publishing newsletters, distributing petitions or organizing demonstrations” (Ritter, 2009: 117).

Returns to the homeland, diaspora’s investments — an open question

An exciting chapter in the history of the Armenian Americans and an example of many attempts to help the homeland is the period of regaining independence by Armenia and the following years. There were few Armenian returns from the U.S. to the independent Republic, documented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which had published lists of such people on its website. There have been frequent investments in local enterprises or the purchase of the real estate. As Ritter noted, at that time, the diaspora moved from “aid logic” to “investment logic” (Ritter, 2009: 2). However, living in the West and accustomed to free-market business principles, diaspora had to face the specifics of doing business in a country where the post-Soviet mentality was still strong — extensive bureaucracy, informal networks, and corruption. The United Nations Development Program analysis indicates that corruption is still a serious obstacle to the economic development of the country and maybe the answer to the question of why Armenians are doing well outside their homeland. At the same time, in Armenia, it is much harder to achieve success (Sahakyan, 2017). For the Armenian “repatriates,” in the capital city — Yerevan kindergartens, schools, and the American University of Armenia have been opened.

Summary

There are many strong indications that global diaspora is an essential element for survival and the future of the Republic of Armenia. The first factor is the huge disproportion of the population living in the homeland and remaining in exile. Another is pan-Armenian loyalty supporting the promotion of the Republic’s demands in international politics. Especially in the current geopolitical situation and the blockade of Armenia by neighboring countries, its fate is strictly dependent on how it is perceived internationally and on what kind of support it can count on. In the 21st century, the Armenian Americans diaspora is the most active in lobbying for the homeland. Influencing the host country was able to obtain billions in subsidies for Armenia, initiated changes in the law, and recently successfully reach the goal of recognition of the Armenian genocide at the level of the U.S. Congress.

Armenian Americans were able to create not only influential political pressure groups but also made an effort to appear in the prestigious space of universities, which makes up their ethnic “soft power”. They established cultural institutions, and Los Angeles became an important center for the publishing of Armenian music. In the future, the challenge for the growing diaspora in America may be the issue of the immigration status regulation for a significant part of its members, especially numerous last wave of immigration. The question of illegal immigration is currently a burning topic of public debates and political struggle for the office of the president of the U.S. and is negatively perceived by a significant part of American citizens.

Both the homeland and the host country have already recognized that Armenian Americans and their interest groups have become an essential moderator of mutual relations. There are many indications that a relatively small but influential Armenian minority will continue to play this key role in the long run. This fact is one of many arguments for which it is an interesting phenomenon for researchers.

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