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NATIONAL IDENTITY AND GENOCIDE: THE EXAMPLE OF KHOJALY

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Nations, nationalism, and nation-states emerged with modernity. The notion of nationalism is an ideology that unites people and links them to one another. The shared history, language, experiences, and culture of nations are the reasons why they stay united and form their national identity. Azerbaijan is a very important country due to its natural resources and strategic location. The country regained its independence after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Yet, due to the settlement policy implemented both during the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union periods, its lands were occupied by Armenians. After gaining independence, Armenians committed a massacre in Khojaly, located in Nagorno-Karabakh. The people in Khojaly were subjected to various tortures. This situation led to an increase in the national consciousness of Azerbaijanis became one of the key factors in shaping their national identity. It helped increase social consciousness regarding the notions of "homeland" and "nation".

Keywords: Nation, National Identity, Nagorno-Karabakh, Khojaly Genocide.

Introduction. After the Westphalian Peace Treaty, modern nation-states began to emerge in the international system. Especially the events that occurred in the 18th century led to the beginning of the modern era. Thanks to these developments, nations and nationalism emerged. In addition to these, a group of unique values were instrumentalized in order to create a nation and form a national identity. Not only triumphs but also tragedies of communities shaped their identity.

Azerbaijan is one of the countries that came under the Russian Empire until the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, then it became a part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) until 1991. During that time, the USSR implemented a settlement policy to place Armenians in Azerbaijani territories. After dissolution of the Soviet Union, Armenians started to claim rights over Azerbaijani lands. They committed unprecedented massacres in the Khojaly region in Nagorno-Karabakh. This incident, which is never forgotten, is very important in shaping the collective memory of the Azerbaijani nation, and it had a crucial impact on their national identity. This article analyzes the Khojaly genocide and its role in shaping Azerbaijani national identity.

Conceptual Framework: National Identity. Nations and nationalism are modern phenomena. They emerged in the 18th century following different revolutions on the international stage. To become a nation, various factors should come together. For instance, a community must share common history, memories, culture, and traditions. The events experienced by societies are factors that influence the formation of their national identity. The shared pains and joys of societies serve as tools that help unite them around a common identity and distinguish them from others. Thus, it can be said that it increases the awareness of being a nation. As Yıldız and Demir mention that national identity is the recognition of various forms of cultural continuity that are shared by some individuals but not by others [1, p.8].

National identity and the concept of a nation are complex structures made up many interconnected ethnic, cultural, territorial, economic, and legal-political elements [12, p.15]. National identity encompasses both cultural and political aspects, and it is situated within both cultural and political communities [12, p.99].

National identity and war are two interconnected phenomena that influence the history of nations [2, p.222]. The first Nagorno-Karabakh War had significant effects on Azerbaijan's national identity in terms of its results. The Khojaly massacre contributed to the formation of unity, solidarity, and national historical consciousness in terms of Azerbaijan's national identity [2, p.232].

Briefly, one of the factors that shapes national identity is the shared trauma experienced by communities. The shared pain of the communities helps people to take the same position.

The Settlement of Armenians in Karabakh. Since the 1800s, the Russian Empire established dominance over Azerbaijani territory. After the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, the Soviet Union was established in 1922, uniting 15 republics. One of the Republics was Azerbaijan, located in the Caucasus region. Between 1918 and 1920, Azerbaijan experienced independence, and after that, it came under the sovereignty of the Soviet Union until 1991.

The origins of the Karabakh issue can be dated back to ancient times. With the conquest of the South Caucasus by the Russian Empire, the fate of the region was irreversibly changed. The problem started during the period of the Russian Empire. In the 20th century, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the independence of Azerbaijan, the problem became an international issue.

After the Russians invaded Azerbaijan in the early 1800s, they turned their attention to Karabagh. They attacked the Khanate in Karabakh. After that, the empire ended the khanate regime in 1826. Thus, Karabagh came under Russian rule. However, during the period of Russian rule, Karabakh was still considered a part of Azerbaijan and, together with the Revan Khanate, its population was entirely composed of Azerbaijanis [3].

The Russian tsars, especially Tsar Peter I, showed a great favor to the Armenians, and in return, they took their place at the front lines as soldiers in the Russian Army [4, p.7]. From the 1830s, a significant number of Armenians migrated to the Karabakh and Erivan regions from Iran and Anatolia. In 1890, nearly 1 million Armenians were settled in the region [3]. At the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, Armenians were significantly settled in the South Caucasus with the support of the Russians. During this period, Russia created a so-called Armenian issue to gain control over the Black Sea and the Straits, showing itself as rescuing Christian Armenians from the oppression of Muslim Turks [4, p.8].

The Armenians' connection to the region is one of the most debated issues. The widely accepted view among scholars is that Armenians were relocated to this region during the Russian Empire period. Babayev mentions that Armenians lived next to the Greeks at some point in history and influenced each other. Because the Armenian language is very similar to the Greek language. For that reason, Armenians never had a state in the Caucasus [5].

Tsar Peter I sought to establish an Armenian kingdom on the western coast of the Caspian Sea to secure Russia's position in the Caucasus. For that reason, he pursued a settlement policy. However, this plan was unsuccessful at that time and the Russians achieved this aim a century year with the treaty of Turkmenchay with Iran in 1828 and the treaty of Edirne with the Ottoman Empire in 1829. Thus, they succeeded in establishing an Armenian buffer zone and Erivan became its center [6, p.10-11].

Briefly, over time, an artificial Armenian state was established in the South Caucasus to protect and advance Russia's interests in the region. The community in the Caucasus first declared their independence in 1918 following the Bolshevik Revolution and the collapse of the Russian Empire. In this period, along with Georgia and Azerbaijan, Armenia also declared its independence. Thus, the Armenian state gained official form. As of 1920, the countries in the region came under the control of the USSR until 1991. During this period, the Soviet Union also implemented a settlement policy. As a result, the demographic balance in Nagorno-Karabakh shifted in favor of Armenians. For them, demographics were a reason why they wanted to annex Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia.

The First Nagorno- Karabakh War. Due to the settlement policy of the USSR, the Armenian population was higher than the Azerbaijani population in the region. For that reason, they wanted to incorporate Nagorno-Karabakh into Armenia. Gorbachev's soft approach towards ethnic issues encouraged the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh to seek unification with Soviet Armenia. Indeed, the Nagorno-Karabakh Armenian administration appealed to Moscow on this matter in August 1987, based on the population majority. After that, Armenians began protests in Armenia and Karabakh to support their appeal [3]. Soviet elites largely overlooked these appeals until the Armenian petitioners and protesters became more assertive. The protests exceeded the usual level of behavior that was tolerated [13, p.58].

After this decision, protests and clashes began in Armenia, the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region, and Azerbaijan. On 13 June 1988, the Azerbaijani SSR Supreme Soviet declared that the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast's (NKAO) request was unacceptable, and they supported the decision of the USSR Council of Ministers dated 24 March 1988. However, on 15 June 1988, the Armenian SSR Supreme Soviet made a new decision, and they insisted on the transfer of the NKAO from the Azerbaijani SSR to the Armenian SSR [7, p.76]. Yet, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union rejected the decision of Karabakh to join Armenia due to contrary to the interests of the people of both republics. The rejection of this decision caused to the outbreak of clashes between Armenians and Azerbaijanis in Karabakh as of February 1988. Yet, Gorbachev stated that it was not possible to accept the Armenian's demands. In response, the Karabakh Soviet declared on 12 July 1988 that it annexed itself to Armenia as an "Autonomous Region". However, when the situation in Karabakh continued to escalate, a state of emergency was declared in Karabakh on 28 September. Moscow took control of Nagorno-Karabakh from the Armenians and put it under special administration. Armenians mobilized once again in June-July 1989 [3].

To summarize, the status of Karabakh has continuously been a source of conflict. The clashes, instigated by the Armenian side, persisted for a long time. The most tragic conflict of the First Nagorno-Karabakh War occurred in Khojaly. The foundation of the Karabakh issue was established by Russian interests, and it created an unforgettable wound for the Azerbaijani people.

Khojaly Genocide. The Khojaly is situated in a strategically vital area of the Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan. It is located 10 km southeast of Khankandi, positioned between the Aghdam-Shusha and Asgaran-Khankandi roads. Its strategic significance arises from the presence of the only airport in the region, Nagorno-Karabakh [14]. Therefore, Armenians deliberately focused on this region and wanted to be annexed Khojaly. The Armenians considered Khojaly as a piece of land that had to be under their control in the pursuit of their "Great Armenia" dream. With the support of Russia, they aimed to reinforce their presence in the "troubled region". The tragedy in Khojaly emerged as a result of this ambition [8, p.67].

Starting from 1987, Armenians, driven by the "Great Armenia" plan, intensified their attacks on Azerbaijan's Nagorno-Karabakh region. The Armenians, along with the 366th Russian regiment, attacked the town of Khojaly in Nagorno-Karabakh, and they carried out one of the most brutal massacres in history [9, p.29]. As a result of attacks, Khojaly was not only occupied but also civilians were brutally killed in mass during the assaults. In addition to these, Azerbaijani Turks who were taken as prisoners were subjected to various forms of torture [10]. The number of Azerbaijani Turks killed by the Armenians is officially reported to be 613. Among the victims, 106 were women, 63 were children, and 70 were elderly. A total of 487 people were seriously injured, including 76 children. Besides, 1275 people were taken as prisoners and subjected to torture. Of these, 800 were later released. However, nearly 500 Azerbaijani Turks remain missing [9, p.30]. In the laws of war, civilians, including the elderly, women, and children, are not to be harmed. However, nearly the entire population of Khojaly, including these protected groups, was subjected to torture by Armenian soldiers, and the people were victims of a brutal massacre that is described as genocide [8, p.74].

The migration of Azerbaijanis from the region continued until the ceasefire declared in 1994 between the two countries. As a result of this process, in addition to the unimaginable massacre, 20% of Azerbaijan's territory, including Nagorno-Karabakh, was occupied, and nearly 1 million Azerbaijanis were displaced from their lands [10].

To conclude, the Khojaly Massacre is a genocide that was committed against the Azerbaijani Turks at the end of the 20th century. In fact, this act of genocide is a barbaric atrocity committed not only against the Azerbaijani Turks but also against all Turkic communities around the world. Because Azerbaijani Turks are an essential part of the Turkic world, they are also closely connected to all Turkic societies through lineage, genetics, and blood ties [11, p.44].

Khojaly Massacre on the International Platform. The General Assembly of the United Nations adopted "The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide" on 9 December 1948. According to the second article of the convention, "genocide means any of the following

acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group" [15]. This article also addresses the activities that fall under the category of genocide. These are:

(a) Killing members of the group;

(b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;

(c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;

(d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;

(e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group [15].

Although Azerbaijan made efforts at the United Nations after the genocide, these attempts were not sufficient. Azerbaijan took the first concrete step by presenting a statement regarding the Khojaly massacre to the UN General Assembly in 1996. In the statement presented on 25 October, findings regarding the ethnic cleansing committed by the Armenians were presented chronologically [8, p.75].

Efforts to gain recognition of the Khojaly tragedy as a genocide produced more substantial outcomes. As a result, the 14th, 15th, and 16th anniversaries of the Khojaly genocide were commemorated on a large scale in Russia, Germany, the USA, Turkey, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Kuwait, and several other nations. The Khojaly genocide was extensively debated during special sessions of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey between 2005 and 2007. A series of memorial ceremonies and campaigns were held as a part of the "Khojaly Week" event program in various Turkish cities from February 19 to 26, 2011. The events are organized every year and are gaining increasing attention in various cities around the globe [16, p.7].

In summary, according to the decision made by the UN Geneal Assembly, the Khojaly massacre is undoubtedly considered genocide. The atrocities committed by the Armenians in Khojaly have been recognized by various international organizations and states.

Conclusion. There are many factors that unite people, and thanks to these elements, this group of people is called a nation. A nation shares common history, myths, culture, and traditions. These are extremely vital in creating a national identity. National identity is shaped by the events that happen to society. Tragedies or victories that society experienced are the reasons for the formation of collective memories. Thus, collective memories are very pivotal parts of the national identities of the nations.

The Khojaly genocide is by far one of the most tragic and cruel events that century has witnessed. Many Azerbaijanis were exposed to genocide by Armenians. Their territories were occupied. This tragedy had an impact on their national identity. Briefly, it may be said that when analyzing the nation-building process of Azerbaijan, it is inevitable to see the traces of the Khojaly genocide in their national identity.

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MİLLİ KİMLİK VƏ SOYQIRIM: XOCALI NÜMUNƏSİ

Müasirliklə birlikdə millətlər, millətçilik və milli dövlətlər formalaşdı. Millətçilik anlayışı, insanları bir araya gətirən və onları bir-birinə bağlayan bir ideologiyadır. Ortaq tarix, dil, təcrübələr və mədəniyyət millətlərin bir arada qalmasının və milli kimliklərini formalaşdırmalarının səbəbləridir. Azərbaycan, malik olduğu təbii resurslar və strateji mövqeyi ilə olduqca vacib bir ölkədir. Ölkə, 1991-ci ildə Sovet İttifaqının dağılmasından sonra müstəqilliyini bərpa etmişdir. Lakin, həm Rus İmperatorluğu dövründə, həm də Sovet İttifaqı dövründə tətbiq olunan iskân siyasəti nəticəsində, onun torpaqları Ermənilər tərəfindən işğal edilmişdir. Müstəqillik qazandıqdan sonra, Ermənilər Dağlıq Qarabağda yerləşən Xocalıda kütləvi qırğın törətdilər. Xocalıdakı insanlar müxtəlif işgəncələrə məruz qalmışlardır. Bu vəziyyət, azərbaycanlıların milli şüurunun artmasına səbəb olmuş və onların milli kimliklərinin formalaşmasında mühüm amillərdən biri olmuşdur. Bu, "vətən" və "millət" anlayışları ilə bağlı sosial şüurun artmasına kömək etmişdir.

Açar sözlər: Millət, Milli Kimlik, Dağlıq Qarabağ, Xocalı Soyqırımı.

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НАЦИОНАЛЬНАЯ ИДЕНТИЧНОСТЬ И ГЕНОЦИД: ПРИМЕР ХОДЖАЛЫ

С наступлением модерности возникли нации, национализм и национные государства. Понятие национализма — это идеология, которая объединяет людей и связывает их друг с другом. Общая история, язык, пережитые события и культура наций - это причины, по которым они остаются едиными и формируют свою национальную идентичность. Азербайджан - очень важная страна благодаря своим природным ресурсам и стратегическому расположению. Страна

восстановила свою независимость после распада Советского Союза в 1991 году. Однако из-за политики переселения, осуществляемой как в эпоху Российской империи, так и в период Советского Союза, ее земли были оккупированы армянами. После обретения независимости армяне совершили массовое убийство в Ходжалы, расположенном в Нагорном Карабахе. Люди в Ходжалы подверглись различным пыткам. Эта ситуация привела к росту национального сознания азербайджанцев и стала одним из ключевых факторов в формировании их национальной идентичности. Это способствовало повышению социальной осведомленности относительно понятий "родина" и "нация".

Ключевые слова: Нация, Национальная идентичность, Нагорный Карабах, Геноцид в Ходжалы.

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