



**IN THE AFTERMATH
OF GENOCIDE**

**ARMENIANS AND JEWS
IN
TWENTIETH-CENTURY
FRANCE**

MAUD S. MANDEL

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Armenians and Jews in Twentieth-Century France

Maud S. Mandel

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To Ruth and Barrett Mandel
For listening

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Note on Transliteration

The transliterations of Western Armenian used in the endnotes of this text are based on the Library of Congress system of transliteration. However, in the narrative, names of organizations, people, and periodicals are generally presented in those forms that have become standard in Western writing even when not fully conforming to the Library of Congress system.

In the Aftermath of Genocide

Introduction

I imagine that if there were such a thing as a collective Jew, he might well ask himself . . . am I the same today as the Jew of thirty-five years ago? Yes, it is indeed me; it is indeed us. But there are deep clefts, despite appearances: everything has changed and yet nothing has. — Saul Friedlander, *When Memory Comes*

Over the course of the twentieth century, the crime of genocide—the attempt to eliminate an ethnic, national, or religious minority—has grown in scope and frequency. Such attacks have, in the current parlance, allowed nation-states to “construct” themselves—if in the most radical way—around ideals of one nation, one state, forcing out those who would cast national identity into question. Universally condemned, these violent massacres nevertheless have often obtained their objectives, providing some states with a definitive means to establish the nation’s citizenry, identifying a particular set of persons as its own while marking others as aliens.¹

Although scholars have paid attention to the role of genocide in shaping the nature and composition of existing societies, few have investigated its long-term impact on those cast as national outsiders.² And yet those dubbed aliens by genocidal regimes have faced more than violent uprootings from their homes and communities; they have also confronted ideological onslaughts that cast doubt on their place in an international civil society constituted primarily along national lines. The growth of the modern nation-state, and its consolidation in Europe following World War I, defined the rights and obligations of those living in its midst, certified their citizenship, and provided for their welfare. Implicit in this relationship between citizen and state was the understanding that those not of the nation were “outsiders” to it. International treaties regularized the status of

immigrants from one nation to another; those stripped of any citizenship or national allegiance often have found themselves outside this international web.³

This study focuses on how survivors of genocide have responded to being cast so definitively from the nation-state structure. In what ways—if at all—have the religious, ethnic, and national affiliations among escapees shifted to reflect the recent violent past? Have such attacks challenged previously held notions of faith, communal solidarity, and national identity? How have survivors assessed the feasibility of living as national minorities or diaspora populations after an attack on their status as such? How have they come to terms with “transnational” identities in a world seemingly determined to define itself according to national lines?

To address these broad questions, I turn to a comparative study of the victims of two twentieth-century genocides: Armenians fleeing the Young Turks during World War I and Jews rebuilding after the Holocaust. In both cases, the victims had been transformed into national pariahs in states determined to eliminate all traces of their existence.⁴ Such violent upheavals had a profound impact on those who escaped. Wherever they settled, whether in the lands in which they had previously been persecuted or elsewhere, survivors had to face significant challenges. Foremost among these was their material reestablishment after years of disruption; indeed, rebuilding homes, families, and communities became a priority for those who had escaped. Also important, however, were broader questions about the nature of community affiliation and minority status after years of being persecuted for that status.

Particularly interesting in this regard were survivor communities in France, the focus of this investigation. Home to the largest Armenian and Jewish survivor populations in western Europe, France nevertheless had a mixed record over the course of the twentieth century with regard to its ethnic, national, and religious minorities. Long committed to a politics of integration, which sought to incorporate ethnic and religious minorities quickly and seamlessly into the polity, French policies shifted direction radically during the Vichy years, as officials isolated foreign minorities, particularly Jews, from their “French” neighbors. This shifting political terrain on the question of national minorities, which once again became “integrationist” in the decades immediately following Vichy, shaped the context in which local Armenian and Jewish communities came to terms with their respective pasts.

For French Jews these shifts were particularly disruptive. Under German occupation and Vichy collaborationist rule, Jews faced a wide range of discriminatory legislation restricting their movements, property ownership, and civil lib-

erties. Furthermore, as the Nazi attack on European Jewry evolved, the Vichy government collaborated in the deportation of approximately seventy-six thousand Jews.⁵ And yet, although deportations drastically reduced the size and diversity of the community, two-thirds of the population survived (approximately 250,000), as did much of the prewar institutional framework.⁶ Moreover, with the freeing of Paris in August 1944 under de Gaulle's liberation forces, Jews began quickly regaining the rights of which they had been stripped. As one Jewish author described the moment, "For the first time in four years, that day we were finally like other people . . . we could call out our names, cry out who we were on the telephone, in the streets, in the stores, and in the restaurants. . . . We had returned to our true identity, to society, to France."⁷

Yet, could French Jews return so simply to their prewar position in French society? Vichy legislation had rejected a more than century-long tradition of viewing religion as a personal matter regulated by the state but conducted outside the public domain. By introducing religious affiliation as a factor in determining legal status and using this new status as a way to institute state-sanctioned oppression, officials had transformed the relationship between the state and its Jewish minority. Hence, although the duration of the Vichy regime was relatively short, its effects were felt by every Jew in France, as former citizens became aliens in the land of their birth, as newly declared Jewish citizens—those who had migrated to France in the two decades preceding World War II—found themselves uncereemoniously stripped of their newly acquired legal rights, and as Jewish refugees and new immigrants faced the ever-increasing threat of internment.⁸

This study considers the impact of these four years on French Jewry *after* de Gaulle's armies had restored democracy and transformed their status back to that of the prewar years. Once again free to live as they chose, how did the local Jewish population respond to their immediate past? After such an attack on their fundamental rights as citizens and as human beings, could they really reestablish their prewar position in their society? Or did notions of community, nationality, and ethnic identity change as a result of the years of persecution?

These questions are addressed by comparing France's post-World War II Jewish population to Armenians who settled in France after the genocide of World War I. Like the Holocaust, the Armenian genocide was an attempt to alter the nature and composition of the existing society. By deporting and murdering populations that had been in place for centuries and by confiscating Armenian property and desecrating places of worship, the Young Turks virtually eliminated all traces of these ancient communities from eastern Anatolia. Those Armenians who were not killed were forced to renounce all connection with their ethnic and religious

heritage.⁹ Although some survivors escaped the violent onslaught, they did so only by going into exile, leaving their ancestral lands and seeking refuge in the diaspora.

Approximately sixty-five thousand of these survivors ultimately made their way to France, where the post-World War I economy necessitated dependence on immigrant labor. For them, disjuncture and ruptures with the past were far more dramatic than for most of France's post-World War II Jewish population.¹⁰ Not only had the migration to France transformed the primarily rural, agriculturally based peasant population into an urban, working-class ethnic minority, but it had also forced them off their ancestral lands and left them to seek refuge abroad.¹¹ For many, finding a final settlement point took nearly a decade; for some, it took even longer. Arriving as stateless refugees without passports or visas and with no obvious country of origin, their position in French society was precarious, particularly in the early 1920s, when the government had not yet worked out coherent policies for dealing with stateless minorities. With no protection through immigration treaties and no international rights, the first Armenian arrivals in France were utterly dependent on the government's benevolence and their own meager resources. The combination of their precarious position in the polity and their own search for stability set the scene for their integration into French society.

For these Armenian refugees, then, questions of religious, ethnic, and national allegiance were forged out of their own past of statelessness, genocide, and exile, a story that differs considerably from that of the post-World War II French Jewish population. Armenians never were persecuted on French soil; French Jews, on the other hand, had been victims of native aggression during World War II. Also, changes in French receptivity to immigrants, as well as changing political, social, and economic conditions, affected those populations differently. It should be clear, however, that to make this comparison, the conditions facing the two populations need not have been identical. Although emigration and settlement patterns differed for both, as did modes of integration and communal construction, both addressed remarkably similar dilemmas as they faced the challenges of rebuilding their disrupted communities in the French context.

Four such parallels stand out particularly clearly. First, and most obviously, both Armenians and Jews had been victims of state-sponsored attempts at total eradication. The Nazis' destruction of European Jewry is often held to be the paradigmatic case of genocide in our time, and comparative studies of such massacres have identified the Armenian genocide as most similar to the Holocaust.¹² Such studies have focused particularly on the motives, killing methods, and extent of destruction achieved by the perpetrators. Yet few have extended this methodology

to the aftermath of genocide by comparing the responses of the victims themselves.¹³ However, the striking parallels linking the Armenian and Jewish cases extend into the reconstructive periods as well. Most important, in both cases, these onslaughts forced survivors to address pressing immediate concerns, such as how best to use communal resources in light of the massive destruction, as well as more existential questions, such as how to assess the viability of living as an ethnoreligious minority within a larger nation-state after having been persecuted for that status.

In addition, the state in which they were living was more than a “host nation” to these two populations. France provided the context in which they rebuilt their homes and communities, a context with little tolerance for ethnic distinctiveness and with a strong state-centered, assimilationist model of governance that shaped the incorporation of all ethnic and religious minorities into the state.¹⁴ Armenian and Jewish genocide survivors were no exception, and the French tradition of intense cultural conformity shaped how they came to terms with their pasts. This context and its impact on survivor communities thus form the second important subject of inquiry for this book.

A third and fourth parallel arise from these first two. Both Jews and Armenians are members of ancient diaspora populations. In both cases, this diaspora network shifted, both empirically and discursively, as a result of the genocides, forcing survivors to reconsider previous notions of communal responsibility, national identity, and transnational solidarity. Such shifts took place, moreover, in a European context itself beset with questions of nationalism and dilemmas over national identity. Furthermore, Armenians and Jews both faced the establishment of independent homelands quickly following the wartime destruction. In both cases, the newly created nation-states and the immediate threats to them forced survivors to question their own relationship to the fledgling states in light of their position in French society.

These four parallels, then—genocide, position in the polity, diaspora, and homeland—provide the central thematic concerns of this study. If, however, such a thematic separation proves conceptually helpful, it should not conceal the great overlap among them. Memories of genocide, for example, shaped how survivors thought about their status as members of diaspora populations, and living in diaspora affected how they conceived of the formation of independent national homelands. Moreover, by focusing on these areas, I do not mean to suggest that all French Jews or Armenians shared a single interpretation or point of view about them. To the contrary, conflict and disagreement characterized survivors’ discussions and activities regarding all four of these issues. In addition, the way they

played themselves out in each population differed according to chronological moment (whether pre- or post-World War II) and position in the French state (whether refugee, immigrant, or citizen). Yet, in both cases, these issues remained definitive in shaping Armenian and Jewish postgenocide communities, as survivors reconsidered, and at times recast, articulations of nationalistic sentiment, communal responsibility, and ethnic solidarity.

In broader terms, then, the comparison of Armenian and Jewish postgenocide populations in France raises some important questions as to the value of comparative analysis as a whole. In the introduction to a compilation of essays comparing Jewish societies, Todd Endelman notes that “historians of the Jews and their religion have been a conservative lot . . . reluctant if not averse to introducing a comparative dimension to their writing.” And yet, Endelman argues, because of its lack of territorial focus, Jewish history “offers unique, almost laboratory-like opportunities for examining how communities with similar but not identical backgrounds and traditions adapt to different environments.” Comparing Jewish communities across time and/or space or comparing Jews with non-Jews in the same place or in different national contexts “transcends the borders of Jewish historiography” both by revealing what is “individual, specific and unique as much as what is more general.”¹⁵

By comparing Armenian and Jewish survivor communities in France, this study seeks to do just that: to explore the specificities of the narratives under consideration while still highlighting the wider concerns that transcend the boundaries of either minority population. As such, it builds on the methodological terrain mapped out by recent historians interested in studying structural similarities in different national or chronological contexts. Whereas, as has been recently argued, “historians . . . have been more reticent than other social scientists to move from the particular to the general,” a new generation of comparativists have begun to break down these barriers.¹⁶ Particularly influential to my own thinking has been Laura Lee Downs’s *Manufacturing Inequality*, which explores the gender division in French and British metalworking industries from 1914 to 1939 and which argues that gender-based job discrimination was a phenomenon that transcended national boundaries. The comparative method allowed her to “suggest how national culture and differences in state structures defined distinctive routes to what were, in many important respects, rather similar outcomes.”¹⁷

Adopting a similar analytic approach, Nancy Green uses the comparative method to trace immigrant labor in the garment industries of France and the United States. She, however, goes one step further than Downs. In addition to examining two national contexts, she makes her analysis doubly comparative by

examining different immigrant groups within one industry. This approach allows her to emphasize change over time and space while also demonstrating how “each period reinvents certain perceptions of progress and newness.”¹⁸ Green’s “post-structural structural” approach thus demonstrates the power of economic structures in transcending chronological and spatial categories while allowing for the histories of specific interests to emerge.

Both Downs and Green thus use the comparative method to determine what is individual and specific while also focusing on what is structural, and both rely on traditional social historical methods to think through larger sociological questions. Likewise, the diachronic nature of the present study offers just such an approach, focusing on genocide survivors as a means to trace both the particular history of each population in question as well as the striking structural similarities that link these two French ethnoreligious minorities. My hope is that such a perspective will raise new questions concerning how genocide shaped communal life in its immediate aftermath and how national and ethnic identities converged in twentieth-century France.

Genocide: Memory, Experience, and Identity

Memories of genocide have defined, in large part, how Armenians and Jews have constructed contemporary understandings of communal affiliation and group solidarity. It took nearly fifty years, however, for Armenian communities to rally around the genocide as a public symbol of their communal life. Likewise, as recent scholarship has demonstrated, several decades passed before the memory of the Holocaust became a central pillar of identification for contemporary Jewry.¹⁹ This “silence” of the immediate post-Holocaust years has been analyzed from a number of different perspectives. Some scholars have considered the difficulty that both survivors and historians have faced when attempting to represent memories of genocide.²⁰ As Doris Bensimon has described French Jews in the decade immediately following the war, “The overwhelming majority preferred silence. . . . Indeed, in France, three or four decades had to pass before memory could disentangle itself from forgetting [*de l’oubli*].”²¹ Others, less interested in the “silence” of survivors, have examined the reluctance of governments or the general public to recognize or take responsibility for the events of World War II.²² These works share a common interest in the visible manifestations of memory, such as commemorations, memorials, memoirs, and historical monographs. The former focus on difficulties in representing memory, the latter on shifting interpretations and political manipulations of those memories. Still others, examining the

“silences” in the decades immediately following World War II, suggest that the first generation of survivors was able neither to face nor to comprehend the extent of the tragedy. Fleeing painful memories, they silenced discussion of the genocide and omitted systematic commemoration from communal agendas. As Bruno Bettelheim wrote in an essay on the Holocaust’s effect on children, “It seems that it requires a distance of twenty years or more, to understand how much a particular tragedy suffered in childhood can transform your whole sense of life.”²³

To focus on survivor silence and the lack of public memorials as a sign that those who escaped could not face their recent past, however, is to misinterpret the impact of the recent upheaval on survivors. Some may indeed have been so traumatized that they opted to remain silent; others “were willing, indeed anxious, to talk of their experiences but made a deliberate choice not to do so, except among themselves,” due to a correct perception that “listeners” were not particularly anxious to hear their stories.²⁴ Moreover, even if public manifestations of communal memory were few and far between, individual Armenians and Jews manifested a different kind of public response to the experiences through which they lived, one that was reflected in the communities they created.

For Armenians, communal memorialization of the recent losses was never totally absent.²⁵ Not surprisingly, however, such commemorations were not the central concern for a population of refugees seeking to reestablish stable home lives, rebuild a steady family economy, learn the local language, and find lost relatives. As noted above, the migrations to France had transformed the occupational makeup of the population, removing survivors from their peasant-based, agricultural communities and transforming them into a factory-based, urban proletariat. The disruption of patriarchal, familial, and economic norms shaped how the first waves of Armenians established themselves and their communities in France. Most, busy with the task of building a life in a new country, expressed communal identification not through commemorations of the recent massacres, but through various other channels, including church life, diaspora political parties, youth groups, and compatriot organizations. It is in these arenas, therefore, where the community’s cultural values were both reflected and promoted and where there were plenty of voices to fill in the postwar “silences,” that we can trace responses to the genocide. Whether intent on building roots in France or turning their attentions to their “homeland” in the Caucasus, survivors grappled with their recent past as they integrated into their new home.

Unlike the uprooted Armenian refugees, post-Holocaust French Jewry was not forced to build a communal structure from the ground up. Nevertheless, World War II had proven disruptive and traumatic to every Jew in France, whether

born there or of immigrant extraction.²⁶ Many were forced to give up homes and sell businesses as they fled the Occupied Zone. Those unable to flee sometimes paid with their lives, and even those who escaped often lost family and friends to deportations. Others, seeking refuge in Vichy-governed areas of the country, were reduced to second-class status, stripped of the basic human rights to which they had become accustomed.

The war's conclusion brought an end to such discriminatory legislation, but it could not erase memories of the four preceding years. Legal battles over lost homes and property continued well into the 1950s. A constant flow of refugees reminded escapees of the destruction of the war and the pressing needs of Jews throughout Europe and the Middle East. Simultaneously, diaspora organizations, such as the American Joint Distribution Committee, funded the construction of schools, youth centers, and other arenas of Jewish life, transforming the communal landscape over the subsequent twenty years. Thus, from the moment the Holocaust ended, French Jews were faced with its repercussions both personally and institutionally.

Interestingly, the few historians and sociologists who have commented on these years have argued that the Holocaust initially devastated what remained of French Jewish life. As one observer commented, the profound disarray that faced French Jews made “most aspire to erase all difference definitively and to give way to the anonymity of secular society.”²⁷ Similarly, William Safran argues that the reethnization of French Jewry that occurred during the 1970s and 1980s was “hampered” in the postwar decades because “the Jewish community had been too decimated, impoverished and demoralized to rebuild its institutions quickly.”²⁸ Safran is right to point out the remarkable resurgence in public manifestations of French Jewish ethnic identification in the last decades of the twentieth century, but his characterization of the postwar decades is too stark.

Like Safran, most scholars of French Jewry have focused their attention on contemporary developments, including the arrival of three hundred thousand North African Jewish immigrants, the impact of the Six-Day War, the rising tide of anti-Jewish sentiment throughout the 1970s and 1980s, and the articulation of a particularistic and vocal Jewish politics. Although it is perhaps unfair to criticize these scholars for not fully analyzing the immediate postwar years, as their own areas of interest were directed toward contemporary questions, it is still worth noting that those who addressed the 1945–68 period—and most simply ignore these years—oversimplify the picture. By leaping from the devastation of World War II to the drama of the late 1960s, these scholars simply assumed that the Holocaust brought Jewish communal life to a halt, frightening survivors away from

any identification with their religious/ethnic heritage. Furthermore, by treating the prewar, Vichy, and postwar periods as distinct from one another, historical accounts have divided French Jewish history around the Holocaust. Although such an approach highlights the changes that faced French Jewry as a result of the Nazi invasion, it ignores the continuities linking these periods. Thus, postwar Jewish life remains a separate chapter in the history of French Judaism and one that has been covered only minimally in the scholarly literature.²⁹

Recent scholarship has begun to rectify the problem. Particularly important is David Weinberg's assertion that far from destroying Jewish communal affiliation, the Holocaust enticed certain of those with assimilationist tendencies to reconsider their Jewish heritage. In his words, "Jewish identity in post-war France was a complex weave of internal tensions born of contradictory memories of deportations and the contributions made by Jews to the Resistance effort. The result was an embryonic new consciousness, which combined the hesitancy and self-effacement of the *français israélite* with a growing pride in the dual heritage of Frenchman and Jew."³⁰

This study seeks to explore Weinberg's assertion of a "new consciousness" in greater depth. As such, it challenges earlier assumptions that the Holocaust devastated surviving French Jewish life. It is here where the comparison to the Armenian case proves particularly instructive. For the latter, the genocide was even more disruptive than for most of the Jewish survivors, for its dislocations proved more permanent, causing fundamental transformations in the nature of communal life. Nevertheless, it would be a mischaracterization to describe the post-genocide Armenian communities in France as "decimated" or "demoralized." To the contrary, in these years we find a notable vibrancy taking root. Likewise, French Jewish populations, while also facing great challenges, proved more than capable of beginning the process of rebuilding their communities, and most did not flee their ethnoreligious affiliations in the aftermath of the Holocaust. As one particularly well-known survivor remarked in response to questions of how he readjusted to normal life, "The truth is, it was not that difficult—less difficult than adjusting to death."³¹ The ease of this "adjustment" for the communities in question can, in part, be explained by the political and cultural milieu in which they found themselves. It is to this milieu, therefore, that I now turn.

Position within the Polity: Minorities and the French State

Both Armenian and Jewish populations faced a similar paradox after their respective genocides. The persecutions of World War I and II seemed to prove that mod-

ern nation-states, even those committed to democracy, could never really tolerate ethnic minorities in their midst.³² And yet, both Jewish survivor communities rebuilding after Vichy and Armenian survivor communities building anew in France remained just that: minorities within a larger nation-state. Their position within the French state, however, differed from one another. Indeed, although a small community of approximately 4,000 Armenians was already in France prior to World War I, most of France's 65,000 Armenians migrated there following World War I as uprooted, stateless refugees seeking shelter from persecution abroad. In contrast, the 250,000 Jews who made up France's post-World War II Jewish population had generally survived World War II on French soil (although an additional 35,000 Jews migrated to France between 1944 and 1949).³³ It would be too simplistic, however, to reduce the comparison between them to one between citizen and refugee. Indeed, of the approximately 300,000 Jews who lived in France in 1939, nearly 150,000 had migrated there since 1919. Approximately 44,000 other immigrant Jews had preceded them between 1881 and 1914.³⁴ Thus, if the two populations under study maintained different relationships to France—Armenians as refugees from a foreign oppressor and Jews as victims of a previous French regime—both were influenced by national minority policies, particularly those directed at foreign immigrants. Moreover, and perhaps even more interesting, whereas a certain portion of the Jewish population was of immigrant extraction, a significant percentage traced roots in France back several generations. This study, then, situates the reconfiguration of Armenian and Jewish communities in the context of these different relationships to the French polity and asks: What was the impact of citizenship or lack thereof on communal understandings of the recent past, and how did French minority policies influence this process?

Recent historiography has demonstrated the importance of state-centered, assimilationist models of government in France's civic self-definition, shaping the incorporation of ethnic and religious minorities into the state.³⁵ This process particularly began gathering steam at the end of the nineteenth century thanks to the ever-growing power and importance of the centralized state, which worked to transmit aristocratic and bourgeois elite cultural norms in Paris over regional languages and practices throughout the country. This national culture was supported and reinforced through schooling, military training, and new organs of information. While regional distinctiveness and local cultures resisted such homogenizing goals, and while ethnic, economic, and religious particularisms continued to assert broader conceptualizations of French national identity, state policies continued to promote a universalistic conception of French citizenship that downplayed minority affiliations.³⁶

France's Jewish population, like its regional minorities, was shaped by such integrationist trends. The Revolution had brought full civil and legal rights to local Jewish populations, in exchange for which it was expected that they would meet all the obligations of citizenship and move away from the self-governing enclaves that had characterized communal life prior to this period.³⁷ Napoleon went even further in confirming the relationship between Judaism and Jews' political status. In 1806, he convened the Assembly of Jewish Notables in Paris, a meeting of seventy-four lay and religious leaders, to attain a public pledge that the religious strictures of Judaism were not in conflict with French law and to guarantee that Jewish allegiances rested first and foremost with the state, not with their own religious-ethnic community. In addition, he organized the consistorial system to centralize rabbinical authority in the state's hands. The Consistoire was to act as the administrative body of French Jewry, overseeing all religious activities, supervising the work of the rabbis, and officially representing Jews to the state. By organizing Jewish life in a centralized and hierarchical manner and by linking it directly to the state, Napoleon sought to bind the internal decisions of the organized Jewish community to France's national interests while removing its power as a rallying point for ethnic identity.³⁸

Although historians disagree as to the success of such an assimilatory project on Jewish communities in postrevolutionary France, most agree that over the course of the nineteenth century, Jews slowly began adopting national cultural norms, shedding Yiddish for French and abandoning traditional apparel and practices. Social change did not occur overnight, particularly in the more traditional communities of Alsace, and even the most acculturated were able to cultivate a Franco-Jewish identity that recognized the coexistence of Jewish particularism within the universalism of their French citizenship; yet France's Jewish population, like linguistic and regional minorities throughout the country, was not immune to the pressures of acculturation.³⁹

State-centered and assimilationist idioms of nationhood became increasingly important in the early twentieth century, when the acquisition of colonies and widespread labor shortages brought large minority populations to France.⁴⁰ As early as the 1880s, government officials began expanding definitions of citizenship in the hopes of incorporating the growing foreign population. Afraid that newcomers were avoiding the increasingly universal obligation of military conscription and concerned that solidarity among ethnic minorities posed a challenge to state centralization, government officials extended the principle of *jus soli* to immigrant populations. With citizenship based on territorial ascriptions rather than solely on the basis of descent, foreigners were thus incorporated all

the more rapidly into the national apparatus. Those favoring an expansive citizenship law argued that the legal transformation “would be accompanied by a social transformation: immigrants could be redefined legally as Frenchmen because they would be transformed socially into Frenchmen through the assimilatory workings of compulsory schooling and universal military service.”⁴¹

Such incorporative measures seemed even more important in the early twentieth century, as the nature of the foreign population began to shift. Whereas the immigrants of the late nineteenth century generally migrated from surrounding countries, such as Belgium and Italy, those who arrived during and after World War I were more likely to have come from eastern Europe, Indochina, and North Africa. The distinctive ethnic and cultural characteristics of these new arrivals challenged the government’s central role in determining cultural norms.⁴² As immigration bureaucracies grew and policies became more coherent, authorities began to institute procedures meant not only to incorporate immigrant labor but also to integrate immigrants rapidly into French culture and society. Such policies remained at the heart of national immigration law until the 1970s.⁴³ Indeed, although the Vichy regime represented a rupture in French minority policies with its stress on ethnic hierarchies, “the legal framework that would determine immigrants’ relationship with the French political system until the mid-1970s was largely in place” by the outbreak of the war.⁴⁴ As one French official noted in 1945, following the collapse of Vichy, “It is in France’s interest . . . to facilitate the rapid and complete integration of foreign elements who prove worthy and on whom we are obliged to rely due to our demographic insufficiencies.”⁴⁵ Aware of the need for foreign labor, officials once again formulated policies that were aimed at the full integration of distinctive ethnic minorities.

As we have seen, Armenian and Jewish genocide survivors in France were not all immigrants. Nevertheless, such integrationist policies shaped their relationship to their surrounding society in several important ways. For Armenian refugees, grateful to find a haven after years of flight and massacre, France symbolized stability and safety. Nevertheless, as *apatrides* (stateless refugees), they lacked the basic protections of most immigrant populations, and having arrived some years before the articulation of coherent refugee policies, they occupied a precarious place in the polity. This stigma of being stateless shaped how the new population responded to their adopted home, encouraging most to “lie low” and avoid any activity that would undermine their chances of being allowed to remain in France. For authorities charged with establishing refugee policies in the post-World War I era, the Armenians’ statelessness posed interesting dilemmas. For some, co-opting the loyalties of this new and potentially malleable population

remained a central concern. Others, however, distrusted this population with no identifiable allegiances. Refugee policies reflected this ambivalence as officials sought both to integrate and police the newcomers. Although sympathy for the uprooted population is evident in certain circles of society, government policies were more concerned with transforming them into loyal citizens of the state than with any humanitarian concern over their recent past.

France's long tradition of political and cultural integration also influenced how authorities addressed the problems posed by Jewish reintegration after World War II. Both a desire to move past Vichy as quickly as possible and a renewed commitment to republican law made government officials hesitant to call attention to Jewish losses. Although the principle of equal rights for all French citizens—and the nullity of all German and French legislation to the contrary—was instituted immediately after republican order was restored in August 1944, the provisional government proved ineffective in creating adequate compensatory legislation for those Jews who had suffered under Vichy's antisemitic laws. With no room for particularism in government policies, Jews were treated simply as equivalent victims of the war.

From a policy perspective, then, France's long tradition of political integration shaped how the government responded to Armenian and Jewish survivors after their respective genocides. In making such a case, however, I am not seeking to make a direct link between French governmental policies toward Armenian refugees in the 1920s and the post-World War II provisional government's response to reintegrating Jewish survivors. In other words, in each case, officials made choices based on the political realities of the day, choices that were informed by the particular relationship of the group in question to the French state. What I am arguing, however, is that a long tradition of policies geared toward ensuring cultural conformity among ethnic minorities influenced how both populations integrated into French society, shaping how survivors came to terms with their pasts.

And yet, as we will see, even while influenced by the surrounding integrationist culture, both populations were also able to cultivate identities that recognized their own particularism.⁴⁶ Indeed, neither the appeals of France's universalistic society *nor* the genocidal persecution led survivors to abandon links to their ethnoreligious heritage. As a comparative study indicates, then, although the French context provided survivors with a framework to understand and come to terms with their recent past, it did not prevent their memories from coalescing into sites of ethnic solidarity.

Diaspora and Homeland

Thus, relationship to the polity was one of the determining factors in shaping Armenian and Jewish postgenocide populations; equally significant was the shifting relationship to their brethren abroad. Indeed, in both cases, the genocides of World War I and II raised new questions of diaspora solidarity and national allegiance. As noted, both Armenians and Jews are members of ancient diaspora populations. Indeed, traditionally, the very concept of diaspora was rooted in the history of Jewish exile from Jerusalem, a banishment that was viewed as a punishment for straying from God's way. Over time, "the concept of 'diaspora' became suffused with the suffering that accompanies many sorts of exile," particularly that of dispersed Greeks and Armenians.

In recent years, however, the meaning of "diaspora" has broadened, becoming integrated into historical discussions on the nature of difference and expanding to encompass a larger semantic domain, including such words as *immigrant*, *refugee*, and *expatriate*.⁴⁷ Thanks to the increasing globalization of political and economic structures and communication networks, previous constraints on the extent to which individuals might participate in more than one society have diminished. Such shifts have had a profound impact on how scholars have conceptualized minority identities. Thus, whereas those who worked on immigrant communities once focused primarily on "distinctions between the here and the there, the center and the periphery, black and white. . . . [s]uch analyses are being supplemented by a whole set of new, unbounded concepts . . . [including] multiplicity, border crossing, disjunction and ethnoscares, cultural hybridization, porousness, webs, and transnational communities."⁴⁸

Such conceptual tools, though generally useful in describing contemporary migration waves to advanced industrial nations, are more limited in showing how diaspora identification shifted for Armenians and Jews in the years following their respective genocides.⁴⁹ Not yet beneficiaries of the postmodern moment that has celebrated overlapping and hybrid identities, these escapees had been singled out for persecution in part *because* of their multinational identity, which marked them as cultural outsiders to the nations in which they lived.⁵⁰ In the aftermath of the genocidal violence, therefore, survivors were faced with new questions regarding where they belonged. Moreover, such questions were inextricably linked to survivors' relationship with the "homeland."

As several recent studies have stressed, the idea of an original homeland—either real or a "mythic place of desire"—is essential to the process of shaping cohesive and conscious diaspora communities as well as to the formation of coher-

ent diaspora nationalist movements.⁵¹ In the two cases under study, the mythical homelands, centered around Jerusalem for Jews and Mt. Ararat for Armenians, remained a constituent part of the diaspora condition until the modern era. What is particularly interesting for both, however, is that following the wartime destruction, the question of a national homeland was brought out of the realm of myth or prayer with the formation of legally constituted, identifiable national states.

The birth of the State of Israel and the Republic of Armenia provided survivors with options that previously had seemed feasible only to a small minority of activist idealists. A national state could bring their diaspora status to an end and could provide security to those who had been persecuted for that status. And yet, few chose to leave France for their new “homeland,” most opting to remain where they were while still taking an active interest in diaspora nationalist movements. Thus, they faced a paradox. On the one hand, they remained the “paradigmatic Other of the nation-state,” maintaining allegiances that defied the nation-state structure; on the other, they actively sought to integrate into the French state.⁵²

Comparing the impact of genocide on Armenian and Jewish survivor communities in France thus sheds light on the power of the national idiom to influence minority culture. Indeed, one can argue that the very consolidation of the nation-state system in twentieth-century Europe made the “transnational” or “denationalized” status of these genocide survivors untenable. Unable to exist comfortably outside of this system, survivors took part in newly energized nationalist movements, which sought to provide a “space” for them—however disconnected from their own settlement plans—in the international arena. Thus, whereas some have argued that contemporary diaspora groups are “emblems of transnationalism” because their existence questions the notion of borders at the heart of the definition of the nation, I would argue that Armenian and Jewish survivors in France were actively seeking to end such questions.⁵³ This may seem counterintuitive. By participating in nationalistic movements that transcended the borders of the country in which they lived, they were certainly encompassing the diaspora/homeland divide that seems to interest so many contemporary theorists. It is my argument, however, that these now thriving nationalist discourses served not as a celebration of transnationalism, but as proof of the power of the national idiom.

As the above discussion suggests, a comparison between the Armenian and Jewish survivor communities in France makes it clear that, although in both cases genocide disrupted and, at times, destroyed surviving communal life, it did not necessarily force survivors to make a clean break with the past, with past ways of

thinking and understanding themselves and their place in the nation. Even Armenian genocide survivors, who faced more disruption than the French Jews under study, did not immediately abandon former understandings of communal organization, nor did they prove incapable of constructing viable communities in their new context. In comparison, it seems hardly surprising that strong continuities link the French Jewish community of the post–World War II era to those of the preceding decades. Indeed, it becomes immediately clear that despite the far-reaching destruction caused by the Holocaust, its occurrence did not delineate a dramatic conclusion to a period born with the civil emancipation of the Jews in 1789, as some scholars have suggested. One historian, whose fine study of interwar French Jewish history has essentially defined the field for future scholars, nevertheless concludes her book by arguing that the great social, political, and ideological changes that had enlivened French Jewry in the 1920s and 1930s were “cut short by the Holocaust,” and that they “withered” after being “denied the test of time.”⁵⁴ Similarly, as noted earlier, scholars of postwar French Jewry have assumed that it took the arrival of three hundred thousand North African Jews in the late 1950s to reinvigorate a community decimated during World War II. I certainly do not contest the Holocaust’s centrality in shaping modern Jewish history, but I do argue that using a central and eastern European model for explaining postwar Jewish life in France is problematic. The Holocaust was tragic, devastating—but it was an important chapter in the unfolding narrative of French Jewish history, not its end.

In broader terms, then, *In the Aftermath of Genocide* seeks to break down the isolation that tends to bracket the history of genocide from the wider histories of its victim groups. By looking at the years that followed as years of continuity as well as years of change, I seek not to de-emphasize the criminality of these events nor to downplay their devastation, but to consider what structures, perceptions, and institutions were able to withstand such a brutal attack and to explain the historical roots of such resilience. My hope is that such an investigation will offer new avenues of analysis for those interested in the history of genocide as well as those interested in the history of Jews, Armenians, and modern France.