Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) – Armenia

A program of Eurasia Partnership Foundation

This research has been implemented in the scope of CRRC-Armenia Research Fellowship Program, financed by the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Grants to Support Social Science and Policy-Oriented Research # C09-1004

The Armenian intelligentsia: identification, perceptions, and discourses

By

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Yerevan – 2012
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Introduction

All studies of intelligentsia have had a specific element that should be taken into account: they are carried out by people that fall into the category of intellectuals or intelligentsia, or have been placed there by others. Due to this fact, every research of the boundaries and frameworks of the notion of intelligentsia usually ends up applying to the authors as well and has as the latent goal self-cognition and disclosure of inner concerns and justifications for shaping the authors’ own identities, and to answer the question whether they can or actually want to be called intellectuals or intelligentsia if the historical developments of those two categories are taken into consideration. I will not deny that a need for self-cognition and self-definition in social and cultural terms also encouraged me to undertake this research and write this particular paper as well.


The main purpose of this paper is to outline some features of the Armenian intelligentsia, as well as its past and present social and cultural functions and dispositions. I will begin by providing a definition of “intelligentsia” that seems to be relevant to describe the target group of people I examined during my research. Out of the tens of definitions I would prefer the one given by A. Gella, who defines the intelligentsia “a culturally homogenous stratum of educated people united by charismatic feelings and a certain set of values” (Gella 1971: 1).

But, besides, I have to provide some explanations of the Armenian language terminology related to the intelligentsia and intellectuals that would be important in further understanding of self-identification and self-representation strategies of the Armenian intelligentsia. In the European and Russian tradition intelligentsia and intellectuals are terminologically differentiated in most of cases. In Armenian both «intelligentsia» and «intellectual» are translated in the same way –
«mtavorakanutiun», that literally means the group of people of intellect ("mtavor" – adv. "intellectual") and are not verbally discernible. This might cause some misinterpretation and multiple uses of the word. Somewhere it may mean “intelligentsia” in the Russian sense of the word and somewhere else it may refer more to “intellectuals” in European understanding (for comparative analysis of these two understandings see Eyerman 1992: 35-36, also Storm 2002, Charles 2005, Marina 2007). To avoid misinterpretation, people often use the words “intelligentsia” and “intellectual” as foreign terms adopted from Russian. Some of my informants insisted that all three terms should be present in the Armenian contemporary vocabulary, because of differences and subtleties of their meanings. Here, I will preserve the exact term people use while quoting; “mtavorakan”, “intelligent” or “intelligentsia”, and “intellectual” irrespectively of content.

In search of definitions, some Russian authors differentiate between the words intelligentsia and “intelligentnost’ meaning the scope of qualities prescribed to intelligentsia or intelligentsialism (Morson 1993: 20). An Armenian derivative of this word, “intelligentutiun”, is sometimes utilized in the vernacular language, but the different aspects of its meaning are usually conveyed through words “well-breeding”, “tactfulness”, “erudition”, “honesty”, and “kulturakanutiun”. The last term, derivative from the Russian “kultura” (culture) is used to make the difference with the Armenian word “mshakuyt” which means “culture”. “Mshakuyt” in Armenian means culture in a broad sense of the word, while the use of the Russian word “kultura” is close to the German concept of “Kultur” expounded by N. Elias (Elias 2000: 6-8).

Before steeping into the discussions and findings, I would like to describe the methodological aspects of the research carried out to produce the current paper. In the beginning, it was conceived as a series of individual interviews with those who are positioned by themselves or by other people as intelligentsia. However it has become clear that there is a significant difference between emic and etic perceptions and identities in everything that is related to the Armenian intelligentsia if we describe it as a socially and culturally identified group of educated people “united by a certain set of values” (Gella 1971: 1). My task was not just to outline specifics of the emic and etic perceptions, but also to point out possible boundaries between them as well as to find out some commonly circulating stereotypes and ideas that have affected the current developments in social and cultural identities of those people. Therefore merely interviewing individuals was not sufficient, and it was crucial to follow the collective discourse unfolded around the topic and its
constituents in mass media, social networks and blogs. To include these new forms of media I deliberately initiated some of the discussions in my research in social networks. It has been a kind of social experiment with more than 25 bloggers participating in it. The overwhelming majority of bloggers, according to last “demographic” inquiries made in the Armenian blogosphere are educated professionals, active in professional and public spheres (Antonyan 2010: 136-137). The rest of my research consisted of journalistic interviews, articles, event reports and other related items found in mass media that conceptualize and instrumentalize the notions of “mtavorakanutiun”, intelligentsia, and intellectuals each in its own way.

Intelligentsia in Armenia: sketch of historical roots, influences and perceptions.

The Armenian intelligentsia should not be considered outside of historical liaisons between the Russian and Armenian cultural frameworks. The Armenian intelligentsia per se is a phenomenon that is rooted in the Russian and European cultural environment of 19th and early 20th centuries. During this time the overwhelming majority of the Armenian intelligentsia did not live in Armenian lands, that were divided between the Russian and Ottoman Empires, but were scattered through the Armenian colonies of Russia, Turkey (Istanbul), and abroad. Despite this, the Armenian intelligentsia was not a mere reproduction of its Russian or European prototypes and counterparts. Rather, it was developed as a very specific social and cultural stratum, having the Russian intelligentsia as a cultural pattern. In this respect, I found it very useful to reference the Polish version of the national intelligentsia. The Polish insist on the Polish origins of the term “intelligentsia” that was accordingly borrowed by the Russians with further transformations of its sense and content (Gella 1971:4). Originally, the specific values system of the Polish intelligentsia included cultural patterns and a mode of life similar of those of the nobility with aspirations for a freedom, conceptualized as a national independence as well as devotedness to ideas of national progress and enlightenment (Gella 1971: 6). The established concept of the Armenian intelligentsia as we will see further, is very similar to this definition, despite the differences of historical and cultural background and social constitution of the Armenian and Polish societies. However, originally the Armenian intelligentsia appeared as an integrative part of the Russian one and the first representatives of the Armenian intellectuals, like the

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1 Since there has been no research of the history of the Armenian intelligentsia, the materials for this sketch are drawn from the following books: Ananun 1916, Yerkanyan 1982, Raffi 1958.
famous Armenian poet and public activist M. Nalbandyan were flesh of the flesh of those who positioned themselves as intelligentsia because of their commitment to socialism, atheism, and revolution. But very soon their aspirations for social freedom acquired a different, nationalistic coloration and triggered the development of their own political and cultural agenda. These goals were at minimum the preservation of the national cultural and religious with the ultimate goal of the creation of a national state.

There was another important factor underpinning national specificity of the Armenian intelligentsia. Unlike the Polish, by the 19th century the Armenians had already lost their nobility due to wars, foreign invasions and crucial transformations of the society after Armenia ceased to exist as a state in the Late Middle Ages. After becoming a part of the Russian Empire in 19th century, the Armenians of Eastern Armenia re-organized the social hierarchy of their society and even managed to partially reconstruct the lost nobility. Remnants of the old Armenian aristocracy, minor land-owners and land-governors (“melik” and “bek”), and some rich merchants were awarded or bought nobility from the Russian empire for their loyalty and support. Trying to be closer to the Russian elite, the new Armenian nobility reproduced cultural patterns of the Russian middle level aristocracy. In turn, the Armenian bourgeoisie also adopted an aristocratic mode of life and cultural patterns to improve their image, “civilize” themselves, raise the cultural and social status, and enhance their influence among the top representatives of the Armenian and Russian societies (Ananun 1916: 139, 171-178). These two strata of the Armenian society manifested a strong inclination to educate their offspring in universities of Moscow, Saint-Petersburg or abroad, mostly in Germany and France (Raffi 1958: 428-449). All this made the new Armenian aristocracy and bourgeoisie almost identical in cultural and social terms. Because of the education received both in Europe and Russia, the two intellectual traditions of the Russian intelligentsia and Western intellectualism were represented at once in the Armenian educated society, both being translated as “mtavorakanutiun”. This coupling of the two elites created a situation where in the late 19th century the “mtavorakan” that is intelligent or
intellectual, was the main initiator and, simultaneously, the target of the Armenian nationalistic discourse. “Mtavorakans” were assigned with the life-long missions of enlightening, political struggle for independence and uniting of Armenia, advancement of the “national cause”, reorganization of the national institutes, etc., and at the same time criticized for not strictly adhering to this idealized functional and moral image.

In Soviet times perceptions and attitudes toward the intelligentsia in Armenia were tripartite. On one hand, they corresponded to those officially established by the Soviet Government, which defines intelligentsia as workers of mental and creative spheres like teaching, science, art, or medicine. This was, and actually is a very formal approach that enlarges the boundaries of the social strata and included all those who received higher education. On the other hand, the intelligentsia was expected to be educated, well read, informed on arts and literature, and demonstrate the high standards of everyday culture like good manners, dressing and literary speaking skills. This elitist approach mechanically reduced the intelligentsia to a rather narrow group of people, in fact, substituting the lost aristocracy. And, finally, the third group of perceptions drawn on the traditional Russian understanding of the intelligentsia as first and foremost a protest group that included educated dissidents and nationalists that fought for to a lesser extent, human rights and most importantly for national interests like memorization of the Genocide, preservation of an official status of the Armenian language, and cognate things (Manukyan 2006).

This preface is necessary to understand the current tendencies in perceptions and attitudes to the intelligentsia this paper is dedicated to.

Intelligentsia, intellectuals, mtavorakanutium: current terminology in public discourses and everyday use

Unlike the Russian academic and non-academic circles that have produced a many texts discussing the sources, roles, functions and fates of the Russian intelligentsia, the Armenian discourse on intelligentsia issues is still scarce and mostly unprofessional. Instead, the Armenian discourse tends to make use of Russian-language texts that have appeared or re-published in the
period of transition. These texts usually focus on the thinking, cognition, mentality, values, social and cultural identities of people living in the Soviet space to post-Soviet ones. In fact, such a transition has been carried out through both academic and public re-interpretation of the old terms and notions, re-shaping the old patterns of self-identification and value systems.

An interview of the late professor of the Yerevan State University, a member of the Academy of Science of RA and a well-known linguist and philosopher Eduard Atayan gave to an Armenian newspaper might serve as a model text for reflections on the topic. In this interview Dr. Atayan tried to define and characterize boundaries of the terms “intellectual”, “intelligentsia” and “mtavorakan” while also addressing their transformations in the Armenian Soviet and post-Soviet reality. Dr. Atayan was not just a random person interrogated on this issue, he belonged to the generation of Soviet dissidents and was one of the few Armenians that joined the Russian dissident movement and were imprisoned for their actions. Therefore, reflection over the definition, identity and role of intelligentsia was a matter of personal identity for him even though he obviously intended to approach it analytically. First, he tried to make clear the difference between the terms “intelligentsia”, “intellectual”, and “mtavorakan”. According to his definitions, the “mtavorakan” is better translated as “intellectual” implying exactly what this word means in the European tradition, whereas the intelligentsia is a phenomenon of the moral dimension. Being the intelligent means possessing certain qualities, such as erudition, awareness of arts and literature, tactfulness, well-breeding, but first and foremost inwardness, spirituality, and high moral standards. He defines the intelligentsia as “aristocracy of spirit” (“аристократия духа”) that might even indulge in some snobbism. They are fighters of the justice, internally free and uninhibited. If the intellectual mainly demonstrates his erudition, the intelligent is educated in a full sense of the word, not just spelling words, while reading, but being able to recognize the true content of the text. One cannot be intelligent only by name, he must be so inwardly, by having words and deeds harmonized and penetrated with “intelligentsialism” (интеллигентность). To put it differently, he has raised here an extremely important issue of genuineness of the intelligentsia. Having in mind an ideal of the intelligentsia, Atayansarcastically categorizes those who pretend to be called the Armenian intelligentsia

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2 It is worth to mention the publication in 1991 a reprint of collections of articles about the intelligentsia “Vekhi” and “Intelligentsia v Rossii” first published in 1909-1910 (Vekhi 1991). The book was possible to buy in Yerevan and, presumably, had some impact to the Armenian intelligentsia’s circles.

3 The English translation of the word is borrowed from G. S. Morson (Morson 1993: 20).
(“mtavorakanutiun”) into three groups drawn on the Soviet principle of so called “nomenclatura”, that formally meant the ruling political, military and administrative elite. He discerns three types of the “mtavorakanutiun”, those of “nomenclatura”, “semi-nomenclatura”, and “undernomenclatura” (номенклатура, полуноменклатура, недономенклатура). All of them have nothing to do with genuine “intelligentsia” and represent intellectual philistines that have passed for the intelligentsia. Atayan’s clear message is that only those who have not been in service for the Soviet regime can be called intelligentsia. He nominates the famous soviet dissident and human rights’ activist, physicist A. Sakharov⁴ and the German philosopher, musician, physician and missionary A. Schweitzer as examples of the genuine intelligentsia (Atayan 2010: 261-269), prioritizing their public activism and fight for human rights. In this perception he comes closely to those definitions of intelligentsia that describe it as an ideological group rather than social one (those of Berdyaev, Uspenski, Gasparov, see the comparative analysis of definitions in Glebkin 2002).

Following Yu. Lotman, who tried not to invent any new definition for the intelligentsia, but to describe the discursive space, which the (self)-definition of the Russian intelligentsia has taken place within (Lotman 1999:125), I will attempt to do the same thing by categorizing the definitions according to the basic criteria prioritized in them.

- **Occupation-based approach**

The official Soviet definition of the intelligentsia as the workers of intellectual sphere looked vague and too general. Besides, it significantly extended social and cultural boundaries of the group, which would not satisfy many of those who defined themselves as the intelligentsia who stressed the exclusivity of the latter.

“Not every intellectual work might be considered that of intelligentsia. The accountant is not an intelligent, but the physician, academician, artist, painter and writer are surely intelligentsia. An intellectual is a person who reads and knows a great deal and thinks independently. For instance, the doctor can be intelligent, but not an intellectual.”

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⁴ Due to his pro-Armenian position in Karabakh movement A. Sakharov is a very popular and idealized person in Armenia.

⁵ Hereinafter all the texts in italic, if not specially referred, are excerpts from interviews or public discussions, gathered in the course of research. Due to the fact that many respondents did not want their names be published, I preferred to leave all informants anonymous. Besides, many of utterances of different informants were almost identical, so it is hardly possible to define who should be pointed out as an author.
In the vernacular use, the occupational approach prevails, but the perceptions of what occupation is typical for the intelligentsia, are rather flexible and dependent on the situation. The following examples clearly show the different uses of the term. A group of University professors arrived at the military unit to deliver lectures for soldiers within the corresponding state program. The commander spoke by telephone and said to his interlocutor as soon as he saw the professors had finished their lectures: ‘Sorry, I will call you back as soon as I see off the ‘mtavorakanner’.

Another case occurred during one of the opposition’s rallies, when representatives of the intelligentsia (mtavorakanutiun) were asked to put their signatures under the petition urging the authorities to immediately liberate one of the opposition leaders, sentenced for the “March 1 case”. Out of the people crowded around the petition holders only those who were recognized as artists, writers or musicians were allowed to sign. Other people who also wanted to join them but were rejected because they were said to not be “mtavorakanner”. One of those who were not allowed to sign said, “I am a thirty-year teacher. How could it be that I am not mtavorakan!”

Mass media periodically reports on so called “Committees of mtavorakans”, or various petitions signed by “mtavorakans”. Everyone understands that “mtavorakans” in such cases are usually viewed as public persons engaged in arts, literature, music, theatre, cinema, and show business. In a lot of cases the common perception of the term is limited to the art sphere.

In the meantime, the occupation-based approach has also important political and ideological connotations inherited from the Soviet times, when the artists, writers, actors and other art professionals were intended to serve as ideological supporters for the ideas of socialism and the ruling Communist party. For their services, they were considered a privileged “estate” and made part of the upper, “nomenklatura” layer (by E. Atayan) of the Armenian society. The actual situation nowadays is very different, because the privileges offered by the state to the art professionals are incommensurable with those of the Soviet times and seem to be rather fictitious, but the attitudes are being changed very slowly. It is very common to hear negative or even pejorative utterances about the intelligentsia referring to it as a group of representatives of creative professions, loyal to authorities. One of the most pejorative references is slightly changed pronunciation of the word “mtavorakanutiun”, replacing a soft “r” with a tough “rr” (as

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6 Plural of “mtavorakan”
7 March 1, 2008 – the date known as that of mass unrests of partisans of the oppositional presidential candidate Levon Ter-Petrosyan who lost the elections but did not acknowledged the defeat because of numerous violations of the voting process. As a result, more than 10 people died and the investigation of the case is not over yet.
“mtavorRRakanutiun, “vorr” meaning “ass”) that completely transforms the whole meaning of the word, making it metaphorically close to “brownnosing”.

- **Qualitative approach: behavior, intellect, moral and ethical codes, everyday culture**

The vernacular, unsophisticated uses of the words “mtavorakanutiun”, “intelligentsia” are not reduced only to professional connotations, but at least add to them some moral, behavioral, mental patterns. The definitions that people were giving in interviews and discussions are obviously apt to stress “non-professional” sides of the phenomenon.

“Mtavorakan” is the person who is not dominated solely by physical demands and desires, who is led not only by stomach and covetous eye but by mind and whose spiritual and mental demands are more prioritized than physical and sexual ones.

“Saying “Mtavorakan” we conclude that someone follows moral and ethical principles of creative and intellectual work”

But there is still a difference between the intelligent and the mere well-bred, educated person. The main characteristics of the intelligentsia are believed to lie in the hereditary cultural and social features, which cannot be acquired by a person him/herself, but rather inherited as a result of a specific family environment. There is even a notion of the “third-generation intelligentsia”, which means that the person may be called an “intelligent” only if at least his/her grandparents were known to have been so. This perception of the intelligentsia is very similar to that of nobility and makes sense in situations where the intelligentsia is treated as an elite, replacing nobility in a direct (as in Armenia) or indirect (as in Russia, see i.g. Rendle 2008) way. The essayist Michael Baghdasaryan (Baghdasaryan 2007) writes that in pre-Soviet Russia, intelligentsia was defined genetically; depending on the number of generations a person’s family could be identified as “intelligentsia”. He also thinks that this interpretation is not applicable in Armenia, as “the Armenians has had different history”, meaning that many of intelligent families of Armenia can hardly count two “intelligent” generations because of historical ruptures in continuity of the Armenian educated elite. However, as he claims, everyone in Armenia who pretends to be educated, well-bred, and good-looking is considered “intelligent”.

Indeed, in Armenia being intelligent in the simplest, vernacular use usually means being polite, courteous, well-bred and in some sense aristocratic in modes of social representation, communication and everyday life. It may include certain sophistication of practices of everyday
life (home interior, meals and clothes). Aristocratic manners might be matched with the sense of superiority and even mere arrogance, sometimes assigned to the “intelligentsia”. A former student of the medical institute remembered: “I didn’t like intelligent professors, they were a bit arrogant”. “Perhaps, they weren’t intelligent at all?” “No, they were, but arrogance made them unpleasant”. It also should be mentioned that occasionally the Russian word «intelligentnyi» (интеллигентный) is also used to designate the well-bred person, but by no means is synonymous to «mtavorakan» and translated to Armenian as «kirt», or «qaghaqakirt», that means «educated», «civilized». Other definitions and attitudes prioritized the qualities and features either intrinsic to human beings or acquired by a person over the course of a lifetime such as bravery, intellect, professionalism:

“Mtavorakan should be brave, he cannot be a coward, should be professional, have a worldview and analytical skills, should struggle against mediocrities.”

«Mtavorakan is a person, who employs his intellect. A taxi-driver can be “mtavorakan” if he is intellectually active, but there might be an academician or a writer having no intellect. Being intelligentsia is not a position or calling, it is a life-long creative and laborious task.”

Intellect and concomitant features like smartness, introspectiveness, analytical skills are important characteristics of an intellectual, but they do not convert him into the intelligent unless he/she does not possess other necessary things such as political, public and national activism. Most of the Armenian Soviet dissidents were nationalists and fought for the Armenian national interests and rights more than for just human rights. After regaining of independence, the nationalistic coloration of the public activism conceded to a mere social and political one. The struggle and aspirations for social, political or cultural changes have become formulated as the main tasks of the contemporary intelligentsia. In these terms the perceptions and attitudes of the Armenian intelligentsia comes back to those that were peculiar to the Russian society of the 19th century.

“We, Armenians, consider “mtavorakan” those who, being faithful to their profession, simultaneously carried out intellectual activities and followed the mission of popularizing the culture. Mtavorakans (intellectuals) have been peculiar with their intellectual and moral qualities, they struggled against medieval customs and habits, and for the freedom of the Armenian nation”
“A mtavorakan should be worried about the fate of his country. The society should have a strong demand for mtavorakans”

“He who is silent, he is not a mtavorakan”

“Those who do not participate in explaining and improving reality, who remain stuck in snobbism and self-complacency, who professes religious fanaticism, and depend on authorities are not mtavorakan»

«Mtavorakan is a person who earns money by means of the intellect. He has to be opposed to authorities and mediate between all social strata”

This transition from a nationalistically colored intelligentsia to a mere social protest group generates new waves of comparison between the Armenian and Russian intelligentsia and search of at least cultural distinctions. According to Stepan Danielyan, unlike the Russian one, the Armenian intelligentsia does not “look for the truth”. The Armenian intelligentsia is based on the form rather than on the content, because looking for the social justice may jeopardize the national unity and national interests. Other opinions and definitions try to establish some cultural patterns that might be developed into ideological discrepancies.

“Unlike the Russian intelligentsia, the Armenian intelligent takes care of their family, is not addicted to alcohol, and likes good food. It makes him more a consumer than a fanatic of ideas.” (Danielyan 2009)

The words «intelligentsia» and «intellectual» are often used as vernaculars for «mtavorakanutium» or at least as explanations for the meaning and content of the word «mtavorakan» to make clear what they meant by using it.

The majority of vernacular definitions are drawing attention to the set of personal characteristics and functional «must haves and dos». Surprisingly, no definition tries to determine a set place in the social hierarchy to the intelligentsia, although, as we will see later, it is considered to be a top of the society, an «elite» by default. However, some people evidently stress the idea that intelligentsia is more of a social, than professional phenomenon. Implications to social and cultural differences between the intelligentsia and other layers of the society are best epitomized in the anecdotal use of the words “mtavorakan” and “intelligent” like this one:

“Once I was parking my bike nearby the Concert Hall. A policeman approached to me and claimed that parking was not allowed there. I argued that there is no written rule on it and what is not forbidden is allowed. OK, good-bye then, he said and took off. I heard him saying to his
colleague: “This is an intelligent” (meaning he is educated, and smart that makes him not easy to fool)”. Vernacular definitions often create an impression that intelligentsia is a group of supermen, endowed with the best human qualities, the image of an «ideal» personality everyone should strive to be like. There are also many definitions are shaped to highlight terms making a person adequate and eligible for being called intelligentsia. Very few definitions indicate typically national characteristics of the Armenian intelligentsia: Some definitions address the difference between intelligentsia, “mtavorakan” and intellectuals. Most people do not explain why they translate “mtavorakanutiun” as “intelligentsia”: “There is no difference between intelligent and mtavorakan, it’s just the matter of translation”. However, those who try to reflect on this usually, but not always, give preference to the translation of the word “mtavorakan” as “intellectual”. “The difference between mtavorakan, that is intellectual and intelligent, is that the former is educated but does not claim to be the conscience of the society, and the latter can be less educated but pretends to be such. Intelligent is more fond of fiction, the intellectual reads scientific literature”. “The word “mtavorakan” should not be translated as “intelligent”, it’s rather “intellectual”. Intelligent is a larger notion than mtavorakan and it should become a part of the Armenian language. I might be wrong, but I would say that being mtavorakan does not mean being “intelligent”. We have a plenty of academicians that hardly can be named “intelligentsia”. “Intelligent is different from “mtavorakan” as the red is different from the round. Mtavorakan is an intellectual. An intellectual may not be intelligent and vice versa.” However, these definitions do not establish any theoretical framework for the words “mtavorakan” or “intellectual”. They just instrumentalize them in a social and cultural context of general perception of the notion “intelligentsia”. In particular, they are also aimed at pinpointing characteristics of the “genuine” intelligentsia and its correlations and correspondence to intellectualism.

**Boundaries and thresholds of the identity of the Armenian intelligentsia**

The main conclusion that we would draw of the definitions and uses of the words “intelligentsia”, “intellectuals” or their Armenian counterpart “mtavorakan” is the fact that all of
them are instrumental in shaping people’s social and cultural identity when it is crucial for the newly-formed hierarchies. By building a definition, people reconsider their own social and cultural identity, trying to shape an ideal personality, “the genuine intelligent”, they inwardly aspire to be. This question of “genuineness” usually arises when the aristocracy is concerned. Being the elite, a top of the society, aristocracy is usually very sensitive towards the “purity” of its origins. In cases when the genuineness cannot be easily proved, other signs of “legitimacy” such as genetically (“blue” blood, specific treats of face and figure) or socially (good manners, education) are used as signifiers of genuineness. It should be noted, that such an approach to the nobility was developed rather late, in early modern era, when the nobles had started to lose their previously held privileges, and boundaries between the nobility and some other strata of the society (bourgeoisie) became loose and transparent. (Elias 2000: 34-42)

We have something similar in the case of intelligentsia. Unlike the nobility, the intelligentsia has always been a comparatively open group, theoretically easy to penetrate. In the Soviet Union, previous nobles were equated to intelligentsia due to a high level of education, manners and corresponding professional occupations (teachers, artists, etc) (Rendle 2008: 7-33). However, for some time (pre-Soviet and early-soviet) this easiness was illusive, because the main prerequisites such as higher education, bourgeois mode of life, objects of culture (books, theatres, museums) were not accessible to larger society and those who managed to become intelligentsia were the minority. As soon as the mentioned prerequisites were made available to other strata, including the rural population, the proletariat started to penetrate the spheres previously unreachable for them, the intelligentsia felt its “aristocratic”, elitist positions threatened. The necessity to create and establish other kinds of boundaries between the old and the new intelligentsia emerged that brought forward the question of “genuineness” of those who are named “intelligentsia”. A significant part of the discourse concerns the division of the intelligentsia into “fake” and “true” ones, or the ways to discern who is “false” and who is genuine intelligent or mtavorakan8.

«There are mtavorakans “by law” and “philistines” who are looking for better life and ready to sell their ideals for that»

“People called intelligentsia/mtavorakans can be very different. There is a category of people I am calling “educated bastards”. They are intelligentsia as well”.

8This kind of discourse is also peculiar to the Russian intelligentsia (see Lotman 1999, Uspenski 1999)
Would a person identify himself as a “mtavorakan” or would he wait until others do so? Yu. Lotman indicated that being “intelligent” means being identified as such by others representatives of this social group (just as in case of aristocracy). In his words, intelligentsia is vigilantly ensuring the purity of the group, from time to time making “purges” with intolerance” (Lotman 1999: 134). That’s true for the Armenian situation as well. One of the most effective mechanisms of the group purity control is a social taboo for self-identification as the «intelligent» that directly correlates with such categories of self-control such as «shame», «modesty» and others, i.e. commonly accepted signs of the «civilized» person in modern European perception (Elias 2000: 365-379), inherited by the Armenian intelligentsia from its Russian and European counterparts. Saying “I am intelligent” is the same as saying “I am a well-dressed, well-bred and intellectual person”, and by saying that at least one of these characteristics might be challenged, because a well-bred person cannot be so immodest. In the meantime, saying “I don’t think I am a right person to bear the honorable and responsible name of “mtavorakan”, as one of my informants did, means implying that he IS in fact the true «mtavorakan».

The situation is slowly changing now. Gradual liberalization of the society, less social and cultural conditioning of behavior has impacted the educated and socially active layers of the Armenian society. That means more and more people give preference to the functional definitions of the intelligentsia which are not bound by moral inhibitions: “I am intelligentsia, because I am carrying out some social functions free of charge, like thinking, writing, criticizing authorities and other intelligentsia. I am doing intellectual work on behalf of the society.”

The self-identification problem for the Armenian intelligentsia is not a mere question of social belonging, but it is also embedded in the discourse on the national culture, national identity, and national values, currently unfolding in many different aspects. One of the issues conceptualizing intelligentsia in a context of such a discourse is that of authenticity of the latter (as notion, and as social and cultural phenomenon). Some people argue, that the intelligentsia is not an authentic Armenian phenomenon that it was inculcated into the Armenian culture from Russia and Western Europe, and therefore it should be viewed as a direct result of their imperial and colonial politics and aspirations. Some others like Michael Baghdasaryan, argue that the Armenian intelligentsia has had its own history and therefore should be analyzed separately from
the Russian intelligentsia. M. Baghdasaryan discerns three types of “mtavorakanutiun” who each have different levels of social activity: reflecting intellects, «dreaming» intelligentsia, and rationally thinking bureaucratic intelligentsia (Baghdasaryan 2007). Another essayist, Stepan Danielyan agrees that each nation has its own type of intelligentsia and, even when borrowed from other cultures, it is being adapted and nationalized: “If Dostoevski and Nansen had been born Armenians they would have necessarily become Sos Sargsyan⁹ or Zory Balayan¹⁰” (Danielyan 2009). This and other statements also exemplify heredity and continuity of the Russian/European and Armenian types of the intelligentsia in current perceptions. Thus, answering the question «who might serve an example of a true intelligent?», the overwhelming majority of respondents first mentioned some Russian names of writers, poets, academics (A. Chekhov, A. Blok, B. Pasternak, A. Sakharov, etc.) and then some Armenian names of people (poets, actors, musicians, painters) they thought worthy to be called intelligentsia (Charents, Sos Sargsyan, Aram Khachaturyan, Hakob Hakobyan, etc.). Interestingly, almost no Europeans were mentioned, except for those having the Armenian origin (Charles Aznavour, William Saroyan) or being known for their empathy and support to the Armenian people (F. Nansen). In the last case, humanity and public activism of Fridtjof Nansen manifested with regards to the Armenian refugees suffered from the Armenian Genocide were considered more important criteria for including him into the “true” intelligentsia’s list than his previous achievements in the spheres of science and diplomacy. Sometimes, the same Armenian-centric approach is applied to the Russians as well. Thus, in the list of representatives of the “true” Russian intelligentsia one of the first places belongs to A. Sakharov, a famous physicist and public activist, well known for his sympathies to the Armenian people during the Karabakh conflict. Authentication of the Armenian intelligentsia has often taken place in the context of the nationalistic discourse. A “true Armenian mtavorakan” has been meant to publicly demonstrate his/her Armenianess via worship and preference for the Armenian language, culture, art, history, nature, etc. However, paradoxically, they have to be different from the extreme nationalists that «make their carrier of the petrified national and social ideas and stereotypes. They make their personal glory from the national tragedy. They induce ideas that corrode the national brain and turn the Armenian society into the suicidal flock»

⁹Sos Sargsyan is a famous Armenian cinema and theatre actor.
¹⁰Zory Balayan is a writer and public figure.
This is a case when the self-positioning in social terms shifts from a narrow social and cultural to a larger and more fundamental framework of self-identification. However, the intellectual also instinctively or deliberately tries to keep some boundaries between socio-cultural and national dimensions of identity. Current developments of the Armenian society (crucial changes of the social structure, political and civilizational landmarks, and transformation of the value system) have resulted in initial uncertainties about the eventual reconfiguration of social positions and functionality of social groups/classes that have previously considered stable and fundamental categories of the society. Surprisingly, no other social group except for the intelligentsia has been so strongly, so pervasively concerned about what they are, what are their social, political and cultural roles, and what are their social perspectives in a changing world.

And only the intelligentsia has revealed propensity to endlessly invent new platforms and theoretical frameworks for construction identities that would clarify and stabilize their self-perceptions and self-manifestation. The practices of self-identification and self-recognition have also been successfully embedded in the group identity claims in all possible dimensions (individual, national, social, religious, etc). Here we will try to present and analyze two interesting aspects of self-identification processes of the Armenian intelligentsia.

- **Repudiation of the «past»: “I am surely not an intelligent and I don't need be”**

  “The God was generous to have not created me as an Armenian intelligent”

  “I am not accepting a notion of “intelligentsia”, it has been a product of power, when the big idols used to create smaller idols to make people worship and copy them.

  “Intelligentsia is a Russian notion, which gave birth to bolshevism, kemalism, and other –isms. It's not what Armenia should pursue for”

The statements posed above are derivative from, or conducive to the negatively colored definitions of intelligentsia, characterizing it as the product of the past. In particular, it is conceptualized as a political construct conceived and produced by the imperial or totalitarian authorities to exert power over the people and national communities. Other version is that the intelligentsia is itself the main device for shaping totalitarian communities. But both of these versions are connected to the Imperial or Soviet past, rejection of which has become one of the main political imperatives of the present. Sometimes, the realities of the past are extended to the present situation.
“All KGB informers were intelligents, Georgian Zviadi (Gamsakhurdia) was intelligent. Our current intelligentsia is a satellite of our authorities”

Paradoxically, people that have refused to identify themselves as the intelligentsia to justify their position expressing implicit or explicit concerns about the «genuineness» of the intelligentsia they don't want to be like. The common explanation sounds like this: “I am not intelligentsia because I am not like those who call themselves intelligentsia, or if they are intelligentsia, so I am not”.

“As Lenin once said, the intelligentsia is not a brain, but the shit of the nation”

“Mtavorakan” in Armenia is a position to be appointed to. If I get $2000 from the president S. Sargsyan, I would be a “mtavorakan” as well”

Allusions to the lack of «genuineness», «purity» of those who pass for the intelligentsia can be discerned in statements like these:

“A herder could be more reliable and pleasant person with his simplicity than the intelligent with all his education and good manners.”

“I would prefer a homeless person give me a black eye, than to have a bloody anti-patriotic intellectual make me listen his bloody “justified” opinions”

So, refusal to belong to intelligentsia is in fact a hidden accusation of the current Armenian intelligentsia in being «false», not true or not genuine, and due to this fact these people prefer to deliberately renounce membership to this social group and join another one. Thus, from the vantage point of the «previous» intelligentsia, belonging to a social group becomes something that could be deliberately chosen, established or rejected, formulated in this or that way, or constructed. The constructivist approach to a mode of self-understanding and self-representation is fully realized by putative «non-intelligents» as a life practice, a part of personality building process.

“I prefer to be called a ‘service man’”

“If I want self-realization, then, I would better choose one of other existing strata of the society”

A lack of stability and certainty in self-identification in social and cultural terms, «soft» conception of identity, implying fluidity and multiplicity (following R. Brubaker's terminology, Brubaker 2004:37) often puts this «floating» type of the Armenian intelligentsia in the epicenter of different movements, ideologies, social and cultural processes that require not only re-shaping
or regaining of the self, changing mentality and ideological/cultural landmarks, but also revising, transforming, eliminating or inventing of what is called «tradition». Below, it is demonstrated how people identifying themselves as intelligentsia try to develop attitudes toward the sphere or the religious/secular and if they choose to be religious, how they shape their religiosity and religious identity.

**Construction of particularistic identities**

- **Religiosity and secularism of the Armenian intelligentsia.**

The questions of religion and religiosity have always been central to self-identification issue for different nation’s intelligentsia of the pre-soviet, soviet and post-soviet space. Oscillations between two extremities namely explicit, fanatic religiosity and militant secularism and atheism, intrinsic to the different types of the Russian intelligentsia (Bulgakov 1991) were not common for the Armenian «mtavorakans». Belonging to the Armenian Apostolic Church, the first national Christian Church, has been an integral part of the Armenian national identity for so long that even Soviet anti-religious campaigns could not shake the foundations of this perception. On the other hand, the Armenian Apostolic Church has always been much more than just a spiritual, religious institution. It has permanently held many representative and managerial functions, also served to conserve national and religious identity and culture, as well as played the role of community centers. In the beginning of Soviet rule the Church was persecuted and the victimized, but starting the late 50-s, when the process of nationalization had started, the Church regained its position of a national institute with both implicit and explicit support of the Armenian party officials. R. Panossian brings the following words of a previous high-ranking party official: «Zarobian (the former first secretary of the Communist Party in Armenia – Yu. A.) succeeded in beginning to nationalize the republic. The leaders and the intellectuals turned to the diaspora and to the church to find the nation» (Panossian 1988: 283). It was the truth, because the Armenian intellectuals, or mtavorakans had really turned to the Church not in search of the spiritual, but in search of the national\textsuperscript{11}. And if they ever criticized the Church they did it from the vantage point of secular seekers of the «national»: “The real Armenian intelligents such

\textsuperscript{11} For the analysis of the religious basis of the Armenian national identity see Panossian 2002: 126-130.
as Khorenatsi, Narekatsi, Komitas (all of these persons famous for their outstanding achievements in history, literature, and music were clericals of respectively 5th, 10th, and 20th cc – Yu.A.) were opposed to the Church in looking for the truth. 

In the post-soviet period the Armenian intelligentsia evidently had to make a choice between the secular (nationalistic) and spiritual (religious) attitudes to the Armenian Church, because paradoxically, these two realms turned to be opposed to each other as being national meant being involved in secular activities and taking over secular functions at the expense of the religious ones. Those who preferred the Church as an institutionalized defender and guardian of national identity, culture and spirituality criticized it for insufficient zeal and secular aspirations for more power and influence. A recent example of this discourse is intelligentsia reaction to the possible construction of a replica of the Poghos-Petros Church, destroyed on the early Soviet times on the spot where current the Summer hall of the Moscow cinema theatre is located. The latter was declared to be a masterpiece of Soviet constructivism and the Church was blamed for attempting to annihilate Soviet cultural heritage in the same way that the Soviets had done to Church and religious values. Another example of a secularized approach to the Church and religion was expressed in public debates regarding the recently introduced secondary school course of history of the Armenian Church. That was perceived as an attempt to inculcate the elements of Christian/religious education in secondary school and therefore had a strong backlash of some representatives of the intelligentsia. (Jaloyan 2010). Messages, conveyed to the society through the mentioned discourses were about the secular self-determination of the Armenian intelligentsia within the national models of thinking and identification.

However, the secularism of the Armenian intelligentsia has not been the same as that of the Russian intelligentsia. In the 1960’s, Soviet dissident and essayist O. Altaev (V. Kormer) wrote about the militant secularism of a Soviet intelligent as the «reversed» religiosity. The intelligent, he wrote, knows that God does not exist, because if he did, he would not have allowed all horrors the intelligentsia were forced to endure within the last half a century (Kormer 2009: 211). The existential problem of the God has never been a focus of the religion-related discourse among the Armenian intelligents. It has been claimed that because of the Armenian Church’s national aspirations gives up in the realm of spirituality, leaving the other group of intelligentsia that preferred to construct their Christian identity on a religious basis two possible ways to turn back

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12 The author of this sentence counts Armenian medieval poets and historians as intelligents.
to «spirituality». The first possibility is engaging in other religious movements that entered Armenia in 90’s (protestant churches like Pentecostals, evangelists, Adventists or cognate churches like Mormons of Jehova witnesses). A second way is reforming the National Church, in an attempt to narrow its focus to religiosity as a spiritual practice. These ways mean building new traditions, like those of collective pilgrimage of groups of church attendants, organized by the Church itself or reconstructing/inventing of «old» spiritual traditions like the «lost» tradition of icon-painting (historical existence of which has actually never proved).

In all cases, the conceptual and instrumental leadership of all these movements belongs to the people that identify themselves as intelligentsia (mtavorakanutium). This supports the definition of intellectuals given by Eyerman who regarded them «as a part of a historical process, in which human actors reinvent cultural traditions” (Eyerman 1992: 34)

- *Between cultures: the language of the Armenian intelligentsia*

Russian had been the official and the most privileged language of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. Among the Armenian intelligentsia it was almost equal to Armenian as a language of official or domestic communication. Due to the politics of intensive Russianization conducted in the last decades of the Soviet Union the Russian-language education became the most demanded and prestigious in Armenia. Speaking Russian was one of the informal «signs» of the intelligentsia. According to statistics, 45% of Armenians in Armenia mastered Russian, and 25% of students went to Russian-language schools (Panossian 1988: 344). This 25% was mostly the children of the elite. According to my own observations from 40% to 90% of home libraries of the Armenian urban intelligentsia consisted of Russian language literature even though Armenia had one of the highest rates of publications in the native language among other Soviet republics (about 1100 titles a year). At the university level bio-medical science, mathematics and physics were all available in Russian and Armenian, so the graduates could choose between the Russian and Armenian departments. The last soviet generation of the Armenian intelligentsia mostly graduated from Russian language schools and was thus less familiar with literary Armenian. Instead, they were well aware of Russian culture, literature and got acquainted with the world culture by virtue of the Russian language. This may have been a large reason why they were among the first who emigrated to Russia and other countries during the years of the economic and energetic crisis of 90’s.
In the post-soviet period, the Russian language schools were canceled except for some Russian-language classes intended for ethnic Russians and recent repatriates. Russian has been gradually taken out from official and domestic communication spheres, though it has never stopped being taught in schools and universities as a foreign language. The percent of the Russian-speaking intelligentsia is decreasing and those who identify closely to the Russian language and Russian/Soviet mentality and cultural patterns nostalgically speak of the death of intelligentsia, and the dramatic decline of education and cultural level of current generations. In the last several years, two foreign languages, Russian and English, have been prioritized and considered obligatory for everyone in Armenia. The recent legislative initiative of the Ministry of Education allowing the establishment of foreign-language schools in Armenia, was understood as a step back towards the Russian language in the cultural and educational system of Armenia. One of mayors of Yerevan (December 2010 – November 2011) provoked discontent of the citizens when he forced employees of the municipality to learn Russian and English. These initiatives are interpreted as having political implications for relations with Russia, but also might be considered as implicit attempts to re-assess and rehabilitate the role of Russian as a bearer for entering intelligentsia elite culture.

There are also some “postmodernist” approaches to the written language among educated youth and intellectuals, used on internet social networks. They try to make the written language identical to vernacular through disclaiming literary forms in favor of the vernacular ones in their online messages.

Given that a significant number of the nationalist intelligentsia were Russian-speaking, we can conclude that language was not a barrier to the nationalistic aspirations of the Armenian intelligentsia. Many of the Russian-language intelligentsia repatriated from Russia or other soviet republics with a clear intention to bind their lives with the motherland, which many of them had never even seen before. Some of them sought a complete “Armenianization”, including adopting the Armenian language at least as the second native. However, the majority of the returnees either could not or did not really want to do so, considering Russian a sufficient tool to express their nationalistic feelings and aspirations. One of the brightest examples of that sort of people was Robert Sahakyants, the famous cartoon-maker and a public figure who passed away just recently. He often spoke in public, and always
spoke Russian. When he was blamed for this, he parried that he did it deliberately for no one in his country must prevent people from speaking the language they want and feel comfortable in. That might be called nationalism in a broad, civic sense as opposed to the narrow ethnic and cultural one, though Robert Sahakyants himself had been a fervent defender and promoter of the Armenian ethnic culture and national values through his life. The development of Armenian nationalism in Russian was supported by politics that mandated translation of national literatures and cinema productions into Russian as part of the Soviet “globalization” project. It was implicitly presumed, that the most important consumers of the translated production would be the Russian-speaking Armenians themselves, whose number gradually increased due to the increased prevalence of Russian-language schools. Thus, one could find whole libraries of the Armenian classic and modern literature and tens of illustrated albums of the Armenian architecture and art translated into Russian at homes of the Armenian intelligentsia. The Armenian nationalist intelligentsia became familiar with the Armenian literature and national culture by virtue of the Russian language and, therefore, they tried to convey their thoughts and feelings also in Russian. This has continued to today where most of the influential Armenian bloggers and Internet media outlets are still the Russian-language ones, though there has been a gradual increase in the use of Armenian. Even with this increase in Armenian resources the used of foreign languages by Armenian intelligentsia looks like it will remain into the future. English and in much lesser extent French also claim to be languages in which Armenian nationalism is developed and conveyed, because of the Armenian intellectuals of Diaspora or those who were educated on the West during the last decades. Eventually, this leads to a kind of Pan-Armenian globalization, which is aimed at achievement of ideological, semiotic, and political unity, but not a linguistic and cultural one.

Another aspect of the Armenian intelligentsia's discourse has been the Armenian language itself. The issue of its oreservation, development and cultural significance were among main topics of the Armenian dissident movement in 1960-s and 1970-s. As R. Panossian writes: «Out of
all the identity markers, language was the one emphasised the most by nationalist intellectuals. It was a «safe» issue and seemed non-political – especially in 1960s.» (Panossian 1988: 344).

Domestic language use is also a signifier of the intelligentsia. There are literary and vernacular forms of Eastern Armenian, which have significant discrepancies in pronunciation, intonation, and less difference in vocabulary and grammar. The intelligentsia in Armenia mostly speaks “vernacularized”, domesticated version of the literary Eastern Armenian, except for the region of Shirak with its administrative and cultural center, the city of Gyumri, where the Shirak dialect of the Western Armenian is used as a domestic language. However, the image of “ideal”, genuine intelligentsia includes speaking on “impeccable”, “pure” Eastern literary Armenian. Due to this, while speaking in public, the intelligentsia usually deliberately switches to the written, bookish version of the literary Armenian that is never used in everyday life. The ability to speak this artificial language is still considered a value and, for instance, became one of the most sound arguments for supporters of one of the president candidates, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, the ex-president of Armenia, during the last electoral campaign of 2008.

- **Being Armenian is more than just being born Armenian**

One of the most interesting processes of construction of particularistic identities by the intelligentsia can be called “making oneself the true Armenian”. This is completely different from the processes of construction/transformation of ethnic or national identities, either deliberate or violent, that take place spontaneously, in groups, and in congruence and coherence of situational demands and dispositions.

The cases I am going to talk about are entirely individual and specific only to representatives of the Armenian intelligentsia repatriating from abroad, mostly from countries of the post-soviet space. The main motive of repatriation, according to repatriates, was a desire to come back to national roots, to regain identity they almost lost because of living in alien cultural environment, and to build their life as a true Armenian in Armenia. The whole image of a “true” Armenian is completely conceptualized in categories of knowledge, intellect, morality, national duty, and missionary goals. It’s purely an intellectual product. One decides to follow the strategy of “making himself” a true Armenian sometimes due to reasons that are not directly bound to outer
circumstances. This is a very individual decision, similar to those like “becoming a professional”, or “becoming a millionaire”. It can be stirred up by external reasons (like drastic raise of nationalism in the country of origin, or occasional events affected awakening of the national identity), but it’s always individual and intellectually devised decision. The case of Alexander Kananyan is exponential in this sense (Kananyan 2010). He repatriated from Tbilisi, Georgia at the very beginning of the Karabakh movement, moved by a decision to settle down somewhere in Armenia or Karabakh. But before doing this, he realized that he knew nothing about Armenia, its history and culture, did not speak Armenian and could not be considered Armenian. He developed an image of an “ideal” Armenian that included such categories as language, religion, family patterns, and life principles and started to follow the steps of the program despite the overall resistance and disapproval of his family and friends. He learned Armenian, both modern and classic (“Grabar”), studied the Armenian history and culture in detail, was converted into the Armenian Apostolic Church, then moved first to Yerevan (Republic of Armenia) and then to Karvachar (Karabakh). He married a local Armenian and completely switched to speaking Armenian in his domestic life, which he previously had in Russian. He is actively participating in political and public initiatives, especially those that were closely connected to Karabakh and Genocide. He realized the transformation of his identity and wanted to be a model for others wishing to become “true” Armenians. The similar cases can be found among other repatriates as well as among the Russian-speaking intelligentsia who was born and raised up in Armenia, but who wanted to “regain”, or, rather, construct anew their ethnicity by deliberately switching to Armenian in everyday life, taking baptism in the Armenian Apostolic Church, reading books on the Armenian History, and participating in nationalistic movements.

The particular desire to build one’s own identity was not unique, but not everyone manages to succeed in reaching “the end of the program”. Sometimes people attempting this transition experience serious difficulties in terms of language, mentality, communication patterns, face realities of political and cultural life and often end up in deep disappointment and even depression, which forces them to completely change their life strategies in terms of national thinking and self-identification and re-emigrate.

Images of the «Armenian intelligentsia»: Addiction to the «spiritual»
Opposition of the “material” and the “spiritual” self-identification of the intelligentsia is best manifested in musical, art and literature preferences that are semantically crucial for the existing cultural confrontation of intelligentsia with other people. Rock, classic and bard music, often linked to the intelligentsia are mostly opposed to so called “rabiz” music13(Abrahamyan, Pikichyan 1987: 136, Hakobyan 2006: 59-61), so the confrontation of the “rabiz” and the rock music fans have not always been perceived as that of intelligentsia and “uncivilized” flock (Artsruni 2009). Such a confrontation might provoke conflicts and skirmishes between young fans of different music styles that were an integrate part of the process of male socialization in Armenia. But along with this explicitly demonstrated preference to this or that music styles (mostly, rock, jazz and classical music) has always been one of the most common ways of self-representation of the Armenian intelligentsia in the society. Musical instruments such as the piano or the guitar often make a part of the domestic interior of intelligentsia’s houses. Sometimes it is hard to distinguish between the demonstration of the “intelligent” identity and the manifestation of the youth and protest subcultures. During the Soviet times, marginality, bohemian looks and behavior of some artists and writers mechanically made them associated with anti-social environment. Intellectual elite of nowadays can also speak with scorn about “long-maned groups of mtavorakans (intelligents) vagabonding around the “Moscow” cinema theatre”.

The other semantically significant parts of the intelligentsia domestic interior and personal preferences are paintings and books. In Soviet times, home libraries were signifiers of not only professional activities, but also of a social status, prestige, cultural and national identity, and intellectual ambitions. In the Soviet times prestigious books, especially multivolume editions of foreign authors were difficult to acquire as they could be found in bookstores only through a system of clandestine distribution and used to serve as additional markers of social power and inclusion in social networks that would help soviet people to manage their life under the conditions of a total “deficit”14. Currently, with the transformation of a hierarchic system of the Armenian society, elimination of deficit and penetration of different practices and values of

13“Rabis” has initially been a musical style, emerged in 30-ies to popularize folk music for people's domestic needs (weddings, funerals, etc). Currently the “rabiz” means a whole subculture including related musical styles, specific mode of life and values, usually prescribed to lower layers of the population.

14 “Deficit” is an artificially produced lack of good at the soviet shops that significantly stirred and supported the informal systems of goods’ distribution through administrative and social networks. Access to a “deficit” goods was one of the signifiers of the Soviet hierarchy (See in more details Turovskaya 2002).
consumerism books have stopped to be the symbol of social status. Now they are perceived like a lost value as everything that has gone with the old cultural system, though they still keep their significance as an outer sign of the “genuine” intelligentsia. In an interview, Artur Meschyan, the famous Armenian musician and architect said that he was concerned with the young generation, because nowadays he would hardly see a university student with a book in hands (Meschyan 2009). In 2009, a flash-mob action was organized through social networks, during which tens of young people with books in their hands gathered in the very center of Yerevan, around the statue of the architect A. Tamanyan (who himself was known as one of the most remarkable “mtavorakans” of 20th c.) and remained there for at least 15 minutes reading the books. This was a kind of protest against the “loss of culture” which is equal to the loss of “intelligentsia”.

The intelligent is not required to be creative, but he or she has to be involved in the process of constant, life-long consumption and adoption of intellectual and art production: «Being artist or painter does not require reading books. On the contrary, the cleaner may watch films of Bunuel or Pazzolini, write poems and receive the Nobel prize in the future. “Intellectual” profession is not a sufficient condition to be considered intelligentsia and intellectual, so is the non-intellectual one».

As mentioned earlier, the aristocratic mode of life, sophisticated manners and ways of self-representation in public are considered intrinsic for the intelligentsia. However, only intellectual interests and activities would not make a person intelligent if he/she had not good manners. E. Ohanyan, one of my respondents, recalled her father organizing the everyday life of his family in an aristocratic way. She was convinced that the aristocratic mode of living and manners are peculiar for the genuine intelligentsia and criticized those of the Armenian artists, writers and academics who had bad manners, non-aristocratic looking, which meant they were not “true” intelligentsia.

“Intelligent is an educated and well-bred person, that possesses a high inner culture and large diapason of knowledge. The Armenian intelligent must have all those qualities the intelligentsia of other countries have.”

“Intelligent is a person having an inner sense of tact. The Armenian intelligent is an Armenian having an inner sense of tact.”

Public spaces of the Armenian intelligentsia
Home is a significant part of the habitus of an «intelligent», but not less important are public spaces used by intelligentsia to develop discourses, as intelligentsia is a primarily discursive phenomenon (Filatova 2005: 216). Soviet “kitchen” as a venue of public discussions and latent political and social protest is mentioned in most essays and papers on intelligentsia, however the summer cafés of Yerevan were more commonly used for the same purposes by the Armenian intelligentsia. They played significant role in formation of dissident and other types of “intelligent” discourses in Armenia (Ter-Abrahamyan 2006: 24).

Currently, the “café communication culture” is thriving in Armenia, not confined to the intelligentsia’s prerogatives; it now serves new functions of business and family communication previously not specific for the Armenian culture. Those cafés that keep playing the role of space for conversations and discussions of political or cultural character are gradually transforming into clubs (Art-Bridge, The Club, Claboratoria).

Another actively used space for the development of the intelligentsia’s discourse is Internet based facilities such as different types of social networks (blogs, forums, Live Journal, Facebook). As A. Filatova writes, the intelligentsia itself is a «walking discourse», a text-based phenomenon (Filatova 2005: 216). So far books have been the main focus of the intelligentsia's world, however not every intelligent had a chance to express themselves in written texts, because it was not an easy task to publish a book or an article in mass media outlets. Currently the Internet provides almost unlimited opportunities to produce and publish texts of very different quality and genres. More and more, representatives of Armenian intellectual community are involved in political and cultural discourses unfolded in the Armenian space of virtual networks. Among groups that tend to use these new tools are the young generations of academicians, politicians, journalists, public activists, lecturers, specialists of IT and other representatives of intellectual specialties, most of which are self-identified as “mtavorakans”, intelligentsia or intellectuals.

As M. Zolyan indicates, the virtual networks have opened new possibilities for civic activism in Armenia. As he writes, «Several civic initiatives and campaigns, including the campaign against the destruction of “Moskva” cinema hall in Yerevan, a similar initiative against destruction of parks in Yerevan, and the campaign against altering of the law on language, used Internet tools such as social networks and blogs and managed to attract the attention of Armenian society in 2009-2010. These initiatives have <…> created a completely new atmosphere in Armenian civil
society and have begun to transform the paternalistic nature of the relationship between government and society in the context of a post-Soviet political system» (Zolyan 2010: 7). Public debates, whether open or closed, that have always considered to be the main field of activity for the Armenian intelligentsia, begin today in the public spaces of the internet such as Facebook, LiveJournal, different individual blogs and forums that grow more and more popular among the young educated people employed in intellectual and creative spheres of activities. Remarkably, 50-60% of friends' groups of the Armenian users consist of Armenians of Armenia or Diaspora that creates opportunities for exchanging national news, concerns and opinions and calls for action. This does not mean the social networking is not used for leisure or business communication purposes, but that in the rest of the world in Armenia it has become the most effective mechanism for civil activities and demonstration of people’s intellectual, creative or social ambitions. On the other hand, there are still a number of the older representatives of the Soviet-style intelligentsia who have not accepted modern information technologies and consider them incompatible with creative or intellectual processes. “The Internet, it's not for the intelligentsia”, as Nelli Sahakyan, a well-known essayist, exclaimed in her article about Internet and IT (Sahakyan 2010). Internet is something unspiritual, materialistic, according to her. Her speculations might have seemed naive if they had not recalled the famous opposition of the materia and the idea in favor for the former, which had been the main focus of the Marxist philosophy. In response, intelligentsia always used to consider itself as an embodiment of the idea. N. Sahakyan’s moods are mostly shared by the older generation thinking that art, literature, and music are incompatible with modern technologies. The fear of high technologies is also a fear of the new world, new realities, and new cultural systems where the old-style intelligentsia does not feel it has an appropriate place in. This also signifies an increasing gap in continuity between Soviet and post-Soviet generations of intellectuals whose identities developed in very different ways and different conditions.

**Patterns and images of the Armenian Intelligentsia in public narratives and writings.**

- **Intelligentsia versus hucksters**

In some vernacular conversations, forums and interviews one can face a lot of utterances where the intelligentsia is opposed to “hucksters” (“лавочники” is the Russian word used by the
Russian-speaking intelligentsia), which is a derogatory name for the current ruling elite, alluding to their low social origins. It also implies that most of them have made their fortunes by illegal trade and speculations.

“Our army does not have intellectuals or professionals, it has nothing but bureaucrats and hucksters”

“Previous politicians (of the First Armenian republic of 1918–20 – Yu.A.) were intellectuals and true “mtavorakans”. Currently one can encounter no intellectual among the leaders of the government”

“We need a strong will, but the elite of hucksters does not have it. We should get rid of the hucksters in rule as soon as possible”

Why hucksters? It should be mentioned that most of the Armenian intelligentsia of the 19th and early 20th centuries came out of merchants’ estate. Armenians have always been known as skillful merchants that even made a part of stereotypical descriptions of the Armenian ethnic character, as it is mentioned in the essay of L. Melik-Shahnazaryan about the Armenian character (Melik-Shahnazaryan 1999). At the same time, educated offspring of the Armenian merchants always wanted to get rid of their past by adopting completely different modes of life and thinking, those intrinsic to the nobility and the intelligentsia.

“The world of the intelligentsia lives in is completely different from that the Armenian huckster lives in.”

The opposition of the “honest” intelligentsia and “criminal” representatives of trade and some industries is not new and flows from the Soviet times. Armenia had been one of the centers of clandestine entrepreneurship (“tsekh”, “џек”– illegal clandestine factory) and illegal trade called “speculation” thriving in the Soviet Union. While the “intelligentsia” lived on state salaries, the “tsekhovikner” (from Russian “џеховик”, those having “tsekher”), were enriched by huge illegal incomes from clandestine manufacturing and trade. After the market economy system was established in Armenia, all types of manufacture in Armenia were legitimizied, the word “tsekhovik” was immediately replaced by the words “entrepreneur”, and “businessman”. However, those who managed to make a lot of money during the first decade of the independence later came to the rule and now makes majority in the Armenian Parliament (“oligarchs”). Therefore even in politics they try use market related terms (“sell”, “buy”),
“bargain”, etc.), which are inapplicable to the notions of nation, national interests, national culture, patriotism, from the vantage point of intelligents.

“We let today’s’ thieves and hucksters in rule to stake our national honor and Genocide memory.”

Interestingly, those of the intelligentsia who have managed to get access to the upper echelons are included in the list of hucksters by default, because they joined the clique, without considering their general personal characteristics (looking, manners, education level) that are crucial for identification of the intelligentsia in everyday life. The division on hucksters and intelligentsia is much more than just a metaphor, implying some personal characteristics of the incumbent rulers. It is an attempt to set up boundaries between two types of power, that of illegitimate or “bought” and that of genuine or “true”.

- **Death of the Armenian Intelligentsia**

A title of one of essays, addressing the topic of intelligentsia, “The dying class of the dying empire” exemplifies well the theme of death (often violent) of the Armenian intelligentsia, frequently encountered in intelligentsia related discourses (Hayrapetyan 2006).

“Armenian intelligentsia does not exist any longer, it has been annihilated.”

“I think the Armenian intelligentsia had been assassinated in the Turkish prisons of Ayash and Chankri and gone with the first republic of Armenia and has not come back yet”.

Such statements are not unique for the Armenians, nor are they new. In the 1960’s, O. Altaev (Kormer) and other authors argued whether the intelligentsia was alive figuratively dead (Kormer 2009: 211-252). This metaphor also directly refers to the discussed issues of genuineness of the current Armenian “intelligentsia” or “mtavorakanutium”. Sometimes, speaking about a specific person, my interlocutors would say: “He was the last “intelligent””, “She belongs to the cohort of the last “mtavorakan”-s”, “Mravorakans like him (her) do not exist any longer”. This means this person possessed all characteristics of a true intelligent that cannot be found in people any longer. However, beside the change of behavioral patterns, implied by the utterances above, many of respondents pinpointed the fact that the intelligentsia is primarily a product of totalitarian, autocratic societies that emerged to fight the ruling regime and had to disappear as soon as the regime collapsed. Sometimes statements about the death of the intelligentsia are concomitant with those claiming that the Armenian intelligentsia has never
“The Armenian intelligentsia has never existed. What we call the “intelligentsia”, in reality is a mixed Armenian-Russian cultural category. One should have invented the other term for the Armenian intellectuals that has nothing in common with thoughts and concerns of the Russian intelligentsia. The word “mtavorakan” seems to have been just a weak translation from the Russian.”

“Intelligentsia is an imported phenomenon, originally alien to Armenians”

The main idea conveyed through these statements is that the Armenian intelligentsia has been an imitation of the Russian one. According to this idea, the Russian-type intelligentsia was deliberately inculcated into the Armenian society and has never been an organic part of the Armenian cultural system. After the Empire collapsed, the Armenians no longer had a need for its constituents. They also state that the Armenian culture also does not need the life style, values, habits, language, customs, and mentality imposed on it by the Russian-speaking intelligentsia.

- Values of the intelligentsia: have they been really changed?

“Change of values”, “collapse of the values’ system” are top themes of current public debates between intellectuals and intelligentsia in mass media and virtual space. All of disputants are concerned with the overflow of consumption mentality in the society, preponderance of the “material” and lack of “true” culture. “Our society is literate but not cultivated, not civilized” (Tadevosyán 2012). Paradoxically, one of suggested ways for improvement of the situation is investing of other foreign cultural capital into the Armenian society instead of the Russian-centered cultural aspirations. It is more adequate to speak about the change of patterns for formation of value systems, because the old patterns are not valuable any longer either in political or in cultural contexts. Having particular patterns is indispensable condition if one thinks that system of values is something that can be deliberately inculcated, built, reconstructed, or invented by a group of intellectuals, the “genuine”, “true” elite and then proliferated among the lower layers of the society. This way of thinking was intrinsic to the Soviet order of things, when cultural, ideological, behavioral values were imposed on the society from above through the “soviet intelligentsia”. It also explains today’s complaints about the devaluation of the intelligentsia in terms of the influence they previously exerted on the people.
“The status of art and artists has been devalued today. Today’s poets, cinema directors, singers and painters are not prophets anymore [compared to Soviet times].”

“Soviet government made everything possible to bring back Armenian intelligentsia to the country”

The utterance about the soviet government taking care of the intelligentsia might seem to be counterintuitive, but the paradox is illusive. Indeed, the majority of the Armenian creative intelligentsia (artists, writers, musicians) who had proved to be loyal to the Soviet rule were given freedom and necessary facilities to work: studios, free sanatoriums, opportunities to exhibit, perform and publish their works. The early 1930’s were marked with the repatriation of a significant number of intelligentsia with the aim of “building the homeland”. The repatriation of Hovhannes Kajaznuni, the ex-prime minister of the bourgeois Republic of Armenia of 1918-20, who was an architect by profession is a clear example of this. Later, he like many others was imprisoned and died during the Stalin’s purges of late 30’s. The situation was well described in the diaries of the opposed writer Ler Kamsar, which were buried in the strict sense of the word for decades until they were published in 2008 (Kamsar 2008). Despite all this, the current intelligentsia cannot help claiming that “one for our main goals, the rehabilitation and repatriation of our national elite <…> was once done in Armenia, when Myasnikyan, Ter-Gabrielyan, Khandjyan, and Harutyunov (communist leaders of early years of Soviet rule in Armenia – Yu.A.) brought back Tamanyan, Saryan, Isahakyan, Khachatryan, brothers Orbeli and brothers Alikhanyans to the country, the elite that rebuilt the country and saved it after the Genocide” (Xmalyan 2010).

S. Eisenstadt wrote: «Intellectuals were most often conceived as guardians or «would-be» guardians of the society’s «conscience» - but only when that conscience was thought to be opposed to the established order» (Eisenstadt 1972: 1). This seems to be inadequate to Armenia. As S. Manukyan writes in his investigation of dissident movements in Armenia, very few members of the Armenian intelligentsia were involved in clandestine anti-Soviet activities and the dissident movement (Manukyan 2006: 86). Their reluctance to oppose to the regime was evidently strengthened by the national character of government in Armenia (Panossian 2004: 283). Besides, as a periphery, Yerevan enjoyed a bit more freedom and a bit less ideological pressure than the centers like Moscow and Leningrad, so artists, writers, musicians and other professionals were afforded more liberties. As a result of this freedom, in the 1980’s Yerevan
was one of the informal capitals of rock-and-roll, jazz, and modern art in the Soviet Union. The sphere of marginal urban art was also a space for proliferation of some dissident ideas (Ter-Abrahamyan 2006: 27-31). Loyalty to the regime, nationalism and marginality were three main characteristics that epitomize the nature of the Armenian Soviet intelligentsia. However, the Soviet period is considered to be a golden era for the Armenian intelligentsia and myths on the good and wise government that supported agents of cultural values do not seem to be debunked. One can find very few books or articles revising history of Armenia of Soviet times, the Soviet period remains “terra incognita” for the Armenian scholars and larger society. The elder generations of intelligentsia feel at ease thinking that they are mistreated by the current authorities instead of trying to realize that times changed and previous hierarchies, attitudes, functional roles and interactions no longer are demanded or.

Remarkably, recent youth movements in support of the political opposition emerged before and after the presidential elections of 2008 have deliberately refused to be called the intelligentsia: “We don’t want to be called elite or ‘intelligentsia’. We represent ourselves rather as the resistance movement”. At the same time in their titles “Sksela” (It’s started) and “Hima” (Now) they almost literally reproduce the watchword of the Soviet intelligentsia of 60’s; which was “It’s started” (“Началось”) (Kormer 2009: 32)

- **Missionarism and victimization of the Armenian intelligentsia**

One of specific features of the Russian intelligentsia propounded by many authors has been an eternal guilt before the “folk” that has been expressed in missionary aspirations to “save” and “illuminate” it. Following its Russian counterpart, the Armenian intelligentsia also practiced retirement to the countryside to enlighten people there in a hope that educated, “illuminated” folk would live a better economical, juridical and social life. This phenomenon has been reiterated through the Armenian history of 19th and 20th century, though embedded in different ideological, cultural and political situations and interpretative frameworks. At the end of 19th century, it was construed as conveying literacy and practical knowledge to the Armenian villagers in both Russian and Ottoman Empires. In 1930’s, a similar literacy campaign conceived and conducted primarily by the Soviet government, and eventually re-emerged during the Karabakh war as the intelligentsia’s movement of resettling themselves in depopulated or abandoned villages/towns of Karabakh. Its leaders who first sought to “repopulate and develop the homeland” appealed to
representatives of the Armenian intelligentsia, i.e. teachers, physicians, and other educated and qualified professionals to move to Karabakh to accelerate the economic, cultural, and demographic development of the region. The already mentioned case of Alexander Kananyan clearly exemplifies this phenomenon. He chose Karvachar (the small town at the north of Karabakh) not because of its alpine beauties and strategic positions, but because of a necessity to have someone set a precedent to leave a secure life and work towards the rebirth and prosperity of depopulated and underdeveloped parts of Armenia, including Karabakh. Even though he was unable to find a job that corresponded to his high level of education in Karvachar, he volunteered his services, including free teaching (history, languages, computer skills), networking, people’s rights protection, and distant journalism. His case is exceptional but not unique. Tens of representatives of the intelligentsia (or people identifying themselves like that) have moved to Karabakh since the end of the war. Not all of them are able to endure all severities of everyday life and some give up and quit, but others, like a recent couple of intellectuals from Moscow that settled up in the alpine village of Tsar in Karabakh, still endure all difficulties and stay on place.

Another aspect of missionary functions and exclusive role of the intelligentsia is as a voluntary or violent victim that perishes for the sake of the entire Armenian nation. This victimization is usually conceptualized in the context of the Armenian Genocide of 1915, when hundreds of the Western Armenian intellectuals were murdered or underwent severe repressions and exile. Although intensive massacres had lasted for several years (1915-1921), the April 24, 1915 was accepted as a symbolic memorial date of the Genocide, not only because the massacres were launched in this particular day, but also because the Armenian intellectual and artistic elite of Istanbul (politicians, writers, poets, musicians, etc) were almost entirely annihilated on this day. Thus, the assassination of the Armenian intellectual elite became an accumulative symbol for subsequent massacres of the entire Armenian population of Western Armenia. “The Armenian nation was beheaded”, “exsanguinated” – these metaphors are directly referred to the fact of extermination of the intellectual elite during the Genocide.

Shadowed by the Genocide, the Stalin repressions of the 1930’s-50’s evoke much less associations with the victimized image of the national intelligentsia, even though tens of political, military and intellectual leaders were lost in the course of political and ideological «purges». As it was demonstrated earlier, Stalin’s era has been idealized as a fruitful and beneficial time for the Armenian intelligentsia, who were brought together in the homeland in order to construct its
luminous future. The period of rehabilitation and cultivation of memories about the Stalin’s repressions that took place in the whole Soviet space had been interrupted in Armenia by the Karabakh movement, the war, and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union and never came back in a form of the nation-wide discourse. Rare publications or discussions of the topic (see i.e. Manukyan A. 1999, or Alexanyan 2007) do not impact the general stance of “amnesia”. This subconscious and commonly shared oblivion to dark sides of the soviet regime in Armenia is a cultural phenomenon that deserves a separate research.

The topic of victimization of the intelligentsia has not been exhausted by the reminiscences of the past. It has in fact been revived by the recent developments of political, economic, cultural, and demographic situation in Armenia. The first decade of the Third Republic (as the current Republic of Armenia is often called) was marked with the tremendous collapse of economy and living conditions that eventually resulted in mass emigration from Armenia, which has only recently started to lessen. A large part of educated, highly intellectual professionals were among the flows of emigration. Their departure is considered as the direct result of the “criminal regime of merchants and oligarchs” and the leaving intelligentsia, thus, is in a position of victims of the regime. A process of emigration is often identified in public discourses as the «White Genocide» and the «brain drain», aimed at “exsanguinating” Armenia, ruining its intellectual potential, and bereaving it of its creative capacities.

Another case of victimization and heroization of the intelligentsia is bound to the Karabakh movement and the Karabakh war of 1991-94. The movement was headed by the group of nationalistic intelligentsia (academics, writers, teachers, technicians, etc) whose life and freedom were threatened in the first months of the movement. There were arrested, tough they eventually freed within half a year. But the very fact of their imprisonment was perceived as a sacrifice, seen in comments such as: “The members of the “Karabagh” Committee were imprisoned not only in the name of, but also instead of each of us, even those who blamed them earlier, or keep blaming now. Their arrest confirmed the idea on their belonging to the victimized – voluntarily victimized – intelligentsia.” (Atayan 2010: 267)

Though the real percent of the intelligentsia voluntarily participating in the Karabakh war was not very high compared to other groups of population, they were considered the main bearers of ideological, national, and cultural values that preconditioned the war. One of the participants of the Karabakh war, the painter M. Tonoyan states in his interview to media: “The results of a war
are usually stipulated by two main circumstances: participation of the intelligentsia and the extent in which this war is technocratic. One of the specifics of the Karabakh war was the fact that the leaders of our military units were the intelligentsia – artists, writers, painters. And thank to those of them fighting in the front line, the enthusiasm of our soldiers had been increased” (Tonoyan 2010). The intelligentsia and clericals in the war bring in spirituality, additional ideological and culture-oriented zeal to the killing process thus turning it into a struggle for the supreme cultural and national values that are worth dying for.

Conclusions
This particular research is a first attempt to outline current cultural and social boundaries of “intelligentsia”, and “intellectual” embedded in the framework of the Armenian culture. We have seen that it is not possible and probably not needed to give any overwhelming definition of the Armenian intelligentsia, it is rather a matter of individual understanding, self-identification, self-representation and identification/representation by others, based particular criteria, characteristics and stereotypes. It is also a matter of mechanisms and techniques of building the solidarity and the sameness of a group that explicitly or implicitly opposes itself to other groups and tends to be closed by outlining criteria of membership. Certain snobbism, requirements for personal qualities and characteristics versus social or economic ones, sophisticated everyday life, encoded in a system of symbols, mental and behavioral patterns, and communication practices became those mechanisms that maintained the intelligentsia through the Soviet times and conditioned the formation of the particular “intelligent” identity with its two main versions: the extremely nationalistic and the moderately nationalistic ones.

The Armenian intelligentsia is currently undergoing a complicated period of transformation of self-identification models that is preceded by a crucial change of political, national and cultural patterns of mentality. Many of those who have identified themselves as the intelligentsia speak about the death of the intelligentsia, its disappearance as a class or a social group. However, it would be more appropriate to talk about the change of self-identification criteria rather than a disappearance of the group.

The main cultural role of the intelligentsia remains the formation/construction/invention of cultural phenomena or “traditions” intended for framing, conditioning, and construing the newly established cultural and political systems. In this context, the tradition can mean many things:
patterns of social and political behavior, ideological dogmas and visions, memorization and forgetting practices, feasts’ calendar, modes of everyday life, religiosity patterns, models of the “national” culture, language, and so on. One of the most targeted “objects” of such activities appears to be the very identity of the intelligentsia. It is shaped and tuned endlessly in congruence with an abstract and accumulative model of an ideal intelligent that exists only in discursive form. But its virtual existence makes people identifying themselves as “intelligents” convinced of dispensability and verity of their missionary aspirations in terms of dissemination of ideological and cultural values invented/constructed by them. Their conviction is so deep that they are ready to be victimized in the name of these values, if not physically, then socially. However, the most important contradiction is right there. Unlike the physical sacrifice, the social one (giving up social positions, being demoted in terms of social status) becomes less and less attractive in new cultural and political conditions. This is the main reason for which the intelligentsia as a group/class/stratum/caste of people identifying themselves like that seems to wane, as nobility once did. This process is not random, sudden and chaotic, it is closely connected to continuous, consecutive and crucial restructuring of identities, hierarchies and mentalities and it is not over yet.

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