

## Why are we losing? Expert's comment, 12.03.2024

**Eduard B. Atanesyan<sup>1</sup>**

We are losing, and we have been losing for a long time and systematically. What is the root cause of the defeat of Armenians, the reason for the continuous shrinking of our homeland like the *Chagrin skin*?

I am far from attributing to our nation – or any other nation, as a system of self-organization based on collective values, territory, language, and culture – with any particular root causes of constant victories or defeats. The fundamental problem of the “*Armenian world*” is the problem of authority<sup>2</sup>, or rather the question of its formation and (sacred) legitimacy. In other words, it is about the nation's elite, capable of long-term responsibility, consolidating resources, and (at least attempting to) solve the current problems. Do we have such an established institution? Apparently not. And the roots of this problem go back centuries.

In our history, there was a moment when, due to a combination of various negative factors – an “ideal storm” – there was an irreversible change in the factors underlying the “Armenian world”. Let us not refer to the Great Migration of Peoples and the struggle of competing religions and states as the primary cause of all troubles. Let us seek the reasons within our Armenian environment. And they lie, it seems, in the early 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries, in the era of the rise and fall of the Bagratid Armenian Kingdom<sup>3</sup>. Their capital Ani<sup>4</sup> – a jewel of the medieval urban planning, with developed communications and infrastructure, became so largely due to the trade routes passing through the territory of Armenia. As in our days, the core of the problems lays largely in the framework of the “*corridor basis*” of the political-economic processes, which began with the Great Silk Road – the genuine one.

The geographical location, political and internal stability of the kingdom, together with the existing roads and necessary infrastructure – the required density of settlements with the possibility of purchasing food and forage from the local population, the presence of convenient courtyards and developed crafts made Armenia an attractive route for the transit of goods to China and Europe. A significant role befalls to the Armenian goods themselves – carpets, natural dyes, jewelry, horses, etc.

As a result, the city became a crucial venue on the trade routes, and the active economic life contributed to the rapid development of crafts associated with the transit trade<sup>5</sup>. The progress of economic relations led to numerous cases of primary capital accumulation among ordinary people, and let me remind you, this took place in the medieval feudal

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<sup>1</sup> Author of a monograph and more than a dozen scientific articles and publications, formerly a scientist-analyst of the Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS) of the MoD, RA. Worked in the NKR Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Presidential Staff, in the Office of the RA Ambassador on Special Assignment.

<sup>2</sup> In Armenian sounds like “սոսաջնորդություն”.

<sup>3</sup> The Bagratids, Bagratuni (Armenian: Բագրատունիներ) – an Armenian princely family, one of the most significant princely dynasties of the Southern Caucasus. From 885 to 1045 – the royal dynasty of Armenia.

<sup>4</sup> From 961 to 1045, Ani was the capital of the Armenian Kingdom of the Bagratids.

<sup>5</sup> For more about the city, see, for example: [Virtual Ani], <http://www.virtualani.org/index.htm>.

Armenia. Accumulated capital, as usual, was invested in trade – fortunately, the road was right there – and, given the Armenians' trading talents, led to the formation or strengthening of such a phenomenon as the medieval Armenian “*proto-bourgeoisie*”. In a feudal state at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> and the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium, it could not naturally aspire for leadership – the role held by the nobility, but anyway it stood out for its financial capabilities. And then, it seems, came the turning point when land, as the main means of production and livelihood of its inhabitants, achieved its competitors – the crafts and trading capital. Figuratively speaking – “*the hammer*” and “*the purse*”.

The competitive advantages of the latter were obvious. Craft is a skill; it is always with the person, making him as free and mobile as possible, dependent on the market but not on a specific geographic location. Genuine craftsmanship could contribute to the primary accumulation of capital, thus becoming the corresponding “social elevator” for climbing up, closer to *the “mighty of this world”*. Even more mobile and independent in the Middle Ages was the “merchant capital”: it also did not depend on the land as a basic means of production, it needed just trade routes (“corridors”). The merchant, who paid duties and levies along the route of his caravan, was a subject of all the rulers along his route, he was needed and beneficial to all.

The land, however, remained with the peasants and the aristocracy – the union of “*the sword*” and “*the sickle*”. For the first ones, it was a source of sustenance, and for the last ones – not only a source of wealth but also the main attribute of feudal nobility. The loss of land was not just a deprivation of immovable property and resource base, as it could be for the landowners among the *nouveau-riche*, but also the loss of sacred roots and status. And despite all this, the land always has been a complex resource: it required heavy physical labor, depended on natural conditions, and was subject to cataclysms. And most importantly, – it had to be fought for, it had to be protected with weapons in hand.

War was the major business of the aristocracy, which, ideally, was supposed to live and raise its offspring in constant readiness for war, growing them as guardians of the traditions of martial affairs. Until a certain point, war was also the main “social elevator”<sup>6</sup> of the Middle Ages – the children of ordinary citizens paved their way “up” with valor and blood (their own and the enemy's). For this, the aristocrats also had to take care of their peasants, from whom the army and militia were recruited, who built fortresses and filled their storehouses with supplies. And all this required considerable expenses, especially given the political and geographical realities of the Medieval Armenia. It is clear that in peacetime, the trading and craft capital did not bear such responsibilities and similar expenses, while in times of trouble it could lose everything.

And then, it seems, came the moment when the less burdened circles, due to the general stability and their financial capabilities, began to form an alternative elite that aspired for the external attributes of the aristocracy, but not yet to the authority. With limited opportunities for capital application, the wealthy class of the Bagratid Armenian Kingdom, in pursuit of the worldly pomp, transformed and fortified the city of Ani, building many churches, making it

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<sup>6</sup> The Church was also such an elevator at all times, raising the sons of peasants up to bishops, archbishops, and Catholicoses. But the Church hierarchs had no right to start families, while the priests could not pass on their rank by inheritance.

the city of “*a 1000 and one churches*”. Perhaps this same class contributed to the spread of Middle Armenian language, initially the spoken language of the common people with plenty borrowings from neighboring languages; a language far from the refined style and melodiousness of *Grabar*<sup>7</sup>, which remained the language of the Church. Not particularly subjecting themselves and their offspring to the risks associated with martial affairs, the wealthy citizens of Ani had no problems reproducing their kind, leaving their heirs with more than they had received themselves. The concept of “*corporate social responsibility*” did not yet exist at that time, and therefore the excessive wealth coexisted quite peacefully with extreme poverty (for, as it is commonly thought, “*God gives to each according to his merits*”), something lamented by the medieval Armenian poet Frik<sup>8</sup>, whose pseudonym – “roasted immature grain” in Armenian – reflects the hardship of his own fate. Thus, peace as a necessary condition, not as a consequence, is the main condition for the development of crafts and trade, while land, under the same conditions, is a constant source of conflicts, and for some, a “*burdensome ballast*”.

Meanwhile, for the nomadic cattle-breeders, – who had fled from their more bloodthirsty brethren in the East and flooded the Armenian Highland with all their belongings and herds, – land, or rather pastures, remained the main and irreplaceable resource. They did not claim other niches of economic life: both then and until our times, their antagonism with the settled Armenians arose solely around the “*land issue*”.

The attitude of the *alternative elite* towards land in the Middle Ages could not but be projected onto the deep perception of their own statehood, called upon to defend this very land. The national *bourgeoisies*, due to the political and economic foundations of their well-being, were initially programmed for “*peace*,” sometimes at any cost, including, unfortunately, the cost of irreversible concessions, giving up land and national power. Worldwide, money teaches people to consider problems primarily in economic terms – as “*acceptable*” or “*unacceptable*” expenses, pushing aside the sacred undertone of processes. Apparently, such rational “*understanding*” was at the core of the act of one of the Catholicos of the Armenian Apostolic Church, Petros Getadarz, who handed over the keys of the city of Ani to the Byzantines. Human memory preserves his name as a synonym for betrayal, while, however, overlooking those who placed these keys in his hands.

Centuries will pass before the Armenian *bourgeoisie*, facing fierce competition in India and Southeast Asia as a whole, will come to understand the necessity of a national state as a guarantor of its rights and property. The realization that the presence of capital without the political means to preserve it is only provisional prompted the advanced minds of the Armenian *bourgeoisie* in Madras, India, to search for a model of a national state based on the familiar contemporary models. But that is there, far from the harsh realities of agrarian Armenia. While here, in our region, Armenian wealth, and therefore the new elite that found refuge in Iran, would seek the patronage of the Iranian and Russian courts. Meanwhile, the

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<sup>7</sup> Grabar (Armenian: Գրաբար, “written”) or classical Armenian language, or ancient Armenian language – the oldest form of the Armenian language preserved in written sources. It was formed already in the 2nd century BCE, during the period of the formation of Greater Armenia.

<sup>8</sup> Frik (Armenian: Ֆրիկ; around 1234–1315) – an Armenian poet. His real name is unknown. The first Armenian poet who wrote in the Middle Armenian language.

Armenian establishment of Western Armenia, settled mainly in Constantinople and other major cities of the Ottoman Empire, would demonstrate their loyalty to the High Porte, cherishing hopes of investing in trade and economic ties with Europe.

And only on the lands cultivated by Armenian farmers and protected by remnants of the Armenian nobility – in Artsakh, Syunik, Lori, Sasoun, and Zeytun – would there remain an understanding of their sacred significance and the necessity to defend them. There would be understanding, but no resources. Even after the annexation of Eastern Armenia to the Russian Empire and the establishment of the internal and external political stability there, Armenia, by and large, did not become the focal point of collective efforts of the Armenian *bourgeoisie*, which preferred to develop profitable sectors in Baku and Tbilisi, but not at home. Buying up huge estates in the same-name provinces for profitable businesses, the Armenian “upper class” remained apolitical and decentralized, unwilling and unable to implement the idea of restoring the Armenian Kingdom, even under the protectorate of the Russian Empire. And the plans for restoration of this kingdom used to be in place at the Russian Court. But everything went wrong, and Armenia remained almost the only region of the Russian Empire where Christian peasants remained dependent on Muslim landowners – descendants of those to whom the Persian shahs had granted these lands after the mass forced relocation of Armenians to Iran in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The specificity of social and economic relations in the territory of the Armenian Homeland determined the philosophy of the formation of the local, or rather, the localist establishment, fragmented by its villages and communities with its system of local relations, bonds, and interests. Figuratively speaking, the confederation of “*tanuters*” – or “*village elders*”, and after 1828 – the “*village aristocracy*”, who enjoyed certain influence but endowed with modest opportunities, could not institutionalize the establishment, and form a national agenda. They lacked power, money, and often the appropriate outlook. Therefore, before the birth of the Armenian political parties (and even after), the *niche* of the national elite was destined to be occupied by representatives of the *intelligentsia*, primarily those who belonged to “*the pen*”.

Far from calculating pragmatism and lacking the levers of socio-economic influence on broad strata of society, let alone the outside world, the people of art had the *written word* as a tool to influence the audience – emotional, hyperbolized, and capable of touching the soul. It was a completely different picture from an elite that would secretly nurture plans, but the one that would create images in minds and hearts. Their path was publicity; their goal was fame, and their standard – their own worldview. They contradicted each other and led in different directions like the Swan, the Pike, and the Crab<sup>9</sup>. Their ideal was freedom in its elevated understanding, their character – an idealist with a fiery gaze, their direction – unknown and exciting faraway. For these bearers of values and ideas, the *prudence of money* was unacceptable, especially since such people always lacked it. Their audience was their people, with whom they spoke in their own language, and their themes were Homeland, its problems, and struggles. For them, the example of Byron's self-sacrifice, who personally

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<sup>9</sup> The author refers to a famous fable by the Russian writer Ivan Krylov - "The Swan, the Pike, and the Crab". In this tale, a swan, a pike, and a crab try to pull a cart together but end up going in different directions due to their different natures. As a result, the cart doesn't move at all.

participated in the Greek uprising<sup>10</sup>, was also, by and large, something distant. Some of them (in the case of the Western Armenian *intelligentsia* – practically all of them) were killed by weapons, and very few of them – with weapons in their hands.

And if everything had begun with the process of elite formation being “detached” from the land and transferred from the feudal nobility to the cosmopolitan business elite, capable of generating capital but mentally and geographically distant from the Homeland and its problems, then by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century – the era of great tragedies and the restoration of the Armenian statehood, the national elite – those occupied with the nation's concerns, had no wealth, remaining only the “*masters of words*”. The basic “*verbalization*” of the Armenian establishment, its distance from the land and money, did not make it capable of creating a political agenda and solving its issues, including the security and survival. The allegorical situation from “Mkneri zhoghov” (“The Mice Conference”) – an immortal work by Atabek Khnkoyan<sup>11</sup> - is an example of a deep understanding of the gap between the *words* and the *deeds* of the elite that existed at the time of its writing. “*Hanging [alarm] bells on the cat's neck*”, in the author's words remained the matter of a few, but not of the system.

The Armenian Genocide and subsequent events were marked by an interesting exchange of national survival formulas between Armenians and Jews. If the Prime Minister of Egypt, Nubar Pasha, and his son Poghos Nubar together embodied the image of the Biblical Joseph – the closest confidant of the Pharaoh of Egypt, who used their opportunities to save their native people, then a Jew Franz Werfel<sup>12</sup>, used Armenian realities to describe the concept of the political future of the Jews. His novel about the defenders of Musa Dagh was a scenario for creating a Jewish state: motivated people under the leadership of national capital and religious leaders gathered on the Mount of Moses, located by a sea to survive in a hostile environment, hoping for help from a maritime power. The fighters survived, while those who refused to fight were killed by the enemies.

With the advent of the Bolsheviks, the class of the people who could be considered the Armenian elite lost even “*the pen*” in the homeland. After the dramatic stage of the restoration of the national statehood, where a small number of people of “*the sword*” were abundantly diluted, in general, by the same “*pen*”, the leadership now passed to the “*fiery revolutionaries*”, far from “*narrowly nationalistic*” understanding of the world and driven by a global agenda, against which the Armenian people, like any other, were nothing but a collective of classes, one of which was subject to total cleansing. Referring the values of the past to “*medieval obscurantism*” and not accepting any dissent, the Bolsheviks dispatched almost everyone who had any connection with “*bourgeois and capitalists*” and set out to create a new “*aristocracy*” based on the ideas of Marxism-Leninism.

As a result, by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – at the time of the revival of national statehood – the Armenian people, for objective or subjective reasons, did not create an

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<sup>10</sup> I. e. the Greek War of Independence – the war for independence by Greek revolutionaries against the Ottoman Empire in 1821-1829.

<sup>11</sup> Khnko-Aper (Armenian: Խնկո Ապեր), Atabek Khnkoyan (1870–1935), Armenian and Soviet poet and teacher, honored teacher and honored writer of the Armenian SSR. See: <https://litarchive.com/authors/25>

<sup>12</sup> See: [https://openlibrary.org/books/OL24207565M/The\\_forty\\_days\\_of\\_Musa\\_Dagh](https://openlibrary.org/books/OL24207565M/The_forty_days_of_Musa_Dagh); [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Forty\\_Days\\_of\\_Musa\\_Dagh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Forty_Days_of_Musa_Dagh)



integral political foundation for its statehood having received an entire pleiad of names in the fields of science, culture, and technology, and did not raise a special community of people ready to implement it.

There have always been individuals capable of leadership, and yet, in our era, there was a final transmutation of *“the pen”*: the national elite began to be formed not on the basis of masters of the *“written word”*, but only on the basis of the *“word,”* the symbol and means of conveying which, given the scientific and technological progress, became the provisional “megaphone/microphone”. At the same time, in the backstage segment of the socio-political life, along with the division of the socialist estate and the *primary accumulation of capital*, the formation of the financial and economic stratum of the Armenian society took place, which, for understandable reasons, would be mostly “pro-government” or, at least, loyal. This community would remain in the shadows and would not establish its own socio-political force of its own, although some attempts would be made.

As a result of the final *“verbalization”* of life in Armenia and the establishment of a new elite paradigm, there will be more doyens of *“the word”* than of action at the top. Unlike the elites of the past, whose *“pen”* used to be friends with *“thoughts”*, the figures of the new formation would not be burdened with excessive conventions: their *“word”* is by default quite viable without the *“deeds”*. As a result, the formation of the institution of the political authority – initially a conjunctural phenomenon – will increasingly resemble a constantly reset “counter” without institutional memory, traditions, and strategic perspective. Without sound and consolidating leadership, the society itself would become excessively “soft” and “flexible”, more susceptible to external influences from all kinds of “windows”, for example, from Overton.

This phenomenon clearly manifested itself against the backdrop of well-known internal political events in Armenia but let us admit – it is not something new. Despite all our talks about national uniqueness and identity, the Armenian socio-political thought over the past centuries has not been able to give birth to any effective nationally-oriented model of socio-political existence that was not initially conceived as a part of something larger, but foreign, and sometimes alien entity: whether it be political parties or their ideological and worldview concepts. We run away from our identity because we see in it not what makes us (like other people) unique, but what distinguishes us from others. And therefore, in our desire to recreate something *“advanced”* and different from our *“national prejudices”*, we often strive to be more Catholic than the Pope, probably secretly cherishing the hope that sooner or later they will recognize us as “one of their own” and give us a little encouragement.

Do our antagonists do the same?

It seems that we do not strive for “sovereign self-sufficiency”, claiming, at most, a pale adaptation of globalist ideas. The revolutionary trends of the time inspired *“Hnchak”* and *“Armenakan”* political parties. Even the *Federation of Revolutionary Dashnaktsutyun* is a local incarnation of the *Labor and Socialist International*. Ideologically, for Armenian communists in Baku, a representative of the Armenian bourgeoisie was a class enemy, while a foreign “proletarian”, who had been an active participant of the Armenian *pogroms*, was a brother. Nowadays, the Republican Party of Armenia, the “Prosperous Armenia” party and others have become members of various European political alliances. Libertarianism and

other liberal aspirations lie at the ideological core of the “Civil Contract” party and the “meteorite belt” of its socio-political satellites. Even the notorious Soros office here in Armenia was not something fully “ours”, created especially for our local realities, but merely a branch of something else.

Is it really the case that after millennia of history, our path is to become part of “something else”, where the final word is not ours, but someone else's—more important and significant? And is the creation of our own subsystem within someone else's larger system the ideal environment for our creative thought, a safe harbor for our existence? It does not matter that this path does not include the highest form of national self-organization—national statehood: after all, it requires extra costs and efforts to maintain external security, and as we have long abandoned “*the sword*,” so let someone else worry about that.

The last 30 years of our independence have clearly shown the utilitarian perception of state institutions in the Armenian environment. This is far from what president John F. Kennedy said in his inaugural address on January 20, 1961: “*Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country*”. Utilitarianism as a worldview contributed to the fact that the system of state institutions in the era of the emergence of independence was quickly duplicated by a system of extra- or even supra-state links, interests, and ties in our society. Instead of accepting the rules of the game within their own state, society adapted to a system of “*workarounds*”, “*kickbacks*”, “*cronyism*”, and so on. Demonstrating a passionate move in the face of existential threats (the 1988 earthquake, the communications blockade and the war, imposed Azerbaijan), Armenians ultimately became prey to the “*quick and agile*” personalities back at home. And this happened also because the dissonance between the pathos of words about justice, unity, values, the creation of national statehood, and everything that was happening in reality without excessive sentiment and fuss led to the alienation of the people from the authorities, the state and society.

The lonely institution of national “selfhood” essentially remained the Armenian Apostolic Church (AAC), which was once for objective reasons also organizationally part of something larger, but then after Chalcedon<sup>13</sup> became structurally independent due to its position. All subsequent attempts to “integrate” the AAC into the politicized churches of modernity turned out to be a tragedy for the nation, the state, and the Church itself. This was the case, for example, with the union of the AAC with the Vatican in the Kingdom of Cilicia, which ultimately led to the loss of Armenian statehood and an intra-Church schism.

But now the Church is not in favor; it has been reduced to the status of an attribute and separated (or rather distanced) from the state; it lives in a slightly different political and ideological reality, hardly influences the authorities, and moreover, the state itself intervened (or intervenes) in its affairs, being one of the main competitors in the rivalry for the hearts and minds of Armenians. Unlike the representatives of other “Churches” on the Armenian soil, the AAC is deliberately exposes itself to media and other attacks: firstly, it is fashionable, and secondly, all this finds resonance not least because of those of its servants,

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<sup>13</sup> The Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon called in the fall of 451 CE by the Roman Emperor Marcian (r. 450-457) in the suburb of Constantinople to settle debates regarding the nature (*hypostases*, “reality”) of Jesus Christ. The Armenians did not participate in the disputes as they were straggling for their faith against the Persia’s Sassanid ruler’s attempts to impose Zoroastrianism as the official religion in Armenia.

who have secularized themselves “for the sake of worldly glory and silver”. The AAC Patriarchates abroad, for objective reasons, are under the influence of the realities of the host countries. The Armenian Catholic and Protestant Churches, for understandable reasons, structurally belong to something larger, also lying outside the “Armenian world”.

History does not change individuals, but people. The ratio of “the sword”, “the land”, “the hammer”, and “the purse” cannot but be projected onto the lifestyle of generations. And today, speaking about the universal ideological postulates prevailing in the Armenian environment, one can highlight “to survive (endure)” and “to adapt”. If the adaptation to realities implies the interaction of the individual with the external collective environment, finding a *niche*, self-realization, and sometimes even collaboration, then the mode of “survival” is unfortunately geared towards individualism and is closer to Charles Darwin than to Jesus Christ. Hence our subconscious tendency towards liberalism, because our liberalism is the freedom of the jaguar dragging the carcass of an antelope up a tree, unreachable for others, and not the (collective) dinner of a pride of lions. And on our collective level everything is quite simple: the reverence for the gloss of the “civilized world” is due to the refusal to acknowledge not always pleasing realities of it for us; the susceptibility to external manipulations stems from our susceptibility to flattery; surrogate ideological views and “truths” drawn from the outside world are good because we can always season them with “sauce” from the quotes of our national figures; our feigned conservatism and collective traditionalism are sometimes just an attempt to disguise an inflated self-esteem and more often – hedonism and the refusal to work on ourselves.

One example suffices to show where we have ended up by running away from ourselves. In its essentially globalist wanderings, the Armenian political thought has not crystallized a generally acceptable definition of what the Armenian Homeland is. Is it what is within the current map? Is it with or without Artsakh? How shall we think of Nakhichevan, how to deal with Western Armenia? The concept of Homeland, artificially opposed to statehood, after losing its sacred foundations, becomes purely a physical space with “inconvenient” borders. Moreover, if in a “swordless” society the main narrative is that the peace (life) is paramount, then why should one die for anything?

The reformatting of society’s worldview towards liberal “*verbalism*,” as part of the “post-revolutionary” transformation of the “Armenian world,” affects the formation of new elite, and, in particular, that part of it which most often intersects with life – the cadres. The Soviet concept of continuous training of cadres and nurturing a community of professional managers has long been replaced by a local model, in which the primary “forge of cadres” has become a provisional “street” – “*revolutionaries*”, “*activists*”, etc. Neither the army, nor the economy, nor the business, which we did not yet have, nor the scientific and pedagogical environment, nor even the Academy of Sciences. The latter, for the most part, remained unclaimed by the “real politics” as theorists, observing the socio-political processes from the sidelines and evaluating what was happening through the conceptual apparatus of physics and mathematics, and at best – cybernetics, but not the social sciences and related fields.

So it happened that in the market economy the Armenian society quickly abandoned the standards of “*success*” inspired by the Soviet ideology, converting any achievement of a professional or just a person into its financial “equivalent” – wealth. The society abandoned



such concepts as “*the best teacher, physicist, chemist, mathematician, poet, writer, historian, tractor driver, welder, doctor, driver, pianist, artist*”, etc. They were replaced by people with money. That was in the 90s. Today, in the era of flourishing information technologies, when “*everything is decided by (conditional) people*” and the market, the common criterion of success has become the “*Like*” icons on the social platforms and the money in life. Many of the now unmarketable specialties were forced to leave their homeland, in search of earnings, while the rest adapted to the new realities, and all of this affected the social environment. Individual “inclusions” of some former Soviet era professionals in the state system, even at the highest level, did not change the picture: they did their work but not the weather, and yet they had to deal with the “*men from the street*”.

The conditional “*street*”, as an environment for the formation of a political caste, has its own characteristics: its main trump card and ticket to the “social elevator” is charisma. Charisma can be positive or even slightly negative, but in any case, it is essentially “verbal”: a figure who is not endowed with “*the word*” cannot evoke sympathy, generate processes, consolidate masses, and lead them. History also shows that the conditional “*word*” is closely dealing with the timbre, facial expressions, and gestures, and in the epoch when doctors become performers, and clowns easily become politicians, it is difficult to expect even from the “old-school” politicians that they would not pull off a stunt.

In the new world, where “*every opinion matters*”, the word is the main tool. And this word is not the argument of a polemicist, nor the skill of an ancient Roman or Greek orator. The rhetoric of the modern figures is not aimed at a glorious victory over an opponent in a discussion – the opponent is simply booed without even being listened to, because these people already “*know everything*” and “*can do everything*”, so they do not need advice from those who are less fortunate, and even more so – from those they pay for the “*smart advice*”. “Smart people” with an academic mindset and critical thinking are pushed to the sidelines of socio-political life by the “*talkers*” – the “*talking heads*” who claim the role of sages and experts. Their abilities are no longer subject to criticism, so being not burdened with responsibility for their thoughts and forecasts, the “talk shop” forms the political and informational background of the Armenian realities, of course, rarely stepping beyond the political orders or grant obligations. After all, the predestination of its members is to broadcast “truths”, identify problems, and appoint the guilty, as they did not sign up to solve problems.

Where the best teachers or poets, whose talent is difficult to convert into money today, are no longer in demand, the elite “flourishes” in power, in its corridors, backrooms, and/or boudoirs. Consequently, their “shelf life” continues to be limited by the term of office. In the Armenian reality, it is difficult to find a figure whose rating does not depend on whether this person is in power or not. A politician without state power is like a souvenir pistol on the wall: a preserved form without a practical content. For a reverse example, one can recall the phenomenon of H. Kissinger – by the way, a more than a controversial person and figure in all respects.

The problem of the formation of an elite in power itself has another peculiarity, which, by the way, ensures the dynamics of social elevation – the impossibility of passing charisma

on as an inheritance<sup>14</sup>. A person can become a leader and lead others, but he cannot “reserve” a similar attitude for someone who has not earned it himself. And it takes place in the nowadays world, where you cannot even force your offspring to follow your path. Therefore, charisma is essentially “worldly glory”, and each departure of another significant figure is just like a fall of a mighty oak in the forest: the change of the old tree opens a place for new and thin ones, because others do not grow in the shade of the giants.

Throughout the history of Armenia, there has never been a situation when there were no worthy figures among us, be it “*the sword*”, “*the sickle*”, “*the hammer*” or “*the purse*.” But the national elite is not a simple compilation of even a small number of individuals born at the same time in the same place by the will of fate. The elite is a system, and if not the reproduction of leaders, as in the medieval nobility, then, at least, their upbringing. Unlike the “political age” of an Armenian politician, it thinks in terms of strategic perspectives, its activities are not built with an eye on party identity and the changing moods of the public, not based on the games and flirtations with the “valuable” persons of the courtyard format and above. Can we now, when the Homeland and the Armenian people are going through another wave of regional and global military-political turbulences, after great losses and cruel disappointments, put forward an ideological elite, whose members are ready to start with themselves, ready to live as they teach others, to combine their words and deeds and to do all this not for the public hype, but out of the personal conviction. An elite capable of “taking up their cross” and going to serve.

Are we, as a nation, capable of “*turning back the wheel of the history*” or will we consciously move toward our defeat, trying only to change our attitude toward it?

There is no other way.

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<sup>14</sup> It is worth to recall, for example, the youth movement “Bazeh” (Բազեհ – hawk), actively promoted by the then authorities, but quietly faded into political oblivion with the change of leadership in the country.