



Retrospective experience of revolutionary activity to seize power in Armenia

In Armenia, over the last 15 years, there has been a systematic “destabilising” of the country by external interested parties, aimed at achieving a specific goal - recoding the public consciousness and seizing power through the “color revolution”. Therefore, the revolution of 2018 was the logical outcome of this work.

Shares of the Armenian opposition in 2003-2007, preparation and implementation of the “color revolution” 2008

In 2003 the Armenian opposition – the Justice bloc and the National Unity Party decided to boycott the parliamentary sessions. The rationale for such a decision was “election fraud,” which, in their opinion, did not allow parliament to be considered a body reflecting the will of the people. Thus, they carried out the first stage - informational pumping of society with the aim of delegitimizing power. The boycott lasted until 2005.

These actions were continued in 2004, when the same “Justice” and “National Unity”, supported by the Communist Party of Armenia, announced the start of a campaign of civil disobedience in order to remove the President Robert Kocharyan from his post.

During the first stage (mid-March 2004), a statement was issued about the complete falsification of the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2003. Based on the opinion of international observers from the PACE and the Council of Europe, who spoke about numerous violations of the electoral process, the thesis was put forward about the president’s illegitimacy. The goal was announced the resignation of President Kocharyan, as well as new presidential and parliamentary elections, or a referendum on confidence in the president.

At the second stage, unauthorized meetings were held demanding the resignation of the head of state (April 9-12, 2004), in which up to 15 thousand people took part. The head of the opposition bloc “Justice” Stepan Demirchyan noted that he is ready to conduct a dialogue with the authorities only if they hold a referendum on trusting the president.

An attempt to strengthen the protests (third stage) occurred on April 12, 2004: opposition supporters moved to the presidential residence, but were stopped by the police. The action was broadcast live by all television stations of the country. At the same time, about 2 thousand people pitched a tent city on the square in front of the parliament. But at night, the protest was dispersed by the police using water cannons, batons and other special means. Simultaneously with the dispersal of the rally on Baghramyan Avenue, the police broke into the

Yerevan offices of “Respublic”, “National Unity” and the People’s Party: everyone was arrested there, two offices were closed for several days.

The authorities initially took measures to neutralize the opposition, declaring rallies unauthorized, and the Armenian Prosecutor General’s Office opened a criminal case against the “illegal actions of the opposition” at rallies.

The reinforced police and internal troops patrolled key sections of Yerevan, which were completely blocked from all directions. Militiamen stopped columns of motor transport. In addition, arrests of oppositionists, in particular, a member of the political council of the opposition party “Republic” Aramazd Zakaryan and the editor of the party’s Internet newspaper Suren Surenians, were carried out. 8 citizens were charged with “a public call for a violent change of constitutional order and public insults to the authorities”, and another 250 were charged for administrative offenses. Such measures allowed to stop the protest, not allowing it to grow across the country, after which it disappeared.

In 2005, the opposition, which included an alliance of 17 parties (Justice, National Unity, Heritage, People’s Party, Armenian National Movement, and others) attempted to speak again. The reason was the changes to the Constitution of the country, initiated by the authorities. Especially they weren’t satisfied with the rule of immunity to the president. The amendments were submitted to a nationwide referendum, which opponents of the government urged to ignore, believing that its failure would mean the end of power.

Stage I (information wave) included the forum “In the name of democracy”, organized by the “Justice” bloc, held under the slogan “The departure of an illegitimate regime is the main condition for the establishment of democracy”. The advantage of the opposition was the fact that on its side was the Venice Commission, which criticized the draft proposed by the authorities. As a result, the ruling coalition has adjusted the draft with the wishes of international partners, but the opposition put forward the thesis of “criminal power, not having the right to change the Constitution.” In addition, reputable expert centers were connected - the Vanadzor office of the Helsinki Civil Assembly stated that the discussion of the draft amendments to the Constitution was held with human rights violations and didn’t reflect public opinion.

At stage 2, a series of actions was organized, in which citizens urged to boycott the referendum: the Yerevan-Shirak rally and rallies in the cities of Artik and Maralik. However, they didn’t have mass success.

November 27, 2005 referendum was held. According to the CEC, the turnout was 65.3%, of which more than 90% were in favor of the new Constitution. A peculiar statement was made by the PACE announcing, on the one hand, a referendum with the relevant international standards, but the number of 1.5 million participants questioned. Oppositionists tried to play on this by discrediting the results of the expression of will by lowering the number of its participants. According to their own turnout data released by them, no more than 15% of voters allegedly voted.

Then they moved to the third stage - a mass protest. They were held in the center of Yerevan during the week (November 25 - December 2, 2005). The Central Election Commission issued an ultimatum demanding to recognize the results of the referendum as invalid within 72 hours. But few citizens took part in the actions - just over 1000. The opposition failed to ensure a mass protest.

In 2006, new opposition movements began to emerge that tried to continue to destabilize the country, mainly in the information field. Thus, it was announced the creation of a social and political initiative "Alternative." This union, which included a group of former members of the Armenian National Movement Party, proclaimed as a priority the early removal of the regime in Armenia. On November 15, 2006, Arkady Karapetyan, a member of the board of the organization "Combat Brotherhood", called on the people to civil disobedience. On November 17, the formal leader of this association, Alexander Arzumanyan, gave a press conference where he announced the creation of the "Civil Disobedience Movement". Already on November 21, the movement organized a picket in front of the presidential residence with the slogan: "Kocharyan, leave," but there was no further development.

The statements of American diplomats also contributed to destabilization. On April 5, 2007, the US State Department once again threatened to suspend the "Millennium Challenge" funding program in Armenia if the parliamentary elections were held with violations. At the same time it was again recalled that a deviation in the sphere of democratic governance was recorded in Armenia. At the same time, the parliamentary elections, which the Republican Party won by a large margin and the opposition standing behind the protests of previous years suffered a catastrophic defeat, went very calmly. Some serious actions after the elections weren't collected.

The outwardly calm 2007 actually marked the run-up to the attempt of the "color revolution" that was being prepared for the 2008 presidential election. During this period, the interventionists began to make an active bid to work with

the former elites of Armenia. The first president of Armenia, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, became their agent, who nominated for the upcoming presidential elections. He spoke out with harsh criticism of the authorities on the day of independence of Armenia (September 21, 2007), stating that relations within the authorities are governed by the laws of the criminal world, and not by constitutional norms. Thus, the politician made it clear that his first priority was to dismantle the regime.

His party “Armenian National Movement” (ANM) created a large coalition of liberal-democratic parties, the largest of which were: “Republic” (leader - Aram Sargsyan, former Prime Minister of Armenia), “Democratic Motherland” (Petros Makeyan, Smbat Ayyvazyan), “New Times” (Aram Karapetyan), “Homeland and Honor” (Garnik Margarian). This party was assigned the role of “shock force” of the revolution.

The main emphasis in the agitation of Ter-Petrosyan was made on isolating state structures from the ruling elite and its personnel destruction. The then-incumbent President Robert Kocharyan and Prime Minister Serzh Sargsyan applying for the presidency of Armenia were identified as opponents of the constitutional order. All other citizens (including businessmen and state officials) were recognized by them as equal supporters of change. And, speaking of the formation of the new government, Ter-Petrosyan noted that a number of representatives of state structures operating under the current authorities would keep their posts and promised not to dissolve the parliament. Thus, he tried to attract the elite to his side and split the imperious camp as much as possible.

At a rally on February 16, he stated that “he is not a new person in politics and about 60% of government employees, including security forces, know him and are not afraid of him. ... This is my strength and this is my difference from other candidates. Neither the army nor the security forces, as in 1998 and 2003, won’t execute illegal orders and won’t go against the people.

Analyzing the attempt of the “color revolution”, which was carried out according to the manuals of Gene Sharp, it should be emphasized that the reason for it was the results of the presidential elections, in which the victory of Prime Minister Serzh Sargsyan was announced. The opposition declared election fraud. The failed coup had the following steps:

Stage 1 - informational (the second half of 2007 – the beginning of 2008): theses on “the criminality of power, fanned by the opposition in the person of the ANM and candidate Levon Ter-Petrosyan. The catalyst is the presidential election. Ter-Petrosyan immediately stated that he scored 68% of the votes and

won in the first round, and called the final CEC protocols, which had registered the victory of Sargsyan, falsified.

Stage 2 – the protest against the election results (February 20 - 25, 2008). Large-scale meetings "for fair elections" were held in the center of Yerevan. Ter-Petrosyan appealed to students to start a student strike (about 100 people responded), and also announced the formation of a "new society that wouldn't allow the victory of the reactionary forces."

Stage 3 - the growth of the protest (February 25 - 29). The number of protesters has grown. On February 27 they marched through the streets of Abovyan and Mashtots. Passing by the building of the General Prosecutor's Office, participants of the march shouted to riot policemen standing in a cordon: "Guys, be patient, very little is left before our victory, and you will no longer be toiled standing here and in other places." On the Freedom Square in the center of Yerevan there was a tent camp with round-the-clock hot meals, where there were up to 8-10 thousand people. The protest methods used were: refusal of loyalty to the authorities, protest rallies, marches, student strikes, public disobedience, endless speeches, watches, sit-in.

In parallel, on February 26, an alternative rally was held in support of supporters of Kocharyan and Sargsyan in Yerevan.

Stage 4 - "the loosening of the power vertical". A number of officials openly went over to the side of the opposition. Deputy Prosecutor General of Armenia Gagik Jhangiryan condemned the elections, who called on the people to defend their votes. Six high-ranking officials of the Armenian Foreign Ministry declared their support for the opposition candidate. All of them were subsequently fired.

The government as a whole has managed to maintain the monolith of its ranks, and the President Kocharyan showed determination. He made a statement about the attempt to seize power by the opposition, and the power apparatus was completely controlled by the government, which allowed later to successfully carry out a "elimination" of the protest.

The elimination of the tent camp took place on March 1, 2008: protesters switched to organizing mass riots, fought law enforcement officers, tried to erect barricades. Kocharyan introduced a state of emergency for 20 days, motivating his decision: a) pogroms and robberies, b) arson, c) serious mutilations inflicted on the police. The clashes continued until March 2, but opposition resistance was crushed, as a result of which Ter-Petrosyan had to call on supporters to disperse.

The result of the confrontation - 131 people were injured, 10 dead (8 protesters, 2 policemen). Subsequently, the protests ceased.

As for the reaction of Western diplomacy and international pressure, its structures were consolidated, supporting the opposition. It is impossible, however, to say that it was categorical. In most cases, the reaction was reduced to appeals to the current authorities to stop arrests, release those arrested and cancel the state of emergency. Similar statements were made by the Foreign Ministry of France, Canada, the Czech Republic, Norway. From calls to certain actions have passed only the United States. Thus, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice announced the suspension of some assistance programs to Armenia. International organizations - the UN, PACE, the EU, the Council of Europe and the OSCE - were expected to oppose the introduction of the state of emergency and recommended to release those arrested. The European High Commissioner for Human Rights Thomas Hammerberg, visiting Armenia, made a statement on the need to stop arrests. However, the statements had no serious influence on the development of events.

Thus, the protests of the mid-2000s became a threshold, an accumulation of forces for the 2008 “color revolution”. There was an accumulation of protest potential through a systematic swinging of the situation in a variety of ways, however, the protests did not go beyond the “peaceful” phase (the second or the third stages), since the country's leadership carried out active and successful opposition to them without letting the “revolution” flare up. And 2008 was an unsuccessful attempt to carry out a coup. She failed because the current government was not split, showed determination to fight - the measures taken by the current President of Armenia Robert Kocharyan localized the unrest, there was no support for the protesting security forces, only individual representatives of the state apparatus were on their side. Although they used a very weighty figure - ex-president Ter-Petrosyan. The society as a whole calmly reacted to the dispersal of the protesters, the introduction of the state of emergency and the arrests of individual "revolutionaries". It's also worth emphasizing that for the success of the coup in Armenia at that time there was a shortage of well-trained agents of influence.

The newest protests of 2011 - 2016: “Electromaidan” and the “hotter” summer of 2016 as the dress rehearsal of 2018

After an unsuccessful attempt, the West continued its attempts to destabilize the country, simultaneously increasing the number of its agents. Protest campaigns were periodically organized to demonstrate the presence of

“lively” activity of opposition forces, remind them in the media, seize the street and keep activists in tune.

February-April 2011, two pro-Western Armenian parties National Congress Levon Ter-Petrosyan and Heritage launched a new campaign against President Sargsyan. The reason for it was the decision of the Mayor of Yerevan Karapetyan to ban street trade. All this coincided with the "Arab Spring" and a wave of coup d'etat, swept across the Middle East. Initially, the events developed in line with the social protest of merchants who complained about the lack of earnings, but the opposition transferred him to the category of anti-government.

During the information phase (January – February 2011), dissatisfaction with the local administration spun up.

At the second stage (February-March 2011) a number of meetings took place, where they put forward demands for the resignation of the president and re-election. Ter-Petrosyan sounded appeals to fight the dictatorial regime to “improve the plight of the people”, referring to the experience of Egypt and Tunisia. According to various estimates, from 10 to 15 thousand people took part in them. On March 1, 2011, economic requirements were added to the political requirements: lifting the ban on street trading, introducing higher minimum wages and unemployment benefits. On March 15, Armenian Foreign Minister and former Foreign Minister Raffi Hovhannisian, leader of Heritage, declared a hunger strike on Freedom Square, which lasted 2 weeks.

During this period, the social networks Facebook and Twitter, which were used to coordinate protest actions, showed their active role for the first time. In addition, a website called Revoforum (“Revolutionary Forum”) was created - a platform for discussing the policy of Armenia with a clear opposition slant.

At the third stage (April-May 2011), from April 2, a sit-in strike was held as a “logical continuation” of the Hovhannisian protest rally. The demonstrators sat silently for five hours before leaving the square. Despite the official ban on public speaking by the Yerevan City Council, the police did not hinder the opposition. On April 8, Ter-Petrosyan voiced three requirements for the authorities: to launch an “objective investigation of violence against demonstrators on March 1, 2008”, to provide official approval for rallies in Yerevan, and also to ensure the release of political prisoners. He threatened to “drastically change the methods of resistance,” if they were dissatisfied.

As a result, 2 days before the expiration of the ultimatum, the authorities as a whole met the opposition’s demands: President Sargsyan promised to

investigate the violence against opposition supporters on March 1, 2008, the Yerevan municipality opened the city center for rallies. In addition, the National Assembly of Armenia adopted a large-scale amnesty plan for hundreds of prisoners, including six opposition activists detained since 2008. The shares declined, but in this way, for the first time, the positions of the authorities were seriously undermined, and the opposition felt its strength, realizing that power could be crushed using the street.

In 2012, the Armenian National Congress held several actions against the results of the 2012 parliamentary elections, where the pro-presidential Republican Party won a decisive victory (over 70% of the vote). The opposition claimed that the election was rigged. The meetings did not end with anything significant, and the Constitutional Court rejected their application for a recount.

A whole series of opposition speeches on various occasions took place in 2013: the election of the president, the rise in prices for travel and the entry of Armenia into the Customs Union.

Initially, the scenario was similar to 2008. During the 2nd round of the presidential elections in Armenia, the incumbent leader Serzh Sargsyan won by more than 20% of the vote. His opponent is the leader of the pro-Western Heritage Party, ex-foreign minister Raffi Hovhannisian refused to admit defeat, announcing his victory, although international observers gave a general positive assessment of the electoral process. The driving forces were the Heritage Party, the Armenian National Congress and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation.

The first stage – the information swing (January-February 2013) – the call of opposition candidate Hovhannisian to fight with the authorities.

The second stage – the protests in the center of Yerevan (February-early March 2013) Hovhannisian and opposition deputy Nikol Pashinyan organized a series of rallies against the “unfair elections” in the center of Yerevan. On February 25, 2013, several hundred students went on strike against “election fraud”.

On March 10, 2013, turning to supporters on Freedom Square, Hovhannisian announced his decision to go on a hunger strike, and after 4 days the Constitutional Court confirmed the victory of the current leader of the country. The opposition’s goal was to organize the re-election of the president or parliament by the end of the year.

The third stage (April - May 2013) is an attempt to expand the protests. From April 1, 2013, Hovhannisian visited the regions in order to increase the

number of his supporters and even promised to hold an alternative inauguration in the center of the capital of the republic. A week later, a clash occurred with the police, who blocked the protesters' attempts to go in the direction of the presidential palace. It wasn't possible to prevent Sargsyan from taking office. The loser candidate promised to continue the struggle, but subsequently the opposition's activity began to decline, and further meetings did not receive mass support. She couldn't go to the radicalization of the protest, as well as offer a constructive program.

In May - July of the same year, the reason for the protest was the murder of an ordinary soldier in one of the units of the Armenian army. A series of actions against the government in the capital and regions of Armenia was held by the movement "Constituent Parliament". An interesting feature of the movement was that it consisted of war veterans in Nagorno-Karabakh, who are sharply opposed to Russia.

In July 2013, a surge of protest activity caused the decision of the Yerevan City Hall to raise prices for city taxis by 50%, for trolleybuses - 2 times. The performances of the disgruntled lasted almost a week. July 19, hundreds of people called on people not to pay new rates. Many famous actors, singers, editors of newspapers, as well as ordinary citizens offered free trips on their cars to other citizens heading in the same direction. The wave of discontent managed to be brought down only after Yerevan Mayor Taron Margaryan canceled the decision to raise tariffs.

On November 5, 2013, an unauthorized "March of a million masks" against the government's economic policy took place in Yerevan. In total, the action was attended by several hundred activists in masks of the famous Guy Fawkes (one of the symbols of the Anonymous movement). The organizer of the action, the head of the nationalist party "Tsegakorn" Shant Harutyunyan received six years in prison, and his 15-year-old son - four years probation. Another 13 people received punishments ranging from a fine to seven years in prison.

And in September - December of the same year, there were demonstrations against the entry of Armenia into the Customs Union. The most mass rally, which was not officially organized by any of the parties, took place on September 21, 2013 (only the aforementioned Heritage party publicly opposed this) during the 22nd anniversary of the independence of Armenia. Some demonstrators clashed with the police, which blocked Baghramyan Avenue near the Presidential Palace. The former Soviet dissident Paruyr Hayrikyan, who declared the Russian Federation "imperialist" and "our enemy", criticized the plan to join the Customs Union of the

Republic. In December, about 100 people were arrested during a rally against the arrival of Russian President Vladimir Putin. However, these protests didn't seriously affect the situation.

Mass discontent of citizens and protests in 2014 was caused by pension reform, under which a funded system was introduced, where 5-10% of salary should be deducted. Hundreds of people took to the streets, who united in a movement called "Dem em" (I'm against). Particularly active were representatives of the thin middle-class stratum, who received high salaries and refused to share large amounts of funds by Armenian standards. The situation was resolved after the Constitutional Court suspended the reform, and then the parliament accepted a compromise: first, it will extend to civil servants. For employees of the private sector within 3 years, deductions will be made on a voluntary basis. After that, a mandatory component will apply to them. Thus, the government was forced to partly retreat due to protests, delaying the full introduction of reform.

In addition, they tried again to exaggerate the topic of Armenia's accession to the Eurasian Union: on October 10, 2014, on the day of the signing of the agreement on joining the EAEU (Eurasian Economic Union), an antigovernment demonstration organized by the Heritage Party and the Armenian National Congress was held in Yerevan demanding the resignation of President Serzh Sargsyan.

In January 2015, rallies were held in Gyumri and Yerevan in connection with the massacre of the Armenian Avetisyan family by a Russian soldier Valery Permyakov (including a two-year-old child and a six-month-old baby).

This high-profile crime was the reason for the real anti-Russian hysteria, inflated by the American radio station Svoboda and a number of human rights defenders, among whom USAID employee David Shahnazaryan is particularly active. " They claimed that Moscow was trying to hide the criminal, although it was the FSS (Federal Security Service) border guards who detained him while trying to flee to Turkey. The aforementioned thesis became a leitmotif of the information campaign, promoted by opposition forces.

The second stage was a protest near the walls of the Russian military base in Gyumri and at the building of the Russian Consulate General. Among the protesters, a significant role was played by the members of the "Constituent Parliament" organization, which, after 1.5 years, would raise an open armed insurrection. There were also calls to remove the Russian military base from Gyumri and recall the Russian ambassador to Armenia. There were separate

clashes by the police, twenty people were injured, including five policemen, but there was no large-scale force confrontation. The intensity of the situation came down after a compromise was found: Permyakova was tried by an Armenian court, but on the territory of the 102nd Russian military base.

The next action was “Electromaidan”, held in June-September 2015. He was probing the ground for social mobilization in response to the “unpopular” decision of the authorities to increase electricity prices by 16%. The organizers were the pro-American parties “Armenian National Congress” and “Heritage”, as well as activists of the nationalist party “Dashnaktsutyun”. In addition, the United States and the human rights organizations under its control, such as the Caucasian Center for Peacekeeping Initiatives, the branches of the Helsinki Civic Assembly and the Soros Foundation Open Society, were specifically supported by the protesters for lowering electricity tariffs. “Elektromaidan” included the following steps:

Stage 1 - “Informational” On June 9, 2015, Armenian Prime Minister Hovik Abrahamyan stated that electricity in Armenia will go up by 6.93 drams (16%). This conclusion was reached by the Public Services Regulatory Commission (PSRC) of Armenia. On June 12, hearings on this issue were held in the National Assembly of Armenia. It was proposed to increase the daily rate by 40%, night - by 53.6%. The opposition criticized the decision as anti-popular, calling on people to take to the streets demanding its cancellation.

Stage 2 - the start of the protests. The PSRC meeting on the issue of raising electricity tariffs was scheduled on June 17. On the same day, the student union of the ARFD “Nikol Aghbalian” held a protest action in front of the PSRC. Protesters called on the PSRC to stop the meeting and freeze electricity tariffs. Also attempted to partially block the roadway.

Stage 3 - the growth of protest. By June 19, protests covered, besides Yerevan, the cities of Gyumri and Vanadzor. Several thousand people took part in the Gyumri action.

Stage 4 - the breaking of the tent camp in Yerevan. The number of protesters by the middle of June 2015 in Yerevan numbered about 6,000 people, tents were set up. To the slogans against the increase in electricity tariffs and corruption were added demands to nationalize the energy sector of Armenia.

On the morning of June 23, the police dispersed the protesters in the center of Yerevan, using water cannons against them. 237 participants of the Yerevan rally were detained, among them the journalists of “Gala”, “Radio Liberty”, news.am

and other media. A criminal case was initiated against the detainees on the grounds of an article of hooliganism.

Stage 5 - an attempt to radicalize the protest. Since June 23, the shares resumed. About 10,000 people gathered in Freedom Square in Yerevan. The protesters were outraged by the police brutality and demanded the release of activists detained in the morning of the same day, the government responded with the release of more than two hundred people.

The authorities responded to this challenge by canceling the earlier decision on price increases (the president made a statement on June 27). Thus, the opposition broke the ground from under their feet and the protest was split. Most of the participants left the streets.

On July 4, citizens, who continued to block Baghramian Avenue in the center of Yerevan, issued an ultimatum, threatening barricades of garbage cans in the direction of the residence of the Armenian President. The action was called “Step Forward”, but in fact it was the end of the “electricmaidan”. Given the small number of participants (several hundred), the police easily cleared the area from the protesters. Left without leaders, the movement died.

At the same time, despite the tactical success (the elimination of protest activity), in the strategic sense it was a defeat of the authorities, since it was forced to cancel the nationwide decision due to street pressure — a corresponding precedent was created.

A more significant attempt to loosen Armenia took place in the summer of 2016, when a group of armed men “Sasna Tsrer” (“Sasun brave men”) consisting of 31 people seized a regiment of the Police Patrol and Checkpoint Service (PPCS) in Yerevan, holding the police and the ambulance team as hostages within 2 weeks. The group consisted of veterans of the Karabakh war and declared an “uprising” demanding to release the representative of the opposition civil initiative “Constituent Parliament” Zhirayr Sefilyan, as well as the resignation of the country's leadership.

During the first stage - the information promotion, mass propaganda of terrorist activities in the media as a kind of “feat” took place. One of the leaders Varuzhan Avetisyan stated that Armenia should not become a Russian province and that they are doing all this in the name of the “national liberation struggle against Russian colonialism”. Journalists described what “exploits” were committed by “Sasnazrerovtsy” during the Karabakh war. They were called somehow: “militants”, “guys”, but not terrorists. At the same time, such important

facts as holding doctors as hostages, as well as the death of a police colonel and two other law enforcement officers were left without the attention of journalists, political and public figures.

During the second stage rallies were gathered, which were dispersed by the police. According to the data of the US Embassy in Yerevan, about 3 thousand people for 7-10 days expressed support to the group, trying to warn with their actions the possible assault of the building of the Police Patrol and Checkpoint Service regiment by the police. The veterans of Karabakh participated in them, along with liberals cooperating with the pro-American party Armenian National Congress. The Heritage Party, sponsored by the West, expressed full solidarity with the terrorists, calling the members of the group antiterrorists and urged citizens to assist them.

After the terrorists surrendered to the opposition and the media everything possible, in order to present the process itself as political, and the members of Sasna Tsrer - political prisoners. A college of attorneys was formed to provide free assistance to defendants, and the Soros Foundation allocated funds to help them. In informational and strategic terms, the situation of 2016 for the ruling elite also cannot be called successful, because social forces have demonstrated their willingness to go against her even for real terrorists, but she could not oppose anything to them.

The attack on the building of the PPCS and opposition rallies in support of the invaders can with complete confidence be called the desire of certain forces to organize the Armenian Maidan with the subsequent forceful overthrow of the government. Firstly, in contrast to the slogans of the protesters in Yerevan a year ago who are against rising electricity tariffs, this time, the opposition demanded the resignation of the President of the country, and therefore the change of power. Secondly, many opposition groups turned out to be ready for unconstitutional actions: one of them attacked the security forces in arms, the other supported the armed criminals. Further, the “shock” group of current speeches against the authorities was no longer composed of the “creative” part of the youth and the poor, as it was before, but by the nationalists and outspoken puppets of the West. There was a driving force for the coup - an alliance of militant nationalists with paid liberals (modeled on Ukraine in 2014).

In general, street protests, which took place in 2011-2016, became a threshold, preparing the ground for the “colored revolution” of 2018. They were necessary for probing the soil in terms of the possibility of social mobilization, seizing the street by the opposition and demonstrating its activity. The reasons for

the protests were used a variety of, and the number of participants is constantly increasing from year to year. The most serious situations occurred in 2015 and 2016, when the course was taken to organize processes similar to Maidan 2014 in Ukraine. All this fits into the strategy of the West to increase the rate of destabilization of the country, in which the government is gradually eroding through street actions, until it finally cracks.

If we assess the situation in Armenia in the spring of 2018, then the following prerequisites existed for the coup:

1) the lack of economic progress in the country and any attempt to modernize. Owing to the “liberal-conservative” path of development, social problems in the country have become acute: in recent years, the proportion of the population below the poverty line has exceeded 30%, and in some regions there has been a shortage of personnel, including teachers and doctors, due to the massive departure abroad. This has led to a significant increase in opponents of the government, especially those who are ready to act radically;

2) the position of the Armenian elites who have begun to play with the West, naively counting on the effectiveness of the “multi-vector” policy (a direct analogy with the “until Maidan” Ukrainian elite suggests itself);

3) pro-Western NCOs inflaming hatred towards Russia on various occasions. In particular, in connection with the incident in Gyumri in 2015, the facts of the sale of Russian weapons to Azerbaijan;

4) as a consequence of the third – the building up the mass of ordinary people, convinced of the need for change, and they pin all their hopes on the West. Armenians have long been convinced that it is necessary to believe not in Russia, but in the “civilized” West, which will help to carry out “democratic reforms” like in Georgia (Georgia was often presented by pro-Western Armenian grant-eaters as a kind of standard).

The coup of 2018: the seizure of power by the puppet of the West by Pashinyan

Analyzing the chronology of events, the successful “color revolution” of 2018, we can conclude that the algorithm of the “coup” was as follows:

1) non-recognition of the appointment of the Prime Minister, consolidation on this basis of all existing opposition. The beginning of protest actions;

2) the formation of images of a “justly indignant people” and “bloody tyrannical power that suppresses democracy and the people”;

3) the formation of the protesters in the quasi-ethnic consciousness of the “new people” or the conviction that they are the whole people;

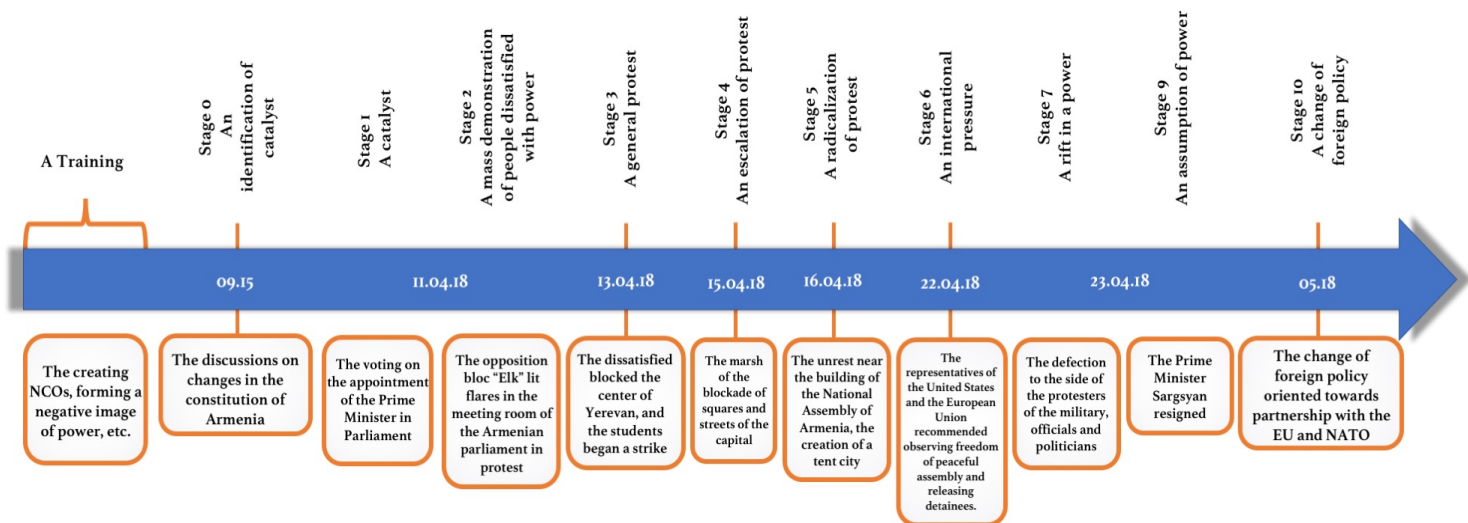
4) paralyzing the authorities with the help of protest technologies according to Gene Sharp's methods described in the book “From Dictatorship to Democracy”: refusal of loyalty to the authorities, protest rallies, marches, student strike, public disobedience, endless speeches, watches, sit-ins, fraternization with soldiers, refusal of political cooperation, strike of special groups;

5) diplomatic pressure from other states on the existing power;

6) transfer of part of the officials and deputies of the Armenian parliament to the side of the opposition;

7) the seizure or "transfer" of power to the "protestors" in the person of the organizer of the actions - Nikol Pashinyan, a member of the pro-Western Elk party.

The coup of 2018 covered the following stages:



Stage 1 - informational. In 2015, Armenia from the presidential republic became a parliamentary one. Serzh Sargsyan, who was president at the time,

promised that he would not qualify for the post of prime minister, however, did not keep his promise. After April 11, 2018, Sargsyan announced the nomination. The leader of the Elk opposition faction Nikol Pashinyan led a protest movement against the nomination of the ex-president for the post of prime minister and organized extensive rallies.

Stage 2 – the opposition rally against Sargsyan. On April 11, representatives of the opposition bloc of Yelk parties lit flares in the hall of the Armenian parliament in protest against the appointment of Sargsyan.

Stage 3 – the mass protest. Oppositionists and members of the “Civil Contract” blocked the center of Yerevan and other streets, and then began round-the-clock protests with the establishment of tents. A group of students at Yerevan State University announced the start of a strike. The original purpose was to declare non-appointment, and then the resignation of the post of Prime Minister of the former President Serzh Sargsyan and the formation of a new interim government.

Stage 4 – the blockade of the squares and streets of the capital. On April 15, protesters blocked the French Square in Yerevan and resumed the sit-in strike. Leader of protest Nikol Pashinyan and his supporters blocked the intersection of Baghramian Avenue and Moskovskaya Street. Later, the opposition marched down Heratsi and Nalbandyan streets right past the Armenian police building.

Этап 5 – переход к радикальным действиям. 17 апреля на заседании парламента Серж Саргсян был избран премьер-министром. В свою очередь, **Stage 5 - the transition to radical action.** On April 17, at a meeting of the parliament, Serzh Sargsyan was elected prime minister. In turn, Pashinyan announced the beginning of a non-violent revolution and later moved the center of protest from the French Square to the main square of Yerevan - the Republic Square, in the area of which the government buildings and a number of ministries are located. “A revolutionary situation has been created in the country, and I announce the start of a non-violent, popular velvet revolution,” the politician said.

The tents, wood stoves were set up in France Square, and a food and beverage distribution point was organized for those who spend the night outside. During the day, the Prosecutor General’s Office, the Central Bank, the Court of Cassation, the State Revenue Committee and the new government building were blocked. In Yerevan, many students simply stopped attending classes, massively supporting the opposition. From April 20, demonstrators blocked the streets throughout Yerevan and in the center of Gyumri, intercity highways, in particular

Yerevan-Abovian, as well as the highway leading to the international airport Zvartnots were also blockaded.

The key moments were the events of April 22-23, after which it became clear that the government faltered and the force was leaning towards the opposition. On the evening of April 22, Pashinyan met with Sargsyan, which did not end with anything. The Prime Minister rejected the opposition's claims, noting that the party with a 7% rating cannot represent the entire people of Armenia. Then an attempt was made to disperse the rally in the center of Yerevan, Pashinyan and two other deputies were arrested. However, the next day they were all released, and a group of military joined the participants of anti-government demonstrations in Yerevan, they were "fraternized" with civilian people in the streets.

Following this, Sargsyan, who showed a determination to fight to the end a day ago, suddenly changed his mind by resigning.

Stage 6 – the international pressure. On April 22, the European Union called on the Armenian authorities to release all demonstrators who were detained during rallies in Yerevan, as well as to observe the "right of citizens to peaceful assembly."

"We also expect Armenia to fulfill its international obligations under the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. All those detained during the exercise of their fundamental rights in accordance with the law should be immediately released," said Maja Kocijancic, the official representative of the head of diplomacy of the EU.

In the same spirit, only somewhat more neutral, the United States also spoke out.

"We urge the government to show restraint by allowing peaceful assemblies, and those who exercise their right to free assembly, urge them to do so with responsibility, avoid violence and prevent the situation from escalating. We are concerned about reports of violence against journalists and demonstrators," said the US Embassy in Armenia on April 23.

In turn, Russia called the events an internal affair of Armenia, which indicates its unavailability for these events. "We are watching what is happening in Armenia, and, most importantly, we hope that everything takes place within the framework of the rule of law," said the Presidential Press Secretary Dmitry Peskov.

Stage 7 - the struggle to remove the entire Republican Party from power, split and disorganization of the elite.

After the resignation of Serzh Sargsyan, a dual power arose in the country. The street led by Pashinyan became one center of power. At the same time, a part of the ruling elite led by Karen Karapetyan, who became acting prime minister, attempted to consolidate power in her hands. In particular, this group hoped to preserve the regime, sacrificing Serzh Sargsyan - believing that after the resignation of the latter, the protests would decline.

But Pashinyan and his supporters, freed from arrest, did not think to retreat, realizing that the government could “bend” further: they demanded that the Republican Party “hand over power to the people” and hold early parliamentary elections. At the same time, during the rallies, the thesis was repeatedly voiced that the protesters are “the real people of Armenia” and “the real power in the country”. According to Pashinyan, it is possible to hold new elections only with the new “government of national trust”, and the “candidate of the people” should be the prime minister. At the same time, naturally, the term “power of the people” implied the actual transfer of control over the country to Pashinyan.

Solidarity with the protesters was also expressed by the Dashnaktsutyun party, withdrawing from a coalition agreement with the Republican Party in parliament. The “fermentation in the upper ranks” began - the acting minister of science and education Levon Mkrtchyan, the acting minister of territorial administration and development of Armenia David Lokyan, the acting minister of nature protection Artsvik Minasyan, Governor of Shirak region Arthur Khachatryan and Governor of Aragatsotn region Ashot Simonyan, all of them resigned. The Republican Party itself was in fact disorganized and suppressed, even to the point that it began to “repent” of its “sins”: on April 28, Acting Minister of Justice of the Republic David Harutyunyan recognized that the monopolization of power by the party was a “big mistake”. As a result, the “Republicans”, being the largest faction in parliament, completely abandoned the nomination of their candidate.

Stage 8 – the final catch of power

On May 1, the parliament didn’t give enough votes to approve Pashinyan as prime minister, after which it was said about the start of a general strike until the authorities recognize the “people's victory” and appoint the “candidate from the people” as prime minister. As a strike method, overlapping of streets, subway, airport, interstate and interregional routes was proposed.

As part of forcing hatred towards the “criminal regime”, attacks were made on deputies who did not support him during the May 1, 2018 voting: people's deputies became the object of threats and insults both on the street and in social networks; their addresses and phone numbers laid out in free access. As a result, for the whole day on May 2, the strikers blocked automobile traffic in almost all of Yerevan, traffic on the Gyumri-Yerevan railway, blocked a number of state buildings, including the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education.

After that, the “Republicans” finally surrendered - on May 8, Nikol Pashinyan received the position of prime minister, 59 deputies voted for him, and some of them were from the “Republican Party”. The West has achieved the desired - his creature stood at the helm of the country.

The seizure of power was made possible by the following factors:

- the organization of street actions with the help of the classic technologies of “color revolutions”, set forth by Gene Sharp - the crowd was large and well organized. As in all artificial protests, their participants were sincerely convinced that their participation in it would help them personally to ensure a greater level of well-being or participation in the life of government institutions;

- the work of political technologists on Pashinyan’s image: in the six months preceding the protests, from a respectable “glossy” politician in a jacket in a short time turned into a “national leader” in a cap with a beard and a backpack on his shoulder (they made a kind of Che Guevara);

- the betrayal of a part of the elite that participated in the coup: a number of “Republicans”, as representatives of the “Party of Regions” in Ukraine in 2014, under pressure, threatened or bribed, went over to the side of the opposition;

- the lack of will in the government and its institutions to resist the coup - the Republican Party and its officials showed frank cowardice and disorganization, they did not even try to mobilize their supporters, and there was virtually no counter-propaganda in the media and the Internet;

- a possible threat of power from abroad: behind-the-scenes political pressure must have taken place, because only a day later Sargsyan abruptly changed his decision to resign. This, in turn, explains the behavior of Pashinyan, who demanded the resignation of the head of the country, representing the party with 7% of voter support. Political, economic or, in extreme cases, military

pressure is always applied to reduce the will to resist those who wish to rally around power.

What happened in Armenia in 2018 can be compared with the “Rose Revolution” in Georgia and the “Orange Revolution” 2004 in Ukraine. The protest was clearly structured and manageable. Most socium takes a passive stance, simply supporting those who are stronger, and the organizers have successfully created the image of “universal popular indignation” using civil disobedience actions according to Gene Sharp's methods, combining rallies, sit-ins with blocking public institutions and strategic transportation hubs. In turn, the government was disorganized and was unable to seriously oppose the above, did not try to mobilize its supporters and even conduct any meaningful counter-propaganda.

After leaving the post of Prime Minister Sargsyan, the center of power clearly shifted to the side of the protesters, some MPs and government officials frankly moved into their camp, so it was not difficult to crush the “Republican Party” with the threat of a street riot. The seizure of power by a representative of anti-Eurasian force would be impossible in the context of ordinary democratic elections

This successful coup made it possible to move to the stage of legitimization - the “cleansing” of the pro-Russian forces, the organization of conditions for the victory of the pro-Western puppet on re-election of parliament (the body that directly forms the executive branch). After all, it is much easier to organize elections for a certain leader in comfortable conditions than to achieve victory in a serious competition. Therefore, the opposition forces together with NCOs and think tanks acted as a tool for successfully completing the color revolution, which became a stage in the subsequent reformatting of the country under a kind of “Trojan Horse” for Russia in the region.

Conclusions

In general, it should be emphasized that the interventionists clearly, structured and consistently went to the realization of their goal - to seize control of the country. Using the example of Armenia, we can trace the essence of their strategy: it lies in the systematic destabilization of the situation in a specifically taken state. Moreover, the number of attempts in their models can be unlimited, their methodology and tools are very extensive and are constantly being

improved. The attempts will continue until the desired result is achieved in the form of eliminating the unwanted mode. This is the task of soft power technology.

The opposition protests of the mid-2000s, as a rule, stopped in the early stages, because the authorities were actively and successfully resisting them. And the first attempt of the “color revolution” of 2008 was unsuccessful, because the current leadership showed its principles, showing the will to defend their positions. The opposition failed to achieve a split in the power vertical, a massive transition of the “siloviki” and state officials to their side (only a few of its representatives expressed support for them). At the same time, the decisive measures taken by President Kocharyan (arrests, the introduction of emergency, alternative rallies) did not allow a coup d'etat to be held in power. A positive factor for the then government was also the insufficient number of well-trained pro-Western agents of influence in the country.

In turn, the invaders, after carefully analyzing this experience, used it to hone the protest technologies. The series of protest campaigns of the 2010s was distinguished by a higher degree of organization and coherence of the opposition, and the quantity and quality of agents that inflate protests on any occasion increased. The opposition, raised by various Western foundations, very skillfully captured the street, constantly pushing the agenda in the information space that curators needed, a vivid indicator of which are the campaigns of 2011, 2013, 2015 and 2016, which became the threshold of the successful “color revolution” of 2018. During 2011-16, the ruling elite headed by President Sargsyan actually lost one position after another under the pressure of the street, narrowing their influence on public opinion and often even not realizing it. This clearly manifested itself in the course of Elektromaidan, when protests forced its to cancel the nationwide decision, showing weakness, and the summer of 2016.

The coup d'état in Armenia can be compared to the “Rose Revolution” in Georgia and the “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine in 2004: the outside-inspired protest was clearly structured and controlled. The organizers, who united the protest around the representative of the pro-Western Elk party Nikol Pashinyan, who had only 7% support in the parliamentary elections of 2017, successfully created the image of a “just outraged people” using the already run-in technologies of civil disobedience J. Sharp. Most of the protesters were sincerely convinced that their participation in it would help them personally to ensure a greater level of well-being or participation in the life of government institutions, organizing rallies, sit-ins combined with blocking government agencies and strategic transportation hubs.

The power, in turn, in 2018, trembled, showing disorganization and indecision. Prime Minister Sargsyan initially tried to resist, but surrendered due to the pressure of external forces and the transfer of part of the military to the side of the protesters. After his resignation, the ruling "Republican Party" was demoralized, effectively abandoning the real struggle for further control over the country. In her camp there simply was not a leader capable of this, there was confusion and vacillation. Some officials and deputies went over to the side of the opposition. In view of the above factors, Pashinyan did not present much difficulty in crushing the "Republicans" with the threat of street riot.

The 2018 coup in Armenia launched its reformatting according to the patterns needed by the West, which seeks to embroil the Russian and Armenian peoples and, ultimately, make Armenia a point of tension for Russia in the Caucasus.

THE ATTEMPTS AND METHODS OF THE ILLUSORY REVOLUTIONS IN ARMENIA DURING THE LAST 15 YEARS

