

# Commentary: Analysis of the Domestic Political Situation in Armenia

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This article discusses the causes and dynamics of events occurring in Armenia from April to October 2018. The events described did not simply change the power regime, but practically reformatted the entire political field of Armenia, which in turn could not but affect the entire region. On the one hand, the new authority that came to power through the revolutionary wave cannot neglect addressing the political reality in which Armenia at present exists; on the other hand, it cannot try to impose the social order of the “street” from where the people brought Pashinyan and his team to the power. The six months of Pashinyan’s command of power have laid the practical foundation for the further rule of this political force. Now, the process of forming a new Armenian political elite is of great interest, since it is that elite, which will include both absolutely new people and representatives of the former elite, that will determine the policy of Armenia in the foreseeable future. This article will respond to the questions of “how Pashinyan came to power,” “why the ruling Republican party could not resist street protests,” “what the first steps of the new government were,” and “how Pashinyan managed to lead the situation in Armenia towards early elections.”

Key words: Armenia, Pashinyan, Revolution, Sargsyan, Elections



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## **Introduction**

The events that have occurred, and are continuing to occur, in Armenia have been very difficult to predict, even for the most well-informed and seasoned experts on Armenia. At the beginning of 2018, just a few months before the events, the regime of personal power of then-President Serzh Sargsyan seemed unassailable. He had built up his regime over ten years while quashing almost all political and financial forces in the process. Therefore, the so-called transition of power, by which was meant Serzh Sargsyan's move from the President's to the Prime Minister's office, was seen as a formality that could not be prevented. However, what started as a protest by a small group of people led by opposition politician Nikol Pashinyan turned into mass demonstrations against the Sargsyan regime and ultimately resulted in the change of government.

This article will argue that the process is, nevertheless, far from over, because, with the revolution entering its final stage in October, a much bigger battle is ahead for Armenia. Therefore, the results of the early parliamentary elections in December made everything clear. Much more important is what will happen next, when the period of power transition to the Pashinyan team is over, and those who brought him to power will be waiting for promises to be fulfilled; and everyone has different expectations, such as, notably, addressing the poverty, economic problems, and corruption issues deeply entrenched in Armenian society and politics during the rule of Sargsyan's government. In this regard, it is important to consider the first steps of Pashinyan in power, and not only concrete actions, but also leadership style will be important here. The active use of social networks along with extravagant political steps are today working to increase the popularity of Pashinyan, however, this cannot last forever. In the near future, Pashinyan will need concrete results that can be sold to supporters as a success story. Therefore, it is very important to understand not only how he is going to achieve results, but also how he is going to sell them to his supporters.

## **Reason for Serj Sargsyan's departure**

Many experts have called the events of spring 2018 in Armenia a revolution, even though it was not. In May, there was a change

of executive power in Armenia, but the parliamentary majority still remained with the Republican Party. This has led to an unusual situation in which a party in a parliamentary republic that holds a majority of seats has been forced to cede power, not even to a political force, but to a single politician who enjoys the unwavering support of most politically active Armenians. To understand how this happened, it is first of all important to answer the question of who was interested in the removal from power of the all-powerful Serzh Sargsyan.

The overwhelming majority of Armenian citizens were invested in the removal of Serzh Sargsyan from power. Only a minority of the Armenian population could actually reap the benefits of the system created by Sargsyan during his term in the Presidential Office. The quasi-feudal social ladder that emerged in Armenia favored only those at the top who, due to their political influence, received considerably more than those at the bottom. The latter group, in turn, in the total absence of social elevators, was deprived of any serious opportunity to change their lives for the better. Although the system itself was not created by Sargsyan, in the case of Armenia, he was the one who perfected it.

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The transition from presidential to parliamentary system of government did not leave any doubt among the members of the lower classes that Serzh Sargsyan intended to stay in power for life, and therefore the system was not going to change for a very long time. Hence, when the moment came, many residents of Yerevan and other cities of Armenia did not hesitate to take to the streets to protest against Sargsyan.<sup>1</sup> That was perceived as the only way to mandate change for the better. For the protesters, the most important goal was not Sargsyan's resignation, but ensuring real change, and Pashinyan became the conduit for these sentiments.

However, the aspirations of politically active people alone are usually not sufficient to change the regime in a country. The inability of the ruling regime to fight back and carry on in the old way are both crucial factors in ensuring the transition of power. In Armenia, the old guard was more than capable of fighting back. The system of governance built by Serzh Sargsyan in

<sup>1</sup> Golos Ameriki (2018), Opozitsiya Armenii Zayavila O «Revolyutsionnoy Situatsii, Available at: <https://www.golos-ameriki.ru/a/4352051.html> (Accessed: 9 October 2018)

Armenia was largely based on a combination of the “vertical of power” – the top-down command structure that included not only his own political party, but to a great extent also the opposition forces – and tight control over the main sections of economic and financial flows. This system, coupled with the widespread use of so-called “administrative resources” to generate desired election outcomes, was perfectly attuned to Armenia’s local circumstances. What’s more, the use of the “enemy at the gates” scaremongering tactic, designed to urge people to rally around the “defender of the flag,” in other words around Sargsyan, also helped Sargsyan to consolidate his power in Armenia by presenting any attempt to challenge the political status quo that he created as an attack on the very existence of the state.

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Serzh Sargsyan was convinced that he had designed a perfectly balanced system to preserve his power by taking into account the interests of all stakeholders, both internal and external. As a result, it created a misperception that the system could withstand any challenge and was not in danger. However, in practice, that turned out to be a miscalculation on the part of Sargsyan.

The fact that none of the political parties represented in the parliament, except for Pashinyan’s party, joined the protests at the initial stage of the “revolution” seemed to confirm the resilience of the system. However, in retrospect, it seems that the absence of systemic political forces behind the protests was not the strength of the system, but its weakness, proving to be Sargsyan’s undoing. If there had been a traditional political force behind the protests, there would have been a chance to negotiate and make a deal. However, Nikol Pashinyan, who assumed the leadership of the protests, was for a long time essentially “excluded” from the political system and, as such, was not willing to make a deal or reach any compromise. As a result, Sargsyan outplayed himself and, following the infamous meeting with Pashinyan at the Marriott Hotel, essentially lost control of the situation. An attempt to realize a scenario in which the situation could be resolved by force also failed and eventually Sargsyan had to resign, declaring that “Nikol Pashinyan was right; I got it wrong.”<sup>2</sup>

Sargsyan’s resignation became the turning point of the Armenian

<sup>2</sup> BBC News (2018), “YA Bil Ne Prav”: Premyer Armenii Podal v Otvstavku iz-za Protestov, Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/russian/news-43868140> (Accessed: 9 October 2018).

revolution. That Sargsyan had enough power to quash the protests is an objective reality, and its denial can only be seen as a part of revolutionary mythology, and not as a serious analysis. Arguments based on Sargsyan's personality as a major factor in his reluctance to fight back can hardly be considered as having sufficient explanatory power either. Moral considerations are not in such cases the overriding concern, since there is too much at stake and the decision is hardly taken single-handedly.

The major role in the situation was played by external factors. During the protests in Yerevan, the embassies of the United States and the European Union constantly expressed their "grave concern and worries" over the situation. Their "concern and worries" were understandable considering the fact that the EU–Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) could have been endangered. The agreement is crucial for cash-strapped Armenia, not least because it also provides access to substantial funds from the EU. Hence, this factor should also be taken into account, but it was not decisive. In the end, the final say on the matter belonged to Russia – the power that controls almost everything in Armenia.

Why then did Moscow not support Sargsyan? Why did the Kremlin not give him *carte blanche* to use force against the protesters? The answer is simple: by the time of the revolution, Serzh Sargsyan had ceased to be a convenient and even acceptable figure for Russia. Sargsyan, who gradually amassed and strengthened his "vertical of power," became too complacent and independent from Moscow. Back in the day, when there was no sharp confrontation with the West, and particularly with the American establishment, such "small dents" in the relationship probably would have not mattered much. But times have changed, as demonstrated by the fact that Sargsyan's removal from power was actively supported by Russian oligarchs of Armenian origin, particularly by Samvel Karapetyan, the owner of the Tashir Group of companies. Without approval at the highest levels of the Russian government, such support would hardly have been possible. In the end, Sargsyan found himself politically isolated, without external support, which led to his downfall.

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After the protests reached the irreversible stage for the authorities, many experts concluded that through the protests Moscow

actually intended to bring its protégé Karen Karapetyan to power and thus finally switch Armenia to the “manual control” mode. However, Karapetyan’s swift and unexpected departure from the political stage, following shortly after Sargsyan’s resignation, rendered all those conclusions invalid.

### Pashinyan’s coming to power

The second turning point of the May events was rather unexpected refusal of Karen Karapetyan, the former Prime Minister and Acting Prime Minister following Sargsyan’s resignation, to run for the office of Prime Minister. The decision not to run for office was unexpected because it was announced immediately after the rally in Gyumri and, more importantly, following a phone conversation with Vladimir Putin in which the Russian president practically supported Karen Karapetyan. During the conversation it was noted that “the crisis in Armenia must be resolved within the legal framework, in line with the existing constitution and on the basis of the results of the legitimate parliamentary elections held in April 2017.”<sup>3</sup> “[T]he importance of electing a new Armenian prime minister by the parliament on a planned date of May 1, 2018” was also emphasized.<sup>4</sup> That is why Karapetyan’s refusal to run for Prime Minister after such a conversation seemed a bit strange.

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Karapetyan’s refusal can be explained by the fact that “his own” Republican Party of Armenia, at the time still controlled by Sargsyan, actually boycotted the prospect of his premiership. Here, in its own strange way, the desires of the protesters and the leaders of the Republican party actually corresponded. At the same time, it is important to note that everyone understood very well that with the advent of Karapetyan to power Armenia would have been switched to “manual control” mode by the Kremlin.<sup>5</sup> This, in theory, should have satisfied Moscow. Given Moscow’s resource depth and capacity in Armenia, it would have not been a big issue for Russia to convince Armenia’s political

3 Prezident Rossii (2018), Telefonnyy Razgovor S Ispolnyayushchim Obyazannosti Prem’yer-Ministra Armenii Karenom Karapetyanom, Available at: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/57368> (Accessed: 9 October 2018)

4 *Ibid.*

5 Golos Ameriki (2018), Pravyashchaya Partiya Armenii Soglasna Na Kandidaturu Pashinyana. Available at: <https://www.golos-ameriki.ru/a/armenian-ruling-party-agreed-to-vote-for-pashinyan/4374861.html> (Accessed: 9 October 2018)

establishment, including the Republicans, to support Karen Karapetyan's candidacy. With the remaining question of what to do about the protesters, there is a whole set of political methods that would have permitted dealing with the situation without having to resort to a coercive course of action. Those methods would have taken time, however, and Karapetyan, apparently not wanting to take a risk and fight back, gave up very quickly.

The series of events that would later be dubbed the "Velvet Revolution" in Armenia was centralized. It had a concrete leader, the opposition politician and journalist Nikol Pashinyan, who was a fringe figure on the Armenian political stage before the revolution. In a matter of a month, Pashinyan managed to transform himself from a marginal opposition figure to the leader of the revolution.<sup>6</sup>

Pashinyan's swift transformation from a human rights journalist to a major revolutionary figure with a hard-line stance and an image of having an uncompromising leadership style led to the birth of a phenomenon termed "Nikolism" in Armenia. He is genuinely adored by ordinary Armenians, who pin their high hopes on him, which is quite natural in the wake of the revolution. The high degree of popular legitimacy that Pashinyan currently enjoys in Armenia is his strongest suit. It was "the street" that gave Pashinyan power with a sort of unlimited vote of confidence. At the same time, it is clear that Pashinyan's ascension to power would not be possible without the consent of external actors, especially Russia. However, consent does not equal support, which is even more true in the case of Moscow. Pashinyan came to power as a result of events that fit neatly into the pattern of the "color revolutions." While he was not affiliated with the Russian oligarchs and had no people hailing from Karabakh in his team, that team did contain many who in the past worked for Western NGOs and human rights organizations. For this reason alone, Moscow could not have much confidence in Pashinyan and Pashinyan himself understood this perfectly well, constantly emphasizing that nothing threatens Armenia's relations with Russia.<sup>7</sup>

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And most importantly, Pashinyan perfectly understood that

6 BBC News (2018), Kto Takoy Nikol Pashinyan: Pyat' Faktov O Lidere Revolyutsii V Armenii, Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-43886648> (Accessed: 9 October 2018).

7 Russia Today (2018), «Khoroshiye i pryamyye otnosheniya»: Pashinyan o partnerstve s Rossiyei, peregovorakh s Putinyim i reformakh v Armenii, Available at: <https://russian.rt.com/ussr/article/522880-pashinyan-putin-armeniya-rossiya> (Accessed: 9 October 2018).

without Moscow he would not be able to consolidate his power in Armenia.

Although people's trust and ardent desire for change brought Pashinyan to power, his position as Prime Minister was not secure since the Republican Party still held a majority in the parliament, which meant that, in fact, they could have replaced Pashinyan with their own candidate at any point, and only "the street" was stopping them from ousting Pashinyan. Thus, Pashinyan's main task became resolving this immediate issue in front of him.

### The power question

The fact that the question of power is the main issue in any revolution is a textbook truth. Pashinyan and his team, which mainly consisted of people who were young and ambitious but inexperienced in government affairs, believed that the main way to address this issue was through taking control of government institutions and the country's financial and political resources from the old elite.

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With rare exceptions, changing the top leadership and senior management was enough to make middle and lower-level bureaucrats loyal to the new authorities. There were two reasons for this: first, middle and lower level officials are representatives of the people, like everyone else. The revolutionary fervor dominating the streets of Yerevan had also affected them. Thus, the desire to faithfully serve the new government among low and middle level officials was in most cases quite sincere. In addition, most civil servants understand that they are not in immediate danger of being fired and whether or not they will be able to keep their jobs will largely depend on how effectively they perform their functions and duties.

Unlike government institutions, however, taking control of financial groups with political influence was a harder task. These groups can be divided into three parts. The first group includes those who are affiliated with the old regime. Taking control over them was out of the question. The most viable option to deal with them would be through confiscating their assets and other

similarly tough measure. However, Pashinyan's team did not have enough power to realize that option. Following the revolution, however, trials relating to the events of March 2008 served, to a certain extent, to neutralize those groups. At some point during the trials, it seemed like Robert Kocharyan, the second president of Armenia, given his personal relationship with the president of Russia, was Pashinyan's main rival. Kocharyan's arrest and the events that followed showed that, on the one hand, Pashinyan was ready to take tough measures and follow through on his promise to "restore justice" in Armenia; on the other hand, it also demonstrated that Pashinyan's team was not all-powerful and intervention by external players, especially Russia, could still significantly impact the direction of political processes in Armenia.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, it is worth noting that no matter how unexpected the arrest and release of Kocharyan were, the measures taken by the National Security Service of Armenia to neutralize the resistance of the old guard looked quite effective. However, it is also worth noting that Pashinyan's intention to go after Kocharyan could be misplaced. We will elaborate on this point a little later.

The second financial group with substantial political influence comprises representatives of Russian business in Armenia, including both Russian state-owned enterprises and Russian businessmen of Armenian origin. The main issue for Pashinyan was to ensure the neutrality of these groups during the transition period in Armenia. Pashinyan's approach in this regard could also be characterized as the bargaining strategy of "a wolf's mouth and a fox's tail." Tough decisions such as searches in the offices of a subsidiary of the state-owned Russian Railways Company "South Caucasus Railway" or decisions on the transfer of high-voltage power grids to Tashir company repeatedly led to negotiations and attempts to reach a compromise.<sup>9</sup> This became a fairly simple and effective – albeit a risky – way of tearing up old and securing new agreements. It was not of primary importance whether those agreements were beneficial to the country or not – the main task was to take the management of those agreements away from the old guard and deprive the latter from being able influence those agreements, in the process also

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8 Ekho Moskvyy (2018), SMI: Osvobozhdeniye iz-pod strazhi eks-prezidenta Armenii Roberta Kocharyana vyzvalo effekt razorvavsheysya bomby, Available at: <https://echo.msk.ru/news/2258776-echo.html> (Accessed: 9 October 2018).

9 NEWS.am (2018), Obyski v YUKZHD: V kompanii nedoumevayut, Available at: <https://news.am/rus/news/466492.html> (Accessed: 9 October. 2018).

showing the partners that from now on they can only negotiate with the new government. Somewhat similar dynamics can be observed in the case of the arrest and release on bail of CSTO Secretary General Yuri Khachaturov. However, since that case is more about foreign policy than Armenia's domestic affairs, it goes beyond the scope of the issues we are currently considering.

Finally, the third group includes those Armenian financial and political groups that, although not close to the Sargsyan regime, were not keen to support Pashinyan either. It is the support of this group, which is the biggest in the country and hence has the "decisive vote," that Pashinyan wanted to secure. With this group the bargaining strategy employed by Pashinyan was about the same as with the previous cases. The campaign against these groups progressed under the banner of the destruction of "gray" schemes and dismantling of the shadow economy, which is indeed a real problem in Armenia, followed by negotiations with these

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groups on securing new agreements on new conditions. For instance, inspections conducted by Armenian authorities at the "Yerevan-City" supermarket chain owned by the member of parliament Samvel Alexanyan followed the previously tested and familiar pattern: systematic probes launched against these entities, dismantling of old gray schemes, and, finally, negotiations on the new way of doing business in Armenia.<sup>10</sup>

To sum up, Pashinyan and his team managed in the end to build a vertical of power in Armenia and to some extent neutralize the negative impact of hostile financial and political groups in the process.

### **Transition of power in Armenia**

What happened in Armenia in May was not a revolution, not a change of power, but a change of the executive branch by revolutionary means. Armenia is a parliamentary republic and, without a majority in the parliament, Pashinyan and his team could not be considered to be fully "in power." Thus, the completion of the process of power transition to Pashinyan's team in Armenia was entirely linked to the holding of snap parliamentary elections.

<sup>10</sup> RIA Novosti (2018), Spetssluzhby nachali proverku armyanskoy torgovoy seti "Yerevan-siti", Available at: <https://ria.ru/economy/20180530/1521701137.html> (Accessed: 9 October 2018).

Under the current Constitution, the Armenian parliament could not dissolve itself and call for snap elections. However, the parliament could be disbanded in case of failing to elect a new Prime Minister twice within 14 days following the incumbent Prime Minister's resignation. For obvious reasons, Pashinyan's resignation would have carried serious risks since there was no guarantee that the parliament, in which the majority is in the hands of the Republican Party, would keep their end of the bargain and intentionally reject his nomination in order to force the snap election. Moreover, after the elections to the Council of Elders (municipal assembly) of Yerevan, Pashinyan also lost the support of the "Prosperous Armenia" party and ARF-Dashnaksutyun, parties that are represented in the parliament. In such a situation, persuading the parliamentarians themselves to agree to a snap election and virtually sign a political "death sentence" was an extremely difficult task.

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It is also worth noting that, following his appointment, Pashinyan promised to hold parliamentary elections in a "logically short time," at the same time stressing that he would not intentionally hinder the work of the government to force early elections.<sup>11</sup> From May till September, the issue of early parliamentary elections was not raised by Pashinyan. However, the issue was reopened before the elections to the Council of Elders of Yerevan, in September 22, at Pashinyan's meeting with the voters from his electoral bloc "My Step."<sup>12</sup> Having swept municipal elections in Yerevan, with the "My Step" block receiving more than 81 percent of the votes,<sup>13</sup> Pashinyan made the issue of snap elections a priority. However, he immediately ran into opposition from the parliamentary majority and had to resort to calling people to the streets of Yerevan again in order to demonstrate his power to the parliament.

The parliament was also considered dissolved if it did not convene for two weeks. Whether it did not convene due to the

11 Sputnik Armenia (2018), Ne budem provalivat' programmu pravitel'stva radi vnoochednykh vyborov – Pashinyan, Available at: <https://ru.armeniasputnik.am/politics/20180511/11974080/ne-budem-provalivat-programmu-pravitelstva-radi-vnoochednykh-vyborov--pashinyan.html> (Accessed: 9 October 2018).

12 Lragir (2018), Nikol Pashinyan obyavil referendum po suverenizatsii, Available at: <https://www.lragir.am/ru/2018/09/21/134114/> (Accessed: 9 October 2018).

13 Deutsche Welle (2018), V Yerevane vybrali Sovet stareyshin i mera, 24 Sentyabr, Available at: <https://www.dw.com/r/в-ереване-выбрали-совет-старейшин-и-мэра/a-45611562>, (Accessed 9 October 2018).

absence of a quorum or for other reasons was not stipulated by the law. It was reasonable to assume that the executive branch could have simply blocked the parliament building and prevented the members of parliament from convening, thus creating a legal ground for the dissolution of the parliament. However, in this case the parliamentary majority tried to get ahead of the curve. On October 2, the National Assembly of Armenia adopted on its second and final reading an amendment to the law “On the Regulations of the National Assembly.” In accordance with the amendments, if the parliament could not convene due to the absence of a quorum or obstacles hindering the participation of MPs, it was proposed to suspend the meeting and continue the work of the parliament after these obstacles were removed. The bill also ensured the functioning of the parliament in case of the Prime Minister’s resignation. Thus, Pashinyan’s plans to hold snap elections by bypassing the parliament were blocked. Representatives of the Republican Party of Armenia, as well as ARF-Dashnaktsutyun and the “Tsarukyan” bloc voted in favor of the amendments. Representatives of Pashinyan’s “Yelk” (Way Out) bloc did not participate in the voting.<sup>14</sup> In response to the voting, Pashinyan brought people to the streets of Yerevan and demanded that the Republicans leave Armenia’s political stage.<sup>15</sup>

Under the prevailing circumstances, Pashinyan had almost no choice but to ensure support from MPs for the self-dissolution of parliament while resigning himself, or to resort to the use of force, which was fraught with ending up outside the constitutional realm. The Prime Ministerial nominee approved by the parliament would have been the legitimate head of the Armenian government under the Constitution, which would have left Pashinyan with no choice but to resort to the power of “the streets” to return the power to himself. However, it is not a given that in such a case the protests would have been as massive as they were in May. In May, Pashinyan fought against Sargsyan and Karapetyan, with whom people were fed up. This time the Republican party could have easily nominated someone more appealing to the masses, and, more importantly, to Moscow.

However, by all indications, unlike the Russian constitutional

14 Sodrzhestvo (2018), Vopreki prizyvam Pashinyana: parlament prinyal nashumevshiyu popravki, Available at: <http://sodrugestvo.info/?p=860813&lang=ru> (Accessed: 9 October 2018).

15 Sputnik Armenia (2018), V Armenii nachalas’ kontrrevolyutsiya: Pashinyan obvinil respublikantsev, Available at: <https://ru.armeniasputnik.am/politics/20181002/14838864/v-armenii-nachalas-kontrrevolyuciya-pashinyan-obvinil-respublikancev.html> (Accessed: 9 October 2018).

crisis of 1993, when a deadlock between the Russian president, Boris Yeltsin, and the Russian parliament was eventually resolved through the use of force, the current situation in Armenia will not lead to a similar scenario. Moreover, the Republican Party is clearly not inclined to use violent methods to fight back since they want to remain a viable political force in Armenia, assuming that, sooner or later, the unconditional support of the population that Pashinyan currently enjoys will gradually fade away. Considering the differences between the current situation in Armenia and the Russian constitutional crisis of 1993, one more important detail should be taken into account. In 1993, Boris Yeltsin had the unconditional support of the world community and did not have to contend with what we call the “Russian factor” in Armenia. It may be useful to elaborate on the latter point a little further.

Although having only 31 seats out of 105 in the National Assembly of Armenia, until recently, the “Prosperous Armenia” party, created by one of the most famous Armenian oligarchs, Gagik Tsarukyan, was considered the second biggest political force in the country. The party was built into Serzh Sargsyan’s political system and joined the protests only after it became clear that Sargsyan was resigning. However, soon afterwards the political paths of Pashinyan and “Prosperous Armenia” diverged. In the elections to the Council of Elders of Yerevan, despite all the expectations, “Prosperous Armenia” received about 7 percent of the vote, winning the second spot, but clearly below what they expected. Immediately after the events of October 2<sup>nd</sup>, the leader of “Prosperous Armenia,” Gagik Tsarukyan, went to Moscow, where, as reported in the press, he held a number of meetings with members of the Russian government and the Armenian diaspora in Russia. Upon Tsarukyan’s return to Armenia, the situation changed. First, “Prosperous Armenia” supported Pashinyan and gave their consent to the dissolution of the parliament. Second, not only representatives of “Prosperous Armenia” in the parliament, but also fifteen MPs from the Republican Party, agreed to hold snap parliamentary elections. It is difficult to say how much of this is related to Tsarukyan’s trip to Moscow. But the fact is that, in the end, Pashinyan received much-needed guarantees that an alternative Prime Minister would not be approved in case of his resignation and that the parliament would be dissolved. On October 16, in order to trigger snap parliamentary elections, Pashinyan resigned from the post of Prime Minister.

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## Conclusion

Considering the course of events in Armenia, it is necessary to understand that we are dealing with a revolutionary process that began in April of this year and is still unfinished. Unlike the Rose Revolution in Georgia, and the Orange Revolution and the Revolution of Dignity in Ukraine, the events taking place in Armenia are, firstly, stretched out in time, and, secondly, they have their own internal logic stemming from the country being under the influence of Russia. In contrast to the revolutionary events in Georgia or Ukraine, it is also telling that those who are currently in power in Armenia are not part of the old elites splintered from the latter at some point in time, but are members of the counter-elite, whose goal is to completely eradicate the old guard from power. This makes it impossible for not only the Republican Party, but also for parties like “Prosperous Armenia” and ARF-Dashnaksutyun to cross the aisle and stand on the “side of the revolution.”

Moreover, for financial groups it was also difficult to embrace the revolution since none of them are secure from major troubles in case Pashinyan and his team obtain full power. After all, almost all of them participated in the corrupt schemes of the previous government, leaving them vulnerable to investigations by the new authorities. Despite all of this, Pashinyan managed to overcome the resistance of the old guard and enter the final stretch of the Armenian revolution. What the role was of external factors – and by external factors, we mainly mean the Russian factor, since none of the other major foreign policy actors, including the United States, the European Union, and even Iran, has serious political influence in Armenia – remains an open question.

Pashinyan’s party won a landslide victory (with 70%) in the parliamentary elections. The party of oligarch Gagik Tsarukyan “Prosperous Armenia” (whose main goal is to ensure the political roof for himself) took 2nd place (8%). The 3rd political force entering the parliament is the “Bright Armenia” (formerly part of the “Elk” bloc), under the leadership of Edmond Marukyan. The previously-dominant Republican Party failed (4.7%) to get seat in the parliament. The Dashnaksutyun party (supported by the Diaspora), failed (3.89%) too. The last two [most militant] parties failed because the level of militancy in the society has noticeably decreased.