

Alexander: It was different times. It was provoked by elections when the first president [inaudible 00:00:21] changed to [inaudible 00:00:28]. But the situation was different because first, you had economic growth from 2002 approximately to 2008. So it was a time when, for example, migration, that was when migration was got more people coming to a region that was [inaudible 00:00:52]. Social situation was a threat. The situation in Karabakh was better than now. Maybe most important political difference was that it was a time when the former president did not want to go to the third term. Robert Kocharian left the chair of politics and Serzh Sargsyan was not very popular for a new person, a newcomer. So it wasn't like it was 10 years ago when Serzh Sargsyan wanted to stay.

Alexander: 2008 was the first year of President Serzh Sargsyan and it was a first year of all economic crisis. And beginning in 2008, it was an economical decrease. It was very serious. And then you have starvation, economic starvation and in all these years until 2017 and you had a migration. As a result you had a migration from country, you had social problems, you've got people leaving the country. You had the situation in Karabakh became worse and worse. The beginning of that period in 2008 and '09, you had what they usually called "sniper wars" so people shoot at, from time to time, not very often. And in it you had, I would say, wide-scale, maybe, movement escalations with artillery, with tanks, et cetera, et cetera.

Alexander: The situation became worse and worse and authorities, Republican party, it gets less and less popular. I would say, at the end of this period, 2007 to 2008, after 2016, mainly, the rating of authorities was very low. It didn't have the social [inaudible 00:03:07], I would say, at all.

Alexander: They were strong. Not because they were strong. They were strong not because they were legitimate and popular. They were ruled. They, I mean, the ruling class, elites. But they were, they could manage because opposition, really, was very weak as well. Opposition was very weak so they didn't have something against them, really. And the main instrument of Republican party leaders, of elites of that time, that period, was, I would say, management of apathy.

Alexander: People were very, you had apathy on policy as well. You have very low leading to [inaudible 00:04:16] of any political party, parliament, political parties, opposition, by the way, ruling party, presidential decision, et cetera, et cetera. So if that, if it was apathy, if they were not popular, if they could manage this apathy, if I, a citizen, somebody from the street, somebody from, ordinary citizen of country, if I really [inaudible 00:04:44]. If I don't believe that we can change something in the country by election, by political life, so better I will take my twenty dollars or thirty dollars and will vote as they want because I don't believe I can change something by political participation. And it was their way to manage situation. The mistake was that they thought that you can do it forever. Really, you can't.

Alexander: I will say that similar was pluralism and the hybrid nature of regime. If you compare that regimes with others, Belarus, Russia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan, you will see there really authoritarian regimes. Here you see authoritarian regimes as well, but weaker. You can, you have opposition, you have

political pluralism in all these countries. You had and have political opposition, but weak opposition. But you had it.

Alexander: Nikol Pashinyan influenced revolution. He was in parliament. He was a parliamentarian. He was not in treason. He was not killed. He was not outside the country, as you sometimes see in other countries. He was in parliament. Got freedom of press. Weak press, I would say, but plural. You had political parties. You had opposition movements from the streets. You had civil society. You have all this. All this was weak, but you had the background for establishing of people, structures, mechanisms, milieus for future revolution.

Alexander: We can't call it a revolution or not. It doesn't matter. What is matter, that I say the background was low legitimacy of the Republicans and trigger was that Serzh Sargsyan in 2014, when it was a process of changing the constitution, of Armenian constitution, from presidential system to parliamentarian, presidential to parliamentarian, he literally said to people that "We are going to change constitution. This is good news. Plural, more European, more democratic, more checks and balances. So it is good. We are going to have plans. It should change. And I will do."

Alexander: After he decided not to go, but he became Prime Minister to go to the third, really, third term, to continue. And you have a lot of examples of of the former Soviet Union, but never in Armenia. It was a trigger. People said, "No."

Alexander: Nikol Pashinyan and people that are of the EU, they are managers of protests. From beginning, by the way. Officially, Nikol Pashinyan worked, he's a journalist, was journalist and he worked as an editor of a newspaper. But it was not just newspaper, it was very radical anti-government, anti-ruling elites newspaper. They were criticized the Republicans. He had people around him from 2005, '06, '07, they were very young, but they got to do it. And it was a group of people who were politicians, sure, but politicians, I would say, from the streets. From mass rallies, [inaudible 00:09:12], from civil society, from opposition, journalism, different types of protests, whole their life, about, maybe, 15 years, something or other. They were just leaders of protests.

Alexander: It was in April 21-22 or maybe 20-21, when protests decentralized. Their logic, logical republicans, was technical. That you can deal with protests by police instruments, police methods. After decentralizing of the protests, when you didn't have a structure, you didn't have a pyramid, you had local pyramids everywhere around the country. It will decentralize protests. It was everywhere. So tourists, somebody, would it be one person or a hundred persons, was useful. They arrested Nikol Pashinyan and then several dozens of people, but it was useful because you have the protests all over the country, outside Yerevan, inside Yerevan, everywhere.

Alexander: So, what? What should you do with such [inaudible 00:10:43] situation? You should war. Go to really mass using of army, I'm not really sure that they could do it, or give them [inaudible 00:10:58].

Alexander: I try to be realistic. Every transit [inaudible 00:11:07]. Every quick transit [inaudible 00:11:13] of your whole revolution is a possibility, I hope, and a risk. There are new people. You have people who are not homogenous other than [inaudible 00:11:27] Republican. They are not experienced to rule the country. And you have expectations from population which are not realistic in principle. The expectations are that you will change something to change bad guys to good guys, and Armenia will be Switzerland in a couple weeks. This is impossible in principle. All problems of Armenia like corruption, problems with investments, conflict, you risk some security, business and politics together, et cetera, et cetera are systemic problems. You cannot resolve it quick. Even if you would have brilliant experience, brilliant elite, et cetera.

Alexander: So you will have problems. It's not very easy looking around, I see situations like that from [Maloa 00:12:34] to Kyrgyzstan and nowhere is paradise. So you need to work. You work for decades, maybe for generations to change something. And expectations are not like that. People [inaudible 00:12:54] more changes immediately. It's not very easy to look how it will go, but I'm not sure that it is easy to do, to do such things.