

Chapter 1: ARMENIA

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Security sector reforms (SSR) and its governance were among the new challenges for the newly independent states of the post-Soviet space, including those in the South Caucasus. After 70 years of strong control by a totalitarian or semi-totalitarian regime with powerful security forces, especially the KGB, the three newly-independent countries – Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia – faced many serious and unexpected problems at the very beginning of the 1990s. Some still constitute challenges to the internal stability of the state entities and provide fertile ground for regional instability.

Reforms in the security sector can contribute to improvement of the security environment in the South Caucasus. However, the successful implementation of these reforms requires shared efforts of the state and society at large. Furthermore, the depth and success of SSR mainly depends upon two factors: the security environment and democratization. In the case of all three South Caucasus states, the security environment plays a critical role and directly influences the level of democratization in each state.

Shifts in the South Caucasus' Security System and Challenges for the Main Regional Actors

The security system of the South Caucasus has changed significantly over the past five years. Several causes are apparent. Through the prism of the analysis of the current stage of SSR, the following factors must be mentioned:

- A sharp shift in the period August-September of 2008, when Russia's recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia transformed these two non-recognized *de facto* states into *de jure* semi-recognized states. In parallel with this, the tensions in the area of Nagorno Karabakh conflict increased.

- Russia remains the main regional power in the South Caucasus. It is making serious efforts to integrate the South Caucasus (as well as some other parts of the post-Soviet area) into its global economic projects, above all into the Customs Union and the Eurasian Union.

- There is an apparent trend toward even greater militarization in the South Caucasus; the unresolved conflicts in this area are substantially contributing to an arms race. The military presence of Russia is increasing in Armenia, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia, and the supply of Russian arms to

Armenia and Azerbaijan is growing. The latter has intensified its military cooperation with Israel. The U.S. military presence in Georgia and Azerbaijan is also gradually growing.

- The Western European states and the USA are exhibiting a decreasing interest in the South Caucasus. In particular, several internal and external factors have objectively contributed to the reduction of U.S. attention to this region. For the United States, the South Caucasus is of strategic interest in terms of its proximity to the Middle East and to Iran, in particular. In this regard enhanced stability throughout the South Caucasus area is a priority. However, internal political developments in the three internationally recognized states in the South Caucasus have produced disappointment in U.S. political circles. Moreover, the dynamics of the regional conflicts leave little room for optimism. Thus, realizing the growing conflict potential of the South Caucasus, including the threat of a resumption of a military confrontation in the area of the Nagorno Karabakh, the United States will cooperate – at least in the mid-term perspective – only at a low intensity level with all the states in the region.

- NATO has begun to conduct a more careful and balanced policy in the South Caucasus, above all in regard to Georgia's membership. In spite of the fact that the new Georgian government clearly announced and confirmed that membership in NATO and the EU remain priorities, the U.S. and other NATO and EU member states are becoming, in discussions on this issue, less enthusiastic. Thus, it is likely that the period of intensive lobbying for Georgia's NATO membership is over. The North Atlantic Alliance has declared that it has no intention to be involved either in peace-managing and peace-keeping processes or in the resolution of the South Caucasus conflicts. However, the Alliance is ready to develop partner relations with all recognized states and to participate in post-conflict rehabilitation in the region.

- In the European security strategy the South Caucasus is increasingly handed over to Central European surveillance: In some spheres, including the SSR and SSG (security sector governance), the experiences of Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary can be transformed, and or implemented, in other states.

Furthermore, in comparison to the previous five-year period, internal developments in each state and state entity of the South Caucasus increasingly impact the joint – regional – security system. The overlapping of internal and external processes ambiguously influences the dynamics of the region's security and the developments of each state in the South Caucasus.

Owing to this very fragile security and stability environment, the role of the security sector is growing. Moreover, the effectiveness of necessary reforms in the security sector directly depends upon the system of governance of the state, the role of constitutionally established executive

authorities, their interaction with each other, the level of responsibility of the state institutions, and upon their interaction with the respective societies, including their relationship to their non-governmental organizations.¹ And, of course, the effectiveness of security sector reforms depends upon the respective education and training.

Among the challenges faced by the South Caucasus states it is worth mentioning the involvement of the three states in ethno-political conflicts that have seriously affected – and still influence – their internal and external security. These unresolved conflicts retain an explosive potential, inhibit the creation of a common economic space, and preclude the establishment of an effective security system. Owing to the different perceptions upon conflict resolution by each party to the conflict, there is an absence of any perspective for regional cooperation even in the long term. In light of the current circumstances and the extant dynamics inside and beyond the region, broad democratic reforms cannot be expected.

The second common challenge to the South Caucasus states is related to the different levels of democratization and freedoms, as well as the speed and depth of democratic transformations in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. According to the most recent evaluation of the Freedom House (2013 Freedom in the World, 2013) and other independent organizations, Georgia and Armenia are considered partly-free countries. Azerbaijan is listed as a non-free country.

The third challenge is rooted in the existence of different types of security systems in the region. Armenia is a member of CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization), and in the meantime has strategic partnership with NATO; Georgia does not hide its desire to become a NATO member, and has the most advanced – of the three Caucasus states – relations with the North Atlantic Alliance. Azerbaijan has the same level of interaction with NATO as Armenia, and uses the Turkish Army as a model.

A fourth challenging piece of the "South Caucasus puzzle" is the mutually-exclusive strategic interests of the regional states, on the one hand, and the complete interdependence of their security systems and on the other. This has unfortunately a negative manifestation resulting in the absence of confidence between the states and the societies involved.

Hence, these factors – different goals and diversified and often mutually exclusive visions of the security environment by Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, the level of their democratization, the model of providing security, and the absence of confidence between the main actors of this area –

¹ According to the Armenia-NATO IPAP, among the specific national measures is mentioned the following: "Through close cooperation between MOD, Parliament and the Public Council and NGOs in the field, ensure active engagement of the Civil Society in the effective implementation of Defense reforms with appropriate assistance from NATO. Further development of role of Public Council is needed.

strongly influence the development of a sustainable, homogenous regional security system. Therefore, the intensity and effectiveness of security sector reforms in each state is also influenced.

Armenia's Security Threats Perceptions

Independent Armenia proclaimed the creation of a democratic state as its main priority, although its citizens had only vague idea about democracy in general and the specific model to be adopted in particular. Currently Armenia undoubtedly follows this initial aspiration as it now attempts to merge democratic transformation with its urgent security needs. However, amid democratization and broad reforms, Armenia finds itself in a very delicate situation: it must balance its security needs with its desire to implement a complementary foreign policy and to continue its democratic reforms, including those in the security sector. This is not an easy task, especially in light of current developments in the South Caucasus.

Armenia continues to face significant external and internal security threats. They are identified in the National Security Strategy (NSS) of Armenia, adopted in 2007.² The key issue among the several external threats to its national security relates directly to the unresolved Nagorno Karabakh conflict. In this regard, as one of the three parties³ to the conflict, Armenia needs to be ready to withstand any use of force from the Azerbaijani side and to provide strong support to the populations of both Armenia and the unrecognized Nagorno Karabakh Republic. The NSS also identifies the resolution of the blockade of the Armenian border by Turkey as involving the use of force. As a general external threat the use of force significantly influences Armenia's maneuvering room in regard to its participation, or non-participation, in political and military alliances. This point will be addressed in more detail later.

A third external security threat involves ethnic conflicts, internal unrest, and military activities in the neighboring states. Since the Russian-Georgian war in August, 2008, this dimension has increased in salience, especially in regard to current developments in Syria and around Iran. Armenia already faces some problems related to the flow of refugees of Armenian descent from Syria into Armenia.⁴ Furthermore, any military action against Iran also will directly affect the security systems of all state entities in the South Caucasus, especially those of Azerbaijan and Armenia.

² A new version of the National Security Strategy of Armenia is in progress.

³ The unrecognized Nagorno Karabakh Republic is a party to the conflict. Without its direct involvement in the negotiations it is impossible to reach any comprehensive peace agreement.

⁴ According to different data, the number of Syrian refugees in Armenia varies between 3,000 and 10,000; and about 400 refugees of Abkhazian descent fled to Abkhazia.

As external security threats Armenia's NSS also mentions the disruption of transit through the neighboring states,⁵ the weakening or ineffectiveness of strategic alliances, and terrorism and transnational crime. Armenia's isolation from regional projects and its energy dependence significantly – and negatively – influence the economic growth of the country and affect its internal stability. Economic stagnation is causing growing social dissatisfaction.

Against the background of the external threats, the internal security threats seem at a glance insignificant. However, the political system's fragility, insufficient levels of democratic consolidation, low level of scientific knowledge and education in general, as well as negative demographic trends, all exacerbate the impact of external security threats – and hence, decrease the level of Armenia's immunity and general stability. The developments in Armenia on the occasion of the parliamentary (May 2012) and presidential elections (February 2013) foreshadowed enhanced dissatisfaction and require further democratization and broad, sustained reforms in different spheres of life.

Moreover, the existence of serious external and internal security threats demands active participation of the security structures (the Army, Police, Ministry of Emergency Situations, and National Security Service) to maintain both internal and external security of the Armenian statehood and the Armenian society. The success of their defensive mission depends upon the effectiveness of reforms in the security sector. However, owing to the fact that the SSR covers mainly two realms, the Rule of Law and Democratization, it is obvious that, under current circumstances and against the background of the above-mentioned external threats, significant objective limitations restrict the implementation of the security sector reforms.

The Armenian Army and the Political-Military Balance in the Region

Analyzing two critical documents such as the National Security Strategy and the Military Doctrine, it is obvious that the unresolved Nagorno Karabakh conflict remains the core issue for Armenia's security. Against the background of the above-mentioned external threats, especially those involving the use of force, the role of the army in the Armenian security system is significant. It is not surprising that the prestige of the Army in Armenian society ranks highest among all governmental and non-governmental institutions.

⁵ In particular, the disruption of transit routes via Georgian territory especially after the August war of 2008 directly influence the economy of Armenia, which significantly depends on supplies from Russia. Thus, any improvement of the Russian-Georgian relations will be beneficial for Armenia. The broad economic sanctions against Iran also pose a direct threat to the Armenian economy.

The National Security Strategy of Armenia refers directly to the role of the Armenian army in the context of the unresolved Nagorno Karabakh conflict: "Azerbaijan's militant policy vis-à-vis Nagorno Karabakh and its readiness to opt for the military solution of the problem are direct threats to the security of Armenia. Under such circumstances, Armenia needs to have an army with increased defense capability to guarantee its security. The main priority of the army is to safeguard the inviolability of the borders of the Republic of Armenia and to be the guarantor of the physical safety of the peoples of Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh" (The National Security Strategy of the Republic of Armenia, 2007, p. 10). It should be noted that the defensive role of the army is growing not only because of the unprecedented militaristic rhetoric of Azerbaijani officials, but also because of the accelerated militarization of Azerbaijan.⁶ Armenia is involuntarily involved in an arms race with this neighboring state.⁷

The Armenian Military Doctrine (MD), in comparison to the Azerbaijani one, is defensive in nature: "It is aimed at ensuring the constant protection and security of the fundamental values of national security of the Republic of Armenia, the military security through the capabilities of the military security system of the Republic of Armenia and wider interoperability, and strengthening peace and stability in the region." (The Military Doctrine of Republic of Armenia, 2007)⁸

If we pose the question of a possible resumption of military actions in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, there are several factors that could constrain Azerbaijan. Most important is the existing political-military balance in the region and cognizance of unavoidably high material and human losses (including the high probability that destruction of oil and gas pipelines by the Armenian side will occur). A Nagorno Karabakh war will not be a Blitzkrieg: it will spill beyond the borders of Nagorno Karabakh and be immediately transformed from a local to an international conflict.

Furthermore, through the prism of Armenia's security, the principle of complementarity in the implementation of the national security strategy and foreign policy is critical: "Armenia's strategic partnership with Russia, adoption of a European model of development, mutually beneficial

⁶ Azerbaijan is visibly intensifying its military-technical cooperation with Israel. At the end of February, 2012, an agreement in the amount of \$ 1,6 billion was signed between the Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) and the Azerbaijani government. The volume of military contracts with Israel is higher than the volume of contracts with Azerbaijan's traditional partners, such as Ukraine and Turkey. However, as yet they do not influence the military capability of this South Caucasus state qualitatively.

⁷ According to the World Bank data for 2011, Armenia's military spending was about 4,0% of the GDP, and Azerbaijan's was about 4,8% of the GDP, reaching \$3,7 billion in 2013.

In February, 2013, President of Azerbaijan I. Aliyev stated that the military budget of the state for the current year will be \$ 3.7 billion. He mentioned once again that the Nagorno Karabakh conflict will be resolved by military means, if progress is not achieved in a reasonable period of time.

⁸ The new Military Doctrine of Azerbaijan was adopted on June 8, 2010, and is offensive in nature: "any political, military, economic, or other support provided to the Republic of Armenia and to the separatist regime created with Armenia's support on Azerbaijani territory with the aim of [securing] official recognition of the results of occupation will be interpreted as an act directed against the Azerbaijan Republic."

cooperation with Iran and the United States, membership in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), and its intensification of cooperation with the NATO alliance, all contribute to a consolidation of the potential of Armenia's policy of complementarity." (National Security Strategy of the Republic of Armenia, p. 15)

It must be emphasized that the full involvement of Armenia in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict has the effect of limiting its choices of strategic partners among the regional powers and /or the political-military alliances. In the meantime, in regard to the existing political-military balance in the South Caucasus, and in the area of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict in particular, and in line with the adopted policy of complementarity, the Armenian Armed Forces must be viewed as offering a unique example of a dualistic approach to security and national security strategy.

Armenia is the only South Caucasus state that is one of the founding members of CSTO, the political-military organization under the strong leadership of Russia. Armenia also participates in the CSTO's Rapid Reaction Collective Forces (RRCF).⁹ In parallel, since 1994, Armenia is developing a partnership with NATO. The policy of complementarity in regard to the Armenian Armed Forces was presented in the Strategic Defense Review. According to this document, "Armenia is and will remain a stable contributor to international security. This will be achieved within the framework of OSCE, CSTO, NATO and other UN Security Council mandated missions and international forces. It is anticipated that the country will continue to develop expeditionary forces of the AAF in the framework of CSTO and NATO/PfP. By 2015 it is foreseen that Armenia will be able to deploy abroad and sustain a contingent of up to battalion-size strength with relevant equipment, on a rotational basis, for participation in multinational operations." (Strategic Defence Review 2011-2015, 2011, p. 6) Of course, the involvement in joint operations contributes to the operability of the Armed Forces of Armenia.

In some circles of the Armenian military establishment the Armenian model of interaction with both CSTO and NATO is considered as a bridge between these two political-military structures. However, it should be acknowledged that in the current security situation, Armenia has few choices: it should have a relationship of strategic cooperation with Russia as one of its main security guarantors. In the meantime, Armenia is attempting to develop a stable partnership with NATO even without entertaining any visible aspiration for membership. In this regard there is a complete mutual understanding between Armenia and NATO.

MG Hayk Kotanjian, one of the 'fathers' of the Armenian National Security Strategy, argued that the developing the American NSS model plus the US military doctrine and the NATO-US model of

⁹ In regard to Armenia's participation in RRF there were discussions in the Parliament. The concern was that Armenia can be involved in a potential conflict in the neighboring states.

Strategic Defense Review needs to be assessed within the unavoidable realities of maintaining the essential complementarity of Armenia towards its strategic partnership with Russia and the CSTO (Kotanjian, 2012).

Armenia - Russia Strategic Cooperation

According to the NSS, Armenia "views its participation in this organization (CSTO – G.N.) as a component of its security, which is exercised through various levels of ties between its member states. The military component of the CSTO provides favorable conditions for the supply of military equipment to Armenia, which is a key priority. The intensification of the military component of the CSTO is aimed at the establishment of mechanisms for military cooperation and an effective way to exchange information and address international challenges, such as terrorism and trafficking in arms and drugs." (The National Security Strategy of the Republic of Armenia, 2007, p. 12)

The next paragraph of this document is related to Armenia-NATO relations: "Armenia's active participation in the PfP is important both in terms of the necessity for a significant level of relations with European security structures and for the development of bilateral relations with the United States and other allies, but also for Armenia's policy of European integration. Armenia is intensifying its dialogue with NATO, and is establishing compatible military units, such as the current peacekeeping battalion, capable of participating in NATO peacekeeping operations. Armenia is also part of NATO's Planning and Review process. The successful implementation of the PfP Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) will foster the greater modernization and efficiency of the Armenian defense system and will bring it in closer conformity with NATO standards." (The National Security Strategy of the Republic of Armenia, 2007, p. 12)

To analyze Armenia's maneuvering possibilities between these two different political-military systems with non-coinciding (at times even contradictory) strategic goals, it is necessary to address Russia's involvement in the regional processes and its role as one of the key elements of Armenian security.

Armenia has strong, multilevel strategic relations with Russia on the bilateral level. Russia's military presence plays a significant role in Armenian strategic thinking and vision of national security.¹⁰ It is viewed as one of the strong components of Armenian security and defense. According to Armenian

¹⁰ According to the Amendments to the bilateral Agreement on the status of Russian Military Base (1995), signed in August, 2010, Russia's lease was extended by 34 years, until 2044. It also enhanced Russia's role in Armenia's security significantly. The about 4,000 Russian troops stationed there will now not only protect the "interests of Russia," but also "ensure the security of Armenia" jointly with the Armenian army. Russia's military presence is irritating for Azerbaijan forcing it to be more cautious in regard to the possible resumption of military actions in the area of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.

Military Doctrine (2007), Armenia is establishing a strategic cooperation with the Russian Federation. "The Republic of Armenia establishes permanently acting combined forces with the Russian Federation, such as the joint formation of troops (Forces) of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia and the Russian Federation; 2) active and practical participation in the programs of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)." (The Military Doctrine of the Republic of Armenia, 2007)

Russia's military base is located on Armenian soil, near Gyumri, and it is a significant component in the Armenian defense system.¹¹ In accordance with the signed Protocol on the introduction of amendments to the Treaty on the Russian Military Base in Armenia (August 2010), not only the term of its presence was extended, but also the sphere of its geographic and strategic responsibility was enlarged. In particular, the new version of Article 3 of the Protocol states that, in addition to the function of defending the interests of the Russian Federation, security to the Republic of Armenia across the entire perimeter of its borders will be provided together with the Armenian armed forces. The real threat to Armenia can come only from aggressive actions by Azerbaijan directed against the Nagorno Karabakh Republic. The Armenian-Russian Protocol has actually put an end to speculations on how will Russia respond in case of a resumption of military actions in the area of confrontation: Russia will not participate in direct military operation. Here, several objective reasons are apparent:

- First, de jure the Nagorno Karabakh conflict is considered as an intrastate conflict;¹² thus, the membership of both Russia and Armenia in the Collective Security Treaty Organization will have no bearing on this particular case;

- Second, both Armenia and Azerbaijan are strategic partners of Russia, as the high-ranking Russian political leadership has frequently stressed;

- Third, after recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Russia, prefers to avoid further aggravation in its relations with the Western powers.

- Fourth, indirectly, Russia's policy of non-interference in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, if it again becomes overt, was confirmed during the visit of Russian President Dmitry Medvedev in Azerbaijan in September, 2010.¹³

¹¹ According to the Deputy Minister of Defense of Armenia, "Russian military base is the indivisible part of Armenia's security system, which is highlighted in a number of conceptual documents of the Republic of Armenia such as the National Security Strategy, Military Doctrine."

¹² Most probably, Russia's response will be similar to its response during the events in Kyrgyzstan, which reached their peak in June 2010.

¹³ "It is certainly very important for Russia to maintain stability here in the Caucasus. Russia is a Caucasian and Caspian nation. This is the main concept for building relations with our closest neighbor and friend, Azerbaijan. Thus, we are interested in maintaining peace and order in the region. The decision made during my visit to Armenia should be viewed

Nevertheless, an updated version of the Treaty on the Russian Military Base provides Armenia with more space for maneuvering. It stands in accordance with the Military Doctrine of Armenia, which states that Armenia is "a guarantor and supporter of security for the population of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic and the course of development it has chosen." (The Military Doctrine of the Republic of Armenia, 2007) Hence, theoretically the joint Armenian-Russian protection of the Armenian border provides the possibility for a greater maneuvering room for Armenia's armed forces to confront the expected and/ or potential aggression from the Azerbaijani side. According to Serzh Sargsyan, President of Armenia, this agreement has expanded a "sphere of geographical and strategic responsibility." Sargsyan added that "the activity of the Russian military base was until now confined to the external border of the former Soviet Union. That restriction has now been removed from the treaty text." Sargsyan also emphasized that the amended agreement commits Moscow to supply the Armenian armed forces with "modern and compatible weaponry and special military hardware." (Soyuzniki, 2012) There is, in other words, a strategic and broad cooperation between the two states.¹⁴

There was, and still is, speculation on this amendment in political circles and in the expert community in Armenia. However, it is obvious that the Armenian side has received more opportunities to confront the possible aggression from the Azerbaijani side either against Armenia itself or, most probably, against the non-recognized NKR.

Thus, in light of the unresolved conflict, and against the background of broad Russian military assistance and Armenia's membership in CSTO, it is understandable that the reformation of the Armenian army is mainly inspired by the Russian model. Armenia announced the creation of a professional, i.e. contract army as one of its goals in the military sector reform. However, in the current security and economic circumstances defined among other factors by a permanent threat from the Azerbaijani side to resume warfare and by the blockade of the Armenian-Turkish border by Turkey, Armenia cannot limit itself only to a professional army; it should have a conscript army as well. Seyran Ohanian, the Minister of Defense of Armenia, argued that "the economic and financial conditions, as well as regional instability complicate the process of modernization of the Armenian Armed Forces. However, acceleration of the development of the Armed Forces is our logical choice, one that is driven by the necessity to preserve the security of the state and our people, to promote and, if necessary, to enforce peace." (Ohanyan, 2011)

in that light – that of extending the agreement to maintain a Russian military base in Armenia. There aren't any hidden or other considerations. The base is intended to ensure peace and order, to preserve stability, and to lessen all the complications we have today."

¹⁴ There is little possibility that in case of the resumption of the military actions in the area of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, the CSTO member-states will provide support to Armenia. That is why the bilateral Russian-Armenian relations in the defense/ military sphere are of crucial importance.

Another sensitive aspect with regard to the Armenian Armed Forces is related to the adoption of an Alternative Service law. The Armenian Parliament approved the alternative service amendments in their first reading on March 18, 2013.

Armenia - NATO Strategic Partnership: Main Areas

As a consequence of the growing Russian-Azerbaijani partnership in a variety of spheres, including economic and military ones, as well as across a range of issues in regard to the Caspian Sea (ecology concerns, oil and gas pipelines policies, and the military presence in the Caspian Sea), Armenia is seeking to balance its growing political-military dependence on Russia by increasing its partnership with NATO. This aspect of Armenian defense policy, which is a priority for the government is receiving more support and understanding throughout the society.¹⁵

Partnership with NATO involves several themes. First of all, NATO is a partner in the field of strategy creation and capacity-building (mainly in military education). The Armenian NSS is based on the American NSS models of security thinking, which means that in comparison with the Russian NSS, it is goal-oriented, rather than threat oriented.

Armenia is gradually intensifying its relations with NATO through the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program, the PfP Planning and Review Process (PARP, currently in its third circle - 2008-2013), and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) – albeit without indicating its desire to become a NATO member. According to the most recent NATO-Armenia IPAP, which was agreed to in November 2011, "Armenia's IPAP is geared towards both strengthening political dialogue between NATO and Armenia as well as supporting Armenia's democratic and defense reforms. NATO agrees to support Armenia in achieving its reform goals by providing focused advice and assistance. Armenia also makes important contributions to NATO-led operations." The IPAP envisages the cooperation on democratic, institutional, and defense reforms that would bring the Armenian armed forces into conformity with NATO standards. The role of the PfP Planning and Review Process (PARP) in this process is very significant. According to official documents, "PARP is a core element of Armenia's cooperation with NATO, which is helping to develop the ability of its forces to work with NATO forces on operations." The key areas of

¹⁵ The attitude toward NATO is shifting in the Armenian society. Immediately after gaining its independence, NATO was viewed exclusively through the prism of Armenian-Turkish relations. Furthermore, Turkey's position and support of Azerbaijan during the war in Nagorno Karabakh, and a closure of the border with Armenia, contributed to a negative perception of NATO. In the course of time there has been a growing understanding of NATO's role in the European security system. Currently, according to recent sociological polls, supporters and opponents of broader cooperation with NATO are almost equal: approximately 30-35%.

cooperation are security cooperation, defense and security sector reforms, civil emergency planning, science and the environment, and public information. Achievements in these areas range in success. In 2011, the first Strategic Defense Review (SDR) was released. It provides insight into the process "through which the Armenian Armed Forces (AAF) are to be restructured to better meet current security needs and to be able to prevent and confront current and possible challenges" (Strategic Defence Review, 2011, p. 1).

Among the important areas of the Armenia-NATO partnership is peacekeeping. Since 2004, Armenia has participated in peacekeeping operations under NATO leadership in Kosovo (KFOR), in Afghanistan (since 2009 it is currently providing three platoons to ISAF), and within the framework of the US-led mission in Iraq (2005-2009).¹⁶ Armenia is cooperating with NATO and individual allies on facilitating the interoperability of the Armenian Peacekeeping Battalion. There are plans for it to become a brigade by 2015 with associated combat support and combat service support units working alongside with those of NATO countries. This brigade is considered as a basis for the Armenian professional army.

Another important area of Armenia-NATO cooperation is defense and security sector reform. It is worth mentioning that the understanding of "security sector reforms" is very limited in Armenian society. Although Armenia organizes annually "a week of NATO in Armenia," thereby attempting to raise public awareness of NATO and the country's cooperation with the Alliance, these efforts are not enough. Moreover, a NATO information centre which has officially opened in Yerevan in 2007 with the support of the Armenian government and NATO also does not work effectively. An absence of qualified experts and professionals in the field of SSR is apparent. The main source of SSR recommendations is thus the OSCE, which focuses mainly on work with the police.¹⁷ Another supplier of recommendations is the DCAF (Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces), which works with authorities and to a lesser extent with non-governmental organizations.

When discussing the challenges to the SSR, attention should be called to the existence of two categories of Armed Forces in Armenia. One – the larger one – is a conscript army, another – the smaller (however, rapidly developing) – is a professional-oriented one. As mentioned above, the reform of the first category is proving very difficult to carry out owing to the external security deficits and the need to maintain a large army. The second category currently includes the peacekeeper's battalion with a 100%- interoperability with NATO forces and is in the process of

¹⁶ In parallel, Armenia participates in all military trainings and maneuvers within the framework of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, including Collective Rapid Reaction Force.

¹⁷ One of the directions to improve the work of the police and to increase trust in the society toward this institution is related to the establishment of the community police. The positive results and shifts were visible during the recent presidential elections in February 2013.

enlargement. The main task now is to prepare the basis for the shift to the fully professional army, a task also made necessary owing to a growing demographic problem in Armenia.

This context is closely related to another challenge facing Armenia: how to maintain the professional army amid the economic crisis. It is obvious that the process of professionalization of the army will not occur quickly. As David Tonoyan has argued, the Armenian government consequently will continue reforming the Armed Forces "on the mixed principle – mandatory and contract – thereby gradually increasing the volume of the latter. Moreover, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict will neither impede or slow the rate and volume of defense-related reforms, rather the opposite. The enhancement of the fighting capacity of our Armed Forces, was and still is, our main goal. Military and educational reforms are one of the most important components of success of this process" (Mediamax, 2012).

A key priority for Armenia in the SSR is to ensure democratic control of the Armed Forces. Its participation in the Partnership Action Plan on Defense Institution Building serves to strengthen this control. Minister of Defence Seyran Ohanyan has argued: "As a result of a recent Strategic Defence Review conducted by a team from NATO, we have devised a mid-term plan to develop the Armed Forces of Armenia between 2011 and 2015, which guarantees defence management based on their democratic and civilian oversight."

According to a revised version of the IPAP (2011), which mainly aims to fulfill the goals of the Strategic Defense Review, "Armenia also intends to intensify practical and political co-operation with NATO in order to draw closer to the Alliance. The Partnership Action Plan on Defense Institution Building (PAP-DIB), the Planning and Review Process (PARP), and consultations with Allies will be important instruments in this regard." According to this document, "Armenia is committed to develop and strengthen democratic control and civilian oversight of its armed forces. [It] also intends to promote civilian participation in the development of defense and security policy. In this regard, Armenia places particular importance on encouraging civil society involvement in defense and security issues and improving the education and training of parliamentarians and their staffs. Armenia is also determined to ensure protection of constitutional and human rights within the Armed Forces and will work to improve education, strengthen independent human rights bodies, and bring disciplinary regulations in line with constitutional requirements." Armenia also aims "to improve the efficiency of its defense planning and budgeting system and to develop affordable, transparent and sustainable defense plans. It also aims to develop expertise in these fields to support the implementation of its Strategic Defense Review and to support improvements in the areas of command and control, equipment and logistics." (Individual Partnership Action Plan, 2011)

As previously mentioned, a professional military education is one of the key components for the successful implementation of the SSR. In this regard, the Armenian National Security Strategy "serves as a methodological and intellectual foundation for furthering Western "smart power"-oriented security thinking and for pursuing reforms in Armenia's strategic defense education system." IPAP has also allowed Armenia to fully involve NATO experts in the process of elaborating the reforms of the defense education system. Armenia has used this opportunity to draft, develop and implement the education and training system of modern armed forces. The Armenian Institute for National Strategic Studies has been transformed into the National Defense (Research) University, based on the U.S. model of military education. The main goal of the Armenian NDU is to modernize the country's professional military education system by making it compatible with the most effective educational models and the most advanced standards and technologies that incorporate processes of research, education, and training (for more details see Kotanjian, 2012, p. 83-90).

Conclusion

There is a clear understanding in the Armenian society at large of the necessity and urgency for implementation of a broad security sector reform, which is widely believed will significantly further the democratization of the country.

Nevertheless, there are several objective and subjective obstacles in the way. Among them is low level of transparency in regard to the military budget and spending: the government is recognizing this and is adopting structural reforms, but in the process to some extent ignoring the public factor and accountability processes. As a consequence of this approach another obstacle should be mentioned: low level of parliamentary and civilian control over the Armed Forces.¹⁸ This has taken place as a consequence of the lack of qualified experts in the field of security and defense, as well as a lack of confidence in representatives from the non-governmental sector.

Regional instability and the absence of regional cooperation constitute one of the most serious factors that prevent the full-scale implementation of the SSR in the regional states, and in Armenia in particular. However, even in the current situation in the South Caucasus it is possible to implement several programs on the bilateral level, thereby creating two-partner confidence-building relationships (Armenia-Georgia, Georgia-Azerbaijan) to transfer knowledge and procedures. In this

¹⁸ On May 29, 2013 debates on the annual report on the 2012 governmental budget took place in the Armenian Parliament. They touched also upon spending in the Security Sector. The sections related to the National Security Service, the Ministry of Emergency Situations, and the Police were open to the public; the debates on spending in the Armed Forces took place behind closed doors.

regard the experience of the V4 – Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary – could prove very valuable.

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