

# A Few Observations Made in the Domain of Armenia- NATO Relations

After including the principle of partnership into the list of security milestones, Armenia continues its fruitful cooperation with NATO. The Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) provides Armenia with a remarkable opportunity to develop and strengthen security components. In this regard, we would point out two spheres within IPAP actions, which though appearing on the political agenda of Armenia, still need more attention. The first is the public monitoring of the army and the second is strengthening crisis management and readiness capacities.

Both spheres share one thing in common: the idea of cooperation. Though it would have been more accurate to state that it is the lack of cooperation that presently brings these two spheres together,

## **1. Cooperation and harmony between the providers of national security and public monitoring**

Though the RA national security strategy has been commended by the Security Council and serves as a guideline for the necessary changes in the future, it should be noted that it does not reflect Armenia's commitment "to develop a National Security Strategy and a Defence Concept, defining the missions and roles of the armed forces and other security institutions.", as stated in the IPAP. It is unfortunate that there is no complete complementarity and harmony between the various security systems and institutions and this in a case, when a common security strategy does exist. It is worth noting that the RA Law on National Security Bodies provides a unique interpretation of national security and the mechanisms suggested for its implementation. Perhaps the tasks of defining a common approach to security issues, relevant legislative changes and reformation of the missions and role of various bodies are still ahead. Without these changes it will be quite challenging, if not practically impossible, to bring the concept of democratic control and civilian oversight of the armed forces to life. Civilian oversight means control over all kinds of armed forces. The current imperative is to create a unified legislative and applied approach to all those bodies that include armed forces in their structure. Only after all these measures are taken can the development and implementation of democratic control and civilian oversight mechanisms increase the RA security level.

## **2. Cooperation and harmony between various bodies responsible for crisis management**

Crisis management issues are clear, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has already undertaken concrete steps towards addressing those. However, the coordination of cooperation between various structures responsible for crisis management is rather complex, and there is still a lot to accomplish in this regard. What is really vital is for the various state institutions to stand above both different bureaucratic interests and risks of sharing the responsibility, and finally realize that during a crisis relevant counteractions will be more effective only if fully

coordinated and implemented cooperatively. Institutions in this sphere are far more diverse, than the others is the security sector, such as the Ministry of Defense, Police, National Security Service, Rescue Service, National Service of Seismic Protection, Ministry of Energy, the Central Bank, the Agency of Migration and Refugees, General Department Of Civil Aviation, Inspectorate of Hygiene and Anti-Epidemics, etc.

Taking into account the wide-spread global and local risks, as well as the geographic position of Armenia, the issue of creating a center and relevant procedures to coordinate the activities of the above-mentioned institutions and engaging in regular exercise become urgency.

### **What to do?**

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Unfortunately, without realization of the fact that the national security system of Armenia is a unified structure and that its individual components should cooperate and coordinate their activities, it will be impossible to ensure a high level of security. The first step is to move from a paper to a real action, which according to the IPAP “to develop a National Security Strategy and a Defence Concept, defining the missions and roles of the armed forces and other security institutions”. Afterwards it is necessary to revise all relevant legislative documents and fill in the gaps. Only after all these reforms will it become possible to increase the effectiveness of Armenia’s security through defining and enforcing democratic control and civilian oversight mechanisms.

A similar task should be carried out in the sphere of crisis management. Different institutions should be able to define mechanisms and procedures for the coordination of joint efforts. In addition, they should raise the level of effectiveness of these actions through regular exercise.

*The paper is elaborated based on the opinions passed by the participants of the discussion “Armenia in a year after launching IPAP: Do we have a new level of relations between Armenia and NATO?”, which took place on October 30, 2007. The roundtable discussion was attended by independent analysts, government officials, and representatives of the international organizations.*

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