CONNECTIONS

The Quarterly Journal

Volume XIV, Number 2 Spring 2015

Norms versus Interests: The Ambiguous Nature of NATO's Democratic Conditionality in Armenia

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This article represents a part of a larger study that examines the relevance of the Western (NATO) standards to the process of Armenian defense transformation. In particular, it pays close attention to the democratic values of the Alliance and the degree of their practical application by the partner country within the respective cooperation agenda. The interplay of strategic mutual interests as the motivating force for NATO's conditionality and Armenia's compliance is reviewed closely, as are the relevance of the language of communication and the varying interpretations of cooperation mechanisms. The article is an attempt to evaluate the status of democratic progress and, in particular, to assess the degree of democratic control over the armed forces in Armenia. The search for motives and reasons for democratic deficit or failure remains outside of the scope of this analysis.

Introduction

The brief review of the normative foundation of the Alliance as well as the context of its gradual development makes it possible to conclude that the mere intention of cooperation with NATO, let alone membership, preconditions a certain degree of national compliance, i.e. institutional transformation of a partner country in a number of defense related areas. A country entering into a partnership relationship with NATO would face fundamental requirements similar to the principles of Security Sector Reforms (SSR) that are predominantly focused on a deep democratic transformation of defense and military institutions.

Sharing the claim that the Alliance consistently promotes norms of transparency and democratic control of the armed forces, we still struggle to find the deep and coherent elaboration of political criteria, whereas the practical-military dimension of criteria is better structured under the concept of "force interoperability" with the mechanisms provided by The Partnership for Peace (PFP) and the Individual Partnership Programme

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(IPP).[1] Generally, NATO requirements and standards are better defined politically than practical-procedurally and are based on the common acknowledgement of the major role of democratic institutions in running the country. Applied to the field of defense and military, it essentially rests upon the primacy of the democratic control of military forces and the wide application of SSR to establish Western standards of governance in defense field.

Though the Alliance possesses the mechanisms of monitoring and evaluating the degree of national compliance via the Planning and Review Process (PARP) and MAP (ANP) progress reports, the existing framework of cooperation and partnerships (PFP) still leaves enough space for national authorities to decide for themselves on the speed and depth of cooperation and does not rule out actions that run against the spirit of compliance (free riding). This ambiguity, generated from the very first steps of launching a partnership framework, is in fact an inherent challenge of its normative nature with a high likelihood of practical repercussions. The feature of "hollowed conditionality" might be explained by the desire of "founding fathers" to assist countries that aspired to NATO membership, but also to create architecture perfectly suitable to those countries that do not seek membership and would like to "contribute to Euro-Atlantic security without compromising their own distinct foreign and security policies."[2] The conditions for the second category of countries theoretically must be the same as for those countries that, despite their desire to join the Alliance, did not get the explicit guarantees of imminent accession.

The example of the South Caucasus countries speaks for the existence of two sets of partner nations for NATO: those interested in full membership (Georgia), and those interested in maintaining some kind of cooperation with the Alliance due to various internal or external interests (Armenia and Azerbaijan).[3] Similar to other partner countries, all three Caucasian republics enjoy PFP as a major tool for developing deep political and military cooperation with NATO. Since neither country is provided the prospective of membership (Georgia was not admitted to MAP in 2008), the question of how to provide stronger incentives for cooperation becomes very hard to answer. In this case, some authors ask what added value the Alliance provides, and out of the 1600 PFP activities, they struggle to identify "carrots" other than membership (know-how, training, expertise, skills) strong enough to ensure compliance.[4]

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1 Marina Caparini, "Security Sector Reform and NATO and EU Enlargement," in *SIPRI Yearbook 2003: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 260, http://www09.sipri.org/yearbook/2003/files/SIPRIYB0307.pdf.

2 Robert Simmons, "Ten Years of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council: A Personal Reflection," *NATO Review – Partnerships: Old and New*, 1 April 2007, available at www.nato.int/docu/review/2007/Partnerships_Old_New/10_years_NATO_Atlantic_council/EN/index.htm (accessed 9 September 2014).

3 Alberto Priego, "NATO Cooperation towards South Caucasus," *Caucasian Review of International Affairs* 2:1 (2008): 50.

4 Barbora Marônková, "NATO's Partnerships Before and After the Chicago Summit," in *PANORAMA of Global Security Environment*, ed. Marian Majer, Róbert Ondrejcsák and

Given the risk of a partner country's partial compliance or even free-riding, the unique PFP platform of practical military cooperation provides additional impetus for the creation of two-tiered armed forces: one that meets NATO standards and is interoperable, and another based on an old model and usually much larger than the former.[5] Consequently, if evidence of such national behavior is found, the underlying motives of states (and actors representing state and institutions) must be studied thoroughly, with specific emphasis on the convergence of strategic interests of the state and the Alliance, domestic agenda priorities and the potential benefits of rhetorical actions for local stakeholders.

Basics of Influence: NATO's Interests in the Region and Mechanisms of Cooperation

This chapter shall provide a brief overview of the complex nature of interests the Alliance pursues regarding the South Caucasus (SC) region. We stress the importance of periodic limitation to our study and concentrate on the basic events that happened within the time span of 2004–2012. The main emphasis at this stage will be placed on general political messages NATO sent to the region and a brief review of existing practical leverage to secure the declared interests of the Alliance in the region.

The Alliance's Interests in the South Caucasus Region

One of the key conclusions drawn from the analysis of the Alliance's policy of conditionality was that the success of conditionality, i.e. the degree of national compliance, is strongly contingent upon the strategic interest of the Alliance towards a partner country and, respectively, towards the credible implementation of commitments. Thus, it becomes highly relevant to know how NATO viewed the region in the aforementioned period, and what role the specific countries played within the strategic agenda of the Alliance.

In 2002, then-Secretary General Lord Robertson stated that the SC region was of no specific relevance to the Alliance.[6] This is understandable, given that at the time, all the SC republics were engaged in a broader PFP framework and no specific political course was identified until the Prague Summit in 2002 (Georgia voiced its desire to become a member), which would unequivocally confirm any nation's major interest to join NATO. Just one year later the same Secretary General took a comprehensive trip, during which he visited the capitals of all three countries, meeting presidents and defense

Vladimír Tarasovič (Bratislava: Center for European and North Atlantic Affairs [CENAA], 2012), 146, 148, http://cenaa.org/analysis/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Maronkova_final.pdf.

5 Caparini, "Security Sector Reform," 246.

6 Martin Malek, "NATO and the South Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia on Different Tracks," *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* 7:3 (2008): 30.

ministers and publicly stating the importance of the region for the security of Europe.[7] The growing importance of the region to the Alliance should not be regarded in isolation from the global context, and the practical steps that followed speak clearly for that. The Istanbul Summit in 2004 elevated the partnerships with Caucasus and Central Asian countries to a top priority and led to the creation of the position of the Secretary General's Special Representatives in both regions.[8] In 2003 NATO took a major role in ISAF operations, took over the command of forces and actively invited partner nations to contribute to operations either by deploying forces or through other contributions. The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) echoes this in the following statement:

> The growing size and significance of NATO's operation in Afghanistan has increased both NATO's emphasis on developing PfP countries' capabilities for participating in NATO military operations and the strategic importance of the Caucasus and Central Asian PfP countries to NATO, given their proximity to Afghanistan.[9]

This implies that ISAF operations and the geographic proximity of SC countries to Central Asia provided an additional logistical capacity (airlift and railway) for coalition supplies to Afghanistan. Azerbaijan and Armenia's proximity to Iran also played a certain role in forming the Alliance's strategic attitude.[10] Politically it was accompanied by the appointment of two liaison officers in both regions, whose main mission was to work daily with local defense and other state institutions and to assist the Special Representative in developing guidelines with regard to NATO's overall strategy towards the Caucasus and Central Asia. It should also be noted that over time, all the SC countries joined the U.S. military operation in Iraq by sending troops, thus creating an additional level of bilateral military cooperation. As recognition of these efforts, the next Secretary General of NATO, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, visited Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan on 4 and 5 November 2004 and specifically emphasized the importance of democratic governance in Tbilisi, whereas the prospects of peaceful resolution to the Nagorno-Karabakh con-

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7 Priego, "NATO Cooperation," 52–53; "NATO Secretary General to Travel to Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan," NATO, Press Release (2003)046 046, 13 May 2003, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_20003.htm.

8 Simon Schmidt, *NATO and the South Caucasus: An Analysis of Cooperative Activities within the IPAP Framework in the South Caucasus Partner Countries* (Yerevan: International Center for Human Development, ICHD, 2012), 2.

9 *NATO Partnerships: DOD Needs to Assess US Assistance in Response to Changes to the Partnership for Peace Program*, GAO-10-1015, Report to the Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate (Washington D.C.: United States Government Accountability Office, 2010), 3, 17, http://www.gao.gov/assets/320/310716.pdf.

10 Svante Cornell, "NATO's Role in South Caucasus Regional Security," *Turkish Foreign Policy Quarterly* 3:2 (2004): 130; Vladimir Socor, "NATO Prospects in the South Caucasus" (contribution to "Building Stability and Security in the South Caucasus: Multilateral Security and the Role of NATO" on the occasion of the NATO Summit 2004, Central-Asia Caucasus Institute, School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, 2004), 2.

flict were discussed in Baku and Yerevan.[11] During these visits, the growing menace of global terrorism and transnational crime was also highlighted as well as the potential contribution of the region to European energy security. Basically, the South Caucasus linked with Central Asia has been recognized as an important transit route for energy resources and "a bulwark against drug smuggling and extremist organizations."[12] Georgia's desire to join the Alliance created an additional dimension of political linkage to the region, which in turn pushed for stronger military reforms within commonly accepted norms of democratic governance. As the NATO Parliamentary Assembly's report states, the open door policy and the framework of military cooperation in the region had to be regarded as assistance to national armed forces to develop "in a manner consistent with democratic governance."[13]

Even though the primary political objective of NATO in South Caucasus has been the overall stability of the region, the potential involvement of the Alliance in the resolution of regional conflicts (Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia) has been vehemently denied. During the aforementioned visits, the statements and speeches of Secretary Generals have always stressed the priority of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) engagement in facilitating possible solutions, leaving NATO no viable option in this regard. The Riga Summit Declaration in 2006 demanded a peaceful solution of ethno-territorial conflicts in the region, yet did not explicitly define the format or desired model of said solution.[14] During another instance in 2006, the possibility of sending NATO peacekeeping forces to the Caucasus was explicitly ruled out by the Chairman of the Alliance's Military Committee, General Raymon Henault.[15] It seems that a general consensus—one that does not foresee any serious political or military action—has been reached among NATO members, aimed at increasing NATO's peacekeeping role in the region. Nonetheless, NATO was able to agree on one of the fundamental principles of conflict resolution, favoring the importance of territorial integrity, which was particularly emphasized during the Chicago Summit in 2102, causing the Armenian delegation to decrease the level of its participation.[16]

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[11] "Caucasus visit focuses on partnership," NATO, 3 November 2004, available at www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_20669.htm.

[12] "NATO's Role in South Caucasus Region, " Committee Report 168 DSCFC 06 E, NATO Parliamentary Assembly, 2006, 4, available at www.nato-pa.int/Default.asp?SHORTCUT=998.

[13] Ibid., para. 4 and 5.

[14] "Riga Summit Declaration," NATO Press Releases, 29 November 2006, para. 39 and 43, available at http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2006/p06-150e.htm.

[15] Malek, "NATO and the South Caucasus," 49.

[16] "Chicago Summit Declaration," Press Release (2012) 062, 20 May 2012, para. 47, available at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_87593.htm?mode=pressrelease; see also Richard Giragosian, Zaur Shiriyev and Kornely Kakachia, "Security Perceptions: The Views from Armenia, Azerbaijan & Georgia," in *The South Caucasus 2018: Facts, Trends, Future Scenarios* (Tbilisi: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2013), 205–206, http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_35353-1522-35-30.pdf?130913081416.

The decisions made public during the Summit represent a logical continuation of the strategic policy review initiated shortly before the Lisbon Summit two years ago. The significant increase of NATO's dependency on military forces and material/financial donations of partner-nations in Afghanistan and Kosovo, in light of serious defense budget cuts by member states, forced the Alliance to assign the Partnership Concept much more weight. The Strategic Concept adopted at the Lisbon Summit in 2010 specifies the role of the partnership as preparing interested nations for membership.[17] Interestingly, however, it also specifies with great clarity that it will develop existing partnerships "while preserving their specificity."[18] The messages of the Chicago Summit in May 2012 reiterated the need for keeping flexible formats of partnerships. Most importantly, they went a step further and exemplified the areas where the flexible formats no longer posed impediments to the deepened cooperation in an operational context (including NATO Response Force – NRF), training and exercises.[19] Even though the declaration did not provide any specific details on Armenia and Azerbaijan (except the reiteration of Georgia's membership aspirations), the signals sent were clear enough to indicate that the military-operational dimension of cooperation lies at core of the Alliance's interest in those countries that are not pursuing membership. Evidently, Armenia and Azerbaijan fall under this category.

The U.S., representing the most potent member of the Alliance, traditionally pursued the general objectives of regional stability and the promotion of democratic transformation. Within this general pattern, U.S. interests were initially "non-country-specific."[20] The radical shift of American policy toward addressing the global threat of terrorism and related risks also caused changes in the national approach to the Caucasus region. As Vladimir Socor highlights, U.S. regional policy disregarded traditional (military) threats and put great emphasis on addressing international terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), arms and drug smuggling.[21] Within this context and in light of the tremendous increase of the Caspian states' capacity to export energy sources to Europe, the role of each country in the South Caucasus became much more articulated. The 2010 Report by the Congressional Research Service identifies Azerbaijan as an important energy supplier, Georgia as a model for implementing democratic reforms in post-Soviet area and a "key conduit through which Caspian Basin energy resources

[17] "NATO – Active Engagement, Modern Defence – Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation Adopted by Heads of State and Government in Lisbon," *NATO*, 19 November 2010, para. 29, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68580.htm.

[18] Ibid., para. 30.

[19] "Chicago Summit Declaration," para. 22.

[20] James Nixey, "The South Caucasus: Drama on Three Stages," in *America and a Changed World: A Question of Leadership* (London: Robin Niblett, 2010), 126, http://edoc.bibliothek.uni-halle.de/servlets/MCRFileNodeServlet/HALCoRe_derivate_00005179/CH_16492_us0510_nixey.pdf.

[21] Socor, "NATO Prospects in the South Caucasus," 3.

flow to the West."[22] Armenia received comparably little recognition in the document and is mentioned within the general context of international crime, conflict resolution in Nagorno-Karabakh and the desirability of improved relations with Turkey. Naturally, the U.S. global security interests played a key role in initiating security and military cooperation with all three countries. The intensive military programs launched in the region from 2003 onwards were nevertheless intended to support the general process of domestic political reforms. As former Assistant Secretary of State Elizabeth Jones stated in 2003, the results of U.S. assistance are that "as each day passes, the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus are becoming better equipped, better trained and better coordinated" and all efforts are integrated with programs to enhance human rights and political reforms.[23] The continuity of said policy and objectives is apparent in the Congressional Budget Justification documents for foreign operations from 2004 to 2012, turning South Caucasus into the largest financial recipient of U.S. aid (about one fifth of all aid to Eurasia).[24]

On 2 April 2009, in an article in *Der Spiegel* the German Foreign Minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, explained that the core of NATO interests embraced the trinity of "goods": the good for the candidate country, good for NATO and good for pan-European security.[25] It is symptomatic of how fast the cancellation of the NATO-Russian Council (a reaction to Georgia-Russia War in 2008) was lifted in March 2009.[26] It also exemplifies how the interests of an aspiring country can be overruled by the interests of the Alliance, namely by key members of the Alliance. The German ambassador to NATO, for instance, blatantly called the decision to freeze relations with Russia "stupid."[27] The decision to restore the Council's work was explained by existing common interests with Russia in Afghanistan and in areas of arms control and disarmament, WMDs, terrorism, piracy and drug trafficking.[28] This example testifies to the existence of a significant disparity inside the wide spectrum of the Alliance's interests. It also makes clear that despite the political commitment to admit Georgia as a member, which increased NATO's political ties to the region, the importance of strategic calculation should never be underestimated.

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[22] Jim Nichol, *Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia: Security Issues and Implications for U.S. Interests*, CRS Report for Congress (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2010), 32–33.

[23] Ibid., 31–32.

[24] Ibid., 42.

[25] Frank-Walter Steinmeier, "Germany's Foreign Minister on NATO: 'We Face New Threats and Challenges,'" *Der Spiegel*, 2 April 2009, available at www.spiegel.de/international/europe/germany-s-foreign-minister-on-nato-we-face-new-threats-and-challenges-a-616969.html.

[26] Ahto Lobjakas, "NATO Lacks the Stomach for South Caucasus Fight," *Caucasus Analytical Digest* 5 (2009): 3.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Archil Gegeshidze, "Post-War Georgia: Resetting Euro-Atlantic Aspirations?" *Caucasus Analytical Digest* 5 (2009): 8.

As Jamie Shea argues, all partnerships can only be strengthened if shared security interests persist that further "common or at least compatible value systems."[29] Since the tendency of rapidly diminishing defense spending among NATO members (without prior consultations) has become a problem and gradually amounted to serious capability shortages, the integration of partners into the planning and command structures to participate in the "sharp end of operation" with the possibility of "a full seat at the NATO table" is a decision NATO leadership apparently favors for its respective partner nations.[30] Here, we clearly see the area of mutual benefits, where not only Georgia, but also Armenia and Azerbaijan would find serious incentives to respond to the Alliance's interests and deepen their cooperation programs.

NATO and Defense Transformation in Armenia

It has been often said that the turning point in relationships between the NATO and SC countries was the inauguration of the IPAP. Although all the countries were already engaged in PARP and IPP formats long before, the real political push and the changes on the ground only became visible in 2004 when Georgia entered the IPAP and Armenia and Azerbaijan joined the following year. At that time the overall conditions of the defense and security sectors in all three countries could largely be described as heavily affected by Soviet legacy. Many reports testify that the entire hierarchy of values was constructed in such a way that the security of the state was given much higher priority than that of the individual, while defense institutions featured

> over-centralized decision-making system on strategic and even operative issues, a hierarchy which excluded civilian involvement in formulating, controlling and implementing defense missions, an arbitrary system of resource allocation, the absence of transparency to the public and public representatives, and a poor capacity to achieve medium and long-term planning.[31]

The appalling deficits of defense institutions and armed forces could certainly be attributed to the existing gaps in democratic governance. The tendency from 2004 to 2005 showed some signs of worsening, allowing Freedom House to attest to Armenia's weak quality of governance, the prevalence of vested interests within power structures and the insufficient level of law enforcement and monitoring.[32] Not surprisingly, the

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[29] Jamie Shea, "Keeping NATO Relevant," *Carnegie Europe Policy Outlook*, 19 April 2012, available at http://carnegieendowment.org/files/keeping_nato_relevant.pdf.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Gagik Avagyan and Duncan Hiscock, *Security Sector Reform in Armenia* (London: Safeworld, 2005), 40; Philipp Fluri and Hari Bucur-Marcu, *Partnership Action Plan for Defence Institution Building: Country Profiles and Needs Assessments for Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova* (Geneva and Bucharest: Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2007), 5, www.dcaf.ch/content/download/35356/525929/version/1/file/bm_pap-dib_profiles 2007.pdf.

[32] "Nations in Transit: Armenia 2004," Freedom House, 2004, available at https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2004/armenia.

political control of the armed forces, represented by the oversight function of the national parliament and the civilian leadership of the defense ministry, raised serious questions. The defense system was highly militarized and demonstrated serious signs of corruption and financial interests.[33]

NATO in National Strategic Agenda: The Political Purpose of Cooperation and Defense Reforms

This section aims to shed light on the degree of political influence NATO exerted in Armenia from 2004 to 2012 by assessing how successful it was in promoting Euro-Atlantic cooperation as the crucial foreign policy objective of the national agenda. Additionally, we look at how the key principles of democratic control of the defense and military were promoted and consequently reflected in reality.

NATO in Armenia's Strategic Agenda

The regional approach was a major element of the Alliance's policy towards the South Caucasus. According to First Deputy Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan, the "indivisibility of the region" developed by the Alliance is a distinctive platform that serves it well for the formulation of individual policy towards each country.[34] The existing security situation in the region is indeed very complex and events in any country could have a significant impact on the others. From this perspective, the effects of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict must once again be highlighted. Said conflict heavily influenced the security culture and domestic politics in Armenia and allowed political leaders from Nagorno-Karabakh to gain power in Armenia in the late 90s, consolidate power and eventually "capture the Armenian presidency" by Robert Kocharyan (president of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic from 1994 to 1998) in 1998.[35] Since then, the security of the breakaway region became even more an integral part of Armenian security policy considerations and determined the very nature of the political structure and decision making. Thus, it was no surprise that not only defense but the entire political culture was "driven by a deeper trend of insecurity and militarization," often resulting in the predominance of primitive politics.[36] Another factor that played a crucial role in forming Armenia's security perceptions is the traditional view that regards Turkey as the main enemy in the context of a possible confrontation with Azerbaijan. As Deputy Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan stressed in an interview, Armenia's security perceptions are strongly influenced by the (negative) role Turkey plays in the region and effectively has an impact on Armenia's policy towards NATO as well as on the relevance of the

[33] Avagyan and Hiscock, *Security Sector Reform in Armenia*, 1.

[34] Author's interview with the First Deputy Minister of Defense of Armenia Mr. Davit Tonoyan, 30 July 2014.

[35] Richard Giragosian, "The Political Dimension: Armenian Perspective," in *The South Caucasus 2018*, 12, http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_35353-1522-1-30.pdf?130910135923.

[36] Ibid., 20.

Russian factor for the country.[37] Despite these reservations, the growing size of the Alliance and the global scale of operations it assumed raised its political relevance for Armenia and caused the policy change. Already in 2003 the Armenian foreign ministry voiced its desire to "ensure its security by developing the widest possible international ties, especially with the world's "most influential" security body."[38] Similarly, the NATO-affiliated *Baltic Defence Review* reported that although the very strategic goal of counterbalancing the Turkish-Azerbaijani alliance was met by the Russian military presence in the country, deepening cooperation with NATO was regarded as very beneficial and served the following objectives:[39]

- To stimulate political dialogue on international security issues
- To create units interoperable with NATO and able to participate in international peacekeeping missions
- To use PFP programs to reform the Armenian armed forces
- To enhance bilateral military-political ties with NATO member and partner countries.

It is evident that Yerevan identified that both multilateral as well bilateral frameworks of cooperation served a very practical interest of institutional reforms of defense and the military transformation along with a general interest of strategic security balance. The National Security Strategy (NSS), which is the guideline for consequent actions, formulates the intensification of cooperation with NATO as an integral part of the policy of "complementarity."[40] This notion is largely referred to as the ability of the country to pursue multi-vector foreign and security policies with the aim to cover all directions that promise certain potential benefits. The benefits of the complementarity policy in the context of NATO would mean better international political-military linkages and better security guarantees for Armenia. The statements of Presidents Robert Kocharyan and Serzh Sargsyan, who shared the view that "joining NATO would barely improve country's security, and affect its relations with neighboring countries," must be taken into account.[41] In line with these claims, some sources also argue that the European Union (EU) is much more relevant for Armenia in the long run to lessen its dependency on Russia.[42] However, the considerable amount of normative and policy evidence suggests that these and similar statements seem to be mostly directed towards a Russian audience and more so perform the function of rhetorical pacification of a major

[37] Author's interview with the First Deputy Minister of Defense of Armenia Mr. Davit Tonoyan.
[38] Nichol, *Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia*, 25.
[39] Arthur Aghabekyan, "National Security Policy and Defence Structures' Development Programme of Armenia," *Baltic Defence Review* 3 (2003): 26.
[40] "National Security Strategy," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, 26 January 2007, 10, http://www.mfa.am/u_files/file/doctrine/Doctrineeng.pdf.
[41] Malek, "NATO and the South Caucasus," 31.
[42] David S. Yost, "Armenian Perceptions of International Security in the South Caucasus," *NATO Defence College Research Paper* 32 (2007): 2–3.

ally rather than of the real policy imperative. A short excerpt from an IPAP document clarifies that the national desire of "full integration into European structures and institutions" is accepted as "Armenia's main foreign policy objective."[43]

It would be reasonable to recall the concerns expressed in the context of the potential added value of cooperation with NATO to those countries that do not envisage membership as the ultimate strategic goal of cooperation. This question is especially relevant in cases in which the Alliance has not identified its strategic interest and, as in the case of Armenia, seems to pay less attention to the country (whereas Azerbaijan and Georgia enjoy large energy resources and transport potential).[44] Potential benefits of such cooperation are generally referred to as the increased capacity of political negotiations, access to training and technical assistance programs, increased interoperability, stimulation of defense reforms and the ability to "counter external pressures from other countries."[45] It seems that said opportunities exactly matched the Armenian expectations, motivating the political leadership to intensify its ties with the Alliance. The NATO Parliamentary Assembly Report (NPAR) documents the official position of the Armenian authorities who reiterated the vital importance of NATO to the country's security interests.[46] It becomes apparent that due to the small size and very limited resources of the country, the national authorities realized the necessity of broadening the instruments of national security policy making. According to former Armenian Foreign Minister Vardan Oskanyan (whose view is shared by many officials), with only two borders open, flexibility in foreign relations becomes critical and a sound basis for conducting foreign policy.[47] Understandably, the partnership aspirations towards NATO are formulated in a way as not to endanger the existing military ties with Russia. Nevertheless, the priority of strengthening relationships with the Alliance became apparent even in the rhetoric of the country's top officials. Thus, for instance, in 2008 President Serzh Sargisyan stressed that Armenia's top foreign security priority was the friendly relations with Russia and good relations with the United States and NATO, so that the latter does not jeopardize the former.[48]

The period between 2007 and 2010 is marked by a significant increase of political consultations at various levels between Yerevan and Brussels. Both the president of Armenia as well as the defense and foreign ministers visited the NATO headquarters, while the Special Representative visited Yerevan for bilateral consultations at least twice

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[43] Aghasi Yenokyan, "Country Study – Armenia," in *Defence Institution Building: Country Profiles and Needs Assessments for Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova – Background Materials*, ed. Fluri Philipp and Viorel Cibotaru (Geneva: Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2008), 26.

[44] Avagyan and Hiscock, *Security Sector Reform*, 10.

[45] *NATO Partnerships*, 13.

[46] "NATO's Role in South Caucasus Region," para. 47.

[47] Ibid., para. 40.

[48] Nichol, *Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia*, 5.

a year.[49] The regularity of meetings on all levels has increased significantly and can be easily monitored by official sources of the respective ministries and the Alliance. According to the Armenian Mission to NATO, NATO officials conduct 9 to 12 official visits to Yerevan each year, while Armenian officials take 11 to 16 trips to Brussels.[50] Thus, summarizing the strategic-political aspect of the relations developed towards NATO, it can be said that the heavy reliance on Russian military guarantees and the close political linkage to Moscow did not prevent the Armenian government from seeking a beneficial cooperation with the Alliance. Further, since Russia itself had institutionalized its contacts with NATO, there was no good reason not to do the same. As some sources rightly indicate, the motivating factors for the Armenian authorities to join the PFP framework were, above all, the fear of falling behind its neighbors, Georgia and Azerbaijan, and the necessity to be informed about the material aid and training provided to Azerbaijan.[51]

The Purpose of Cooperation and Defense Reforms

The formulation of clear objectives, such as expected benefits from NATO's cooperation formats, has found its place in Armenia's strategic documents. For instance the National Security Strategy, adopted in 2007, pursues deeper connections to European security structures, higher compatibility of forces with NATO forces and modernization of the armed forces in "closer conformity with the defense systems of advanced states, including their forces."[52] On the one hand, the term "modernization" can be viewed in terms of technical upgrades and innovations, but also can refer to reforms of the general defense system and military. The latter, however, implies much deeper transformational processes (institutional, procedural, structural, etc.) than the technical aspect of modernization. For example, the stronger scope of military interoperability (PARP) was enlarged in 2005 with a stronger emphasis on institutional reforms (IPAP), while the NPAR from 2007 confirms this claim.[53] The evidence, however, speaks more for the prevalence of practical benefits of force interoperability and related standards. Particularly the active engagement of Armenia in NATO-led operations (in Kosovo and Afghanistan) since 2004 pushed for more intensive bilateral military cooperation with key allied nations such as the U.S., Germany, France, Greece and Italy.[54] This naturally

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[49] Schmidt, *NATO and the South Caucasus*, 3; "Viewing NATO from the South Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia," Committee Report 167DSCFC07EBIS, NATO Parliamentary Assembly, 2007, para. 12, available at http://www.nato-pa.int/default.asp?SHORTCUT=1283.

[50] Author's interview with Mr. Mher Israelyan, Defence Advisor at Armenian Mission to NATO, 17 March 2013.

[51] Nichol, *Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia*, 25.

[52] "National Security Strategy," 11–12.

[53] "Viewing NATO from the South Caucasus," para. 35, 36.

[54] Richard Giragosian, "Armenian Military & Security Policy: Regaining a Strategic Balance," Regional Studies Center, 6 December 2012, 1, available at http://regional-studies.org/images/documents/publications/journals/yerevak/Yerevak_article_ENG_11.12.pdf.

brought the military-technical aspect to the forefront and overshadowed other aspects of cooperation.

Armenian authorities recognized the existing misbalance, yet it seemed that this was exactly what they were expecting. The NPAR from 2006 testifies that the NATO-PA delegation identified a broader consensus among political parties in Armenia that were more interested in the practical benefits of cooperation, such as political dialogue and achieving "certain standards."[55] This stance is further strengthened by Deputy Minister Davit Tonoyan, who believes that the initial weight of "democratization" of the defense sector and democratic values have been replaced by a heavier emphasis on the practical benefits of cooperation related to the national participation in NATO-led operations and the valuable expertise predominantly provided by member states and not the Alliance as an organization.[56] Thus, a clear distinction must be made between the value of membership and the value of cooperation for Armenia. The benefits of cooperation are tangible, identifiable and very much appreciated. Concerning the value of membership, there is no evidence of wider discussion within the government. The officials who openly support the idea of NATO membership seem to create serious discomfort for the Armenian leadership. The case of National Assembly Speaker Artur Baghdasaryan, who in a *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* interview in 2006 outlined the strategic goals of Armenian membership in the EU and NATO, is very much telling, as he was forced to step down and withdraw his party ("Orinats Yerkir") from the government.[57] As long as the issue of membership is off table, the open support of cooperation activities with NATO and its key member states seems much less problematic. For instance, in July 2011, while discussing IPAP implementation, Armenian and U.S. officials agreed to hold joint exercises in 2012 and expand the "spheres of cooperation" that, according to U.S. officials, did not pose any obstacles to Armenia's military pact with Russia.[58]

It is crucial to understand how Armenian authorities understand the notions of defense and institutional reforms. The reasons are simple, namely, the fact that the views they share are directly reproduced into national commitments embedded in bilateral documents (IPAP or PARP). This, in turn, is acknowledged by NATO representatives as a national obligation to pursue reforms in line with agreements made with the Alliance.[59] As already stated, the sequential introduction of each new cooperation format was designed in a way that enlarged and complemented the existing ones, such that the cooperation seemed beneficial. Thus, it is no surprise that the PARP was increasingly used for addressing the institutional aspects of the defense reforms, and in this particular area supplemented by PAP-DIP, which itself proved instrumental in shaping the IPAP format. In fact, they are fully compatible and strengthen each other in achieving the de-

[55] "NATO's Role in South Caucasus," para. 41.
[56] Author's interview with the First Deputy Minister of Defense of Armenia Mr. Davit Tonoyan.
[57] Malek, "NATO and the South Caucasus," 32.
[58] Emil Danielyan, "Armenia Plans More NATO-Backed Defense Reforms," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 8:153 (2011), available at www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=38299&no_cache=1#.VBMty_mSy08.
[59] "Viewing NATO from the South Caucasus," para. 4.

fined objectives.[60] Interestingly, the rare examples of local expertise in Armenian-NATO relations reveal a common terminological tradition of SSR and draw a kind of separating line between the notions of *democratic* and *defense* reforms. For example, a report produced by the Centre for European and North Atlantic Affairs (CENAA) mentions the Armenian IPAP as an important tool for facilitating "democratic and defence reforms." NATO is regarded here as key provider of assistance and advice in democratic, institutional and defense reforms "that would bring the Armenian armed forces into conformity with NATO standards."[61] The emphasis on armed forces and NATO standards, as well as a repetitive contextual disconnection of defense, institutional and democratic reforms, points towards a peculiar understanding (intentional or not) of defense reforms as the major means of primarily achieving military-technical interoperability of forces.

The peculiarity of the contextual understanding of IPAP's mission is further supported by the Armenian perception of the PARP, which, according to a number of documents, is the core element of cooperation with NATO, "helping to develop the ability of its forces to work with NATO forces on operations."[62] Contrary to this statement, NATO's understanding of defense reforms seems to be a bit different and attaches the notions of quality of the democratic and institutional improvement to defense reforms. Already in the very first year of Armenian participation in IPAP (2005), the requirements for institutional defense reforms stressed the need to separate general staff from the ministry proper, the establishment of a corps of civil servants and the reform of defense planning and management.[63] The same NPAR from 2007 also clearly states that the IPAP would strengthen the institutional cooperation between Armenia and the Alliance and provide more transparency in governance. A strong mismatch of perceptions is visible here. It is also evident that a strong continuity of the selected approach is preserved on the Armenian side, as the Armenian delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly frequently reiterated that various cooperation mechanisms with NATO support the modernization of the defense system, its efficiency and interoperability.[64] One may find different explanations for the term *modernization*, yet in general it is possible that the *modernization* in this particular context implies the recognition of the superiority of Western military thinking and technology. This stance is additionally strengthened, as the Deputy Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan pointed out in an interview, by the enhancement of the fighting capacity of armed forces as the main goal of cooperation

[60] "Individual Partnership Action Plan 2009: Armenia," North Atlantic Treaty Alliance, 2009, para. 1.1, 1–1, http://www.mil.am/files/IPAP%202009-2010-Unclassified-1349253637-.pdf.

[61] Gayane Novikova and Sergey Sargsyan, "Chapter 1: Armenia," in *Security Sector Reform in Countries of Visegrad and Southern Caucasus: Challenges and Opportunities*, ed. Marian Majer (Bratislava: Centre for European and North Atlantic Affairs [CENAA], 2013), 17, available at http://cenaa.org/analysis/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Chapter-1-Armenia-Novikova-Sargsyan.pdf.

[62] Ibid.

[63] "Viewing NATO from the South Caucasus," para. 35–36.

[64] Ibid., para. 13, 14.

with NATO.[65] Further analysis of the relevant documents as well as national actions provides a more telling picture of the concrete priorities in this regard.

The expected benefits may certainly differ from the actual benefits, and during the course of action may result in a significant delay of the general cooperation process. Nonetheless, the Armenian authorities' decision to link the idea of defense reforms with major assistance from NATO, rather than Russia, is an extremely interesting example in itself. It is evident that Armenia successfully established political links to a global security organization by adopting a common language of communication with international stakeholders.[66] There is no good reason to deny the existing differences in perceptions and expectations, which is also logical and understandable. Yet it is critical to distinguish between the differences regarding the essence of defense reforms that require deep systemic transformation and the discrepancies of views on less relevant issues of policy making. Local experts illustrate this dilemma in admitting that the military mission of armed forces depends on the effective implementation of reforms in the area of defense, which is hampered by external threats, "current circumstances" and "significant objective limitations."[67] Though there is no detailed explanation of the aforementioned *circumstances* and *objective limitations*, it is possible to further examine as to whether these concerns are reflected both in policy and in actions or inactions on the ground. This will shed light on the nature of said reservations and lead either to evidence that supports this claim or rather reveal the formality of such excuses, which is aimed at masking the reality. According to the DCAF Report of 2007, no critical factors were identified that impeded "a swift revision of the current practices of defense control on behalf of the electorate and implementation of required improvements."[68]

One may therefore conclude that the cooperation with NATO grew to become an integral part of the Armenian security agenda. Though some sources claim that the EU is much more important for the country in long run due to its "baby steps" towards human rights, rule of law and lessening its dependency on Russia, the same logic can be easily applied to NATO.[69] For example, according to the explicit statement of the Armenian Delegation in the NPAR, the IPAP and the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) must be regarded as complementary.[70] The Alliance asks for the general compliance with norms of democratic governance of defense, offers tailored, detailed plans of cooperation and via the concepts of NATO standardization and force interoperability should, in fact, lessen the dependency of the Armenian armed forces on the Russian military. The benefits Armenia hopes to gain from the cooperation process are twofold: one is linked to the desire to establish a certain balance of global powers in its strategic policy mak-

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65 Novikova and Sargsyan, "Armenia," 18.

66 Michela Telatin, "The Development-Security Nexus and Security Sector Reform" (Ph.D. diss., University of Westminster, 2011), 89, availbale at http://westminsterresearch.wmin.ac.uk/9571.

67 Novikova and Sargsyan, "Armenia," 11.

68 Fluri and Bucur-Marcu, *Partnership Action Plan*, 12.

69 Yost, "Armenian Perceptions," 2–3.

70 "Viewing NATO from the South Caucasus," para. 40.

ing, while the second is related to the very practical gains of military-technical cooperation contributing to the effective upgrade of its units in a Western manner. Yet there is some evidence of different interpretations of missions of major cooperation frameworks (IPAP, PARP) by NATO and Armenian officials. Whereas the Alliance increasingly regards the aforementioned mechanisms as a means to strengthen the democratic institutional pillar of defense reforms, the Armenian authorities primarily focus on developing the interoperability and general capabilities of their armed forces. Consequently, they increasingly ignore the collective format of the PFP (EAPC), initially widely welcomed and supported, and engage in favor of the "28+1" (former 26+1) format and bilateral programs (member country–partner country) that seem much more promising.[71]

Democratic Control of the Armed Forces

This section of the paper will focus on Armenia's performance in the field of democratic control of the armed forces. Published IPAP documents, DCAF reports as well as NATO-affiliated academic contributions and local reports will contribute to the comprehensive analysis of the achievements. Keeping in mind that IPAP documents are much more "political" than PARP and are typically based on the content of the previous IPAP cycle document (especially in the introduction), the formulation of the approved objectives and actions provide us with a sufficient degree of clarity regarding the progress in the areas of defense relevant to our study.

Democratic control of the military is usually represented by the capacity of the national parliament to control and monitor processes within its defense services, by its constitutional obligation to hold executive bodies (including the defense ministry) accountable for their actions and the proper chain of decision making between the government organs with the civilian authority at the top. The findings of the previous chapters support the claim that for Armenia's leadership, the practical aspect of defense cooperation with the Alliance appears more relevant than its "political" features, namely the democratic dimension. To a certain degree, it seems that the phase of "defense democratization" has been formally completed, allowing the parties to proceed with practical actions from which both sides can benefit. We will therefore try to prove whether the democratic requirements of the Alliance have indeed been fully met by the Armenian side, and how NATO perceives the national achievements in this field.

Some authors argue that the defense transformation process in the country can be bluntly divided into generations of reforms, with the second generation aiming for the introduction of democratic principles of civilian control of the armed forces.[72] Civilian control of the military refers to the governmental structure in which a civilian minister runs the defense ministry and the president or the head of state holds the highest political responsibility for a country's defense and security. The view provided by an Armenian

[71] *Individual Partnership Action Plan 2009: Armenia*, Chapter 1, action 1, 2–1; *Individual Partnership Action Plan 2011–2013: Armenia*, NATO North Atlantic Council, 2011, para. 2.2, http://www.mil.am/files/IPAP-2011-2013-ENG-Declassified-1349350859-.pdf.

[72] Giragosian, "Armenian Military & Security Policy," 2.

representative at the NATO headquarters supports this approach, as he states that the adoption of IPAP meant a step towards higher responsibility in supporting defense reform programs focusing on a stronger Western civilian control model within the ministry and other steps to improve force capabilities in peacekeeping operations.[73] Again, a strong reference to the practical-military aspect of cooperation must be noted here. Still, as the civilian control of the military has turned to the major principle of democratic reforms, its implementation became vital for the general objective (mirrored in IPAP) of getting closer to standards of Western governance.[74] Naturally, the democratic pillar of the IPAP's requirements led to the consequent enlargement of the PARP's content in 2005, adding ten new Partnership Goals (PGs) to the 23 agreed upon in 2004. In 2007, there were 39 PGs in total.[75]

The NSS adopted in 2007 clearly highlights the recognition that Armenia's overall security depends on a number of key factors, among which the democratic ones enjoy higher priority. The document declares democratic principles of governance (transparent, efficient institutions and independent judiciary) as top guarantees for national security that rank above force compatibility.[76] We disregard the ambiguity of the *compatibility of the armed forces* at this stage. It is crucial, however, to note that the primacy of democratic governance over other factors of national security has been formally recognized by national authorities and anchored in top strategic documents. Furthermore, within the area of domestic security, the NSS again gives institutional reforms to strengthen democratic governance (efficient public administration) priority ahead of building effective armed forces (second priority), which, according to document, must be based on civilian control and "democratic planning."[77] Again, we leave out the ambiguous term, *democratic planning*, which raises the general question of its utility. Yet the key point here is clearly national adherence to the democratic principles as the first priorities that must be met and ensured. For this purpose, we must briefly examine the presidential authority as the chief executive party responsible for the democratic and transparent functioning of defense institutions. Next, we must review the interplay of the executive bodies within the government and ultimately examine the status and capacity of the national parliament to execute its oversight and control functions.

Within the period of our research (2004–2012), President Robert Kocharyan was reelected for a five-year term and as a response to internal political tensions agreed to make constitutional changes in 2005 that would "distribute some power away from the presidency."[78] Despite the constitutional amendments and the active involvement of the Venice Commission, presidential authority remains substantial and the "power ministries" remained strongly under Kocharyan's personal grip. As the DCAF Report of 2008

[73] Author's interview with Mr. Mher Israelyan, Defense Advisor at the Armenian Mission to NATO.
[74] Yenokyan, "Country Study – Armenia," 26.
[75] "Viewing NATO from the South Caucasus," para. 30.
[76] "National Security Strategy," 1.
[77] Ibid., 6–7.
[78] "NATO's Role in South Caucasus," para. 35.

states, the president continues playing a key role in foreign and security (defense) policy making, maintains the responsibility to convene government sessions on related security issues and holds the defense minister personally responsible for developing and implementing defense policy priorities.[79] The link between the president and the government remains strong and the defense minister clearly holds more power and authority than other members of the government. An example was the parliament's decision to withdraw already initiated changes to the Law on Compulsory Military Service in 2004 after Defense Minister Serzh Sargsyan stated that there was no intention on the ministry's side to approve the changes. In a similar vein, the minister refused to agree on the establishment of the post of a military ombudsman, although this is specifically addressed in the IPAP document.[80] Ultimately, as a result of the legal amendment, the post was created in 2006, yet not as a separate body, but under the Office of the Human Rights Defender.[81]

Understandably, NATO reports and assessments do not reflect the internal mechanisms of governmental decision-making. However, they may well address issues of intra-governmental coordination or cooperation. This aspect of governance is very much relevant, as it relates to the general process of democratic deliberation and reduces the risk of single-handed actions, especially in the field of defense. In 2005 the Alliance accepted Armenia's plan for defense reform, which also envisaged the creation of an interagency commission to oversee the military.[82] In fact, this body acquired a more detailed mission after the Strategic Defence Review (SDR) was put on defense reform agenda as the key task to be performed. Concerning the overall coordination of the reforms and their communication to the Alliance, the close link between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense is clearly visible. The first IPAP document presented at the NATO headquarters and signed by Defense Minister Serzh Sargsyan was developed in strong cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the president's administration.[83] Another source claims that the coordination of ministries was managed by the National Security Council (NSC), chaired by the president and the minister of defense in the capacity as the council's secretary.[84] According to the available sources, the NSC has no clear status or permanent secretariat, thus serving as an informal arena for the coordination of joint political actions. Though the constitutional changes stipulated that the NSC would become a permanent advisory structure under the president, there is no evidence of its active and continuing work on defense-related issues.[85] Given the circumstances, the role of president's administration in formulating national defense priorities objectively increases. It also becomes instrumental in organizing NSC meetings and defining its agenda. This view is additionally strengthened by the fact that the

[79] Yenokyan, "Country Study – Armenia," 10–11.
[80] Ibid., 17, 20.
[81] Fluri and Bucur-Marcu, Partnership Action Plan, 23.
[82] "NATO's Role in South Caucasus," para. 49.
[83] Yenokyan, "Country Study – Armenia," 24.
[84] Avagyan and Hiscock, *Security Sector Reform in Armenia*, 18, 30.
[85] Yenokyan, "Country Study – Armenia," 16–17.

initiative of building the Center for Strategic Studies was picked up and effectively implemented by the administration.[86] Once again, this underscores the existence of two centers within the executive branch that are responsible for the formulation of defense and security policies, but also suggests the existence of a close and direct link between the president and the defense minister with less chance of interference from the rest of the government. Further, it is important to note that all senior military and civilian officials in the defense ministry are appointed by the president.[87] To this regard, the role of personalities and the relevance of personal ties should not be underestimated. A good example is General Hayk Kotanyan, who chaired the Center for Strategic Studies, while at the same time serving as the military advisor to the minister and held the position of Head of Staff of the National Assembly until 2009.[88] Current President Serzh Sargsyan himself served as defense minister from 2000–2007, simultaneously holding the position of Secretary of the National Security Council.[89]

Since defense reforms encompass various fields of defense activities, where new defense policies have to be implemented, defense officials are usually required to cooperate with the rest of government to achieve the necessary legal amendments or changes in defense budgeting. According to First Deputy Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan, the Ministry of Finance (and to a lesser degree, the parliament) remains the main venue for addressing defense budget issues.[90] However, even within the financial domain, the government seems to be limited in its authority to monitor and control defense spending. As the DCAF report highlights, though the prime minister formally has all means available to audit the Ministry of Defense, no evidence of such auditing has been found.[91] The general weakness of the government to exercise effective control over defense institutions might be attributed to the traditionally strong position of the defense minister within the executive. Yet it seems that the exceptional links between the defense minister and the president contribute to the aforementioned quality and inviolability of the defense institutions. It has also been argued that the passive use and inadequacy of other state institutions, along with the marginalization of the National Security Council, do not allow for the proper use of formally existing mechanisms, thus leading to the mere implementation of preexisting decisions by the president, who dominates security and defense policy making.[92]

Turning to the issue of the parliament's ability to execute its constitutional power of holding the government and the ministry of defense, in particular, accountable, a certain dichotomy comes to light. On the one hand, Armenia's legislative body formally holds all means available, yet in reality the application of control and monitoring mechanisms

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86 Ibid., 17.
87 Avagyan and Hiscock, *Security Sector Reform in Armenia*, 32.
88 Yenokyan, "Country Study – Armenia," 18.
89 "Serzh Sargsyan – the President of the Republic of Armenia," Official Website, available at http://www.president.am/en/serzh-sargsyan, accessed 29 October 2014.
90 Author's interview with the First Deputy Minister of Defense of Armenia Mr. Davit Tonoyan.
91 Yenokyan, "Country Study – Armenia," 17.
92 Giragosian, et al., "Security Perceptions," 191.

appears very limited. According to the DCAF Report of 2005, the National Assembly's authority rests on a number of basic and well defined functions, such as legislative initiatives and amendments, inquiries and questioning the members of executive, budgetary control and monitoring of state procurement and approval of strategic defense policies as well as the size of the armed forces (manpower).[93] The first relevant and public document for this period is the IPAP from 2005, which identifies a number of areas in which substantial gaps were identified and subsequent actions agreed upon. For instance, it acknowledges deficiencies in parliamentary control and civilian participation in defense policy and a serious need to speed up subsequent legal processes. In particular, it urges Armenia to enhance its committees' (for Defense and Security, Financial-Credit and Budgetary and Economic Affairs) roles in overseeing the defense sector and to improve their capacity by providing specific education and training to their respective staff members.[94] Additionally, the need to review the Military Discipline Code along with the establishment of the post of military ombudsman is stipulated. In fact, the first IPAP document challenges the ability of the parliament to perform its defense-related mission in a broad range of fields: defense policy, defense budgeting and defense law. The budgetary aspects mostly relate to the ability of the defense ministry to develop financial plans in a sound manner and present them in detail. This must therefore be discussed in a specific chapter dealing with defense budgeting and transparency. Still, it would be reasonable to make a general note that as of 2005, the defense budgets submitted for review to parliamentary committees were not detailed, the defense-related laws contained many gray areas and the only issue that caused heated discussion was the force deployment in Iraq.[95]

In examining the subsequent IPAP cycle document, one may draw some conclusions regarding the progress made within the aforementioned areas of parliamentary authority. Within the IPAP period of 2007–2009, Armenia intended to optimize the parliament's role and involvement in defense issues by reviewing existing laws and providing additional staff training and education courses.[96] Most importantly, a national commitment was made, according to which a project team was to establish and conduct an SDR based on an updated NSS, threat assessment and defense concepts. It was also acknowledged that the team had to establish a reporting mechanism that would keep the defense ministry and other relevant state agencies informed about the progress of the SDR.[97] Meanwhile, the DCAF report from 2007 attests to serious deficiencies in the investigative functions of the assembly on defense matters, defense budgeting or other independent actions that would differ from the practice of authorizing a decision taken by the government.[98] Another DCAF report (from 2008) continues in similarly identifying the

[93] Avagyan and Hiscock, *Security Sector Reform in Armenia*, 31.
[94] "Armenia's Commitments under Individual Partnership Action Plan with NATO, 2005," sec. 1.6, 1.3.5, http://www.mil.am/files/IPAP-English.pdf.
[95] Avagyan and Hiscock, *Security Sector Reform in Armenia*, 31.
[96] Yenokyan, "Country Study – Armenia," 25.
[97] Ibid., 25–26.
[98] Fluri and Bucur-Marcu, *Partnership Action Plan*, 13.

absence of formalized methods of control and auditing, the mere reliance on the defense minister's annual report and the risk of turning the control function into mere political rhetoric.[99]

The language and formulation of action used in the IPAP of 2009 provide a sufficient level of understanding regarding the degree of progress Armenia has achieved in the subsequent period. Among 52 actions listed, fighting corruption and improving the democratic oversight of the armed forces hold priority for the success of the democratic and defense reforms.[100] In general, the language of earlier IPAP documents is reiterated with emphasis on the same range of defense-related issues. This tendency clearly does not speak to the significant improvement in the quality of parliamentary control. The same notions of promoting democratic oversight and parliamentary capacity along with committees' expertise are mentioned.[101] The references to the need to update the military disciplinary code as well as the need to ensure maximum transparency in defense policy, budgeting and military human rights have not been changed.[102] There is also no major change in the language used in the IPAP document for the period of 2011-2013. Similar emphasis on parliamentary committees' staff training and the need to increase general expertise in the areas of national security, defense, budgetary planning and finance are once again reiterated.[103]

The legislature's inability to enforce its duties in the area of the democratic control of the military is very well acknowledged by defense officials. As Deputy Minister Davit Tonoyan stated, the defense-related committee meetings in parliament lack both in terms of quality and quantity of discussions, which must partially be attributed to the lack of expertise among committee members in defense and military matters.[104] Tonoyan also points to the general passivity of the parliament in terms of initiating general inquiries about the processes and issues relevant to defense, thus allowing the ministers to have more accountability. Furthermore, the Ministry of Defense, as explained by the Armenian Mission to NATO, does issue about ten reports annually addressed to president, parliament, security council, cabinet of ministers, interagency commissions and other stakeholders as well as targeted reports to public organizations (NGOs), yet mostly by request.[105] This fact speaks rather to the favor of the Ministry of Defense and underscores its ability to provide information if required. However, it also highlights two inherent deficiencies regarding parliamentary control of the military. Firstly, aside from the annual ministerial report, there is no institutionalized regular reporting system. Secondly, the legislative body's capacity to identify areas of interest and provide the needed expertise in defense and military matters is highly limited. Several rare occasions, such

[99] Yenokyan, "Country Study – Armenia," 17–21.
[100] Schmidt, *NATO and the South Caucasus*, 3–4.
[101] *Individual Partnership Action Plan 2009: Armenia*, sec. 1.1, 1.4.
[102] Ibid., sec. 1.4.1, 1.4.2.
[103] "Individual Partnership Action Plan 2011–2013: Armenia," sec. 1.4.1.
[104] Author's interview with the First Deputy Minister of Defense of Armenia Mr. Davit Tonoyan.
[105] Author's interview with Mr. Mher Israelyan, Defense Advisor at the Armenian Mission to NATO.

as the heated discussions about the potential negative effects of Armenian participation in the RRCF (Rapid Reaction Collective Force of the CSTO) with a high risk of dragging the country into conflict with its neighbors, points to existing potential in cases when strategic-level issues are at stake.[106] However, as far as narrow defense-related policy areas concerned (planning, budgeting, human resources, etc.) no evidence of strong parliamentary involvement can be found.

It seems that there is a common view in Armenia as regards the defense transformation process across the generations of defense reforms. In line with Deputy Minister Davit Tonoyan's statement, local sources claim that the "second generation" of reforms largely dealt with the institutional development of the democratic (civilian) oversight of the military and achieved significant improvement.[107] According to this view, the democratization phase of the defense reforms has been successfully accomplished. Thus, a "third generation" of defense reforms is mainly aimed at the practical improvement of defense management in the areas of personnel management, military education and the increased transparency of the defense sector to avoid human rights violations within the armed forces. Indeed, the "civilianization" of the defense ministry and other defense structures improved in 2007, after which point the defense minister was no longer a military official.[108] This implied that the authority of the strategic decision making moved to a civilian body, yet the composition of the ministry was by and large still military-dominated. The majority of the top leadership remained former military servicemen with extensive military and combat experience in Nagorno-Karabakh who took up civilian positions by presidential decree in 2010.[109] Ideally, the military experience of a civilian speaks for better quality of expertise and competence in the field of defense. Yet the question remains as to whether the Soviet military experience still has any effect in policy making and implementation, which may be explored by analyzing results in various functional policy areas. At this stage, we can conclude that the formal NATO requirement of civilian leadership in the defense ministry can be regarded as completed. With regard to the "civilianization" of the lower level positions, subsequent research and analysis of human resources (HR) policy must be conducted.

As for the overall evaluation of the "reform-generations," a seemingly strong convergence of the assessments by the Armenian officials (Davit Tonoyan) and particularly NATO representatives is present at first glance. In 2006 the NATO Liaison Officer for the South Caucasus, Romualds Razuks, briefed the NATO PA delegation that the focus had switched from promoting democratic values to assisting Armenia in establishing democratic civilian control over the armed forces with an increasing emphasis on budget resource and personnel management.[110] However, this statement reveals the opposite approach to the issue. Whereas the Armenian defense officials regard civilian oversight

[106] Novikova and Sargsyan, "Armenia," 14.
[107] Giragosian, *Armenian Military & Security Policy*, 2.
[108] Fluri and Bucur-Marcu, *Partnership Action Plan*, 17.
[109] "Deputies of the Minister of Defense," Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia, http://www.mil.am/1295954750 (accessed 12 June 2014).
[110] "NATO's Role in South Caucasus," para. 31.

as the key element of democratic reform, and as largely successfully established, the emphasis by the NATO Liaison Officer on better defense policies as the precondition for more effective democratic and civilian control over the armed forces makes it clear that the "second generation" reform my not yet be complete.

This stance is also supported by findings from IPAP documents that cover the continuing deficiencies in parliamentary control and capacity to monitor defense institutions over a period of eight years. Freedom House identified the lack of transparency in governance as one of the key problems of the country, ultimately labeling Armenia as a "partly free" semi-consolidated authoritarian regime with a worsening democratic governance index since 2009.[111] The argument that democratization efforts in Armenia suffer from the significant limitations imposed by external threat and strategic circumstances could certainly be applied to this case.[112] However, it is less clear why actions aimed at increasing parliament's competence in the defense field that contribute to the effectiveness of defense management and the development of sound and affordable plans and policies must be regarded as a factor jeopardizing the country's security.

Conclusion

Finalizing our findings on the status of the democratic transformation of Armenia's defense forces, we draw the following preliminary conclusions. First, we found sufficient evidence to state that the cooperation with NATO has been strongly established within the national political agenda as a major strategic objective that serves the country's security interests. The benefits of cooperation for Armenia relate mostly to practical results in the areas of military interoperability and the forces' combat effectiveness. The democratic dimension of defense reforms is clearly acknowledged by national authorities and formally mirrored in national commitments in respective cooperation documents as well as in top national strategic documents. Yet, the value and interpretation that the parties (Armenia and NATO) attach to the requirements for defense reforms vary significantly with the tendency of preserving such differences across the entire period examined. This conflict is clearly visible in the consistent repetition of the same formulations in all IPAP documents. Though the civilian control of the military is formally and structurally very well established at the ministerial level, the continuing deficiencies in parliamentary control and monitoring leave an ambiguous picture of Armenia's democratic compliance. Consequently, the existing ambiguity can imply either that the formal nature of the democratic requirements for Armenia were caused by the absence of strategic interest or that the Alliance was unable to provide the added value of enhanced cooperation and subsequent compliance to that end.

[111] *Nations in Transit 2013: Authoritarian Aggression and the Pressures of Austerity* (Washington, D.C.: Freedom House, 2013), 11, available at https://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/iles/NIT%202013%20Booklet%20-%20Report%20Findings.pdf.

[112] Novikova and Sargsyan, "Armenia," 11.

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