Security Sector Reform Centre of Excellence in South Caucasus

Supported by

Visegrad Fund

Remarks on V4 research trip to Southern Caucasus

(Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan)

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February 2013

CONTENT

I. INTRODUCTION

The research team composed of experts of Central European think-tanks, represented by Robert Ondrejcsák, (*Centre for European and North Atlantic Affairs, Slovakia*), Beata Gorka-Winter (*Polish Institute of International Affairs, Poland*), András Rácz (*National University of Public Service, Faculty of Military Science, Hungary*) and Vít Střítecký (*Institute of International Relations, Czech Republic*) have begun Central European initiative in the field of security sector reform in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia. During a research trip in November 2012, the expert team conducted consultations with high-level representatives of Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Parliament (state secretaries, heads of policy planning divisions, etc.), as well as with representatives of think-tank and expert communities in the three states in the region.

II. A BRIEF PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The activities are conducted within a framework of project "Security Sector Reform Centre of Excellence in Southern Caucasus". The project partners are: CENAA (Slovakia), NUPS/HIIA (Hungary), IIR (Czech Republic), PISM (Poland). Our ambition is to establish a Centre of Excellence for the Security Sector Reform in Southern Caucasus. The project, supported by International Visegrad Fund, aims to contribute to long-term stabilization of the region while taking advantage of Central European experience in the security sector reform.

This report concludes the key findings (Chatham House rules apply). This research was mainly conducted to identify potential shortcomings in the area of core security actors with an emphasis on military structures, leaving aside other security institutions.

III.KEY FINDINGS

Armed forces as well as the whole security sector institutions of three South Caucasian states are structured, trained and equipped in significantly different way. However each of them inherited the same Soviet-type of thinking and equipment, their development during last two decades ran in different directions. It is a consequence of the different strategic and geopolitical situation of Southern Caucasian states, which resulted in the different security strategies and military doctrines, network of partnerships and alliances, as well as self-perception within the regional security complex.

Since the 2008, War the **Georgian** armed forces have been prepared almost exclusively for conducting missions abroad, particularly within NATO-framework (Georgia is the most

important non-NATO contributor to ISAF). One of the key "lessons learned" from August 2008 war with Russia, was that it is impossible to restore territorial integrity and re-estabilish Georgian sovereignty over South Ossetia and Abkhazia by military means. The participation of Georgian troops in the NATO-led mission is one of primary military and political tools used to bring the country closer to the Alliance.

Armenian armed and security forces are exclusively focusing on territorial defence – as a consequence of disputes with Azerbaijan over Nagorno Karabakh. Even though Armenian troops are participating in NATO-led missions, it has primarily political context (assuring their presence in the same regions Azerbaijan is deploying its forces and also to formulate a non-Russian pole of Armenian security policy) as Russia remains the key security partner for Yerevan. Russian troops are keeping heavy presence in the country. Armenia is also a member of CSTO.

Azerbaijani armed forces witnessed very rapid modernization period recently. The strategic culture of the country is determined by the conflict with Armenia and perception of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. The Azerbaijani forces are prepared to a large extent to conduct possible operations to re-gain territories under Armenian control (Nagorno Karabakh) and also to defend the country's territory against potential threats from the South. The participation in the NATO operations has political context. Azerbaijan as a sole country of the region shows ambition to build up its own military industry (small weapons, ships operating in the Caspian Sea).

CENAA is an independent think-tank, focusing mainly on activities in the field of foreign and security policy. Within the framework of these activities CENAA accomplishes projects and research, organizes expert events and issues publications together with partners from Slovakia as well as from abroad.

The aim of CENAA is to play an active role in the strategic discussions in Slovakia and in the Euro-atlantic area, to participate in the education process of future foreign and security policy professionals, and to contribute to the stability and sustainable development in partner countries where we are present through our educational and training programmes.

IV. GEORGIA
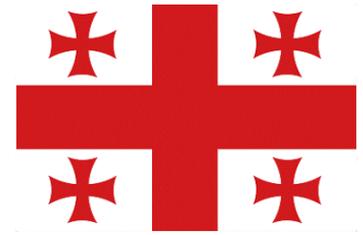
A. MAIN TRENDS

- Georgian security and threat perception is still strongly determined by presence of Russian troops on Georgian territory ("only 25 kilometers from Tbilisi"). However, this has a decreasing impact on the actual reforms of the military.
- NATO integration is still the most important foreign policy and security goal: step-by-step approach, also improving interoperability with the NATO members armed forces
- Ongoing generational change within structures of key ministries is seen as a long-term development.
- The defence budget has decreased dramatically – from approximately $ 1 billion in 2007-8 to about $ 300 million currently according to data of the SIPRI Military Expenditure Database.
- Military is no longer considered as the primary tool for restoring territorial integrity – main lesson learned in 2008 war ("we cannot defeat Russia by military means"). The emphasis is now put on strengthening economic ties, cultural and humanitarian issues. There is a pressure coming from the US and the EU on Georgian elites on improving relations between former belligerents. There are perspectives for normalization: for younger generation Russia is one of neighbors (while inherited ex-Soviet connections gradually fade away), with which the relations should be run in a pragmatic manner.
- The ISAF participation – significant by numbers (1600 troops), BUT: financial burden of the Georgian involvement is taken almost exclusively by the US, Georgia provides just the manpower and the salaries for soldiers.
- One of the key elements – to improve IMAGE of Georgia – strategy of reunification – strong focus on PR
- The transition of power after the parliamentary elections was managed in a peaceful manner – without threatening democratic standards. However, post-elections political struggles are not completely free from such risks.
- Azerbaijani rise as a new Caucasian "rising power" is observed in Georgia with caution, but potential benefits are also appreciated by Georgian elites.

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B. MAIN CHALLENGES

- **The institutionalization of defence resources management** – there is no culture of defence budget planning in Georgia
- **Human resources** – key focus of current efforts of MoD (professional development programme founded by NATO); lack of well-educated staff; competition od administration with business in area of human resources;
- Existence of Defence Academy in Gori, but missing M.A. programme. General lack of resources and capabilities. Outsourcing + approximately 10 people annually educated abroad. No civilian education at Defence Academy. Problem to keep trained people within Ministry of Defence.
- Limited real public control and parliamentary oversight over the security sector;
- Relative weakness of the NGO sector
- MoD – NGO communication. To find way to government, ministries as consumers for NGO´s products.
- Ability of institutions to address crisis situations – experiences from 2008
- Inter-agency cooperation
- Cyber-security issues

V. ARMENIA

A. MAIN TRENDS

- Armed forces are central part of Armenian society – their main purpose: "to defend the country"
- Russia remains main guarantor of Armenian security (political support, weapons supplies, economic support)
- Threat perception: "not a full peacetime", in security planning almost exclusive focus on Azerbaijan.
- Self-comparison with Azerbaijan: much more limited resources than Azerbaijan both in terms of funds and personnel – focus on "asymmetric responses" and perception of Armenian Armed Forces as a "defence force"
- Strategy against Azerbaijani threat is based mainly on deterrence
- Strong political emphasis on differences among 3 countries of Southern Caucasus – difficult to find "comprehensive approach" with involvement of each C3 country

- Lack of "confidence-building measures" on regional level
- Doubts about the future of the CFE treaty
- The Security Sector has 3 pillars: Armed Forces, Ministry of Emergency Situations, Police
- OSCE as a main supplier of SSR recommendations
- NATO – political reasons for Armenia´s participation in NATO´s mission; the Alliance is a partner in the field of capacity building (military education) and strategy creation
- The continuous military and border control support from Russia (e.g. Russian border guards presence on the Armenian-Turkish border, etc.) enables Armenia to concentrate larger and larger parts of its armed forces on the border with Azerbaijan.

B. MAIN CHALLENGES

- Application of principles of **civil and parliamentary control over Armed Forces**; cooperation within ministries; cooperation with NGOs; more openness of Armed Forces; participation of Parliament on law preparation (not "just voting")
- **Lack of parliamentary and civilian experts in the field of security and defence** – experts able to asses and analyze laws

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  >
  > ▪ Lack of institutionalized mechanisms necessary for a meaningful parliamentary oversight.

  and materials – key factor of the ability of the Parliament to execute civilian control over Armed Forces. There is no civilian education on security and defence at Defence Academy. Generally, involvement of civil society, political parties experts and parliamentary experts to security document creation is one of the main challenges. **Lack of institutionalized mechanisms necessary for a meaningful parliamentary oversight**.
- There is an MoD think-tank – theoretically the main umbrella organization for cooperation with NGOs
- **SDR** – inter-institutional communication and cooperation (MoD, MFA and other relevant institutions); SDR includes: threat perception, strategic planning, definition of defence priorities, future vision of Armed Forces and General Staff, Armed Forces structure, personal management, human resources management and military education; legal context.
- Reform of military education (NATO´s involvement) – training programmes for lower and higher ranking officers and NCOs.
- de facto **existence of 2 categories of armed forces**: the first one for out-of-area operations with focus on professionalization (creation of "peacekeeping brigade" – as

an example for the gradual improvement of other units, 100 % interoperability, NATO standards), the latterfor territorial defence (larger, conscripts, CSTO an Russian standards)

- lessons learned from operations abroad – there is no specialized institution
- **Key players of SSR**:
- Ministry of Emergency Situations – Crisis Management Centre
- Police – reform with the OSCE involvement: education, public order management, transparency, civil society-policy cooperation, community police programme (the first in Yerevan); gender balance
- National Security Council under the President – it is the highest authority of security system; status above ministries; defence and foreign affairs are under the authority of the President
- **Potential problems with recruitment/demography** – how will be Armenia able to maintain a force of 46 000 soldiers? Key problem: demography – decrease of numbers of conscripts – potential replace with professionals which allows to decrease troop levels because of quality, but simultaneously increases the costs significantly – how to solve this crucial dilemma?

VI. AZERBAIJAN

A. MAIN TRENDS

- Strategic perception determined by description as "no peace – no war" situation
- Turkey: the main partner in the defence reform, but there is some Azerbaijani reluctance ("too much NATO") + military´s position in Turkey: Azerbaijan reject the idea of military as a central element of society and military as a "social elevator"
- Not to provoke Russia – in Azerbaijani perception Armenia is able to maintain its positions only because of the substantial Russian support
- Concerned about developments in Iran and about the intentions of Tehran
- Join or not to join NATO – not a question of the day + purely political decision – Finland perceived as an example: applying NATO standards without membership – "there is no benefit for Azerbaijan from joining the NATO". In Azerbaijani perception "NATO is stepping back" in the Caucasus after the Lisbon summit.
- SSR perception: SSR as a whole is useful during peacetime – Azerbaijan does not have a luxury of fully peacetime, BUT: significant possibilities for application of Central European experiences in particular problems (professionalization, military education)

B. MAIN CHALLENGES

- Existence of specialized agencies: for protection of pipelines, protection of government buildings, Ministry of National Security has its own forces, cyber defence specialized agency under the President – **coordination, finding their place**
- The ability to launch SSR procedures because of threat perception/political situation – "**it is impossible to do reforms during wartime – the peace is a time for reforms**"
- Currently **focus on technical, but not organizational modernization** – focus on OWN/Azerbaijani military industry – small weapons + specific situation in the Caspian Sea: it is impossible to import new ships without Russian involvement, so, Azerbaijan launched its own ship-building capability
- Pipelines protection with involvement of specialized units – missile defence, UAVs
- USA assistance – language trainings, special units training
- **Higher military education** – Azerbaijan does not have civil security, military education – there are military students in civilian education, but there are no civilian students in military education; Turkey is the main partner (+ USA and Russia), there is a permanent need to upgrade the curricula

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> ▪ Military is still a tool of "nationalization" of youngsters

- A generational change is ongoing: less Russian socialized and speakers, more Western educated staff – it will have long-term political impact – changing organizational culture in general – challenges based on Soviet legacy
- Military is still a tool of "nationalization" of youngsters
- "state of war" prevents from full **professionalization** + economic considerations: to maintain a force of 90 000 troops is economically a significant burden (it is impossible to maintain that force of professionals). Because of threat perception (sources: Iran, Russia, Armenia) – a large part of the population needs military training.
- Increasing defence spending – challenges: rationalization + fighting against corruption.
- **Potential NATO´s involvement in protection of energy infrastructure**? – "not Article V., but Article IV. Is not enough" – need for "individual partnership" tailored just for energy infrastructure, not for the whole country – based on perception that energy security is the key interest of NATO
- **Security and defence document update** – possibility of Central European involvement?
- Interoperability – preparation of a brigade interoperable with NATO from 2016.