



საქართველოს სტრატეგიისა და საერთაშორისო ურთიერთობების კვლევის ფონდი
GEORGIAN FOUNDATION FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Security Review

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National Security Strategy of Armenia

2020

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The National Security Council of the Republic of Armenia approved a new [national security strategy](#) on July 10, 2020. The work on this document has been going on for almost a year. By the order of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, Nikol Pashinyan, on July 17, 2019, an interagency commission was set up under the leadership of the Secretary of the National Security Council. It was instructed to [develop a working version](#) of the new national security strategy within one year.

[The previous National Security Strategy](#) was approved by the National Security Council of Armenia a while ago on January 26, 2007. Thirteen years is quite a long period and the renewal of the national security strategy, in principal, should have happened earlier. Such a long pause indirectly indicates that the process of national security policy planning in the Republic of Armenia is not going appropriately.

The purpose of this publication is to juxtapose and highlight the main differences between Armenia's national security strategies for 2007 and 2020 and also assess Armenia's external security environment based on the 2020 strategy.

The Key Differences Between Armenia's 2007 and 2020 National Security Strategies

First of all, it should be noted that the 2020 National Security Strategy is a politically more important document than its predecessor. Two circumstances in particular indicate this:

- 1) As a foreword, the 2020 National Security Strategy has an address by the Prime Minister of Armenia, Nikol Pashinyan. In this address, national values, national goals and common Armenian rules of coexistence are formulated.
- 2) The concluding provisions of the 2020 National Security Strategy clearly set out the fundamental importance of the National Security Strategy and the role of the National Security Council apparatus in the national security policy planning process as well as the rules for reviewing the National Security Strategy. In particular:
 - All sectoral documents on Armenia's security and sustainable development that contain a security component emanate from the fundamental provisions and the framework of Armenia's National Security Strategy (p. 38).
 - State administrative bodies submit annual reports on the implementation of the provisions included in the National Security Strategy to the Office of the Security Council, which are then summarized and presented to the Prime Minister (p. 38).
 - The Strategy is subject to review at least every five years, or more frequently if necessitated due to changing circumstances and priorities in Armenia and the world (p. 38).

It should be noted that an address by the country's highest political figure was not attached to the 2007 National Security Strategy. It was published on behalf of the then Chief of Staff of the President of Armenia, Robert Kocharian. It did not contain explicit provisions on security policy planning. Its publication coincided with the expiration of Robert Kocharian's second presidential term. Serzh Sargsyan was elected as the President of Armenia on February 19, 2008. During his presidency, Armenia's national security

strategy was not updated. Accordingly, the National Security Strategy adopted on January 26, 2007 is a document of a sort of transitional political period which has not contributed to its political significance.

The structure of Armenia's 2020 National Security Strategy differs from that of 2007. For example, in the 2007 National Security Strategy, a separate chapter was devoted to Nagorno-Karabakh. As for the 2020 National Security Strategy, although the security of Nagorno-Karabakh is only discussed in a sub-section, this does not in any way means that less attention is devoted to this issue. On the contrary, in the National Security Strategy 2020, the security issues of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh are explicitly discussed in a mutual context.

Also noteworthy is the fact that instead of Nagorno-Karabakh, the new national security strategy refers to it by its Armenian name - Artsakh. This underscores Armenia's position that this region has historically been an integral part of Armenia. It should also be noted that although much attention is paid to the right of self-determination of Nagorno-Karabakh in the new national security strategy, less emphasis is placed on its statehood. Unlike the 2007 security strategy, the term republic is also not used in relation to Nagorno-Karabakh.

Therefore, there is a strong impression that the new national security strategy responds politically to the statement made by the Prime Minister of Armenia, Nikol Pashinyan, at a rally in Stepanakert in August 2019 - "[Artsakh is Armenia period.](#)" It should be noted that the [same phrase](#) was repeated on May 5, 2020 by the newly elected President of the self-proclaimed Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh, Araik Arutunian.

The 2020 National Security Strategy also focuses on currently significant issues such as the deteriorating international security environment and hybrid wars which, according to the document, include "not only military elements, but also the use of economic means, cyber attacks, fake news, and disinformation" (p. 5).

Unlike the 2007 National Security Strategy, China is tackled separately in the 2020 document. In particular, it states that "we shall consistently deepen friendly relations with the People's Republic of China by expanding broad, multi-sector, and mutually beneficial cooperation" (p. 12). An exclusive section on China, on the one hand, is linked to the strengthening of its role in international politics and, on the other hand, to its increasingly active involvement in the South Caucasus.

It is also noteworthy that France and Germany are singled out from the EU countries in the 2020 National Security Strategy and it is emphasized that Armenia attaches special importance to the deepening and development of cooperation with these countries (p. 12). This is probably an expression of the desire to strengthen the European vector in Armenia's foreign policy. This is particularly noteworthy in the light of the fact that the 2020 strategy pays virtually no attention to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). It should be noted that in the 2007 document, the entire subsection was devoted the positive role of the CIS (p. 18).

Perhaps, the fact that the Eurasian Economic Union is mentioned in a positive context in the 2020 National Security Strategy (pp. 19 and 34) can be understood as a compensation for this. But it should be noted that no special attention is paid to this organization which is quite significant given that Putin's regime

considers the Eurasian Economic Union as a major integration project that should strengthen Russia's influence in its member states.

Armenia's External Security Environment Based on the 2020 National Security Strategy

The 2020 National Security Strategy reiterates the key postulates of the 2007 document on the external security environment. The main threats are Azerbaijan and Turkey. In particular, it states that " The use of force by Azerbaijan in the context of the Karabakh conflict is the principal threat to Armenia's security" (p. 15).

According to the 2020 National Security Strategy, " Turkey's policy towards Armenia is unneighborly. It continues its blockade of Armenia, refusing to establish diplomatic relations without preconditions, denying and, in certain instances, justifying the Armenian Genocide" (p. 6). " At the same time, Turkey's military-political assistance to Azerbaijan further strengthens the latter's aspirations to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict by military means" (p. 6).

In this regard, an excerpt from the 2020 National Security Strategy is noteworthy, stating that " the sale of arms to Azerbaijan further jeopardizes regional peace and stability" (p. 6). It is important because it seems that it does not mean Turkey but other countries because Turkey is openly discussed afterwards. Even though, it is not directly mentioned but, most probably, Russia is also implied in the list of countries supplying arms to Azerbaijan which has caused a great deal of dissatisfaction in Armenia in recent years.

As for Azerbaijan and Turkey, they are mentioned in the 2020 National Security Strategy as a threat due to the blockade imposed on Armenia and attempts to isolate it from regional programs (p. 33).

According to the 2020 National Security Strategy, the Russian Federation remains Armenia's main ally. In particular, it states that " Armenia's foreign policy priorities include deepening and expanding its strategic alliance with the Russian Federation in the spheres of politics, trade and economy, defense, security, culture, and humanitarian assistance based on the historical friendship between the two nations" (p. 11).

Along with Russia, strengthening relations with the United States and the European Union has been maintained as a priority of Armenia's foreign policy (p. 12). It is also noteworthy that like the 2007 National Security Strategy, the new strategy also focuses on cooperation with NATO in addition to the importance of Armenia's participation in the Collective Security Treaty Organization. (p. 19).

As for Georgia, similar to the 2007 National Security Strategy, it is mentioned in a positive context together with Iran. In particular, it states that through mutually beneficial and outstandingly good neighborly relations with Georgia and Iran, Armenia will develop effective cooperation with these countries in various fields and at the same time protect them from external geopolitical influences (p. 12).

Conclusion

In addition to the matters mentioned above, the new National Security Strategy of the Republic of Armenia covers many other important issues such as the Armenian diaspora, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, energy, demographics and more.

Overall, the 2020 National Security Strategy of the Republic of Armenia clearly reflects the difficult security environment of the South Caucasus. It is further complicated for Armenia by its strained relations with two immediate neighbors - Azerbaijan and Turkey. This tension is largely a consequence of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the prospect of its resolution is beyond the horizon and this objective aspect remains a key factor influencing Armenia's foreign policy orientation. Consequently, a strategic alliance with Russia is a natural choice for Armenia's foreign policy. However, as before, expanding foreign relations with other major countries within the framework of so-called complementarity policy remains a priority for Armenia.