

THE MEDIA AND MILITARY: HOW THE PUBLIC OPINION  
CAN INFLUENCE THE MILITARY INSTITUTIONS

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**We fear others we create an institution  
of violence to protect us, but then we  
fear the very institution we created for  
protection<sup>1</sup>**

Does the open interaction between military institutions and media outlets result in better conditions for servicemen during their service and increase the overall quality of Armed Forces? Not only in specific countries, but globally the military institutions such as Ministry of Defense and the Armed Forces do not always have open communications with the media. Nevertheless, in some cases, primarily with advanced armies, the open interaction between military institutions and media outlets are considered to be one of the essential aspects that increases the quality of those institutions and military bases. The transparent interaction and freedom of speech, media, and press give the public an opportunity to not only be aware of the ongoing violations of conditions in the army, but gives them the tools to demand better standards for the servicemen.

The media is not the only stakeholders that advocates for the protection of human rights in military bases, on the same side of the argument Ministry of defense should be more transparent and encourage the public to demand the change in the policy from the military institutions. Also what should be noted the directors of non-governmental and civil society organizations provide their fair contribution to the matter and came up with the monitoring and evaluation of both activities conducted by ministry of defense and by the media sector of Armenia starting from the 2009. The contribution and cooperation of all stakeholders included become a vital aspect to

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<sup>1</sup> P. D. Feaver, "The civil-military problematique: Huntington, Janowitz, and the question of civilian control", *Armed Forces and Society* 1996, 23, 149, p. 150

build transparent defensive institutions which eventually will lead to the combat readiness and powerful armed forces.

After secession from the Soviet Union in 1991, the creation of the Armed Military Forces was an essential objective for the newly established Armenian Republic due to the ongoing armed conflict with neighboring Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh and tense relations with its other neighbor Turkey. Since its establishment, on January 28, 1992, the Armenian Military Forces has experienced and gone through many changes both positive and adverse. The progress of conditions for those participating in mandatory military service is evident, both by official announcements of the Ministry of Defense of Armenia (MOD) and by the decrease in non-combat deaths not caused by the violation of the ceasefire regime with neighboring Azerbaijan Republic.

Throughout this period, the Republic of Armenia has signed under multiple international protocols and partnership agreement plans with The North Atlantic Treaty Organization<sup>2</sup> that obligates it to provide high standard and protection of fundamental human rights for the servicemen at the time of their service. However, do those protocols have an impact on the actual situation in the military, and what is the role of the media?

One can make a case that after the development of communication technologies it is nearly impossible to conceal the information regarding the situation in the Army from the public eye.

Clearly the government should provide necessary conditions for the media to be able to operate freely and without obstacles. At the same time one of the arguments of the capstone also concentrates on the other side of the coin: The media should be active on its own and seek the

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.natoinfo.am/en/news/278/>

public's and government's attention towards the disciplinary problems and issues that were and currently are going on in the Armed Forces of Armenia. As in most post-Soviet states, there are issues with hazing in the military, the roots of which goes back to the Soviet era. Hazing in the Soviet Army was a phenomena referred to as "Dedovschchina" by military servicemen.

Also what do add up an importance to the issue and the current situation is the fact that Republic of Armenia is currently in the middle of implementation of constitutional reforms which includes the change of the form of Government shifting from the presidential system to the parliamentary, meaning that the Parliament would take the leading role as a global decision maker in the republic of Armenia. The parliament as the highest State body should take a responsibility of the supervision over the protection of human rights in Armed Forces as parts of creation of more combat-ready prepared military forces. The valid and sufficient parliamentary control may not be obtained if there is no cooperation between parliament and the independent non-politically affiliated bodies such as the military ombudsman. Also the importance relies on the reports prepared by think tanks and Non-Governmental Organizations and the media coverage as all factors are interconnected and create an equation for the further democratization and development of the military forces.

## **Literature Review**

### **Global and Regional Changes and Tendencies**

Many scholars have argued that both domestic and international military systems have had to face many changes and shifts after the end of Cold War<sup>3</sup>. The values and cultural aspects of modern society have shifted and the Armed Forces of the specific country should face changes in accordance with the needs and demands of society. Besides economic aspects and conditions the Armed Forces and National Defense institutions should pay attention to “the impact of the electronic media on public opinion and politics.”<sup>4</sup> The development of the communication means and electronics, in contrast with globalization have made a major shift in public perception towards different issues. Public opinion has been influenced by many things such as human rights and the idea that the public has an authority and a say in the political decision making process. The developed and Western countries have faced many changes in 1990’s as an effect of the major changes in public opinion globally. For instance, the United Kingdom have made changes on legislative level and adopted law according to which “Ministry of Defense of United Kingdom that homosexual activities are incompatible with service in the armed forces, and homosexual personnel will be administratively discharged” (The British Journal of Sociology). Unlike the developed countries the post-Soviet countries as well have the changes in the military system in their domestic policy agenda. Some are in a phase of need for those changes in the military infrastructure. Some countries have already begun the implementation of the changes that would help to shift from the Soviet background. For this capstone the specific case would be the Military institutions and the Ministry of Defense of Armenia as a post-Soviet state. The major stakeholder here is the media outlets that in some cases may be the bridge for the interaction of public, society with the Armed Forces and Military officials.

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<sup>3</sup> The British Journal of Sociology, 45(4), 637-654. doi:10.2307/591887

<sup>4</sup> The British Journal of Sociology

## **The background on conditions in post-Soviet states (Dedovschina)**

In the Soviet army and later on in Russia the term of initiation was also known as Dedovschina. Having the reference to the Russian word for grandfather “Ded”<sup>5</sup>. In the Soviet Army the second year servicemen were considered as the elderly of the base and were using the different hazing practices as the initiation for the newcomers. The officers and high rank officials were not much concerned with that situation and find that procedures as a normal and even in some cases necessary.

Unlike most of the ex-Soviet countries, Armenia has tried to diversify its Military and defense systems by planning and implementing the views and ideology of western structures. Also, the freedom of media and press have made society sensible towards the issues of the Army and the life of the servicemen which at its place have made an impact on the position of government and the cooperation of military institutions with the public and media outlets.

The current on-going situation in the Russian armed forces might be considered as the army that is affected the most by the hazing procedures caused by elder 2nd-year servicemen (day). Also, the Russian Armed forces, the ministry of Defense and the President of Russian Federation have shown the lack of communication and co-operation with the media outlets, NGO-s, and public initiatives. Similar to other issues such as racism or hooliganism the public awareness is considered as the valuable tool and steps towards the tackling the problem. At the same time, the government did not address the issue of the initiation process hazing as they mostly try to concentrate on the other matters and draw the public attention to other things.

*This comment by Sergei Ivanov is an example: One other thing that concerns me are the runaways, sometimes hundreds of kilometers, to so-called committees of soldiers mothers... In*

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<sup>5</sup> Those who date the present dedovschina system to 1967 include Odom, William E. (1998). The Collapse of the Soviet Military. Yale University Press.

*fact, there are hundreds of such committees, or even thousands. Who supports them, how they live, that remains a big question.*<sup>6</sup>

In Armenia the cases with the deaths caused by non-combatant situations have not been much in the public discussion since the establishment of the Armenian Armed Forces and remained so till the late 2000's since when those cases began to receive the necessary but not sufficient attention from the public, military officials and the judicial system. Despite having regulations agreed on paper, on practice there are some military bases or specific Army officials that did not obey to those regulations. Some studies for instance suggest the opposite and argue that Military officials actually were hiding or were providing very vague information about the deaths and did not give necessary details to the case. The study showing this goes back to 2011. Armenia freedom of press index have not changed in the previous three years from 2014-2016 Armenia remained in between the ranks of 74-78 and the global index have not shifted much. Also at the same time the reports and investigations conducted by journalists and availability of information have increased. The projects such as the safe soldiers for safe Armenia<sup>7</sup>, which is conducted by peace dialogue NGO, have collected the data from the families of the death soldiers. One could argue that society becomes more aware of the situation in the military bases and at the same time the information remains available and without censorship from the government and military officials. At the same time the number of civil and judicial cases have increased showing that legal parties such as prosecutors are considering those cases to face full criminal justice if find necessary.

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<sup>6</sup> "S. Ivanov: v Rossii ne budet otmenena prizyvnaia sistema" (S. Ivanov: the conscription system in Russia will not be abolished), June 1, 2004 [online], <http://www.gazeta.ru/cgi-bin/newsarc.cgi> (retrieved August 4, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> <http://safesoldiers.am/en/>

## **International Protocols and Agreements**

In the past few years, Armenia has signed protocols and agreements according to which it is obliged to provide specific changes towards the development of military and the life of members of the armed forces. Some of those protocols are directed to the pluralism and transparency addressed to media as mentioned in individual partnership action plan between Armenia and NATO. Also according to the action plan Armenia would continue to train and raise the awareness among the public officials for them to communicate with public and media outlets effectively. At the same part, the plan suggests that Armenia is planning on improving and continuing the ongoing co-operation with the international institutions such as the European Council. From this scheme, one can conclude that throughout the time the Armenia have realized the importance of the protection of the fundamental rights of the servicemen and how the media could be a tool for it. From the same document, it is evident that Armenian officials are determined to enhance the ties between society armed forces and increase the contribution to the defense strategy of the Republic of Armenia. One could argue that Armenia would use the public opinion and media outlets to develop and bring necessary changes to the Armed Forces that were partly damaged by the influence of Soviet Union. Besides the Partnership plan with NATO, Armenia has also enhanced their co-operation with the Council of Europe and signed protocols that aimed to protect and defend the rights of the servicemen. Four sub-closes are targeted to prevent the degrading treatment in the Armed Forces. The sub-closes prohibit the punishment that includes degrading treatment, collective punishment and use of the authority provided by the officers with the higher stance. These protocols show the shift of Armenia from the post-Soviet stance in the Armed Forces and provide a long-term solution that would contribute to the whole

situation with the Military institutions as the state security in the region have been a major concern since the independence.

Several international organizations such as the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe have mentioned a lot of times in their reports over the democratic activity the necessity of the cooperation of non-governmental organizations, media sector and the government.

The special councils have been assembled that are operating under the jurisdiction of the ministry of defense. However, such bodies may be unnecessary as the monitoring mechanisms should be independent of any governmental body, otherwise the effectiveness of the monitoring would drop and at the end the Council could grow closer to the institutions it should have monitored.<sup>8</sup>

### **The tendencies and numbers in Armenia**

The protection of human rights has become a global perspective in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As shown before the global politics and opinion making have been circling around the protection of the most fundamental human rights in any conditions. Various NGO's have conducted researches and projects aiming to monitor the situation over deaths in non-combatant situations and how those deaths were related to the violation of fundamental human rights.

The reports based 2008- 69 deaths, approximately 59 of which were caused by none military issues in NKR. 4 are hazing-related. No official source announces the death and gives a description; the information is obtained from the soldiers who report about the situation to NGO's and media outlets.

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<sup>8</sup> public council that is adjacent to the RA Minister of Defense

Tendencies started to change, 70% decrease in the hazing, an ombudsman appointed a new specialized military adviser on the human rights defender's staff, military personnel convicted.

In 2009- The government reports seven deaths due to abuse and the prosecutor reports two deaths caused by mistreatment. An additional number of suicides and induced suicides. The sources mentioned respectively six and eleven cases of suicides. Official tells the cases "negligence" or "violations of breach of procedures of soldiers' relations."

*According to the military prosecutor, during the first 11 months of the year, 38 military personnel were convicted of hazing and related violations and 45 more cases were under trial.*<sup>9</sup>

Official statement and report of ombudsman on the issue of hazing rose for the first time. The report suggested that officials and government failed to register hazing procedures here. The report tells 171 cases and showed that only 15-20% of hazing incidents were registered.

The upcoming reports show the increase of the governmental involvement and attempts that tackles the hazing, but it still remained as a common practice in Army according to the interview of the servicemen.

From the report one could argue that information over the deaths in military due to non-combatant situation have become a major topic of discussion and public discourse. The report also includes the information regarding the conditions of the facilities in the military unit and that many of the deaths have come from poor conditions. Also the number of public announcements over the deaths during the service has increased over the past years. The number of trials with the case of the hazing has increased over the past years as well.

Also at the same time the role of the Human Rights Defender (ombudsman) has been increasing over the past years.<sup>10</sup> The right of the Ombudsman to freely enter anyplace make him a unique

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<sup>9</sup> Country reports on human rights practices: Report submitted to the Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate and Committee on Foreign Affairs

mechanism to being able to monitor the state protected places and military bases. The objectives and main activities of the Human Rights Defender consist of the following points:

- Constant monitoring of human rights protection,
- Dealing with citizens' complaints,
- Being a speaker for civil society,
- Publishing reports on various issues, including those that are of interest for the armed forces
- Organizes visits to places where there are alleged or factual violations of criminal and procedural rights, as well as rights of servicemen or their family members.<sup>11</sup>

The reports and press conferences conducted by the Human Rights Defender's office give an excellent material to work with.

## Research Questions

The research concentrated mainly on the following purposed questions in order to have more general understanding of the matter, the methods and the measurements that are in place and contribute to the situation. The methodology and the approach of field study were chosen and adapted considering the specifics of the questions.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.ombuds.am/en/statistics.html>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.ombuds.am/en/functions/department-for-protection-of-criminal-procedure-rights-and-rights-of-military-servicemen.html>

- How transparent is the Ministry of Defense of Armenia?

The ministry of defense is the only stakeholder that had the first hand information over all the issues at stake. The media outlets, journalists and NGOs rely on the information that the Ministry of defense provide. Without the relevant information and description of it the public would have a place to make the assumption which not necessarily would mirror the reality. Recently Armenia has shown quite promising signs in the protection of freedom of press and freedom of media making the positive case for the whole government of Armenia. Compared to the other ex-soviet states (excluding Baltic States Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia)<sup>12</sup>, as a part of my research questions I would also question if the Armenian media and press outlets have developed enough to have impact on military institutions and their work.

- Is the media competent to provide the public with those cases of military misconduct within military bases?

All the stakeholders involved in the issue and protection of human rights in the military bases should play their role accordingly, that includes the media outlets. The media is the integral stakeholder of the process providing a link between the public and the government in this case the ministry of defense. If media is free and capable of providing the necessary information to the public, the public presence in the policy making will increase.

- Is the media, through shaping public opinion, successful in spurring reforms and policy changes within the military structure (Ministry of Defense)? From the first two questions

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<sup>12</sup> <https://rsf.org/en/ranking>

arises the third one: the media has power and capability to influence the public opinion one way or another. Further the more in scope of my research I also had focused on question whether the public opinion is represented by media reports and articles and if the media had done enough to approach to the ministry institutions and provide fair criticism towards their work.

## Methodology

To answer the purposed questions, several methods of research were utilized.

Data collection: The main strategy of the methodology of research was concentrated on the data collection from various sources. The means of data collection were the interviews; among the interviewed people there were directors of the Non-Governmental organizations, the editors of media outlets, the ex-workers of ministry of defense and the family members of the victims that have died under unknown circumstances while serving at Armed Forces. At the same time in order to have generalization on the overall perception of the Armed Forces the specific survey was conducted among the citizens who had previously served at Armed forces. The questions for the interviews and the survey were chosen in coherence with the material that is presented in the bibliography and literature review.

Survey for the ex-servicemen: The applicants were consisted of servicemen from the different regions of service, different age group and different cultural and educational background.

Armenia's Ombudsman appointed a new specialized military adviser to his office in 2008. This was the first human rights actions regarding the military, therefore the groups were divided before 2008 and after. At the same time, it is important to bear in mind that since protocols and agreements between NATO's Individual Partnership Plan and the Council of Europe were signed recently, it have been relevant also be relevant to have a third group of servicemen who have completed their military service recently.

Also, I had taken into consideration the location of the military bases where the interviewed former soldiers have served. The decision of which base had been included was based on reports and cases of non-combat deaths that have occurred according to the circumstances (e.g., poor health treatment, hazing, etc.). The quality of the service facilities might be different based on their geographic location, for instance the strategically important bases might have the high standard facilities and equipment whereas in less strategically important bases might have poorer quality equipment. With the same pattern I had applied to the disciplinary part of the research, the quality and the preparation of the military crew (officers, officials) might be different from one base to another. The information that comes from survey still is not sufficient enough to make a precise case of military bases being different in quality of sanitary equipment and disciplinary situation. Also I had conducted the interviews with the media representatives as well; the media companies would be decided later on after the interviews with the military officials. The military officials would be asked to name the most prominent media partners and with whom they work the most. The discussion over the interview was mainly about their general opinion over the relations between media and military institutions. Based on variation of

their answers and comparisons between the answers I had create more precise picture of what are the actual relations between media and military. More precise description over the interviews is followed in the upcoming section.

## The interviews

While conducting the survey the number of applicants was not specified beforehand, overall more than 30 ex-servicemen have written the application. The numbers of applicants also included current servicemen due to unforeseen circumstances. But to achieve as much precise information as possible considering the variety of sources I am initially planning to divide the map of Armenia into regions in accordance so that every part would be represented.

The questions for the interviews are compromised considering the knowledge obtained from the literature, and each group would have a specific question based on the human rights report of state government reports of the particular years. The outreach towards the ex-servicemen would be done by surveys or by direct contact with the ex-serviceman who currently studies at the American University of Armenia.

The interviews with the public officials, workers of the military institutions such as the defense ministry on the question of their co-operation with the media and public would be conducted.

The number of the interviewed person was limited or no more than one person.

Also, as a part of the research I had analyzed the speeches and official statements of military officials regarding the issues presented as the central ones to understand their approach towards it. Even if there is no any speech of any staff member mentioning hazing or poor medical

conditions, that also could drive to the conclusion that they do not pay attention towards the issues. The outreach towards the officials or workers of ministry of defense will be done either by directly by approaching the ministry of defense, or by approaching the ex-workers of ministry of defense.

Third party that was interviewed is the representatives and editors of the media outlets to get the insight from the professional point of view of the media representatives. The editors of the most prominent media agencies that have worked in this specific field were targeted as the potential people to interview. The interviewed people were the editors of mediamax news agency Ara Tadevosyan, chief editor of Hetq media agency Edgar Baghdasayan and one of the co-editors of Razminfo Karen Vrtanesyan.

## Research Findings and Analysis

### Media Sphere

Most of the interviewees, regardless of their professional field pin pointed at the non-sustainable coverage of the murder cases or cases of human rights violations as not sustainable. Many media specialists have pointed that in the 21st century the journalism is more about how fast occurred event is covered. Speaking in the scope of the topic, the main activities that have been covered in the media includes only the actual cases and the following actions of the stakeholders are not taken into the account. Most media outlets do not cover the full case from the beginning till end;

instead they limit the coverage to the name of the victim, the place where the issue occurred and the general description of the case. The follow up is missed by the media outlets. The later investigation and the decision of court are not covered by the media agencies. The agencies face different limitations in terms of coverage starting from the state bureaucratic procedures and finishing with the lack of resource as the media outlets may be limited in terms of their human and financial resources. To add upon that the court trials can make up long period of time and the investigation of the criminal case may take time up to 10 years.

Besides the obstacles that are created by the complexity of the Armenian Justice System journalist face the problems with their own investigation as they cannot in any circumstance visit the military base or any institution working under the authority of Ministry of defense. Since the cases in Armed forces are judged under the regular criminal code of Armenia. In this term the case become more transparent as the public and media outlets in Armenia are free to follow and cover the cases. Compared to the other systems that have a different court or tribunal responsible for the trial, processing and executing the cases that appear under the service or in the military bases, the Armenian system is more liberal as the Ministry of Defense has no obligation of being a judge and making decisions on the cases that could have jurisdictional power and no higher authority.

Another numbing factor is the only one source of possible information. In the 21st century media outlets mostly rely on the different sources in order to verify the information, but being the only source of information. “The society, in turn, would like to be informed about everything that is going on in the country. Therefore, if the natural desire “to be informed” is not satisfied, people tend to get bitter and believe the discrediting information or the different made-up versions, to

put it mildly. These situations are often created by state bodies that use different excuses in order not to provide information, thus causing disinformation to be published”<sup>13</sup>

What also may appear as a clear obstacle for the media outlet to cover are the interviews with the families of the victims. The topic of the discussion may occur as a sensitive issue that needs a proper capacity of knowledge in the sphere of journalism and human psychology. Many editors of different media agencies pointed on the issue of the sensitivity of the topic that makes the clash between the society's right to know and the individual's right for privacy. It is evident that this situation creates a necessity for the journalists that are specialized in this specific aspect of the journalism and reporting.

The factors that speak in favor of free media and transparent Ministry of Defense are vital factors for armed forces and Military Institutions to get trust from the citizens. However, the competence of media is a must factor in the equation. The survey dedicated to the ex-servicemen includes a separate question dedicated to the media reporting on the situation in the army. The question was related to the situations and cases that do not include cases with the ceasefire violation. The question is open-ended so the applicants could provide a better insight and be more flexible in their responses.

Most of the responses have a common opinion that generally not much is hidden by the official sources and that the media provide is of a high quality. Some answers still included the statements such as "not everything is told" or "Most of the news is true, but not everything is revealed". However, all answers included the statements speaking in favor of the media work done. Some answers also have their positive stance on the coverage of the recent cases of

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<sup>13</sup> In October 1993, the Council of Europe's first Summit of Heads of State and Government was held in Vienna and solemnly proclaimed the organization's pan European vocation. It also laid down the basic conditions for membership:

violation of ceasefire happening in April 2016. Regardless of the place and time period of the service the ex-soldiers of the Armed Forces had the common agreement on the competent coverage of the cases in the Army.

The other contributing party to the protection of human rights and transparency of the Institutions under the control of Ministry of Defense and the Armed Forces are the civil society and Non-Governmental organizations. As a matter of fact, the NGOs and Civil Society organizations can become great mechanisms of evaluating the media content for the matter. Several NGOs provide the information on the matter that included the precise descriptions of the cases and even more by giving the proceeding information about the case even when the court hearing of the case begin. The difference between the NGO sector and the media outlets is the specialization and the objectives of the organizations from two sectors. The NGOs are specializing in the sustainable collection and analyses of the data. The data collection may take up to several years. Meanwhile the media agency can waste no resources on following the cases and after all the media provides the data to the NGOs to build their later data on.

However, regardless of the obstacles that have occurred in front of the media agencies some have proven the reliability and competence of covering the essential issues in a crisis situation.

Several directors of non-governmental organizations emphasize the high professional approach media agencies in intensive and high quality coverage of the April events.

“We would have been in an intangible situation if some media outlets were not as responsible as they were during the April events”- The director of the Peace Dialogue Non-Governmental Organization stated about the full scale attack on Nagorno Karabakh a year ago in the beginning of April 2016.

The overall environment on the matter of which institution can impact the public opinion is divided in three main players: Civil Society and Non-Governmental Organizations, the Media outlets and the press and the third segment of players are the Ministry of Defense and the institutions that are under the jurisdiction of MoD. These which are unequal in power, but more or less, they are equal in terms of the opportunities they have. In case of malfunctioning of one of the segments one or two of the others would take the advantage and turn the public trust in their favor. However, there can be the case if the 3 parties coexist in harmony and eventually lead towards the more developed armed forces and more empowered society.

### The Public Sphere

The other segment at stake is the public sector or more precisely in this cases the ministry of defense. The ministry of defense is the institution that possess the ultimate power of the information and at any given point may consider any information as a vital part for the national security and do not provide the information to the public.

What should be realized here is the geopolitical situation that the Armenia is currently in. The Armenia on its own should develop a system that would be efficient in the current situation regarding the frozen conflict over the Nagorno Karabakh dispute with the neighboring Azerbaijan. The situation allows the state officials to put the mark “secret for the protection of National Security.” Sometimes that mark could be put to the cases that have no direct impact towards the contribution over the protection of national interests.

Armenia is part of many international agreements and organizations, including the direct participation and influence of Armenia and the agreements that have executive aspect. Many agreements indicate the vital component of transparency and competent public relations from the

side of the ministry of defense. The ministry of defense is the advocate of the military institutions, their activities and in some cases is the connecting institution between the public and the military sector. Aside from the international agreements, the ministry of defense has implemented several structural changes and created different committees and institutions objective of which are the monitoring of the situation in the military bases, the monitoring of the soldiers psychological and behavioral condition.<sup>14</sup>

The actions initiated by both the international agreements and internal policies started to take place in recent years. The actions of Ministry of defense by opening various institutions and guiding documents such as Public Information of Armed forces and public information concept paper both emphasize the importance of further development of the public relations between Armed Forces and Ministry of Defense. The plans aim to address the public awareness issues and creation of the mechanism that if working correctly will precisely monitor the situations going on in the Armed Forces and how to address them.

When comparing the actual opportunities, the public institutions are in an advantage as they have a legislative power to come up with the decisions that they will find non-negotiable.

Survey and the Social perception

### **Survey Replies**

- General information on place and time period of service

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.mil.am/hy/pn/317/18/3923/p/about>

- Have you witnessed the abuse of power by soldiers higher in rank while serving in the Army?

Yes/No Question, 53% answered NO

- If the Answer to the previous question is Yes, please provide some details. Details included mild responses such as “That is a usual issue on all levels” and “only for disciplinary purpose”

- Did you get medical treatment whenever needed without any obstacles? Yes/No question 66% of respondents answered Yes

- Have all sanitations requirements been in place during your service? Yes/No question 73% percent replied negatively to the proposed question. The question included an open ended choice in case of answering no some responses included the answers such as “They were late and problematic to realize the need, but eventually we get some treatment” some pointed that those were mild issues and there is no need for being upset

- Do you follow the news regarding the situation in Armed Forces and military bases? Almost 90% of respondents were following the news after they have finished their service. The question as well included an open-ended option and the respondents replied with answers such as “60% true” and “not everything is published”

The survey shows that most of the servicemen have a trust towards media. Considering the circumstances that media faces many obstacles in terms of coverage of the criminal cases and the coverage of the situation in military bases, the current result is quit of a high mark. Having the only one source to rely on, the media agencies were capable of a comprehensive and competent coverage of the events. At the same time one shall admit the work done by the Ministry of Defense as the only source of information for media outlets. The results also show the

corresponding and professional cooperation going between these two direct stakeholders.

However the system of cooperation still has a lot of place of improvement and several loopholes.

However when considering the public perception one should take into account the fact that the respondents to the survey were not the ones that of high capacity of knowledge regarding the international protocols or the sanitary and disciplinary standards that should be met. Hence the precise argument over the situation in the military bases could not be made. Also the precise evaluation of the stakeholders (media, ministry of defense, NGOs) cannot be made as the facts still can be left undisclosed both from public and from the Ministry of Defense.

#### The final take and current situation

The borderline between freedom and necessary limitation has become one of the most crucial discourses over the previous years, accumulated by the information coming every side of the equation: government (in this case military institutions) media and non-governmental organizations. The essential collaboration between these three sides could lead towards the proactive public control mechanism over the armed forces and military institutions. Currently the Ministry of Defense of Republic of Armenia is in cooperation with the non-governmental organizations, such as “Soldiers and Rights”. According to the interview with the directors of Peace Dialogue Organization and Helsinki Citizens Assembly Vanadzor organization the cooperation between them and Ministry of Defense has become much more effective and open. However, still in some situations non-governmental organizations faces difficulties and obstacles when working with Ministry of Defense such as long and ineffective bureaucratic procedures or problems with statistical data provided. The further development of relations between NGOs and

public administration bodies should increase and at the same time some powers and abilities should be provided to the civil societies to affect the defense sector's regulations and policies.

The issues of the Ministry of Defense with the lack of trust and more in depth cooperation with media sector and non-governmental organizations was noticed by the human rights defender, more precisely the advisor of Ombudsman on issues of military servicemen and military affairs. In 2009 with the support of legal experts from OSCE Yerevan Office the Ombudsman report on the following issues were made:

- lack of justification for choosing a specific form of disciplinary sanction,
- failure to record violations of law,
- ineffectiveness of appeal mechanisms,
- condemnation of torture,
- freedom of information and the confidentiality regime in the army<sup>15</sup>

In any case the Human Rights Defender and his office would play crucial role in the formation of the strong public control mechanism.

Eventually the public control could become a democratic control mechanism is the way that balances the civil-military relations. It would provide the necessary scheme to create combat ready army that is ready to protect the civilians and at the same time be authorized by the citizens. The society and the society should have the authority to influence and impact the

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<sup>15</sup> See Extraordinary Report on Human Rights Protection during Implementation of Disciplinary Policy in the RA Armed Forces. The RA Human Rights Defender, Yerevan, 2009, <http://www.ombuds.am/main/am/10/31/0/4/>:

security policy and the way the armed forces.<sup>16</sup> State should be able to democratically govern and lead the military institutions and armed forces not the opposite<sup>17</sup>.

### **Limitations for Research**

**The diversity of the interviewed individuals:** Interviewing the family members and mothers of the victims: this point of limitation was an obstacle due to its sensitivity. Although the research did include the interview with the family member of one of the victims, nevertheless the research could have gained more diversity if there were more interviews with the family members of the victim. By interviewing different people, the information would have been more diverse in terms of provided the insight on how the situation on the matter had changed in the past years.

**Inability to include the direct stakeholders:** This applies only to the stakeholders that are working in the Ministry of Defense. Although this obstacle was overcome by the interviewing of the ex-workers, nevertheless the interview with the current workers would have added diversity over the opinions.

**The legal limitations:** The interviews with the ex-workers of the military of defense. The limitation that could not be overcome during the research was regarding the information that the ex-workers could provide. The workers had faced the limitations prescribed by law as some of the information could not be provided to the public due to National Security interests. This

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<sup>16</sup> A. J. Goodpaster, S. P. Huntington, "Civil-military relations", American enterprise institute for public policy research, Washington, D.C, 1977, p. 31.

<sup>17</sup> Article 2.1 of UN Charter. Available at: <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/index.shtml>

limits the freedom of the interviewee to share their experience to the fullest and to contribute more to the research process.

**Lack of diverse sources:** Another general limitation that can arise upon the topic is the lack of diversity among the actual information sources. The media outlets in their coverage and the civil society and non-governmental organizations in their reports heavily rely on the information that is provided by the Ministry of defense. Whenever considering the research in this field the limitations of this field in general put their shadow on the limitations of the research. All the cases described and the policy cited in the research and capstone are coming from one first hand source; the ministry of defense. However, this limitation could have been tackled by including more opinion of the people involved which in the case of this research were the individuals who had served for the Armed forces.

### **Methodological limitations**

**Self-reported data:** The large part of the information obtained and the situation described is self-reported data. Some of the participants of the survey may have problems of recalling the memories or reporting the cases with the specific bias. Moreover, the survey contained the question where the one should have got some background knowledge on the international agreements and laws according to which they should have been treated during the service. For the further initiatives of the research over the topic it would be more convenient to provide

background information to the participants of the survey so they be more critical while answering to the survey question.

**Size of the sample:** The strong statistical analyses or data require larger contribution. The work is limited for the individual to obtain the first hand data with the limited sources. The research might rely more on the secondary data which discredits on its behalf the initial research done by the individual. The possible prospect for the future research might be the larger target group for more precise data and analyses.

## Works Cited

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Those who date the present dedovschina system to 1967 include Odom, William E. (1998). *The Collapse of the Soviet Military*. Yale University Press

"S. Ivanov: v Rossii ne budet otmenena prizyvnaia sistema" (S. Ivanov: the conscription system in Russia will not be abolished), June 1, 2004 [online], <http://www.gazeta.ru/cgi-bin/newsarc.cgi> (retrieved August 4, 2004)

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Country reports on human rights practices: Report submitted to the Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate and Committee on Foreign Affairs

<http://www.ombuds.am/en/functions/department-for-protection-of-criminal-procedure-rights-and-rights-of-military-servicemen.html>

<https://rsf.org/en/ranking>

In October 1993, the Council of Europe's first Summit of Heads of State and Government was held in Vienna and solemnly proclaimed the organization's pan European vocation. It also laid down the basic conditions for membership

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A. J. Goodpaster, S. P. Huntington, "Civil-military relations", American enterprise institute for public policy research, Washington, D.C, 1977, p. 31

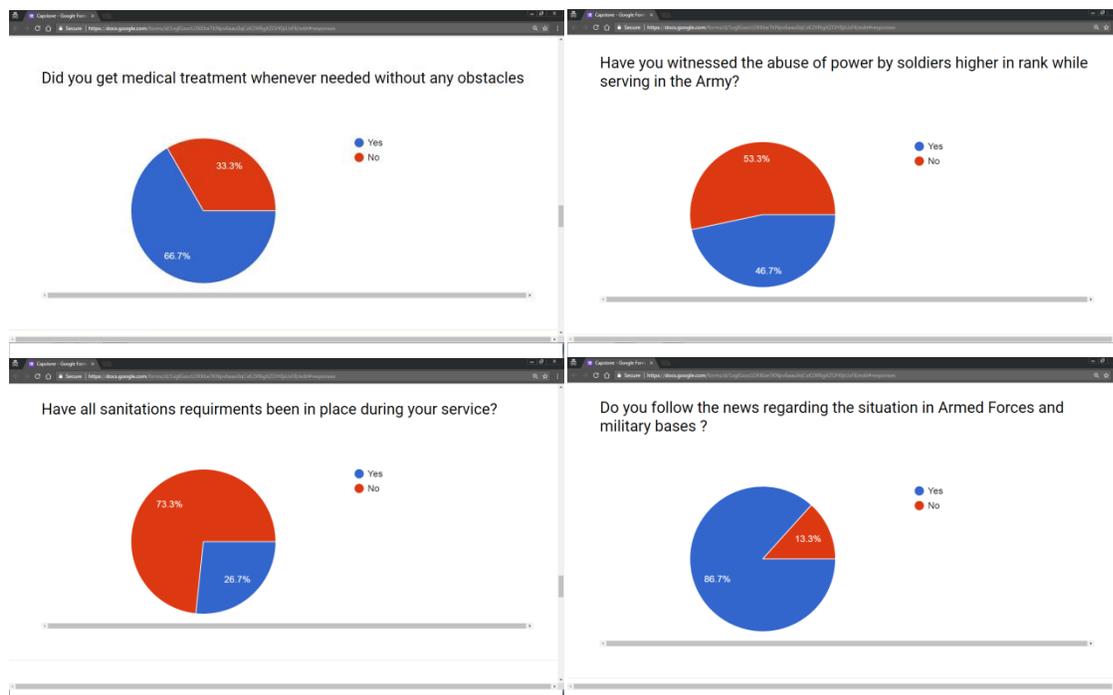
Article 2.1 of UN Charter. Available at: <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/index.shtml>

Democratic Control of Armed Forces: The international Parliamentary Dimension Dr. Wim F. van Eekelen Member of the Netherlands Senate Vice-President of NATO Parliamentary Assembly

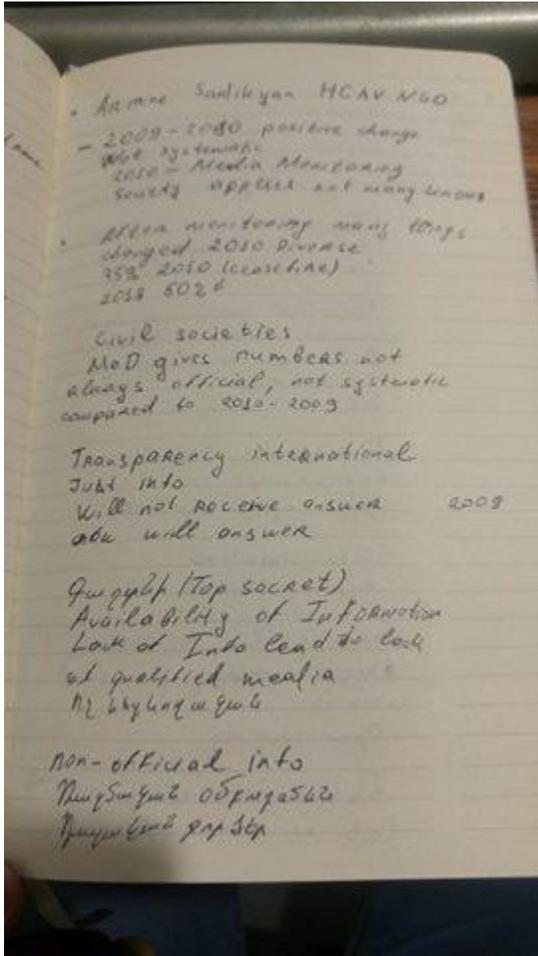
Armenia and Democratic Control of Armed Forces Analysis and Perspectives

## Appendices

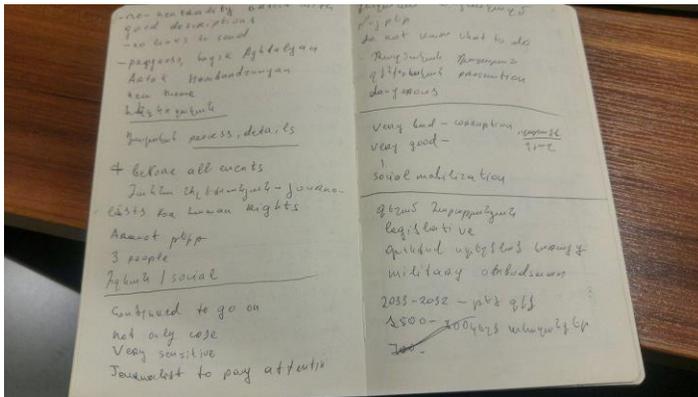
Find the results of close ended (Yes or No) Questions attached; the open ended questions were described in Findings and analysis Section



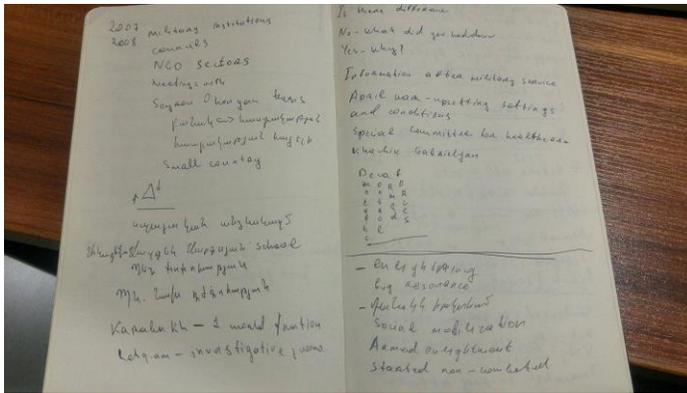
Find the Captions of the notes from the interviews attached:



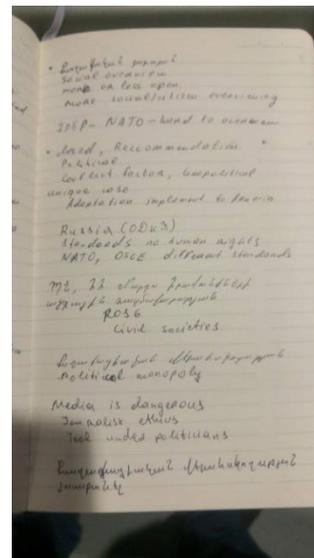
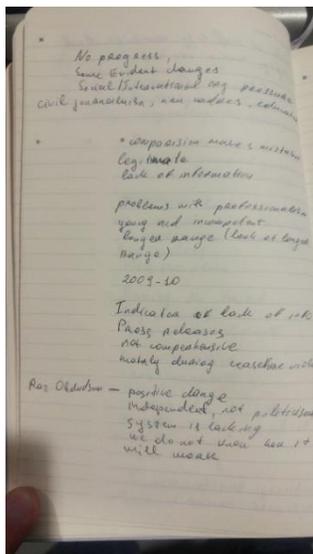
Notes of interview with Armine Sadikyan: Director of Helsinki Citizens Assembly Non-Governmental Organization:



Notes of Interview with Tsovinar Nazaryan, whose brother died under unclear circumstances while serving at Army



Notes of interview with Vahram ter-Matevosyan: Assistant professor at American University of Armenia  
 Areas of specialization: Turkish domestic and foreign policy, Regional Security, Conflicts in the post-Soviet Space.



Notes on interview with Edgar Khachatryan: director of Peace Dialogue Nongovernmental Organization

• Needs on time  
Spring 2 parts  
Yes, ethical transparent  
No, independent  
not allowed for journalists  
problem regarding the investigation

• Journalists are not allowed  
to visit for several years  
Substantial with liberty

• Translucent, but not clear  
operation, clash of opinions  
Investigation is coming  
long process  
Visit the place

• During the trial  
long process  
Open source for all

• Quite sensitive  
announcements

• Impossible to hide  
small country word of  
mouth  
Open society  
International president  
Lack of human Resource

Notes on interview with Edgar Baghdasaryan: Editor at Hetq news agency

• Computer - budget normal  
medium size  
ADD not fully but a lot  
Transparency not at all  
transparent till the

• Journalists - professionalism  
not the highest  
corresponding last 5 years

April 9. - Armenia at its place  
Journalists cannot obtain  
April cases, disciplinary point

• Turbulent  
European Court  
Humanitarian rather low  
jurisdiction  
Emotional  
Inconfidence in Society  
towards institutions  
More transparent  
Solutions undermined

Notes on interview Ara Tadevosyan- Editor at Mediamax media agency

## Annotated Bibliography

***The wrongs of passage: Inhuman and degrading treatment of new recruits in the Russian armed forces. (2004). New York: Human Rights Watch.***

This Study is conducted by the Human Rights Watch in October 2004. The similarities among the post-soviet countries regarding system (Dedovschina) in the military are evident. The first part of the study concentrates on the definition of Dedovshchina, how it works as a system, who are the key players and how the system is implemented among soldiers. Also, the study discusses different mechanisms on the prevention of Dedovshchina. The primary sources of the study are the interviews of the soldiers and ex-servicemen of Russian armed forces, conducted by the Human Rights Watch.

I will use this source as the comparison towards the system that is commonly utilized in the Armenian Military. Also, this source is relevant regarding giving a general background on the hazing issue in Armenia and how that phenomenon works. Since the term is by its nature come to the region from the Russian routs, the analysis of this study would contribute in terms of concentrating on specific aspects of the phenomena that are currently in place for Russian Armed Forces.

***Daucé, F., & Sieca-Kozłowski, E. (2006). Dedovshchina in the post-soviet military: Hazing of Russian army conscripts in a comparative perspective. Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag.***

This study similar to the previous describes the phenomena of Dedovschina, but includes the general idea over the post-soviet countries as well. At the same time it argues why the prevention mechanism and democratization have failed in combating these phenomena. Also the study discusses the cultural aspect of the phenomena and how the Soviet legacy has made an impact which is vivid till now.

The fact that this study contains the democratization and describes why it fails to combat the phenomena, it will be easy for me to utilize the information and compare it with the situation in Armenia. Also this study provides diversification of the sources that define the Dedovschina. This book would help to shape the whole concept of Dedovschina, and would help with the formulation of the questions for the focus groups which are going to be the part of the research.

***Country reports on human rights practices: Report submitted to the Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate and Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives by the Department of State in accordance with sections 116(d) and 502B(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended. (Annually). Washington, D.C.: U.S. G.P.O. starting from 2008 to 2015.***

The report contains official figures, descriptions of deaths, the later trials over the cases and the follow up. The reports contain the opinion of the soldiers and the servicemen regarding the hazing and the conditions in Armenian Armed Forces, based on the interviews conducted by NGO's. Each research on average contains almost 15 paragraphs where the hazing in the military and among the servicemen is mentioned.

The study will help to identify the shift of the tendencies over the specified period of time. The reports explore and could provide a statistic over the non-combatant military deaths and the abuse of human rights and degrading treatment in the army. Also the study will accompany the research of the mass media articles and laws and protocols that are adopted and would provide criteria for the measurement of the effectiveness of those laws and protocols.

***INDIVIDUAL PARTNERSHIP ACTION PLAN 2014 - 2016 ARMENIA INTRODUCTION, NATO-Armenia***

The partnership action plan introduces the co-operation between Armenia and NATO in the scope of years from 2014-2016. The plan also has paragraphs and sub-paragraphs touching upon the issues of the human rights and the conditions in the bases of Armed Forces of Armenia.

Additionally it contains parts that stresses upon the public information and importance of enhancing the public awareness over the defense issue. Also plan has a paragraph concentrating on the preparation of the soldiers.

This plan could be provided as evidence, on paper, showing that Armenia recently started to consider the importance of dialogue between MoD and its institutions with the public. At the same time the plan stressing upon the preparation of the soldiers with the specifically concentrating on discipline, which some authors on the phenomena of “Dedovschina” have considered as a mechanism against it.

***Human rights of members of the armed forces Recommendation CM/Rec (2010) 4 and explanatory memorandum- Directorate General of Human Rights and Legal Affairs Council of Europe Strasbourg. (2010)***

The set of rules and protocols concerning the overall military and defense of the countries who have agreed and signed the protocols and are at the stage of the ratification. Specific category of concentration is the protocol marked under B “No member of the armed forces shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”. Republic of Armenia have signed the protocols and agreed upon their ratification. The protocols are purposed by European Council. Also the category is mentioning the reporting of the “ill/degrading treatment”. These protocols pays attention not only to the treatment of the soldiers towards each other, both also put additional stress on the overall environment of the military bases and institutions and the importance of the protection of the fundamental human rights of the servicemen.

The laws and protocols generally speaking, are ratified or accepted in case if the society (group) that the rules are impacting, is ready or in a need of change. This study would be used as another measurement of the development of the conditions of Armed forces, and by the personal field study the implementation and the effectiveness of these protocols and recommendations would be put under the question.

***Safe Soldiers for a Safe Armenia. (n.d.). Retrieved November 08, 2016, from <http://safesoldiers.am>***

The information gathered as the part of the project initiated by the Piece Dialogue NGO This web page provides data; provide information directly collected from the family members of the soldiers who have died in non-combatant situations.

This web-page would be used as a tool to research the general number and also will add additional review towards the other sources.

At the same time this web-page could be mentioned as an example of the initiative raised in the recent years due to the factor that topic have become broadly discussed in the society and by the media. This platform also could contribute to the primary research as this web-page could become an object to concentrate while preparing the rhetorical, qualitative or quantitative analyses.

***Karatnycky, A., & Motyl, A. J. (1997-2015). Nations in transit: Civil society, democracy and markets in East Central Europe and the newly independent states. New York: Freedom House.***

Since 1995 the freedom house has started a collection of data on the 29 Central European and Eurasian countries regarding their level of democratizations. In their reports they have categorized countries democratization levels also in terms of democratization in Military system. The Nations in Transit Series also concentrates on the development of freedom of press and media, reporting on the violation of fundamental rights towards the journalists in the “Transit Nations”.

This research helps to diversify the sources by adding a new perspective and its concentrates on the freedom of media. While looking on the changes in the sphere of freedom of media, I can draw the proportions of how for instance the increase in the freedom of press leads to lesser military deaths caused by non-combatant situations. This series would be evidence in form of data that would show the correlation between media and the military.

***Payaslian, S. (2011). The political economy of human rights in Armenia: Authoritarianism and democracy in a former Soviet republic. London: I.B. Tauris.***

Generally this book presents objective arguments of why the democratization process has failed in the Republic of Armenia, discussing political and economic perspectives. The author has specified several aspects of human rights being ignored by the Armenian Military forces. The author present the military service as a sphere that demands a further effort to develop in terms of protection of human rights and present several cases that included the death of soldiers because of the medical conditions and deaths caused by fire not from the enemy’s side. The publication of this book goes back to 2011, but the analyses of data go further back to the 1990’s and an early Post-Soviet era and Post-Karabakh movement era.

The field study and the comparative analysis with this book would be done by me, to compare the situation back than and to see, if the actual change have been taken place and is the Armenia

in the right direction regarding this issue. This source provides a diversification and provides a general summary of what cultural aspects left from the Soviet, such as Dedovschina. The study provides an argumentation of why the implementation of human rights standards has failed in Armenia, which contains a part dedicated to the military service.