

INSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATIONS FOR THE MANAGEMENT AND ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY OF THE PROCESS OF CIVILIAN OVERSIGHT

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Key words: economic efficiency, accountability, civilian oversight, management, institutional framework, economy, strategic document, transparency

Introduction

In the Republic of Armenia, civilian oversight is a crucial factor in strengthening democratic governance. It also ensures the transparency and accountability of military structures, limits their uncontrolled influence on political processes, and fosters public trust. From an economic perspective, civilian oversight is vital for the effective management of the annual military budget, the targeted allocation of resources, and the prevention of financial waste, thereby contributing to the state's economic stability. In terms of governance, it strengthens interagency cooperation, promotes a coordinated approach between the civilian, defense sectors, other state institutions, and ensures that strategic decisions align with national priorities. This work aims to analyze the legal foundations of oversight, identify legislative and institutional gaps, propose practical solutions to enhance the effectiveness of economic, parliamentary, public, and legal protection mechanisms, to promote economic and governance efficiency, to align them with benchmarks.

Methodology

The study employed a combination of analytical and systemic methods to comprehensively assess the legal, strategic, and practical frameworks of civilian oversight. The analytical method was applied to examine the content of the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, sectoral laws, military doctrines, national security strategies, and government reports in 2021-2024, evaluating legal formulations, implementation practices, and structural and purposive compliance. This analysis is primarily presented in the *Literature review*, *Analysis* and *Conclusion* sections. The systemic method was utilized to identify the interconnectedness of oversight mechanisms, highlighting how legal, institutional, economic, and governance gaps mutually undermine effective oversight. This approach played a crucial role in *Scientific novelty* and *Analysis* sections, demonstrating the impact of systemic deficiencies on accountability and efficiency in the defense sector. The integration of these methods facilitated the formulation of practical recommendations, grounded in situational assessment, comparative international experience, and the identification of pressing governance challenges.

Literature review

The study of civilian oversight of the armed forces in the Republic of Armenia is based on the analysis of legislative, strategic, and programmatic documents. The Constitution

of the Republic of Armenia, the Law "On Defense", and the Constitutional Law "On the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly" establish the legal foundations for oversight of the armed forces. These documents define the mechanisms for parliamentary and governmental oversight but reveal procedural gaps that hinder effective control. From an economic perspective, these documents often lack mechanisms for detailed analysis of the defense budget and evaluation of expenditure efficiency, which limits financial transparency. In terms of governance, there is a lack of coordinated approaches to ensure cooperation between the Ministry of Defense and other state bodies for the effective implementation of strategic goals.

The Military Doctrine of the Republic of Armenia [r'azmakan doktriny', 2025] and national security strategies [azgayin anvtangowt'yan r'azmavarowt'yowny', 2025, azgayin anvtangowt'yan r'azmavarowt'yown, 2020] emphasize the importance of democratic oversight, yet the mechanisms for their implementation remain limited.

The Internal Service Regulations [nerqin c'ar'ayowt'yan kanonagirqy', 2025] govern the internal processes of the armed forces, but their connection to civilian oversight mechanisms remains limited. To enhance economic and governance efficiency, it is necessary to strengthen the transparency of resource planning and interagency coordination.

The study of civilian oversight of the armed forces in the Republic of Armenia necessitates a comprehensive analysis that synthesizes local legislative and strategic contexts with international experiences. This field is enriched by both local and global research, which collectively address institutional, procedural, and governance challenges.

In Armenian literature, some works particularly focus on institutional gaps, such as deficiencies in the activities of the Human Rights Defender and the absence of a military ombudsman institution. Her analysis highlights how these gaps impede transparency and accountability in the defense sector [Jilavyan, 2025, 131–133]. Similarly, Khachatryan's research centers on procedural issues and non-statutory relationships within the defense sector, which undermine the effectiveness of civilian oversight and governance [Khachatryan, 2024, 45–47]. Together, these works expose systemic deficiencies in Armenia's civilian oversight framework and lay the groundwork for proposing reforms.

Other experts complement this analysis by providing comparative perspectives and practical solutions. Erkkilä's study delves into the global diffusion of the ombudsman institution, underscoring its role in strengthening democratic oversight [Erkkilä, 2020, 23–25]. This research is highly relevant to Armenia, where the lack of such an institution constitutes a significant barrier. Medeiros, in turn, examines challenges related to the use of violence by military personnel, linking these to democratic accountability [Medeiros, 2022, 193–195]. His work emphasizes the critical need for civilian oversight to ensure the legality of military operations.

Rodrigues and co-authors explore the protection of socio-economic rights in armed conflicts, with a particular focus on the right to education [Rodrigues et al., 2025, 195–197]. Although it does not directly address military oversight, this study is pertinent to Armenia, where armed conflicts impact socio-economic rights, necessitating broader oversight mechanisms. Finally, Yamamoto’s work offers a comparative analysis of parliamentary oversight tools, drawing on the experiences of 88 countries [Yamamoto, 2007, 9-10]. This study provides practical recommendations that could be applied to enhance Armenia’s parliamentary oversight system.

The synthesis of these works enables not only the identification of systemic gaps in Armenia’s civilian oversight framework but also the development of tailored reforms, taking into account international best practices and local specificities.

Scientific novelty

Within the scope of the study, a comprehensive analysis of Armenia’s legislation, strategic documents, and annual programmatic reports is presented, alongside a systemic analysis identifying structural, procedural, and institutional gaps that hinder the effectiveness of civilian oversight. This approach sheds new light on the interconnectedness of oversight mechanisms in Armenia, deficiencies in the economic and governance domains that impact the efficient allocation of defense resources and interagency coordination.

The work proposes several recommendations to strengthen and develop civilian oversight mechanisms, particularly the formation of independent monitoring groups based on international best practices. These groups can ensure continuous monitoring of social conditions, the disciplinary environment, human rights, the economic management and oversight of resources in the armed forces, thus fostering public trust and financial efficiency.

Additionally, a critical analysis of the 2020 National Security Strategy of the Republic of Armenia, compared to the 2007 strategy, has been conducted. This analysis identifies shortcomings in the reinforcement of civilian oversight and proposes specific improvements to enhance the effectiveness of strategic documents, including transparent planning of the defense budget and the integration of governance systems. These innovations address existing scientific gaps regarding civilian oversight in Armenia and offer practical solutions to strengthen democratic governance principles, economic stability, and effective management.

Analysis

Civilian oversight in Armenia is grounded in a series of strategic, constitutional, and institutional provisions designed to ensure that the activities of the armed forces and other defense structures align with the principles of a democratic state. The initial norms of democratic oversight in Armenian legislation can be traced to the 1996 Law on Approving the Internal Service Regulations of the Republic of Armenia. Article 81 of this law

stipulates that a commander is obliged to enhance their professional training and unit management methods, acting independently within the scope of their authority, in close cooperation with state authorities, enterprises, collectives, war veterans, and armed forces veterans, while strengthening unified command by relying on the officers' assembly and the unit's public organizations, directing the personnel's efforts toward actively and creatively addressing assigned tasks [kar'avarowt'yan c'ragri, 2021-2026]. Other provisions of the Regulations require commanders to consider the opinions of public organizations when managing units ensure soldiers' communication with their families and public organizations. However, commanders often fail to comply with these requirements, as they conflict with their perceptions of unit management [Medeiros, 2022, 193–230].

Currently, civilian oversight of the armed forces in Armenia is regulated by several legal acts. Specifically, the provisions of the Constitution and the Law on Defense establish the principles of civilian oversight, which have gradually evolved and been refined through practical application. This normative framework has undergone changes to account for accumulated legal experience and the need to align with international standards.

The Constitution and various legislative regulations provide tools enabling the public to oversee the defense sector's budget, strategic decision-making processes, and military service conditions. Notably, Article 14, Part 2 of the Constitution stipulates that the armed forces maintain neutrality in political matters and are subject to civilian oversight [Constitution, 2015]. This provision serves as the foundation for constructing the entire civilian oversight mechanism. The neutrality of the armed forces in political matters has two components. First, it means that the armed forces cannot function as an independent entity within the state's political structure with the ability to influence decisions made by constitutional bodies. This political neutrality is ensured through civilian oversight, subordinating the armed forces to Armenia's constitutional bodies. The second component is that the armed forces must remain outside the direct influence of political parties [Evropayowm anvtangowt'yan, 2008]. The Law on Defense also establishes provisions for civilian oversight. Article 4 of the law outlines the principles of organizing and implementing defense in the Republic of Armenia, with democratic and civilian oversight of the armed forces' activities enshrined as a distinct principle.

A significant step toward establishing democratic oversight was designating the Minister of Defense as a political position, resulting in the appointment of a civilian to this role. Article 10, Part 2 of the Law on Defense stipulates that the Minister of Defense manages the Ministry of Defense and the armed forces within the framework of the main directions of defense policy, ensuring civilian oversight of the armed forces through the Ministry [Pashtpanowt'yan masin» o'renq, 2025].

Thus, the appointment of a civilian as Minister of Defense marks the beginning of the civilianization of the armed forces, aligning with the principles of democratic states. This

approach enhances the transparency of the armed forces, strengthens political oversight, ensures the protection of human rights, builds public trust, and increases the effectiveness of parliamentary oversight. It also aligns with international standards and contributes to enhancing Armenia's international reputation. Furthermore, a civilian minister, being outside the military hierarchy, can make more objective and strategic decisions, promoting the efficient use of the armed forces' resources and overall effectiveness. It should be noted that, from an economic perspective, the involvement of a civilian minister can promote more transparent and targeted use of the defense budget, prevent financial losses, and ensure optimal resource allocation. From a governance standpoint, this approach facilitates coordinated management between the defense sector and other state bodies, thereby enhancing the efficiency of decision-making. Additionally, Article 6, Part 3 of the Law on Defense defines the powers of the National Assembly (NA), which exercises parliamentary oversight of the defense sector within the framework of its constitutional functions, in accordance with the Constitutional Law on the Rules of Procedure of the NA [Azgayin jhoghovi kanonakarg, 2025].

When examining existing legislative regulations, it is pertinent to address their implementation gaps. Although the Law on Defense grants the NA oversight powers, there are no comprehensive mechanisms for in-depth examination of the defense sector's budget utilization. The analysis concludes that the defense sector has certain budgetary oversight deficiencies. Specifically, the NA lacks sufficient authority to conduct transparent examinations of the Ministry of Defense's procurement, expenditures, and budget allocations. The defense budget is consistently presented in aggregate figures without detailed breakdowns, hindering full oversight. Considering the above in the context of economic and governance efficiency, it can be noted that, from an economic perspective, this gap leads to inefficient management of defense expenditures, financial losses, and non-targeted use of resources. In terms of governance, the limited toolkit of parliamentary oversight undermines the coordinated and transparent management of the defense sector, which negatively impacts the implementation of national security policy.

At the same time, military procurements are often conducted in a non-transparent manner, with a lack of openness and limited public oversight. The Standing Committee on Defense of the National Assembly lacks effective oversight tools to determine whether military expenditures align with the actual needs of the state. While, from a national security standpoint, a certain degree of secrecy may be justified, international practice (e.g., the United Kingdom) demonstrates that selected portions of the defense budget can be reviewed in closed parliamentary sessions. This approach allows for the monitoring of the efficient use of funds without compromising national security. From an economic perspective, the mechanism of closed sessions can enhance transparency and financial efficiency in military procurement. From a governance standpoint, it can also strengthen

coordination between the Parliament and the Ministry of Defense, ensuring more effective and comprehensive oversight [Yamamoto, 2007, 9–10].

As noted, several legal and policy documents have been adopted to strengthen civilian oversight in Armenia, with the National Security Strategy and Military Doctrine being particularly significant. The National Security Strategy outlines priorities in the defense sector, including the development of civilian oversight mechanisms, while the Military Doctrine addresses defense organization principles, including issues of accountability and the effectiveness of civilian governance.

In this context, it is essential to assess how the provisions of the National Security Strategy and Military Doctrine reflect Armenia's political commitment to strengthening civilian oversight.

According to the Military Doctrine, Armenia employs a military security system to ensure its military security, integrating the state's political, economic, and military potential with centralized and targeted leadership. Key methods include enhancing the combat readiness, modernization, and continuous development of the armed forces, as well as ensuring civilian oversight. According to the Doctrine, the armed forces maintain neutrality in political matters and are subject to civilian oversight. Chapter 9 outlines reforms in defense planning and budgeting, aimed at more targeted and effective resource utilization and improving civilian oversight mechanisms [r'azmakan doktriny', 2025].

Similarly, the National Security Strategy emphasizes the development of civil society and its role in oversight processes for effective state governance. Chapter 2 states that the goal of army-building is to ensure a defense potential capable of repelling aggression to protect the physical existence, sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of the Armenian people. Armenia remains committed to ensuring democratic principles in civilian oversight of the armed forces and military budget planning [azgayin anvtangowt'yan r'azmavarowt'yowny', 2025]. The new National Security Strategy does not explicitly highlight the need for civilian oversight of the armed forces. Instead, Article 7.2 generally references the importance of civilian oversight for Armenia, stating that the country will continue to pursue the harmonization and enhancement of the effectiveness of state governance, law enforcement, special services, and oversight bodies [2020 t'vakani azgayin anvtangowt'yan r'azmavarowt'yown, 2025]. From this perspective, organizational-legal reforms characteristic of a democratic, parliamentary state are crucial, ensuring not only transparency but also a higher level of parliamentary, political, and civilian oversight. From an economic perspective, the general approach of the 2020 strategy does not contribute to the transparency of budgetary expenditures, thereby limiting the efficient use of resources. From a governance standpoint, this inadequate formulation undermines a coordinated approach between the defense sector and other state institutions, negatively affecting the effectiveness of oversight and management.

Despite the inclusion of civilian oversight provisions in these strategic documents, practical implementation faces certain challenges:

- The Ministry of Defense and the armed forces continue to operate as a relatively closed system, with limited information accessibility for civilian bodies.
- Public oversight of the armed forces is hindered by a lack of transparency, particularly in defense expenditures and procurement.
- Access for NGOs, journalists, and independent monitoring groups is restricted, preventing effective oversight.
- Neither National Security Strategy specifies mechanisms for strengthening civilian oversight. Additionally, the current Strategy does not directly address the need for civilian oversight of the armed forces.

The effectiveness of civilian oversight systems over the armed forces is contingent not only on the existence of legal frameworks but also, critically, on the presence of robust political will. Political will serves as either a catalyst or an obstacle to the operationalization of oversight mechanisms, depending on whether governing political forces are committed to fostering transparency, accountability, and the development of institutions for civic participation. In this context, the efficacy of governance systems plays a pivotal role, as it presupposes clearly defined accountability mechanisms that ensure the regularity and transparency of oversight processes.

From an economic perspective, strengthening civilian oversight necessitates targeted and efficient allocation of financial resources, which is feasible only within transparent financial management systems [Rodrigues et al., 2025, 195–207]. The Government's 2021–2026 Program explicitly commits to enhancing civilian oversight of the armed forces [kar'avarowt'yan c'ragir, 2021-2026]. However, as evidenced by government reports from 2021, 2022, and 2023, these commitments often remain at the level of general declarations, lacking detailed accounts of implemented measures or analyses of outcomes.

For instance, the 2021 report addresses border incidents and their consequences but fails to provide assessments of whether systemic changes were introduced to strengthen oversight within the armed forces [kar'avarowt'yan c'ragir, 2021-2026]. This issue could have been mitigated by establishing independent governance bodies to monitor processes for preventing and responding to border incidents, utilizing modern management tools such as data analytics systems. The 2022 report highlights numerous criminal cases, including those related to treason and corruption, indicating deficiencies in oversight mechanisms. However, information on efforts to improve oversight remains abstract [kar'avarowt'yan c'ragir 2021 t'vakani katarman y'nt'acqi, 2]. The absence of a governance system incorporating risk management and internal control mechanisms has contributed to these shortcomings. The introduction of modern management technologies, such as electronic monitoring systems, could have facilitated early detection of corruption risks. The high pre-

valence of corruption cases underscores weak budget expenditure oversight mechanisms, which could be addressed through electronic financial reporting systems and independent financial audits. The 2023 report records high rates of non-combat fatalities and identified violations but lacks in-depth analysis of structural causes, preventive measures, or improvements in accountability [kar'avarowt'yan c'ragri 2022 t'vakani katarman y'nt'acqi, 28]. Regarding the 2024 report, it notes that efforts to enhance psychological and moral preparedness within the armed forces have contributed to a reduction in fatalities and non-statutory relationships compared to 2023 [kar'avarowt'yan c'ragri 2021-2026, 32]. Nevertheless, the persistence of non-combat fatalities and the distinction between service-related and unrelated circumstances highlight ongoing gaps in oversight and prevention mechanisms. Data from the government's official reports for 2021–2024 indicate that, despite some progress, corruption, disciplinary violations, human rights abuses, and non-statutory relationships persist within the armed forces, underscoring the inadequacy of existing oversight tools. Moreover, these reports lack clear measures aimed at advancing civilian oversight of the armed forces. Preventing and addressing such issues requires not only refining existing legal frameworks but also enhancing their practical applicability. This necessitates the establishment or development of governance institutions to ensure regular monitoring and transparency of internal processes within the armed forces, such as through periodic parliamentary hearings [Erkkilä, 2020, 23–58].

This analysis suggests that civilian oversight currently operates at a suboptimal level. It is articulated as a component of state policy but lacks concrete, systematic implementation. This is driven not only by structural and legislative gaps but also by insufficient development of governance systems and inconsistent manifestations of political will. Economically, improving oversight requires targeted resource allocation and financial transparency, achieved through independent audits and electronic monitoring systems.

Consequently, it is imperative to refine and strengthen oversight tools while ensuring governance and economic accountability through continuous monitoring, parliamentary hearings, independent oversight, and efficient financial resource management. Modernizing governance systems, including the adoption of risk management and data analytics tools, can enhance oversight effectiveness. Simultaneously, transparent and efficient use of economic resources can bolster public trust and encourage civic engagement [Medeiros, 2022, 193–230]. Only under these conditions can civilian oversight transition from a declared principle to an effective tool for embedding and sustaining democratic values within the armed forces.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that, while the legal foundations for civilian oversight of the armed forces in the Republic of Armenia are established, they contain significant gaps that hinder effective implementation. The analysis categorizes these gaps into three types:

structural, procedural, and institutional. Structural gaps are evident in the substantive deficiencies of legislation, such as the lack of specific oversight procedures in the Law on Defense and the incomplete inclusion of civilian oversight provisions in the 2020 National Security Strategy. Procedural gaps relate to the limitations of parliamentary oversight tools, the absence of transparent procedures for analyzing the military budget, and restricted access to information. Institutional gaps encompass the absence of a military ombudsman institution or structural weaknesses in the specialized unit under the Human Rights Defender [Jilavyan, 2025, 131–133], the insufficient independence of the military prosecutor's office, and the lack of independent monitoring mechanisms. These deficiencies result in a lack of transparency, low accountability, violations of servicemen's rights, and diminished public trust.

Simultaneously, the role of reports is critical for enhancing governance and oversight effectiveness. Regular, comprehensive, and publicly accessible reports detailing the armed forces' financial expenditures, protection of servicemen's rights, resolution of identified issues, strategic planning, and operational activities enable the parliament, civil society, and media to assess the legality and efficacy of military institutions. For example, defense budget reports should include not only aggregate expenditure data but also detailed breakdowns to facilitate public oversight of resource utilization. The absence or limited accessibility of such reports undermines transparency and erodes public trust.

The study's findings underscore that political will within the state governance system is decisive for reforming the oversight framework. Without the commitment of political leadership, legislative and institutional changes risk remaining superficial. Political will must be expressed through legislative improvements, ensuring the independence of oversight bodies, combating corruption, and promoting public engagement.

Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that strengthening civilian oversight in Armenia requires not only continuous refinement of the legal framework but also a fundamental reassessment of political commitment and governance culture. It is necessary to develop an institutional architecture wherein the parliament, civil society organizations, independent monitoring groups, and media have substantive roles and tools to exercise oversight over the defense system. Only through such measures can oversight of the Armenian Armed Forces be transformed from a formal obligation into an effective democratic institution capable of simultaneously ensuring national security and public trust in the military.

Recommendations

To strengthen and develop civilian oversight of the armed forces, the following measures are proposed:

1. Introduce comprehensive parliamentary oversight tools, including detailed analysis of the defense budget and mechanisms for closed sessions.

2. Develop a legal act establishing clear procedures for access to information on the armed forces' activities for civil society organizations and media.
 3. Establish an independent military ombudsman institution or strengthen the specialized unit under the Human Rights Defender to ensure impartial protection of servicemen's rights [Jilavyan, 2025, 131–133].
 4. Form independent monitoring groups to assess the social conditions, disciplinary environment, and human rights protection levels for contract and conscripted servicemen.
 5. Enhance accountability within the armed forces by ensuring transparency and public-city of internal oversight mechanisms within the military hierarchy.
- These measures, aligned with international standards, will contribute to increasing the effectiveness of civilian oversight, strengthening the rule of law, and implementing democratic governance principles.

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Institutional foundations for the management and economic efficiency of the process of civilian oversight

Key words: economic efficiency, accountability, civilian oversight, management, institutional framework, economy, strategic document, transparency

This article examines the legal foundations of civilian oversight of the armed forces in the Republic of Armenia, highlighting governance, legal, and economic dimensions. The study shows that civilian oversight plays a vital role in reinforcing democratic institutions, ensuring transparent and efficient management of the defense budget, reducing corruption risks, and enhancing public trust. The research reviews the Constitution of Armenia, the Law on Defense, national security strategies, the Military Doctrine, and government performance reports from 2021 to 2024. It identifies structural, procedural, and institutional shortcomings that hinder the effective implementation of oversight mechanisms. The article proposes concrete measures, including enhanced parliamentary control tools, the establishment of independent monitoring groups, the introduction of a military ombudsman, and the strengthening of civil society engagement in defense oversight. The study emphasizes that the implementation of these reforms requires stable and deliberate political will. In particular, the economic dimension is emphasized through recommendations aimed at improving resource efficiency, expenditure transparency, and interagency coordination. Ultimately, this article contributes to the development of an accountable defense governance system in Armenia, where public institutions operate transparently, citizens' rights are respected, and defense spending is subject to effective oversight.