



FROM MILITARY MODERNIZATION TO ARMY TRANSFORMATION: HUMAN RESOURCE, FORCE STRUCTURE, AND COMMAND REFORM IN THE ARMED FORCES OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

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Abstract

Contemporary military transformation extends beyond technological modernization, requiring comprehensive institutional reforms that integrate effective military management, adaptive command structures, and human resource development to enhance operational effectiveness. The transformation of the Armed Forces has become a top priority for Armenia, especially after changes in the security architecture following the 2020 44-day war. The Concept for the Transformation of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia (2024–2035) outlines the main goals for military reforms that aim to strengthen the national defense capability. This article explores the concept, focusing on the sphere of military management and human resource development. It examines the modernization of command-and-control systems, the adoption of mission command principles, the establishment of a professional non-commissioned officer (NCO) corps, enhancements in morale and psychological readiness, and the improvement of the reserve and conscription system. The successful institutionalization of reforms will embed adaptive leadership and decentralized command into the organizational culture of the Armenian military. The article argues that the Transformation Concept marks a broader strategic shift from force modernization to institutional transformation, demonstrating that effective military management, mission command, and human resource development constitute the essential foundations of long-term operational effectiveness and resilience.

Keywords: *Armed Forces of Armenia, military management, HR development, Mission Command.*

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Introduction

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the international security system has changed drastically. The nature of traditional warfare is evolving, increasingly accompanied by hybrid threats, cyberattacks, information warfare, the widespread use of unmanned systems, and other advanced technology.¹ For small states, adapting to these changes has become imperative. However, with limited resources, they must rethink their defense strategies and create new ways to improve national security. This pattern is observable from the Middle East to Central Europe, where the breakdown of the existing security environment has driven many countries to reformulate their military doctrines and recalibrate their systems of national security governance.

For Armenia, the changing security environment became mostly urgent after the 2020 44-Day War and the subsequent border skirmishes. This conflict highlighted specific weaknesses in military capabilities and revealed deeper issues in command and control, mobilization organization, intelligence gathering, technological readiness, and strategic planning. These variables showed that isolated reforms were not sufficient and that a complete transformation of the armed forces was essential. On November 12, 2024, the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia released the first official document outlining military reform—The Concept for the Transformation of the Army for 2024–2035.² This Concept serves as a broad plan for modernizing the Armed Forces, reorganizing command and control systems, enhancing the professional component, and advancing technology. It outlines a new philosophy for Armenia's defense policy aimed at creating a modern, flexible, efficient, and highly capable military force. Given the wide-ranging reforms, this article focuses on a specific aspect of the transformation process, *par excellence*, the development of military management systems and the challenges of human resource management.

Hence, the paper analyses how the 2024–2035 Transformation Concept seeks to address deficiencies in military management and human resource development revealed by the 2020-war and to what extent it represents a shift from Soviet-style force management toward a modern mission-command military model. This article employs qualitative document analysis of the Transformation Concept (2024–

¹ Frank G. Hoffman, "Hybrid Warfare and Challenges," *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 52 (2009): 34–39.

² Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Armenia, Concept for the Transformation of the Army of the Republic of Armenia (Yerevan: Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Armenia, 2024).

2035), supplemented by comparative military management literature and contemporary theories of military transformation.

Rather than representing a conventional military modernization program, the 2024–2035 Transformation Concept marks a paradigmatic shift in the Armenian defense doctrine and policy by replacing platform-centered modernization toward institution-based comprehensive military transformation in which mission command philosophy, professional military education, organizational learning, reserve force, and human resource development collectively constitute the institutional foundations of long-term combat effectiveness and defense resilience.

Military Transformation as an Imperative of Defense Reform

Wars often serve as the primary drivers of military reform. Barry Posen, in his work *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, points out that wars significantly impact changes in military doctrines, organizational structures, and operational preparations.³ In the case of Armenia, the 2020 44-day war and ongoing military conflicts marked a significant turning point, revealing that traditional military strategies are insufficient for current battlefields. The contemporary armed conflicts in other regions continue to demonstrate new instruments and methods for future warfare, requiring a reevaluation of military security principles and the overall approach to force development.⁴

Current military operations illustrate the key role of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), rapid intelligence effectiveness, the importance of air superiority, and the growing significance of network-centric command and control systems. They prove that having a large army is no longer enough if it lacks technological superiority, rapid response capabilities, and an effective command and control system. Thus, we can conclude that the transformation of the armed forces starts not only from the need to address existing gaps but also from the strategic need to build technologically advanced, professional, and resilient military forces that can meet future warfare demands. Military transformation should be seen as a long-term and institutional process aimed at boosting the defense capabilities in the national security of Armenia.

Nevertheless, the future effectiveness of Armenia's Armed Forces will therefore depend not only on the pace of military modernization but also on the successful institutionalization of reforms that embed adaptive leadership, professional

³ Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany Between the World Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt1287fp3>.

⁴ *Transformation Concept*, 2024, 3.

military education, decentralized command, and human capital development into the organizational culture of the Armenian military. The implementation of the Transformation Concept marks the beginning of a sustained process of institutional renewal. Its enduring value will ultimately be determined by the extent to which this strategic vision is translated into effective organizational practices, as sustainable defense capability rests on institutional quality and human capital as much as on technological advancement.

Institutional Foundations of Military Transformation

The Concept for the Transformation of the Army organizes and consolidates these efforts by encompassing a wide range of reforms, from improving the command and control system to enhancing cybersecurity capabilities. Among the different priorities identified in the Concept, particular emphasis is placed on modernizing the command and control system, improving military education, and strengthening the mobilization system. This article will mainly discuss these three areas as key components of the transformation of Armenia's Armed Forces.

Table 1. Three Principal Directions of the Transformation of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia

Reform Area	Main Objectives	Planned Measures	Strategic Priority
 Modernization of the Command and Control System	Increasing the speed of decision-making and ensuring flexibility of command	Reduction of bureaucratic procedures, introduction of digital management tools and automated mechanisms	Of critical importance, as rapid response and effective command are decisive factors in contemporary warfare
 Development of Military Education and Science	Formation of a professional, educated, and initiative-oriented officer corps	Revision of the military education system, introduction of new curricula, and promotion of continuous professional development	Of high strategic importance, as quality human capital constitutes the foundation of military effectiveness and development
 Reform of the Reserve and Mobilization System	Enhancing rapid force generation capabilities and expanding societal participation in national defense	Modernization of reserve management systems and improvement of mobilization mechanisms	Of major importance, as it represents a key instrument for ensuring national resilience and sustained defense, particularly for small states

As shown in Table 1, upgrading the command-and-control system is a top priority. In modern warfare, quick decision-making is significant. The Armed Forces should develop an automated command and control system, as contemporary military environments and battlefields increasingly require rapid, precise, and data-driven decision-making. Modern combat scenarios and the dynamic operational

landscape require commanders to adapt swiftly and respond effectively, allowing them to make independent decisions that can influence operational outcomes. Subordinate commanders and units must also have enough authority to demonstrate initiative and creativity in accomplishing their assigned tasks. In this regard, the Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2) concept serves as a notable example, developed by a leading military leader, that emphasizes improving command and control systems by shifting from a centralized decision-making approach to a more decentralized one. This change can significantly improve the effectiveness of operations on the battlefield. The integration of target acquisition and engagement capabilities is also important, but this integration doesn't guarantee mission success. Hence, the push for sixth-generation warfare systems that combine command and control, intelligence, and strike capabilities into one framework is decisive. This integration improves decision-making speed and overall military operation effectiveness.

In the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia, the decentralized command and control approach is carried out on the principle of Mission Command. This strategy shows how military operations should be conducted in a decentralized manner, relying on mission-type orders. It grants subordinate commanders the autonomy to exercise their judgment in selecting the most effective methods for accomplishing assigned tasks. The focus here is on building trust, encouraging initiative and creativity, and leveraging the human element in warfare. In this context, creating a professional Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) corps is crucial for strengthening the principle of Mission Command philosophy. It supports the independence of subordinate units while following the commander's overall intent. A professional NCO serves as the first-line leader who, through discipline, skill, and professional behavior, connects enlisted personnel and commissioned officers. Therefore, we confirm that developing a professional NCO corps within the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia is a significant step toward the improvement of command and control effectiveness.

As previously mentioned, modernizing the command-and-control system is not effective without adequately preparing the human resources responsible for its implementation. Regardless of how advanced these command and control tools may be, their success ultimately relies on the professional skills, military expertise, and leadership qualities of the commanders using them. Thus, improving military education and developing the officer corps is vital as we work on transforming the Armed Forces. A modern military is built not just on complex command and control systems but also on capable military leaders who can effectively operate them.

Therefore, the Concept envisions transforming the military education system by aligning it with contemporary battlefield requirements.⁵ There is a strong focus on updating military curricula, improving hands-on training, ensuring continuous professional growth for officers, and collaborating with respected foreign military educational institutions. This strategy is completed with international best practices, suggesting that military education should be viewed as an ongoing journey rather than a one-time event during a service career. However, the question arises whether educational reforms can be effective without the simultaneous advancement of military science and research. Essentially, the Transformation Concept proposes a shift towards a knowledge-based military model. This involves promoting military studies, addressing new threats, and carefully analyzing lessons learned from recent conflicts. However, the implementation of the educational reforms faces several challenges.

The institutional transformation of the Armed Forces requires stronger collaboration between military educational institutions and civilian research centers to promote interdisciplinary research, doctrinal innovation, and evidence-based defense policymaking. Contemporary security issues require input from various fields. We also need to encourage a new military culture that values initiative, innovation, and critical thinking among military personnel. This is closely tied to forming a new generation of officers, as the future officer corps will need state-of-the-art education and training to fulfill their roles during military operations. We believe it is necessary to create a new concept for military education and to improve available scientific resources to enhance military regulations, manuals, and other guidelines governing the activities of the Armed Forces.⁶

The Transformation Concept of the Armed Forces of Armenia outlines the need to improve the moral and psychological readiness of the military personnel. This readiness is vital for ensuring the combat effectiveness and resilience of the Armed Forces. As Dwight D. Eisenhower said, “*Morale is the greatest single factor in successful war.*”⁷ This quote highlights that military success relies not just on technological superiority and resources, but also on the psychological strength and commitment of military personnel. Therefore, improving the moral and psychological readiness of the officer corps should be seen as a top priority in the ongoing transformation of Armenia’s Armed Forces.

Accordingly, the development of moral and psychological readiness should be viewed as a continuous and institutionalized component of military transformation. Beyond preparing personnel to withstand the psychological pressures of combat, it

⁵ *Transformation Concept*, 2024, 20.

⁶ *Transformation Concept*, 2024, 21.

⁷ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1948).

seeks to cultivate professional military and patriotic values, strengthen leadership at all levels, reinforce commitment to military service, and enhance the resilience required to operate effectively in the complex and dynamic environment of contemporary warfare. It involves instilling patriotic values in our service personnel, encouraging a thoughtful approach to military duty, developing leadership skills, and building psychological endurance when facing stress.⁸ This issue is particularly significant in contemporary conflicts, where military operations are increasingly embedded within broader information warfare environments characterized by disinformation campaigns and various forms of psychological pressure. In such conditions, the moral and psychological readiness of military personnel becomes an important factor not only for the army but also for national security. Meanwhile, it is also important to understand how to create an effective moral and psychological support system, avoiding purely formal or propaganda approaches. Moral and psychological readiness should be based not only on discipline and a sense of duty, but also on mutual trust, dignity, and respect for the service member.

Another significant aspect of human resource management deals with challenges related to improving the mobilization system and the readiness of reserve forces. Winston Churchill once noted, *"In war, a commander is usually required to do two things: first, devise a good plan for his army, and second, maintain a strong reserve."* This emphasizes that reserve forces are not merely an extra manpower source; they are a vital strategic asset. They provide military leaders with the flexibility and resilience needed during wartime.⁹ The Concept for the Transformation of the Army emphasizes the reforming of the mobilization system and reserve forces as a strategic priority for improving national defense capabilities. For countries with smaller populations and limited human resources, an effective reserve force not only increases military potential but also serves as an essential component of deterrence.

Thus, modernizing the mobilization system should be seen as a key component of military transformation. The Concept proposes a shift to a more flexible and efficient mobilization model, with continuous reservist training and combat readiness program executed through 25-day military training camps. Previously, reserve resources were viewed mainly as backups for major emergencies, but nowadays, security demands a reserve system that can respond quickly, possesses specialized skills, and participates in regular retraining. The reserve registration and management system requires further modernization through the introduction of

⁸ *Transformation Concept*, 2024, 22.

⁹ Winston Churchill and Andrew Scotland, *Churchill on Men and Events: A Selection from 'Thoughts and Adventures' and 'Great Contemporaries' Made by Andrew Scotland, With Illustrations* (Melbourne, 1965).

regular training programs, periodic refresher courses, and systematic tactical exercises designed to maintain reservists' operational readiness and integration with active forces. This new model of reserve training has significantly affected public perceptions and increased participation in reserve activities in recent years. Furthermore, it has become a priority for state policy. Evidence of this priority is the introduction of criminal penalties for avoiding training assemblies, which emphasizes the importance of public perception and the implementation of state policy.¹⁰

In this light, establishing a territorial defense system is crucial. The main goal of this system is to provide a well-organized and balanced defense complex across the country. As described in Chapter XI of the Transformation Concept, local territorial defense units will be formed using reserve forces, considering the population distribution and available resources.¹¹ These units will mostly consist of second-generation reservists and retired servicemen who will undergo regular training during peacetime for quick mobilization during wartime. The effectiveness of territorial defense forces mostly depends on the level of their combat readiness. Therefore, their training, equipment, and organizational standards should align as closely as possible with those of the regular army. Continuous training and stable personnel are key prerequisites for ensuring teamwork and combat effectiveness within units.

Conclusion

The analysis of the key elements in the Concept for the Transformation of the Armed Forces of Armenia indicates that it extends beyond a set of reforms, representing instead a new strategic vision for military development aimed at building a system capable of effectively addressing contemporary and future defense and security challenges. The transformation of Armenia's armed forces is fundamentally an institutional and organizational process, not merely one of modernization. The successful institutionalization of reforms will embed adaptive leadership, professional military education, and decentralized command into the organizational culture of the Armenian military.

The main focus areas in the Concept, such as modernizing the command-and-control system, enhancing the officer corps and military education, building a knowledge-based military model, improving the moral and psychological readiness of personnel, and improving the reserve and mobilization system, are interconnected. They will only produce meaningful results when executed systematically and

¹⁰ Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia, Article 462, Part 1, <https://www.arlis.am/hy/acts/153080>.

¹¹ Transformation Concept, 2024, 16.

thoroughly. The Concept for the Transformation of the Armed Forces should be seen as an ongoing, long-term endeavor rather than a short-term reform initiative. Its successful implementation is based on the coordinated efforts of government bodies, military organizations, the academic community, and society as a whole. The ultimate aim is to develop armed forces capable of effectively addressing the challenges of the twenty-first century, while ensuring the security, territorial integrity, and sovereignty of the Republic of Armenia over the long term. Additionally, the success of the transformation process will depend not only on adopting new structures and procedures but also on fostering a modern military culture rooted in professionalism, initiative, adaptability, and continuous learning. In this context, the transformation of the Armed Forces should be regarded as an institutional process that combines organizational reforms, human resource development, and technological advancements within a unified framework to strengthen national defense capabilities.

Ultimately, the transformation of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia should be understood not as a finite modernization program but as a continuous process of institutional adaptation. By integrating organizational learning with technological innovation and placing military management, professional military education, mission command, and human capital at the center of defense reform, the 2024–2035 Transformation Concept lays the foundation for a more adaptive, resilient, and combat-effective military, capable of meeting the strategic challenges of an increasingly contested security environment. In this sense, the true measure of the Transformation Concept's success will not be the acquisition of new capabilities alone, but the creation of a professional, adaptive, and learning military institution capable of sustaining operational effectiveness amid an increasingly complex security environment.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

Ethical Standards

The authors affirm that this research did not involve human subjects.

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