

The agenda of integration of the Republic of Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic



International
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The necessary and sufficient conditions of assistance

The future of Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) stands out as primary both on the political agenda of the Republic of Armenia (RA) and in the dreams and concerns of every Armenian. We often try to provide assistance believing that this or that issue is important. We also think that in future our assistance, investment and our money will be a sufficient lever by themselves for achieving our aspirations. However, such assistance is a necessary though not a sufficient condition. It is necessary to lay a foundation, which will direct the development of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR) onto a self-sustainable and independent path, will accelerate the pace of development and will multiply the efforts made. However, financial resources and cooperation on the official level are not sufficient for laying such a foundation. Moreover, there is a clear gap between the NKR and RA societies: the faulty juxtaposition of the current foreign policy and the domestic reality come to prove this statement. The gap is a challenge to the RA and NKR security, and keeps hindering the process of state building, development and integration of the society. All these processes are happening in the background of the policy of isolation adopted against the NKR and partially against Armenia. One can make but one conclusion regarding the worldwide Armenian Diaspora assistance to Armenia and Artsakh: "If you help, but do not engage and build relations, you alienate and disintegrate".

Partnership is most important

Thus, the NKR does not lack in the number of friendly hands extended in willingness to help. Assistance is being provided both on the official level, in the form of a budget loan, and non-formally, provided by the Armenian Diaspora through the donations of the Hayastan All Armenian Fund. There is also a simple human unity: we are all Armenian. Thus, it seems that on the level of human and official relations the connections are quite strong, whereas on the most important platform, civil society, the breach is quite obvious. The lack of cooperation between civil societies in Armenia and NKR contributes to the deepening of the gap. It escalates the risk of manipulation, and weakens the process of democratic state building.

Today many civil society organizations in Armenia are more willing to work and collaborate with European and US-based NGOs, rather than try and find partners in NKR and implement joint projects. Perhaps this is the consequence of multi-million projects, in the result of which the established collaboration increases the effectiveness of the projects, enlarges and enriches the spectrum of civil society and promotes pluralism. Such positive influence would have been impossible if the international development partners provided resources only to one subject, which would have considerably weakened the accountability of the resource usage, would jeopardize the responsibilities of the actors and the transparency of their activities, perhaps even their legitimacy. Thus, the conclusion is clear. Direct cooperation between the civil society organizations in Armenia and NKR will enrich the palette describing civil society, will enlarge its spectrum and will significantly decrease the current impermissible obstacle that exists in the domain of civil society. Meanwhile, it is clear that such collaboration requires resources. However, the issue of developing adequate sources and allocation mechanisms remains to be addressed.

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Impediments as they are

There are several factors that impede the active integration of the RA and NKR civil societies:

- Currently there are no clear approaches according to which the relations of the state and non-governmental organizations and their partnership should develop. The rules of the game are still in the developmental stage.
- The relations between the state authorities and NGOs are sometimes antagonistic. The culture of constructive criticism is only emerging.
- Though the RA government has some experience in contracting NGOs for the implementation of certain projects financed through the state budget, the current mechanisms for such interactions are still faulty and cannot compete with the assistance mechanisms employed by the international development partners, and with the budget experiences of the developed countries. The current assistance to NKR has taken its own flow, though without any negative results.

Better early than too late

Those with management experience know well that the majority of decisions are made only when delaying decision making is already impossible. One should not wait until it is too late to take any steps. In order to bridge the gap between the RA and NKR and promote the integration processes, it is necessary to make a decision today. Decisions can differ. However, they should meet the major goal and contain clear outlines of the mission of integrating the governments and NGOs, the RA and NKR. This can imply developing a number of new institutions, such as

- Advisory body on RA-NKR integration policy;
- RA-NKR integration policy implementation and supervision agency.

New prospects

The recommended policy will target also a number of long-term goals, specifically:

- The process of the RA-NKR integration will be institutionalized;
- A significant part of the reforms in Armenia, which are implemented by NGOs and with external assistance, will be expanded to include NKR, with the help of the RA and NGOs;
- Effective implementation and supervision mechanisms will be worked out for the state projects implemented by non-governmental organizations with the resources from the state budget;
- The framework for establishing relations and partnerships between the government and civil society will be outlined and institutionalized, which will eliminate marginalization and mistrust;
- A foundation will be laid for the development of the institute of RA assistance, which will promote the RA policy of external assistance in other countries as well.

The paper is elaborated based on the opinions passed by the participants of the discussion “ Armenia-NKR Civil Society Relationship: What are Institutional Gaps?”, which took place on November 1, 2010. The roundtable discussion was attended by independent analysts, government officials, and representatives of the international organizations.

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