

# THE ROLE OF PUBLIC COMMUNICATION IN CIVILIAN OVERSIGHT OF NATIONAL SECURITY OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

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## **Abstract**

In the modern world, ensuring national security is one of the priority tasks of states. The security system is not limited only to military capabilities or legal mechanisms. Rather, it requires trusting relations between society and the state. The essential tool for forming these relations is public communication. Transparent, systematic and accountable communication makes it possible to strengthen public trust, ensure control over state structures and promote civic participation.

For the Republic of Armenia, the current issue is especially relevant in the post-war period, when the level of trust in state institutions has noticeably decreased, and the security system is facing multi-layered challenges. In such conditions, the functions of civilian oversight can be fully implemented only when state structures consistently apply effective communication strategies. Such strategies not only ensure an open and accurate flow of information but also prevent the spread of disinformation, strengthen the participation of civil society, and form an atmosphere of mutual trust.

Public communication encompasses a number of functions: information management, public opinion formation, ensuring constructive dialogue, coordinating media and public relations, information protection, and strategic communication. All these functions complement each other and contribute to the formation of an environment where ensuring national security becomes the result of joint efforts not only of state structures, but also of the entire society.

The scientific novelty of this study lies in treating public communication not only as a means of transmitting information but also as an institutional mechanism for ensuring national security and civil control. The study combines international experience with the realities of the Republic of Armenia, revealing a direct correlation between communication effectiveness and public trust. The

presented analyses can serve to improve communication policies in the public administration system and enhance the oversight functions of civil society.

Thus, the aim of the research is to analyse the role of public communication in the process of ensuring civilian oversight of the national security system of the Republic of Armenia, showing its theoretical foundations and practical applications.

**Keywords:** National security, civilian oversight, public communication, information, civil society, strategy.

## ՀԱՆՐԱՅԻՆ ՀԱՂՈՐԴԱԿՑՈՒԹՅԱՆ ԴԵՐԸ ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆԻ ՀԱՆՐԱՊԵՏՈՒԹՅԱՆ ԱԶԳԱՅԻՆ ԱՆՎՏԱՆԳՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՔԱՂԱՔԱՑԻԱԿԱՆ ՎԵՐԱՀՍԿՈՂՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՈՒՄ

### ԱՆԱՀԻՏ ՇԱՀՈՒՄՅԱՆ

ՀՀ ԳԱԱ Գիտակրթական միջազգային կենտրոնի  
ընդհանուր բաժնի գլխավոր մասնագետ,  
ՀՀ ԳԱԱ Փիլիսոփայության, սոցիոլոգիայի  
և իրավունքի ինստիտուտի հայցորդ

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### Համառոտագիր

Ժամանակակից աշխարհում ազգային անվտանգության ապահովումը պետությունների առաջնահերթ խնդիրներից է: Անվտանգության համակարգը չի սահմանափակվում միայն ռազմական կարողություններով կամ իրավական մեխանիզմներով. այն պահանջում է նաև հասարակության և պետության միջև վստահելի հարաբերություններ: Այդ հարաբերությունների ձևավորման առանցքային գործիքը հանրային հաղորդակցությունն է: Թափանցիկ, համակարգված և հաշվետու հաղորդակցությունը հնարավորություն է տալիս ամրապնդելու հանրային վստահությունը, ապահովելու պետական կառույցների նկատմամբ վերահսկողությունը և խթանելու քաղաքացիական մասնակցությունը:

Հայաստանի Հանրապետության համար այս հարցը հատկապես արդիական է հետպատերազմյան շրջանում, երբ պետական ինստիտուտների նկատմամբ վստահության մակարդակը նկատելիորեն նվազել է, իսկ անվտանգության համակարգը կանգնած է բազմաշերտ մարտահրավերների առաջ: Նման պայմաններում քաղաքացիական վերահսկողության գործառնությունները կարող են լիարժեք իրագործվել միայն այն դեպքում, երբ պետական կառույցները հետևողականորեն կիրառում են արդյունավետ հաղորդակցական ռազմավարություններ: Դրանք հնարավորություն են

տալիս ոչ միայն ապահովելու տեղեկատվության բաց և ճշգրիտ հոսք, այլև կանխելու ապատեղեկատվության տարածումը, ամրապնդելու քաղաքացիական հասարակության մասնակցությունը և ձևավորելու փոխվստահության մթնոլորտ:

Հանրային հաղորդակցությունն ընդգրկում է մի շարք գործառնություններ՝ տեղեկատվության կառավարում, հանրային կարծիքի ձևավորում, կառուցողական երկխոսության ապահովում, մեդիա և հասարակական կապերի համակարգում, տեղեկատվության պաշտպանություն և ռազմավարական հաղորդակցություն: Այս բոլոր գործառնությունները փոխլրացվում են միմյանց և նպաստում այնպիսի միջավայրի ձևավորմանը, որտեղ ազգային անվտանգության ապահովումը դառնում է ոչ միայն պետական կառույցների, այլև ամբողջ հասարակության համատեղ ջանքերի արդյունք:

Սույն ուսումնասիրության գիտական նորույթն այն է, որ հանրային հաղորդակցությունը դիտարկվում է ոչ միայն որպես տեղեկատվության փոխանցման միջոց, այլ նաև որպես ազգային անվտանգության ապահովման և քաղաքացիական վերահսկողության ինստիտուցիոնալ մեխանիզմ: Հողվածում համադրվել են միջազգային փորձն ու Հայաստանի Հանրապետության իրականությունը՝ բացահայտելով հաղորդակցության արդյունավետության և հանրային վստահության միջև ուղղակի փոխկապակցվածությունը: Ներկայացվող վերլուծությունները կարող են օգտակար լինել պետական կառավարման համակարգում հաղորդակցական քաղաքականությունների բարելավմանը ինչպես նաև քաղաքացիական հասարակության վերահսկողական գործառնությունների կատարելագործման համար:

Այսպիսով, սույն հոդվածի նպատակն է վերլուծել հանրային հաղորդակցության դերը Հայաստանի Հանրապետության ազգային անվտանգության համակարգում քաղաքացիական վերահսկողության ապահովման գործընթացում՝ ցույց տալով դրա տեսական հիմքերը և գործնական կիրառելիությունը:

**Բանալի բառեր՝** ազգային անվտանգություն, քաղաքացիական վերահսկողություն, հանրային հաղորդակցություն, տեղեկատվություն, քաղաքացիական հասարակություն, ռազմավարություն:

## Introduction

In every democratic state, government bodies strive to implement public communication and its management in the most open and transparent manner possible. This aspiration stems from the state's accountability to its citizens and the recognition that maintaining citizens' trust and support for the public communication system is necessary. Considering these two factors, public

communication theory currently prioritises the consolidation and widespread application of transparency and accountability principles in the security system (Cole, 2015, p. 14).

Experience shows that distrust in society mainly arises from a lack of information or limited access to it. When citizens receive incomplete information about an incident, they often make assumptions that may not correspond to reality. The situation becomes more complicated when media outlets, taking advantage of the absence of official sources, in order to increase their ratings, attempt to sensationalise information without proper professional analysis. Meanwhile, society expects complete and reliable information about the country's internal and external processes.

### **Research methods**

Considering the nature of the research and the scope of the issues examined, various general and specialised methods have been employed, including analysis, synthesis, deduction, induction, and the comparative–legal method.

#### **The Relationship Between Public Communication and Civil Control**

Conducted research shows that public communication and its management target both internal and external audiences, including citizens, public servants, partners, investors, journalists, and other stakeholders. Public communication enhances the credibility, authority, and effectiveness of state and public institutions.

In contemporary political systems, public interests and demands are realised not only through state power or political parties. Citizens often unite to achieve vital goals and realise their rights and freedoms by creating public organisations that represent and defend the collective interests of groups. Various self-governing associations of citizens, such as public, charitable, religious, and professional organisations, play a pivotal role in this process. These groups become important institutions in socio-political processes and governance. According to the current legislation of the Republic of Armenia, a public organisation is defined as a public association of RA citizens, foreign state citizens, stateless persons, and/or legal entities that has the status of a non-commercial organisation (The Law of the Republic of Armenia “On Public Organizations”, 2016).

Public communication and its management include several fundamental functions that are significant for effective communication, the development of public relations, and the formation and strengthening of civilian oversight in the national security system.

**1. Information Management:** This process involves the effective collection, storage, processing, dissemination, and use of data, information, and knowledge. It enables organizations and individuals to make better decisions, optimize work processes, and safeguard sensitive information (Greenberg & Korol', 2017, p. 75).

In the 21st century, information management has become one of the most important areas of governance and technological development. It ensures process

efficiency, data security, and rapid adaptation to changing situations.

As a priority of public communication, information management is also valued for the following advantages:

- **Effective decision-making:** Decisions based on accurate data reduce the probability of errors.
- **Cost-effectiveness:** Proper information management reduces time and resource losses.
- **Higher security:** Correctly applying cybersecurity methods prevents information leakage.
- **Process automation:** Information management systems (IMS, ERP, and CRM) increase efficiency.
- **Competitive advantage:** Accurate information management allows for a rapid response to market changes, providing a competitive (Calhoun, 2025).

**2. Public Opinion Formation** is the process of shaping people’s viewpoints, beliefs, and attitudes around social, political, economic, or cultural issues. This process can be natural (spontaneously formed) or managed (through mass media, social media, propaganda, and PR technologies) (Sjoraida et al., 2024, p. 292).

Public opinion formation is a complex, multi-layered process that largely depends on the influence of media, social environment, propaganda methods, and psychological factors. It can be applied for both positive (increasing awareness, educational programs) and negative (fake news, propaganda, manipulation) purposes.

In the context of public relations and its management, the process of public opinion formation can include various, yet essential and significant, measures, depending on sectoral orientations. For example, in politics: organisation of political and social campaigns, electoral campaigns, public discussions, spokesperson statements; in economics: financial crises and changes in market confidence; in marketing: studying public moods, forming public attitudes toward brands (for example, Apple users’ loyalty), etc. The main sources of public opinion formation are mass media (television, radio, print press, news websites), social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok), bloggers, experts, influencers, and official sources (government, state bodies).

**3. Ensuring Constructive Dialogue: Constructive dialogue** is a communication process aimed at discussing various issues in an open, effective, and respectful manner to find mutually acceptable solutions, promote cooperation, and prevent conflicts.

Constructive dialogue is an important tool in the field of communication that contributes to conflict resolution, development of cooperation, and generation of innovative solutions (Mikes, 2025, pp. 8–10).

It is based on the principles of mutual respect, active listening, presenting reasoned arguments, and mutual understanding. In the field of state defence, particularly in the military-industrial system, the effectiveness of dialogue can be

assessed according to the following levels:

- Government–citizens: discussions regarding public policy
- Employer–employees: dialogue on improving working conditions
- Companies–customers: discussion of customer complaints and solutions
- Social groups–society: discussion of cultural and social initiatives, etc.

**4. Media and public relations management** is a strategic process that shapes and manages public perception of an organisation, individual, or brand through media, communication, and PR tools. The purpose of this process is to ensure positive public opinion, increase trust, and maintain the organisation’s or individual’s authority among society and stakeholders (Tomić & Grbavac, 2016, p. 92).

At the executive level, non-governmental organisations involved in the public communication process mainly cooperate more with responsible organisations than with special services. Their participation and influence in these processes can be expressed in the following main forms:

1. Conducting research, data collection, including comparative data from other countries, developing theoretical models and providing them to relevant state structures, presenting to competent bodies,
2. Preparing reports on specific problems with the aim of influencing or specifically assisting the emerging political direction,
3. General and substantive cooperation with mass media,
4. Dispatching experts to state institutions and other structures in the security sector,
5. Organising training courses and programs on human rights protection, security sector oversight and similar topics (Johnston & Blais, 1996, pp. 14–15).

By its nature and scope of work, media and public relations management is a complex but irreplaceable process that helps organisations and individuals manage their public image, maintain trust, and respond to social changes. It includes strategic communication, social media management, crisis communication, and public opinion formation.

In the national security sector direction, **the process of media and public relations management can be consolidated through the following key measures:**

- **Developing media strategy** (clarify key messages, define target audience, select appropriate media platforms),
- **Selection of communication tools** (digital media (social media, bloggers, influencers), traditional media (TV, radio, newspapers), press conferences, conferences, events),
- **Establishing media relations** (preparing and distributing press releases, organising interviews, engaging PR partners),
- **Continuous monitoring and analysis of public opinion** (social media analysis, assessment of topics covered in media, study of public response),

- **Crisis communication and rapid response** (managing information in unexpected situations, developing correct responses to negative reactions, maintaining public trust) (Edwin, 2004, pp. 23–25).

##### **5. Information Protection within Communication Frameworks:**

For the implementation of the objective discussed in this topic, information protection within communication frameworks is of pivotal importance. Particularly, the information published on contemporary media platforms, due to various objectives—political, corporate, personal interests—can be modified, distorted, or falsified by interested parties. It is noteworthy to mention that information protection in the contemporary legal system is a rather complex process. Thus, the protection includes the application of criminal law, administrative law, and civil law protection measures. Under the existing legislative frameworks, civil law protection measures predominate in law enforcement practice, which presuppose the publication of appropriate refutations and compensation for caused non-material damage (The Civil Code of the Republic of Armenia, 1998).

Conditioned by the above, we believe that information protection is also of pivotal importance for ensuring communication effectiveness. Therefore, in this regard, it is necessary to ensure the availability of appropriate legal safeguard mechanisms, including the involvement of specialists.

**6. Structural & Strategic Communication** is a coordinated and purpose-oriented communication process that focuses on developing communication strategies, constructing messages, and managing communication flows to achieve the fundamental objectives of an organisation, government, or individual. This type of communication is based on **planning, management, and impact assessment**, ensuring communication effectiveness in both internal and external environments [**Error! Reference source not found.**]. (Werder, 2005). In the context of public relations (communications) network assessments, structural and strategic communication can be characterised as interconnected yet distinct concepts that, together, ensure proper information management. Structural communication refers to the formation of communication systems, while strategic communication focuses on the content and impact of messages.

After the war, public disappointment, decreased trust in state institutions, and emerging security challenges in the Republic of Armenia underscored the need of revise Armenia’s national security strategy. In this context, it is important to increase mutual trust between the state and civil society, as well as to clarify and institutionalise society’s role within the military and security systems. Moreover, in specialised literature, civil society is characterised as a relatively independent and self-organising system of social, economic and political relations that includes various forms of associations of people in order to meet their own material and spiritual needs (Mailyan & Kazanchian, 2023; Kazanchian, 2021).

It should be noted that public relations and communication management systems in the national security sector significantly increase the effectiveness

of security structures and defence ministries, as well as international military-political structures. These systems ensure the proper and controlled dissemination of information, improve interaction with society, and contribute to building trust in security structures. These systems include methods, tools, and technologies that disseminate information to the public, manage communication during crises, and ensure information security.

Public relations' effectiveness in the national security sector is also important from a strategic security perspective. Public relations ensures rapid and accurate communication during wartime and crisis situations. It promotes a positive perception among youth and properly forms public opinion regarding military operations and national defence. Public relations also maintains the authority of the state and the army in the international arena. To this end, the Republic of Armenia assessed the strategic defence review process as a priority agenda item. In our opinion, the initiation was important not only from the perspective of strategic assessments, but also from the standpoint of public perception and emphasising the army's value within society. It is noteworthy that the Republic of Armenia initiated and conducted its first strategic defence review process starting in 2008. The five phases of the review included identifying and assessing current and future military threats, developing and simulating scenarios, clarifying the armed forces' tasks, planning necessary military capabilities, and forming a dynamic military structure capable of responding to aggression. As L. G. Ayvazyan (2015) rightly pointed out, a summary of these phases indicates that the strategic defence review process encompasses the development of defence policy and the formation of military strategy, culminating in the country's defence planning (pp. 58-59).

In the field of national security, public relations encompasses the following main functions:

- providing official information to state and international institutions, public organisations, and the general public;
- Promoting dialogue between the security sector and society to enhance trust.
- Ensuring transparency of military operations to foster an informed society;
- Increasing the effectiveness of disseminating information through mass and social media.

To restore public trust in the Republic of Armenia's defense and security system and the state as a whole, it is crucial to ensure informational transparency after a crisis, provide accurate information to the public, raise awareness about recovery measures and reforms in the security sector, promote dialogue with civil society and the media, and conduct information campaigns aimed at restoring a positive image.

Public awareness campaigns strengthen the connection between the army and the public. These campaigns include:

- Conducting informational campaigns on national security policy;
- Organizing educational programs and awareness initiatives;
- Holding informational events related to war and national security.

One positive example of such programs is those implemented during the defence reforms of the 2000s. During this period, the Republic of Armenia undertook large-scale measures within the framework of defence and security reforms to ensure greater control over the management of the armed forces. Some of these measures are summarised in “The Public Awareness Concept” (2007). The concept states that increasing transparency in the sector is one way to ensure stronger, more capable, and internationally recognised armed forces. The concept also establishes that public awareness of army-building and the current state of the armed forces is sufficient to prevent violations of individual rights under the pretext of maintaining military discipline. Furthermore, applying democratic oversight mechanisms to the armed forces would make the utilisation of institutions responsible for state security and defence more predictable, thereby preventing their involvement in processes with undesirable consequences.

Effective public communication and management in the security sector require distinguishing between internal and external communication policies. Internal communication is crucial for managing and ensuring the efficient operation of the security system. This includes exchanging official messages between military command and units to ensure an efficient flow of information, as well as mechanisms to maintain service discipline and information security. External communication systems aim to maintain effective connections between the army and society, as well as with international military organisations. This includes cooperating with media outlets, journalists, and international news agencies; exchanging information with international security and military bodies; and managing social media and public information platforms. Consequently, the disruption of mutual trust and the deepening of distrust in state-civil society relations pose a significant challenge to the collaboration between government entities and civil society. This deepening alienation creates a post-war conflict situation that may undermine the security of a country undergoing a transformational phase.

In the context of civil oversight, public relations management systems play an important role in ensuring national security, building public trust, and preserving information security. Alongside the development of modern technologies, it is necessary to improve communication methods by taking into account new challenges and international experience. Future developments should focus on enhancing cooperation with government bodies and maximising their involvement in discussions about proposals to delegate certain public authorities.

## **Conclusion**

National security cannot be conceptualised solely within the confines of military or legal components. It equally requires the active engagement of society and the cultivation of trust in state institutions, a goal that can be achieved

through effective public communication. Public communication not only ensures the transparency and accuracy of information flows but also contributes to enhancing the accountability of state structures, strengthening civic oversight, and expanding public participation.

In the post-war context of the Republic of Armenia, the significance of this process is particularly acute. The challenges of diminished trust, the spread of disinformation, and scepticism toward the security system can be effectively addressed only if state institutions adopt clear and long-term communication strategies. Such strategies must incorporate information management, shaping of public opinion, constructive dialogue, the coordination of media and public relations coordination, information security, and strategic communication.

The central finding of the current study is that public communication should be regarded as an institutional mechanism for ensuring national security and civic oversight. It fosters an atmosphere of mutual trust between the state and society, mitigates the risks associated with disinformation, and stimulates public participation.

From a practical standpoint, it is essential to:

- enhance the transparency of communication processes within state institutions,
- broaden the participation of civil society and the media,
- strengthen components of information security,
- implement educational and awareness-raising programs aimed at restoring public trust.

Summarizing, public communication plays a crucial role in the national security system of the Republic of Armenia. It not only contributes to the stability of the state but also helps to shape a society in which the citizen becomes a co-author of security provision and state development

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