

PERCEPTIONS OF NATIONAL SECURITY IN ARMENIA

STATE POLITICAL SECURITY
ARMED PREPAREDNESS LAW ENFORCEMENT

SOCIETY
ECONOMIC SECURITY
INDEPENDENCE

Findings of a public opinion poll

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

SOVEREIGNTY PROTECTION

INDIVIDUAL

PEOPLE

Yerevan
June 2
2015

DEMOCRATIC

ARMENIAN IDENTITY

VALUES

MILITARY SECURITY

BORDERS

WELFARE

TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY

PHYSICAL EXISTENCE

FOOD SECURITY

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE

Background

In the last two years, Armenia has undertaken a major foreign policy step by signing up to the Eurasian Economic Union, and by not pursuing the Association Agreement with the European Union. The Armenian authorities explained its decisions by ‘security’ reasons.

The findings of the Civilitas Foundation’s [previous poll](#) in June 2014 indicate that public justifications for joining the Customs Union (later, the Eurasian Economic Union) were more linked to ‘security reasons’ than to economic factors, similar to the justifications of the Armenian authorities.

Still the question that remains is, to what extent does the public perception of the concept of ‘security’ or ‘national security’ match the conceptual framework of ‘national security’ inscribed by the Armenian government in its “Strategy on National Security”? This leads to the next question: To what extent do public expectations of national security match the current policy of deploying foreign military bases in Armenia? There is need to identify not only the public’s tolerance level against a particular country’s military units’ presence in Armenia, but tolerance against the presence of foreign military units in general. In this regard, it is worth surveying the conditions under which the Armenian public agrees to provide its territory to foreign military units and whether the conditions for providing territory match their own definition of ensuring ‘national security.’

Objectives of the Poll

In order to study the above-mentioned questions, the Civilitas Foundation conducted a public telephone poll with 600 residents of Armenia, randomly selected from all the marzes (regions) of the country and Yerevan.

The objectives of the poll are:

- to identify the attitude of Armenia’s population on the presence of foreign military bases in Armenia,
- to identify the underlying factors of this attitude,
- to compare the attitude towards foreign military presence with the public’s perceptions of ‘national security,’ and finally
- to compare their perceptions of national security with the conceptual definitions of national security as adopted by the authorities in the strategy of national security.

The opinion poll and this discussion do not aim at examining Armenia’s National Security Strategy (approved in 2007), its relevance to the current situation, its status of enforcement, public opinion regarding the internal and external threats stipulated in the document, although all these questions are valid for a separate inquiry.

The discussion of the poll findings is presented in the following sequence:

- Comparison of the concepts described in the state national security strategy with public perceptions of national security, public opinion about who or which institutions are in charge of ensuring national security in the country;
- Public opinion towards and expectations of foreign military bases in general and of the Russian military bases in particular.

The methodology of the poll, as well as additional findings are presented at the end of the report.

National Security

The National Security Strategy of the Republic of Armenia (hereinafter, National Security Strategy) was approved by President Robert Kocharyan's decree N NH-37-N of February 7th 2007, after deliberations and drafting by an inter-agency committee for two years. The National Security Strategy has not been amended ever since.

In academic literature, white papers or strategies on national security are considered to be the second most important guideline for public life after the constitution (Minasyan, 2006)¹.

The final provisions of Armenia's National Security Strategy stipulate that the strategy "... is carried out based on development white papers and action plans in Armenia's foreign policy, military, economic, food, energy, environmental, telecommunication, demographic, scientific, educational, spiritual, cultural sectors" (NSS of RA, 2007)², in other words, the National Security Strategy is a guideline for the development of sectoral strategies or concept papers.

The National Security Strategy starts with introductory provisions framing the key concepts of the document and has the following four sections:

1. Founding values of the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Armenia, the factors and actions ensuring security, the threats against the values
2. Internal Security Strategy
3. Republic of Nagorno Karabakh
4. External Security Strategy.

The National Security Strategy is broadly defined as the "system of state policies aimed at ensuring the security of the state, the society and the individual, at sustainable development and maintenance of the Armenian identity." The implementation of the strategy is based on the policies pertaining to all sectors of human life developed in accordance with a "democratic value system" (NSS of RA, 2007). The guarantees underpinning implementation of the strategy emphasize its nature as not so much of a traditional nature based on military and external security, but as a balanced system of ensuring the security of the individual, the society and the state. The guarantees underpinning implementation of the National Security Strategy are the following:

- efficiency of the state administration system,
- ensuring rule of law,
- embedding democratic values,

1 Minasyan, Sergey (2006), 'The International Practice of Adopting a National Security Concept Paper', 21st Century, N 3 (13)

2 NSS of RA (2007), National Security Strategy of the Republic of Armenia, <http://www.irtek.am/views/act.aspx?aid=38022&m=%27%27&sc=#>, last accessed on 21.05.2015

- unbiased and independent judiciary,
- combat readiness of the armed forces,
- efficiency of security and law enforcement institutions,
- foreign policy enabling effective international engagement,
- ensuring social justice.

The National Security Strategy clearly demarcates internal and external security areas, enlisting security threats ranging from inefficiency of governance and incomplete human rights protection system, to low public trust towards the judiciary, insufficient development of political parties, social polarization, environmental threats and unreasonable use of natural resources, continuation of the Karabakh conflict, energy dependence, isolation from the economic projects of the region etc.

Public Perception of National Security

In general, the public seems to have a narrow definition of national security, that is less broad than the values of national security as inscribed in the National Security Strategy.

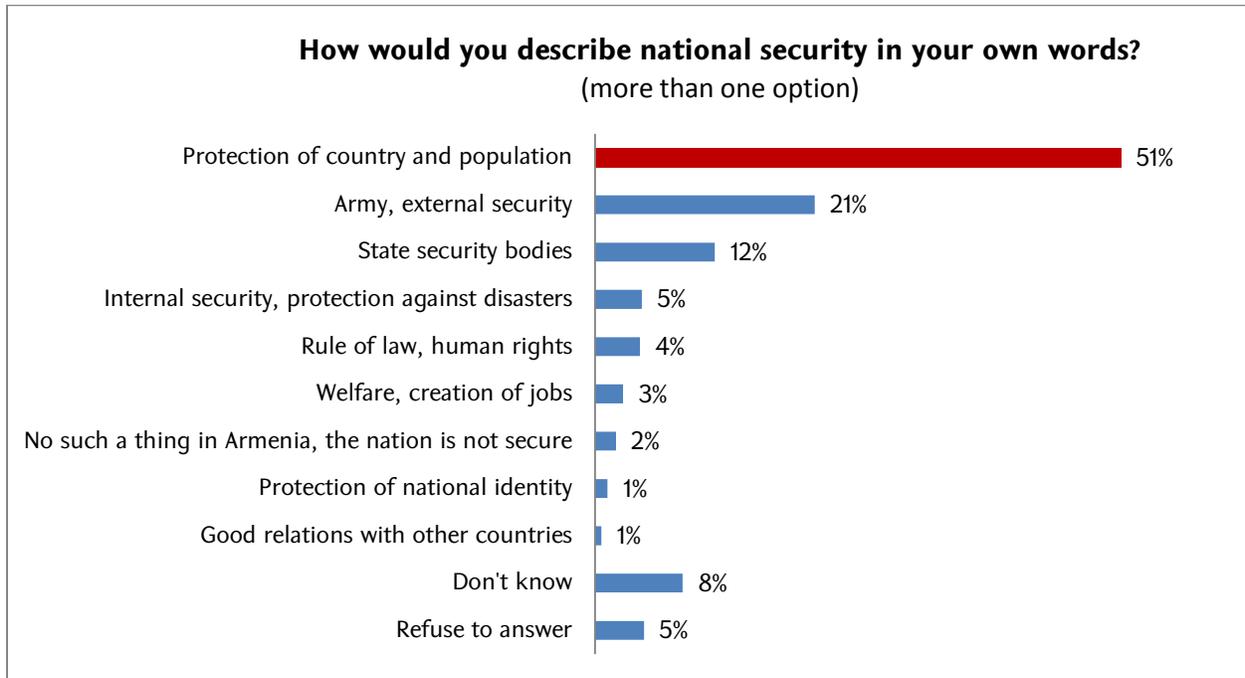
In order to identify the public's opinion about national security, Civilitas first asked the respondents to describe national security in their own words, and afterwards asked them whether or not they consider the following concepts as part of national security (the concepts are the values of national security as inscribed in the National Security Strategy):

- independence and sovereignty,
- protection of the state and people, territorial integrity, immunity of borders, physical existence of the population,
- peace and international cooperation,
- maintaining the Armenian identity,
- welfare, ensuring a high quality of life through sustainable development.

By contrast, half of Armenia's population in their own words defines national security as 'protection of the country and the people,' 21 percent perceives national security as 'army' and 'external security.'

Interestingly, the respondents often associated national security with a particular state institution, mainly with the National Security Service of Armenia (by its current and former names, e.g. KGB) and with the police. It is noteworthy that along with the predominantly traditional perception of national security, there were responses defining national security as protection of the rights of the individual and rule of law.

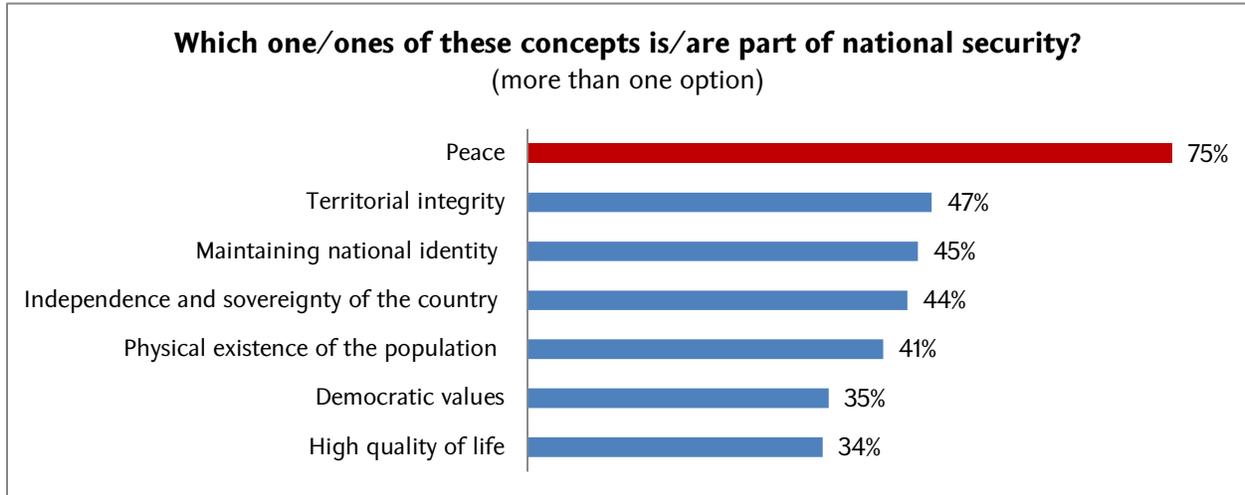
Graph 1. Population’s perceptions of national security³



In the event when the interviewers listed the founding values of national security as stipulated in the Strategy, all the options were selected by 25 percent of the respondents, whereas the predominant majority (75%) opted to consider peace as part of national security. 80 percent of women consider peace as part of national security as opposed to 68 percent of men with the same opinion (the responses broken down by gender can be viewed in Table 4, Appendix 2).

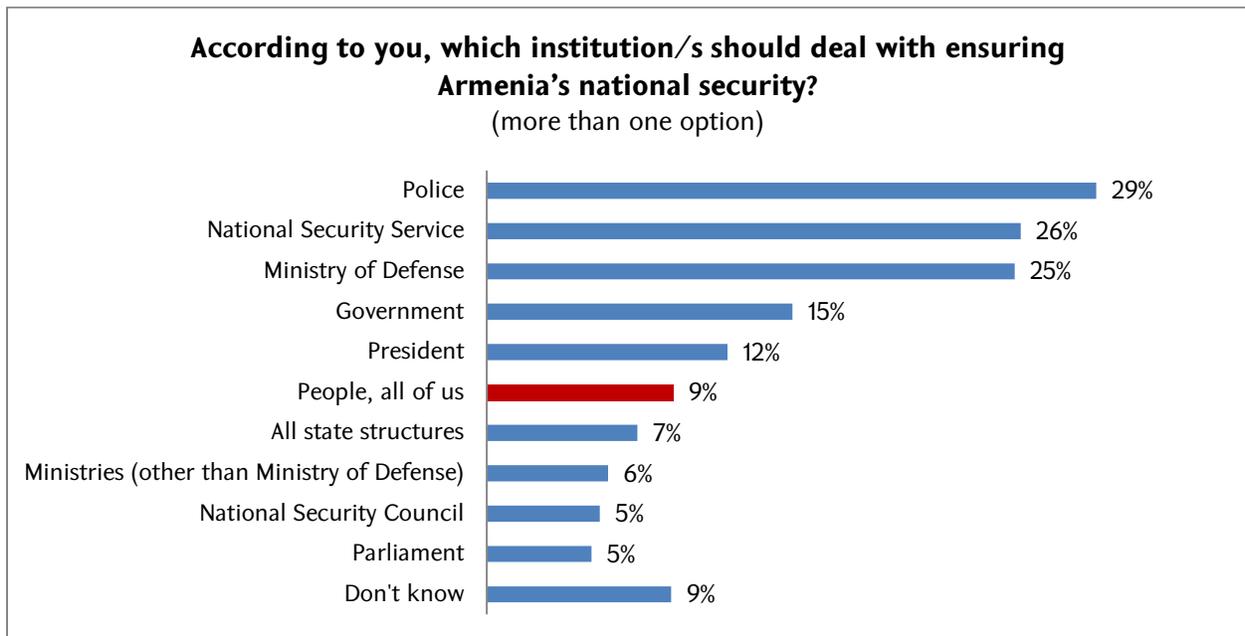
³ Hereinafter, if the question had more than one response choice, the sum of the percentage points may not amount to 100%. In all those cases, when there is only one response choice, the sum may be slightly different from 100% due to rounding of percentage points.

Graph 2. Population’s opinion about the components of national security



To the question which structure/s should deal with ensuring Armenia’s national security, the majority of the population specified the police (29 percent), the Ministry of Defense (25 percent). Around 10 percent of the population mentioned about the responsibility and power of the ‘people, all of us’ to handle issues of national security. Only 0.7 percent of the population specified that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should deal with national security. Graph 3 below contains aggregate responses by sectors; more detailed responses broken down also by gender can be viewed in Table 5 of Appendix 2.

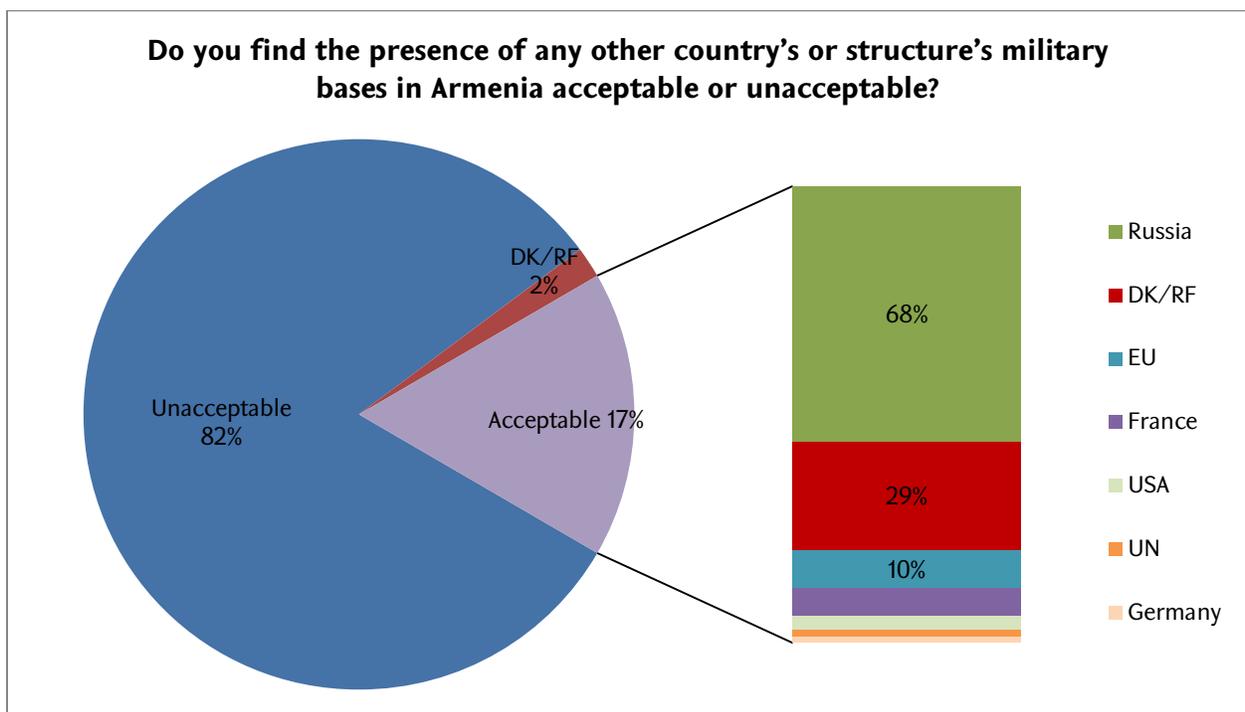
Graph 3. Population’s opinion on which institutions should ensure Armenia’s national security



One of the most remarkable findings of the telephone poll is that for the overwhelming majority of Armenia’s population (81 percent) it is not acceptable that another state or/and an international (intergovernmental) structure deal with ensuring Armenia’s national security.

Of all those, who entrusted Armenia’s national security provision to a different state and/or international (intergovernmental) structure, the majority specified Russia (68 percent), some mentioned France (7 percent), EU (10 percent), USA (4 percent), Germany and UN (2 percent accordingly). 5 percent of these were not able to specify any country or structure. None specified the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Organization for Security and Cooperation of Europe (OSCE), or NATO. It is noteworthy that there were responses where no specific country or structure was identified, however it was stressed that it be a European/developed/democratic state or institution. These, however, do not account for a significant share.

Graph 4. Population’s opinion about the participation of a foreign state/structure in ensuring Armenia’s national security

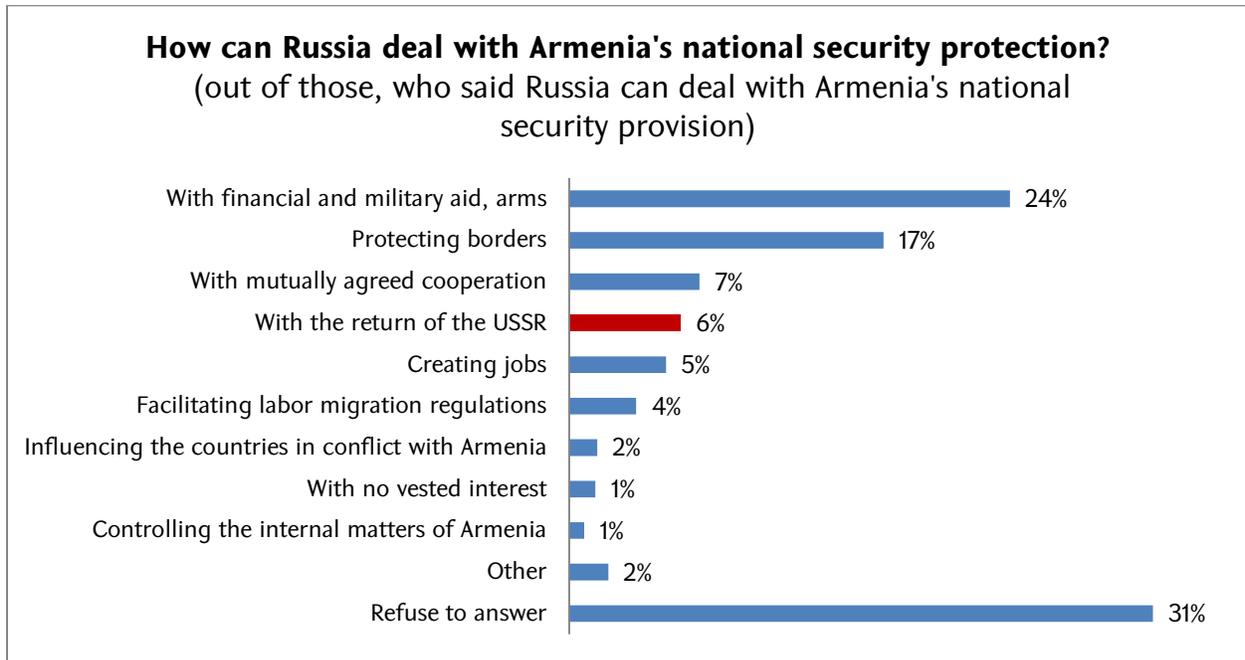


Those respondents that found it acceptable for a foreign state or institution to ensure Armenia’s national security were requested to specify how they imagined this. From Russia, the respondents expect direct intervention – military support and protection of the borders, whereas from other states the respondents did not expect protection of borders so much, however mutually agreed cooperation and having no vested interest were amongst the most frequently specified expectations.

The responses to this open question indicate that Armenia’s population expects a more one-sided and complimentary participation, they specify, for example, ‘provision of arms’ and not ‘sales of arms,’ or ‘protection of borders’ and not ‘support to the border-keeping operations,’ ‘elimination of barriers to labor migration’ etc.

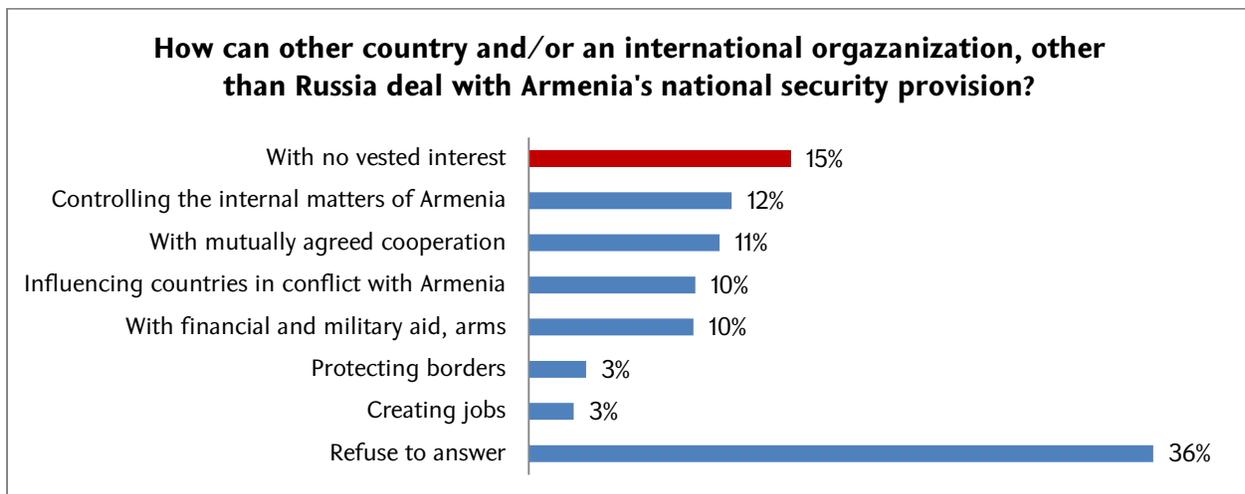
Interestingly, just as the Collective Security Treaty Organization was not mentioned, ideas of collective security and possible collective action were not popular amongst the population.

Graph 5. Population’s opinion about how Russia can ensure Armenia’s national security



A much smaller number of respondents expressed an opinion about the form of other foreign states’ participation in ensuring Armenia’s national security. Overall, the respondents did not always answer open questions, and specifically the quantitative characteristics of responses given to the participation of Russia or other states in ensuring Armenia’s national security should be approached with a certain reservation, as they were articulated by a small segment of the population. Instead, the qualitative characteristics are interesting.

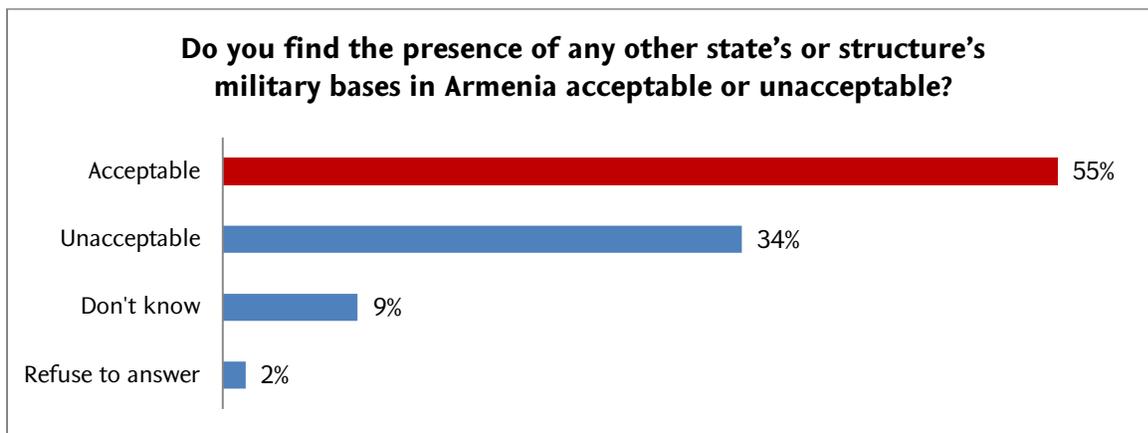
Graph 6. Population’s opinion about how other states and/or structures can ensure Armenia’s national security



Presence of Foreign Military Units

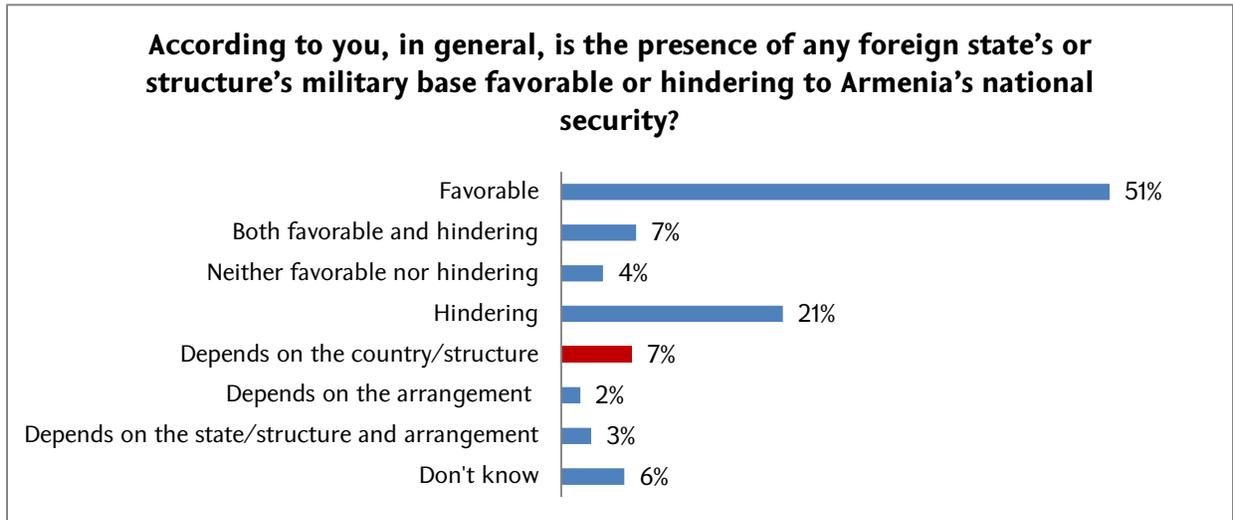
The telephone poll included questions aimed at identifying the population’s level of tolerance towards foreign military units in Armenia, to what extent can these units contribute to ensuring Armenia’s national security and under which conditions is the Armenian population ready to provide its territory for the deployment of foreign military units. 55 percent of the population finds it acceptable that another state’s or international (intergovernmental) institution’s military base be deployed in Armenia.

Graph 7. Population’s attitude towards the presence of foreign military units in general



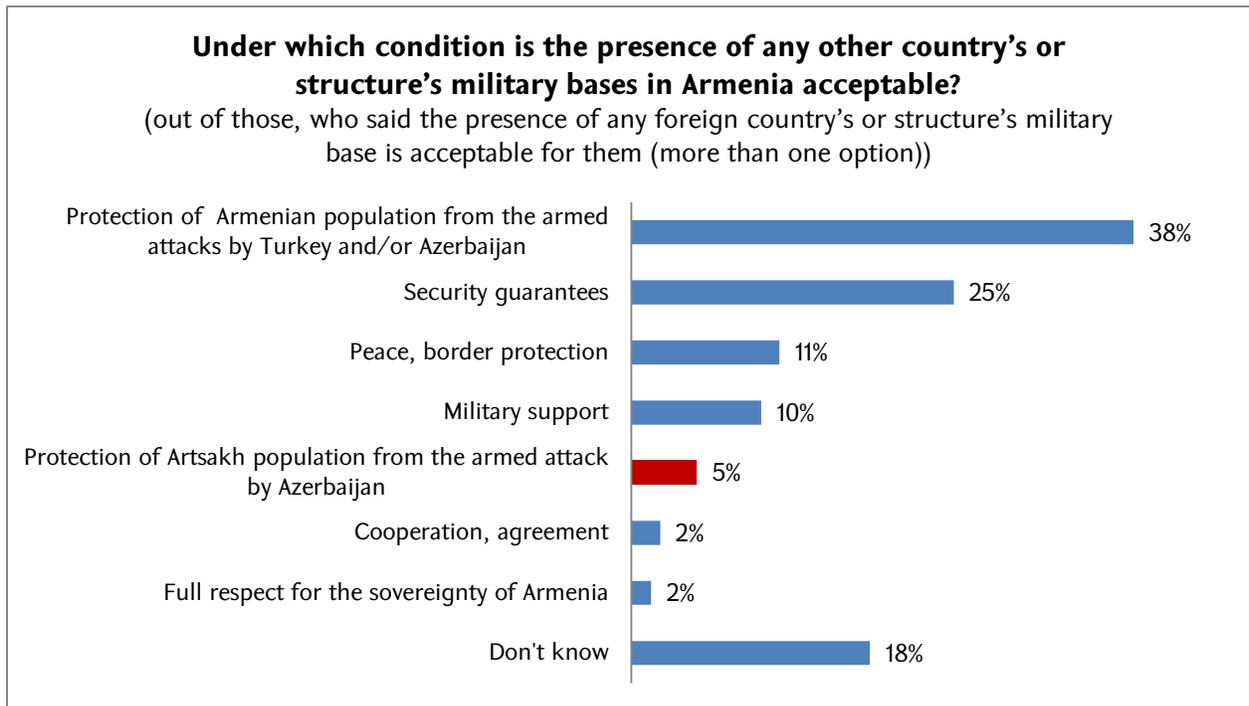
Half of Armenia’s population believes that, in general, the presence of any foreign state’s or international (intergovernmental) institution’s military bases in Armenia is favorable for Armenia’s national security, while 21 percent believes that their presence is a hindering factor to Armenia’s national security. Interestingly, the overwhelming majority of the respondents participating in this survey had given a negative answer to an earlier question regarding acceptability of a foreign state’s or institution’s participation in ensuring Armenia’s national security.

Graph 8. The state of Armenia’s national security depending on the presence of foreign military bases



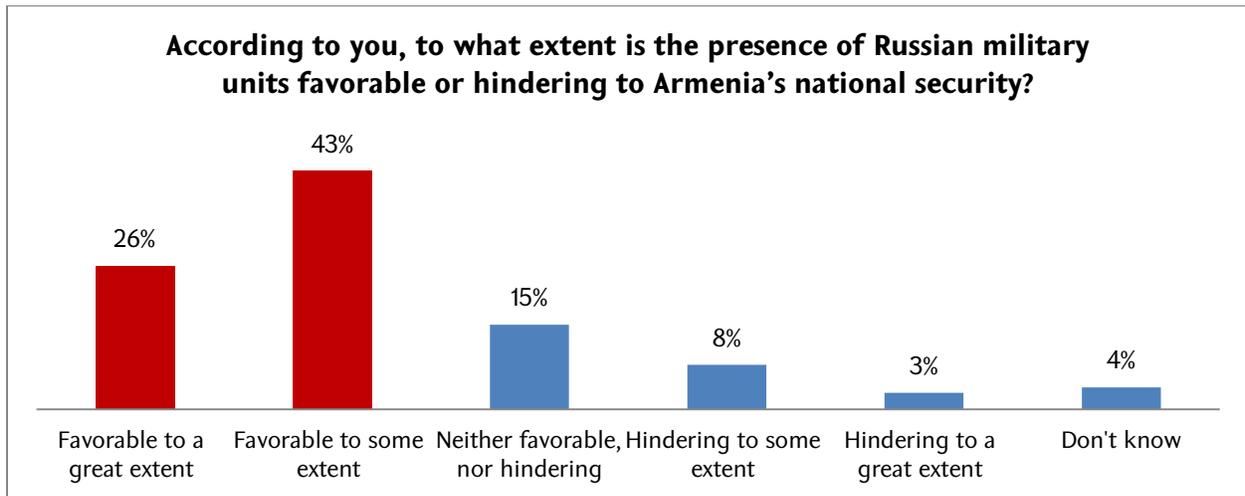
All those who mentioned that they find the presence of a foreign military base acceptable in Armenia were requested to specify under which condition this presence should be. 38 percent of those who find their presence acceptable expect that they will protect Armenia’s population from Turkish and Azerbaijani military attack. The number of those who specified protection from Turkey is slightly larger than that of Azerbaijan (accordingly 21 percent and 17 percent). 18 percent of the population found it difficult to answer this question.

Graph 9. Expectation of the population of Armenia from the presence of military bases by any state or institution



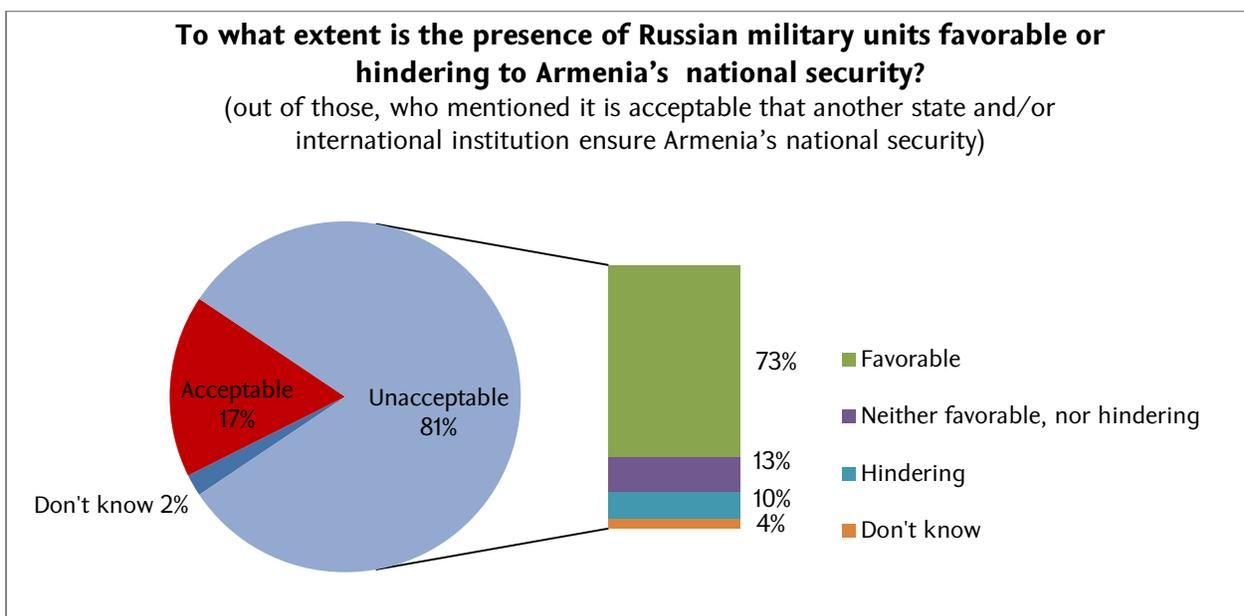
Similar questions were asked specifically in relation to the Russian military bases in Armenia. The findings of the poll indicate that the majority of Armenia’s population finds the presence of the Russian military bases to a large extent (26 percent) and to some extent (43 percent) favorable to ensuring Armenia’s national security.

Graph 10. The state of Armenia’s national security depending on the presence of Russian military bases

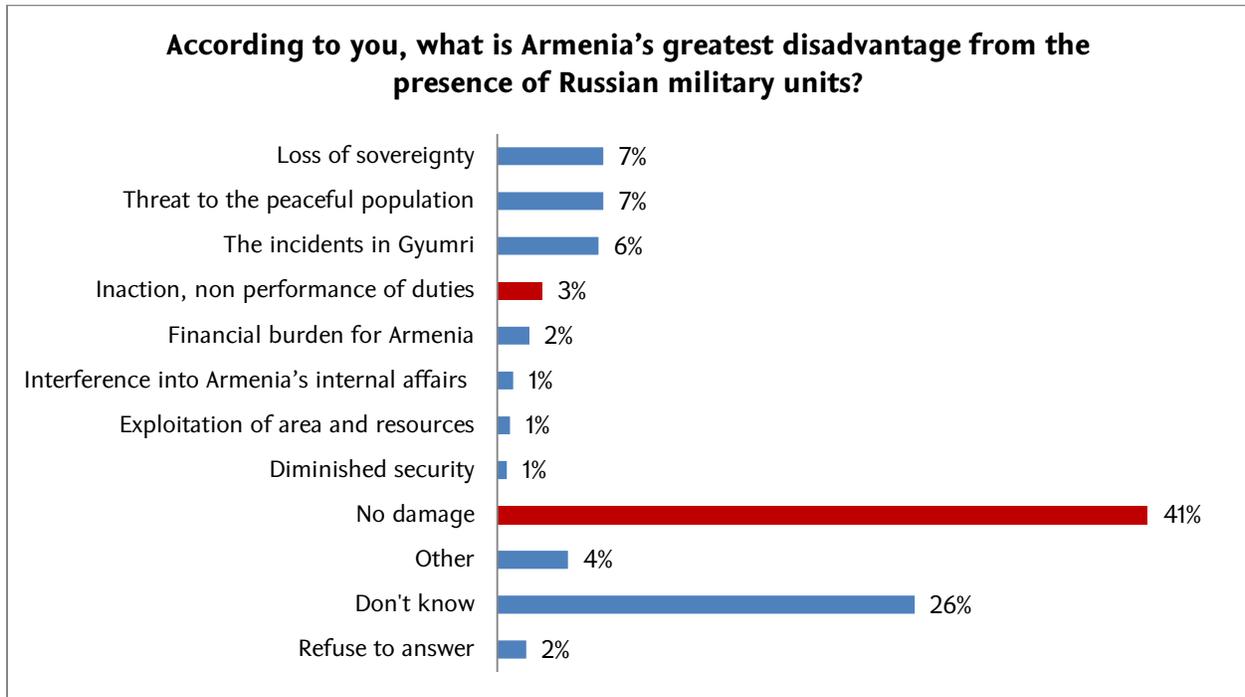


The overwhelming majority (73 percent) of all those who mentioned that it is not acceptable that any other state and/or ensure Armenia’s national security, still mentioned that the presence of the Russian military bases is favorable to Armenia’s national security. This indicates some sort of an uncompromising attitude towards Russia.

Graph 11. Population’s attitude towards Russia’s participation in ensuring Armenia’s national security and the presence of Russian military units in Armenia

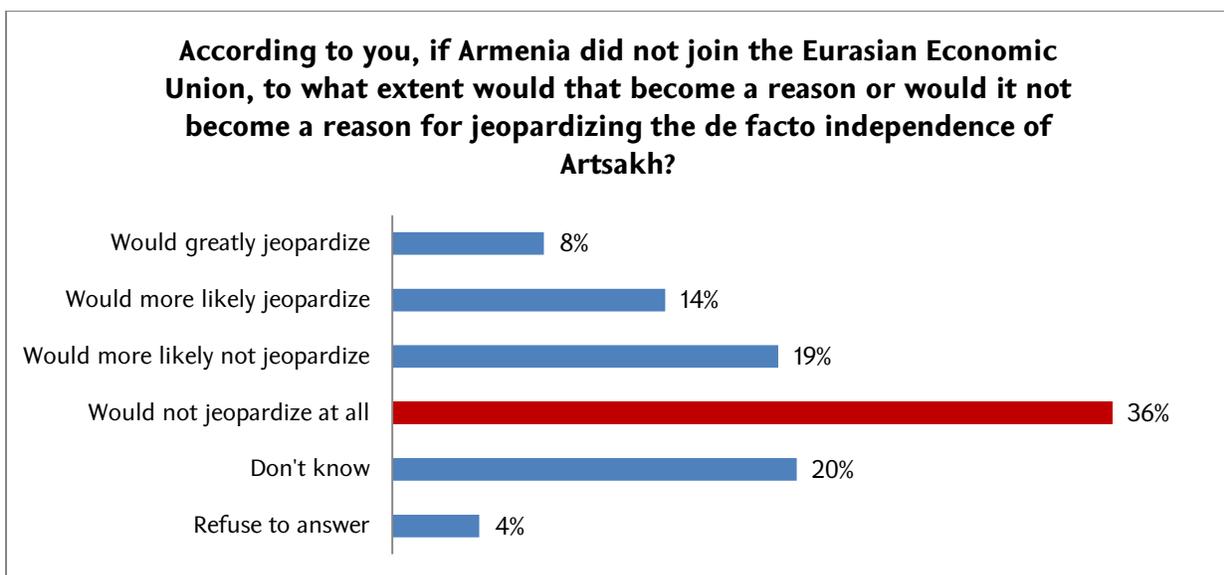


Graph 14. The largest disadvantage from the presence of the Russian military units



The poll also attempted to identify the population's opinion whether not joining the Eurasian Economic Union might threaten the de facto independence of Nagorno Karabakh. Although 26 percent of the population did not have an answer to this question, more than half of the population believes that the de facto independence of Nagorno Karabakh would not be threatened if Armenia did not join the Eurasian Economic Union.

Graph 15. Population's opinion about the link between joining the Eurasian Economic Union and situation in Nagorno Karabakh



Appendix 1. Methodology

The telephone poll was carried out between March 27 and 30, 2015 amongst more than 600 residents of all the marzes of Armenia and Yerevan randomly selected from the pool of landline phone subscribers. Given Civilitas’s experience of previous polls: the number of refusals to answer, phone number errors, the fact that the phone numbers were not household numbers, the sample included 1800 telephone numbers.

Stratified random sampling was conducted for the poll. The numbers of the households were stratified according to marzes and types of settlement and then phone numbers were randomly selected, and out of these households again a household member was randomly selected for the poll (the adult whose upcoming birthday is the closest to the date of the poll). If this member of the household was absent, the next closest was selected. Return calls were also made in order to speak to the randomly identified household member.

The major pool of respondents was the population of Armenia subscribed to landline phones.

The margin of error does not exceed 4 percent and the confidence level is 95 percent. The number of successful interviews is 644. In order to analyze the results of the poll, the data were weighted in accordance with the following steps:

- The phone number’s weight in the given stratum was calculated. This shows the number of phone numbers that this randomly selected number on average represents out of the same stratum.
- The response frequency was calculated. This indicator shows the average number of open households that each successful interview represents in each stratum.
- The respondent’s weight in the household was calculated. This shows the number of adults the respondent is representing in the given household.
- The age and gender proportion of the population was also weighted.

The questionnaire was developed by the Civilitas Foundation and reviewed by international experts. It contained 14 attitudinal and 5 descriptive questions, the duration of successful interviews was 18 minutes. The phone calls were randomly checked for quality control, thus around 10 percent of the phone call recordings were checked.

Appendix 2. Additional findings

Table 1. Respondents by gender and residence

	Urban	Rural
Male	22.8%	35.0%
Female	77.2%	65.0%

Table 2. Respondents by education and residence

	Urban	Rural
Secondary	26.1%	50.9%
Vocational	29.9%	24.6%
Higher	44.0%	24.5%

Table 3. Respondents by age groups and residence

	Urban	Rural
18-30 years old	23.0%	21.3%
31-45 years old	28.2%	23.0%
46-60 years old	26.9%	30.6%
61+ years old	21.9%	25.1%

Table 4. Population's opinion regarding the components of national security by gender

	Female	Male
High quality of life	31%	38%
Democratic values	30%	40%
Physical existence of the population	37%	46%
Independence and sovereignty of the country	39%	50%
Maintenance of national identity	41%	51%
Territorial integrity	39%	56%
Peace	80%	68%

Table 5. Population’s opinion about which institution/s should deal with ensuring Armenia’s national security

According to you, which institution/s should deal with ensuring Armenia’s national security?		
	Male	Female
National Security Service	32%	20%
Ministry of Defense	28%	23%
Police	28%	30%
President	11%	12%
People, all of us	9%	9%
Government	8%	20%
National Security Council	6%	5%
Parliament	6%	5%
All State Structures	5%	8%
Ministry of Territorial Administration and Emergency Situations	2.6%	0.5%
Judicial System	2.4%	1.7%
Other Ministries	2.3%	0.1%
Ministry of Education and Science	1.9%	0.6%
Authorities	1.6%	1.0%
Ministry of Health	0.7%	1.4%
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	0.6%	0.7%
Prosecutor's Office	0.2%	0.0%
Nobody	0.2%	0.3%
Ministry of Nature Protection	0.0%	0.4%
Intergovernmental institutions	0.0%	0.1%
International organizations	0.0%	0.3%
NGO's	0.0%	0.7%
Intelligent and competent people	0.0%	0.2%

Table 6. Population’s opinion about the participation of a foreign state/structure in ensuring Armenia’s national security by education

Is it acceptable or it is not acceptable for you that any other state and/or international institution ensure Armenia’s ‘national security’?			
	Secondary	Vocational	Higher
Acceptable	15%	23%	16%
Not acceptable	84%	76%	83%
Don’t know, Refuse to answer	2%	2%	2%

Table 7. Population’s attitude to the participation of other states in ensuring Armenia’s national security and the presence of other state’s or institution’s military bases in Armenia

According to you, in general, is the presence of any foreign country’s or structure’s military base favorable or hindering to /ensuring/ Armenia’s national security?	Is it acceptable or it is not acceptable for you that any other state and/or international institution ensure Armenia’s ‘national security’?	
	Acceptable	Not acceptable
Favorable	73%	26%
Both favorable and hindering	5%	8%
Neither favorable nor hindering	2%	5%
Hindering	8%	43%
Depends on the country/structure	6%	8%
Depends on the arrangement	2%	2%
Depends on the state/structure and arrangement	2%	2%
Don’t know	3%	7%

Table 8. Population’s attitude to the participation of other states in ensuring Armenia’s national security and the presence of Russian military bases in Armenia

According to you, to what extent is the presence of Russian military units favorable or hindering to Armenia’s national security?	Is it acceptable or it is not acceptable for you that any other state and/or international institution ensure Armenia’s ‘national security’?	
	Acceptable	Not acceptable
Favorable to a great extent	35%	14%
Favorable to some extent	45%	38%
Neither favorable, nor hindering	11%	23%
Hindering to some extent	4%	15%
Hindering to a great extent	1%	8%
Don’t know	4%	3%

Table 9. Respondents by marzes and by the response that Gyumri incidents are the greatest disadvantage from the presence of Russian military units in Armenia

Aragatsotn	5%
Ararat	1%
Armavir	4%
Gegharkunik	6%
Kotayk	3%
Lori	15%
Shirak	5%
Syunik	1%
Tavush	7%
Vayots Dzor	4%
Yerevan	7%
Armenia	6%

- *[MARK THE RESPONSE]* _____
 - *don't know*
 - *refuse to answer*
6. *[If "ACCEPTABLE" to Q 4, then ask] How? [MARK THE RESPONSE]*
- *[MARK THE RESPONSE]* _____
 - *don't know*
 - *refuse to answer*
7. According to you, in general, is the presence of any foreign country's or institution's military base favorable or hindering to ensuring Armenia's national security? *[MARK ONE RESPONSE]*
- *[MARK THE RESPONSE]* _____
 - *don't know*
 - *refuse to answer*
8. Do you find the presence of any other country's or structure's military bases in Armenia acceptable or unacceptable? *[DO NOT READ THE OPTIONS, IF THE RESPONSE IS NOT "ACCEPTABLE", GO TO Q10]*
- acceptable
 - unacceptable
 - *don't know*
 - *refuse to answer*
9. *[If the response is "ACCEPTABLE" ask] Under which condition? (What should Armenia get in return?) [MARK ALL THE RESPONSES MENTIONED]*
- *[MARK THE RESPONSE]* _____
 - *don't know*
 - *refuse to answer*

[READ SLOWLY AND DISTINCTLY]

Thank you for your answers so far. As you will be aware, right now there are only Russian military bases in the country, and they are the only foreign military presence in Armenia. Let me proceed to the next question.

10. According to you, to what extent is the presence of Russian military units favorable or hindering to ensuring Armenia's *national security*? [READ THE OPTIONS, MARK ONE OPTION]:
- favorable to a great extent
 - favorable to some extent
 - neither favorable, nor hindering
 - hindering to some extent
 - hindering to a great extent
 - has nothing to do with Armenia's national security [DO NOT READ THIS OPTION]
 - *don't know*
 - *refuse to answer*
11. What do you (personally) expect of the presence of Russian military units in Armenia? [MARK UP TO THREE RESPONSES MENTIONED FIRST]
- [MARK THE RESPONSE] _____
 - [MARK THE RESPONSE] _____
 - [MARK THE RESPONSE] _____
 - *don't know*
 - *refuse to answer*
12. According to you, as of today, what is Armenia's greatest benefit from the presence of Russian military units? [MARK ONE OPTION]
- [MARK THE RESPONSE] _____
 - *don't know*
 - *refuse to answer*
13. According to you, what is Armenia's greatest disadvantage/threat from the presence of Russian military units? [MARK ONE RESPONSE]
- [MARK THE RESPONSE] _____
 - *don't know*
 - *refuse to answer*
14. According to you, if Armenia did not join the Eurasian Economic Union, to what extent would that become a reason or would it not become a reason for jeopardizing the de facto independence of Artsakh? [READ THE OPTIONS, MARK ONE OPTION]
- would greatly jeopardize
 - would more likely jeopardize
 - would more likely not jeopardize
 - would not jeopardize at all

- *don't know*
- *refuse to answer*

15. Respondent's date of birth *[MARK THE RESPONSE]*

16. RESPONDENT'S SEX *[DO NOT READ, MARK]*

17. Respondent's highest education level given the latest educational institution graduated from. *[DO NOT READ THE OPTIONS]*

- No elementary education
- elementary education
- secondary
- high school
- vocational
- higher
- post-graduate
- other *[MARK THE RESPONSE]* _____
- *don't know*
- *refuse to answer*

18. How many adults live in your household? *[MARK THE RESPONSE]*

19. Have we reached a rural or urban settlement? *[DO NOT READ THE OPTIONS, MARK THE RESPONSE]*

- rural
- urban