

**INTERNATIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE OF  
THE SECOND  
KARABAKH WAR**

**FARID SHAFIYEV AND ILAHA CHIRAGOVA**





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**Editors: Farid Shafiyev and Ilaha Chiragova**

**Contributors (ADA University):** Esmira Rahimova – Orientalism and Islamophobia; Emil Zadayev – the Role of the Armenian Lobby; Sara Rzayeva – The New York Times and The Washington Post; Jala Rzayeva – The BBC and The Guardian; Seymur Baghirov – French Media; Orkhan Babayev, Tamerlan Mahyaddinli – Russian Media

International media outlets, including through editorials, articles, and news reports, have huge overall impact on the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict by shaping public opinion. The principal purpose behind conducting this research is to provide an analytical tool for the comparative study of the coverage of the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict by the leading international media outlets.



CENTER OF ANALYSIS OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
BEYNÖLXALQ MÜNASİBÖTLÖRÜN TÖHLİLİ MƏRKƏZİ

Mirza Ibrahimov 8, Baku, AZ1100, Azerbaijan,  
Phone: (+994 12) 596-82-39, (+994 12) 596-82-41,  
E-mail: [info@aircenter.az](mailto:info@aircenter.az) [www.aircenter.az](http://www.aircenter.az)

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## Introduction and Executive Summary

Following the First Karabakh War in the 1990s, the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan became a subject of large-scale news coverage by international media outlets. Prior to the Second Karabakh War (9/27–11/10/2020), however, the conflict between the two countries escaped the attention of mainstream international media and was reported only by a small number of dedicated correspondents. Although Armenian and Azerbaijani media outlets limited war coverage to only the information provided by the Ministries of Defense of these countries, and international media organizations consequently also relied on the same, the latter still misrepresented the situation under the influence of the concepts, implanted over a long period, of Orientalism, Turkophobia, and Islamophobia. Simultaneously, some of them were influenced by the Armenian diaspora and government, and others by religious fundamentalists believing in ‘Christian solidarity’ and emphasizing the religious aspects, even though the conflict was not caused by faith issues.

The First Karabakh War (1987–1994) was a convincing example of Western and Russian media supporting and spreading pro-Armenian narratives, thereby opting for an Orientalist standpoint in their news coverage. One of the most influential false narratives, which further turned into the main attitude of the West towards the conflict, was presented by Nobel Prize Winner Andrey Sakharov: ‘*For Azerbaijan the issue of Karabakh is a matter of ambition, for Armenians of Karabakh it is a matter of life and death.*’<sup>1</sup> For almost three decades, this narrative about the ‘*significance of Karabakh for Armenians*’ and it being ‘*just a territory*’ for Azerbaijanis dominated in Western media and academia, confirming how insufficiently the conflict was studied as a whole. Manifestations of Orientalism and Islamophobia have been revealed since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when Armenians committed massacres against Azerbaijanis. Ever since, both the West and Russia have considered these massacres part of the fight between Christianity (Armenia) and Islam (Azerbaijan). This narrative grew into the description of the conflict under discussion as a religious one. During both the First and Second Karabakh wars, there was speculation about a ‘new genocide against Armenians’ by Turks (this time, by Azerbaijani Turks). Although apparent changes have appeared in 21<sup>st</sup> century narratives, elements of Orientalism, Islamophobia, and Turkophobia continue to prevail.

The aim of this report is therefore to demonstrate the misrepresentation inherent in the coverage of the Second Karabakh war and how exactly the concepts of Orientalism, Turkophobia, and Islamophobia influenced the way Western media narrated the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the fall of 2020. One reason why the international coverage of the Second Karabakh War deserves further research is the one-sided approach devoted to the issue previously. The importance of this is that subsequent accounts therefore lean on the embedded, constructed Western narrative and continued its dissemination. False narratives provided by the media have led the audience, including policymakers, to wrong opinions and knowledge about the history of the conflict, thereby causing biased decisions to be made. Furthermore, Orientalistic, Turkophobic, and Islamophobic approaches merely enhance antagonistic relations with Azerbaijan.

For the purposes of this study, it is essential, alongside the requisite theoretical knowledge, to investigate and understand the history of media coverage, starting with the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (1905–1906 and 1918–1920) clashes between Armenians and Azerbaijanis,

<sup>1</sup> Rasizade, A., 2011. Azerbaijan’s prospects in Nagorno-Karabakh. *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 13(2), pp. 215–231.

massacres committed against Azerbaijanis, and their representation in Western media. Similarly, the report examines the attitude of media outlets to the First Karabakh War and the narrative constructed afterwards. The report argues that most Western (and, for that matter, Russian) media became immersed in an Orientalistic, Turkophobic, and Islamophobic frame of mind, which led them to continue to misrepresent details of the war and circulate pro-Armenian narratives.

This study analyzes the output of selected Western and Russian media outlets during the Second Karabakh war. The report strives to show how the parties to the war were presented by the media; how, overall, the conflict has been depicted; and to analyze articles promoted by the Armenian diaspora and pro-Armenian experts. The report emphasizes how Orientalism, Turkophobia, and Islamophobia are entrenched in the media and the narrative around the Second Karabakh War.

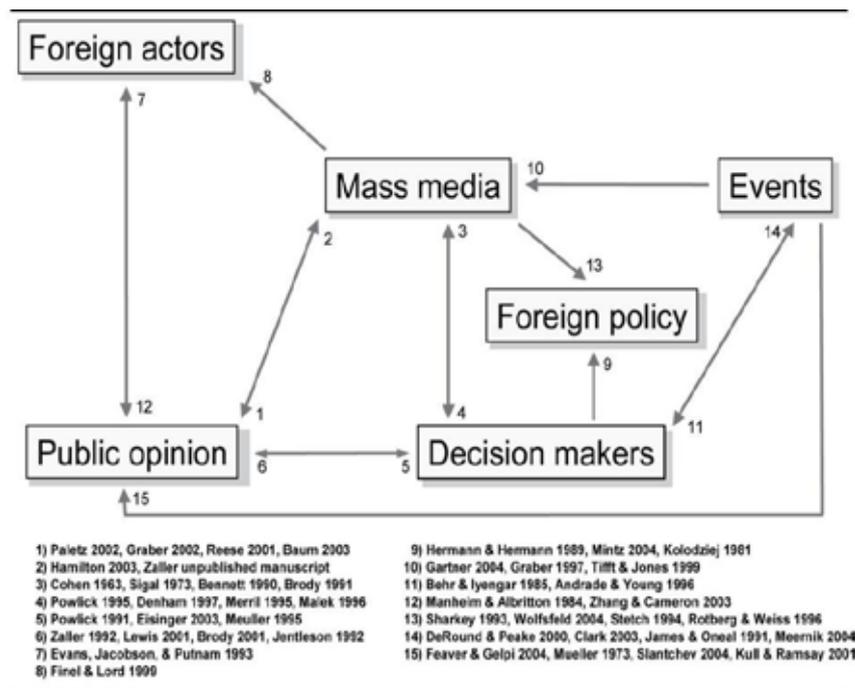
Along with the abovementioned factors, another crucial aspect of the study was to reveal how the key words and phrases used to portray Armenia and Azerbaijan (and the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan) were informed by the clichés and stereotypes formed over almost a century by Western and Russian media. Preliminary results reveal the prejudice in the coverage throughout the century that found its continuation in the Second Karabakh War. The authors of the report analyze the articles of pro-Armenian experts/journalists, among whom are Viken Berberian, Daniel Larison, Christina Maranci, Michael Rubin, and others. Selected publications from Western and Russian print media include *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *the BBC*, *The Guardian*, *Liberation*, *Le Figaro*, *Le Monde*, *Vedomosti*, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, *Gazeta.ru*, *Life News*, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, *Kommersant*, and *Argumenty i Fakty*.

The first chapter of the report provides a brief theoretical framework of the main concepts and a general outline of the situation with information and propaganda warfare and the influence of Orientalism, Turkophobia, and Islamophobia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (1905–1906 and 1918–1920). The second chapter contains a short summary of the formation of the Armenian communities abroad, the establishment of an influential diaspora and lobby, as well as their influence in Western and Russian media. The third and last chapter scrutinizes selected articles by leading Western experts and journalists in the abovementioned media outlets.

## Chapter 1

### Theoretical Framework

Considered the ‘fourth estate’, or fourth pillar of society in addition to the judiciary, legislature, and executive, the media has a noteworthy role in shaping public opinion. The news media is empowered to set the agenda of a nation, influence the way the public perceives the key issues, and even manipulate public attention and priorities. Hence, the media industry is a significant force in affecting the construction of public belief and attitudes. ‘Ordinary people’ are not alone in acquiring information on the current and past events from media outlets; experts and policymakers make decisions and assumptions on the basis of this news that can have significant impacts by themselves and, occasionally, influence foreign governments’ perceptions. The academic literature reveals a complex relationship and causal link between the media, public opinion, decision makers, and foreign policy. Consequently, it is argued that the media influences public opinion; public opinion, in turn, influences the media; and so on.<sup>2</sup>



 Baum MA, Potter PBK. 2008.  
 Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci. 11:39–65.

On September 17, 2021, the Second Karabakh War between Armenia and Azerbaijan began in the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. *The Washington Post* began its narrative on this event with the following paragraph: ‘The fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh is about local territories and wider rivalries’ ... ‘We surveyed people in Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia about land and geopolitics.’

2 Baum, M.A. and Potter, P.B., 2008. The relationships between mass media, public opinion, and foreign policy: Toward a theoretical synthesis. *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.*, 11, pp. 39–65.

Explaining to the public what and where Karabakh is, the article continued:

*The region is enmeshed in broader regional, continental and global geopolitics. The unrecognized Armenian 'statelet' in the region, the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (known locally as Artsakh and internationally as NKR), is deeply integrated (economically, culturally and politically) into the state of Armenia.*

Another *Washington Post* article on the same events stated: '*the Azerbaijani-Turkish military force are "the jihadist forces" and claimed "... Turkish-affiliated Syrian rebels appearing on the front lines against Armenian force."*'

The English-language media outlet *The Guardian* portrayed that, '*The spike in violence further undermines international efforts to calm a resurgence of fighting between Christian Armenians and Muslim Azerbaijanis*'. Meanwhile, French media outlet *Liberation* published articles with the titles '*Calls for International Recognition of the Republic of Artsakh*' and '*Nagorno-Karabakh: Armenians bid farewell to "roots"*.' Also in France, *Le Figaro* acquainted its readers with the Karabakh War with the headline: '*In Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijanis threaten Armenian cultural heritage.*'

The abovementioned, influential Western outlets thus put out one-sided, anti-Azerbaijani information and lacked in-depth analysis and comprehensive coverage. As Matthew Gentzkow and Jess Shapiro put it, 'by selective omission, choice of words, and varying credibility ascribed to the primary source, each conveys a radically different impression of what actually happened.'<sup>3</sup> Opting to incline information in a particular direction is what is meant by the concept of media bias. The results obtained reveal that media outlets have a goal to selectively promote the narrative to meet the expectations of clients and consumers and confirm their prior beliefs – in this case, those of the Armenian diaspora, lobby, and their supporters. Another reason for the strong tendency of media bias against Azerbaijanis is the persistent existence of Orientalism, Islamophobia, and Turkophobia in the West.

### 1.1. Orientalism

Orientalism, one of the founding concepts of postcolonial studies, has its origins in the work of cultural critic Edward Said. The supremacy of Orientalist discourse is seen to be directly proportional to the triumph of perception through the lenses of several prejudices shaped by the Western world. These prejudices portray the West as an 'eye of the world' and the eternal birthplace of civilization, making it to be reckoned the inheritor of modern civilization.<sup>4</sup> Said argued that the Western imaginary always represents the Orient as opposed to the Occident. The Orient is usually depicted as despotic and monolithic. Furthermore, Orientalism is described as a hegemonic discourse that could achieve an epistemological status close to that of geographical location as well as historical chronology.

Within Said's oeuvre, Orientalism has been defined in many diverse ways. The first of these is that Orientalism is a way of thought based on ontological and epistemological divergence between West and East and involving imagination between these two. Another definition describes Orientalism as idiosyncratic to Western university disciplines that

<sup>3</sup> Gentzkow, M. and Shapiro, J.M., 2006. Media bias and reputation. *Journal of political Economy*, 114(2), pp. 280–316. Available at: [https://www.nber.org/system/files/working\\_papers/w11664/w11664.pdf](https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w11664/w11664.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Jamerson, T., 2017. Digital orientalism: TripAdvisor and online travelers' tales. *Digital sociologies*, pp. 119–135.

aim at researching and immersing into Eastern societies. According to a third conceptualization, Orientalism is understood as an established West-centered institution scrutinizing the East, while the West is demonstrated as a superior that aims at rearranging the East according to the former's supremacy. Hence, it is a complex of interests that are drawn into play when the issue concerns the East.

Orientalism is identified by Edward Said as a discourse inspired by Michel Foucault's school of thought.<sup>5</sup> In Foucault's conceptualization, discourse is a set of statements that belong to the 'same discursive formation,' empowering the creation of a specific way of seeing, perceiving, and thinking about a given topic.<sup>6</sup> His understanding includes discourse being systematic and rule-governed. This is a reason why individuals and their views about the world are not foregrounded, but rather the rules governing discourse. Fortifying Foucault's viewpoint, Said pointed out that 'Orientalism expresses and represents that part [the Orient] culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles.'<sup>7</sup> The definition of Orientalism, therefore, similarly to Foucault's conceptualization of discourse, is a specific way of talking about, perceiving, and representing the Orient.

Antonio Gramsci stressed the supremacy of elite culture. Referring to his concept of cultural hegemony, elites have supremacy over the masses through 'common sense' as well as daily practices and rituals. An undoubted role goes to intellectuals (experts in legitimation) for determining a consensus through the arts, education, and the media.<sup>8</sup> Said outlines Gramsci's distinction between civil (schools, families, unions, etc.) and political (state institutions with a role of domination: the police, the central bureaucracy, the army) society. Hegemony is, therefore, an appropriate concept for the explication of cultural life in the industrial West. This Western leadership is formed within a particular culture's supremacy over the others. Hence, the durability and strength of Orientalism is provided through cultural hegemony. The dichotomy of 'us' (Europeans) and 'them' (non-Europeans) and, in that context, the idea of the superiority of European identity over those of non-European peoples and cultures was a crucial component.

With the rise of technological development and the digitalization of mass media, traditional Orientalism underwent a transition into digital Orientalism. As Paul Jahshan stated, during the Vietnam and Korean wars and, further, in the war in Iraq, Edward Said's 'theatrical of the East' found its reflection.<sup>9</sup> Orientalism towards Azerbaijan was obvious in the Western and Russian media's coverage of the Second Karabakh war. The Armenian narrative about 'the war (Azerbaijan) against civilization (Armenia and the rest of the West)' has been visible in how the war was presented to a wider audience. The media in Russia and France, especially, are vivid examples, as these countries' discourses are characterized by a long tradition of Said's Orientalism.

5 Höglund, J., 2008. Electronic empire: Orientalism revisited in the military shooter. *Game Studies*, 8(1), p.10.

6 El Aidi, A. and Yechouti, Y., 2017. Michel Foucault's theory of discourse in Edward Said's theory of Orientalism. *The Criterion: An International Relations Journal in English*, 8, pp. 1059–1072.

7 Said, E., 1978. Introduction to Orientalism.

8 Irwin, R. (2012) Popular Culture, Orientalism, and Edward Said. Available at: <https://www.mei.edu/publications/popular-culture-orientalism-and-edward-said>

9 Jahshan, P., 2014, January. Cyber-Orientalism and the Virtualization of an Image: Edward Said's Legacy for a Digital Century. In *CASAR Fifth International Conference, Beirut, Lebanon*.

## 1.2 Islamophobia

The genesis of the concept of ‘Islamophobia’ seems much more diverse, and the history of the term’s usage has followed a crooked path. Moreover, the content as well as the meaning of it were modified during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As a result, the term has caused much debate not only within political discourse but also in the academic field. Orientalism deals with subjects that lie in the past and are, in part, historical. In contrast, the concept of Islamophobia deals with actual issues that attract the attention of a wider audience.

Islamophobia as a concept was first introduced during the period of French colonialism in Africa in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This was a period full of tension and fears about an upcoming conflict between Europe (Christianity) and the Orient (Islam). As a result, this conflict, which was expected to affect colonial politics, led to further studies focused on the relationship between Islam and the colonial powers. Therefore, the neologism ‘Islamophobia’ was coined by civil servants working for the French colonial administration who were either anthropologists or Orientalists. French colonial rule needed to be enforced as well as consolidated. Publications released by Maurice Delafosse in 1910 and another author, Alain Quellien, attempted to convince the French colonial administration not to hold a position full of prejudice and stereotypes toward the religion of Islam – a position that was called ‘*Islamophobie*.’ Later, this concept was used by other authors such as Sliman Ibrahim and Etienne Dinet, who denounced the biases of some European Orientalists in their distorted interpretations of Islam.

The real breakthrough took place in the 1990s. During that period, the term Islamophobia was used in the debate on multiculturalism in the United Kingdom. A great number of both public activists and scholars were concerned about hostility against Muslims and frequently referred to the term Islamophobia, for example, in the Runnymede Trust Report published in 1997. Moreover, this report not only expanded the use of the term in the mass media but also provided a description on the lines of ‘hostility toward Islam.’ As a result, it led to the creation of the concept’s very definition.

A new wave of Islamophobia was caused by various terrorist attacks in the West beginning with the September 11, 2001, terror attacks in the USA. There is a correlation between Islamophobia, the expansion of radical fundamentalist Islam in the post-9/11 era, and the wars against ‘terror’ in Afghanistan, Yemen, Lebanon, Iraq, and the wider Middle East. Moreover, issues such as the nuclear threat of Iran as well as further terrorist attacks (2003 Istanbul bombing, 2004 Madrid train bombing, 2005 London bombings, etc.) caused the rise of Islamophobia in Europe.<sup>10</sup>

There are different examples of Islamophobic depictions. It is therefore necessary to underline the manner in which manifestations of Islamophobia reveal themselves in various types of media. In Elizabeth Poole’s opinion, there are three themes that Islamophobic narratives can have:

- First, the representation of Muslims as ‘the Other’ and a threat to Western civilization;
- Second, the representation of Muslims as a threat to liberal values;

10 Denz, H., 2003. Solidarität in Österreich: Strukturen und Trends. *SWS-Rundschau*, 43(3), pp. 321–336.

- Third, that differences between Muslims and non-Muslims in cultural and religious aspects result in political and social conflicts.<sup>11</sup>

In Poole's view, there exists a considerable amount of evidence that demonstrates that the primary source and reference of information about Islam for a non-Muslim audience is the media. There are many examples of when Muslims have been misrepresented and depicted negatively to the wider society. Moreover, phenomena such as terrorism, extremism, and fundamentalism have been connected to Islam. *The Sun* and *The Independent* are among leading newspapers in the United Kingdom that were scrutinized for disproportionate depiction of unlawful acts committed by Muslims. Moreover, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have also been accused of fueling Islamophobia.

We can observe the same situation concerning representing Muslims as a threat to the Christian world in the coverage of the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict. Major powers such as Turkey and Russia were also involved in the conflict and attracted the attention of the West.

### 1.3 Turkophobia

Occasionally, every nation or ethnic group becomes a target of ethnic and religious bigotry and, in that sense, the Turkic peoples are no exception, especially the Anatolian Turks. The root of the hostility towards Turks emanates from the historical rivalry between European powers and the Ottoman Empire. Azerbaijanis are a Turkic-speaking ethnic group and were historically identified as Turks.

There are several elements that fuel modern Turkophobia. First and foremost are the historical memories of those who, for various historical reasons, feel animosity, a sense of victimization, or rivalry with regard to the Turkic peoples. From Huns to modern Turks, historic battles and events reverberate in the minds of people across Europe and Asia. At the individual level, these events turn into personal prejudices against the present generation of Turks. Thus, when an Armenian terrorist killed a Turkish diplomat in the 1970s and justified his crime with what happened in 1915 – before he was born – he exposed the interplay of historical, political, social, and psychological factors that underlie Turkophobia.<sup>12</sup>

Another root of Turkophobia is religious discrimination. Since most of the Turkic peoples are Muslim, all negative stereotypes against Islam are inevitably projected onto the Turkic peoples, despite the fact that considerable parts of Turkic society are secular.<sup>13</sup> The echo of a sentiment expressed by Pope Urban II at the Council of Clermont in 1095, declaring Muslims 'bastard Turks,' can be felt today.<sup>14</sup>

Another source of Turkophobia is government-funded propaganda in countries either bor-

11 Poole, E.A., 2011. Change and continuity in the representation of British Muslims before and after 9/11: The UK context. *Global Media Journal*, 4(2), pp. 49–62.

12 Badretdin, S. 2000. Turkophobia: Its social and historical roots. *The Tatar Gazette*. No.3–4

13 Badretdin, S. 2000. Turkophobia: Its social and historical roots. *The Tatar Gazette*. No.3–4

14 Taras, R., 2013. Euro-Turks in the contemporary European imaginary. *Insight Turkey*, 15(4), p.79.

dering Turkic nations or with Turkic minorities. This propaganda is frequently published to divert public attention from internal problems or to win an election.<sup>15</sup>

There is a connection between Islamophobia and Turkophobia. Islamophobia originates from the medieval images of good versus evil and comparing Christianity with Islam. In modern Europe, apart from terrorism, Islamophobia has cultural undertones, specifically the inability of Muslim communities to be integrated into the fabric of the Western society. The concept of Turkophobia can be seen as an extension of this stylized Islamophobia. Turkophobia is partly caused by cultural misunderstandings and misperceptions as well as non-existent policies for the integration of Turks living in Europe.

Well aware of these Turkophobic tendencies, Armenia and its diaspora successfully seized upon them for the promotion of negative images of Turks and Azerbaijanis as uncivilized and Muslim, in contrast with enlightened Christian Armenians. Moreover, Armenian propaganda also utilized a policy of victimhood related to the events of 1915.<sup>16</sup> The well-designed propaganda of Armenia and its diaspora was aimed at advancing the cause of the self-determination of Armenians in the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan and calling on countries around the world to recognize the separatist movement in the internationally recognized territories of Azerbaijan as a 'country.' To achieve this, the Armenian diaspora engaged, in particular, in financing the election campaigns of Western policymakers, sponsoring various research institutions, and simply bribing media outlets.

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15 Badretdin, S. 2000. Turkophobia: Its social and historical roots. *The Tatar Gazette*. No.3–4

16 Shafiyev, F. ed., 2020. *Azerbaijan's Geopolitical Landscape: Contemporary Issues, 1991–2018*. Charles University in Prague, Karolinum Press.

## Chapter II

### International Coverage before the Second Karabakh War

#### 2.1 Orientalism, Turkophobia, and Islamophobia in the Coverage of Armenian–Azerbaijani relation during the 1905–1918 events

The modern Armenian national identity was developed towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and correlated with a range of well-organized political organizations, the aim of which was a restoration of Armenian statehood. In this regard, various myths were manufactured by Armenian thinkers that related to an ancient homeland with extended boundaries termed ‘Great Armenia.’

Armenian political parties founded in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century such as *Hunchak* (The Social Democrat Hunchakian Party) and *Dashnaktsutyun* (The Armenian Revolutionary Federation) were at the forefront of the Armenian nationalist movement. The bloody clashes with the Ottoman Empire that began in the 1890s spilled into the territory of the Russian Caucasus.<sup>17</sup> On January 5, 1887, a clash between Azerbaijanis and Armenians took place in the Market Square in Erivan. The main reason for this was the murder of two Azerbaijanis by Armenians the day before. In the course of these events, 17 people were killed and wounded. The Russian military garrison located in Erivan intervened in the event and stopped the clashes.<sup>18</sup> The Armenian revolutionaries tried to discredit the Russian authorities, which, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, had created conditions for mass Armenian resettlement from Qajar and the Ottoman Empire but were appalled by the nationalist movement. The head of the gendarmerie department of Erivan province, in a brief political review of that province and the Kars region in 1887, noted: ‘The Armenians are trying to humiliate the local administration in the eyes of the common people for every minor offense.’<sup>19</sup>

The number of Armenians and the entire Christian population was historically lower than that of Azerbaijanis. However, due to the ongoing resettlement of Armenians from the Ottoman Empire, the size of the Christian population had grown. Thus, by 1889, out of 14,738 people of the general population of the city of Erivan, 7,494 were Christians and 7,244 were Azerbaijanis.<sup>20</sup>

Violence between Armenians and Azerbaijanis in Baku, Elisavetpol, and Erivan provinces reached a peak in 1905–1906. Disturbances began after the murder of an Azerbaijani by Armenian guards serving the Russian administration in Baku and then spread through the whole South Caucasus.

Western media reported the events with anti-Muslim and anti-Turkic undertones. *The New York Times*, in an article dated March 21, 1905, reported, ‘Mohammedans (Tatars)

17 Arzumanyan, V. and Mustafa, N., 1998. Black pages of history. *Deportation. Genocide. Refugees. Baku*, pp. 181–189.

18 Niftaliyev I. 2017. Historical Prism: 1905th. Massacre of Erivan Azerbaijanis – how it was. Retrieved from <https://news.day.az/politics/958135.html>

19 Niftaliyev I. 2017. Historical Prism: 1905th. Massacre of Erivan Azerbaijanis – how it was. Retrieved from <https://news.day.az/politics/958135.html>

20 Niftaliyev I. 2017. Historical Prism: 1905th. Massacre of Erivan Azerbaijanis – how it was. Available at: <https://news.day.az/politics/958135.html>

killed over 1000 Christians, including men, women and children.’<sup>21</sup> The Russian media also favored the Armenians. *Peterburgskiy Vedomosti* wrote about the Tatars attacking ‘defenseless Armenians.’<sup>22</sup>

In another article published by *The New York Times* on September 1, 1905, about the city of Shusha, it was reported that Tatars had committed a massacre against Armenians and seized the town: ‘Tatars are well armed. Telegraphic communication with Shusha was cut this afternoon.’ However, as is known from other sources, the violent clashes in Shusha began with the murder of an Azerbaijani and, in this and other cities and regions, thousands of people from both ethnic groups perished.<sup>23</sup> While mostly reporting about Armenian victims, the Western media did not cover the suffering of the Azerbaijani population. Both the West and Russia considered that these massacres were the result of the conflict between Christianity (Armenians) and Islam (Azerbaijanis).

The massacres of Azerbaijanis assumed a larger scale after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and against the background of the collapse of the Russian Empire. A special role in these massacres belongs to the Armenian leftist party Dashnaksutyun, which united with the Bolsheviks against the Azerbaijani national movement, *Musavat*. This long-standing and well-organized strategy is clearly described by Hovhannes Kajaznuni, the first Prime Minister of the First Republic of Armenia (1918–1919) and a member of Dashnaksutyun:

Although we were under the influence of the Georgian Mensheviks in Tbilisi and under the hegemony of the Bolsheviks in Baku, in both cases we took action, taking into account our national interests and national strategy. As a result, we were able to inflict a deadly blow on Musavat.<sup>24</sup>

A telegram sent by the British to Baku on April 9, 1918, stated that the Armenians, together with the Bolsheviks, had committed massacres against the Azerbaijanis, whom they considered a racial enemy.

Thomas De Waal, in his book *Black Garden*, also touched upon the large-scale ethnic violence:

21 Over 1,000 Christians Massacred At Baku; Men, Women, and Children Slaughtered by Mohammedans. The Officials Looked On Cossacks Aided the Tatars — Victims Shot, Stabbed, and Burned to Death — Armenians Unarmed. (1905). Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/1905/03/21/archives/over-1000-christians-massacred-at-baku-men-women-and-children.html>

22 Shafiyev, F., 2008. Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict: roots. Massacres of 1905–1906. *Journal of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan*, pp. 18–19. Moreover, an Azerbaijani publicist Rahim Bek Melikov blamed ‘Sankt-Peterburgskiy Vedomosti’ for insinuation and abetting. He wrote in «Kaspiy» (№ 14, 18 January 1906): ‘It is a futile attempt to prove to these newspapers that the ongoing hostility between the Armenians and the Muslims is not caused by pan-Islamism but by other factors. Because these conservative and pro-government newspapers want to increase the ethnic hatred in the Caucasus while all forces of the society try to stop violence.’

23 For more detailed account of the 1905–1906 Armenian–Azerbaijani massacres see Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905–1920. The Shaping of a National Identity in a Muslim Community*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, and Farid Shafiyev, ‘Armenian–Azerbaijani Conflict. Roots: Massacres of 1905–1906.’ *World of Diplomacy*, Azerbaijan, 18–19 (2008): 14–29.

24 Gaziyeu, Y. 2009. Erməni məsələsi: yalanlar və gerçəklər. *Qafqaz Araşdırmaları İnstitutu Nəşriyyatı*, pp. 85

When in March 1918 Azerbaijanis revolted against the Baku Commune (The Bolshevik organization which basically ruled in Baku after the collapse of the tsarist administration until July 1918 and headed by ethnic Armenian revolutionary Stepan Shaumyan), Armenian Dashnaks and Bolshevik troops poured into the Azerbaijani quarters of the city and slaughtered thousands.<sup>25</sup>

## 2.2. The impact of Orientalism and Turkophobia on Media Coverage during the First Karabakh War (1987–1994)

By the outbreak of the modern conflict in 1987, the Armenian diaspora had an influential network among Western policymakers, scholars, and journalists. The conflict was also portrayed as a reformation drive during Gorbachev's *perestroika*, and Armenian nationalists who advocated for the unification of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region of Azerbaijan with Armenia were able to attract the sympathy of liberal circles in the West and Russia.<sup>26</sup> All these factors were reflected in how the narrative of the First Karabakh War was constructed in Western and Russian media. The Orientalist undertone resurfaced in the coverage of the conflict. *The New York Times*, in its article 'The World; The Soviets and the Enmities Within,' argued that the 'Christian nations of the Caucasus – Georgia and Armenia voluntarily drew themselves close to the Russian empire, seeking protection against neighboring Muslims. Armenians see the Turkish massacre of 1915 as the pivotal moment in their national experience.'<sup>27</sup> In another article published by *the New York Times*, 'Soviet Reports a Major Oil Center In Azerbaijan Is Shaken by Riots,' the author mainly described the confrontation in Sumgait in 1988. Trying to give background to the conflict, the article asserted that 'these two territories (Nagorno-Karabakh and Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic) reverted to Azerbaijani control in 1923 as part of a Soviet effort to accommodate the wishes of Moslem Turkey, whose help it sought in subduing the ethnically Moslem areas of Central Asia.'<sup>28</sup>

The years 1987–1994 brought mass-scale violence and deportations. Armenians were expelled from many parts of Azerbaijan and Azerbaijanis were completely ethnically cleansed from Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. Further, Armenian armed forces occupied seven regions of Azerbaijan adjacent to Nagorno-Karabakh – these territories were completely destroyed and looted. However, events surrounding the massacres of Azerbaijanis such as in Khojaly in February 1992 (613 Azerbaijanis killed) and deportations were underreported in Russian and Western media when compared with smaller-scale violence such as in Sumgayit in February 1988 (26 Armenians killed).

Moreover, during its assault against the sovereign territory of Azerbaijan, Armenia re-

25 De Waal, T., 2013. *Black garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through peace and war*. NYU press, pp. 100.

26 Farid Shafiyev, 'Liberal Hypocrisy on Post-Soviet Separatism, *The National Interest*, 13 June 2016, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/liberal-hypocrisy-post-soviet-separatism-16575>

27 New York Times Archive, 1851-present. Available at: <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/ref/membercenter/nytarchive.html>

28 New York Times Archive, 1851–present. Available at: <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/ref/membercenter/nytarchive.html>

ceived significant military support from Russia,<sup>29</sup> while the United States Congress, under the influence of the Armenian lobby, imposed restrictions on aid to Azerbaijan through the notorious Section 907 of the Amendment to the Freedom Support Act. Armenia was the biggest recipient of US aid, per capita, among post-Soviet states.<sup>30</sup> This amendment was adopted in 1992 at a time when Azerbaijan was subject to military attacks and, later, occupation – a fact that was affirmed in 1993 by the United Nations Security Council resolutions demanding the unconditional withdrawal of all occupying forces from Azerbaijan’s territory.

In the 1990s, Armenians were much better equipped with propaganda and information warfare tools, which facilitated the ‘permissive international environment’ that enabled the Armenian annexation of Azerbaijani territories.<sup>31</sup>

In the given context, it is noteworthy to mention the manuscript (2015) of Kamala Imranli-Lowe, which provides the reader with a more comprehensive picture on the media coverage of the First Karabakh War. As stated by Imranli-Lowe, an analysis of the media outlets’ coverage – with only a very few exceptions – demonstrates the same patterns being written in the Western media. Hence, the Western media usually leaned on Armenians as sources, or went with the same narrative although preferring to not state a source. What is more, Western media made room for numerous articles by Armenian authors or those sympathetic to the Armenian position. Armenian views obtained supremacy over alternatives through a ‘conventional narrative’ that the author divided into a sequence including several supplementary narratives:

*Nagorny Karabakh belonged to Armenia before the 1917 Revolution.*

*Nagorny Karabakh was part of Armenia from the first century AD to 1923.*

*Nagorny Karabakh was part of Greater Armenia but in 1921 it was attached to Muslim Azerbaijan by Stalin.*

*After the declaration of Soviet power in Armenia, Azerbaijan decreed that Nagorny Karabakh should be part of Armenia, but shortly afterwards it changed its position and called for the transfer of the region, which was reversed at Stalin’s insistence on July 5, 1921.*

*Nagorny Karabakh has been ruled from Baku since 1922 or 1923, when Lenin transferred it to Muslim Azerbaijan.*

29 Armenian–Russian relations are shaped by centuries-long geopolitical interests of Russian Empire: Svante Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus*, Richmond: Curzon Caucasus World, 2001; Stepan Danielyan and Knar Babayan, ‘Nagorno-Karabakh; the Edge of Russia’s Orbit,’ *European Council on Foreign Relations*, September 2016, accessed 01.05.2022, [http://www.ecfr.eu/article/essay\\_nagorno\\_karabakh\\_the\\_edge\\_of\\_russias\\_orbit](http://www.ecfr.eu/article/essay_nagorno_karabakh_the_edge_of_russias_orbit); Gaidz Minassian, ‘A Russian Outpost in the Caucasus?’, *Russia/NIS Centre*, February 2008; Farid Shafiyev, *Resettling the Borderland: State Relocations and Ethnic Conflict in the South Caucasus*, Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2018.

30 Saideman, S.M. and Ayres, R.W., 2008. *For kin or country: Xenophobia, nationalism, and war*. Columbia University Press, pp. 88.

31 Ambrosio, T., 2001. *Irredentism: ethnic conflict and international politics*. Greenwood Publishing Group, pp. 146.

*Frequent use of words like “reunification” with and “return” of Nagorny Karabakh to Armenia.*<sup>32</sup>

In her manuscript, Kamala Imranli-Lowe allocates space to Edward Said’s vision and its possible application to the media coverage of the then-current Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict/war. The investigation revealed that US and British journalists were unenlightened regarding both republics, their culture, history, traditions, and the history of the conflict between them, which, understandably, has been reflected in their interpretations, reporting, and certain definitions. Western media were, at that time, mostly Moscow-based or only interested in dealing with Soviet-wide politics and policies, not digging deeply into specifically Armenian and Azerbaijani issues (some never even visited the countries). Others saw the issue through a Russian prism.<sup>33</sup> As a result, the article demonstrated that the views of the Armenian side on the issues under consideration were featured much more frequently than Azerbaijani ones.

### 2.3 Armenian Diaspora

For many centuries, based on various circumstances, the Armenians created their own communities or, as they are termed today, diasporas in other states. In general, three main stages can be distinguished in the formation of the diaspora – these are the pre-XX century period; the First World War; and the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The first proto-diasporas were formed due to religious schisms during the era of the Christianization of the Armenians. Further, with their land under the control of various authorities such as the Byzantine, Ottoman, Persian, and Russian empires, the habitat of the Armenians changed owing to mass migrations. After the seizure of the South Caucasus by Peter the Great, he signed a decree allowing the resettlement of Armenians in territories occupied by Russia. In particular, large-scale resettlement policies were conducted in the 19<sup>th</sup> century after the conquest of the South Caucasus by Russia.<sup>34</sup> Mass resettlements as a result of the policies of large empires, especially the Russian Empire, have shaped the nature of the Armenian communities in various countries.

The second and most significant period for the formation of the Armenian diaspora occurred because of events during the First World War, as a result of which thousands of Armenians were deported from the Ottoman Empire and settled in the United States, France, the countries of the Middle East, Argentina, and others. A new, distinctive identity relating to victimhood, which was previously absent, began among the Armenians. After the First World War, the narrative of massacres, displacement, and Turkophobia became the main agenda for the diaspora. Religion, language, culture, and political rights of Armenians as the root causes of the resettlement became intertwined with the development of a new Armenian identity through the creation a common enemy, the Turks. Armenian communities adopted different strategies based on the political policies of their host country and evolutions in world affairs that influenced Armenian relations.

In parallel, in Soviet Armenia, along with Marxist indoctrination, a modern sense of statehood was developed among the Armenian elite and intellectuals. The Soviet authorities fostered anti-Turkish sentiments due to geostrategic rivalry with Turkey as a member of

<sup>32</sup> Imranli-Lowe, K., 2015. The Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict through the prism of the British media and The New York Times, 1988–1994. *Caucasus Survey*, 3(2), pp. 152–53.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp. 162–163.

<sup>34</sup> Firouzeh, M., 2006. On the Religious Frontier: Tsarist Russia and Islam in the Caucasus.

NATO. By the end of the Cold War, the Armenian diaspora around the world was well organized and united on the issues of Armenian statehood and Turkophobia.

The third, no less significant period of the exodus of Armenians around the world is associated with the collapse of the USSR and the declaration of independence of the Republic of Armenia. Despite the spirit of nationalism and superiority developed after victory in the First Karabakh War and newfound independence, thousands of Armenians found it difficult to face the new challenges and decided to leave a country poisoned by jingoism, corruption, and economic deprivation. The new migrants were radically different from the traditional Armenian communities. First, the latter were displaced persons who had accumulated their resentment and hatred for years, whereas the new migrants voluntarily left their country. Second, the former Armenians were deeply integrated and even assimilated into their host countries and, against that background, the new flow of migrants, with their Soviet worldview, did not fit into these communities. However, the anti-Azerbaijani and anti-Turkish mobilization prevailed among all generations of migrants, and this served as an impetus for the consolidation of all forces. The war in Karabakh and the growing hatred towards Azerbaijanis opened a path for the Armenians to use the lobby even more to achieve success. In addition to the war, there was the question of supporting the young state and building a strong alliance between the world diaspora and the Republic of Armenia. The first steps for this were taken in 1992 after the establishment of the Hayastan All-Armenian fund that supported the development of infrastructure inside Armenia. Soon after, the Ministry of Diaspora was established, which has since become the most active state institution in incorporating the diaspora into the affairs of Armenia.<sup>35</sup>

The Armenian lobby is one of the most influential in the world, and its spectrum of interests is focused on extreme nationalism. Many nations may have diasporas in other countries, but not all have influential lobby groups that will actively promote the interests of their nation both within the host country and abroad.

One of the most important goals of the diaspora is to help and support the Republic of Armenia. This includes various measures, such as maintaining the integrity of the country, financial support, and all kinds of assistance, including to the illegal self-proclaimed regime of Karabakh Armenians controlled by Yerevan during the occupation. For example, the Hayastan Foundation spends in excess of \$100 million to provide assistance to Armenia. The next fundamental goal of these groups is ‘raising public awareness’ about events related to the ‘Armenian genocide’ and acquiring universal recognition of that ‘genocide’ from the international community. Since the 1990s, the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan has become a new priority for the lobby, which has set itself the goal of achieving international recognition of the illegal regime and using every possible option to suppress the attempts of Azerbaijanis to enlist the support of the international community. At one point, the lobby was planning to bolster separatist sentiment in the Javakheti region of Georgia, where a sizable Armenian community exists (Armenians call this region Javakhk). The Armenian state is highly dependent on the preferences of the diaspora and these goals are shaped to a great extent not by the Armenian government,

35 Sputnik, 16.11.2020. Кто и сколько пожертвовал для Арцаха: Всеармянский фонд ‘Айастан’ опубликует отчет. <https://ru.armeniasputnik.am/society/20201116/25364541/Kto-i-skolko-pozhertvoval-dlya-Artsakha-Vsearmyanskiy-fond-Ayastan-opublikuet-otchet.html>

but by the Armenian lobby, which has more opportunities and resources. This identity, formed on the basis of historical hatred of neighbors and revanchist sentiment, has built an aggressive nationalist policy of realizing the diaspora's goals by all available means.

Diaspora activities can be viewed at several levels: informative, legislative, and executive. The informative level is the environment in which the Armenians most effectively communicate their narrative to the public. By the First Karabakh War, the Armenians had a developed network of various lobby groups, mainly in Western countries. Unlike the Azerbaijanis, who did not form an influential diaspora in the 20th century and did not have a range of public advocacy organizations, the Armenians had an absolute advantage. Wealthy Armenians owned or sponsored printed publications, magazines, and newspapers, and also provided grants for 'scientific research' to 'prove' that the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan belonged to the territories of 'Great Armenia.' Even before the outbreak of hostilities in Karabakh, some prominent Armenian scholars advanced the narrative about Great Armenia in parallel with the history of victimhood and the status of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Using their prestigious position and finances, the Armenians also influenced policymakers. On November 16, 1987, Mikhail Gorbachev's economic advisor, ethnic Armenian Abel Aganbegyan, met with a group of French Armenians at the Intercontinental Hotel in Paris and offered them his vision of the problem:

I would be glad if Nagorno-Karabakh was united with Armenia. As an economist, I believe that they have much closer ties with Armenia than with Azerbaijan. I have already made a similar proposal and I hope that these ideas will be implemented in the spirit of perestroika and democracy.<sup>36</sup>

In the United States, Armenians recruited prominent senators and congressmen along with social media influencers and other public advocates.<sup>37</sup> This process showed the real strength of the Armenian lobby, which, despite the fact that Azerbaijan officially fought on its own territories against Armenia, faced all the hardships of the war, and received about one million refugees and internally displaced persons while being subjected to destruction and problems arising from mining.

There are two major Armenian lobbying groups: the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA)<sup>38</sup> and the Armenian Assembly of America (the Assembly).<sup>39</sup> The historical divide between the two groups lies in their relationship to the Soviet Union. ANCA was an offshoot of the Committee for the Independence of Armenia (ACIA), which supported the Armenian Revolutionary Front (ARF), aka the Dashnaks. In 1972, those Armenians who opposed the ARF and were not opposed to cooperating with the USSR created the Assembly. This means that the ANCA is related to the Dashnaks, and the Assembly is composed of anti-Dashnaks (or, at least, non-Dashnaks). After the fall of the USSR, this confrontation softened due to a change in priorities and the need for support of the young

<sup>36</sup> <https://karabakh.center/d/page18321969.html>

<sup>37</sup> Zarifian, J. 2014. *The Armenian-American Lobby and Its Impact on U.S. Foreign Policy*. Berkeley Press.

<sup>38</sup> <https://anca.org/>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.armenian-assembly.org/>

Armenian state. The largest organization, to this day, remains the ANCA and, during the 44-Day War, it relentlessly exerted pressure on Congress with the help of its lobbyists.

During past three decades, Armenian groups have acted against any economic project that could benefit Azerbaijan. The construction of the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan pipeline, which was designed to bring Azerbaijani oil to global markets, mobilized the Armenian lobby in the United States. An attempt was made by pro-Armenian congressmen to promote a bill on the suspension of funding for this project; however, due to the strategic importance of this pipeline for the United States, the bill was blocked. Nevertheless, the suspension of financing from American banks for the Baku–Tbilisi–Kars railway can be added to the successes of the Armenian lobby.<sup>40</sup> However, Azerbaijan self-funded this project, which has assumed significance in the transit corridor between Europe and China.

From literally the first hours of the Second Karabakh War, the Armenian lobby groups promoted a pro-Armenian narrative in the media, with clichés about the ‘corrupt, oil-rich Azerbaijani dictatorship’ committing a second ‘Armenian genocide’ against Christian Armenians. The favorite feature of the Armenians in the dialogue with the American public is the appeal to Christian values; in this case, they labeled Azerbaijan and Turkey as ‘jihadists’ and suggested that ‘honest Christian voters’ should not vote for any political representative connected to Azerbaijan.<sup>41</sup>

The position of the Armenian diaspora in Russia has always been prominent. According to various experts, about 2–3 million ethnic Armenians live in the territory of the modern Russian Federation. They live compactly in Krasnodar, Stavropol, Moscow, and other regions. Since the time of the Russian Empire, many Armenians have held high positions in the administration and army. During the Soviet era, high officials of Armenian origin such as Anastas Mikoyan and Abel Aganbegyan clandestinely and publicly patronized Soviet Armenia.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, in the 1990s, the first ethnic Armenian associations began to form in the Russian Federation. In 2000, the first unified organization, the Union of Armenians of Russia, was established. As its main focal point, under the leadership of Armenian oligarchs, the organization tries to use all available tools to influence the Russian authorities. From the first days of the Second Karabakh War, the Union came out with a flurry of accusations directed at Azerbaijan and promoted relevant stories in the Russian media. In addition, the union initiated the sending of various petitions calling on international organizations to condemn and punish Azerbaijan, and the president of the Union, oligarch Ara Abrahamyan, personally sent a letter to the president of Russia asking him to immediately intervene in the conflict.<sup>42</sup>

In light of these factors, it is important to understand that the vertical power arrangement in Russia works on a different principle from that in the West. The legislative branch is closely tied to the executive branch, while foreign policy is actually shaped by one

40 Zarifian, J. 2014. *The Armenian-American Lobby and Its Impact on U.S. Foreign Policy*. Berkeley Press.

41 Armenian National Committee of America. 2020. ANCA Urges Ohio Voters to Unseat Azerbaijan Caucus Co-Chair Steve Chabo. Retrieved from <https://anca.org/press-release/anca-urges-ohio-voters-to-unseat-azerbaijan-caucus-co-chair-steve-chabot/>

42 Союз Армян России, 2020. Ара Абрамян направил Президенту России В.В. Путину заявление армянской общественности, принятое по итогам большого собрания в Союзе армян России. Retrieved from <https://www.sarinfo.org/news/novosti-sar/?year=2020&month=9>

person – the President of Russia. In the first weeks of the war, Russia took a wait-and-see attitude and officials sparingly gave a restrained assessment of what was happening, ignoring all the efforts of the lobbyists. The lobbyists' dissatisfaction can be immediately seen during the war; for example, Professor Alexander Svarants, in a piece published in a press release of the Union of Armenians of Russia, criticized the CSTO military alliance, accusing it of inefficiency and 'fighting the shadow.'<sup>43</sup>

Disappointed by the absence of decisive action on the part of the Kremlin, the Union of Armenians of Russia continued its struggle on two fronts – information and humanitarian. Throughout the war, the organization collected funds and donations, and sent humanitarian supplies to Armenia. In the information space, the Armenian lobby has used all its tools to influence the public. As in the United States, the number of ethnic Armenians in leading Russian media is large. The editor-in-chief of *Sputnik* and *Russia Today*, Margarita Simonyan, is of Armenian origin, and channeled the resources of these media outlets against Azerbaijan.

The great influence of Armenians can be seen particularly on television, where, on federal channels' political programs, there is a high concentration of experts defending the Armenian position. And those who dared to speak out against Armenia found themselves under pressure and facing threats. For example, after a strong statement by the *TASS* journalist of Azerbaijani origin Saadat Kadyrova on one of the programs on a federal channel, an activist of the Armenian Union filed a lawsuit against the journalist, accusing her of inciting ethnic hatred; following that, the journalist received death threats.<sup>44</sup>

In addition to traditional media outlets, Armenian tycoons sponsored various Internet instruments for pro-Armenian propaganda. A striking example is the Telegram channel *Wargonzo*, on which the Russian blogger and journalist Semyon Pegov passes on military posts, increasing the morale of Armenians, and filming exclusive reports from the battlefield. The sponsor of the *WarGonzo* project, which was originally created as an instrument of Armenian ideological sabotage and psychological warfare against Azerbaijan, is the Armenian media magnate Aram Gabrelyanov. The main goal of this project was disinformation, as the channel often denied reports about Armenian failures. This kind of content is especially well-received and popular among young people, and this project successfully formed false opinions about the success of the Armenian army. At the end of the day, it was the Armenian side that was the loser from promoting a 'parallel reality.'

One of the most influential Armenian diasporas in Europe is in France. There are about 300 Armenian public organizations in France, 40 of which are concentrated in the Paris district.<sup>45</sup> However, unlike in other countries, France does not have a clearly defined center or council of all Armenian organizations, so diaspora structures often duplicate

43 Союз Армян России, 2020. Бой с тенью и ОДКБ. Retrieved from <https://sarinfo.org/news/novosti-sar/boy-s-tenyu-i-odkb.html>

44 Союз Армян России, 2020. Заявление Армена Паршина, активиста САР (Ставропольский край) в Генпрокуратуру РФ раскрывает истинную сущность Саадат Кадыровой и проворачиваемых ею тёмных дел, подпадающих под статьи УК РФ. Retrieved from <https://www.sarinfo.org/news/novosti-sar/?year=2020&month=9>

45 Л.А. Кртян, 2009. Геополитические интересы Франции в Республике Армения. Нижегородский журнал международных исследований.

each other's activities, which leads to dissonance of efforts and dissipation of funds. The absence of a leading institution that could independently mobilize the entire potential of the Armenian community in France is one of the vulnerable points of the diaspora. In this context, the establishment of the Forum of Armenian Organizations in Paris in 1991 speaks of an understanding of the current situation and a desire to overcome differences within the diaspora. However, in acting as an integrator, the Forum entered into competition with political parties, which in March 1993 created the Permanent Union of Armenian Political Organizations in France, founded by the Ramgavar party. Despite the differences in the methods of mobilization, the activities of the Forum and the Council for the Coordination of Armenian Organizations are united in France by common political goals.<sup>46</sup> Both lobbying groups have worked towards the French government's recognition of the 'genocide.'

An important component of the mechanism of influence of ethnic communities on political structures is the financing of election campaigns. This involves the influence of the press, the right to vote, and the manipulation of public opinion. For example, in the city of Marseille, in the South of France, of 16 municipal districts, Armenians make up the majority of the population in 6 and provide the heads of many districts; some mayors of the city have been of Armenian origin. Publications are the key vehicles for mobilization. Currently, the Armenian diaspora in France publishes three monthly magazines, two weekly magazines, and two daily newspapers. In addition, national newspapers are also used by Armenian organizations to influence public opinion. In such well-known newspapers as *Le Monde*, *Libération*, and *Le Figaro*, which very effectively influence public opinion, there were articles covering the events of the war mainly from the Armenian point of view. In addition, the diaspora has created dozens of websites in France to inform the government, officials, members of parliament, scientists, and political analysts about important Armenian issues.

During the 44-Day War, all lobbying organizations came out as a united front to influence the French government. And here is the first difference from the United States and Russia: if, in those countries, the executive branch has taken a balanced and pragmatic position, in France practically the entire vertical structure of power has expressed its prejudice regarding the conflict.

Proceeding from the cultural and political ties between France and Armenia, the ruling circles, represented by President Emmanuel Macron, publicly attacked Azerbaijan and Turkey. For the Armenian lobby, the position was advantageous, as the Second Karabakh War occurred during a period of high tension between France and Turkey over the situation in the Mediterranean Sea and the issue of Europe's Muslim communities. Therefore, these attacks were directed not so much at official Baku, but at Ankara, and the mouthpiece of Armenian propaganda understood this well. The Armenian lobby was successful in mobilizing support for the adoption of a resolution on the so-called 'recognition' of the self-proclaimed entity in Karabakh by French senators. Although the resolution was purely formal, it still gained an overwhelming majority in the Senate: 304 out of 305 senators.

Apart from political lobbying, traditional influence on the information outlets includes even threats if they are seen as necessary. During the war, independent French journalists

46 Conseil de Coordination des Organisations Arméniennes de France Sud, 2020. Available at: <http://www.ccafsud.fr/>

sent reports for the *TF1* television channel about the situation on the front line from the Azerbaijani side. The response was immediate; the Co-Chair of the CCAF Coordination Council, Murad Papazyan, called for massive protests and boycotting of the TV station that broadcast the report. After massive pressure from Armenians, *TF1* was forced to remove the link to the report from the station's website. Armenian radicals resorted to threats such as decapitation against journalists reporting fairly about the situation between Armenia and Azerbaijan.<sup>47</sup>

However, it should be also noted that the executive branch of the French government, that is, the Foreign Ministry, took a more balanced approach and worked with the Azerbaijani side to promote peace in the region. Overall, the efforts of the Armenian diaspora and lobby did not yield any practical results in any of the countries under consideration – France, Russia, or the United States. However, the Armenian lobby greatly influenced the media portrayal of the Second Karabakh War based on pre-existing prejudices against Azerbaijanis.

The last front on which the Armenian lobby still continues to resist is the peace process between Armenia and Azerbaijan. In reality, the Armenian lobby's efforts were unable to prevent the success of Azerbaijan's military, political, and economic development. The misery of that fact fell on Armenians residing in the Republic of Armenia.

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47 Özkır, Y., 2020. ANALYSIS - Western media's approach to Nagorno-Karabakh rife with bias and prejudice. Anadolu Agency. Available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/analysis/analysis-western-media-s-approach-to-nagorno-karabakh-rife-with-bias-and-prejudice/2016909#>

## Chapter III

### The Coverage of the Second Karabakh War by International Media

#### 3.1 American Media

Experts of Armenian origin promoted several narratives in the Western media about Azerbaijan, Armenia, and the war. The repertoire mostly included the old clichés about Muslim Azerbaijanis versus Christian Armenians. However, the authors also promoted new topics – democratic Armenia versus autocratic Azerbaijan, oil despotism, and the Azerbaijani-Turkish alliance against small Armenia.

In advancing their stories in the Western media, Armenian authors did not mention the military and political alliance of Armenia with Russia, the destruction caused by the Armenian occupation of Azerbaijani territories, or ethnic cleansing.

An article ‘Captive of the Caucasus: The Long War over Nagorno-Karabakh,’ published in *The Nation* by Viken Berberian, is focused entirely on the manipulation and dissemination of the Armenian narrative.<sup>48</sup> Berberian draws out a couple of dichotomies in the article that are quite exemplary and are presented in many more articles and op-eds by Armenian or pro-Armenian authors.

The first dichotomy is ‘civilized world against barbarism’: ‘*How a little-understood war between Azerbaijan and Armenia threatens democracy.*’ The article begins with many references to the history of the Armenian people, with an emphasis on Christianity. The author further speaks about another historical cliché: that Soviet leader Josef Stalin assigned Karabakh to Azerbaijan. As a matter of fact, the decision of the Soviet authorities was to *retain* Karabakh within Azerbaijan, which means that the region previously belonged to Azerbaijan. Even some Armenian scholars, such as Arsen Saparov, acknowledge this fact.<sup>49</sup>

The narrative transits to: ‘*the current war represents a head-on collision between democratic values, as represented by Armenia’s Prime Minister, Nikol Pashinyan, and tyrannical ones, as typified by Ilham Aliyev.*’ Further Berberian condemns Israel over its military assistance to Azerbaijan against the ‘*democracy of Artsakh,*’ without mentioning that Armenian troops committed numerous war crimes, as documented by various international organizations including Human Rights Watch. Nor does the author reflect that the democratic leader of Armenia, Nikol Pashinyan, after coming to power, never raised the issue of the rights of Azerbaijani refugees and IDPs. However, in the end, states Berberian,

48 Berberian V., 8.10.2020. Captive of the Caucasus: The long war over Nagorno-Karabakh.

Available at: <https://www.thenation.com/article/world/armenia-war-nagorno-karabakh/>

49 Saparov A., 10.12.2018. Q&A with Arsene Saparov: No evidence that Stalin ‘gave’ Karabakh to Azerbaijan. Available at: <https://armenian.usc.edu/qa-with-arsene-saparov-no-evidence-that-stalin-gave-karabakh-to-azerbaijan/>

*‘There is a message here that is particularly relevant to the war in the Caucasus: Peace is possible only when both sides acknowledge the other’s right to the everyday.’* However, the author fails to mention any tragic moment in Azerbaijani history, focusing exclusively on Armenian grievances.

*The American Conservative* published Daniel Larison’s article ‘Just Say No To A Karabakh “No-Fly Zone”.’<sup>50</sup> While targeting David Ignatius’s proposed No-Fly Zone, Daniel Larison simultaneously reinforced Armenian victimhood, denouncing Azerbaijan as an aggressor and calling on the US government to withhold military assistance from the Azerbaijani government that was ‘attacking’ Armenians with the help of Turkey.

While many Western liberal journalists have attacked Russia due to its involvement in ethnic separatism on the territories of Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, when it comes to the similar separatist and irredentist conflict involving Armenia, those same journalists tend to blame Azerbaijan. Award-winning investigative journalist Simon Ostrovsky, in the article ‘Armenia’s Miscalculations in Nagorno-Karabakh,’ deals in the same cliché of Armenian historical victimization while barely speaking about the Armenian occupation – he prefers to call it a ‘conquest.’<sup>51</sup> The article portrays Ostrovsky in an Armenian church, providing a subliminal message on the nexus between Armenians and Christianity. He continues: *‘Armenia’s history is indeed ancient; it can claim relics and landmarks throughout the region that stretch far beyond its modern borders.’*

Christina Maranci, in her article ‘Cultural Heritage in the Crosshairs once more’<sup>52</sup> that is full of Orientalism, Islamophobia, and Turkophobia portrays the same narrative with the dichotomy of the civilized world and barbarism. Here is her first paragraph: *‘Azeri aggression against the rich and irreplaceable cultural heritage of its indigenous Armenian people has only just begun.’* The next paragraph talks totally about the ‘barbarism’ of Azerbaijan, ‘destroying culture, heritage, churches.’ According to Maranci, the goal of Azerbaijan was *‘demoralizing the Armenian people during battles in the short term and erasing their physical and cultural existence in the long.’* Expressing her proud faith, Maranci points out that ‘some of the monuments date to as early as the fourth century, when Armenia became the first nation to establish Christianity as a state religion.’

Maranci, simultaneously totally ignores that, before 1988–1994, the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan was home to 706 historic and cultural monuments that were totally destroyed during the Armenian occupation.<sup>53</sup>

In another article, Maranci explicitly opts for Orientalism, talking first about the multiple architectural traditions in Karabakh (including Islamic), then writing: *‘But heritage orga-*

50 Larison D., 21.10.2020. Just say no to a Karabakh ‘no-fly zone.’ Available at: <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/state-of-the-union/just-say-no-to-a-karabakh-no-fly-zone/>

51 Ostrovsky S., 25.10.2020. Armenia’s miscalculations in Nagorno-Karabakh. Available at: <https://newlinesmag.com/reportage/armenias-miscalculations-in-nagorno-karabakh/>

52 Maranci, C., 18.11.2020. Cultural Heritage in the Crosshairs once more. Available at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/cultural-heritage-in-the-crosshairs-once-more-11605731198>

53 AIR Center, July, 2021. Armenia’s appropriation of Azerbaijani cultural and historic heritage. Available at: <https://aircenter.az/uploads/files/Cultural%20Appropriation.pdf>

nizations, museums, scholars, journalists and church leaders are most concerned about the fate of the vast number of Armenian Christian monuments which represent the indigent Armenian populations – and which may suffer for precisely that reason.’<sup>54</sup>

A large number of propagandist articles against the Azerbaijani side during the Second Karabakh War were written by Michael Rubin. In his article ‘Nagorno-Karabakh Crisis: It’s time to open to a US consulate in Stepanakert,’ Rubin calls on the US government to openly support the illegal separatist regime and establish a consulate there as this how he envisages reaching a ‘peace’ between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Michael Rubin explicitly portrays Azerbaijan as a ‘jihadist’ country, pointing out ‘Stepanakert is the capital of Nagorno-Karabakh, a mountain region historically populated by Armenians which is now under a prolonged assault by Azeri forces, Syrian mercenaries transported into the theater by Turkey, and Turkish drones.’<sup>55</sup> In another article, ‘The problem with the Nagorno-Karabakh Ceasefire Agreement,’ Michael Rubin tries falsely to link the war with religious motives – an ‘Azerbaijani-Turkish jihad.’<sup>56</sup> The Islamophobic statements come from another of the author’s articles that attempts to build a bridge between terrorism, Islam, and Azerbaijan: ‘Azerbaijan now works in conjunction with Turkish-backed Syrian mercenaries, many of whom previously served Al Qaeda-linked groups or the Islamic State.’<sup>57</sup> However, it is well-known that Azerbaijan is a secular country with a majority Shia population that was targeted by Al Qaeda and ISIS.

Remarkably, while scrutinizing the articles listed above, one comes to conclusion that all these authors construct their writing according to a centralized Armenian narrative. Almost all these articles contain the false information about Stalin ‘transferring’ Karabakh to Azerbaijan and the conflict’s Christian–Islamic dichotomy.

It should be emphasized that many of the abovementioned media outlets, including *The Nation*, *The Conversation* and *New Lines Magazine*, while publishing several articles with pro-Armenian perspectives, refused to give an opportunity for other opinions to be heard, including those of some contributors to this report. A notable exception is *The National Interest*, which published diverse judgements about the war.

### 3.2 The New York Times and the Washington Post

This section studies the following aspects of these American media outlets: how the causes of the conflict were described; how the religious factor that includes the relationship between Muslim Azerbaijanis and Christian Armenians was presented; how the military

54 Maranci, C., 15.12.2020. Armenians displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh fear their medieval churches will be destroyed. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/armenians-displaced-from-nagorno-karabakh-fear-their-medieval-churches-will-be-destroyed-149141>

55 Rubin, M., 07.11.2020. Nagorno-Karabakh crisis: it’s time to open a U.S consulate in Stepanakert. Available at: <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/nagorno-karabakh-crisis-it%E2%80%99s-time-open-us-consulate-stepanakert-172224>

56 Rubin, M., 10.11.2020. The problem with the Nagorno-Karabakh ceasefire agreement. Available at: <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/problem-nagorno-karabakh-ceasefire-agreement-172313>

57 Rubin, M., 03.11.2020. President Biden must shut down Azerbaijan’s sanctions waiver on day one. Available at: <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/president-biden-must-shut-down-azerbaijan%E2%80%99s-sanctions-waiver-day-one-171872>

phase of the conflict was portrayed using slogans and visual images; the extent to which the internalization and description of the roles of the international players, Turkey and Russia, during the conflict impacted public perceptions; and how the position of *The New York Times* has differed from that of *The Washington Post* in disseminating information.

The relatively balanced approach of *The New York Times* stands as a rarity among those considered in this report. It is no surprise that this approach caused protests by Armenians in front of *The New York Times* offices in New York. Unlike others, *The New York Times* covered the conflict from both sides and its reports included stories of Azerbaijani refugees, their grievances and losses.

Yet, *The New York Times* also occasionally emphasized the religious background. ‘*They set up one of their observation posts at Dadivank, a centuries-old monastery that Armenians, who are mainly Christian, fear the arriving Azerbaijanis, who are mainly Muslim, will deface.*’<sup>58</sup>

After publication by the *New York Times* of journalistic dispatches from the Armenian side (‘*At Front Lines of a Brutal War: Death and Despair in Nagorno-Karabakh*’), the newspaper began featuring reports from the Azerbaijani front line: ‘*Roots of War: When Armenia Talked Tough, Azerbaijan Took Action*’ and ‘*In Azerbaijan, a String of Explosions, Screams and Then Blood.*’

A subsequent article, ‘*Armenia’s leader makes plea to the US as conflict rages with Azerbaijan,*’ written with relative balance, tried to cover the positions of both sides. This *New York Times* article justly describes Karabakh as legally part of Azerbaijan, though controlled by Armenians for the past three decades. Nevertheless, despite informing its audience on attacks against Azerbaijan’s second largest city Ganja, other cities that suffered from Armenian aggression were left out.

The *New York Times* also touched upon an issue usually left out in the cold by almost all media outlets: the matter of the Khojaly genocide, stating: ‘*Armenia, too, has selective memories of the past, with Mr. Pashinyan dismissing the worst atrocity of the 1991–1994 Karabakh war — the 1992 killing of hundreds of Azerbaijani civilians by Armenian fighters near the town of Khojaly — as a “pure propaganda trick”.*’ At the end of the article, the author speaks out about the main propaganda trick of Armenia: ‘*Describing the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh between **Christian Armenia and Muslim Azerbaijan as a “civilizational front line,”** Mr. Pashinyan said the dispute “is not about territory” but involves far bigger and more important stakes.*’<sup>59</sup>

In another article under the title, ‘*In Nagorno-Karabakh peace deal, Putin applied a deft*

58 Troianovski A, Gall C., 2020. After war between Armenia and Azerbaijan, peace sees winners and losers swap places. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/15/world/europe/azerbaijan-armenia-nagorno-karabakh.html>

59 Higgins A., 04.10.2020. Armenia’s leader makes plea to the US as conflict rages with Azerbaijan. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/04/world/europe/armenia-nagorno-karabakh-trump.html?searchResultPosition=1>

new touch,' Anton Troianovski and Carlotta Gall give a clear-headed assessment of Russia's role before and during the war and elucidate both the Armenian and Azerbaijani stances. The authors continue: '***With Russian support, Armenia had won control of Nagorno-Karabakh, a region of Azerbaijan inhabited by ethnic Armenians, after a years long war in the early 1990s that was precipitated by the breakup of the Soviet Union. Armenian forces also captured surrounding districts, expelling more than half a million Azerbaijanis.***' Once again, the media outlet shed light on a frequently ignored page of Azerbaijani history and collective memory and, taking into account the concerns of ordinary Azerbaijanis, the authors say: '***Seared in almost every Azerbaijani's memory are the bloody events of 1990, when Soviet tanks rolled over demonstrators in Baku's central square. Russian troops have since intervened repeatedly in troubled corners of the Caucasus, often under the moniker of peacekeepers but acting more like an invading army.***'<sup>60</sup>

By and large, as compared with *The New York Times* reporting, the coverage of *The Washington Post* was visibly pro-Armenian. Apparently, the editorial board of *The Washington Post* took a stance of defending Armenia and refused to publish any other perspective on the conflict, except short letters of reply by Azerbaijan's ambassador to the United States. Prominent *Washington Post* columnist and editorial board member of Armenian descent David Ignatius, known for his anti-Azerbaijani and anti-Turkish stance, influenced the *Washington Post* policy with regard to the conflict. In his op-eds, he frequently refers to the events of 1915, emphasizing Armenia's 'existential struggle' and the Azerbaijani-Turkish alliance without mentioning Azerbaijani losses or the Armenian–Russian military union.<sup>61</sup>

*The Washington Post* demonstrates a one-sided approach in using visual news images to show the Armenians in the position of the victim. For example, in an article written by Isabelle Khurshudyan, Kareem Fahim, and Zakaria Zakaria, *The Washington Post* uses an illustration with an Armenian woman and two children, whereas a photo of the Azerbaijani city of Ganja is accompanied by the caption '*shelling, allegedly by Armenian artillery.*'<sup>62</sup> It is an established fact, confirmed by an Amnesty International Report (2021), that 'Armenian forces employed inaccurate ballistic missiles, unguided multiple launch rocket systems (MLRS), and artillery.'<sup>63</sup> The abovementioned factors create a fundamental question regarding the neutral position of *The Washington Post*.

60 Troianovski A., Gall C., 01.21.2020. In Nagorno-Karabakh peace deal, Putin applied a deft new touch. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/01/world/europe/nagorno-karabakh-putin-armenia-azerbaijan.html?searchResultPosition=1>

61 Ignatius D., 20.10.2020. What's needed for a first step for Armenia and Azerbaijan. Available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/whats-needed-for-a-first-step-toward-peace-for-armenia-and-azerbaijan/2020/10/20/cd00693c-1319-11eb-ad6f-36c93e6e94fb\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/whats-needed-for-a-first-step-toward-peace-for-armenia-and-azerbaijan/2020/10/20/cd00693c-1319-11eb-ad6f-36c93e6e94fb_story.html)

62 Fahim K., Khurshudyan I., Zakaria Z., 14.10.2020. Deaths of Syrian mercenaries show how Turkey, Russia could get sucked into Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle\\_east/azerbaijan-armenia-turkey-nagorno-karabakh/2020/10/13/2cdca1e6-08bf-11eb-8719-0df159d14794\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/azerbaijan-armenia-turkey-nagorno-karabakh/2020/10/13/2cdca1e6-08bf-11eb-8719-0df159d14794_story.html)

63 Amnesty International, Azerbaijan/Armenia: Scores of civilians killed by indiscriminate use of weapons in conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.nl/content/uploads/2021/01/Azerbaijan.pdf?x49325>

### 3.3. British Media: The *BBC* and *The Guardian*

British media has historically had a tradition of Orientalism, and particularly Turkophobia.<sup>64</sup> However, during the Cold War, respective British governments politically supported the NATO alliance with Turkey. Britain was also instrumental in developing Azerbaijan's energy resources.

Yet, the British media, especially the liberal wing, tends to portray the conflict through the same Orientalist lenses. Particularly one-sided coverage was exhibited by *The Guardian*, which refused to publish other perspectives on the conflict.

*'The spike in violence further undermines international efforts to calm a resurgence of fighting between Christian Armenians and Muslim Azerbaijanis before it draws in regional powers Russia and Turkey,'* writes *The Guardian* with the same emphasis noted previously on the religious differences between the two sides of the conflict.<sup>65</sup> Disproportionately, *The Guardian* profiles the role of Turkey while skimming over Russian involvement in the conflict.<sup>66</sup> During the war, Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev said:

*If Armenia is not provided with financial, economic, military and political support, will it be able to stand on its feet? ... Everyone can count this, go online, see the cost of this equipment and ask a question. Where does this impoverished country get all this? (2020)*<sup>67</sup>

One of the most important points that puts the neutrality of these media sources in question is their illustrating the losses or grievances of only one of the conflicting parties. Particularly biased articles were written by *Guardian* contributor Dale Berning Sawa. As early as 2019, she published an article about cultural destruction in the conflict zone, exclusively speaking about Armenian heritage.<sup>68</sup>

The *BBC* took a more balanced and nuanced approach to the conflict but still exhibited Orientalist bias. *'Nagorno-Karabakh was an ethnic-majority Armenian region, but the Soviets gave control over the area to Azerbaijani authorities.'*<sup>69</sup> While talking about the root causes of the conflict, they describe the conflict as a *'competition between Christian Armenian and Muslim Turkic and Persian influences.'*<sup>70</sup> Religion is one of the most-used

64 Shafiyev F., 2022. The Orientalizing Azerbaijanis and the Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict, In 'The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: Historical and Political Perspectives,' edited by Hakan Yavuz and Michael Gunter, London: Routledge, pp. 88-112.

65 The Guardian, 17.10.2020. Nagorno-Karabakh: Azerbaijan says 12 civilians killed by shelling in Ganja. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/17/nagorno-karabakh-azerbaijan-says-12-civilians-killed-by-shelling-in-ganja>

66 McKernan B., 28.09.2020. Syrian rebel fighters prepare to deploy to Azerbaijan in sign of Turkey's ambition. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/28/syrian-rebel-fighters-prepare-to-deploy-to-azerbaijan-in-sign-of-turkeys-ambition>

67 Ilham Aliyev addressed the nation., 26.10.2020. Available at: <https://president.az/en/articles/view/44435>

68 Sawa D.B., 1.03.2019. Monumental loss: Azerbaijan and 'the worst cultural genocide of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.' Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2019/mar/01/monumental-loss-azerbaijan-cultural-genocide-khachkars>

69 The BBC, 12.11.2020. Armenia-Azerbaijan: Why did Nagorno-Karabakh spark a conflict? Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54324772>

70 The BBC, 18.11.2020. Nagorno-Karabakh profile. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-18270325>

factors by Armenia to gain the sympathy of the Western world and to present Armenia as a country that is trying to protect the Christian legacy against the Muslim world. In this case, it is worth mentioning the close, friendly relations that Armenia has with the Islamic Republic of Iran. This country is considered a strategic partner and, even when the USA imposed sanctions on Iran, Armenia supported it and stated that the region could benefit from Iran's nuclear program. Armenia also has good relations with other Muslim-majority countries, such as Lebanon, Egypt, and Syria, all of which are strongly influenced by the Armenian diaspora.<sup>71</sup> Therefore, one cannot describe this conflict mainly as a competition between religious groups, as we see the role of diaspora in influencing the attitudes of other countries.

### 3.4. The Representation of the Second Karabakh War in the French Media

According to Van Dijk, if a title does not represent part of the macro statements of the news and contains a low level of detail, it is possible to conclude that the title is biased. The headlines reflecting news subjects are controlled by powerful actors as they have a significant impact on the reproduction processes underlying social power and domination.<sup>72</sup>

Examining the titles of the articles in French media, it is seen that a similar approach stands out with regard to the Second Karabakh War in *Libération*, *Le Figaro*, and *Le Monde*. In the headlines in these newspapers, the words chosen are specifically geared towards producing a certain discourse. With clear expressions such as 'attack' and 'harsh condemnation from France,' the authors create prejudice against Azerbaijan. The war occurred at a time when France had a tense period in its bilateral relations with Turkey, which had repercussions for Azerbaijan. France has historically supported Armenia, and its legislative bodies appealed for the recognition of the illegal entity on the territory of Azerbaijan – Nagorno-Karabakh. It would be expedient, once again, to remember that no such appeal was made regarding similar separatist and irredentist entities on the territories of Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. In one news article in *Libération*, the headline is 'Calls for International Recognition of the Nagorno-Karabakh.'<sup>73</sup> In another, 'Nagorno-Karabakh: Armenians Bid Farewell to "Roots",'<sup>74</sup> *Libération* creates the impression of a historical connection and the right for self-determination of Nagorno-Karabakh. In the newspaper *Le Figaro*, there is an article titled 'In Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijanis threaten Armenian cultural heritage.' Meanwhile, the expression 'Turkish aggression' is used very frequently in the news articles. As Dane and Pratt summarize, these are 'emotional judgments derived from fast, unconscious overall associations,' and the core characteristics are non-conscious, fast, overall associations and emotions.<sup>75</sup>

71 Shafiyev, F. 2020. The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: Deconstructing Stereotypes and International Imagery. Karolinum Press.

72 Van Dijk, T. A. 2009. Critical Discourse Studies: A Sociocognitive Approach, Methods of critical discourse analysis. In Ruth Wodak & Michael Meyer (eds), London, Sage, 62–85.

73 *Libération*, 18.11.2020. Pour la reconnaissance du Haut-Karabakh. [https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2020/11/18/pour-la-reconnaissance-du-haut-karabakh\\_1805985/](https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2020/11/18/pour-la-reconnaissance-du-haut-karabakh_1805985/)

74 *Libération*, 13.11.2020. Haut-Karabakh: l'adieu aux 'racines.' [https://www.liberation.fr/planete/2020/11/13/haut-karabakh-l-adieu-aux-racines\\_1805576/](https://www.liberation.fr/planete/2020/11/13/haut-karabakh-l-adieu-aux-racines_1805576/)

75 Dane, E./Pratt, M. G. 2007. Exploring Intuition and Its Role in Managerial Decision-making, in:

The social sciences draw attention to how reality can be constructed with the choice of words used to describe it. This comes under the ‘interpretative procedures’ that shape representations but need to be deciphered, especially when they fuel historical and political injustice. Let us turn to the word ‘*belligerents*’ that is issued in this context. This term, which designates adversaries engaged in a war, supposes two opposing armies. While it is fair because it indeed represents what was happening, it nevertheless implies a common responsibility by ignoring the fact that, in this case, one of the two parties, Armenia, had occupied the internationally recognized territories of Azerbaijan. Moreover, by advancing the term ‘disputed territory’ (this term is broadly used in the English-speaking media instead of the UN-accepted language, ‘occupation,’ in the relevant UN Security Council resolutions), the Western media equates the two sides. Designating Azerbaijan as one of the ‘belligerents’ thus places them implicitly in the semantic framework of a shared responsibility and as bellicose

Almost all news on the Second Karabakh war in the French media is constructed in accordance with the conventional Armenian narrative. Thus, the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan is principally portrayed as a ‘right of Armenians,’ and there is insistence on the region being ‘attached,’ ‘ceded,’ or ‘transferred’ by Stalin to Azerbaijan in a logic of ‘divide and rule better and of alliance with Turkey, between Lenin and Kemal’<sup>76</sup> just to ‘curry favor to Azerbaijani people.’<sup>77</sup> Religion was used by the French media as a source for producing empathy with people of common faith. Take, for example, *France 24*, which, while covering the war, emphasized how:

Armenian residents cling to their Christian faith, despite everything. Religion allows them to stand up to the test. Marriage, collective prayer, distribution of food and clothing ... The Church remains very present in their daily lives.

The journalist describes this report being filmed ‘before the entry of the Azerbaijani army into the area, which until now had been controlled by the Armenian independence forces.’<sup>78</sup>

*Le Figaro* put out an article headlined ‘Armenians and the Armenian population of Nagorno Karabakh need our solidarity more than ever,’ in which the publication’s online media outlet provided an outlet for the position of the President and Director General of SOS Chrétiens d’Orient, and his concerns around the situation of the Armenian population during the then-ongoing war. The first paragraph sets off by emphasizing Armenia’s religion and building a linkage between Armenia and France in order to justify the necessity of support:

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Academy of Management Review, 32, 1, 33–54.

76 Radio Notre Dame, 14.10.2020. Haut-Karabakh : les origines du conflit entre l’Arménie et l’Azerbaïdjan <https://radionotredame.net/2020/international/haut-karaback-les-origines-du-conflit-entre-larmenie-et-lazerbaïdjan-290094/>

77 Les clés du Moyen Orient, 30.09.2020. Le Haut-Karabagh : une ligne de feu pour l’Arménie et l’Azerbaïdjan, une ligne de front diplomatique pour la Russie et la Turquie (1/2). Une Transcaucasie marquée par une diplomatie soviétique hésitante <https://www.lesclesdumoyenorient.com/Le-Haut-Karabagh-une-ligne-de-feu-pour-l-Armenie-et-l-Azerbaïdjan-une-ligne-de.html>

78 France 24, 10.11. 2020. Dans le Haut-Karabakh en guerre, les habitants s’accrochent à la religion. <https://www.france24.com/fr/%C3%A9missions/focus/20201110-dans-le-haut-karabakh-en-guerre-les-civils-s-accrochent-%C3%A0-leur-foi>

*Armenia was the first nation to convert to Christianity. In Cilicia, a brilliant Armenian kingdom hatched with strong links with France and the Latin States of the East and whose last king Levon VI of Lusignan will die in exile in Paris and will have his recumbent statue in the basilica of Saint-Denis. Armenia therefore has strong ties with France and Christianity in long history.*

Subsequently, the author Charles de Meyer highlights that ‘*the defeat of Armenia is also that of the West*’ and turns to Islamophobic and Turkophobic statements, pointing out: ‘*45 days. This is the time that the Armenians resisted, in the face of repeated attacks from Azerbaijan, Turkey, jihadist mercenaries based before in Syria and transferred by Turkey and Israeli drones*’ and [the West] ‘*must see who the enemy is, namely the expansionist logic of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis in power in Ankara and how to fight it.*’ In this, we see clear patterns of both Orientalism and Islamophobia as well as Turkophobia.<sup>79</sup>

### 3.5. Coverage of the Second Karabakh War by Russian Media

Unlike the First Karabakh War, when the information capabilities of Azerbaijan lagged significantly behind those of Armenia, with the outbreak of hostilities on September 27, 2020, Azerbaijan and Armenia and their respective diasporas took active parts in information warfare in the Russian media. As a result, in the first days of hostilities, the Russian media mainly limited itself to bringing to the public news published on the websites and official pages of the social networks of the Azerbaijani and Armenian Defense Ministries. However, in the course of the 2020 war, with the obvious successful advances of the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan, articles became more pro-Armenian and biased.

The article ‘Karabakh: An ideal time for war,’<sup>80</sup> published in the online edition of *Vedomosti* (Ведомости), is silent about the obvious reasons for the counteroffensive operation of the Azerbaijani Army, such as the occupation of 20 percent of the territory of Azerbaijan and the presence of more than a million refugees and internally displaced persons. The article, relying on the so-called ‘experience’ of the April 2016 war, argues that the real reason for the outbreak of war is not the desire to liberate the occupied territories, but a banal distraction of the people’s attention from the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Alexey Sakhnin from *Vedomosti*, preferring not to mention the catastrophic economic situation in Armenia, comments on the economic situation in Azerbaijan thus:

The fall in oil prices will lead to a decline in GDP, but most importantly, it will deprive the budget of almost \$ 3 billion, while treasury spending will increase by \$ 1.5–1.8 billion. Due to the crisis in the spheres of trade and tourism, 300,000–400,000 people left without earnings.

Russian-speaking readers are therefore imbued with the idea that a rich and economically strong Azerbaijan needs war more than economically weaker Armenia. Another article,

79 Le Figaro, 16.11.2020. «L’Arménie et la population arménienne du Haut Karabakh ont plus que jamais besoin de notre solidarité». <https://www.lefigaro.fr/vox/monde/l-armenie-et-la-population-armenienne-du-haut-karabakh-ont-plus-que-jamais-besoin-de-notre-solidarite-20201116>

80 Сахнин А., 30.09.2020. Карабах: идеальное время для войны. Available at: <https://www.vedomosti.ru/opinion/articles/2020/09/30/841594-karabah-idealnoe>

‘A Carefully Prepared War,’<sup>81</sup> speaks about Azerbaijan’s preparation for the military operation and concludes that Azerbaijan will not be able to achieve a solution to the problem by military means:

*However, it seems that the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev at the moment does not set such a maximalist task [the liberation of Karabakh], which is hardly feasible for the Azerbaijani armed forces.*

Another point is clearly manifested in the analysis of this article, which is characteristic of many Russian publishers. This is an attempt at presenting the following formula:

- *Interests of Armenia = Interests of Russia and interests of Azerbaijan = Interests of Turkey.*

The Russian media focused on geopolitical rivalry, which was no coincidence, as the Russian leadership viewed all political and economic development in the post-Soviet space through the imperial prism of its exclusive sphere of influence. One author directly depicts Azerbaijan’s attempt to liberate its internationally recognized territories as a failure of Russian foreign policy, noting:

*Undoubtedly, the Azerbaijani military campaign against Karabakh has become a serious crisis for Russian foreign policy, overturning the long-standing Russian line on maintaining the status quo in the Transcaucasus and on balancing between Armenia and Azerbaijan.*

In conclusion, the author writes:

*It is in Russia’s interests to force Azerbaijan to end the military campaign against Armenia as soon as possible, and to do this from the position of Russian military-political superiority and not allowing Turkey to be involved even as a mediator.’*

He further emphasizes, ‘Moscow can achieve all this only by relying primarily on the threat of the use of Russian military force.’<sup>82</sup> A call to use Russian military force as a threat to Azerbaijan manifests the author’s preference regarding the conflict.

Unlike *Vedomosti*, the articles describing the first days of the Second Karabakh War by another Russian publication, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, can be considered more restrained and objective. The article, ‘What is happening in Azerbaijan now?’ covers rather moderately the events in the first days of the war.<sup>83</sup> In contrast to *Vedomosti*, there seems to be no desire to emphasize the ‘aggression’ of Azerbaijan and vividly present the Armenians as victims of the war. Special correspondent Artur Bagov, describing the artillery strikes on the Azerbaijani city of Tartar, notes the presence of a Russian community and a Russian school in it, which is a subtle, but very important, nuance. The article notes the presence

81 Вестомости, 02.10.2020. Тщательно подготовленная война. <https://www.vedomosti.ru/opinion/articles/2020/10/02/841878-tschatelno-podgotovlennaya>

82 Вестомости, 02.10.2020. Тщательно подготовленная война. <https://www.vedomosti.ru/opinion/articles/2020/10/02/841878-tschatelno-podgotovlennaya>

83 Багов А., 4.10.2020. Что сейчас творится в Азербайджане. Available at: <https://www.kp.ru/daily/217190.5/4298068/>

of Turkish flags, but this is logically explained by the support of Turkey. In another article in *Komsomolskaya Pravda* by special correspondent Aleksandr Kots, ‘War to raise hatred,’ published on October 5, 2020, the author calls for peace.<sup>84</sup> Describing the bombing of Khankendi, Kots notes: *‘they say that this was a response to the unprecedented shelling of the Azerbaijani city of Ganja, where, in addition to the military airfield, the civilian sector was also damaged.’*

In an article on another online outlet, *Gazeta.ru*, ‘Victims of the conflict: the first results of the aggravation in Nagorno-Karabakh,’ which was published on September 27, 2020, along with official information from Armenia and Azerbaijan, the authors compared the military equipment (number of tanks, guns and mortars, combat aircraft, missiles, etc.) on both sides and added – interestingly – the numerical strengths of the Russian 102nd Military Base in Armenia and the 3rd Field Army of the Turkish Armed Forces bordering Armenia.<sup>85</sup> For example, the author notes: *‘This army alone (the 3<sup>rd</sup> Field Army of the Turkish Armed Forces) is capable of defeating the armed forces of Armenia. And in the Land Forces of Turkey there are three more such armies.’* This is a very strange comparison, given that direct military intervention by Turkey in the conflict has always remained unlikely. Nevertheless, *Gazeta.ru* mentions this on the very first day of the war to show the Azerbaijani-Turkish alliance and justify the future possible involvement of Russia.

In another article published by *Gazeta.ru*, ‘The provocations of Yerevan misfired’<sup>86</sup> by Nikolai Korsakov (September 27, 2020), the author gives another perspective on the war and holds Armenia responsible for its outbreak. Korsakov considers the beginning of armed clashes to be the result of an Armenian provocation:

*The first of these incidents began on July 12, when the so-called ‘Tavush clashes’ took place – along the village of Movses in the Tavush region of Armenia and the village of Aghdam in the Tovuz region of Azerbaijan. Then Yerevan tried to explain its attacks outside the zone of Nagorno-Karabakh – for the first time in many years – by the fact that the alleged sabotage and reconnaissance group of Azerbaijan on UAZ attempted to cross the borderline, as a result of which Armenia opened fire. Even Pashinyan himself noticed the strangeness of the version of ‘full-length reconnaissance’ at that time: during a government meeting, he doubted that Baku had decided to advance deep into the front line in such a peculiar way.*

Nikolay Korsakov believed that provoking the conflict was in the interest of Armenia – first, the leadership of Armenia, failing in the fight against coronavirus, decided to create an external threat factor; and second, it desired to drag Russia into the conflict.

In *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, an article ‘Azerbaijan squeezes Karabakh in “ticks”,’<sup>87</sup> published on October 5, 2020, it is noteworthy that the author terms the operation around the

84 Коц А., 5.10.2020. Война на повышение ненависти. Available at: <https://www.kp.ru/daily/217191/4298354/>

85 Ходаренко М., 27.09.2020. Жертвы конфликта: первые итоги обострения в Нагорном Карабахе. Available at: <https://www.gazeta.ru/army/2020/09/27/13270819.shtml>

86 Новости ВПК, 28.09.2020. Провокации Еревана дали осечку. Available at: [https://vpk.name/news/448636\\_provokacii\\_erevana\\_dali\\_osechku.html](https://vpk.name/news/448636_provokacii_erevana_dali_osechku.html)

87 Зарипов Р., 5.10.2020. Азербайджан сжимает Карабах в ‘клещи.’ Available at: <https://www.kp.ru/daily/217190/4298877/>

Azerbaijani city of Jabrail a ‘liberation’ – a term that pro-Armenian authors avoided in both Western and Russian media. Another *Komsomolskaya Pravda* author, Ravil Zaripov, writes:

*And the Armenian formations began intensively shelling the settlements of Azerbaijan not only in the zones adjacent to the hostilities, but also in the depths of the country. It is reported that the shooting is being conducted both from Nagorno-Karabakh and from the territory of Armenia.*

Overall, however, it can be unequivocally stated that Turkey’s stance with regard to Azerbaijan is mentioned with a certain irritation. The use of Turkish drones was actively covered in Russian publications.<sup>88</sup> In the eyes of the Russian public, journalists and experts created grounds to justify Russian intervention in the conflict on the side of Armenia as a counterbalance to Turkish aid.

From the initial days of the war, the important Russian newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* extensively covered the conflict. Despite some balanced information, overall, the newspaper portrayed a more militant image of Azerbaijan versus Armenia, even though operations happened on the territory of the former with the presence of army units of the latter.

The headings also pointed out the role of Turkey: ‘Макрон назвал опасными и неприемлемыми заявления Турции по Карабаху’ (‘Macron called Turkey’s statements on Karabakh dangerous and unacceptable’),<sup>89</sup> ‘Макрон заявил, что Турция перешла красную линию, отправив в Карабах боевиков из Сирии’ (‘Macron said that Turkey crossed the red line, sending militants from Syria to Karabakh’),<sup>90</sup> ‘Пашинян заявил о стремлении Турции к мировой экспансии’ (‘Pashinyan announced Turkey’s tendency for the global expansion’),<sup>91</sup> ‘Столтенберг не ответил, может ли Турция как член НАТО перебрасывать исламистов в Карабах’ (‘Stoltenberg did not answer whether Turkey, as a NATO member, can transfer Islamists to Karabakh’).<sup>92</sup>

At the same time, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* was silent about the Armenian-Russian military alliance and depicted Armenia as a weaker opponent of Azerbaijan: for example, ‘Экономика Азербайджана выдержит войну за Карабах’ (‘Azerbaijan’s economy will withstand the war for Karabakh’),<sup>93</sup> ‘Продолжение войны в Карабахе для Армении чревато банкротством’ (‘Continuation of the war in Karabakh for Armenia is fraught with bankruptcy’).<sup>94</sup>

88 Мисник Л., 01.10.2020. Сделка без подтверждение: кто уничтожил системы ПВО в Карабахе. Available at: <https://www.gazeta.ru/army/2020/10/01/13274551.shtml>

89 Независимая Газета, 30.09.2020. Макрон назвал опасными и неприемлемыми заявления Турции по Карабаху. Available at: <https://www.ng.ru/content/news/691192/>

90 Независимая Газета, 02.10.2020. Макрон заявил, что Турция перешла красную линию, отправив в Карабах боевиков из Сирии. Available at: <https://www.ng.ru/news/691395.html>

91 Независимая Газета, 10.10.2020. Пашинян заявил о стремлении Турции к мировой экспансии. Available at: <https://www.ng.ru/news/692088.html>

92 Независимая Газета, 23.10.2020. Столтенберг не ответил, может ли Турция как член НАТО перебрасывать исламистов в Карабах. Available at: <https://www.ng.ru/content/news/693315/>

93 Независимая Газета, 07.10.2020. Экономика Азербайджана выдержит войну за Карабах - Министерство. Available at: <https://www.ng.ru/news/691844.html>

94 Независимая Газета, 30.10.2020. Продолжение войны в Карабахе для Армении чревато

Occasionally, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* published information about Armenian assaults on the Azerbaijani civilian population: ‘Удар «Смерча» по городу Барда может привести к международным последствиям для Армении’ (‘Smerch strike on the city of Barda could lead to international consequences for Armenia’).<sup>95</sup>

Another prominent Russian newspaper, *Kommersant*, also profiled Turkish support to Azerbaijan: ‘Турция поддержала Азербайджан в конфликте с Арменией’ (‘Turkey supported Azerbaijan in the conflict with Armenia’),<sup>96</sup> ‘Минобороны Армении заявило о вмешательстве Турции в конфликт в Нагорном Карабахе’ (‘Armenian Defense Ministry announced Turkey’s intervention in the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh’),<sup>97</sup> ‘Турция пока не планирует отправлять военных в Карабах’ (‘Turkey does not plan to send military to Karabakh yet’),<sup>98</sup> ‘Пашинян призвал Меркель «обуздать агрессивную позицию» Турции’ (‘Pashinyan urged Merkel to “curb the aggressive position” of Turkey’),<sup>99</sup> ‘Армения заявила, что Азербайджан передал Турции управление воздушной операцией в Карабахе’ (‘Armenia announced that Azerbaijan transferred control of the air operation in Karabakh to Turkey’),<sup>100</sup> ‘Макрон заявил о наличии доказательств участия исламистов из Турции в боях в Карабахе’ (‘Macron says there is evidence of the participation of Islamists from Turkey in the fighting in Karabakh’),<sup>101</sup> ‘Алиев призвал Турцию к участию в разрешении конфликта в Карабахе’ (‘Aliyev calls on Turkey to participate in the resolution of the conflict in Karabakh’).<sup>102</sup>

## Conclusion

This study aimed to analyze the media coverage of the Second Karabakh war and how the narrative was constructed and influenced. The research has demonstrated that the perspectives in favor of the Armenian side were much more prevalent than those for Azerbaijan. This situation is influenced by Orientalism, Islamophobia, and Turkophobia – concepts that are deeply entrenched in both Western and Russian media. Nevertheless, it is worthy of mention that, although the situation regarding media coverage of the First

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банкротством. Available at: <https://www.ng.ru/news/693949.html>

95 Независимая Газета, 31.10.2020. Удар «Смерча» по городу Барда может привести к международным последствиям для Армении Available at: <https://www.ng.ru/news/693987.html>

96 Коммерсант, 27.09.2020. Турция поддержала Азербайджан в конфликте с Арменией. Available at: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4509532>

97 Коммерсант, 27.09.2020. Минобороны Армении заявило о вмешательстве Турции в конфликт в Нагорном Карабахе. Available at: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4509755>

98 Коммерсант, 28.09.2020. Турция пока не планирует отправлять военных в Карабах. Available at: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4510451>

99 Коммерсант, 29.09.2020. Пашинян призвал Меркель «обуздать агрессивную позицию» Турции. Available at: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4510590>

100 Коммерсант, 30.09.2020. Армения заявила, что Азербайджан передал Турции управление воздушной операцией в Карабахе Available at: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4511861>

101 Коммерсант, 01.10.2020. Макрон заявил о наличии доказательств участия исламистов из Турции в боях в Карабахе. Available at: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4512445>

102 Коммерсант, 05.10.2020. Алиев призвал Турцию к участию в разрешении конфликта в Карабахе. Available at: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4519879>

Karabakh War was much more biased and there were some improvements, the Armenian view still predominated in the coverage of the Second Karabakh War.

It is also clear that most correspondents were not well-informed about either the conflict or the states involved. In these circumstances, in its coverage, *The New York Times* noticeably distinguished itself from almost all other media outlets considered in this report. It is unsurprising that the coverage by *The New York Times* caused irritation among the Armenian diaspora, which staged demonstrations in the front of the *New York Times* headquarters.

Several historical, cultural, religious, and political clichés were prevalent in the Western media, among them that of the ‘Nagorno-Karabakh’ region of Azerbaijan being transferred by Stalin to Azerbaijan; ‘Christian Armenians versus Muslim Azerbaijanis’; ‘civilized front against barbarians’; and so on. As can be seen from the analysis presented in this report, a considerable number of people, as well as news media outlets, seemed to believe this propaganda-infused narrative. Quite often, people stand by the ‘solidarity with Armenians’ tag, merely leaning on their religious affiliation. Being aware of the international arena’s high sensitivity to questions of terrorism, Armenians constructed narratives that were later spread by Western media about thousands of mercenaries ‘fighting for Azerbaijan’ and Azerbaijan, in turn, being a ‘jihadist’ country. Hence, in almost all news covering the Second Karabakh War, this fallacious narrative can be observed. Additionally, the question of ‘genocide’ was recirculated with new undertones – about Azerbaijanis wishing to realize ‘genocide’ against Armenians – though frequently ignoring the fate of many Azerbaijanis massacred in Khojaly and other settlements during the First Karabakh War and the war crimes committed by the Armenian armed forces during the Second Karabakh War.

The findings of this study enable us to witness how the concepts of Orientalism, Islamophobia, and Turkophobia are deeply embedded in the approach of Western and Russian media towards Armenia–Azerbaijan relations and the war itself. Taking this into account, a comparison can easily be drawn with the other conflicts and wars, in particular those covered by Western media. This, in its turn, reveals how events were actually reported, including the stereotypes, ideologies, and interests of the correspondents, as well as their sources of information. But what is more crucial in this case is the potential impact of such coverage – not only on Western public opinion, but also on that of the rest of the world.

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# INTERNATIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE SECOND KARABAKH WAR



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