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Mapping the Air Time of Eastern & Western Media on Conflict and War: A Comparative Study of BBC, DW, TRT and Al Jazeera on the Coverage of Second Nagorno-Karabakh War & the Aftermath

Abstract

A significant body of literature exists examining the coverage of the first Nagorno-Karabakh war by Western media. However, there is a lack of comparative studies analyzing the coverage of the second Nagorno-Karabakh war by both Eastern and Western media. We examined 245 news reports from two prominent Eastern channels (TRT World and Al-Jazeera) and two prominent Western channels (BBC World News and DW) through content and frequency analyses. This study aims to investigate the magnitude of Air Time dedicated to the second Karabakh war by both Eastern and Western media, examining the disparities between the two. Additionally, it seeks to analyze the lexico-semantic linguistic manipulation techniques employed and the use of euphemisms and dysphemisms during the coverage. Our research reveals a pronounced bias favoring Armenia in the coverage provided by both Western television channels. Conversely, among Eastern television stations, TRT World exhibited a distinct pro-Azerbaijani leaning, while Al-Jazeera maintained a relatively neutral standpoint. This clearly shows that media outlets and journalists are not free from bias. They predominantly mix their reporting with their ideological beliefs or faith, state interests, and their country's foreign policy directions.

Keywords
Second Nagorno-Karabakh war, Armenia, Azerbaijan, media coverage, eastern & western media.

1. Introduction

The Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict is characterized by intricate and multifaceted claims, primarily stemming from the Soviet era, encompassing issues related to territory, economy, legal status, and historical narratives (Baguirov, 2012). Following a full-scale war in 1992, Armenia seized control of 20 percent of internationally recognized Azerbaijani territory, including Nagorno-Karabakh and seven adjacent districts. Consequently, the United Nations adopted four resolutions (822, 853, 874, and 884), explicitly calling for Armenia's immediate withdrawal (Abasov & Khachatrian, 2006; Abushov, 2010; Broers, 2019; De-Waal, 2013;

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Gasparyan, 2019; Geukjian, 2012; Guliyev & Gawrich, 2021; Makili-Aliyev, 2019). Despite these resolutions, Armenia did not comply, leading to Azerbaijan's retaking of the territory during the second Karabakh war.

The 44-day conflict that erupted between Armenia and Azerbaijan on September 27, 2020, over Nagorno-Karabakh and its surrounding districts, garnered significant global attention, resulting in a devastating loss of life, with approximately 4000 Armenian and 3000 Azerbaijani soldiers, as well as numerous civilians, perished during the conflict (Bayramov, 2023). This conflict came to an official end on November 9, 2020, through a trilateral agreement involving the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Russia, along with the Prime Minister of Armenia (Bayramov, 2023). In the context of liberal media theory, the media is seen as a vital public watchdog, responsible for overseeing the actions of the state on behalf of its citizens (Curran, 1996). Thomas Jefferson famously argued for the paramount importance of a free press in maintaining a government accountable to the people (Jefferson, 1905). This underscores the media's role in monitoring governmental power, exerting social control, and exposing instances of government misuse of authority (Esenov, 2012). Numerous scholars, including Chomsky (2013), Fenton (2019), Mill (1977), and Wyatt (2014), have stressed the critical significance of a free and impartial media in democratic societies.

The adage "Truth is the first casualty of war" holds particularly true in the context of conflict reporting, as exemplified by the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh (Goltz, 2012). This conflict has witnessed the local media acting as a tool of state interests, while international media confront severe limitations (Aghayev, 2016). Consequently, reconciliation between the conflicting parties has grown increasingly challenging due to the proliferation of hostile rhetoric and nationalist propaganda through domestic media outlets and official statements from both sides (Geybullayeva, 2012).

During the initial Nagorno-Karabakh war, Western media encountered restricted access to the conflict zone, compelling them to rely predominantly on pro-Armenian Russian media sources for reporting (Demoyan, 2008). In the second Karabakh war, both sides initiated extensive disinformation campaigns across social and mainstream media, exacerbating the challenge of discerning accurate information (Kopečný, 2021). Additionally, restrictions on foreign journalists further pushed international media to depend on social media for information, compromising their ability to report impartially.

In the realm of media coverage, prior research has extensively examined the representation of the first Karabakh war by Western media (Adriaans, 2019; Aghayev, 2016; Atanesyan, 2020; Demoyan, 2008; Evgenia, 2020; Geybullayeva, 2012; Imranli-Lowe, 2015). Conversely, a substantial body of recent literature has emerged pertaining to the second Karabakh conflict, with a primary focus on either social media narratives or mainstream media coverage within individual countries or regions (Erol, 2022; Qarayeva et al., 2021; Hakobyan, 2021; Mamadaliev, 2021; Amaryan, 2020; Kopečný, 2021; Evgenia, 2020; Chervatyuk & Goreev, 2021; Bayramov, 2023; Yadulla, 2021; Galstyan, 2021; Atanesyan, 2020; Soğancıoğlu, 2022; Firuzi et al., 2022). Consequently, a comparative analysis of Eastern and Western media coverage during the second Karabakh war remains notably absent from the literature.

This research endeavors to address this gap by exploring the following key questions: What was the magnitude of the Air Time given to the second Karabakh war by the Eastern and Western media? What was the difference between the Air Time of Eastern and Western media? What kind of "lexico-semantic linguistic manipulation" was done/used? What kind of euphemisms and dysphemisms was used? To answer these inquiries, we conducted a comprehensive analysis of news reports from two Western (BBC World News, DW) and two Eastern (Al Jazeera, TRT World) television channels, utilizing content analysis and frequency analysis. This paper comprises multiple sections, beginning with a comprehensive review of existing literature on the media's coverage of the understudied topic, followed by an overview

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of the historical context of the conflict, a detailed description of the research methodology, findings, and, finally, a discussion and conclusion section.

2. Existing Debates on Media Coverage of Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict/War

Numerous scholars have extensively examined the dual role of media in both exacerbating conflicts and facilitating peacebuilding efforts (Baghdasaryan, 2013; Groebel, 1995; Kaufman, 2001; Kuznetsov, 2013; Novikova, 2012; Esenov, 2012). However, a considerable number of researchers contend that the role of media has not been adequately researched in both areas (Gilboa, 2009; Schoemaker & Stremlau, 2014). Moreover, conflict and media are often closely examined together. Media can shape a conflict's perception in its audience's consciousness based on its political, religious, ethnic, financial, and other affiliations (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2009).

Historically, Bernays (1923) underscored media's influential role in shaping public opinion during wartime. Herman and Chomsky (2002) conceptualize media as a tool for narrative manipulation to achieve policy objectives. Moreover, Lasswell (1927) posits that propaganda primarily aims to evoke desired responses while avoiding unwanted ones. Furthermore, Browne (2004) identifies four major official deception tactics employed by states, including prewar lies, rosy promises, propaganda, and myths. Regarding television, Baudrillard (2017) emphasizes how the hyper-realistic depiction of the Gulf war on screens distorts the actual circumstances and goals of the war.

2.1. *Western Media Coverage of the Conflict/War*

Scholarly investigations into Western media coverage of the first Nagorno-Karabakh war (1992) have garnered substantial attention. Imranli-Lowe (2015) contends that Western media exhibited a bias in favor of Armenia during this conflict. Similarly, Demoyan (2008) arrived at a parallel conclusion, positing that the Western media's pro-Armenian disposition was influenced by the presence of Western news representatives in Moscow, where Armenian and pro-Armenian Russian influences prevailed over Azerbaijani ones. Moreover, Aghayev (2016) scrutinized Western media's portrayal of the conflict, asserting its predominant pro-Armenian stance, framing Armenians as "victims." Aghayev attributes this bias to the historical antagonism of the West toward the Soviet Union. However, following the dissolution of the USSR, media coverage underwent a significant transformation, adopting a comparatively impartial perspective that depicted the conflict as an interstate dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Prior to this shift, the conflict was framed as a "movement for the re-unification of long-oppressed" Armenians, leading to extensive coverage of events like the Sumgait incidents. Nevertheless, from 1992 onwards, Western media increasingly referred to the conflict as a "conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh" between two countries.

Sadikhova (2013) examined the portrayal of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the New York Times from 1992-1997 and 2007-2012, revealing a bias toward aligning foreign news with the newspaper's own country's national interests and foreign policy. Moreover, Sadikhova underscores the need for further research into television and radio news coverage on this topic. Therefore, our paper aims to fill this research gap. Furthermore, Chervatyuk and Goreev (2021) investigated linguistic manipulation in US and Russian media during the second Nagorno-Karabakh war. They found that euphemisms and dysphemisms were used to influence public opinion, serving the agendas of states and other organizations to meet their larger goals. Plus, both media used euphemisms and dysphemisms concerning the understudied topic to manipulate their audience.

In his recent study, Bayramov (2023) critically analyzes the Dutch media's portrayal of the second Karabakh war, finding that it often exhibited stereotypical and simplistic framing. This analysis suggests potential bias and an overemphasis on specific aspects of the conflict. Notably, opinion pieces tended to present Azerbaijan in a negative light and favored Armenian

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narratives over Azerbaijani perspectives. Moreover, Yadulla's 2021 research underscores the significance of the British press in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, highlighting the enduring relevance of Britain's historical associations with parliamentary democracy, liberalism, and freedom of speech. Furthermore, Yadulla's work delves into the role of corporate interests in shaping news coverage, particularly in the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

In the context of the second Nagorno-Karabakh war, Galstyan's (2021) thesis conducted an extensive examination of media representation, focusing on humanitarian journalism. The research centered on four newspapers: *The Guardian* and *Al Jazeera* English, representing transnational media, and *Sputnik* and *Hürriyet*, as regional counterparts. Employing a combination of quantitative content analysis and qualitative narrative analysis, the study assessed how these outlets addressed humanitarian issues. The findings of the study reveal a significant lack of comprehensive attention to humanitarian concerns, marked by a limited utilization of affected individuals as sources and minimal prominence given to accompanying photographs that highlight the plight of those impacted.

2.2. *Eastern Media Coverage of the Conflict/War*

Examining the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict through a peace journalism lens, Atanesyan (2020) contends that the Armenian and Azerbaijani media face significant constraints imposed by their respective governments, limiting the structural, institutional, and ideological space for peace journalism. Consequently, war journalism frames predominated over peace journalism. Additionally, Arslan *et al.* (2017) found that Azerbaijani, Armenian, and Turkish media exhibited discriminatory and biased language when presenting each country's perspective. Furthermore, Soğancıoğlu's (2022) study of two prominent Turkish newspapers revealed a predominantly pro-Azerbaijan stance during the 44-day second Nagorno-Karabakh war.

In addition, Erol (2022) analyzed five Turkish newspapers –*Hurriyet, Sabah, Milliyet, Turkiye*, and *Posta*– affirming earlier research findings. The study concludes that the Turkish press portrayed the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with a strong bias influenced by newspaper ideologies and the government's foreign policy. It suggests a shift away from divisive narratives (friend-enemy or us-them) toward emphasizing human rights violations and narratives encompassing all sides, promoting a peaceful resolution. Regarding Iranian media coverage, Firuzi *et al.* (2022) argued that Iran's press mainly focused on topics of stable peace, security, and the conflict's impact on national interests.

3. Theoretical Framework

This academic paper employs the well-established agenda setting theory proposed by McCombs and Shaw (1972) as a theoretical framework to examine the media's attention to the Karabakh conflict involving Armenia and Azerbaijan. The study utilizes agenda setting theory as a tool to analyze the coverage provided by prominent news outlets such as BBC World News, DW, Al Jazeera, and TRT World during the second Nagorno-Karabakh war. According to agenda setting theory, the media's emphasis on particular issues, as reflected in their news placement and coverage, influences the significance attributed to these issues by the audience (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). In practical terms, "agenda setting has been defined as the idea that the news media, by their display of news, come to determine the issues the public thinks about and talks about" (Severin & Tankard, 1988). McCombs and Shaw's original research revealed a strong correlation between media and public agendas in diverse spheres, including public welfare, economy, civil rights, foreign policy, and law and order.

The "issues people deal with in their daily lives are referred to as obtrusive issues, and issues that individuals cannot experience or verify by themselves are considered unobtrusive issues" (McCombs, 2004). Previous studies have examined how international news about specific countries can influence audience perceptions. For instance, Soroka (2003) found that international news mentioning the US or the UK had a greater impact on the audience's views

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compared to foreign news excluding these countries. Additionally, Wanta, Golan and Lee (2004) observed that the attention given to a particular country in the media directly affected how its citizens perceived their country's interests. The agenda-setting effect was found to be most pronounced in news pieces concerning crime and narcotics, foreign conflicts/wars involving the US, and reports on terrorist activities. Conversely, issues related to politics and foreign trade, not involving the US, were negatively correlated with public interest, suggesting that media reporting can mitigate anxiety. Moreover, McCombs and Shaw (1972) continued to contribute extensively to agenda setting theory, and its applications evolved to include the concept of "Second Level Agenda Setting." This extension, informed by the combination of framing and agenda setting studies, has been explored in subsequent research (McCombs, 2004; Wanta, Golan & Lee, 2004). In conclusion, this paper utilizes agenda setting theory as a theoretical framework to analyze media coverage of the second Nagorno-Karabakh war/ conflict and its warring sides, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

4. Methodology

4.1. *Content Analysis*

Content analysis methodology analyzes media content through a systematic and objective manner (Neuendorf, 2016). Written texts, visual pictures, and audiovisual media like movies and television programs can all be analyzed using this method. It includes employing human coders who have been taught to monitor and identify different aspects of media content, for instance, the presence or absence of specific themes, messages, or codes (Krippendorff, 2013). To ensure the validity and dependability of the coding process, it is essential to develop a precise and comprehensive coding scheme that details the categories and subcategories to be used in the analysis (Weber, 1990). This coding scheme is often created using pre-existing theoretical frameworks or research questions, and it is then examined and refined through a continuous process of testing and refinement (Neuendorf, 2016). When the coding scheme is developed, coders are taught how to use it consistently and systematically (Krippendorff, 2013). This procedure has multiple processes, including determining the unit of analysis, choosing a representative sample, and ensuring inter-coder reliability to guarantee uniformity and continuity across coders (Neuendorf, 2016).

The aim of this study is to examine and compare the bias, tone and magnitude of Western and Eastern media coverage (Air Time) given to the second Nagorno-Karabakh war by asking the following questions:

RQ1. What was the magnitude of the Air Time given to the second Karabakh war by the Eastern and Western media?

RQ2. What was the difference between the Air Time of Eastern and Western media?

RQ3. What kind of "lexico-semantic linguistic manipulation" was done/used?

RQ4. What kind of euphemisms and dysphemisms was used?

To answer our questions, we examined the news reports of two Western (BBC World News, DW) and two Eastern (Al Jazeera, TRT World) TV channels by employing Content Analysis, and Frequency Analysis. The selected four TV channels are widely consumed and deemed credible news sources globally. Furthermore, this research is divided into two major parts; (1) measuring the magnitude of Air Time given to Azerbaijan and Armenia by the stated four TV channels and (2) looking into the linguistic side, for example, the type of words, terminologies and phrases they used in their news reports. We employed content analysis and frequency analysis to measure the magnitude of Air Time, and any possible linguistic manipulation.

For the content analysis, our universe was the stated four TV channels and the unit of analysis was the news reports they published. We extracted the news reports of BBC World News, DW, Al Jazeera and TRT World from their respective YouTube channels. These four TV

channels' news reports were not sampled but were instead selected; all were about the second Nagorno-Karabakh war. It is to be noted that we only extracted news reports cornered with the understudied subject. All other types of TV programs were excluded. In total, between 27 September 2020 and 27 January 2023, 245 news reports were published on the subject of the second Nagorno-Karabakh war and were analyzed.

Moreover, for the coding procedure, with some changes, we used Önder *et al.* (2021) design. Three independent coders worked to categorize the magnitude of Air Time given to the understudied subject. All the coders were Ph.D. candidates, two research assistants and one was a Ph.D. graduate; plus, the coders were trained and were blind to the writers. Moreover, the coders conducted their coding independently without having any clue about the coding of their fellow coders in order to maintain objectivity. For the measurement of Air Time, we came up with the following eight categories: (1) Overall Air Time to Azerbaijan; (2) Overall Air Time to Armenia; (3) Air Time to Azerbaijani war crimes; (4) Air Time to Armenian war crimes; (5) Air Time to Azerbaijani war-affected civilians; (6) Air Time to Armenian war-affected civilians; (7) Air Time to Azerbaijani forces; and (8) Air Time to Armenian forces. An example of the coding procedure is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Example of the hypothetical inter-reliability and the coding procedure for this research.

Magnitude of Air Time	Coder 1	Coder 2	Coder 3	Agreement/ Disagreement
Overall Air Time to Azerbaijan	00:30:15	00:34:25	00:31:05	2/3 = Yes
Overall Air Time to Armenia	00:45:10	00:48:30	00:41:15	0/3 = No
Air Time to Azerbaijani war crimes	00:25:45	00:24:31	00:25:05	3/3 = Yes
Air Time to Armenian war crimes	00:54:00	00:54:45	00:53:36	3/3 = Yes
Air Time to Azerbaijani war affected civilians	01:05:38	01:09:25	01:02:10	0/3 = No
Air Time to Armenian war affected civilians	01:15:00	01:16:10	01:12:00	2/3 = Yes
Air Time to Azerbaijani forces	00:50:54	00:54:44	00:58:04	0 = No
Air Time to Armenian forces	00:49:30	00:48:44	00:49:18	3/3 = Yes
				Total: 5=Yes (62.5%) Agreement 3=No (37.5%) Disagreement

Source: Own elaboration.

To demonstrate that the classification or categorization is neither subjective nor biased, it is imperative to carry out an inter-rater reliability assessment. In addition, it is helpful to assess if our multiple categorizations are accurate and effective or whether it needs to be modified (Stemler & Tsai, 2008). Hence, in order to eliminate coder subjectivity and guarantee inter-rater reliability, we compared and contrasted the coding choices. In the coding process, two coders out of the three have to be in agreement in order to be counted as "Yes." If at least two or more coders are in agreement, then we assign "Yes;" if a minimum of two coders fails to achieve agreement out of the three, then we assign "No." For agreement, two or more coders should not have more than 2 minutes of difference in their measurement of the Air Time. In the hypothetical example in Table 1, we got 5 "Yes" and 3 "No," which means 62.5% agreement and 37.5% disagreement. In our actual coding inter-reliability process, we achieved 83.5% agreement and 16.5% disagreement.

Frequency analysis is a popular method for evaluating text data in natural language processing (NLP). Moreover, frequency analysis counts how often words or phrases appear in a text and it uses statistical methods to track out and quantify the most commonly occurring words and phrases within a corpus (Manning *et al.*, 2008). By doing so, you may determine the text's recurring themes or topics as well as the relative weight of certain words or phrases.

We performed frequency analysis to measure the frequency of some of the most common words/phrases used (see Table 7). To determine the frequency of occurrence of certain words, terms, and phrases, a counting method was employed, whereby the number of times each word or phrase was utilized was recorded (see Table 7). This was achieved through the implementation of the specified coding mechanism.

Note: The overall Air Time (see Table 2) represents all the coverage given to the second Karabakh war. Out of the overall Air Time, some Air Time was given to Armenia, some to Azerbaijan, and the rest was general in nature. For example, let us take the example of Al Jazeera's Air Time from Table 2. The overall Air Time Al Jazeera gave to the second Karabakh war was 04:37:00. The overall Air Time given to Armenia was 01:41:32 and 01:39:09 to Azerbaijan, adding both Air Times is equal to 03:20:41. Now, subtracting 03:20:41 from 04:37:00 is = 01:16:19. So this one hour sixteen minutes and nineteen seconds (01:16:19) Air Time was general in nature and was not specific to any country (see calculation below). This is true for all tables.

Overall Air Time = 04:37:00

Overall Air Time to Armenia = 01:41:32   = 03:20:41
Overall Air Time to Azerbaijan = 01:39:09

04:37:00 - 03:20:41 = 01:16:19

General Air Time = 01:16:19

Al Jazeera's Example (numerical presentation).

5. Findings

5.1. *The Overall Air Time*

The descriptive analysis of the overall Air Time of all four TV channels is presented in Table 2. As stated earlier, we measured the Air Time given to the second Nagorno-Karabakh war to map the bias/stance/slant and tone of the Eastern and Western prestigious TV channels. We did this by categorizing or dividing the Air Time into eight different categories. Following, we will present our results in six different tables. Table 2 contains the overall Air Time in which DW has broadcasted the lowest number (26) of news reports. On the other hand, TRT World broadcasted the highest number (110) of news reports. Furthermore, BBC World News falls into the second lowest category (31) and Al Jazeera falls into the second highest category (78).

Table 2. Overall Air Time given to 2ⁿᵈ Karabakh war and Azerbaijani and Armenian sid.

Overall Air Time Given to Armenia and Azerbaijan in news reports							
TV Channels	Total News Reports	Overall Air Time	Overall Air Time to Armenia	Overall Air Time to Azerbaijan	Overall Air Time by eastern media	Overall Air Time by western media	Overall Air Time
BBC	31	02:24:00	01:05:39	00:36:40		04:46:23	14:24:07
DW	26	02:22:23	01:29:37	00:12:50			
TRT	110	05:00:44	00:18:24	03:49:56	09:37:44		
Al Jazeera	78	04:37:00	01:41:32	01:39:09			

Source: Own elaboration.

Concerning the overall Air Time, again, DW gave the lowest Air Time (02:22:23) and TRT World the highest (05:00:44). The second lowest Air Time, again, was given by the BBC World News (02:24:00) and second highest by Al Jazeera (04:37:00). These statistics vividly imply the higher interest shown by the Eastern media in the understudied subject as compared to the Western media.

Coming to the comparison of Overall Air Time given to the Armenian and Azerbaijani sides, TRT World gave the lowest Air Time to the Armenian side, which is just eighteen minutes twenty-four seconds (00:18:24). However, TRT World gave the highest Air Time to the Azerbaijani side which is three hours forty-nine minutes and fifty-six seconds (03:49:56). Drawing from these statistics, as far as the understudied issue is a concern, we can clearly categories the Air Time of TRT World as pro-Azerbaijan.

With regard to the Air Time of BBC World News, it gave one hour five minutes and thirty-nine seconds (01:05:39) of Air Time to the Armenian side, which is the highest, and it gave just thirty-six minutes and forty seconds (00:36:40) of Air Time to the Azerbaijani side which is lower than the Air Time given to Armenia. Therefore, these results vividly show the BBC World News' pro-Armenian stance. Coming to the comparison of DW's Air Time, it gave Armenia the highest Air Time, which is one hour twenty-nine minutes and thirty-seven seconds (01:29:37). While merely twelve minutes and fifty seconds (00:12:50) of Air time was given to the Azerbaijani side. Again, with the help of these findings, we can categorize DW's coverage as pro-Armenia.

In contrast to the other three channels, Al Jazeera comes out to be the most neutral news channel. Al Jazeera gave one hour forty-one minutes and thirty-two seconds (01:41:32) of Air Time to Armenia and one hour thirty-nine minutes and nine seconds (01:39:09) Air Time to Azerbaijan, which is almost the same. Therefore, these statistics prove that Al Jazeera maintained a balance in its coverage/Air Time. Now, if we analyze the above data collectively, we can conclude that the cove: rage of both Western TV channels was pro-Armenia. Concerning the Eastern TV channels, one of the Eastern TV channels, namely TRT World, coverage was pro-Azerbaijan, but the second one, Al Jazeera, was neutral in its coverage.

5.2. *Air Time to the War Crimes*

In the case of Air Time given to war crimes, BBC World News had given the lowest Air Time. Out of the 31 news reports, they have mentioned war crimes of both countries in just nine news reports. The Overall Air Time given to the war crimes of both countries by BBC World News was forty-four minutes and fifty-five seconds (00:44:55). Furthermore, in comparison to Air Time given to Azerbaijan (00:07:15), it gave more coverage to Armenia's war crimes (00:09:37). DW gave the second lowest Air Time to the war crimes, broadcasted only eight news reports out of the total 26. Moreover, similar to the BBC World News' coverage, DW gave more Air Time to Armenia's war crimes (00:06:50) compared to Azerbaijan (00:03:30).

Table 3. Air Time given to the war crimes of both countries.

TV Channels	Total News Reports	Overall Air Time	Air Time to Armenia's war crimes	Air Time to Azerbaijan's war crimes
Air Time to given Armenian and Azerbaijani war crimes (shelling on civilians) in news reports					
BBC	9	00:44:55	00:09:37	00:07:15
DW	8	00:45:47	00:06:50	00:03:30
TRT	35	01:38:24	00:54:28	
Al Jazeera	19	01:08:16	00:13:28	00:12:00

Source: Own elaboration.

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Moving forward, TRT World and Al Jazeera had the highest and second-highest Air Time, respectively, with 35 and 19 news reports out of the total of 110 and 78 news reports analyzed. However, unlike Al Jazeera, TRT World only gave Air Time to the Armenian war crimes, which is fifty-four minutes and twenty-eight seconds (00:54:28). However, in contrast, it gave zero Air Time to Azerbaijani war crimes, which can be considered a very one-sided approach. Al Jazeera had again maintained a balance giving almost similar Air Time to both sides' war crimes (see Table 3). Out of all four TV channels, three gave more Air Time to the Armenian war crimes, drawing our attention to the intensity of the Armenian war crimes during the second Karabakh war.

5.3. *Air Time to war affected civilians*

In this category, Al Jazeera gave the lowest Air Time that is forty-six minutes and nine seconds (00:46:09). In contrast, TRT World gave the highest coverage consisting of one hour and twenty minutes (01:20:00). On the second level, the second lowest Air Time to war-affected civilians was given by BBC World News (00:52:32). The second highest was DW (01:07:52) in terms of overall Air Time.

Table 4. Air Time to war affected civilians.

Air Time given to war affected civilians in news reports				
TV Channels	Total News Reports	Total Air Time	Air Time to war affected Azerbaijani civilians	Air Time to war affected Armenian civilians
BBC	8	00:52:32	00:13:54	00:16:51
DW	11	01:07:52	00:02:56	00:14:50
TRT	12	01:20:00	00:55:44	00:00:58
Al Jazeera	18	00:46:09	00:13:08	00:10:36

Source: Own elaboration.

To compare the Air Time given to the individual countries by the stated TV channels, TRT World gave the highest Air Time (00:55:44) to the Azerbaijani war-affected civilians. In contrast, it gave only fifty-eight seconds (00:00:58) of Air Time to the Armenian war-affected civilians, which is next to none. Therefore, according to our results under this category, the Air Time of TRT World is pro-Azerbaijan. In contrast to TRT World, DW had given more Air Time (00:14:50) to the Armenian war-affected civilians as compared to Azerbaijan (00:02:56). Therefore, the coverage of DW was more pro-Armenia. With regards to BBC World News and Al Jazeera's coverage of war-affected civilians in this category, according to the results, their coverage was somewhat balanced.

5.4. *Air Time to the fighting forces*

Media coverage of the fighting forces during wartime is essential. It can hugely impact the morale of the fighting forces or nations, both positively and negatively. Overall, Al Jazeera gave the highest coverage (01:46:12) to the fighting forces, and BBC World News the lowest (01:07:22). Moreover, in this category, BBC World News and Al Jazeera's coverage was more balanced as compared to DW and TRT World. TRT World's coverage was more pro-Azerbaijan and DW's coverage was pro-Armenia.

Table 5. Air Time to the military forces of both sides.

Air Time given to Armenian Forces and Azerbaijani Forces in the News Reports				
TV Channels	Total News Reports	Overall Air Time	Air Time to Armenian forces	Air Time to Azerbaijani forces
BBC	11	01:07:22	00:04:40	00:03:10
DW	8	00:39:45	00:03:42	00:00:29
TRT	25	01:26:07	00:00:54	00:24:27
Al Jazeera	27	01:46:12	00:12:57	00:11:12

Source: Own elaboration.

5.5. *Type of cities names preferred*

The region of Nagorno-Karabakh is full of disputes and complications. The Azerbaijanis and Armenians prefer to call Nagorno-Karabakh cities by their own names. The Armenians obviously prefer Armenian names and Azerbaijanis prefer Azerbaijani names for the cities. For instance, the capital of Nagorno-Karabakh is called "Stepanakert" in Armenian and "Khankendi" in Azerbaijani, "Aghdam" is called "Akna" and "Kalbajar" is "Karvatchar" in Armenian, similarly "Shusha" is called "Shushi" in Armenian language. Therefore, it is a useful scale to judge a media outlet's tone/slant/stance by looking at their preferences for using the cities' names in their news reports. Table 6 contains the data of news channels about their preference for using cities names.

Table 6. Types of cities names preferred.

Types of names of the war area cities preferred in news reports (e.g. Armenian names: 'Stepanakert, Akna, Karvatchar, Shushi' or Azerbaijani names: 'Khankendi, Aghdam, Kalbajar, Shusha' etc.)			
TV Channels	Total News Reports	Number of times Armenian names used	Number of times of Azerbaijani names used
BBC	13	17	7
DW	10	15	3
TRT	34	2	75
Al Jazeera	33	37	34

Source: Own elaboration.

Starting from the TRT World, it had preferred to use Azerbaijani names of the cities 75 times in 34 news reports out of the total 110. On the other hand, it only mentioned the Armenian names of the cities just two times. There are huge sentiments attached to the names of the places; therefore, preferring the Azerbaijani names of the cities shows TRT World's slant or its tilt towards the Azerbaijani side. BBC World News (17 times) and DW (15 times) preferred to use the Armenian names of the cities in their news reports. This proves that the tilt of both Western TV channels was towards Armenia and they supported the Armenian side while reporting on the understudy matter. As usual, Al Jazeera maintained a balance in its reporting. Al Jazeera used both sides' cities' names equally (see Table 6). This shows that Al Jazeera was clearly avoiding a tilt towards any side.

5.6. *Euphemisms and Dysphemisms*

According to Robert M. Entman (1993), journalists frame specific aspects of the occurrences they report as problematic based on their moral assessment and interpretation. Framing in the news directs viewers' thoughts by being the conscious or unconscious judgments of journos with certain dogmas by containing "certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters

of facts or judgments." In order to examine the framing of the news reports, specifically by analyzing the frequency of particular phrases and keywords, a frequency analysis was conducted. The objective of this analysis was to determine the distribution of frequencies for specific keywords and phrases, thereby revealing the framing employed and the linguistic manipulation in the news reports. In the 245 news reports broadcasted by the stated four TV channels, Table 7 shows that certain words were incessantly repeated.

Table 7. Euphemisms and dysphemisms.

Magnitude of important words mentioned in News Reports			
Words	BBC	DW	TRT	Al Jazeera
Armenian Defeat, Conceded, Capitulated, Surrendered	2	1	7	5
Armenian enclave (Karabakh)	1	1		2
Armenian Mercenaries			7	
Armenian Occupation	2	1	70	20
Armenian Controlled	19	9		6
Azerbaijan took Control/Reclaimed Territory	3			11
Captured by Armenia	5			
Armenian Invasion	1		2	
Azerbaijani Invasion				
Armenian Separatists		5	9	6
Ethnic Armenian forces	11	12		9
Syrian [Muslim] Mercenaries	4	1	1	1
Christian Mercenaries				
Azerbaijani Occupation	1			1
Azerbaijan Conquered Land	1			1
Azerbaijan's Victory			13	1
Liberated/Liberation/ Liberated Territories			35	
Armenian Aggression			7	
Disputed	8	8	2	13
Conflict	2		5	1
Total Number of News Reports				
Total	BBC	DW	TRT	Al Jazeera
	25	16	63	49

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 7 shows the frequency of some important keywords or phrases or in other words, it shows the frequency of euphemisms and dysphemisms used by the understudy media outlets. This section has been discussed in the following "Discussion and Conclusion" section in great detail. Therefore, due to space, we will just summarize the Table 7 results here in this section. TRT World has used the term "Armenian Occupation" the most (70 times) while the other

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media outlets predominantly avoided the term. With the exception of Al Jazeera, BBC World News and DW preferred to use the term "Armenia Controlled" which is a Euphemisms (for a detailed discussion on euphemisms and dysphemisms, see the 'Discussion and Conclusion' section). The second most used term was "Liberated/Liberation/ Liberated Territories." However, it has only been used by TRT World. The other three channels completely ignored it. The third highest used term was "Armenia Controlled" which has been used by BBC World News 19 times, DW 9 times and Al Jazeera 6 times, while TRT World completely avoided it. For the frequency of other terms, words, and phrases used, please refer to Table 7.

6. Discussion and conclusion

The findings of this study not only confirm the previous studies findings on the Karabakh issue (Imranli-Lowe, 2015; Aghayev, 2016; Bayramov, 2023; Arslan *et al.*, 2017; Soğancıoğlu, 2022; Erol, 2022) but also expand the investigation to the electronic media coverage of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict/war (Sadikhova, 2013; Bayramov, 2023). Consistent with Bernays' (1923) assertion on the influential role of media in shaping public opinion during times of conflict, we conducted our investigation keeping in mind the importance of an unbiased and transparent media environment. Additionally, we will discuss the findings in the order presented in the findings section. As previously mentioned, we measured the Air Time allocated to the second Nagorno-Karabakh war in order to analyze the bias, stance, and tone of prominent Eastern (TRT World, Al Jazeera) and Western (BBC World News, DW) television channels.

The overall findings, as presented in Table 2, indicate that Western media outlets not only provided the least coverage of the topic understudy but also exhibited a pro-Armenia slant or stance. These findings align with prior research that has identified Western media coverage as pro-Armenia (Imranli-Lowe, 2015; Aghayev, 2016; Bayramov, 2023). Conversely, the Eastern media outlets demonstrated a higher level of attention to the issue compared to their Western counterparts. In terms of slant, Al Jazeera maintained a neutral stance, while TRT World displayed a pro-Azerbaijan slant. These results support previous studies that have highlighted the favorable position of Turkish media towards Azerbaijan (Arslan *et al.*, 2017; Soğancıoğlu, 2022; Erol, 2022). The allocation of Air Time to a specific subject holds significant influence over public perception and the prominence of that subject within society. According to the Agenda Setting Theory proposed by McCombs and Shaw (1972), the media plays a crucial role in determining the salience and relevance of particular topics for the general public. The extent of audience interest and perceived importance of an issue in the public sphere is shaped by the amount of Air Time dedicated to it (a factor). Editorial control over Air Time distribution can therefore impact social and political agendas, as well as shape public discourse (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009).

Moreover, topics that receive extensive Air Time are often regarded as more significant and consequently attract greater attention from the public, interest groups, and policymakers (Dearing & Rogers, 1996). Fair and impartial media coverage, which provides equal representation to all sides of a dispute, can foster better understanding among different groups and facilitate efforts towards peace. By generating dialogue and presenting a unifying narrative that transcends differences, such coverage can contribute to peacebuilding initiatives (Galtung, 1996).

The commonly held belief in war correspondence is that "Truth is the first casualty of war." This notion is particularly applicable to the media reporting on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (Goltz, 2012). In terms of the attention given to war crimes committed by both sides, the BBC World News gave the lowest coverage to the war crimes, while DW allocated the second lowest amount of Air Time to war crimes. The media's role, as assigned, is to serve as a public watchdog (Curran, 1996; Jefferson, 1905). This implies that the media is responsible for monitoring governmental power, exerting social control, and exposing the misuse of

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authority (Esenov, 2012). However, the media outlets under study failed to fulfill their original responsibilities in a broader sense. The Eastern media outlets provided relatively higher coverage of war crimes compared to their Western counterparts, yet TRT World only reported on the war crimes committed by Armenia, completely neglecting those committed by Azerbaijan. This once again exemplifies a failure to uphold journalistic principles. Furthermore, when reporting on war crimes, media bias can contribute to the dehumanization of one side while defending or justifying the actions of the other. Insufficient coverage of war crimes committed by one group may lead to ignorance or downplaying of those actions, resulting in a distorted understanding of the conflict. The media possesses the ability to significantly influence public perception, attitudes, and memory regarding war crimes, with lasting effects that extend beyond the duration of the conflict (Esenov, 2012).

Regarding the allocation of Air Time to war-affected civilians, it is noteworthy that TRT World provided the highest coverage of civilian sufferings. However, this coverage was heavily biased as it completely disregarded the Armenian side and solely focused on the plight of Azerbaijani civilians. On the other hand, DW offered the second highest coverage to war-affected civilians, but it neglected the Azerbaijani side and predominantly concentrated on the suffering of Armenian civilians. The media plays a crucial role in identifying, highlighting, and ultimately defining specific contexts affected by humanitarian crises (Rozakou, 2020). For many individuals, the media serves as the primary means through which they encounter suffering in distant locations (Joye, 2012). Consequently, the media significantly influences how these cases are portrayed, how viewers comprehend the pain experienced by others, and how they adopt positions in response to that suffering (Zhang & Luther, 2020). Our findings also corroborate the observations made in Galstyan's (2021) study, which examined the media's coverage of the second Nagorno-Karabakh war from the perspective of humanitarian journalism and revealed a general lack of emphasis on humanitarian issues.

Our study employed the usage of city names as a metric for evaluating the tone, slant, or stance adopted by media outlets, based on their preferences for city name usage in their news reports. The data pertaining to the preference of news channels for using city names is presented in Table 6. The Nagorno-Karabakh region is characterized by a multitude of disputes and complexities. Both Azerbaijanis and Armenians have a tendency to refer to the cities in Nagorno-Karabakh by their respective preferred names. The Armenians predominantly favor the use of Armenian names, while the Azerbaijanis prefer the employment of Azerbaijani names for these cities. Western media outlets have exhibited a preference for Armenian names, whereas among the Eastern media, TRT World has shown a preference for Azerbaijani names. However, Al Jazeera has endeavored to maintain a balanced approach by utilizing names from both sides.

Coming to the last section of our findings, it discusses "linguistic manipulation" as a powerful weapon for shaping public/viewers' perceptions. If a media outlet uses phrases in news reports having purposefully "negative connotations," it is an act to consciously embed views, ideologies, or certain knowledge into the viewers' subconscious. Here we examine euphemisms and dysphemisms as tools for "lexico-semantic linguistic manipulation" (Chervatyuk & Goreev, 2021) and its frequency. Language is not something empty of value. Beard (2000) argues that Language is a means of communication, a means of presenting and shaping series of beliefs. Language is not something somehow separate from the ideas it contains, but the way language is used says a great deal about how the ideas have been shapes.

Manipulation is examined by scores of experts (Beard, 2000; Lightman, 2019; Kara-Murza, 2009 etc.). Manipulation is typically defined as having a permanent or non-permanent influence on the target recipient or recipients. Dijk (2006) regards manipulation as "illegitimate domination confirming social inequality." A Russian scholar Kara-Murza (2009) explains manipulation as a "way of spiritual influence on people through programming their behavior." In other words, linguistic manipulation refers to employing language techniques

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to exert covert influence over the audience. Depending on the language's complexity, there are multiple ways to manipulate language: "syntactic, lexico-semantic, derivational and morphological-semantic, paragraphemic and supra graphemic means" (Chervatyuk & Goreev, 2021).

Euphemisms and dysphemisms are some of the most effective tools for manipulating lexico-semantics. Euphemism refers to something softer or indirect as "sensitive, disagreeable, or taboo. Conversely, dysphemisms refer to sensitive topics in a harsh or rude way" (Felt & Riloff, 2020). Table 7 contains the euphemism and dysphemism terms/words preferred by the four TV channels. For instance, in normal circumstances, "occupation" should be termed as dysphemism and a softer version of the word occupation, such as "administered," should be termed as euphemism. However, here in our case, it should not be like this because the situation is different; therefore, following, we explain why. According to the four UN resolutions (822, 853, 874, and 884) and the international community, Armenia had occupied Nagorno-Karabakh and the adjacent seven districts that belonged to Azerbaijan. So, Armenia was the occupier of Azerbaijani land; therefore, referring to the occupation as "Armenian occupation" is neither Euphemism nor dysphemism, but not referring to Armenia as occupier or using softer terms/words such as "Armenian administered" are euphemisms.

In the understudy 245 TV news reports, the most used terms were "Armenian occupation." TRT World used it 70 times. However, BBC World News and DW avoided this term and instead used a softer term (Euphemism), "Armenian controlled," 19 and 9 times, respectively. Al Jazeera predominantly referred the actual term "Armenian occupation" (see Table 7). Therefore, BBC World News and DW were clearly trying not to refer to the occupation of Armenia as an occupation and tried to embed a softer image into their audience's subconscious. This is a classic example and attempt of linguistic manipulation. Furthermore, due to space, we will not pen down all the terms mentioned in Table 7; however, we will shed light on a few more terms. BBC World News, DW, and Al Jazeera used the term "ethnic Armenian forces" 11, 12, and 9 times respectively. However, TRT World did not use this term even once. The ethnic Armenian forces of Nagorno-Karabakh were and are an entity involved in the fighting throughout the conflict's history. Therefore, not referring to the term at all by the TRT World is also an example of linguistic manipulation. So, here, TRT World tried to embed a distorted image into their audience's subconscious. Last but not least, the term "liberation" was only used by TRT World 35 times and other TV channels did not use it. The rest of the three channels used alternative words like "retook," "reclaimed," etc. Now, Azerbaijan retook its internationally recognized land from Armenia. In other words, they liberated their land from Armenian occupation. Therefore, again, not referring to the term liberation is another example of linguistic manipulation.

One of the primary limitations of this study is the exclusion of the Russian TV channel due to the unavailability of their news reports. Furthermore, it should be noted that the scope of this study is confined to a specific subset of English-language television channels, encompassing only four channels. Consequently, incorporating a broader array of media outlets from prominent established great powers such as the United States, France, and Germany, as well as emerging great powers like China and India, and middle powers including Saudi Arabia, Australia, South Korea, Brazil, and South Africa, would prove advantageous in future research endeavors. This expansion would ensure the inclusion of diverse languages and regions, ultimately enhancing the potential for generalizing the findings. Lastly, future study on the subject could be enriched by conducting interviews with prominent individuals such as politicians, media practitioners, bureaucrats, and academicians, among others.

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Annex

Supplementary material for this research is available in the Figshare data repository with the following doi: https://figshare.com/s/affc6618036db59653a4

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