



**REPORT ON THE MONITORING  
OF REFERENCES BY THE MEDIA AND EXPERTS  
OF ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN ON THE TOPIC  
OF THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES  
IN NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2024**

*The study was carried out within the framework of “**Expanding Substantive, Diverse and In-depth Dialogue Between Armenian and Azerbaijani Societies**” project, implemented by Yerevan Press Club in cooperation with Baku Press Club.*

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## OVERVIEW

Media plays a key role in shaping public opinion and political narratives, especially in the context of complex international relations. The Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, as an ethno-political international issue, is intensified by a media landscape overwhelmed with emotions, stereotypes and mutual accusations. It would not be an exaggeration to argue that media in both countries serve not only - and at times not even mainly - as transmitters of conflict-related events and phenomena, but also as generators of sentiments, often unfortunately hostile. Therefore, to understand the nature and transformation of the conflict and explore ways to resolve it, it is important to regularly study the reflection of these processes in the media.

Between November 18 and December 17, 2024, Yerevan and Baku Press Clubs carried out a monitoring of the coverage of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations in the media of both countries. The goal of the monitoring was to identify the main patterns and trends and develop recommendations for fostering a peaceful discourse. To achieve this, the monitors determined the frequency of the studied media's detailed references to the topic of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict and its specific aspects, and recorded the attitudes expressed toward the prospects for mutual understanding in various sectors.

Each of the partners carried out the monitoring in their respective country, using a unified methodology. The monitoring focused on 9 media in each country, including state (public), conditionally pro-government, opposition-oriented (or associated with opposition forces) and independent media. In Armenia, these were *1in.am*, *First Channel of the Public Television*, *Aravot*, *CivilNet*, *24News*, *News.am*, *Noyan Tapan*, *Azatutyun*, and *Factor TV*. It should be emphasized that when categorizing the media, both their societal perception and certain de facto circumstances were taken into consideration.

In Azerbaijan, the media studied included *Turan\**, *Pressklub TV*, *Caliber TV*, *Minval*, *Yeni Musavat TV*, *Qafqazinfo*, *CBC TV*, *ITV*, and *Azadliq* radio.

*\* On February 13, 2025, Turan news agency announced that it was suspending its activities "due to financial issues." However, at the time of the study, the agency was still operational.*

The monitoring findings in both countries revealed an increase in the number of publications on Armenian-Azerbaijani relations, in comparison to the similar study conducted in March 2024. Over the course of one month, 407 pieces related to the monitoring topic were recorded in 9 Azerbaijani media, and 728 were recorded in Armenia. However, it should be highlighted that while almost all of the studied Azerbaijani media (with the exception of *PressKlub TV*) showed an increase in interest in the topic, most Armenian media recorded a decline, with the "overall" growth ensured only by the impressive jump in pieces from *News.am* (+128% compared to the previous period) and *Aravot* (+13%). It is noteworthy that, despite official-level statements regarding the pursuit of peace, the prevailing tone of coverage of the topic in both countries is negative: 71.5% of references in Azerbaijani media and 52% in Armenian media underscore the contradictions between the sides. In Azerbaijani media, the negativity is mainly evident in references to Armenia's position in the negotiations, its "inconsistency," "serving the interests of third parties," and its "desire to prolong the peace process and arm itself" (all formulations are taken from the pieces - *Author's note*). In Armenian media space, Azerbaijan's raising of the issue of amendments to the RA Constitution, alongside issues concerning prisoners of war and other detainees, the rights of forcibly displaced persons

from Nagorno-Karabakh, etc. are perceived negatively. Independent media (or local offices of foreign media) in both countries demonstrate a more reserved attitude to the topic, compared to pro-government and opposition-affiliated platforms.

In both countries, the main focus is on issues related to the negotiation process, territorial claims or fears of such claims against each other, and the arms race... Unsurprisingly, media and experts often accuse each other of lacking a constructive approach and impeding the peace process. A relatively new phenomenon is the shared skepticism toward mediation in the peace process, although the “recipients” of this skepticism differ in each country. While in Azerbaijan, both Western (US, EU) and Russian mediation is viewed negatively, in Armenia, Western (especially that of the EU) mediation is generally regarded positively, in contrast to Russia's mediation. 58% of all references to Moscow's mediation in Armenian media were negative, which is especially notable if we recall that throughout the earlier phase of the conflict - at least until September 2022 - there was a strong belief in both societies that Russia's mediation benefited the Armenian side. As for the bilateral negotiation format, 72.7% of the relevant references in Azerbaijani media conveyed a positive tone. Accordingly, Azerbaijani media support the viewpoint of official Baku that every mediator enters the process driven by its own interests, thereby complicating the negotiations and introducing additional risks. Meanwhile, 60% of relevant content in Armenian media carries a negative attitude towards the bilateral negotiation format, despite the fact that official Yerevan has also supported this model for the past year and a half. It is worth noting that the prospect of signing a peace treaty has emerged as one of the most discussed topics in both societies. In Armenian media, the dominant debate revolves around whether “peace without a treaty” is possible or whether taking this step without comprehensive guarantees could become a trap. In Azerbaijani media, the emphasis is placed on Armenia delaying the process, along with criticism of Armenian leadership's refusal to participate in COP29 in Baku, which was seen as a missed opportunity for effective diplomacy.

Perhaps the most evident discrepancy in the tone of media coverage between the two countries was revealed by the thematic section on the border delimitation process. In Armenia, the coverage of the process was much more positive (39.4% of positive references) than in Azerbaijan (7.9%). This indicates that in Armenia, the delimitation of a very small portion of the state border (12 km) last spring was seen as at least an encouraging development, while in Azerbaijani society, the issues of enclaves and the activities of the EU observation mission in Armenia continue to provoke strong reactions.

Turning to another aspect of the Armenian-Azerbaijani process - the issue of unblocking communications - in this regard as well, Azerbaijani media are slightly more critical in their assessment of prospects, while in Armenia, a more balanced perspective prevails, albeit with some predominance of negative connotations.

Overall, the conditionally independent media in both countries remain the main platforms for relatively balanced coverage. Meanwhile, state/public media (especially in Azerbaijan and to a lesser extent in Armenia) often become mouthpieces of the official position, and, as the old Soviet joke goes, “waver with the party's general line.” The influence of opposition forces is visible in Armenian online publications, where there is criticism directed at both Baku and Yerevan, while in Azerbaijani media, complete loyalty to their government prevails. At the same time, in both countries, experts and journalists are often restricted in their opportunities for open dialogue due to the political and social situation.

Despite a certain tendency to restrict hate speech, the media remains a battleground for narratives, with every significant event being interpreted through the lens of narrow national interests. The lack of a balanced approach to problems among politicians, experts and journalists makes it challenging to objectively understand the situation, thereby hindering the reduction of tensions within societies.

To overcome conflict-inducing rhetoric, it is necessary to develop platforms for dialogue between journalists and experts from the two countries, which would enable the mitigation of hostile rhetoric in the media and contribute to the peace process and promotion of content aimed at finding joint solutions to the remaining contradictions.

# **REPORT ON THE MONITORING OF REFERENCES BY THE MEDIA AND EXPERTS OF ARMENIA ON THE TOPIC OF THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES IN NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2024**

## **I. STUDY GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND METHODOLOGY**

The goal of the study is to develop recommendations for strengthening peace-oriented discourse in the coverage of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations and enhancing the role of media platforms in holding internal and bilateral discussions on peace and conflict-related issues, as well as to build the capacity of experts to engage in dialogue with colleagues from the other side.

The objectives of the study are the following:

1. Determining the frequency with which the studied media make detailed references to the topic of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict and its specific aspects, by recording the number of such references for further analysis of the collected data.
2. Recording the attitude to the topic (in accordance with the thematic sections) by Armenian and Azerbaijani media: “+” (positive attitude, seeing a possibility of reaching an agreement, coming to an accord, overcoming contradictions), “-” (negative attitude, not seeing a possibility of reaching an agreement, coming to an accord, overcoming contradictions; blaming the opposite side for everything); “0” (neutral or uncertain attitude to the topic; analysis, commentary without placing emphasis on the presence or absence of possibilities of reaching an agreement, coming to an accord, overcoming contradictions).

The monitoring was carried out from November 18 to December 17, 2024 and covered 9 media in each country. In Armenia, the monitors analyzed all pieces from online outlets *Aravot* and *News.am*, as well as the leading news programs and main analytical programs aired during prime time on *1in.am*, *24 News*, *Azatutyun*, *CivilNet*, *Factor TV*, *First Channel of the Public Television of Armenia*, and *Noyan Tapan*. In cases where a channel lacked an evening news program, the two most important analytical or discussion pieces aired each day were studied.

## **II. GENERAL FINDINGS OF THE MONITORING OF ARMENIAN MEDIA**

Throughout the one month period, 728 pieces containing detailed references to the topic of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict (398 fully dedicated to the topic, and 330 partially) were published by 9 Armenian media. Within these pieces, the monitors recorded 1,156 references to various thematic categories related to the conflict (since a single piece often addresses several issues, the number of references to the thematic categories is higher than the pieces themselves). The monitoring included articles, interviews, talk shows, and more, with each publication considered as a separate piece, during which, however, guests (experts) could touch upon several of the aforementioned topics.

In 2023-2024, Baku and Yerevan Press Clubs carried out other studies on a similar topic. Minor changes in the methodology and the list of media studied do not generally hinder the tracking of the dynamics in the number of pieces dedicated to Armenian-Azerbaijani relations over a year and a half. In particular, according to the December monitoring results, the total number of pieces devoted to the conflict slightly decreased, reaching 728, compared to 794 recorded in the monitoring conducted from [March 1 to March 31, 2024](#). At the same time, most of the media studied demonstrated negative dynamics (7 out of 9), and only the impressive growth of interest in the conflict topic in *News.am* and, to a lesser extent, in *Aravot* made it possible to reduce the overall negative balance.

**Table 1**

Name of the media	Number of publications 01-31.03.2024	Number of publications 18.11-17.12.2025	Dynamics (%)
1in.am	39	25	- 35.9
24News	52	30	- 42.3
Factor TV	51	16	- 68.6
<b>News.am</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>128.6</b>
CivilNet	19	12	- 36.8
Azatutyun	118	61	- 48.3
<b>Aravot</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>13.4</b>
PTA First Channel	132	66	- 50
Noyan Tapan	38	38	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>794</b>	<b>728</b>	<b>- 8.3</b>

The overall tone of coverage remains predominantly negative (52%), with neutral references accounting for 32%, and only 14% being positive. The main topics with negative coverage were those related to overcoming the elements conditioning the conflictuality between Armenia and Azerbaijan (the issue of Karabakh Armenians, mentions of territorial claims in each country's constitutions, the arms race, reciprocal phobias, etc.), as well as the prospects for signing a peace treaty and normalizing relations.

### III. MEDIA PLATFORMS

The TV channels and online publications selected for this study represent 3 conditional categories of media operating in Armenia: pro-government (*1in.am*, *PTA*), opposition (which criticize the government and/or are associated with opposition forces) (*Aravot*, *CivilNet*, *24News*, *News.am*), and neutral/independent (*Noyan Tapan*, *Azatutyun*, *Factor TV*). It is essential to highlight that this categorization of the media is conditional, taking into account both their societal perception and certain de facto circumstances.

The distribution of all pieces on the monitoring topic and references to various thematic sections is organized in the following way:



**Table 2**

Name of the media	Number of pieces on the monitoring topic			Number of references to the thematic sections
	Total pieces	Fully dedicated to the topic	Partially dedicated to the topic	
Aravot	304	185	119	121
News.am	176	133	43	79
PTA First Channel	66	30	36	50
Azatutyun	61	34	27	36
Noyan Tapan	38	0	38	28
24News	30	0	30	24
1in.am	25	2	23	16
Factor TV	16	9	7	13
CivilNet	12	5	7	9

It is worth noting the leadership of *Aravot* and *News.am* in this list, marked by a visible rise in their interest in covering conflict-related topics. As Table 1 demonstrates, they are the only media in the list to have increased the number of pieces compared to the previous monitoring. Moreover, it would not be amiss to recall that these two media are perceived as being in opposition to the current government. In this context, it is also noteworthy that negative coverage largely prevails in both outlets. In *Aravot*, three-quarters of all references are negative - 228 out of 304 (75%), with only 49 (16%) being positive, and 9% (27) neutral. The picture is nearly the same in the case of *News.am*: here, too, almost three-quarters of the 176 references (128 or 73%) are negative, 39 (22%) are positive, and only 9 (5%) are neutral.

The indicators of the *Public Television of Armenia (First Channel)* help to better trace the correlation between the attitude towards the government and the tone of coverage. Here, 46% of the references to the topic are positive, 36% are neutral, and only 18% are negative.

While the other media studied display greater restraint, the negative tone, overall, prevails, as highlighted above.

In the pieces dedicated to the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Armenian media mainly criticize issues related to the prevalence of conflict-inducing elements (268 negative, 74 neutral and only 5 positive references). Mostly negative or neutral coverage was recorded regarding the topics related to the peace treaty and the normalization of relations (172 negative, 134 neutral and 70 positive references). A balanced position (with positive references holding a narrow lead) prevails in the thematic section related to the issues of border delimitation and demarcation (56 positive, 33 negative, and 53 neutral). This apparently reflects the relatively successful process of delimitation of a small section of Armenia's northeastern border and the adoption of joint regulations by the border delimitation commissions at the end of August 2024.

*The table below presents the studied topics, arranged in descending order based on the share of positive coverage:*

**Table 3.**

<b>№</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Positive (+)</b>	<b>Negative (-)</b>	<b>Neutral (0)</b>
3	Border delimitation and demarcation	39.4%	23.2%	37.3%
4	Unblocking of communications	27.0%	23.8%	49.2%
2	Negotiation formats	24.4%	34.1%	41.5%
6	Impact of US elections	21.1%	10.5%	68.4%
1	Peace treaty and normalization of relations	18.6%	45.7%	35.6%
7	Other topics	3.8%	38.5%	57.7%
5	Overcoming conflict-related elements	1.4%	77.2%	21.3%

*In the following table, the topics are arranged in descending order based on the share of negative coverage:*

**Table 4.**

<b>№</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Positive (+)</b>	<b>Negative (-)</b>	<b>Neutral (0)</b>
5	Overcoming conflict-related elements	1.4%	77.2%	21.3%
1	Peace treaty and normalization of relations	18.6%	45.7%	35.6%
7	Other topics	3.8%	38.5%	57.7%
2	Negotiation formats	24.4%	34.1%	41.5%
4	Unblocking of communications	27.0%	23.8%	49.2%
3	Border delimitation and demarcation	39.4%	23.2%	37.3%
6	Impact of US elections	21.1%	10.5%	68.4%

*Finally, in another table, the topics are arranged in descending order based on the share of neutral coverage:*

**Table 5.**

<b>№</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Positive (+)</b>	<b>Negative (-)</b>	<b>Neutral (0)</b>
6	Impact of US elections	21.1%	10.5%	68.4%
7	Other topics	3.8%	38.5%	57.7%
4	Unblocking of communications	27.0%	23.8%	49.2%
2	Negotiation formats	24.4%	34.1%	41.5%
	Border delimitation and demarcation	39.4%	23.2%	37.3%
1	Peace treaty and normalization of relations	18.6%	45.7%	35.6%
5	Overcoming conflict-related elements	1.4%	77.2%	21.3%

#### IV. THEMATIC SECTIONS

In the pieces dedicated to Armenian-Azerbaijani relations, detailed references to 7 thematic sections were recorded. In each of them, several subtopics were formulated, for which a separate count was conducted. In total, 1156 references to all thematic sections were distributed among them in the following order:

Thematic section 1. Possibilities of signing a peace treaty and normalizing relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan

*Subtopics: 1.1 Appropriateness of signing a treaty without incorporating controversial provisions; 1.2 Building relations in the context of “peace without a treaty”; 1.3 Establishment of diplomatic relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan; 1.4 Cooperation in economic, energy and other spheres; 1.5 Attitude toward the UN COP29 climate conference as a factor influencing the Armenian-Azerbaijani dialogue; 1.6 Other.*

The most popular (widely covered) topic - negotiations - received 376 references (with 102 being fully dedicated to it, and 274 partially). The overwhelming majority of these references (71.8%) fell under the category of “Other aspects of the topic” (mainly referring to the negotiation process, without further specification). Among the remaining subtopics, the appropriateness of signing a treaty without incorporating controversial provisions stands out (25.8%).

The negative coverage in this category noticeably exceeds both neutral and positive approaches (172, 134 and 70 references, respectively).

Thematic section 2. Selection of platforms/formats of negotiations for the peaceful settlement of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations

*Subtopics: 2.1 With the mediation/participation of the RF; 2.2 With the mediation/participation of the EU; 2.3 With the mediation/participation of the USA; 2.4. Regional format (conditional 3+3); 2.5 Bilateral format (without intermediaries and mediators); 2.6 Other.*

82 references were made in relation to this thematic category. Overall, neutrality prevails in this section, accounting for 34 references or 41.5%, followed by 28 negative and 20 positive references.

An analysis of the subtopics in this section reveals the following picture: a *negative* attitude is most frequently observed in relation to negotiations mediated by the RF (29 references out of 50, or 58%), and, to a lesser extent, by the USA (12 out of 27, or 44%). In the bilateral format (without intermediaries) negative references also prevail (9 out of 15, or 60%), whereas the mediation by the EU and the regional format (the so-called “3+3”) reflected a more positive attitude (52% and 54%, respectively). At the same time, it is important to consider the overall frequency of references to each of the formats: Russia’s mediation attracted the most attention (50 references), followed by the USA (27) and the EU (21), with the regional format (excluding the category labeled “Other aspects of the topic”) receiving the least attention.

The most active media covering this topic were *Noyan Tapan* (21 references) and *1in.am* (12).

### Thematic section 3. The process of delimitation and demarcation of the Armenia-Azerbaijan state border

*Subtopics: 3.1 Application of the provision on the activities of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border delimitation commissions; 3.2 Resolution of the issue of enclaves through compromises; 3.3 Stability and security in the demarcated and conditional sections of the border; 3.4. Other.*

As highlighted earlier, this thematic section has the largest share of positive references. The topic was most frequently addressed by *Aravot* (40 times), *Azatutyun* and *News.am* (24 references each), and *PTA* (17). The anticipated most commonly positive attitude (70.6%) towards the topic was observed with *Public Television* (perceived by many as pro-government).

Aside from the subtopic labeled “Other,” the subtopics that most frequently received a positive attitude included “Stability and security in the demarcated and conditional sections of the border” (14) and “Application of the provisions on the activities of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border delimitation commissions” (8).

### Thematic section 4. Prospects for the unblocking of communications

*Subtopics: 4.1 Unblocking of the Meghri (Syunik, Zangezur) road under the supervision of the RF FSB border guard troops; 4.2 Unblocking of the Meghri (Syunik, Zangezur road/corridor) with the engagement of other international actors; 4.3 Functioning of the Meghri road within the bounds of Armenia’s full sovereignty; 4.4 Free (extraterritorial, on privileged conditions) communication between “mainland” Azerbaijan and the Nakhichevan exclave; 4.5 Unblocking of “all communications” with no specification; 4.6 “Crossroads of Peace” project proposed by Armenia; 4.7 Other.*

A total of 126 references were recorded concerning the topic of the unblocking of communications (33 fully dedicated to the topic, and 93 partially). The “Crossroads of Peace” project proposed by the Armenian government generated the greatest interest in this section (66 references). Exactly half of all references to this subsection reflected a neutral attitude, with positive references reaching 39.7% and negative ones comprising just 10.3%. At the same time, there is a critical perception of the extraterritorial corridors (free communication between “mainland” Azerbaijan and the Nakhichevan exclave), as well as the unblocking of the Meghri road under the supervision of the RF FSB border guard troops.

It is noteworthy that this thematic category stands out as one of the few in which neutral references are significantly dominant, with positively and negatively toned references appearing at nearly the same level.

### Thematic section 5. Overcoming the elements conditioning the conflictuality between Armenia and Azerbaijan at the current stage

*Subtopics: 5.1 The issue of Karabakh Armenians; 5.2 The rights of other forcibly displaced persons and refugees who left their places of residence throughout the entire course of the conflict (1987-2024); 5.3 References to the presence of territorial claims in the Constitutions of Azerbaijan and Armenia; 5.4 Accusations of serving the interests of third countries; 5.5 Lawsuits filed by Armenia and Azerbaijan (Armenians and Azerbaijanis) against each other in international courts; 5.6*

*Positions regarding prisoners of war and other detainees; 5.7 Phobias of an ethnic, religious, cultural and other nature toward each other; 5.8 The issue of the arms race as a factor intensifying the distrust between the parties; 5.9 Other.*

This is the second most covered section (347 references) and stands out as the unequivocal leader in terms of negative attitudes towards the topic (268 or 77.2%). Moreover, a pronounced negative attitude is observed across all of its subtopics, with some lacking any positive references altogether.

Based on the distribution of references among the subtopics of this section, we can pinpoint which elements of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict attract (or attracted during the monitoring period) greater media attention:

As noted earlier, the overwhelming majority of pieces in this section carry a negative tone.

#### Thematic section 6. Impact of the US elections of November 5, 2024 on Armenian-Azerbaijani relations

*Subtopics: 6.1 Assumption that the new US administration (Senate, House of Representatives) will not pay attention to events unfolding in the South Caucasus; 6.2 Assumption that the election results are advantageous to the Armenian side; 6.3 Assumption that the election results are advantageous to the Azerbaijani side; 6.4 Other.*

The monitoring was carried out immediately after the US presidential elections, whose results will undoubtedly have an impact on all major global processes, including those in the South Caucasus. Nevertheless, it remains challenging to draw conclusions based on the data obtained: the topic did not attract significant attention in the context of normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan. In fact, it holds the second-lowest position among all sections in terms of frequency of references. In 21 cases, it is stated that the new US administration will not pay attention to the South Caucasus. In 37 cases, the election results are described as advantageous to the Armenian side (with a predominantly neutral tone), and in 16 cases, it is indicated that Azerbaijan will come out the winner. In all of the listed points, the tone is predominantly neutral.

#### Thematic section 7. Other topics dedicated to Armenian-Azerbaijani relations

This category comprised references that did not fall under any of the six thematic sections. A total of 26 such cases were recorded by the monitors. These mainly related to environmental issues (outside the context of COP29), the operation of the Armenian Nuclear Power Plant, the likelihood of military aggression against Armenia, etc.

The tone of most of these references (15) was neutral, with the rest classified as “negative” (10) or “positive” (1).

## **V. CONCLUSION**

The monitoring of Armenian media focusing on Armenian-Azerbaijani relations, conducted between November 18 and December 17, 2024, revealed a predominance of negative tone in the coverage of most key topics. Compared to the previous monitoring (March 2024), the total number of publications devoted to the topic saw a slight drop. The share of

references carrying a negative tone remains high, especially concerning issues of overcoming conflict-related elements and securing a peaceful settlement. The most balanced coverage is observed in pieces related to the negotiation formats and unblocking of communications. At the same time, a significant difference can be observed in the approaches taken by various media when addressing topics related to the rights of forcibly displaced persons, territorial claims and legal proceedings. Such differences may be due to editorial policies, preferences of the target audience and political, economic and other affiliations. The intensification of international processes, including the elections in the United States, also affects the tone of publications, illustrating the dependence on the broader foreign policy context.

Based on the monitoring findings, it can be highlighted that some progress in the delimitation and demarcation in the northeastern section of the border has resulted in positive media coverage of the topic.

Further analysis of the dynamics of changes in the topic coverage will allow us to predict media trends with greater confidence and design relevant strategies in the information sphere.

# **REPORT ON THE MONITORING OF REFERENCES BY THE MEDIA AND EXPERTS OF AZERBAIJAN ON THE TOPIC OF THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES IN NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2024**

## **I. STUDY GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND METHODOLOGY**

The goal of the study is to develop recommendations for strengthening peace-oriented discourse in the coverage of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations, enhancing the role of media platforms in holding internal, inter-community and inter-conflict discussions on peace and conflict-related issues, as well as to build the capacity of experts to engage in debates.

The objectives of the study are the following:

1. Determining the frequency with which the studied media make detailed references to the topic of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict and its specific aspects, by recording the number of such references for further analysis of the collected data.
2. Recording the attitude to the topic (in accordance with the thematic sections) by Armenian and Azerbaijani media: “+” (positive attitude, seeing a possibility of reaching an agreement, coming to an accord, overcoming contradictions), “-” (negative attitude, not seeing a possibility of reaching an agreement, coming to an accord, overcoming contradictions; blaming the opposite side for everything); “0” (neutral or uncertain attitude to the topic; analysis, commentary without placing emphasis on the presence or absence of possibilities of reaching an agreement, coming to an accord, overcoming contradictions).

The monitoring was carried out from November 18 to December 17, 2024 and covered 9 media in each country. In Azerbaijan, the monitors analyzed all pieces from online outlets *Turan*, *Minval* and *Qazqazinfo*, as well as the leading news programs and main analytical programs aired during prime time on *ITV* (public television), *CBC*, *Pressklub TV*, *Caliber TV*, *Yeni Musavat TV* Internet channels, and *Azadliq* radio. In cases where a channel lacked an evening news program, the two most important analytical pieces aired each day were studied.

## **II. GENERAL FINDINGS OF THE MONITORING OF AZERBAIJANI MEDIA**

Throughout the one month period, 407 pieces containing detailed references to the topic of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict (156 fully dedicated to the topic and 251 partially) were published by 9 Azerbaijani media. Within these pieces, the monitors recorded 849 references to various thematic categories related to the conflict (since a single piece often addresses several issues, the number of references to the thematic categories is higher than the pieces themselves).

In [2023](#)-2024, Baku and Yerevan Press Clubs conducted other monitorings on a similar topic. Minor changes in the methodology and the list of media studied do not generally

hinder the tracking of the dynamics of a consistent increase in the number of pieces dedicated to Armenian-Azerbaijani relations over a year and a half.

All the media studied in these three monitorings, with the exception of *Pressklub TV*, increased their attention to issues related to the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict. The largest increase in the number of pieces on this topic was exhibited by *CBC TV* company (almost twofold), *Caliber TV* Internet channel (more than fourfold), and the Azerbaijani service of *Azadliq* radio (tenfold).

The pieces mainly cover the reciprocal claims between the involved sides, as well as issues that cause discord and deepen the confrontation. There is a lack of unbiased discussion regarding the reasons for the current “neither peace nor war” situation, along with an analysis of the arguments and views of the opposing side, as well as international organizations whose stance on some issues does not align with that of Azerbaijan. This leads to a multifold preponderance of references with a “negative” tone to all the thematic sections over “neutral” and “positive” ones.

### III. MEDIA PLATFORMS

The outlets and TV channels selected for the study represented all four categories of media present in the country: what remains of the independent sector (*Turan*, *Pressklub TV*), a sizable pro-government sector (*Caliber TV*, *Minval*, *Yeni Musavat TV*, *Qafqazinfo*), a strong government/public sector in every respect (*CBC TV*, *ITV*), as well as foreign media organizations that operate websites and YouTube channels in the local language for the domestic audience (*Azadliq* radio).

All pieces dedicated to the monitoring topic and references to various thematic sections are distributed among these media in the following manner:

Name of the media	Number of pieces on the monitoring topic			Number of references to the thematic sections
	Total pieces	Fully dedicated to the topic	Partially dedicated to the topic	
CBC TV	101	29	72	196
Caliber TV	87	66	21	206
Minval	57	16	41	70
Yeni Musavat TV	45	2	43	110
ITV	43	3	40	137
Turan	24	19	5	51
Azadliq TV	21	17	4	49
Pressklub TV	19	2	17	20
Qafqazinfo	10	2	8	10

The leadership of *CBC TV* and *Caliber TV* in this list, producing the bulk of content in Russian, indicates that a substantial portion of information on the topic under study is directed toward an external audience. This, naturally, has an impact on its content.

The same logic is reflected in the fact that nearly 36% of all pieces and 40% of references to various thematic sections are, in aggregate, attributed to the state television company *CBC TV* and the public *ITV* channel. This is an indicator of the government's interest in covering the topic with a broad presentation of its perspective on the situation for both external and internal audiences. The data from pro-government publications and channels,



with the exception of *Qafqazinfo*, which overall has little analytical content, serve as an additional argument in favor of this conclusion. They account for 51% of all pieces on the topic of the conflict and approximately 47% of references to its various sections.

Independent media and *Azadliq* radio stand out for their more restrained coverage of the monitoring topic, compared to other categories of Azerbaijani media. Interestingly, their main indicators are close, including the tone used in the presentation of information and its commentary.

Media status	Share in the total number of pieces on the monitoring topic	Share in the total number of references to the thematic sections
State/public media	35.4%	39.2%
Pro-government media	48.9%	46.7%
Independent media and <i>Azadliq</i> radio	15.7%	14.1%

The monitoring shows that in pieces dedicated to the conflict between Baku and Yerevan, Azerbaijani media are highly critical (71.5% of references to all thematic sections carry a negative tone). Criticism is mainly directed at Armenia's stance in the negotiations, its inconsistency, serving the interests of third parties, the desire to prolong the peace process and arm itself, with doubts expressed about the possibility of normalizing relations with that country in the near future due to the lack of any constructive steps from its side. However, as highlighted earlier, the coverage of the monitoring topic by independent media and *Azadliq* radio differs in tone. In most of their pieces, they maintain neutrality in presentation and try to promote a peaceful discourse.

Media status	The tone of media references to all thematic categories		
	Positive	Negative	Neutral
State/public media	5.1%	75.4%	19.5%
Pro-government media	7.3%	79.6%	13.1%
Independent media and <i>Azadliq</i> radio	2.5%	35%	62.5%

#### IV. THEMATIC SECTIONS

In the pieces dedicated to Armenian-Azerbaijani relations, detailed references to 7 thematic sections were recorded. In each of them, there were several subtopics, for which a separate count was conducted.

In total, 849 references to all thematic sections were distributed among them in the following order:

##### Thematic section 1. Possibilities of signing a peace treaty and normalizing relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan

*Subtopics: 1.1 Appropriateness of signing a treaty without incorporating controversial provisions; 1.2 Building relations in the context of "peace without a treaty"; 1.3 Establishment of diplomatic relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan; 1.4 Cooperation in economic, energy and other spheres; 1.5 Attitude toward the UN COP29 climate conference as a factor influencing the Armenian-Azerbaijani dialogue; 1.6 Other.*

A total of 115 analytical pieces were directly dedicated (26 fully and 89 partially) to the topic of negotiations, with the overwhelming majority of them (91.3%) falling into two thematic categories. The most commonly expressed opinion was that a peace treaty could only be concluded if all existing issues of contention were agreed upon. Along with this, the media characterized the COP29 conference as a missed opportunity to achieve peace in a short period of time, criticizing Armenia for declining to travel to Baku and take part in the biggest international event of the year. However, the high “rating” recorded for the “COP29” subtopic in the context of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations is explained by the fact that the monitoring period coincided with the Baku conference, alongside certain expectations regarding the possible visit of Armenian Prime Minister Pashinyan to Azerbaijan. Therefore, this “rating” can be considered “seasonal,” with the assumption that the issue will quickly lose relevance for the media.

*CBC* and *Caliber TV* channels addressed this thematic section more frequently (31 pieces each) than any other media. Negative coverage in this category significantly outnumbers those with neutral and positive approaches (85, 24 and 6 pieces, respectively).

#### Thematic section 2. Selection of platforms/formats of negotiations for the peaceful settlement of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations

*Subtopics: 2.1 With the mediation/participation of the RF; 2.2 With the mediation/participation of the EU; 2.3 With the mediation/participation of the USA; 2.4. Regional format (conditional 3+3); 2.5 Bilateral format (without intermediaries and mediators); 2.6 Other.*

This thematic category was touched upon in 84 pieces. In 90.5% of all references to it, the media considered the possibility of continuing peace talks in a bilateral format or with the mediation of Russia, the EU, and the USA. Direct negotiations without intermediaries were the only format assessed positively, with the other options frequently triggering a negative reaction. Thus, the media support the idea that every intermediary enters the process with their own interests, thereby complicating the negotiations and creating additional risks in terms of the region’s future.

Alongside *CBC* and *ITV*, *Azadliq* radio was highly active in covering this topic, with almost half of its monitoring-related pieces devoted to this aspect of the issue.

#### Thematic section 3. The process of delimitation and demarcation of the Armenia-Azerbaijan state border

*Subtopics: 3.1 Application of the provision on the activities of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border delimitation commissions; 3.2 Resolution of the issue of enclaves through compromises; 3.3 Stability and security in the demarcated and conditional sections of the border; 3.4. Other.*

The topic of state borders was most frequently touched upon in the programs of *Caliber TV* YouTube channel, as well as *CBC* and *ITV* television networks. Over the course of one month, 9 media addressed this topic in 63 pieces, with nearly 70% of them falling to these three channels.

Altogether, an unusual picture takes shape: 4 pieces within this thematic section discussed the fate of Azerbaijani enclaves in Armenia; 9 - the complex process of delimitation and

demarcation; 12 - key issues of stability and security in the conditional sections of the border; and 39 - accounting for over 60% of all pieces in this category - focused on the visit of Polish President Andrzej Duda with the EU observation mission to the conditional border. Due to the lack of a suitable subtopic in the pre-defined list, the monitors included them in the section labeled as "Other." This situation illustrates how sharply the media react to issues - that are in ordinary times perceived as less urgent and, figuratively speaking, are covered "in routine mode" - once an external trigger emerges. Had it not been for the pieces dedicated to Duda's visit to the conditional border, this could have been yet another monitoring section, where neutral coverage prevails over negative assessments.

#### Thematic section 4. Prospects for the unblocking of communications

*Subtopics: 4.1 Unblocking of the Meghri (Syunik, Zangezur) road under the supervision of the RF FSB border guard troops; 4.2 Unblocking of the Meghri (Syunik, Zangezur road/corridor) with the engagement of other international actors; 4.3 Functioning of the Meghri road within the bounds of Armenia's full sovereignty; 4.4 Free (extraterritorial, on privileged conditions) communication between "mainland" Azerbaijan and the Nakhichevan exclave; 4.5 Unblocking of "all communications" with no specification; 4.6 "Crossroads of Peace" project proposed by Armenia; 4.7 Other.*

Throughout the study period, Azerbaijani media placed the thematic section "Prospects for the unblocking of communications" on the margins of their attention. Only 37 analytical pieces were recorded, with 7 media addressing this topic (during the monitoring period, no such pieces were identified on *Qafqazinfo* website and *Azadliq* radio). The topic was most frequently addressed by *Yeni Musavat* TV (11 pieces), *ITV* (9), and *Caliber TV* (7). The discussions revolved around the issues of free communication between "mainland" Azerbaijan and the Nakhchivan exclave, unblocking of the Meghri road, or "all communications" with no specification. None of the other subtopics within this section received attention more than three times throughout the month.

It is noteworthy that this is one of the two thematic categories where pieces with a neutral tone prevail over negatively toned ones.

#### Thematic section 5. Overcoming the elements conditioning the conflictuality between Armenia and Azerbaijan at the current stage

*Subtopics: 5.1 The issue of Karabakh Armenians; 5.2 The rights of other forcibly displaced persons and refugees who left their places of residence throughout the entire course of the conflict (1987-2024); 5.3 References to the presence of territorial claims in the Constitutions of Azerbaijan and Armenia; 5.4 Accusations of serving the interests of third countries; 5.5 Lawsuits filed by Armenia and Azerbaijan (Armenians and Azerbaijanis) against each other in international courts; 5.6 Positions regarding prisoners of war and other detainees; 5.7 Phobias of an ethnic, religious, cultural and other nature toward each other; 5.8 The issue of the arms race as a factor intensifying the distrust between the parties; 5.9 Other.*

More than half of the references (432 out of 849) to the monitoring topic relate to these issues. At the same time, the distribution of these references across media and subtopics is extremely uneven. Two channels - *CBC* and *Caliber TV* - stand out, together accounting for nearly 55% of the pieces (126 and 108, respectively) devoted to "conflict-related

elements". They are followed by *ITV* (54), *Yeni Musavat TV* (48) and *Minval* (38). The total number of pieces from independent media (30) and *Azadliq* radio (20) lags far behind in comparison to these figures.

Based on how the pieces within this section are distributed across subtopics, we can pinpoint which conflict-related elements of Azerbaijan-Armenia relations attract (or attracted during the monitoring period) greater media attention:

The overwhelming majority of pieces in this section carry a negative tone. The pieces accuse Yerevan of serving the interests of third countries, primarily France, purchasing large quantities of arms with revanchist intentions, showing unwillingness to eliminate the provisions containing territorial claims from the Constitution and recognize the right of Azerbaijani refugees to return to their homes in Armenia, manipulating the problems of Karabakh Armenians, displaying ethnic, cultural and other phobias, using international courts to file unjustified lawsuits against Azerbaijan, etc. Half of the pieces in the "Other" subsection are devoted to minefields in Azerbaijan, as a war legacy that continues to take lives. However, the monitors also recorded pieces on *CBC*, *Pressklub TV* and *Yeni Musavat TV* that inspire confidence in the possibility of overcoming all these issues and normalizing relations.

#### Thematic section 6. Impact of the US elections of November 5, 2024 on Armenian-Azerbaijani relations

*Subtopics: 6.1 Assumption that the new US administration (Senate, House of Representatives) will not pay attention to events unfolding in the South Caucasus; 6.2 Assumption that the election results are advantageous to the Armenian side; 6.3 Assumption that the election results are advantageous to the Azerbaijani side; 6.4 Other.*

The monitoring would have been incomplete without this thematic section - it was carried out immediately after the US presidential elections, whose outcomes will impact all major global developments and conflicts. Notably, literally a day earlier, then-President Biden had sent a letter to Aliyev and Pashinyan, urging both leaders to show "ingenuity and compromise."

However, drawing conclusions from the figures obtained is difficult: firstly, the topic did not enjoy wide popularity - it ranks second-to-last among all sections in terms of the number of references. Secondly, the results are close - 19 pieces claim that the new US administration will not pay attention to the South Caucasus (with a predominantly neutral tone), 17 state that the results of these elections are advantageous to the Armenian side (with a predominantly negative tone), while 13 references indicate that Azerbaijan will be the one to benefit (with predominantly neutral assessments). Yet here, the monitoring data from the second thematic section come to mind, which suggest that Azerbaijan is against any mediation in peace talks with Armenia.

#### Thematic section 7. Other topics dedicated to Armenian-Azerbaijani relations

This category covered those references that did not fit into any of the six thematic sections. The monitors recorded 69 such references. These included thorough commentaries regarding the decisions of international organizations and statements made by the foreign ministries of various countries accused of applying double standards towards Azerbaijan, as well as articles on Russian-Armenian relations, programs on the

history of the conflict, stories about war participants, missing persons, etc.

The tone of most of these references (36) was negative, the rest were assessed as “neutral” (23) or “positive.”

## V. CONCLUSION

1. In comparison to previous monitorings, the current monitoring registered a rise in the number of pieces devoted to Armenian-Azerbaijani relations in the studied media. There have also been changes in the frequency of media references to various thematic categories concerning these relations. At present, the most discussed topic in the media is not peace negotiations, but the elements conditioning the conflictuality between the parties at a specific stage. This suggests that the conflict is still “alive,” capable of undergoing transformations and, once resolved in one dimension, moving to another. Thus, it finds new forms of manifestation and expression.

2. A significant factor is the substantial predominance of pieces with a negative tone over those with a “positive” and “neutral” tone in the coverage of the topic of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations (71.5%). This, on the one hand, indicates the persistence of serious disagreements and low level of trust between the parties, while on the other hand, it suggests that media and the expert community are starting to openly discuss the issues that spark the most acute reactions and seek solutions.

3. Threats, accusations, and disparaging tone continue to reinforce negative stereotypes even in the pursuit of peace. It is necessary to **adjust the narrative and change the language of communication**. There is a need for more pieces regarding the benefits of cooperation, the possibility of coexistence, and the commonality of a number of interests. To this end, efforts should be intensified in engaging the expert community, but above all, media and journalists, who are the ones most often setting the negative tone.

4. The monitoring findings allow us to assert that when selecting media platforms for internal, inter-community and inter-conflict debates on peace issues, local Internet channels and independent websites are still recommended to be prioritized. At the same time, cooperation with state television channels and some pro-government media, which maintain leadership in covering this topic, can be a good resource in terms of increasing audience reach. However, it should be taken into account that their programs have a certain ideological orientation.