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The Karabakh Issue in the English-Language Press “The Image of Azerbaijan in the English-Language Press During the Independence Period (1993-2003)”

Abstract

Numerous books have been written and scholarly studies conducted on the life and work of the national leader Haydar Aliyev. Among these, one of the most significant is the book "The Image of Azerbaijan in the English-Language Press During the Independence Period (1993-2003)," published under the academic supervision of Kamal Abdulla. This book highlights the portrayal of Azerbaijan in English-language media outlets from the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and other foreign countries during Haydar Aliyev's presidency of an independent Azerbaijan. It focuses on how Azerbaijan was perceived from the outside, the international perspective on the Karabakh war in the 1990s, and the successful policies implemented by the national leader. One of the central themes of "The Image of Azerbaijan in the English-Language Press During the Independence Period (1993-2003)" is the Karabakh issue, which dominated the political agenda in the 1990s. The examination of this topic in the international media plays a crucial role in communicating the realities of Azerbaijan to the global audience. During the 1990s, Azerbaijani media sometimes struggled to cover the events related to the Karabakh conflict as effectively as foreign journalists. The study draws upon publications such as the UK's *The Gazette*, *The Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Economist*; Canada's *The Globe and Mail*; Australia's *The Sydney Morning Times*; and US-based outlets including *The New York Times*, *The Daily Herald*, *The Middle East Journal*, *Forbes*, and others.

Keywords: Azerbaijan, Haydar Aliyev, press, foreign, Karabakh

İngilizce Basında Karabağ Sorunu "Bağımsızlık Döneminde İngilizce Basında Azerbaycan İmajı (1993-2003)

Öz

Ulusal lider Haydar Aliyev'in hayatı ve çalışmaları üzerine çok sayıda kitap yazılmış ve akademik çalışma yapılmıştır. Bunlar arasında en önemlilerinden biri Kamal Abdulla'nın akademik danışmanlığında yayınlanan "Bağımsızlık Döneminde İngilizce Basında Azerbaycan İmajı (1993-2003)" kitabıdır. Bu kitap, Haydar Aliyev'in bağımsız Azerbaycan'ın cumhurbaşkanlığı döneminde Amerika Birleşik Devletleri, Birleşik Krallık, Avustralya, Kanada ve diğer yabancı ülkelerdeki İngilizce yayın organlarında Azerbaycan'ın nasıl tasvir edildiğini ortaya koyuyor. Azerbaycan'ın dışarıdan nasıl algılandığına, 1990'lardaki Karabağ savaşına uluslararası bakış açısına ve ulusal liderin uyguladığı başarılı politikalarla odaklanıyor. "Bağımsızlık Döneminde İngilizce Basında Azerbaycan İmajı (1993-2003)" kitabının ana temalarından biri, 1990'larda siyasi gündemi domine eden Karabağ meselesidir. Bu konunun uluslararası medyada ele alınması, Azerbaycan'ın gerçeklerinin küresel izleyicilere aktarılmasında önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. 1990'lar boyunca Azerbaycan medyası Karabağ çatışmasıyla ilgili olayları yabancı gazeteciler kadar etkili bir şekilde aktarmakta zaman zaman zorlanmıştır. Bu çalışmada İngiltere'de yayınlanan *The Gazette*, *The Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Economist*; Kanada'da yayınlanan *The Globe and Mail*; Avustralya'da yayınlanan *The Sydney Morning Times* ve ABD'de yayınlanan *The New York Times*, *The Daily Herald*, *The Middle East Journal*, *Forbes* gibi yayınlardan yararlanılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Azerbaycan, Haydar Aliyev, Basın, Yabancı, Karabağ

Giriş

Located at the crossroads of civilizations, Azerbaijan has always contributed great personalities to world history. One of these eminent figures is the distinguished statesman of Azerbaijan, the national leader Haydar Aliyev. Serving as the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan from 1969 to 1982, and as the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan from 1993 until the end of his life, Haydar Aliyev consistently dedicated his efforts to the independent development of the state. His political activity has always remained in the focus of international media attention.

The book "*The Image of Azerbaijan in the English-Language Press During the Independence Period (1993-2003)*" offers a highly interesting and important study of how Azerbaijan was perceived by foreign journalists, based on articles published in international media outlets. The research also highlights and clarifies with factual evidence the misconceptions about Azerbaijan that appeared in the perspectives of some journalists.

The project leader of *"The Image of Azerbaijan in the English-Language Press During the Independence Period (1993-2003)"* is academician Kamal Abdulla, Rector of Azerbaijan University of Languages. The executive coordinators are Ph.D. in History Agshin Rustamov and research fellow Ph.D. in philology Suğra Alakbarli. The editors and translators include Shahla Khudiyeva, Nargiz Seyidova, Aysu Huseynli, Parvana Jafarova, Roya Azizova, Irada Najafova, Gulnar Naghiyeva, Ilaha Taghizade, Eleonora Babayeva, Sabir Aliyev, and Tovakkul Zeynalov. The responsible editor is Associate Professor Aqil Shahmuradov. The reviewers include Elshad Nasirov, Head of the Haydar Aliyev Academy of the State Security Service, Professor Solmaz Rustamova-Tohidi, and Associate Professor Abutalib Jalilov. The investigation of articles published in the foreign press, as presented in *"The Image of Azerbaijan in the English-Language Press During the Independence Period (1993-2003)"*, is of great significance and relevance both for the study of the Azerbaijani press and for historiography.

This study focuses on the period from 1993 to 2003 and analyzes articles published in English-language media outlets such as the United Kingdom's *The Gazette*, *The Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Economist*; Canada's *The Globe and Mail*; Australia's *The Sydney Morning Times*; and the United States' *The New York Times*, *The Daily Herald*, *The Middle East Journal*, *Focus*, *Forbes*, and others. These articles reflect the policies pursued by national leader Haydar Aliyev, the resolution of the Karabakh issue, and the underlying causes of the conflict.

1. The First Karabakh War in The New York Times

In the 1990s, under the lingering influence of the 70-year-long "Soviet fear," Azerbaijani media of the time often lacked the courage to speak openly on many matters (Hüseynova, 2021). In 1992, when the Khojaly genocide occurred, American correspondent Thomas Goltz and his Turkish wife Hicran Goltz were the first to inform the world media about the tragedy through *The Washington Post*. Although the newspaper published the information, the *BBC* hesitated to report it. It was only after a report from its Moscow correspondent that *BBC* publicly announced the Khojaly massacre (Cenk, 1992, p. 6). On August 6, 1998, President Haydar Aliyev signed a decree titled *"On Additional Measures to Ensure the Freedom of Speech, Thought, and Press in the Republic of Azerbaijan"*, which marked an important step in the implementation of state policy aimed at the free development of mass media and their transformation into powerful tools for the democratization of society. Some foreign media outlets during the 1990s depicted newly independent Azerbaijan as a weak state. In the July 9, 1993 issue of *The New York Times*, journalist Serge Schmemmann published an article titled *"War and Politics Block Azerbaijan's Road to Riches"*, in which he described the country's dire situation:

“Azerbaijan is on the brink of a disgraceful defeat. Dozens of villages around the city of Aghdam have been flattened by Armenian forces, depriving the Azerbaijanis of a base from which they had planned a counteroffensive against the capital of Karabakh, Stepanakert. They now appear poised to take the city itself. This was the final humiliation for Azerbaijan” (Abdulla, Rüstəmov & Ələkbərli, 2023, p. 12).

However, based on the law *“On the Abolition of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast”* adopted by the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Azerbaijan on November 26, 1991, the historical name of Stepanakert was restored, and the city has since been referred to as Khankendi. The fact that American journalist Serge Schmemmann, in his 1993 article, referred to Khankendi as *“the capital of Karabakh – Stepanakert”* two years after this official legal change demonstrates a breach of journalistic ethics and constitutes a serious factual error.

Thirty years later, the territories of Karabakh were liberated from occupation. According to 2020 *Europamaps* statistics, Azerbaijan ranked first among the nations most willing to sacrifice their lives for their homeland. During the third anniversary of the Victory in the Patriotic War, commemorated on November 8, 2023, in Khankendi, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and Commander-in-Chief İlham Aliyev stated:

“In the 21st century, no army has demonstrated as much professionalism and self-sacrifice as ours. No nation has ever cherished its native land so dearly and been so willing to die for it. We all know this well, and the world should know it too.” In contrast to its 1993 portrayal of Azerbaijan as *“on the brink of a disgraceful defeat”*, *The New York Times* in its November 17, 2023 issue acknowledged the liberation of Azerbaijani lands from Armenian separatist occupation during the Second Karabakh War. In another example, journalist Michael Specter published an article in *The New York Times* on July 10, 1994, titled *“The World: In a Distant War, Blood Flows Unseen”*, in which he employed several methods of historical distortion to advance the idea that Karabakh historically belonged to Armenians:

“Until this region was handed over to Azerbaijan by Stalin, who needed grazing lands for livestock, Nagorno-Karabakh was an autonomous republic of Armenia” (Abdulla, Rüstəmov & Ələkbərli, 2023, p. 80).

In reality, such a decision by Stalin never existed. The decision adopted on July 5, 1921, by Stalin and the members of the Caucasian Bureau stated that Nagorno-Karabakh should be retained within the Azerbaijan SSR and be granted broad regional autonomy with Shusha as its administrative center. The claim by American journalist Michael Specter that Nagorno-Karabakh was an autonomous republic of Armenia is baseless. There has never been such an

entity in Karabakh; the mountainous part of Karabakh has always been an integral part of Azerbaijan throughout history.

2. The Issue of the “Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast” in Foreign Media

The establishment of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO) within the Azerbaijan SSR in 1923, despite various obstacles, was part of the Soviet Union's implementation of Lenin's nationalities policy and fully aligned with Leninist principles of Soviet state-building.

Since that time, during the years of Soviet rule, Azerbaijanis—the indigenous people of the Karabakh lands—along with Armenians, Russians, and representatives of other ethnic groups, lived together in peace and security. A recurring theme in foreign journalists' articles is the consistent reference to the region as “Nagorno-Karabakh.” On June 16, 1981, the Supreme Soviet of the Azerbaijan SSR adopted a law titled “*On the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast.*”

However, beginning in 1987, as a result of Mikhail Gorbachev's so-called “perestroika” (restructuring) policy, nationalist elements of the bourgeoisie and certain Armenian intellectuals, in collaboration with some deputies and officials from the Armenian SSR, began artificially constructing and amplifying what came to be known as the “Nagorno-Karabakh issue” (Məmmədov & Məmmədov, 2018, p. 20). Gorbachev's Armenian economic adviser, Abel Aganbegyan, stated in an interview with the French newspaper *L'Humanité* that “the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast should soon be transferred to Armenia.” Following this interview, protests began in the city of Khankendi.

On June 15, 1988, the Supreme Soviet of the Armenian SSR adopted a resolution to annex the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast to Armenia. In response, on July 12, 1988, the local council of the NKAO declared its intention to separate from Azerbaijan. In turn, the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Azerbaijan passed a resolution on June 17, 1988, declaring these actions unconstitutional and reaffirming that the transfer of the NKAO to the Armenian SSR was legally impossible. The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR subsequently issued a decree on July 18 of the same year, citing Article 78 of the USSR Constitution, which stipulated that the borders of union republics could not be altered without their mutual consent. The decree reaffirmed that the NKAO was part of Azerbaijani territory. On November 26, 1991, the Parliament of Azerbaijan officially abolished the NKAO as a national-territorial entity. The decrees establishing the NKAO—the July 7, 1923 decree of the Central Executive Committee of Azerbaijan and the June 16, 1981 law of the Azerbaijan SSR—were declared null

and void. According to the tripartite statement signed on November 10, 2020, by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, and the Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan, the territories of Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding regions were returned to Azerbaijan. Whether during the Soviet period or in the modern era, Nagorno-Karabakh has never been recognized as a disputed territory. Historically, geographically, economically, politically, and legally, the region is an integral part of Azerbaijan and is recognized as such by the international community.

3. The Enclave Issue

Throughout both the Soviet era and the modern period, Nagorno-Karabakh was never recognized as a disputed territory. The region, which is an integral part of Azerbaijan from historical, geographical, economic, political, legal, and administrative standpoints, is also recognized as Azerbaijani territory by the international community.

Labeling Nagorno-Karabakh as an "enclave" (a territory of one state entirely surrounded by the territory of another) is entirely incorrect. Nagorno-Karabakh is part of Azerbaijan's internationally recognized territory. Another mistake often encountered is the separate usage of "Nagorno-Karabakh" and "Azerbaijan," which suggests that Nagorno-Karabakh is an independent state, separate from Azerbaijan. For instance, the UK's *The Economist* implies such a division, which is completely false and baseless, not supported by any factual evidence.

In the August 3, 1993 issue of the U.S. newspaper *Daily Herald*, Edith M. Lederer wrote in her article titled "Armenia losing hope in its victory distances itself from Azerbaijan" that "Over the past year, ethnic Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh have seized 10 percent of Azerbaijan's territory. The enclave is now connected to its main backer, Armenia, by two land corridors" (Abdulla, Rüstəmov & Ələkbərli, 2023 p.14).

Similarly, in the December 11, 1993 issue of the UK's *The Economist*, in an article titled "The Bear Takes a Break: Azerbaijan," it is claimed: "Diplomats in Baku say that the Azerbaijani government has promised the Russians more than a 10% stake in exchange for helping resolve the conflict surrounding the Armenian-populated (and controlled) Nagorno-Karabakh enclave in Azerbaijan. In other words, if the Russians return Nagorno-Karabakh and the other Armenian-occupied territories to Azerbaijani control, they will be rewarded" (Abdulla, Rüstəmov & Ələkbərli, 2023 p. 31). This article contains numerous inaccuracies.

In the December 1, 1994 issue of the U.S. journal *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Besik Urigashvili makes a similar error in his article "The Caucasus: Blood Ties," stating, "The first

conflict began in 1988, in the Armenian enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan” (Abdulla, Rüstəmov & Ələkbərli, 2023 p. 48).

In the March 4, 1994 issue of the UK’s *New Statesman*, in the article “Azerbaijanis Play the Russian Game,” Dilip Hiro uses the term “Armenian enclave.” The journalist also claims, “Six years ago, the Armenians of Karabakh demanded to be transferred from Azerbaijan to Armenia. This situation led to ethnic clashes in both republics and, subsequently, to the cross-border migration of 420,000 Armenians (outside of Karabakh) from Azerbaijan and 200,000 Azerbaijanis from Armenia” (Abdulla, Rüstəmov & Ələkbərli, 2023, p. 74). However, this claim is false. In 1988, the Armenians of Karabakh and separatists in Armenia made territorial claims against Azerbaijan and demanded the unification of the unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast with Armenia. Additionally, the journalist’s claim about 420,000 Armenians being displaced is inaccurate. According to the 1989 All-Union Census, the number of Armenians in Azerbaijan, including Karabakh, was 390,505.

Some articles even mislabel Nakhchivan as an enclave. For example, in the February 5, 1994 issue of the U.S.-based *EBSCO* journal, the article “Azerbaijan” claims, “Since 1988, Azerbaijan has blockaded Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia. Armenian forces have destroyed Azerbaijani settlements in Nagorno-Karabakh and blockaded the Azerbaijani enclave of Nakhchivan, an autonomous republic separated from the rest of Azerbaijan by Armenia” (Abdulla, Rüstəmov & Ələkbərli, 2023). This is also incorrect. Nakhchivan is not an enclave but an exclave—a part of a country geographically separated and surrounded by the territory of one or more other countries.

The article also discusses the creation of the OSCE Minsk Group in 1992 and its initial promise to resolve the conflict. However, it later notes delays in implementing the group’s proposals: “In June 1993, all conflict parties accepted the Minsk Group’s proposals on ensuring a ceasefire, partial withdrawal from occupied territories, deployment of international observers, lifting the blockade, and resuming negotiations. However, implementation of these proposals is delayed” (Abdulla, Rüstəmov & Ələkbərli, 2023, p. 59).

Throughout its existence, the OSCE Minsk Group and its co-chairs failed to achieve any concrete results and often acted with double standards. As noted in the February 22, 1994 issue of the UK’s *The Guardian*, in Jonathan Rugman’s article “*Oil Eases Russia’s Peace Plan in Karabakh: Azerbaijani President’s Official Visit to London Begins Today*,” it is stated, “Armenian forces have not complied with UN resolutions calling for troop withdrawal.

Currently, they occupy 20 percent of Azerbaijan's territory" (Abdulla, Rüstəmov & Ələkbərli, 2023, p. 69).

From September 27 to November 10, 2020, during the 44-day Patriotic War, Azerbaijan defeated Armenia, liberated its lands from nearly 30 years of occupation, and rendered the Minsk Group obsolete. On April 8, 2022, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, during a press conference with Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan, officially declared the OSCE Minsk Group defunct.

In his article, Besik Urigashvili rightly condemns Armenia for exploiting Gorbachev's glasnost and perestroika policies to launch territorial claims against Azerbaijan. He also rejects the Armenian narrative that Nagorno-Karabakh had always been Armenian and was forcibly annexed to Azerbaijan by Stalin: *"But they forget that over the last century and a half, except for the short period between 1918 and 1921, neither Azerbaijan, Armenia, nor Georgia had independent statehood"* (Abdulla, Rüstəmov & Ələkbərli, 2023, p. 49).

Urigashvili notes that the majority population in the region was Armenian, but historical facts disprove the existence of any Armenian state in this area. Historical evidence proves that these lands have always belonged to Azerbaijan. In the same article, Urigashvili attempts to fabricate history by claiming, based on legend, that Armenia was a Christian state in the Caucasus as early as the 4th century: *"According to legend, the Greek god Prometheus, who gave fire to humanity, was chained to the Caucasus Mountains. The New Testament mentions Mount Ararat, where Noah's Ark rested after the flood. This region is the cradle of Christian culture. Armenia and Georgia adopted Christianity in the early 4th century, before Greece or Rome"* (Abdulla, Rüstəmov & Ələkbərli, 2023, p. 48).

This is historically inaccurate. There was no state named Armenia in the South Caucasus until 1918. In the 4th century, the Caucasian Albanian state existed in the region. Archaeological evidence shows that the population of Caucasian Albania practiced Christianity. Armenians later appropriated Albanian churches and cultural monuments. Even Musa Kalankatli, in his work *The History of Albania*, refers to churches in Azerbaijani territory as among the oldest in the East (Kalankatuklu, 2006). In the early 19th century, the Treaty of Kurakchay was signed on May 14, 1805, between the Khan of Karabakh, Ibrahim Khalil Khan, and the Russian general Sisianov. This proves that had Armenians held power in the Karabakh Khanate, the treaty would not have been signed by the Azerbaijani khan. Furthermore, a significant historical document—"Description of the Karabakh Province," compiled by Russian officials Yermolov and Mogilyovsky in 1823—shows that the province had 20,095 families,

including 15,729 Azerbaijani and 4,366 Armenian families. These Armenian families had been relocated to Karabakh, increasing their numbers after the Kurakchay treaty. Strategic relocation of Armenians from Iran and Türkiye to Karabakh began in the early 19th century. This mass migration occurred during and after the Russo-Iranian wars (1804-1813, 1826-1828) and the Russo-Turkish war (1828-1829), significantly altering the region's demographics. The Gulistan (1813) and Turkmenchay (1828) treaties between Russia and Iran further confirm this process.

Russian diplomat and writer Alexander Griboyedov, a witness to the Treaty of Turkmenchay and participant in the resettlement process, noted that the majority of Armenians were settled on lands belonging to Azerbaijani Muslim landlords (Əhmədov, 2021). Following the Turkmenchay Treaty, on March 21, 1828, Tsar Nicholas I issued a decree establishing the "Armenian Province" on the territories of Irevan and Nakhchivan, laying the groundwork for a future Armenian state. Official statistics from that time show that the city of Irevan, the center of the new province, had 7,331 Azerbaijanis and only 2,369 Armenians. Based on Article 15 of the treaty, 40,000 Armenians were relocated from Iran to Irevan, Karabakh, and Nakhchivan. A similar process followed the Russo-Turkish wars in the 19th century (1829, 1878), during which approximately 85,000 Armenians were resettled in these areas.

Urigashvili, fully aware of these historical realities, rightly concludes that Russia holds political control over the South Caucasus: *"Russia plays a key role in the region. Much depends not on its words, but on its actions. Although it formally recognizes the territorial integrity of South Caucasus states, by adhering to the old imperial 'divide and rule' principle, it continues to provoke separatism in its former colonies"* (Abdulla, Rüstəmov & Ələkbərli, 2023, p. 51).

On February 20, 1988, the session of the DQAO People's Deputies' Council adopted an appeal requesting the transfer of Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia. On February 21, the Central Committee of the CPSU declared that this request was unconstitutional. Despite this, on June 15, 1988, the Armenian SSR Supreme Soviet agreed to the annexation of DQAO, while the Azerbaijani SSR Supreme Soviet, on June 7, rejected the proposal as illegal. On December 1, 1989, the Armenian SSR Supreme Soviet passed a resolution uniting Armenia with Nagorno-Karabakh, and in January 1990 included the region's economic development in its national plan. On January 10, the USSR Supreme Soviet declared these actions unconstitutional, violating Azerbaijan's sovereignty.

After regaining independence in 1991, on September 2, a joint session of the DQAO and Shaumyan district councils declared the establishment of the "Nagorno-Karabakh Republic."

In his 1993 article *“When the Victim Turns Violent”* published in *EBSCO*, Steve Levine states: *“After years of enduring fire from Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh fighters now seek harsh revenge”* (Abdulla, Rüstəmov & Ələkbərli, 2023, p. 47). However, the forces in Nagorno-Karabakh were not legal Azerbaijani military personnel, but consisted of Armenian separatists, Armenian citizens, mercenaries, and foreign terrorist fighters waging an illegal war of aggression against Azerbaijan.

4. The Issue of Armenian Support

President İlham Aliyev, the political successor to the Haydar Aliyev administration, has repeatedly addressed the terrorist acts committed by Armenians against peaceful Azerbaijani civilians. For instance, during a press conference with local and international media representatives on February 27, 2021, President Aliyev stated: “According to our observations, the so-called civilians on the enemy side were mostly killed during military operations. They were positioned near artillery weapons, transported ammunition, and were harmed when we destroyed those weapons. Therefore, civilian casualties on the enemy side were not a result of deliberate targeting. In contrast, the Armenian side deliberately sought to inflict maximum damage on our civilian population. The ballistic missile attacks on Ganja, Barda, Tartar, and other cities are clear evidence of this (Əliyev, 2021). The International Institute for Strategic Studies in London estimated that the Nagorno-Karabakh combat forces numbered approximately 8,000. Meanwhile, Armenia’s Minister of Defense, Vazgen Manukyan, assessed the figure to be between 10,000 and 15,000 (Abdulla, Rüstəmov & Ələkbərli, 2023, p.15). Additionally, American journalist Edith M. Lederer confirmed Azerbaijan’s awareness of the fact that a portion of the global Armenian diaspora—estimated at 3 million, including those in Russia and abroad – provided both personnel and logistical-financial support to the conflict.

At that time, the Azerbaijani Armed Forces consisted of approximately 40,000 soldiers, while the Armenian side had about 50,000. Azad İsazade, who served as the Head of the Press Service of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan from February 1993 to March 1995, clearly articulated the reasons for Azerbaijan's setbacks in the First Karabakh War. In an interview, he stated:

“Because we did not have our own people in certain areas, around eight percent of the senior officers, including generals, were brought in from Russia, Belarus, or Ukraine.” (Abdulla, Rüstəmov & Ələkbərli, 2023, p.16). At the time, such an interview would likely not have been permitted in Azerbaijani media, underscoring the sensitivity of the issue.

On August 27, 1993, the *Sydney Morning Herald* of Australia published an article by Robert Haupt titled “*New Armenian Offensive Against Azerbaijanis.*” It reported: “According to Interfax, the latest Armenian assault on Azerbaijan was accompanied by armored vehicles and helicopters. Citing Azerbaijani military sources, the agency reported that by last night, the troops had advanced up to five kilometers into Azerbaijani territory” (Abdulla, Rüstəmov & Ələkbərli, 2023, p.18). Similarly, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* in the United States published an article by Deborah Seward on September 9, 1993, titled “*Turkish Leader to Discuss Caucasus War in Russia,*” which further confirmed that Armenian forces received both manpower and logistical assistance from Russia and other foreign countries:

“Russia is displeased with the concentration of Turkish military forces on the border with Armenia, which it supports. Additionally, Russia is frustrated by Türkiye’s growing influence in Azerbaijan and other Muslim republics of the former Soviet Union” (Abdulla, Rüstəmov & Ələkbərli, 2023, p. 25).

Conclusion

As demonstrated, the misrepresentations of foreign journalists are particularly evident in the statistical data regarding casualties during the First Karabakh War. For instance, Charles Fenyvesi, in his article titled “*No More War*” published in *U.S. News & World Report* on August 22, 1994, wrote: “After six years of fighting over Nagorno-Karabakh, which claimed more than 15,000 lives and forced over a million people to flee their homes, the two old enemies are now making peace via fax” (Abdulla, Rüstəmov & Ələkbərli, 2023, p. 93).

However, the journalist’s claim that over 15,000 people were killed does not align with official data. According to the State Commission of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Prisoners of War, Hostages and Missing Persons, approximately 20,000 people were killed and 1,200,500 were displaced as a result of the conflict.

The book “*The Image of Azerbaijan in English-Language Media During the Independence Period (1993-2003),*” published under the leadership of academician Kamal Abdulla, Rector of Azerbaijan University of Languages, is a significant contribution to countering the unfounded territorial claims and falsehoods propagated by Armenian narratives in international media for centuries. It provides fact-based, coherent responses to these distortions.

Occasionally, statistical inaccuracies appear in English-language media. Such errors often stemmed from the difficulties in obtaining reliable information during wartime, particularly in an era before the widespread availability of the internet. One of the most important aspects of

this research is the exposure of falsehoods disseminated by foreign, English-language journalists who presented narratives contrary to the realities of Azerbaijan. Journalists such as Besik Urigashvili, Serge Schmemmann, and others attempted to obscure the truth about Karabakh for unknown motives. Through comparative analyses grounded in historical facts, the study brings clarity to these misrepresentations.

Considering that the Azerbaijan-Armenia issue remains a topic of international discourse, and that Armenians continue to exert baseless political pressure on Azerbaijan through various channels, the examination of media examples included in “*The Image of Azerbaijan in English-Language Media During the Independence Period (1993-2003)*” holds great relevance. It is not only significant for understanding the history of Azerbaijani media, but also for enriching the broader historiography of the region.

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