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The Second Karabakh War through the Prism of the Most Influential British Press, 27 September-10 November 2020

This article deals with the analysis of the coverage of the Second Karabagh War by the influential British press. The mass media plays an important role in shaping or influencing people's opinions on conflicts. The Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno Karabakh Conflict is one of the conflicts that has got and presently is getting international press coverage. The news coverage has great importance in informing the world how Armenia invaded and destroyed Karabakh. And as the British press is enough influential in western countries and plays an important role in shaping the opinions, its coverage of the conflict is very important. Another important point is that the United Kingdom has long been one of the important geostrategic actors in the system of international relations. Although the UK's international influence is relatively weak in modern times, the country is still considered one of the world's power centers.

The United Kingdom is also home to concepts such as parliamentarism, democracy, liberalism, and freedom of thought, speech, and press. All these factors make the analysis of the Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the British press especially relevant. One more important fact that is worth to mention that Azerbaijan is a country rich in oil and gas reserves. This fact draws the attention of many individuals and legal entities in the United Kingdom, including BP, to Azerbaijan. The economic interests of transnational companies coincide with the development trends of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and, as a result, take different directions. Taking this into account, Azerbaijan is objectively interested in gaining access to the political and intellectual elite of the United Kingdom through these individuals and legal entities. The links of transnational companies to Azerbaijan's national security are one of the subjects of research in the British press. This, in turn, increases the relevance of the study of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the British press.

Keywords: Azerbaijan, Karabakh, British Press, Conflict, Armenia

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Друга карабаська війна через призму найвпливовішої британської преси, 27 вересня – 10 листопада 2020

Стаття присвячена аналізу висвітлення Другої Карабахської війни впливовою британською пресою. Засоби масової інформації відіграють важливу роль у формуванні думки людей про конфлікти або вплив на нього. Конфлікт між Вірменією і Азербайджаном, Нагорний Карабах - один з конфліктів, який отримав і в даний час отримує освітлення в міжнародній пресі. Освітлення в новинах має велике значення для інформування світу про те, як Вірменія вторглася і зруйнувала Карабах. А оскільки британська преса досить впливова в західних країнах і відіграє важливу роль у формуванні громадської думки, висвітлення конфлікту дуже важливо. Інший важливий момент полягає в тому, що Великобританія довгий час була одним з важливих геостратегічних гравців в системі міжнародних відносин. Хоча міжнародний вплив Великобританії в наш час відносно невелике, країна як і раніше вважається одним зі світових центрів сили. Сполучене Королівство також є батьківщиною таких понять, як парламентаризм, демократія, лібералізм і свобода думки, слова і друку. Всі ці фактори роблять особливо актуальним аналіз вірмено-азербайджанського нагірно-карабахського конфлікту в британській пресі.

Ще один важливий момент - Азербайджан - країна, багата нафтогазовими ресурсами. Цей факт привертає увагу багатьох фізичних і юридичних осіб в Великобританії, в тому числі BP, до Азербайджану. Економічні інтереси транснаціональних компаній збігаються з тенденціями розвитку нагірно-карабахського конфлікту і, як наслідок, різняться. Беручи це до уваги, Азербайджан об'єктивно зацікавлений в отриманні доступу до політичної та інтелектуальної еліти Сполученого Королівства через цих фізичних і юридичних осіб. Зв'язки транснаціональних компаній з національною безпекою Азербайджану є предметом дослідження в британській пресі. Це, в свою чергу, підвищує актуальність дослідження нагірно-карабахського конфлікту в британській пресі.

Ключові слова: Азербайджан, Карабах, британська преса, конфлікт, Вірменія

Introduction.

The British press has come a long and difficult way in its historical development. The fact that the United Kingdom is at the center of the political processes in the world, the tendencies of cooperation and confrontation between civilizations, has allowed its press to develop in different directions and gain great experience. The press, which has many positive qualities, is not far from the negative ones. However, research shows that the subject matter of the press is in direct proportion to the existing value system and the level of literacy in society. The British, who are distinguished by this level of education and literacy, prefer mainly the elite press, which allows the latter to prepare their articles in a more objective, informative and analytical form. An analysis of the British press in the forms of quasi-media democracy, media democracy and mediocracy has determined the location of the press between the last two forms. It should also be noted that, depending on international trends such as globalization and regionalization, this position can move in the direction of media democracy and media democracy.

Discussion.

The Second Karabakh War and the tripartite agreement were closely followed by the British press. On November 13, 2020, the Economist, weekly magazine of news published an article entitled "Peace Agreement puts an end to the bloody war for Nagorno-Karabakh." The article compared how the peace agreement was faced by the society in Azerbaijan and Armenia. Among the factors contributing to the agreement, the author notes that Azerbaijan raised its flag over Shusha the day before, that "a few hours later the lost and morally depressed Armenian troops" surrendered, and that Pashinian did nothing to prevent this and prepare his country for armed conflict. Azerbaijan's victory in the Second Karabakh War changed the discourse in the British press significantly. For example, referring to the history of the conflict, the author notes that the chain of events that accelerated the disintegration of the USSR and led to the First Karabakh War began in February 1988 by hundreds of Armenians gathered in Lenin Square in Khankendi and demanded unification with the Armenian SSR.

It is acknowledged that the victory of the Armenians in the First Karabakh War

was due to Russia's military assistance, not the Armenian armed forces, but "Armenia's occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as the occupation of 7 surrounding regions." The author notes the factors that made the second Karabakh war inevitable were the failure of Azerbaijan to live up to 25 years of expectations and hopes, its richer and more secure country as an oil-producing country, Turkey's growing self-confidence, Russia's unwavering commitment to Azerbaijan's progress and Turkey's participation. The article pays special attention to the analysis of Russia's unique role. Azerbaijan has rightly calculated that Russia is more concerned about the anti-Western alliance with Turkey and is not inclined to side with the government that came to power in 2018 as a result of the color revolution in Armenia. On the other hand, the article says that Azerbaijan did not want to see Russian troops in Nagorno-Karabakh because it was closely acquainted with the activities of Russian peacekeepers in Georgia. On the other hand, the continuation of this war risked a direct confrontation with Russia. According to the author, Turkey helped to solve this dilemma and persuaded Azerbaijan to agree to deploy peacekeepers.

On November 11, the influential newspaper Telegraph published an article entitled "Russia's and Turkey's tough power in the Caucasus is a wake-up call for the West." According to the article, although Azerbaijan is the undisputed winner, what is more important for the world is which major powers will benefit from it and why the West is silent, while the fate of the leading energy corridor is being decided. According to M. Almond, director of the Crisis Research Institute in Oxford, Russia has thrown away its ally, Armenia and despite the protests of the Armenian Diaspora in Paris and Los Angeles, the leaders of Western democracies did not support Armenia, which two years ago praised Armenia as the light of democracy. However, "Putin-Erdogan duo-power" proved that the real owners of the game are themselves, when it comes to power policy, not political gestures. Analyzing the direct geopolitical consequences of the conflict, the author says that as a result, Turkey has tighter control over one of the Western energy arteries, while Russia remains the only alternative route for exporting energy resources to the West due to Iran's isolation (Almond, 2020) On November 13, another



influential British newspaper, the Financial Times, published an analytical article on the end of the war. According to the main thesis of the article, "Reconciliation in the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia establishes a new regional balance between Moscow and Ankara."

The authors say that if earlier Azerbaijan looked more to the north and considered Russia as its main partner, the six-week war brought relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey to the fore. The scale of Azerbaijan's success reinforces Ankara's re-established prestige in the Caucasus region, which Russia considers its geopolitical backyard. Analyzing the geopolitical aspects of the war, Ruslan Pukhov, head of the Russian Center for Strategy and Technology Analysis, said that the geopolitical consequences of the defeat of Russia's ally and the victory of Turkey's ally were devastating not only for Armenia but also for Russia.

The bitter truth behind the thin veil of mediation and the deployment of peacekeepers in the region is that Moscow's influence in the South Caucasus region has significantly diminished, while the prestige of a successful and militant Turkey has grown incredibly. According to the article, although the agreement confirmed the necessary role of Russian President Vladimir Putin as an arbitrator, it had to pay off with the recognition of Turkey as a geopolitical player in the Caucasus. According to the authors, Azerbaijan relied on Turkey's support and took the calculated risk that Russia would not dare to intervene militarily. With its remarkable success, Baku proved that Moscow was not the only military power in the post-Soviet area that could de facto change its borders (Foy, & Pitel, 2020). On November 15, 2020, the weekly magazine "Spectator" published an article entitled "The West has abandoned Armenia and it has to care of itself". According to the main thesis of the article, "Armenians need a solution to the problem, not an agreement." To build support for Armenia, author Colin Freeman calls Armenia a "Christian democracy in a region ruled by Islamists and dictators." The article is more like a written appeal to the reader to form a supportive feeling for Armenians than a description or analysis of the facts. K. Freeman states that Nagorno-Karabakh is a sacred concept for Armenians, noting that the population of 150,000 is always

ready for war, and when the war began in late September, about ten thousand Armenians voluntarily took up arms. Although the author formally affirms that Nagorno-Karabakh is part of Azerbaijan, he calls Azerbaijan's control over Shusha and other liberated territories as "occupation". Noting Azerbaijan's promises to the Armenians of Karabakh for a more prosperous life, the author recalled the case of Ramil Safarov, concluding his article by the Armenians' disbelief in Azerbaijan's promises (Freeman, 2020).

The tripartite agreement also attracted the attention of another influential newspaper, The Times. On November 10, The Times published an article about hundreds of Armenians attacking the parliament building after a tripartite agreement. The article noted that Armenians chanted, "resign" or "reject" in the meeting hall, dissatisfied with the terms of the agreement, and that the police could not prevent it (Bennetts, 2020).

On November 11, the Times called the ceasefire agreement and the deployment of "Russian troops" in Nagorno-Karabakh a "bitter peace." The Times called the agreement a capitulation for Armenia, saying it changed the map of the South Caucasus permanently and radically (The Times view, 2020). On the same day, Mark Bennett published an article on the deployment of Russian peacekeepers in Nagorno-Karabakh. On November 26, Gareth Brown published an article entitled "The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: The Withdrawal of Armenians by Burning Their Lands Has Nothing for Azerbaijani Winners." The article states that the Armenians took what they could take with them and burned the rest "as a last protest against undesirable foreign military forces" (Browne, 2020).

The article published on December 16, "Nagorno-Karabakh: Invaluable Christian Artifacts in Danger," by giving as an example the destruction of the ancient city of Palmyra by ISIS, called on the world community to support Armenia and put pressure on Azerbaijan under the guise of protecting Armenian Christian monuments. "The world is on the verge of another cultural and humanitarian catastrophe that, if left uncontrolled, could be more devastating than ISIS's brutal attack on history in the Middle East five years ago" (Box, 2020).

In order to delve deeper into the coverage of the Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the British press, it is expedient to analyze the images accompanying the articles. According to the famous modern American photographer Philip-Lork Di Corsia: "Photography is a foreign language that everyone thinks they speak." In addition to the "text display system", which expresses the objective reality, we can talk about the "photo re-display system", which includes the replacement of the object with the intended means. In other words, a photograph that embodies the form of a re-demonstration involves filling any object with a certain meaning.

Photography is characterized by the strengthening of connections, as well as the creation of new relationships that do not necessarily require the presence of reality (Fotografiya kak tekst, 2019). Although it is desirable to study a large number of photographs in order to better understand the details of the event, it is also possible to convey the essence to the reader on the basis of a single photograph. The key point here is the selection of a photograph that can stimulate the imagination, memory, and emotions, as well as lead the viewer to deep reflection (Kak «govorit» fotografiya, 2019).

For example, on November 12, 2014, the Guardian newspaper published an article entitled "Armenian military helicopter shot down by Azerbaijani forces, killing three people." Although the article was written on November 12, the image showed Azerbaijani tanks moving in the direction of Agdam in August. Since the tank is an offensive military equipment, the convoy of Azerbaijani tanks moving in the direction of Agdam instills in the viewer the idea that Azerbaijan intends to carry out an offensive operation. However, the combination of the November article with the August photo is intended to draw the reader's attention to the fact that Azerbaijan has systematically carried out offensive measures.

It should be noted that the same picture was reflected in the letter titled "Armenia erases the cultural heritage of Azerbaijan" by the Azerbaijani Ambassador Tahir Tagizade, published in the "Guardian", which was completely excluded from military operations, just related to the protection of cultural heritage. Despite the ambassador's arguments

in the article about Armenia's destruction of Azerbaijan's cultural heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh, the picture creates an ambiguous, dissonant position on the essence of the issue. It should be noted that the American sociologist and photographer Douglas Harper says that the parts of the brain that process visual information are evolutionarily older than the parts that process verbal information. For this reason, unlike images, words and sentences, it mobilizes wider areas of the brain by addressing the deeper layers of the human mind (Fotografiya kak tekst, 2019).

The famous French semiotician Roland Barthes considers the distinction between natural language and descriptive language to be an important historical turning point: "Description no longer illustrates the word by itself; from a structural point of view, the word itself lives a parasitic life on the image; ... in the past, the image itself illustrated the text, but now the text itself complicates the description, loading it with culture, spirituality, imagination" (Fotografiya kak tekst, 2019). In this regard, it is expedient to refer to the picture described in Thomas de Waal's October 11, 2015 article in Politico entitled "Loss of Control in the Caucasus." The article was followed by the caption, "In Shusha, children are playing among buildings destroyed more than 20 years ago." (Waal, 2015) Although the article deals with different aspects of the conflict, the fact that several generations of children spend their free time near buildings that were destroyed 20 years ago and have not yet been rebuilt due to the conflict, loads the analytical article with cultural, spiritual, emotional and empathic images.

Unlike the pro-Armenian Guardian newspaper, the Daily Mail also selects and describes the images in its articles on the basis of objectivity. The article dated April 2, 2016, featured a picture of a Jiguli car destroyed in the Tartar region with many dark bullet marks and blood stains. Other photos showed an Azerbaijani helicopter shot down by Armenians. Another image depicts an unexploded artillery shell on the ground. According to the caption to the photo, the Azerbaijani Defense Ministry said that the military operations began after the Armenian forces opened fire along the front line with mines and large-caliber artillery shells. Thus, the compliance between the described



image and the words of the Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan is determined, and the reader's thinking is directed in a specific objective direction (Calderwood, 2016).

The newspaper performs its role as a "demonstrator" very professionally. For example, an article published on April 3, 2016, entitled "The Associated Press Explains: The Roots of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict," is accompanied by a description of a shot down Azerbaijani helicopter and an article commenting on its "collapse in the separatist Nagorno-Karabakh region." Elsewhere, in Stepanakert, a separatist region of Nagorno-Karabakh, doctors at a hospital treated 12-year-old Gevorg Grigoryan, who was wounded in a rocket attack (The roots of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, 2016). Thus, the newspaper did not use the photos for manipulation purposes but reflected the details of the events with pictures of both parties to the conflict. This objective principle was justified in an article published on April 5. The photos accompanying the article include a photo of Armenian soldier Sasun Mkrtchyan, who died in the separatist region on April 4, 2016, but buried in Yerevan. The next picture shows a destroyed house in the village of Mardakert.

On April 3, another photo showed Armenian soldiers firing grad missiles in the village of Mardakert. In other photos, it was described the mourning of 12-year-old Vagarshak Grigoryan on April 4, who died on April 2 in the separatist village of Martuni in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. Along with the description of the damage suffered by the Armenian people from the conflict, the offensive operations of the parties are reflected in the pictures too. It should be noted that only one of the photos shows Azerbaijan's firing from Grad missiles on April 3. The comments to the photo also note that "Nagorno-Karabakh, which is part of Azerbaijan, was controlled by local ethnic Armenian forces and the Armenian military after the 1994 war." All other photos show the military activity of Armenians. The photo on April 3 shows Armenian soldiers standing near the grad missile system in the "separatist village of Mardakert in the Nagorno-Karabakh region." Another image shows Armenian forces firing artillery at the village of Mardakert in the separatist Nagorno-Karabakh region. "Narrative" means an image that reflects the

vector of action from one person (actor) to another (purpose).

The action vector can manifest itself in the form of observation or action. Based on the terms of Cress and Van Lewen, we can divide the image not only into narrative and non-narrative, but also into active and passive participants, those who act and those who act on it (Kak «govorit» fotografiya, 2019). Looking through these images from this perspective, given the superiority of Armenia's depiction of offensive weapons, the following narrative can be suggested: the Azerbaijani side responded to the Armenian attack with a counterattack, causing casualties on the Armenian military and civilian side. The study led to several interesting conclusions. The study found that the Herald Scotland was the only media outlet to cover the 1988-1992 conflict. The generalization and analysis of the Herald Scotland articles show that the aggressor is Armenia. The published articles revealed that Armenia did not want to take into account the existing legal procedures within the USSR, called on the decisions of official Moscow, and thus engaged in such separatism within the USSR. One of the most influential newspaper-The Independent coverage of the events of the war phase analyzed the atrocities committed by Armenians against Azerbaijanis, the consequences of the occupation, as well as internal and external trends on both sides.

Following the ceasefire, several important changes took place in the British media's approach to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Initially, the conflict was covered not only by the Herald Scotland and the Independent, but also by almost all major newspapers and magazines. The second important point is that the information is written not only by British journalists, but also by journalists with whom the media cooperates on the ground. Sometimes the articles were written by two journalists, one from Baku and the other from Yerevan, and the editorial board combined them into a single article and published it. It should be noted that the article was prepared and published in the British press not only with the help of Azerbaijani and Armenian journalists, but also by journalists from third countries who are familiar with the conflict. The third point to note is that the data is large but inconsistent. The information appeared more and more unsystematically from time to time due to different events in one or another media outlet.

Result.

The most important result of the research is that different media outlets have different approaches to the conflict. Observations of articles published in the Guardian show that the editorial staff is constantly subjective in its coverage of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, presenting the events incompletely and usually from the perspective of Armenia's interests. The Guardian newspaper tends to portray Armenia as "good" and Azerbaijan as "bad" in its articles on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The Guardian newspaper demonstrates its antipathetic stance against Azerbaijan not only in its texts, but also in its published images.

As a result of the research, it was determined that the "Economist" was also biased against Azerbaijan. Unlike the Guardian and the Economist, the influential Daily Mail takes an objective view of the situation and reflects Azerbaijan's just position in the conflict. In its texts, the "Daily Tendency" refers to "separatist organization", "leaders of rebel forces", "broken territory" and so on in relation to Karabakh. Using terms like these to convey to the reader that the separatist regime is not an independent state. It should be noted that the objectivity of the newspaper is clearly seen not only in the texts, but also in the photographs accompanying the texts.

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