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AZERBAIJAN-KYRGYZSTAN

RELATIONS AND KYRGYZ'S MEDIA REFLECTIONS OF THE SECOND KARABAKH WAR

LAS RELACIONES ENTRE AZERBAIYÁN Y KIRGUISTÁN Y LOS MEDIOS DE COMUNICACIÓN KIRGUIOS: REFLEXIONES SOBRE LA SEGUNDA GUERRA DE KARABAJ

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ABSTRACT

Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan have emerged as significant players in the Turkic world following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The relationships between both countries, based on deep historical and cultural ties, illustrate the importance of ethnic and cultural connections in shaping contemporary regional dynamics. While there are studies on Turkic country's cooperation in general, there is a lack of specific research on the nature and scope of Azerbaijan-Kyrgyzstan relations. Furthermore, the role of the media in shaping perceptions of significant regional events has not been sufficiently explored in this context. Therefore, this study aims to examine the deep-rooted relationships between Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan, emphasizing the historical roots of their political, economic, and cultural ties. Additionally, it analyzes the stance of Kyrgyzstan's media on the Second Karabakh War to understand its perspective and influence on the regional perception of the conflict. The research revealed that the relationships between both countries have strengthened playing a crucial role in the regional dynamics. Moreover, the analysis of selected media content from Kyrgyzstan provides insights into the country's perspective on the Second Karabakh War, revealing how media can influence the understanding and regional discourse on significant events.

Keywords: Azerbaijan-Kyrgyzstan relations, Second Karabakh War, Kyrgyzstan media.

RESUMEN

Azerbaiyán y Kirguistán han emergido como actores importantes en el mundo túrquico tras la disolución de la Unión Soviética. Las relaciones entre ambos países, basadas en profundos lazos históricos y culturales, ilustran la importancia de las conexiones étnicas y culturales en la configuración de la dinámica regional contemporánea. Si bien existen estudios sobre la cooperación de los países túrquicos en general, existe una falta de investigación específica sobre la naturaleza y el alcance de las relaciones entre Azerbaiyán y Kirguistán. Además, el papel de los medios de comunicación en la configuración de las percepciones de eventos regionales significativos no se ha explorado suficientemente en este contexto. Por lo tanto, este estudio tiene como objetivo examinar las relaciones profundamente arraigadas entre Azerbaiyán y Kirguistán, enfatizando las raíces históricas de sus vínculos políticos, económicos y culturales. Además, se analiza la postura de los medios de comunicación de Kirguistán sobre la Segunda Guerra de Karabaj para comprender su perspectiva e influencia en la percepción regional del conflicto. La investigación reveló que las relaciones entre ambos países se han fortalecido y desempeñan un papel crucial en la dinámica regional. Además, el análisis de contenidos mediáticos seleccionados de Kirguistán proporciona información sobre la perspectiva del país sobre la Segunda Guerra de Karabaj y revela cómo los medios pueden influir en la comprensión y el discurso regional sobre acontecimientos importantes.

Palabras clave: Relaciones entre Azerbaiyán y Kirguistán, Segunda Guerra de Karabaj, Medios de comunicación de Kirguistán.

INTRODUCTION

The dissolution of the Soviet Union had a huge impact on geopolitics around the world, and its effects are seen even today (Kramer, 2022). One of the most important changes was the emergence of different republics that gained their independence. In this context, relations between Azerbaijan and other Turkic countries gained importance both at the bilateral level and in the context of broad cooperation between Turkish states. Various agreements and cooperation protocols have been signed among the countries playing an important role in strengthening these relations (Keser et al., 2022; Tufaner, 2022). Multilateral platforms such as the Turkic Council have contributed to the further deepening of relations. Thanks to these platforms, cooperation between the two countries has developed not only in the region but also in the international arena. Such platforms, which represent the common values and interests of the Turkish world, have made significant contributions to countries achieve their common goals (Çetinkaya & Demirel, 2024).

However, the 2020 Second Karabakh War reshaped regional dynamics in the South Caucasus, particularly affecting Azerbaijan's relationships with other nations. The conflict highlighted and strengthened the Azerbaijan-Turkey alliance, with Turkey providing crucial military and diplomatic support based on their shared Turkic heritage and mutual interests (Kurban & Ergun, 2021; Papazian, 2024). Azerbaijan's military success facilitated closer ties between Azerbaijan and other Turkic nations like Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. However, the war also created diplomatic challenges for Azerbaijan, especially with countries having significant Armenian populations (Makili-Aliyev, 2023). For instance, Ukraine adopted neutrality to manage its internal demographic complexities. The conflict has effectively redrawn the diplomatic map of the South Caucasus, establishing new alliances while straining other relationships. This shift represents a significant change in regional geopolitics, with implications for future interactions between local countries and major powers in the area (Pashayan & Navasardyan, 2024; Uzer, 2024).

But in general, the Second Karabakh War brought the relations between Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan even closer. Kyrgyzstan media followed the developments of this conflict closely and provided extensive news coverage on this subject. The results of the war and Azerbaijan's victory were generally reflected positively in media outlets in Kyrgyzstan, emphasizing Azerbaijan's right to protect its territorial integrity. This contributed to the further strengthening of Azerbaijan-Kyrgyz relations and increased the

potential for future cooperation contributing to the stability and development of the region as a whole.

Thus, Kyrgyzstan's multidimensional foreign policy approach has had a significant impact on its relations with Azerbaijan, reflecting a strategy that seeks to balance its regional and global interests. Kyrgyzstan has promoted cooperation within regional organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the Commonwealth of Independent States. This approach has facilitated closer dialogue with Azerbaijan, enabling collaboration on security and economic development issues. Kyrgyzstan has sought to diversify its international relations, establishing links not only with neighboring countries but also with powers such as China and Russia. This diversification has allowed Azerbaijan to view Kyrgyzstan as a potential partner in the region, especially in the context of infrastructure and energy projects. Both countries share interests in the economic sphere, especially in the energy sector. Moreover, Kyrgyzstan has fostered cultural and educational exchanges with Azerbaijan, which has contributed to strengthening ties between both countries. These exchanges have helped to build a foundation of mutual understanding and long-term cooperation (Çuhadar & Bulğurcu, 2023; Merve & Yi, 2024).

Taking the above into account, the objective of this research is to explore the relationship between the states of Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan within the broader context of Turkic cooperation. It also investigates the role of Kyrgyz media in shaping perceptions of the Second Karabakh War. The research employs a dual methodological approach: first, it conducts a comprehensive analysis of bilateral relations, relying on historical documents, economic data, and cultural exchanges to establish the depth and nature of the ties between Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan. Second, it utilizes content analysis of selected Kyrgyz media outlets to discern patterns in the coverage and framing of the Second Karabakh War. This mixed-method approach allows for a nuanced understanding of both the tangible aspects of bilateral cooperation and the intangible influence of media narratives on regional perceptions, contributing to a more holistic view of Turkic world dynamics and the role of media in shaping regional discourse.

DEVELOPMENT

Development perspectives of bilateral relations between the Republics of Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan

Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan are countries with similar roots and values. At the same time, the fact that both countries were among the centrally governed allied republics within the Soviet Union united them within the framework of

similar administrative structures and ideological foundations. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, both countries declared their independence and entered into similar processes to determine their fates. After this, relations between Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan began to strengthen even more (Turan, 2019). The first official diplomatic relations were established between Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan on January 19th, 1993. Azerbaijan's National Leader Heydar Aliyev made a special effort to develop these relations. He emphasized his determination to strengthen relations between the two countries during his meeting with Kyrgyz President Askar Akayev at the Council of Heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) held in Turkmenistan in December 1993, and this was one of the important steps taken towards supporting strategic cooperation. In addition, Heydar Aliyev's visit to Kyrgyzstan in 1995 to participate in the III Summit Meeting of Heads of States of Turkic-speaking countries was an important step not only in strengthening bilateral relations but also in developing regional cooperation and solidarity. Following that, on April 23rd, 1997, Kyrgyz President Askar Akayev made his first official visit to Azerbaijan at the invitation of Azerbaijani President Heydar Aliyev. Askar Akayev also took part in the International Conference on the revival of the Historical Silk Road within the scope of the TRACECA program held in Baku on September 7-8, 1998 (ALIYEVHERITAGE, 2010).

The friendship and cooperation agreements signed between Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan in 1997 and 1998 reflected the aims of the two countries to establish closer relations with each other at that time. During this period, relations between Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan developed mainly within the context of mutual cooperation in regional integration platforms such as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Council of Turkic-speaking States. Specifically, Askar Akayev participated in the VI Summit Meeting of Heads of States of Turkic-speaking Countries held in Baku on April 8-9, 2000, and in the celebrations of the 1300th anniversary of the epic "Kitabi-Dede Korkut." In addition, at the Council of Heads of State meeting of the participating countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) held in Moscow on January 25, 2000, at the Summit Meeting of Turkic-Speaking Countries held in Istanbul on April 26-27, 2001, and at the informal meeting of the Heads of State of the CIS countries in Sochi on August 1-3, 2001, President of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliyev met with President Askar Akayev. This process created a fundamental basis that would allow bilateral relations to deepen in the future (Özsoy, 2019, p. 758). Over time, relations between the countries became stronger, and diplomatic relations based on mutual cooperation and agreement were

established. Kyrgyzstan's appointment of an honorary consul to Azerbaijan on April 1st, 2002, played an important role in deepening these relations. At the same time, since that date, broader cooperation opportunities have emerged between the two countries in the economic, cultural, and trade fields. Subsequently, on December 10th, 2003, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev met with the President of Kyrgyzstan Askar Akayev during the World Summit on the Information Society held in Geneva. During this meeting, the President of Kyrgyzstan, referring to the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, stated, "We support the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, and we will continue this stance." Within the framework of the VIII Summit Meeting of Heads of States of Turkic-speaking Countries held in Antalya on November 17th, 2006, President Ilham Aliyev also met with the President of Kyrgyzstan Kurmanbek Bakiev.

Later, the opening of the embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan in Kyrgyzstan on May 16th, 2007, became a symbol of diplomatic relations taking a step forward and allowing for an increase in mutual trust. The visit of Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiev to Nakhchivan to attend the Summit Meeting of Turkic-speaking Heads of State on October 3rd, 2009, gave a new impetus to the development of relations. The establishment of the Turkic Council based on the Nakhchivan Agreement within the framework of the meeting aimed to promote economic, cultural, and political cooperation between Turkic-speaking countries.

After 2010, a new era began in Azerbaijan-Kyrgyzstan relations. Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambayev's business trip to Azerbaijan on March 30-31, 2012, aimed to further strengthen diplomatic relations and increase cooperation between the two countries. During the visit, Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambayev met with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and exchanged views on regional and international issues as well as bilateral relations. During Atambayev's visit to Azerbaijan, steps were taken to increase cooperation in areas such as energy, trade, and investment, and agreements were signed between the two countries to evaluate the potential in these fields and prepare joint projects. This was one of the important steps taken towards deepening friendly relations between the two countries and increasing mutual understanding between their peoples.

President of Kyrgyzstan Almazbek Atambayev visited Azerbaijan again to attend the III Summit of the Cooperation Council of Turkic-speaking States from August 14-16, 2013. During this visit, Atambayev participated in various events aimed at strengthening cultural relations and spreading friendship between peoples. One of the issues that was particularly focused on during the

visit was the projects and joint initiatives that could be realized within the framework of the Cooperation Council of Turkic-speaking States. In this context, Atambayev took initiatives to increase Kyrgyzstan's cooperation with other Turkic-speaking countries (Republic of Azerbaijan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014).

Almazbek Atambayev's decree dated October 24th, 2014, which included the opening of an embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic in the Republic of Azerbaijan, reflected the concrete result of these initiatives. The opening of the embassy allowed for the establishment of solid relations between the two countries and the realization of cooperation more efficiently. Thus, the diplomatic missions operating mutually in both countries have played an important role in issues such as increasing trade and investments, strengthening cultural relations, and determining strategic cooperation areas. Following that, the visits of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, to the Kyrgyz Republic on September 16th, 2016, and September 3rd, 2018, were considered an important step towards strengthening friendship and cooperation between the two countries. These visits reflected the desire of both leaders to share mutual interests and further deepen bilateral relations. They contributed to strengthening relations between Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan not only at the state level but also among their peoples. Strengthening trust and understanding between the countries has created new opportunities for identifying joint projects and strategic cooperation areas (APA reports, 2023).

After the visits of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, the official visit of the new President of the Kyrgyz Republic, Sadyr Djaparov, to Azerbaijan on April 20th, 2022, was a remarkable event in further strengthening cooperation between the two countries. This visit represented an important stage of strategic cooperation between Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan. The signing of a total of ten documents during the visit showed that the multifaceted cooperation between Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan covers not only certain areas but also many different fields, such as culture, trade, and education. These documents have strengthened mutual interests between the two countries while also contributing to the creation of a broader cooperation network at regional and international levels. Most recently, the official visit of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev to Kyrgyzstan on October 11th, 2022, further deepened cooperation between the two countries and strengthened diplomatic and cultural relations through the openings and events held. The decision to jointly establish the Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan Development Fund has been one of the important steps taken to make economic

cooperation between the two countries more efficient and sustainable (Qurbanqizi, 2022).

Moreover, on October 12th, 2023, President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev made an official visit to Kyrgyzstan to attend the meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and at the same time, he met with the President of Kyrgyzstan Sadyr Djaparov in Baku on November 24th, 2023. During this meeting, the President of Kyrgyzstan conveyed his congratulations to President Ilham Aliyev and the Azerbaijani people on the occasion of the restoration of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan, stating that this creates new opportunities for peace and stability in the South Caucasus. The President of Kyrgyzstan also offered his congratulations on the 100th anniversary of the National Leader of the Azerbaijani people, Heydar Aliyev, and expressed his appreciation for the monument erected in Baku in honor of the elder son of the Kyrgyz people, Chingiz Aitmatov (APA reports, 2023). On April 24th, 2024, the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, Sadyr Japarov, again paid a state visit to the Republic of Azerbaijan. During the visit, he met with the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, participated in the 2nd meeting of the Interstate Council of Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan, signed joint documents, made statements to the press, visited the Fuzuli and Aghdam regions, which were liberated from occupation, and attended the joint foundation-laying ceremony of the secondary school in the Khidirli village. The Azertaj information agency considered this an indicator of the unbreakable brotherly relations between the two countries (AZERTAC, 2024).

The current cooperation between Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan is further deepening in the economic, commercial, cultural, and diplomatic fields, providing important opportunities for regional and international cooperation. The recent visits of Kyrgyz President Sadyr Djaparov and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev indicate that cooperation between the two countries will continue to expand. These visits enable important steps to be taken toward consolidating peace and stability in the region, as well as in energy, trade, education, and cultural cooperation.

Characteristic features of Kyrgyzstan media structure

After the Tsarist period, many publications emerged in Kyrgyzstan as products of Soviet propaganda. The first newspaper published in Kyrgyz Turkish was the "Erkin-Too" newspaper, which was published in Tashkent in 1924. This newspaper aimed to influence the Kyrgyz people for educational purposes in line with Kyrgyzstan's struggle for independence and Soviet ideology. After 1927, by the decision of the Provincial Committee of the Kyrgyz

Communist Party, its scope was expanded, and the publication was transformed into a republic newspaper, beginning to be called "Red Kyrgyzstan." Thus, the "Red Kyrgyzstan" newspaper undertook the mission of spreading Soviet propaganda, trying to instill socialist ideals in the Kyrgyz people, and continued to be published until 1956 (Temir, 2021, pp. 163–164).

The first radio station in Kyrgyzstan was established in 1931 based on the decision of the Central Executive Board of the Radio Broadcasting Committee dated December 19. The improvement in the quality of radio broadcasts toward the end of 1932 marked an important period in the media landscape of Kyrgyzstan. However, as in the entire Soviet Union, Kyrgyzstan Radio was also affected by the Second World War in the 1940s. During this period, radio became an important platform for propaganda and promotion efforts. Radio was used to increase Kyrgyz's participation in the war and to strengthen Soviet ideology. During this time, Kyrgyz Radio continued its development despite the difficulties of the war and maintained its existence as an important means of communication in Kyrgyzstan after the war.

The beginning of television broadcasting in Kyrgyzstan coincided with 1958. While the broadcast time of Kyrgyzstan television was only five hours in 1960, this period increased rapidly and reached 120 hours by 1976. During this period, television's reach to a wide audience in Kyrgyzstan increased society's exchange of information and allowed the media to play a more effective role in people's daily lives (Temir, 2021, pp. 164–165).

In general, during the Soviet period, the Kyrgyz media operated under the control of the Soviet administration and was seen as one of the main propaganda tools. Newspapers, magazines, radio, and television programs consisted of content that highlighted the "achievements" of Soviet socialism, praised the leadership of the Communist Party, and constantly called on society to embrace revolutionary ideology. During this period, Kyrgyz media also tended to move away from Kyrgyz culture and generally broadcast in Russian. This situation caused the local language and culture to fall into the background and increased the Russian influence.

After gaining independence, Kyrgyzstan's media rapidly developed and underwent a significant evolutionary process. The first private television channels, "Piramida" and "Osh-TV," began operating during this time. Under the influence of the new political and economic order, the Kyrgyz media adopted an independent and critical stance, striving to examine the activities of the government and other centers of power while providing accurate information

to the public. This environment allowed the Kyrgyz media to play a crucial role in the transition to democracy. However, from 1993 to 1995, serious changes occurred in the relationship between the media and the government in Kyrgyzstan. During this period, major media companies, such as KOORT (Kyrgyz Social Education Radio and TV), NBT (Independent Bishkek TV), Rabu Radio, and Ak am Bishkek, came under the control of individuals close to the government.

Between 1999 and 2004, significant changes in media ownership took place, leading to a redistribution and concentration of media assets in the country. This reshaping of media ownership accelerated with the establishment of media holdings, which maintained an influential position by combining various media organizations. These mergers facilitated more efficient use of media resources and coordinated management of diverse media channels, enhancing their ability to influence public opinion by reaching larger audiences. After 2005, the media sector in Kyrgyzstan experienced rapid development due to factors such as digitalization, increased internet usage, and the spread of new communication technologies. This digitalization process significantly enhanced the potential of Kyrgyz media to reach and engage a broader audience. During this period, local and independent media organizations also gained strength, playing a more active role in societal affairs and emerging as key players in promoting democratic values, transparency, and accountability (Asanbekova, 2016).

According to the State Statistics Committee of Kyrgyzstan, as of 2020, approximately 1,800 organizations operated within the media sector, reflecting an increase of around 18% over the previous five years. Notable printed publications in Kyrgyzstan include "Kyrgyzstan Tusu," "Slovo Kirgizstana," "Erkin-Too," "Vecherniy Bishkek," "Kutbilim," "Super-Info," and "Avtogid." Additionally, there are 126 independent broadcasting companies, such as the "National Radio and Television Center," "New Television Network," "Independent Bishkek Television," "Piramida" radio center, and "Europe," which contribute to media diversity in Kyrgyzstan (Turdubaeva, 2021).

The Kyrgyz government also partners in numerous projects to support and develop the media sector. For instance, Bishkek hosted the fifth meeting of ministers and senior officials from the Organization of Turkic States responsible for media and information issues on October 17th, 2023. This meeting served as a platform to strengthen cooperation in media and information among member countries. High-level officials exchanged views on implementing joint media projects and enhancing regional collaboration. This gathering reinforced Kyrgyzstan's commitment

to becoming an effective actor in the media sector, both nationally and regionally, and reflected the country's aim to promote media diversity (Tayfur, 2023).

The reflection of the second Karabakh war in the Kyrgyzstan media

Kyrgyzstan distinguished itself as a proactive mediator during the First Karabakh War, undertaking significant efforts to facilitate conflict resolution. Between March 31st and April 3rd, 1994, the chairman of the Supreme Council of Kyrgyzstan, alongside a special representative from the Russian presidency within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), visited Baku, Yerevan, and Khankendi to initiate negotiations among the conflicting parties. Subsequently, from May 2nd to May 5th, representatives from the Kyrgyz parliament and the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs convened the leaders of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and the former Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region, taking crucial steps towards ensuring peace. The Bishkek Protocol, signed on May 5th, 1994, as a result of these negotiations, led to a ceasefire agreement among the parties involved, significantly reducing tensions in the region and halting the conflict (Aslanli, 2015, p. 83).

During the Second Karabakh War, which began on September 27th, 2020, Kyrgyzstan expressed its concerns and called for negotiations among the relevant parties. In a statement issued the day after the war commenced, the Kyrgyz Ministry of Foreign Affairs indicated that Kyrgyzstan was prepared to assume a mediating role in addressing the conflict, drawing upon its historical experience in such matters (Öztopal, 2021, p. 224).

Even before the war commenced, an article titled "Kyrgyzstan recognizes Nagorno-Karabakh as an integral part of Azerbaijan" was published on the "24. kg" news portal on May 4th, 2020. This article, based on an interview with Bakyt Yusupov, the temporary affairs representative of the Kyrgyz Republic in Azerbaijan, stated that Kyrgyzstan endorsed the four UN Security Council resolutions from 1993 that recognized Nagorno-Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan. In this context, Yusupov emphasized the importance of resolving the issue peacefully and diplomatically, grounded in the principles and norms of international law. The article also highlighted Yusupov's perspectives on the growth and expansion of bilateral cooperation and the historically mutually beneficial relations between Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan. He noted the significant progress in Kyrgyzstan-Azerbaijan relations and indicated that both countries support each other and collaborate within organizations such as the UN, the Commonwealth

of Independent States, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

Following the outbreak of hostilities, an article titled "Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh: The Azerbaijani Embassy Announced Its Position" appeared on the same news portal on September 29th, 2020. It reported the declaration of a military situation in Nagorno-Karabakh and the onset of conflicts in the region. The article included statements from the Azerbaijani Ministry of Defense, which asserted that the Azerbaijani army had launched a counter-offensive to protect civilians after Armenia bombed residential areas in the Terter, Cebayil, and Fuzuli regions. The article also expressed opinions regarding the illegal settlement policy of the Armenian forces in Azerbaijani territories, emphasizing that Azerbaijan was merely defending its interests and that Nagorno-Karabakh is historically Azerbaijani territory. Furthermore, it was notably stressed that the diplomatic mission recognized Nagorno-Karabakh as an integral part of Azerbaijan and called for the withdrawal of Armenian armed forces from the occupied regions, as stipulated in the four UN Security Council resolutions.

In another article published by the news portal on October 12, the history of the conflict was examined, detailing Azerbaijan's loss of control over Nagorno-Karabakh during the military conflict between the two republics from 1992 to 1994, the activities of the OSCE Minsk Group established in 1992, and information about the "Bishkek Protocol." The article also included a statement from the foreign ministers of the Russian Federation, Azerbaijan, and Armenia, highlighting the Azerbaijani Embassy in Kyrgyzstan's media sensitivity during the war. It reported on the bombing of Azerbaijan's Aghdam and Terter regions by Armenian forces and sabotage attempts in the Hadrut and Jabrayil directions, despite a ceasefire being declared for the exchange of prisoners of war and other detainees.

In the article titled "Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh: Another Statement from the Azerbaijani Embassy," published on the "24. kg" news portal on October 28th, 2020, attention was drawn to a statement from the Azerbaijani embassy in Kyrgyzstan. The article reported that, according to the diplomatic representation, as a result of a missile attack by Armenian armed forces on the Barda region of Azerbaijan on October 27th, four civilians lost their lives, and 13 others, including women and children, were seriously injured. The Embassy emphasized that the political and military leadership of Armenia bore responsibility for the anti-human crimes committed against the civilian population of Azerbaijan and called on the international community to adopt a decisive stance in holding the perpetrators accountable.

In another article published on November 10th, 2020, the news portal discussed the latest developments in Nagorno-Karabakh and the mass protests in Armenia that ensued following the ceasefire agreement brokered by Russia. The article noted that protests in Yerevan were led by crowds demanding the continuation of hostilities in Nagorno-Karabakh and that protesters entered the parliament building, insisting on the resumption of conflict. The details of the ceasefire agreement reached through Russia on November 10th were elaborated upon, with some of its key provisions listed.

Based on various articles from the “24. kg” news portal, it appears that the Kyrgyz media adopted an objective and comprehensive approach to the Second Karabakh War. Kyrgyzstan’s media generally expressed views urging the conflicting parties to reach an agreement and engage in negotiations, while also sharing opinions that the official stance of Bishkek and messages from certain diplomats fostered diverse reactions within society. Although not officially stated, local press sources, recalling the interview given to Azertaj in May 2020 by Bakyt Yusupov, Deputy Chargé d’affaires of Kyrgyzstan in Azerbaijan, noted that such views on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict had been expressed on various platforms previously and pointed out that Kyrgyzstan maintains a neutral position on this issue.

The Kyrgyzstan branch of “Freedom” Radio has been a significant media organization addressing the Second Karabakh War. On September 29th, 2020, the article titled “Baku and Yerevan accused each other of escalating the conflict in Karabakh,” published on the official website of the Kyrgyzstan office of Radio “Ozgurluk,” highlighted that martial law and mobilization were declared in both countries, with the Armenian government imposing travel restrictions on men aged 18-55. In Azerbaijan, the article noted that popular social networks and messaging apps were blocked during the escalation of the conflict, aimed at preventing provocations from Armenia (AZATYK.ORG, 2020a). A comprehensive article titled “Bishkek Offered Mediation in the Resolution of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict,” published on October 1st, 2020, included a statement from the Kyrgyz Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressing concern over the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh. The statement called for the parties to exercise common sense and emphasized Kyrgyzstan’s preference for a peaceful resolution through negotiations, respecting sovereignty and territorial integrity. The article provided historical context regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, summarizing events from 1988 to the Bishkek Protocol signed in 1994. It also featured comments from Asker Beshimov, the former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyzstan,

who expressed skepticism about the possibility of mediation in the current climate. The article noted that while Kyrgyzstan maintains a neutral official position, conflicting messages from diplomats lead to public confusion. For instance, Bakyt Yusupov, Kyrgyzstan’s temporary affairs deputy in Azerbaijan, stated that Kyrgyzstan supports a peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict based on international norms, highlighting that Nagorno-Karabakh is an integral part of Azerbaijan. Expert opinions on the matter were also included in the discussion.

In another article titled “Trump, Putin and Macron Urge to Stop the Conflict in Karabakh,” it was noted that the presidents of the USA, Russia, and France issued a joint statement regarding the situation in the unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (AZATYK.ORG, 2020d). The article reported that these leaders called on the Azerbaijani army to immediately halt the clashes that had persisted for five days between Karabakh’s armed forces and the Armenian army, urging negotiations between Baku and Yerevan. It also mentioned that numerous casualties had occurred within days of the conflict’s onset and provided context on the origins of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, including the secession demands of the Armenian population in Azerbaijan, which sparked large-scale hostilities from 1992 to 1994 (AZATYK.ORG, 2020b). In another piece titled “Azerbaijani Army ‘Progressed on Many Fronts,’” published on October 25th, 2020, on the official website of the Kyrgyz office of Radio “Ozgurluk,” it was reported, based on information from the TASS agency, that President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan opposed the internationalization of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, advocating for a diplomatic resolution (AZATYK.ORG, 2020c).

The article includes a statement from the Azerbaijani Ministry of Defense made on the morning of October 25th, 2020, which reported that the Azerbaijani army was making advances on multiple fronts within the conflict zone. It noted ongoing conflicts in the Agdere, Hocavend, Füzuli, Hadrut, Kubadli, and Laçin regions, with clashes of varying intensity and the neutralization of numerous military vehicles belonging to the Armenian army. Another article titled “Ilham Aliyev: ‘If Armenia Does Not Accept Baku’s Conditions, Azerbaijan Will Go to the End in Karabakh,’” published on November 8th, 2020, highlighted Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev’s assertion that military operations in Nagorno-Karabakh would continue if the Armenian administration did not accept Baku’s terms. The article emphasized Aliyev’s firm stance against Armenia’s failure to withdraw from occupied territories, reporting that Azerbaijani forces had liberated over 200 settlements, including Fuzuli, Jabrayil, Zengilan, Kubadli, and Shusha, since September 27th. Additionally, it included

statements from the Ministry of Defense of the unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, which reported heavy losses in clashes with Azerbaijani Armed Forces during the night (AZATYK.ORG, 2020c).

In the article titled “Demonstrators Protesting the End of the War in Karabakh Entered the Armenian Government Building,” published on November 10, 2020, it was reported that demonstrators objected to certain articles of the ceasefire agreement signed by Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, and Russian President Vladimir Putin. The article mentioned the protesters’ entrance into the Armenian government building and briefly discussed the agreement, stating that Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding regions had been under Armenian occupation since the early 1990s, with Azerbaijan launching a counteroffensive to reclaim the area in September (AZATYK.ORG, 2020d).

The articles indicate that the Kyrgyzstan office of “Freedom” Radio closely monitored the Second Karabakh War and provided detailed coverage to the public. It emphasized Kyrgyzstan’s support for resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict through peaceful and diplomatic means, backing the 1993 UN Security Council resolutions, and recognizing Nagorno-Karabakh as an integral part of Azerbaijan. Kyrgyzstan’s neutral approach to conflict resolution was underscored, advocating for diplomatic engagement between the involved countries.

Furthermore, an article published on the website of Kyrgyzstan’s independent public-political newspaper “Dlya Vas” included the perspectives of Armenian Prime Minister N. Pashinyan, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Spokesperson for the Armenian Ministry of Defense. The article also referenced the Azerbaijani Ministry of Defense, stating that the Azerbaijani army was actively managing Armenian movements along the contact line. Additionally, it discussed key historical milestones such as the declaration of Nagorno-Karabakh’s “independence” in 1991, the subsequent war triggered by Baku’s efforts to reclaim the region, the 1994 ceasefire protocol, and the July 2020 conflicts that erupted approximately 300 kilometers from Karabakh (FOR YOU, 2020b).

The article published by “Dlya Vas” on September 30th, 2020, highlighted that following the long-standing conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh and particularly after the clashes in the Tovuz region on July 12-13, the situation escalated into a new war. It noted Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev’s declaration of “partial mobilization” alongside Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s announcement of “martial law” and “general mobilization.” The article also mentioned Turkey’s active

role in the Caucasus, supporting Azerbaijan, while noting Russia’s growing influence in the region and efforts to limit it. Ultimately, the article argued that the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict hinges on the removal of all foreign forces and allowing the local population to determine their future (FOR YOU, 2020c).

Another article titled “Erdogan Called ‘Armenia to End Occupation of Azerbaijani Territories’” discussed Turkish President R.T. Erdogan’s demand for Armenia to cease its occupation of Azerbaijani land, referencing TASS’s coverage of the issue. Erdogan asserted that Armenia should immediately withdraw from the occupied territories, emphasizing that Azerbaijan had been waiting for a resolution for 30 years and was now acting independently. The article included Armenian officials’ accusations against Turkey for intervening in the Karabakh conflict and allegedly transporting foreign mercenaries from Syria to Azerbaijan, which Azerbaijan denied (FOR YOU, 2020a). Overall, “Dlya Vas” provided comprehensive coverage of various aspects of the Second Karabakh War, focusing on the historical, regional, and international dimensions of the conflict since its onset. The newspaper presented detailed official statements and claims from both Azerbaijan and Armenia while examining the regional and international implications. It discussed the history of Nagorno-Karabakh, the origins of the conflict, and the processes experienced during different periods. “Dlya Vas” emphasized the significance of regional stability and peace, notably supporting a neutral and diplomatic approach to conflict resolution. This stance illustrated the newspaper’s commitment to peaceful methods in resolving the conflict while considering the regional dynamics and external influences, including Turkey’s role.

In the article titled “Bombing of Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijan and Armenia Accuse Each Other of Provocation; Dozens of Karabakh Residents Are Known to Have Died,” published on the “Kloop” website, it was noted that Azerbaijan did not declare general mobilization, although President Ilham Aliyev accused Armenia of provocation, asserting that Azerbaijan’s military positions were under fire from Armenian forces. The article emphasized that a ceasefire was achieved with the Bishkek Protocol signed in 1994, yet conflicts persisted throughout history. Consequently, it stated that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict had transformed from a regional issue into a large-scale conflict (Irgel, 2020). In another article, the “Kloop” website provided the full text of a declaration issued jointly by the leaders of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Russia to end the military conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, outlining the commitments of the parties involved (Baimuratov, 2020). “Kloop” thoroughly explored the

history and regional effects of the conflict, demonstrating an interest in previous periods and ongoing political dynamics. The website aimed to understand not only current events but also the conflict's origins, emphasizing the humanitarian dimensions and potential consequences, as well as significant information regarding the war's conclusion and the commencement of the peace process.

CONCLUSIONS

Kyrgyzstan's stance towards Azerbaijan has established a significant foundation, particularly in advocating for Azerbaijan's rights under international law. Statements regarding Azerbaijan's counterattacks and the military situation in the region have been closely monitored by Kyrgyzstan, striving to reflect these developments objectively in its media. Kyrgyzstan's support for Azerbaijan's territorial integrity concerning the Nagorno-Karabakh issue demonstrates the robustness of diplomatic and political relations between the two nations. By recognizing Nagorno-Karabakh as an integral part of Azerbaijan and endorsing UN Security Council resolutions, Kyrgyzstan highlights the mutual support both countries provide in the international arena. Furthermore, Kyrgyzstan's sensitive handling of humanitarian issues during the conflict, including support for ceasefire calls and the exchange of prisoners of war and bodies, indicates that their cooperation extends beyond political and economic dimensions to encompass humanitarian and ethical values. This approach underscores Kyrgyzstan's commitment to Azerbaijan and its respect for international law during crises.

Overall, Kyrgyz media has portrayed the Second Karabakh War objectively and comprehensively. Analysis of media content indicates that Kyrgyzstan generally adopted a neutral stance in its coverage of the war, emphasizing the importance of regional peace. The media has framed regional and international issues within its internal dynamics and national interests, presenting the Second Karabakh War in a balanced manner from various perspectives. Since the war's onset, Kyrgyz media has closely followed the events, highlighting the historical background of the conflict, its regional implications, and the international community's reactions. Additionally, discussions have emerged regarding the potential impacts of the war on Central Asia and Kyrgyzstan, particularly concerning economic relations, energy security, and regional stability. The Kyrgyz media has also included analyses and expert commentary on the long-term consequences of the conflict.

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