

Coverage of Armenian-Turkish Relations and Turkey in Armenian Media in 2006-2009

Content Analysis and Opinion Research

Realized by Journalists' Team for Sustainable Future NGO through
funding of Eurasia Partnership Foundation

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PREFACE

The research project “Coverage of Armenian-Turkish Relations and Turkey in Armenian Media in 2006-2009” has been realized by Journalists' Team for Sustainable Future NGO with the support of Eurasia Partnership Foundation.

It has been realized in July-October of 2009 with application of two research methods – **Content Analysis** and **Opinion Research** –represented in separate parts of this report.

Each part enables to more detailed manner learn about the objectives and tasks of the used methods and the preface reflects a brief information on the process of the realized research.

Worth mentioning, within the scope of **Content Analysis** overall 1,570 articles from three print and two internet medium directly or indirectly related to the Armenian-Turkish relations or Turkey have been studied and assessed within seven-month period of 2006-2009.

The Content Analysis aimed at revealing the coverage specificity on Armenian-Turkish relations in the Armenian Media during the mentioned four years.

Only articles published in April and September of 2006-2008 and April 2009 have been coded. The choice of the months was conditioned by the activation in the overall reference to Armenian-Turkish relations in April, and the general passivity in September, with an exception of September 2008, connected with Turkish president’s visit to Yerevan by the invitation of Armenian president Serzh Sargsyan.

As far as the monitoring was conducted in July-September of 2009, thus it was impossible to study also articles of September 2009 within the frameworks of this project. Though following Media publications it could be certified that this month was more than active as compared with any of the April months.

Such kind of media activity was conditioned by hot public reaction over the press release issued by the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Armenia and Turkey on August 31, 2009, saying that Armenia and Turkey have agreed to start internal political consultations over the two well-known protocols pre-signed during the negotiations mediated by Switzerland.

The **Opinion Research** has been conducted by means of three focus group discussions. The focus group participants were specialists from Yerevan and Gyumri who have an interest in the issue and have their role in formation of public opinion. The participants were mainly Media sector representatives, political figures, parliamentarians, state officials, as well as historians.

July as an intermediate and a comparatively passive month regarding the discussions on Armenian-Turkish relations was selected for organization of focus group discussions.

The **Opinion Research** aimed to reveal the participants' opinion on the quality and bias of the coverage on Armenian-Turkish relations in Armenian Media; to define the preposition; possible tendencies in the case of improvement of bilateral relations; necessary steps to improve coverage of bilateral relations.

The research results could be useful for all the stakeholders who are interested in making their investment in the process of improvement of Armenian-Turkish bilateral relations.

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Content Analysis

Coverage of Armenian-Turkish Relations and Turkey in Armenian Media in 2006-2009

Introduction

In Armenia the reflections on the coverage of the Armenian-Turkish relations by the mainstream print and internet media have been occasional and received less systemized attitude than they actually deserved. With the tendencies of change now coming forth on the geopolitical field of the South Caucasus (for reasons beyond the scope of this research), and the wide scale of discussions regarding establishment of Armenian-Turkish relations, the demand for a clearer picture of the situation has drastically increased.

This research project studies the current situation with the coverage of Armenian-Turkish relations and the level of bias (or, its absence) reflected in journalistic pieces and has more descriptive rather than prescriptive character: what we saw as an aim of this project, was to find out and identify the specificities of the coverage of Armenian-Turkish relations in the Armenian media within the last four years. Here we stay back from giving any recommendations or, even worse, ‘recipes’ of how to better solve the problems each of the two nations face what regards the perceptions, attitudes, and, as a final product, the qualitative reflections on each other, in the media.

Literature Review

The issue of the coverage of Armenian-Turkish relations has regularly come into the focus of various research and exchange programs within the last years with the major aim of setting direct communication between Armenian and Turkish journalists.

The most recent example of an effort was the Armenian-Turkish Team Reporting Project in 2008-2009 realized by Yerevan Press Club (“Armenian-Turkish Team Reporting Project”, 2008-2009, Conference materials, July 10-11, 2009, Yerevan, Armenia), where equal number of Armenian and Turkish journalists produced articles on various topics after exchange visits to Armenia and Turkey.

Another research of the coverage of regional relations was conducted jointly by the Yerevan Press Club and Yeni Nesil Journalists’ Union of Azerbaijan back in 2003, which was a follow-up of a similar research done a year earlier (“Media Coverage of Regional Relations”, Media Monitoring project, 2003).

The analysis showed Armenian media paid 17.8% to political, 3.6% to economic, 2.6% to cultural, sports, science, education, and history issues, 1.2% to security issues and fight against crime, and less than one percent to social and media issues, in 2003, when covering Armenian-Turkish relations and Turkey.

Other aspects of relations with Turkey covered in the mentioned period by the Armenian media included opening of border, communication matters, and lack of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Yet another study of Armenian media, though not directly focusing on the bias or its absence in the reporting on a particular conflict issue, but rather the overall picture of objectivity, was the monitoring of quality of journalistic reporting done jointly by the Institute of Applied Media Studies, Winterthur, Switzerland, and the Caucasus Institute (then the Caucasus Media Institute) in Yerevan, Armenia, in 2005 (“Quality of Armenian Print and TV Media”, 2006).

The results of the survey showed that the South Caucasus and the countries neighboring the region, including Turkey, were paid less attention in print press, than the regional players like Russia, the United States, and Europe. For example, Turkey and Iran had only 15.5% and 6.7% percent of coverage respectively, against 25.2% given to Europe. Unlike the print press, representation of foreign countries on the Armenian television channels manifested the tendency to pay more attention to Turkey and Iran (43%) and slightly less attention paid to Europe and the US, with Russia and the CIS staying almost neglected. Worth mentioning, Armenian Diaspora was also given small attention in the Armenian media in 2005 with only 1.5% and 1.2% in the print press and on TV, respectively.

In a survey “Armenian-Turkish Citizens’ Mutual Perceptions and Dialogue” conducted jointly by the Sociological and Marketing Research Center-HASA (Armenia) and the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation-TESEV in 2006, respondents had indicated media as the second largest source of information about the neighboring countries after history books. Worth mentioning, in Armenia the media as a source of information about Turkey came second after that for Azerbaijan (92.7% and 95.5%, respectively).

The quoted survey also showed the mutual perceptions and the attitudes of the two societies. The questions of the survey were related to the past, present and the perspectives of the Armenian-Turkish relations. According to the survey results majority of Armenian citizens characterized Armenian-Turkish relations as bad, with only 5 of the surveyed 1,000 calling the relations between the two nations as good, with no ‘very good’ answers and with every 5th of Armenians calling the relations as very bad.

During the survey in 2006, the respondents were also asked to choose a statement that would best describe the contemporary relations between Armenia and Turkey. Armenian citizens had widely opted particularly for statement indicating that Armenia and Turkey are bordering countries lacking diplomatic relations and that Turkey is a hostile country to Armenia. Further, the respondents were asked about the past and the perspectives of the relations between the two countries. Most Armenians indicated the relations had remained unchanged for the last ten year (52.5%) and would remain so in the next ten years (37.4%) as well.

The next thing the survey looked at were the priorities the citizens in Armenia and in Turkey had in two major fields – economics and politics, and their moves within the context of Armenian-Turkish relations. The majority of Armenian respondents indicated they were ready to buy goods produced in Turkey, spend their holidays in Turkey, watch

Turkish films, TV programs, and read Turkish magazines, but refused to go for study, medical treatment, or work. Further, a vast majority of Armenian citizens also approved the opening of Armenian border, establishment of diplomatic relations, and developing economic relations, independent of the political relations.

Research Objectives, Methodology and Methods

Stemming from the set objective mentioned earlier in this report to identify the current situation with the coverage of Armenian-Turkish relations and the level of bias (or, its absence) reflected in journalistic pieces, the research team agreed on the *content analysis* as the best method to meet the needs of this survey. In the current situation of the lacking systemization of the knowledge about the nature of the coverage of Armenian-Turkish relations, this greatly descriptive form of research, though unable to directly explain either the effects of the media on the readership, or the reasons behind the characteristics of the coverage revealed, is a good tool to survey the existing situation with the results it provides able to serve a good ground for development of relevant policies and have an effect on the further nature of the subject matter.

The *research problems* included:

a) revealing the degree of attention towards different aspects of the Armenian-Turkish relations in the Armenian media (the frequency of articles related to the Armenian-Turkish relations and to Turkey in the Armenian media, dynamics of its changes during the last years; the degree of attention devoted to separate issues and topics of the Armenian-Turkish relations);

b) define the characteristics of the form and the content of the publications covering Armenian-Turkish relations and Turkey (the context, in which Armenian-Turkish relations are more frequently touched upon; the character of reporting in the articles on the Armenian-Turkish relations;

c) to assess the objectivity of the information about the Armenian-Turkish relations in the media (the timeliness of information on Armenian-Turkish relations in the Armenian media; the degree of representation of the sides in Armenian media while covering Armenian-Turkish relations and Turkey).

The coded newspapers included three dailies *Hayots Ashkharh*, *Aravot*, *Haykakan Zhamanak*, and two news websites *PanARMENIAN.Net*, *A1plus.am*, selected based on number of copies (for print media) and number of visitors (for news websites); political orientation (pro-governmental, opposition, neutral); as well as rating (according to the last data of the media rating surveys). The articles from the sampled media included all the verbal texts with a single composition and design, including the characteristics of its genre, the title, the subtitle, the lead of the article, which covered issues related to Armenian-Turkish relations, whether fully or partially.

The time frames of the study involved the months of April and September of 2006 through 2008, and April 2009. The choice of the months was conditioned by the hypothesized activation in the overall reference to Armenian-Turkish relations in April, and the general passivity in September, with an exception of September 2008, connected with Turkish president's visit to Yerevan, enabling the measurement of the picture with the coverage of the topic in varying social-political contexts.

General objectivity during the coding was provided by formalization of procedures, which implied clear separation of the measurement units and the categories of analysis; instruction of coders to select an appropriate code proposed for each variable and fill it in the code sheet, with the variables scaled into mutually excluding measures; regular team meetings during the coding and brainstorming on arising issues; analyzing data received by the coding procedures with the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) software, which:

a) enabled to systematically archive large amount of information, analyze it, identify the variable relationships, and organize them into accurate tables and graphics;

b) minimized human intervention in the process.

We grouped variables into formal aspects – date, availability of illustrations, genres; and content aspects – field of topic (context), weight given to topic field, stimulus of creating the journalistic piece, geographical scope of the described events, besides Armenia and Turkey, time dimensions, including the references to past (divided into periods), as well as future references, three actors, with the indication of whether they are also sources or not, and the side they represent, plus sources, with the way they are quoted (direct/reported speech), their attitude to the question under scrutiny, and the side they represent. Besides, we also measured the author and the nature of author's attitudes to the topic as well as the overall number of Armenian, Turkish, and other viewpoints expressed in the text.

Content Analysis Results

1. Frequency of reference to Armenian-Turkish relations by media

Among the total 1,570 assessed articles from three print and two internet sources the most attention within seven-month period of 2006-2009 to Armenian-Turkish relations has been given by *PanARMENIAN.Net* online news service (31.3%), *Aravot* (22.2%) and *Hayots Ashkharh* dailies. The distribution of the frequency of reference to Armenian-Turkish relations in other monitored media appears as in the table below:

Medium	Number of articles	Percent
PanARMENIAN.Net	491	31.3
Aravot	349	22.2
Hayots Ashkharh	344	21.9
Haykakan Zhamanak	230	14.6
A1plus.am	156	9.9

1.2. Distribution of coverage per months and years

At the initiation of the research it was hypothesized that Armenian media would intensify the reflections on Armenian-Turkish relations in April, when the Armenian Genocide commemoration events traditionally evolve on a wider scale, and also because ahead of April 24th there are some tendencies on domestic level in countries with large Armenian communities, whose governments frequently reset the issue of the recognition of Armenian Genocide in the forefront of their domestic rhetoric, and which traditionally finds its reflection in the Armenian press.

The results showed that the highest activity in the coverage was registered in April 2009, with 30.3% of all articles coded within seven months chosen from 2006-2009, appearing in this one month only. The most active in April 2009 was *A1plus.am* with 44.2%, followed by *Aravot* daily (43.6%), and *Haykakan Zhamanak* (37%). Interestingly, *Hayots Ashkharh*, frequently believed as paying significant amount of attention to the issue of Armenian-Turkish relations covered the topic in 32.8% of the cases.¹ Overall, as expected, all media manifested particular interest to the issue in this period.

In September 2008 the most active was *Haykakan Zhamanak* (27%), closely followed by *Aravot* (24.9%), *Hayots Ashkharh* (24.7%), *A1plus.am* (21.2%), and *PanARMENIAN.Net* (19.6%), which points that the attention to the topic in the mentioned period was more or less equal from across all coded media.

As of distribution per months April appeared to be only somewhat more active than September (except September 2008 and April 2009).

¹ The percents show the portion of attention out of overall coverage for all seven months per each medium.

2. Use of visuals

Of the coded total 1,570 articles the number of illustrations has been distributed almost equally with 50.4% (792) having the visual supplements, against 49.6% (778) lacking them.

3. Genre of articles

The decisive majority of the studied articles appeared as news (79.2 %), followed by interviews with a major margin (7.6%), and commentaries and analysis coming third in the row of preferred genres (6.6%). The rest of forms of articles were distributed in the following order:

Genre	Number of articles	Percent
News	1,244	79.2
Interview	119	7.6
Commentary/Analysis	104	6.6
Essay/Pamphlet	34	2.2
Editorial	20	1.3
Letter	19	1.2
Review	10	0.6
Press Release	6	0.4
Survey/Poll/Monitoring	4	0.3
Other	9	0.6

3.1. Genres per medium

The results showed that among the print media *Aravot* daily revealed the highest degree of reliance on news as a genre of covering Armenian-Turkish relations (74.8%). (The data on *PanARMENIAN.Net* and *A1plus.am* internet sources – 94.7% and 85.3%, respectively, - should not be taken in comparison with the print media, in this case, due to their more inclination of positioning themselves as news media.) Interestingly, *Aravot* also appeared to be the medium with the least use of commentaries/analyses as a journalistic genre in regard to this issue (2.6%). In contrast to *Aravot*, *Haykakan Zhamanak* produced almost 10 times more commentaries/analyses (20.9%), and the least number of news reports (66.5%) within all stories on the issue produced by this medium.

Also worth mentioning, *Haykakan Zhamanak* appeared with the lowest percent of interviews (0.9%), against the highest of *Aravot* (12.9%), which led with the least margin ahead of *Hayots Ashkharh* (12.8%). Commentaries/analyses occupied 13.1% of coverage in *Hayots Ashkharh*. Editorials appeared in *Haykakan Zhamanak* (4.3%) and in *Aravot* (2.9%), with *Hayots Ashkharh* totally lacking it (at least in a recognizable manner).

There was also some reliance on the genre of essays in *Haykakan Zhamanak* (4.8%), *Aravot* (3.2%), *A1plus.am* (2.6%), and *Hayots Ashkharh* (2.3%).

4. Topics

Significant portion of the issues identified by the monitoring have tended to appear within the context of intergovernmental relations between Armenia and Turkey only (27.1%), regional conflicts (7.2%), foreign policy (6.2%), and culture and cultural policies (4.1%), occupying the top five positions.

The rest of the fields to which the covered issues related to, were distributed as follows:

Topics	Number of articles	Percent
Intergovernmental bilateral relations	425	27.1
Regional conflicts	113	7.2
Foreign policy	98	6.2
Culture, cultural policies	64	4.1
Public events	63	4.0
Legislative	54	3.4
Sport	39	2.5
Peace negotiations	38	2.4
Intergovernmental multilateral relations	34	2.2
Regional cooperation	29	1.8
Regional integration	24	1.5
Domestic political disturbances, protests	23	1.5
Human rights	21	1.3
Science	21	1.3
Administrative	19	1.2
Media	17	1.1
Law enforcement	16	1.0
National security	16	1.0
Industry, business	14	0.9
Energy resources, policies	11	0.7
Regional economic integration	11	0.7
Infrastructure	10	0.6
International cooperation	9	0.6
International law	9	0.6
Social issues	8	0.5
Elections	7	0.4
Migration, refugees, demographics	4	0.3
Customs, traditions	3	0.2
Criminal offense	3	0.2
Humanitarian	3	0.2

Finances, currency	2	0.1
War	2	0.1
Personal account	2	0.1
Education	2	0.1
Organized crime	2	0.1
Terrorism	2	0.1
Political reforms	1	0.1
Economic reforms	1	0.1
Healthcare	1	0.1
Small entrepreneurship	1	0.1
Religion	1	0.1
Tourism	1	0.1
Political violence	1	0.1
Drugs and trafficking in humans	1	0.1

4.1. Weight of reflections on Armenian-Turkish relations

Armenian-Turkish relations have been a dominant topic in 74.1% of studied articles, with only in 13.9% of cases appearing as the main, but not the only topic and only one of the topics and topic only mentioned in 94 cases, 6% per each position.

4.2. Weight of reflections per media within years

Armenian-Turkish relations appeared to be the only topic in critical number of cases for all sampled media throughout the four years. For example, in 2006 the topic happened to appear as the only one in the articles in 90% of cases in *A1plus.am*, in 86.3% - in *PanARMENIAN.Net*, in 73.3% - in *Hayots Ashkharh*, in 71.7% - in *Haykakan Zhamanak*, and 67.5% - in *Aravot*, with these indicators persisting (with some minor moves to more or less) also in 2007. Worth mentioning, though, in 2008, the year marking a new phase in Armenian-Turkish relations, *A1plus.am* internet source and *Aravot* daily showed drastic drop of interest in putting Armenian-Turkish relations as the only topic of articles to 53.2% and 41.8%, respectively, with a significant growth of attention in April 2009 (72.5% and 60.5%).

The topic of Armenian-Turkish relations also received significant portion of attention as the main but not the only topic, in 2008. As compared to 2006, when the issue was the main, but not the only topic in 9.7% of the articles, and in 8.8% of cases in 2007, in 2008 and in 2009, the topic was viewed in a bundle with other issues in 16.4% and 16.8% of cases.

The highest tendency of only mentioning the issue within different contexts was registered with *Aravot* daily (12.5%).

5. Initiating event/act

The collected data shows that out of 1,570 cases in 346 (22%) the writing of the article has been initiated by a specifically media targeted event, including an announcement, press release, or a press conference, and interview, media publication, or a public speech in 283 cases (18%). Articles have also been initiated by official visits (5.5%), state, religious holidays, or memorial days (5.1%), rallies, demonstrations and other acts of protests (3.6% + 0.3%, authorized and unauthorized, respectively), legislative motions (3.6%), publication of open letters (3.2%). Articles with no identified initiating event or act have comprised 11.7% of the overall number of coded pieces.

6. Geographical scope

There appeared some noteworthy data on the geographical boundaries of Armenian-Turkish relations. For instance, Azerbaijan, which is the most directly involved party in the Armenian-Turkish stalemate, stands only 4th among the third countries mentioned in the articles, getting just 8.2% of attention. Similarly Russia, Armenia's main regional partner, received 3.7%, against the US and Europe, (both individual European countries and geopolitical alliances), who had much higher rating in Armenian media what refers to Armenian-Turkish relations with 19.6% and 16.5% of focus, respectively. Nagorno-Karabakh, as another example, got just 4.3%, and furthermore, only 3.2% in combination with Azerbaijan. Overall, the number of articles about Armenian-Turkish relations with a third side indication made 50.8%.

Almost an equal number of articles have referred to topics within the scope of Armenian-Turkish relations in cases, when Armenia and Turkey have appeared with third sides, separately (7.3% and 7.8%, respectively). Articles with no third side have made 28.8%.

7. Timing

The quality of reporting is much dependent on time, i.e. the speed with which a medium responds to the developments. Secondly, what regards the issues of unsettled foreign relations, interstate and ethnic conflicts, etc, reports on them frequently refer to past times describing events with their prehistory and also consequences in a future reference.

To define the level of reference to past, present and the perspectives of the relations between the two nations, we set 11 time frames including the most recent point of time measured within the range of the last 24 hours to more than a year. The results showed that in covering Armenian-Turkish relations the sampled Armenian media referred to events within the last 24 hours as the most recent point of time in 419 cases or 26.7% out of 1,570 coded articles. The second most recent point of time was, with significant portion of unexpectedness, the one that dated back to more than a year with 194 cases (12.4%). Next came the last week occurring in 157 cases (10%), with the last month,

earlier than a month, from two months to a year getting 2%, 0.6%, and 2.2% of the cases, respectively.

Interestingly, the more than a year back point of time referred to the last 17 years (from September 1991 to a year ago from the day of publication) in only 12.5% of cases (197 articles); to the Soviet period – in 6.4% (100 articles); to the first republic days in 3.1% (49 articles); to period from the mid 19th century to the year before the setting of the first Republic of Armenia – in 14.2% of cases (223 articles); and to period before the 1850 – in only 0.2% (3 articles). Reference to future time was made in 19.4% of the cases or in just 305 articles.

It should also be mentioned that in greater part of the cases the time references have been totally indefinable in 46.2% (or in 725 articles).

8. Actors

Other points of interest for understanding the picture of reference to Armenian-Turkish relations by Armenian media was:

- a) the correlation of reference to Armenian/Turkish actors,
- b) the type of the actors referred to by the media on the topic, and
- c) the level of representation.

8.1. Number of actors

The screening showed in a significant portion of articles in the Armenian media the number of reference to actors involved in described events and situations equals to 3. The stories with 2 and 1 actor presented, as well as cases referring to 4, 5, 6 and more actors are distributed within the following range:

Number of actors	Frequency (in 1,570 articles)	Percent
1 actor	210	13.4
2 actors	376	23.9
3 actors	527	33.6
4 actors	166	10.6
5 actors	113	7.2
6 and more actors	171	10.9
No actor	7	0.4

8.2. Representation of specific actors

The highest level of representation among actors was received by president (13.1%), and the government (12.9%), representatives of science and education (5.5%), as well as Armenian coalition parties (when indicated separately, not as part of government or parliament) (4.9%) as well as parliament, including speaker and members, when represented as such without an emphasis on their belonging to coalition or opposition (4.7%). Worth mentioning for comparison, opposition parties both represented in the

Armenian parliament and not represented were given 1.2% and 1.7% of attention. Further, parties positioned as independent in Armenia’s political field received 2.1%.

Turkey as a state led in representation with about a double margin, receiving 9.4% of representation against the 4.4% of Armenia appearing as a state.

Reference to Armenian Diaspora, although perceived as playing a special role in the Armenian-Turkish relations, received only 3.4%, which is only somewhat higher than the ordinary citizens, who got 3%, and is less than the place occupied by media themselves (4%).

Despite the high level of reference to third side countries/regions in covering the Armenian-Turkish relations, international and interstate organizations received very little forum, as the following table shows:

International and interstate organizations	Frequency (excluding <i>No actor</i> responses)	Percents
European Union (EU)	77	2%
OSCE/Minsk Group	30	0.8%
Council of Europe (CE)	20	0.5%
United Nations (UN)	11	0.3%
Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)	6	0.2%
NATO	5	0.1%

Worth mentioning also, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization occurred in only 4 stories or in 0.1%; while the Collective Security Treaty Organization appeared in only 1 article.

8.3. Actors per Armenian/Turkish side

In 45.2% of actor reference the players have represented the Armenian side, with the Turkish side lagging behind with 27.8% but standing quite close to the third side actors, who got 27%.

Again, of all actors representing the Armenian side the highest representation is the president’s with 13.2%, followed by the government with 10.5% and coalition party with 8%. Representatives of science and education from the Armenian side received 6.2%, with Armenia as a side (4.9%), ordinary citizens (4%), representatives of media (3.6%), Diaspora (3.5%), culture (3.4%), completing the row of the most represented actors from Armenian side.

Among all actors representing the Turkish side, the highest rated the president of that country (15.2%), followed by the government (14.2%), Turkey as a state (13.4%), representatives of science and education (4.9%), and media (4.9%).

Presidents and governments of third side countries have once again appeared in top of the list with 11.1% and 14.6%, respectively. However, foreign parliaments and parliamentarians have received overall more space in the stories than those of Armenia and Turkey, by getting 9.5% against 2.7% and 2.3%, respectively.

Among all the presidents cited in the coded articles the Armenian president received the highest rate in 45.2%, with the president of Turkey getting 32.5% and leaving 22.3% to the presidents of other countries. However, the prime ministers of Armenia and third side countries were mentioned less than Turkey's – 29% and 24.4% against 46.6%. Of the parliaments the highest rated legislatures of third sides, while those of Armenia and Turkey appeared in 27.8% and 14.5% of cases.

Turkish structures getting larger space than the Armenian ones included courts (61.3% against 22.6%), prosecutor's office (57.1% against 35.7%), and army and its representatives (47.6% against 33.3%).

Of economic entities, Armenian large businesses were represented in 47.1% of cases against 27.5% of Turkish side, and 25.5% of third side; small and medium businesses received 87% and 12.5% from Armenian and Turkish side, respectively.

The widest were represented also media from Armenian side – 41.1%, against 35.5% from Turkish side, and 27.1% from the third side.

8.4. Actors as sources

Actors, whenever, there were such, appeared also as quoted sources in 44.5% of articles.

9. Sources

The monitoring revealed that in 50.6% of the cases Armenian media heavily relied on one source when covering Armenian-Turkish relations (in 795 articles), with 27.1% quoting two sources (426 articles), and in only 10.1% the number of sources equaled to 3.

9.1. Representation of specific sources

In 21.6% of cases sources were media, with the government getting 13.7% coming second. Interestingly in the case of the sources the representatives of science and education preceded the president with a margin in 0.2% (7.5% of the experts against 7.3% of the head of country). The coalition party and/or its representatives got 6.3% and the author of the article – 5.1%; parliament in general was given 4.1%.

Worth mentioning again, Diaspora was quoted in only 2.1% of cases, and ordinary people 1.3%. Similarly, local and international non-governmental organizations, received 1.8% and 3.6% of representation as sources.

9.2. Forms of speech

Armenian media appeared to give more preference to the combination of direct and reported speech (32.1%) than to each form separately (28.6% of direct against 29.2% of reported).

9.3. Sources per Armenian/Turkish side

The distribution of sources across Armenian/Turkish/third sides showed dramatic discrepancy with more than half of the quoted sources originating from Armenian side (53.4%), against the 25.6% of the third side sources, and even less – 20.5% - of the Turkish sources.

Further, the highest level of reliance on local sources was registered with *PanARMENIAN.Net* (27.2%), followed by *Aravot* daily (25.1%), and *Hayots Ashkharh* (22.8%). Similarly the most frequent use of third side and Turkish sources were traced in *PanARMENIAN.Net* (45.3% and 39.1%, respectively), among sources used by all media per each side.

However, within each media separately, the highest number of cases of the use of Armenian sources was registered with *A1plus.am* (70.9%), followed by *Aravot* (61.4%) and *Hayots Ashkharh* (60.2%). *PanARMENIAN.Net* that manifested the highest inclination to using Armenian sources among all quoted sources of Armenian side appeared to be using the lowest number of Armenian sources within all sources quoted in itself (42.5%).²

10. Viewpoints/Opinions

10.1. Distribution of viewpoints per Armenian/Turkish side

Viewpoints, including those of third side, have been reflected in 83.9% of stories covering Armenian-Turkish relations; of this, the media have relied on a single viewpoint in 50.3% of cases, which is the half of the stories coded, whether representing Armenian, Turkish, or third side view.

Whenever bringing Turkish viewpoints, the media in the majority of cases, gave place to one viewpoint (16.9%), with significantly less number of cases of citing two viewpoints (2.3%), and bare number of cases reflecting three and more viewpoints from the Turkish side.

The number of Armenian viewpoints as well, in the a significant part of the articles, were represented by one opinion (37.6%); two viewpoints were brought in 7.3% of cases, three viewpoints – in 3.4%, but four and more points of view were cited in 6% of cases.

² As compared to all sources used by each particular medium.

10.2. Distribution of viewpoints per Armenian/Turkish side per media

Most often reliance on single Armenian viewpoint was registered with *Hayots Ashkharh* (53.2%), followed by *A1plus.am* (43.6%), *Haykakan Zhamanak* (40%), *PanARMENIAN.Net* (34.2%), and *Aravot* (22.6%); worth mentioning, the latter also appeared to be the medium with the highest rate of bringing 4 and more Armenian viewpoints (16.9%), against the lowest in *Haykakan Zhamanak* (1.7%).

Similarly, the most number of single Turkish viewpoint cases was registered in *Haykakan Zhamanak* (24.8%), followed by *PanARMENIAN.Net* (19.3%), *Hayots Ashkharh* (18%), *A1plus.am* (10.3%), and *Aravot* (10%). However, *Aravot* again appeared as a medium with the most often use 4 and more viewpoints (1.1%). *Hayots Ashkharh* and *Haykakan Zhamanak* appeared to never bring 4 and more Turkish viewpoints.

10.3. Attitudes

As per the nature of viewpoints expressed by the quoted sources, a significant part of them appeared to stand on the positive side, by manifesting positive attitude to the issues of discussion in 12.3% of the cases; negative position was identified in 9.2% of the cases, with neutral stands appearing in 8.3%. The positions showing rather negative viewpoint than positive made 4%, against the 2.8% of opinions interpreted rather positive than negative.

10.4. Author's opinion

Although the decisive majority of the coded stories contained only facts (in 85.7%), which implies absence of any opinion (including that of the author), the rest of the articles showed containing author's opinion that was expressed by making direct statements, without attributing them to anyone in 5.4%, openly mentioning personal point of view in 4.9% of cases, and hiding behind others opinions in 3.9% of the stories.

10.5. Facts/Opinions

Further, the stories tended to show more facts in 4.4% of the cases, equal distribution of facts and opinions – in 3.9%, more opinions in 3.2%, and opinions only – in 2.8% of the stories.

Conclusions

The content analysis of the Armenian media revealed a number of major tendencies in covering of Armenian-Turkish relations.

1. The issue is within the focus of the media attention, independent of whether there is any claimed stimulus (social, political, economic, cultural, etc.) outside the media discourse facilitating it or not.

2. In the great majority of cases media prefer covering the issue in news genre.

3. In a preference to cover the Armenian-Turkish relations more as news, the media overlook genres like interview, or commentaries.

4. All sampled Armenian media, independent of the channel of distribution, represent the Armenian-Turkish relations within the context of the bilateral relations on governmental level. Further, the relations are in a significant portion of cases viewed within the context of foreign policy.

5. Whenever covered, the issues within the frames of Armenian-Turkish relations are the only topic of discussion in article, although they are sometimes also combined with others.

6. The geographic boundaries of the issue in Armenian media go far beyond Armenia and Turkey, and even the South Caucasus and extend to US and Europe, but leave behind immediate countries like Russia, Iran, Georgia, and Azerbaijan.

7. As to the time limits of the reflections on Armenian-Turkish relations in Armenian media, the major period under the scrutiny of Armenian media were the two decades since Armenia's independence in 1991, with a large portion of formal attention to future references.

8. Unlike the US, often referred to as an actor in the context of Armenian-Turkish relations in the journalistic pieces, Europe is involved mostly as a general geopolitical concept, with low representation of particular European structures like the European Union or the Council of Europe.

Among other actors receiving special attention of the media are presidents and governments, although preference is mostly given to Armenian authorities. The situation was similar with all the rest of actors cited in the coded articles with a major space given to Armenian actors. Nevertheless, some of the actors like the power structures from the Turkish side received wider coverage.

Wider representation was given also to large businesses as well as small and medium businesses from the Armenian side.

Another vastly represented actor was the media and the representatives of science and education from both sides (with some more room given to the Armenian side).

9. The situation repeated also with the sources, with a major discrepancy between Armenian and Turkish sources.

10. Despite the prevalence of the use of facts and the reliance on news as genre, the distribution of the Armenian and Turkish viewpoints appeared unequal as well.

Opinion Research: Coverage of Turkey and Armenian-Turkish Relations in Armenian Media

Quality, Bias, Level of Accuracy of Publications
Application of Sources
Public Reaction to Media Coverage

Brief Description of Research Project

Research Objectives

- To define the target group opinion: what is the quality, bias of publications on Turkey and Armenian-Turkish relations?
- to study the reasons of the present situation;
- to reveal the preposition and possible tendencies in the case of improvement of bilateral relations;
- to define the focus of necessary steps addressed to the coverage improvement;
- to build information on the basis of the received data, helping in the process of making government decisions and promoting productive planning.

Research Tasks

To define:

- target group attitude related to the topic coverage;
- whether there is or there is no bias;
- motives;
- target group perspective on the society's reaction and perception regarding coverage on Turkey or Armenian-Turkish relations;
- the possible steps to improve coverage of bilateral relations;
- the priorities for improving bilateral relations;
- different sectors' contribution to the improvement of bilateral relations.

Hypothesis

- There is a certain level of bias while covering the topic.
- There is a low level of confidence towards the coverage among the society.
- The media could be represented by more productive coverage.
- The coverage improvement will contribute to the improvement of bilateral relations.

Research Subject

Coverage on Turkey and Armenian-Turkish relations

Research Object

The research object supposes the necessity of gaining not the public, but target group perspectives representing certain interest.

The target group is represented by stakeholders participating in formation of public opinion within the scope of the issue.

The focus group participants are:

- Media representatives (journalists, media NGOs)
- Policymakers (political figures, deputies, state officials)
- Scientists (historians and experts in international studies)

Research Period

13.07.2009 - 07.09.2009

Methodology

Focus Groups

The Focus group methodology is applied to study the existing situation, to define the motives and grounds.

Altogether three focus-groups are conducted: two in Yerevan and one in Gyumri (the second largest city of Armenia neighboring Turkey, where the local media is quite active as compared with those in other communities).

Focus group is a kind of qualitative research which is applied to study the person's:

- behaviour;
- system of values;
- motives of making decisions;
- image features;
- creative conceptions, etc.

During the focus group discussion the respondents with moderator's direct participation discuss the topic and set forth possible perspectives.

Tools

- The participants are chosen according to eligible criteria (sex, age, residence, coincidence with the target group);
- A briefing with the invited participants is conducted in the focus group foyer and with the help of a filtering questionnaire it is confirmed or denied their participation in a group discussion (psychographic image, leader, “false respondent”, etc.).

- The discussion in the focus group room is conducted according to the guide topics in freestyle.
- The client is afforded opportunity to contact the moderator from the observation room through a computer and guide the discussion to the course he is interested in.

Quality Reconsideration

- The whole course of the discussion is recorded (video and audio).
- The client is eligible to participate in the discussion from the observation room, as well as to interfere in it, if needed, remaining unnoticed for the participants.

Description of Armenian Media Coverage According to Participants

“...Nature of the coverage on Turkey is analogous to the state of the Armenian media...”

Stories on Armenian-Turkish relations dominate among the coverage on Turkey. On the whole they are situational and mainly spontaneous. That is, when an event happens and an article is published in the abroad media, then Armenian media covers about or cites. Otherwise there is almost no coverage.

Also there is no confidence towards the media, thus towards the coverage. Often in order to get information part of the society applies to the abroad media rather than to the Armenian one. It is the same picture in the case when a notable event occurs. It is sooner to get information from the foreign media and only afterwards the cited version from the Armenian media.

Consequently the weight of the media and confidence towards information provided by the media suffer.

Most of the participants shared the same perspective while referring to the coverage available in the Armenian media: there is no professional approach, no serious journalistic work, analysis, collection of exact facts, and competent provision of materials. As a result the quality endures deprivations.

“... I could sound harsh, but I try not to read Armenian newspapers, though I look through the Internet and usually visit the newspaper sites. I open and immediately close them, because Armenian media, surely, is a separate topic for discussion, it’s a hard topic...”

There is another point beside this and similar opinions:

“... I don't share most of my colleagues' opinion, as it seems as if we focused on an “association” – the media – and made it a scapegoat for all our problems, which I don't like in principle...”

In any country and among any society the media is the mirror of the society. So any kind of word used

by us towards the media, expresses directly both the situation in the political field and the health degree of the society.

...that is nothing could be disconnected among the society: if we have low quality media, then we have a low quality political field, etc... Thus I don't understand and support the idea of choosing an institute and trying to put the whole blame on it..."

One more factor – emotions: according to participants the Armenian reports on both Turkey and Armenian-Turkish relations are mainly emotional.

"...mainly "our Western Armenia, our motherland, the lost motherland, etc." is broadcasted on TV. That is there is no any report on today's Turkey, on the country's social and economic life prepared by Armenian authors or journalists. If there are any reports, then these are mainly emotional expressing national attitude, etc. ...Often speaking on Armenian-Turkish relations is just pronouncing these words..."

Besides the emotional background the attitude towards Turkey is quite politicized:

"...there are economic interests under the context of politics, as far as except the above mentioned psychological background Armenia is interested in Turkey as an economic partner and economic perspective – opening of borders, trade, money streams. But all this is impossible because of absence of an adequate environment and mechanisms.

Media outlets, particularly TV companies, are under certain control. Not a healthy media market is formed. There is no media supply and demand. The newspapers have quite little run..."

The following factors supplement the above mentioned ones which leave their trace on the bias and description of the coverage.

There is no systemization in the coverage stemming from the information interests of the society. And according to the participants the quality of coverage is quite low. The following possible reasons of the existing situation were mentioned:

- absence or low level of journalistic school;
- tendency of each media organization to apply the coverage as a tool for own interests and purposes;
- low reputation of media organizations, low level of confidence;
- lack of government support or its weak expression;
- problems with sources, obstacles to collect information;
- lack of studies and data on the demand of information among the society;
- low level of information on the neighboring countries in general.

The above mentioned reasons were referred to as the primary and significant obstacles hindering to improve the situation.

And if the above mentioned issues regarding the quality could be classified among the issues related to the media field in general, and that their overcoming would raise the level of the media activities, then in the case of the Turkey-related coverage there are also a number of issues specific just to this topic.

And here we encounter with the stereotypes, psychological complexes and clichés.

Bias, Stereotypes and Clichés

“...a Turk sits in each of us, like a dwarf, against whom we struggle ...”

According to the participants, irrespective of the essence and other factors of the covered material, the coverage is too biased, and the bias expressions are too polarized. On one hand one can meet coverage strengthening the negative tone aiming to warn, threaten or trying to “open the society's eyes” related to political processes, on the other hand – coverage promising “fantastic improvements” and greeting the same political activities. Here are the following tendencies:

- if Turkey, then Armenian-Turkish relations, genocide, opening of the border, etc.;
- if Turkey, then politics;
- sometimes while covering a “positive” story on Turkey or Turkish people (here the stories where Turkey or Turkish people are represented as a side with reasonable, developed, fair or other positive features are meant), the journalists are concerned their reports just won't be accepted by the editorials:

“...the report was not broadcasted, justifying, “should we care for the Turkish people problems now...”

There is also a concern the journalist would immediately be considered as a supporter to this or that political “army”.

- There can't be unbiased analysis as “I hate Turks from the very beginning”.

However the participants shared the opinion that in the recent years, especially over the last year the situation has been abruptly changed. And it has been significantly promoted by the “football activities”, that became a vivid example to prove that not only political, but information on other fields too is demanded among the Armenian society.

There were a lot of opinions that coverage on social, cultural and economic fields is disregarded. There is almost no coverage of the type, whereas it is possible it would have a great demand:

“...it is interesting to know not only about the official visits, the statements made by political figures, but also how, for example, spends his/her time a Turk of my age and status in Turkey, what kind of restaurants attends, how he/she lives, how the youth life runs, that is...coverage on people who are equal to me in

their social statuses and age. How they live, spend their time, get married, etc...”

There were opinions that journalists should be the first to overcome the existing psychological barrier, the negative attitude towards Turkey and should try to be unbiased. This would result in a situation change among the society. The role of the direct contact, communication is great to overcome the stereotypes. Bilateral invitations, conferences and, of course, possession of a special correspondent in the neighboring country could be the warrant necessary for more unbiased and high quality coverage.

“...contact, direct communication is needed to overcome the stereotypes, a way that is the most productive one...”

It is very important also the working style of the media organization – objectivity, expressions of social responsibility, journalistic ethics and professionalism.

Most of the reports are dependent directly on the purpose of the media organization. And this tendency is so obvious that often distrust appears towards any kind of coverage.

And is this kind of coverage interesting for the society? Most of the participants consider that there is interest towards the coverage on Turkey especially during the recent period, but at the same time the society gets just scraps and not multilateral information relevant to the demand.

The society is not quite informed. There is demand which is not satisfied with information provided by the Armenian media. At the same time there was and now there is a negative stereotype towards Turkey. The role of the media is great to put all this into a pragmatic course.

It's quite important also to study, understand the demand of information on the specific topic.

Demand, Level of Awareness

“...Information is goods that is produced and sold. There are no accurate mechanisms to define the demand of information in Armenia. ...The information should be free, prompt and competitive for it to be cleansed and for people to understand what they want. There are cleansing mechanisms, application of which will afford an opportunity to understand that if a person has the demand of information on Turkey then there would be information, if not – there wouldn't...”

Provision of information is biased and not professional. However only in the case of provision of such information it is possible to find out whether the society supports this or that process or not. There are no data helping the media to more precisely make an informed choice of the demand.

“...Many could express an opinion on whether there is or there is no demand... All these speculations actually have no sense, because in fact there is no any society opinion research that could confirm it. So our colleagues who tell that the Armenian-Turkish topic is too urgent, or vice-versa, they are

grounded not on research data, but on an
“intuitive”... subjective opinion...”

There is need of research data to compare the demand and supply, the information built on the basis of those data, which will help to develop a strategy and later apply it in a systemized manner.

According to the participants mechanisms helping to cleanse the more demanded and high quality topics should be developed and given more chances to be posted on the media.

Also work must be carried out to create a demand: measures to raise the level of information among the society should be taken both by the media and by the policymakers.

Today there is need of creating a demand addressed to the increase of unbiased information. There are materials, information that should be represented, covered professionally as the society is interested in.

There are almost no analytical stories. It is quite difficult to meet deep and comprehensive works on Turkey. Mainly the third side media is referred to.

The same official information and responses given to them are often met. Such kind of news dominates within information on Turkey and is saturated among the society.

Whereas, in the current situation, ordinary and unofficial information turns to be more interesting.

This claim becomes weightier taking into consideration the number of Armenians living in Turkey. There is no course of dynamic information. And Armenians living in Turkey could become one more resource stimulating active provision of information between the countries.

But it turns out that on one hand journalists comprehend and are ready to cover information on different fields of Turkey, on the other hand it's difficult to meet such coverage. Why?

Here are the main obstacles:

- media organizations have not or don't allot a budget and resources for this purpose;
- certain difficulties related to collection of information in Turkey or through Turkish people

“...familiar Turkish journalists are ready to provide information, represent the situation, etc., but when they are asked could their names be mentioned as a source, they refuse asking not to do it...Article 301 is quite a severe one...”

Obstacles in Getting Sources, Data and Information

The primary characteristic feature of information quality is the accuracy of the information. Which are the main sources Armenian media representatives apply to and how are the data checked?

The media representatives were of the same opinion: the materials are taken mainly from the Internet, often they are translated by turkologists and more often it is information published by the third side - “mediated information”.

Here is an opinion regarding the coverage of information received from those sources:

“...Mostly the information on Turkey is by all means passed through the prism of Genocide. It is difficult to meet a story with no reflection on that topic. There is almost no unbiased information without any psychological complexes of Genocide...”

Most of the media representatives were of the opinion that often it is simply impossible to obtain the necessary information because of lack of resources and support. Only 2-3 media organizations can afford having a special correspondent in Turkey. And this is conditioned not by the peculiarity of Armenian-Turkish relations, but by the funding situation of the Armenian media.

“...today Armenia and Turkey look at each other through the third side eyes. ...there is a gap and to overcome it, we should be there..., write about what we have seen with own eyes...”

Also there was an offer to create a database with the support of the two countries, a base that could be used by the journalists of Armenia and Turkey in order to be more informed and to receive unbiased data.

During the discussion often parallels were drawn between the work of the Turkish media - focused style of working, availability of government strategy, systemization, application of accurate mechanisms, development and dissemination of messages, strict government control - and the spontaneous work of the Armenian media.

As an example it was mentioned that Turkish journalists who have arrived in Armenia within the framework of football games were preparing stories on the social and economic fields of Armenia telling that their editorials have ordered them to cover such kind of issues.

However there is no such tendency in the work of the Armenian media. There might be a few cases which are not a result of systemized work, but the will, the approach of a journalist.

Events taking place in Turkey are covered by the Armenian media, but the authors are mainly the Turkish agencies or journalists. One can hardly find a story independently prepared by Armenian authors.

On the whole the following tendencies were observed while referring to the fact-based information, to their verification and provision of information:

- the experts claimed that journalists often distort the information while using both foreign media and the information received from Armenian specialists and policymakers.

“...next day, after any kind of press conference I have to deal with the coverage, denials...segments out of the context are taken, the sense of the speech is distorted, whereas I apply to everyone to always call and clarify the information...”

- As a result the experts are concerned about how the ideas expressed by them would be covered or represented by the media.
- There were many complaints on the journalists' unwillingness to verify the information, to consult and get information from the experts. And often they are unable to professionally provide the information because of insufficient competence.

On the other hand the journalist-participants expressed an opinion of the experts' supporting or belonging to this or that political field which results in a concern that verifications, provision of data and arguments by them would be from a favorable perspective. So again there is an encounter with the issues of applying the objectivity and the topic as a tool.

“...The lack of professionalism is supplemented also by the support received from a weightier, specialized association. An expert association has a significant role jointly with a journalistic one. But I think that the main linking “artery” is quite seriously damaged today. And one side only couldn't be blamed in the damage...”

Thus there is bilateral distrust between the two fields, whereas their profitable cooperation could promote the coverage improvement.

The relationship gap between journalists and experts is a serious obstacle in the route of making the society quite competent. To overcome this obstacle specific steps should be undertaken.

Thus, the next important precondition for high quality, unbiased and impressive coverage is the accurate planning of communication lines, provision of sources and elimination of the existing obstacles, which is difficult to realize or almost unrealizable without the government support.

Availability of Government Strategy, Application of Cleansing and Improving Mechanisms, Message Statement and Dissemination

To the question whether the participants note a government strategy regarding the coverage on Turkey in the Armenian media, the main opinion was that there is no such strategy at all. In any case the message that bears or should have to bear that strategy, the ways and methods of realization, support to the media, budget allotment, etc. are uncertain.

However it is noted that there is “permission”, that is, now it is a period of time, when speaking on Turkey is “permitted”. And the public awareness and interest on the topic have greatly changed after the Armenia-Turkey football games. In this regard most of the participants conditionally separated between two periods of coverage on Turkey - before-and-after the football games.

While discussing the comparativeness of the official and unofficial media the participants were of the opinion that there is a positive tendency in the official guided information. In the case of unofficial information there is no any systemization, it is situational.

Most of the participants were concerned that the government doesn't fund Armenian journalists to arrive in Turkey, to work and cover the news. Such trips are organized only within the official visits' frameworks not enough to provide multilateral information.

A hot controversy was stirred also when discussing the level of freedom and chances to receive information in both countries. Here the opinions were different. Some of the participants were claiming they have never met any obstacles to receive information in Turkey, others were confirming they have had state matter problems, whereas Turkish journalists don't encounter any barrier in Armenia while receiving information in line with the law.

The participants shared the opinion that the Turkish media and journalists are much more supported by the government and that there is a common state approach, control and an accurately planned state strategy towards the Turkish media.

On the whole the participants' opinion on the Armenian media was the following: each media organization covers the topic from the point of view of its mercenary purposes, there is no public approach arising from the information interests of the society so that each media organization would imagine and realize its mission and responsibilities.

Conclusions, Summary

Thus it may be concluded that according to the focus group participants the coverage quality of the Armenian media needs significant improvements.

There is biased and personal approach in the majority of stories. There are stereotypes, clichés and a negative tone towards Turkey. There is a great polarization between the demand and supply of the reports on Turkey. At the same time no demand is created to raise the level of awareness of the society.

The level of confidence towards the media is low among the society, so is the level of susceptibility of the coverage.

The primary tasks to overcome all these shortcomings are:

- works addressed to overcome stereotypes;
- research of public demand on the topic;
- analysis of the supply and demand;
- formation, creation of a certain demand;
- improvement of the journalistic school;
- resources and funding addressed to media organizations;
- improvement works related to sources (possession of a special correspondent, etc.);
- application of an accurately planned government strategy.

The following options were mentioned as more productive means to overcome the psychological background:

- creation of communication opportunities through conferences, discussions;

- expansion of joint, team works between the Armenian and Turkish journalists;
- creation of a free information field.

Productivity of the above mentioned options is proved to be actual also taking into consideration the positive tendency over the last year. The situation was significantly changed by the expansion and the coverage of the Armenian-Turkish sport events allowing some experts to distinguish between the notions before and after the football games.

One of the Armenian TV companies' experience of sending a special correspondent to Turkey for a film series production, was also assessed as a positive example of allotment of resources and budget by the participants. As a result high quality, remarkable and impressive stories are created.