

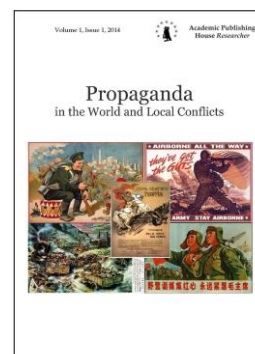
Copyright © 2021 by Academic Publishing House Researcher s.r.o.



Published in the Slovak Republic
Propaganda in the World and Local Conflicts
Has been issued since 2014.

E-ISSN 2500-3712
2021. 8(1): 42-51

DOI: 10.13187/pwlc.2021.1.42
www.ejournal47.com



Military Propaganda at the First Stage of the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War (September 27 – October 11): Official Materials of Armenia and Azerbaijan Defense Ministries

Anvar M. Mamadaliev ^{a, b, *}

^a Cherkas Global University (International Network Center for Fundamental and Applied Research), Washington, USA

^b Volgograd State University, Volgograd, Russian Federation

Abstract

The series of papers spotlights the relevant issue – propaganda around the next, yet very fierce development from September 27 to November 10, 2020 in the Nagorny Karabakh conflict that over the past two and a half decades not only has altered the balance of regional forces, but also predetermined major territorial changes; the outcome of this, without any exaggeration, full-scale war between the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan and Artsakh Defence Army is the victory by Azerbaijan. However, the balance of forces, legal aspects behind the involvement of third parties (Armenia, Turkey, Russia and others) and aftermath of the conflict are of no interest to us, but we would like to have a closer look at the forms, methods and content of the propaganda war that was no less bitter than action on the front; this war “flared up” in the media not only of the opposing sides – Armenia (de facto) and Azerbaijan – but also of other countries, primarily Russia and Turkey.

The paper suggests a periodization of the 27.09.2020–10.11.2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and analyzes the official messages of the Armenia and Azerbaijan Defense Ministries in the period from 27.09.20 to 11.10.20 based on the propaganda sources classification proposed in the first part of our work.

Keywords: Nagorno-Karabakh conflict from September 27 to November 10, 2020, propaganda, military propaganda, propaganda campaigns in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

1. Introduction

As it is known, the “acute phase” of the Karabakh conflict, which has been ongoing for decades, escalated into yet another tragic event in 2020 with both official sources and media of the warring sides – Azerbaijan and, perhaps, it would be fair to say, Armenia – waging an all-or-nothing ideological war. The media of other countries immediately joined the propaganda fray (especially Russia, because the opposing states are its allies under the CSTO treaty (Armenia)¹ and

* Corresponding author

E-mail addresses: anvarm@mail.ru (A.M. Mamadaliev)

¹ The CSTO or the Collective Security Treaty Organization is a regional intergovernmental organization acting on the basis of the Tashkent Treaty of May 15, 1992, and constitutes a military alliance of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan. Azerbaijan withdrew from the treaty in 1999.

under the CIS treaty¹ (Azerbaijan)). The forms and techniques of the propaganda “war” can be insightful not only in terms of their historical value but also in terms of political significance.

The chronological framework of the work is confined to the first stage of the “acute” phase (except for the war day 1 – September 27, 2020), that is from September 28 to October 11, 2020.

Clearly, with paper size limitations, we have no possibility to cover all information messages of the Azerbaijani and Armenian military agencies, and so we selected those that provide the most accurate illustration for the forms of “ideological war” under review. Needless to say, “official” sources carry much more considerable clout than the media, and besides the latter always make references to the former.

We should also define the concepts of “conflict”/“war”/“local war”, used in the work in connection with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict of the autumn 2020.

In sociology and political science, the term “conflict” (from the Latin *conflictus* – from the past participle of *confligere* ‘to strike together’) means the most active way of resolving clashes of interests, goals or views, which occurs in the process of social interaction, implies the opposition of the entities in this interaction and typically goes along with negative emotions (see e.g. [Antsupov, Shipilov, 1999: 81](#)). Certainly, “conflict” is an umbrella concept and includes the concept of “war”, which is one of the types of conflict.

The term “war” usually denotes “a conflict as between political entities, such as nations, tribes, political groups, etc., carried on due to discordant claims in the form of the armed confrontation and military (combat) action by their armed forces” (see e.g. [Slovar', 1999](#)) or “armed fighting between countries, ethnic groups or hostile parties within a country as to restore, reserve or acquire disputed rights and interests, in short, to compel one side to obey the will of the other” ([Brokgauz, Efron, 1892: 937](#)). Moreover, Azerbaijani official sources define the conflict as the Patriotic War (see e.g. [Provodyatsya podgotovitel'nye trenirovki..., 2020](#)).

Both research and popular literature widely use the concept of “local war”, meaning “armed engagement between two or more countries, with respect to political goals limited by the interests of those involved in the military (combat) action between the countries, and with respect to territory – by a small geographical region, located, as a rule, within the borders of one of the warring sides” ([Baryn'kin, 1994: 7](#)).

As is seen from above, the autumn conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020 generally fits all three definitions because it has systemic elements of each of the concept, in particular: a) clash of interests; b) combat action between polities, c) the armed confrontation motivated by political interests. Hence, this work will deem the terms “conflict”/“war”/“local war” with respect to the confrontation between the Azerbaijani and Armenian/self-defense forces of Nagorno-Karabakh on September 27 – November 10, 2020 as synonyms.

2. Materials and methods

For sources, the paper proceeds from official publications by the Armenian and Azerbaijani Defense Ministries within the specified chronological timeframe.

A classification of sources is highlighted in a separate publication (see [Mamadaliyev, 2020](#)); we will only point out here that based on the sides involved in the conflict, we break down the sources into Armenian² and Azerbaijani ones; based on the message form – official statements of the sides, front-line “status reports”, information messages; based on the genre – use of traditional propaganda techniques, art techniques and mass communication techniques. As emphasized above, we will analyze only one “genre”, namely the official messages of the sides’ military departments, published on the Internet.

The methodological basis of the research is comprised by both specialized historical and general research methods. The specialized conventional historical methods used include:

¹ The CIS or the Commonwealth of Independent States is an international organization acting on the basis of the Belovezh Treaty of December 8, 1991, aimed to regulate trade, economic and foreign policies of the nine member states, most of which are the USSR former national republics (out of fifteen states, six did not join the CIS).

² Legally, the Republic of Armenia was not a side in the conflict, however, with the tremendous scope of military, ideological and economic support, provided to the armed forces of the unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, researchers and politicians quite rightly have to view Armenia as a side opposing to Azerbaijan.

a) historical systematization: sources were reviewed in tactical/situational (situation at the front, socio-economic situation in front cities, hardships faced by non-combatants/civilians, etc.) and strategic (history of the conflict) contexts.

b) historical comparison: in particular, sources were compared in terms of chronology (the rhetoric of the sources altered even in this very short time frame under study) and through the lens of the warring sides, etc. The latter method can be considered the primary tool for the work because it directly compares the “propaganda machines” of Armenia’s and Azerbaijan’s official agencies.

c) historical genetics (the impact of the front and political situations on the forms and techniques of propaganda).

In addition, general research methods such as synthesis, analysis, generalization, classification and categorization were employed.

3. Discussion

As for the issue of the theoretical justification of propaganda, academic and popular literature feature many works ranging from fundamental treatises to very concise pieces. One of our previous papers ([Mamadaliyev, 2020](#)) described three theories of propaganda: Harold D. Lasswell’s (see e.g. [Lasswell, 1927](#)), who was the first to substantiate the effectiveness of the phenomenon of the enemy’s “demonization” ([Lasswell, 1938: 71-100](#)), Walter Lippmann’s (see e.g. [Lippmann, 1922](#)) and John Dewey’s (see e.g. [D’yui, 2000](#); [D’yui, 2002](#)).

As this work will directly dissect sources, we think it is inexpedient to disperse our attention to other theoretical treatises and papers dedicated to propaganda mechanisms.

For an objective understanding of the conflict roots, we believe the works on the history of Azerbaijan (see e.g. [Istoriya Azerbaidzhana, 1960a](#); [Istoriya Azerbaidzhana, 1960b](#)) and Armenia (see e.g. [Istoriya armyanskogo naroda, 1980](#)) to be of great value.

Of course, we did not overlook the writings focusing directly on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and its history (in particular, [Dashdamirov, 2005](#); [Kornell](#), etc.). Special mention should be made about reminiscences by Vladimir Semichastny, Colonel General (translator’s note: in the Soviet Army, “Colonel General” was a three-star general rank whose paygrade was equivalent to, for example, Lieutenant General in the U.S. Army) of the KGB of the USSR, who devoted a considerable part of his memoirs to the tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the 20th century in the late 50s, when the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (1923–1991) was part of the Azerbaijan SSR ([Semichastnyi, 2002](#)).

Publications by senior officials are also of interest in the context of our subject, although the works should be regarded not so much as research efforts but as propaganda communications (see, in particular, [Aliyev, 2020](#)).

4. Results

We should determine the conflict periodization in the first place, which we will rely on in this and subsequent papers.

As it is known, the historical process this way or another is temporally extended so that it is quite practical to divide it into stages by laying down some criterion. Each war is typically characterized by its own periodization; moreover, the division often depends on the criteria adopted by a particular researcher, and as a result the same war may be divided into varying discrete blocks in the works of different authors. However, some criteria are “generally accepted”, including “a turning point in the war”, “changing from the offensive strategy to the defensive one”, “major battles that pushed the command into changing its tactics/strategy”, etc. We regard the so-called “turning point in the war” as a universal criterion, when any of the warring sides gains the initiative or decisive military, technological, political (e.g. a revolution/coup inside the enemy’s nation and its withdrawal from the war) advantage. The entire range of the elements specified may not always be present – we mean obtaining a true decisive advantage that eventually led to victory.

Bearing this in mind, it is helpful to discriminate between two stages in the September–November 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict:

a) stage 1 – from September 27 to October 11, 2020 – is a period in which the “parity” combat action took place as it can be conditionally termed, i.e. when the Azerbaijani forces had no obvious

advantage in their offensive, and the Nagorno-Karabakh Defense Army predominantly held the borders of the area under their control.¹ The end of the stage (and to a larger extent, we think, a kind of “red line” for the Azerbaijani side) was marked by a tragedy that occurred on October 11, 2020, when a residential building in Ganja was hit by a high-power ballistic missile, presumably from the Elbrus OTRK² system. The explosion killed 10 civilians and injured 34 people. Although on October 17, fire was again targeted at Ganja’s residential neighborhoods, outside which the Azerbaijani Armed Forces were deployed³, and the number of civilian casualties was even greater (13 dead, including three children, and 53 wounded), it is the “October 11 tragedy”, in our opinion, that propelled the command of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces into mounting the most active action.

b) stage 2 – from October 12 to November 10, 2020 – marks active advance of the Azerbaijani forces into the Nagorno-Karabakh territory, seizure of control over the Shusha town, which, according to some authors, decided the outcome of the conflict (see e.g. [Pochemu Azerbaidzhan vyigral voynu...](#), 2020).

There is little doubt that certain elements in the periodization we have proposed are debatable; despite this, it is very instrumental for our research, i.e. for the analysis of the sides’ propaganda campaigns.

Statements made by the sides (28.09.20-11.10.20).

Statements of the Defense Ministry of the Republic of Armenia.

The official statements of the sides were delivered basically on the conflict’s day 1 (and the most crucial day in terms of propaganda) – September 27, 2020, and we scrupulously reviewed them in the previous part of our work.

This paper will only give prominence to the statements that we found particularly interesting from the ideological point of view and/or those that proved to be an “unconventional” propaganda vehicle.

Taking the official website of Armenia’s military agency, one of such unconventional (in terms of propaganda techniques) statements was an article inconspicuously entitled “Announcement” ([Ob'yavlenie...](#), 2020). Considering the article’s heading and, in part, content, it should be categorized as an information message; however, the RA⁴ Defense Ministry’s staff defined it a statement, and so we as well will follow their example. Here is the text: “The Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Armenia receives numerous letters, telephone calls from the organizations and individuals, offering to donate material items and food products for the needs of the Armed Forces ...In order to regulate the process and specify the information about the necessary material resources in Yerevan, we suggest to apply to... The donated means must be classified according to the material and food groups and they must have a description of the product units (type, quantity, etc.). ...The products according to their types should be sent accordingly: ...To the material items warehouse, responsible... To the food products storeroom, responsible...” ([Ob'yavlenie...](#), 2020). On the face of it, the “announcement” appears to be intended for information purposes only. However, the RA DM’s⁵ employees did not arbitrarily identify it as a

¹ We will not review the controversial issue of annexing the Hadrut town, a major locality, of which Azerbaijan announced on October 9, as the issue lies beyond the scope of our study. In our paper, we will stick exclusively to the facts that are known for certain (and “accepted” by both sides in the conflict).

² OTRK is a Russian abbreviation for a mobile short-range ballistic missile system.

³ Ganja, an Azerbaijani city on the border with the combat zone, was shelled several times (in particular, on October 4, 8, 11 and 17), of the attacks the last two inflict heavy casualties among civilians. The Armenian Armed Forces and the “Defence Army of the Republic of Artsakh” under their control say that the strike was unintentional and was only targeted at enemy servicepeople who were deployed in the close vicinity of residential neighborhoods. Considering the fact that the CEP (circular error probable means the uncontrolled measure of a weapon system’s precision/ projectile dispersion) of the warhead of a R-17 ballistic missile, which is the standard ammunition for the Elbrus OTRK system and was introduced in service in the USSR as early as in 1962, achieves nearly half a kilometer, the suggested explanation of an unintentional hit looks quite plausible, a number of military experts believe (see e.g. [Armenia: Unlawful Rocket...](#), 2020). At the same time, the authors of the article insist that the tragedies could have been avoided if the Armenian military had taken into account tactical and technical performance of the missiles used, i.e. in legal terms, they are charged with indirect intent.

⁴ Republic of Armenia.

⁵ Defense Ministry.

statement, because it not only contains information on economic matters (collection of donated sustenance goods and products), but also indirectly communicates a considerable veiled/'subtle' ideological message, devised above all to rekindle the subconscious patriotism in citizens, in particular, it emphasizes the 'numerous' letters and calls received. Interestingly, we did not find similar messages on the website of Azerbaijan's military agency.

A frequent type of statement is the so-called "denials", in particular those concerning the use of Tochka-U OTRK missile system: "The Defense Ministry of Armenia officially announces that the information actively disseminated by the Azerbaijani media that today the Armenian side allegedly used Tochka-U tactical missile system is a blatant lie and is not consistent with the reality. ... At the same time, we strictly warn that if the Azerbaijani side intends to use the pretext of this disinformation for retaliating by using a similar or larger and longer-range missile systems, the response will be instant, powerful and extremely destructive" ([Zayavlenie MO RA, 2020](#)).

Statements of the Defense Ministry of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The news item under the heading "President Ilham Aliyev and first lady Mehriban Aliyeva met with wounded servicemen undergoing treatment at Central Military Clinical Hospital of Defense Ministry – VIDEO", released September 30, 2020 ([Prezident Il'kham Aliev i pervaya ledi..., 2020](#)), should be categorized not only and not so much among information messages, but among statements of a senior official (the President and the Supreme Commander-in-Chief) in the first place, because the meeting transcript includes an ample speech with a salient ideological component. From the very beginning, I. Aliyev accentuated patriotic sentiments ("...According to the information provided to me, all our wounded soldiers and officers live with the desire to recover soon and go back to the military operations zone, to continue to wage the just war for the Motherland..."), sense of justice ("...Ours is the cause of justice, we are fighting on our lands, and we are fighting for the Motherland. We are fighting for a fair cause, and I am sure that in this conflict we will achieve what we want. Justice will be served and Azerbaijan will restore its territorial integrity. Our compatriots who have been living as IDPs for many years will also return to their native lands..."), demonstration of the efforts by the government and personally by the President to improve social situation for combatants ("...As you know, special attention is paid to the families of martyrs¹ in our country, and government takes care of everything. I should say that Azerbaijan can be considered an exemplary country in the world in terms of attention to the families of martyrs. You know that on my instructions, government provides all the families of martyrs with apartments and houses. This year alone, 1,500 families of martyrs will be provided with housing by the government. In the next two to three years, the families of our heroic sons who perished in the first Karabakh war will be fully provided with houses and apartments. We continue to have martyrs as we speak. We have had martyrs in the battles for the Motherland..."; "...At the same time, the government provides the Karabakh veterans with necessary support. Their day-to-day problems are addressed. You can also be sure that the government will be by your side, the doctors are doing and will do everything possible for you to recover here as soon as possible and return to normal life..."). The address also arouses religious feelings ("...May Allah rest their souls in peace, may Allah give patience to their families and relatives. Shedding of their blood will not go unpunished. The enemy is seeing a fitting rebuff..."), hatred ("...Our soldiers are saviors, while Armenian soldiers are occupiers. That is the difference. We are fighting on our own lands, while an Armenian soldier dies on the land of another state – Azerbaijan..."), as well as forbearance to "ordinary" soldiers and people ("...I call on the Armenian people and urge them not to become hostages of the sordid deeds of their leadership..."). An effort is also put in to drive home the fact of the "irrelevance and unfairness" of the hostilities to the Armenian side (as a method to provoke internal contradictions in the enemy's camp): "... Let them hold their government accountable today. They should not send their children to Azerbaijan. What is the Armenian soldier doing in Azerbaijan? We are fighting on our own lands. Our soldiers and officers are dying on their own lands, are getting wounded on their own lands, and we are liberating our own lands..."; "...If the Armenian people want to live in peace, they should hold their government accountable. Because the misfortune of the Armenian people lies in the fact that for many years they were governed by a crooked criminal regime, the regime that committed genocide against

¹ Shehid (or Shahid) is a Muslim who dies as a martyr for their religious faith (see e.g. [Ali-zade, 2007](#)), "religious martyr" (see e.g. [Gritsanov, Sinilo, 2007](#))

the Azerbaijanis only for personal gains and keeps our lands under occupation. I am sure that the Armenian people will understand my words correctly. We have nothing against the Armenian people. Azerbaijan is a multinational state; many nations live here in peace and tranquility, including the Armenian people. Thousands of Armenians live in Azerbaijan. There are not pushed around because they are our citizens. Therefore, our struggle is a struggle for a just cause..." ([Prezident İl'həm Əliyev i pərvaya ledi..., 2020](#)).

Statements by other senior officials, such as those by Azerbaijan's Defense Minister Z. Hasanov, also draw attention to the "illegal" actions of the enemy: "Minister of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan Colonel General Zakir Hasanov: 'Delivering fire on the territory of Azerbaijan from the territory of Armenia is clearly provocative and expands the zone of hostilities...'" ([Zayavlenie Ministra Oborony, 2020](#)).

I. Aliyev's speech "President İlham Aliyev addressed the nation" on 09.10.2020 appealed to the people" should not go without mention as well as again resorts to the entire range of propaganda techniques. We believe it is not practical to provide supporting quotations for each method. It makes sense to quote previously unused techniques, such as "humiliating" one's counterpart – Armenian Prime Minister N. Pashinyan: "...I think that today's meeting in Moscow will clarify many things. They must accept the basic principles. However, Pashinyan said he did not accept them. He said that he would not give back an inch of land to Azerbaijan. What happened?! Why can't you hold on to these lands? Why can't you? What happened? Why did you run away? Now you are kneeling before others, humiliating yourself and humiliating your people. You have brought your country to level zero. He said he would not give back these lands. Who is even going to ask you whether you will give it back or not?! We came and took it, and that is all. We will take as much as we need, if we want, we will take more. As we could have done in July. I have talked about that. In July, we could easily move into the territory of Armenia and occupy lands. No-one could have stopped us. These battles are proving that. We didn't do that. I didn't! However, our army was ready for that. I did not let them because there is a political will. We act within the law. We don't set our sight on the lands of other countries but we will not give our land to anyone either. So what happened, Pashinyan? You said that the 'Nagorno-Karabakh republic' covers all the occupied territories. So come and defend them now. Why are you running to Moscow? Why do you keep calling and annoying world leaders? Who did you not call? Who did you not annoy? I would advise him to call shamans. Let them help him. Or call a chief of a tribe living on a remote island and he will save his life. As they say, he has become a joke character. Open up and scroll through social networks. People are making fun of you and circulating jokes. There has never been anyone in the world who would humiliate his country so much. Why? Because he cannot come and sit on someone else's land and keep it" ([Prezident İl'həm Əliyev i pərvaya ledi..., 2020](#)).

Summing up, we should say that in the conflict, the Azerbaijani side wielded the technique of making statements much more frequently than the Armenian side. However, legally, Armenia was not a side in the conflict, and this, in our opinion, explains why they avoided statements. So, the "abundance" of statements by senior officials should be rated as a strength of the propaganda campaign launched by the RA MD.

Front-line status reports (28.09.20-11.10.20).

Front-line status reports by the Defense Ministry of the Republic of Armenia

Front-line status reports by the RA DM in the initial days of the war do not offer much detail on the number and type of enemy units eliminated; they feature, however, video materials. The status reports are "generalized" messages, in particular: "The army of the Republic of Artsakh continues to inflict huge losses on the Azerbaijani army. The tanks and armoured fighting vehicles of the opponent are always under the target of the Armenian Armed Forces and they are hit with accurate fire" ([Armyanskije vojska..., 2020](#)). In other cases, news items only contain videos without any description (see e.g. [Ocherednye porazheniya..., 2020](#)).

Front-line status reports by the Defense Ministry of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Front-line status reports by the Defense Ministry of Azerbaijan usually provide a plethora of video materials in line with the principle: "Demonstration of facts is the best evidence". It is difficult to argue against the approach. In addition to the news item headline, video footage is now and then complemented with a brief, usually clarifying text (see e.g. [Pushki protivnika..., 2020](#); [Boevaya tekhnika protivnika..., 2020](#) and others). Front-line status reports without photo and

video documents are also used (see e.g. [Unichtozheny rezervnye sily protivnika..., 2020](#)); some of them do not relish an opportunity to discriminatory assessments of the enemy's combat capabilities: "Earlier, the Armenian armed forces used the "Tochka-U" high-precision tactical missile system... Due to the unsuitability and poor quality of the enemy's military equipment, three of the missiles fired did not explode" (see e.g. [Armeniya primenila..., 2020](#)).

So, front-line status reports of the warring sides have a number of common features. Each of them does its best to support texts with photo and video evidence. The quantity of such messages issued by the RA DM is much larger, and video footage is not even supplemented with a text (the publication has only a headline).

Information messages (28.09.20-11.10.20).

Information messages by the Defense Ministry of the Republic of Armenia

Informational messages of the RA DM can be characterized by a reserved and minimalistic style with dry enumerations of "essential" facts. With respect formal peculiarities, the most widely used type of message is the following: "According to the information received from the Defence Army of Artsakh, on the night of October 11-12, the relatively stable tension was maintained in all the directions of the frontline. The opponent was active especially in the northern, northeastern and southern directions... All the attempts of the enemy forces to change the operative-tactical situation in their favor were stopped by the Defence Army units. The opponent suffered heavy losses of manpower and military equipment... In the morning, the opponent resumed shelling, accompanied by the artillery fire, which was suppressed as a result of the equivalent actions taken by the Defence Army units" ([Soobshchenie dlya pressy, 2020](#)).

Information messages by the Defense Ministry of the Republic of Azerbaijan

The article "The Armenian side is trying to conceal its losses by spreading misinformation", dated 28.09.20 ([Rasprostranyaya dezinformatsiyu..., 2020](#)) and posted at 00:35 Moscow time, is devised to breed mistrust of the enemy's information sources among Azerbaijani citizens and at the same time make the population aware of their own successes: "The information spread by Armenian Defense Ministry officials on the number of casualties about Azerbaijan Army is baseless and does not reflect reality. This is aimed at reducing to some extent anxiety among the Armenian population and chaos in the army, in the face of Azerbaijan army successes..."; "...Due to the large number of wounded in the enemy's army, there is a shortage of beds in military and civilian hospitals and reserve blood deficiency in the blood bank... As always, the Armenian side hides the real number of combat casualties in its army from the public...". As it is seen, "standard clichés" are also leveraged to rebut information from the sources of the opposing side and downgrade the combat effectiveness its armed forces, as well as underline "systemic" and "situational" problems the rear is beset with.

We mentioned above that propaganda delivers value only if buttress with "factual evidence": "...According to intelligence information obtained at the end of the day, the Armenian army suffered serious losses as a result of the combat operations. Thus, 22 enemy tanks and other armored vehicles, 15 OSA anti-aircraft missile systems, 18 unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), 8 artillery pieces were destroyed. The enemy suffered more than 550 casualties, including dead and wounded. 3 weapons and ammunition depots have been destroyed in different directions...". The "factual knowledge" is supported by items with videos that is captioned with minimalist comments such as "...Units of the Azerbaijan Army continue to destroy the enemy's military equipment with precise fire", "...As a result of the steps taken to prevent the active combat activity of the enemy, 2 more Armenian Armed Forces tanks were destroyed by precise fire of our units", "...A large number of enemy forces have been killed" and other examples (see in particular [Nashi podrazdeleniya..., 2020](#); [Unichtozheno eshche dva tanka..., 2020](#); [Vygodnye vysoty vokrug..., 2020](#), etc.). It would be correct to identify this type of message as front-line status reports, but they were given in the context of rebutting the enemy's information (as confirmation), and hence we referred them to the "category" of information messages.

The initial phase of the conflict always includes a message about a "final warning", which produces the outward effect of compulsion to justify the use of tough action before a side's own population: "The city of Tartar has been under fire from the Armenian armed forces units since the morning of September 28... Ministry of Defense's leadership warns the other side for the last time that we will take adequate response measures against them" ([Vrag preduprezhdaetsya..., 2020](#)). The method can also be regarded as one of propaganda clichés.

On the other hand, even at the onset of the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war, the official military sources of Azerbaijan also released “purely informational” messages having no aggressive propaganda, in particular the item “Foreign military attachés and representatives of international organizations in our country were informed about the operational situation – VIDEO”, dated September 28 ([Inostrannye voennye attashe..., 2020](#)), contains almost no trite propaganda clichés.

4. Conclusion

Based on the analysis conducted, we can sum up and formulate the following findings:

1. In the propaganda “war”, the defense ministries of the warring sides give priority to front-line status reports; the majority of the messages on the military agencies’ official websites belongs to this type. However, there are some distinctions between the sources: for example, the Armenian Defense Ministry more frequently resorts to so-called statements; the content items of the Azerbaijani Defense Ministry are generally dominated by front-line status reports. Informative and other “clarifying” messages were much more broadly posted by the Armenian Defense Ministry.

2. The sources of each side are invariably characterized by clichés aimed to “derogate the dignity” of its enemy. Certainly, they are much “subtler” and “thinly disguised” than, for example, Soviet and German clichés during World War II, but they are still present, amplifying the propaganda impact on the unsophisticated part of the population.

3. The articles by the Azerbaijani Defense Ministry occasionally include information messages that do not use any propaganda techniques at all. This situation is not typical of the “deadly enmity” background and, from our perspective, may well strengthen, rather than weaken the propaganda effect by adding a “tone of objectivity” to the presentation of facts.

4. The average number of daily messages by the Azerbaijani Defense Ministry is considerably larger than that of the Armenian Defense Ministry. Our suggestion is that the main reason is Azerbaijan’s more thorough approach to its propaganda efforts. Moreover, Azerbaijan’s official military source did not “silence down” the events when its own territory was shelled (see e.g. [Territoriya Mingyachevira i..., 2020](#); [Territoriya Bardinskogo i..., 2020](#), etc.).

5. Azerbaijan's senior officials made addresses to the people on overwhelmingly more occasions. We believe the fact that Armenia was not legally involved in the conflict pressed to refrain from such actions. Our review did not cover the websites of the Artsakh military departments and only focused on the agencies of the warring nations recognized by the most of the global community (these only include Armenia and Azerbaijan).

6. Front-line status reports by the warring sides have similarities in form and content, as they both strive to support their materials with photo and video evidence, above of all. However, such messages were predominantly capitalized on by the RA DM, and more than once the video footage even has no text attached to it (only headlines).

7. The information messages of the sides often employ no “propaganda techniques” and can be described as reserved and objective. The Azerbaijani Defense Ministry uses a more “emotional” tone of voice in messages of the type with the “ideological” components often embedded in them.

References

[Aliev, 2020](#) – *Aliev* (2020). Nagorno-karabakhskogo konflikta bol'she net, blagodarya etomu poyavilsya koridor v Nakhichevan' [The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict no longer exists, thanks to this a corridor to Nakhichevan appeared]. 01.12.20. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.rosbalt.ru/world/2020/12/01/1875677.html> [in Russian]

[Ali-zade, 2007](#) – *Ali-zade, A.A.* (2007). Shakhid [Shahid]. Islamskii entsiklopedicheskii slovar'. M.: Ansar. [in Russian]

[Antsupov, Shipilov, 1999](#) – *Antsupov, A.Ya., Shipilov, A.I.* (1999). Konfliktologiya [Conflictology]. M.: YuNITI. [in Russian]

[Armenia: Unlawful Rocket..., 2020](#) – Armenia: Unlawful Rocket, Missile Strikes on Azerbaijan. 11.12.20. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/12/11/armenia-unlawful-rocket-missile-strikes-azerbaijan>

[Armeniya primenila..., 2020](#) – Armeniya primenila takticheskii raketnyi kompleks «Tochka-U» [Armenia used tactical missile system "Tochka-U"]. 30.09.20. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://mod.gov.az/ru/news/armeniya-primenila-takticheskij-raketnyj-kompleks-tochka-u-32451.html>

Armyanskie voiska..., 2020 – Armyanskie voiska prodolzhayut unichtozhenie azerbaidzhanskikh tankov i bronetekhniki [The Armenian Armed Forces continue to destroy the Azerbaijani tanks and armoured fighting vehicles]. 28.09.20. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://mil.am/ru/news/8430> [in Russian]

Baryn'kin, 1994 – *Baryn'kin, V.* (1994). Lokal'nye voyny na sovremennom etape: kharakter, sodержanie, klassifikatsiya [Local wars at the present stage: nature, content, classification]. Voennaya mysl' : Voenno-teoreticheskii zhurnal. Pechatnyi organ Ministerstva oborony Rossiiskoi Federatsii. M.: Redaktsionno-izdatel'skii tsentr MO RF. № 6. Pp .7-11. [in Russian]

Boevaya tekhnika protivnika..., 2020 – Boevaya tekhnika protivnika, unichtozhennaya segodnya do 17:30 – VIDEO [Enemy's military equipment destroyed before 17:30 today – VIDEO]. 30.09.20. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://mod.gov.az/ru/news/boevaya-tehnika-protivnika-unichtozhennaya-segodnya-do-17-30-video-32457.html> [in Russian]

Brokgauz, Efron, 1892 – Voyna [War]. Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' Brokgauza i Efrona: v 86 t. (82 t. i 4 dop.). SPb., 1890-1907. T.VIa. SPb., 1892. [in Russian]

Dashdamirov, 2005 – *Dashdamirov, A.* (2005). Karabakhskii konflikt v kontekste perestroiki [Karabakh conflict in the context of perestroika]. *Vestnik analitiki.* 3(21): 190-212. [in Russian]

D'yui, 2000 – *D'yui, Dzh.* (2000). Demokratiya i obrazovanie [Democracy and education]. Per. s angl. M.: Pedagogika-press. [in Russian]

D'yui, 2002 – *D'yui, Dzh.* (2002). Obshchestvo i ego problemy [Society and its problems]. Per. s angl. I.I. Myurberg, A.B. Tolstova, E.N. Kosilovoi. M.: Ideya-Press. [in Russian]

Gritsanov, Sinilo, 2007 – *Gritsanov, A.A., Sinilo, G.V.* (2007). Shakhid [Shahid]. Religiya: Entsiklopediya. Minsk: Knizhnyi Dom. [in Russian]

Inostrannye voennye attashe..., 2020 – Inostrannye voennye attashe i predstaviteli mezhdunarodnykh organizatsii v nashei strane byli proinformirovany ob operativnoi situatsii na fronte – VIDEO [Foreign military attachés and representatives of international organizations in our country were informed about the operational situation – VIDEO]. 28.09.20. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://mod.gov.az/ru/news/inostrannye-voennye-attashe-i-predstaviteli-mezhdunarodnyh-organizacij-v-nashej-strane-byli-proinformirovany-ob-operativ-32383.html> [in Russian]

Istoriya armyanskogo naroda, 1980 – Istoriya armyanskogo naroda [The history of the Armenian people]. Pod red. M.G. Nersisyana. Erevan, 1980. [in Russian]

Istoriya Azerbaidzhana, 1960a – Istoriya Azerbaidzhana [The history of Azerbaijan]. T.I. Baku: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk Azerbaidzhanskoi SSR, 1960. [in Russian]

Istoriya Azerbaidzhana, 1960b – Istoriya Azerbaidzhana [The history of Azerbaijan]. T. II. Baku: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk Azerbaidzhanskoi SSR, 1960. [in Russian]

Kornell – *Kornell S.E.* Konflikt v Nagornom Karabakhe: dinamika i perspektivy resheniya [Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh: Dynamics and Prospects for a Solution]. [Electronic resource]. URL: http://old.sakharov-center.ru/publications/azrus/az_015.htm [in Russian]

Lasswell, 1927 – *Lasswell, H.D.* (1927). Propaganda Technique in the World War. New York.

Lasswell, 1938 – *Lasswell, H.D.* (1938). Propaganda Technique in the World War. New York. Ch.4: Satanism. Pp. 71-100.

Lippmann, 1922 – *Lippmann, W.* (1922). Public Opinion. New York.

Mamadaliyev, 2020 – *Mamadaliyev, A.M.* (2020). Military Propaganda around the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War: Official Materials of Armenia and Azerbaijan Defense Ministries (as illustrated by the first day of the conflict – September 27, 2020). *Propaganda in the World and Local Conflicts.* 7(2): 29-40.

Nashi podrazdeleniya..., 2020 – Nashi podrazdeleniya prodolzhayut unichtozhat' tekhniku protivnika – VIDEO [Our units continue to destroy enemy equipment – VIDEO]. 28.09.20. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://mod.gov.az/ru/news/nashi-podrazdeleniya-prodolzhayut-unichtozhat-tehniku-protivnika-video-32347.html> [in Russian]

Ob'yavlenie..., 2020 – Ob'yavlenie [Announcement]. 28.09.20. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://mil.am/ru/news/8431> [in Russian]

Ocherednye porazheniya..., 2020 – Ocherednye porazheniya azerbaidzhanskoi voennoi tekhniki [Other destructions of Azerbaijani military equipment]. 28.09.20[Electronic resource]. URL: <https://mil.am/ru/news/8428> [in Russian]

Pochemu Azerbaidzhan vyigral voinu..., 2020 – Pochemu Azerbaidzhan vyigral voinu v Karabakhe? Otvechayut voennye eksperty [Why did Azerbaijan win the war in Karabakh? Military

experts answer]. 11.11.20. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-54900906> [in Russian]

Prezident Il'kham Aliev i pervaya ledi..., 2020 – Prezident Il'kham Aliev i pervaya ledi Mekhriban Alieva vstretilis' s ranenymi voennosluzhashchimi, lechashchimisya v Tsentral'nom voennom klinicheskom gosspitale Ministerstva oborony – VIDEO [President Ilham Aliyev and first lady Mehriban Aliyeva met with wounded servicemen undergoing treatment at Central Military Clinical Hospital of Defense Ministry – VIDEO]. 30.09.20. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://mod.gov.az/ru/news/prezident-ilham-aliev-i-pervaya-ledi-mehriban-alieva-vstretilis-s-ranenymi-voennosluzhashchimi-lechashchimisya-v-centralnom-32463.html> [in Russian]

Provodyatsya podgotovitel'nye trenirovki ..., 2020 – Provodyatsya podgotovitel'nye trenirovki k voennomu paradu, posvyashchennomu Pobede v Otechestvennoi voine [Preparatory trainings are held for the military parade dedicated to the Victory in the Patriotic War]. 05.12.20. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://mod.gov.az/ru/news/provodyatsya-podgotovitelnye-trenirovki-k-voennomu-paradu-posvyashchennomu-pobede-v-otechestvennoj-voine-video-34013.html> [in Russian]

Pushki protivnika..., 2020 – Pushki protivnika, obstrelivayushchie pozitsii nashikh podrazdelenii byli unichtozheny tochnym ognem – VIDEO [The enemy guns shelling the positions of our units were destroyed by a precise fire – VIDEO]. 30.09.20. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://mod.gov.az/ru/news/pushki-protivnika-obstrelivayushchie-pozitsii-nashih-podrazdelenij-byli-unichtozheny-tochnym-ognem-video-32442.html> [in Russian]

Rasprostranyaya dezinformatsiyu..., 2020 – Rasprostranyaya dezinformatsiyu, armyanskaya storona pytaetsya skryt' svoi poteri [The Armenian side is trying to conceal its losses by spreading misinformation]. 28.09.20. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://mod.gov.az/ru/news/rasprostranyaya-dezinformatsiyu-armyanskaya-storona-pytaetsya-skryt-svoi-poteri-32341.html> [in Russian]

Semichastnyi, 2002 – *Semichastnyi, V.E.* (2002). [Bespokoynoe serdtse]. M.: Vagrius. [in Russian]

Slovar', 1999 – Slovar' russkogo yazyka [Dictionary of the Russian language]. V 4-kh t. Pod red. A.P.Evgen'evoi. 4-e izd. M.: Rus. yaz. [in Russian]

Soobshchenie dlya pressy, 2020 – Soobshchenie dlya pressy [Press release]. 12.10.20. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://mil.am/ru/news/8525>. [in Russian]

Territoriya Bardinskogo i..., 2020 – Territoriya Bardinskogo i Agdamskogo rajonov podvergaetsya intensivnomu obstrely [The territory of Barda and Aghdam regions is under intense shelling]. 09.10.20. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://mod.gov.az/ru/news/territoriya-bardinskogo-i-agdamskogo-rajonov-podvergaetsya-intensivnomu-obstrely-32793.html> [in Russian]

Territoriya Mingyachevira i..., 2020 – Territoriya Mingyachevira i Agdzhabedinskogo rajona podvergaetsya intensivnomu obstrely [The territory of Mingachevir and Aghjabedi region is under intense shelling]. 09.10.20. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://mod.gov.az/ru/news/territoriya-mingyachevira-i-agdzhabedinskogo-rajona-podvergaetsya-intensivnomu-obstrely-32797.html> [in Russian]

Unichtozheno eshche dva tanka..., 2020 – Unichtozheno eshche dva tanka protivnika – VIDEO [Two more enemy tanks were destroyed – VIDEO]. 28.09.20. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://mod.gov.az/ru/news/unichtozheno-eshe-dva-tank-protivnika-video-32357.html> [in Russian]

Unichtozheny rezervnye sily protivnika..., 2020 – Unichtozheny rezervnye sily protivnika [Enemy reserve forces were destroyed]. 30.09.20. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://mod.gov.az/ru/news/unichtozheny-rezervnye-sily-protivnika-32444.html> [in Russian]

Vrag preduprezhdaetsya..., 2020 – Vrag preduprezhdaetsya v poslednii raz [The enemy is warned for the last time]. 28.09.20. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://mod.gov.az/ru/news/vrag-preduprezhdaetsya-v-poslednij-raz-32361.html>. [in Russian]

Vygodnye vysoty vokrug..., 2020 – Vygodnye vysoty vokrug sela Talysh byli ochishcheny ot vraga – VIDEO [Advantageous high grounds around Talysh village were cleared of the enemy – VIDEO]. 28.09.20. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://mod.gov.az/ru/news/vygodnye-vysoty-vokrug-sela-talysh-byli-ochishcheny-ot-vraga-video-32369.html> [in Russian]

Zayavlenie Ministra Oborony, 2020 – Zayavlenie Ministra Oborony (Azerbaidzhana) [Statement by the Minister of Defense]. 04.10.20. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://mod.gov.az/ru/news/zayavlenie-ministra-oborony-32617.html> [in Russian]

Zayavlenie MO RA, 2020 – Zayavlenie [Announcement]. 30.09.20. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://mil.am/ru/news/8450> [in Russian]