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**The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict From The Perspective of
Western Media: reasons, type, provocateur and victim.**

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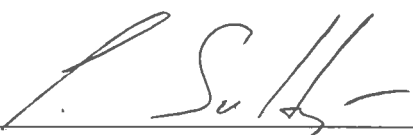
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The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict From The Perspective of Western Media: reasons, type, provocateur and victim.

ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the Western Media coverage of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh region by applying content analysis. The primary aim of this research is to find out the reasons, type, provocateur and victim of this conflict from the perspective of the Western media as well as the factors that may have resulted in changes in the Western Media coverage of this conflict. The importance of this research stems from many factors. One of these factors is the Media's ability to shape people's minds as well as to influence governments' decisions about a particular issue, which is why it is usually called the *fourth estate*¹. I will broadly cover the aspects that make this research important in introduction. Besides this the research design, preliminary analysis as well as limitations of the research will be explained in introduction. The second part will examine the Western media reporting as a whole, while the third, fourth and fifth parts of the research will examine three different newspapers chosen to represent the Western Media (more precisely, *the New York Times*, *the Independent* and *Der Spiegel*) separately from one another and the sixth part will compare their differences from each other. The last part of the paper will serve as a conclusion to sum up the results gained from the analysis.

¹ This term was first used by Edmund Burke in 1787 in a parliamentary debate and has since then been used to refer to the news media.

Contents

Abstract.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Importance.....	3
Existing literature.....	4
Research design.....	6
Selected media outlets.....	11
Findings.....	11
Difficulties with the research.....	13
Combined analysis.....	14
The New York Times.....	17
The Independent.....	26
Der Spiegel.....	34
Cross-media analysis	41
Conclusion.....	44
Bibliography.....	46

List of figures

Combined.....	94
Figure 1a (Number of articles).....	94
Figure 1b (Foreign powers).....	95
Figure 1c (Victim).....	96
Figure 1d (Nagorno-Karabakh belongs to.....)	97
Figure 1e (Causes of the conflict).....	98
The New York Times.....	99
Figure 2a (Total number of articles vs. the number of articles dedicated to the topic).....	100
Figure 2b (Total number of words vs. the number of words dedicated to the topic).....	100
Figure 2c (Average word count (dedicated to the topic) per article).....	101
Figure 2d (Victim).....	102
Figure 2e (Nagorno-Karabakh belongs to.....)	103
Figure 2f (Foreign powers).....	104
Figure 2g (Foreign powers %).....	105
Figure 2h (Comparison to other conflicts).....	106
Figure 2i (Causes of the conflict).....	107
Figure 2j (Causes of the conflict %).....	108
The Independent.....	109
Figure 3a (Total number of articles that mention Karabakh).....	109
Figure 3b (% of words dedicated to the topic).....	110
Figure 3c (Average word count (dedicated to the topic) per article).....	111
Figure 3d (Total average word count vs. average word count dedicated to the topic).....	112
Figure 3e (Nagorno-Karabakh belongs to.....)	113
Figure 3f (Victim).....	114
Figure 3g (Comparison to other conflicts).....	115
Figure 3h (Foreign powers).....	116
Figure 3i (Causes of the conflict).....	117
Der Spiegel.....	118
Figure 4a (The number of articles).....	118
Figure 4b (Word count).....	119

Figure 4c (Word count percentage).....	120
Figure 4d (Average word count).....	121
Figure 4e (Victim).....	122
Figure 4f (Nagorno-Karabakh belongs to...).....	123
Figure 4g (Foreign powers).....	124
Figure 4h (Causes of the conflict).....	125
Figure 4i (Comparison to other conflicts).....	126

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the period of the conflict (1988-present) this issue has been researched frequently. A number of scholars and journalists, mostly those of Azerbaijani or Armenian origin, have addressed this question. Despite applying different research designs and methodology as well as focusing on different periods of coverage, these studies share similar weaknesses, such as covering a very short period of time, while at the same time provide more or less similar results such as Armenia's being favored more than Azerbaijan etc. In contrast, this paper will analyze all of the articles published by three newspapers from 1988 till 2015.

This research will apply a quantitative content analysis and will focus on the newspapers that are in top ten newspapers in terms of circulation in the USA, in Great Britain and in Europe, namely *The New York Times*, *The Independent* and *Der Spiegel*.

The results of the research show support for the findings obtained by the previous researches exploring this issue. In most of the published articles the Western media takes a pro-Armenian position regarding it as the main victim of the conflict and depicting Nagorno-Karabakh (and in some articles, even Nakhichevan) as a historical land of Armenia that was given to Azerbaijan by Stalin in the early twentieth century. Demonstrations of Armenians in Armenia and in Nagorno-Karabakh started in the late 1980s are quite frequently labeled as "the movement for re-unification" of the latter to the former.

Media also shows an ambiguous position when it comes to the possible causes of the conflict. Articles published during the beginning of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict claim this dispute to be driven mostly because of religious factors whereas post-Soviet Union articles allocate more space to territorial claims.

Besides articles, there are other kind of publications that touch upon the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. *The New York Times*, *the Independent* and *Der Spiegel* tend to publish letters (written usually by non-journalists and addressed to the outlet itself), obituaries and interviews with various government officials, respectively. It must be noted that the number of letters

written by authors of an Armenian origin is much bigger than that of letters, which are written by Azerbaijanis and take a pro-Azerbaijani position. *The Independent* in its turn has not dedicated any obituary to an Azerbaijani who played a crucial role in the conflict. *Der Spiegel* also tends to interview Armenians more than Azerbaijanis in topics related to Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The last part of introduction briefly speaks about the difficulties of the research.

Importance

The aim of the paper is to analyze the Western media's attitude towards the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as the changes (if any) in the Media coverage of this conflict. The research will also study possible factors that could have caused such changes.

The research is also important for finding out if certain events happened throughout the period of the conflict had influence over the reporting of the Western Media on this conflict. These events include Armenian Parliament Shooting in 1999, 9/11 events, the Second Gulf War, Russian-Georgian war of 2008, Ukrainian crisis, the signing of Zurich protocols between Turkey and Armenia etc.

It is believed that freedom of speech and expression are among the first victims of most of the conflicts in non-democracies. Domestic media serves the political goals of the regime while foreign and independent journalism encounters artificial limitations (Article 19, 2008, p. 1). This was also the case during the beginning of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict when the western journalists were prohibited to travel to conflicting republics, namely to Azerbaijan and Armenia, as well as to the Nagorno-Karabakh region. Therefore, most of the articles published in the Western Media were written based on the facts published in the Soviet Media where Armenian and pro-Armenian Russians were dominating (Demoyan, 2008).

The Media coverage of the conflict was dependent on certain factors not only during the beginning, but also in the later stages of the conflict. The coverage of a number of aspects, such

as the foreign powers that have influence over the conflict as well as the similarities of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with other disputes have changed quite frequently as a result of some events in international arena. Therefore, one of the purposes of the research is to find out the factors that have impact the Media's coverage regarding these issues.

Existing literature

This question was addressed by a number of Azerbaijani and Armenian scholars. Baguirov (1998) identifies some errors (which the author calls "myths") of the Western Media while reporting on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. These errors are the following:

1. the depiction of the "Sumgait pogroms" as the first casualties and basically, the beginning of the conflict;
2. the depiction of Nagorno-Karabakh and Nakhichevan as the historically Armenian lands that were given to Azerbaijan by Stalin in 1920s;
3. the depiction of the Nagorno-Karabakh region as an independent republic in the later stages of the conflict. (Baguirov (1998))

Besides indicating the mistakes ("myths"), the author also tries to "correct" them by bringing certain historical events as examples. In order to explain the situation in the region to Americans (who are probably the main target audience of the article, taking into account the fact that the outlet where this article was published is based in the USA) by making an analogy with "Colorado, which does not even share a border with Mexico, suddenly declared independence from the United States and went to war to attach themselves to Mexico, and in the process a Coloradan became the President of Mexico" (Baguirov 1998).

Nevertheless, Baguirov (1998) does not apply any academic research design or does not refer specifically to any news outlet article or even to outlet itself. Therefore, I will also check if the author's assumptions are correct.

The article can also be regarded as outdated since it was published nearly 18 years ago. As mentioned above, the Media tends to change. It is not an exception that the Western Media's attitude towards the conflict might have changed since then.

A more recent paper published by (an Azerbaijani) scholar that discusses this topic applying a different research method is Imranli-Lowe (2015), which provides very similar results as Baguirov (1998). Imranli-Lowe (2015) conducts a discourse analysis² based on the reportings of the British media and *The New York Times*. The author analyzes statements, words, word combinations and sentences in the articles and explains the mistakes, gaps as well as the reasons of these gaps. The conclusion that Imranli-Lowe (2015) reaches at the end of her research can be summarized as follows:

- the Western media is more sympathetic to the Armenian side since most commentaries were published by Western academics of Armenian origin;
- phrases like “re-unification” and “return” of Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenians is used frequently;
- the Western media referred mostly to Armenian sources or lacked any reference at all (Imranli-Lowe, 2015; p.165).

Like Baguirov (1998), Imranli-Lowe (2015) also corrects what she perceives as intentional or unintentional mistakes (made in favor of Armenian side) by referring to historical documents and books.

The main problem of this research is that it covers a short period (1988-1994) of time. The paper focuses only on which side of the conflict the Western media favored and why. The research also lacks the information whether certain important political events such as the demise of the Soviet Union changed the Western media coverage of the conflict or not. The author conducts neither longitudinal nor “within media” research, which makes it difficult to understand

² A method in which author analyzes various discourses (usually but not limited to, published in news media outlets) related to a particular topic and draws conclusion regarding the topic.

if the American and the British Media differ in their points of view regarding this topic or whether the Western media change its views about this conflict over time.

The Western media's pro-Armenian position (i.e. depiction of Armenians as the victims of the conflict, also calling Nagorno-Karabakh the Armenian lands and etc.) is also confirmed by an Armenian author, namely by Demoyan (2008) who applies a content analysis focusing on the media coverage of the conflict from 1988 to 1990. According to Demoyan (2008), in the beginning stage of the conflict the Western Media favored the Armenian side due to the fact that representatives of most of the Western newspapers were based in Moscow where Armenians and pro-Armenian Russians were much more active than Azerbaijanis (Demoyan, 2008; p.59).

Unlike Imranli-Lowe (2015) and Baguirov (1998), Demoyan (2008) points out the fact that the Media tends to discuss this conflict in the shadow of other topics and that the Western media covered the conflict mostly in the context of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, usually calling the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as "a test for perestroika".

Problems with Imranli-Lowe (2015) can be observed in this research as well. Demoyan (2008) is concerned with the Media coverage of the conflict from 1988 to only 1990. The research also lacks a precise question. The author does not clarify what exactly he is researching and instead allocates more space to historical events. As in the articles discussed previously, there is almost no information whether historical events influenced the Western media coverage and if yes, how they have changed it.

Research Design

A quantitative content analysis will be conducted in order to find answers to the questions of the research. Study units³ (or units of analysis) of the research will be the news articles, which mention the phrase "Nagorno-Karabakh" and which are published since January 1, 1988 until January 1, 2016. News outlets that I plan to use are going to represent three Western societies,

³ Elements of content that are defined by the content analyst in the process of reducing and selecting the material to be studied (articles, journals etc.). Riffe, Daniel; Lacy Stephan; Fico, Frederick G. (2005) *Analyzing Media Messages: Using Quantitative Content Analysis in Research*.

namely the American, the British and the German societies. These are *The New York Times*, *The Independent* and *Der Spiegel*.

I will use a variety of information units⁴ and they will depend on questions. Below the information units will be explained in detail.

In order to answer the main questions of the research I will focus on the following, more concrete ones:

1. How does the activeness of the Western Media in reporting the conflict vary across years?
2. What is the type of this conflict (ethnic, religious, territorial etc.)?
3. Who is the victim?
4. To whom does the Nagorno-Karabakh region belong?
5. How important roles do outside powers play in this conflict?
6. To which conflicts is the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict compared to (if any)?

In order to define the popularity of the topic in the Western media, firstly we must underline the fact that although the word “Karabakh” is mentioned in more than 900 articles published in the three news outlets used in this research (for example, 603 articles published in the New York Times mention the word “Karabakh”), not all of the articles are dedicated solely to this conflict. Some of the articles mention the conflict in context of other issues such as *perestroika*, *glasnost*, the collapse of the Soviet Union and etc. There are also articles about other conflicts and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is only brought as an example or is compared to those conflicts. Therefore, I will generate the *main_topic*, which will be a dichotomous variable with 0 representing the articles that mention the conflict in the context of other issues and 1 representing the articles that are specifically dedicated to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

There are a lot of very short, up-to-100-word articles, that are mainly of informational character. That is why the number of words can be a good tool for measuring the so-called level

⁴ Elements that carry meaning that affects the receiver of the message embedded in the content (words, sentences, visual images). Riffe, Daniel; Lacy Stephan; Fico, Frederick G. (2005) *Analyzing Media Messages: Using Quantitative Content Analysis in Research*.

of interest of Western media towards the conflict. Hence, more words can be the indicator of more interest and logically, less words of smaller. Taking this into account, I will generate the variable *word_count*, which will represent the word count of these articles. Note that I will also take the words that are dedicated to the topic. This means that not all of the words from the articles where the conflict was simply mentioned (used as an example, for instance) will be taken. Average word count per article in a given year will also be briefly elaborated in a separate graph.

For answering the second question I will look for certain words and word combinations such as “ethnic conflict” (which would mean that the article suggests the conflict to be an ethnic conflict), “Christian Armenians” or “Muslim Azerbaijanis” (meaning that the conflict started because of religious antagonism). *Type* will indicate the type of the conflict according to the article and will be coded with 1 if the conflict is described as a territorial one, 2 if as a nationalistic conflict, 3 if as a civil war inside the Soviet Union, 4 if an ethnic, and 5 if as religious dispute between two nations.

In most of the articles there is no phrase directly referring to the type of the conflict. However, a sentence like “a dispute between two states over the Nagorno-Karabakh region” suggests that the article regards the conflict as a territorial one.

It must also be noted that the majority of the articles touch upon all of the above mentioned factors (for example, although the author specifically uses the phrase “conflict/war over territory”, further in the same article he also mentions the possibility of religious and ethnic drivers as well). *Religion*, *territory* and *ethnic* will be dichotomous variables which will be coded as 1 if, respectively, religion, territorial demands and ethnic antagonism are mentioned and 0 if not.

The articles published in above mentioned newspapers differ in their opinions about the aggressor and victim of this conflict. More than half of the articles do not specifically refer to any side as a victim or aggressor. Nevertheless, the number of the articles where one of the sides

are presented as a victim, is also big enough. *Victim* will be coded as 0 if there is no information about who the victim is, 1 if Armenia is shown as the victim of the conflict and 2 if Azerbaijan.

Based on the early analysis we can conclude that articles published in the late 1980s suggest that Nagorno-Karabakh is a historical land of Armenia as they use the expressions like “re-unification of Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia” or “mostly Armenian territory (or enclave) which was given to Azerbaijan” very often. Articles that do not use these expressions, still regard the region as an Armenian land, mainly because of domination of Armenians in terms of population by using sentences like “predominantly Armenian territory (or enclave) ruled by Azerbaijan” or “mostly Armenian populated territory within Azerbaijan” and etc. That is why, I will use phrases like, “re-unification”, “to take back”, “invasion” and etc. as information units.

It must also be underlined that phrases like “a mostly/predominantly Armenian populated territory **OF** (not **in** or **within**) Azerbaijan” will be regarded as pro-Azerbaijani, since the preposition “of” is usually used to emphasize the ownership. The variable *belong* will be coded 1 if the article claims Nagorno-Karabakh to belong to Armenia, 2 if to Azerbaijan and 0 if there is no information about this.

The variable *foreign_powers* will explore the role of outside powers, including international organizations, in this conflict. This will include statements made by the officials of these powers, their roles as mediators, attempts to send troops and etc.

Some articles compare the conflict to other conflicts in the world, especially to those in the post-Soviet space. The claim of these articles is that almost all of the conflicts in the post-Soviet world are interrelated and are the consequences of Gorbachev’s policies, namely *glasnost* and *perestroika*. I will find out to which disputes (if any) the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is mostly likened and why.

As mentioned above, I will also examine if statements of Baguirov (1998) are correct. Thus, I will generate another set of “secondary” variables. *Sumgait* will be a dichotomous variable and will be coded 1 if Sumgait events are mentioned in an article as the beginning of the

conflict and 0 if it is not. *Stalin_NK* and *Stalin_Nakhichevan* will also be dichotomous variables, which will be coded 1 if the article mentions the assumption that, respectively, Nagorno-Karabakh and Nakhichevan were given to Azerbaijan by Stalin and 0 if it does not.

I will design both longitudinal and “cross media” researches. The former method will serve the aim to find out whether the opinion of the news s about this conflict have changed over time or not and if yes, I will look for the reasons of such changes (for instance, did the British newspaper change their attitude towards the conflict after the “The Contract of the Century” was signed? If yes, can we conclude that the change was motivated by BP’s oil interests in Azerbaijan?). The latter research method is useful for comparing different media s with each other (for example, does the German media depict this conflict differently than the American or the British media).

I will also examine if there are any changes in the Western media coverage of this conflict and if yes, what are the factors causing these changes. In doing so, I will look at important political events during the periods of changes (if any). For example, imagine that media allocates more place to Russia in articles about Nagorno-Karabakh conflict after the Russian-Georgian war of 2008. Thus, we might argue that the war was a turning point in Western media coverage. Other possible turning points may include the Contract of the Century, signed in 1994, Armenian Parliament Shooting in 1999, the US intervention into Iraq in 2003 and etc.

Besides political processes, there can be other factors influencing the Media coverage. The author of an article is among this kind of factors. Almost each author researches this topic more than once. Thus, I will generate another variable, *author* and will design so-called “individual longitudinal” analyses as well. Since there is a huge number of authors who published at least 1 article directly or indirectly related to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (around 200), I will examine the author and the news agency (such as *the Reuters*, *the Associated Press*, *Agence France-Presse*, *Deutsch Press-Agentur*) that published the most number of

articles (and therefore has more influence over the attitude of the newspaper towards the conflict) from each media . This will allow me to understand whether a particular author changed his mind over time regarding the conflict or not. If yes, what are the reasons?

Selected media outlets

The major reason why I chose to represent the American media with *the New York Times* is because it is regarded as one of the most influential newspapers around the world and in the USA. *The New York Times* has the second-largest circulation behind *The Wall Street Journal*. However, *the New York Times* has published more than 600 articles that touch upon the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict compared to 134 published by the Wall Street Journal. It is also worth mentioning that this newspaper has won the biggest number of Pulitzer Prizes among the newspaper organizations.

The Independent was⁵ one of the most read newspapers in Great Britain being in top ten in terms of circulation. Although circulation of several other newspapers such as *the Times of London*, *the Financial Times*, *the Sun* and etc. are higher than that of *the Independent*, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict appears in its reporting more than other newspapers of the UK.

Der Spiegel (together with its sister, *Spiegel Online*) is known for its investigative journalism and exposing political scandals. It was especially active in uncovering a number of political scandals including the Spiegel Scandal and Flick affair. Because of this feature it was named as one of the Europe's most influential media s by *the Economist*. This feature makes *Der Spiegel* a perfect candidate to represent the European and German Media and society.

Findings

The analysis suggests that the conflict received the broadest coverage from the Western media from 1988 to 1994. However, the Western media lost its interest in this topic since 1994.

⁵ On 20 March 2016 *the Independent* published its last paper and announced to become digital (online) only.

For example, *The New York Times* published 27 articles in 1994 compared to 67 articles in the previous year. The next year (1995) this figure was much less – 6, most probably due to signing of the ceasefire which led to a relatively calmer situation in the region.

The analysis of the articles also suggests that the Western media's so-called level of interest in this topic might be shaped by the Soviet Union/Russia's foreign policy priorities. During the beginning of the conflict newspapers regarded Armenian demonstrations as a "test for *perestroika*" probably due to the fact that it sought to be directed against the Soviet Union. Therefore, articles published from 1988 till 1994 were mostly pro-Armenian oriented or neutral at best (with some minor exceptions). The second phase of the Media coverage of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which takes off in mid-1990s and continues for nearly a decade, is a more neutral period of it and is notable for some sort of "silence". Finally, during the third phase, which has started in mid-2000s, a more or less pro-Azerbaijani position of the Western Media can be observed. It should also be mentioned that it coincides with the beginning of so-called "aggressive policy" of Russia. The reason of this "shifting priorities" can be the West's negative relations with Russia, which is the number 1 ally of Armenia.

Examination of articles shows that the newspapers often use the phrases like "battle\conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh" which leads us to think that the newspapers regard this dispute mainly a territorial one. Nevertheless, other possible factors such as ethnic animosity, religious antagonism as well as nationalistic feelings also received attention from the sides of newspapers. On the other hand, during early 1990s, it was very common to see phrases like "Muslim Azerbaijanis" or "Christian Armenians". For instance, an article published in *The New York Times* by Felicity Barringer on February 24, 1988 is called "A dispute with religious tones" which is a clear indicator of the fact that the Western media regarded the religious factor to play a major role in escalation of this conflict.

Articles published during the early stages of the conflict very often discuss the Sumgait events and frequently indicate them as the beginning of the conflict. There are very few articles

highlighting the deaths of two Azerbaijani people on February 24, 1988. These results support the assumptions of Baguirov (1998) and can be regarded as another indicator of the Media's pro-Armenian position.

Review of the articles published during the beginning of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict also give other information which lead us to speculate about the Western media's pro-Armenian position. This includes the frequent use of terms such as "*re-unification* of Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia", "Nagorno-Karabakh was *given* to Azerbaijan in early twentieth century", which can act as a proof of above mentioned claim. For instance, the following statements can be found in almost every article published in British media:

- Nagorno-Karabakh had been part of Armenia since the first century AD until early twentieth century;
- In early twentieth century, Nagorno-Karabakh was given to Azerbaijan by Soviet leaders (by Stalin in some articles, by Lenin in others).

Taking this into consideration, we can argue that the Western media favored Armenia as stated by Imranli-Lowe (2015) and Demoyan (2008).

Difficulties with the research

Due to time constraint as well as word count limit, I was able to research only three above mentioned newspapers. Each of them represents one (the American, the British and the German (European)) society. Because of this problem, it is hard to fully ascribe the results obtained from this research to the whole media. I must underline that I am planning to enhance this research in the future by including a few more news outlets.

Another limitation was the lack of access to hard-copy archives of the newspapers, which obscured getting certain important information such as the number of articles published on the front page etc.

COMBINED ANALYSIS

Selected three newspapers have published a total 937 articles in which the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was mentioned (*figure 1a*). As is already stated, the whole period can be divided into three stages. From 1988 till 1994 when the Media published the most number of articles to the conflict. Starting from 1994, most probably after signing of the ceasefire, the interest in this topic gradually decreases during the next 10 years and the number of articles published in any year has never reached 40. In 1999 the subject again gains a little more attention, which might be due to the Armenian Parliament Shooting, although it was widely reported that the event had nothing to do with the conflict and it was totally Armenia's internal matter. Starting from mid-2000s we can observe a slight upward trend in this figure, although erratically.

Figure 1b illustrates the role of Russia, Turkey and the USA in this conflict. It must be noted that these are the most mentioned foreign powers in articles related to Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. All three countries' names appear much more frequently in early 1990s compared to other periods.

The USA's name appears mostly in the context of Freedom Support Act. The figure goes down to 1 in 1995 and starting from then it fluctuates between 0 and 4. It can be assumed that the Western Media does not consider as influential actor in this conflict as Russia and Turkey. No change is observed after 9/11 which might suggest that the Media was reluctant to draw any parallels between the conflict and Iraq war.

Turning to Turkey, it also loses its position from mid-1990s till late 2000s. Starting from 2006 its name re-appears in articles and in 2009 is mentioned much more times than any other foreign power, which might be due to Zurich protocols between Turkey and Armenia. However,

that number again goes down the following year reaches its previous level in 2011 and even after that keeps going down.

As it is clear from the graph, from the point of view of the Western Media Russia has been the most important foreign country in this conflict since its beginning. Like other two states, it also drops from the center of attention from mid-1990s. It is interesting that the Media allocated more space to Russia's role in this conflict in 1999, the same year when Armenian Parliament Shooting occurred. Russia "regains" its place in Western Media reporting about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in mid-2000s and since then its name constantly appears in articles related to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, albeit with some fluctuations. It is worth underlining that Russia's "comeback" coincides with some very important events related to it such as Russian-Georgian war, Ukraine crisis and annex of Crimea.

During the early stages of the conflict, Armenia was depicted as the victim of the conflict but the primary aggressor was not Azerbaijan but the Soviet Union (*figure 1c*). This becomes evident if we pay attention to the fact that immediately after the demise of the Soviet Union, conflicting sides have some kind of draw in this figure. This draw has been continuing up to date.

A very similar pattern is observed in *figure 1d* which shows whom the Western Media regards as the "owner" of Nagorno-Karabakh. During the first stage of the coverage (1988-1994) we see a clear dominance of Armenia. However, the gap between figures become much less in 1995 although Armenia is still being favored more up to 1999. From then on we again observe a draw although in some years one of the sides gains the "upper hand". It is also worth to mention that in the third phase of reporting upward and downward trends in these figures are observed for Azerbaijan and Armenia, respectively.

Two authors (Bill Keller of *the New York Times* and Hugh Pope of *the Independent*) have published a total of 94 (10%) articles in which the conflict is touched on. Unlike the former, Pope takes a more neutral and sometimes slightly pro-Azerbaijani position. He does not mention Sumgait events at all whereas Keller constantly refers to that event as a “massacre/bloodshed of Armenians”. Whereas Keller keeps balance while talking about the origins of Nagorno-Karabakh, Pope takes a somewhat pro-Azerbaijani position, especially after 1993.

Among news agencies, *Associated Press* appears to be the most active one in covering the conflict having published 42 articles in all three outlets. The second place in this index belongs to the *Reuters* at 23. In total they account for 7% of all the articles.

As for *Reuters*, it appears to be more pro-Armenian oriented. While they both refrain from calling either side the victim of the conflict, *Reuters* calls Nagorno-Karabakh as Armenian land a total 7 times. This figure is only 2 for Azerbaijan. *The Associated Press* is more prone to neutrality in this regard. Especially after 2010 it constantly refers to Nagorno-Karabakh as “Azerbaijan’s Nagorno-Karabakh region occupied/controlled by Armenian separatists”.

THE NEW YORK TIMES

From January 1 1988 until January 1 2016 *The New York Times* published a total of 603⁶ articles, written by more than 100 different authors, than mention the word “Karabakh”. 234 out of these 603 articles are dedicated solely to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, while in the remaining 369 articles, which discuss other subjects, the conflict is mostly used as an example or for comparison.

It is worth mentioning that the articles are not “distributed” evenly. In certain periods of time (especially during the early years of the conflict) the word “Karabakh” is mentioned in much more number of articles than in other periods.

The New York Times published 401 out of 603 articles from 1988 to 1994 i.e. from the year when the conflict started till the signing of the ceasefire, (on average, around 52.2 articles annually) (*figure 2a*). As it is clear from the graph, the number of articles mentioning “Karabakh” gradually decreased till 1994. Starting from 1995 we can notice this figure being in a constant flat. Nevertheless, an increase in the proportion of articles dedicated solely to the conflict since 2011 must also be pointed out.

We observe almost the same pattern examining the total number of words in these articles vs. the number of words that specifically discuss the conflict (*figure 2b*). It appears that the newspaper allocated much more space to this topic during the first 7 years of the conflict.

Figure 2c shows the average word count per article the outlet allocated for the topic. We can see that *the New York Times* allocated the most number of words for the discussion of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in 1988 and in 1994⁷. In general, the topic was more interesting for the outlet until 1994. Starting from 1994 to 2010 the outlet had lost its interest in the conflict and the average word count per article dedicated to this topic barely exceeded 150. Beginning from 2011 the average word count again went up to close to 300 words and remained there the next

⁶ 623 results are shown if one searches for the word “Karabakh” in the database of *The New York Times*. Nevertheless, 20 of them are not articles, but corrections to articles published before.

⁷ The highest number in graph belongs to the year 2004. However, it must be noted that the number of articles mentioning “Karabakh” were extremely low from 1999 to 2004 (look at the red lines in *figure 1c*), which is the reason the word count seems to be very high in those years. Therefore, the reliability of those results is called into question.

year as well. Although the figure went back down in 2013, we can observe a slight upward trend since then.

Analyzing above mentioned three graphs we can draw a conclusion that the first 7 years of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was the period when *the New York Times* allocated the most space to it. From 1995 till 2010-2011 the newspaper lost its interest in the topic. However, we witness a growing interest of the outlet towards the conflict starting from 2011. The signing of the ceasefire in 1994 and the beginning of the relatively calm period between the sides of the conflict might be the reason why the *New York Times* decreased the level of coverage in 1995. Activeness in reporting the conflict during the late 2010s can be caused due to the start of Russia's "aggressive" policy, that took off with the Russian-Georgian war of 2008 and peaked with the annex of Crimea.

The Western Media favored Armenia during the early stages of the conflict as suggested by early researches examining this topic. It becomes clear if we take a close look at *figure 2d*, which graphically shows whom *the New York Times* regarded as the victim of the conflict. As we can see, until 1995 most articles described Armenia as the victim of this conflict. Starting from 1995 the paper took a somewhat more neutral path and this process has still been continuing.

The pro-Armenia position of *the New York Times* in the beginning of the conflict is also evident in *figure 2e*, which illustrates whom the newspaper regarded as the "owner" of the land. During the first 7 years of the dispute, the outlet depicted Nagorno-Karabakh as an Armenian land calling it "a predominantly Armenian enclave within\inside\in Azerbaijan" as well as using phrases like "reunification\reunion of Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia" quite frequently. Nonetheless, starting from 1995 a more balanced position is observed. It is interesting that from 2009 onwards *the New York Times* has taken a slightly more pro-Azerbaijani position in this subject with publishing more articles that depict Nagorno-Karabakh as an Azerbaijani territory. We can see a continuing upward trend in the number of this kind of articles starting from 2013.

It must be underlined that even during the period when Armenia was depicted as the primary victim of the conflict, not Azerbaijan but the Soviet Union was the primary aggressor from the perspective of *the New York Times*. It was due to the fact that 1987-1988 Armenian movement over the annexation of the Nagorno-Karabakh territory to Armenia was widely regarded to be directed not against Azerbaijan but against the Soviet Union and therefore, it was frequently labeled as the first “test” for Gorbachev’s policy of *perestroika* and *glasnost*. Therefore, in the eyes of *the New York Times*, the conflict was not a conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, but between Armenia and the Soviet Union.

Similarly, the reason why *the New York Times* has begun to favor Azerbaijan since 2009 might be the beginning of Russia’s aggressive policy. It is possible to argue that the outlet condemns Armenia more since Russia is its closest ally. If this speculation is correct, then we might expect the outlet to continue this trend in case Russia keeps its aggressive policy.

Figure 2f and *2g* graphically illustrate *the New York Times*’ position regarding the role of outside powers - more precisely, the roles of the USA, Russia⁸ and Turkey - in this conflict. Although names of other countries such as Iran, Italy, Kazakhstan and etc. appear in articles about the conflict, above mentioned three states are the most referred outside powers.

Having a look at the graphs, we might decide that the outlet considers Russia as the most influential player in this conflict, especially during the first three years of independence of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Until 2000 Russia is believed to be at least as influential as other two states. Between 2002 and 2005 Russia’s name disappears from the articles related to the conflict and again reappears in 2006. From then on Russia has again been depicted as an important actor in this conflict.

This is not to say that the roles of the USA and Turkey has been forgotten. In 1992 the names of both Turkey and the USA appeared in as many articles as Russia’s name. Nevertheless, Turkey had gradually lost its “place” in the eyes of the outlet. In 2009 Turkey again came to the

⁸ Because until 1991 both Armenia and Azerbaijan were parts of the Soviet Union, the conflict was considered as an internal one and there are very few articles published that time which mention “Russia”. Therefore, data about the articles with Russia’s name in them are included after 1991.

center of attention and was mentioned in the more number of articles than in all other years of coverage except for 1992. The major reason of this pattern could be the attempts to normalize relations between Armenia and Turkey, which resulted in signing of Zurich protocols between two countries. Taking into account the fact that the occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh by Armenia was one of two main reasons why these relations worsened in early 1990s (the other being Armenia's propaganda of 1915 events calling it as "Armenian Genocide"), it comes as no surprise why *the New York Times* became "re-interested" in Turkey's role in the conflict.

The USA was also mentioned as many times as was Russia and Turkey in 1992. The role of the USA in this conflict is predominantly depicted in the context of the Freedom Support Act and its Section 907 both of which were adopted in 1992. Therefore, the USA received much attention in that and in the next year. Starting from 1995, however, the outlet "lost its interest" in the role of the USA in the conflict. Since then the highest number of articles where the USA is shown as an actor having influence over the conflict is 3.

Surprisingly, the name of France appears very rarely in the articles despite the fact that it is one of the members of OSCE Minsk group.

The New York Times coverage of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict also includes comparisons to other conflicts, especially to those are in the post-Soviet space. Conflicts in Georgia (Abkhazia and South Ossetia) and Moldova (Transnistria) are the most mentioned conflicts in this regard. *Figure 2h* indicates the number of articles where Georgian conflicts and Transnistrian conflicts are mentioned. We observe very similar patterns in both graphs. From 1992 to 1995 both Georgian and Transnistrian conflicts were quite frequently compared to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. From 1995 till 2005, this figure ranges between 0 and 2 and again goes up to 6 in 2006. Interestingly Transnistrian conflict again loses its importance in the eyes of *the New York Times*, whereas Georgian conflicts continue to be referred quite often until 2014 with being mentioned 6 times (the same number of times as in 2006) in 2011.

The reason why the outlet has the same reactions to all three conflicts during the same periods of time might be their similarities. All of three conflicts were the results of the demise of the Soviet Union. Besides, territorial demands and separatism are in the center of these conflicts. Russia's manipulation of these conflicts according to its own interests can also be considered as a common feature for them.

Both of these conflicts received broader coverages in 1992-1994 as well as in 2006 since almost the same events happened in these regions during these periods of time. In 1992, immediately after the demise of the Soviet Union the Abkhaz-Georgian and Transnistrian wars started (at the same time when the Nagorno-Karabakh war started).

In 2006 Abkhazia again came to the center of attention, probably because of the Kodori crisis⁹. That same year, both South Ossetia and Transnistria held referendums on independence. It can be argued that these events made *the New York Times* again be interested in covering these conflicts in the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

*Figures 2i and 2j*¹⁰ show the causes of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict according to *the New York Times*. As it is clear from the graph, the outlet allocates much space to territorial issues. For example, 90 articles (78%) that mention "Karabakh" and are published in 1988 show territorial issues as a possible cause (or one of the causes) of the conflict. Although this figure goes down to 36 in the next year, percentagewise this makes 81% of all the articles published in that year (1989). From 1988 till 2001 on average 40% of articles published each year touch on territorial issues. Nevertheless, starting from 2002 territorial demands are referred in only 4 (2008, 2012, 2014, 2015) out of 14 years.

Ethnic antagonism and religious antagonism were also touched upon very frequently until 2001. Like territorial claims, both religion and ethnicity lost their significance starting from 2002. Ethnic animosity was briefly mentioned in 2006, but beginning from 2009 ethnicity and religion started to be referred to as possible drivers of the conflict.

⁹ In July, 2006 Emzar Kvitsiani declared his opposition to the Government of Georgia stating to defy Georgia's central authority.

¹⁰ Most of the articles mention more than one cause of the conflict, therefore sum of percentages in some years may exceed 100%.

Nationalism is the least mentioned among these four factors. During the early phase of the conflict since *the New York Times* regarded Armenian demonstrations over Nagorno-Karabakh as a nationalist unrest. Another possible reason why nationalism was mentioned so often during that period of time might be the outlet's attempts to liken this conflict to unrests in Baltic states, particularly in Estonia. In total, nationalism was touched on in 57 (9.5%) out of all 603 articles.

The unique feature of *the New York Times* is the publication of the letters. Since 1988 till 2015 *the New York Times* published 29 letters related to this conflict. Main topic of 22 of these letters is the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. 11 articles were published by Armenians, 6 by Azerbaijanis and the remaining 12 by foreigners.

As it can be guessed, Armenian authors present the conflict as a civil war on independence of Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh, whereas Azerbaijani writers depict it as Armenia's attempts to occupy Azerbaijani lands. Foreign authors, on the other hand, allocate more space to territorial and ethnic problems. Each of the parties of the conflict is shown as victim in 3 letters and the rest 6 authors kept their neutrality.

The New York Times did not constantly remember Sumgait events as is suggested by Baguirov (1998). It was mentioned 38 times in 1988 (the year when the events happened), and a total of 16 times the next two years and only 3 times from 1991 till 2015.

On the other hand, the assumption that Nagorno-Karabakh is an Armenian land given to Azerbaijan by Stalin in 1920s has been constantly repeated, though not very frequently. Until 1994 it was continuously touched upon. From 1995 till 2009 the outlet "forgot" mentioning this statement only once in 1997. In 2010-2012, *the New York Times* again started to publish articles with this claim. The statement that Nakhchivan was also given to Azerbaijan was mentioned only twice.

Baguirov (1998) was right, however, claiming that the Western Media had almost never allocated any space for reporting the death of two Azerbaijanis in Nagorno-Karabakh during the

early days of the conflict. This fact was presented in only 8 articles 7 of which were published in 1988.

As suggested by Demoyan (2008) and Imranli-Lowe (2015), articles published during the early years of the conflict regard this conflict as a result of Gorbachev's *Perestroika* and *Glasnost* policies calling the Armenian demonstrations "a test for perestroika". In 1988 there published 31 articles that mentioned *perestroika* and *glasnost* in the context of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. This number significantly decreased to 7 the next year and to 3 in 1990. Since 1994, the *New York Times* has not mentioned the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and *perestroika* in the same article.

More than 100 different authors and news agencies published articles related to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in *the New York Times*. However not all of them published the same number of articles. As mentioned above I will focus on the author who wrote the most number of articles and hence, has more influence over the position of the newspaper towards this conflict.

Bill Keller, a Pulitzer Prize winner, published 73 articles from 1988 till 1991 (note that no other author published more than 20 articles). It is also worth to mention that during this period of time the author published a total of 641 articles. From 1988 to 1991, the newspaper published a total of 246 articles in which it touched upon the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. This means that roughly 30% of all the articles published in *the New York Times* that mention "Karabakh" were written by Bill Keller. 41 (44152 words) of these 73 articles (71963 words) are dedicated to the discussion of the Nagorno-Karabakh article, whereas the remaining 32 mention this conflict in the context of other topics. The average number of words the author allocates to discussion of the dispute relative to the number his articles that mention "Karabakh" (i.e. the number of words that discuss the conflict divided by the number of articles that mention the word "Karabakh") is 605. This figure relative to the total number of articles published by this author (i.e. the number of words that discuss the conflict divided by the total number of articles) is 69.

Bill Keller takes a more or less balanced position. In 25 articles he names Karabakh (directly or indirectly) as an Armenian land. This number is almost the same (26) for Azerbaijan. Unlike other authors, Bill Keller refrains from claiming that the Nagorno-Karabakh region was gifted to Azerbaijan by Stalin in 1920s. Nevertheless, the author regards Armenians as the primary victims of this dispute (26 times). Azerbaijan is called the victim of the conflict only twice. It must once again be noted that during these early years of conflict not Azerbaijan but the Soviet Union was shown as the aggressor in this dispute.

The author calls territorial factors as one of the drivers of this conflict for 67 times (more than 94%). Ethnic, religious animosity and nationalistic feelings are touched upon 36, 29 and 16 times respectively.

The author refers to Sumgait events quite often (23) times, but does not mention the death of two Azerbaijanis during the uprisings in Nagorno-Karabakh region. This information appears to be consistent with the claim made by Baguirov (1998).

Among the news agencies *the Associated Press* appears to be the most active one compared to other agencies such as *Reuters*, *Agence France-Press* and etc., publishing 29 articles precisely about the conflict and 6 articles about other articles where the conflict was mentioned. Like most of the news agencies, the AP prefers short articles of informative character to long analyses. On average, at allocated 210 words per articles.

It is visible that the AP tries to keep its objectivity as much as possible. The number of times the Nagorno-Karabakh region was shown as an Armenian and Azerbaijani land are almost the same, 10 and 9 respectively. The statement that the region was given to Azerbaijan by Stalin was made only twice.

The AP is also reluctant to speak about who is the victim of this conflict. In only 7 articles we can find some clues regarding the victims of the conflict from the perspective of the agency. In 28 articles there is no information about who the victim of the conflict is.

Sungait events did not get large coverage in AP's articles and were mentioned in only two articles.

The AP regards territorial demands to be the main driver of this conflict too. This was mentioned in 23 (more than 65%) articles. Ethnic and religious antagonism are touched on 11 and 7 times respectively. Nationalism on the other hand received less space and was mentioned in only 2 articles.

THE INDEPENDENT

The Independent has been less active in covering the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict than *the New York Times*. The word “Karabakh” has appeared in its articles only since 1992. The news outlet has published a total of 161 articles mentioning “Karabakh” till 1 January 2015. The level of interest in the conflict was not equal in all years as with *the New York Times*. 100 out of 161 articles were published during the first 4 years of coverage (i.e. 1992-1995) (*figure 3a*). The newspaper did not mention the conflict in 2004 and in 2015.

55 articles (a little more than 34%) are dedicated to the conflict whereas the remaining 106 articles mention the dispute in the context of other topics. It is also clear from the graph that from 1994 to 2015 the news outlet has published only 1 article (which was published in 1999) that specifically discussed the conflict.

Figure 3b shows the total word count of articles that mention “Karabakh” vs. the number of words of these articles that discuss the conflict. It appears that a very small proportion of words of the articles which mention the word “Karabakh” allocate space for the discussion of the conflict. *Figure 3c* illustrates the percentage of words of articles dedicated to the discussion of the conflict. As it is evident according to the *figure 3b*, from 1992 to 1994 the outlet allocated more space to the conflict (more than 20% in each year). Starting from 1995 this figure fluctuated between 0 and 10 except for 1999 and 2005, when the figure briefly went up close to 20% but again decreased back to its previous flat¹¹.

Figure 3d graphically illustrates the total average number of words per article in which the word “Karabakh” can be found (i.e. the sum of words of articles that mention the conflict divided by the number of articles) vs. the average number of words used to discuss the conflict. The pattern observed in the previous graphs is repeated here. The conflict was only interesting to *the Independent* during the first 4 years of coverage.

¹¹ In 2003 there *the Independent* published only one article in which the word “Karabakh” was present. Therefore, the figure in that year is very high (close to 40), however, unreliable.

The reasons why the conflict became uninteresting to *the Independent* after 1994 might be the same as with *the New York Times*. The signing of the ceasefire agreement which resulted in significant decrease in the number of military activities and thus, there was nothing “interesting to report” for the outlet.

In 1999, *the Independent* again published 11 articles that mentioned “Karabakh” and 17% of words were allocated to discuss the dispute. Possible reason why this topic became slightly more interesting than during the previous 4 years can be the 1999 Armenian Parliament Shooting which was believed by some people to partially be motivated by the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict despite the fact that Armenian government denied the existence of any connections of this event to the conflict.

The Independent shows a quite ambiguous position regarding to whom Nagorno-Karabakh belongs (*figure 3e*). Articles published in 1992 depict Nagorno-Karabakh as an Armenian land. The next year, however this balance changes in favor of Azerbaijan. Nevertheless, in 1994, the number of articles that show the region to belong to Azerbaijan goes back down to 3 whereas this figure remains at 6 for Armenia. As it is clear from the graph, Armenia is favored much enough in this subject by the outlet.

In 1999, *the Independent* published the highest number of articles claiming Nagorno-Karabakh to belong to Armenia, except for 1992. Armenian Parliament Shooting made Armenia an interesting topic for the outlet and articles about this were published by authors of Armenian origin. These two factors combined may have had significant contribution over the depiction of Nagorno-Karabakh as an Armenian land in that particular year.

Nevertheless, note that *the Independent* did not publish any article in which it stated that Nagorno-Karabakh or Nakhchivan was given to Azerbaijan by Stalin.

What is surprising is the outlet’s position about the victim of the conflict (*figure 3f*). During 24 years of coverage of the conflict, *the Independent* called Azerbaijan the victim of the conflict a total of 32 times. This number is 21 for Armenia. In 1992, Armenia was named as the

victim much more times than Azerbaijan. The next year this balance changed significantly in favor of Azerbaijan. The same pattern continued for the next two years as well, but starting from 1995 till 2003 Armenia had gained “the upper hand”. Nonetheless, since 2005 till 2014 *the Independent* had kept on favoring Azerbaijan in this issue.

The Independent has shown little interest in mentioning this conflict in the context of other disputes (*figure 3g*). This is not to say that other conflicts were not touched upon at all. But the outlet’s coverage of the conflict mostly included short articles (up to 100 words) mainly of informational character that lacked any analysis. Still certain conflicts, particularly conflicts in Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia) and Moldova (Transnistria) as well as in former Yugoslavia were sometimes mentioned together with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Georgian crises are the most referred subjects in the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In 1992, Georgian crises were mentioned 9 times. This figure was 4 in 1993 and decreased to 2 in 1995 after which it fluctuated between 1 and 2. The same pattern is observed with other two conflicts (Transnistria and former Yugoslavia) as well, simply with smaller figures. From 1999 till 2007 no comparison has been made between Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and other disputes. Although these three conflicts again has begun to be referred to since 2008, the figure has not reached 1992-1994 levels yet.

It is worth mentioning that these are the most mentioned conflicts but not the only ones. Besides them the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was very rarely likened to other conflicts in the world such as Somali, Cyprus, Rwanda and etc.

Figure 3h graphically illustrates the role of outside powers, more precisely Russia, Turkey and the USA. Note that Turkey and Russia receive an almost equal attention from *the Independent*. First 2 years of coverage of the conflict each of these countries are mentioned almost the same number of times (16 and 15, respectively).

Russia remained in the center of the outlet’s attention the next year as well. The main reason of this might the signing of ceasefire, which according to *the Independent* was brokered

by Russia. As we can observe from the graph, in 1995 the outlet's attention to Russia also decreased.

Unlike Russia, Turkey was not able to keep its significance in the eyes of the *the Independent* in 1994. It was referred to mostly as a country allied with Azerbaijan against Armenia keeping the latter in a blockade. Turkey again gained slightly more attention in 2009, probably due to the signing of Zurich protocols between Turkey and Armenia that was a result of efforts to reconcile these two countries. Except for that year, Turkey has never been mentioned more than once in any year since 1997 (in some years it has not been mentioned at all).

Russia, on the other hand, enjoyed a bit more "popularity" compared to Turkey and the USA. But even the name of Russia has not appeared in articles together with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict more than twice in any year since 1997. Like Turkey and the USA, it was "forgotten" in 2000, but since 2007 (especially in 2008-2009, most probably, after the Russian-Georgian war) it has regained its place in the eyes of *the Independent*.

The USA is not regarded to be as influential as Russia or Turkey by *the Independent*. In the articles related to Nagorno-Karabakh dispute, the name of the USA appeared only until 1999. Especially in 1993-1994 the outlet mentioned the USA in many articles related to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict which might be resulted by the Freedom Support Act and its Section 907. However, the name of the USA has disappeared from the articles about the conflict since 1999.

By taking a look at *figure 3i*, which identifies the cause of the conflict from the perspective of *the Independent*, we can see that it clearly allocates much more space to territorial demands. The phrase "territorial dispute" has been mentioned 62 times during the period of coverage, which is more than the sum of the number of times where ethnic animosity and religious antagonism were mentioned. Although in some years religious and ethnic factors gain "the upper hand", territorial issues keep to be constantly mentioned in the articles about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict over the coverage period.

For some reasons *the Independent* touched upon religious issues quite often during the period of 1992 to 1994. In a number of articles Armenia is depicted as “a Christian country surrounded by hostile Muslim countries”.

The main reason why nationalism received much less attention from the newspaper can be its “being late for coverage”. In 1992, when the outlet started to publish about the conflict, both of the sides of the conflict were independent. Since 1992, *the New York Times* has mentioned nationalism as a possible driver of the conflict 7 times. This number is equal to 50 from 1988 till 1991.

A different feature of *the Independent* from *the New York Times* is the publishing of obituaries¹². *The Independent* published 7 obituaries in which the word “Karabakh” is present. In other words, the outlet wrote articles about 7 people’s lives who played some role in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. It is worth mentioning that only 1 out of these 7 obituaries is about a person of Russian origin – to be more precise, Viktor Polyanichko – and the remaining 6 are dedicated to Armenians, such as Catholicos Vazgen I, Sergei Badalian, Hrair Maroukhian and etc. No obituary was published following the deaths Azerbaijani political figures. It must be noted that during the period of the outlet’s coverage of the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute, a number of well-known Azerbaijani officials passed away (such as, Abulfaz Elchibey and Heydar Aliyev to name only a few).

Interestingly, *the Independent* did not consider Gorbachev’s policies to have anything to do with this conflict. Up to date there has been only 2 articles where the newspaper touched upon the possible connection between Gorbachev’s policies - *perestroika* and *glasnost* - and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The fact that *the Independent* started covering the conflict after 1992 might be the reason of this attitude. The demonstrations for Nagorno-Karabakh during the early years of the conflict were named as “a test for perestroika” by Armenian intellectuals as well as by ordinary citizens. In 1992 there was no Soviet Union and eventually no *perestroika*.

¹² **Obituary** is a news article that reports on the recent death of a person, typically along with an account of the person’s life.

Therefore, for the newspaper this was an interstate territorial war with some elements of ethnic and religious antagonism.

The Independent also seems reluctant to speak about the Sumgait events as these events were mentioned a total of only 2 times during the whole 24 years of coverage. Probably this is the reason why religious factor received broader coverage from *the Independent* than ethnic or nationalistic aspects of the conflict. *The New York Times* depicted the killings Sumgait and similar events in other parts of Azerbaijan as a result of predominantly nationalistic feelings. Another possible reason why Sumgait events received less attention is the fact that the newspaper started publishing about the conflict only after 1992. Note that after 1992 *the New York Times* also virtually stopped mentioning Sumgait events along with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

As with *the New York Times*, not all of the authors have been equally active in publishing articles related to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Hugh Pope published the most number of articles, more precisely 21 (13539 words), whereas no other author published more than 10 articles. His articles were published from 1992 to 1995. 11 out of these 21 articles are dedicated to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In total he allocated 7325 words for the discussion of the conflict.

Hugh Pope takes a more pro-Azerbaijani position depicting Azerbaijan as the primary victim of the conflict in 14 articles. This number is 2 for Armenia.

It is worth to mention that he is also one of very few journalists that described the events from the perspective of Azerbaijan. Most of the journalists both in *the New York Times* and *the Independent* were based in Moscow during the times of Soviet Union and in Yerevan after Azerbaijan and Armenia gained independence. That was one of the reasons why the Western Media favored Armenia during the early stages of the conflict.

The topic of the articles published by Hugh Pope where the conflict is of secondary importance the main subject is usually the oil production and export policy of Azerbaijan and its impacts on Azerbaijan's foreign policy preferences as well as on the conflict.

He depicts the conflict as a predominantly territorial conflict although other possible causes such as ethnic and religious differences are mentioned.

It is also interesting that *perestroika*, Sumgait events as well as the claims the Nagorno-Karabakh and Nakhchivan were given to Azerbaijan by Stalin did not receive coverage from him.

Despite Hugh Pope's mostly pro-Azerbaijani position, he kept some balance about whom the region belongs to. 9 times it was named as Azerbaijani land and 7 times as Armenian. In 9 articles there is no information about this.

Among the foreign powers, Hugh Pope pays the most attention to Turkey and Russia. USA is touched upon only three times as country that has interest in Caspian region and in Azerbaijani oil. Turkey and Russia, on the other hand, are mentioned 12 and 11 times respectively.

Reuters news agency was the most active one in covering the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict publishing 17 articles about it, the main topic of all of which is the conflict. However, it must be noted that the average word count per article is slightly more than 85 as most of the articles don't exceed 90-100 words.

Reuters coverage of the conflict is quite neutral and it is hard to say if the agency favors any side. In only 3 articles we can find some clues regarding who the victim of the conflict is. Armenia was perceived as the victim of the conflict once and Azerbaijan twice. A very similar pattern is observed if we examine whom the *Reuters* regards as the "owner" of the land. However, in this context, Azerbaijan's name is not mentioned at all, whereas Armenia's name appears although a very small number (3) of times.

Like Hugh Pope, the *Reuters* refrain from mentioning Sumgait events, *perestroika*. Soviet Union's "gifting" the region together with Nakhchivan was not touched on either. The *Reuters* appears to use very small number of words without any analysis or comparison as no other conflict is mentioned in the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Foreign powers did not receive a broad coverage either with a few exceptions.

The news agency directly or indirectly mentions territorial issues a total of 8 times. Ethnic hostility between two nations is briefly mentioned whereas religious and nationalistic feelings are "forgotten".

DER SPIEGEL

From January 1 1988 till January 1 2016 *Der Spiegel* has published 173¹³ articles in which the word “Karabakh” appears (*figure 4a*). As with other two newspapers, we can divide the whole period of *Der Spiegel* coverage of the conflict into three phases. The first phase starts in 1988, when the conflict started and ends in 1994 when the ceasefire between the sides of the conflict was signed. As we can see from the graph, the most number of articles – 19 – mentioning the conflict were published in 1988 the year when the Armenian movement over the annexation of the Nagorno-Karabakh region started. This figure decreased to 8 in 1989 and to 5 in 1990 but again went up to its 1988 level in 1992, probably due to the fact that both sides of the conflict, Armenia and Azerbaijan, gained independence in 1991 and an interstate war started the same year.

The second phase covers the period from 1994 till 2006. During this phase the outlet was relatively inactive in reporting the conflict and mentioned it in no more than 6 articles in any year. In 1999 *Der Spiegel* became slightly more active compared to other years of the second phase the issue again came to the center of attention which might be the result of Armenia Parliament Shooting.

The third and to date the final phase has started since 2006-2007. From then onwards the conflict has again begun to frequently appear in articles and in 2007 it was touched upon 12 times i.e. as many times as in 1993. This pattern might be resulted by many factors such as the Russian-Georgian war of 2008, the signing of Zurich protocols between Armenia and Turkey, as well as the Russian annexation of Crimea. It must be noted that although the newspaper started very actively to the third phase, there has been a continuing downward trend since 2007.

As with the other two newspapers, only certain portion of the articles mentioning the conflict (more precisely, 36 or around 20.8%) are solely dedicated to it. In only 4 years *Der*

¹³ The number of articles mentioning “Karabakh” is bigger. But the word “Karabakh” in some of them refers to the football club and not to the conflict of the region.

Spiegel published more than one this kind of article: 13 articles in 1988, 8 in 1992, 3 in 2007 and 2 in 2014. In the remaining years this figure fluctuated between 0 and 1.

A very similar pattern can be seen if we take a look at *figure 4b* which illustrates the number of words allocated to all of the articles than mention the conflict vs. the number of words used specifically to discuss the conflict. Although the total number of words is quite high, in some years too little number of words were dedicated to depict the situation in the region. *Figure 4c* shows the percentage of words of articles that is used to discuss the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict¹⁴. Note that this is **not** the proportion of words relative to all of the articles published by the newspaper in the year, but only the articles which mention the conflict.

Figure 4d depicts the average word count per article that is dedicated to the discussion of the conflict. In both figures we see the repeat of the pattern observed in previous graphs: in 1992 the outlet loses its interest in the conflict. However, starting from 2007 this conflict has regained its place in the eyes of *Der Spiegel*.

Der Spiegel regarded Armenia as the victim of the conflict throughout the period of coverage. This becomes clear once we take a look at the *figure 4e*. Especially during the first four years, Armenia, directly or indirectly, was presented as the primary victim of the conflict while the name of Azerbaijan appears in this context quite rarely. Starting from 1994 the outlet begins to refrain from calling either side the victim until 2006. However, in 2007 *Der Spiegel* again starts favoring Armenia and this attitude continues for the next few years. It must be noted that during the same period of time Azerbaijan was also mentioned as the victim of the dispute more than in previous phases, although still less than Armenia. In general, Azerbaijan was regarded as the victim in much less articles than Armenia which indicates that Armenia was the primary victim in the eyes of *Der Spiegel*.

A very similar pattern is observed in *figure 4f* which determines the position of the newspaper towards the origins of Nagorno-Karabakh. As it is clear, the newspaper clearly

¹⁴ In 2000 the conflict was mentioned in only one article the main topic of which was the conflict. Therefore the number is 100% (note the red line in *figure 3c*).

perceives Armenia as the “owner” of Nagorno-Karabakh during the early stages of the conflict. Until 1994 Nagorno Karabakh was labeled as an Armenian land a total of 17 times. This figure is only 3 for Azerbaijan in that phase. However, since 1994 to 2006 the newspaper significantly decreased the number of articles where it discussed the origins of Nagorno-Karabakh. From 2007 the region was again started to be depicted as either Armenian or Azerbaijani land. It must also be noted that in this period of time Azerbaijan was named as the “owner” of this region much more times than any other period although the number of articles where Armenia’s name still appears more in this context. In 2012 *Der Spiegel* published the most number of articles – 5 – where Nagorno-Karabakh was labeled as an Azerbaijani land.

Examining figures 4e and 4f we can conclude that *Der Spiegel* was more pro-Armenian than pro-Azerbaijani. There can be a variety of reasons of this pattern. As with *the New York Times*, *Der Spiegel* regarded the Soviet Union (not Azerbaijan) as the main aggressor during the early stages of the conflict. Western Germany’s antagonism towards the Soviet Union because of the fact that the latter was the major obstacle of the unification of Germany might be the cause of this kind of coverage. The fact that Armenian movement was labeled as the “movement for reunification” as well as the claims of Armenian side that the Soviet Union was hindering this “reunification” could be reason why *Der Spiegel* favored Armenia more, especially during the first phase.

Turkey, Russia and the USA were again the most mentioned foreign powers that according to *Der Spiegel* have important roles in this conflict. Figure 4g graphically illustrates the roles of these powers. As we can see, the outlet almost did not mention any of the countries till 1992, probably due to the fact that until then it was an internal conflict. However, in 1992 Turkey comes to the center of attention being mentioned a total of 6 times together with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. This number is 3 and 1 for Russia and the USA respectively. Note that among these three countries, the USA has the least significant role in the conflict according to *Der Spiegel*. Russia on the other hand enjoys a much bigger attention from the outlet as its

name appears the most in the articles related to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Even during the second phase when the outlet becomes less interested in the conflict, Russia continues to be frequently touched upon in the articles where the name of the conflict appears. It again comes to the center of attention in 2007 and 2008, probably due to the referendums on independence held in 2006 in Transnistria and South Ossetia, both of which are strongly backed by Russia, as well as the Russian-Georgian war of 2008.

We can observe that Turkey also receives a broader coverage during the third phase of coverage. This interest could have been resulted by the efforts to create better relations between Turkey and Armenia that ended up with the signing of Zurich protocols between Turkey and Armenia. Note that during the first phase, Turkey's name appears as a close ally of Azerbaijan that kept Armenia in blockade. However, starting from since 2012, Turkey's name has disappeared from the articles related to the dispute published by *Der Spiegel*.

Figure 4h shows the causes of the conflict from the perspective of the newspaper. Although nationalism is more or less popular during the first phase, probably due to the Sumgait events which were believed to be resulted by the nationalistic feelings. Nonetheless, it has almost disappeared from *Der Spiegel's* articles related to the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute since 1994.

Ethnic, territorial and religious factors mentioned the most number of times together with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Nevertheless, it is evident that while interest in religious factors decreases, territorial factors continue to be touched on even during the second phase when the newspaper was inactive in reporting about the dispute. During the third phase territorial factors continue to dominate.

Ethnicity on the other hand was "forgotten" during in the second phase, but again starts to be mentioned in the third phase, although not as frequently as territorial demands but more than religion.

Like other two newspapers, *Der Spiegel* has made some comparisons of this conflict with other disputes in the world (*figure 4i*). Unrests in Baltic states, Georgian and Transnistrian

conflicts are the most compared issues to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Nevertheless, later disputes in Baltic states almost disappear from the articles in this context whereas the Georgian conflicts as well as the Transnistrian dispute in Moldova continue to be touched on. Especially Abkhazia and South Ossetia issues received a much broader coverage since 2007-2008 till 2011. During this period of time there were important events happening in these regions, particularly, as mentioned above, the referendum in South Ossetia and the Russian-Georgian war of 2008. It is however, interesting that *Der Spiegel* has not mentioned any dispute together with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict since 2012.

The outlet is not interested in comparing the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to Transnistria as much as to the Georgian conflicts, considering that it was mentioned more than once only in 1992 (twice). In the remaining years it was mentioned only once together with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict or was not mentioned at all.

Der Spiegel does not allocate too much space to Sumgait events of 1988. It was touched upon a total of 15 times 11 of which were in 1988.

Contrary to claims of Baguirov (1998), the claim that Nagorno-Karabakh and Nakhichevan are Armenian lands gifted to Azerbaijan by Stalin can be met a total of 10 and 3 times, respectively, during the period of media coverage of the conflict.

Like other two news s *Der Spiegel* also frequently depicted the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the context of *perestroika* and *glasnost* during the early years of the dispute. It might be caused by the belief that Armenian movement for Nagorno-Karabakh in late 1980s was the result of this policy of democratization. Note that in 1988-1991 the word "Nagorno-Karabakh" appears in 26 articles where above mentioned policies are also mentioned. Since 1992, however, these two topics have not been mentioned in the same article.

Der Spiegel frequently holds interviews with people of different professions (predominantly politicians). From 1988 till 2015 it has published a total of 18 interviews in which it touched upon the Karabakh issue. 8 of these interviews were held with Armenians

including two Armenian presidents, Robert Kocharian and Serge Sargsyan. In contrast, only 2 Azerbaijanis, Fasil Iskander and Surat Huseinov, were interviewed in which the conflict was mentioned. Other people who also touched on the conflict in their interviews are Arkady Volsky, Boris Yeltsin, Radimir Karadzic and etc. 6 interviews were dedicated to the discussion of the conflict whereas in the remaining 12 interviews it was of secondary importance.

As predicted, these interviews were mainly pro-Armenian. 6 times Armenia (more precisely, the Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians) was depicted as the victim of this conflict. This figure is 0 for Azerbaijan. Only once the region was called as Azerbaijani and 7 times Armenian.

Unlike *the New York Times* and *the Independent Der Spiegel* prefers not to put the names of the authors. In only 71 articles there are information regarding the author, 18 out of which are interviews as mentioned above.

7 out of the remaining 53 articles are published by Christian Neef. Only 1 article was dedicated solely to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict whereas the remaining 6 articles simply briefly touch upon the topic in the context of other topics. Around 20% of these articles' word count was used to discuss the situation in the region.

In 5 articles the author mentions Russia which might be the indicator of his strong belief in Russia's role in this conflict.

The author is trying to be as neutral as possible and refrains from referring to either side as the victim although he calls Armenia the victim of the conflict in one of his articles. Each of the sides was named to be the "owner" of Nagorno-Karabakh twice.

Note that Christian Neef has the longest period of coverage of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict among the authors of all three s, despite relatively smaller number of articles. He had published articles from 1997 till 2011. It must also be underlined that we can observe very little to no change in this thought about the conflict.

Among news agencies Deutsche Presse-Agentur (German Press Agency) known as DPA has been more active than other agencies in reporting the conflict. It has published 9 articles

(4014 words) from 2008 till 2011 in which the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was mentioned. The proportion of words used to examine the conflict relative to the total word count of these articles is almost the same with Christian Neef (20%).

The agency seems to have a slightly pro-Azerbaijani position, which is surprising given the overall pro-Armenian position of the newspaper. Azerbaijan was portrayed as the victim of the conflict twice whereas Armenia was not regarded to be such in any of the articles.

The agency did not touch any possible reasons of the conflict other than territorial claims. Turkey and Russia each was mentioned twice as having influence over the conflict.

CROSS-MEDIA ANALYSIS

Considering the number of articles in which the word “Karabakh” is mentioned we can claim that *the New York Times* was far more active in reporting the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict than other two (*figure 4a*). It has published such articles much more than other two media s together. Nevertheless, if we pay attention to the average word count of these articles (*figure 4b*) it becomes clear that on average *Der Spiegel* allocated more words for the discussion of the conflict which leads us to think that it went into more details.

The Armenian side was favored more in articles although *the Independent* appears to have certain differences as it occupies a more neutral (sometimes even pro-Azerbaijani) position compared to other two media outlets. *The New York Times* and *Der Spiegel* demonstrated a clear pro-Armenian position during the early stages of the conflict portraying it as the primary victim of the conflict. But the antagonist in this reporting was not Azerbaijan, but the Soviet Union as the “Armenian movement for reunification” was “a test for perestroika”.

Unlike these two newspapers, however, *the Independent* did not start reporting about the conflict from 1988 but from 1992, after the Soviet Union collapsed and both sides of the conflict gained independence. This might be the reason of *the Independent's* neutrality throughout the period of reporting.

Russia's name appears more. In contrast the names of the USA and France are mentioned quite rarely though they both are members of OSCE Minsk group along with Russia. Turkey is the second most referred foreign power in all three outlets.

The reporting of all three outlets on Nagorno-Karabakh conflict can be divided into three periods: from the beginning of the conflict till mid-1990s when the ceasefire between conflicting states was signed and relative calm was reached. During this period the newspapers were quite

active in reporting on the conflict. Another feature of this period is the Media's clear pro-Armenian position.

From mid-1990s till mid-2000s can be regarded as the second period during which the Western Media's interest in this topic gradually decreased. And the third period, which starts from 2006, is notable for a slight increase in media s' interest in this subject.

What happened in mid-2000s that brought the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict back to the agenda. Bigg (2006) calls 2006 as the "year of muscle and missteps". That year, Russia started gaining international recognition by "showing its muscles". It stopped the gas supply to Ukraine over price issues, which resulted in disruption of stable energy supply to a number of European countries.

2006 was also notable for Russia as it chaired the Group of Eight (G8) for the first time, which also significantly contributed to increase of its international recognition.

Also the same year Gazprom threatened to raise prices for gas in Georgia, Azerbaijan, Belarus and the Baltic states. As mentioned above, the same issue was already a subject of dispute between Russia and Ukraine.

These events were followed by more radical policy that included the Russian-Georgian war of 2008 and the annex of Crimea.

If the above mentioned statements are correct what can we expect in the near future? Taking into account close ties of Armenia with Russia as well as recent disagreements of the Western World with Russia in regards to Ukraine and Syria crises, we might observe a more pro-Azerbaijani reporting from the Western media in case Russia continues its ambitious foreign policy despite sanctions imposed on it. It must be noted that a pro-Azerbaijani position of the Western Media is already visible, although not as clear as its pro-Armenian position during the early years of the conflict.

Another similarity in reporting on this conflict is related to the causes of the conflict from the perspective of the Western Media. The conflict was mostly referred as “territorial” or as the “war\conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh\territory” which indicates that from the standpoint of these s, this conflict was a predominantly territorial dispute. Other factors such as ethnic animosity, religious differences as well as nationalistic feelings also received coverage.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was compared mostly to disputes in Georgia and Moldova. Taking into account Russia’s role in these disputes, this can also serve as another proof to the claim that Russia is the main factor that shapes Western Media’s attitude towards the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Armenian demonstrations in the late 1980s were also likened to unrests in Baltic states.

Along with similarities, these outlets also have certain differences. For example, besides articles, these newspapers published other kind of publications. *The New York Times* preferred letters that were directly or indirectly related to the conflict, whereas *the Independent* and *Der Spiegel* published obituaries and interviews respectively. While the structures of these “extra publications” can be different, they too tend to favor the Armenian side.

News agencies such as *the Reuters*, *the AFP*, *the AP*, *the DPA* and etc. are more neutral while reporting on this conflict. On the other hand, the authors that explore this subject more and eventually has more influence over the position of the newspaper regarding this topic favor either sides more. While the most active American and German journalists favor Armenian side, the British journalist takes a somewhat neutral to slightly pro-Azerbaijani position and depicts the events from the standpoint of Azerbaijan.

CONCLUSION

Analyzing these three media outlets we can draw several conclusions. First, the most active period of the Western Media in reporting this conflict was from the time when it started (i.e. late 1980s) till mid-1990s, when the conflicting sides signed a ceasefire. The next decade is notable for some sort of “silence” of the Media regarding this topic. Starting from mid-2000s the Media has started to mention the conflict slightly more than in the previous decade.

The assumption that Nagorno-Karabakh is an Armenian land gifted to Azerbaijan by Stalin during the 1920s was also depicted in articles published in the early stages of the conflict i.e. until the collapse of the Soviet Union as stated by Baguirov (1998).

As predicted, Russia’s name appears in most of the articles as a power having influence over the conflict. Especially, events such as Armenian Parliament shooting, Russian-Georgian war, Ukrainian crisis and annex of Crimea increased the Media’s interest in Russia’s role in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Turkey holds the second place and the USA comes the third. Turkey is shown as a country that together with its ally, Azerbaijan, blockaded Armenia. However, from mid-1990s till late 2000s it is mentioned in less number of articles, but again comes to the center of attention in 2009-2010 due to signing of Zurich protocols which were the consequences of attempts to normalize the relations between Turkey and Armenia. The USA, on the other hand, was predominantly mentioned in the context of the Freedom Support Act and its section 907. 9/11 events did not affect Western Media’s perceptions regarding USA’s role in this conflict either. This might be one of the reasons why the Second Gulf War and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict were quite rarely mentioned in the same article (no more than 10-15 articles).

The Media has demonstrated a predominantly pro-Armenian position, especially during the beginning of the conflict regarding it as the victim of the conflict in most of the articles. The main reason appears to be the West’s antagonism against the Soviet Union. The Armenian

movement over the annex of Nagorno-Karabakh was sought to be directed against the Soviet Union and the Western Media regarded it as a “test for *perestroika*”. After the demise of the Soviet Union, the Media changed its attitude significantly becoming more neutral since from civil disobedience it has transformed into an interstate war.

This assumption can also be strengthened by the fact that Gorbachev’s policies and Sumgait events disappeared from the articles related to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict almost at the same time. To put it simple, as long as there was the Soviet Union, this conflict was a “movement for re-unification” of “long-oppressed” Armenians. That is why Sumgait events also received broad coverage. However, since 1992 this conflict became a “war over Nagorno-Karabakh” between two countries.

Among other conflict the names of which frequently appear together with that of Nagorno-Karabakh are South Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia, Transnistria in Moldova and to some extent unrests in Baltic states. The common feature of all these conflicts is the Soviet Union/Russia’s active role. This again leads us to think that Russia’s role has impact on the Media’s reporting on this conflict.

Although the Western Media became more neutral after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it still continued favoring the Armenian side, although not very openly as before. Nevertheless, the above mentioned newspapers have started to show a slightly pro-Azerbaijani position since mid-2000s, a time period during which the activation of Russia in international arena has started.

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Figure 1a

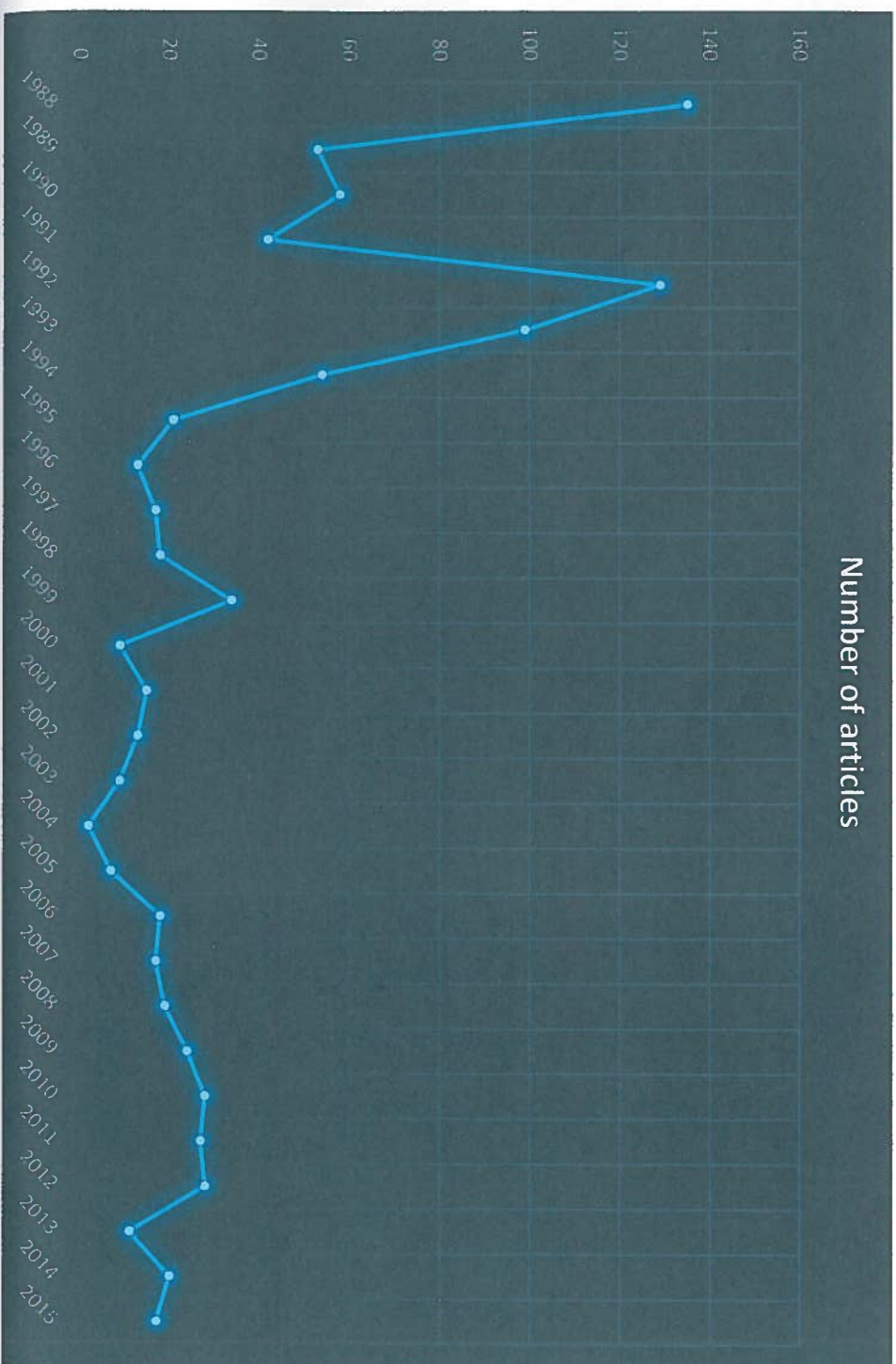


Figure 1b

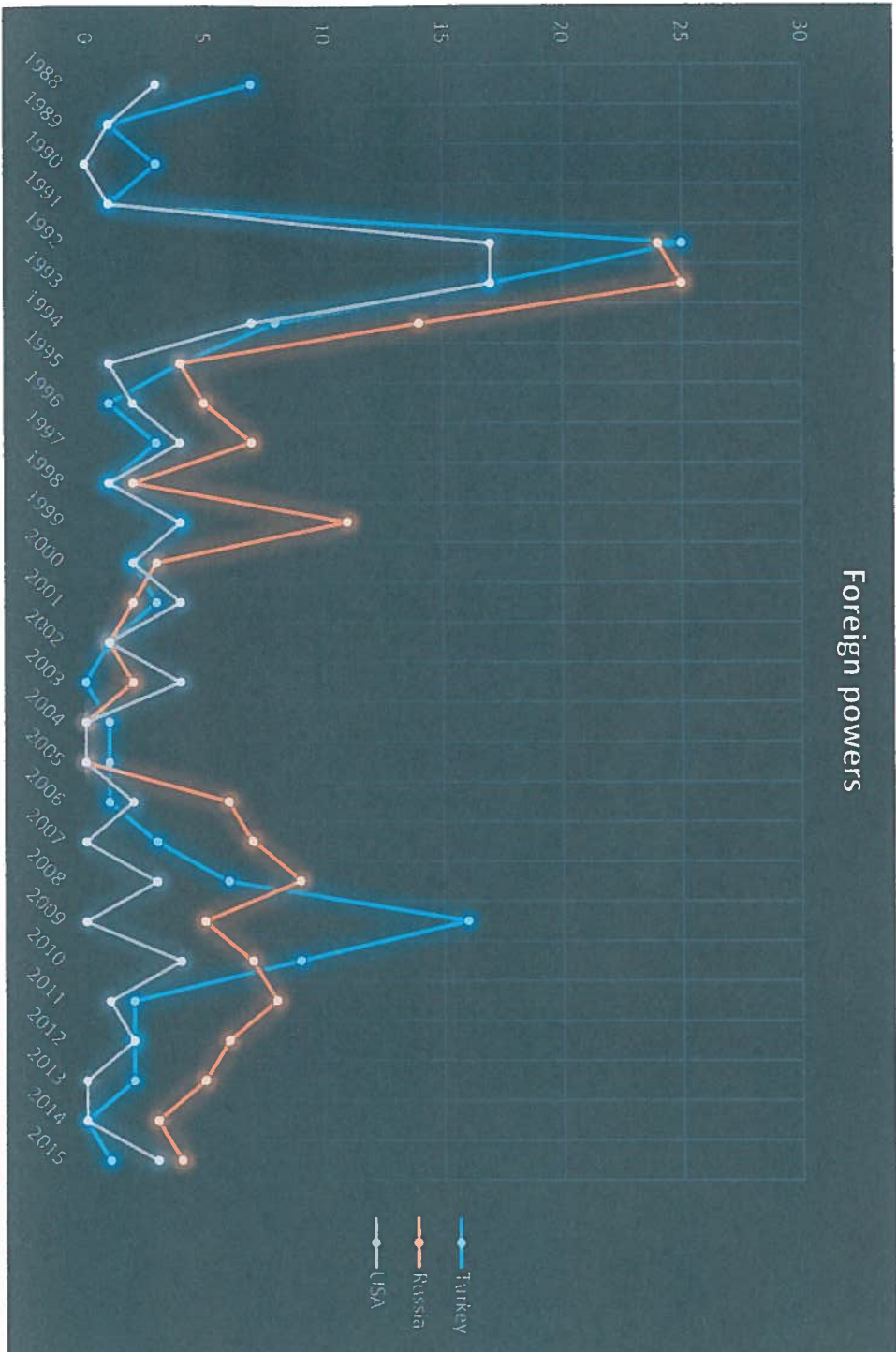


Figure 1c

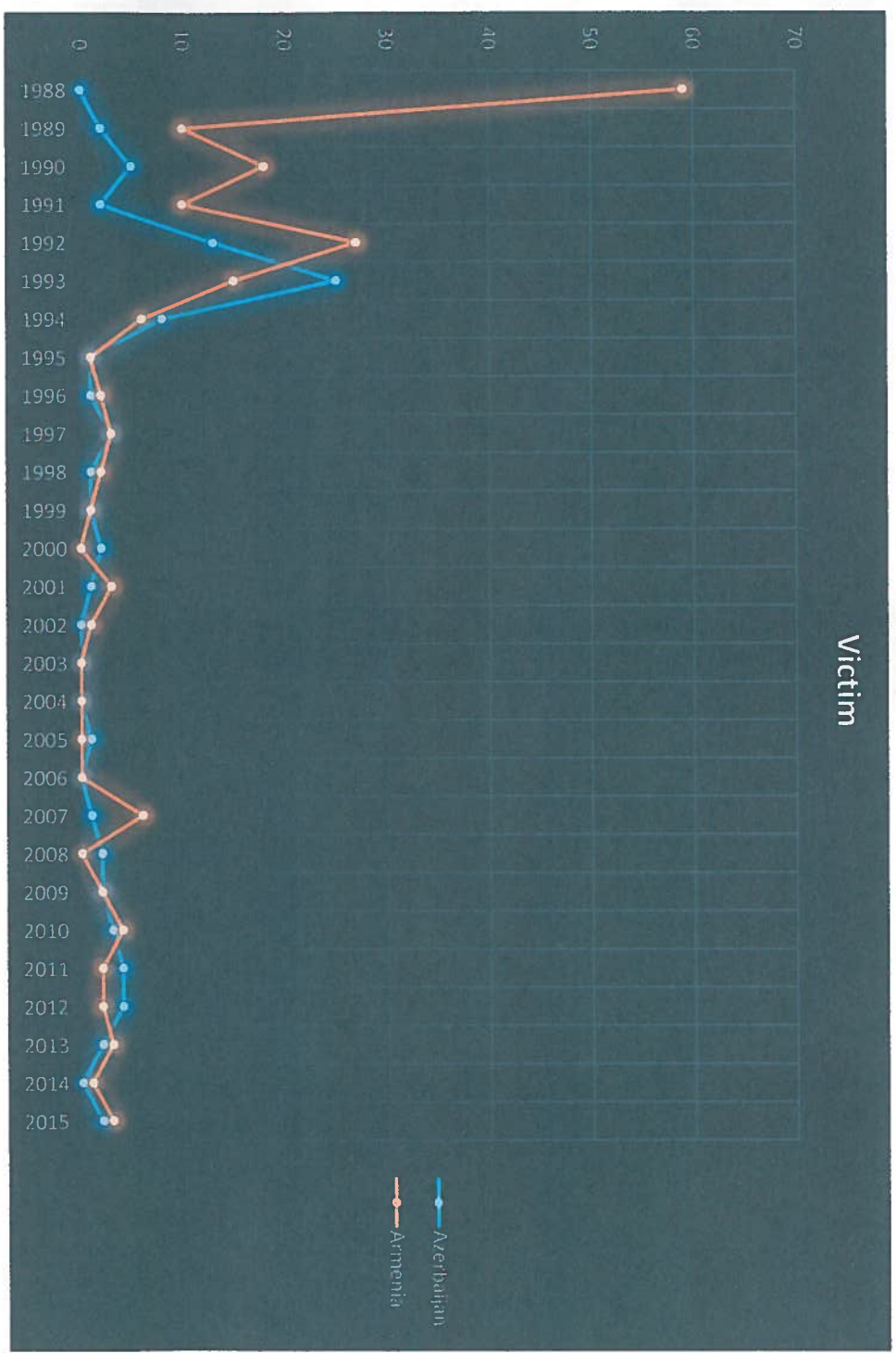


Figure 1d

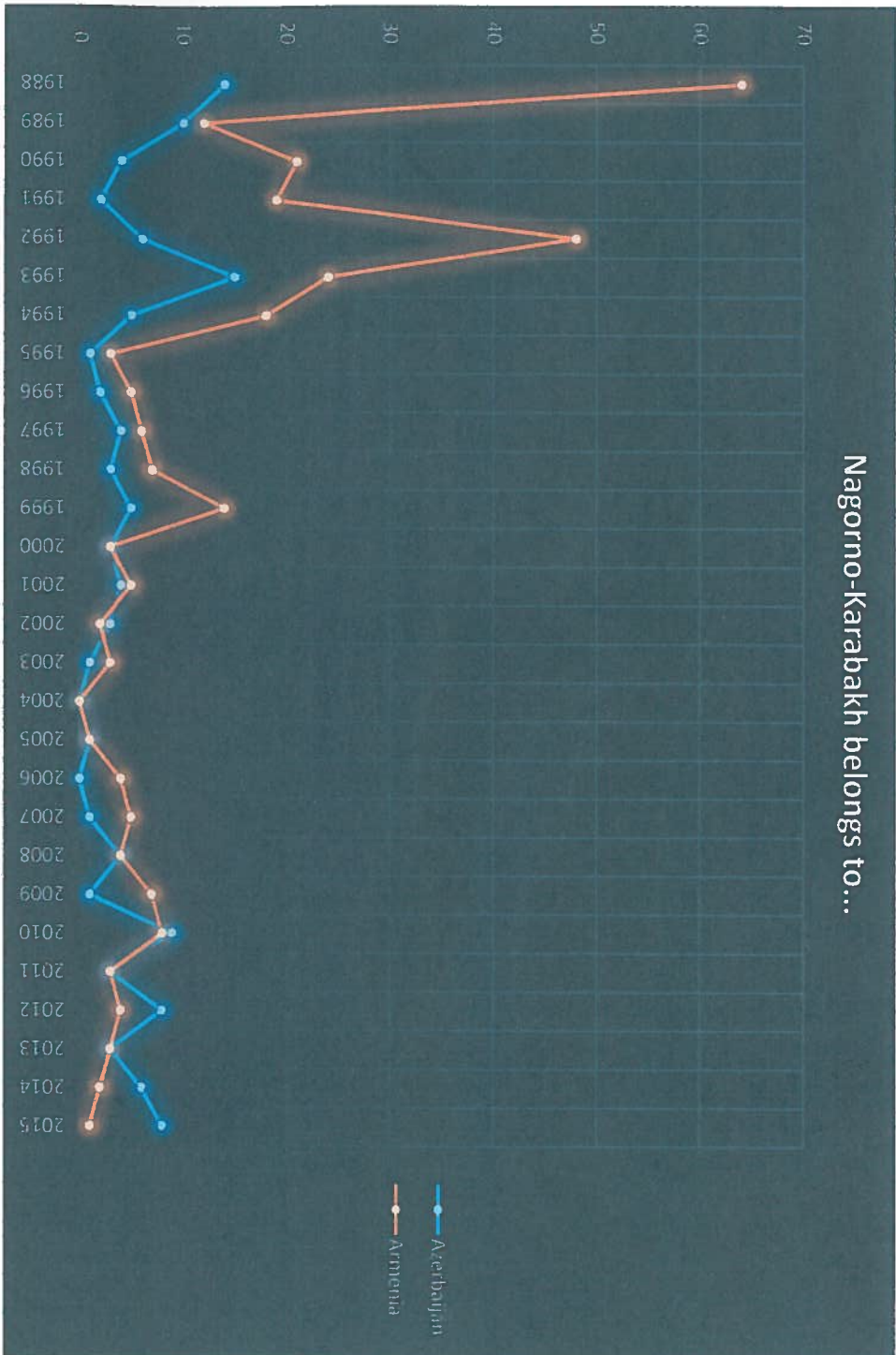


Figure 1e

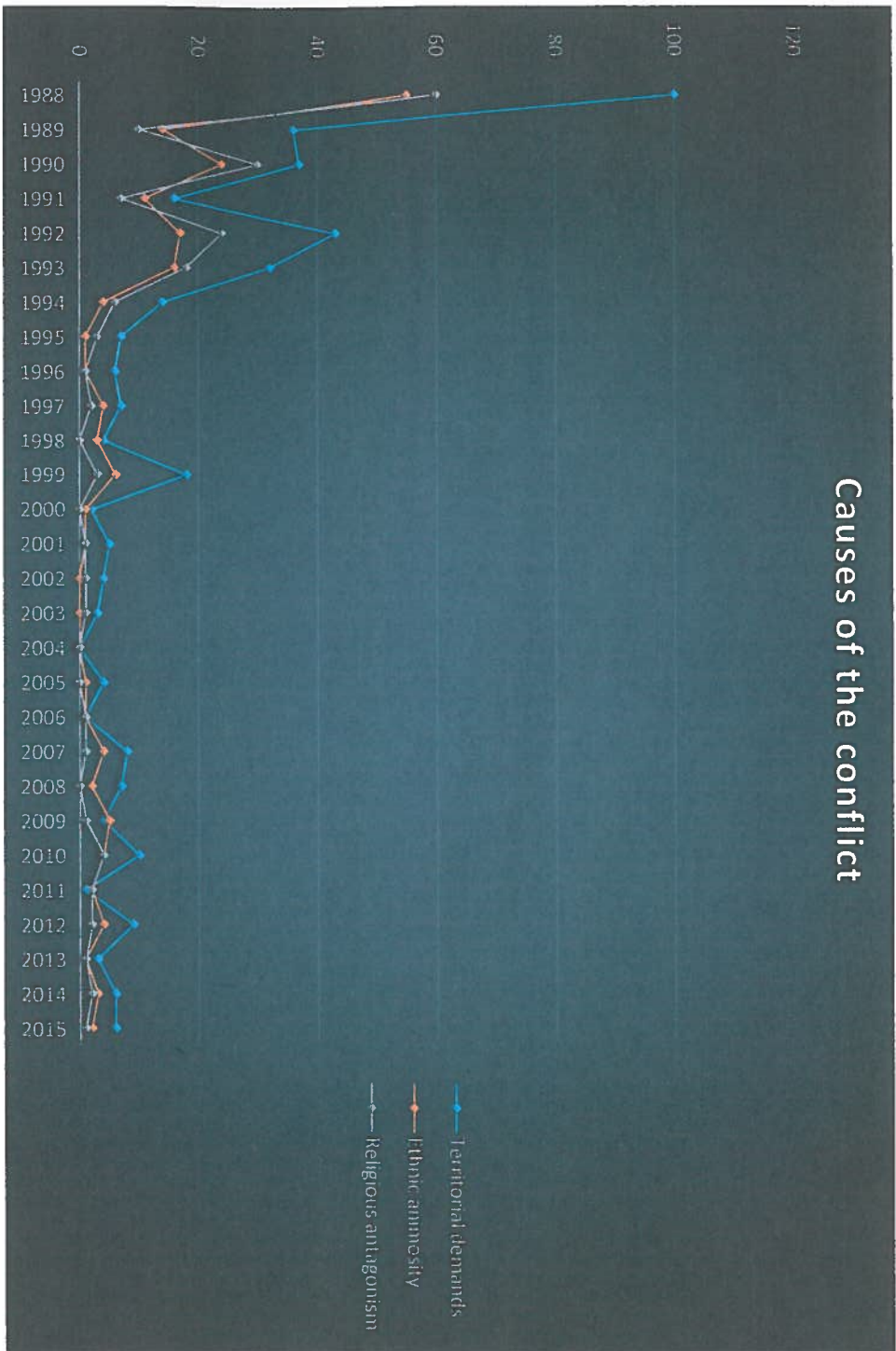


Figure 2a

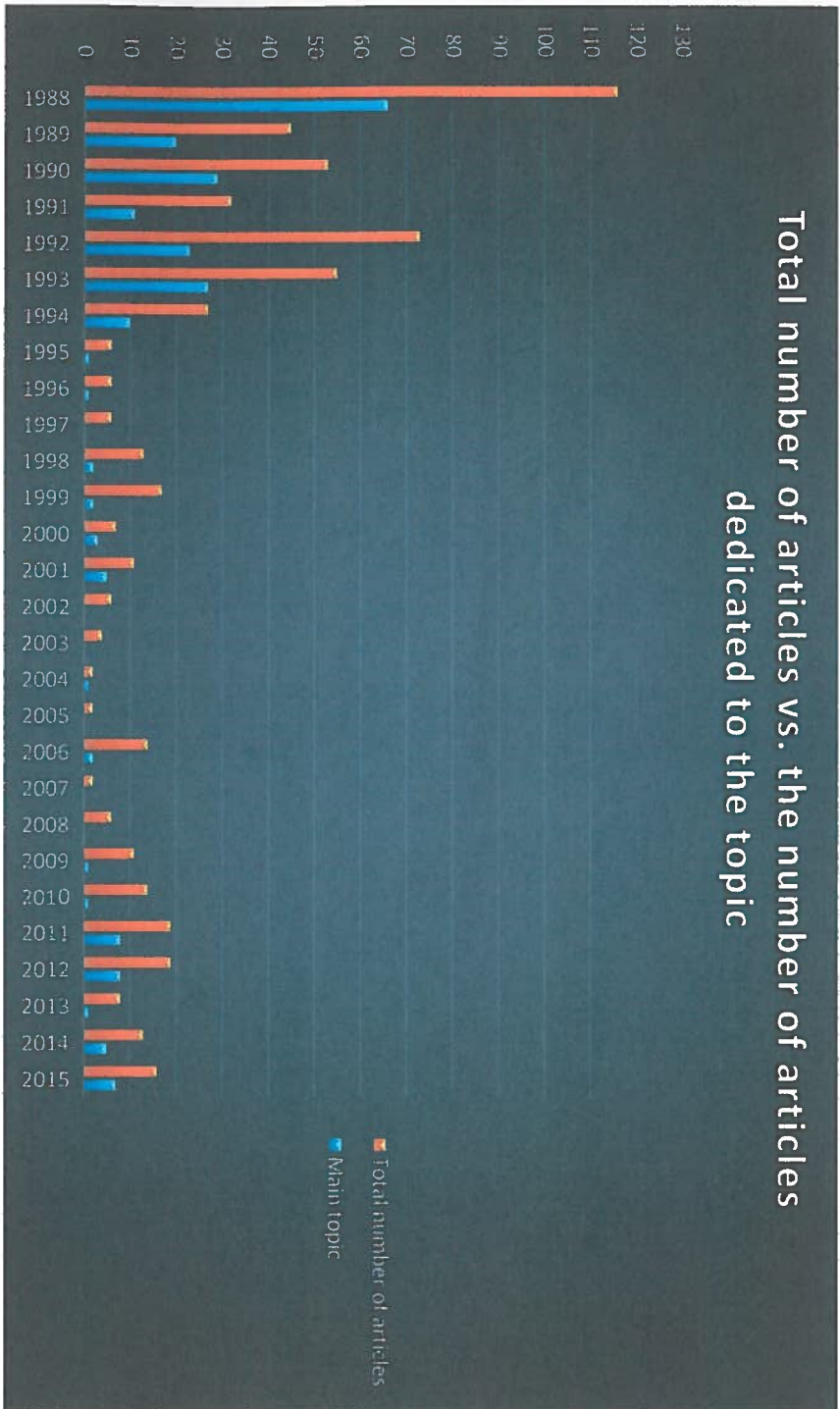


Figure 2b

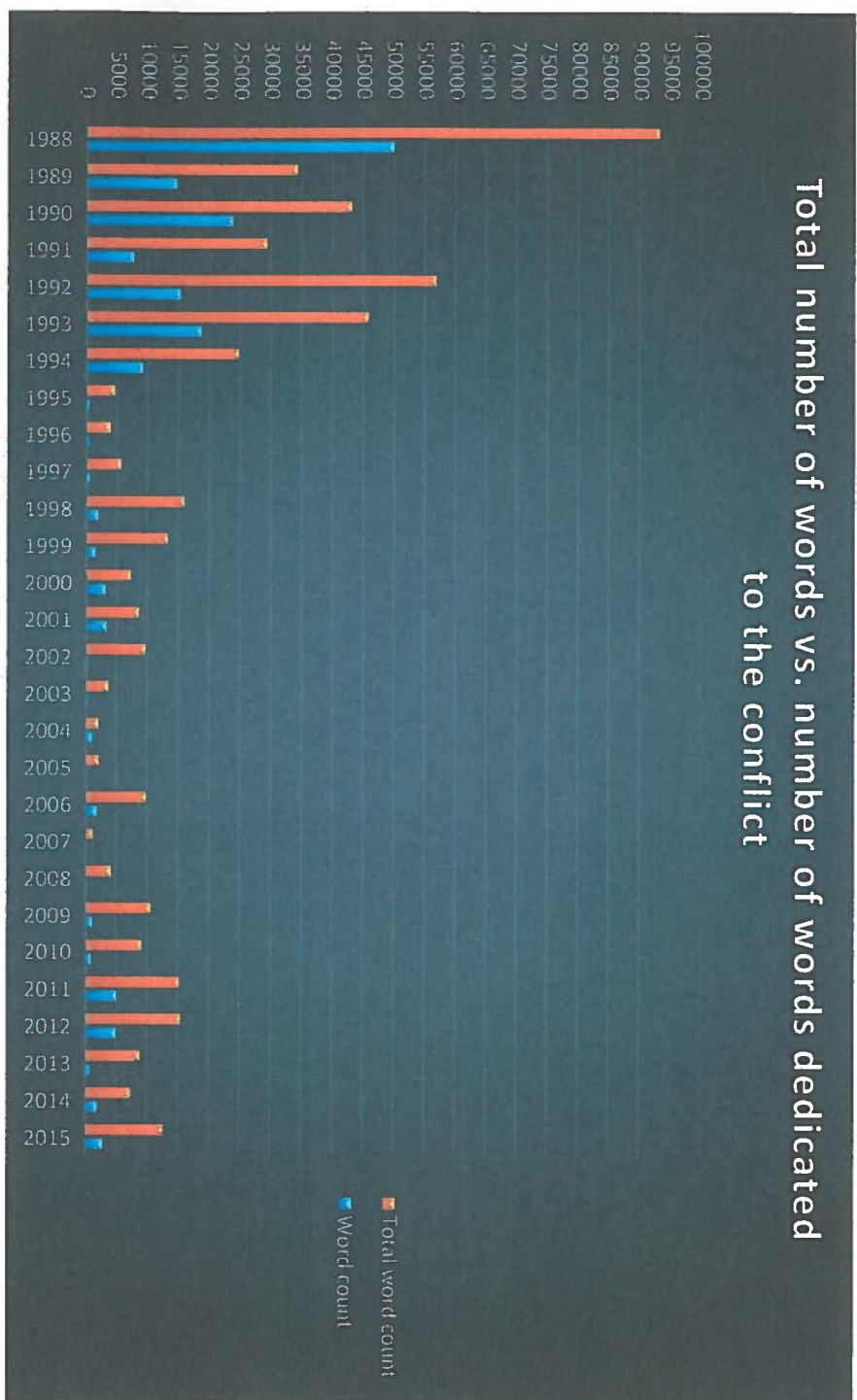


Figure 2c

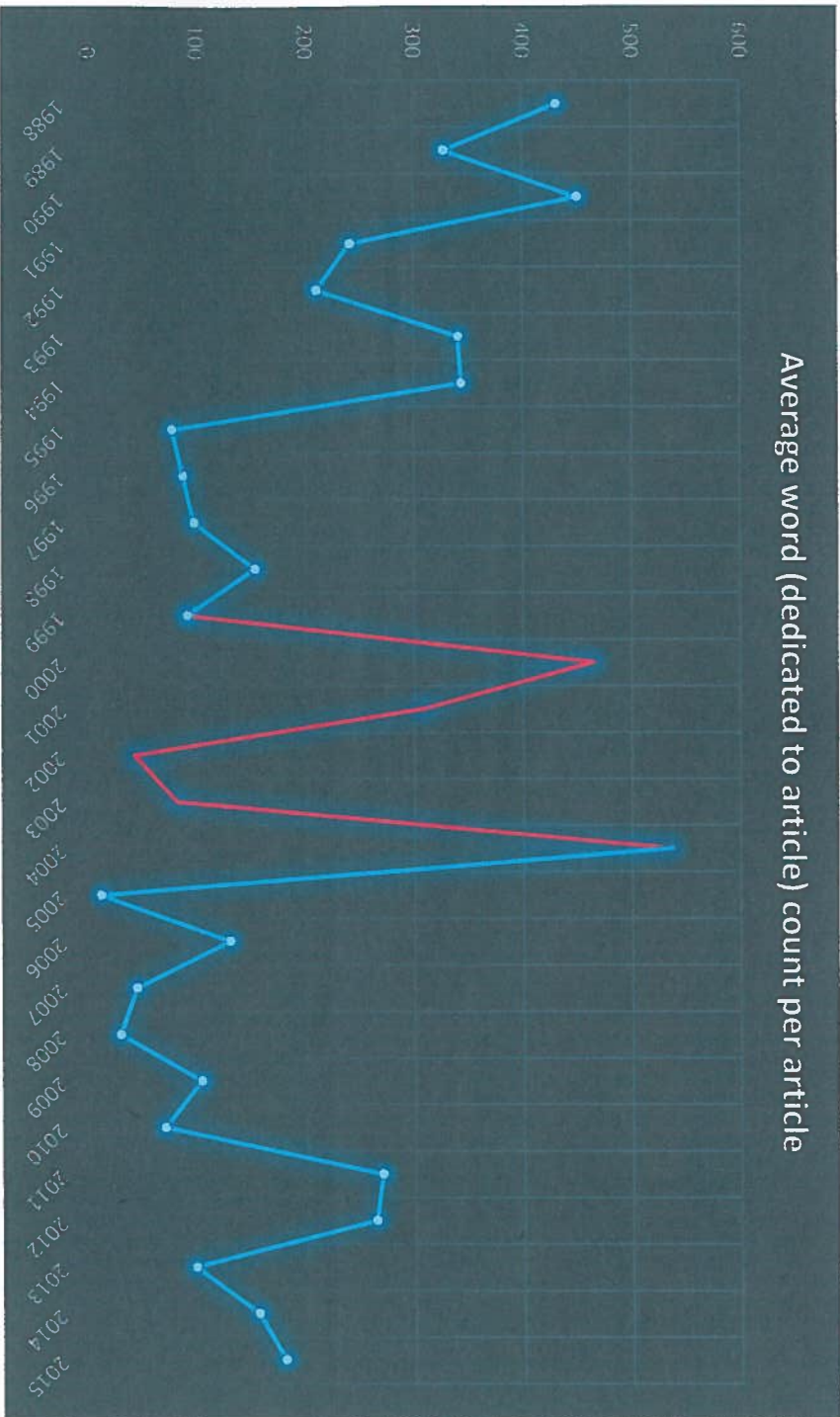
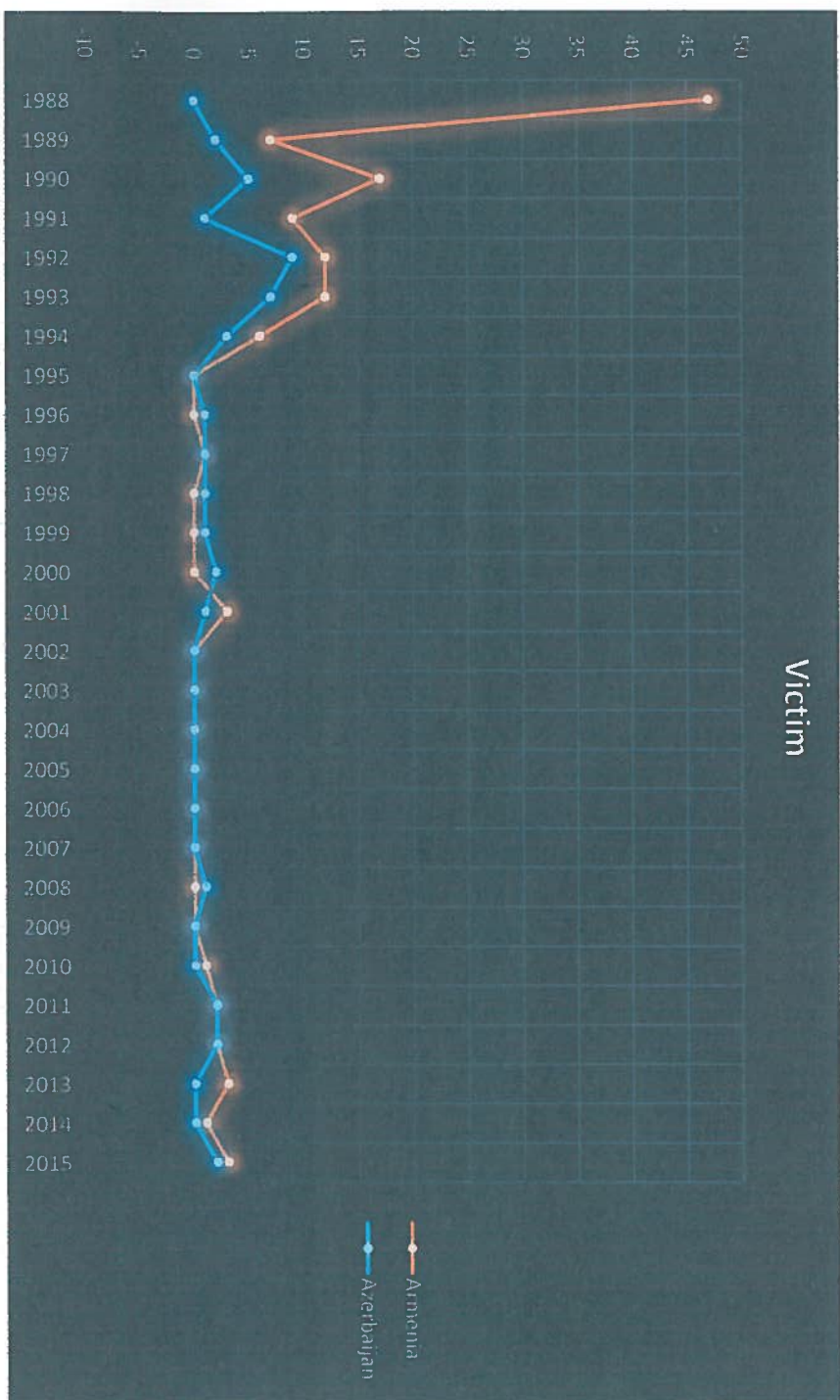


Figure 2d



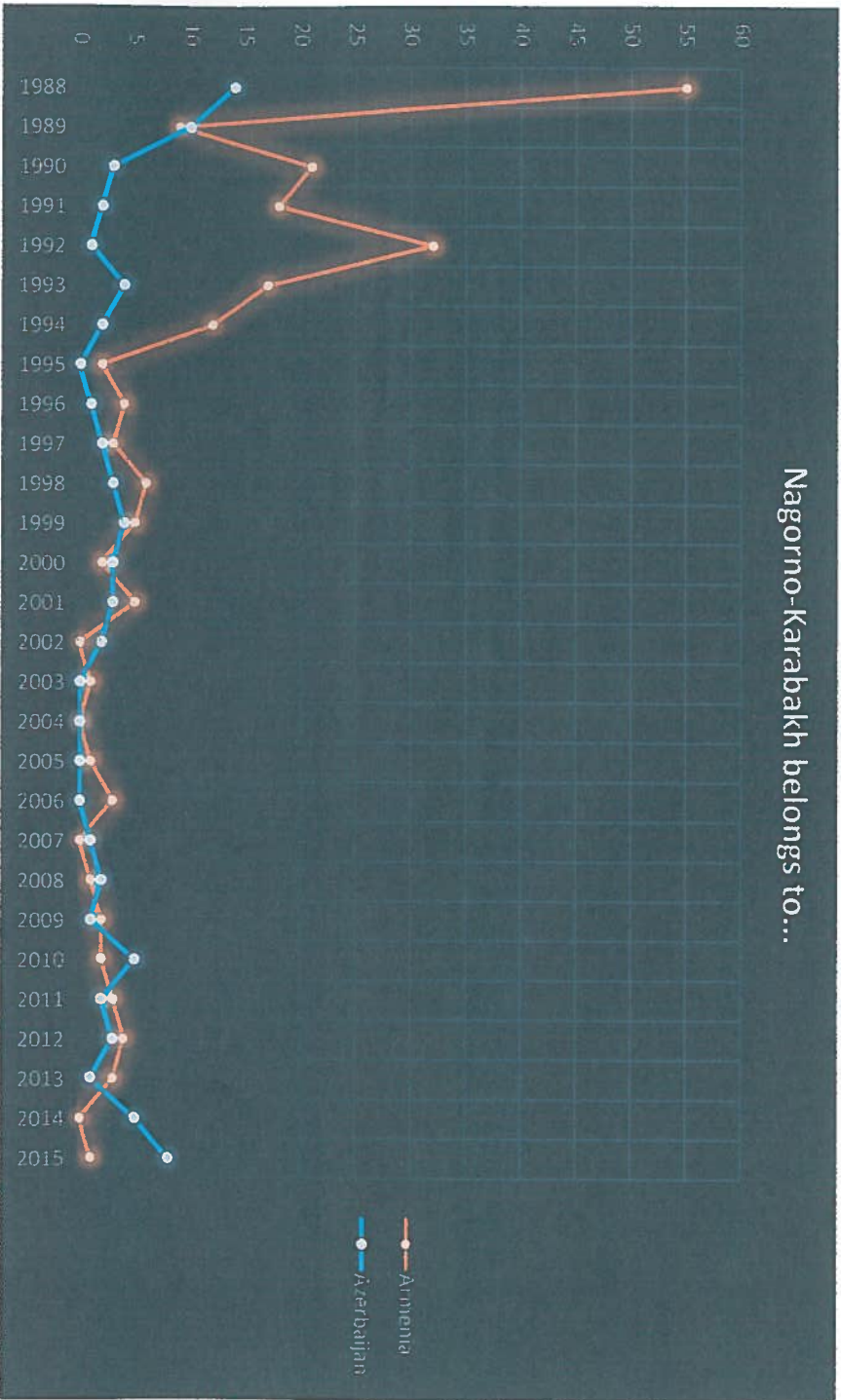


Figure 2e

Nagorno-Karabakh belongs to...

Figure 2f

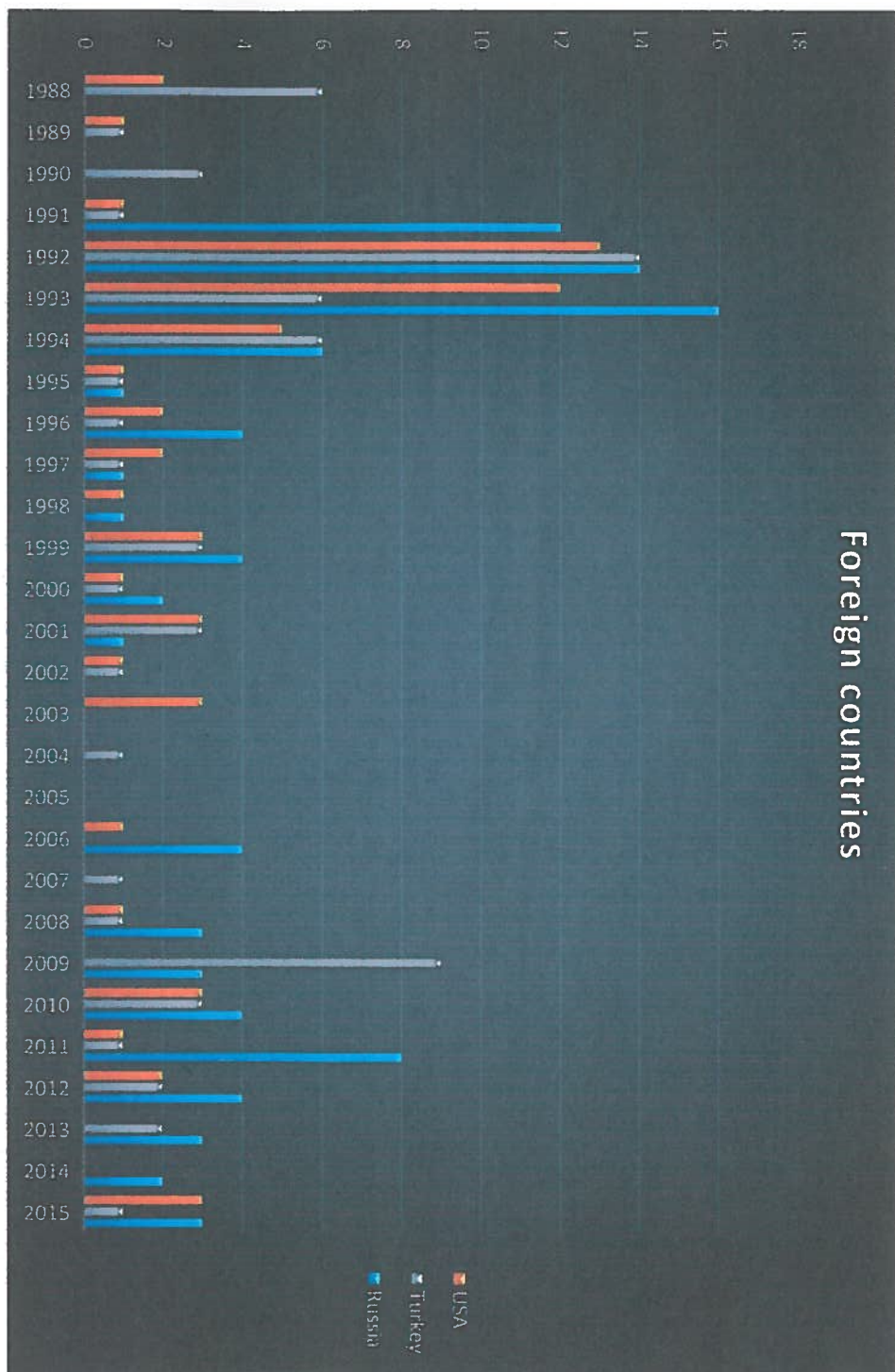


Figure 2g

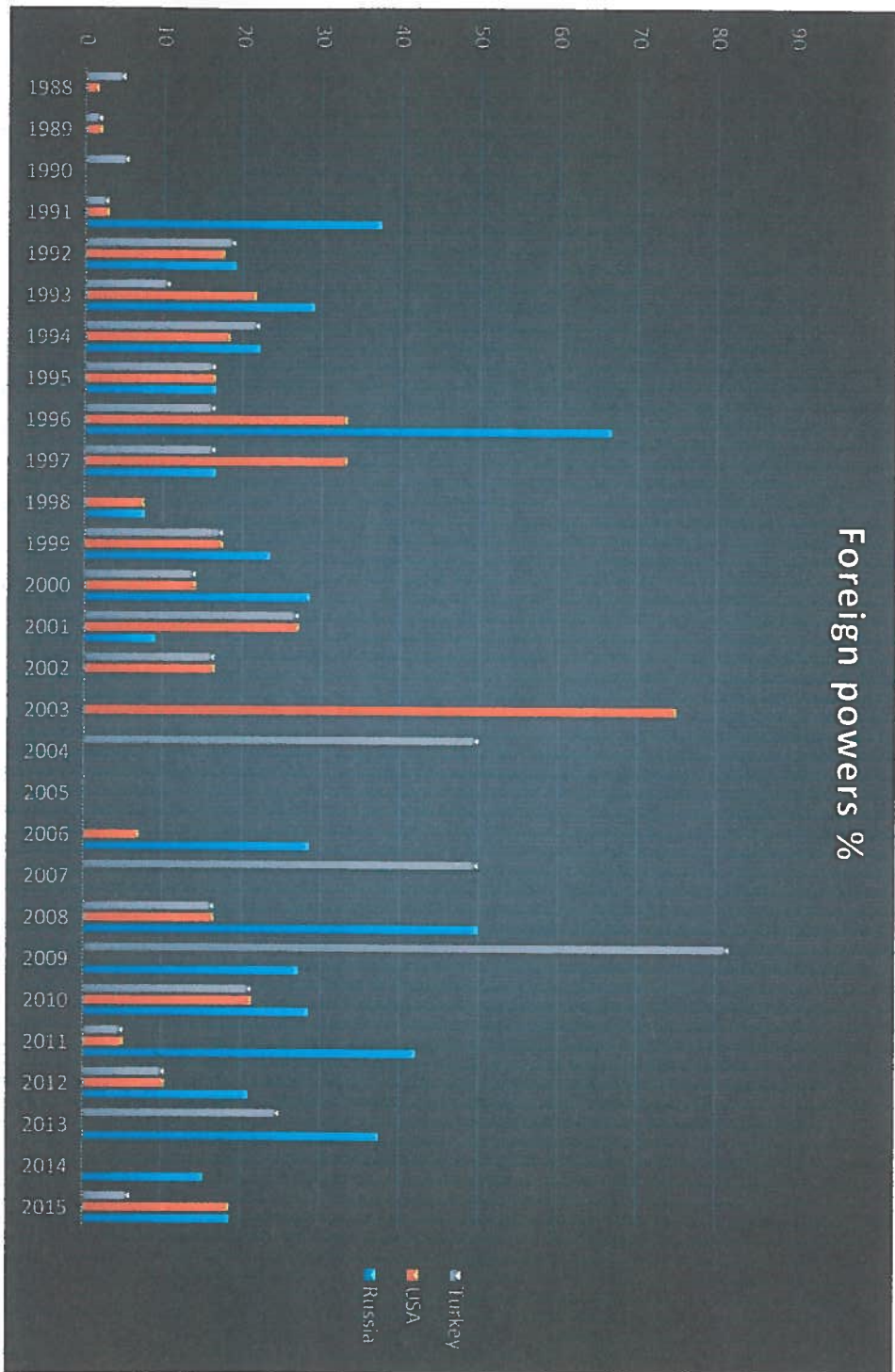


Figure 2h

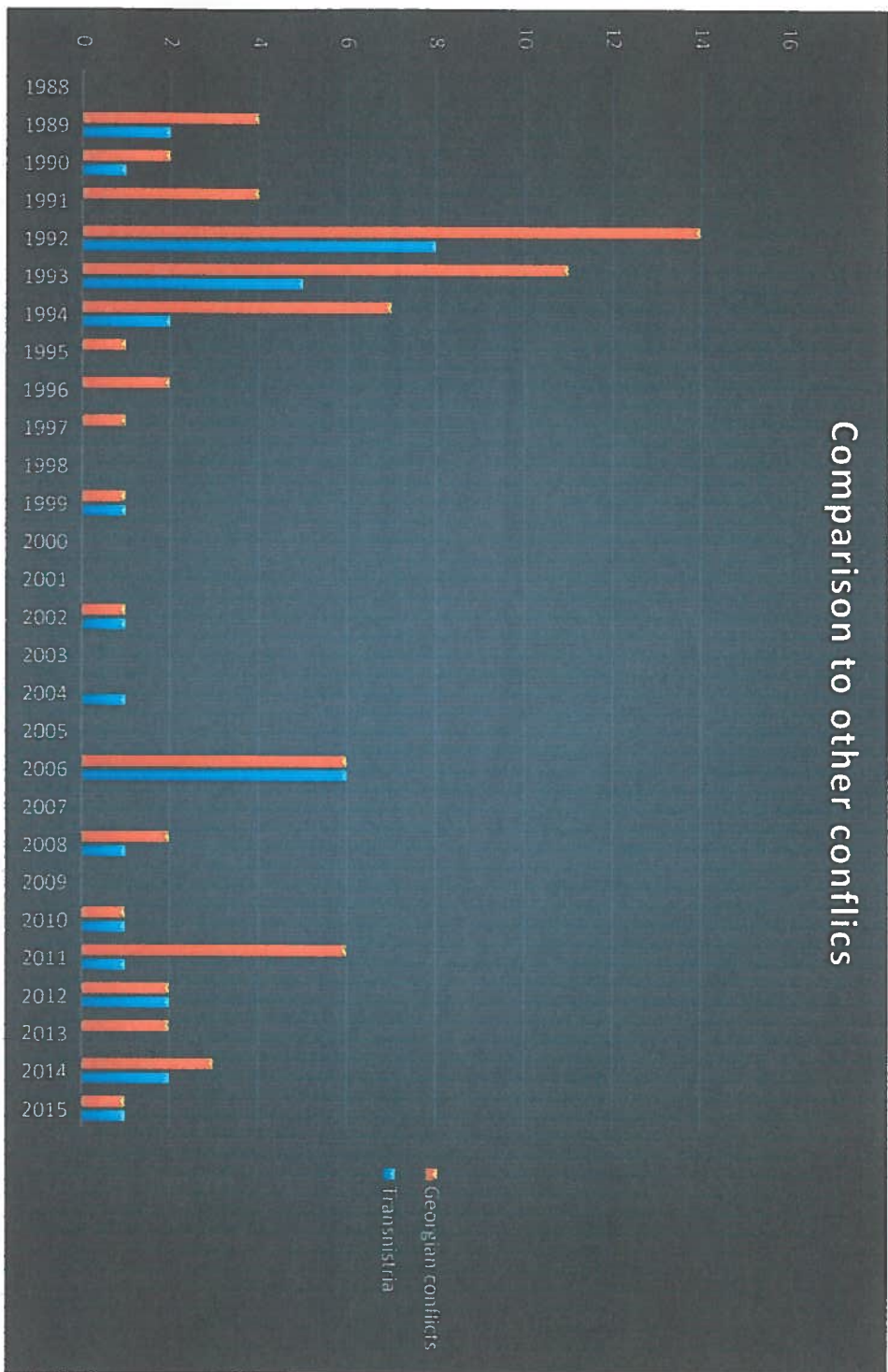


Figure 2i

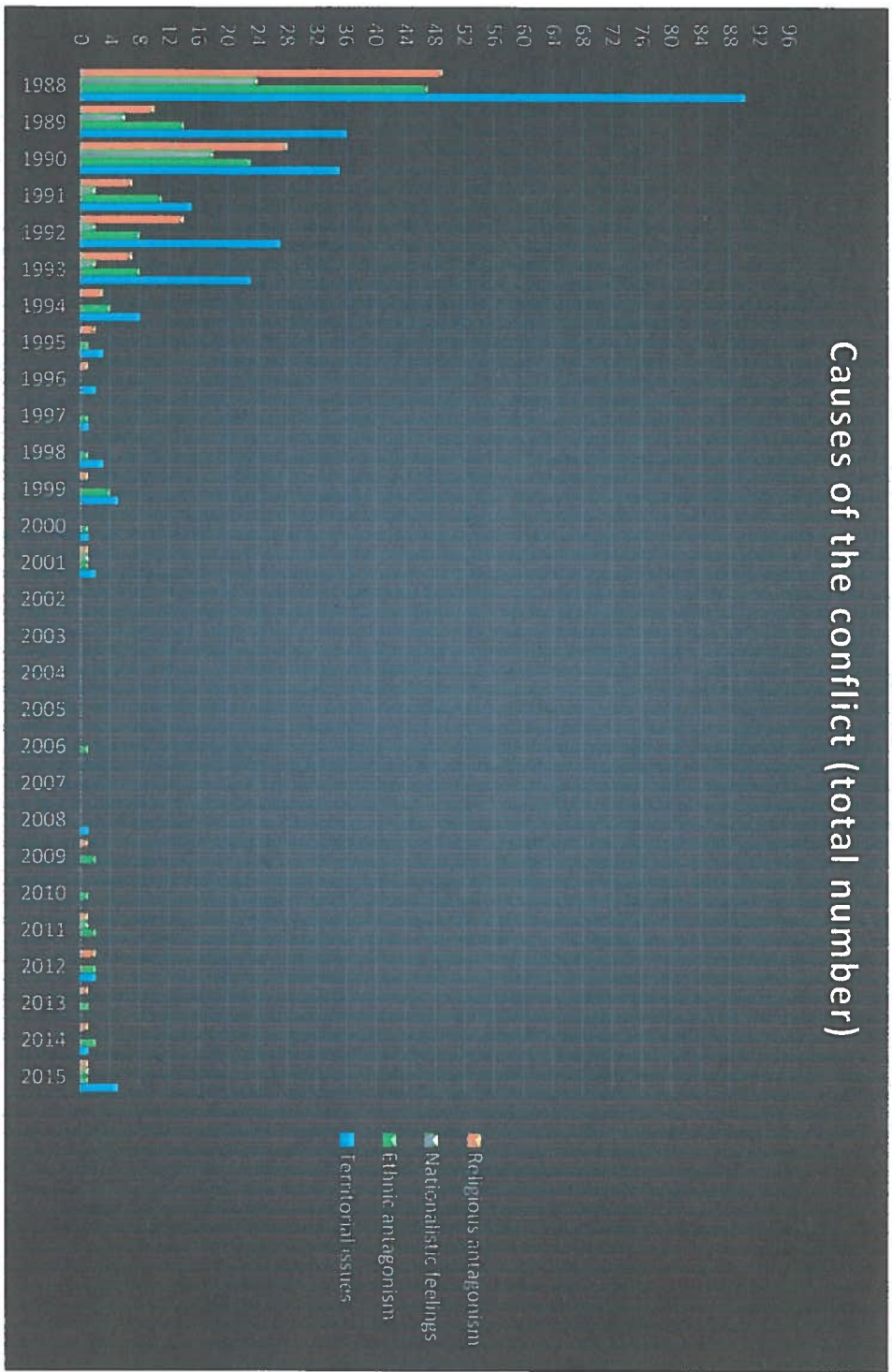


Figure 2j

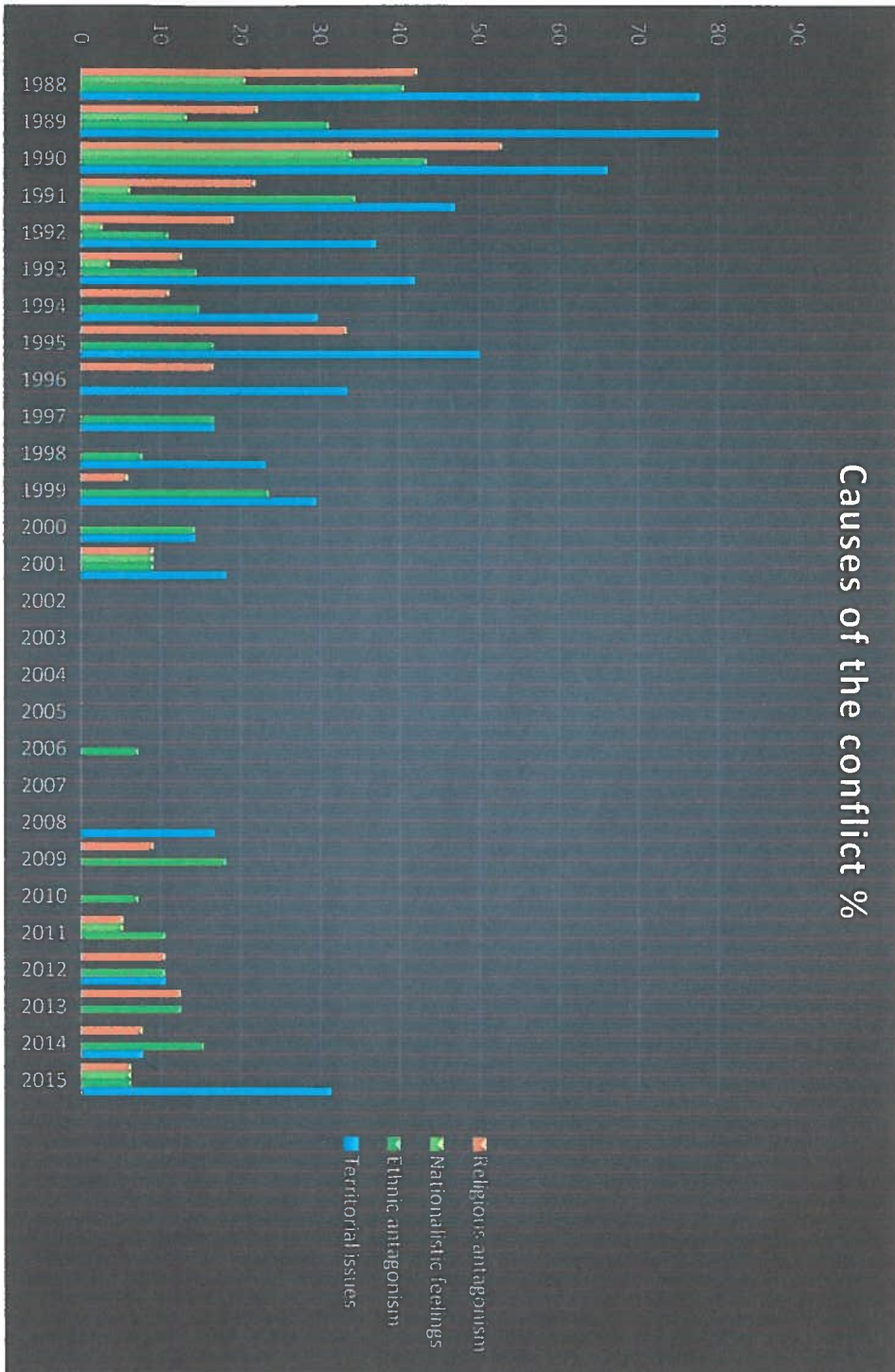


Figure 3a

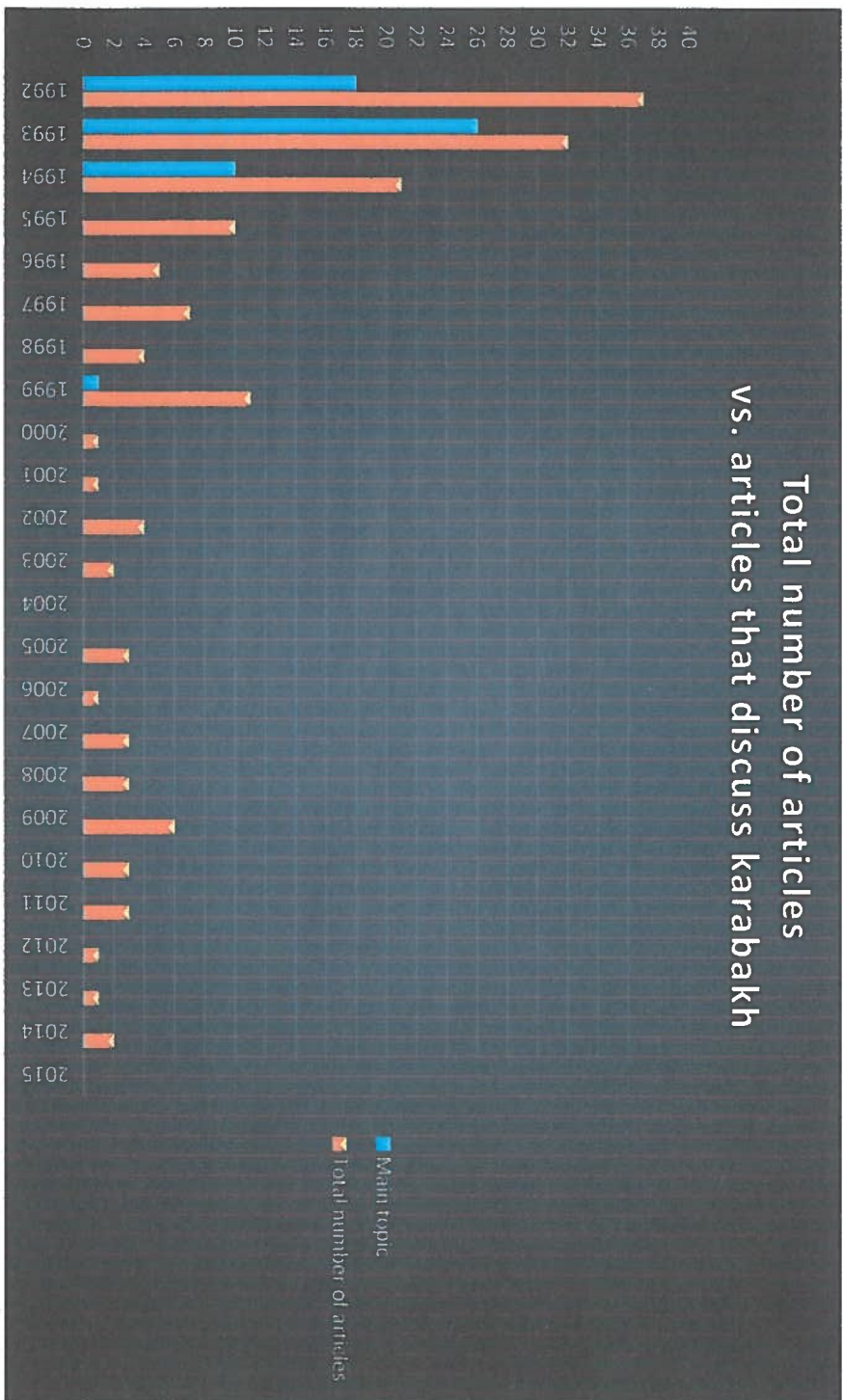


Figure 3b

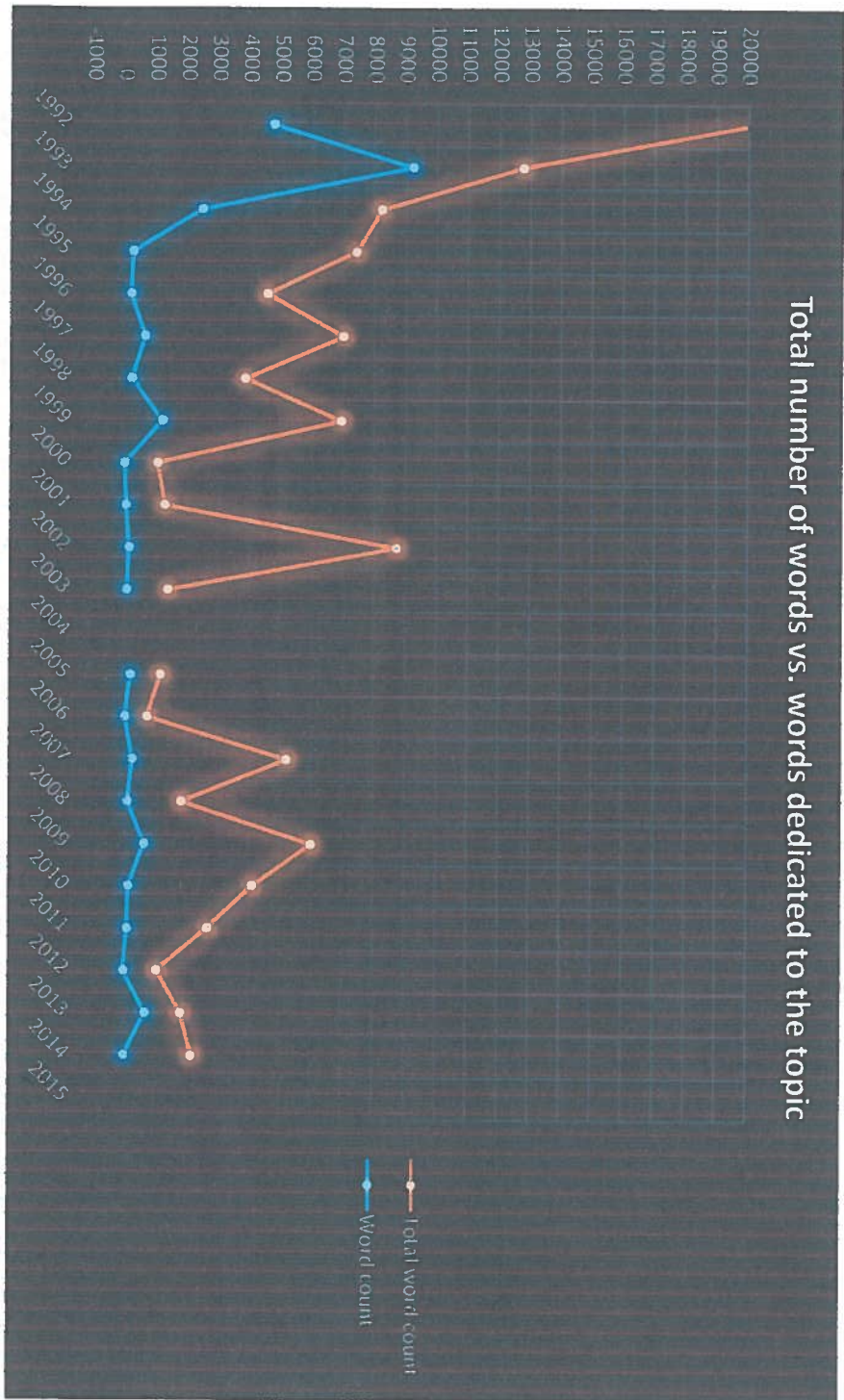


Figure 3c

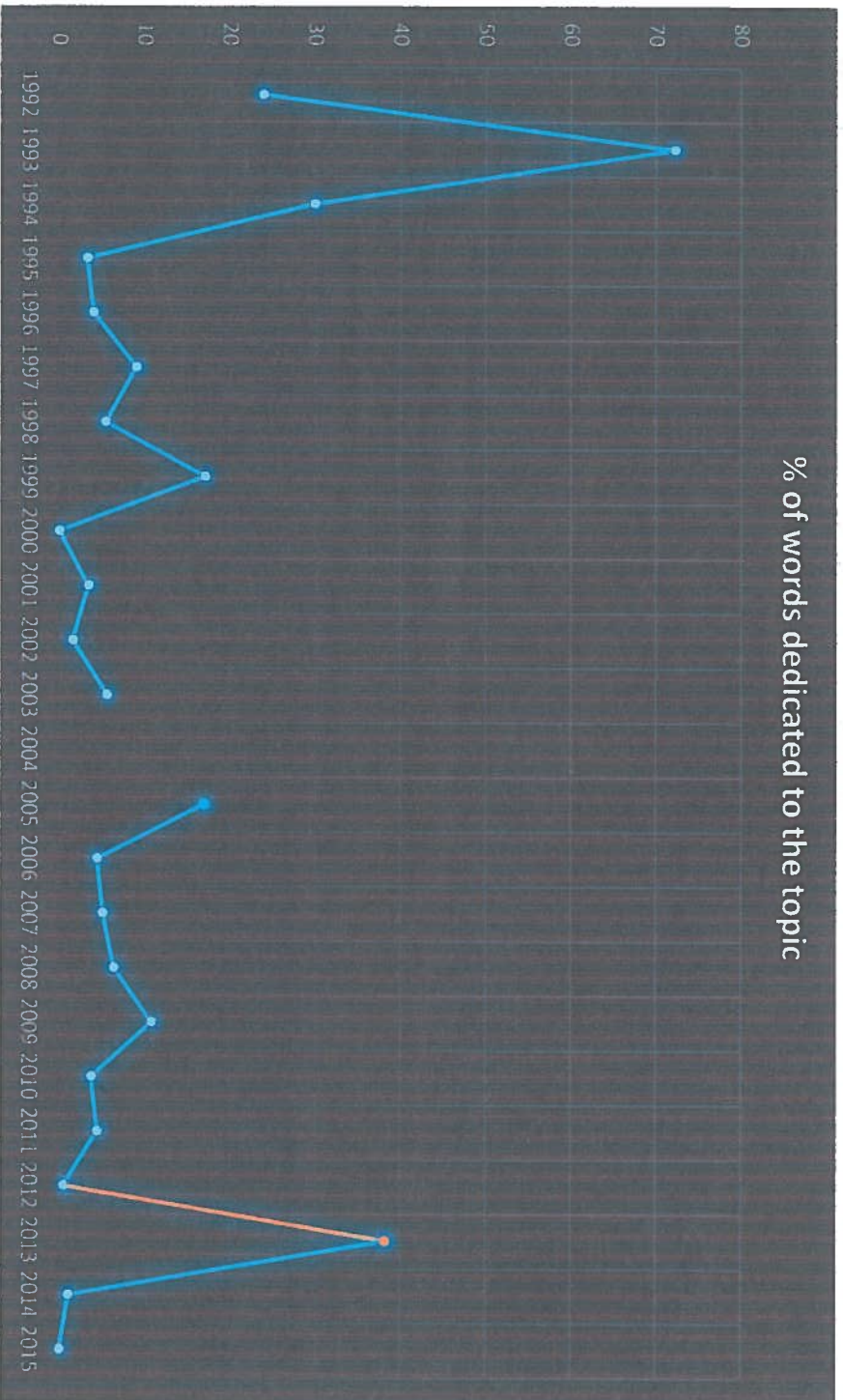


Figure 3d

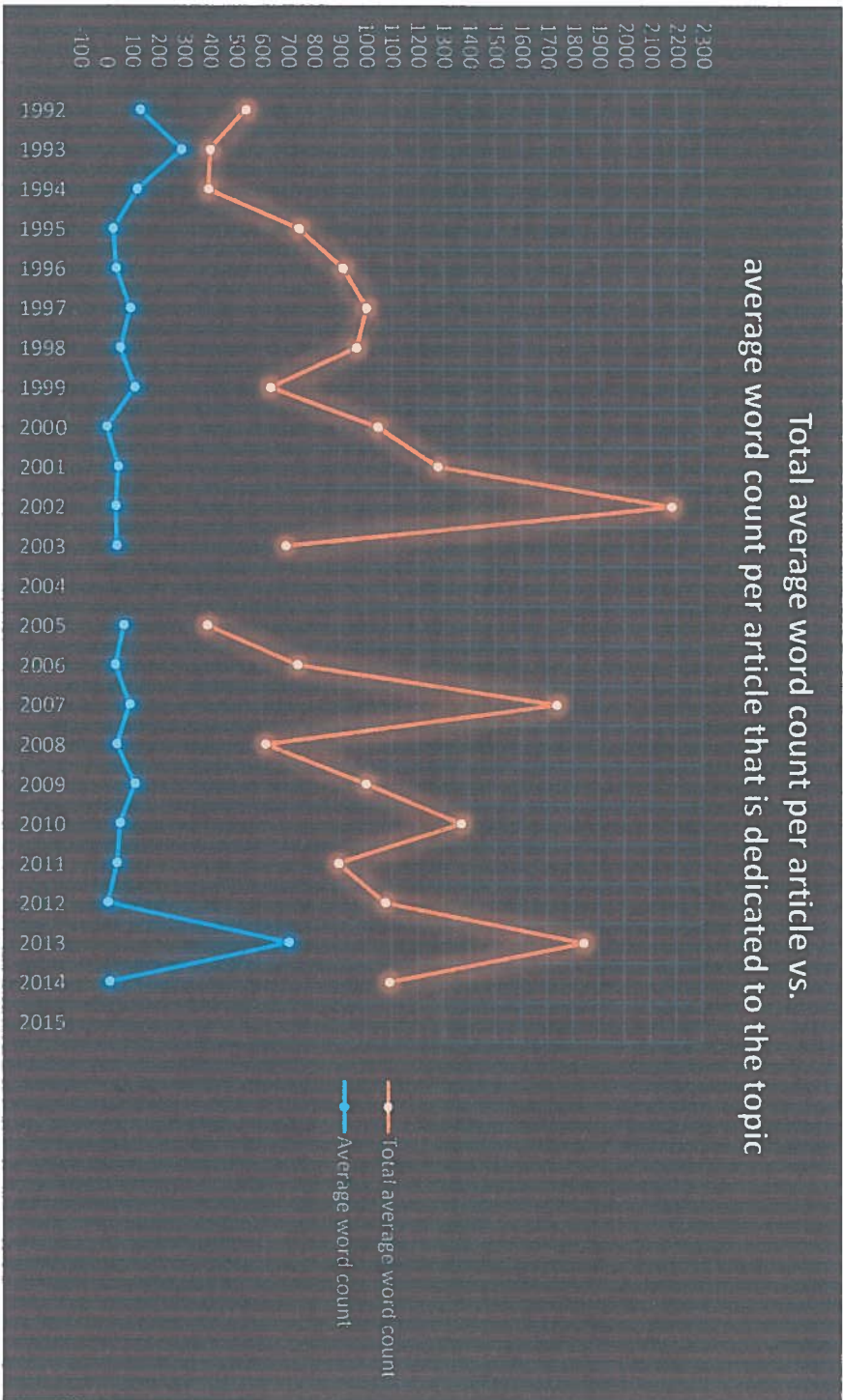


Figure 3e

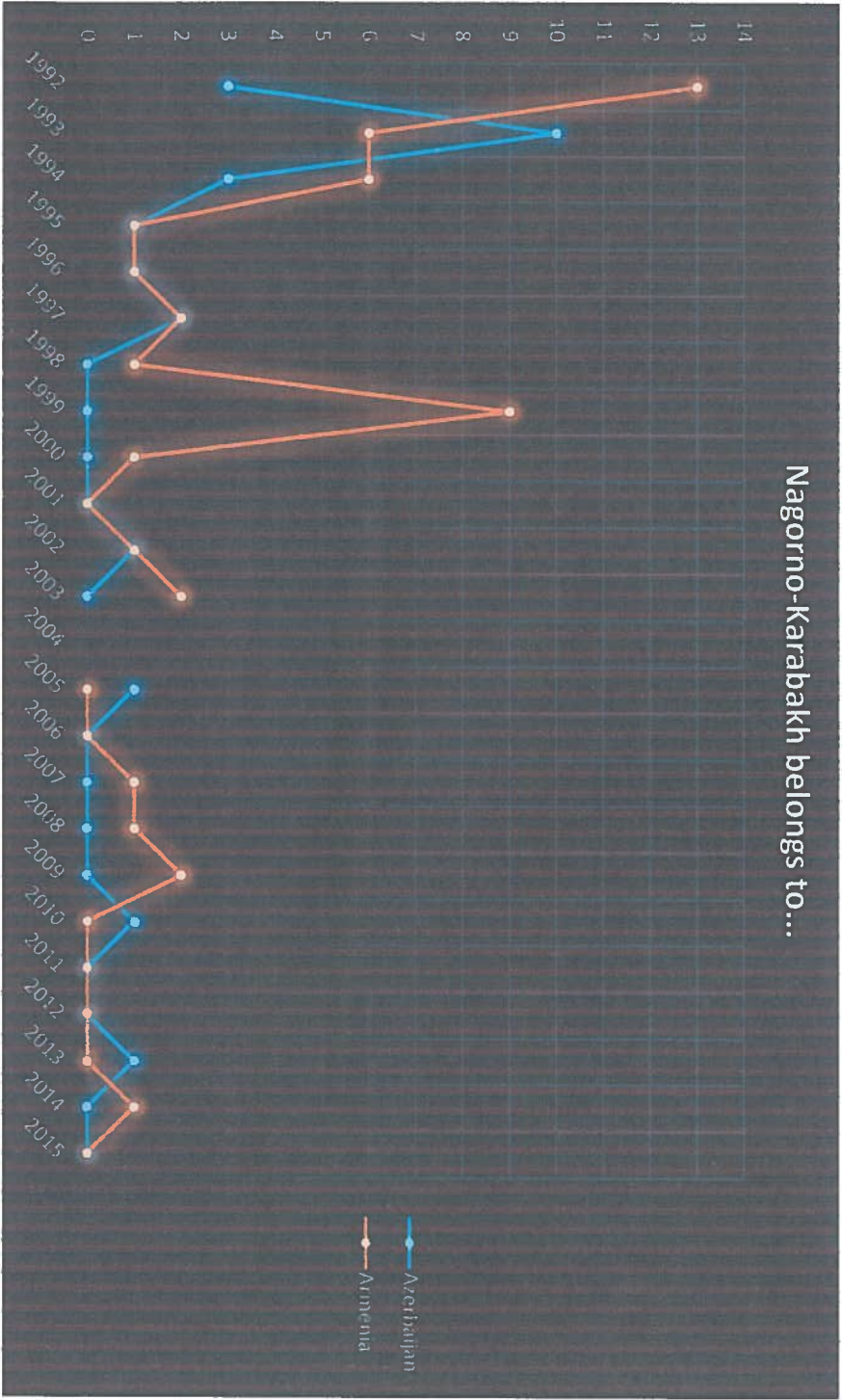


Figure 3f

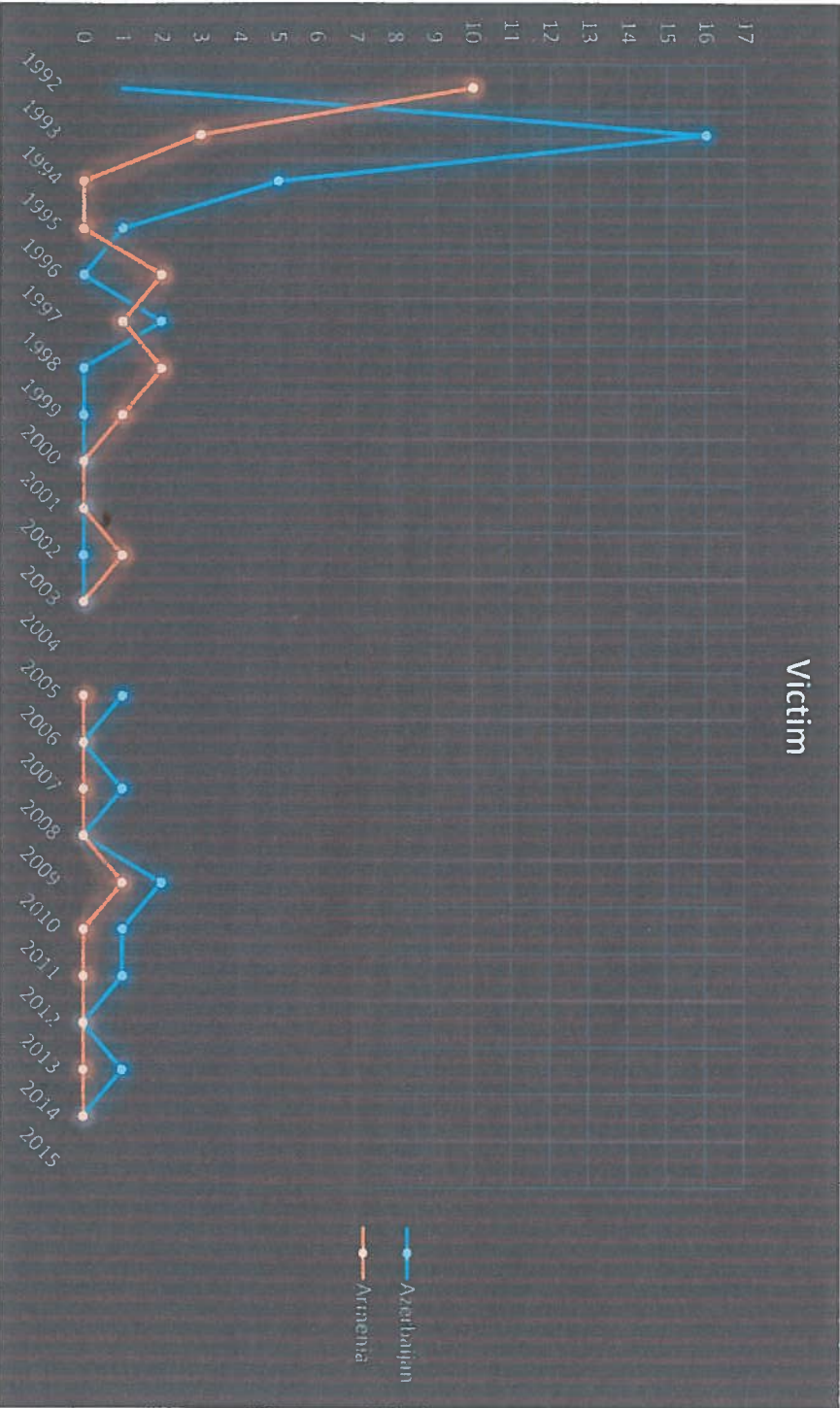


Figure 3g

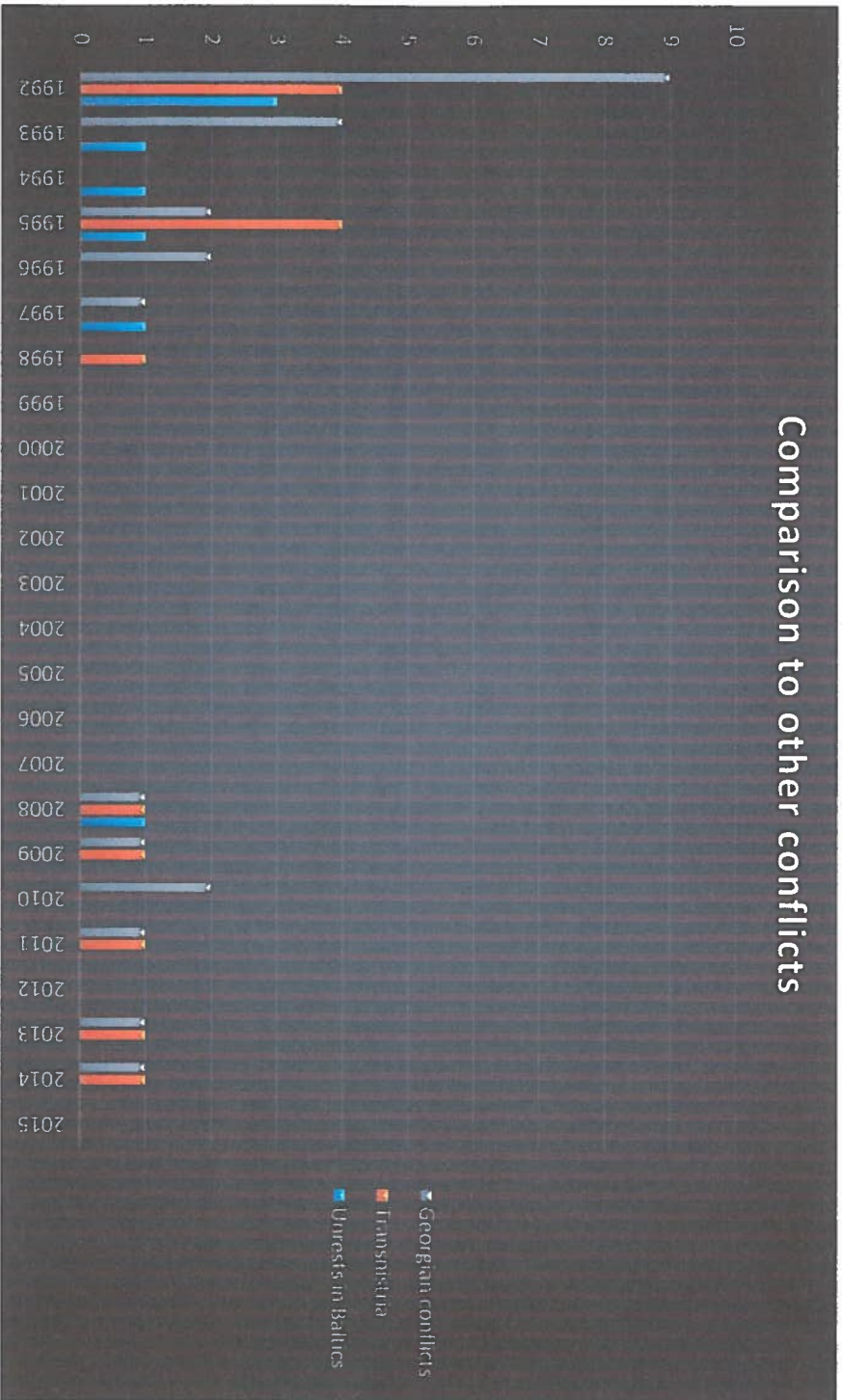


Figure 3h

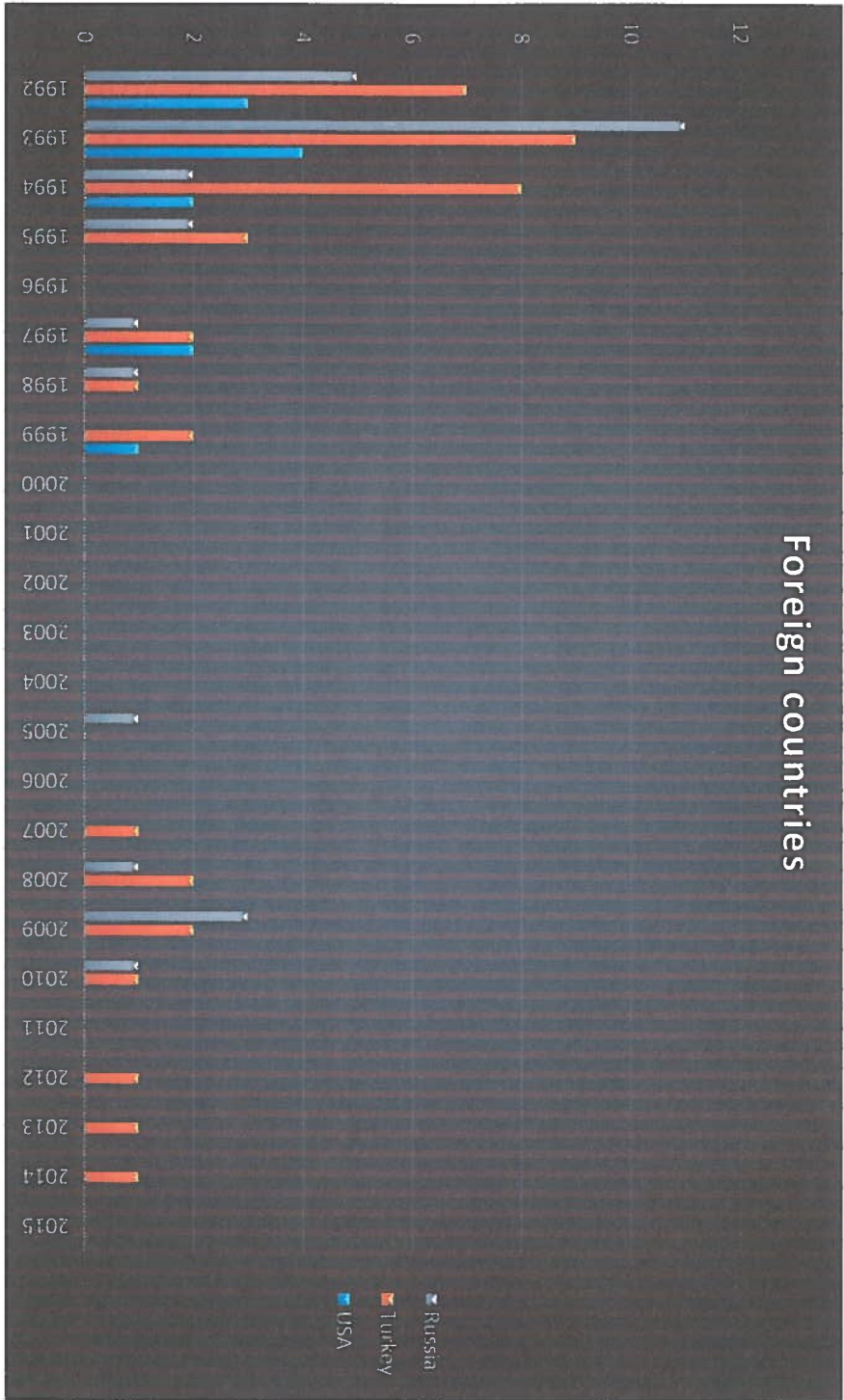


Figure 3i

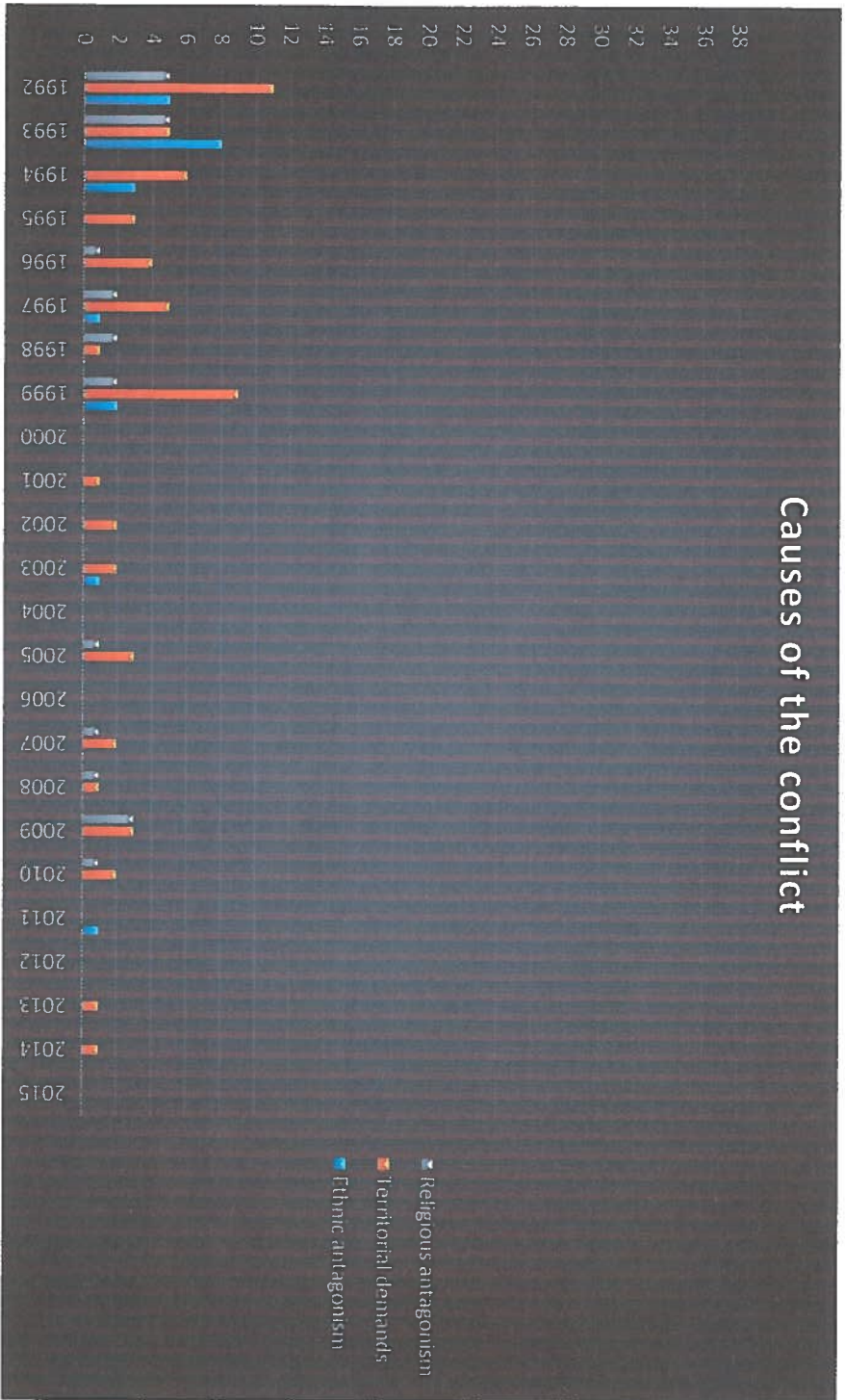
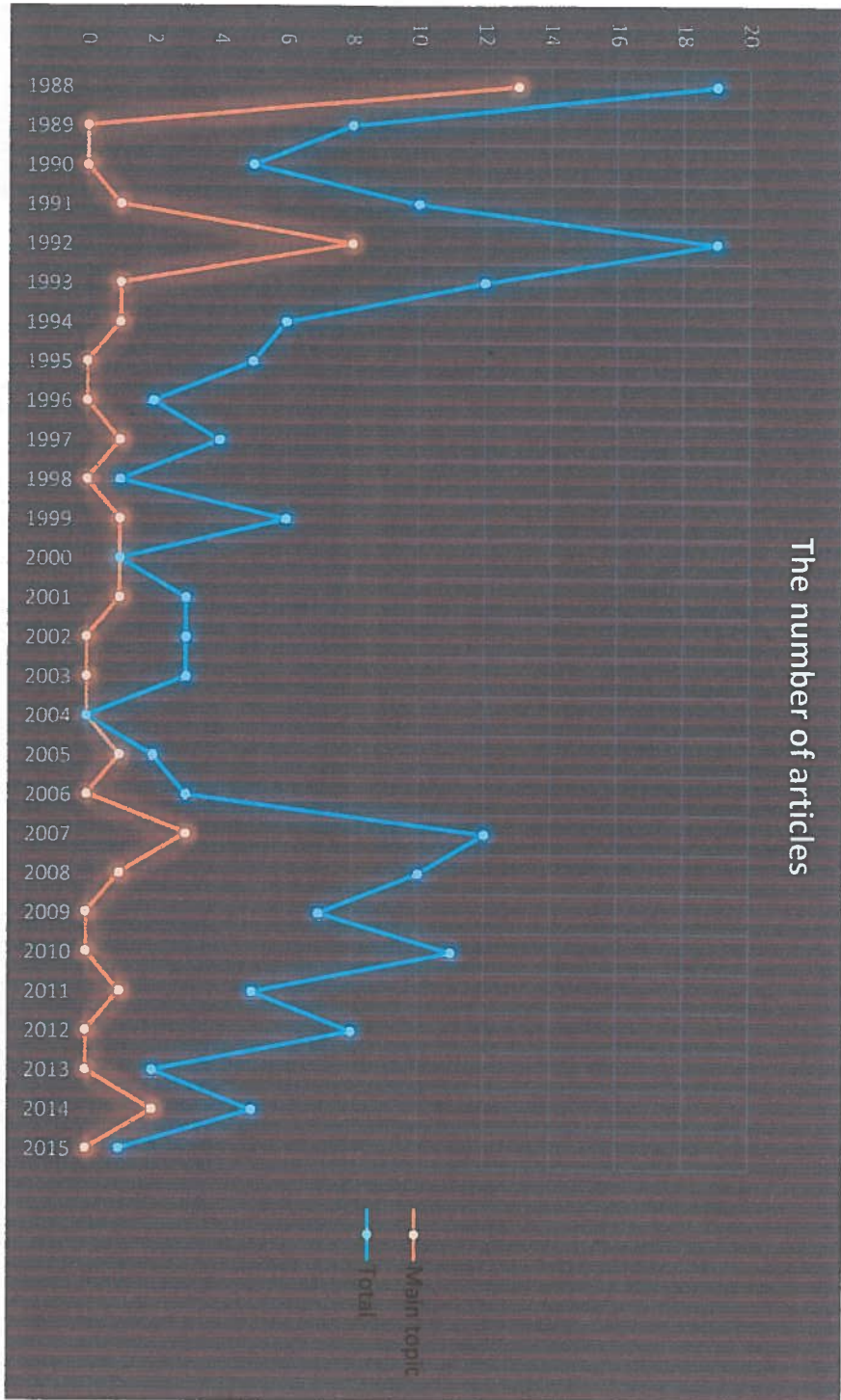


Figure 4a



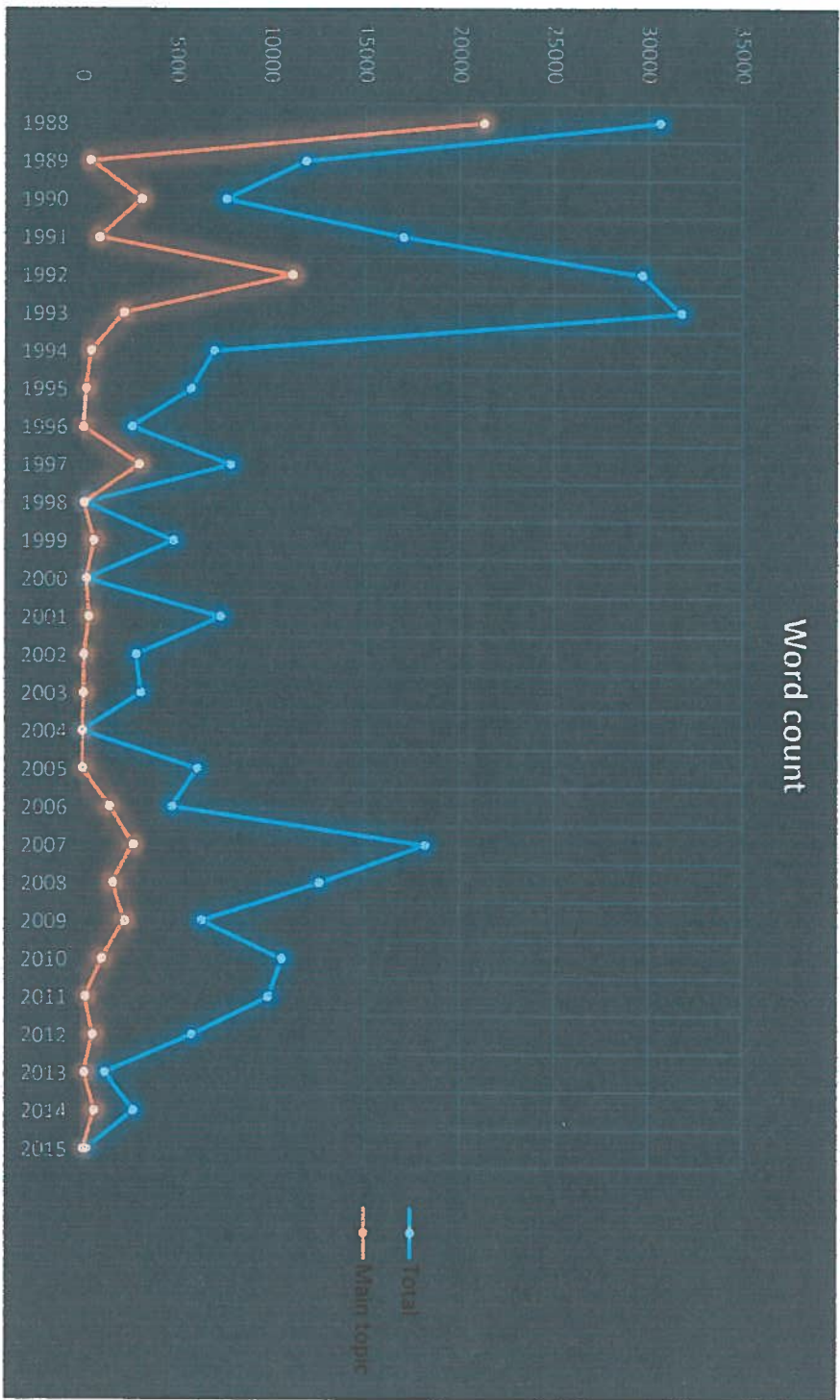


Figure 4b

Figure 4c

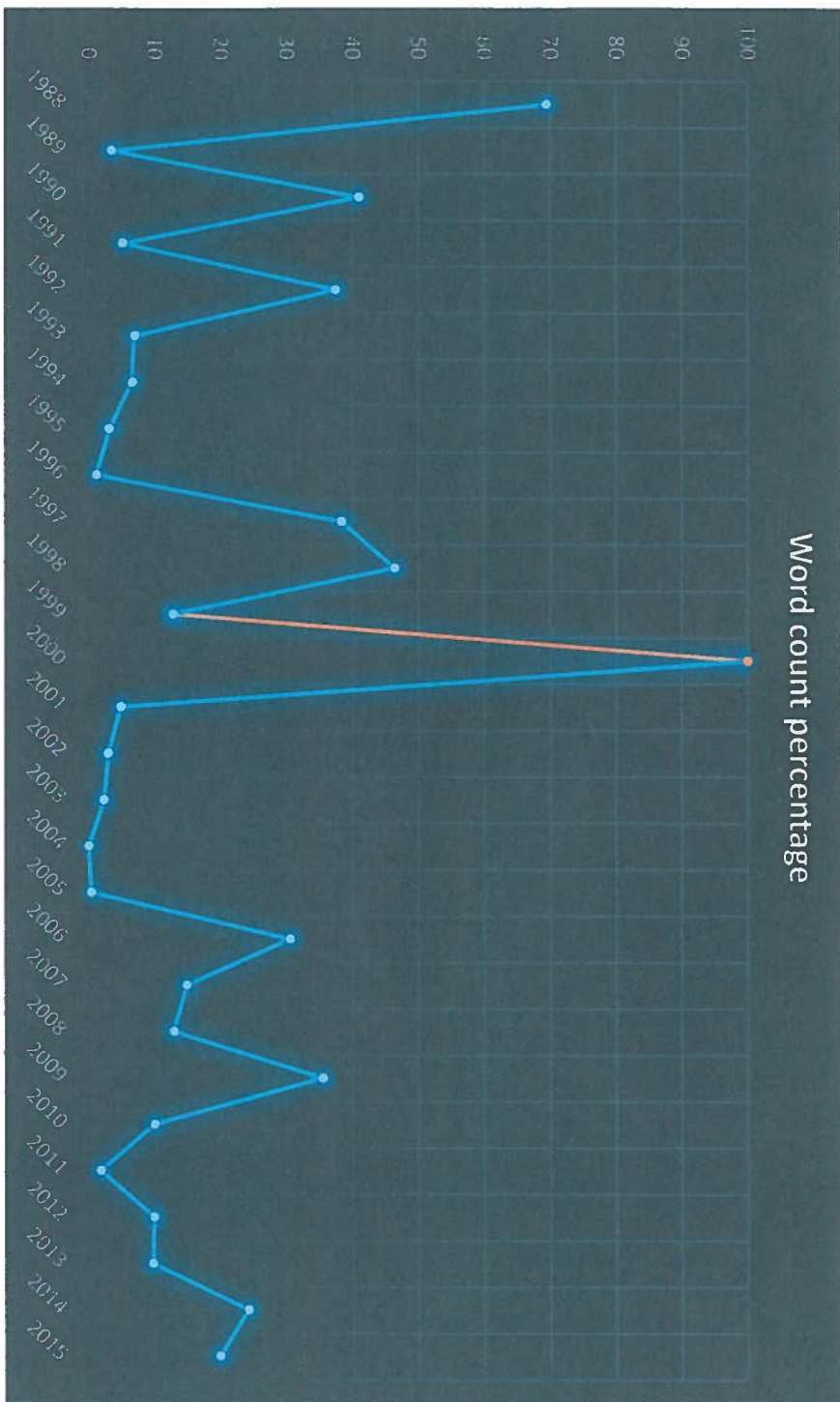


Figure 4d

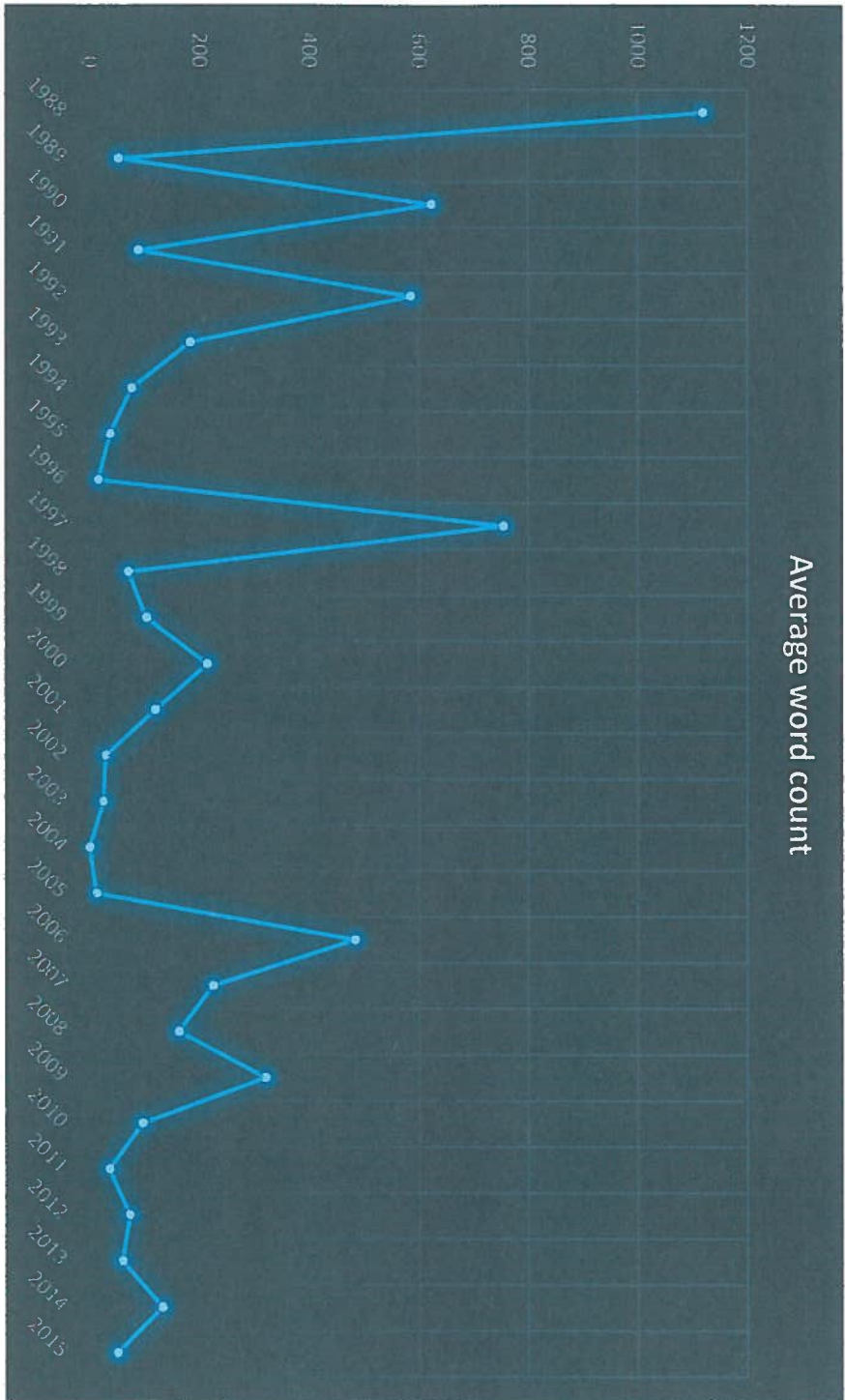


Figure 4e

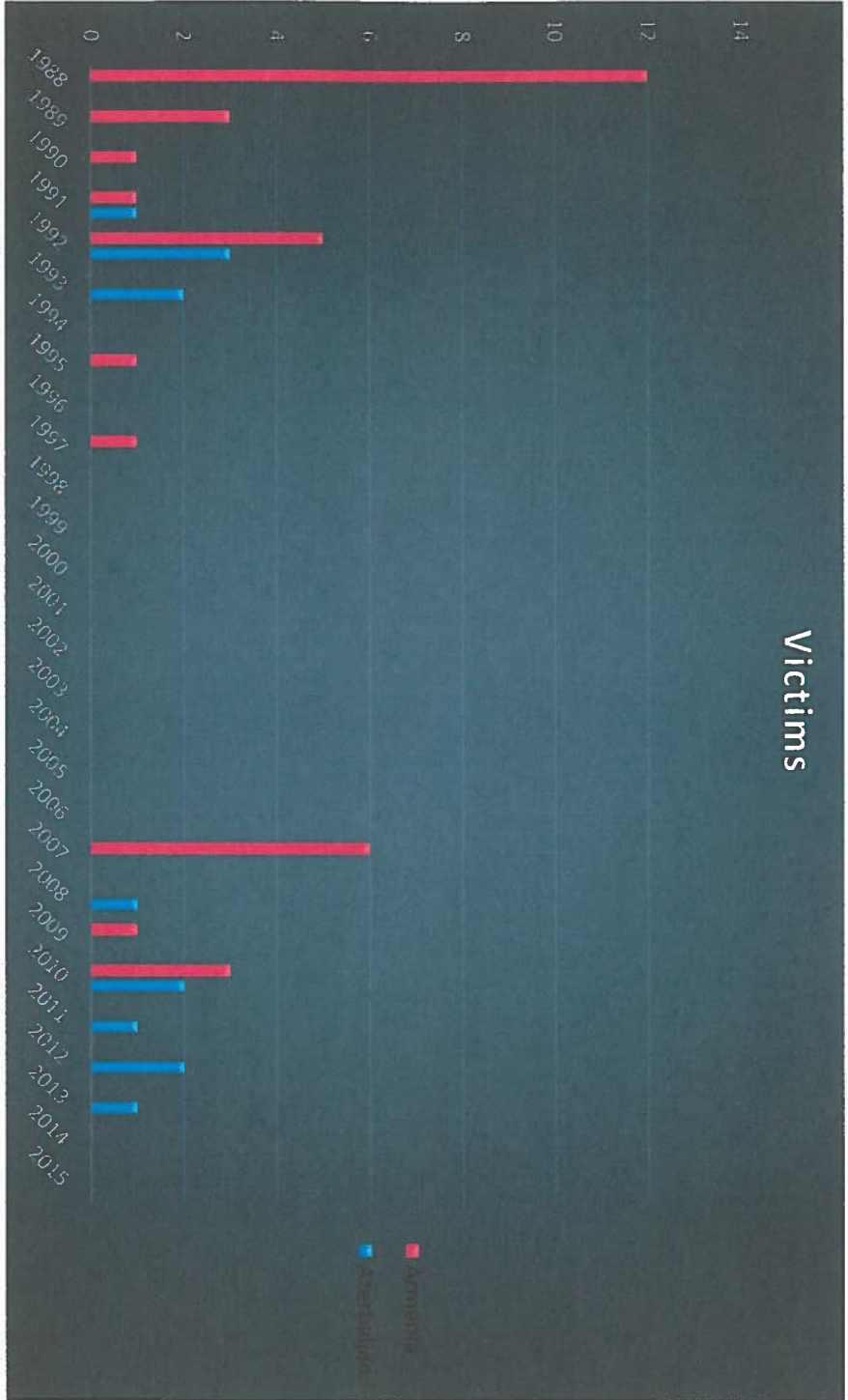


Figure 4f

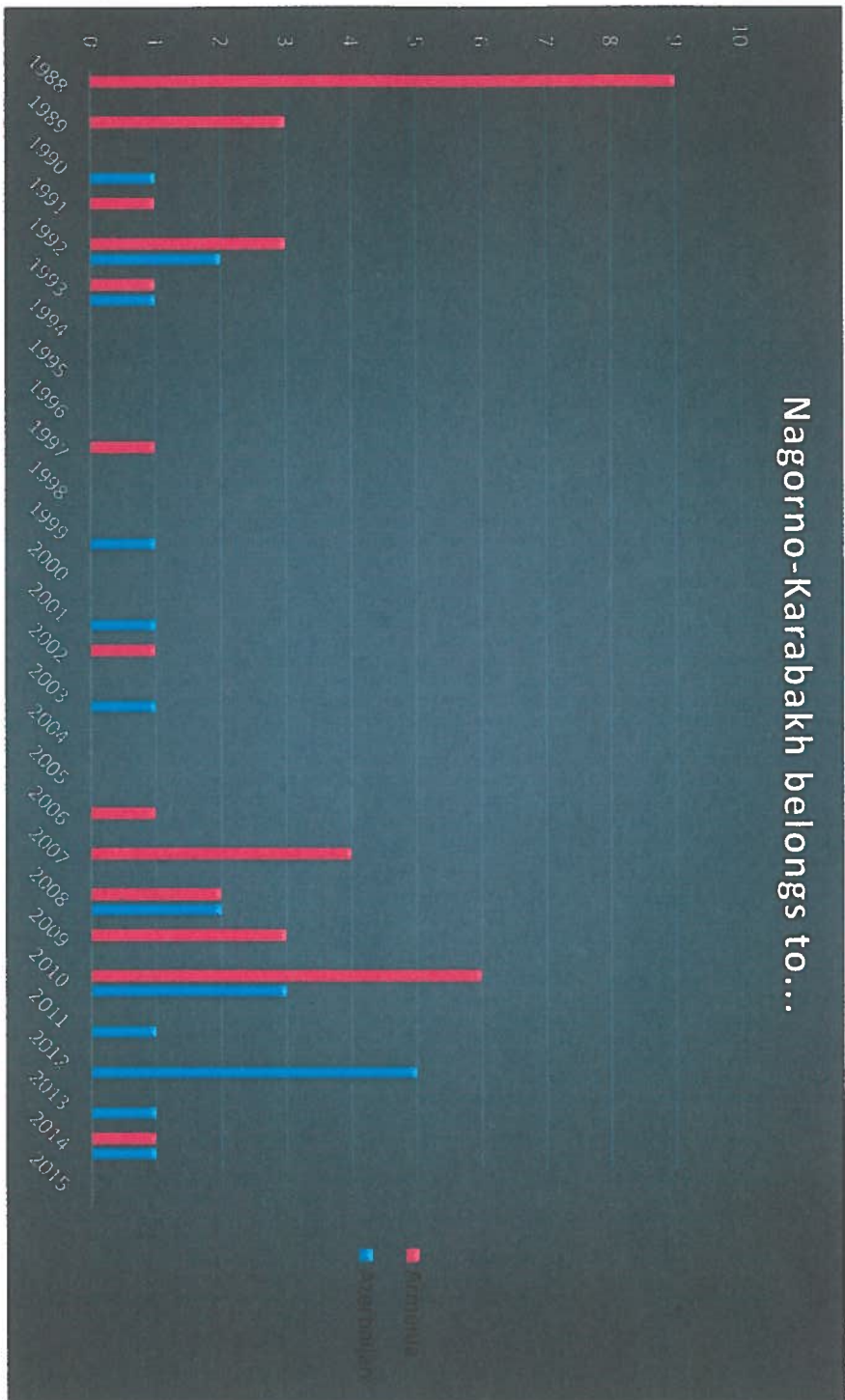


Figure 4g

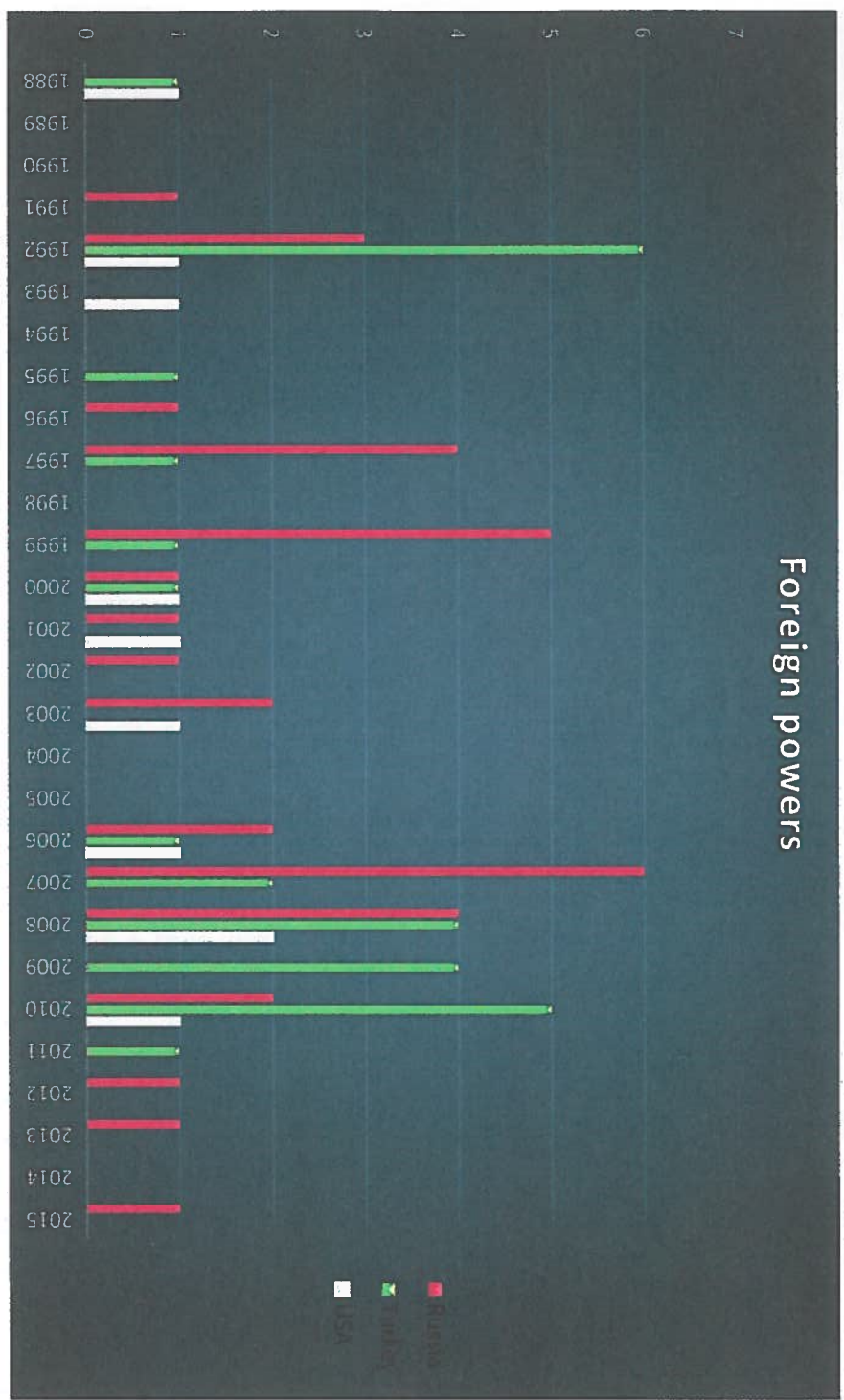


Figure 4h

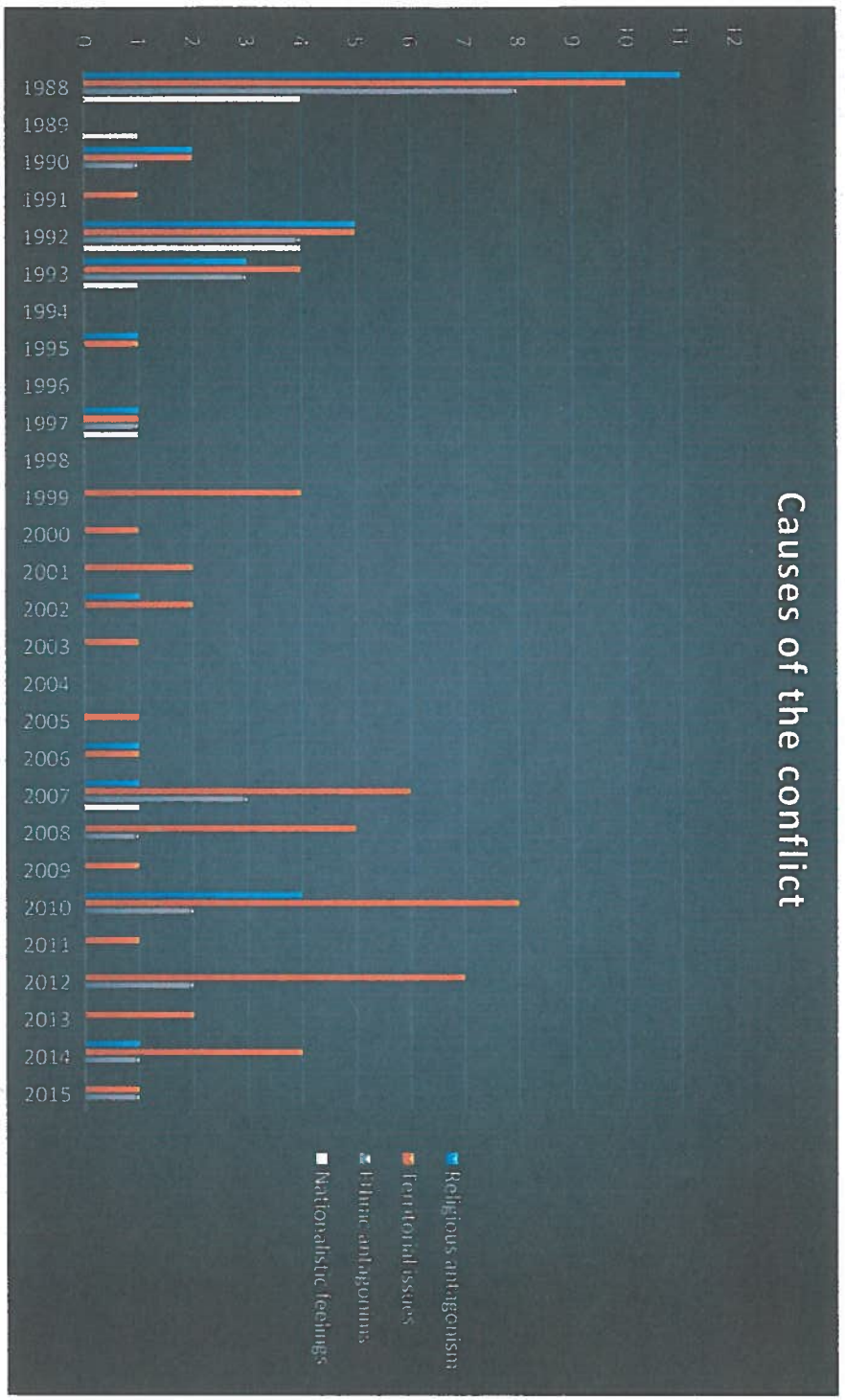


Figure 4i

