Investigating the Nagorno-Karabakh war and the emerging India-Armenia alliance through the lenses of Indian media: case study of the *Times of India*

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	In the process of ongoing wars and conflicts between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the formation of new alliance between India and Armenia, this study aims to investigate the Indian media news coverage of the recent Nagorno-Karabakh war. To this end, a synthesis of agenda setting and media conflict framing theories with a special attention to war/peace journalism was applied. A synthesis of agenda-setting and media conflict framing theories, with a special focus on war/peace journalism, was applied as it provided a suitable framework for analyzing war news. The main research method was content analysis, and data was collected from the *Times of India*, one of the most significant nationwide English-language newspapers in India. The study's timeframe spanned from September 2022 to October 2023.It was the time that the clashes happened between the two countries leading to the Azerbaijani government launched a blockade of the self-proclaimed Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh).The results of the study showed that the most important news topics that were covered by the *Times of India* was the report of violence in battlefield including the number of victims such as killed, wounded or displace people. Then mediating other countries such as Iran for the peace process got prior attention. Afterwards the tensions between Armenia and Russia and consequently, its alliances with countries such as France and India were highlighted. From the perspectives of media conflict framing the results showed that the selected news frames were closer to the war journalism.

Introduction

Following the 1988 resolution by the Nagorno-Karabakh regional legislature to join Armenia, a conflict erupted between the South Caucasian nations of Azerbaijan and Armenia over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh (Cornell, 1999). This conflict, considered the longest inter-ethnic dispute in the former Soviet Union, intensified with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The situation is further complicated by the fact that the region is internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan, and there is a broad international and legal consensus that Armenia has long occupied Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding area. Consequently, an international armed conflict has persisted throughout this period, resulting in thousands of deaths and millions of refugees (Migdalovitz, 2003). The primary cause of the conflict is the Armenian minority living in Azerbaijan's Nagorno-Karabakh region, who have demanded either independence or unification with Armenia (Migdalovitz, 2003). Azerbaijan has found this unacceptable, leading to a considerable amount of violence over the issue (Migdalovitz, 2003).From the first Nagorno-Karabakh war that was happened mainly between 1988 and 1994 until the second war in 2020, there have been several conflicts in the region. As well, the 1994 ceasefire that was made by the mediation of Russia, has been broken several times. As Aslanli (2022) and Askerov & Ibadoghlu (2022) assert due to failed diplomatic attempts and negotiations for keeping ceasefire the second major Nagorno-Karabakh war started on September 27, 2020 and continued until November 10, 2020. The war stopped after 44 days with signing a cease-fire declaration between Azerbaijan and Armenia, mediated by Russia and as a consequence, Azerbaijan returned a large part of its occupied lands in the war (Ibrahimova, 2024). Since then, there were several border disputes between Azerbaijan and Armenia. The clashes reached their peak in 2022 when the blockade of Nagorno-Karabakh started on December 2022 by Azerbaijan and then another Azerbaijani offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh in September 2023.

Both Azerbaijan and Armenia have sought alliances from various countries during the conflict. Azerbaijan has received support from Turkey, driven by the idea of Pan-Turkism, as well as from Pakistan (Goswami, 2024). In contrast, Armenia has strained its ties with Russia, a country it has historically relied on for security. As a result, Armenia has sought to strengthen relationships with other nations, including France, Iran, and India (Goswami, 2024). This shift is largely due to Yerevan's disappointment with Russia's perceived failure to defend its interests, particularly during the war with Azerbaijan (Oxford Analytica, 2023). Consequently, Armenia froze its membership in the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), an intergovernmental military alliance, in 2024 and is considering an official withdrawal. The CSTO includes Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan.

Armenia has also pursued a "normative alliance" policy, seeking partnership with the European Union, especially with France. Beyond France's large Armenian diaspora and its historical recognition of the 1915 Armenian Genocide, the country is viewed as a crucial partner for more strategic reasons. As Briand (n.d., p. 1) notes, "Strengthening relations with France could serve as a catalyst for Armenia's pursuit of multilateralism. Overcoming challenges such as geographical distance is essential for realizing the full potential of the historical ties between Armenia and France." In recent years, security concerns and Russia's dominance have prompted Armenia to gradually reorient its alliance policies. Armenia now views **India** as a potential strategic partner, motivated by India's rapid economic growth and its increasing engagement with the Eurasian Economic Union. India's role as a potential counterweight to Russian-Chinese dominance in the region further adds to this appeal (Lakshminarayanan & Yepremyan, 2023, p. 81).

Particularly Armenia-India relations found new promising relevance within the context of the South Caucasus and Eastern Europe after the 44-day Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) war in

2020. One of the most important geopolitical and geo-economic purpose of India to have partnership with Armenia and its broader Eurasian vision is to bypass its rival, Pakistan and the Pakistan-Azerbaijan-Turkey axis. There is also the 'China factor' and thus, India – Armenia Partnership could provide more balance in the region "through the India-Iran-Armenia nexus as against the China-Pakistan-Turkey axis." (Lakshminarayanan1 & Yepremyanp. 2023, p. 96)."Armenia, a close EU partner and a member of EAEU [(The Eurasian Economic Union)] that has a land border with Iran, can potentially become a key channel in the INSTC (International North–South Transport Corridor)" (Lakshminarayanan & Yepremyan, 2023, p. 83- 88). Armenia as a strategic partner for India and Iran facilitates the economic corridor from India to Europe via Chabahar to the north of Iran.

India's support for Armenia and their growing partnership are also rooted in shared geopolitical interests. Armenia has consistently supported India's position on the Kashmir issue, while Azerbaijan's ally, Turkey, has backed Pakistan (Lakshminarayanan & Yepremyan, 2023, p. 91). Although India did not officially recognize the Armenian Genocide until 2021, its relationship with Turkey has deteriorated under the Modi administration due to Ankara's strong support for Pakistan. This shift led to the Indian embassy in Yerevan using the term "genocide" for the first time in 2021, with the Indian ambassador paying tribute to the victims (Armenpress, 2021). During the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war, as Azerbaijan received support from both Turkey and Pakistan, India publicly sided with Armenia, leading to a new level of military and defense cooperation between the two nations (Lakshminarayanan & Yepremyan, 2023, p. 91).

As an illustration this cooperation has been described by (Goswami, 2024, p. 7) as follows:
> "India-Armenia bilateral relations have been on an upward trajectory, primarily due to the centrality of their defence partnership, with India proving to be reliable defence supplier to Armenia. Starting with a US$40-million deal in March 2020 to supply Armenia with Swathi weapon-locating radars, Indian military aid to Armenia has become increasingly kinetically focused, notably with the sale of Pinaka missiles in 2023 and the Akash surface-to-air missile (SAM) platforms in August 2024. The rapid growth of an indigenous defence deep-tech ecosystem in Armenia presents new opportunities for India, especially for emerging technologies and dual-use platforms".

In light of this growing partnership, India is now a major defense supplier to Armenia. Within this context, the media's framing of both the India-Armenia alliance and the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict becomes highly significant. This is crucial because it reveals how a major nationwide Indian newspaper can not only shape public opinion within India regarding the new alliance but also project India's official stance to the international community. Given that the Karabakh war is a significant and ongoing issue in the Caucasus region, it has captured the core attention of both regional and global media. Consequently, media representation of the conflict has been a central focus of scholarly work.

In a 2013 study Sadikhova examined the portrayal of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in *the New York Times* between 1992-1997 and 2007-2012. Meanwhile, Bayramov (2023) studied the Dutch media's coverage of the 2020 Karabakh war, concluding that their reporting was often stereotypical, simplified, and biased in favor of Armenia while being more critical of Azerbaijan. Expanding on this, Fahim and Islam (2024) compared media portrayals in both Eastern and Western news outlets. They found that while TRT World (from Turkey) was predictably pro-Azerbaijani due to Turkey's role as a key ally, Al-Jazeera (from Qatar) maintained a more neutral stance. Conversely, the Western outlets they studied, BBC and DW (Deutsche Welle), showed a pro-Armenian bias. Looking at the conflict through the lens of peace/war journalism, Atanesyan (2020) concluded that there was limited evidence of peace journalism, with a more prevalent tendency toward a war journalism framework. Seyidov (2023) investigated the post-conflict situation as reported in two major Azerbaijani media

outlets. The existing literature shows that the conflict has been a central focus for media in countries involved in the issue.

Since India is now involved through its alliance and growing economic and defense partnership with Armenia, this study aims to investigate the perspective of Indian national media. There's a lack of systematic studies on this topic, and this article seeks to fill that gap. To do this, the article will first explain its theoretical framework, which synthesizes agenda-setting and media conflict framing theories. The research will focus on the *Times of India*, one of the most prominent and popular English-language newspapers in India, established in 1838 as *The Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*. It serves as a suitable case study because its editorial stance often aligns with the national government (Britannica, 2025). The article will then detail the content analysis used as the main research method, present its findings, and conclude with remarks on the new India-Armenia alliance. It also explores the challenges Armenia faced in the war and highlights the new geopolitical realities and international alliances emerging for the country.

Theoretical framework: agenda setting and media conflict framing
One of the most significant and prevalent theories in analyzing news coverage regarding political issues is agenda setting. While the theory was originally applied by McCombs and Shaw (1972) for election news, the application of that was generalized to other political topics since then. The main idea of the theory is that by highlighting some topics, media make them important in the minds of audiences. In other words, "agenda setting is the process of the mass media presenting certain issues frequently and prominently with the result that large segments of the public come to perceive those issues as more important than others" (Coleman, et al, 2009, p. 167). In this regard, "the more coverage an issue receives, the more important it is to people" (Coleman, et al, 2009, p. 167). This theory has been selected as one part of the theoretical framework of this study because it is important to see what issues regarding the Armenia Azerbaijan conflict is highlighted by Indian media.

In considering the agenda setting theory, one important question is "who sets the agenda"? (Russell Neuman, 2014, p. 196). This issue can be considered within two levels. 1) Within the media organization and 2) outside media organization. Within the media organization, the journalists and editors are the most important agents that decide about the selection of topics. They are also called as 'gatekeepers'. Outside media organization there are influences from other media. The phenomenon which is called as 'intermedia agenda setting'. "In general, intermedia agenda-setting research is concerned with measuring the extent to which news content transfers between various media" (Harder, Sevenans, & Van Aelst, 2017 as cited by Su & Borah, 2019, p.2). This study also considers the role of intermedia agenda setting in Indian media news coverage of Armenia Azerbaijan conflict.

Another theory which has a close relation with the agenda setting is framing theory. In the context of war and tensions between two sides, the conflict framing can be used. Framing conflict in media is significant because as Putnam (2007, p. 167) argues the role of media as mediators to build consensus and manage community tensions is very significant. In other words, depending on the modality of news coverage, media can impose psychological pressure to people or can manage their stress. In this regard, using either of the two frames i.e. war or becomes significant. In this dichotomy there are strategies for news coverage that can either propagate war or propose peace. The former focuses on violence, speak on behalf of elites and take partisan side in favor of one group to win. The latter, however is nonpartisan i.e. take neutral side towards both sides of conflict and cover both of them equally. As well it offers issues pertaining to solve the problem and call for peace rather than focusing on the existing

conflicts and tensions (Wang, 2022). In this regard, the article will apply a combination of agenda setting and conflict framing theory with a special attention to the peace/war journalism.

Research methods
This article has employed content analysis to investigate the conflict framing of the recent Nagorno-Karabakh war in one of the major Indian newspaper i.e. the *Times of India*. The reasons for selection of this newspaper as case study is twofold: 1) it is one of the leading nationwide English language newspapers in India that has worked since 1838 i.e. 186 years ago. 2) The full text of news in this newspaper are freely available and similar to other news organizations such as The Hindu and The Indian Express does not need subscription and more Importantly, as aforementioned the newspaper views are mainly coincided with the national government (Britannica, 2025). The time frame for data selection is from 12 September 2022 to almost one year later in October 2023. 12 September 2022 is significant because the clashes that happened this time between the two countries leading to the Azerbaijani government launched a blockade of the self-proclaimed Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) in December. The keywords for the selection of news stories were "Armenia Azerbaijan" and "Nagorno Karabakh". Any news that contained information regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh war or the Armenia Azerbaijan tension and conflict was selected as sample. In total, 75 news items were selected.

For examining the first research question i.e. what important themes and topics are highlighted by the *Times of India* regarding the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, qualitative content analysis was employed. In doing so, it was assessed which topics received more attention. This was deduced through counting the reparation of every topic.

For answering the second question i.e. what conflict framing has been used by the *Times of India* in news coverage of Armenia-Azerbaijan war, three themes were extracted. These themes were inspired from one part of the Peace journalism framework developed by Lee (2020, 369).

1. Reporting visible/invisible effects of war. To operationalize this category, it was examined whether the news story reports the visible effects of war such as causalities, dead or wounded people, and destroyed houses and so forth or the invisible effects of war such as emotional trauma. The former was regarded as war framing and the latter was considered as peace framing.

2. Reporting the current situation of battlefield/possible future peace. In this category if a news item focuses on what currently happens in the battlefield, is considered as war frame, but if the news reports the possibility of future peace and agreement is considered as peace frame.

3. Partisan (biased) / non-partisan (neutral) towards one side. To operationalize this category, it was examined whether the news stories took pro-Armenia or pro-Azerbaijan stance or show neutral stance towards each side of the conflict. If the news be biased towards one side of the war, it is considered as war frame, but if it takes neutral stance, it is regarded as peace journalism.

Finally, for answering the third research question i.e. the possibility of exiting intermedia agenda setting, it was examined whether the selected sample news published by the *Times of India* were produced by the themselves or were borrowed from other news agencies or media organizations. If more than half of the published news are borrowed from external sources, the role of intermedia agenda setting will be confirmed.

Findings
The findings of this paper are presented in three parts.

The first part discusses the most significant themes and topics that are highlighted and selected by the *Times of India* regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh war or more broadly towards the Armenia Azerbaijan conflict between September 2022 and October 2023. The results of this part are in line with the agenda setting theory. The second part reports the results of media conflict framing theory. The third part reports the possibility of the intermedia agenda setting in the *Times of India* Nagorno-Karabakh war news.

1. The most significant highlighted themes regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh war

Applying the agenda setting theory in analyzing the selected news sample showed the most highlighted and repeated themes are as follow. It is also important to mention that the following categories are ordered based on their quantity and the number of times that they are repeated.

1-1. The number of victims in the battlefield including the killed or wounded soldiers or civilians.

This is the most repeated topic that can be observed in the news. Focusing on the number of victims as well as explaining the injuries and the incidents that happened to the people from both side indicates the significance of this issue for the *Times of India*. As an illustration a news headline published on 14 September 2022 i.e. a short time after the new round of conflict started between the two countries reports: "Nearly 100 killed in Armenia-Azerbaijan border clashes" (*Times of India*, 14 September 2022).

1-2. Fleeing ethnic Armenians living in Karabakh to Armenia.

The second repeated theme in the selected news relates to the effects of war on people's lives. The most significant illustration of that is moving ethnic Armenians of Karabakh to Armenia. Based on the news 120 thousand of the Karabakh inhabitants were going to escape as they feared from the Azerbaijanis. As later in the following part will be explained a reasonable number of the selected news took side in favor of Armenia and criticized Azerbaijan. It was observed that the news that were in this category often claimed that the Azerbaijan activities are leading to 'ethnic cleaning' and 'genocide'. These two keywords were repeated several times in the news to show that the great fault of the war is with Azerbaijan and the Armenia and the Armenians living in Karabakh are victims of this war. One news example in this category is as follow: "Armenians flee Karabakh after defeat to Azerbaijan", "the leadership of 120000 Armenians who call Karabakh home said Sunday that they did not want to live as part of Azerbaijan because they feared persecution and ethnic cleaning" (*Times of India*, 26 September 2023).

1-3. Mediating other countries or international organizations for peace between the two countries.

In every war there are counties or groups that try to mediate the conflict. In the case of Nagorno-Karabakh war, Russia has been the traditional mediator between Armenia and Azerbaijan. It has kept some peacekeeper teams in the region since 2020, the second Karabakh war. In addition to the role of Russia, the news talked about the role and tendency of other countries to mediate the recent conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. As an illustration, the role of Iran and in some cases the US is highlighted. The following news situates in this category. "Iran to host six-nation meeting on Armenia-Azerbaijan peace process" (*Times of India*, 22 October 2023).

1-4. The emerging conflict between Armenia and its former ally, Russia.

Another group of news that received priority by the *Times of India* to be covered is the emerging conflict between Armenia and its former ally, Russia. This issue has been highlighted because Russia has had the role of peace keeper in the region for the past years, but the Armenia government accused Russia for not doing its job in the best way because of its engagement in

Ukraine war. One of the repeated theme in the news is Russia-Ukraine war and this theme had been mentioned by a negative attribution to Russia. In fact, the selected covered news by the *Times of India* propagating this issue that Russia is not a good mediator and negotiator for the peace process as it involves in the Ukraine war. News examples that report the conflict between Armenia and Russia are as follow: "Armenia PM signals foreign policy shift away from Russia". In a quotation in the same news story he says" "It has become evident to all of us that the CSTO instrument of the Armenian-Russian military political cooperation are insufficient for protecting external security of Armenia"(*Times of India*, 24 September 2023). Later on it was observed that Armenia PM did not attend the CSTO meeting in November 2023 (*Times of India*, 23 November 2023)

1-5. New alliances of Armenia including France and India
Due to its growing conflict with Russia, Armenia has shifted its foreign policy toward other countries, including France and India. News reports indicate that France has not only expressed strong support for Armenia but has also openly threatened Azerbaijan. For instance, the *Times of India* reported on October 23, 2023, that "France announces sale of defensive weapons to Armenia." Similarly, India has also shown clear support for Armenia. The *Times of India* noted on October 26, 2023, that "India may send more weapons to Armenia amid Azerbaijan tensions." While the sheer volume of news on India's support and new alliance with Armenia may not be extensive, the firm nature of this expressed support is highly impactful.

1-6. Verbal tensions between the two countries officials.
The last category of news relates to the verbal tensions between the officials of the two countries: "Armenia and Azerbaijan accuse each other of breaking ceasefire pact" (*Times of India*, 23 September 2023).

1-7. Other topics.
Other topics include news with other issues such as analyzing the war between two countries, the consequences of the war for people, the possible peace in future and some other issues. Because the number of each topic was less than 5 news, they were not considered as a significant independent category and all of them together were considered as other topics.

2. Analysis of the news based on the conflict framing theory.
Following the explanations on the research methods section, three factors were examined for analyzing the conflict framing theory.

2-1. Visible/invisible aspects of the war.
First, it was examined whether the selected news covered the visible aspects of the war such as the number of killed or wounded people or the invisible aspects of that such as peoples' fearing or trauma. The results of content analysis of the selected news showed that half of the news included visible aspects of war and half of them reported the invisible aspects of that. Among 75 selected news, 37 items were in the first category and 38 were in the second group.

2-2. Current conflict/possible future peace
The second part discusses whether the news items propose the issues regarding the 'current conflict' or the 'possible feature peace'. The results of the content analysis showed that among 75 news items, 58 news presented information regarding the current conflict and the existing problems between the two countries and only 17 news discussed possible solutions.

2-3. Being pro-Armenia or pro-Azerbaijan /being neutral
The third part discusses whether the selected news took pro-Armenia or pro-Azerbaijan side. The results of the content analysis showed that in 37 news the information was offered in way that showed its support for Armenia or its criticism towards Azerbaijan. As an illustration, there were news showed Armenia as the victim. At the same time, there were news showing Azerbaijan is doing ethnic cleaning in Karabakh. As expected, there was not even one pro-Azerbaijan news. The rest of 38 news were categorized as neutral since no sign of support or criticism towards each side was observed in them.

3. Intermedia agenda setting in the *Times of India*.
The results of the study regarding the existing of intermedia agenda setting in the *Times of India* Nagorno-Karabakh war news coverage proves positive. Among 75 selected news items only 4 were produced by the *Times of India*. The rest were borrowed from other sources such as AP (Associated Press), AFP (Agence France-Presse) and Reuters.

Conclusions
This study's findings on the *Times of India's* coverage of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict from September 2022 to October 2023 offer crucial insights into how a nation's media can reflect and, in turn, shape its evolving geopolitical strategy. The analysis, grounded in agenda-setting and media conflict framing theories, has not only confirmed the existence of a clear editorial bias but also illuminated the mechanisms through which this bias operates. The core argument is that the media, in this case, a prominent national newspaper, does not merely report on international events; it actively participates in projecting a state's strategic interests and influencing domestic and global perceptions. This conclusion is particularly relevant given India's emerging alliance with Armenia, a partnership driven by a complex interplay of economic, military, and geopolitical factors.

The study's first key finding, based on agenda-setting theory, demonstrated a deliberate prioritization of certain topics. The most frequent reports focused on the human toll of the conflict: the number of casualties and the displacement of ethnic Armenians from Karabakh. This emphasis on human suffering, particularly the plight of the Armenian population, served to cast Armenia as the victim. This framing is further underscored by the second most highlighted topic, the accusation of "ethnic cleansing" against Azerbaijan, a narrative that effectively places moral blame squarely on one side. This prioritization is not a neutral act of journalism. Instead, it directs public attention and emotional sympathy toward Armenia, subtly laying the groundwork for public acceptance of India's burgeoning strategic alignment. The media, in this sense, acts as a public relations tool for the government's foreign policy, preparing the ground for more explicit military and diplomatic support.

The shift in coverage from the human tragedy to diplomatic affairs further highlights this agenda-setting function. Reports on mediation attempts by Iran and rising tensions between Armenia and its former ally, Russia, underscore the changing geopolitical landscape. The *Times of India's* coverage repeatedly linked Russia's inaction to its engagement in the Ukraine war, effectively portraying Moscow as an unreliable and preoccupied partner. This narrative serves a dual purpose: it justifies Armenia's pivot away from Russia while simultaneously presenting India as a potential, more dependable alternative. The less frequent, but highly impactful, news items on the new alliances with France and India are strategically placed to reinforce this new geopolitical reality. For instance, headlines like "India may send more weapons to Armenia" (*Times of India*, 26 October 2023) are not just informational; they are declaratory, signaling to a domestic and international audience the firm direction of India's foreign policy. This suggests that while the media may be passive in its quantitative coverage of the alliance, it is assertive in the qualitative expression of its support.

The findings from the media conflict framing analysis strongly corroborate the existence of this pro-Armenian bias. The predominant use of a war journalism framework over a peace-oriented one is a critical indicator. The focus on the visible, immediate effects of the conflict—such as casualties and destruction—rather than on the invisible psychological trauma or long-term peace solutions, keeps the narrative in a state of crisis and conflict. This is evident from the finding that 58 out of 75 stories focused on current problems, not future peace. This framing, by dwelling on the immediate conflict, sustains a sense of urgency and maintains a narrative of ongoing antagonism, making any diplomatic solutions seem remote and strengthening the justification for military intervention or support. Furthermore, the analysis of partisan framing, which revealed a clear bias favoring Armenia in 37 of the 75 news items, confirms this argument. The complete absence of any pro-Azerbaijani news, as found in the study, is a powerful testament to the one-sided nature of the coverage. This media stance is not accidental; it is a reflection of the national interest.

This alignment between media coverage and national interest is not an isolated phenomenon but is deeply rooted in India's broader geopolitical objectives. The new alliance with Armenia is a multifaceted strategy. It is, first and foremost, a direct response to the Pakistan-Turkey-Azerbaijan axis, which poses a significant threat to India's regional influence (Lakshminarayanan & Yepremyan, 2023, p. 91). . It also addresses the "China factor" in the region (Rolland, 2018), as "An Armenia-India partnership with unidirectional propensity towards hedging alliances could provide the much-needed balance in the region through the India-Iran-Armenia nexus as against the China-Pakistan-Turkey axis" (Lakshminarayanan & Yepremyan, 2023, p. 96). By supporting Armenia, India is strategically countering the influence of its rivals. Moreover, the alliance is a key component of India's grander Eurasian vision, particularly its role in the International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC). As a strategic partner, Armenia, with its land border with Iran, is crucial for establishing an economic corridor from India to Europe that bypasses Pakistan and Turkey. This is a clear demonstration of how India leverages its soft power through media to support its hard power and economic interests.

The study's final finding on intermedia agenda setting adds another layer to this conclusion. The fact that the *Times of India* relies heavily on international news agencies like AP, AFP, and Reuters indicates that it is not generating its own news on the conflict. However, rather than simply being a passive recipient of information, the newspaper acts as a selective gatekeeper. It chooses which external stories to feature and how to frame them to fit its national narrative. The selection of news reports that highlight Armenia's victimhood, Russia's unreliability, and the new India-Armenia defense deals, while ignoring any pro-Azerbaijani perspectives, confirms that the intermedia agenda-setting process is not a random transfer of information but a deliberate, politically motivated act. The newspaper's editorial stance, which aligns with the government's foreign policy (Britannica, 2025), ensures that the chosen narratives reinforce India's strategic goals.

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