HOWARD UNIVERSITY

**Alternative Discourse During the
State of Emergency in Armenia, 2008**

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School

of

HOWARD UNIVERSITY

in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the
degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Mass Communications and Media Studies

By

Tsovinar Nazaryan

Washington, D.C.
May 2011

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ABSTRACT

The study investigates the alternative discourse on March 1, when fatal clashes between the police and protesters generated citizen discussion on the Internet. That discussion continued during the following 20-day state of emergency in Armenia when official censorship was imposed over the media. Embracing critical theory, the study analyzes how the citizens used the Internet for promoting oppositional discourse, while the mainstream media were perpetuating the official discourse. Overall, 525 statements extracted from 54 articles published in the official, oppositional, and third party media (18 in each) were subjected to content and framing analyses. These found that generally, the debates were focused on the freedoms and rights on one hand, and on stability and security on the other. The findings show that the oppositional groups made their way in forming and promoting an alternative discourse opposing the official propaganda. The research recommends similar investigations of citizen employment of new technologies to speak to each other during political crises in other nations.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The new media, represented by the Internet's myriad offerings, including traditional media's websites, online news, official websites of non-governmental institutions, weblogs, social networking sites (SNS), and listservs, have contributed much to the freedom of expression among audiences across the world. Their importance for access to information has been demonstrated in times of national crises more than once. The ways that citizens used new media to mobilize revolutionary uprisings were seen, for instance, in Tunisia and Egypt in early 2011[1], for example, are fresh proof of their importance.

On March 1, 2008, 10 people were killed, hundreds were injured, and hundreds of opposition leaders and supporters were arrested as the result of clashes between riot forces and protesters in the capital city of Armenia. Many trials took place in further months; and still six people are in prisons declaring themselves as political prisoners. None was arrested or was charged for the killings. This proposed research will examine the political discourse (alternative discourse versus official discourse) about the March 1 events and the 20 days of the proclaimed state of emergency. That discourse was formed and reflected by both traditional media and the new media users during the 20 days of the state of emergency in Armenia in 2008. Of concern will be the alternative messages, i.e. information and commentary, delivered by the political opposition and citizen journalists to their audiences in Armenia. The discourse formed in the studied period will be examined in the framework of critical theory. The word "alternative" will be used as synonymous with the oppositional and pro-oppositional (media, voice, sources) as

[1] Activists and young new media users used the Internet for mobilizing peaceful protests in Tunisia in January, 2011, and in Egypt in February, 2011. Those protests resulted with resignation of the heads of Tunisia (Ben Ali governed for 23 years) and Egypt (Mubarak governed for 30 years).

distinguished from mainstream, official, governmental, pro-governmental (media, voice, sources).

Problem Statement

In 2008, 10 days of non-stop citizen protests against the disputed presidential elections of February 19 ended in deadly clashes between the government forces and demonstrators, dozens of arrests of opposition activists, and the imposition of a three-week state of emergency by the Armenian government (March 1 through March 21, 2008). In the night of clashes on March 1, the President declared a 20-day state of emergency in Yerevan. According to his decree, the media were forbidden to use any other source of information on the internal affairs of Armenia beside the official ones (Message of Armenian President Robert Kocharyan to the people, 2008). Many newspapers, several radio stations and most online news were banned. Foreign broadcasters' reports on Armenia were shut down (Yerevan Press Club, 2009). Further, news and commentary both digressing from and opposing the official sources moved to the Internet. In spite of its limited availability in Armenia, the Internet became the medium that delivered alternative messages to small audiences with Internet access during the state of emergency. This alternative discourse, which occurred in "new media," represented by the Internet, has not been identified or investigated. It forms the basis of the present research.

Rationale for the Study

The present research addresses the problem of the "new media activism" phenomenon in times of censorship and crises. It describes and analyzes how the Internet contributed to the emergence of an alternative discourse to an official government discourse during the state of

emergency in Armenia in 2008. This research will study the forms of the new media used during the state of emergency, the channels used for reaching out to audiences, and the frames and/or counterframes used in the messages. According to Berardi, Jacquemet, and Vitali (2009), the accessibility of technologies makes it possible for more and more people in the grassroots to produce media content. The authors state, "Media activism came to represent the conscious practice of those who invaded the field of technologically mediated social communication to produce critical thinking and social awareness" (Berardi et al., 2009, p.75). This research will also examine frames and counterframes in the official discourse and in the alternative discourse, respectively, carried on by the media.

Armenian media studies, which are mainly limited to media monitoring and surveys by national media NGOs, have done little to examine the new media and explain their role in the society in times of crises. The study is trying to address the lack of research on the development of the new media in Armenia. An analysis of the Armenian alternative media forms and content can reveal the role of alternative media in forming and supporting alternative discourse in times of censorship and crises. Also, it will contribute to the establishment of similar studies in Armenia, as well as in the region—both post-Soviet South Caucasus and neighboring countries like Iran and Turkey.

Background

Armenian Media

Since 2002, the state of freedom of press in Armenia, a post-Soviet country in which democratization processes have taken place (and which are under permanent monitoring by the Council of Europe), has been ranked as "Not Free" in Freedom House's annual reports. Only in

2010 was it assessed as "partially free" (Freedom House, 2011). In 2008 (the year whose events are examined in the present research), Reporters Without Borders ranked Armenia 102nd on Freedom of Press ("Press Freedom Index 2008", 2008). Local and international research and technical reports argue that media freedom in Armenia has always been suppressed by the government, which becomes more repressive during elections in the country. Political tension often results in attacks on the media, e.g., brutal attacks on journalists by police and others, trials against pro-opposition and independent media, bans by publishing houses, enactment of laws limiting freedom of expression, and so forth (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 2008; Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, 2008).

Television is the most influential source of information in the country, with a population of about 3.5 million. Only three television stations, including *Armenian Public TV (H1)* and two private stations, broadcast all over Armenia. More than a dozen of television stations broadcast to Yerevan and neighboring regions covering about half of the country's population. There are also community television stations that have little audiences. Major television broadcasters in Armenia are entirely loyal toward the government (Yerevan Press Club, 2008). Few independent channels changed their editorial policy in favor of the government in early 2000s. The last independent TV channel *A1+* was shut down in 2002, and though it won a legal challenge against the Armenian government at the European Court, its license was not restored. Moreover, in 2008 the parliament passed a bill imposing a moratorium on new television licenses until 2010 (Freedom House, 2009). The next contest for TV frequencies held on January 2011, reduced the number of television channels (Amb. Kelly on the Press Freedom in Armenia, 2011).

According to independent organizations, such as the Yerevan Press Club (2008), the print media are quite diverse in Armenia but their circulation is limited to 3,000 to 6,000. Their

contents are also available online. Due to the limited market and several other reasons mentioned by various experts, the most popular newspapers are informally backed by political parties (Mkrtchyan, 2010). Narine Mkrtchyan, an experienced print journalist and a university professor, finds that the Armenian newspapers have to rely on "shadow financing" because publishing commercials is informally "monopolized" by the government-controlled television stations. Few businessmen would dare to publish commercials in un-controlled media, she posits (Mkrtchyan, 2010).

More diversity is provided in online news resources but access to them is even more limited because of poor access to the Internet (Papyan, 2009). According to International Telecommunication Union's (ITU) data published in a professional media blog by Artur Papyan, a new media expert and the country coordinator at the British non-profit organization Media Diversity Institute, only 5.8% of Armenian population was using Internet in 2008 ("700% growth in Armenia's penetration rate," 2010). Then, Internet usage was based mostly on dial-up connections, and it was available mostly to urban population. In spite of this factor, it turned out to be the only way for citizens to exchange alternative messages during the state of emergency. Data and analyses show that after March 2008, the presence of Armenians in blogosphere and social networking sites (especially Facebook) expanded (Papyan, 2009) and the Internet usage in Armenia vastly grew reaching 47.1% accessibility in 2010 (ITU in "700% growth in Armenia's penetration rate," 2010).

Armenian Politics

Political tension in the country evolved after September 21, 2007, when the first President of Armenia Levon Ter-Petrosyan[2] broke the long-lasting silence he had maintained since his resignation in 1998 and publically introduced a sharp criticism against the ruling party, calling it "corrupted, criminal, and plutocratic" (Radio Liberty, 2007). This made clear that he was going to lead the opposition to the forthcoming elections on February 18, 2008. President Robert Kocharyan[3] was serving his second and last term according to the Constitution. He was supporting the presidential candidacy of his long-year political ally Serzh Sargsyan[4], the prime-minister at that time. Kocharyan responded with even harsher criticism of Ter-Petrosyan and his ruling years (Radio Liberty, 2007). Since then, the pro-government media, including all TV channels, provided little coverage of opposition rallies and sharply criticized the opposition and its leader. The opposition had no access to the live TV shows. It was using some print media and online resources to reach out to people, but the demonstrations and hundred-thousand DVDs depicting those rallies were available to much larger audiences in the country (Radio Liberty, 2007).

The media restrained their own anti-opposition rhetoric during the official period of the electoral campaign (January 21 through February 17, 2008) as required by the law and as monitored by the international electoral observers (Yerevan Press Club, 2008; OSCE/ODIHR, 2008). However, eight out of nine candidates did denounce the opposition candidate. The latter's

---

[2] In this study, the Presidents' names are spelled as in the President's official web-site (www.president.am). Armenian names' transliteration may differ in other languages. Thus, Ter-Petrosyan may be referred as Ter-Petrossyan, Ter-Petrosian, Ter-Petrossian, and even Der-Bedrossian.
[3] May be referred as Kocharian, too.
[4] May be referred as Serge Sargsian, Sarkisian, Sarkisyan, Sarkissyan, and so on.

critique targeted only Serzh Sargsyan, the ruling party's and the acting President's candidate, as well as the President (Yerevan Press Club, 2008).

On February 19, 2008, the voting day, local and international observers recorded many incidents of vote fraud, violence against opposition activists and journalists, and other violations of the Electoral Code of Armenia (Reporters Without Borders, 2008; OSCE/ODIHR, 2008). Those facts were later documented in the OSCE/ODHIR's Final Report on the elections. However, the OSCE's preliminary assessment was moderate: On the next day after the voting, the International Observation Mission made a statement that the elections were "one step forward" toward democracy comparing them to the previous ones (OSCE/ODHIR, 2008). The Central Electoral Commission stated that Serzh Sargsyan won the elections with 52.9% of the votes, and Ter-Petrosyan won 21.5% of the votes. The opposition applied to the Constitutional Court complaining about the procedures and the official results of the elections which made a runoff unnecessary. At the same time, the opposition launched non-stop peaceful rallies in the Freedom Square[5] in downtown Yerevan, Armenia's capital (PACE, 2008).

Though President Kocharyan promised to tolerate the rallies until the Constitutional Court could make a decision, early in the morning of March 1, the police attacked the Freedom Square where people were sleeping in their tents and dispersed the demonstrators chasing them for several kilometers (Human Rights Watch, 2008). Ter-Petrosyan was taken by force to his residence and put under home arrest. There, he gave a press-conference telling what happened in the morning (Radio Liberty, 2008) but it was poorly covered because the state of emergency

_____

[5] The Freedom Square is located in front of the Opera Building. Often, it is referred also as Opera Square or Theatrical Square. Since the late 1980s' fight against the Soviet regime, almost every demonstration was held in this square. That is how it has gained its name. Since March 2008, the oppositionists have been refused to have any access to the Freedom Square until April 28, 2011.

imposing censorship on the media was declared in the same night. Dispersed people started to gather in a square surrounded by the City Hall, French embassy, and Russian embassy. During the day, many opposition-supporters gathered on the spot. That night clashes between the demonstrators and the government forces started. Ten people, including two policemen, were shot to death on the spot; two of them died later in hospitals (Human Rights Watch, 2008).

President Kocharyan declared a 20-day state of emergency in Yerevan, blaming the opposition for the unrest. Hundreds of opposition supporters and leaders were arrested. The media were banned from producing news based on any other sources beside official ones (Kocharyan's Decree, 2008). Those who were formally and informally under the government's control were allowed and encouraged to perpetuate the government's interpretation of the March 1 clashes not only through the information and comments issued by the officials but also through their own commentary and interviews with "random" citizens in the streets (Nazaryan, 2008). Those who had refused the government's control before were banned and the online sources were blocked. Even after the March 13 amendments in the President's decree, National Security Service officials were checking the contents of the newspapers and banning their publication (Yerevan Press Club, 2009).

Though the purpose of the state of emergency was declared to promote national reconciliation (Kocharyan, 2008), the Armenian people lacked information about how many people had been killed and injured, or who was arrested and why (Human Rights Watch, 2008). Some citizen attempts to conduct public protests in other regions of Armenia were restrained by the local authorities, though the state of emergency was launched only in the capital city Yerevan. While some opposition activists and bloggers in Yerevan were actively sharing information through the internet, phone, and face-to-face communication, the regions were even

more unaware, scared, and silent. One should take into account that at the beginning of the 2008, dial-up was the most popular internet connection available to few people (about 6%) in Armenia (Papyan, 2009).

The Armenian presidential elections of 2008 are extremely interesting for a media communications researcher for the unprecedented usage of different non-traditional media which citizen activists intended to counteract the government-controlled television and some print media. Hundreds of thousands DVDs, mailing lists, new web sites, social networking sites, weblogs, as well as mobile phones were effectively used to provide ideas different from official. Their usage was multiplied during the state of emergency. While many non-government-controlled newspapers, several radio stations and most online news were banned, some online media continued their work and were accessed by citizens through foreign servers and were delivered via email-lists. Though the opposition was not able to come to power, it contributed to the alternative media activity. Ironically, the government played a significant role here because its restrictions against already established traditional media forced the alternative voices to move to the Internet. It is remarkable that amidst these media-related contestations between the government and the opposition, a range of blogs and other web sources appeared on the scene to provide diverse views and analyses on particular issues. Some of them continued their work and are popular information sources now (Papyan, 2009).

Relevance

Media freedom problems challenging Armenian democracy are common in the South Caucasus, a post-Soviet region bordering Russia, Iran and Turkey and a relatively new part of the Council of Europe, an inter-state organization in Europe including both "Old World," i.e., Western Europe, and the post-Socialist and post-Soviet countries of Eastern Europe. Armenia's

democratization process is permanently monitored by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and by the European Commission[6]. The struggle for democratization should be viewed as a part of civil society transformations in all post-Soviet area and Eastern Europe, as well as in Armenia's neighboring countries such as Turkey and Iran. Undoubtedly, media played a weighty role in the democratic revolutions framed as orange and rose in post-Soviet Ukraine and Georgia, respectively. However, these countries enjoyed more media freedom than Armenia did, especially in the period of the state-of-emergency censorship of the media. That is why and how many individuals responded to this challenge with the launch of new sources and communication channels to fulfill the gap of alternative information.

The Armenian situation can be compared to the situation during the last presidential elections in the Islamic Republic of Iran where the clashes between government forces and protestors were even bitter and bloody. In Iran, a country bordering Armenia, where freedom of expression and media are censored permanently, the opposition used all the possibilities to promote alternative voices against the regime, including Internet opportunities well known from previous Armenian experience. This was possible in larger scale, especially because Iran had very quality and reasonable internet connection. A comparative analysis of media activism needs to be done on media's role in democratic transformations in the post-Soviet and neighboring region. For this, an initial study at the national level is needed. Researchers are challenged by questions of whether the civil movements and alternative media in the region share their

---

[6] Armenia is a member of the Council of Europe, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and it is involved in European Neighborhood Policy by European Union. With other post-Soviet countries, including Russia, it is a member of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Organization for Collective Security Treaty; it also cooperates with NATO, especially with the USA.

experience and tools or they are always endemic; what they learn from one another and how they support one another.

A study on alternative media activism in Armenia during the state of emergency is important for Armenia and the region as the new media demonstrated their potential in democratization processes. Ideas of launching a TV in Georgia for broadcasting in Armenia, usage of foreign servers to access online content during the state of emergency, periodical statements by European inter-government organizations, the U.S. State Department and international human rights organizations supporting freedom of expression in the country and frequent references to them by Armenian media and civil society demonstrate that this is not just an "Armenian case" but a case of civil voice in a larger context. Still, due to lack of studies on the matter the proposed research will be a step toward understanding alternative media trends in Armenia, and it will contribute to further study on those trends in the region.

Theoretical Framework

This research will employ a critical theoretical framework and qualitative analysis in an attempt to elicit how the voices suppressed by the state of emergency were struggling to be heard above the official and pro-government discourse. The dialectical tension between agency and structure of the social world described by Baran and Davis (2009) can be observed during the Armenian state of emergency. These authors observe that critical theory assumes that, "When elites control the struggle, they define reality"—in other words, elite's control of the structure defines people's material realities—"When people are emancipated, *they* define reality through their behaviors and interactions (agency)" (p. 15). Simply, critical theory embraces the idea that scholarly research has an emancipatory goal of enabling social change. Analyzing the media-politics relationship, Corner and Robinson (2006) state, "Having understood how orders are

11

created and maintained, one task for critical theory is to produce knowledge that can inform ways of changing things for the better" (p. 50).

This study will use framing analysis proposed by critical scholar Robert M. Entman (2004) in his research employing the cascading activation model. To find out why some frames win over others, he explains the information flows' traffic in the relations between the media, audiences, and the politics through a cascading model of activation. Analyzing the media environment in the United States after the September 11, 2001, terroristic attacks on New York and Washington, he found, "Reflecting the surge of outrage and nationalistic fervor, the news made little room for any but official, government-sanctioned interpretations. Even the mildest dissent was immediately condemned" (Entman, 2004, p. 2). This is also true to the subject of this study in terms that the Armenian government *officially* sanctioned what could be published, and the "mildest dissent' was *officially* abandoned from publishing. In other words, both situations can be described as national crises. In both situations, the oppositional discourse had to look for alternative ways of communicating its messages. Both oppositional and official discourses included information and interpretation on the situation, communicated by different means.

In the Armenian reality, the dominant news frames are perpetuated by the mainstream media, which are merged with politics and mostly controlled by the government and pro-government elites (Yerevan Press Club, 2009). According to Entman (2004), news frames produced by the ruling elites and sometimes by the media themselves, influence audiences. The present research adopts Entman's definition of framing: "[s]electing and highlighting some facets of events and issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution" (Entman, 2008, p. 5). While the Armenian political opposition managed to respond to the official discourse with counterframes during the electoral

campaign, its chances for perpetuating counterframes were extremely reduced by the President's declaration of a state of emergency.

The cascading activation model suggests that not the media, but political and other elites are on the top of media communication flows portraying an allegorical cascade. In this network of communication, "ideas cascade downward from the administration" (the White House in Entman's example) reaching the media. Journalists frame the news according to those ideas that "win the contest" and become dominant. When the ideas coming from "above" vary, there will be more diversity of frames. When an idea or thought is articulated by many, including elites and other media, journalists will likely frame the news according to it. "The president and top advisors enjoy the most independent ability to decide which mental associations to activate and the highest probability of having their thoughts become part of the general circulation of the ideas," Entman posits (Entman, 2004, p. 9). According to the cascading activation model, the audiences may have some "splash-back," as defined by Gamson (2005, p. 324), through counterframes. Entman finds this process inseparable from the freedom of expression:

> The cascade model suggests that the media should provide enough information independent of the executive branch that citizens can construct their own counterframes of issues and events. It is not enough for media to present information in ill-digested and scattered morsels. Rather, what citizens need is a counterframe constructed of culturally resonant words and images, one that attains sufficient magnitude to gain wide understanding to the sensible alternative to the White House's interpretation. (Entman, 2004, p. 17)

Conventional interpretations of knowledge (information), according to postcolonial scholar Edward W. Said (1997), are situational and affiliative; they occur in a given situation either confirming, or disputing precedential interpretations, but they never try to stem from different interpretations. Said puts it this way:

> All knowledge that is about human society, and not about the natural world, is historical knowledge, and therefore rests upon judgment and interpretation. This is not to say that

facts and data are nonexistent, but that facts get their importance from what is made of them in interpretation. No one disputes the fact that Napoleon actually lived and was a French emperor; there is however, a great deal of interpretative disagreement as to whether he was a great or in some ways a disastrous ruler of France. Such disagreements are the stuff out of which historical writing is made and from which historical knowledge derives. (Said, 1997, p. 162)

Said concludes his discussion by calling those who provide coverage of news and research to make the choice for "criticism, community, dialogue, and moral sense," rather than for power (p. 172).

When the state of emergency left no choice for the Armenian media, oppositional discourse moved to the Internet. By now, this relatively new and vastly growing sphere of media has been what might be characterized as "welcomed with skepticism" by the academia, including critical theorists. Herman and Chomsky (2002) recognize the role of the Internet and other new communication technologies as a source of alternative (versus mainstream) information, social mobilization, and democratic development. However, Herman and Chomsky notice the Internet is available to smaller groups because it is connected to fewer people, it is not designed to meet the needs of those who escape from the mainstream media, and its usage requires knowledge and organization (p. xvi). The authors find that the new technologies are too commercialized to introduce alternative discourses to larger publics (p. xvii). Their major concern is that the audiences are provided with too much information that may confuse them and deprive them from needed news. This is what Berardi, Jacquemet, and Vitali (2009) call "white noise" in cyberspace: "This is the new scenario facing contemporary media activism: how to remain significant in a world drowning in signs, data trash and media pollution" (p. 142). However, these analyses have been based on the American and European experiences, and they ignored the role of the Internet in the times of crises. In addition, according to research on the media's coverage of anti-war protests in the United States, Klein, Byerly, and McEachern (2009),

Herman and Chomsky (2002) "deny human agency of a public increasingly fed up with its government policies" (Klein, Byerly, and McEachern, 2009, p. 334). Such was the case in Armenia in 2008.

Research Questions

The study answers the following research questions and then compares the findings:

RQ_1: How did the mainstream Armenian news characterize the March 1, 2008, events during the 20-day period of emergency and crisis?

This question will be answered by examining mainstream news stories published during the state of emergency (March 1, 2008, to March 21, 2008).

RQ_2: How did the popular opposition, as circulated in Internet sources, characterize the March 1, 2008, events during the 20-day period of emergency and crisis?

This question will be answered by examining alternative news sources that circulated in the Internet (e.g. websites, weblogs, networking sites) during the state of emergency (March 1, 2008 to March 21, 2008).

RQ_3: How did third-party sources, circulated in the Internet, characterize March 1 in the next 20 days of the state of emergency and crisis?

This question will be answered by examining third-party news stories published in the Internet during the state of emergency (March 1, 2008, to March 21, 2008).

The findings will be analyzed in order to reveal: How the studied media formed public/political discourse on March 1 during the state of emergency? What were the differences of news coverage between the studied media? How the Internet/new media contributed to representation of the oppositional discourse/perspective?

Definition of Terms

New media. According to Pratt (2010), the term *new media* relates to the recent forms of communication technologies, "such as computers, multimedia forms (such as CDs and DVDs), and, of course, the Internet" (p. 2). The author recognizes that broadband Internet is the most communicative amidst these new technologies. That's why many scholars use the terms Internet and new media interchangeably. So will the present research use *new media, Internet media*, and *on-line media* terms as synonyms. This study will examine samples from print and broadcasting media's websites, on-line news websites, weblogs (blogs), and listservs related to the 21 days of the state of emergency in Armenia in 2008. In other words, it will consider any form of Internet-based news media that provided information both representing and altering from the pro-government discourse.

Discourse. McCloskey (2008) defines discourse as a "belief, practice or knowledge that constructs reality and provides as shared way of understanding the world" (p. 24). Referring to Mills (1997) and Fairclough (2003), she posits that discourse is largely used in ideologies promoted by individuals and groups. The last "determine the possibilities and limitations of what is possible to say, do and write by defining what constitutes truth and knowledge" (McCloskey, 2008, pp. 24-25). The present study will use the terms *official discourse* and *pro-government discourse* interchangeably. They will represent viewpoints, interpretations, decisions, and news produced by the official bodies of the Armenian government. The term alternative discourse will introduce oppositional citizen voices (viewpoints, interpretations, decisions, and news), as well as third-party voices positioning themselves neutrally in politics but being actively involved in the struggle for the basic right of the freedom of expression.

Framing and *counterframing*. This study embraces Entman's (2004) definition of framing analysis as well as his term counterframing. According to Entman, framing within the news media occurs through "selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution" (p. 5). In Entman's cascading activation model, framing originates with government officials (administrations) and other elites who set forth particular views (in his research, with respect to the September 11 terrorist attacks).

Mostly perpetuating those frames, news media sometimes also reflect also counterframes, what Gamson calls "splash-back" in a cascade of frames, provided by different groups within the news audience. To Entman, counterframes should,

> "put together a complete alternative narrative, a tale of problem, cause, remedy, possessing as much magnitude and resonance, as the administration's. Availing themselves of such diverse, clashing, and equally well-developed understandings, a democratic citizenry can in theory freely and intelligently come to its own interpretation." (Entman, 2004, p. 48)

Simply put, frames are the interpretations by a dominant minority, and counterframes are interpretations by marginalized, largely silenced groups. Both are mediated by the news. This study examines the frames promoted by the mainstream media, and the counterframes promoted by the Internet-based alternative media.

Media activism. According to Berardi et al. (2009), *media activism* represents "the conscious practice of those who invaded the field of technologically mediated social communication to produce critical thinking and social awareness" (p. 75). Media activism cannot be produced by the mainstream media; it is usually produced by those who create alternative discourse (Berardi, 2009, p. 147). Using these terms, the present study views *media activism* as occurring through blogging and other individual and group activities, which are expressed in the

Internet. That *media activism* embraces critical thinking and public and social engagement. For this study, *media activism* concerns the citizens' involvement in the new media as news producers and distributors.

Mainstream news. In a lecture published in the *ZMagazine*, Noam Chomsky (2007) analyzes what makes the mainstream media "mainstream." He suggests that one can judge whether media are mainstream or not based on three questions: How are they situated in the larger public, what is their internal institutional structure, and how are they related to power and authority? Chomsky finds similarities between mainstream media in the Soviet Union and in the West, noting though that Soviet media were controlled by the political regimes, while the Western mainstream media are controlled by economically powerful interests. Still, this judgment is true also for the most post-Soviet countries like Armenia. Lack of democratic freedoms including freedom of expression, limited market, and political backing are the main constraints predetermining the structure of the Armenian media field. All the TV channels, most print media, and many online outlets are controlled by the ruling political party (Yerevan Press Club, 2008). This study will apply the term *mainstream news* to the news produced by the Armenian pro-government media. This term will complete the realm of the official and pro-governmental discourse found in news media.

Thus, someone looking for *alternative discourse* or *oppositional perspectives* in Armenia has to look through alternative media, both *oppositional* and *third-party*. They include print media, professional online news, weblogs, and the only broadcasting medium, the US-financed Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, a popular medium striving for more balanced reporting on Armenian internal affairs.

For the present study, the term *oppositional media* refers to the professional and non-professional media favoring the oppositional perspective on the March 1 as circulated in the Internet during the state of emergency. *Third-party*. In the present study, the term third-party will apply to the media, sources, and perspectives that favored neither the government, nor the opposition.

Crisis. Entman (2004) finds that dominant frames determine whether the most people will interpret their situation as a crisis (p. 16). Within the context of this study, crisis will refer to the political instability resulting from the citizens' uprising against the fraudulent elections of 2008.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

In spite of the lack of research on Armenian media activism in times of political crises, including states of emergency such as that central to this research, media studies research provides us with a valuable literature on similar situations in other countries, as well as with rich theoretical framework to analyze the subject. Thus, the literature review for this study will include research on the alternative media and/or other oppositional news sources in times of censorship and crisis in other countries.

In their article, "Counterframing public dissent: An analysis of antiwar coverage in the U.S. media," Klein, Byerly, and McEachern (2009) examined how public dissent to the U.S. war in Iraq was covered by the media, how antiwar dissent counter-framed the Iraq war (that was framed by the government as a "War on Terror"), and how media sourcing shifted from elite voices to non-elites (p. 331). These non-elite voices are conceptualized as alternative, dissent, and oppositional voices in the proposed research. The latter is not making an attempt to draw similarities between the situations in the post-September 11th United States and post-March 1 Armenia, though they both could be described as national crises. This research also seeks dissident voices in the alternative, rather than mainstream media. However, while most research on the post-September 11th public discourse is focused on the analysis of the dominant discourse, the study by Klein et al. (2009) contributes much in the understanding of how non-dominant dissident voices create and promote counterframes trying to reach out larger audiences. This study by Klein et al. inspired the present research.

Post-September 11 political discourse reflected in frames and counter-frames has been examined by many other researchers. Lewis and Reese (2009) subjected the frame "War on

Terror" used by the *USA Today* daily's journalists to content analysis to find out how journalists themselves believed in the official frames and discourse. The study showed that journalists did not acknowledge their own responsibility for perpetuating militaristic frames. They processed transmission, reification, and naturalization of the frame with a simple belief that it was handful and short term for describing the new foreign policy adopted by the Bush government. Besides, they found that a reference to the Bush administration was enough to use the frame as many times as needed. When asked, the *Armenian Public TV*, the major perpetuator of the post-March 1 official frames, explained that not the TV, but the officials were providing anti-opposition frames, and it was airing not the self-produced, but the videos provided by the government (Nazaryan, 2008). This proposed study will also provide political background of the media field structure, policies, and practices in Armenia. Unfortunately, Lewis and Reese (2009) did not take into consideration the editorial policy of the *USA Today* and its relation to the political and economic elites. It could explain why most journalists found nothing non-professional and non-ethical in perpetuating the frames that they sometimes anticipated.

The "War on Terror" was not the only frame perpetuated by the Bush administration and the mainstream media. A textual analysis provided by Debra Merskin (2004) demonstrated how images of Arabs were distorted and dehumanized introducing them as "others," therefore "enemies" (p. 158). Although unlike Merskin, this proposed study is not trying to test or analyze the enemy construction model provided by Spillman and Spillman, but Merskin's analysis of frames is helpful for shaping an understanding of how the powerful elites create images of "enemies" and force them through the media to the entire society.

Many studies show that the oppositional discourse moves to cyberspace when it cannot find response from the mainstream media. The use of Internet as a forum for alternative and/or

oppositional discourse in censored situations is much less studied. Meanwhile, the trends are visible even in democratic countries in times of crisis as shown in an article by Carolyn M. Byerly (2005). There, she particularly describes how the public dissent used Internet for social mobilization and exchange of information and analysis, which contributed to forming an oppositional discourse against the US government's "War on Terror" policies on Afghanistan and Iraq after the September 11th terroristic attacks on Washington and New York: "This new technology has been called a space for formation of alternative (i.e., multiple) public spheres" (p. 292). According to the author, antiwar voices were marginalized and they had to rely on the Internet as the only "venue to speak" (p. 292). This article reveals why and how oppositional voices became marginalized in times of crises, what they do to reach out each other and audiences, and how they use the Internet to gain expression.

Early 2011 revolts in the Middle East and Northern Africa attracted much attention with their usage of social networking sites and modern devices, such as cell-phones and smart-phones. While some attribute those revolts to the Facebook and Twitter, others find that there is some exaggeration about the role of Internet resources in the uprising of the masses, including the poor (for instance, see Hounsel, 2011). No doubt, much research will be done on the subject, but until recently, many scholars expressed skepticism on the role of the new media in radical social and political change. While both new media owners and the scholars believe that Internet is only a means for change rather than change itself, a forum for discourse, rather than discourse itself, they trust change and alternative discourse to the Internet to different extent.

Berardi, Jacquemet, and Vitali (2009) have completed their book *Ethereal Shadows: Communications and Power in Contemporary Italy* with three case studies on Italian "media activism" (p. 8). Berardi, a philosopher of the Foucault and Baudrillard generation, himself has

been a leader in that "activism" since the 1970s. He has been a founder of the first independent radio stations in Italy (1976), first pirate TV station *Orfeo TV* (2002), the *A/Traverso* magazine (1975), *Rekombinant.org* e-zine (2000), and recently *through europe* e-zine (th-rough.eu). The work of Berardi et al. (2009) on the media activism phenomenon doesn't embrace Internet. Moreover, they express skepticism toward the online recourses as tools for alternative news. The authors analyze the "marriage of media and politics" and alternative media's role in society addressing a range of questions like: "How can concerned citizens resist these media and political monopolies? How is the public space of communication going to be used in the future?" (p. 9). They believe that Italian realties are important "for the future of democracy" in Europe and in the world (p. 9).

While the role of the Internet in shaping public discourse alternative to/different from one of the mainstream media has been well covered by the traditional and new media, little research has been done on the subject. This can be explained by the fact that the new media are changing rapidly in a short period of time. Thus, the present study will rely on the research on the same subject for different countries.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The present study employs a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to examine the alternative discourse as circulated via the Internet during the period of the state of emergency in Armenia, 2008. First, it employs elements of retrospective participant-observation, drawn from ethnography. The researcher was an active journalist (i.e., participant-observer) in Armenia, freelancing for the Russian news agency *Interfax* during the time of the state of emergency. On March 1, she was at the location of clashes up till the early morning of the March 2, 2008. She witnessed accumulation of military forces and trucks during the day of March 1, demonstration, clashes, and gun shots in the evening, injured people, and blood spots in the night when the military and police yielded. Her testimony was taken for the record by the non-governmental organization Human Rights Watch (Human Rights Watch, 2008). Also, as a freelance journalist, she often used alternative media, i.e. listservs, weblogs, and websites to access alternative information and announcements—ignored by the pro-governmental media—for her professional work.

Second, the study employs quantitative and qualitative content analysis and framing analysis (two procedures often used together to examine both mainstream and alternative news) to learn how the mainstream media perpetuated dominant discourse and how the new media were used for shaping and promoting oppositional discourse. Data to be examined are the mainstream and Internet media content produced by published governmental, oppositional, and third-party sources during the 20 days of the state of emergency in Armenia (March 1 through March 21, 2008). The third-party media provide coverage of both oppositional and governmental perspectives. Like the oppositional media, the third-party sources were also banned from

publishing, so they had to move to the Internet during the state of emergency. Thus, while the governmental discourse could be found in the Armenian mainstream print and broadcast media, as well as online, oppositional discourse and third-party news could be found only in the Internet. Data for the content analysis was extracted from the *Armenian Press Archive* (documented by the Yerevan Press Club) available online and the archives maintained by the media themselves.

Content analysis

Content analysis derives from social scientific (i.e., quantitative) mass communication theory but it is employed by a number of scholarly disciplines. According to Krippendorff (2004), content analysis "promise[s] to yield inferences from all kinds of verbal, pictorial, symbolic, and communication data" (p. 17). As to qualitative approach in content analysis, it is rooted in literary theory, social sciences, and critical scholarship, and it is considered an interpretive analysis, Krippendorf states. To him, qualitative content analysis is used to determine smaller amounts of texts; it involves a systematic interpretation of elements within the texts. The present study uses frequencies (a form of descriptive statistics) to describe more precisely what was found in pro-government and oppositional news items. As applied in the present study, interpretation of the findings also involves the researchers' social and cultural understanding of the nation and events within a working hermeneutic (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 17).

Framing analysis

This research also employs framing analysis developed by Entman (2004). He proposes a cascading activation model of communication, where the media perpetuate the frames suggested by political and economic elites. These frames rarely reflect counterframes suggested by segments of the audiences who hold contrary views of the same events (p. 10). Thus, analyzing frames and counterframes, Entman posits that the mainstream media are not the initial creators of the frames but rather their perpetuators, "News organizations and personnel are driven by economic pressure and incentives; professional customs, norms, and principles; and normative values" (Entman, 2004, p. 14). When larger social groups are able to reach out to these dimensions, the media would reflect their counterframes, too. Entman measures the frames through their social resonance and magnitude, "The words and images that make up the frame can be distinguished from the rest of the news by their capacity to stimulate support or opposition to the sides in a political conflict" (p. 6). Then the author explains that those words and images are culturally resonant if they are "highly salient in the cultures, which is to say noticeable, understandable, memorable, and emotionally charged" (p. 6). The resonance of the frames and counterframes used by the studied Armenian media was informed by the qualitative content analysis and participant-observations in the period of the state of emergency and afterwards. As to the magnitude of the frames, Entman finds it can be measured by the prominence and repetition of those words and images. The magnitude of the frames and counterframes of the studied Armenian media was informed also by the quantitative data acquired in the content analysis.

Period of time to be examined

This study will use content analysis in order to elicit frames and counterframes of the March 1 events reflected in the items examined in the research. Framing analysis is used to discover how the media shaped the alternative discourse opposing the official discourse in the time of censorship. For that, the research will include the 20-day period of the state of emergency from March 1 to March 21, 2008, examining a sample of media content produced each by governmental, oppositional, and third party media sources circulated in the print and Internet publications, both legally and "illegally." Only fully written texts and transcripts of audio and/or video reports and interviews will be included in the data. Discourse contained in the news items examined will be determined through the hermeneutic interpretation of the frames and counterframes identified in content analysis.

Sampling procedures

Three media sources will be examined in this study. Each represents one party (i.e., entity) associated with the political conflict in Armenia in the period of time under examination. They include the state official *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* daily ("*Republic of Armenia*" in Armenian), the *Payqar.net* oppositional weblog, and the website of the *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL).*[7]For data sampling, the study relied on the archives available online. The *Payqar.net* and the *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL)*[8]was sampled from the archives available on their websites. *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* daily was sampled from the online *Armenian Press Archives* documented by the Yerevan Press Club.

---

[7] Further will be referred also as *Radio Liberty (RL).*
[8] Further will be referred also as *Radio Liberty (RL).*

The researcher sought to examine a limited number of items to provide a manageable data set for the study by selecting 18 news items from each of the three media (for a total of 54 items). These were chosen from much larger populations of news. Selection criteria included items that contained specific statements about the state of emergency, with a formula applied to each of the three media that would allow the sample size of each to total 18 items. The number of 18 was established by selecting **all** of the published public statements by top Armenian officials in the 21-day period under examination. These included statements by then president Robert Kocharyan, then prime-minister and the winning presidential candidate Serzh Sargsyan, and the first president of Armenia, opposition leader Levon Ter-Petrosyan. Corresponding samples of 18 were then drawn from the oppositional media sources and the third party media sources.

A pilot study conducted earlier using the same media sources during the 21 days of the state of emergency suggested that the media expressed discernible political perspectives. Thus, the official perspective was sought in the *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* daily, and the oppositional perspective was sought in the *Payqar.net* weblog. The *Radio Liberty* coverage represented the third-party perspective in that it included both oppositional and governmental perspectives.

Selection of items for examination represent a constructed sampling process, intended to collect mainly stories, editorials, interviews and other items containing statements about the clashes on March 1 and the state emergency of the 20 days following. While the other media were mostly summarizing the public speeches and interviews in fewer words, the state official *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* daily was the one that provided the officials' speeches in their full length. There, Kocharyan and Sargsyan had more public speeches, including interviews, press-conferences, direct address, and article signed by them), than others. The sampling included all these articles with Kocharyan's and Sargsyan's words—five and five—in the *Hayastani*

Hanrapetutyun daily. It included also two articles that covered press-conferences by the President's spokesman, two articles covering the two most important parliamentary sessions, and the statement of the newly formed ruling political coalition. Besides political statements, the sampling included also two articles that covered legal issues expressed in two press-conferences by the General Prosecutor and a Deputy-Chief of Police. For providing a comprehensive portrait of the oppositional official discourse, an editorial by the *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* was also included in the data set. The oppositional perspective on March 1 was articulated by other top leaders of opposition in three other articles of the *Payqar.net*. All were included in the sampling. The rest of the sampling included interviews with representatives of other oppositionist parties (two articles), a human rights defender, and a statement by a group of lawyers, as well as first hand testimonies (three articles), editorial commentary (two articles), and foreign press digest (in three articles). The sampling considered more lengthy articles that were covering oppositional discourse on March 1, rather than sharing brief operative information about the arrested, foreign servers for access to the certain websites, and meetings. As far as the *Radio Liberty* covered both oppositional and governmental, as well as third-party perspectives, its sampling considered every 14th news story in 246 articles covering the political crisis in Armenia in the studied period in order to select 18 articles.

To enable the identification of major frames promoted by the government and perpetuated by the mainstream media, the sampling focused on the *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* daily ("*Republic of Armenia*" in Armenian), a governmental medium that was legally working during the state of emergency and reflecting the official discourse to its full length. The *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* daily is the only state-owned Armenian-language medium in the country. The President's administration, the government, the parliament, and the Information

Department are its equal shareholders. This daily keeps with the political line of the ruling party, covering mostly official news. However, it provides the pro-government propaganda when there is political tension in the country (Yerevan Press Club, 2008). According to its official status, it has been obliged to publish all the news released by the press departments of the official bodies of the government. Although the state of emergency obliged the media to quote only official bodies of the government when covering internal political affairs of the country, *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun*, along with other newspapers and TV stations that were allowed to publish during the state of emergency, perpetuated the governmental discourse also through its editorials and interviews with various experts (Հասարակական կազմակերպությունները անհանգստացած են լրատվական դաշտում ստեղծված իրավիճակի առթիվ [NGOs are concerned about the situation of the media], 2008).

To enable the identification of the counterframes promoted by the oppositional sources and introduced in the new media employed by many journalists and other citizens, sampling focused on the new media, including both professional and non-professional outlets and listservs. These included the *Payqar.net* (*Payqar* means "fight," "struggle") which was combining first-hand news and statements by the opposition, publications from weblogs, and media content that was banned to be published. These stories were multiplied also through other weblogs and listservs. The *Payqar.net* is actually more than one medium, thereby able to provide an overall portrait of the oppositional discourse. The content provided by the *Payqar.net*, was published not only on its blog, but also in print leaflets that were disseminated in Yerevan. Those leaflets' digital versions have also been posted as Word documents on the *Payqar.net* blog. Thus, both direct and "attached" posts in *Payqar.net* could be examined in this study.

Sampling also focused on the Armenian *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* as a third-party medium. Founded and financed by the American Congress through the Broadcasting Board of the Governors (BBG), "chartered in Delaware, it receives federal grants as a private grantee. RFE maintains a corporate office in Washington, D.C." (from RFE/RL official website). Normally, the Armenian Bureau of the *RFE/RL* broadcasts one-hour daily news on radio. It has also a user friendly website, which provides also audio (and recently video) coverage of the main news in Armenia. As usually, the *RFE/RL* refrained from positioning itself in any side of the political conflict in Armenia. However, at the time of the state of emergency, the audiences had to rely only on the written news stories posted on the website, as the *Radio Liberty* was banned from broadcasting. As a professional medium, it kept on providing governmental and oppositional, as well as international perspectives during the state of emergency. Its Internet access was soon blocked, too. Audiences were accessing the *RFE/RL* website through foreign servers, as well as through the listservs as their content was copied and emailed to large groups and posted in various blogs, including the *Payqar.net*.

Analytic procedures

The governmental and oppositional discourses were systematically analyzed through categorization of the statements by both parties. Coding was conducted using six categories elicited from a pilot study conducted earlier. The statement served as the unit of analysis. Statements relating to the predetermined six themes were put into those thematic categories. When a statement related to more than one category, it was color-coded and counted in each of those categories. Those six thematic categories include freedom of political expression, free press, accuracy in reporting, free and fair elections, legal/political responsibility, and readiness

for political dialogue. Each of the categories was operationalized to allow for uniform coding of all 54 items. *Freedom of political expression* concerns the citizens of Armenia's ability to express their views about the nation's political system. *Free press* concerns the news media's ability to print and broadcast political events and commentary without the Armenian government's interference. *Accuracy in reporting* concerns the media's responsibility to respect truth and fairness in news coverage of political events in Armenia. *Free and fair elections* concerns the ability of Armenian citizens to have free, open and fair elections for candidates of their choice, and the expectation that the candidates will have equal opportunities in campaigning and equal access to the media, and the candidate with the most votes will be allowed to hold office. *Legal/Political responsibility* concerns the legal and/or political responsibility of political parties for the actions they took on the March 1, their causes and consequences. *Readiness to political dialogue* concerns the readiness of political parties to negotiate for overcoming the national crisis.

The frames and counterframes were elicited according to their magnitude and resonance (Entman, 2004, p. 6). The goal of the analysis of the frames and counterframes was ultimately to understand how the new media created and maintained oppositional discourse in a time of control and censorship over the traditional media and even the Internet.

Coding focused on identifying words that were used to characterize the government and the opposition with respect to each of the six categories examined. With respect to the March 1 clashes, for example, the oppositional voices depicted those events as "violence," "massacres," and "barbarism;" and the government as "liars," "killers," "barbarians," "Turks[9]," "betrayers,"

---

[9] Some Armenians depict their perception of the worst people calling them Turks. This comes from collective memory of the Armenian genocide committed by Ottoman Turkey in 1915, when 1 million Armenians

"non-legitimate," and "non-elected." Ironically the frames that Klein et al. (2009) found in dissident voices opposing the U.S. war in Iraq may be found also in dissident voices of Armenian citizens, who characterized their own government's behavior as: immoral, illegal and full of lies (p. 343).

---

were killed and the rest of the Armenian population was deported from Turkey. Regular media *usually* do not use this frame.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

This section contains both the findings from the researcher's role as a participant observer and the empirical findings from the analysis of news stories. The points of information between this first-person account and the empirical findings will be joined where relevant, offering corroboration and complementarity as possible.

Participant Observations of the March 1 Events

In the studied period of March 1-21, 2008, the researcher, a professional journalist then, was freelancing for the Russian news agency *Interfax*. For her everyday work, she followed broadcast, print, and online news on a permanent regime during the state of emergency. Also, she had access to the first-hand sources necessary for her journalistic reports. In addition, members of her social network were providing testimonies on March 1. Many of them were related to the political processes and events and they were sharing news and other information with others. The researcher was on the spot of the March 1 clashes during the entire day. Her testimonies had been taken into record by the Human Rights Watch, a New York-based international human rights organization, and by the Armenian Parliament's ad-hoc committee investigating the March 1 events (Human Rights Watch, 2008).

Early in the morning of March 1, learning that the police had dispersed the protesters and that they were still chasing people around the city, she rushed to downtown. On the way, she found out that Levon Ter-Petrosyan, the opposition leader, the first president of Armenia, had invited a press-conference at his house. The house was surrounded by dozens of policemen and police vans and cars. The protesters, who were living in tents in front of the house as a response to the opposition's tent town in the Liberty Square, were folding their tents ready to leave the

area. The police were checking journalists' IDs. Some colleagues were not allowed to get inside because they had no ID approving that they were journalists.

The first President's basement was crowded. He told the journalists that the police had attacked the protesters around 6:40 a.m. in the morning without any prior warning or request. Isolated from his security guard, the first President had been watching how the police were searching the area. He said he had witnessed how they were planting metal sticks in the bushes. Refusing to leave the area, Ter-Petrosyan had been forcedly put into a car and taken to his house. His security guards checked with the police whether he was under home arrest and they were answered that there was no sanction but he couldn't leave the house. He said he could not connect even to some friends and he had little idea what was going on. After a person whispered something to Ter-Petrosyan, he said that they are told that the dispersed people were gathering at the French Embassy («Իմ զգացողությամբ նրանք 10 օր չեն դիմանա» ["I sense they will not stand more than 10 days"], 2008).

After the press-conference, most reporters walked to the French Embassy. Big water-spraying trucks and other police cars were on the spot. A trolley bus had been put across the street. Several hundred people were gathered at the Myasnikyan sculpture. The front line of protesters was holding hands thus blocking more aggressive people from coming forward. Police riot forces equipped with helmets, bludgeons, and shields were standing in front of the crowd. A smaller crowd of protesters divided from others by police was standing in front of the French Embassy. High-positioned police officers were negotiating with few opposition leaders on between ranges of the police and the protesters. Armen Harutyunyan[10], the Ombudsman, was

---

[10] Armen Harutyunyan was the Armenia's Human Rights Defender simply known as Ombudsman.

among them, too. He was trying to mediate between the two parties. The policemen were demanding that the crowd leave the Myasnikyan Square. They even offered a megaphone to the oppositionists asking: "Who is the organizer? Tell them to move." The last were confused; one of them said: "They say I am the organizer. Am I?!" The crowd was very anxious. Hearing any word about leaving the area, it was yelling and chanting: "We are not going anywhere without Levon! Let Levon [Ter-Petrosyan] come here! Le-von! Le-von!" The front line of protesters was hardly keeping people back. Writing about her observations on the spot, the researcher noted that "there was one provocateur against 10 protesters" (Nazaryan, 2008). A woman from the crowd started to cry that she had lost her son after the dispersal; she was scared that "something" could have happened to him. A man around age 60 was struck. He was laying on the ground and shivering. The police were indifferent. When asked by the participant-observer why with medical care staff was present, and no one helped the man, a high positioned police officer replied, "Let them apply, if they need our help." Later in the evening the medical care car of the police was turned over and set on fire by protesters.

Then, Davit Shahnazaryan, a close associate to Ter-Petrosyan, came to the spot. After talking to police, with the ombudsman's mediation, and coming up with a proposed solution, he used the police microphone to talk to the people. He introduced himself and stated that it was a spontaneous protest. Then he told the people that the police were leaving the area, and the protest should move to Matenadaran (another popular spot for demonstrations beyond the Liberty Square) through Mashtots Avenue. The people were still yelling words of protest and refusing to leave the Myasnikyan Square. The police and their trucks moved away. But the crowd refused to move to Matenadaran.

Hour by hour, tens of thousands of people came to the Myasnikyan Square. It was blocked by people and by few cars. People were in shock because of the sudden police attack on the protesters in the Liberty Square. They were not sure what had happened to the others who had been dispersed. They were saying that the police had been not only beating them in the Liberty Square, but also chasing them for few kilometers. Two days later, the researcher saw blood right in front of the Press Building, which is situated not far from the French Embassy. The porter, an old gentleman, said that several people banged the Press Building's doors saying that they were being chased and beaten by police, but he did not let them in as he was cautious about the consequences. Many were arrested. The researcher kept in touch with other journalism colleagues, while she worked from the Myasnikyan Square.

At the square, several men were acting aggressively, e.g. delivering angry speeches on the tops of cars; other people were demanding that they stop acting like that. There was a pile of garbage in front of the French Embassy, in the middle of the street. Women standing next to it said that they saw their tents in the truck and they stopped and made the truck load the garbage there. Someone showed a child's shoe, saying that there were rumors that a child had been killed and a pregnant woman had been beaten in the Liberty Square. There were only megaphone, so few people could hear the leaders talking to them from the stage. In the evening, after loud speakers were installed, Nikol Pashinyan, a key opposition leader, now imprisoned for March 1 events, stated that no one had been killed in the morning. He asked protesters to stop talking about a kid and a pregnant woman. Another wave of anxiety arose when a police car drove into the middle of the crowd. It stopped at the edge of the protest spot, the driver run away, and the car was later set on fire. Many screamed that people were hit by the car, but those reports were not confirmed. Nikol Pashinyan said through the megaphone that none had suffered, but he was

heard by only few people who were really close to the stage. Meanwhile, loud speakers were beginning to control the situation and prevent miscommunication and provocations.

In early afternoon, when going to Mashtotz Avenue for a coffee-break, the participant-observer saw riot forces, police and army cars, trucks, and two BMP fighting vehicles all over the avenue. Pashinyan came to the Myasnikyan Square later that afternoon. He told the people to get ready to protect themselves. People blocked the spot with more buses and trolleys. In the evening, men were equipped with stones and metal sticks pulled out from the construction sites. At 7 p.m., the entire square tuned into the *Radio Liberty*. Talking to the crowd through loud speakers, Pashinyan said that some people were looting stores in Mashtotz Avenue, and he asked everybody to stay in the Myasnikyan Square. Police had surrounded the protest spot with a much larger circle than the Myasnikyan Square. No policeman was seen from the square. Some men were walking around and bringing news. As quoted in the researcher's article, Myasnik Malkhasyan, an MP and a veteran of Karabakh war (1992-1994), urged the people: "Please, no contact with the police! Please, no confrontation! Those who contact the police are provocateurs! Don't follow them, stay in the square!" When it got dark, the first shots were heard and seen. The tracery bullets were coming from the Mashtotz Avenue and flying above the heads of protesters in the Myasnikyan Square. Some men rushed toward Mashtotz Avenue. Cars were blocking the site. But wounded people were coming from the clashes. Four men were rushing another man on the top of a car to the hospital. A young man with bleeding eye and cheek appeared at the Myasnikyan Square (Մեր կեղտոտ մարտի 1-ը. Ազատ հայի օրագրից [Our filthy March 1. A free Armenian's diary] [Blogpost], 2008, March 9). It seemed that everybody knew that there were deaths but everybody was keeping silent in order not to spread panic. At a moment, Pashinyan asked a priest to go to the stage, if there was one around. Rev. Kyuregh went

to the stage and pronounced the Lord's Prayer. Others joined him; many were crying though no one was told that people had been killed.

The researcher's mother, aunts, and brother were on the spot, too, which was limiting her mobility, because she was followed by them whenever she was trying to go to the frontline. When the police had yielded, the participant-observer's brother, then a civilian, held her hand, took her to the spot of clashes, and showed her a large spot of blood with tiny white particles believed to be brain fragments. No police were seen but there were signs of clashes and looting in that part of Mashtotz Avenue. There were also few young men on the spot. Someone was riding a cart with a computer on it. When stopped by the researcher's brother, he said: "Don't worry bro; this is from Lfik's supermarket!" Lfik is the nickname of an Armenian oligarch (Samvel Alexanyan) whose personal (private) bodyguard members were seen dressed as policemen during the clashes. All the cars that were set on fire belonged to the police as determined by their car license plates.

In Myasnikyan Square, people made little fires to warm up. Some people brought candies and other food from the looted stores and offered these to others. Many refused to have them, though everybody was cold and hungry. The researcher and her family left the scene around 1:30 a.m. of March 2. Getting home, she learned that oppositionist leader Levon Ter-Petrosyan had asked the people to go home.

On March 2, the participant-observer's friend was released from police custody. He told about his personal experience at the police station, saying that he could hear the cry of Gagik Shamshyan, a pro-opposition scandalous photo reporter, complaining about his kidneys during the night. Later Shamshyan told the press that the policemen were kicking him, knowing that he had kidney stones. The friend said that the police attacked them suddenly, without any warning

in the morning of March 1. He was with his friend Davit Matevosyan, an opposition leader and a former police colonel himself, who was trying to urge the police not to beat people. He had been bare-handed but he was charged with confronting the police. He had to serve a year in jail. The friend's efforts to give testimony for Matevosyan were constantly denied.

The following days of the state of emergency were full of rumors and whispers, as well as harsh anti-opposition propaganda by television stations and the pro-government press. For her freelance reporting, the participant-observer was following all the news sources. She subscribed to email lists and weblogs. In addition, she was getting first-hand testimonies from witnesses of the March 1 events. That experience turned out to be helpful for designing the current study.

The participant-observer, a freelance reporter at that time, published her notes about the March 1 scene in *Haykakan Zhamanak* daily. She was subsequently interviewed by the Human Rights Watch, an international organization that monitors human rights, for the technical report *Armenia on Rocky Ground.* Later, when the parliamentary ad-hoc commission investigating March 1 events challenged the authenticity of a video made by the *A1+* independent TV company, saying that they had no other witnesses of the blood spot, she made a statement. As a result, she was invited to the parliament and testified about what she had seen. The media had covered her testimony in the parliament, but the commission's report doesn't refer to her by name. The personal experiences of the researcher enter into the interpretation of the empirical findings of this study.

Overview of Themes and Perspectives

The Table 1 introduces numerical data of the themes and perspectives in the studied media. The data analysis elicited 525 statements related to the six categories defined in advance. They all were translated from Armenian to English and put into charts. When a statement related to more than one category, it was counted in each category that it related to.

Table 1
<u>All sources</u>

Theme	Dominant perspective	Minor perspective	Other perspective	TOTAL
Free political expression	43	63	1	107
Free press	21	21	1	43
Accuracy in reporting	23	20	0	43
Fair elections	18	39	3	60
Legal & political responsibility	87	140	6	233
Readiness for dialogue	21	12	6	39
TOTAL	**213**	**295**	**17**	**525**

A little less than half of the statements (233, 41%)—the most in all categories—related to the legal and political responsibility of the political parties for their actions on March 1. Freedom of political expression was the next category that combined most statements (107 out of 525, 20%). The other four categories, i.e., free and fair elections (60, 11%), free press (43, 8%), accuracy in reporting (43, 8%), and readiness for dialogue (39, 7%) represented relatively small amount of overall statements in the studied media. The minor perspective was present in a majority (295, 56%) of the statements identified and coded. The dominant perspective was expressed in less than half (213, 41%) of the statements identified and coded. Only 17 (3.2%)

statements out of overall 525 represented the "other," or third-party, perspective (see Table 1) in spite of third parties' engagement both in the media and in Armenian politics.

Official Media for Official Sources

Official Media Excluded Oppositional and Third Perspectives

Along with other newspapers and TV stations loyal to the government, the state official *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* daily continued working during the state of emergency. Its most common publications were press releases issued by various top official bodies, such as the president's administration, the parliament (National Assembly), the government (i.e., the executive branch of government represented by its ministries and agencies), the general prosecutor, and so on. As required by the presidential decree announcing the state of emergency, the newspaper did not source oppositional or pro-oppositional subjects when covering the political situation in the country (Table 2).

Table 2

 Official (governmental) sources

Theme	Dominant perspective	Minor perspective	Other perspective	TOTAL
Free political expression	41	0	0	41
Free press	21	0	0	21
Accuracy in reporting	23	0	0	23
Fair elections	14	0	0	14
Legal & political responsibility	79	2	0	81
Readiness for dialogue	19	0	0	19
TOTAL	**197**	**2**	**0**	**199**

The archives did not reveal any statements in *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* that could be considered as a third perspective during the 20 days state of emergency. Table 2 demonstrates that almost all the publications examined in this research were favoring the government. Only two statements reflected oppositional perspective on the situation. They both related to the legal and political responsibility for the March 1 clashes.

Themes in the Governmental Media Carried a Dominant Perspective

Examination of the official media (Tables 2) revealed 199 statements related to the six categories. Nearly all statements were found to perpetuate dominant and minor perspectives, respectively. While the state official *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* published official and non-official statements expressing only the governmental perspective about March 1, it included also the rare oppositional perspective expressed in the parliamentarian minorities' statements recorded in the press releases. Only two (out of 199, 1%) pro-opposition statements were found in the 18 articles studied in *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* (Table 2). When the prosecutor general applied to the Armenian Parliament with a request to cancel four oppositional parliamentarian's immunity, the press center of the National Assembly (the parliament) covered the oppositionist parliamentarians' statements in 109 words in a 2,008-word report about the session.

President's Message to the People Forms the Governmental Discourse On March 1

Legal and/or political responsibility was the most discussed theme in *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun,* as well as in other media studied here. As shown in Table 2, 79 (out of 199, 40%) statements reflected the government's view on who was responsible for March 1 clashes and the ensuing political crisis in the country. The newspaper published the president's decree on the state of emergency and the message of the president issued in live TV programming in the

night of March 1, when the clashes were still going on. The message described the situation as follows:

> The self-nominated candidate Levon Ter-Petrosyan, who lost in the 2008 presidential election in the Republic of Armenia, and a group of adventure-seekers surrounding him, without acknowledging the reality of their defeat, took to illegal actions. Among them are the accumulation of weapons and ammunition and their transportation to public places where their presence may pose a serious danger to citizens' lives and health, and holding public rallies and marches without keeping [authorities] aware (i.e., without official authorization – TN). […] A group of opposition representatives committed disturbances (disorder) in the center of Yerevan on March 1 causing damage to state property and the property of citizens, as well as creating a direct threat to the security of citizens, which makes the situation uncontrollable. The target of these activities is the stability gained by the Republic of Armenia, and the consequence is the disruption of international prestige. (Kocharyan, 2008)

The president justified his decree with urgency "to prevent the immediate threat to the constitutional order in the Republic of Armenia and for the purpose of protecting the rights and legal interests of the population" (Kocharyan, 2008). The President's decree of March 1, the message to the people, and the press conference invited that midnight formed the dominant discourse that were promoted during the state of emergency and afterwards. On one hand, the government tended to characterize the irresponsible, illegal, and even, criminal behavior of the opposition. On the other hand, the government described its own actions based in the law and constitution, security, and human rights concerns.

President Blames the Opposition for Violence

In the press-conference given to a selected audience of journalists the same night, when the police had left the scene to the protesters, Robert Kocharyan supported his assessment of the opposition's actions as criminal, introducing the scene of clashes in details. He stated that "everybody knows what the protesters are up to: they have been stealing cars, looting stores. We all know the names of the organizers, and of course, they will be brought to responsibility against the law." He inferred that "the election-related political process is no more political"

(Կազմակերպիչները պատասխանատվություն են կրելու օրենքի առջև [The Organizers will Be Brought to Responsibility against the Law], 2008). The President's statements included such particularities as describing how the protesters were using arms against the government forces, e.g.: "The shooter would come out behind a car, shoot the soldiers, and hide" (Կազմակերպիչները պատասխանատվություն են կրելու օրենքի առջև [The Organizers will Be Brought to Responsibility against the Law], 2008). Kocharyan blamed the opposition for the clashes. He explained that the police did not plan to disperse people from the Liberty Square early in the morning of March 1, but to search the area as they had "serious information about arms and ammunitions." However, he noted that the clashes of March 1 were instigated earlier by unauthorized non-stop rallies: "They have been organizing unauthorized rallies for nine days, and their content, organization style instigated clashes with the police." (Կազմակերպիչները պատասխանատվություն են կրելու օրենքի առջև [The Organizers will Be Brought to Responsibility against the Law], 2008).

Government Finds the Opposition's Actions Criminal, Not Political

Overall, 120 statements (79 on responsibility and 41 on freedom of expression—40% and 20%, respectively) in *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* promoted the government's positions on the post-election protests and March 1 clashes (Table 2). These mostly blamed the opposition for manipulating freedom of expression for illegal purposes. Although the criminal investigation has not been able to find shooters among civilians and to prove a range of anti-opposition charges that were articulated by high officials during the state of emergency and afterwards, Kocharyan's March 1 statements provided the framework for further governmental discourse on March 1 events and the state of emergency. The special parliamentary session invited the same night approved the President's decree. The speaker of the Parliament Tigran Torosyan agreed with the

President that "what is happening now has been planned and prepared by Ter-Petrosyan. We are told both parties are wrong. I don't accept such claims, especially in hard time. This would mean escapism" (NA PR Department, 2008). Torosyan expressed the belief that imposing a state of emergency would prevent bloodshed. Later, he confessed that he did not know that there had already been fatalities at the moment when they were having the special session. However, the speaker's idea that the state of emergency saved the country from many more dangers was later perpetuated in the governmental discourse articulated by almost all top officials. For instance, the Prosecutor General "A. Hovsepyan stated that 'grave crimes took place' and much more tragic consequences were prevented due to the law-enforcement bodies' reasonable, balanced, and legal measures" (Gasparyan, Բոլոր բռնարարքները ղեկավարվել են մեկ կենտրոնից [All the Organized Violent Actions Have Been Done from One Center], 2008b). "If we did not declare a state of emergency, the losses would be significantly more," President Kocharyan said to journalists in a March 5 press-conference (Gasparyan, «Եթե արտակարգ դրություն չհայտարարվեր, կորուստները շատ ավելի մեծ կլինեին» ["If We did not Declare a State of Emergency, the Losses would be Significantly More"], 2008b)

Opposition Is Accused of Targeting the Country's Statehood

In a press-conference given on the last day of the state of emergency, President Kocharyan blamed the opposition for having an "order to resolve the state[hood]" and for cultivating that idea as a "mania" (Kamavosyan, 2008b). His statement was based on Levon Ter-Petrosyan's speech of the September 21, 2007, when he expressed belief that the government is deeply corrupted, criminal, and Mafiosi, and therefore the task is "to deconstruct the system and to get rid of the system" (ՀՀ առաջին նախագահը վերջապես խոսեց. «Այս

իշխանությունը վերից վար կոռումպացված է» [The First RA President Eventually Spoke Up: "This Government is Entirely Corrupted", 2007).

Prosecution Charged the Oppositionists Of Attempting to Capture The State

According to the governmental perspective, the opposition leader, losing in fair elections, tried to take power through illegal means. The theme of "fair elections" (14 statements, 7%, Table 2) often was discussed in the context of the opposition's legal responsibility. Besides the arrests of oppositional leaders and more than 100 people on the morning of March 1, the additional arrests mostly targeted the oppositional leaders. Four members of parliament (MPs) were among them. Two of them were hiding, and they were arrested later. Courts found three of them guilty, and one of them, Sasoun Mikaelyan is still in prison. The parliament deprived their legal immunity in a special session. *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* published an extensive (2,008 words) report by the Parliament's press department on that session. As reported, the Prosecutor General found that those four parliamentarians, as approved by testimonies, "have organized mass disorder with a purpose of capturing the state power in spite of the Constitution" (NA PR Department, 2008b). Thus, the prosecution defined the March 1 events as a *coup d'état,* a frame that was later perpetuated in the mainstream media.

Oppositional Perspective Was Represented in Tiny Portions

As usually, a 2,008-word report of the National Assembly's (Parliament's) session included also the perspective of the parliamentarian minority. Within that report, a 69-word paragraph summarized that the charged MPs ensured that their activities and appeals couldn't threaten the country; rather, they were peaceful and preventive. Another paragraph of 40 words summarized the speeches made by all the six MPs of the Heritage oppositional faction. It read: "According to them, what is happening with the four MPs is a political persecution. They said

that the General Prosecutor's request lack reasoning and some of them said that they were also ready to be arrested" (NA PR Department, 2008b). For comparison, the report quoted the National Assembly Speaker's 1,180 words and paraphrased the Prosecutor General's speech in at least 489 words (NA PR Department, 2008b).

"Motherland" and "Family" Were Blamed As Weapons of Mass Psychosis

The opposition was accused of manipulating masses through media and demonstrations. This was another way of contradicting freedom of expression by reframing it as legal responsibility and interpreting political processes as criminal acts. Another frame covered in the above-mentioned report found more popular resonance, especially among the opposition supporters. It was also articulated by the Prosecutor General, who stated that the opposition had been "using various techniques of engineering mass psychosis" (NA PR Department, 2008b). Moreover, a week later, referring to the prosecutors involved in the investigation of the March 1 case, the *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* wrote that the opposition had used neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) for affecting the protesters. According to the prosecutors, it included "usage of psychotropic drugs and pronouncing such coding/key words through megaphone, as 'motherland,' 'family,' 'they are Turks,' 'we won,' and so on" (Kamavosyan, 2008a).

The official discourse included also rhetoric on what was called a Western conspiracy. The last let the media know that one version of the investigation assumed that the "disturbances were organized from outside [the country]" (Kamavosyan, 2008a). The winning candidate Serzh Sargsyan told a Russian newspaper that "apparently, an attempt of colorful revolution took place in Armenia" (Yuryeva, 2008). "Colorful revolutions" refers to so called "orange" and "rose" revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia, respectively, when massive demonstrations forced the more

Soviet-styled and pro-Russian governments to step down in the early 2000s. In the post-Soviet area, those revolts are interpreted as having been backed by the West.

Governmental Discourse Targeted the Opposition Leader's Manhood

During the state of emergency, the official discourse laid the main responsibility for the March 1 clashes on Levon Ter-Petrosyan personally. Although the officials did not exclude that the opposition leader could be arrested, he has not been neither interrogated, nor arrested by now. However, a mediated dispute went on Ter-Petrosyan's status on March 1. That morning, when the police dispersed the tent town of protesters from the Liberty Square, Ter-Petrosyan was forcedly taken to his house. His bodyguard, a formal unit of the Presidential Security Service, was forbidden to convey him out of the house, which was surrounded by police forces. Though there was no formal sanction for that, Ter-Petrosyan claimed that he was under de-facto house arrest. Those reports were interpreted as not accurate from the governmental perspective. Later, President Kocharyan told the media that the first president was free to move but the bodyguard refused to serve him on the way to "illegal events," and staying home was Ter-Petrosyan's choice. "If he had fears regarding his personal safety he should have had fears for the safety of the gathered people as well. If he truly had concerns, he should have had manhood to participate in the rally," Kocharyan said (Gasparyan, 2008b).

The Official Media Ignored International Official Response

In the archives of the *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* documented in the Armenian Press Archives, statements of foreign governments and international organizations were covered only in relation to their representatives' visits to Armenia and meetings with Armenian high officials. In spite of this, the president in charge and the winning candidate frequently referred to the

foreign officials as additional approval of their own rightness. For instance, talking to the press, the president in charge Robert Kocharyan said on March 6: "At my meetings with international delegations in last two-three days, many say that Ter-Petrosyan should be punished. I also find that the organizers [of the clashes] must be punished" (Gasparyan, 2008b). Sometimes, readers could make a guess that there had been oppositional or third-party statements from the government's respond to those statements, such as in the case when Kocharyan was wondering that the European diplomats interpret any conflict between the officials and the media favoring the last (Kamavosyan, 2008b).

Official Media Had Its Own Fight against the "Hatred" Produced By Opposition

The governmental discourse studied in *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* includes also frequent claims that the March 1 clashes were perpetrated by the opposition through engineering and propagating hatred, intolerance, and malice among its supporters. Thus, some statements could concern both legal/political responsibility of the political parties for what happened on March 1 and the category of freedom of expression. Statements regarding the last put that category in the second place in the dominant discourse (see Table 2). In spite of the President's decree requiring to source only the official bodies of the government in the internal affairs coverage, most pro-government media perpetuated the official discourse themselves, too. So did *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun*. An op-ed reads: "One could not assume that malice, hatred, and ambitions could obscure one's mind so much that a part of society could get sick by intolerance, malevolence, become bloody, and deride and kill own soldiers" (Եկել է գարունը վայելելու ժամանակը [It is Time to Enjoy the Spring], 2008). In the following passage, basic sentiments of the governmental discourse are expressed:

> But in spite of all the foes and strivers for malice inside and outside [the country], the spring is looking like spring both in the streets and in the people for already three days.

There is no ill-omen; there is no threat to the peace; a soldier in the street is there not for war; the world is really an apricot garden for a napping baby in the pram and hiding from awry whoopee or from street disorder is not the parents' concern. (Եկել է գարունը վայելելու ժամանակը [It is Time to Enjoy the Spring], 2008)

Data analysis for this study demonstrates that what the opposition considered freedom of expression, the government assessed as "illegal events" and "disturbances" threatening the public order.

President Found Distrust of the System Produced By Oppositional Media

President Robert Kocharyan frequently referred to the freedom of political expression, freedom of press, and accuracy in reporting in the same context. Respectively, 41, 21, and 23 statements found those themes were often overlapping (Table 2). For instance, ensuring that the state system is trustworthy, he stated: "It is another issue that it is possible to constantly instill distrust toward the system through media and speeches." On the last day of the state of emergency, Kocharyan said: "Tomorrow some newspapers will publish flooded with false news. Various appeals and the contents of those papers will be such that certainly [they] will not contribute to the moderation and stabilization of the situation" (Kamavosyan, Ժողովրդավարությունը կարիք ունի պաշտպանվելու ամբոխավարությունից [Democracy Needs to Be Protected from Ochlocracy], 2008b). But the media were recalled also in different context. As approval of his statements about violence by opposition, Kocharyan recalled the media publications.

> To the president, there were people who were coming [to rallies] to listen to their candidate based on their ideological beliefs, but there were many people who were going to the square for just different reasons—apt to everything, without any ideological beliefs; people who are manageable in bad terms, terms of manipulation and instigating them, one can commit provocations. "And this is what the media have been alerting about. A point has been made in all the reports that this kind of intolerance and

conducting this kind of campaign in long term is dangerous for the country's stability, and first of all for themselves." (Կազմակերպիչները պատասխանատվություն են կրելու օրենքի առջև [The Organizers will Be Brought to Responsibility against the Law], 2008)

The Regions Were Silent, Too

The state of emergency decree imposed a ban on "holding meetings, public rallies, demonstrations, marches, and other mass events;" "ban on strikes and measures to stop or otherwise suspend the activities of organizations;" "ban on leaflets and implementation of political propaganda by other means without permission of corresponding state bodies;" and "temporary suspension of the activities of political parties and other nongovernmental organizations obstructing the removal of the circumstances serving as a basis for the declaration of the state of emergency" (Kocharyan, 2008). Although the ban on political and non political parties, as well as limitations on the media were partially lifted in less than two weeks, political gatherings were prohibited not only in the capital city, but also in the regions, though the state of emergency was formally imposed only in Yerevan (Kamavosyan, 2008c). In an accelerated regime, the parliament adopted amendments to the law on political rallies on March 17. According to them, Yerevan municipality should authorize demonstrations and other mass events based on recommendations provided by the Police and the National Security Service. Once the amendments were lifted, there was opportunity for citizens to hold spontaneous mass events without authorization, i.e. without getting the municipality's approval (NA PR Department, 2008b).

Freedom of Expression Versus "Mob Rule"

The dominant discourse discussed freedom of press 21 times in the articles examined from *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* (Table 2). This theme was mostly interrelated with the freedom

of political expression theme (41 statements). Even after the new decree limiting restrictions on the media freedom, the legally published media kept with the dominant line during the entire period of the state of emergency, and they did not source the opposition or other parties favoring the opposition. President Kocharyan reasoned restrictions of democratic rights and freedoms with a need to "protect democracy from ochlocracy (mob rule)" (Kamavosyan, Ժողովրդավարությունը կարիք ունի պաշտպանվելու ամբոխավարությունից [Democracy Needs to Be Protected from Ochlocracy], 2008b). The ruling party's perspective on the freedom of political expression is expressed also by the winning candidate Serzh Sargsyan. In his March 13 TV interview to bloggers, he promised "to not allow mass disorder in Armenia anymore." He also refused that he had said that people's welfare is more important than democracy. He stated: "I had an interview and I said that it is difficult to ensure other human rights in Armenia, when you cannot provide the basic human right of normal nutrition" (Լավ աշխատանքը պետության, իշխանությունների եւ ժողովրդի հեղինակության վերականգնման ամենաճիշտ ճանապարհն է [Good work is the best way to restore the country's, government's, and people's reputation], 2008b).

The Governmental Discourse Invents the Internet

This TV interview was unprecedented in its format for Armenia. Questions were received in advance through Serzh Sargsyan's blog (serzhsargsyan.livejournal.com) started on March 10, 2008. The PM warned that those questions that did not include curse and "speeches/statements" will be answered. More than 600 questions were posted on the blog, and 65 questions were answered at the TV interview which was conducted by four popular bloggers loyal to the government. It was broadcasted by the *Armenian Public TV* and posted on Sargsyan's blog. The transcripts of the interview were also posted on the blog and published in two parts in *Hayastani*

Hanrapetutyun daily. Sargsyan confessed that the reason for having an interview in such a format was "that the Internet in Armenia has become an opinion-forming mechanism." He stated: "I am sure there will be some hot questions that will not be pleasing to my ear and that is also why I have chosen this form of communication with the active part of our public" (Լավ աշխատանքը պետության, իշխանությունների եւ ժողովրդի հեղինակության վերականգնման ամենաճիշտ ճանապարհն է [Good work is the way to restore the country's, the government's, and the people's reputation], 2008a). Commenting on a question about the real number of the fatalities and injured, Sargsyan interpreted the question as a demonstration of lack of faith in the news. The mere fact of this interview demonstrated the growing role of Internet as a forum for competing political news and discourses.

The Government Finds "No Room for Dialogue" For Opposition

The theme of the political/public dialogue was the least discussed (19 statements) following the theme of fair elections (14 statements) in the studied period (Table 2). As the winning candidate, Serzh Sargsyan introduced his newly-signed coalition agreement with another presidential candidate Arthur Baghdasaryan as an indicator of readiness to political dialogue with the opposition. Coming to the radical opposition lead by Levon Ter-Petrosyan, Sargsyan stated that a dialogue is impossible as far as,

> Levon Ter-Petrosyan continues to insist that he is the elected president by 65% of the votes, does not accept the decision of the Constitutional Court, and considers me a criminal, Mongol-Tatar, what kind of dialogue are we talking about? If the approaches are different, my approaches will be different too. (Լավ աշխատանքը պետության, իշխանությունների եւ ժողովրդի հեղինակության վերականգնման ամենաճիշտ ճանապարհն է [Good work is the best way to restore the country's, government's, and people's reputation], 2008b)

The President's press secretary also stated that "no room for dialogue is left" (Kamavosyan, 2008d). President Kocharyan also found that there was no more room for dialogue, but there had been one, when the successful candidate made an offer to join his upcoming coalition government. He blamed the opposition and its leader for taking a path of confrontation, rather than collaboration with the winning candidate. (Gasparyan, «Եթե արտակարգ դրություն չհայտարարվեր, կորուստները շատ ավելի մեծ կլինեին» ["If We did not Declare a State of Emergency, the Losses would be Significantly More"], 2008b).

Later, Serzh Sargsyan and Arthur Baghdasaryan wrote an article in the *Washington Post* (Sargsyan, S. & Baghdasaryan, A., 2008) urging the foreign governments and international organizations to view their coalition as a proof of Armenia's will to overcome the crisis through a dialogue. The article was republished in *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* daily («Մեր թիկունքում է ընտրողների ձայների 70%-ը» ["We are backed by 70% of votes"], 2008).

Oppositional Media

Oppositional Media Articulated an Anti-Government Perspective

The Internet hosted both professional and non professional media that refused to adopt the state-of-emergency rules. The banned content that the professional media were still producing was available mostly through weblogs and emails. The new non-professional media, including the *Payqar.net* weblog, were not systematic in their work—neither in collecting information, nor in distributing. Simply to say, they were distributing whatever they received and/ or found. *Payqar.net* provided information from different sources and in different digital formats, but pieces with obvious pro-oppositional statements have been selected for this study. In

them, one statement regarding the readiness for political dialogue reflects dominant perspective, and three (1.5%) of them regarding the freedom of expression, freedom of media, and legal/political responsibility reflect third-party perspective (See Table 3). The rest 195 (of 199, 98.5%) statements are of oppositional perspective, as pictured in the Table 3.

Table 3
Oppositional (anti-government) sources

Theme	Dominant perspective	Minor perspective	Other perspective	TOTAL
Free political expression	0	40	1	41
Free press	0	12	1	13
Accuracy in reporting	0	18	0	18
Fair elections	0	20	0	20
Legal & political responsibility	0	100	1	101
Readiness for dialogue	1	5	0	6
TOTAL	**1**	**195**	**3**	**199**

It should be noted again that these data cannot be generalized to *all* official, oppositional, or third-party media of the time. The data can provide a focused understanding of these discourses in a smaller scale.

As in the case of the governmental discourse, the oppositional discourse was also focused on the issues of legal and political responsibility for the March 1 events. This theme constituted a sound majority of the statements (101 out of 199) found in the *Payqar.net*. It was constantly posting news on March 1 starting from the morning dispersal of the protesters to the late night when the riot forces had left the arena. During the day, it posted also the opposition leader's press-conference given right after he had been forcedly taken to home from the Liberty Square

and deprived from security guard. This report is included in the data for a more compelling understanding of the oppositional discourse circulated in the Internet. This is important also for grasping the distinct characters of the morning dispersal and evening clashes within the same day.

Oppositional Media Distributed Mostly Favorable Publications

In the oppositional media examined (Table 3), the *Payqar.net* published not only first-hand statements and testimonies on March 1, but also digested stories from oppositional or other weblogs and media sources, including the *Radio Liberty*. It also published the statements of the foreign governments and international organizations and translated articles on March 1 that had been published in the foreign media. The *Payqar.net* posted also the president's decrees on the state of emergency. Although more diversity could be found in the *Payqar.net*, the sampling focused on the pieces reflecting the oppositional perspective on March 1 events. Therefore, 195 out of 199 statements (98%) found in the *Payqar.net* in the studied period reflect a minor (anti-government) perspective (Table 3). This finding may be compared the 197 out of 199 statements (99%) reflecting the dominant (pro-government) perspective found in the *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* (Table 2) in the same period. As a non-professional oppositional media outlet, the *Payqar.net* can be said to promote an oppositional discourse, rather than to provide balanced coverage. However, it missed covering several important events, such as a press-conference by the opposition leader, and some important statements by the international community, such as those by the European Union's Presidency. Those stories were found in the *Radio Liberty*'s archives, as the *Radio Liberty* source represented more diversified coverage of the March 1 events. It covered both pro-governmental and pro-oppositional perspectives, as well as the international community's response to the March 1 events.

Oppositional Perspective on the Morning Dispersal

Responding to the government's allegations against the opposition, the last devoted a big portion of its discourse to the issues of responsibility for the March 1 events (Table 3). Thus, at the moment when dispersed and other opposition supporters were gathering in front of the French Embassy at the Myasnikyan Square, Ter-Petrosyan told the journalists what happened in the morning. According to him, when the police surrounded the protesters, he took the stage and asked everybody to stay still, to have no contact with the police, and to listen to their requests, but the police attacked without any warning or request. The first President also stated that he refused to leave the area: Isolated from his security guard he was sitting there and watching how the police was searching the Liberty Square and putting metal sticks under the bushes. Afterwards, he was forcedly put into a car and taken home. The March 1 morning in the Liberty Square was later described also by another opposition leader Nikol Pashinyan (Pashinyan, 2008, March 15).

Opposition Blamed the Ruling Party for the Morning Dispersal

Levon Ter-Petrosyan argued that the entire responsibility lay with the President in charge and the winning candidate: "If I was the elected president, I would not have any leverage, but Serzh Sargsyan is the Prime Minister and all forces are under his command" («Իմ զգացողությամբ նրանք 10 օր չեն դիմանա» ["I sense they will not stand more than 10 days"], 2008). At that moment there were rumors that dispersing the people caused not only injuries and arrests, but also fatalities. So, Ter-Petrosyan blamed the ruling party for attempts to maintain the power through bloodshed and expressed expectation from the "foreign world" to condemn the violence against the peaceful protesters. Although the rumors about fatalities were

not approved to be true regarding the morning dispersal, they turned to be a tragic prognosis for that night's severe clashes that caused 10 deaths.

Opposition Claimed to Prevent Greater

The legal/political responsibility and freedom of expression issues also often intersected in the oppositional discourse. The two themes constituted about 70% (140 statements out of 199) in the studied articles posted by *Payqar.net*. In a situation, where the opposition's activities were criminalized, many activists were arrested, and the means for political activity were restricted, some opposition leaders hid/went underground. So did Nikol Pashinyan[11], the editor-in-chief of *Haykakan Zhamanak* (*Armenian Times*) daily and a key figure in the opposition's leadership. In an interview from underground, Pashinyan called the March 1 events "Kocharyanist violent attacks" committed by not "a police working in accordance with law, but an armed criminal band, which decided to physically destroy citizens. We are dealing with a government of murderers" («Չենք ընկրկի որեւէ ուժի առաջ»,- ասում է Նիկոլ Փաշինյանը ["We will not step back before any force," Nikol Pashinyan says], 2008, March 6). He claimed that the army units equipped with combat bullets, automatic guns, and snipers were also involved in suppressing the mass protest at the Myasnikyan Square. Pashinyan, accused for organizing a mass disorder with fatal results, introduced the oppositional perspective on the March 1 events. To him, the actions taken by the opposition on the stage ensured the protester's safety and prevented thousands of deaths. No incident had happened in the 10 days of rallies organized by the opposition and those facts talk for themselves, Pashinyan stated. He argued that the violence

---

[11] Later Pashinyan stopped hiding and went to the Prosecutor General's office to be arrested. He is in jail till now.

and looting were organized by the government through special provocateurs instilled in the crowd and the opposition leaders had condemned those acts right on the scene:

> In this situation, only the government is in the role of provoker. These are the actions that provoke to go out on the streets and to tell the Kocharyan-Serzhist criminal government that one should not make the public an experimental field for his own impudence, one should not test people's patience, one should not sit on the people's head. And if after these warning the regime does not intend to pull itself together, the public should take decisive steps. («Չենք ընկրկի որևէ ուժի առաջ»,- ասում է Նիկոլ Փաշինյանը ["We will not step back before any force," Nikol Pashinyan says], 2008, March 6)

In a later published article, Nikol Pashinyan posited that the government needed the clashes in order to get a reason for imposing a state of emergency, which would limit opportunity for legal and political dispute on the elections' results. He inferred that "the task of the Kocharyan-Serzhist kleptocracy was not dispersing the protesters from the Liberty Square, but breaking them down, returning them to the former slavery" (Pashinyan, 2008, March 15).

The State of Emergency Was Deemed Illegal

Discussions of the President's decree on the state of emergency contained most themes examined in this study, both in the governmental and oppositional discourses. Pashinyan's perspective reflected the opposition's political assessment of the March 1 events. He found that the state of emergency was illegal as the Constitution allows launching it according to law, but there had been no law adopted on the matter, so Kocharyan's decree was illegal. Addressing the Prosecutor General, he said: "This is the capture of power, not the ridiculous fairy tales that you create […] Show me the law that authorizes anyone to do something like that. Why to use combat guns against civilians, why not just rubber bullets?" (Pashinyan, 2008, March 15). Pashinyan agreed with the point that the protesters, who were enjoying their freedom and "victory" in the Liberty Square were viewed by the "kleptocratic couple" as "enemies, rather

than own people." He insisted that Robert Kocharyan and Serzh Sargsyan should be the real addressees of the criminal charges imposed against the opposition leaders, as they are the ones who had captured the state through fraudulent elections. David Shahnazaryan, another leader of the opposition, stated that Kocharyan and Sargsyan had committed a "slaughter" against their own people and they should face trial in Hague International Court[12] (Դավիթ Շահնազարյան. «Պայքարը նոր է սկսվում» [David Shahnazaryan: The fight has just started] [Blogpost], 2008, March 11).

People Opposed the Government

Along with other oppositional media, *Payqar.net* was publishing also first-hand testimonies on the March 1 events. One revealed that the widow and the daughter of a prominent Armenian scholar and publicist Rafael Ghazaryan were bitterly beaten on the spot of clashes where they appeared minutes before gun shots. An officer saved them by throwing them into a portal. Hidden in an apartment with several other people, the woman (Grizelda Ghazaryan, whose head was described as torn and bleeding) heard how the police were looking for them. They called for emergency assistance, but the latter said that their cars had to go back as the police were shooting them (Դաժան ծեծի են ենթարկել [Severely beaten] [Blogpost], 2008, March 13). An anonymous physician, who volunteered to help the injured, also testified that the emergency had no access neither to the immediate spot of clashes, nor to the Myasnikyan Square, so they had to find random cars for sending people to hospital. One injured person died on the way to hospital. The doctor told also that the opposition leaders were calling the people to use whatever they had for defense and not to destroy property. He quoted the leaders' appeals

---

[12] Later Shahnazaryan initiated a petition for filing against Kocharyan and sent it to Hague.

that were trying to control people and prevent provocations (Մեր կեղտոտ մարտի 1-ը. Ազատ հայի օրագրից [Out filthy March 1. A free Armenian's diary] [Blogpost], 2008, March 9)

Opposition Expected Acknowledgement of Its Freedom Of Expression

The freedom of expression was the second major category in the articles examined from *Payqar.net* (Table 3). But this theme was often interrelated with that of legal and political responsibility. Generally, the oppositional discourse reflected in the *Payqar.net* referred to several ideas in the same context. For instance, saying that the looting was organized by the ruling party and implemented by their provocateurs in order to show on TV that the oppositionists were not freedom fighters, but criminals trying to capture the power through illegal means, Pashinyan brought up several themes, i.e. responsibility for the clashes, freedom of expression, and accuracy of reporting. The opposition demonstrated obvious distrust toward the criminal investigation, the country's political leadership, and its media, demanding to involve an international independent investigation of the March 1 events. An article entitled "A Show or an Investigation" in *Payqar.net* reads:

> The TVs show the videos provided by police. There, some young people allegedly testify and tell about they have looted the stores on the Mashtotz Avenue. Although the same young people note that they have had no relation to the protests, but the police and the General Prosecution, however, introduce things in a way that the protesters are right these looters. (Շոուի վերածված նախաքննություն [A show or an investigation?] [Blogpost], 2008, March 13)

As in this case, the oppositional discourse was largely focused on responding to the official perspective and the pro-government media that were viewed in an ensemble.

Russian and Western Media Favored The Opposition

The opposition's supporters, including the media, frequently referred to the international sources both for news and assessment. A report by the Russian *Gazeta* was translated and republished in *Payqar.net*. It noted that Ter-Petrosyan had filed a complaint against the official results of the presidential elections to the Constitutional Court, and while waiting for its decision, he was trying to "hold a revolution with clean hands" (Երկուսից մեկը հաղթում է [One of two wins] [Blogpost], 2008, March 5). The hearings of the opposition's application started after the state of emergency was imposed. In his speech at the Constitutional Court, Levon Ter-Petrosyan refrained from blaming the government for what happened on March 1. But the next day, the *Washington Post* published an article by the Armenian opposition leader who was urging the foreign governments to call the Armenian government to responsibility. This article, as well as Ter-Petrosyan's press-conference to the foreign media after the March 1 night clashes, will be discussed in the Third-Party Media section.

A journalistic report by *The Economist* was republished both in English and Armenian in the *Payqar.net* with a remark: "Another excellent article by the *Economist*." It is telling that protests and rallies held in the downtown Yerevan were peaceful, but "on March 1st, the police moved in on the pretext that protesters were carrying firearms, which some observers say were planted." President Kocharyan "sent in the army, and the area was soon lit up with tracer fire," the *Economist* says adding that the protesters were armed with stones and metal poles. The British newspaper concludes that "the responsibility ultimately lies with the government which allowed the situation to deteriorate into chaos" (Հայաստանը The Economist-ի երեկվա տպագիր համարում [Armenia in the *Economist*'s yesterday issue] [Blogpost], 2008, March 7).

Third-Party Sources

Radio Liberty Kept On Sourcing More Than One Party

In the 18 articles from *Radio Liberty*, 127 statements were elicited that related to the six themes determined in advance (see Table 4). Like in the case of *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* and *Payqar.net*, in *Radio Liberty* the theme "legal/political responsibility" was discussed more than other themes. And unlike the previous two media, second major theme was the "fair elections," but it was discussed in only one more statement than the "freedom of expression." However, the "freedom of expression" remained the second major theme in the statements representing minor perspective.

Table 4
Third-party sources

Theme	Dominant perspective	Minor perspective	Other perspective	TOTAL
Free political expression	2	23	0	25
Free press	0	9	0	9
Accuracy in reporting	0	2	0	2
Fair elections	4	19	3	26
Legal & political responsibility	8	38	5	51
Readiness for dialogue	1	7	6	14
TOTAL	15	98	14	127

The Armenian bureau of the *Radio Liberty/Radio Free Europe* remained faithful to its editorial policy during the state of emergency and refused to source only one party in its reports. So, it was banned from broadcasting and later, its website was blocked by the government. The

Radio Liberty (www.azatutyun.am) changed the website's domain several times but each time it was blocked shortly. However, it was one of the popular websites during the state of emergency due to its consistent daily reports and free proxy servers used by the readers to access blocked sites.

Third Party Media Covered Multiple Third-Party Perspectives

Third-party sources, such as international organizations and foreign governments and political and public figures of Armenia, were recalled most of all by the *Radio Liberty* in the studied media. However, their statements were categorized depending on the party their perspective favored. Still, while *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* and *Payqar.net* introduced only three statements that could be categorized neither as dominant (governmental), nor as minor (oppositional) perspective, 14 (of 127, 11%) statements in *Radio Liberty* introduced "other" perspective on March 1 events (Table 4). Fifteen statements (11.8%) favored dominant perspective, and 98 (77.2%) favored oppositional perspective. However, these numbers should not be interpreted as an indicator of *Radio Liberty*'s bias, because the sampling of *Radio Liberty* aimed to fill the gaps in the previously studied media. The oppositional media represented much more gaps in the coverage because of the restrictions over the media that were not loyal to the government and because of some other reasons, such as professionalism of and access to the media.

Third-Party Media Covers Opposition Leader's Story Of March 1 Escalation

Radio Liberty revealed what occurred at Levon Ter-Petrosyan's two press conferences that were not covered by the *Payqar.net*. In both press-conferences, the theme "legal and political responsibility" was covered by *Radio Liberty* the most as in overall coverage studied here (Table 4). The first one was given to the foreign media in his house on March 2, Sunday.

The opposition leader told the journalists that after he was taken home, he had been trying to negotiate with President Kocharyan about going to the Myasnikyan Square in order to calm down the people and to prevent escalation of the situation. His idea was welcomed but eventually nothing was offered instead and a decision on dispersing the protest was made. According to Ter-Petrosyan, the negotiations were going on during the entire day. They were mediated first by "the person whose hostage I was, general Sarkisov" and then by the Yerevan-based foreign ambassadors. While President Kocharyan was claiming that Ter-Petrosyan was welcomed to join the protest but he was scared to do so without a security guard, Ter-Petrosyan told the press that negotiations failed for the following reason:

> "After all, Armen Gevorgyan, the head of the Kocharyan's administration, invited the ambassadors to him and said: 'We decided to disperse the protest; no compromise will be there.' Hence, there was no reason to disperse the protest. There was no violence or other reasoning to use force. They just decided to disperse people," Ter-Petrosyan said. (Լեւոն Տեր-Պետրոսյանը պատմում է բոնարարքները կանխելու բանակցությունների մասին [Levon Ter-Petrosyan tells about the negotiations for preventing the violence], 2008, March 3)

In an earlier interview, Ter-Petrosyan's spokesman Arman Musinyan told *RFE/RL*

that the mass protest of March 1 in the Myasnikyan Square was not organized by anyone

as the opposition was "beheaded," many leaders were arrested, and Ter-Petrosyan was

"under home arrest" (Արման Մուսինյան. «Մեզ համար շատ դրամատիկ

իրավիճակ է» [Arman Mousinyan: "It is a very dramatic situation for us."], 2008, March

2).

Freedom of Expression Contradicted the Criminal Charges

The third-party media examination elicited 46 statements on legal/political responsibility, 38 of which expressed oppositional perspective. The latter was also expressed in 23 statements on the freedom of political expression, out of 25 (see Table 4). Those statements, including the

above-mentioned ones by Ter-Petrosyan and Mousinyan, were not only pointing out who was responsible for the clashes, but also representing the opposition as favoring the freedom of expression. Moreover, at his press-conference of March 12, Ter-Petrosyan said that he was going to apply to the municipality for new demonstrations, ensuring the press that no incident would happen, if the government did not use force. He noted that the most of the opposition's political leadership were arrested (he named them "political prisoners"), and none of those who committed violence was arrested. To him, "The arrests bear character of political repressions" (Լեւոն Տեր-Պետրոսյան. «Սահմանադրական դատարանը ականապատեց Սերժ Սարգսյանի լեգիտիմությունը» [Ter-Petrosyan: "The Constitutional Court's decision is a trap for Serzh Sargsyan's legitimacy"], 2008, March 12).

These statements reveal that the opposition had been viewing the March 1 events as consequences of fraudulent elections. These themes frequently overlap in the oppositional perspective. The theme "freedom of political expression" also frequently comes across with the responsibility issues.

Oppositional Discourse Targeted The Democratic West

The *Radio Liberty* covered also Ter-Petrosyan's article in the *Washington Post* (Ter-Petrosyan, 2008, March 5). It embraced three themes studied here, i.e. freedom of expression, fair elections, and responsibility issues contributing in the Table 4. The article was putting blame on the West for "silence on Armenia." Later, the opposition would directly say that the European election observers' positive assessment of the elections released the government's hands against the opposition, but this article was limited to stating that the technical report of the observer mission from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe "rubber-stamped Sarkissian's [i.e. Sargsyan's] farcical claim of victory" (Լեւոն Տեր-Պետրոսյան. «Մեզ

qարմացնում է Արեւմուտքի լռությունը» [Levon Ter-Petrosyan: "We are dismayed with the silence of the West"], 2008, March 5). He also demanded to keep the Armenian government responsible; otherwise, the Armenian people would be disappointed both in the meaning of peaceful struggle for freedom and in the fairness of commitment of the West to democracy. Radio Liberty summarized that according to Ter-Petrosyan,

> The people of Armenia, unlike the OSCE monitors, chose to see what happened at the polling stations and staged a continuous protest at Liberty Square that, according to Ter-Petrosyan, "should be studied as an example of nonviolent, lawful resistance against illegitimate rule." (Լեւոն Տեր-Պետրոսյան. «Մեզ զարմացնում է Արեւմուտքի լռությունը» [Levon Ter-Petrosyan: "We are dismayed with the silence of the West"], 2008, March 5)

Elections Were Reassessed

Discussions about fairness of the past presidential elections mostly favored the opposition; four out of 23 statements represented the governmental perspective and three represented various other perspectives (Table 4). The OSCE/ODIHR published the international election observers' second interim report on the Armenian presidential elections 2008 on March 8. The *Radio Liberty* interviewed the parties about the new report. Ter-Petrosyan's spokesman Arman Mousinyan found that its data grounded in the factual evidence demonstrated "that the elections cannot be considered either free and just, or even successfully implemented." In spite of the President's claims that "no room was left for a dialogue," the Ministry of Foreign Affairs responded that the government had noticed already shortcomings of the electoral process that were mentioned in the report, and it was already taking steps toward solutions (Իշխանության եւ ընդդիմության արձագանքը ԵԱՀԿ/ԺՀՄԻԳ երկրորդ միջանկյալ զեկույցին [The government and the opposition respond to the OSCE/ODIHR second interim report], 2008, March 8). Later, the *RL* website reported that a criminal case was imposed against a member of

an election commission, who allegedly fabricated the votes in favor of the opposition's candidate (Թիվ 22/21 տեղամասում ընտրակեղծիքների փաստով գործը ուղարկվել է դատարան [The case on the frauds in the polling station 22/21 is sent to court], 2008, March 18).

Opposition Accepted European Recommendations for Dialogue

In the studied data sampled from the *Radio Liberty*'s website, half of the 14 statements reflected oppositional perspective on the notion of political dialogue. Respectively, one and six statements were from governmental and third-party perspectives (Table 4). The latter perspectives were made mainly by foreign officials. The opposition found that the consequences of the March 1 events could be addressed by implementing the recommendations traced in the March 4 declaration of the European Union's Presidency. Condemning the acts of violence, the EU called on the parties "to abstain from unlawful activities and to reengage into the political dialogue, because this is the only way to move forward." It also demanded to "free all the civilians who were arrested for exercising their right of peaceful gatherings, and lift the emergency situation which imposes limitations on the freedom of press, freedom of peaceful protests and on political parties" (Եվրամիությունը դատապարտում է բռնությունը, առաջարկում անկախ հետաքննություն անցկացնել եւ սկսել երկխոսություն [The EU condemns the violence, offers to start an independent investigation, and to start a dialogue], 2008, March 6). Other responds from Europe were similar. Thomas Hammarberg, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, demanded to lift all the restrictions, especially the one on the media. He told to *Radio Liberty* the arrested had been ill-treated:

> "Apparently, there is a political context. I urged President Robert Kocharian and Prime Minister Serzh Sarkisian to limit the ongoing prosecutions only to those cases where there is real proof that people have committed violent crimes. Otherwise, an understanding will prevail that people are arrested because of their political positions," European high official said. (Թոմաս Համմարբերգ. - «Հայաստանում այսօր լուրջ

խնդիրներ կան» [Thomas Hammarberg: "Armenia faces serious problems today"], 2008, March 14)

The Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe (PACE) Terry Davis underlined "that the investigation must focus on finding those who committed criminal acts, and not for persecuting opposition." Calling the parties to start a dialogue, he noted that the restrictions imposed by the state of emergency were obstacles to political dialogue, so the state of emergency should be lifted. He also demanded the government to report on the procedures and "grounded explanations for them without delay" as required by European conventions signed by Armenia (Թերրի Դեւիս. «Ցնցված եմ, տեղեկանալով, որ 8 մարդ է զոհվել» [Terry Davis: "I am in shoke learning that eight people have been killed"], 2008, March 4).

American Perspective on March 1 Reflected That of Opposition

As an American medium, *Radio Liberty* traditionally covers the U.S. political discourse in Armenia. The USA was actively responding to the post-election situation in Armenia. Matthew Bryza, then a deputy assistant secretary of state, now American Ambassador to Azerbaijan, was one of several Western (mostly European) envoys visiting Armenia in the next few days after March 1. In an interview to the Russian bureau of the *Voice of America*, Bryza was asked whether he would agree that an attempt of "colorful revolution" had taken place in Armenia. He replied that what happened was a tragedy: "It was strong challenge for democracy. It could be viewed as a revolution or a public confrontation." He called on the government to restore the media freedom, to lift the state of emergency, and to start dialogue with public (Մեթյու Բրայզա. «Հայաստանում տեղի ունեցածը լուրջ հարված է

ժողովրդավարությանը» [Matthew Bryza: "What is going on in Armenia is a strong challenge for democracy"], 2008, March 15).

This statement was made after the restrictions under the rule of state of emergency were moderated, but Americans did a similar statement also at the end of the state of emergency. Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Fried called on dialogue with the opposition. He said: "It is one thing that some people were arrested for violence and vandalism, but people who were arrested under questionable circumstances must be let free" (Դենիել Ֆրիդ. - «Պետք է երկխոսություն լինի ընդդիմության հետ» [Daniel Fried: "Dialogue should be with the opposition], 2008, March 20).

Russian Perspectives Reflected the Armenian Governmental Perspective

Russian activity in post-March 1 Armenia was visible in the media only in short official messages in which the Armenian president or PMs had phone conversations with the Russian President. But Grigori Karasin, the Russian minister of foreign affairs, visited Armenia on the last day of the state of emergency. He said that he was looking forward to the Armenian government's plans "to bring the opposition to legal sphere and initiate a dialogue." Minister told the press that dialogue and legal field are the best ways to sole political problems. As quoted by the *Radio Liberty*, to him:

> "Disputes and chaos in the streets are dangerous for any country. I am sure that the events of March 1-2 demonstrated to the citizens of Armenia how dangerous the path that is not solving any problems can be, and which in the end may result in instability and distrust in the future, and will not contribute to developing an optimistic view in regards to the future of families, children and grandchildren," Karasin added. (Կարասին. «Ռուսաստանը անտարբեր չէ Հայաստանի ներքաղաքական զարգացումների նկատմամբ» [Karasin: "Russia is not indifferent to the political processes in Armenia"], 2008, March 20).

This statement was considered as favoring the Armenian government, because the last was also prioritizing stability and safety over freedom of political expression. On the other hand, the Western officials' most statements were related to the minor perspective in this study, because the opposition had adopted those approaches either before, or after those statements were done.

Other Perspective Blamed both the Opposition And The Government

There were few statements that did not contribute to the discourse of any party. They were partially found in an interview with Vahan Hovhannisyan, another former candidate. He found that both the government and the opposition refused to engage in a political debate. Rather, they cultivated "provocation and hatred" before the March 1. He offered the parties to start negotiations. To Hovhannisyan, Ter-Petrosyan mobilized the people promoting hatred and intolerance (dominant discourse). And the government failed to be good enough not to let this happen. The former candidate posited that the electoral system was far from ideal, and the society was ill, but it should be cured by the government. He and his party were not going to dispute the results of elections because they did not find sense in doing so, Hovhannisyan said (Վահան Հովհաննիսյան. «Հասարակության մեջ լուրջ հիվանդություն կա եւ այն պետք է խոհեմությամբ բուժեն իշխանությունները» [Vahan Hovhannisyan: There is a desease in society and it should be cured by the bovernment"], 2008, March 3)

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The present research addresses a concern about citizens' use of new media, particularly the Internet, in times of political crisis and censorship, when alternative voices are suppressed. This study contributes to an understanding of how alternative discourses are formed and maintained by citizen use of the new media, such as in the case of Armenia during the 20-day state of emergency in March 2008. The study employed both qualitative and quantitative research methods for investigating how the citizens used Internet to promote an oppositional discourse about the March 1 events that ended with clashes between protesters and task forces and fatalities, and about the 20 days of a state of emergency that followed. Official, oppositional, and third-party media sources were subjected to content analysis revealing frames and counterframes used in the governmental and oppositional discourses, respectively. Participant-observation, performed retrospectively by the researcher, was used to provide historical context and in the interpretation of empirical findings from the content analysis.

The findings have shown that the issues of legal and political responsibility, i.e., who was to blame, were the matters most discussed among the public in the 20 days of state of emergency imposed on March 1. Both the government and the opposition were accusing each other for the clashes and assessing each other's activities as criminal. Both parties were referring to the law, Constitution, and democracy. Both parties were assuring that if they did not take appropriate measures to prevent further escalation, more people could suffer. However, they were putting their words into different contexts and also into different media. While the opposition was recalling its freedom of expression, the government was accusing the opposition for conducting "illegal events" for nine days in downtown Yerevan and instigating clashes through different techniques of mass manipulation. The opposition's activities were framed as criminal, rather than

political activities, in the governmental discourse. The last posited that the opposition candidate was trying to capture the power and to resolve the state—two objectives that are apparently contradictory.

Meanwhile, the opposition counterframed the government's activities as a continuation of the fraudulent elections with an aim to maintain the power at any price. In spite of the opposition's efforts to bring up the problem of the last elections, the findings show that it had to address disputes about responsibility and freedom of expression more than other themes, which were the most popular themes in the governmental discourse, too. Not surprisingly, according to the researcher's personal observations, the words that found the largest resonance in the pro-opposition public were those of the officials. Those words were allegations about mass psychosis allegedly engineered by the opposition through neuro-linguistic planning with words "motherland" and "family." Till now many jokingly pronounce those words as if they want to control people.

In other words, the governmental discourse set an agenda for the oppositional discourse. Deprived from access to larger audiences and targeted by the legal and political charges of the government, the opposition was using scarce opportunities to represent the reasons and the facts about March 1st events. In addition, the oppositional media were focused on sharing operative information about new arrests and new ways for overcoming the censorship. However, the oppositional discourse was affirmed also through the international response to the March 1 events, which tended to favor the opposition: In spite of their diplomatically packed, balanced, and neutral character, the most statements by the Western governments and intergovernmental organizations, as expressed in the oppositional and third-party media, were supporting the

opposition's wishes to lift the state of emergency, to investigate the violence and killings, and to release the opposition activists from prisons.

In addition, the opposition was able to reach out to the foreign media. After Ter-Petrosyan's article was published in the *Washington Post* on March 5, 2008, the winning candidate Serzh Sargsyan and another candidate, Arthur Baghdasaryan, wrote another article in the same newspaper that was published on March 18, 2008. This was one of few times during the state of emergency that the opposition managed to precede the government in setting an agenda for public discourse. Levon Ter-Petrosyan's article blamed the government for the March 1 clashes and fatalities. More importantly, it was blaming the democratic West for not supporting the Armenian democratic movement (Ter-Petrosyan, 2008). However, the last blame did not save the opposition from accusations of importing Western-backed "colorful" revolutions. Sargsyan directly called the opposition's activism as an attempt to implement a "colorful revolution" (Yuryeva, 2008). Along with Baghdasaryan, he composed his article in the *Washington Post* in more positive tones calling on the West to support his government (Sargsyan, S. & Baghdasaryan, A., 2008). That tone can be explained also by the President Kocharyan's attitude to the opposition-driven publications in the foreign media. Commenting on Ter-Petrosyan's article in the *Washington Post*, he assessed it as "bringing in an outsider guy," an Armenian idiom that means relying on "foreign authoroties" being weak to solve a problem. However, the blame that the article put on the West for hipocricy was an important message that the opposition, in fact, was not backed by the West and its activities were indigenious. Republished in Armenia, it influenced the further oppositional discourse.

Kocharyan accused the opposition leader of a lack of "manhood" also for not leaving home for Myasnikyan Square (where the protest of the dispersed was taking place that day)

without his security detail (Gasparyan, 2008b). Future research might analyze the discourse on "manhood" in political debates and conflicts, such as that associated with these Armenian events. Meanwhile, empirical findings of the present study show that the oppositional media had no doubt that Ter-Petrosyan was under house arrest and he couldn't and shouldn't leave the house without security. This viewpoint was sustained by other opposition leaders, particularly by Nikol Pashinyan who was wanted by and hiding from police since March 1, 2008.

Along with oppositional and third-party media accounts, the participant observations showed that the morning dispersal and arrests of the protesters from the Liberty Square instigated anxiety that escalated to physical resistance and clashes by the end of the day. Meanwhile, the governmental discourse was avoiding finding any nexus between the morning and evening events. Neither, did it acknowledge fraud in the elections. The governmental discourse continued to characterize the post-electoral protests as "illegal" rallies, the purpose of which was to take power illegally. The opposition was recalling the peaceful nature of the rallies, stating that their purpose was to put pressure on the Constitutional Court expecting that it would cancel the official results of the elections. Opposition found that the authorities purposively instigated the clashes with morning dispersal and evening attack in order to get a reason for imposing a state of emergence that would allow them to control the Constitutional Court's decision. These ideas were promoted in three articles by Nikol Pashinyan and David Shahnazaryan, leaders of opposition, in *Payqar.net.* David Shahnazaryan, proposed that Kocharyan must be trialed at the Hague International Court for what Shahnazaryan called "crime against own nation" (Դավիթ Շահնազարյան. «Պայքարը նոր է սկսվում» [David Shahnazaryan: The fight has just started] [Blogpost], 2008, March 11).

The role of the opposition leaders was misrepresented in the official media, according to participant-observations. Shahnazaryan was represented in the governmental media as a leader who was trying to settle situation moving the dispersed people from Myasnikyan Square to Matenadaran. And Pashinyan was represented as someone who forbade the crowd to move. Meanwhile, the participant-observations support the empirical findings about the oppositional perspective that the crowd refused to follow Shahnazaryan without Ter-Petrosyan, and Pashinyan appeared on the scene few hours later when the police had left the crowd alone in Myasnikyan Square. So, Pashinyan couldn't be the reason for staying in the Myasnikyan Square. Later that afternoon, riot forces were seen positioning around the square on larger parameter far from the protesters' sight. The government later would claim that opposition leaders, particularly Pashinyan and Malkhasyan, were calling the people to fight the police. Meanwhile, the researcher observed that they were calling on staying in the Square and being ready for self-defense, rather than going to the Mashtots Avenue, where, they believed, provocateurs were breaking in stores and looting them. The oppositional media often were representing March 1 events in fragments. For instance, they never mentioned that there were no loudspeakers until late afternoon, as noticed by the participant-observer. A factor that could make the crowd more manageable. On the other hand, *Payqar.net* stressed several times that Ter-Petrosyan's presence on the spot could prevent the clashes.

The empirical findings show that *Payqar.net* was eagerly publishing first-hand accounts about March 1 events. The official media sourced only the police and the president. As noted above, president Kocharyan described details of clashes as provided by one witness: "The shooter would come out behind a car, shoot the soldiers, and hide" (Կազմակերպիչները պատասխանատվություն են կրելու օրենքի առջեւ [The Organizers will Be Brought to

Responsibility against the Law], 2008). Citizen testimonies published in the *Payqar.net* did not recall any use of arms by the protesters. Moreover, they testified about gun shots by the task forces. Many participant-observations by the researcher were found being compiling with other citizen testimonies in the studied articles by *Payqar.net*. For instance, an anonymous author described how he or she helped a young person whose eye was injured (Մեր կեղտոտ մարտի 1-ը. Ազատ հայի օրագրից [Our filthy March 1. A free Armenian's diary] [Blogpost], 2008, March 9). This was supposedly the same person whom the participant-observer saw that night. Other reports on the escalation of the March 1 events were also congruent with what the researcher witnessed on the scene.

One should notice that under the regime of the state of emergency, the government was forming the agenda for political discourse through monopolized media propaganda, arrests, and legal charges against the oppositional activists and leaders. The oppositional discourse was formed mostly in response to the allegations targeting the opposition. This phenomenon can be explained as "splash-back" (Gamson, 2005, p. 324) in a cascade of media flows pouring down from above the media, i.e. from political and economic elites, as Entman (2004) describes. In the case of this study, it concerns the Armenian government, which maintains enough control over the mainstream media and enough power to silence independent and oppositional media when extremely needed.

Armenian media and politics are rather merged even in regular times, but the state of emergency demonstrated this problem in its full potential. The findings demonstrate how the media were perpetuating frames produced by political elites. This might relate also to the oppositional media in regular circumstances, but as shown in this study, promotion of oppositional discourse was the choice of the examined oppositional medium *Payqar.net*

elementary because the other choices—staying silent or favoring the government—were legally and politically encouraged. Hardly one can insist that the state official *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* daily had other choice than perpetuating governmental discourse.

Although access to the Internet was limited to 6% of the population of Armenia at the time of the events, the new media turned out to be a significant virtual space for social mobilization that was also influencing offline audiences. Offline audiences had access to the weblogs and other online media through photocopies of blogs and other items that online Internet users disseminated. The Internet turned to be also a tool and a location at the same time for resisting mainstream propaganda and sharing alternative information. The coverage provided by the oppositional media was not organized and systematic but still the opposition and citizens managed to raise their voice and to reach out at least to the government. This statement is supported by the fact that many high officials were responding to the opposition's claims and counterframes. The third-party media, both professional ones (e.g., *Radio Liberty* and *Washington Post*) and weblogs, also contributed in the promotion of oppositional discourse. Generally, Internet-based pro-opposition, anti-governmental, and third-party sources were actively cooperating with each other during the state of emergency. A note should be done that most articles were anonymous.

The non-systematic character of the publications in *Payqar.net* and other oppositional media was a challenge for this study. Although few professional media were publishing during the state of emergency but access to them was even more problematic. While the *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* daily was legally publishing professional articles as usually, the *Payqar.net* blog was not a professional outlet, neither it was legal. Its many articles were copied from other professional media, websites, and weblogs. In other words, it apparently had to rely on

volunteered media activists and professional media publications. Meanwhile, the participant-observations in the present study propose that non-professional new media outlets can sometimes be more accurate in reporting news than professional ones, depending on their political economy.

A major challenge for this study was the lack of scholarly research on the Armenian media and on media activism. It is supported mostly by similar studies in the USA. However sourcing for this research would be more compelling, if supported by previous studies conducted in the Armenian (or Eastern Europe) context. Time frames and deadlines were additional limitations for this thesis.

New media activism now plays significant role in social change especially in the societies with challenged democracy. It is also crucial in times of crises occurred because of different reasons. Other researchers might wish to extend this study to media behavior and media use in times of censorship and crisis or to investigate similar problems in other nations. That would provide also grounds for further comparative analyses on the matter.

REFERENCES

Works Cited

700% growth in Armenia's penetration rate (2010). *The Armenian Media Blog.* Retrieved from: http://www.ditord.net/2010/09/700-growth-in-armenias-internet.html

Amb. Kelly on the press freedom in Armenia (2011). Retrieved from the State Department's Bureau of International Information Programs (IIP) website: http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2011/January/20110127124212su9.096491e-02.html

BBC World service Trust (2008). *Needs assessment of Armenia's Public Television Company.* Retrieved from: http://www.osce.org/documents/oy/2008/10/34425_en.pdf

Berardi, F. ("Bifo") (2009). *Precarious rhapsody: Semiocapitalism and the pathologies of the post-alpha generation.* Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia.

Berardi, F. ("Bifo"), Jacquemet, M., & Vitali, G. (2009). *Ethereal shadows: Communications and power in contemporary Italy*. New York: Autonomedia.

Chomsky, N. (2007, October). What makes mainstream media mainstream. *ZMagazine.*Retrieved from: http://www.zcommunications.org/what-makes-mainstream-media-mainstream-by-noam-chomsky

Calingaert, D. (2010, Apr/May). Authoritarianism vs. Internet. *Policy Review,* 160, 63-75.

Corner, J., & Robinson, P. (2006, January). Politics and mass media: A response to John Street. *Political Studies Review, 4*(1), 48-54. DOI: 10.1111/j.1478-9299.2006.00035.x

Entman, R. M. (2004). *Projections of power: Framing news, public opinion and U.S. foreign policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Freedom House (2008). *Freedom of the press – Armenia (2008).* Retrieved from: http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=251&year=2008

Freedom House (2009). *Freedom of the press – Armenia (2009).* Retrieved from: http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=251&year=2009

Gamson, W. A. (2005, Summer). Robert M. Entman: Projections of power: Framing news, public opinion, and U.S. foreign policy. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 69*(2), 324-336.

Haraszti, M. (2006). *The state of media freedom in Armenia: Observations and recommendations*. Retrieved from: http://www.osce.org/documents/oy/2007/05/24699_en.pdf

Hounsel, B. (2011, February 14). Think Again: Egypt. From the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood to the Arab autocracy domino theory, five myths about Egypt's revolution. *Foreign Policy Magazine*. Retrieved from: http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/02/14/think_again_egypt

Klein, A. G., Byerly C. M., & McEachern, T. M. (2009). Counterframing public dissent: An analysis of antiwar coverage in the U.S. media. *Critical Studies in Media Communication, 26*(4), 331-329.

Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology.* USA: Sage

Lewis, S. C., & Reese, S. D. (2009). What is the War on Terror: Framing through the eyes of journalists. *J&MC Quarterly, 86*(1). 85-102.

Merskin, D. (2004). The construction of Arabs as enemies: Post-September 11 discourse of George W. Bush. *Mass Communication & Society. 7*(2), 157-175.

Message of Armenian President Robert Kocharian to the people (2008). *Radio Liberty.* Retrieved from: http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1079570.html

Mkrtchyan, N. (2010). Ապաստան [Shelter] in *Azg Daily*. May 4, 2010. Retrieved from: http://www.azgdaily.com/AR/2010050411

Nazaryan, T. (2008). Promise for improvement. In *Zhamanak Yerevan Daily*. October 26, 2008. Retrieved from: http://www.zhamanak.com/article/10417/

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (2008). *OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final report.* Retrieved from: http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2008/05/31397_en.pdf

Papyan, A. (2009). Բլոգների դերը 2008թ. նախագահական ընտրություններում: [The role of weblogs during the presidential elections in Armenia, 2008.] Paper session presented at the meeting of Yerevan Press Club and Open society Institute, Aghveran, Armenia.

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (2008). Resolution 1609: Functioning of democratic institutions in Armenia. Retrieved from: http://assembly.coe.int/main.asp?Link=/documents/adoptedtext/ta08/eres1609.htm

Pratt, Y. P. (2010). Merging new media with old traditions. *Native Studies Review, 19*(1), 1-27.

Reporters Without Borders (2008). Press Freedom Index 2008. Retrieved from Reporters Without Borders website: http://en.rsf.org/press-freedom-index-2008,33.html

Said, E. W. (1997). *Covering Islam: How the media and the experts determine how we see the rest of the world (2nd ed.).* New York: Vintage Books.

Yerevan Press Club (2008). *The coverage of presidential elections 2008 by broadcast media of Armenia.* Yerevan, Armenia: YPC Publications.

Articles Examined

«Իմ զգացողությամբ նրանք 10 օր չեն դիմանա» ["I sense they will not stand more than 10 days"]. (2008, March 1). *Payqar.net* , p. Retrieved from: http://www.payqar.net/?p=69.

«Իշխանությունները պարզապես արգելել են իրենց համար անցանկալի լրատվամիջոցների գործունեությունը» [The authorities just banned the media they don't favor]. (2008, March 12). *Radio Liberty*. Retrieved from: http://www.azatutyun.am/content/article/1593829.html.

«Մեր թիկունքում է ընտրողների ձայների 70%-ը» ["We are backed by 70% of votes"]. (2008, March 18). *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun*. Retrieved from: http://www.ypc.am/press/id/7186/yy/2008.

«Չենք ընկրկի որևէ ուժի առաջ»,- ասում է Նիկոլ Փաշինյանը ["We will not step back before any force," Nikol Pashinyan says]. (2008, March 6). *Payqar.net* , p. Retrieved from: http://www.payqar.net/?p=560.

Gasparyan, G. (2008b, March 6). «Եթե արտակարգ դրություն չհայտարարվեր, կորուստները շատ ավելի մեծ կլինեին» ["If We did not Declare a State of Emergency, the Losses would be Significantly More"]. *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* , p. Retrieved from: http://www.ypc.am/press/id/6410/yy/2008.

Gasparyan, G. (2008b, March 5). Բոլոր բռնարարքները ղեկավարվել են մեկ կենտրոնից [All the Organized Violent Actions Have Been Done from One Center]. *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* , p. Retrieved from: http://www.ypc.am/press/id/6329/yy/2008.

Kamavosyan, O. (2008d, March 5). Երկխոսության տեղ չի մնացել [No room for dialogue is left]. *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun*. Retrieved from: http://www.ypc.am/press/id/6327/yy/2008.

Kamavosyan, O. (2008b, March 21). Ժողովրդավարությունը կարիք ունի պաշտպանվելու ամբոխավարությունից [Democracy Needs to Be Protected from Ochlocracy]. *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun*. Retrieved from: http://www.ypc.am/press/id/7429/yy/2008.

Kamavosyan, O. (2008c, March 5). Ի սկզբանե բացառվել է ուժի կիրառման տարբերակը [Use of force has been excluded since the beginning]. *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* , p. Retrieved from: http://www.ypc.am/press/id/6328/yy/2008.

Kamavosyan, O. (2008a, March 13). Նախապես մշակված ու ծրագրված գործողություններ [Priorly Planned Actions]. *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun*. Retrieved from: http://www.ypc.am/press/id/6889/yy/2008.

Kocharyan, R. (2008, March 4). Որևէ մեկին չեմ թույլատրելու վտանգել մեր պետության սահմանադրական կարգը [None will be allowed to threaten the constitutional order of our republic]. *Hayastany Hanrapetutyun*. Retrieved from: http://www.ypc.am/press/id/6242/yy/2008.

NA PR Department. (2008b, March 18). 90 կողմ, 6 դեմ [90 for, and 6 against]. Retrieved from: http://www.ypc.am/press/id/7193/yy/2008.

NA PR Department. (2008, March 4). The Parliament Approved the President's Decree. *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* , p. Retrieved from: http://www.ypc.am/press/id/6251/yy/2008.

NA PR Department. (2008b, March 6). Չորս պատգամավոր զրկվեց անձեռնմխելիությունից [Four MPs were Deprived from Immunity]. *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun*. Retrieved from: http://www.ypc.am/press/id/633/yy/2008.

Pashinyan, N. (2008, March 15). Մինչև մարտի 1-ը և դրանից հետո [Before March 1 and after] [Blogpost]. *Payqar.net* , p. Retrieved from: http://www.payqar.net/?p=97.

Sargsyan, S. & Baghdasaryan, A. (2008, March 17). Moving forward in Armenia. *Washington Post*. Retrieved from: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/03/16/AR2008031602128.html.

Ter-Petrosyan, L. (2008, March 5). Silence on Armenia. *Washington Post* , pp. Retrieved from: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/03/04/AR2008030402329.html.

Yuryeva, D. (2008, March 7). Шутки в сторону [Apart from Jokes]. *Российская газета [Rossiyskaya Gazeta]*. Retrieved from: http://www.rg.ru/2008/03/07/sarkisyan.html.

Արման Մուսինյան. «Մեզ համար շատ դրամատիկ իրավիճակ է» [Arman Mousinyan: "It is a very dramatic situation for us."]. (2008, March 2). *Radio Liberty* , p. Retrieved from: http://www.azatutyun.am/content/article/1593579.html.

Դաժան ծեծի են ենթարկել [Severely beaten] [Blogpost]. (2008, March 13). *Payqar.net*. Retrieved from: http://www.payqar.net/?p=679.

Դավիթ Շահնազարյան. «Պայքարը նոր է սկսվում» [David Shahnazaryan: The fight has just started] [Blogpost]. (2008, March 11). *Payqar.net* , p. Retrieved from: http://www.payqar.net/?p=649.

Դենիել Ֆրիդ. - «Պետք է երկխոսություն լինի ընդդիմության հետ» [Daniel Fried: "Dialogue should be with the opposition]. (2008, March 20). *Radio Liberty*. Retrieved from: http://www.azatutyun.am/content/article/1594001.html.

Եկել է զարունը վայելելու ժամանակը [It is Time to Enjoy the Spring]. (2008, March 5). *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* , p. Retrieved from: http://www.ypc.am/press/id/6326/yy/2008.

Եվրամիությունը դատապարտում է բռնությունը, առաջարկում անկախ հետաքննություն անցկացնել եւ սկսել երկխոսություն [The EU condemns the violence, offers to start an independent investigation, and to start a dialogue]. (2008, March 6). *Radio Liberty*. Retrieved from: http://www.azatutyun.am/content/article/1593668.html.

Երկուսից մեկը հաղթում է [One of two wins] [Blogpost]. (2008, March 5). *Payqar.net*. Retrieved from: http://www.payqar.net/?p=520.

Թերրի Դեւիս. «Ցնցված եմ, տեղեկանալով, որ 8 մարդ է զոհվել» [Terry Davis: "I am in shoke learning that eight people have been killed"]. (2008, March 4). *Radio Liberty* , p. Retrieved from: http://www.azatutyun.am/content/article/1593610.html.

Թիվ 22/21 տեղամասում ընտրակեղծիքների փաստով գործը ուղարկվել է դատարան [The case on the frauds in the polling station 22/21 is sent to court]. (2008, March 18). *Radio Liberty*. Retrieved from: http://www.azatutyun.am/content/article/1593928.html.

Թոմաս Համմարբերգ. - «Հայաստանում այսօր լուրջ խնդիրներ կան» [Thomas Hammarberg: "Armenia faces serious problems today"]. (2008, March 14). *Radio Liberty* , p. Retrieved from: http://www.azatutyun.am/content/article/1593884.html.

Իշխանության եւ ընդդիմության արձագանքը ԵԱՀԿ/ԺՀՄԻԳ երկրորդ միջանկյալ զեկույցին [The government and the opposition respond to the OSCE/ODIHR second interim report]. (2008, March 8). *Radio Liberty*. Retrieved from: http://www.azatutyun.am/content/article/1593747.html.

Լավ աշխատանքը պետության, իշխանությունների եւ ժողովրդի հեղինակության վերականգնման ամենաճիշտ ճանապարհն է [Good work is the best way to restore the country's, government's, and people's reputation]. (2008b, March 15). *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun*. Retrieved from: http://www.ypc.am/press/id/7070/yy/2008.

Լավ աշխատանքը պետության, իշխանությունների եւ ժողովրդի հեղինակության վերականգնման ամենաճիշտ ճանապարհն է [Good work is the way to restore the country's, the government's, and the people's reputation]. (2008a, March 14). *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* , p. Retrieved from: http://www.ypc.am/press/id/6972/yy/2008.

Լեւոն Տեր-Պետրոսյան. «Մեզ զարմացնում է Արեւմուտքի լռությունը» [Levon Ter-Petrosyan: "We are dismayed with the silence of the West"]. (2008, March 5). *Radio Liberty* , p. Retrieved from: http://www.azatutyun.am/content/article/1593655.html.

Լեւոն Տեր-Պետրոսյան. «Սահմանադրական դատարանը ականապատեց Սերժ Սարգսյանի լեգիտիմությունը» [Ter-Petrosyan: "The Constitutional Court's decision is a trap for Serzh Sargsyan's legitimacy"]. (2008, March 12). *Radio Liberty*. Retrieved from: http://www.azatutyun.am/content/article/1593809.html.

Լեւոն Տեր-Պետրոսյանը պատմում է բռնարարքները կանխելու բանակցությունների մասին [Levon Ter-Petrosyan tells about the negotiations for preventing the violence]. (2008, March 3). *Radio Liberty*. Retrieved from: http://www.azatutyun.am/content/article/1593589.html.

Կազմակերպիչները պատասխանատվություն են կրելու օրենքի առջեւ [The Organizers will Be Brought to Responsibility against the Law]. (2008, March 4). *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* , p. Retrieved from: http://www.ypc.am/press/id/6243/yy/2008.

Կարասին. «Ռուսաստանը անտարբեր չէ Հայաստանի ներքաղաքական զարգացումների նկատմամբ» [Karasin: "Russia is not indifferent to the political processes in Armenia"]. (2008, March 20). *Radio Liberty*. Retrieved from: http://www.azatutyun.am/content/article/1593997.html.

Հայաստանը The Economist-ի երեկվա տպագիր համարում [Armenia in the Economist's yesterday issue] [Blogpost]. (2008, March 7). *Payqar.net*. Retrieved from: http://www.payqar.net/?p=87.

ՀՀ առաջին նախագահը վերջապես խոսեց. «Այս իշխանությունը վերից վար կոռումպացված է» [The First RA President Eventually Spoke Up: "This Government is Entirely Corrupted". (2007, September 21). *Panorama.am*. Retrieved from: http://www.panorama.am/am/politics/2007/09/22/ltp/.

Մեթյու Բրայզա. «Հայաստանում տեղի ունեցածը լուրջ հարված է ժողովրդավարությանը» [Matthew Bryza: "What is going on in Armenia is a strong challenge for democracy"]. (2008, March 15). *Radio Liberty*. Retrieved from: http://www.azatutyun.am/content/article/1593896.html.

Մեր կեղտոտ մարտի 1-ը. Ազատ հայի օրագրից [Our filthy March 1. A free Armenian's diary] [Blogpost]. (2008, March 9). *Payqar.net*. Retrieved from: http://www.payqar.net/?p=611.

Շռւի վերածված նախաքննություն [A show or an investigation?] [Blogpost]. (2008, March 13). *Payqar.net*. Retrieved from: http://www.payqar.net/?p=673.