

Babeş-Bolyai University
Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences
Doctoral School of Political and Communication Sciences

Doctoral dissertation abstract

**Reflection of migration after the Armenian genocide
in the Romanian and Hungarian press**

Doctoral Coordinator

Prof. dr. habil. Zoltán Tibori-Szabó

Doctoral student

Zsanett-Krisztina Vákár

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Summary

The tragedy of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire was the first genocide of the 20th century, the culmination of a process of mass extermination and ethnic cleansing that took place from 1915 to 1923. The tragedy involved the execution of an estimated one and a half million Armenians, the deportation of half a million more, and the forced conversion of another half a million to Islam. Furthermore, the survivors of the genocide found themselves as forced migrants, without food, clothing, or other belongings, living in horrific, inhumane conditions. Their number is estimated at 800,000. They formed a mass of people who, together with other nations displaced after World War I, became a problem for many countries. A problem that the state structures of the time were incapable of dealing with, and which humanitarian aid organizations, in partnership with missionary networks, therefore sought to solve. Thus, the League of Nations was forced to rely on modern humanitarianism, while the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was created in 1921 to, among other things, rescue surviving members of the Armenian community and manage global migration. The situation of the Armenians was further complicated by the absence of an independent Armenian state to act on behalf of the forced migrants. As this migratory flow affected Romania and Hungary in different ways, it was exciting to examine the contemporary Romanian and Hungarian press coverage of the tragic situation of the Armenians, and in particular their perceptions of it. To this end, the dissertation examines and compares six contemporary daily newspapers covering a period of almost fifty years.

The press research of this thesis aims to map the extent to which the genocide committed by the Ottoman Turks, mainly under the cover of the First World War, and its consequences reached the news media of our region. It could be said that the knowledge of the events of the Armenian genocide (1915–1923) in our region is not an integral part of the public consciousness. It is safe to assert that knowledge of the events of the Armenian genocide (1915-1923) is not an integral part of public consciousness in our country. For example, if we take the universal knowledge of the history of the Holocaust, which in many respects was carried out in a similar way, the Armenian genocide can be considered much less known. Although the present thesis cannot answer the reasons for this through the methods used, it can shed light on the extent to which this under-information is related to the contemporary press. The first research question, therefore, is whether the mentioned under-information is because the contemporary press did not report at all, or only partially, on the horrors of the Ottoman Empire. The next research

question explores the extent to which the results might be distorted by the historical fact that during World War I Hungary was bound by a wartime agreement that imposed heavy censorship on the press. The Austro-Hungarian Empire was an ally of the Turks in World War I, and the first hypothesis assumes that the Hungarian press distorted the information about Armenian refugees through the pressure of military censorship, i.e. that it did not present an accurate picture. This assumption does not apply to the entire period under study, but mostly to the years of the war and the one or two years that followed. But since the deadliest phases of the genocide were committed under the cover of the world war, it is an important question how the Hungarian press portrayed these few years.

The second hypothesis is that since Romania was not allied with the Turks, and only joined the war on the side of the Entente in 1916, the Romanian press is likely to present the persecution of Armenians with greater accuracy and historical fidelity. Of course, this fact must also be treated correctly, since Romania was the enemy of the Turks during the World War, and it is therefore possible that the Romanian press will use propaganda that is inflammatory against the Turks. Nevertheless, we can certainly predict that the Bucharest daily newspapers' approach to the problem will be more historically reliable and faithful.

Finally, the third, and perhaps most important hypothesis is that the newspaper reports make it clear that Armenians were forced to become refugees because the Turks not only refused to let them live undisturbed, but also plundered, persecuted and murdered them en masse. The dissertation assumes that, even though in most cases the events were not reported as current events or in real time, it will be possible to conclude from the articles that the Turks intended to exterminate all the Armenians. It is also important to note that journalists of the time could obviously not be expected to refer to the series of events as genocide, since, as we know, the term was not coined until later, after 1945. All this will be discussed in more detail in the first chapter of this thesis.

Before mapping the press, it was necessary to explore the historical and geopolitical context of the issue in depth and detail. Although this thesis, using press research, is primarily related to the field of communication studies, it is undeniable that the subject is inseparable from its political and historical context. A thorough knowledge of this background information is essential, first and foremost, because it is this information that will help us to fully understand the various newspaper articles studied during press research. For this reason, the historical and geopolitical chapters in the theoretical part of the thesis, as well as the chapters on Armenian

studies, international law, humanitarianism and sometimes psychology, are given as much emphasis as the analysis of the press. It is for this reason that the history of the Armenian people is presented in the first chapter through a summary work. Here, the dissertation also discusses the importance of the Armenians as a people group from a global perspective, and the frequent threats to the integrity and security of their country by the surrounding powers over the centuries. But the most important sub-chapter is the one that explains how Armenians lived after the central and western regions of Armenia were permanently absorbed into the Ottoman Empire in 1639.

For a multidimensional discussion of the minority existence and the Armenian question that unfolded in the 19th century, we have used the work of such distinguished and respected authorities as Hovannasian, Bounmotian, Gazdovits, Kempler, Balakian and de Zayas. Only after this does it turn to a discussion of the genocide events themselves. Indeed, in its second chapter, the dissertation pays attention not only to the extreme nationalist ideology that lay behind the sequence of events, but also discusses the causal links between the different stages of the genocide, with reference to the number of victims. In this way, it describes the two so-called precursors of the genocide, namely the Hamidi and Adana massacres, and then the two phases of the genocide, which was based on a specific, systematic, ethno-religious homogenization: the Young Turk genocide (1915-1918) and the Kemalist massacres (1920-1923). It draws on reference books and studies by authors such as Cohan, Zayas, Kránitz, Marshlian, Aghbashian, Hovhannisyan, Mouradian, Kunth, Akçam, Kévorkian, Hovannasian, Astourian, Merenics, Bounmotian and Balakian, among others.

In the next two chapters, we will look at the perpetrator's position, accountability, recognition and non-recognition of the genocide, and its international consequences, based on the findings of Morgenthau, Akçam, Aghbasian, Çiçek, Çora, Suny, Mouradian, Avedian, Hovannisian, Melson, Hovhannisyan, Poósz and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. As the literature draws parallels between the Armenian tragedy and the Holocaust at several points in its discussion of the events of the Armenian Genocide, this dissertation will approach the two genocides from a comparative perspective in many of these two chapters. Most notably in the sub-chapters that describe the perpetrator, Ottoman Turkish position, their attempts to cover up the events and institutionalized denial. Likewise, in the subsections where recent research on the causes of impunity and the complicity of Imperial Germany is presented, mostly based on the work of Ihrig, Gust, Kieser, Kurt and Kránitz. At the same time, of course, when discussing

the consequences of genocide, it is essential to explore the international forced migration processes and the importance of the work of humanitarian organizations. The works of Arachelian, Baser and Swain, Okkenhaug, Prisac and Xenofontov, Sahakyan, Watenpaugh, Dakessian, Bjørnlund and Prisac have been of great help in this respect.

The next chapter, the sixth, is entirely devoted to the Armenians who became refugees after the genocide, including the policy measures taken at the international level to resettle them. These sub-chapters thus mainly clarify global political, refugee and legal issues, based on the academic works of Lemkin, Jones, Kránitz, Birkás, Dărăban, as well as official documents from the United Nations Secretary General, the UNHCR and the legislation in Hungary and Romania. This section also includes a description of the immigration of Armenians to both Romania and Hungary (including Transylvania), with a special focus on the attitude of the leadership of both countries towards the forced Armenian migrants. The dissertation traces the path of Armenians arriving in the region from the earliest arrivals to the resettlement of their fellow Armenians who were forced to flee after the genocide. In this respect, in addition to the much-mentioned research work of Gazdovits, Dărăban, Prisac, Xenofontov and Kránitz, the experts Kovács, Pál, Szimonján, Ionescu, Nastasă-Kovács and Tarján also provided useful information.

These chapters of the thesis have been elaborated in detail, and this is because in order to discuss the media coverage of post-genocide migration in a meaningful way, we need to first understand the genocide itself. Subsequently, in chapter seven, we summarize, through a thorough literature review, the work of numerous researchers and across a range of disciplines, which authoritative source works are relevant to the chosen topic, and which researchers have previously reached valuable results and conclusions in this area.

All of these authors and their earlier works have been an important point of reference in determining which research methods should be used and, above all, which period should be examined in the light of the press. In the empirical part of the thesis, these were the basis for our choice of six different daily newspapers. In the eighth chapter, on methodology, we describe the excellent applicability of the qualitative content analysis chosen and the advisability of complementing it with a quantitative content analysis based on a complex code sheet. It is therefore used as a complementary supporting method that we believe will further refine and color the results of the research. We also describe the periodical database Arcanum, which provided the press sources for the analysis, and explain in detail why it was necessary to

cover a period of almost fifty years, from 1894 to 1940. Within the framework of the present paper, a total of six newspapers are analyzed during this period: two Romanian newspapers, two Hungarian newspapers and two Hungarian newspapers from Transylvania, the ones that published the most articles on the Armenian refugees. The number and frequency of articles about them was assessed by using a keyword search in the Arcanum database for the term “Armenian refugee” in both Hungarian and Romanian.

The six newspapers were then selected, considering several important criteria: the first was that each of them should be a daily newspaper, and one that was considered a quality newspaper at the time and distributed to a wide readership. Secondly, it was also important that each region should be represented by a pair of newspapers, one conservative and one liberal. According to this screening, my list of newspapers was as follows: the Hungarian press was represented by the conservative Budapest daily *Budapesti Hírlap* and the more liberal *Pesti Napló*; the Romanian press by the conservative *Universul* and the left-wing, democratic *Adevărul*; and the Hungarian press in Transylvania by the conservative, Kolozsvár (Cluj)-based *Ellenzék* daily and the liberal Brassó (Braşov) daily *Brassói Lapok*.

The analysis of the press material is presented separately, in three case studies, in order to make the research more transparent, the results more precise, and the separation of the three regions' press products more comparable. Different thematic categories have been defined to facilitate further interpretation and categorization of the articles. The first of these six categories was entitled *The Representation of the Persecution of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire*, which mainly included articles published at the time of the Hamidian massacres and the Adana massacre. In other words, all accounts of massacres that took place before World War I and the genocide. The newspapers in the pre-war period covered a surprising amount of the cruel fate of the empire's Armenians. These articles – mainly news, editorials, and occasionally a few reports – can generally be said to be high-quality, credible writings, given the historical facts. The figures they gave were largely factual, the events were often portrayed accurately by their correspondents on the ground, and the Armenians were mostly approached with sympathy, empathy and compassion.

The events of World War I fall into the following category. This is the group of events that appeared in the newspapers surveyed in the most diverse way and with the fewest articles. This diversity was, however, at the expense of credible reporting, as the strong military censorship of these articles severely limited what could be published at the time. This also means that this

category shows a significant change in perspective in terms of whether the Armenians' flight from their homeland was credibly reported – or not. Thus, whether the Kingdom of Romania and Hungary at the time were enemies or allies of the Ottoman Empire had a significant impact on the tone of the articles written during the war.

The next category, *Nansen and the League of Nations' International Discourse on Refugees*, can be said to be the most consistent and similar of all the newspapers studied. Since delegates from both states attended the various League of Nations sessions, the news and reports on these were largely identical. Another important aspect is that the articles published were no longer distorted by the existence of wartime censorship by the 1920s.

The next category, *Disputes on the Arrival, Accommodation and Registration of Refugees*, is very wide and varied. In this case, we consider it important to point out first of all that this category not only includes the issues of refugees arriving in Romanian, Transylvanian and Hungarian territories, but also that the papers have provided a European and even global perspective on how different countries have tried to address this problem. Regardless of the fact that they did not write about refugees arriving in their own countries, the journalists' or at least the editorial staff's position on the Armenians' case was clearly visible in these articles.

Understandably, there was also a theme that explored *The Problems of Integration of the Arriving Refugees*. In this category, too, it was not justified to limit the relevant articles to those dealing exclusively with the integration of refugees arriving in Romania and Hungary. Mainly because, unfortunately, too few articles were written on this subject. Therefore, all reports on the integration of Armenians seeking asylum, irrespective of the geographical location where this took place, were included in this section. However, it should be noted that at first glance this category can be rather disappointing. Given the high number of refugees arriving in Romania, the Romanian press would have been expected to follow and report on the refugees' journey to integration. However, few articles on this subject were published, and the reasons for this were explained later.

Lastly, in addition to the above, a sixth category entitled “*Other*” was added, in which each newspaper included articles about Armenian refugees from a different perspective. It is also important to note that for some categories, it was necessary to set up additional content subdivisions for transparency and ease of organization.

These case studies are presented in the following chapters of the thesis, and finally the conclusions of the press research. The first case study (chapter nine) analyses the two national daily newspapers in Budapest, the second (chapter ten) examines the Bucharest daily newspapers, and the last two newspapers representing the Hungarian press in Transylvania are presented in a separate case study (chapter eleven).

It is clear from the research that the four national newspapers reflected about Armenian refugees much more than their Transylvanian counterparts, which can be considered regional. The third case study thus explores a narrower interpretation of the issue and its dissemination to a smaller readership, but the results are certainly interesting given that Transylvania was first under Hungarian and then Romanian rule during the period under study. The biggest difference between the articles in the press corpus is also – and this is the most exciting part of the research – whether military censorship was in force at the time the articles were written. This, in fact, greatly limited and distorted the veracity of the news and events reported, as did the geographical region from which the article was coming. In fact, reports telegraphed from the major cities of the Ottoman Empire and disseminated by Turkish propaganda, and articles taken from the Western press by daily newspapers, paint a very different picture of the Armenians. It is precisely these factors that provide the most valuable and exciting results of the research.

Since no comprehensive research on the topic has ever been carried out in either the Romanian or the Hungarian press, namely the extent to which the contemporary press dealt with the Armenians who became forced migrants after the genocide, the present research topic can be considered innovative and unique.

Keywords:

Armenians, genocide, Armenian genocide, forced migration, press research, First World War

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