

## ЯЗЫКОЗНАНИЕ И ЛИТЕРАТУРОВЕДЕНИЕ

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### THE CONCEPT OF GENOCIDE AS USED IN MASS MEDIA PERTAINING TO THE NAGORNO-KARABAKH PROBLEM: A PRAGMA-COGNITIVE PERSPECTIVE

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#### ABSTRACT

In the paradigm of socio-political developments and dynamics of the modern world, socio-political communication mainly takes place in the domain of media discourse, elevating media to a state of heightened import. Moreover, today the media has become a platform for the realization of political discourse, so although media and politics are defined as separate disciplines, their integrated existence is an established fact. Analysts and journalists often elucidate 'top events' on the platforms of media, which shed light on the understanding of political processes and principles. One of these pressing issues is the problem of Nagorno-Karabakh, relevant not only to the Karabakh people themselves and the Armenian society as a whole, but also to the international community.

The present work is devoted to the study of the concept of “Genocide” in English-language media texts regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh problem as viewed from a pragma-cognitive standpoint. This approach makes it possible to decipher the cognitive aspect of “genocide-in-context” and thus to identify the kernel and the nexus of both language production and comprehension.

**Keywords:** Nagorno-Karabakh, blockade, genocide, concept, media, pragma-cognitive approach, addresser, addressee, production, comprehension.

### **Introduction: a brief geohistorical overview of Nagorno-Karabakh**

Nagorno-Karabakh<sup>1</sup>, a region located in the South Caucasus, has always been at the center of the regional interests of Russia, Iran and Turkey, and multiple blood-filled wars. It has also been a venue of geopolitical dissension between Russia and the West. The geopolitical implications of Nagorno-Karabakh, in the course of its history, resulted in the control of its territory by different powers, notably the Persian Empire (1748–1813) and Imperial Russia (1813–1822).

In 1921 the iniquitous decision of Stalin to place Nagorno-Karabakh under the administration of Soviet Azerbaijan, as a consequence, led to escalating conflicts and wars between the Azerbaijanis and the ethnic Armenians.

The Nagorno-Karabakh problem is regarded as controversial, and its media coverage, particularly the developments in Nagorno-Karabakh after 2020, is news-worthy and valuable to research. In this undertaking we have raised the following basic issues:

1. Why is the concept of “Genocide” repeatedly used in media in its reportage of the news in regard to Nagorno-Karabakh after 2020?
2. Is there a causal relationship between the tragic developments in Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020-2023 and the Armenian Genocide in 1915?
3. What intentional stances do the media analysts put forward?

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<sup>1</sup> Nagorno-Karabakh, historically named Artsakh, has always been an integral part of historical Armenia. Cf. Nagorno-Karabagh: Legal Aspects.  
URL: <https://www.mfa.am/filemanager/Statics/nk-eng-2015.pdf>

4. What should the publicly anticipated response be to the media coverage of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem?

### **A pragma-cognitive approach to mass media**

It is an established fact that modern avenues of media are an integral part of human existence. Their role in performing the essential function of conveying information about events happening in the surrounding world cannot be overestimated. Due to the language means used in the media, every constituent of a society can be immersed in the vortex of events and relive those events at varying levels of perception.

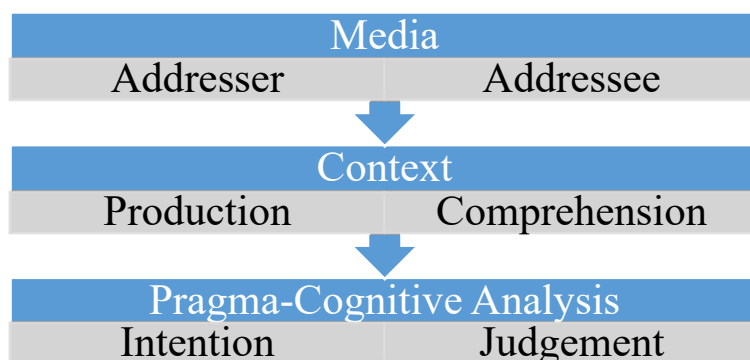
A media report is required to be objective. Nevertheless, journalists conflate their “truth”, which may be biased or unbiased, and the spectrum created by their reportage formulates the grounds of public sentiments. Different, complex messages, produced in social media, particularly those intertwined with political processes, should be designed with a genuine intent to satisfy the readers’ anticipation of truth, to display to them the veracity of the presented ideas and facts. However, it’s not that simple, for producing, reading and understanding media articles presupposes an availability of not only knowledge and skills but also accuracy.

The aim of the present research is to study the process, through which media producers contextualize their messages, i.e. the way they choose this or that frame to transmit their message. As analysts and journalists often aim at triggering a reader’s emotions, arousing their feelings and propagating this or that idea, thus shaping people’s thoughts and attitudes, the use of relevant vocabulary as well as different rhetorical devices is considered native to media texts.

Through the application of the pragmalinguistic method [1] we try to study a corpus of English-language media texts liable to infer the purport of the report and possible social repercussions and then, viewing the text from a cognitive-linguistic standpoint [2], we make an attempt to expose the strategy of using the concept of “Genocide” to bring out the mental correlative response between an author and a reader.

While pragmatics deals with the intentional choice of language means that make a deep impact on the recipient by evoking certain feelings, ideas and behavior [3], cognitive pragmatics, according to H. Schmid [4], focuses on the cognitive aspects of the construal of meaning-in-context. This pertains to both, language production and comprehension.

A media text reveals the author's perception of the world through explicit and implicit language means. Employed language elements, directly or indirectly, convey the addresser's intentions and conceptual information appealing to an emotional response from the readers, who react to the imparted information through the mechanisms of their emotive, evaluative and attitudinal comprehension.



*Figure 1. Represents the main constituents of the pragma-cognitive analysis of media texts.*

Thus, a mediatext is a multicomponent discourse process involving an addresser and an addressee. In the production process an addresser sets his/her intention whereas an addressee is to comprehend the content of the mediatext and form a judgement. Production process (pragmatic) consequentially interflows into comprehension process (cognitive), more importantly the cognitive process is not static, it activates multiple elements (language, context, etc.) in the media discourse, which eventually result in “spontaneous/automatic” and “directive” mindset stance.

The employment of continuous sampling strategy and consideration of more than 40 English-language media texts from 2019 to 2023 on the Nagorno-Karabakh problem from a pragma-cognitive viewpoint, help reveal a high frequency use of the concept of “Genocide” that cannot be regarded as random.

It is also important to note that construing the news on the Nagorno-Karabakh problem, the reporters equate the situation in Artsakh with the 1915 massacres and deportations of Armenians from Western Armenia.

We have made an attempt to categorize the considered media texts into pro Armenian, pro Azerbaijani and neutral, which show the value orientations of the addressers relating to the Nagorno-Karabakh problem. Pro Azerbaijani media journalists tend to blame the Armenians for the latest developments and current situation. They support the idea of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and deplore indirectly the unwillingness of the Armenian side to compromise. Pro Armenian analysts sustain the fact that Nagorno-Karabakh is a part of ancient Armenia that has always been inhabited by ethnic Armenians. They pinpoint the readers’ attention to the unjust and unwarranted resolution of the Soviet authorities in 1921 to integrate Nagorno-Karabakh into the Republic of Azerbaijan, transmitting historically documented information and highlighting people’s firsthand stories concerning the situation in the region. Neutral media texts present the authors’ impartial and objective attitude to the problem, thus giving the readers an opportunity to orientate themselves in the informational crisis of the given problem. The main idea of such texts invokes the self-conscience of the two peoples (the Armenians and the Azerbaijanis) and calls for concessions to restore relations between the countries.

Adhering to the opinion of G. Salomon [5] that there are no “raw” messages, which asserts that an idea once made into a communicable message is a coded idea, we have found reasons to believe that in this case, the concept of “Genocide” in the media texts on the Nagorno-Karabakh problem can be regarded as a coded idea to be deciphered by the recipient.

Our survey and analysis of the English-language media texts regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh problem, and the opportunity of categorizing them as pro Armenian, pro Azerbaijani and neutral [6], makes

it possible to reveal the addresser's and addressee's attitude towards the problem under examination.

### **The Concept of Genocide**

The notion of 'concept' which, largely speaking, is an abstract idea derived from concrete instances, has been studied by different scholars in different disciplines, including philosophy [7], linguistics [8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13], etc. In the framework of cognitive linguistics, J.R. Taylor [14] interprets it as a structured fragment of the language community's experience of perceiving the surrounding world symbolized through language units (see also [15, 16, 17, 18]).

Cognitive studies help reveal the correlation of linguistic phenomena and the accumulated human knowledge based on objective reality. According to V.A. Maslova [19], "a concept is a semantic unit that has linguo-cultural features and characterizes speakers of any chosen ethno-culture. While reflecting an ethnic mindset, a concept marks the ethnic language world image and serves as the so-called brick to build *the house of our being*".

Concept, as a basic unit of cognitive linguistics, deals with peoples' cognition, with what develops their mindset and closely connects their life experience and mental actions. Concept preserves information about reality and models a perception of the world. The concept of any given word is determined through its semantic and associative fields.

"Genocide" is an important component of the 20<sup>th</sup> century discourse [20], in particular of modern Armenian history and politics, for the Genocide inflicted upon the Armenian people at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has become an inalienable part of its historical memory, generating serious material, psychological, moral, cultural and political damage, around two million physical victims, taking into account the chronology of the violent actions and massacres in Ottoman Turkey at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There is no surprise that the concept of "Genocide" evokes deeply painful sensations and is associated with the tragic fate of the Armenian people.

Collins English Dictionary [21] defines “Genocide” as “*the deliberate murder of a whole community or race*” and presents the list of synonymous words and expressions such as “*massacre, killing, murder, slaughter, holocaust, ethnic cleansing (euphemistic), carnage, extermination, mass murder, annihilation, pogrom, butchery, mass slaughter*”. Additionally, “*the crime of intentionally destroying part or all of a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group, by killing people or by other methods*” [22], according to the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 9 December 1948 and ratified in 1951, ‘Genocide’ means “any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group” (UN Convention on the Prevention and ..., 1951).

For the present article, the following tome is of import: “The Armenian Genocide: A Linguocognitive Perspective” by S. Gasparyan [23], which elucidates the concept of “Genocide” perspicuously. This research presents an analytical review of different interpretations of the Armenian Genocide from a linguo-cognitive standpoint that gives us a chance to study the textual mechanisms of expressing various attitudes towards the issue, and reveals the implicit intents of the authors, often meant to veil the pre-planned genocidal nature of the unconscionable events at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Western Armenia. The semantic field of the word “genocide” which, though equivalent to the Armenian term *yeghern*, and, however, a preferable choice in the field of politics and international law, covers such notions as: “*destruction of language, carnage, massacre, mass killing, victimization, forced deportation, annihilation of a race, ethnic cleansing, racial extermination, race murder, slaughter, destruction of religion*”. The application of these interpretations of the concept “Genocide” to the situation as practiced in Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) for

centuries, fosters cognizance toward the perpetual Genocide of Armenians that, however unfathomable it may be, has stretched into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the century of democracy, tolerance and mutual understanding.

### **A pragma-cognitive view of media coverage of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem (finding and evaluating)**

In this part of the article, we intend to study English-language media texts pertaining to the Nagorno-Karabakh problem, texts that have been selected and analyzed from a pragma-cognitive standpoint. Our observations reveal the embodiment of the concept ‘Genocide’ in said media texts, which invites our attention to the necessity of critical scrutiny. One of the articles, entitled “Genocide Warning in Nagorno-Karabakh”, was issued on 18 September 2023, a day before yet another aggression of Azerbaijan was inflicted upon the peaceful population of Nagorno-Karabakh. The article serves as an alarm, warning of a preconceived attack, and as a denouncement of the mass killing of ethnic Armenians. Caroline Cox, the author of the article under study, mentions the menace articulated by Elchin Amirbayov, representing the Azerbaijani president: *“a genocide may happen in Nagorno-Karabakh if its leaders fail to submit to Azerbaijan’s demands”*. Is the word “Genocide” intentionally used in this context? The answer is a definite “Yes”, for the speaker is well aware that deeply set in the cognitive space of the Armenian mind, the use of the word “Genocide” generates anguish and bereavement. The repeated use of the word ‘Genocide’ in the Azerbaijani leaders’ speeches, as represented in the article under study, is meant to influence not only the consciousness of the Armenian population of Artsakh but the Armenian people at large. The excerpt is a conditional sentence in which the modal verb “may” expresses the possibility of mass killing as a consequence of defiance (*the Armenian leaders’ failure to submit to Azerbaijan’s demands*). Elchin Amirbayov’s intention is to exert psychological pressure on the Armenian people, to induce in them a panic, and to place the responsibility of the results of Azerbaijan’s threat of possible genocidal actions entirely on the Armenian side. Intentionally delivering his words as a warning, he displays his



anticipation of provoking the Armenian audience's positive response. He can guess that encircled by enemy forces in 2020, having lost the war and having Artsakh completely blockaded by Azerbaijan since December 12, 2022, Armenia is at a dead end.

Of great interest is Luis Moreno Ocampo's report (2023), in which he expresses his expert opinion as the former chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. The frequency of usage of the term "Genocide" in his speech is very high – 124 occurrences. The key point of it is in the title "Genocide against Armenians in 2023", with its focus on the concept of "Genocide". Hence, it is not by chance that numerous media actors have referred to his report, expounding upon his words of condemnation, themselves in turn using the term "Genocide" in reference to the 10-month blockade of Nagorno-Karabakh. The usage of the term in these media texts is specified by the semantic component of implementing other than killing methods for intentional collective destruction of part of a national group (Cambridge Dictionary, 2024; UN Convention, 1951).

The following excerpt is taken from the Guardian (The Guardian View on Nagorno-Karabakh: A Ceasefire is Needed, But It's not a Solution, 2023).

*Luis Moreno Ocampo, the former chief prosecutor of the international criminal court, suggested it amounted to genocide through the "secret weapon" of starvation.*

The concept of "Genocide" is disclosed by means of the conceptual metaphor "weapon of starvation". The word "weapon" is presented in Cambridge Dictionary (2024) as: *"an object used in fighting or war, such as a gun or a bomb, or something used against someone"*, whereas the interpretation of "starvation" runs as follows: *"the state of having no food for a long period, often causing death"*. The metaphor is used not only as a rhetorical or stylistic device, but also as a means of constructing and transmitting the significance of political events and processes. The metaphorical link of the source (weapon) and target (starvation) domains offers a full scope for understanding the situation in Artsakh. The adjective

“secret” (secret weapon) underlines Azerbaijan’s hidden policy of extermination enacted upon ethnic Armenians who have been living in the cradle of their ancestors for centuries.

The reasonable part of the international community for whom the genocidal tendencies of Azerbaijan are no longer shrouded in the veil of false democracy, for whom the Azerbaijani leaders’ hate discourse obviously provokes aggression and hostility, a real and consistent threat to Artsakh Armenians and Armenians in general, continue the discussion of these questions in mass media intensively. Nicholas Kristof (“Another Ethnic Cleansing Could Be Underway – and We’re Not Paying Attention”, 2023) discusses Ocampo’s core ideas in The New York Times, while inserting a range of emotive phrases (*genocide emergency, active genocide alert, the risk of genocide*) to support the evenhanded stance of well-known international organisations such as the Group Genocide Watch, the Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention, and the International Association of Genocide Scholars towards the Azerbaijani aggression. In these examples, the functioning of the words “*emergency*”, “*alert*”, “*risk*” in combination with the concept of “Genocide” notifies the audience of extreme danger.

Siobhan Nash-Marshall (“A Second Armenian Genocide”, 2020) draws a parallel between the Armenian Genocide in 1915 and the situation in Artsakh, labeling it as “A Second Armenian Genocide”. Peter Pinedo, citing the opinion of Siobhan Nash-Marshall, supports her idea in his article (“Destruction’ of Ethnic Armenians is Imminent”, 2023).

*For those Armenians who choose to leave, they “will bear permanent scars akin to those of the descendants of genocide survivors”.*

The sentence alludes to the aftermath of the Armenian Genocide, soundly reasoned by the idiom “to bear scars”, which is entered in the Cambridge Dictionary (2024) as: “*to still suffer emotional pain from something unpleasant that happened in the past*”. The collocation “*permanent scars*” means that the wounds have not been stitched up, as shown in the fact that the Genocide of 1915 has not been recognized and

condemned throughout the world. Moreover, the policy conducted in 1915 by Turkey is still being practiced, this time by its ally Azerbaijan.

Nathalie Tocci in her article (“Nagorno-Karabakh’s Tragedy Has Echoes of Europe’s Dark Past. But a Remedy Lies in Europe Too”, 2023) writes:

*Furthermore, hatred between Armenians and Azerbaijanis runs deep, far deeper than that between Georgians and Abkhazians or Ossetians, or Moldovans and Transnistrians. While distinct from their relationship with Azerbaijan, this hatred is tied to the even deeper wounds surrounding the 1915 Armenian genocide, unrecognized by Turkey, which has welcomed Azerbaijan’s move in the enclave. While incomparable in violence and magnitude, the exodus of Karabakh Armenians from Turkic-Azerbaijan will probably end up being woven into a larger and older story of Armenian victimhood and dispossession. Far from healing, Armenian wounds are bleeding again.*

The conceptual meaning of the word “Genocide” in the above fragment is revealed through the evaluative meaning of the constituent elements *hatred, wound, violence, exodus, victimhood, dispossession and bleeding* retracing the dark days of 1915 in parallel. Thus, in mass media as a linguistic and social phenomenon, reporters deliver news through explicit and implicit means, trying to construct in the minds of the mass public a judgement concerning the political events. The pragmatic analysis of the above media texts regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh problem reveals the meaningful use of the concept of “Genocide”; being the central idea, it is ultimately directed to guide public consciousness. The above-adduced media material is positioned as pro Armenian and signals the impending possibility of the conduction of a premeditated felonious policy and a relapse into genocidal actions against the Armenian people.

The pro Azerbaijani assessment can be sifted out from some media texts, as for example from “Azerbaijan’s Lachin Road Conundrum” (2022). The author of the article argues that the Armenians juggle with the concept

of “Genocide” (*from the beginning of the conflict at the end of the 1980s, Armenia built a narrative around imminent genocide and ethnic cleansing*). He not only condones the blockade of Karabakh but explicates the orthopraxy of such a decision as well. He asserts commentaries on the illegal exploitation of natural resources by local Armenians in the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan and the equitable protest of Azerbaijani ecological activists who blocked the only road connecting Karabakh with Armenia and the outside world. He states that the road was used for the illegal transfer of military supplies and personnel. A consequential point of the article is as follows: *Experts who wish to spend some time considering this issue might discover that the conundrum around the Lachin road has deeper and wider implications, as well as a historical context.*

*Lachin was the first region outside the former Nagorno-Karabakh autonomous oblast that Armenia occupied on May 18, 1992, in the course of the bloody conflict with Azerbaijan. Armenian nationalists, who launched the irredentist project to unite Azerbaijan’s Karabakh autonomy with Armenia under the slogan of miatsum (unification) in 1987–1988, regarded establishing this road connection as a vital strategic goal. Thus, Lachin became the “miatsum road” that enabled military supply. In April 1993, Armenia attacked from two directions: Armenia proper and Karabakh, and another Azerbaijani region, Kelbajar, located between the former autonomy and Armenia.*

As can be seen in the above sample, the author uses the word combination “*miatsum road*”, the concept (miatsum) which, coined in the late 1980s and early 1990s, stands for an Armenian idea and movement based on the principles of liberty and unification with motherland Armenia. In fact and effect, the author’s statements concerning ecology, weaponry transfer and so on are internally inconsistent with the main idea of the argument “*miatsum road*”. He exhorts political actors of the international community to decipher the conundrum and accept this reality that symbolically breaks the Armenian

national ideology carried out for 30 years. It is worth mentioning that the metaphoric potential of the word *conundrum* is realized in the title of the article, hinting at the hidden incentive of this political decision.

Some political media texts may seem neutral, as the authors attempt to review the latest events in Karabakh objectively, nevertheless the misuse of some lexical elements are bright examples of word abuse [24]. For example, the authors of the article entitled “Nagorno-Karabakh Tests the Biden Administration” (2023) not only discredit the genocidal policy conducted by Azerbaijan, but they also play on some words which testify to a hidden pro Azerbaijani stance. The following example shows the denial of genocide implicitly:

*But Armenian diaspora groups are frustrated that the administration refuses to call the situation as a genocide, and leaders in the Armenian community argue the situation conforms with definitions in international law.*

The following two passages from the same article demonstrate other obvious cases of word abuse, or otherwise stated a thoughtful and intentional displacement of political terms.

*1. Two Biden administration officials are in Armenia today, as the U.S. struggles to defuse a worsening humanitarian crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh and prevent a genocide against the region’s Armenian population.*

*2. After Azerbaijan launched an “anti-terrorist operation” last week in the territory against Armenian separatists, thousands fled to Armenia, as our own GABRIEL GAVIN reported Saturday. Armenian officials are bracing for more refugees to arrive in the coming days.*

In the above-adduced excerpts we are confronted with the words and word combinations *region’s Armenian population*, *anti-terrorist operation* and *separatist*. They are pure examples of language word abuse, tucked

inside euphemisms. Their counterparts may be regarded *indigenous Armenian population, war and liberator* if considered from neutral or pro Armenian standpoints.

We adhere to the opinion of V.A.Maslova [24], who believes that lexical manipulation is implemented by means of the easy change of subjective for objective and vice versa. She observes that politics, like poetry, relates to the register of figment and play, as it contains surreal features.

In another article entitled “What Cultural Genocide Looks Like for Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh” (2023) another very important aspect of the concept ‘Genocide’ – culture is placed at the centre of attention. Words and expressions like *monuments, statues, a spectacular landscape of 16<sup>th</sup>-century Armenian tombstones, the Church of the Mother of God, the Cathedral of Ghazanchetsots in Shushi, the Armenian cupola, Christian Temple, cultural heritage, the archives, artifacts, the 13<sup>th</sup>-century monasteries of Dadivank and Gandzasar, medieval Armenian architecture, Armenian inscriptions, khachkars*, associated with the field of “culture”, characterize the Armenian ethnos and its religion. The implementation of the idea of Cultural Genocide, the unveiled criticism against the brutal devastation of the values of Christian culture, are embodied in the text by the following linguistic units: *was erased from the face of the earth by Azerbaijan, were completely scrubbed from the landscape using earthmoving equipment like bulldozers, was shelled and vandalized with graffiti, the brazenness of these actions, the annihilation of millennia of Armenian life in Artsakh, cultural erasure, to destroy, the destruction, from vandalism to complete effacement, a sinister way to remove, gouging, sandblasting, removing, dehumanizing, largescale looting and vandalization* that indicate the genocidal actions committed by Azerbaijan against the centuries-old specimens of Armenian civilization and world civilization at large.

While western journalists and politicians were sounding the alarm, employing the term “Cultural Genocide” as a powerful rhetorical tool, the Azerbaijanis put their vandalism into practice, thus stirring the historical memory of the readers and reminding them of the details of the erasure of

tens of thousands of UNESCO-protected ancient stone carvings in Nakhichevan and Western Armenia.

The article “Monumental Loss: Azerbaijan and the Worst Cultural Genocide of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” published in 2019 sounds an appeal to the international community. The journalist believes that the analogous scenario of Nakhichevan is clearly repeated in Artsakh, and that since the Armenian cultural heritage is unique and invaluable, it cannot be left unprotected. A few more decades, and Azerbaijan will not hesitate to repeat its state-level denial of the well-known fact that Armenians have been the indigenous population in Artsakh and have always lived there. Hence, the erasure of all existent Armenian traces from the territory of Artsakh, the vandalization of Armenian tombstones, the distortion of the historical significance and function of Armenian sacraments and artifacts are actions of the longstanding genocidal policy of Azerbaijan.

Particular attention is focused on the term “ethnic cleansing” which appears concurrently in media texts on the Nagorno-Karabakh problem. The combination “ethnic cleansing” is explained as: *‘the organized, often violent attempt by a particular cultural or racial group to completely remove from a country or area all members of a different group’* (Cambridge Dictionary, 2024)<sup>2</sup>. In the media text under study this term is used as a euphemism for the malicious crime brutally practiced against one hundred and twenty thousand people, including thirty thousand children. Multiple videos were uploaded to social platforms containing horrific scenes of violence including the torture of young Armenian soldiers, the humiliation and killing of civilians, aimed at undermining the morale of not only the ethnic Armenians of Artsakh but the Armenian nation as a whole.

Here are some examples from the media text “Death of the Armenian Dream in Nagorno-Karabakh was Predictable but not Inevitable” (2023):

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<sup>2</sup> It should be mentioned, however, that Professor of Politics Alan Whitehorn believes that the use of the inherently pejorative concept of “ethnic cleansing”, relating to the targeted victim group, “incorporates a genocidaire’s language about ridding a polity/society of impure or diseased elements”. He thinks it wiser to substitute “ethnic cleansing” for phrases like “forced ethnic removal/displacement”, the employment of which will be “more suitable and less problematic” for “scholarly humanist analysis and prescription”. See [25].

1. *Rather, greater flexibility from both sides – and less demonization of the other – could have prevented the catastrophic collapse of Artsakh, as Armenians called their autonomous republic, and with it the effective ethnic cleansing of people from lands they had lived in for millennia.*
2. *This ethnic cleansing of Nagorno-Karabakh – first through hunger, then by force of arms – completed the Azerbaijani victory.*

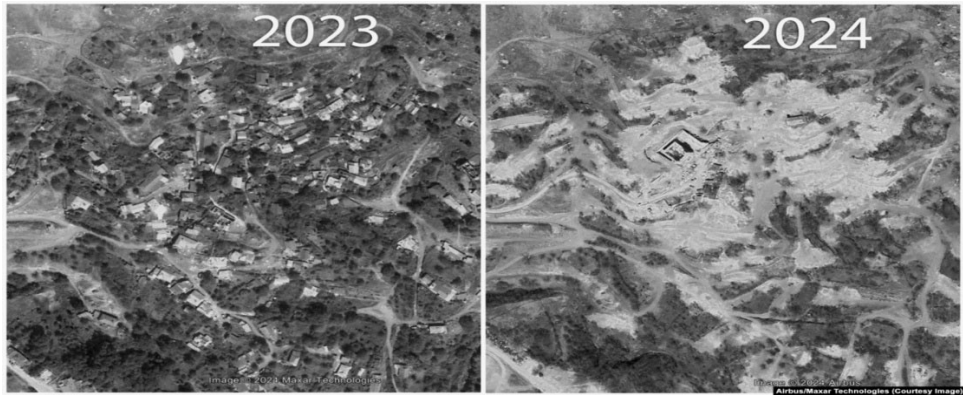
The article these excerpts are taken from is rather neutral; in order not to sound exceptionally harsh the author uses the mild alternative of the concept “Genocide”, employing the political word combination “ethnic cleansing”. In the first example above, the political term is preceded by the adjective “effective” which potentiates the meaning of the euphemism “ethnic cleansing”. It indicates the fact that the analyst apperceives the severity of the situation. The second example is supported by naming methods of Genocide “*first through hunger*” and then “*by force of arms*”; thus, the author indirectly discloses extreme psychological abuse and physical annihilation through these expressions.

Sporadically conjoined usage of both of these terms – “genocide” and “ethnic cleansing” can be observed in other media texts as well. Generally speaking, ‘ethnic cleansing’ is one of the acts of genocide, but the concurrent functioning of two similar terms (or according to Whitehorn’s reasonable assessment, seemingly similar) (Whitehorn, Ibid.) in one sentence intensifies their meaning and significance as in: *Ethnic cleansing and genocide, along with forced assimilation, have historically been effective tools in the arsenal of nation-makers.*

Amos Chapple (“Church, Entire Village “Erased” from Azerbaijan’s Recaptured Nagorno-Karabakh”, 2024) alluding to recent facts from Nagorno-Karabakh, covers the erasure of the village Karintak and the church Kanach Zham in the winter of 2023-24, specifying the devastations in the pronouncements and proofs of analysts. Yet the author takes a neutral stance in designating the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh “internationally recognized as Azerbaijani land”. Implications of this can be seen in his use of the verbs “recapture” and “retake”, defined as “*to take something into*



*your possession again, especially by force*” and *‘to take something such as a place or position into your possession again, often by force, after losing possession of it’* accordingly (Cambridge Dictionary, 2024).



*Picture 1. Images showing the village of Karintak before and after its erasure.*

Unlike many journalists, the author eludes the concept of “Cultural Genocide”, using the words *to erase*, *to demolish*, *the destruction*, and so on instead. Examples of euphemistic periphrasis are as follows:

1. *Today that church, built by Armenians in the 19th century, no longer exists.*
2. *Two kilometers south of the erased church, satellite images released in April reveal that an entire village appears to have been razed to the ground.*

## **Conclusion**

The pragma-cognitive analysis of the English-language media texts (from 2019 to 2023) pertaining to the Nagorno-Karabakh problem, shows the high-frequency usage of the concept “Genocide” which cannot be regarded as random. The Armenian Genocide is a national precedent phenomenon generating painful feelings; the aftermath of it is the concept of “victim”, which has intruded the mental space of not only Armenians,

but the international community as well. In this regard, the journalists and analysts, elucidating the news on the Nagorno-Karabakh problem, use this concept regarding the 1915 massacres and deportations as identical to the situation in Artsakh. Importantly, the concept was used before the war in Artsakh (2019). The high frequency of the concept of ‘Genocide’ throws out a delicate hint that the outcome of Nagorno-Karabakh was predictable.

In parallel, the euphemism “ethnic cleansing” is used in media texts, still of rarer occurrence than the concept of “Genocide”; this fact provides insights into the Nagorno-Karabakh problem, particularly the forced expatriation of the ethnic Armenians from Artsakh. The categorization of the media texts into pro Armenian, pro Azerbaijani and neutral shows the value orientations of the addressers relating to the Nagorno-Karabakh problem.

Pro Azerbaijani media journalists (13%) tend to charge the Armenians as responsible for the latest developments and the resultant ongoing situation. They support the idea of Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity and accuse, directly and indirectly, the Armenian side of an unwillingness to compromise.

Pro Armenian analysts (41%) sustain the fact that ethnic Armenians have always inhabited Nagorno-Karabakh, as it is a part of ancient Armenia. They pinpoint the readers’ attention on the unjust and unwarranted resolution of the Soviet authorities to integrate Nagorno-Karabakh into the Republic of Azerbaijan as an original prompt in the conflict. The authors transmit reasoned, reliable information and highlight verified firsthand stories concerning the region from its ancestral inhabitants.

Neutral media texts (46%) present the authors’ impartial and objective attitude to the problem, in an effort to provide the readers an opportunity to orientate themselves in the information space of the given crisis. The primary fulcrum of such texts invokes the consciences of the two peoples, calling for an ability to make concessions in an apparent hope for a restoration of relations between the two countries.

The approach used in this study can serve as a foundation for further research on the concept of Genocide in mass media, by including other geographic areas in which this serious problem has occurred. It may provide

a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon and the employment of the concept in mass media, thus revealing the possible psychological influence of media stance on the perception of the mass audience.

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## КОНЦЕПТ ГЕНОЦИДА В СМИ, ОСВЕЩАЮЩИХ ПРОБЛЕМУ НАГОРНОГО КАРАБАХА: ПРАГМА-КОГНИТИВНЫЙ ПОДХОД

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### АННОТАЦИЯ

В условиях современных социально-политических процессов коммуникация все чаще осуществляется в пространстве медиадискурса, что придает средствам массовой информации особую значимость. Сегодня медиа не только отра-

жают, но и формируют политический дискурс, стирая границы между журналистикой и политикой. Аналитики и журналисты используют медиаплатформы для интерпретации и освещения ключевых событий, тем самым влияя на общественное восприятие политических событий и процессов. Одной из таких острых и актуальных тем, имеющих международное значение, является проблема Нагорного Карабаха, волнующая как народ Карабаха и армянское общество, так и мировое сообщество.

Данное исследование посвящено анализу концепта *геноцид* в англоязычных медиатекстах, касающихся проблемы Нагорного Карабаха в **прагма-когнитивной парадигме**. Такой подход позволяет выявить, как концепт когнитивно формируется и реализуется в контексте, раскрывая глубинные механизмы продуцирования и восприятия дискурса, связанных с понятием *геноцид*.

**Ключевые слова:** Нагорный Карабах, блокада, геноцид, концепт, медиа-дискурс, прагма-когнитивный подход, адресант, адресат, продуцирование, восприятие.