

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX

2006/2007

**The Development
of Sustainable
Independent Media
in Europe and Eurasia**



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The Development of Sustainable Independent Media in Europe and Eurasia
www.irex.org/msi

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USAID

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IREX is an international nonprofit organization specializing in education, independent media, Internet development, and civil society programs. Through training, partnerships, education, research, and grant programs, IREX develops the capacity of individuals and institutions to contribute to their societies.

Since its founding in 1968, IREX has supported over 20,000 students, scholars, policymakers, business leaders, journalists, and other professionals. Currently, IREX is implementing 40 programs in more than 50 countries with offices in 17 countries across Europe, Eurasia, the Middle East and North Africa, and the United States. IREX serves as a major resource for universities, governments, and the corporate sector in understanding international political, social, economic, and business developments.

For the most part, the “haves” live in Baku, and the “have-nots” live outside of Baku. The same holds true for the media, with the nationally telecast television stations originating their signals from the capital city, the major newspapers based there, and the only radio stations in the country located within the confines of Baku’s borders.



AZERBAIJAN

The Chinese have a wonderful adage, “We live in interesting times; we just wish they weren’t so interesting.” As far as the media are concerned, Azerbaijan is an interesting country.

The country is divided into “haves” and “have-nots.” For the most part, the “haves” live in Baku, and the “have-nots” live outside of Baku. The same holds true for the media, with the nationally telecast television stations originating their signals from the capital city, the major newspapers based there, and the only radio stations in the country located within the confines of Baku’s borders. Estimated advertising revenue is somewhere between \$26,000,000 and \$32,000,000, according to two surveys¹, and less than 2 percent of that money reaches beyond Baku. The average regional television station in the regions subsists on \$1,500 per month, discounting grants from donors. The regional television stations, while not exactly independent, were originally owned by individuals. But it is reported that the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, a nongovernmental organization (NGO) named after the former leader of the country and the father of the current president and administered by the wife of the sitting ruler, is purchasing equity positions in some of the stations.² In a country as wealthy as Azerbaijan, it is surmised by many that the Foundation is not buying these stations to improve its financial position, especially when one considers the lack of revenue.

Newspapers in Baku are divided into pro-government (meaning in favor of Heydar Aliyev’s party, YAP) and the opposition, with one or two operating within the intersecting circles. It is rumored that each day, members of the Presidential Apparatus meet to decide what headlines will adorn which newspaper. Supposedly that same group controls advertising in the newspapers by means of an “approved” list of publications. A negative word or inference about the current president or any member of his family can get you removed from that list, initiate a libel suit, or even warrant a visit from the local constabulary. In one case, one of the opposition newspapers, *Azadliq*, was evicted from the premises it had held for 15 years, a property that was ceded to it during the administration of President Elchibay in 1992. Oddly enough, the government managed to find the newspaper another location after an outcry from the foreign community.

¹ Yeni Nesil, 2006 estimated advertising revenue at \$26,000,000. Najar Najarov, 2006 estimated advertising revenue at \$32,000,000

² Lenkeran TV 100%, Xhaxhmaz TV (uncertain %), Mingechevir TV 51.

AZERBAIJAN AT A GLANCE

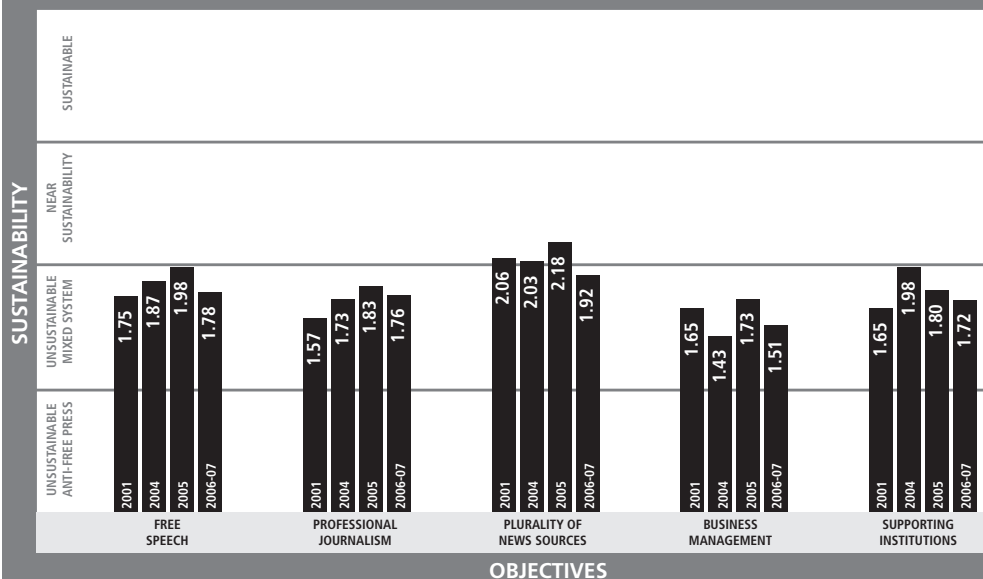
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 8.4 million (State Statistical Committee, 2005)
- > **Capital city:** Baku
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Azerbaijani (90%), Dagestani (3.2%), Russian (2.5%), Armenian (2%), other (2.3%). It must be noted that the Armenian population resides in the Azerbaijani territory of Nagarno Karabakh.
- > **Religions (% of population):** Muslim 93.4%, Russian Orthodox 2.5%, Armenian Orthodox 2.3%, other 1.8%. Again, the Armenian Orthodox are located in the Nagarno Karabakh.
- > **Languages (% of population):** Azerbaijani 89%, Russian 3%, Armenian 2%, other 6%
- > **GNI (2006-Atlas):** 15.712 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2007)
- > **GNI per capita (2006-PPP):** \$5,960 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2007)
- > **Literacy rate (% of population):** 97%. This statistic may hold true for the capital city of Baku but the regions of Azerbaijan lack the educational resources of the capital. (Ministry of Education of Azerbaijan)
- > **President or top authority:** President Ilham Aliyev

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:**
 - Print:** 3,000+ registered publications but are productions of the Azerbaijani government.
 - Radio:** 9 covering most of the Azerbaijan territory through relays and satellite.
 - Television:** 6 national, 6 regional
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** Difficult to approximate, as numbers are not readily available. The most widely read paper was *Realny Azerbaijan*, unfortunately that newspaper recently ceased publication when its editor was sentenced to thirty months in prison.
- > **Broadcast ratings:** Numbers not readily available.
- > **News agencies:** Turan, Trend, APA, and Day.Az. Day.Az is the most widely read of the group perhaps because it is a free service, while both Turan and Trend are subscription based. The government has its own service called AzerTag.
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:**
 - TV:** More than \$26 million (2004 est.). Numbers estimated as much higher now. Newspaper: Approx. \$500,000.
 - Radio:** Minor.
 - Internet usage:** 300,000 (2004 est.). Current numbers estimated to be much higher.

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: AZERBAIJAN



Unsustainable, Anti-Free Press (0-1):

Country does not meet or only minimally meets objectives. Government and laws actively hinder free media development, professionalism is low, and media-industry activity is minimal.

Unsustainable Mixed System (1-2):

Country minimally meets objectives, with segments of the legal system and government opposed to a free media system. Evident progress in free-press advocacy, increased professionalism, and new media businesses may be too recent to judge sustainability.

Near Sustainability (2-3):

Country has progressed in meeting multiple objectives, with legal norms, professionalism, and the business environment supportive of independent media. Advances have survived changes in government and have been codified in law and practice. However, more time may be needed to ensure that change is enduring and that increased professionalism and the media business environment are sustainable.

Sustainable (3-4):

Country has media that are considered generally professional, free, and sustainable, or to be approaching these objectives. Systems supporting independent media have survived multiple governments, economic fluctuations, and changes in public opinion or social conventions.

Television in Baku is not without its pitfalls, either. There are six television stations headquartered in the city, including the state broadcaster, AZTV, and what the government calls the public broadcaster, Ictimayi. Of the other four, three of them are directly controlled by either members of the current government or close associates of it. The fourth, one of the most mature of the stations and financially successful, ran into difficulty this past year when it became the target of the National Television and Radio Council (NTRC) for “airing too many commercials.”³ While it may be true that ANS did exceed the limit, it was not unique in this practice but was the only one closed for overachieving. The NTRC was forced to rescind its decision after the foreign community came to the aid of the only “independent” station in the city. However, in retaliation, the NTRC has refused to renew the license of ANS and has put it out for tender. It is rumored that the new owner will be a close associate of the president’s family.

The score for Azerbaijan declined slightly this year, and a look at the past six years shows basic stagnation in the Media Sustainability Index (MSI) score for the country. Azerbaijan scored a 1.74 in 2001, and it also scored a 1.74 in 2006.

OBJECTIVE 1: FREE SPEECH

Azerbaijan Objective Score: 1.78/4.00

There was little real change in the legal and regulatory field this year, and the score remained effectively stagnant. The legislation of Azerbaijan acknowledges that freedom of speech is a right given to every citizen. In reality there are those who are sacrosanct when it comes to criticism, and the penalties for crossing those lines can be onerous. The President of the Republic is considered beyond reproach and cannot be criticized. The result can be both fine and imprisonment. However, to date, the current leader of the state has not invoked any litigation against any of his detractors. On the other hand, members of the Presidential Apparatus have used the courts against independent journalists.

The advocates of media law reform are quick to recognize the fact that Azerbaijan has approved legislation that protects the rights of journalists as required by the Council of Europe (CoE) but has been hesitant in implementing those same laws according to the principles the CoE sees as essential to press freedom. An excuse that some loyalists of the current government use is that an ombudsman for the journalists has yet to be selected; thus, the outcomes in these cases must be adjudicated by a judiciary mired in corruption and serving only those who are able and willing to pay for a verdict.

³ The legislation limits advertising inventory to 15% of broadcast time, or nine minutes per hour.

There was no dissent among the roundtable participants when one of them stated that the opposition journalists “cannot obtain information from state agencies on any matter, and, very often, in order to get information, they introduce themselves as reporters of media favoring the government.”

The concept of a public figure is not practiced in Azerbaijan. According to one of the panelists, if he were to defame his neighbor and it was proven that he did, the penalty would be low. On the other hand, an MP could exact a fortune for using the same words against him.

The participants had a difference of opinion as to the independence of the broadcast regulatory body, the NTRC. According to the NTRC representative, there have been no applications from members of the opposition for a broadcast license. Based on the response from one media advocate, if an opposition member were to apply it would be the Presidential Apparatus that would deny the license, not the NTRC, because the regulatory body is under the domination of that part of the government. The Presidential Apparatus installed the chairman and the members of the Council.

LEGAL AND SOCIAL NORMS PROTECT AND PROMOTE FREE SPEECH AND ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION.

FREE-SPEECH INDICATORS:

- > Legal and social protections of free speech exist and are enforced.
- > Licensing of broadcast media is fair, competitive, and apolitical.
- > Market entry and tax structure for media are fair and comparable to other industries.
- > Crimes against journalists or media outlets are prosecuted vigorously, but occurrences of such crimes are rare.
- > State or public media do not receive preferential legal treatment, and law guarantees editorial independence.
- > Libel is a civil law issue; public officials are held to higher standards, and offended parties must prove falsity and malice.
- > Public information is easily accessible; right of access to information is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Media outlets have unrestricted access to information; this is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Entry into the journalism profession is free, and government imposes no licensing, restrictions, or special rights for journalists.

Obtaining information from government organs can be an onerous and frustrating task, often ending in months of waiting for data that, by law, is supposed to be made available within five working days, or in many cases, is not obtainable at all.

One of the panelists indicated that it was possible to increase the number of broadcast outlets, as was proven feasible by a frequency mapping project completed by IREX. It became evident during the course of this initiative that the citizens in the regions of Azerbaijan were being underserved by the existing media. While television broadcasting would not be viable due to the then-current advertising situation, radio in the regions was totally within the realm of sustainability, both in local advertising revenue and the opportunity to serve the local communities. However, the Council is wont to even consider such an expansion.

The politicization of the sector is demonstrated by the case of ANS-TV. ANS-TV, the only station in Baku that is not directly controlled by the government or one of its acolytes, was closed in November due to its “continual abuse of the laws on advertising” that limit commercial availabilities to 15 percent of the broadcast time, or nine minutes per hour. The owners readily admit that, at times, they do go over the proscribed allotment, but no more so than any of the other television broadcasters in the city. That statement has been corroborated by AGB/Nielsen, which monitors all of the Baku stations. Nonetheless, the television station was closed by the regulatory body until the uproar from the foreign community meant it could no longer be ignored and the station’s right to broadcast was reinstated—temporarily. The regulatory body decided to reopen for competition the license held by ANS.

While market entry and tax structure are not necessarily biased against media, the majority of media, as described above, are controlled in whole or part by the state. The market does not adequately support the print media. Advertising is low, and distribution is poor.

Incidents of harassment, beatings, and intimidation of journalists happen too regularly, and little is done to investigate or solve such cases. Elmar Huseynov, the “martyr of the media,” was killed in 2004 on his doorstep, and, to date, no one has been indicted with the crime, although a few have been alleged to be the triggerman. Huseynov’s family is living in Norway, and ultimately he will be remembered as only a name on a plaque as the case stagnates. As one of the panelists mentioned, when

instances of intimidation against journalists are brought to the attention of the authorities, nothing ever comes of it. According to another panelist, the Ministry of Internal Affairs boasts that it solves 95 percent of all crimes in the country, making him speculate that 5 percent of all the crimes committed in Azerbaijan are against members of the media.

Ictimayi (Public) Television celebrated its first anniversary this year. To his credit, the general director, Ismayil Omarov, put the station on the air within 90 days of its parliamentary creation and outfitted the station with the most modern equipment available. Now, technically, Ictimayi is equal to any PBS station in the middle markets of America. However, the editorial policy of the station remains much the same as it was when it was the secondary signal of AzTV, the state broadcaster, and it cannot be called a public-service broadcaster in the true sense of the word. Very seldom is a member of the opposition allowed in the station, and few dissenting views to those of the government are presented. The news program is not truly different from that being broadcast on state television.

Both the CoE and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) maintain that Azerbaijan is not following the precepts of libel law that is prevalent in civil societies—that is, libel is a civil issue and does not belong in the criminal courts. According to one official of the government during a conference with the Special Representative for the Media of the OSCE, the journalists of Azerbaijan are not educated enough to know the difference between truth and fiction. He went on to say that if the prison terms were not imposed for libel, no one would be safe; thus, the law will remain in place as it is until such a time as the media earn the right to have it modified.

In addition, the law as it does exist seems to be enforced selectively. If an official feels he is impugned in the press, he does not have to prove malice. Nor does proof from the defendant seem to matter, according to most panelists. Private citizens are often used as tools to initiate lawsuits if officials want to use a stalking horse, as is the current case against Rauf Arifoglu, who is accused of insulting the Republic during a speech he gave in Ankara in March. On the other hand, as in the case of one of the panelists when he filed a suit against Public Television and its management for defamation of his character, the courts were very efficient in dismissing the case as groundless.

There was no dissent among the roundtable participants when one of them stated that the opposition journalists “cannot obtain information from state agencies on any matter, and, very often, in order to get information, they introduce themselves as reporters of media favoring the government.” Each of the ministries of the government has

been tasked with initiating and maintaining a website so that the public has access to current information. But, to date, only a few of them have developed such sites, and those that have fail to keep it current.

Accreditation for reporters of the opposition is difficult to obtain, and even though the Parliament is supposed to be accessible to all of the media, it is nearly impossible for some journalists to gain entrance.

Obtaining information from government organs can be an onerous and frustrating task, often ending in months of waiting for data that, by law, is supposed to be made available within five working days, or in many cases, is not obtainable at all. And, even if the information is forthcoming, the data may be suspect, as was the case when the Ministry of Economic Development provided a donor organization with what was termed “the current state of the economy.” When analyzed by the donor, the data proved to be so far beyond the realm of reasonableness as to be completely useless. However, Rashid Hajily, of the Media Rights Institute, stated that his organization “has been conducting research on implementation of this law, and for now we have figures of several journalists who brought actions against ministers with regard to this legislation and have won the cases. For example, there was a case when the defense attorney of the Minister of Transport came up to the complainant and asked to stop the case and come to mutual understanding. In present, there are around 30 similar court cases in which media took, let’s say, the victory.” So there may be room for improvement.

There are no restrictions on international news sources in the country. Using that information as a source, however, can prove problematic, especially when the country or the government is criticized.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Azerbaijan Objective Score: 1.76/4.00

The quality of journalism remains low in Azerbaijan, although there has been some progress since 2001. However, the dominance of state media and their standards of professionalism offset gains that may be made in the small independent sector. Journalism is not a field that is necessarily desirable, and the training, formal and informal, does not lead to good journalism.

The stand of the government and opposition reflect the quality of journalism. Members of the government often say that the opposition press is biased and ignores the progress that the administration is making toward bettering the country. The opposition often says that the government-

Khadija Ismailova, of Voice of America, stated, “I have been to a number of trainings internationally and locally, and I can assure you if I’d work strictly in accordance with them I’d not be able to cover stories in Azerbaijan.”

sponsored media attack the opposition and do not fairly portray it. In essence, they are both right—there is no balance or objectivity in most Azerbaijani journalism.

In some regards, the fault is not with the education system or the journalists. Getting information, as mentioned previously, is difficult, and finding corroborating sources is next to impossible. There are even instances of conflicting information from within the government itself, as in the case of the former Minister of Economic Development and the charges against him. Sometimes he was presented as awaiting trial for financing a coup, and other times his crime was abuse of power and influence peddling.

For the most part, the working conditions in Azerbaijan do not allow those working in the media to be ethical. Many admit that they “sell” stories, and some will even agree that some subjects have paid them to *not* print an article. The panel believes that publishers are aware of this and are actually part of the system. Khadija Ismailova, of Voice of America, stated, “I have been to a number of trainings internationally and locally, and I can assure you if I’d work strictly in accordance with them I’d not be able

JOURNALISM MEETS PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF QUALITY.

PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM INDICATORS:

- > Reporting is fair, objective, and well sourced.
- > Journalists follow recognized and accepted ethical standards.
- > Journalists and editors do not practice self-censorship.
- > Journalists cover key events and issues.
- > Pay levels for journalists and other media professionals are sufficiently high to discourage corruption.
- > Entertainment programming does not eclipse news and information programming.
- > Technical facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news are modern and efficient.
- > Media outlets have unrestricted access to information; this is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Quality niche reporting and programming exists (investigative, economics/business, local, political).

Censorship exists in the media. Even the owners of the once vaunted ANS-TV have taken on a much more modified stance in regards to the government for fear of being completely removed from their station.

to cover stories in Azerbaijan. Professional journalists shouldn't obtain information for money or shouldn't write without proper documented facts. The most sources you can find for a story are rarely over one or two. Thus, during my work as a department head at a newspaper I didn't demand from my journalists maximum coverage or obtaining opinions from both sides, but only to try for that, because when my correspondents would come and say that they tried but couldn't get through, I believe that they didn't receive a response."

Self-censorship is a problem. However, there is also the fact that opposition newspapers often seek to publish everything they can that will detract from the government in power, short of denigrating the president. The government-controlled media, which includes, in one form or another, most all television and radio stations, regard the opposition as targets for attack.

On the other hand, there are several publications that are somewhere in the middle, and, rather than "restrain" some derogatory news, they would tend to avoid it altogether instead of attracting the ire of the party in power or the tax police.

Censorship exists in the media. Even the owners of the once vaunted ANS-TV have taken on a much more modified stance in regards to the government for fear of being completely removed from their station.

Baku is the beacon that beckons the media. It is the seat of power for the government, the source of all information and where 98 percent of the advertising revenue for the country is spent. Those journalists working in the provinces yearn to work in the capital city, where they can earn enough to sustain themselves. But there is a division, even in Baku.

Television journalists have a higher pay scale than their print colleagues because most of the advertising revenue goes to television. Print is suffering both in readership, which continues to evaporate, and in advertising, which is getting more and more difficult to find in newspapers. This has its effect on journalism.

It should be noted that journalism is not too different from the rest of society. Corruption is pervasive in Azerbaijan. It is a

way of life and part of the culture, according to panelists. In a city where the average monthly wage is estimated to be less than \$700, luxury cars, expensive apartments, restaurants, and the like abound.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES

Azerbaijan Objective Score: 1.92/4.00

This objective obtained the highest score from the panelists, although it, too, remained below 2, or "approaching sustainability." On the face of it, Azerbaijanis have many choices when it comes to obtaining information. There are an estimated 2,300 publications, 16 television stations (six of which are nationally broadcast), nine radio stations (all national), six news agencies, and the myriad of television signals that are available from the satellite dishes that adorn apartments. The Internet is an option for a small but growing number, and foreign publications can be obtained. Availability is definitely not a major problem.

However, availability does not mean diversity, reliability, or accessibility. As noted by Tahir Mammadov, of Public Television, "Quantity of media in the country I would say is more than fine, but when it comes to the quality we get a different picture." Issues affecting this include cost, access to new media (Internet), and language. The news emanating from within Azerbaijan, as discussed above, could not be characterized as diverse, reliable, and professional.

Aside from one or two of the news agencies, information is either controlled or contrived. The print industry must tow

MULTIPLE NEWS SOURCES PROVIDE CITIZENS WITH RELIABLE AND OBJECTIVE NEWS.

PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES INDICATORS:

- > A plurality of affordable public and private news sources (e.g., print, broadcast, Internet) exists.
- > Citizens' access to domestic or international media is not restricted.
- > State or public media reflect the views of the entire political spectrum, are nonpartisan, and serve the public interest.
- > Independent news agencies gather and distribute news for print and broadcast media.
- > Independent broadcast media produce their own news programs.
- > Transparency of media ownership allows consumers to judge objectivity of news; media ownership is not concentrated in a few conglomerates.
- > A broad spectrum of social interests are reflected and represented in the media, including minority-language information sources.

the line, if they count themselves among the independents, or they will suddenly find themselves removed from the “approved” list that is distributed by the government to the advertising agencies and the advertisers.

Television is always under scrutiny in Baku by the central government and, in the regions, by the local authorities (ExCom), who often can be more demanding than those in the capital city.

Satellite reception does provide a cornucopia of information, but even that emanating from the West does not entirely contribute to a large diversity of news and information on Azerbaijan. Most international channels rarely cover Azerbaijan, and language issues further restrict the utility of those channels to broaden the information sphere.

Even news directed at Azerbaijan from abroad now faces obstacles. Voice of America was originally rebroadcast on ANS-TV, but since the station’s “disenfranchisement,” the Azerbaijani news segment has been moved to AzTV, the state broadcaster. As Ismailova of VOA stated, “Last year we were broadcasting through ANS and amongst our topics were the Department of State report on human rights and freedom of speech. But since we were forced to switch to AzTV for broadcast of our programs this year, we knew that it was unrealistic to suppose that programs on such content regarding Azerbaijan would be shown through AzTV and thus mainly concentrated our attention on news about Iran.”

The Internet remains an option for obtaining independent news, albeit with limits. Access is an issue, together with language and cost. Internet access remains mostly for the better off and remains much less outside the capital.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Azerbaijan Objective Score: 1.51/4.00

Despite a large advertising market and a growing economy, this objective continued to lag, scoring only a 1.51. The advertising market is estimated at somewhere between \$26,000,000 and \$32,000,000. That is overwhelmingly located in Baku and overwhelmingly for broadcasters and not print media. As one panelist, Sanubar Heydarova, noted, “Publication of advertisements through print media has dropped dramatically, according to our calculations eight times for the last year.”

Observations of the media give the indication that, for the most part, business is a secondary issue when it comes to this sector. The government and its ministries print their newspapers as propaganda pieces and operate their television

The government and its ministries print their newspapers as propaganda pieces and operate their television and radio station the same way. Public Television is, for the most part, supported by the budget of the state and is wont to do anything to eliminate that support. Placement of advertising is not so much based on market research as it is on political factors. Advertising by the state or by friendly companies is placed to gain political favor.

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The independent press, *Zerkalo* especially, would be recognized as profitable, but few of the others can make that claim. ANS-TV did operate as a business, but, because of its profitability, managed to step over the bounds of what was deemed acceptable and was punished for its impunity.

Now, television broadcasters like ATV have suddenly realized that they can become businesses and profitable and have adopted some financial standards that will allow them to

INDEPENDENT MEDIA ARE WELL-MANAGED BUSINESSES, ALLOWING EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT INDICATORS:

- > Media outlets and supporting firms operate as efficient, professional, and profit-generating businesses.
- > Media receive revenue from a multitude of sources.
- > Advertising agencies and related industries support an advertising market.
- > Advertising revenue as a percentage of total revenue is in line with accepted standards at commercial outlets.
- > Independent media do not receive government subsidies.
- > Market research is used to formulate strategic plans, enhance advertising revenue, and tailor products to the needs and interests of audiences.
- > Broadcast ratings and circulation figures are reliably and independently produced.

Elshad Farzaliyev, of the OSCE, noted in regards to advertising, "The source for [advertising] is rarely its business activity and mainly is the finances from interest groups. Advertisements are usually placed in entertainment programs."

profit, but independence has never entered the corporate structure. Since they can gain financial advantage by not being independent, there is little incentive to change this mode of operations.

Additionally, as Elshad Farzaliyev, of the OSCE, noted in regards to advertising, "The source for [advertising] is rarely its business activity and mainly is the finances from interest groups. Advertisements are usually placed in entertainment programs." In this view, advertisers are not necessarily interested in supporting news programs directly. Heydarova indicated a similar situation specifically in the print sector: "Profitability of media is not the subject of discussion, as the newspaper with the biggest circulation doesn't make a profit but receives financing from certain interest groups."

As such, management skills are lacking if one thinks in purely market terms. Farid Gahramanov, of the Turan news agency, noted, "On the matter of profitability, yes there are a number of problems, but I think the major problem in this regard is with management of print media." Management in a competitive independent market is quite different from the management skills needed in Azerbaijan, where the political nature of the content is a major factor in obtaining advertising.

The media outside the capital city barely subsist. IREX, for instance, has endeavored to improve that situation by trying to establish a network, planning to provide quality, legal programming and developing a sales organization that would provide considerably more revenue than the average \$1,500 per month they garner now. But the government of Azerbaijan has not been overly cooperative in this plan. Additionally, as Mahir Orujov of Gutb TV (Guba region) noted, there is little research available for regional media who may want to operate more as businesses.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Azerbaijan Objective Score: 1.72/4.00

Supporting institutions remain weak in Azerbaijan, and as such this indicator received a score of 1.72. Associations, journalism faculties, transmission and distribution systems, and market research and advertising firms do operate. However, they do not, for the most part, operate to the benefit of independent media; nor do they necessarily operate on market principles or provide a quality service.

Supporting NGOs, other than international organizations or internationally affiliated organizations such as IREX and Internews, have languished into passivity. Yeni Nesil, without the leadership of Arif Aliyev, has become far less active, despite the occasional monitoring of the media.

As noted by Ilham Safarov, of Internews, in regards to supporting NGOs and associations, "I think we need to have organizations working in the field of journalism, be it with protection of reporters' rights or institutional build-up. Currently there are 25 organization in the field of media, but how many actively operate we can count on one hand. Also, I think for stimulation of the work of such organizations we should have more media grants from donor organizations. Media grants mean training, internships for staff abroad, and modern equipment supply."

The Press Council, although it claims to be an advocate of those in the media, does not, in the view of independent journalists, serve this role. It has never really become involved in any of the crimes committed against the members of the working press. One notable exception in the field of advocacy is the Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety, an

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS FUNCTION IN THE PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA.

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS INDICATORS:

- > Trade associations represent the interests of private media owners and provide member services.
- > Professional associations work to protect journalists' rights.
- > NGOs support free speech and independent media.
- > Quality journalism degree programs that provide substantial practical experience exist.
- > Short-term training and in-service training programs allow journalists to upgrade skills or acquire new skills.
- > Sources of newsprint and printing facilities are in private hands, apolitical, and unrestricted.
- > Channels of media distribution (kiosks, transmitters, Internet) are private, apolitical, and unrestricted.

Azerbaijani version of the CPJ that speaks out. The director, Emin Huseynov, is a young man who tries to rally his fellow reporters. However, with self-censorship and fear among many reporters, he has a difficult time succeeding.

The state university system does not offer a sound education for journalists. The professors, for the most part, are leftovers from the days of the Soviet Union and practice teaching of theoretical journalism. The private universities, which abound in Baku, had the possibility of attracting the better students and better-educated instructors—those not mired in the dogma of the past. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Education has imposed restrictions on the private schools by limiting the size of their classes, imposing a ceiling on both what they could charge for matriculation and what they could pay their instructors. This limits their competitiveness.

The Internet, print distribution, and transmission remain controlled or dominated by the state. Ismailova said, “We named IT as the second strategic sphere of the country upon oil and gas, but ISPs are under government control, as in the case with ‘az’ domain provision.” Speaking about the Internet in the regions, panelist Heydarova bluntly said, “Internet connections in the regions are also something from out of the future.”

Print distribution is largely government-controlled, with a notable exception being the Gaya network, supported by IREX through USAID, which has had success in challenging the state-supported distributor, Azermetbuatyayim. Azermetbuatyayim has not exhibited business efficiency in print distribution or real interest in impartial distribution of print media, independent and state. Transmission is controlled by the state.

MSI Panelists

Farid Gahramanov, Turan news agency

Mahir Orujov, Gutb (Horizon) TV (Guba region)

Rashid Hajily, Media Rights Institute

Khadija Ismailova, Voice of America

Elshad Farzaliyev, OSCE

Sanan Rzayev, *Echo* newspaper

Ilham Safarov, Internews

Gafar Jabilov, National Teleradio Council

Tahir Mammadov, Public Television

Rovshan Hajiyev, *Azadliq* (Liberty) newspaper

Sanubar Heydarova, Reporters’ Freedom and Protection Institute

Moderator

Shahin Abbasov, IREX