

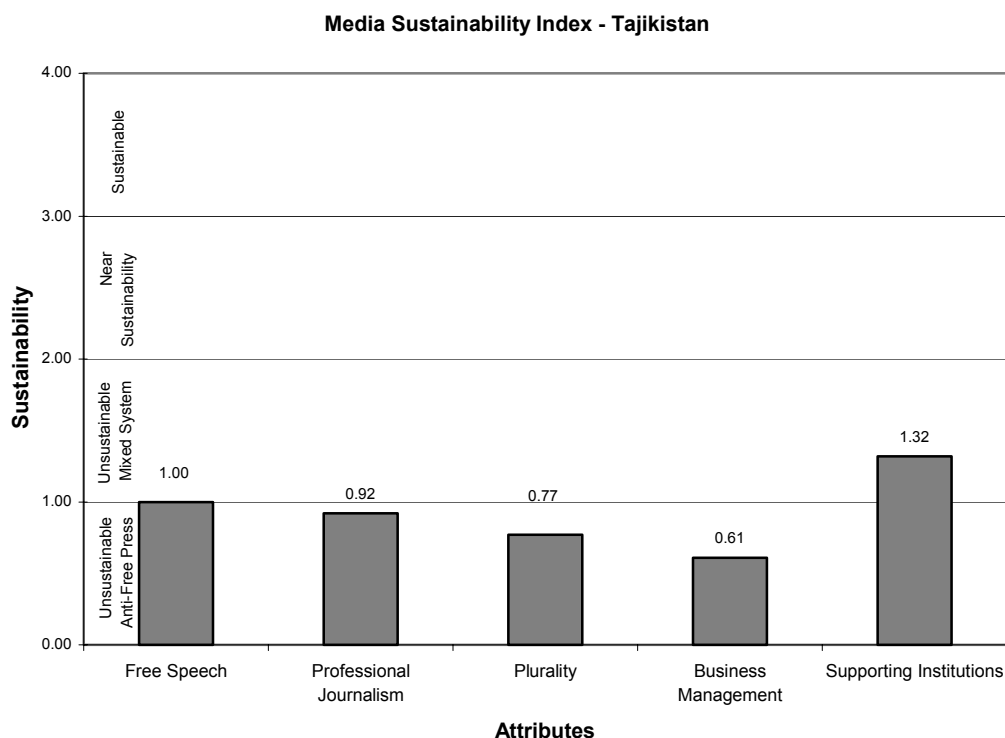
Tajikistan

Introduction

During the many years of its brutal civil war, Tajikistan was considered one of the most dangerous places in the world for journalists. Even now that a somewhat fragile peace and stability have come to Tajikistan, the country still suffers from one of the most poorly developed media environments among the countries of the former Soviet Union. The profession of journalism today continues to be dangerous. Although fewer journalists are perishing today than during the war (50 journalists were killed in the civil war), the threat of violence remains.

Overall, MSI panel participants were very critical of the current state of media and freedom of expression in Tajikistan. Their pessimism was reflected in the extremely low scores across the board on all MSI objectives, indicating that the country shows almost no degree of sustainable independence in the media sector.

It is estimated that 126 newspapers and journals are in print, although the print runs, particularly for journals, are often very small. According to the official data from 1999, 58 newspapers were published. Of these, 40 newspapers are in Tajik, nine in Russian, and nine in other languages. Four have a republic-wide circulation, five are oblast-wide, 31 are local papers, eight provide mainly information and advertisements, three are private, and seven are published by various political parties and movements. A number of private publications have also been established with the support of international sponsors. Most private media, however, are not financially viable. Because of low advertising revenues and circulation bases, no private newspapers publish daily.



Scoring System

- 0** = Country does not meet indicator; government or social forces may be actively opposed to its implementation.
1 = Country minimally meets aspects of the indicator; forces may not be actively opposed to its implementation but business environment may not support it and government or profession not fully and actively supporting change.
2 = Country has begun to meet many aspects of indicator but progress may be too recent to judge or still dependent on current government or political forces.
3 = Country meets most aspects of indicator and implementation of indicator has occurred over several years and/or change in government, indicating likely sustainability.
4 = Country meets the aspects of the indicator; has remained intact over multiple changes in government, economic fluctuations, changes in public opinion and/or changing social conventions.

The scores for all indicators are totaled and averaged for each objective.

Each of the objectives can receive a score from 0 to 4:

Above 3: Sustainable and free independent media

2-3: Independent media approaching sustainability

1-2: Significant progress remains to be made; society or government not fully supportive

0-1: Country meets few of indicators and government/society actively opposing changes

In Tajikistan today, there are no independent media outlets. Access to information sources—both domestic and international—is restricted and costly, and technical equipment is outdated or obsolete. Licensing of media outlets—which is under the control of the Ministry of Culture and Information—and the tax system are regularly used to control or hinder independent media, especially radio and television. Government officials often instruct journalists on what news to cover, and reporters practice considerable self-censorship, fearing reprisals if they publish something the government might oppose. The president's political party is usually given extensive media coverage, while other parties receive almost no coverage by national and local media.

Broadcast media are also dominated by government services. In February 1994, President Imomali Rahmonov took direct control of broadcasting services with the pretense of ensuring their objectivity. The state-run Tajik Radio is the major radio service, and the only national television service is the state-run Tajik Television. There are a number of private television stations in Tajikistan. None of these, however, has its own facilities, and they must use official broadcasting studios for most of their work. Independent television stations have been the targets of continual government harassment. In 1997, independent TV stations experienced serious delays in obtaining registration licenses from the authorities. Currently, there are no private radio stations in Tajikistan, although the Law on Television and Radio Broadcasting stipulates their establishment.

Panelists agreed that, on the whole, the professional standards of journalism are low. The media are biased, subjective, and tendentious; publications lack balance and reflect one point of view, a fallback to old-style Soviet journalism. Professional training for journalists in Tajikistan is very poor, and there is a shortage of instruction manuals and technical equipment. Moreover, finding jobs for graduates of journalism schools is a serious problem. Although entry into the journalistic profession is relatively unhindered, very few competent people are attracted because of the low salary level.

People in rural regions have no access to television, radio, or newspapers, and available newspapers are often delivered with great delays to the remote parts of the country. Furthermore, many people cannot afford to buy newspapers and are thus excluded from access to this source of information.

Opportunities for the population to use e-mail facilities are expanding, but computer use and Internet access are still far beyond the means of the vast majority of Tajiks. Access remains limited to a small number of users because of technical constraints, and, more important, the high cost involved.

Attribute #1: Legal and social norms protect and promote free speech and access to public information

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

The Tajik Constitution stipulates basic human rights with regard to freedom of speech (Chapter 2, Article 30). However, it does not contain any provision on the right to receive information, which allows the government to legally limit the freedom of speech. International and local experts discussed this inconsistency during the preparation of the Constitution in 1994 and during the constitutional reform in 1999, but without any result. One panelist noted “the text of the Constitution does not envisage the rights of the citizens to get information. Articles 14, 17, 27 and 88 say that the freedoms and rights of the citizen are regulated, protected and ensured by the Constitution, while the absence of a provision for the right of the citizen to get information in Article 30 can be seen as a certain limitation of the rights of the citizen backed by constitutional norms.”

Panel participants also noted that a specific legal basis regulates the activities of mass media in Tajikistan, in addition to the laws concerning freedom of speech. The legal framework in Tajikistan is, in theory, functional. The relevant laws are as follows: the 1990 Law on Print Media with four amendments (1992, 1996, 1997, 1999); the Law on TV and Radio; the Law on Mass Media Activities; and the Law on Authors’ Rights. The basis of media legislation is a fairly democratic law on mass media adopted before the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990. However, these laws have drawbacks: the laws lag behind contemporary developments and do not cover some new aspects of media; in fact, the four amendments to the law in 1992, 1996, 1997 and (especially) 1999 have considerably worsened the situation.

The most debilitating problem with Tajik law is the discrepancy between existing laws and their enforcement. This gap between theory and practice exists due to the collapse of law and order in Tajikistan during the civil war, the weak judiciary, the existence of parallel legal systems, and the lack of a developed civil society. One panelist noted that “we speak about the gap between theory and reality in terms of freedom of speech. But can it be any different in Tajikistan? My answer is NO. The difference between the laws and implementation in Tajikistan is in all spheres of life.” All panelists agreed that freedom of speech and the quality of media have worsened in recent years. One panelist noted that only foreign media offer balanced news: “Only foreign media show life in Tajikistan in a more or less objective manner, while domestic media either do not want to or cannot do this.”

Panelists noted that very few legal actions on mass media are brought to court in Tajikistan, and that parties involved in disputes prefer to solve problems through traditional negotiations. In a typical court case, for example, numerous inconsistencies and violations in court proceedings arose from contradictions in the legislation on mass media. As a result, the case had to be solved through appeals to international law.

In addition to problems with the legal infrastructure, panelists noted that freedom of speech in Tajikistan is not highly valued. Frequently, civil society seems to tolerate limitations on the freedom of speech. As one panelist said, “I think that freedom of speech is not greatly valued in our society. We used to discuss this issue a lot, but when we need to protect freedom of speech in the courts, we always back up. This can be attributed to the consequences of the civil war; however, the time has come to legally protect freedom of speech.”

According to the panel, the discrepancy between the existing national legislation and international norms has deepened during the last several years. All panelists agreed that judicial reform and changes in the public consciousness are needed, as well as new laws on mass media that provide a sound basis for freedom of speech in Tajikistan. Some panelists stressed that media associations have recently started to lobby the government to improve legislation: “To achieve [improvements in the legal code], our organization lobbies the Parliament. We encourage the deputies to introduce new laws on mass media, and we have prepared a media draft law with the assistance of an expert who is one of the authors of the media draft law in Russia.”

In terms of media regulation, licensing of media outlets is controlled by the Ministry of Culture and Information (for print media and information agencies), and the State Radio and TV Committee (for broadcast media). Licensing procedures are restrictive because the state agencies use their powers to keep the information market under governmental control. In the licensing process the agencies frequently eliminate unfavorable independent media by rejecting their license applications. One panelist noted that the state regulatory agencies have considerably weakened independent media: “Consequences [of the policies of the regulatory agencies] were obvious in the last 3–4 years, when licenses were granted infrequently and with great delay.” Things are particularly complicated for independent TV and radio stations, and the relevant licensing procedures were not made public until recently. Currently, the licensing process remains confidential, is excruciatingly slow, and maintains no established time guidelines.

Licensing procedures differ for print and broadcast media. It is relatively easy to register an independent newspaper because the government will control the paper’s printing press. It is more difficult, however, to license independent private radio and television stations. This is because strong political actors become involved with broadcast licensing. As one panelist explained, “there is no fair and honest licensing [for broadcast media]. Everything is guided by political or personal reasons.”

Tax policy also impacts media development in Tajikistan negatively. The tax system is very complicated, and rates are high; as a result, tax evasion is typical for businessmen. Panelists were of the opinion that tax breaks on media are needed to help it develop. One panelist argued “it is necessary to make taxes favorable for media for a certain period of time, like in Russia. After 10 years of war, most media outlets are weak. If the authorities are really interested in developing national media, tax privileges will be needed.” The tax situation leads to widespread official corruption and gives the State yet another opportunity to control media: “There are now different methods of solving problems with journalists, such as sending tax police to unfavorable media, who will always find something wrong. Our tax legislation makes the editors and media bosses keep their financial resources confidential, decrease taxes, or avoid them. But if a media outlet criticizes authorities, the government will launch a tax investigation in response. If this happens, the media outlet can be closed. Reform of the tax system is necessary in order to make media independent.”

In the area of journalist intimidation, crimes faced by journalists include threats, blackmailing, insults, physical violence, and illegal detention of journalists or their relatives. While murders are rare, they still occur and are committed by professional killers or disguised as traffic accidents. Crimes against media outlets include confiscation of printed materials, bans on publications, threats, and blackmail. A journalist notes that journalism can be one of the most dangerous professions in Tajikistan: “The most dangerous jobs in Tajikistan are the ones of a journalist and a judge. As of today, not a single criminal who

committed crimes against journalists has been detained or punished.” There is also a distinct lack of public outcry against harassment of journalists. And finally, because court trials are rare, libel issues are settled by threats, tax harassment, and blackmail.

In Tajikistan, every media outlet is under the control or influence of political or economic leaders who consider it acceptable to interfere in the functioning of these outlets: “There are no absolutely free or independent media. Their freedom is only relative. It is clear that politicians and the government interfere with editorial policies. The Ministry of Security told us to publish less negative information. I asked them whether this is an advice or a threat. I was told that it is a friendly advice.” Regardless of the fact that the same laws apply to both government-owned and independent media, independent media are in a much less favorable position.

One of the biggest problems is access to public information, which is treated as state property. The primary concern is control over the internal information market, which is exercised by all official structures. One panelist described the general problems as follows: “The first factor is a lack of initiative among local journalists, their inability to get information. The government provides different information to the internal and external markets. Authorities are more open with foreign journalists—ITAR-TASS or BBC journalists accredited in Tajikistan, for example—but they strictly limit the information for the domestic market so that readers in the villages are not agitated.” Furthermore, access to information for independent media in the regions is even more difficult than at the center. One of the most popular methods used by regional authorities to suppress independent media is to completely ignore them. One panelist noted that “although the independent newspaper Sughd was registered, it is never invited to cover official events in Sughd province. It is completely ignored, although its circulation is 23,000 and it is very popular.”

Panel members pointed out that media in Tajikistan are often prevented from accessing foreign news sources. Many foreign news broadcasts find their signals blocked or distorted. According to one panel member, “one of the methods of restricting international information is the artificial creation of radio noise: it is very difficult to listen to Radio Ozodi; with BBC it is better. Maybe Radio Ozodi is purposefully blocked.” The Internet is also restricted due to high access fees and lack of computer equipment; in fact, one hour of Internet access can cost the equivalent of one month’s salary (about US \$6). And finally, only government media have the right to reprint/retranslate foreign news programs; as a result, independent media are forced to do so illegally and thus risk prosecution.

Attribute #2: Journalism meets professional standards of quality

Indicators
1. Reporting is fair, objective, and well sourced
2. Journalists follow recognized and accepted ethical standards
3. Journalists and editors do not practice self-censorship
4. Journalists cover key events and issues
5. Pay levels for journalists and other media professionals are sufficiently high to discourage corruption
6. Entertainment programming does not eclipse news and information programming
7. Technical facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news are modern and efficient
8. Quality niche reporting and programming exists (investigative, economics/business, local, political)

Unbiased reporting and objectivity have not yet become the norm for the media in Tajikistan. Most media outlets provide biased reporting and subjective assessments. One panelist suggested that the lack of objective reporting is due to “subjects that are banned or completely off-limits; and lack of professionalism among journalists who have not been taught that several sources of information should be used, different opinions should be cited, etc. The Soviet approach of saying ‘proper’ things is still alive.” As a rule, publications reflect only one point of view, a byproduct of the tradition of Soviet journalistic techniques. In addition, the government and editors under government influence exert very strong pressure over reporters.

There is no official code of ethics for journalists in Tajikistan. However, there are certain rules of the game and norms that journalists try to respect, related to some general Tajik social standards. For example, there is a taboo against exposing the private and especially the intimate life of an individual, and compromises are preferred to open conflict. Corruption among journalists (bribes) is widespread. One panelist noted that “we face a situation where journalists from government TV ask for money in exchange for showing information on certain events.” Corruption is so widely accepted that journalists scarcely take notice of the fact that they rarely manage to articulate the truth in their reports.

Intimidation of journalists and fear of retribution has led to widespread self-censorship. Panel members unanimously agreed that this results from the pressure of authorities, who can dismiss journalists, close media outlets, and use violence against them: “All journalists in Tajikistan practice self-censorship, regardless of where they work. Why? Most importantly, they are afraid for their lives and the lives of their children. On the one hand, if a journalist works in government media, he may be dismissed from his position; on the other hand, if he works in private media, there may be a telephone call from officials or political bosses, resulting in dismissal.”

Violence is widely used to intimidate media, and is often perpetrated by military leaders, government officials, and businessmen. While it is often difficult to identify the assailants, they seem to be omnipresent. Editors under pressure, for example, in turn often pressure and force journalists to censor their materials. The situation becomes worse when the editor is also a top-ranking official. The state-run print house Sharki Ozodi plays a special role in pressuring and censoring journalists, according to one panelist: “All our printing houses are tools for exercising state control. If a journalist does not change his article, the editor will not publish it in his paper. The editor has no choice, because the [government-controlled press] will refuse to print it. There are no independent print houses.”

Independent media in Tajikistan, despite attempts to cover key events and subjects, are paralyzed by self-censorship, official control, lack of financial resources, and lack of access to information. Government media, according to one panelist, “publish only official documents, orders, government resolutions, information on trips, visits, etc. Newspapers are issued once a week. The majority of independent private newspapers publish the same articles that were published in Russian media. In other words, journalists are no longer the source of fresh information.”

Finally, the tragic isolation of local or regional media promotes informational isolation and enhances the likelihood of regional conflicts. As one panelist noted, “local media have no access to information at all; that’s why they give no news except local. In the past, there was TajikTA news agency, which provided wire stories on events daily, and local newspapers published some national news.” As a result, local media are often devoid of objective news from diverse sources.

The low salaries for journalists discourage ambitious young people from entering the journalism profession. Journalists receive from US \$2 to US \$8 a month at the local newspapers, and US \$10 to US \$15 at the national newspapers; together with freelance opportunities, a journalist’s total monthly income may be up to US \$20 dollars. One journalist described his predicament as follows: “Recently I wrote an article on the salaries of our journalists, both government and private. Our journalists get 22 somoni (a bit more than US \$9). Naturally, they get extra ‘fees.’ However, altogether it is not more than 30 somoni (US \$13). It is not enough even for my small family.” Another consequence of the low salaries is that journalists become very susceptible to accepting “fees” for directed articles.

In terms the availability of hard news, panel members said that broadcast media, especially state-run national television, devote far more time to entertainment programs than to news and information. The only source of information on state-run television is the daily newscast Ahbor (News) and the analytical program Tajikistan, which is broadcast twice a week in Russian and Tajik. Some panelists thought that the lack of interest in news programs might be due to the low educational level of the population: “All of

our intellectuals left; people in rural areas should be educated in order to become interested in news. They are more interested in concerts or entertainment.”

All panelists criticized the technical capacity of Tajik media equipment. According to one panelist, “our technical equipment is at the level it was in 1950. Europe and Russia use digital technology, while we use VTS and super VTS format. In print media, government newspapers started using computers only last year.” Different opinions were expressed on how best to overcome the technical backwardness. Some stressed that assistance should be provided only to independent private media, while others argued that state-run regional newspapers should also be supported since they are the only source of information at the local level, no matter how inadequate they are. Finally, some voiced the opinion that because of location specifics, local media need support with modern transmission equipment to meet the requirements of the area. This is especially important for remote places, such as Gorno-Badakhshan, where television is unavailable and radio reception is very poor.

Attribute #3: Multiple news sources provide citizens with reliable and objective news

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

In Tajikistan at the beginning of 2000, there were 247 mass media outlets (officially registered), including 43 non-government media outlets and 5 independent information agencies.

In Tajikistan, few people have access to diverse sources of information. Newspapers are not widely available because they are too expensive, especially in rural areas. Electronic media are available only when there are no power shortages; in the majority of rural areas, power works only 2-3 hours a day. One panelist noted that “very few people in Tajikistan have the opportunity to buy independent newspapers, especially intellectuals. The newspapers cost 35-40 diram (about 15 cents) and are a luxury when people make from one to three dollars a month. Very often people share newspapers.” The state-wired radio network (Tochka) has been destroyed in two-thirds of the country, and batteries to power radios are often of poor quality and rather expensive. Finally, the vast majority of people cannot afford new TV or radio sets although their Soviet-era devices are gradually wearing out.

The economics of news production are also tilted in such a way as to make newspapers unaffordable for most citizens. The cost of production is very high and does not correspond to consumer purchasing power. One panelist observed that “if Tajikistan had its own paper, the newspapers would be more affordable and available. At the moment, everything is bought in Russia, China, and Iran and is very expensive.”

Small villages and towns are, in effect, under complete information blackout. One panelist explained the situation as follows: “The situation is desperate. There are 90,000 people in Panj, and only 300 people are subscribed to the local paper. It is impossible to keep a newspaper alive with a circulation of 300. The main sources of information in rural areas are (1) state-run television (dependent on electricity supply) which airs news and agricultural programs, concerts, Russian films, and entertainment; (2) state-run radio, airing concerts, agriculture programs, news and weather; and (3) newspapers, with *Charhi gardun* and *Vechernii Dushanbe* being most popular. Even the government newspapers *Jumhuriat*, *Sadoi Mardum*, and *Narodnaya gazeta* are not available to rural readers. If they do become available, they are out of date, and the number of copies is inadequate.”

The main obstacle to Western media and Internet information is financial, although a decrease in education levels and low skills in foreign languages also prevent the public from accessing foreign media. One panelist noted that “Internet access is very limited. First of all, not everybody has the opportunity to buy a computer. Second, even if an organization has a computer, it cannot access the Internet because it is too expensive. Third, not everyone knows how to use a computer and the Internet.” Access to Western print media, radio, and TV is further restricted by the government through a ban on bringing in video films and computer diskettes. And finally, state authorities have passed new legislation creating further obstacles to using the Internet: specifically, the new Law on Radio and TV bans export and import of electronic productions and cooperation with foreign television. The government has also recently gained the authority to control computer media and the Internet.

Heavy state control of the media sector is further demonstrated by the absence of any commercial television channels or independent news agencies. Most agencies were established with the assistance of international organizations and foundations. However, many news-starved media outlets are reluctant to use the information from these agencies because it has not been approved by official authorities. One panelist explained that “together with the state agency Hovar, there are six agencies registered in Tajikistan: five in Dushanbe and one in Khorogh. Agencies in the capital are called independent, but often use information from VAU, [which is under control of the government].”

Finally, media in Tajikistan are unable to cover the wide range of social problems, including those of minorities. One reason for this is the limited number of minority newspapers, radio programs, and television programs. In general, the poor state of local media limits minority access to information. According to the ambiguous media laws (Article 3), the various ethnic groups have a right to their own media; however, the law also allows the government to maintain control.

Attribute #4: Independent media are well-managed businesses, allowing editorial independence

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

The relationship between the media and printing houses in Tajikistan is problematic. All print facilities are under government control, though not all of them are financed by the government. One panelist noted that “not one printing house is private. For printing houses to become private, they need permission from the Ministry of Culture and Information. This is one of the methods of censorship. If any independent newspaper, e.g., *Charhi gardun* or *Nadjot*, has a debt to the printing house of 1,000 somoni, the printing house will only print the paper after the debt is paid. Government media can have an unlimited debt, as their financing comes from the government pocket.” Through these methods, the government is able to indirectly control all printed news in Tajikistan.

The advertising market in Tajikistan is highly dysfunctional. Agencies that appeared before the war are now in miserable condition due to the poor economy and government control over ad placement. Panelists agreed that none of the MSI advertising indicators correspond to the Tajik reality. Professional marketing research has not been carried out because the ad market is poorly developed and there are very few trained professionals. At the time of writing, the first research firm providing rating services was in its initial stages of development. In general, market research firms in Tajikistan suffer from a lack of trained professionals and modern database processing programs.

Attribute #5: Supporting institutions function in the professional interests of independent media

Indicators
1. Trade associations represent the interests of private media owners and provide member services
2. Professional associations work to protect journalists' rights
3. NGOs support free speech and independent media
4. Quality journalism degree programs exist providing substantial practical experience
5. Short-term training and in-service training programs allow journalists to upgrade skills or acquire new skills
6. Sources of newsprint and printing facilities are in private hands, apolitical, and not restricted
7. Channels of media distribution (kiosks, transmitters, Internet) are private, apolitical, and unrestricted

While trade associations exist in Tajikistan, many of them are fledgling organizations. One representative of a journalists' association explained the situation as follows: "There are several associations protecting media interests: the Union of Journalists (the oldest), the National Media Association, the Tajik Journalists' Association, and Tajik Journalists for Social Partnership. Our National Media Association unites more than 30 independent media outlets, including nongovernmental TV and radio stations. We protect the interests of our members through legal consultations, publish the bulletin *Media and the Law*, and represent their interests to authorities. [At first,] authorities attempted to prevent our registration. But now we feel the authorities are ready for cooperation. We consider it major progress that we can make the authorities at least listen to us. There are NGOs protecting the interests of journalists, but they are weak and lack experience. They bring together young active professionals who try to broaden their activities."

Professional training for journalists in Tajikistan is very poor. As one panelist noted, the problems begin with poorly qualified teachers at journalism schools: "Not only students should be taught, but also teachers. Teachers in Tajikistan are behind the times. There are no manuals and equipment. In Soviet times, teachers used to go to the training centers in Moscow and Sverdlovsk and come back as professionals. This opportunity no longer exists." Many students today receive their practical training in state media, and as a result they learn stereotypes and standards typical of the Soviet era.

Recently, several NGOs have made efforts to update the training available to journalists. One panelist noted that "with the assistance of international organizations like Internews [a US-based NGO working on media development] and the Soros Foundation, we try to get textbooks. The lack of modern textbooks, especially in Tajik, is a great problem." Panelists pointed out that there is no opportunity for students to study abroad. The most gifted and well-trained graduates leave the country and go into other fields.

In Tajikistan, the Soros Foundation has arranged different programs for journalists and has sent some abroad for training. It also finances two schools of journalism, one at a news agency called Asia Plus, and the other at Internews, a US media NGO. One panelist explained "our foundation has no opportunity to provide long-term training for young gifted journalists. This is why we arrange short-term courses. We send some journalists to study courses on covering gender problems or the Internet. We want to open a new program in support of individual journalists' projects. Thanks to the efforts of international and local organizations, all the journalists can pass through short-term courses and training."

Media distribution channels generally support the media because distribution is largely in private hands, and the state has more difficulty controlling distribution than printing facilities. The state has difficulty maintaining control over the distributors because their networks are fluid and dispersed. A typical distribution network, for example, includes editors, small businessmen, street traders, and other small distributors, making state control difficult.

Finally, the government has no need to control access to the Internet because very few people can afford it. Thus far, the Internet has not been a factor in supporting Tajik media. Only when the Internet becomes accessible for everybody will the government consider taking more control.

List of panel participants

1. Ymed Babakhanov, Chief Director, Asia Plus Information Agency
2. Salimakhon Khodjimurodova, Deputy Editor, *Vechernii Dushanbe* newspaper
3. Qironsho Sharifzoda, journalist, *Sadoi Mardum* newspaper
4. Nuriddin Qarshiboev, Chairman, National Association of Independent Electronic Mass Media
5. Mahmadali Haitov, analyst, Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan; Board Member, *Nadjot* newspaper
6. Valdemar Rokoshevsky, Political Adviser, UNTOP
7. Shahriniso Najmiddinova, Media Assistant, OSCE
8. Zebo, Media Program Coordinator, OSI
9. Bahodur Qosimov, Director, Internews

Observers

Alla Aslitdinova, IREX representative, Tashkent
Jaroslaw Martyniuk, Senior Research Analyst, InterMedia, Washington DC.

Panel moderator

Muzaffar Olimov, Director of the Scientific-Analytical Center “*Sharq.*”