

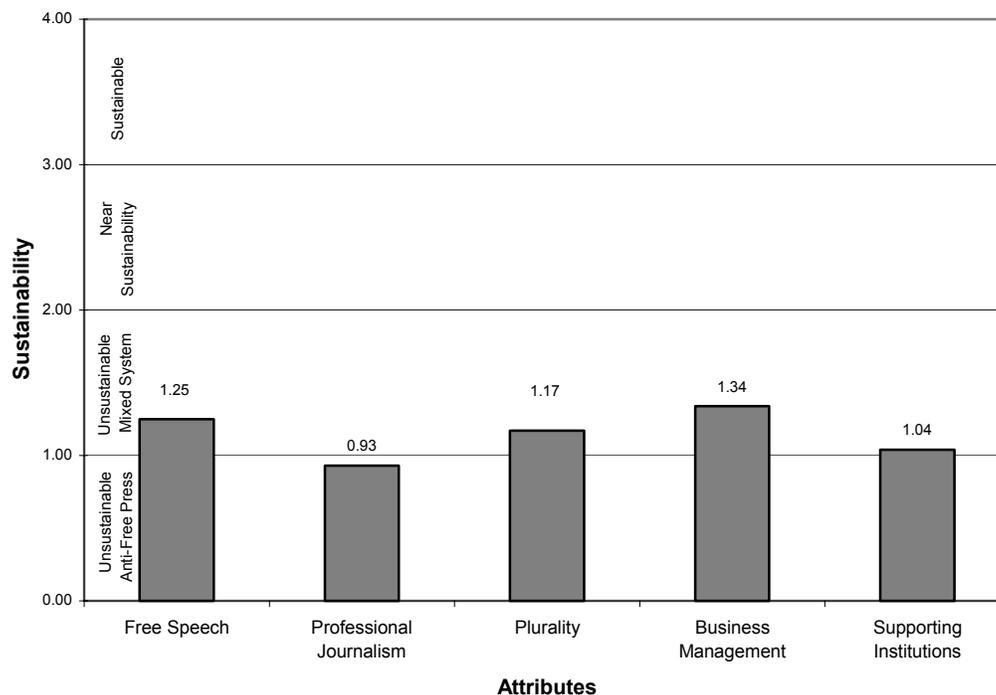
Uzbekistan

Introduction

At present, publishing in Uzbekistan is concentrated almost exclusively in the nation's central publishing offices, which control 124 newspapers and 131 magazines. There are also newspapers and magazines published by province, municipal, and district printing centers. Most newspapers and magazines are published in the Uzbek language; however, there are also newspapers and magazines in Russian, Tajik, Korean, and other languages of national minorities. The country has four national television channels: two of them (UzTV-1 and UzTV-2) cover the entire territory of Uzbekistan. The most popular Uzbek radio stations are Yoshlar, Mash'al, and Uzbekiston. At the same time, radio stations broadcasting on the FM band recently have begun to develop vigorously, especially in large cities. The program content of FM radio stations is chiefly entertainment.

The participants in the panel discussion agreed that an alternative non-government press that could offer an independent view of current events is nonexistent in Uzbekistan. During the period of relative political pluralism in 1991 and 1992, political parties and opposition movements (Birlig and Erq) had their own printed publications. However, the ousting of the opposition from the political arena, the exile of its leaders, and the rapid strengthening of Islam Karimov's personal power has made all mass media uniform. This particularly concerns news-producing media: today, there are neither electronic nor print media that express views different from the official state position.

Media Sustainability Index - Uzbekistan



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
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The lack of diverse media sources does not seem to concern the majority of the population, 65 percent of who live in rural areas. Because most people are poor and newspapers and magazines are expensive, it is very difficult for those living in small towns and villages to receive reliable information about domestic events and developments. The recent activism of extremist movements acting under the slogans of radical Islam, combined with the even greater power of the current political regime, has resulted in the formation of two large media groups: (1) mass media directly or indirectly controlled by the government, which produce official reports on events, and (2) non-government media with an entertainment profile. Panelists generally agreed that draconian government control over the media, maintained through near-total censorship by the State Press Committee, is the main cause of the unstable media environment in Uzbekistan. Government censorship is complemented by the self-censorship of journalists and editors who fear for their safety or salary, among other things.

MSI panel members voiced their dissatisfaction with media developments in the country. According to the panelists, the condition of Uzbekistan's media has not only stagnated, but is actually deteriorating. Some assessed the level of the media today as equivalent to that of the 1960s and 1970s when, under control of Soviet censors, "inflated reports of cotton harvests" were the norm. Participants explained that the term "independent media" is not applicable in Uzbekistan's current media environment, as no such media exist. The journalistic milieu is rather conservative, and journalists generally do not protest encroachments upon their freedom of speech, as silent acceptance ensures that they will not fall victim to crime (assassination, kidnapping, etc.). By denying themselves the professional right to freely research, collect, and distribute information, journalists essentially buy themselves an undisturbed existence. These limitations on journalistic freedom, along with low salaries, have resulted in the declining prestige of the journalism profession and a lack of competition in both enrollments in journalism schools and media employment. Television may be the one exception, as salaries and prestige at TV channels are considerably higher than in print media.

The entire Uzbekistani mass media system is modeled on the practices of the Soviet era. It might seem that the public's passivity should have rendered the printed word moot, but the reality is different: officials, on the one hand, ignore the media, but on the other, feel insulted by publications presenting them in a negative light. According to panel participants, developments over the last ten years have brought the journalism profession to a state of complete degeneration. Journalists not only neglect to observe any ethical standards adopted by their foreign colleagues, but they sometimes do not even possess

a clear understanding of the basics of their profession. Uzbek-language journalists, for example, sometimes receive money or presents for producing “made-to-order” publications.

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 Uzbekistani constitution provides a legal basis for freedom of speech and the press. These laws, however, are either not enforced or are circumvented by various means. MSI panelists pointed out that conflicting articles of the constitution facilitate media censorship; one article prohibits censorship, while another indirectly introduces possibilities for exercising censorship. Violations of freedom of speech either go unknown or are hidden from the general public, because the government strictly controls all mass media. Moreover, most people remain indifferent to such violations and do not perceive them as an encroachment on their rights and freedoms.

Panelists agreed that the legal status of Uzbekistan’s mass media at present is ambiguous and controversial. In fact, a censor’s permission is required to publish any information in the press, or to broadcast it on television or radio. Panelists explained that “Freedom of speech is guaranteed by the constitution. There are several national laws that assert that censorship is prohibited in the country, and guarantee this very freedom of speech. However, there is a huge discrepancy between word and deed. There is a special commission for the protection of national secrets, whose members read through all materials in every issue of a newspaper or magazine and stop the publication of any material that appears subversive to them. Even in former times, I never saw such blatant censorship. There seems to be, however, little public resentment of this violation of the freedom of speech.”

This situation is partly due to the existence of contradicting articles in the constitution; Article 67 stipulates that censorship is not allowed, but Article 29 indirectly introduces the possibility of exercising censorship. Naturally, government officials interpret this contradiction to their benefit, said panelists. “Despite the existence of several media laws prohibiting censorship, in reality censorship does exist and is carried out by an inspector from the GosKomPechat [State Press Committee]. Without his sanction, not a single newspaper can be issued. His function is to prevent national secrets from leaking out, but a document specifying what qualifies as a national secret is missing. Actually, any information that displeases the authorities can be made to fit the national secret category. The presence of censorship entails the emergence of self-censorship.”

In Uzbekistan, there are no specific legal mechanisms that protect the public and journalist against violations of freedom of speech, because all entities involved are closely interconnected. This leads to a feeling of insecurity and fear. “These days I am not sure what one can write about,” said one panelist. “There are many organizations, such as the police, the prosecutor’s office and the like, that simply must not be touched, though these are the places where the abuse of power is the greatest.... Judging by the number of letters to the editors, one can say that today people mostly complain about law enforcement agencies.”

Panel participants believe that the general public is indifferent on the issue of freedom of the press and is not upset when it is violated. “Does freedom of speech have any value in our society? No, it does not, and society is very passive.... Journalists have no rights; newspapers are controlled by the authorities and serve them. The society is indifferent; openly expressed public opinion does not exist.” Very often these violations simply remain unknown to the general public. Even if these facts were known, the panelists believed they would be unlikely to cause much public protest. “The media have ceased to be a social institution. Therefore, the words ‘public resentment’ cannot apply. People don’t know what ‘freedom of speech’ is.... It is an alien term, so how can it be valued or not valued. Here ‘freedom of speech’ is professional slang. It is also a way to make money, to go abroad, to receive a grant.”

Many editors-in-chief are political appointees with good positions and privileges. Fearing the loss their position and privileges, editors censor even more drastically than the public censors. “Often editors-in-chief act more rigorously than censors do,” said one panelist. “It happened to me more than twice that my materials were approved by the censor, but the editor-in-chief was afraid to print them.... On television, editor-in-chief and censor are the same person. If you want to make at least some money, you would choose cultural and other such similar topics.” Often editors’ decisions are also influenced by such considerations as the interests of their own clan or relatives. Editors-in-chief of newspapers and other media live under obvious pressure and unscrupulous threats ranging from financial audit to the revocation of a license and a possible shutdown.

The State Press Committee issues licenses to publish newspapers or magazines. The panelists agreed that the licensing procedure could not be considered fair because there is not any competitive bidding. There are no laws that would seriously restrict the power of government officials to decide arbitrarily who should be given a license and who should be denied one. “In our attempt to open a private newspaper,” said a panelist, “we came to the GosKomPechat and were immediately told that we would never succeed. I showed them the law, which said that opening such a paper is not prohibited. Then I was told that there was an unspoken command from the top that a private individual is not allowed to open a newspaper. Unless you find a public “roof”—a ministry or a state-owned company—you will not succeed.” But even if a certain publication’s title were registered, it would not take much effort to close it. In the current situation, opening or closing a media outlet is left entirely to somebody’s [governmental] arbitrary judgment.

The case of closing an independent television company from Urgench, Khorezm Province, is illustrative of the situation in Uzbekistan. Two panelists said that this television company presented information about a national airline plane crash without obtaining approval. In a short time, the tax police and fire safety inspectors visited the company and meticulously searched for faults in the company’s operation until they eventually found them. Later, another accusation was invented: the director of the television channel received an official letter stating that the channel was covering events in Yugoslavia differently and contrary to the coverage of state television.

Although legal regulations guarantee opportunities for independent media to enter the market, these regulations are enforced inconsistently and arbitrarily for reasons already mentioned. Some panelists argued that because independent media do not exist in Uzbekistan, this could not be a subject of discussion: “The concept of independent media actually does not exist in the country, because printing centers and the authority to allocate broadcasting frequencies belong to the government.”

Since nearly every media “title” is partly or wholly state-owned, the mass media enjoy a number of tax privileges. This relieves media outlets of financial responsibility: for example, there is a waiver on the value-added tax. At the same time, media outlets do not practice sound financial management principles. For example, many papers are instructed in plain language not only what to write, but are also told from whom to buy paper and other printing supplies. The peculiarity of the situation in Uzbekistan is that the complete lack of freedom ensures a relatively quiet existence for journalists. No crime is committed

against journalists, unless daily violations of freedom of speech are considered a crime. There is no reason to kill or threaten journalists, as there are other methods to prevent unwanted publications.

Panel participants explained that mass media in Uzbekistan are organized and function very much as in Soviet days. For example, there is a newspaper founded by the Cabinet of Ministers, there are newspapers that belong to different ministries and agencies, and newspapers run by local governments. The hierarchy among these newspapers is defined as strictly as in the system of governance. A media outlet is allowed to criticize only those officials and institutions subordinate to its sponsor. For example, the newspaper published by the city government (khokimiyat) cannot criticize the provincial khokim or the ministers at the republic level. Such a newspaper is only in the position to criticize the city and district-level authorities that are subordinate to the city khokimiyat. Moreover, the content published in these newspapers, such as stories about the year's cotton harvest, is similar to the content previously reported in Soviet days.

According to the panelists, not all journalists have access to information; in fact, information is often completely inaccessible. Although there are no legal restrictions preventing access to important information, it is nevertheless extremely difficult to obtain. "According to the law, an official must respond [to a journalist's query] within 30 days," said a panelist. "But mine is a daily newspaper, and in 30 days I will not need this information, but the law is not violated." At the same time, even the possession of significant information does not always mean that it can be disclosed to the public. One panelist felt that Uzbekistan is lagging behind its neighbor Tajikistan in terms of access to information. "I recently visited Tajikistan, where I was able to obtain every piece of information I needed. I was surprised. If one tried to get such information here, it would probably take him a month. Here [the Uzbekistan officials] act on a principle not to stick their heads out. They think, 'what does this journalist have in mind? I'd rather not tell him anything than tell him something I shouldn't.'"

Given the rigorous censorship, authorities do not bother to restrict access to international news and news sources, said panelists: "The international television channel [UzTV-4] broadcasts CFI [Canal France International], BBC news and the Russian news programs Vesti and Vremya without cuts." There are several reasons for this. First, news that is not related to Uzbekistan is broadcast freely. Second, the cost of accessing these sources presents a natural barrier: the majority of Uzbekistan's population can neither access the Internet nor afford to buy international or Russian newspapers. Third, the low standard of living is another natural hindrance in people's search for news: most people are preoccupied with the mundane problems of survival.

Panelists pointed out that journalism, as a profession, is relatively free and accessible. Some asked the rhetorical question, "Why would authorities need to restrict access to the profession when its prestige in the country is very low, and people themselves do not want to become journalists?" Licensing of journalistic activity is conducted through the issuance of accreditation certificates. A disfavored journalist can easily lose his accreditation and thus find himself effectively banned from his profession.

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)

Panelists unanimously acknowledged that the quality of journalism in Uzbekistan is very low: "Journalism in Uzbekistan does not meet professional standards. There isn't the faintest sign of

journalistic ethics, balance, or impartiality. Only hypocrisy.” Some expressed the radical view that journalism never existed in the country. Others felt that at least on television, there are some well-trained journalists, but that they have not been allowed to display their skills to the fullest. The main problem for television, radio and newspapers, however, is the absence of alternative viewpoints: “When talking about the impartiality of reports,” concurred panelists, “one cannot say that all available local and international sources are used to verify the reliability of information.... Journalists do not strive to present the views of all parties involved. Reporting completely lacks balance of opinions. There is only one point of view: the issue must be covered in a positive light ... unless a special order is given to present the matter in a more critical way. Many reports are nothing but pure propaganda.”

When ethical standards in journalism were discussed, panelists expressed a variety of views. Some insisted that, in fact, no ethical standards exist in the journalistic milieu and that journalists can easily violate not only the professional, but also the general human code of conduct: “I do not think there are any ethical journalistic standards” said one panelist. “If a man has to be crushed, they [journalists] will crush him.” Others felt that journalism in Uzbekistan does not have the roughness and rudeness typical of journalism in Russia. Uzbekistani journalists write more softly and try not to insult the people they are writing about. At the same time, panelists noted, journalists do not adhere to principles recognized by the international community of journalists. For example, the principle of presumption of innocence is not always observed in Uzbekistan: journalists can easily label someone a criminal before the court has convicted him. They can bring parents of a suspect to tears and make them an object of derision.

Despite the low popularity and visibility of the print media, journalists sometimes receive money or presents for publications “made to order.” One panelist claimed that some journalists even brag about being paid for certain articles they have published. Another panelist explained that the tradition of made-to-order publications has its roots in the Soviet days, so it is not surprising that today it is blossoming as never before.

All panelists agreed that self-censorship exists. The main reason for this is that editors-in-chief fear being fired by appointed government officials who control a particular publication; journalists in turn are afraid of being fired by the editors-in-chief. To protect themselves, journalists resort to self-censorship, which makes it difficult to write or produce a television program. Said a panelist: “The main fear of an editor-in-chief is getting fired. And you don’t know how to navigate, because what is banned today may be allowed tomorrow.”

The presence of censorship automatically leads to neglect of coverage of events of paramount importance. All events are prioritized according to the order of importance established by the censoring bodies of the authorities. “Topics whose coverage could lead to an undesired outcome are avoided,” said panelists. “Information concerning national and regional security is 100 percent classified. One can write on this subject only on the basis of what the president has said.” Subjects concerning regional and national security are prohibited from being independently covered. Very often, it is impossible to predict what might please or displease the censors, and one can end up with an absurd situation, such as the suppression of information about compensation for victims of Nazism. One panelist gave a remarkable example: “Germans paid a lot of money to publish in all Uzbek newspapers information on how the victims of Nazism could receive compensation. The original text came ready from Germany and was accompanied by a photo showing people behind barbed wire. Unfortunately, all this was happening just before the visit of Islam Abduganievich to Germany, and our censors—despite the fact that the Germans had paid for the publication, prepared the text, and supplied the photo themselves—said literally: ‘Our people don’t need this’ and removed the material from *Pravda Vostoka*.”

Mass media are flooded with cheap “entertainment” that leaves no room for serious contemplation about social order, actions of the government, and other social issues. As one panelist explained, “The principle of the media management is to try to make fools of the population, to make a person stop thinking, to prevent any serious thoughts from coming into one’s head.”

Journalists' salaries are extremely low, so young journalists try to find jobs at television or radio stations, where one at least has the benefit of on-air exposure. Nobody applies for jobs at the newspapers: these jobs are not prestigious, are poorly paid, and are troublesome. "The only journalist who can be free here is one who has an alternative source of income," said a panelist. "My salary of 6,000 [soums] at *Tashkentskaya Pravda* is just for ice cream. I feel free only because I also earn money from *Kommersant*." (Six thousand soums can buy 4 kg of meat.) Journalists working for the print media try to find additional ways to make money, such as with another newspaper, preferably foreign, or by doing completely unrelated work.

Some panelists claimed that low wages are one of the main reasons why "made-to-order" articles appear. Even very little money can easily buy a newspaper journalist when he is asked to write an article: "Unfortunately, there are examples of journalists writing articles for money or blackmailing people by threatening to publish critical materials and extorting money from them," said panelists. Sometimes journalists or newspapers make money by refusing to write an article. In other words, someone will carefully explain to a potential target of criticism that if he pays, the article in question will not be published. All this motivates journalists to leave the country in search of higher pay and greater freedom of self-expression. Russia remains the main destination for those journalists who write in Russian. According to the panelists, the professional level of Uzbek-language newspapers is much lower than even the worst Russian-language newspaper.

Most of the media are explicitly entertaining. For instance, the two main television channels (UzTV-1 and UzTV-2) broadcast mostly "singing and dancing." Radio stations have gone even further: all FM stations are purely entertainment. Newspapers publish "official reports" rather than news. About 65 percent of the country's population lives in rural areas, where only two national television channels are available, with entertainment programs dominating, and it is extremely difficult to get information from other sources. Often people do not have money to buy newspapers; neither do they have decent radio sets to listen to programs on short-wave bands. In the given circumstances, about 75 percent of the population of small towns and villages are deprived of any objective and comprehensive information. These conditions provide a favorable environment for rumors.

The technical resources of the electronic and print media are very different. For example, television is relatively well equipped, and many radio stations have modern equipment sufficient to perform their operational functions. As for the print media, their situation is catastrophic. As one panelist related, "In our office of *Tashkentskaya Pravda*—a newspaper with a 50-year history—there is only one typewriter, which is maintained from my personal budget. . . . We have old computers that we use as typewriters or to play card games. Those computers were purchased at the dawn of the country's independence."

The panelists agreed that although one can occasionally encounter fairly good reports and programs on economic subjects, these are rare. When it comes to politics, neither good reporting nor journalistic investigation exists: "On-site reporting is practically nonexistent. Information from the site of events is provided chiefly from a press release. Information about decisions made is missing or limited to the statement that 'relevant decisions have been made.'"

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

Panelists believe that most private media in Uzbekistan focus on entertainment and do not offer much news programming: “We have only one news program, Akhborot, and only one point of view on events—the official one.” The private press also offers mostly entertainment and is generally expensive because the printing quality is better than that of other newspapers. A few panelists estimated that in rural areas, only one or two out of a hundred families could afford to buy private newspapers: “Experience shows that for the majority of the rural population, the only source of information is radio. Television sets are available in many homes, but because of frequent interruptions in power supply, rural residents do not watch TV programs regularly. And it is too expensive for them to subscribe to newspapers and magazines. There are no kiosks in the villages, and very few residents have Internet access. Unfortunately, many editorial offices also do not have Internet access, because they don’t have the right equipment. Therefore, we cannot say that multiple sources provide citizens with reliable, objective news.”

Naturally, residents of big cities (especially Tashkent) enjoy much greater access to mass media than do people living in small towns and villages. The key reason is the level of income, which is 4-5 times higher in the capital city than in small towns and villages. The largest proportion of Internet users is also concentrated in Tashkent. Most people in the villages have never even heard of the Internet, said panelists: “Access to local and international media is not limited. The only limitation is the price. The Internet, being so expensive, is accessible to few.” International media, though accessible to those who have the means, are not in demand by the majority. Western newspapers and magazines are rare and are sold mainly in hotels. Kiosks chiefly sell local and Russian newspapers and magazines. However, serious Russian newspapers (such as *Kommersant*, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* or *Izvestia*) are hard to find. The “yellow press” dominates.

Journalists do not and cannot represent the entire political spectrum, since there is not a large difference between parties, and there is not any public political life to speak of. The Uzbekistani media clearly do not represent a multitude of political forces. Most newspapers look identical and represent only the “official” point of view.

There are three information agencies in Uzbekistan, of which the principal one is the Uza; it receives funding from the state budget and represents the official point of view. The second is Jakhon, which is also financed by the government, but specializes in the coverage of international events. The third information agency, partly governmental and partly independent, is Turkiston-Press. Although this agency is not funded from the state budget, it is controlled by government organizations. “Independent news agencies do exist in the country” said panelists, but these agencies “are in a very early stage of development, and they can hardly be seen as an alternative to the government news sources.” According to some panelists, editorial offices do have a choice of information agencies. This choice is limited, however, because all official information is based on the Uza’s version. In some cases, editorial offices also are obliged to receive information from Jakhon. Subscribers of Turkiston-Press are mainly commercial radio stations.

In principle, it is easy to find out who owns a certain media outlet, since every newspaper prints the name of its founder. As for the few non-government media, few citizens care to know who owns them because

this knowledge matters little to them. In Uzbekistan, one also sees print media in the Kazakh, Tajik, and Korean languages. These newspapers offer the same information as the central press. They are usually issued weekly and mainly discuss cultural problems of the national minorities. Radio and television programs for national minorities are mostly entertainment. If any newspaper dares to discuss national (ethnic) issues or to open a discussion on acute social problems, the days of its existence are numbered “People in Uzbekistan do not have a comprehensive knowledge about the owners of private media,” said panelists. “Mass media in the languages of national minorities do exist, but writing about social and political problems is something they never do.”

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 capacity of printing offices is insufficient, as most of their equipment is obsolete. Large printing facilities belong exclusively to the government, and the small private ones are afraid to print anything but accounting forms. At the same time, printing offices are quite profitable. One panelist explained how this works: “Printing offices are profitable, but this is how they make a profit: they indicate one circulation number, say 10,000 copies, but actually print 15,000. Five thousand copies are then sold illegally on the shadow market.” Some popular entertainment newspapers are the exception. For example, *PressTIJ* purchased good printing equipment in Russia and has achieved fairly good product quality. However, this newspaper does not offer reports, news or analytical articles—only a television program guide, entertainment information, and advertisements. Another case of success is the information and entertainment newspaper *Darakchi*, which has also purchased modern equipment and will install it soon.

Private individuals general handle distribution of newspapers. Distribution is a lucrative business, and one can distribute almost whatever one wishes. As one of the panelists said, “If you have money, you have your own point of view.”

In recent years, advertisement has become one of the main sources of income for media outlets. Subscription fees account for no more than 20 percent of a newspaper’s budget, and the remaining 80 percent comes from advertising money. The advertisement business in Uzbekistan is at a very low professional level, said panelists: “Clients have no influence over editorial policy, because it is established at the top.” TV commercials break all internationally accepted rules and there are just too many of them. They advertise tobacco, alcohol, drugs, and toys. Sometimes advertising serves as an instrument for money laundering. The development of the advertising market is impeded by the lack of real competition.

Most newspapers do not order marketing studies. *PressTIJ*, which has requested that such studies be conducted, is the exception. Television has a special “social survey” department that works mainly by mail; this constitutes a method that cannot effectively determine the ratings of programs or channels. A company called Internews Network determines ratings for FM radio stations.

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

Most of the panelists said that trade unions—not Soviet-era unions, but the modern variety—do not exist in Uzbekistan. There is also no journalists' association. The papers required for registering an association of foreign journalists were submitted to the relevant authorities six months ago and are still being reviewed. Trade unions operate jointly with the administration, whereas journalists and editorial offices are, according to the panelists, alienated from each other and unprotected. "Trade unions do not protect the interests of journalists or media outlets, and the professional association called the 'Sociopolitical Foundation for Democratic Development and Media Support in Uzbekistan' basically has no impact on the life and work of journalists. This foundation is entirely dependent on the government and makes no attempt to protect the freedom of speech."

Panel members agreed that no law-enforcement bodies or media-supporting NGOs exist in the country. Although for most NGOs freedom of the press is absolutely essential, not one is able to fight the government machine in order to protect this freedom. It is extremely hard for NGO activists to publish anything in the press, as most of it is under the government's strict control. "Nongovernmental organizations do make efforts to support freedom of speech and independent press," said panelists; "however, one cannot say that their reaction to any infringement of freedom of speech is that of an unleashed watchdog. The operations of these NGOs are limited mostly to large cities."

Panelists reported that approximately 60 students are studying journalism at Tashkent State University, and for 25 of them the language of instruction is Russian. Graduates are not likely to seek employment as journalists unless they fail to find a job in another area; they are generally more willing to work in television than in the print media. Most panelists believe that the qualifications of journalists are poor. In their experience, journalism school graduates do not have in-depth knowledge or skills in news production; nor do they have a sense of journalistic priorities and principles. "I graduated from university [in journalism] in 1996 and can judge from my own experience," said a panelist: "I did not have the slightest idea of what journalism was. They could not teach us anything. All sorts of people work in the media, very often totally unfit for the job."

Some panelists mentioned that there is a training center in Tashkent for working journalists, which offers short-term courses. The Internews Network, an international organization, also provides training programs. However, more often than not, the knowledge gained at these courses and training programs cannot be applied due to censorship. Panelists felt that it is useless to train journalists in modern journalism if they cannot publish new articles or air improved programs.

List of panel participants

1. Galima Suleimanovna Bukharbayeva, Agence France Press, country reporter, London Institute of War and Peace Research, Project Manager in Uzbekistan
2. Sergei Alexandrovich Yezhkov, *Pravda Vostoka* newspaper, Head of legal department
3. Marfua Saidumarovna Tokhtakhojayeva, Women's Resource Center—Public Association of Women of Tashkent, Chairperson
4. Saodat Khamrayevna Khaitova, Television & Radio Company of Uzbekistan “Mezhdunarodniy Kanal” (TV-4), journalist-translator
5. Alexander Mikhailovich Khamagayev, International Radio of Tashkent, Editor of broadcasts for Afghanistan
6. Elparid Makhsumovich Khojayev, Photopress Information Agency, Editor-in-Chief
7. Yuriy Alexandrovich Chernogayev, *Tashkentskaya Pravda* newspaper, Head of department: *Kommersant* newspaper (Russia), Correspondent for Central Asia; *Darakchi* newspaper

Observers

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Panel moderator

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