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## Coverage of the 2003 post-election protests in Azerbaijan: impact of media ownership on objectivity

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COVERAGE OF THE 2003 POST-ELECTION PROTESTS IN  
AZERBAIJAN: IMPACT OF MEDIA OWNERSHIP ON OBJECTIVITY

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
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in

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study is to determine bias in press news coverage of the 2003 post-election street protests, which resulted from the presidential election in Azerbaijan. This study provides a look at the extent of state and private media ownership of newspapers in Azerbaijan conducting a content analysis of three highly circulated local newspapers, one state owned and the others privately owned, during a three week period following the election day when the main subject of local newspapers' coverage was protest actions in the streets of the capital city, Baku. The data are news and articles regarding the street protests from three newspapers: state owned Kalg, privately owned Echo, and Zerkalo. The period under study consists of 3 weeks, from October 15, 2003, the election day, to November 7, 2003.

A content analysis of 126 news articles in the three local newspapers found that significant differences exist in newspaper coverage reflecting differences in ownership. The study showed how ownership of media outlets affects political coverage of the street protests by opposition party supporters through unbalanced coverage and framing. The general conclusion of this study is that the privately owned newspapers are more objective than state owned newspapers in their coverage of the political protest.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The 15 October 2003 presidential election in Azerbaijan represented only the second significant post-Soviet handover of presidential power via the ballot box in any Caucasian state. They were the first elections to be held since the country joined the Council of Europe in 2001. As a member of this exclusive club, Azerbaijan's commitments to protect democratic principles and individual human rights had increased.

The election experience was a bitter disappointment to election observers, foreign governments, and most of all to the hopes for democracy in Azerbaijan. According to the foreign observers, twelve years after the Republic of Azerbaijan became independent of the Soviet Union, the state lost a significant opportunity to hold a democratic and peaceful presidential election.

The October 15, 2003, presidential election caused a significant political crisis in Azerbaijan. The most egregious violations occurred on election night itself and on the following day, when police and internal security units used overwhelming force to break up unauthorized opposition protest rallies in the capital, Baku. One person was killed, and a wave of detentions swept 625 persons, including at least 85 election commission officials from opposition parties, into custody.

This study analyzes the media coverage of the street protests after the election. The purpose of the study is to see how ownership affect balance of coverage and framing of three highly circulated newspapers with different types of ownership.

Why is it interesting to look at how the media cover political protest? First of all, it can never be overstated that the health of a democracy requires that its majority citizens be both informed and involved, and a serious form of this involvement might mean every

so often these citizens would gather to participate through social protest. Social protest as a form of political participation has a colorful and controversial history. It takes many forms including mass demonstrations, sit-ins, rallies, strikes, and pickets. Protests serve a number of functions such as stimulating change, voicing criticism, and bringing important issues to light (McLeod & Hertog, 1999). In modern times, such activity depends on media attention to the protest (Beyeler & Hübscher, 2003). Media is an important vehicle for mobilizing supporters and for influencing policymakers and during political crisis, such as protest actions. This study gives us a chance to examine the role of media during political a protest, and find out how ownership affects news coverage. The matter is that during political crisis such as protest actions when the government and the opposition interests are at stake the partisanship of the media becomes more obvious according to their ownership.

In many post-soviet countries including Azerbaijan there are two dominant forms of media ownership, the state and private. It is believed that privately owned newspapers have traditionally occupied a significant role in the lives of readers, while serving as a watchdog against governmental abuse and defining communities through publication of daily activities and events (Folkerts and Lacy, 2001). In contrast, many think that the state media entrench the incumbent government, preclude readers from making informed decisions, and ultimately undermine democracy (Djankov et. al., 2001). Aiming to exam the differences among the media coverage of representatives of the state and privately owned newspapers we intend to find out if ownership is at work in case of Azerbaijan.

It is also interesting to know if the journalists used similar sources for newsgathering and similar frames for reporting news regarding the protest, or did coverage differ from state owned to private media? Furthermore, dominant frames and

source used in the articles allow us to determine whether the outlets were biased in their coverage of the protest action.

The content analysis of the state owned and privately owned newspapers can be an important tool in testing the media ownership theory developed by Altschull, Shoemaker, and Reese. According to the ownership theory, the ownership often influences the news coverage of a particular medium. Researchers of this theory believe that by framing the events, using favorable sources and neglecting unfavorable ones, media create the meaning of the events that often reflects the political beliefs and interests of the owners.

Generally speaking, this study will explore the following questions: How objective were the state owned newspaper and privately owned newspaper in their news coverage of the election and political violence? Does ownership affect the objectivity of a newspaper in Azerbaijan? Who and what were the sources of the information?

These questions take on added importance today in Azerbaijan where ownership of news organizations is increasingly held by the state and a handful of media conglomerates are owned by corrupted officials and their relatives.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **POLITICAL BACKGROUND**

Following the collapse of the Russian Empire during the World War I, Azerbaijan declared independence and established the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. Azerbaijan was the first Muslim republic in the world having adopted a secular, democratic form of government, which existed only two years in 1918-1920 before Soviet Red Army invaded this country. Subsequently, Azerbaijan became part of the Soviet Union. Azerbaijan re-established its independence with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Like its neighbors in the South Caucasus - Armenia and Georgia - Azerbaijan, after an interval of 71 years, became independent under less than ideal and orderly conditions. So the legacy of that first republic became favorable ground for the development of the modern independent Azerbaijan following the way of the first Republic.

Today, Azerbaijan is neither a democracy nor a clearcut authoritarian state of the sort found in the Central Asian republics. An active and diverse opposition, a relatively free press, and a vibrant political life exist in Azerbaijan. Opposition leaders and the press criticize the regime openly and harshly; they even organize demonstrations and rallies. Of course, the Azerbaijani political scene is not free from serious problems. Opposition figures are sued for libel, a private television channel was closed, and none of the country's elections has come anywhere close to international standards. In sum, Azerbaijan is torn between powerful tendencies toward both democratization and authoritarianism.

Before 15 October, it was believed that Azerbaijan could break with its previous pattern of less-than-free elections. Elections 2003 provided Azerbaijan with a unique opportunity to organize a democratic suffrage that could be exemplary for other countries

of the post-Soviet Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Instead, problems already evident during the election campaign were exacerbated further on and after election day. From a democratic suffrage, the 2003 presidential vote became an autocratic dynastic succession.

During summer 2003, the Azerbaijan Central Elections Commission had registered twelve presidential candidates, thus in principle guaranteeing voters a genuine choice. Several political parties and well-known political figures had boycotted the 1998 presidential election, but in 2003 all main opposition leaders energetically attempted to maximize their vote. On the other hand, before the election, international pressure had brought about significant improvements to electoral legislation and had helped reverse decisions banning significant opposition parties from participating in the vote.

After the flawed parliamentary election in 2001, Azerbaijan citizens and political activists were galvanized by the 2003 campaign. The political campaign was dynamic, with pro-government and opposition candidates drawing hundreds of thousands into streets, squares, stadiums, cinemas and other public spaces to attend political party rallies.

Opposition political parties, media and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were active, encouraging citizens to use their right to vote and preparing a thorough election-day observation effort. However, the political environment was dominated by a strong centralized state whose conditions did not favor change or even dialogue.

## **2.1 Main Political Players**

The players on the Azerbaijani political scene can be divided into two main groups: the government bloc and the opposition parties. The government bloc consists of the ruling New Azerbaijan Party (NAP) and a collection of minor political formations

tied to the regime. A significant number of NAP cadres are well-entrenched and experienced functionaries who had served during the soviet period. In addition to this "old guard," the NAP also has a "young" wing of reformers, often foreign-trained, who have associated themselves with the ruling circles. These two groups have widely divergent political and economic beliefs. Indeed, they seem to be engaged in a power struggle within the regime, which is likely to intensify recently.

The Azerbaijani opposition displays tendencies toward both fragmentation and cooperation. Despite being fragmented into several dozen parties, only half a dozen of which can be considered major, the opposition is capable of working together, whether it comes to organizing demonstrations or coordinating a response to government policies or actions. Although the opposition includes leftist forces, represented mainly by the Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party, center-right and nationalist parties predominate. The opposition parties with the largest degree of popular support are Musavat, the National Independence Party (NIP), the Democratic Party (DP), and the Popular Front (PF). The effort to appoint a single candidate led to a meeting on 23-24 August 2003 in London between the leaders of these major parties, Gambar (Musavat), Mammedov (NIP), Kerimli (PF) and Guliyev (DP), where the four agreed to support whoever of them reached the second round of voting, but not on the identity of the candidate. Yet in failing to agree upon a single candidate during the election, the leaders of these major parties missed a key opportunity to unite around civic values and a shared vision for change.

## **2.2 Election**

Azerbaijan developed an increasingly pluralistic political environment with a multiparty system by the 2003 presidential election. These positive developments,

together with the regime's responsiveness to international criticism and advice, generated hope for improvement in the conduct of elections as well.

Unfortunately, these hopes were dashed on election day. Both official figures and personal observations on election day indicate a large turnout. According to the Central Election Commission, 72% of the registered voters voted. Yet the accuracy of the electoral roll was a serious concern. Numerous abuses were noted on election day, including various forms of ballot-stuffing, the falsification of results protocols, and the intimidation of voters and opposition members of precinct electoral commissions. Official voter-turnout figures (reported hourly by precincts) were artificially altered. Observers noted numerous instances where official figures were double or triple the actual turnout observed on location. Observers were denied access to the computers used to tabulate precinct results at the district level and send them electronically to the CEC.

An audit of voter registration lists showed a margin of error of 30 percent, with people not living at their stated address as well as deceased or nonexistent persons on the lists. It was believed that the officials used those names in process of ballot-stuffing.

On the other hand in some poll stations several hundred voters were turned away because their names were not on the voters' lists. After being told to obtain court documentation, thousands of voters stood in long queues at courthouses. Their anger at having to wait for hours to meet a judge was equaled only by their commitment to protect their right to vote.

Persons interviewed at the courts alleged that they had been excluded from the lists because they supported the opposition; opposition leaders also charged that the names of their supporters were deliberately withdrawn. While such allegations were

difficult to verify, citizens' resolve to vote clearly demonstrated their desire to participate in a democratic electoral process.

According to the reports of some international institutions, the last presidential election was run with a lack of equality during the pre-election period, ballot stuffing, falsifications in counting and tabulations, and interference in counting by unauthorized authorities (Herman, 2003). The reports of the international and local independent observers say the state lost a significant opportunity to hold a democratic and peaceful presidential election. For example, according to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the elections "failed to meet OSCE commitments and other international standards for democratic elections." Even during the election campaign this organization, deploying more than 600 observers here in one of its largest-ever monitoring missions, had already noted numerous campaign violations — including violence at opposition protests ignited by police or pro-government provocateurs, intimidation of opposition sympathizers and biased media coverage. President Bush wrote in his letter dated 31 October 2003: "We have expressed our concerns and disappointments both publicly and privately with the conduct of the October 15 election."

Opposition Musavat Party Chairman Qambar, who claimed victory, affirmed late on 15 October that he would not accept the official preliminary returns that gave former Prime Minister Aliyev a landslide victory with almost 80% of the vote. According to those figures, Qambar placed second with 12.8%. But exit polls of 2,414 voters at 200 polling stations throughout Azerbaijan conducted by the independent ADAM Center and Turan gave Qambar 46.2 % of the vote followed by Aliyev (24.1%) (Trilling & Mielnikewicz, 2003).

Opposition leaders – including Gambar, the National Independence Party’s Etibar Mamedov and the Popular Front’s Ali Karimli – refused to recognize the election results, maintaining that the government rigged the vote. Speaking at a news conference, Gambar declared himself the winner, and vowed to continue mounting popular protests until the government admitted that it had resorted to fraud. In result a protest action erupted in the centre of Baku (capital city) following the closing of the polling stations, and continued the next day.

While election day was relatively peaceful, violence erupted on election night in front of Musavat Party headquarters. During the late evening of election day, October 15, security forces stormed the opposition Musavat Party headquarters, making dozens of arrests. Peter Eicher, the head of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) election observer mission, was caught up in the melee, and was on the receiving end of several truncheon blows delivered by police (Associated Press, 2003). Officials claimed that Musavat supporters instigated the violence by attacking police.

Violence also erupted in Baku on next day, October 16, as opposition supporters protested Azerbaijan’s presidential election results, which showed the ruling party (NAP) candidate, Ilham Aliyev, winning in a landslide. Police, backed by Interior Ministry forces and black-clad special riot troops, sealed Freedom Square in central Baku, where several thousand pro-opposition supporters gathered and cut off access to the headquarters of leading opposition parties in an effort to contain popular discontent over the reports of massive vote fraud. Authorities also revoked a permit granted to opposition forces to hold a rally in central Baku planned for October 16. Police savagely beat protesters, using what some witnesses described as “excessive force”. Opposition supporters offered stiff resistance, wielding self-styled weapons, including branches

broken off trees and metal pipes taken from construction sites. One man was killed and 625 persons, including at least 85 election commission officials, were put into custody in a October 16 clash between an estimated 15,000 supporters of opposition presidential candidate Isa Gambar, the leader of the Musavat Party, and roughly 5,000 police. The indiscriminate police action also resulted in numerous journalists suffering injuries.

A resolution adopted by the PACE's winter session on 27 January expressed the body's concern over what it called "the excessive use of force by the Azerbaijani security forces to disperse the protest rallies that turned into bloody clashes between the police and opposition in Baku on 15–16 October". The document called on the Azerbaijani authorities to release the jailed opposition members and refrain from any new arrests and detentions of people for their political opinions and activities, personal thoughts and beliefs.

The violence of 15-16 October initially succeeded in turning international and Azeri attention away from purely election-related developments, including the state's recourse to massive fraud to ensure Ilham Aliyev's victory, to the need for stability. A meeting of OSCE ambassadors accredited to Azerbaijan on 20 October focused not on electoral violations, but on ways to mediate between government and opposition, and to obtain from Isa Gambar a public renunciation of violence and acceptance of Ilham Aliyev's mandate.

In the weeks following the election detentions, politically-motivated firings and intimidation of opposition supporters and other members of civic society continued. According to officials, the detainees were persons involved in violent activities or responsible for instigating or organizing the violence. Several leaders of opposition parties were among those detained, including Rauf Arifoglu, editor-in-chief of the

opposition Yeni Musavat newspaper and deputy chairman of the opposition Musavat party, Iqbal Agazadeh, leader of the opposition Umid (Hope) party, Ilgar Ibrahimoglu, a human rights activist and leaders other parties belonging to the Our Azerbaijan Bloc supporting Isa Gambar's candidacy. Subsequently, they were charged with violations of the criminal code that are punishable by 4-12 years imprisonment. According to their lawyers, they were subject to torture while in detention. However, the detentions took place in all parts of the country and included many individuals with no clear connection to the violence. To avoid detention and harassment some opposition officials chose to leave their homes and "go into hiding."

The stories about the outcomes of the election and the public protests dominated the Azerbaijan media after election. The thesis of the paper is that media with different ownership construct different realities while covering the same event, in our case – street protest, by certain means. Each media outlet, by providing the same political actors and other news sources with different order and place in news and by framing the protests in a particular way and thus, created different meaning and importance of the event.

### **2.3 Access to Information in Azerbaijan**

It has been hypothesized that greater access to information and knowledge, the greater the ability of social actors to initiate projects that promote social change or challenge those in power (Hindman, 1999). When ideas are conveyed through various media sources, negative perceptions of controversial social and political issues can be changed. It is also asserted by Tichnor, Olien, and Donohue (1980) that city size correlates with the range of viewpoints and group interests exhibited within the community. It can then be predicted that the larger the size of a city, the greater the number of media outlets that will exist. These multiple media outlets can then create a



more extensive forum for the exchange of ideas, which could consequently facilitate a greater likelihood of social change. It is true in case of Baku -capital of Azerbaijan - with 3 million populations where almost all major broadcast companies and newspapers are located.

Previous community structure approach studies have found that media abundance is associated with a plurality of reporting perspectives and relative openness to political and social change (Pollock & Dantas 1998; Pollock & Dudzak, et. al. 2000). A main indicator of democratic progress is freedom of the mass media. The Constitution of Azerbaijan Republic guarantees freedom of speech and of the media. Censorship was formally abolished in the country in 1998. Mass media is becoming more and more confident in standing up for their rights and freedom through public self-organization and self-government in Azerbaijan. The Council for Mass Media, which was established upon the initiative of a number of journalistic organizations, should be considered an essential element towards further development of the freedom of mass media. The Council for mass media is a public organization that attempts to resolve problems between specific media, the community and mass media. They try to resolve cases before the issues result in court cases, which, according to some representatives of opposition minded mass media, is being used as a tool to pressure them.

The biggest problems concern electronic mass media—radio and television. Television is by far the most important source of news in Azerbaijan. State TV has a nationwide outreach and is among the most influential media outlets. It has not yet been transformed into an independent public broadcasting service. Discussions are underway regarding transforming this channel into a public channel. Because of commitments, which Azerbaijan took when joining the Council of Europe, a public television channel

must be established in the country in the near term. Recently, relevant laws have been adopted by the country's Parliament Milli Majlis.

A highly restrictive system of granting broadcast licenses remains in place. Even though 40 TV and radio companies had been registered by the end of 2003, only a few still function. The most significant private TV stations with national outreach are: *Lider TV, ANS, SPACE TV and ATV*. All these TV stations, which call themselves an independent media, had become a pro-government during the last election.

The four state-owned newspapers reflect only the position of the government. The only alternative sources of political news are a limited number of independent and opposition party newspapers. Due to low circulation, however, they are often unavailable for most sections of the public. More than 300 newspapers exist in Azerbaijan, but many of these are published irregularly and have limited circulation. The circulation and periodicity of some major newspapers is provided in Table 1.

Table 1 - Circulation and Periodicity of Newspapers

Newspaper	Daily Circulation	Weekly Periodicity	Weekly Circulation
Khalg (state)	6,615	7	46,305
Azerbaijan (state)	7,534	7	52,745
Zerkalo (indep.)	8,000	5	40,000
Yeni Musavat (oposit.)	14,350	7	100,450
Azadlig (oposit.)	5,610	5	28,250
Express (indep.)	7,000	5	35,000
Sharg (pro-gov.)	4,212	5	21,060
Echo (indep.)	9,000	5	45,000

Very few limitations on the dissemination of information exist. Newspapers are free to choose topics and positions in their coverage of domestic and foreign policies, events and processes. However, misunderstandings about freedom of the press

occasionally lead to the violation of laws and subsequent lawsuits. In the event that the publication is found to be at fault, fines are levied.

In the run-up to the 2003 presidential election, the freedom of media was a cause for serious concern. Some newspapers faced lawsuits as a result of their criticism of government officials; this was seen by some media watchdog organizations as an effort by authorities to silence criticism. The media situation was further exacerbated by systematic harassment and intimidation of journalists, including physical and verbal attacks, detentions, life-threatening phone calls and editorial interference akin to censorship. On 8 September, 2003, police attacked several journalists outside the main Baku police station, where they were gathered performing their duties.

## **2.4 Media Monitoring**

In order to monitor local media, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE) established Election Observation Mission (EOM). The EOM monitored five television stations and seven newspapers, using qualitative and quantitative analysis, from September 16 through October 13, 2003. The conclusion of monitoring says that media coverage of the campaign was characterized by an overwhelming tendency of state-owned and government-oriented media to exhibit an overt bias in favor of the Prime Minister Aliyev, a candidate for presidency. Opposition candidates were mentioned sparingly and often in negative terms. In news and current affairs programs, state-owned media failed comprehensively to meet its legal obligation, as set out in the Election Code, to create equal conditions for the candidates. Private broadcasters were also overwhelmingly biased in favor of Ilham Aliyev and against the opposition candidates during the period of monitoring.

Monitored independent newspapers offered a more balanced, though sometimes inaccurate picture of the election campaign. In general, the media's biased coverage of the election demonstrated that Azerbaijan lacks a strong and independent media able to provide sufficient, balanced information to enable the electorate to make a well-informed choice, says the EOM's report.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This study employs theoretical perspectives derived from ownership and framing theories. We will try to find out whether leading newspapers properly performed their duty of unbiased reporting in the political protest by finding the dominant source the journalists relied on most and by using the so-called Coefficient of Imbalance.

#### **3. 1 Role of Media**

Throughout modern history, people have depended on the mass media to spread the word about events and people of interest to the general public. Much communication research has suggested the media record public knowledge and opinions. Humans need to be aware of their social and physical environment, and this need is both cultural and biological (Shoemaker, 1996). A central function of the media is surveillance; the media specialize in providing information about important aspects of the environment (Lasswell, 1949). Media, first of all newspapers also serve as forums for public discussion of vital issues (Tichenor, Donohue & Olien, 1980). More specifically, they function as community organizations that broadcast, distribute, negotiate, and discuss community concerns about critical issues (Pollock & Killeen, 1995; Pollock, Dudzak, et al., 2000; Pollock, Awrachow & Kuntz, 1994; Tichenor, Donohue & Olien, 1980). Secondly, “mainstream media are agents of social control for dominant institutions and value systems” (Demers & Viswanath, 1999, p. 419). This fact places a big responsibility on the media to present factual pictures of the world through news. News “is an attempt to reconstruct the essential framework of an event” (Schramm, 1949: 288).

One of the broadest topics in journalism scholarship news construction is a highly complicated process because it involves the filtering of reality and events. Researchers

define news as “the result of journalistic activity of publicizing” (Schudson, 2003, p. 3), it is a socially structured representation of reality (Lawrence, 2000), and it “constructs and reconstructs a public reality from privately experienced events” (Cook, 1989, p. 8).

### **3. 2 Ownership Theory**

The extent to which journalists follow a balancing strategy may depend on a number of factors, one of which is a factor of ownership of media organizations. Diversity of ownership is critical to ensuring diversity of sources and viewpoints. That’s why this study aims to build on the work of Altschull, Shoemaker and Reese by applying their theory of media ownership to state-owned and privately owned newspapers in their coverage of the 2003 civic disobedience in Azerbaijan. The hypothesis of this study - that a privately owned newspaper is more likely to display greater objectivity in its news coverage of a street violence than a state-owned newspaper - is based on a theory of media ownership developed by Altschull (1984). Altschull contends that “the content of the press is directly correlated with the interests of those who finance the press” (Altschull, 1984, p. 254). The autonomy of media outlets is given within the boundaries of owners’ profit. Where the media outlet is commercially owned, the content will reflect the point of view of the news organization’s owners and advertisers. Where the media outlet fits into what Altschull calls an “interest pattern,” the content mirrors the concerns and objectives of whoever is providing the financing. For example, systematic studies of coverage of local issues found that “objectivity violations in all 20 stories were classified as serving the self-interest of the news organization or its parent corporation” (McManus, 1991).

Trying to refine Altschull’s (1984) theory, Shoemaker and Reese (1991) developed their own theory that points out that the owners of a media organization have

the ultimate power over the news content of the newspapers. They contend that the primary focus of a news organization owned by a publicly held corporation is to make a profit, and objectivity is seen as a way of attracting the readers desired by advertisers. Simply put, the content of the news is built into the economic objective of the company. Though in some cases, the owner may choose to make profits secondary to an ideological goal, such as promoting a particular agenda, the organization can't indefinitely ignore the economic goal. Especially when media firms are owned by stockholders, public service is usually sacrificed for the sake of profitability. In case of Azerbaijan this assumption works when the government advantages the state media that it owns entrenching its policy. In other words, in case of state ownership the non-financial benefits usually are higher than financial. Even some "independent" newspapers and TV channels become a "propaganda machine" of political parties during election campaigns. It happened because high level of competition and limited capacity of local advertising market force those news organizations seek the additional financial sources. Such media organizations financed primarily by "grateful" sources (political parties or interest groups) are far less likely to place great emphasis on objectivity and newsworthiness. At least during election campaigns their content is more likely to reflect those groups' interests that finance them.

On the other hand, those newspapers that can get their financing from advertisings are considered to be more independent. Shoemaker and Reese (1991) have found that news organizations funded primarily by commercial sources are far more likely to use objectivity and newsworthiness as their principal standards in making news judgments. The reason, Shoemaker and Reese (1991) said, is that a commercial media outlet is more responsive to its audience and advertisers, both of whom desire these qualities. However, owners have a tendency to impose their preferences and biases on the media they control

(Baker, 2001). They may not do so all of the time or on all issues, but at critical moments, when their interests are at stake, they are more likely to do so. Because ownership bestows control (Grossman and Hart, 1986), it shapes information provided to audience.

It is obvious that viewpoint diversity focuses on the ownership of outlets. Independent ownership of outlets is critical because outlets that are commonly owned are less likely to provide diverse points of view. The number of independently owned outlets is critical to civic discourse for a variety of reasons. Positive externalities flow from having a larger number of outlets. Competition among private media may assure that alternative views are supplied to voters and consumers, and prevent state media from distorting the information they supply too heavily (Djankov et. al., 2001). Moreover, when media outlets are numerous, they are also more accessible.

Concluding a literature review on ownership theory, we can state that ownership influences media organizations' structure and content. Simply put, ownership dictates viewpoint (Baker, 2001).

The present study examines how media ownership influences the news outcome during the protests and how the media signified the protest by comparing a state-owned newspaper "*Khalg*" and privately owned ones, "*Echo*" and "*Zerkalo*". In the other words, our principal interest is to find out how ownership affects accuracy. In order to identify the impact of ownership on coverage of political protests, we first examine the literature on media bias.

### **3.3 Media Bias**

Mass media coverage of political issues is necessarily selective. Not all sources can be quoted, all angles explored or all relevant facts cited. As I mentioned before one of the purpose of this study is to determine to what extent bias can be found in the news



coverage of the 2003 street protests in Azerbaijan. Literature review on bias showed that there is not a standard definition of bias. The definition of Stevenson and Greene (1980) says that “bias is the failure to treat all voices in the marketplace of ideas equally” (Greene & Stevenson, 1980, p. 115).

Patterson and Donsbach (1996) study proves that even in developed western countries media bias is widely spread. They surveyed journalists in five western democracies and concluded that bias was present in their reporting: “... bias occurs at measurable levels throughout the news systems of Western democracies” (p. 446).

Other researchers who looked for bias in reporting in American media have found instances in which issues have been reported as if the Democratic version of the facts were correct (Hewitt, 1996; Lichter et al., 1986) and instances in which the treatment of individual leaders and candidates have suggested a Democratic bias (Efron, 1971; Clancey & Robinson, 1985; Lowry & Shidler, 1995; Just et al., 1996; Lichter & Noyes 1995; Watts et al., 1999; Maurer, 1999).

The above mentioned studies found that media bias came from an absence of balance resulting in one side of a story receiving unwarranted attention. However, Entman in his *Democracy Without Citizens* argues that an imbalance in coverage found in American media does not necessarily mean bias. In his opinion, enforcing strict balance, i.e. giving equal time or place to both sides, along all dimensions is usually impossible, without violating the original purpose of objectivity – without deliberately skewing the facts. On the other hand, strict balance violates media’s own purpose: to ensure that the news offers a neutral, factual mirror and reality. His conclusion is that “there is no easy way for journalists to reach some sort of ultimate balance or absolute depersonalization in all aspects of their message” (Entman, 1989, p.33).

Generally speaking media bias means that the media might, for reasons of ownership, economics, class, or outside pressure, actually be more sympathetic to one political elite (i.e. the government) than to another (i.e. the opposition). It could be ideological, where owners, editors, or journalists present stories that support particular world views. Bias could also be partisan, where owners, editors, and journalists present stories to support the policies or causes espoused by political parties or interest groups. Bias could also be due to the fabrication of information, from information hidden or distorted by sources, or from career concerns of journalists who compete to be published or be on the air. Bias could even arise from the personal preferences of journalists.

Mullainathan and Shleifer (2002) argue that there are two types of media bias, ideological and spin bias. Ideological bias reflects a news outlet's desire to affect reader opinions in a particular direction. The second source of bias, referred to as spin, reflects a newspaper's attempt to create a memorable story. In our case, we can assume that ideological bias is at work in case of state media, which is the government propaganda machine. Because in state newspapers information is used to reinforce ideas and interpretations of events that support existing power structures - the government.

The belief that competition between media can eliminate the effect of ideological bias can lead to the assumption that privately owned independent newspapers give more balanced picture of events. The reason for that is that in contrast to the state owned newspapers they have to compete with other outlets for public attention in order to survive in the media market. The role of such private and competitive media is held to be so important for the checks-and-balances system of modern democracy.

News bias can take several forms, such as source bias, unbalanced presentation of controversial issues, emphases on the exceptional rather than the process or context,

packaged formula, selection and omission of information, and a tendency to rely on partisan sources such as official communiqués, press releases, speeches and interviews with leaders (Bennet, 2003; Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Gans, 1980).

The study looks at balance within stories as an indicator of bias. In other words, we use a term of bias interchangeable with balance. A balanced article will presumably have roughly as many favorable references to the research trait (i.e., the government) as it has unfavorable ones. In this study we investigate a role of source in media bias by identifying the sources of the information the newspapers used most.

### **3. 4 News Sourcing**

Accuracy and balance are fundamental principle of journalism. Most journalists who report events like social protest must rely on different sources. In order to maintain balance journalists have to present opposing views. Previous studies show that when journalists present conflicting claims, they tend to balance the different opinions equally, regardless of the empirical evidence on which those claims are based. That's why we also focus specifically on sourcing and attribution by journalists. One of the notions that guide this study provides perspectives not merely on the slant that journalists give a story, but also the slant that journalists give a story on political protest.

From the individual journalist's perspective, a thorough, unbiased recording of events, issues, and opinions about them is an important practice norm. A majority of journalists view their role as neutral disseminators of information, according to Weaver and Wilhoit (1986). When opposing views were presented, journalists tended to use a balancing strategy without any interpretation of which view was supported by the weight of evidence.

One of the main aims of the analysis in this study is to find out whether and how journalists give voice and viewpoints that do or do not reflect the dominant paradigm. Herbert Gans (1980) defined news as information transmitted from sources to audiences with the journalist as middleman – summarizing, refining and altering that information. In this study, a similar definition is used. Sources are individuals and organizations that journalists depend on for information but may not actually be named or appear in the news.

The literature on “sourcing” has looked at journalism practices from several ends and made several observations. Journalists tend to rely on sources - official rather than unofficial ones - for their news during protest actions. Talking about news making process in his *The Sociology of News*, Schudson says that reporters “look up for sources who can speak for their institutions with full legitimacy”; they do not only seek authoritative sources, but “the higher up in the hierarchy they can maintain a source, the better” (Schudson, 2003, p. 137). The hierarchy thus represented in news tends to reflect the hierarchy in government and society (Gans, 1979; Fishman, 1980; Sigal & Cohen, 1963). Berkowitz (1987) found a high reliance on official and ‘affiliated’ sources. In this study, official and non-official (opposition, experts, witnesses, and journalists) are two main categories of sources. In *Manufacturing Consent*, Chomsky and Herman (1988) state that the American media as a propaganda machine, controls and creates an apathetic public, by relying heavily on elite sources.

Becker’s model of the hierarchy of credibility maintains that those higher up in society are more likely to be asked to present their knowledge than are subordinate groups because of their access to the inner workings of society’s bureaucratic organizations: ‘any tale told by those at the top intrinsically deserves to be regarded as

the most credible account...Thus, credibility and the right to be heard are differentially distributed through the ranks of the system' (Becker, 1967; p. 241, cited in Allan, 1999). Credibility is also central to Hall et al.'s (1978) theory of primary definition. This is built upon the idea that social hierarchies determine the mechanism by which elites obtain privileged access to the media. It holds that the pressure of deadlines and the professional demands of objectivity combine to produce an over accessing of elite sources and thus a reiteration and perpetuation of dominant ideologies. This determinism ensures that primary definers are consequently drawn from elite groups and institutions who are both easily found and considered credible through their structural positioning and representative status: 'journalists [are] very likely to take the frameworks for understanding events offered by such institutions as a starting point for their reports' (Manning, 2001, p. 15). The power, legitimacy and authoritativeness of such sources, according to Hall et al., ensure their prominence as primary sources.

Schlesinger and Tumber (1994/1999) are among many to criticize the theory of primary definition. They argue that it presents an essentialist and monolithic notion of sources that is not sensitive to the vagaries of everyday political practices. They point to conflict between primary definers that may result in more than one definition; to the practice of off-the-record briefings, which result in unofficial information flows; and to the unequal media access enjoyed by different primary definers.

Findings on communication studies show importance of government officials in any event that becomes news, first of all in case of political protests during which violence occurs. Government officials are important not only to turn an event into news, but also to provide quotes for journalists. Sutter (2004) argues that using government officials as main sources is one of the possible mechanisms of bias. Despite the fact that

some researchers define institutionally driven news as officially dominated, even such driven news, when it is the result of unplanned, unexpected events, such as street protests, may take story cues from non-officials (Lawrence, 2000). The other previous studies also show that during the civic disobedience and protests, media let other societal voices into its news programs (Bennett, 1990). Protestors, on their side, try to create narrative structures and visual symbols that may connect to mainstream audiences (Perlmutter & Wagner, 2004). However, Lawrence (2000) argues that it is difficult for “critical nonofficial to promote a systematic frame for the issue of police brutality” (p. 179).

Although the 2003 post-election protest in Azerbaijan was short-lived, spontaneous collective action of the opposition supporters, it could attract media attention and become a part of news stories across the independent outlets. Because the protestors succeeded in producing “newsworthy” protest events that includes prominence, human interest and human drama, conflict, violence, the unusual, timeliness, and proximity (e.g., Gans, 1980; Shoemaker and Resse, 1991; Schulz, 1982; McCarthy et al., 1998). Images from that protests showing the violence on the capital streets also became a main part of news for a long period afterward. In contrast to the independent outlets where protestors tended to be worthy victims, the state owned media as a loudspeaker of the government tried to frame the protesters as rioters.

One of the most consistently replicated findings in American journalism research is that government sources tend to dominate news coverage of national and international affairs (Gans, 1979; Hackett, 1985; Soley, 1989). It happened because reporters focus on designated leaders “whose institutional position is taken as a sign that they have greater influence than the average member” (Cook, 1989, p. 52).

In this study, it is apparent that governmental sources will likely dominate because the breaking news story, such as violence in the capital streets, is “an issue of national security and such sources in this domain would seem "natural" and inevitable” (Hallin, 1993). Reporters’ reliance on official sources in the government is one of the basic elements in this study. But, similar to a 1994 study by Reese, Grant, and Danielian, we not only consider organizational (official) sources but also other important categories that are not officially, organizationally affiliated: experts, opposition representatives, eyewitnesses, and journalists themselves. Official source is defined as any representative of governmental institutions; opposition source is any representative of oppositional political movements; experts are sources with perceived independence from the policies of the day; witnesses are eyewitnesses or ones who are directly affected by the news event; media witnesses are reporters who became also eyewitnesses to the tragic events of that day.

In this study, we also dealt with a lot of journalists’ stories about street protests, police brutality and etc. When journalists became witnesses of such events they tend to tell about that by becoming a source. Although people commonly suppose that news organizations report just the facts, in such cases journalists typically tell stories. Discussing factors that make for good stories Bennett highlights drama: “Every news story should . . . have structure and conflict, problem and denouement, rising action and falling action, a beginning, a middle, and an end” (1996, p. 55).

After reviewing the above literature on news sourcing, we will try to answer to the question: 1)What sources did the newspapers rely on the most? and 2)Is there a

significant difference on sourcing between state and privately owned newspapers in Azerbaijan?

### **3. 5 Framing Theory**

The study also examines the media's objectivity by identifying the frame newspapers used while covering the political protest between state and privately owned (independent) media outlets. One of the main interests is to define the predominant frame they used.

Framing has received considerable attention in the past decade as an approach to understanding news processes and effects. The media depend upon frames to help organize and lend coherence to relatively brief treatments of complex subjects (Nelson, Oxley & Clawson, 1997). Journalists use frames to construct social reality for audiences and thus give meaning to words and images (Tuchman, 1978). As a crucial part of the news-making process, framing has special importance for this study. Using framing theory to organize this study will allow us to see which aspects of the events between the government and the independent media outlet were highlighted the most, how the media reflected the social and political protests that followed.

The basis of framing theory is that the media focuses attention on certain events and then places them within a field of meaning. Framing is a critical activity in the construction of social reality because it helps shape the perspectives through which people see the world. Framing theory then, hypothesizes that realities or facts can be reconstructed through presentation (Chen, 2004).

Since much of the public's knowledge and information about public affairs is mediated rather than direct, popular understanding of, and even opinions about, political issues may be substantially shaped by the selection and presentation of information



(Iyengar and Kinder, 1987). Communication sources such as the news media frequently rely on frames to organize the presentation of messages. It is believed that the media can impart a certain perspective, or “spin,” to the events that they cover and that this, in turn, might influence public attitudes on an issue. For example, calling framing analysis as a second level agenda setting, Ghanem (1997, p. 3) says it:

This second level of agenda setting deals with the specific attributes of a topic and how this agenda of attributes also influences public opinion.

James Tankard, one of the leading writers on mass communication theory, defines a media frame as “the central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of *selection*, *emphasis*, *exclusion* and *elaboration*.”

Gamson and Modigliani, for example, state that: “A frame is a central organizing idea for making sense of relevant events and suggesting what is at issue” (1989, p.57); while Entman writes that “To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, casual interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (1993, p.52).

Miller (2002) writes that framing can be performed by the media through the inclusion of specific subtopics of calculated size strategically placed to aide in the telling of the news story as well as through the style of narration, the piece’s overall tone and through the specific details purposively included in or excluded from the story.

In the contest of election campaigns, Patterson (1993) has documented the increasing tendency of the American news media to frame political candidates in negative terms. Of course, people also frame objects, placing varying degrees of emphasis on the

attributes of these objects when they are thought about or talked about. The media may not dictate to voters what their opinion will be about political candidates, but they may well direct, guide, or orient the content of what the public deems worthy of saying about them to a significant degree.

Meanwhile, Iyengar (1991) distinguishes between two types of news frames that affect attributions of political responsibility--episodic and thematic. In episodic framing, news reports present unconnected events centering on individuals rather than on broader societal concerns, thereby encouraging viewers to assign blame to individuals rather than elected officials. In contrast, presenting the news in a thematic framework causes viewers to blame decision makers and institutions for societal problems.

Scholarly approaches to mass communication increasingly refer to “framing” as an important function of political elites, the mass media, and other agents of political communication. Frames serve their employer by helping to make sense of a broad array of information and events while suggesting a suitable course of action. There is no doubt that framing is a tool that persuaders use to influence opinion. Many view work on framing effects as evidence of citizen incompetence—that is, evidence that citizens base their preferences on arbitrary information and/or are subject to extensive elite manipulation (Druckman, 2001).

Neuman, Just & Crigler (1992) identify five conceptual frames that the news audiences use to make sense of the political news flow:

- The economic frame, where costs and benefits in financial terms are in the foreground.

- The human impact frame, in which individuals or groups who are affected by a certain issue appear as illustrations to the issue in question. The frame puts a ‘human face’ on a story by providing examples of this kind.
- The conflict frame, in which two sides of an issue are presented as two conflicting groups or individuals. The issue is presented as a battle between the two, ‘us’ and ‘them’, or ‘winner’ and ‘loser’.
- The powerlessness frame, where the locus of control of an issue is out of sight, in the hands of “powerful others” or simply not possible to identify.
- The morality frame, with a focus on judgments of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’, and other morality based praise and condemnation.

This study will examine how the Azerbaijan press framed the political protests by identifying key frames. We will examine whether the choice of certain frames promoted the political goals of the government or its opposition. For this purpose we will use several key frames which have been identified in framing research: conflict, human interest, economic consequences, morality, and responsibility, among others (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000).

Building on Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), we will use a responsibility frame to replace the powerlessness frame. Economic, human impact, conflict, and morality frame also will be used. The responsibility frame refers to stories where responsibility for actions or events is attributed. In other words, the responsibility frame portrays an issue or problem in a way that attributes causality to government, interest groups, individuals, or society (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000).

Valkenburg et al. have analyzed five frames of 1522 television news stories in the period surrounding the Amsterdam meetings of European heads of state in 1997. Their

study shows that journalists tend to use responsibility frame more often than the other frames. The conflict, economic consequences, human interest and morality frames follow them respectively. Researchers (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000) said the most significant differences were between sensationalist vs. serious types of news outlets. They also claim that serious television news programs more often used responsibility and conflict frames, whereas sensationalist outlets more often used the human-interest frame.

After a close reading of the articles we determined that the following five frames mentioned above were used in news regarding street protests: government responsibility, opposition responsibility, conflict, human impact, economic consequences, and morality. Although all these six frames are present, some are much more prevalent than others. By finding the most used frame categories we examine how the newspapers framed the protest action.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES**

#### **4.1 Research Questions**

Drawing from the literature and theory outlined above, the research questions for this study are:

Question 1: What news frames did the newspapers use in their coverage of the street protests?

Question 2: What kind of sources of the information the newspapers use and which of them they rely on the most?

Question 3: Is there a significant difference on sourcing between state and privately owned newspapers?

Question 4: How objective were the state owned and privately owned newspapers in their news coverage of the political protests?

#### **4.2 Hypothesis**

Hypothesis: Privately owned newspapers are more likely to display greater objectivity in their news coverage of a street violence than a state-owned newspaper.

## CHAPTER 5 METHODOLOGY

In order to analyze how Azerbaijani independent and state owned newspapers' coverage differ from each other and to examine bias in the coverage of the street protests, this study used descriptive content analysis method. Budd, Thorp and Donohew (1966) described content analysis as a systematic technique for analyzing message content and message handling whereby the analyst is not necessarily concerned with the message, but with the larger questions of the processes of effects and communication. Berelson (1952) defined content analysis as a "research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication". Content analysis is frequently used in researches because it can help researchers "learn about news reports" underlying attitudes, biases or repeat themes (Rubin & Spiegle, 1986). As this study is mainly designed to explore the across-time differences in the state owned *Khalg gazetisi* and private *Zerkalo* and *Echo*'s coverage of the street protest, including the prevailing tone and the news frames used, content analysis was decided as the appropriate and valid method.

Newspapers were chosen over broadcast media because as we mentioned above, all state and privately owned major networks were biased in favor of the government when dealing with the election. On the other hand, using newspapers as the data source for analyzing social movements is a common practice in sociology and political science (Franzosi, 1997; Mueller, 1997; Koopmans & Rucht, 2002; Rounds, 2002). Newspaper accounts of social movements and protests are used in both qualitative and quantitative studies (Woolley, 2000; Koopmans & Rucht, 2002). With the use of newspaper data, which allows us to trace "the sequence of events" (McAdam et al., 1997), we first of all

aim a construction of contentious events after the election, during street protests the largest one in the center of Baku since 1993. On the other hand, the newspapers have different type and source of income. The state owned newspaper's budget is approved and financed by the government. The private one depends fully on advertisements and several grants provided by the national and international foundations in order to facilitate the development of free and independent media in the country.

The data are the news stories of three major newspapers – *Khalg gazet*i, *Zerkalo* and *Echo* – in Azerbaijan (see Table 1).

*Khalg gazet*i, one of the two largest circulation state newspapers in Azerbaijan was chosen because it is the major outlet, which disseminates official news and provides position of the government on internal and foreign issues.

*Echo* and *Zerkalo* are the largest circulation independent newspapers in Azerbaijan. The factors that favored the selection of these newspapers were their daily publication, different ownership, high circulation, popularity, and strong agenda-setting effect on public opinion.

Since these newspapers share the same market and one of them is the state owned *Khalg gazet*i while the others are the privately owned *Echo* & *Zerkalo*, this represents a good sample to examine the ownership theory of Shoemaker and Reese.

## **5.1 Coding**

Overall, 126 staff-written and supplied news stories related to the street protest and appeared from October 15, 2003, the election day, until November 7, 2003, were analyzed and coded. Three weeks were chosen because after that period the media switched their attention to other issues. The state owned newspaper *Khalg gazet*i published 57 news stories (45%), while publicly owned *Echo* and *Zerkalo* published 31

(25%) and 38 (30%) stories accordingly covering the political protests. In comparing equality in news coverage between the officials and protestors, the importance of coverage by each newspaper was determined.

The study unit is the news story and the units of analysis are the headline and every paragraph in all articles and news stories related to the street protests. The news story will be the best unit to assess news sources and identify dominant sources. Meanwhile, the paragraph is large enough to contain judgmental words or clauses that are recorded to determine the direction of coverage. That's why the paragraph is more appropriate for judging bias. Headlines of protest coverage have been demonstrated to have a significant impact on the interpretation of the article that follows, particularly in understanding the motivations and actions of the protestors (Pfau, 1995). Headlines are important because some readers may scan the page and only read the headline. The headline is also an influential determinant of whether the story gets read. As such, headlines tend to emphasize actions and conflicts rather than issues. This is particularly the case when protestors have conflicts with the police. In such cases, headlines tend to stress violent clashes and legal violations that lead to arrests (McLeod & Hertog, 1999). Generally speaking the headlines help us to judge the news direction. In addition to the date, the news articles on the street protests will be coded for the following dimensions:

Author: This determines whether the article was written by a staff writer, a contributing writer or a correspondent. Articles supplied by wire services will be also identified. It can help us better understand the attitudes of the studied newspapers to the events. The newspapers' own correspondents' articles reveal those outlets' policy.

Story Type: Articles are coded as straight news, investigative, feature and interview. First, straight news stories answer most of the basic questions: Who, what,



where, when, why, and how. They also focus on a conflict or problem and the attempts to resolve it (Rich, 2003). Stories highlighting events were coded as spot news.

Additionally, stories that were in-depth, included background information and revealed hidden or unknown facts will be coded as investigative. In general, such stories tend to be longer and their scope extends beyond that of the straight news story. Feature stories are descriptive, often to the point of painting a picture for the reader. Interview category includes all interviews with the witnesses, officials, protestors.

Editorials and letters to the editor were excluded because they do not fit the objective of this study.

#### **5.1.1 Source Types**

The paper counted the frequency and type of sources in each story and by this way we will find out the dominant source in a story. Coding distinguished between official, opposition, experts, witnesses, and media witnesses.

- **Officials**

Official source is defined as any representative of governmental institutions, ruling party (NAP), and representative of the police forces. For example, sources such as Ministry of Internal Affairs, deputy-chief of the city police, State Attorney belong to this type of sources.

- **Experts**

“Experts” in particular fields such as violence on the streets are likely to be used in breaking news situations for "color commentary." This group of sources has enormous knowledge and experience. One important aspect of these sources is their perceived independence from the policies of the day. Therefore, they may have more freedom to speak on the record and presumably more frankly about the current situation than those

currently employed by the government or representatives of the opposition parties (Hallin, 1993). For example, human rights activists, international and local observers were coded as Experts.

- **Opposition representatives**

This category includes those protesters whom reporters credited with quote-worthy status protesters, those protesters who were quoted because they engaged in acts of violence and leaders of the opposition parties who became main sources for media. Protestors, leaders of opposition parties became opposition sources.

- **Witnesses**

Witnesses were also included in our sourcing analysis. They fall under Gans' (1979) “unknowns” category where "ordinary people" come into news only in extraordinary circumstances (p. 15). In breaking news situations, witnesses are an important element in telling the story. They hold key information simply because they are eyewitnesses or are directly affected by the news event. In the hours, days, and months after protest, there was parade of witnesses on news stories telling their stories. People who witnessed the mass disorder and don't have any party affiliation became witness source.

- **Journalists as Sources**

In this study, journalists were also coded as sources. Some reporters were also eyewitnesses to the tragic events of that day and even some of them were injured by the police. Berkowitz (1987) found that television news often presented large amounts of information without attribution during reports by correspondents, field reporters and news anchors. In our study these journalists are coded as media witnesses. News organizations need to be able to trust their reporters and correspondents in such situations

to report their observations independently rather than expect them to act as a pack (Patterson & Wilkins, 2002). In the first week after the protest action there were many news stories written by the journalist who witnessed the event.

- **Others**

All sources such as ordinary citizens, relatives of the arrested protestors, people whose property was destroyed during the mass disorder and etc. that don't match to the above mentioned categories were coded as other sources.

Using the quantitative data about sources, this paper will look for evidence about differences between the use of sources by state and privately owned newspapers.

### **5.1.2 Paragraph's Viewpoint**

According to the equality and dominance of each source in the paragraph, its viewpoint will be coded. The paragraph's viewpoint will be coded as favorable, unfavorable or balanced/neutral toward the assigned trait – the government. This trait encompasses all actions or statements which the article links to the government personnel or security forces. Hurwitz, Green, and Segal provide several basic guidelines which were followed whenever possible:

- **Favorable:** Paragraphs will be coded as “favorable” if they exhibited content that was determined to be generally positive towards the government. Paragraph will be recorded favorable if it depicts the use of police forces as necessity. And paragraph will also be judged as favorable if it justifies “excessive force” used against the protestors characterizing them as destructive forces. Finally, favorable paragraphs will be those that refer to the official sources and organizations that support the government measures to suppress the protest of opposition candidate's supporters.

- **Unfavorable:** Paragraph coded as “unfavorable” commonly will expose negative

aspects, such as violence, immorality, and oppressiveness of the government policy toward to the street protests. Examples of negatively coded paragraphs are those that target police action calling them savage, brutal and crime against their own citizens. Content will be recorded unfavorable if it uses opposition or other sources that criticize the government policy.

- **Balanced/Neutral:** Paragraphs that present the content of the relevant trait without any favorable and unfavorable material or with an equal amount of both types of material (Hurwitz, Green, and Segal, 1976).
- **Non-relevant:** Paragraphs that don't present the content of the relevant trait or any attitudes to the trait.

One point will be given to each paragraph, which shows favorability, unfavorability, neutrality or non-relevance. And then all the paragraphs will be analyzed and coded. Once the paragraphs are classified as favorable, unfavorable, balance/neutral or non-relevant for the assigned trait we will use these attention scores in the calculation of the degree of imbalance present in the newspapers' coverage of the street protests.

### **5.1.3 Coefficients of Imbalance**

In order to measure bias in the coverage, this study will use the so-called Coefficient of Imbalance developed by Janis and Fadner. The Janis-Fadner Coefficient is a simple statistical measure of the extent of difference in the ratios of favorable, unfavorable, or balanced/neutral material assigned to the traits within the analysis. The coefficient is designed so that it will always: (1) increase when the frequency of favorable content increases; (2) decrease when the frequency of units of unfavorable content increases; (3) equal zero if the units of content are balanced /neutral; (4) equal zero if the numbers of units of favorable content are equal to the number of units of unfavorable

content (Janis & Fadner, 1965). Usually the coefficient measures imbalance in the positive and negative direction. The Coefficient of Imbalance expresses the total picture of bias by means of a single numerical value. The expressions employed to calculate the Coefficients of Imbalance are as follows:

When the number of favorable paragraphs (units) exceeds the number of unfavorable paragraphs (units):  $C_f = (f - u)/rt$  where  $f > u$ ;

When the number of unfavorable paragraphs exceeds the number of favorable paragraphs:  $C_u = (u - f)/rt$  where  $f < u$ ;

These two formulae may be used as a Coefficient of Imbalance, which expresses quantitatively the imbalance of any communication with respect to the topic or symbol under investigation. Here  $f$  = favorable units of content;  $u$  = unfavorable units (paragraph) of content;  $r$  = relevant units of content ( $f + u + \text{neutral/balanced}$ );  $t$  = total units of content ( $r + \text{non-relevant units}$ ); and Range is  $C_f = +1.00$  (maximum favorable imbalance) through  $C_f/u - 0$  ( $f = u$ ,  $t = \text{neutral/balanced}$ ,  $r = 0$ ) to  $C_u = -1.00$  (maximum unfavorable imbalance).

After obtaining the frequency of content units (paragraphs) which fall into each of the above mentioned categories, we will express the total picture by means of a single numerical value, a Coefficient of Imbalance.

According to the equality and dominance of each source and paragraph the news direction of each article/story will be judged. The nominal measurements of favorable, unfavorable, or neutral content will be assigned to each article. An article will be considered favorable if it conveys a positive impression on the government and condemn the protesters. Articles that support, justify, approve or imply that an incident is understandable given certain circumstances, will be coded as favorable. All the same,

articles that have negative meaning, contain unfavorable descriptions, or condemn the government will be coded as unfavorable. Neutral articles portray the attitude object neither positively nor negatively and they don't justify or condemn the act of government and the protesters.

#### **5.1.4 Frame Categories**

As mentioned before this study aims at analyzing the newspaper coverage of 2003 street protests by *Khalg gazeti*, *Zerkalo* and *Echo* newspapers, finding the impact of ownership on their objectivity of the social protest and the most used frames. The context of particular paragraph of the article might also indicate a certain frame. Therefore, we will look for the following five dominant framing categories: responsibility frame, conflict frame, economic consequences frame, human impact and morality frame in each paragraph. The following definitions of the five framing categories will help the coder to identify a frame used in each article, or a story.

- **Responsibility frame** - places blame or attributes cause. Portrays an issue or problem in a way that attributes responsibility for its cause to government, individuals, or interest groups. The responsibility frame are divided into two subgroups: Government responsibility frame and Opposition responsibility frame. Example for the government responsibility frame: "Chaos in the streets is the result of falsification of the election by officials". Opposition responsibility frame: "The opposition has prepared beforehand to fight the police forces".

- **Conflict frame** - stresses conflict or disagreement between individuals, institutions or different groups, and the government to capture the audience interest. In our study we will examine the conflict between the ruling party and opposition. For example, if the official and a representative of the opposition party reproach each other

we can identify it as conflict frame. For example, when a representative of the ruling party condemns the opposition saying that their opponents just don't have ability to accept the loss, the sentence is coded as referring a conflict frame.

- **Economic consequences frame** - pictures an event, problem or issue focusing on the economic impact, which it might have on an individual, group, institution, region, or country. "Opposition protesters caused a huge damage to the city"; "The protestors destroyed many cars on the streets".

- **Human impact frame** - The human impact frame, in which individuals or groups who are affected by a certain issue appear as illustrations to the issue in question. The frame puts a 'human face' on a story by providing examples of this kind. In our study this frame portrays the protesters or citizens who affected (beaten, jailed) by the violence and tells the story of a citizen regarding the election, the violence and outcomes. Example: "Many passer-bys, including journalists, women and children were beaten and injured".

- **Morality frame** - The morality frame, with a focus on judgments of 'right' and 'wrong' and other morality based praise and condemnation. The frame in news or articles that exposes negative aspects, such as violence, immorality, and oppressiveness of the government policy toward to the street protests will be referred as morality frame. For example: "The police action was crime against their own citizens".

## 5.2 Coder Reliability

Each major variable was tested for inter-coder reliability. The coding of news content was conducted according to the prescribed procedures by Daniel Riffe et al. (1998). To ensure the accuracy and objectivity of the coding results, the researcher and another Mass Communication graduate student carried out the inter-coder reliability test. The researcher provided the coder a structured training session to explain the coding

procedures and categories, and gave a representative sample content to be analyzed for an initial test. When the initial test of reliability yielded satisfactory results, the main body of data, approximately 20% (n = 25), was coded. The reliability coefficient calculation formula used is from Holtsi (1969).

$$R = C(1,2) / C(1) + C(2)$$

C (1,2) is the number of category assignments (decisions) both coders agree on.

C(1) + C(2) is the total category assignments (decisions) made by both coders.

The results were obtained as follows: newspaper r= 1.0; author = 1.0; story type = 0.96 ; headline dominance = .92 ; official sources supporting the government = 0.96; official sources supporting the protestors = .84; official sources supporting neither the government nor the protestors = .80; opposition sources supporting the government = .80; opposition sources supporting the protestors = .96; opposition sources supporting neither the government nor the protestors = .70; expert sources = .84; expert sources supporting the government = .92; expert sources supporting the protestors = .96; expert sources supporting neither the government nor the protestors = .82; media witnesses supporting the government = .83; media witnesses supporting the protestors = .80; media witnesses supporting neither the government nor the protestors = .82; witnesses supporting the government = .94; witnesses supporting the protestors = .94; witnesses supporting neither the government nor the protestors = .84; others supporting the government = .82; others supporting the protestors = .80; others supporting neither the government nor the protestors = .76; dominant official source = 1.0; dominant opposition source = .92; dominant expert source = .87; dominant media source = .88; dominant witnesses source = .80; favorable paragraph's viewpoint = .88; unfavorable paragraph's viewpoint = .82; neutral paragraph's viewpoint = .80; favorable article tone = 0.88; unfavorable article



tone = .92; neutral article tone = .80; government responsibility frame = .82; opposition responsibility frame = .84; conflict frame = .80; economic consequence frame = .83; human interest frame = .92; morality frame = .80.

With inter-coder reliability satisfied, the researcher continued to code the remaining 80 % (n = 101) of articles. The coding process was the same as it was for the inter-coder reliability test.

Upon completion of the coding, the researcher entered the values into an Excel Spreadsheet. The categories were labeled and converted into SPSS format for further analysis. Data was analyzed using frequencies and percentages.

## CHAPTER 6

### FINDINGS

Overall, there were 126 stories regarding the 2003 post-election street protests during studied period between October 15, 2003, election day and March 7, 2003. The state owned newspaper *Khalg gazeti* published 57 news stories (45%), while publicly owned *Echo* and *Zerkalo* published 31 (25%) and 38 (30%) stories accordingly covering the political protests.

#### **RQ 1: What news frames did the newspapers use most in their coverage of the street protests?**

The results show that two frame categories, responsibility (the government and opposition responsibility) and conflict, dominated in the articles (Chart 1). According to the figures, overall approximately 37 % of the stories contained the responsibility frame. The opposition responsibility frame dominated in the paragraphs of 24% of the stories and responsibility was attributed to the government in 13% percent of the news stories. Twenty six percent of the stories revealed the main characteristics of the conflict frame. Fewer stated employing a morality frame (15.3%) or human impact frame (15%). The economic consequences frame was placed at the bottom because only 7% of the stories contained this frame category.

Analyses for the frames across the newspapers showed that the dominance of the opposition responsibility frame in the final results came mostly from the state owned newspaper *Khalg*. For example, in the paragraphs of this newspaper 55 sentences that revealed the opposition responsibility frame were found. Moreover, during the studied period this newspaper never attributed responsibility to the government. In contrast to the

state newspaper, in the privately owned newspapers, *Echo* and *Zerkalo*, such distinct dominance of the opposition responsibility frame was not found.

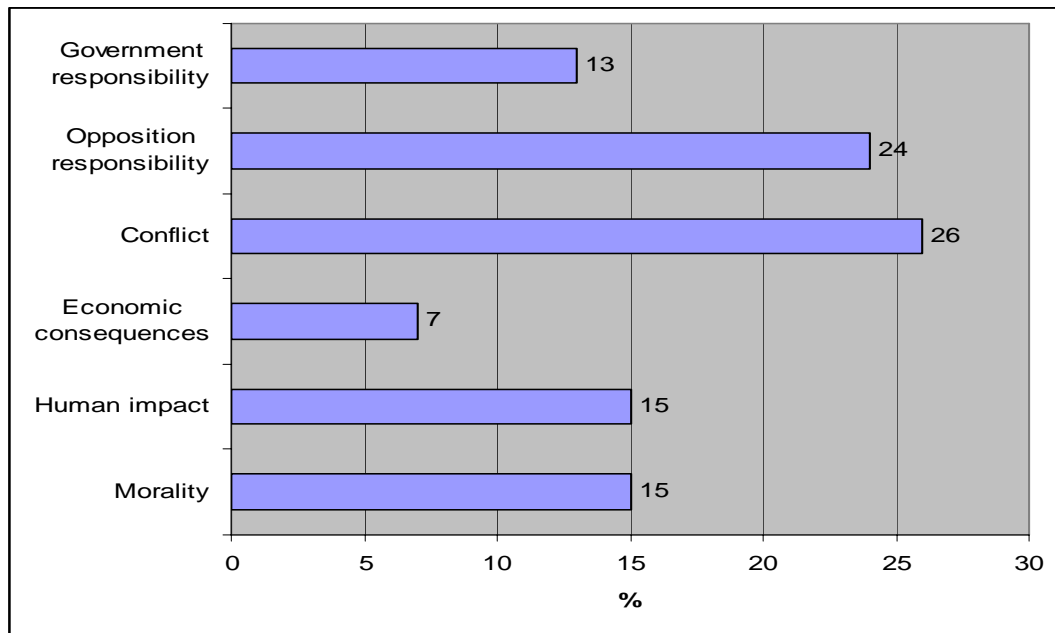


Figure 1 – Percentage of frames used by the newspapers

The distribution of frames across the newspapers indicated the dominance of the responsibility frame (Table 2). For the state owned newspaper - *Kalg gazeti* opposition responsibility frame was central. It consists of almost 30 percent of frames categories used in this newspaper. Then Conflict (24%) and Morality (22.9%) frames come. The results show that although the protest action caused a significant damage to the capital city, the state outlet tended to use economic consequences frame least.

At the same time for the privately owned newspapers responsibility frame mostly associated with the government. *Zerkalo* in comparison with *Echo* was more negative toward to the government using government responsibility frame more often than opposition responsibility. The Conflict and Morality frames were among the most used frame categories by all newspapers, regardless of their ownership. The least used frame category in these newspapers was also economic consequences.

Table 2 - Percentage of frames across the newspapers (column percentage, [n])

	<i>Kalg gazeti</i>	<i>Echo</i>	<i>Zerkalo</i>
Government responsibility	0	23 (19)	27.7 (30)
Opposition responsibility	29.4 (55)	18 (15)	16.7 (19)
Conflict	24 (45)	26.5 (22)	27.7 (30)
Economic consequences	10.2 (19)	6 (5)	3.8 (4)
Human impact	13.5 (25)	20.5 (17)	13.8 (15)
Morality	22.9 (43)	6 (5)	9.4 (10)

As we mentioned in the method section the units of analysis are the headline and every paragraph of the studied articles. Headlines are important because they helped us to judge the news direction. As Table 3 shows 86 percent of the headlines of the state *Kalg gazeti* outline was favorable toward the government. Seventy four percent of the *Echo*'s headlines and 60.5 percent of the *Zerkalo*'s headlines were neutral or balanced.

Table 3 - Headline dominance by newspapers (column percentage, [n])

	<i>Kalg gazeti</i>	<i>Echo</i>	<i>Zerkalo</i>	Total
Favorable	86% (49)	16.1% (5)	10.5% (4)	46% (58)
Neutral/Balanced	14% (8)	74.2% (23)	60.5% (23)	42.9% (54)
Unfavorable	0	9.7% (3)	28.9% (11)	11.1% (14)

(df = 4, p<.05)

These findings in headlines show the direction of the news published in the studied newspapers. After reviewing the tone of headlines it became obvious that the *Kalg gazeti* was more likely to support the government actions during the street protest, the independent *Echo* and *Zerkalo*, on contrast, had more balanced coverage.

**RQ 2: What kind of sources of the information did the newspapers use and which of them they rely on the most?**

Analyses for the next research question regarding the types of quoted sources showed that government officials were quoted more often than any other type of source; 28.2% of the stories quoted mainly the government officials (Chart 2). Surprisingly, at the second place there were sources coded as “Others” with 26.6%. This category includes mostly ordinary citizens and effected people whose property was destroyed during the mass disorders. Such sources mainly expressed their opinion regarding to the event in the articles. Results showed that the state newspaper mostly used this category of source in its coverage of street protest in order to express “a public opinion”. Twenty three percent of the overall used sources were representatives of the protestors. There were other types of sources such as experts - 8.9%, media witnesses - 8.9%, and witnesses - 4%.

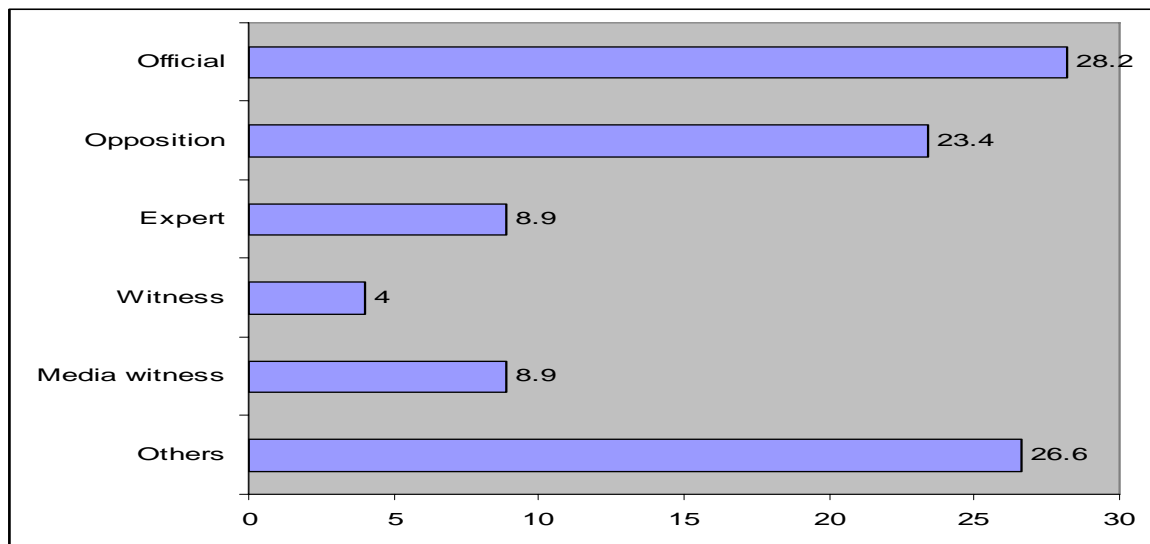


Figure 2 – Distribution of sources (%)

**RQ 3: Is there a significant difference on sourcing between state and privately owned newspapers?**

The results revealed significant differences on sourcing between state and privately owned newspapers. According to the dominance of the particular source, the dominant source of each article was found. The results showed that the state newspaper relied mostly on the official sources and others (Table 4). Hence, in this newspaper twenty three articles (42%) out of 55 related to the street protests had the officials as a dominant source. In 18 articles (33%) a source category “Others” dominated.

Meanwhile, results proved that the privately owned newspapers allowed the protestors to be a part of their articles by letting them into their news stories. For example, 10 articles (32%) of 31 published in the newspaper *Echo* relied mostly on opposition sources. In the newspaper *Zerkalo*, a number of the articles with dominance of opposition sources was 15 (39%) out of 38.

Table 4 – Distribution of the dominant sources by newspapers (column percentage, [n])

	<i>Kalg</i>	<i>Echo</i>	<i>Zerkalo</i>	Total
Official	41.8% (23)	19.4% (6)	15.8% (6)	28.2% (35)
Opposition	7.3% (4)	32.3% (10)	39.5% (15)	23.4% (29)
Expert	0	22.6% (7)	10.5% (4)	8.9% (11)
Witness	5.5% (3)	6.5% (2)	0	4% (5)
Media witness	12.7% (7)	3.2% (1)	7.9% (3)	8.9% (11)
Others	32.7% (18)	16.1% (5)	26.3% (10)	26.6% (33)

(df = 10, p>.05)

One of the interesting findings revealed that the major story type (Table 5) used by the state newspaper was feature (38.6%). Feature stories, which are descriptive painting a picture of the event for the reader, in comparison with other story types convey more writers’ opinion rather than facts. Because this story type allows a correspondent or a contributor writer to draw a picture of the event that reflects to his/her or the owner

point of view it has higher level of partisanship. On the contrast, straight news dominated in the news coverage of the independent outlets, *Echo* (61.3%) and *Zerkalo* (55.3%).

Table 5 – Story type by newspapers (raw percentage, [n])

	Straight news	Investigative	Feature	Interview
<i>Kalg</i>	33.3% (19)	15.8% (9)	38.6% (22)	12.3% (7)
<i>Echo</i>	61.3% (19)	25.8% (8)	12.9% (4)	0
<i>Zerkalo</i>	55.3% (21)	23.7% (9)	0	21.1% (8)
Total	46.8% (59)	20.6% (26)	20.6% (26)	11.9% (15)

(df = 6, p<.05)

**Question 4: How objective were the state owned and privately owned newspapers in their news coverage of the political protests?**

Tone of stories published in the newspapers showed that although the privately owned newspapers tended to criticize the government more regarding the mass protest, they conveyed more balanced/neutral articles than state newspaper (Table 6).

Table 6 – Story tone by newspapers (column percentage [n])

	<i>Kalg</i>	<i>Echo</i>	<i>Zerkalo</i>	Total
Favorable	98.2% (56)	19.4% (6)	15.8 % (6)	54% (68)
Neutral/Balanced	1.8% (1)	45.2% (14)	34.2% (13)	22.2% (28)
Unfavorable	0	35.5% (11)	50% (19)	23.8% (30)

(df = 4, p<.05)

Findings showed that 98.2 % of the articles published in the state owned *Khalg gazeti* had a favorable tone toward the government police and the action of police forces during the mass disorders. The fact that just one article was neutral reveals high partisanship of the state outlet. Although neutral/balanced articles consist of approximately half of overall articles published in the privet newspapers, *Echo* (45.2%)

and *Zerkalo* (34.2%), they tended to be more critical toward the government actions during the mass disorder and afterwards. For example, 35.5 percent of *Echo*'s and 50 percent of *Zerkalo*'s articles were found as unfavorable toward the research treat, government.

In order to answer to the research question the degree of bias of each newspaper was found by using so called Janis-Fadner coefficients of imbalance. For that purpose we coded each paragraph's viewpoint of all articles in three newspapers as favorable, unfavorable or balanced/neutral toward the assigned trait – the government. This trait encompasses all actions or statements which the article links to the government personnel or security forces.

Table 7 - Frequencies of attitudes toward the government by paragraph (raw percent [n])

	<i>Khalg</i>	<i>Echo</i>	<i>Zerkalo</i>
Favorable	68.4% (341)	24.3% (87)	14.1% (60)
Unfavorable	0.39% (2)	22.9% (82)	30.7% (130)
Neutral	2.3% (12)	33% (118)	19.3% (82)
Non-relevant	29.4% (148)	19.6% (70)	35.6% (151)

(df = 12, p<.05)

Results showed that a heavy reliance on official sources caused high level of bias in the state newspaper regarding the street protests. Overall 503 paragraphs were coded based on the total of 57 articles dealing with the protests and 341 of them revealed a favorable attitude toward to the assigned trait – government. Neutral attitudes accounted for only 12 of the paragraphs, 2 unfavorable and 148 non-relevant paragraphs were found in the state newspaper *Khalg gazeti* (Table 7).



Because the number of favorable paragraphs (units) exceeded the number of unfavorable paragraphs (units) we used the following expression to find a coefficient of imbalance:

$$C_f = f(f - u)/rt = 341(341-2)/355 \times 503 = 115599/178565 = +0.64737$$

The state owned newspaper's coverage of the street protests displayed the highest degree of imbalance in the positive direction, +.647. It proved the assumption that the state newspaper is highly biased in favor of the government.

Analysis of the paragraphs revealed a negative coefficient of imbalance in the independent newspaper *Zerkalo*.

$$C_u = u(f-u)/rt = 130 (60 - 130)/272 \times 423 = - .072$$

In comparison with the coefficient of the state owned outlet the number here was low enough to conclude that the *Zerkalo* provided more balanced coverage throughout studied three weeks.

For another private newspaper, *Echo*, a coefficient of imbalance was even lower.

$$C_f = f(f - u)/rt = 87(87-82)/287 \times 357 = +.004$$

The smallest coefficient of imbalance that we found in the case of *Echo* means this newspaper was the most objective among the studied outlets.

**H: Privately owned newspapers are more likely to display greater objectivity in their news coverage of a street violence than a state-owned newspaper.**

The results showed that there were significant differences in coverage of the street protests by the state owned and private newspapers, which we can explain with their different ownerships. This finding answered to the research question # 3 showing that the ownership of the newspaper affects its coverage of the street protests. It was also found that private outlets - *Echo* and *Zerkalo* display greater objectivity in their coverage of the

event than a state-owned newspaper, *Khalg gazetisi*. It means the hypothesis of this study is supported.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The aim of the study was to examine aspects of media coverage of the 2003 post-election street protest in Azerbaijan. This research added to the knowledge of effect of media outlet's ownership on its content, framing and news sourcing of the press media with different ownership.

First, this study highlights the effects of ownership on the newspapers news coverage of the 2003 post-election street protests in Azerbaijan. Findings showed that, as the ownership of Shoemaker and Reese predicts, the publicly owned the *Echo* and the *Zerkalo* were more objective than the state owned *Khalg gazet*i in their coverage of the post-election street protests. Shoemaker and Reese (1991) have found that news organizations funded primarily by commercial sources are far more likely to use objectivity and newsworthiness as their principal standards in making news judgments.

Baker (2001) argues that owners have a tendency to impose their preferences and biases on the media they control. Our findings suggest that at a critical moment such as the mass disorders in the capital streets, when the government's interest was at stake, the state media became highly biased in favor of its owner, government. The results showed that a coverage of the state owned newspaper- *Khalg gazet*i, which income doesn't depend on the market and gets financing from the state budget, reflects the existing government attitudes towards the protest action. In our case, the government that acts as an owner of the state outlet imposed its preferences and biases on the content of that newspaper. The *Khalg gazet*i showed a significant bias toward the government and its action during the mass disorders having more favorable paragraphs ( $n = 371$ ) than

unfavorable ( $n = 2$ ). The absolute dominance of favorable paragraphs in this newspaper's articles led to the highest positive degree of imbalance ( $+ .647$ ) among the studied outlets.

Moreover, feature type of story telling, the most used in this newspaper (38.6%), gave the reporter an opportunity to insert into the news their own or the owner's ideological evaluation. Such personalization that is violation of objectivity rules also caused a high bias of the state outlet.

Our findings prove our prediction that state newspaper became a propaganda machine of the government during the street protests and afterwards. These results provide support for another theory of Shoemaker and Reese (1991), that the political view of a newspaper will reflect that of the owners. Generally speaking, the study proves the assumption of Grossman and Hart (1986) that ownership shapes the information provided to readers.

Although the *Zerkalo* was more objective than the state newspaper, the results revealed more negative attitude toward the government actions during the studied period. The newspaper had 130 (30.7%) unfavorable paragraphs versus 60 (14.1%) favorable paragraphs toward the assigned treat, the government. Just 19.3% of the paragraphs carried a balanced/ neutral content. A negative coefficient of imbalance ( $- .073$ ) of the *Zerkalo* coverage also showed that it was more negative toward the government. Such imbalance coverage doesn't necessarily mean bias. As Entman (1989) states strict balance usually doesn't allow news to offer a factual mirror and reality. Mindich (1998) also suggests that a responsible journalist has to offer something more than passive "objectivity". It means that in order to fairly cover the event the outlet sometimes has to convey imbalance coverage. In the situation when the government used excessive force

against the protestors and committed mass arrests it must not surprise that the independent outlet acted as a watchdog conveying more critical coverage.

The findings revealed that the most objective newspaper among studies outlets was the *Echo*. We found a non-significant difference between unfavorable (22.9%) and favorable (24.3%) paragraphs. A percentage of neutral/balanced paragraphs was 33 %, which means that the newspaper had more balanced coverage in comparison with the above mention outlets. The lowest positive coefficient of imbalance (+. 004) of this outlet's coverage revealed that although the Echo was more positive toward the government action we could consider its coverage objective.

Based on the results we can conclude that the independent newspapers as a commercial media outlets are more responsive to their readers. This proves the assumption of Shoemaker and Reese (1991). The main reason for such responsiveness could be a competition in the news market that leads to lower bias. Privately owned newspapers are financially supported by readers, advertisers and stockholders, so they have to provide more objective news to survive in the large market. In other words, competition among media firms assures that readers obtain, on average, unbiased and accurate information (Mullainathan & Shleifer, 2002; Djankov et. al., 2001). Simply put, the more competition in the media, the better are the outcomes.

Some may argue that ownership is not only determinant of media content. Of course, in Azerbaijan the government can affect content of media with private ownership providing direct subsidies and advertising revenues to media outlets, restricting access to newsprint and information collection, and harasses journalists. But our findings that revealed more criticism in the private outlet's coverage means that in our case the government failed to control their content. Even one of the studied private newspapers,

*Zerkalo*, act as critics of the government. We can assume that the private media tend to be more critical toward the authorities actions during protest action. According to Entman (1989) the watchdog role of independent media demands that it convey critiques where appropriate. In case of *Zerkalo* we witnessed such activity.

News bias can take several forms, one of which is source bias. The comparison of the sources in the articles of three newspapers revealed that the sources that reporters most heavily used change from one beat to another. As main players during the post-election street protests the official and opposition sources prevailed in the articles of all studied newspapers. Despite their different approach to the protestors the newspapers selected their news sources from a similar circle of political actors. An obvious partisanship of the state newspaper was also shown in its sourcing. The reporters of the state owned newspaper *Kalg gazeti* were much more likely to use the official sources (41.8%) in their stories than the other newspapers' reporters. As Sutter (2004) claims such heavy reliance on official sources may cause a bias of the outlet. The study found that here the second most used sources (i.e. citizens without party affiliations etc.) labeled as "others" (32.7%) mainly made statements condemning the protestors and supporting the government actions during the mass disorders and afterwards. To strengthen the government position, the state owned newspaper also used the opposition sources (7.3%) who supported the official viewpoint and criticized the opposition protestors. It can be implied that the newspaper did not seek to find balance in presenting sources. Although the state outlet also used the other sources, they didn't conflict with the officials' point of view. The quite contrary they supported that official news slant. That's why in case of the state newspaper using different sources didn't convey a variety of views.

One of the most significant findings of this study is that journalists of the privately owned newspapers, in the contrast to the state outlets, cited the protestors more than official and authoritative sources. Moreover, they quoted often those sources that strengthened the position of the protestors. In 32.3% of the *Echo*'s article regarding the street protest the opposition sources prevailed over other sources. *Zerkalo* let the protestors dominate in 39.5% of its news stories. Here it seems that the independent outlets prefer event-driven news. This finding doesn't support the findings from many researches, which conclude that journalists tend to rely on official sources rather than unofficial ones for their news during protest actions (Chomsky & Herman, 1988; Gans, 1979; Becker, 1967). On the other hand, in our case it seems that the assumption of those who argue that news that is the result of unplanned, unexpected events, such as street protests, may take story cues from non-officials is at work (Bennett, 1990; Lawrence, 2000). Moreover, our findings suggest that in case of private media when profit is the primary concern and using other news sources are significantly more profitable the media would be less dependent on officials (Entman, 1989).

One of the reasons for such difference in sourcing in our case could be the excessive force used by the police force against the protestors. The fact that there were many reporters among the injured and arrested by the police could also lead to such "sympathy" of the independent media toward the protestors.

However, the prevalence of the opposition sources over the officials doesn't mean that independent outlets were bias in favor of the protestors. In contrast with the state newspaper that had just the government interpretation of the street protest, news stories in the independent outlets with many conflicting sources conveyed a variety of views

(Entman, 1989). According to the results we can conclude that in comparison with the state newspaper they were more objective in their reporting.

The findings on framing provide evidence that the media depend upon frames to help organize and construct social reality for audiences (Oxley & Clawson, 1997; Tuchman, 1978). Although the framing results showed that all studied five frames were present, some are much more prevalent than others. For example, the responsibility and conflict frames were most used in the studied newspapers. The opposition responsibility frame offered by the government and most used in the *Kalg gazeti* was not accepted by the privately owned outlets. Prevalence of the government responsibility frame over the opposition responsibility in the articles of *Echo* and *Zerkalo* proves that the independent newspapers tended to criticize the officials attributing the responsibility for violence during the street protests to the police forces.

Our framing results support findings of many researchers, which show that journalists tend to use responsibility and conflict frames regarding political news (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; Neuman, Just & Crigler, 1992). Prevalence of the responsibility and conflict frames including morality frame led to a picture of guilt and responsibility in the newspapers reporting about the street protests.

By framing the street protests and participants in a different way the studied newspapers with different ownership define and give different meanings to the same issue. By using the official sources and other sources that supported the official viewpoint and repeating frames given by the government the state newspaper tried to convince its readers that the protests were riots and the excessive force used by the police against the participants was necessary. It proves the assumption that framing is a tool persuaders use to influence opinion (Druckman, 2001).



On the other hand, dominance of the government responsibility frame and the frequent use of the opposition sources in the privately owned outlets indicate that the protestors succeed in influencing the news construction of the independent newspapers, the most trustworthy media in Azerbaijan. Gaining such attention of the independent media was very important for the opposition at that time. The matter was that shortly after the October 15<sup>th</sup> presidential elections, Azerbaijan Publishing House, controlled by the government, refused to publish Azadlig and Yeni Musavat and other major Azeri opposition newspapers, stating that the newspapers' management was among the organizers of mass protests on October 16th. But a small number of such non-partisan outlets couldn't influence and change public opinion. On contrast, a dominance of state-owned and pro-government TV stations and newspapers, which repeated the governmental discourse of the protests, let the officials break down the opposition attempts to raise masses against falsifications during the voting process,

In the case of neighbor country – Republic of Georgia- a social protests after parliament election in 2003 led to the “Revolution of Rose” and change of the government. In that case, an independent media, first of all independent TV stations were a vital medium during the revolution (Devdariani, 2004). Mitchell (2003), one of the observers, calls Rustavi 2, a popular independent TV station a main propaganda machine of that revolution. As Mitchell (2004) states “... coverage of the protests was almost nonstop, except to provide periodic interviews and roundtables with opposition leaders who often used the opportunities to inform Georgians about upcoming demonstrations and actions”.

The general conclusion of this study is that the privately owned newspapers in comparison with the state owned outlet are more objective in their reporting the political

protest. They got such objectivity by using different sources, letting the opposition side into their news stories and avoiding the frames suggested by the authorities. On contrast, the state owned newspaper showed a heavy reliance on the official source, usage of the official frames and in the end a bias reporting in favor of the government actions during the protests.

Some believe that state owned media can serve the social needs to the poor and disadvantaged, and thereby improve social outcomes. But our findings prove that the government uses its ownership of the media to muzzle the press, and to prevent the disadvantaged groups such as the opposition representatives from having a mechanism for voicing their grievances. It means that the state ownership of the media has a more adverse effect on media and its outcomes.

## **7. 1 Limitations and Future Research**

This research was not without limitations. The first and major limitation lays in the sample. The study cannot be generalized to Azerbaijan media because it is limited to three media outlets, although as I mentioned before a number of registered newspapers in Azerbaijan is more than 300.

Another limitation of the study is that the articles taken from the studied newspapers deal with one particular event – the post-election protest action and cover a short period of time.

On the other hand, the study doesn't include editorials, letters to the editor. In order to get more data future research could consider all kind of print material and broaden a studied period.

In the future research it would be fruitful to expand the sample to look at a larger numbers of newspapers with different types of ownership. Media samples also could be

broadened by including television companies. The matter is that in Azerbaijan state ownership of the media is more pervasive in broadcasting than in the printed media. Moreover, some studies show that there is a significant difference between the effect of state ownership of the press and the effect of state ownership of television (Djankov et. al., 2001). That's why a comparison of television coverage with newspaper coverage could be a good topic for future research.

Future researches also should study consequences of state ownership of the media such as its effect on media freedom, citizens' rights, and government effectiveness.

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## APPENDIX I CODING SHEET

Coder: Ilgar -1    Lusine - 2

Date\_\_\_\_\_ Day of Week \_\_\_\_\_

### General Story Characteristics:

**1. Newspaper:** (1) Khalg (2) Echo (3) Zerkalo

**2. Author:**

(1) Staff writer (2) A contributing writer (3) Supplied article

**3. Story Type:**

(1) Straight news (2) Investigative (3) Feature (4) Interview

**4. Headline dominance**

(1) Favorable (2) Neutral/Balanced (3) Unfavorable

**5. Count the number of Sources (use hash mark):**

	Supporters of the Government	Supporters of Protesters	Neutrals
Sources			
Official			
Opposition			
Expert			
Witness			
Media witness			
Others			

**6. Dominant Source in the article**



(1) Official (2) Opposition (3) Expert (4) Witnesses (5) Media witness (6) Others

**7. Paragraphs' viewpoint (count existence of each category using hash marks)**

Categories	Number	Total
Favorable		
Unfavorable		
Neutral/Balanced		
Non-relevant		

**8. Overall story/article tone**

(1) Favorable (2) Neutral/Balanced (3) Unfavorable

**9. Frames (count existence of each and use harsh marks)**

Indicate a presence of the following frames in each paragraph and count the number of paragraphs.

Government Responsibility: (1) Yes \_\_\_\_\_ (0) No  
 Opposition Responsibility: (1) Yes \_\_\_\_\_ (0) No  
 Conflict: (1) Yes \_\_\_\_\_ (0) No  
 Economic Consequences: (1) Yes \_\_\_\_\_ (0) No  
 Human Interest: (1) Yes \_\_\_\_\_ (0) No  
 Morality: (1) Yes \_\_\_\_\_ (0) No

## **APPENDIX II CODING PROTOCOL**

### **Introduction**

This study aims at analyzing the newspaper coverage of 2003 street protests by *Khalg gazeteti*, *Zerkalo* and *Echo* newspapers and finding the impact of ownership on their objectivity of the social protest. The study unit is the news story or article. In this study, stories carried on the news pages of *Khalg gazeteti*, *Zerkalo* and *Echo*, which focus on street protest, will be included.

### **Coding Instruction**

Date: the month and day of the story

Day of Week: write down the day of the week that the story appears on the newspaper, eg: Sunday, Monday etc.

General story characteristics

#### **1. Newspaper**

Identify the different newspaper, *Khalg gazeteti*, *Zerkalo* or *Echo*

#### **2. Author**

Identify the author of news story:

Staff writer; A contributing writer; Supplied article/news story.

#### **3. Story type**

Straight news: stories answer to: who, what, where, when, why and how;

Investigative: stories that are in-depth, included background information;

Feature: Stories are descriptive, often to the point of painting a picture for the reader.

#### **4. Headline Domination**

Identify if the headline is

**Favorable:** generally positive towards the government;

**Unfavorable:** omit negative aspects of the government policy;

**Balanced/Neutral:** headline that don't show any favor or disfavor toward the government.

## **5. Count the number of Sources (use hash mark)**

Read through each paragraph and find the sources that story attributes. If the source expresses his or her opinion indicate which category (supporter of government or protesters or netural) it belongs to:

**Official:** organizational sources which are representatives of the government, police forces or a ruling party;

**Expert:** independent sources with knowledge and experience;

**Opposition:** Representative or supporter of opposition parties;

**Witness:** eyewitnesses or directly affected by the event;

**Media witness:** reporter who are eyewitnesses to the event.

## **6. Dominant Source**

Find dominant source in the news story through finding the most frequently used source:

- Official; - Opposition; - Expert; - Witnesses; - Media witness.

## **7. Paragraphs' viewpoint**

According to the dominance of each source in the paragraph identify its viewpoint.

Code the paragraph's viewpoint as favorable, unfavorable or balanced/neutral.

**Favorable:** is generally positive towards the government;

**Unfavorable:** omits negative aspects of the government policy;

**Balanced/Neutral:** article that objectively states the facts and don't show any favor or disfavor toward the government.

## 8. Overall story tone

**Favorable:** is generally positive towards the government;

**Unfavorable:** omits negative aspects of the government policy;

**Balanced/Neutral:** article that objectively states the facts and don't show any favor or disfavor toward the government.

## 9. Frames (count existence of each)

To identify a frame used in each article. The unit of analysis should be each paragraph.

Select one of the following dominant categories: responsibility frame, conflict frame, economic consequences frame, human impact and morality frame.

### 1. Responsibility frame:

**Government/Opposition responsibility frame:** Places blame or attributes cause.

Portrays an issue or problem in a way that attributes responsibility for its cause to government, individuals, or interest groups. Example for the responsibility frame: "Chaos in the streets is the result of falsification of the election by officials".

**2. Conflict frame:** stresses conflict or disagreement between individuals, institutions or different groups, and the government to capture the audience interest. In our study we will examine the conflict between the ruling party and opposition.

**3. Economic consequences frame:** pictures an event, problem or issue focusing on the economic impact, which it might have on an individual, group, institution, region, or country. "Opposition protesters caused a huge damage in the capital".

**4. Human impact frame:** The human impact frame, in which individuals or groups who are affected by a certain issue appear as illustrations to the issue in question. The frame puts a 'human face' on a story by providing examples of this kind. In our study this frame

portrays the protesters or citizens who affected (beaten, jailed) by the violence and tells the story of a citizen regarding the election, the violence and outcomes.

**5. Morality frame:** The morality frame, with a focus on judgments of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’, and other morality based praise and condemnation. The frame in news or articles that exposes negative aspects, such as violence, immorality, and oppressiveness of the government policy toward to the street protests will be referred as morality frame. For example: “The police action was crime against their own citizens”.

## VITA

Ilgar Khudiyev was born on December 19, 1975, in Mingechaur, the Azerbaijan Republic. He graduated with honors from Azerbaijan Cooperation Institute in 1996. During his study at the Institute he wrote articles on social and economical issues; later he became a reporter of the weekly newspaper *Business Press*. In 1995, he joined the staff of the daily newspaper *Millet* and in 1996 he became special correspondent of the newspaper *Mukhalifet*. He also gained an experience in TV reporting during his internship in TV company *TRT* (Turkey) and in the local privet TV company, *Space*. From 1998 to 2000 working as a marketing manager in a local branch of Singapore company Keppel Fells he was a contrition writer for some local newspapers. In 2000 he became a local correspondent in Baku Bureau of BBC Azeri Service.

In 2003, Ilgar obtained a master's level degree from the Caucasus School of Journalism and Media Management. In 2004 he was selected as a teaching assistant at the Caucasus School of Journalism and Media Management. The same year he received a scholarship from International Center of Journalists to earn a master's degree in mass communication at Louisiana State University.