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Assessment of International Intervention in Bosnian Media

The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina marked a period of transition from communism to democracy, leaving the media largely unregulated. This loose period of regulation allowed media outlets in BiH to segregate during the war. When the three major nationalist parties took over broadcast and print media in BiH, Titoist integration of media ended and nationalist messages spread to corresponding ethnic groups, facilitating violence throughout the region. The Serb Democratic Party (SDS) took control of Serb Radio and Television (SRT), the Bosniak Party of Democratic Action (SDA) ran RTV-BiH in Sarajevo, and the Croat Democratic Union (HDZ) controlled Croatian Radio and Television (HRT) (Pech, 2000). Broadcast media developed rapidly between 1992 and 1995, emerging as a facilitator of war, whereas print media crumbled (International Crisis Group, 1997). The Dayton Peace Agreement generally ignored the issue of the media. In Annex 3, there is mention of maintaining freedom of the press, but only for the purpose of organizing free and fair elections. The Constitution (Annex 4) excludes media altogether. This failure to address media issues in the Dayton Accords left news outlets controlled by political parties that continued to incite ethnic violence (ICG, 1997). The media environment in BiH during the war showed that controlled media can negatively impact society and perpetuate violence, and economic researchers Nabamita Dutta and Sanjukta Roy found that the reverse effect occurs when media is independent from political control. They suggested that free media improves society by preventing manipulation of information by politicians and exposing the public to diverse viewpoints (Dutta and Roy, 2013). The belief in free media as an enabler of democracy prompted international intervention in BiH media, particularly by the OSCE and OHR, though other international organizations such as the EU and USAID also made contributions (Turcilo, 2011).

Bosnian researchers Tarik Jusic[[1]](#footnote-1) and Nidzara Ahmetasevic[[2]](#footnote-2) periodized international intervention in Bosnian media into three stages. It began with deep involvement from the OHR and OSCE immediately following the war in order to subdue the media’s ethnocentric tone and prevent provocation of violence. After resolving immediate problems, the international community focused on long-term reform, creating regulatory organizations and an independent public broadcasting system. Since 2002, the international community has largely withdrawn from involvement in BiH media, handing over authority to local actors, such as the regulatory agencies created earlier (Jusic and Ahmetasevic, 2013). International figures (specifically the OHR and OSCE) failed to fully prepare the media sector for self-sustainability in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Their withdrawal correlates with the level of media independence in the years following; media independence first improved in the mid-2000s but began to stagnate and even regress after 2008. I argue that intervention established a basis for media independence but later on partially caused regression in five key issues in the media sector: freedom of speech, professionalism of journalists, plurality of news, business management and supporting institutions.

These five key areas of analyzing media independence are the five objectives that the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) uses to measure a state’s level of media sustainability. Freedom of speech involves protection of speech rights and guaranteeing access to public information. Professionalism looks at standards of quality in media reporting, presence of self-censorship and adherence to ethics codes. Plurality of news insinuates an availability of various media outlets that offer reliable and objective information and involves the transparency of media ownership. Business management focuses on the efficiency of media outlets as businesses, sustainability and support of advertising revenue. Finally, the supporting institutions factor encompasses the presence and capacity of associations that act in the interest of independent media as well as journalist training programs and media distribution infrastructure (IREX, 2015). These five criteria for analyzing media independence are not always mutually exclusive and often overlap. Thus, various forms of intervention in the media sector have simultaneously affected more than one factor.

**FREEDOM OF SPEECH**

During the first phase of intervention between 1996 and 1998, the OHR and OSCE helped BiH establish necessary reforms to promote freedom of speech, but the failure to fully coordinate with local governments and communities prevented implementation of these free speech reforms. As administrator of elections in BiH, the OSCE created the Provisional Election Commission in February 1996 (OSCE, 1996a). Under this framework, entity governments agreed to allow journalists freedom of expression in their coverage of the 1996 election campaign and guarantee access to the media to all political parties and candidates. The PEC’s rules also prohibited governments from imposing sanctions or penalties on journalists or subjecting them to detention, harassment or interference (OSCE, 1996b). This initial effort laid the groundwork for future reforms, but because the PEC had no enforcement capacity, implementation of these rules was initially unsuccessful. For example, despite the inclusion of equal access provisions, opposition parties were not always given the opportunity to purchase editorial space or television time (OSCE, 1996a).

The actions that the OHR and OSCE took to promote freedom of speech between 1998 and 2002 led to a more comprehensive legal framework to protect speech rights for journalists via new laws guaranteeing freedom of access to information and decriminalization of libel. In July 1999, the OHR issued a decision that called on central BiH and the entities to adopt these two types of legislation to protect freedom of speech and access to information (Westendorp, 1999). High Representative Carlos Westendorp initially set a deadline for governments to adopt the Freedom of Access to Information Act by the end of 1999, but the state government did not adopt it until October 2000, and the Republika Srpska government only adopted it in May 2001 after the OHR threatened to use its Bonn powers (OSCE, 2001a). Despite the late action by the BiH government, establishing legal rights to government information was a great accomplishment in promoting media independence. Decriminalization of defamation was slower to pass and was not fully adopted by the BiH government until 2003 (Freedom House, 2014). While decriminalizing libel made it easier for journalists to publish critical news without fear of prosecution, biased judiciaries often dealt journalists excessive damages in civil cases, and journalists are still responsible for proving innocence rather than plaintiffs holding responsibility to prove guilt (Freedom House, 2014). The mere possibility of facing libel charges prevents journalists from maintaining full freedom of speech.

By 2002, involvement in media by the OHR and OSCE began to decrease, and while they successfully established a legal basis for protecting freedom of speech, the international community failed to ensure that the new laws worked in practice and that government officials followed through with promises to grant access to information. As a result, suppression of free speech in various forms continues into 2015. Between 2002 and 2003, death threats and attacks against journalists decreased; however, harassment continued to frequently affect journalists (Freedom House, 2014). In 2008, threats and attacks increased substantially, and a member of parliament assaulted three journalists while trying to prohibit them from covering a press conference (Freedom House, 2008). In 2010, journalist Rade Tesic had his car set on fire after writing about local criminal networks in the RS (Freedom House, 2010). While attacks are not as common in the Federation, they still occur occasionally; local policemen in 2010 assaulted TV journalist Osman Drina in Zenica where he was reporting on a women’s basketball league (Freedom House, 2010). In addition to harassment, dismissals from state media outlets give journalists reason to censor themselves. In 2007, BHT1, a national public TV channel, covered a story regarding hostile treatment by Prime Minister Dodik and the Council of Ministers (Haraszti, 2007). A month later, the Steering Board of the Public Broadcasting Service dismissed the general director and appointed a replacement. Journalists from BHT1 were also barred from attending RS President Milan Jelic’s press conference, and government officials refused to give interviews to any journalist reporting for BHT1 (Haraszti, 2007). Since journalists would rather keep their job than cover news with a critical eye, they practice self-censorship (Freedom House, 2010). Civil suits with excessive compensation also continue to damage freedom of speech. In 2013, a Banja Luka court gave 2,500 euros to Dodik in a lawsuit against journalist Ljiljana Kovacevic over her reporting on embezzlement and abuse of power, which had already been publicized by Bosnian state police (Freedom House, 2014). Surprisingly, this case was overturned on appeal in 2014, ultimately working out in favor of Kovacevic (IREX, 2015). However, the case lasted for five years and proves to other journalists the possible consequences for publishing criticisms of the government in Republika Srpska. Overall, since international organizations have pulled out of media in BiH, freedom of speech has suffered.[[3]](#footnote-3)

**PROFESSIONALISM**

International intervention in media professionalism between 1996 and 1998 consisted of promoting the establishment of ethics codes and basic standards. Because the OSCE was mandated to administer BiH elections, it laid the groundwork in February 1996 with the creation of the Provisional Election Commission. The commission created standards of professional conduct and required journalists to agree not to provoke nationalist thought or promote ethnic hatred (OSCE, 1996a). Other standards included distinguishing between factual and editorial content, reporting accurate and unbiased information, avoiding suppression and misrepresentation, refraining from taking bribes, avoiding language that encourages discrimination, and publishing corrections (OSCE, 1996b). Despite the guarantee of balanced coverage, journalists violated PEC regulations and continued using inflammatory language (OSCE, 1996a).

Between 1998 and 2002, international focus shifted to self-regulation, prompting the creation of the Independent Media Commission and the Press Council, which further built into law the standards of professionalism. The OHR focused on broadcast reform and thus took on the role of establishing the Independent Media Commission (IMC) in 1998, which subjected journalists to conduct codes (Westendorp, 1998). The IMC took responsibility for issuing broadcast licensing and ensuring adherence to licensing conditions; it was also given the capacity to require apologies from media outlets, issue warnings, impose penalties, suspend licenses, seize equipment and close operations if outlets did not adhere to standards (Westendorp, 1998). Early on before transitioning into a locally run agency, the IMC relied on donor assistance. Between 1998 and 2003, 19 million U.S. dollars went toward supporting its creation and operations (Jusic and Ahmetasevic, 2013). In December 1998, the Peace Implementation Council pushed for an agency responsible for print media, prompting the creation of the Press Council. The OSCE, more involved in print media than the OHR, took on the primary supervisory role. The Press Council was tasked with increasing professional standards and handling complaints between citizens and the press (Jusic and Ahmetasevic, 2013). Though creating the Press Council supported professional standards on paper, problems arose in practice. Media outlets were unsupportive of the Press Council and did not understand the idea of self-regulation in the industry. The Press Council was also not able to enforce its standards or apply sanctions (Jusic and Ahmetasevic, 2013).

Since 2002, the IMC has established sustainability but not the Press Council, suggesting that international actions have both succeeded in and failed to promote sustainability. In 2002, the OHR imposed the Law on Communications, which combined the IMC and the Telecommunications Regulatory Agency into the Communications Regulatory Agency (CRA) and set it on the path to be funded by license fees rather than international donors. By 2003, the CRA had transitioned into an agency entirely run by domestic actors (Jusic and Ahmetasevic, 2013). While some analysts say the CRA makes fair and unbiased licensing decisions, it is still subject to political interference because the government is ultimately responsible for approving the appointment of CRA leadership (Freedom House, 2014). For example, in 2007 and 2008, the Council of Ministers spent over a year blocking the process of choosing a general manager and tried to influence the selection (U.S. Department of State, 2009). Moreover, the law’s imposition by the OHR has caused local actors to frequently attempt to undermine the agency’s neutrality (Jusic and Ahmetasevic, 2013). In 2013, the BiH government drafted a new electronic communications bill that vaguely divided competencies between the CRA and the Council of Ministers, threatening the CRA’s independence (OSCE, 2013).

Biased reporting and making claims without facts or evidence also continues to challenge journalists’ professionalism. In February 2014, media outlets during protests falsely linked protestors to looting and ethnic animosity. Even after independent media reported accurately and these claims were proven false, journalists refused to issue retractions or apologies for their unprofessional behavior (IREX, 2015). While the OHR and OSCE initially succeeded in promoting professionalism in Bosnian media by establishing regulatory bodies like the CRA and Press Council, the self-regulatory system has not in practice freed journalists from political intimidation, resulting in continued unprofessional practices in Bosnian journalism.

**PLURALITY OF NEWS**

The OHR and OSCE have put vast amounts of money into achieving plurality of news in Bosnian media, both by restructuring the public broadcasting system and developing independent media outlets. Both objectives initially promoted a diverse and balanced information environment but could not sustain improvement beyond basic reforms.

Restructuring of the Public Broadcasting System

The OHR’s goal in public broadcasting was to move away from nationalist rhetoric in the media and promote a pan-ethnic outlet, but the BiH government resisted intervention, preventing full implementation of the restructuring. Between 1996 and 1998, international actors generally ignored the issue of public broadcasting, instead focusing on reducing animosity between the international community and the government authorities controlling public broadcasters. What truly set off intervention in public broadcasting was a series of decisions by the OHR between 1998 and 2002 calling for the establishment of a statewide broadcaster and two entity-wide broadcasters that would coordinate with one another and jointly act as a public service to BiH citizens (Jusic and Ahmetasevic, 2013). In these decisions, the OHR outlined various requirements for the new system to promote an open media scene, including license obtainment, transparency in management and finances, OHR-appointed employees, and a 40 percent quota protecting news and educational programming (OHR, 2000). Pushback from BiH government officials prompted the OHR to impose the legislation in 2002 using Bonn powers, which put into law the joint system (Jusic and Ahmetasevic, 2013).

The OHR inevitably had to work within the ethnically divided framework of the Bosnian political environment, but it further ingrained into society separation of nationalities, undermining the OHR’s original goal of breaking free from nationalist media. RTV-FBiH, the Federation’s broadcaster, tailored itself toward Bosniaks and broadcast stories in the Bosniak language, and the RS broadcaster served the Serbs in the same way. This dual system left the Croats without their own public broadcaster, and they resisted adoption of the broadcast law for years (Hodzic, 2015). Overall, the OHR’s restructuring allowed separation by nationalities to remain in tact, reducing the effectiveness of its goal to reduce subjectivity in public broadcasting.

After 2002, the European Commission became more involved in Bosnian media as part of its overall strategy to encourage reforms through the EU pre-accession process (Jusic and Ahmetasevic, 2013). As a precondition for signing the Stabilization and Association Agreement, the Commission outlined requirements in 2003 for BiH to restructure its public broadcasting system. While the EU was able to continue adjusting public broadcasting, it faced continued resistance from the BiH government. The OHR’s imposition of legislation during its intervention period left BiH officials with a poor image of the international community, partially resulting in the resistance that the EU faced (Jusic and Ahmetasevic, 2013). Politicization of public broadcasting persisted into 2013, and the government continued to exert political influence on the system via management appointments (Jusic and Ahmetasevic, 2013). Hate speech is still prevalent within public media, though politicians often label constructive criticism of government as hate speech. Moreover, in 2013, the National Assembly of RS passed a law to allow direct financing of public broadcasters through the entity’s budget. This action violated the law requiring financing to be taken from license fees and advertising revenue, and it strengthened the political hold on public broadcasting in the RS (Freedom House, 2014). While the OHR’s public broadcasting legislation established basic rules to promote some level of independence from party control, the independence and transparency of ownership within public media remains low (IREX, 2015).

Development of Independent Media Outlets

In the first seven years after the Dayton Agreement, over 60 million U.S. dollars went toward creating and training independent media in BiH (Taylor and Napoli, 2003). Between 1996 and 1998, the OHR and OSCE made progress in achieving diverse viewpoints in the media by creating and funding independent outlets, but the projects were not set up with long-term plans in mind, preventing a chance at sustainability.

**Free Inter-Ethnic Radio Network:** As administrator of elections, the OSCE established the Free Inter-Ethnic Radio Network (FERN) in July 1996 as an independent radio broadcaster to provide objective and accurate information to both entities of BiH for the election period. (Jusic and Ahmetasevic, 2013). However, two of the project’s characteristics prevented it from having a lasting effect on media plurality and ultimately led to FERN’s demise: 1) FERN’s basis in Sarajevo prevented it from developing credibility among Serb and Croat areas of BiH; and 2) the network originally intended to disband after the elections in September 1996 (ICG, 1997).

The OSCE established an independent outlet able and willing to disseminate neutral news, but FERN’s structure prevented Serbs and Croats from using it as a news source, undermining the OSCE’s goal of creating a pan-ethnic independent outlet. The OSCE provided journalists with training, consistent salaries and incentive programs, which facilitated an environment in which journalists provided objective information (ICG, 1997). In that sense, the OSCE achieved its goal of establishing plurality of news. Providing unbiased information over the air did not, however, equate to Bosnians actually consuming the news (ICG, 1997). FERN’s basis in Sarajevo meant that it had the greatest penetration in Bosniak-controlled areas of the Federation, whereas it relied on contributions to cover Croat-controlled Federation areas and the RS. In 1996, RS authorities temporarily banned FERN from broadcasting in the entity because FERN did not initially seek permission to broadcast there (ICG, 1997). For the 1996 elections, FERN covered 81 percent of the Federation and 61 percent of the RS (OSCE 1996a). However, this did not correlate with those who tuned into the network. One survey found that less than 0.5 percent of people in Banja Luka listened to FERN regularly in 1996 (Chandler, 2000). FERN’s listenership did not improve substantially over time. In 2000, only 3.6 percent of radio listeners regularly used FERN,[[4]](#footnote-4) as compared to 13.6 percent listenership of the most popular station, Radio BiH (Udovicic et al., 2001). Ultimately, FERN was ineffective at achieving pan-ethnic reach even if it broadcasted neutral information across both entities.

Because the OSCE originally established FERN as a temporary method of broadcasting election information, FERN was never given the capacity to sustain itself long-term. FERN depended entirely on international donations to fund its operations. When OSCE and Swiss government funding ended in 1998, the OSCE tried to find alternative financial support by encouraging corporate sponsorship and commercial advertising (OSCE, 1998). These efforts proved to be fruitless, and in 2001, FERN dissolved into the Public Broadcast Service of BiH. Although OSCE celebrated FERN for providing objective information across BiH, it was ultimately unable to sustain itself via commercial advertising or sponsorship (OSCE 2001b).

**Open Broadcast Network:** The OHR’s project, the Open Broadcast Network (OBN), faced a similar fate as FERN; the OHR’s lack of coordination with the domestic government and failure to establish effective implementation mechanisms prevented OBN from achieving sustainability. The OHR created OBN in 1996 to span across both entities and provide equal time for parties and candidates to campaign for the September elections. In implementing OBN, the OHR did not account for domestic authorities’ opinions. (Jusic and Ahmetasevic, 2013). Government officials at all levels resisted by trying to block OBN’s frequencies, prompting the Peace Implementation Council to install the network without consulting local actors, which prevented affiliate stations from making decisions on management. The OHR and international advisors were administering both OBN’s direct broadcast and its affiliate local stations, preventing management structures from forming that were necessary to sustain the network after the OHR pulled out (Jusic and Ahmetasevic, 2013).

Similar to the OSCE’s search for alternative resources to fund FERN, the OHR attempted to attract commercial revenue in 1998 to boost OBN’s sustainability (Jusic and Ahmetasevic, 2013). The search for adequate advertising revenue proved unsuccessful, and OBN was unable to attract a large audience. In 2000, 5.5 percent of BiH TV viewers regularly watched OBN, amounting to only one-fifth of the viewership RTV BiH from Sarajevo received and one-third of the viewership RTV Republika Srpska received (Udovicic et al., 2001). Moreover, media researchers Maureen Taylor and Philip Napoli conducted a study in Sarajevo suggesting that perceived importance of OBN decreased between 2000 and 2002. While politically dependent outlets also decreased in importance, they still placed higher than OBN (Taylor and Napoli, 2003). On the contrary, results from the parallel study conducted in Banja Luka found an increase in the importance of Alternativna Televizija (ATV), an affiliate of OBN. However, between 2000 and 2002, international funding to a competitor station ended, benefiting ATV (Taylor and Napoli, 2003). Because ATV benefited from a competitor’s loss of funding, this data cannot serve as reliable evidence that OBN’s programming caused ATV’s importance to increase. Other evidence suggests that local citizens distrusted independent media outlets like OBN because of their foreign administration (Howard, 2003).

Whatever the reason, donors (including the European Commission after contributing 4.7 million euros) were unsatisfied with OBN’s appeal and began pulling money out of the project as early as 2000, redirecting funding to public broadcasting. In 2003, the international community sold OBN to a Croatian advertising tycoon, who transformed it into an entertainment network consisting largely of commercial programming (Jusic and Ahmetasevic, 2013). Similar to FERN, OBN initially showed promise by introducing independent and objective ideas into the media sphere, but the lack of implementation by the OHR and lack of coordination with local actors prevented OBN from contributing to news plurality in the long term.

**Additional intervention:** Aside from FERN and OBN, other international actors such as the EU, Council of Europe and individual donor countries poured money into developing and operating additional independent outlets to serve as competition to the state media. However, donors contributed to various different start-up outlets rather than consolidating efforts, producing an artificial media industry (Howard, 2003). Lack of coordination among donors led to funding outlets that were at competition with each other, saturating the media market (Jusic and Ahmetasevic, 2013). Once international funding ceased, these media outlets struggled to survive. Private outlets that were developed and funded by international actors did not survive long enough to have a long-term benefit on the plurality of news in BiH, and donors wasted their money on weak stations unsupported by the public (Martin, 2011). Those private outlets that still maintain the capacity to publish more news are generally not truly independent from political powers. For example, since many private industries in the Bosnian economy are state-run, domestic advertisers tend to hold close party ties, which results in advertising revenue often placing political pressure on media outlets, inhibiting plurality of news (IREX, 2015).

**BUSINESS MANAGEMENT**

Attempts by international donors to establish independent media outlets in BiH not only failed to provide long-lasting diversity of information but also inadvertently worsened the economic system of the media industry. As already stated, donors did not coordinate their contributions and instead funded outlets at competition with each other, saturating the media market with too many outlets for the advertising system to sustain (Jusic and Ahmetasevic, 2013). In 1997, BiH had 156 radio stations and 52 TV stations. By 2000, BiH broadcasters increased to 210 radio stations and 71 TV stations (Udovicic et al., 2001). After donors stopped funding outlets, many of them could not sustain themselves and died out (Jusic and Ahmetasevic, 2013). In 2014, BiH had 160 radio stations and 43 TV stations (IREX, 2015). Even with these decreased outlet numbers, the current amount of stations still stressed the market to its limits, making it too large for the meager advertising revenue system. In 2014, the advertising revenue in the media sector was 52.3 million U.S. dollars, which a Sarajevo advertising agency considered unable to sustain the market at its current size (IREX, 2015).

Intervention not only affected the private media’s business environment but also that of the public media. The OHR shaped the public broadcasting system’s business management by requiring that the state and entity-level broadcasters pool funds collected by advertising and license fees (Westendorp, 1999).[[5]](#footnote-5) This consolidation was an attempt to financially unify the public broadcasters under one system and discourage hostile competition (Haraszti, 2007). However, entity-level governments resisted this unification, undermining the business management of the public media. In 2008, RS officials pressured residents to stop paying license fees that supported BHRT, the statewide public broadcaster (Freedom House, 2009). Furthermore, because the Croat elites wanted to push for their own public broadcaster, they too discouraged cooperation with license fee collection (IREX, 2015). Public broadcasters also face difficulty collecting license fees from poorer areas of BiH (Haraszti, 2007). As a result of boycotts and inability to pay, the collection of fees has decreased in recent years. In 2012, public broadcasters collected only 74 percent of what they were owed, 5 percent less than the percentage collected in 2011 (IREX, 2015).

Overall, intervention by the OHR and OSCE in the independent media market resulted in an oversaturated and unsustainable media market, and the OHR’s restructuring of the public broadcasting system led to resistance by Serbs and Croats in supporting the statewide public broadcaster. The current outlook on the media industry’s sustainability and performance is bleak, which has perpetuated the problem because advertisers will not purchase advertising space or time if circulation and ratings are low (IREX, 2015).

**SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS**

As explained earlier, the OHR and OSCE played an integral role in establishing regulatory bodies to promote freedom of speech; the establishment of these agencies also acted as a way of promoting supporting institutions. Other supporting institutions in BiH include journalist associations and educational systems.

Registered journalist associations in BiH include BH Journalists, Association of Journalists of the Republika Srpska, Association of BiH Journalists, and Association of Croat Journalists from BiH. Because of the ethnic divide, these associations rarely come to agreements, undermining their effectiveness in supporting journalists’ needs (IREX, 2015). Though there is little research on coordination by the international community with journalist associations, the OSCE did take over as administrator of the Free Media Help Line in November 1999 after the IMC created it in February of the same year. The help line established an outlet for journalists to report violations, attacks and threats and proved to be supportive of journalists’ rights. After two and a half years, the OSCE transferred authority to the BH Journalists (OHR, 1999). Since the Free Media Help Line continues to report yearly violations of rights and media freedoms, it appears that this was a case in which intervention resulted in a successful institution that was able to achieve long-term sustainability (IREX, 2015).

USAID has in the past taken on a large role in supporting journalist trainings in BiH through its Judicial Development Programme. The trainings focused on teaching journalists standards for reporting on judicial trials in order to promote accurate dissemination of sensitive topics such as war crimes trials (Justice Report, 2010). While this program allowed journalists to build their skills, its short-term nature and international control did not significantly contribute to the well being of supporting institutions in BiH (IREX, 2015). Overall, intervention beyond the initial development of regulatory bodies and funding of trainings has been limited, making a negligible impact on supporting institutions in recent years.

**CONCLUSION**

This paper follows the general framework that international intervention in Bosnian media failed to prepare the industry for sustainable independence that would last after international withdrawal, and media independence scores by Freedom House and IREX generally support this hypothesis. However, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations of this argument. This paper is not a comprehensive discussion of every project implemented by the international community in Bosnian media and is limited to current available research. Therefore, it is possible that unharvested evidence conflicts with this argument. In addition, linking international actions with media independence scores and drawing conclusions based on a correlation is limited by other factors that might also have impacted media independence, such as changes of power in government.

Intervention by the OSCE and OHR led to initial improvements in media freedom in the early 2000s by establishing basic reforms in the industry, but overall the international community’s failure to ensure implementation of these reforms prevented media from continuing to improve independence and maintain sustainability. While some intervention efforts resulted in successful and sustainable programs such as the CRA and the Free Media Help Line, those programs are not without their limitations, and the general trend has been that internationally assisted media reform programs were unable to sustain themselves in the long term once international actors withdrew their money. Because international withdrawal occurred without adequately preparing BiH media for sustainability, political pressure and poor business practices continue to hamper freedom of speech, professionalism, plurality of news, business management and supporting institutions in Bosnian media.

Appendix: Freedom House and IREX Media Independence Scores

Freedom House Media Freedom:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
| Freedom Score  0=Best  100=Worst | 53 | 49 | 48 | 45 | 45 | 45 | 45 | 47 | 48 | 48 | 48 | 49 | 50 |
| Legal Environment  0=Best  30=Worst | 8 | 8 | 9 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 10 |
| Political Environment  0=Best  40=Worst | 19 | 20 | 20 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 23 | 23 | 23 | 23 |
| Economic Environment  0=Best  30=Worst | 26 | 21 | 19 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 17 | 17 |

IREX Media Sustainability Index:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006/07 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
| Media Sustainability Index  WORST=0  BEST=4 | 1.66 | 1.66 | 2.09 | 2.52 | 2.41 | 2.90 | 2.64 | 2.81 | 2.60 | 2.22 | 1.97 | 2.03 | 2.04 | 2.03 |
| Freedom of Speech | 1.95 | 2.20 | 2.35 | 2.83 | 2.80 | 3.09 | 3.04 | 2.94 | 2.96 | 2.54 | 2.45 | 2.38 | 2.36 | 2.56 |
| Professional Journalism | 1.37 | 1.46 | 1.88 | 2.23 | 2.11 | 2.65 | 2.25 | 2.30 | 2.12 | 1.87 | 1.68 | 1.60 | 1.83 | 1.77 |
| Plurality of News | 1.84 | 1.64 | 2.20 | 2.71 | 2.65 | 2.95 | 2.84 | 3.02 | 2.77 | 2.59 | 2.16 | 2.20 | 2.26 | 2.23 |
| Business Management | 1.53 | 1.25 | 2.01 | 2.31 | 2.20 | 2.74 | 2.50 | 2.82 | 2.43 | 1.84 | 1.61 | 1.60 | 1.64 | 1.58 |
| Supporting Institutions | 1.63 | 1.74 | 2.00 | 2.54 | 2.31 | 3.05 | 2.55 | 2.97 | 2.71 | 2.27 | 1.95 | 2.35 | 2.12 | 2.02 |

Unsustainable Mixed System (1-2):

“Country minimally meets objectives, with segments of the legal system and government opposed to a free media system. Evident progress in free-press advocacy, increased professionalism and new media businesses may be too recent to judge sustainability,” (IREX, 2015).

Near Sustainability (2-3):

“Country has progressed in meeting multiple objectives, with legal norms, professionalism and the business environment supportive of independent media. Advances have survived changes in government and have been codified in law and practice. However, more time may be needed to ensure that change is enduring and that increased professionalism and the media business environment are sustainable,” (IREX, 2015).

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1. Tarik Jusic worked for Mediacentar Sarajevo, an independent media research organization, from 2002 to 2011, and he now works for Analitika – Center for Social Research. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Nidzara Ahmetasevic is a freelance journalist in Sarajevo who has worked with independent Bosnian media outlets such as Slobodan Bosna. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See Appendix for media independence scores by Freedom House and IREX. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The 1996 survey cannot be compared to the 2000 survey without acknowledging that the 1996 survey was limited to Banja Luka, whereas the 2000 survey pooled from all of BiH. Knowing this, the increase in FERN listenership between 1996 and 2000 is likely less substantial. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The OHR implemented the license collection fee as a method of funding public broadcasting by charging TV owners in BiH an annual fee (Westendorp, 1999). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)