

Spring 2018

US Advocacy for Azerbaijani Press Freedom and Democracy

Danny Burns
SIT Graduate Institute

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US Advocacy for Azerbaijani Press Freedom and Democracy

Capstone

Daniel Burns

School for International Training Graduate Program

Abstract

This study sought to determine best practices for policy advocates who promote press freedom, freedom of expression, and democracy in Azerbaijan to influence policymakers in the United States of America. Results from other studies, the literature on the topics of Azerbaijan and policy advocacy, and expert interviews were used for this study. Its goal is to increase the amount of influence the average policy advocate has in the US by analyzing current advocates' experiences and synthesizing concrete suggestions for actions to effectively enact desired policy changes. The interviews and literature clearly support the premise that the regime in Azerbaijan is exerting authoritarian rule over the people and violating the human rights of their citizens. This leads the advocates interviewed to believe that support from the government of the United States and other influential actors in the United States are critical for impacting the regime. The paper calls for building stronger relationships and cooperation between not only policy advocates for Azerbaijan but also working with larger advocacy efforts to impact the regime. The paper also calls on the international community to support advocates for human rights with a greater sense of fervor.

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Introduction

This capstone paper examines the best practices for policy advocates on US policymakers in regards to Azerbaijani press freedom, freedom of expression, and Democracy. According to the findings, there is a major problem with political prisoners, corruption, a lack of civic engagement, and funding opportunities for grassroots organizations on the ground. The researcher concludes that the policy advocates should systematically advocate for the 158 political prisoners, improve coordination, and develop tools to help their efforts in the long run. The paper consists of 31 sections and subsections. First, it will introduce the reader to the situation in Azerbaijan Second, it will go over literature pertaining to the main topics of Azerbaijan, policy advocacy, and U.S. policymakers. It will continue to go over the methodology and limitations before it goes into the major findings from the expert interviews. Following the findings of the interviews will be the recommendations and conclusion along with the references.

To provide background information for the case study that will become the major focus of this paper, a brief history of Azerbaijan's governance challenges and advocacy issues is in order. The country of Azerbaijan has a population of roughly 9,762,000 and is located in the South Caucasus region (Azerbaijan, 2018). Azerbaijan declared itself a democratic republic in 1918 only to be overtaken by the Soviet Union in 1920 (Altstadt, 2017). Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the small oil-rich country has faced a lot of adversity. There were a series of minor conflicts that led to a full-scale war between Azerbaijan and Armenia from 1992 to 1994 (Blank, 2017). The current situation between the two countries is often referred to as a frozen conflict, and this conflict is ever present in the minds of many Azerbaijani and Armenian people. Daily propaganda pieces are

reminding the people of the atrocities committed against them on all the major television stations in both countries and is reinforced in public schools (Finkel, & Brudny, 2014; Hakobyan, 2016). In this environment, an authoritarian leader was able to thrive and pass the presidency on to his son. Heydar Aliyev was the head of the state security agency, KGB, in Soviet Azerbaijan and went on to wrestle the presidency away from others (Elgie, & Moestrup, 2016). Before he died of a heart attack in 2003, he was able to put his son in a political position to ensure he would become president after him. Ilham Aliyev took power in 2003 and continued his father's repressive tactics (Elgie, & Moestrup, 2016). Throughout Ilham Aliyev's presidency, European and American diplomats have criticized his administration's fraudulent elections, harsh sentencing, and corruption (Pearce, Vincent, & Geybullayeva, A. 2015) (Sadigov, T. 2018). As of 2013, the Aliyev regime has started to crackdown on the people of Azerbaijan by taking away their freedom of expression and preventing international organizations and countries from funding NGOs inside the country (Pearce, Vincent, & Geybullayeva, 2015). This crackdown has been in the form of increased arrest rates, restrictive laws against NGO funding, fraudulent charges lobbed against media outlets and personnel, as well as torture as a means of intimidation against critics (Pearce, Vincent, & Geybullayeva, 2015).

Review of Literature

What was found to be lacking throughout the body of literature on the topic of Azerbaijan, U.S. policymakers, and policy advocacy was a detailed analysis of the best way to go about policy advocacy for Azerbaijan in the United States specifically.

This literature review will be selective instead of comprehensive as the research is dealing with three ordinarily unrelated aspects and the intersection of them. Those three aspects of the study are policy advocacy, United States policymakers, and addressing authoritarianism in Azerbaijan. This literature review will go over knowledge gained from articles and books that have intricately looked into policy advocacy in the United States as well as the literature meant to establish that the Azerbaijani government is an authoritarian regime, and how some change advocates have gone about promoting change.

Azerbaijani Authoritarianism

This section is a compilation of articles and sources which demonstrate how authoritarian the government of Azerbaijan is. The difficulty with establishing this definitively is that the administration has a lot of resources to create a counter argument against any seemingly empirical evidence.

Some of the most relevant evidence that the regime is authoritarian are the examples that were set on election day April 11th, 2018. In the preliminary report from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), they stated that widespread disregard for procedure, lack of transparency, and many serious irregularities, such as ballot box stuffing took place on election day. They also supplied evidence that proper democratic standards were unachievable due to long-term lack of pluralism in the media and elsewhere in the run-up to the election.

There is a great deal of money flowing through Azerbaijan from international energy companies. These companies and their employees often spend a lot of money on

rent and other property transactions. The Rentier State Theory (Almaz 2015) sheds light on the behavior of the state in the situation of large amounts of the GDP coming from expats involved with the energy sector. The theory claims that the more money a country gets from rent, the more likely that wealthy renters are going to control and often suppress the democratic process in the nation (Almaz 2015). Almaz (2015, p. 67) says “Azerbaijan's less reliance on taxation, but more reliance on energy revenues has a negative impact on its citizens' democratic aspirations.”

There are very few reports from civil society organizations regarding the most relevant issues for policy advocacy for press freedom. However, the report *Shrinking Space for Civil Society in Azerbaijan* by Zohrab Ismayilov and Ramute Remezaite as well as Human Rights Watch's *World Report 2017: Azerbaijan* seem to be the most relevant. These reports provide a critical look into the situation on the ground in Azerbaijan. The report *Shrinking Spaces for Civil Society in Azerbaijan* depicts the struggles of nine different organizations that were facing criminal prosecution and four cases of individual human rights defenders. Ismayilov and Remezaite claim that the past couple of years have been the worst for Azerbaijan civil society sector since the country's independence in 1991. Ismayilov and Remezaite document the trend in rising imprisonment of NGO leaders and restrictions on NGO funding. They document evidence of fraudulent convictions to point out that these arrests are precisely for political reasons. The report lists some recommendations to the government of Azerbaijan such as requiring that the government give clear and objective reasons for refusing permission for NGOs to receive grants be. However, the authors are not hopeful for those recommendations to be heeded. On the other hand, they have several recommendations to international organizations and

other governments that they are more enthusiastic about possibly getting traction. One key recommendation is for the international community to increase support for the civil society in Azerbaijan.

Another example of the authoritarianism of Azerbaijan is the case of Ilgar Mammadov. Advocates for Ilgar Mammadov worked extremely hard trying to get him released from an Azerbaijani prison after he was fraudulently convicted of inciting violence against the state (Alstadt, 2017). Their advocacy helped Mammadov win a court case in the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). However, that support was not effective in impacting the proper audience. The authorities inside of Azerbaijan continue to hold Mammadov against the decision of the ECHR (Alstadt, 2017). Mammadov was a strong critical voice with a great deal of national and international attention. This was a clear example of how strong the authoritarian rule of the Aliyev regime was and still is. It is clear from the decision of the ECHR that the courts fraudulently convicted Mammadov and the most logical reason is that Aliyev forced them to convict him. Not only was Aliyev's grip so secure as to get every level of the judiciary to reiterate his fake charges but also he maintains enough control to keep Mammadov in prison for four years after the ECHR ruling.

There has been a dramatic drop in public support for democracy in Azerbaijan between 2010 and 2016 (Sadigov, & Guliyev, 2018). According to Sadigov and Guliyev (2018), this is due in part to the repressive regime. This also led those researchers to believe that Azerbaijan is unstable and susceptible to drastic change given the proper catalyst. One of the co-authors also wrote about the nationalism that is pervasive in the

culture and that even opposition parties focus on patriotism, which Guliyev (2017) argues deters the younger generation from political life.

Policy Advocacy

The following concepts presented by Daly provide useful frameworks of thinking that have informed the analysis of advocacy issues within this paper. The book *Advocacy: Championing Ideas and Influencing Others* by John Daly talks very dynamically about policy advocacy and influencing people, in general. This book is anecdotally about Daly's experiences and the experiences of others along with his expertise as a communications professor and policy advocate himself. There are many aspects of this book that while they may have been from one man's opinion, they have been supported by the findings of others. Daly talks about several techniques and concepts that can be useful to policy advocates.

In the "Matrix of Ideas," as Daly (2011) calls it, an X and a Y-axis is correlating to the quality of ideas and the quality of advocacy. In this matrix, he describes four quadrants depicting "a lucky break," "a wasted investment," "a lost opportunity, and finally "successful advocacy" (Daly 2011). The term lucky break may sound counter-intuitive, but Daly (2011) says that this is when a bad idea has terrible or non-existent advocacy, you are fortunate not to have invested your time and effort into that bad idea. A bad idea with good quality advocacy is a wasted investment while conversely, a good idea with poor advocacy is a lost opportunity (Daly, 2011). Finally, a good idea, which is well advocated for, is extremely likely to be successful. Daly argues that you can apply these methods to practically anything. From a child advocating for a higher allowance to international sanctions geared at human rights violators in Azerbaijan.

		Idea Quality	
		Poor	Good
Advocacy Skill	Low	Lucky Break	Wasted Opportunity
	High	Wasted Investment	SUCCESS!

2

Figure 1. Image of the “Matrix of Ideas” (Perry, n.d., p. 2)

Narratives matter.

As an advocate for any given topic, stories can convey your message well. Abe Lincoln said, “plain people are more easily influenced through the medium of a broad and humorous illustration than in any other way” (Daly, 2011). The anecdotal evidence from Daly’s (2011) experience is reaffirmed by the more scientific work of Carstarphen (2004). According to Carstarphen, “combining personal stories with more rational discussion and explanations is more effective than either approach alone” (2004). Daly primarily discusses how a well-told story seems to be one of the best ways to convince many people of the value of one’s particular issue. On the flip side of that coin, stories told poorly can be easily dismissed or forgotten. Alexander Fleming is well remembered for discovering penicillin, but Florey, who was similarly instrumental in the discovery of

penicillin for medicine, is not recognized (Daly, 2011). This is most likely because Florey summarized his work in a more scientific and less accessible way for the general public.

Decision makers.

Daly (2011) argues that ideally an advocate should take their time and decipher which actors are the key decision makers in getting their idea accepted. Another level of influence would be not only knowing who the key decision makers are but also what kinds of things influence them. On top of knowing whom the decision makers are is that, sometimes, others influence decision-makers and the best way to get to the decision makers is to influence those that influence them (Daly 2011).

Daly breaks down the process of deciding how to go about advocacy and who to focus your attention on with a series of questions:

1. What should someone know about decision makers?
 - a. Is there a group of them or a lone decision maker for the issue?
 - b. When and where do they make their decisions? Rolling basis?
 - c. Do the people they represent hold them to a mandate?
2. Which decision makers are persuadable?
 - a. Where do they fall on the matrix of ideas?
 - b. Have they already been persuaded by other advocates?
 - c. How do they go about making their decisions?
3. Which decision makers like what approach?
 - a. Do they appreciate well-explained facts or would a good story be more effective?

- b. Do they like to be reached out to directly or would it be more useful to talk to their assistant?

A good advocate needs to read their audience according to Daly, which can be extremely time consuming, but the more one can do this the more effective their advocacy. The most challenging part of determining this line of advocacy for those who care about the issues of press freedom and democracy in Azerbaijan is that there are so many possible paths to advocate for this issue that it is hard to determine where to put the focus. This is part of the reason that this research will focus specifically on the US to narrow the possibilities and decide where advocates should focus their time.

Austen-Smith, & Wright (1992) support a more convoluted version of the idea that other people influence the primary decision makers. In their article on competitive lobbying, their research shows that legislators are not entirely but mostly beholden to constituents who elect them. This leads to the idea that influencing the broader community rather than an individual legislator may cause the desired effect.

Another line of research that has proven the worth of Daly's method of finding out the details of the target of one's advocacy is community mapping or stakeholder mapping. Stakeholder mapping is the idea that if you could map out all the connections to a particular program, you could use the information from all the connections to improve the program (Manchanda et al., 2016). This same plan goes for mapping the stakeholders involved in changing a specific policy issue in the United States.

Types of decision makers.

Daly also describes what he calls the matrix of knowing and feeling. There are again four quadrants along an X and Y-axis. In this matrix, the X-axis is regarding how

much the decision maker knows about the topic, and the Y-axis is regarding how they feel on the subject. The first quadrant is inferior knowledge and negative feelings toward the issue being advocated for. This first group of people is referred to as "cynics." The second quadrant is those with low knowledge but positive feelings, these people are called "naïve followers" by Daly. The third quadrant is the group with high knowledge and negative feelings toward the issue, and they are called the "adversaries." The final group is those that are supportive and knowledgeable and are called the "cheerleaders." Daly talks about working with cheerleaders as fellow advocates and using their time and energy to help the cause.

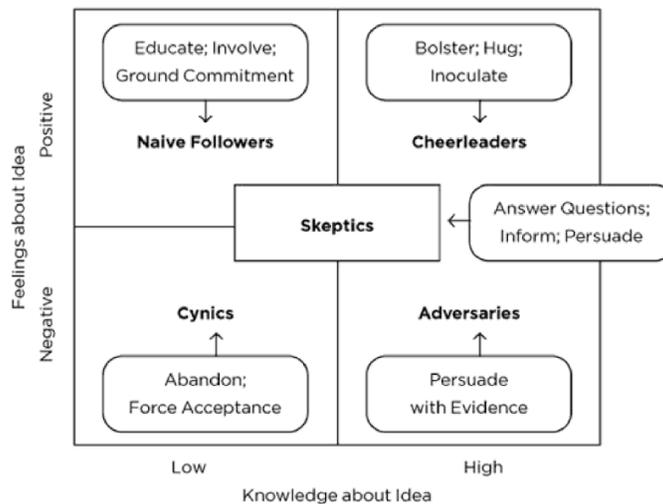


Figure 2. “The Knowing-Feeling Matrix” (Daly, 2011, p. 142)

Specifically, on the issue of authoritarian regimes and policy advocacy, there is an article that gives a bleak look into the future of Azerbaijan. This article talks about the authoritarian system in China, which in some ways can be said to be better off than the case of Azerbaijan in that they still have some NGOs (Li, Lo, & Tang, 2017). That being said it is easy to point out that the mere population size of China may make it near impossible to suppress every NGO. According to Li et al. (2017), the NGOs in China as

long as they are not critical of the government can remain open, but many are either specifically supportive of the government or stay out of politics. Similarly, some governmental organizations in Azerbaijan claim to be NGOs, but they are supportive of the government, and most are directly funded by the regime.

US Policy Makers

The literature on US policymakers mostly focuses on Congress but also addresses the impact that the executive branch, the president, and their administration, has on the situation in Azerbaijan. Despite the fact that Congress makes a more long-lasting impact on any of the issues, the president can quickly have a significant effect and can bring the focus of the Congress to whatever point they want.

Hojnacki & Kimball (1998) wrote an article about legislators, which discusses talks about how lobbyists spend large sums of time and money to influence committee members on policy issues and those members, once convinced, work to convince others of the merits of the policy issues. This article has empirically shown how organizations with a more substantial money base can move beyond those who agree with them to influence undecided committee members and have a larger overall influence than organizations lacking such resources. Advocates for press freedom in Azerbaijan do not have the money or resources to effect change as easily as the groups that Hojnacki & Kimball (1998) mentioned.

Smith (1984) said that unlike the issues of low resources or high resources like Hojnacki & Kimball mentioned, he believes that advocates can affect the number of supporters on a bill but only to a point. Their empirical data shows that, despite having

the political will, the influence that advocates have decreases as the issues become more intricate.

Blank (2017) wrote an article about the Obama administration's policy towards the South Caucasus in general titled *Missing in Action: US*. The United States has become less involved and active in the security of the South Caucasus.

Previously, sanctions have been endorsed by key political figures in the United States and President Obama commented on the human rights violations in Azerbaijan in a 2014 speech. However, since 2015, relations between the US and the Azerbaijani regime strengthened. The US has also been putting less pressure on Azerbaijan since the release of 18 political prisoners in 2016. Comparatively, the EU has been trying to engage Azerbaijan on issues of democracy, but they too seem more focused on the energy market and less focused on human rights (Nuriyev, 2007).

It is important to note the lack of democracy, press freedom, and freedom of expression in Azerbaijan that is clearly shown by Sadigov and Guliyev (2018), Guliyev (2017), Almaz (2015), Alstadt (2017), and Ismailylov and Remezaitė (2016). This along with the lack of significant political pressure from the U.S. and Europe as well as the financial support of IFIs makes it extremely difficult for policy advocates to effectively work on human rights in Azerbaijan (Blank, 2017; Nuriyev, 2007).

Methodology

The research conducted was exploratory. The study emphasized qualitative methods from the interviews. The interviewer used the information from the interviews

along with the data from literature and reports to aggregate the data based on triangulation (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011).

Interviews

Seven interviewees were carefully selected from the small group of people who do work on this issue specifically in the US. Advocates were selected based on the fact that they are a diverse subset of the population representing different organizations, varying experience levels with the country, gender diversity, and different nationalities from within the country and abroad. Two women and five men made up the group of advocates for the study. Some of the advocates interviewed are actually from Azerbaijan and have a deep passion for what they are advocating while others advocated for other reasons. The aim of the interviews was to incorporate a wide range of perspectives into the analysis due to the diversity of the subset. Interviews lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes and were semi-structured. They primarily focused on the biggest challenges faced by advocates in their work, underlying causes of the lack of press freedom and freedom of expression in Azerbaijan, the most effective strategies of advocates, useful resources, funding and advice for future advocacy in the United States. A full template of interview questions can be found in Appendix 1.

Analysis

The analysis of the aggregated data focused on breaking the interviews down into main categories that the advocates talked about and then extrapolating larger themes from those categories. The researcher also used his own notes and memos throughout the duration of the research to look at the process as objectively as possible. This memo writing allowed the researcher to look at his own biases and ensured that he was not unduly

influencing the data. The interviews were used to determine best practices for using possible funds to make the biggest impact and why it is crucial to understand if and how those two things correlate. The interviews were analyzed to allow the researcher to determine what policy advocates need.

Limitations

The study was conducted in American English, which was not the native language of some of the advocates. This factor was mitigated slightly by the fact that all the advocates work with US policymakers and influencers and thus need to speak English well. The researcher also mitigated this by using simple terminology during the interviews.

The information from this study was collected only from the seven advocates and the sources listed. This study was thus not comprehensive but was used to extrapolate best practices from the interviews. This study could also lead to points of interest for further research.

The study is also limited by a lack of organizations that can directly fund Azerbaijan based NGOs due to strict laws in Azerbaijan which have made it difficult to fund NGOs without government approval. A common workaround for some organizations is that they are focused on the area and not specific to Azerbaijan, so they are not subject to the same laws. This forces many donors to fund these organizations privately, which makes it extremely difficult for NGOs.

Another limitation of this study was some people's unwillingness to participate due to the harsh treatment of some individuals by the Azerbaijani regime. However, this was substantially mitigated by the fact that none of the advocates are currently living in

Azerbaijan. A second mitigating factor was that the researcher maintained strict anonymity for the advocates.

Researcher bias was also a limitation. The researcher has extensive knowledge and experience regarding Azerbaijan and faced difficulty separating the data from their own experience and prejudice. To mitigate this, the researcher took memos regarding his perceptions at each stage of the process and attempted to ensure personal opinions were not unduly impacting the data.

Findings

Based on the semi-structured interviews with advocates, a number of conclusions emerged, which are discussed in further detail below. These findings span from consensus around the major underlying causes of the lack of press freedom and freedom of expression in Azerbaijan to common challenges policy advocates face in their current work in the United States. Advocates also provided a number of useful insights for future policy advocacy on Azerbaijan in the United States including commonly agreed upon the advice and what advocates considered to be the most effective resources.

Underlying Causes

One of the questions in the semi-structured interviews was, “What are the underlying causes for the lack of press freedom and freedom of expression that leads Azerbaijan to be ranked extremely low in press freedom?” According to the Committee to Protect Journalists’ (CPJ’s) Press Freedom Index the regime is ranked 162 out of 180 countries. This section deals with advocates’ responses to this question.

The advocates for the purpose of this study shall remain anonymous. In order to maintain that anonymity and to keep a sense of identity throughout the paper, the advocates have been renamed A1 through A7. This will help keep the comments from the different advocates clear.

All the advocates mentioned, in one way or another, that the country lacks a democratic political system. A1, A3, A4, A5, and A6 believe the voting system has been rigged on all levels of government. One advocate (A4) went into great detail on the topic stating that this belief was supported by the recognition of the US State Department, European Union, and the OSCE that there were irregularities and voting fraud.

The other underlying cause that was mentioned by all advocates except A7 was about the corruption of the regime and throughout the institutions of the country. A4, A6, and A2 told similar stories about the depth of the corruption and the fact that it is top down. From stories of teachers having to pay their first year's salary as bribes just to start teaching, to stories about mayors imprisoning people for personal vendettas. A4 thought that the most egregious was the fact that a small group of families are in charge of everything in the country. The oligarchs run not only the government institutions but also all of the significant companies based out of Azerbaijan they said.

Another underlying cause, according to the advocates, is the silencing of independent news outlets. Discussing this phenomenon at length, A4 noted that this silencing of critical voices took a long time and was done simultaneously as they built an army of propaganda outlets. A4 explained that under the former president's term, they started to take over and manipulate print media but as the internet became more important, the son Ilham Aliyev, had to step up the efforts of his father. They started to

crack down on online websites between 2013 and 2014 when they began the widespread crackdown on civil society in general. A4 pointed out that in 2017, they got rid of the last independent print media when they closed down Azadliq Qezeti and soon after they silenced the last of the critical online websites as well. The regime shut down the websites through a new law that allows them to immediately shut down any media that endangers the people. However, there is a broad understanding of what is harmful to the people, and the courts take their time delaying the cases.

The last primary underlying cause for lack of democracy in Azerbaijan, according to the A1, A2, A3, A6, and A7, is that President Aliyev demonstrates that he sees democracy as a threat to his power. In fact, A3 stressed that not only President Aliyev and his immediate family but also the entire network of oligarchs in Azerbaijan feels threatened by freedom of expression. Advocates pointed to the comparative lack of support for President Ilham Aliyev as opposed to his father, Heydar Aliyev. A6 mentioned that Ilham's legitimacy was in question from the beginning as the parliament contorted laws and regulations to install him as the president upon the death of his father. Lending credit to this lack of perceived legitimacy is the conspiracy theory that Heydar Aliyev died before he reached the hospital in Cleveland, Ohio. Both A3 and A6 mentioned that there is what they consider to be a ridiculous theory that President Heydar Aliyev had a heart attack in Turkey and died, but the regime covered it up to install Ilham Aliyev as president before the world knew he was dead. While A3 and A6 acknowledged that this is outlandish, they still see it as proof of his lack of perceived legitimacy. The advocates mentioned faux opposition parties are specifically intended to feign democratic values to the international community. The evidence that these groups are fake, A6 points

out, is most easily seen if you watch the most recent presidential debate. A6 mentioned the Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Center (EMDS/SMDT), which just posted a chart of all the fake opposition leaders and how much time they spent in the presidential debate praising the current president. A6 emphasized that this is not the tactic of candidates who are legitimately trying to win a political race.

In this section, some of the key factors pointed out by the advocates were all focused on the things the regime has done to destabilize democracy and secure power. A major lack of democratic institutions was pointed to as an underlying cause of the lack of democracy. The corruption of the system at all levels is another leading factor. The advocates talked in detail about Aliyev's fear of losing power which leads him to silence independent media and civil society throughout the country. This questions about the underlying issues in Azerbaijan gives way to the logical question of why these advocates do the work they do.

The Importance of Advocacy

An additional question posed to the advocates was why they thought policy advocacy in the United States, in particular, is vital for impacting the issue of freedom of expression and press freedom in Azerbaijan. This section summarizes advocates' key responses.

The notion of presenting a democratic face to the international community brings up the idea of why policy advocacy in the US is essential. All seven advocates mentioned the potential influence that the US government has on Azerbaijan. The regime cares about their image abroad for several reasons, but all those reasons seem to center around money according to A2 and A4. A2, A3, A6, and A7 claim that the regime pays all the

lobbyists in D.C. to help get the message out that Azerbaijan is a good business partner with lots of oil.

The flip side of Azerbaijan caring about their image abroad is the importance of the opinion of the United States. Again, in one way or another, all of the advocates mentioned the authority the U.S. is perceived to have. One anecdote mentioned by A7 was how a low-level politician's aide wrote a memo about a human rights issue in a smaller developing country just like Azerbaijan, and in response, the top officials of that country had to write official reactions. A2, A3, A4, and A5 made comments to the effect of "the U.S. talks and the world listens," "the U.S. is the most powerful country in the world," and "leadership starts in the U.S." They made these comments believing that the U.S. administration could force the Azerbaijani government change if the U.S. was willing to take a stronger stance.

Two major factors came up repeatedly in the advocates' responses to this question. The first is the idea that the regime needs to have good relationships with the U.S. to continue getting financial support. The second is tangentially related in that it was the mere fact that the U.S. is such an influential actor on the global stage. This section reiterates the importance of working on these issues in Azerbaijan. It is logical to ask how effective their tactics have been in the past.

Effective strategies

When asked about the most effective strategy used to advocate for democracy and freedom of expression, a number of common strategies emerged among respondents' answers. The following section lists the most effective strategies according to advocates.

While many of the advocates voiced their frustrations that they felt there had been little to no effective strategies, as the regime has seemed to consolidate power over the years, all of them then went on to list some aspects that may have had short-term effects. All advocates either mentioned a specific case or generally talked about how effective it has been to focus on individual political prisoners. The most compelling story mentioned by A1, A4, and A6 was the campaign building up to, the investigative journalist, Khadija Ismailylova's birthday, which was effective in getting her released from prison. Ismailylova has been a consistent critic of the regime and was imprisoned on outlandish charges of inciting a coworker to kill himself. Several of the major human rights INGOs and many governmental bodies pressured Azerbaijan to release her before her birthday, and they were successful. Fikret Huseynli is a journalist and asylum seeker from Azerbaijan ordinarily living in the Netherlands. His was the most recent case that A2 and A3 mentioned and they specifically attributed the denial of his extradition to the policy advocacy work being done in Washington. A2 talked in more detail about Fikret Huseynli. A2 said that Fikret was passing through Ukraine and the Azerbaijani government requested that Ukraine extradite him back to Azerbaijan through an Interpol red notice. The regime claimed that Huseynli illegally left the country but that was 10 years ago and after A2 believes, Huseynli had been attacked for his journalism. A2 insisted Huseynli did not leave Azerbaijan illegally in the first place. Other advocates were anxious at the idea of countries respecting Interpol red notices from Azerbaijan because they feel that could endanger any of the diaspora that decides to speak out against the regime.

Whereas Huseynli's case is the most recent example of successful campaigning between U.S. and European influencers, there are a few prominent cases of direct pressure on Azerbaijan. The most prominent success that A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, and A6 mentioned was the 2016 release of several political prisoners. There is some debate about how many political prisoners were released, but A4 seemed to clear that up. A4 claimed that originally 15 prisoners were released and over the next month or so three more were released. This gradual release seems to lead to a debate over whether the release included 15 to 18 prisoners. More recently there have been several cases that advocates in the interviews thought were directly related to advocacy including the release of human rights activists, Leyla and Arif Yunus, according to A1 as well as the dropping of charges against Azadliq newspaper editor, Mehman Aliyev, according to A2 and A6.

Despite the fact that most of the advocates said there had been little success some of the advocates flipped that idea on its head. A4 said that even though the success may have been small any success against this regime is huge. When A4 said it was huge, they meant it was extremely difficult to make a difference when the system is stacked against them. While talking about this, A4 mentioned the problems of hazing and corruption in the military. According to A4, several young conscripts were ending up dead, and it was discovered that they were dying and being beaten because of hazing and corruption. People started organizing protests against the deaths. Despite civilians being attacked with military-style weapons, the protesters persisted, and eventually, the conscripts stopped dying at such a high rate they said.

Three separate advocates, A2, A6, and A7, talked about how beneficial it has been for their advocacy to deconstruct the misconceptions revolving around Russian and

Iranian influence in Azerbaijan. As far as Russia is concerned, five advocates, A2, A3, A4, A6, and A7 noted that the current regime is the closest political group to Russia, which stands in the face of what they say most politicians in the U.S. believe. Advocates acknowledged that Russia has a lot of influence in the region and likely will continue to, no matter who is in power, but they believe that the regime has the strongest ties to Russia. For supportive evidence, one can quickly notice the interview that the president of Azerbaijan gave to the Russian journalist, Soloviev in 2017 as noted by A2. Aliyev distances himself from America in the interview and makes it clear that he is supportive of Russia. In this same interview, he criticizes Islam and "people running around with beards ready to blow stuff up," but A1, A4, and A6 strongly voiced their disagreement with Aliyev's portrayal of Islam in Azerbaijan.

Another successful strategy appears to be fostering and maintaining relationships with influential figures in senior positions according to A1, A2, and A7. This has allowed advocates to get influential people to write opinion pieces in major newspapers. This is also a way to get access to talented people, by making oneself available and being present said A2. According to A2 and A6, the more one is known as an expert and available to speak or write on the topic of Azerbaijan, the more likely one is to be called upon to talk about the issues there.

The four key factors in this section have been about political prisoners, victories are huge, Azerbaijan is independent, and relationships are vital. Advocates pointed out the successes involved with pointing to the compelling stories of individual political prisoners. In the spirit of staying positive, they pointed out that the regime is extremely powerful, and success is amazing and important. Breaking down the misconception about

Russian or Iranian influence in Azerbaijan has been helpful in convincing U.S. policymakers that the crimes of the regime should be a priority. Finally, they constantly reiterated the importance of relationships and relationship building.

Lasting Impact

Advocates were also asked to discuss any lasting impact from advocacy campaigns that they have been involved in. Responses to this question revealed common themes for advocacy that have garnered success, which is discussed below.

This section, similar to the one above, had most of the respondents depressed at first because they felt there had been little positive impact over the long term. A4 and A1 felt that contrarily the regime has amplified their repressive strategies while avoiding sanctions and repercussions. Eventually, they mentioned some hopeful and positive aspects of their work. One lasting impact that A5 mentioned, that was not specific to Azerbaijan but rather the broader region is that the problem is recognizable when it comes to LGBT issues. People, at least in Europe and the U.S., know that the situation for the LGBT community is harsh in the region. A5 claimed that this is supported by the widespread knowledge of attacks against the LGBT community in Chechnya. Also, there were many statements from the international community after somewhere between 80-200 people were detained or arrested in Azerbaijan in the summer of 2017 seemingly because they were believed to be part of the LGBT community A5 said. While the advocate thinks this discrimination is horrible, the positive impact is that other countries may accept more LGBT refugees now that the issues are more recognizably dangerous in the region.

Another lasting impact mentioned by A4 is that Azerbaijan is now on the radar of international NGOs, governments all around the world, and international governmental organizations like the EU. They stated that the U.S. State Department, Council of Europe, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and many more consistently write a statement about the human rights violations in Azerbaijan.

The advocates mentioned two things during this section that can be considered the main "takeaways" from the topic of lasting impact from policy advocacy. First is the fact that many of the international human rights organizations immediately react when something happens in Azerbaijan. The other is that this part of the world has seen greater recognition that LGBT rights are being infringed upon at an extremely high rate. After talking about some of the major successes, it would be good to discuss the challenges these advocates face on a daily basis.

Challenges

All policy advocacy entails challenges, so it was not surprising that respondents had much to say when asked about the challenges they face in their efforts advocating for freedom of expression and the press in Azerbaijan. In fact, advocates faced a number of common challenges, which are outlined in the section below.

Policy advocates face a wide array of difficulties while trying to convince organizations and lawmakers in the US to work with them to improve press freedom, freedom of expression, and democracy in Azerbaijan. An issue that got mentioned so often it seemed to merit its own section is the issue of the revolving door. In the United States, most people understand the revolving door concept to mean something distinctly different than the revolving door issue in Azerbaijan. The U.S. has the idea of recidivism

being the revolving door for prisons, but in Azerbaijan, the concept refers to letting some political prisoners go while putting more in prison at the same time or soon after. A1, A2, A3, A4, and A6 talked about how the regime uses this tactic to both intimidate and silence critics inside the country and to have the ability to appease critics outside the country at any time. The advocates believe it gives the government an astonishing amount of potential for earning goodwill from the international community. At any point, the government could release 58 political prisoners and be praised for their generous gesture, but they would still have 100 left and would likely arrest 30 more the next week, according to one advocate.

The second most consistently mentioned challenge that advocates face was the lack of knowledge among those involved in decision making in the US. This was explicitly mentioned by A1, A3, A4, A5, and A6. Lack of knowledge is a common obstacle for policy advocates according to Daly (2011), but the advocates specifically claimed that many do not know the country they are talking about exists. Even if the advocates are able to get past the hurdle of geography, they claim the knowledge gap goes further.

A1, A2, A3, A4, A6, and A7 claimed that decision makers believe that either the benefits of supporting the regime in Azerbaijan outweigh the deficits or simply that democracy abroad is not a priority for them or their constituents. Of those who explicitly believe the benefits of support outweigh the deficiencies A1, A3, and A4 mentioned that due to the intricate difficulties of supplying Afghanistan, about 40 percent of NATO supplies go through Baku, Azerbaijan currently. The same three advocates also refer to the benefit of having another supplier of oil to Europe other than Russia. A1, A2, A3, A4,

and A6 said many US officials believe that the regime is the only thing stopping Russian control and/or Iranian control of the country. The advocates all had slightly different critiques to these supposed benefits, which will be discussed later. As for the belief by A1, A6, and A7 that democracy abroad is not essential to decision makers, this seems to be part of an intricate balancing act. A1, A6, and A7 mentioned the idea that larger countries with stronger ties to the U.S. are higher priorities than countries like Azerbaijan. Advocates stated that these groups might have large diaspora populations in the US or in specific regions, which makes their approval more desirable to politicians or businesses in that area. A clear example of this is that despite Puerto Rico not being able to vote for president legally many candidates go to the island to earn the vote of Puerto Ricans living in New York.

Another challenge that was mentioned in several different ways was lack of organization. Part of the disorganization according to A1, A6, and A7 includes lack of collaboration between various activists and advocates. They also believe along with A2 that there is a lack of organization to support the advocates financially, which led them to mention having multiple jobs and working on these issues out of love or passion with little to no support. A1 even felt that there is greater organization and cooperation in Europe compared to having very little in D.C. There were also a few comments about the diaspora community not being able to effectively communicate all the issues that are happening on the ground due to lack of coordination with people in the country according to A1, A3, and A4. That being said, they also mentioned the belief that critics in the diaspora will be arrested if they go back. Connected to this lack of people getting out of

the country to advocate for their needs is that A1 mentioned embassies not giving visas to experts living in Azerbaijan.

Every single interview mentioned big money coming out of the Azerbaijani government and indirectly or directly into the hands of policymakers in the US and all over Europe. A2, A3, and A6 mentioned the more recent case of “caviar diplomacy” with Europeans, which is a case of bribing officials from the Council of Europe. A2, A3, and A7 mentioned an earlier trip funded by Turkish lobbyists and the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR) in 2013, specifically for a bipartisan group of U.S. politicians. The US politicians were treated to a lavish excursion and given expensive gifts and, according to advocates, many claim to have never asked where the funding came from for the trip. Less directly the government pays for lobbying groups to present the regime's opinions in a positive light to policymakers in D.C. claims A2 and A7. They claim this is not just from Turkish lobbying groups like Turkish Coalition of America but also from the BGR Group (formerly known as Barbour, Griffith, and Rogers) and the Podesta Group. They claim the regime spends \$3Billion a year on lobbying in the US alone. Another difficulty, mentioned by A2 and A6 that is related to the lobbying is that the regime promotes themselves as Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) by exaggerating the influence of Iranian Muslims in Azerbaijan and arresting many of the Muslims that criticize the administration. A6 mentioned the regime appears to have conflated a prominent mullah with a group in Nardaran and that overall they arrest people with more conservative religious beliefs for being critical of the government on trumped up charges of terrorism. While the regime seems to be appealing to U.S. policymakers that want to promote CVE the actual effect of the authoritarian system according to both

A4 and A6 is that more people are running to religion or alcohol out of despair. The same advocates mentioned that the prisons are full of religious activists and alcoholics.

This section seems overwhelming and difficult to summarize as these advocates face a variety of challenges. The revolving door concept really includes the idea of political prisoners, torture, intimidation, and international appeasement all in one, which is probably why it was referred to so often. A widespread lack of knowledge about the situation is another obstacle to the advocates. They also talked about a lack of cooperation and organization that hinders their work as they do this work with little assistance. Finally, there is the fact that well-paid professionals are working against them for the Aliyev regime and other actually illegally bribed. This seems to point to the fact that these advocates fighting for human rights need to be supported with resources and funding

Advice for Policy Advocates

When asked about advice for other advocates for press freedom, freedom of expression and democracy in Azerbaijan, many of the advocates interviewed had drastically different approaches to advocating for these issues based on their situation. This section summarizes respondents' primary pieces of advice.

The only common thread among the advice given by advocates was the idea of patience, which four of them, A1, A2, A3, and AZ4, mentioned specifically and some of the others hinted at it in their responses. They believed patience is important because they have had to endure a long time working on this issue and often when they were hoping for something good the unexpected happened, and it got worse. More recently, as A2 points out, this was the case with the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI)

that was beginning to pressure the regime and Aliyev quietly withdrew from the initiative with no noticeable repercussions.

Other pieces of advice from A2 and A5 included teaming up with other advocates that have similarities and are working on regional or categorically similar issues. A separate recommendation by A6 was to become an expert by actually including and talking with people from the country or learning the language. This idea was mentioned because A6 experienced a lot of people talking as if they were experts but in reality, they had never been to or even really studied the country of Azerbaijan. A5 said advocates should mention the benefits there would be of actually having a democratic partner in place in Azerbaijan instead of the current regime. This would be an ideal strategic partner according to A5 and would allow for a more in-depth relationship with the U.S. and Europe.

Specifically talking about advice for Washington A2, A6, and A7 said an advocate should be present and make themselves available for speaking and ask questions when they attend events. A2 also said that you should delve into the intricate difficulties of how to work with Congress and specifically tailor your advocacy to individual members of Congress.

The advocates gave five critical pieces of advice for future advocates. Policy advocates believe that patience is critical given the many setbacks that occur and the time it takes to form relationships. Teaming up with regional or categorical allies is beneficial to all parties involved and could amplify impact. For new advocates taking the time to become well versed on Azerbaijan will pay off more in the long run. The benefits of a democratic Azerbaijan should be stressed in advocacy because this is a persuasive point

to make for policymakers to get them to support an advocate's cause. In Washington D.C. specifically, advocates should know their audience and stay well connected and available for questions.

Advice for Funders

One part of the interview was specifically asking the advocates about funding for policy advocacy and for freedom of expression in general. When asked for their opinions on funding and suggestions for what could be the most helpful, advocates shared a number of useful ideas for potential areas that could be funded. Their thoughts on funding are discussed in depth below.

Funding seemed to be a difficult subject for the advocates, A1, A2, A6, and A7 thought it was unlikely for the organizations and advocates who need it most to get the funding they need. One issue that kept coming up was the restrictions on the financing for NGOs. A1 and A6 said that it all but made every NGO left in the country a governmentally funded organization. They noted that for almost a year after the new laws were passed it was utterly impossible for foreign donors to fund NGOs. Even after the first year, according to A6, there were still so many hoops, and grants were subject to biased approval by the regime, so no programs were funded unless the government supported them. A1 thought this led to secret grants and strained relationships between the government and the typical philanthropic organizations. A1 suggested that the only way forward is to find workarounds to get the right finances to the people on the ground.

All of the aforementioned funding issues were specifically for getting funds directly to people on the ground, and that is important to A1, A3, A4, and A6. However, it would be much easier to fund individuals and organizations outside the country. A1, A6, and A7

made it clear that getting money to organizations that are run by the exile community such as Turan Information Agency or The Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety (IRFS) would be much easier. They still, however, need to get information from people in the country. Another tactic that was mentioned by A5 was the idea of funding larger more inclusive policy advocacy campaigns that would support a larger group of countries. An example of this, based on A5's comments, is to create a campaign to work on all the countries that are authoritarian and push for policies to pressure them such as the Magnitsky Act, a US law which makes it possible to sanction individual human rights violators. Another option could be focusing on LGBT issues and campaigning to pressure the entire region based on that issue.

Another funding idea brought up by A6 was to fund smaller more local organizations and avoid DC organizations that have a massive overhead. The idea being that your grantor funds would go farther if they avoided large administrative organizations.

For funding, there were four major topics that sum up what the advocates wanted to say. Restrictive laws have made it extremely difficult for any organization to succeed without government support. It would be easier to fund the exile community, but they still need to get funds to their support in the country. Working with larger regional campaigns can be a catalyst for greater impact and success. Smaller organizations may be more cost-effective than larger NGOs with massive overhead costs

Resources

Part of the interview with the advocates pertained specifically to resources both tangible and intangible. Advocates were asked what resources most facilitate their advocacy work. The most commonly noted resources are discussed below.

For the idea of Resources, advocates talked about intangible resources which make sense as A1, A2, A3, and A7 made it clear they are doing this as a “labor of love” and not getting a lot of financial compensation to help build their physical resources. Another aspect of the lack of physical resources is how little necessity there is for them in this type of work, as noted by A6. A2 said that physical resources might be beneficial for giving presentations but in the digital age, an excellent performance can be done without many resources at all. A1, A2, A3, A4, A6, and A7 mostly mentioned their connections and the tools they use to build links and maintain relationships as their most powerful resources.

The connections they have to people on the ground in Azerbaijan were one of the most mentioned resources in the interviews, specifically by A1, A3, A4, and A6. Whether they be actual reporters, activists, or just citizens, those contacts on the ground, A1 claims, are vital to keeping an advocate informed of the situation in different parts of the country and for different sectors of society. The mere fact that no internationally funded NGOs are active in Azerbaijan leaves a considerable deficit for society says A6.

According to the majority of the advocates (A1, A2, A4, and A7), this lack of international NGO support on the ground makes it even more vital for advocates to have international contacts. It is always good for a policy advocate to be in contact with politicians and influential people, say A2. However, A2 also claimed, in most cases, the international NGOs that operate in the country also have advocates that can easily access the workers on the ground. A1 and A2 spoke a great deal about advocates having to have both an extensive network on the ground and an extensive network in the international community. So while the advocates complained about the challenge of creating a

network, A1, A2, A6, and A7 indicated that because of this need they have established substantial ones which have benefitted their work.

Another resource that A1, A2, A4, and A6 spoke of is their passion and connection to the issues. Three of the advocates, A2, A4, and A6, specifically mentioned the “human factor” being a resource. Others A1, A3, and A7 referred to their benefit of actually caring and being connected to the issue. A6 specifically contrasted the advocates’ connection and passion to the lack of knowledge or interest by the lobbyists that the regime pays lots of money to promote their interests.

One resource that only A4 specifically talked about during the resource section was social media. All of the advocates mentioned their use of it at length in different parts of their interviews, but it seems they may have thought of it as a foregone conclusion or an obvious resource. A4 spoke about it at length and mentioned the growth of its power and influence in Azerbaijan and for Azerbaijan abroad. The list of activists and journalists, who have been harassed, imprisoned, tortured, and even killed for their work on social media is evidence, A4 says, of its power and influence. Another advocate, A6, said that the diverse social media platforms that are used in Azerbaijan show the ingenuity of the people to avoid the media crackdown by the government.

Finally, the last resource that was brought up by four of the seven advocates, A1, A3, A6, and A7, was the exile community. The exile community, according to the advocates, is more helpful in Europe, as many are not able to get to the U.S., but they are a vital resource as they have experience in the country and are less susceptible to punishment or retaliation from the Azerbaijani government. Of course, A6 mentioned, they still have their families threatened and ostracized by the regime, but they are less

likely to be directly attacked. They are also more likely to get visas to other countries and able to travel to support the cause says A1.

Maintaining a strong relationship with diverse contacts on the ground in Azerbaijan is vital to policy advocates regardless of where they are located. International connections are also extremely important to advocates, especially given the repressive situation for NGOs in Azerbaijan. The human factor, being passionate and connected to the work, can strengthen policy advocacy. Social media amplifies reach and maintains transparency. The exile community is a huge asset especially in European advocacy, which could be beneficial in US campaigns.

Most Important Contacts

Advocates in the interviews were specifically asked about contacts in Congress and among influencers in general. When asked about their most vital contacts for advocacy, advocates noted a number, including specific members of Congress who have been supportive. The contacts provided are noted below.

As mentioned in other sections the connections that advocates find most beneficial are both those locally on the ground in Azerbaijan and internationally located. First, the local contacts advocates mentioned most are the reporters and activists on the ground working for organizations like Meydan TV, Radio Free Europe, Azadliq Newspaper, independent journalists and activists connected to NIDA (Azerbaijani for exclamation point), Republican Alternative (ReAL) , Musavat, and others. These organizations are able to support the advocates' need for information from the country. For international contacts, the advocates had a much longer list. Amnesty International, Freedom House, Human Rights Watch and the European Endowment for Democracy all

had three to four mentions while others such as Article 19, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), Helsinki Commission, and the New York Times all had one or two mentions from advocates

A2, A5, and A6 mentioned their frustration with congressional bodies in the U.S. system. Some congresspeople have very intricate reasons for supporting the things they do. A common issue the advocates mentioned was trying to work with Congress and not be criticized for cooperating with Armenian allies. Some of the closest supporters fighting for democratic reforms for Azerbaijan in the U.S. House of Representative are those with close ties to Armenia. Due to the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia, any tangential connection becomes suspicious and often gets attacked, so the advocates working closely with Congress often feel as though they are walking a tightrope. Some of the more supportive representatives and senators mentioned by those interviewed are listed below.

- Congressman Jim McGovern D
- Congressman Adam Schiff D
- Congressman Christopher Smith R
- Congressman Frank Pallone D
- Senator Ben Cardin D
- Senator Bob Menendez D
- Senator Marco Rubio R
- Senator Dick Durban D

Dream Resources

Given the current constraints to their work, advocates were also asked what additional resources would be most useful in facilitating their work. These dream resources are outlined below.

Many of the ideal resources for policy advocates regarding democracy and press freedom in Azerbaijan are related to the resources they have and improving those resources. For example, A1, A4, A6, and A7 mentioned their connections being very important and that the lack of organizations requires them to have a larger network. Accordingly, they believe it would be ideal to have more information centers inside the country. Information centers refer to a catchall for a variety of more specific things mentioned by the advocates. For example, A1 and A3 mentioned news organizations getting “real” information out to the people in the rural parts of Azerbaijan. A4 and A6 mentioned specifically having NGOs in the regions that would help the people get better information about capacity building and civic engagement in general. Another specific aspect A1 mentioned was the idea that these centers would be most valuable in getting feedback from the community, making the point that true participation is closer to the ideal rather than giving the people what outsiders think they need. An article about advocacy in Egypt warned that not having involvement from people on the ground could lead to the disaster of ignorant people deciding what the needs of the people of a country are (Tadros, 2009). This seems to directly support A1’s desire to get feedback from the people on the ground. It is also worth noting that despite their desire for such centers, overwhelmingly, advocates discussed these as if they were a pipe dream.

Apparently, another ideal resource that was mentioned or hinted at by A1, A2, A3, A6, and A7 is more financial support. Three of the advocates, A2, A3, and A7, specifically emphasized that they do not need more money for themselves but more for the greater cause. As mentioned before they said this work is a labor of love for many of the advocates that work on this issue. A1, A2, and A6 want more funding specifically for events and programs that bring awareness to the issues. On the other hand, A4, A5, and A7 pointed out that more funding could be used in a variety of ways to benefit the cause.

One of the other issues that were mentioned by A1, A4, and A5 was the idea of more support from organizations and businesses on the ground in Azerbaijan. This support, they believe, would make their efforts more sustainable by having sponsors on the ground. A4 claimed it would make a beneficial loop, in that people who support advocacy would support the business and as the business grows the sponsorship might grow too. However, A4 also mentioned that such support from local groups was highly unlikely in the current environment because most organizations and companies are afraid of retaliation from the government.

Increasing information to and from people in Azerbaijan would benefit policy advocacy and freedom of expression in general in Azerbaijan. However, most felt this was a pipe dream. More funding for organizations and events supporting freedom of the press and expression as well as democracy in Azerbaijan would be a huge resource for policy advocated. Involvement and support from local organizations and businesses in Azerbaijan, however unlikely, could better sustain advocacy efforts and increase support.

Recommendations

Some of the key issues that came up from the interviews, the literature review, and other sources were the importance of advocating for political prisoners, tackling corruption, boosting civic engagement, understanding to whom to advocate, building connections, and financially supporting those in Azerbaijan that are getting the information out. These key issues can all be addressed by strategic efforts by policy advocates either inside or outside the country, international funders mostly from the U.S. and Europe, the U.S. government, and finally the people on the ground in Azerbaijan. That being said, the following recommendations will be addressed to those groups respectively.

For Policy Advocates

Continue telling the stories of political prisoners in a dynamic and systematic way. There are several different ways to go about telling the tragic stories of those who have been imprisoned for years and many of them tortured. The Working Group on Unified List of Political Prisoners has created a list of 158 political prisoners. As policy advocates, you could break the list down into 13 to 14 prisoners each month to focus your advocacy on.

A secondary benefit to the political prisoner advocacy would be to increase cooperation and organization among fellow advocates. Despite the fact that a majority of advocates noted a lack of time the researcher believes an initial time investment to develop enhanced cooperation would ultimately save time and energy while boosting efficiency. Even if it is only a small portion of the advocates that initially decide organize more profoundly their organization will impact and assist the greater community.

Another initiative that may seem time-consuming at first, but time-saving in the end would be for the policy advocates to use the tools and techniques mentioned in the literature review by Daly (2011) and Manchanda, et al. (2016). Analyzing the prospective targets of one's advocacy as Daly mentions in the Knowing-Feeling Matrix or building on your relationships and more deeply understanding your community with the stakeholder mapping technique that Manchanda et al. talk about would be extremely beneficial.

For Funders

Another underlying cause of the lack of press freedom and democracy in Azerbaijan that was mentioned was the silencing of independent media. Resourceful young Azerbaijanis are already using intricate methods of social media to get their message to wider audiences. Despite the crackdown attempts from the regime, the social media activists are making progress (Pearce, Vitak, Barta, 2018). These social media activists need support, and this may be an easier way for funders to get financial support to people on the ground. Providing these social media activists with credits, to advertise their posts and build their exposure, may be a way to help them. Not only would it help them boost their message but individuals with greater visibility are slightly less likely to be imprisoned and attacked.

Finding other ways to get around the financial restrictions of the regime is a necessity for any major donor that wants to fund democratic initiatives in the country. The regime has shown time and time again that it is unwilling to truly implement democratic changes. There are several secure ways to get funds to individuals inside of Azerbaijan that can and should be taken advantage of. Even now with the rise of cryptocurrencies, there are more resourceful ways to support people on the ground in Azerbaijan.

For the U.S. Government

The government of the United States has been a key advocate for international human rights. They have been a driving force behind several of the most vital pieces of international law related to freedom of expression and press freedom. It is clear that economic interests have clouded the policies of the administration in the past. It is important that the U.S. steps up to take these human rights violations head on. The U.S. has the ability to use the Global Magnitsky Act to sanction all of those in Aliyev's inner circle and push for the European governments to do the same. This regime is no friend to the United States of America, this is clear from Aliyev's disregard for human rights, democracy, and freedom of expression. These are all things that America is a champion of and the government can no longer sit idly by and tacitly enable these crimes.

For People on the Ground

The advocates noted that institutions all over the country are entirely corrupt. This is more intricate, but a campaign for alternative institution building might be a catalyst for change (Nielsen, 2017). Alternative institution building involves bringing the community together to hold people accountable. Alternative institutions may sound like a new idea, but it has been in practice as long as any other institution. The idea is to build a secondary system or institution to avoid the corruption of the primary institution. This may be difficult while Aliyev holds all the proverbial cards. It often entails building a secondary market or a black market. Organic systems have come about in Azerbaijan including a system to support fellow teachers at the school through donating part of everyone's salary to one teacher each month.

The advocates said there was a lack of basic democratic structures as one of the root problems in Azerbaijan. One course of action to address this promoted by Jennifer Ghandi (2006) is to build up the less well known democratic institutions in the country. For policy advocates, this might be demonstrated in campaigns to support honest judges or lawyers.

Furthering Research

The researcher has found that there is a great deal of information lacking and that further research into policy advocacy in Europe would be a logical next step. The European Union, the Council of Europe, and OSCE all have a strong record of criticism against authoritarian governments and advocating for democracy, press freedom, and freedom of expression. Due to this strong record, further research may show that it would be more effective to advocate in Europe rather than in the U.S. This is not to say it would be a one or the other situation. Cooperation between advocates and advocacy for human rights, in general, should be more strongly supported and intensified in both Europe and the U.S.

Researching the effectiveness of advocacy in so-called lesser developed countries (LDCs) would also be useful. It is helpful to spread the word in countries that will face fewer consequences and have fewer mandates to address international human rights issues. These are exactly the countries that Azerbaijan makes deals with like Belarus for example.

Another continuation of this research could be carried out by looking into the aftermath of this most recent election. Despite the fact that it is early, the international

community has started to make some strong statements about the snap elections on April

11th.

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Appendix 1

Sample Interview Questions

1. Overview
 - a. Can you talk about some of the most significant challenges you have come across while working on this issue?
 - b. In your opinion, what are the underlying causes for the lack of press freedom and freedom of expression that leads Azerbaijan to be ranked extremely low in press freedom?
 - c. Why do you think policy advocacy in the US is essential for impacting the issue of freedom of expression and/or press freedom in Azerbaijan?
 - d. Can you talk about some of the most significant challenges you have come across while working on this issue?
2. Strategies
 - a. Can you talk about what you view as the most effective past strategy (or two) you've used to advocate for democracy/freedom of expression in Azerbaijan and why you think it was successful?
 - b. Can you mention some lessons learned about mitigating past challenges?
 - c. Have you seen any lasting impact from advocacy campaigns you have been involved in?
3. Resources and Contacts
 - a. What resources facilitate your efforts to increase press freedom? How?
 - b. What additional resources do you think would benefit your work most? Why?
 - c. What have been the most vital contacts for advocacy?
 - d. What individuals or groups do you think would be helpful in your work if they were interested in helping?
4. Funding

- a. How do you go about funding campaigns and other work to advocate for the support of press freedom and freedom of expression in Azerbaijan?
- b. What type of donors do you reach out to for grants?
- c. What are your significant challenges with regard to the grant process and what might be helpful?
- d. If an organization was trying to work in this field, what donors and organizations should they reach out to?

5. Advice

- a. What advice do you have for someone who is trying to work on this issue?

Do you have anything else to add or share?