



Study and Research on Election Media Coverage for 2016 Parliamentary Elections in Georgia

Monitoring of Print Media

31 August – 25 September, 2016

The Civic Development Institute (CDI) is implementing the monitoring of print media within the framework of the project entitled “Research of Media Coverage of 2016 Parliamentary Elections” funded by the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The monitoring is carried out from May 20, 2016 through December 19, 2016, and looks at the election performance of 7 print media outlets: “Rezonansi”, “Akhali Taoba”, “Asaval-Dasavali”, “Alia”, “Guria News”, “Qronika +”, and “Kviris Palitra”.

This report presents the media monitoring results for the period of 31 August through 25 September 2016.

The monitoring has revealed the following **key findings**:

- As during the previous rounds of monitoring, the “United National Movement” and the “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia” had the highest coverage among all political parties;
- Activities of the ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili and the former prime-minister Bidzina Ivanishvili were quite actively covered;
- Negative tone prevailed in 6 out of 7 outlets in their coverage of the United National Movement and the ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili;
- In contrast to the first round of monitoring, “Qronika +” newspaper dropped its positive treatment of the United National Movement and Mikheil Saakashvili, while retaining clearly negative attitude towards the ruling team and Bidzina Ivanishvili;
- Extremely high rates of negative tone were observed in two newspapers (“Alia” and “Asaval-Dasavali”) towards both the ruling party and the parliamentary opposition.
- The cases of violation of journalistic standards and ethical norms were encountered in “Alia” and “Asaval-Dasavali” newspapers;

- Extreme cases of using abusive terminology was regularly observed in “Alia” and “Asaval-Dasavali” newspapers;
- “Akhali Taoba”, “Qronika+”, “Alia”, and “Asaval-Dasavali” often published unverified information.

„Rezonansi”

The reporting period has seen increased positive tone indicators towards “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia’ party, while “United National Movement’ has been spared more of negative tone indicators. Articles funded by various individuals or bodies were not clearly delimited from those prepared by the staff. There were no cases of severe violations of journalistic ethical norms by journalists identified during the reporting period.

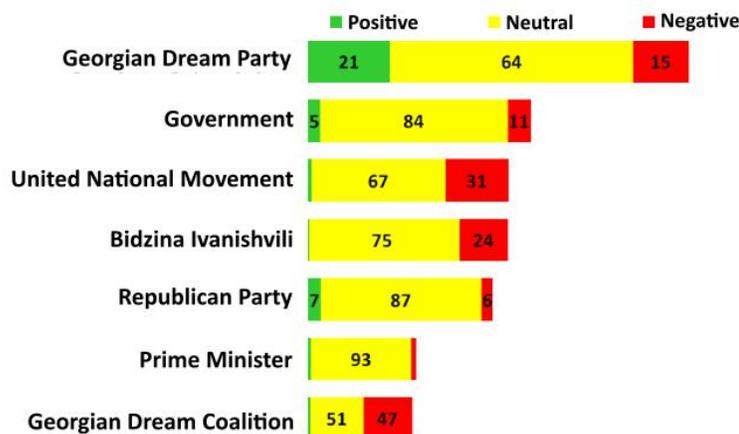
The third round of the monitoring “Rezonansi” dedicated most of its materials to “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia” (20%), the Government of Georgia (12%), “United National Movement” (10%), former Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili (10%), and Republican Party (10%). High percentage of negative tone indicators were observed in materials concerning ex- President Mikheil Saakashvili (66%), “Georgian Dream Coalition” (47%), “United National Movement” (31%) and ex-Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili (24%), while the highest percentage of positive tone indicators (21%) was spared to “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia”.

It is worth noting that contractual materials printed in “Rezonansi” newspaper are difficult to tell apart from editorial articles. The contractual materials are framed in black and a note on the last page of the newspaper informing readers that this type of materials are funded by clients and therefore beyond the responsibility of the editorial board, is printed with quite small fonts. It is recommended that the newspaper provide information about commercial materials in a manner that is easily noticeable by and comprehensible to its readers.

It can be concluded that positive tone indicators were on the rise in “Rezonansi” during the reporting period while negative tone indicators were mostly used while covering the parliamentary opposition. Commercial articles printed by “Rezonansi’ are difficult to tell apart from editorial materials.

Space allocated to the subjects in "Rezonansi" according to the tone (%)

31 August - 25 September, 2016



„Alia“

During the third round of the monitoring the publication “Alia” exhibited mostly negative tone indicators effectively to all political subjects. The newspaper severely violated journalistic standards and ethical norms on numerous occasions.

Activities of the following political subjects received the widest coverage in “Alia” during the reporting period: “Georgian Dream - Democratic Georgia” (21%), ex-Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili (16%), and “United National Movement” (13%). Strongest negative tone indicators were observed in materials dedicated to “United National Movement” (77%), ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili (77%) and ex-Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili (61%).

Journalists working for “Alia” frequently used abusive language both in texts as well as in headlines. For instance: “People do not care if you are a world class bass, C or D!”¹ (5-11 September, P. 20).

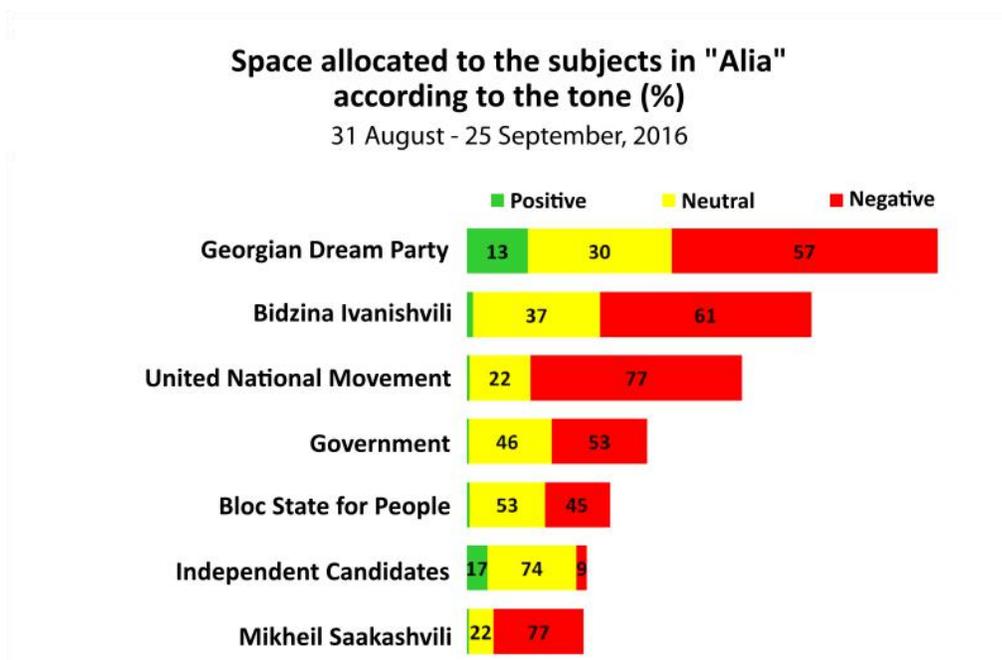
In addition, materials printed in the newspaper often contained dubious information based on unverified sources. For instance: ‘...rumors have it that Bidzina Ivanishvili has been secretly negotiating with Mikheil Saakashvili. As a result of negotiation brokered by the US ambassador, Ivanishvili ‘handed over’ 20% of votes to Saakashvili’. Also, “... according to the information Saakashvili was threatening Ivanishvili...” (“this version was circulated by

¹ There is a word play in Georgian as ‘bass’ in Georgian is ‘Bani’ which is the name of the second letter of the Georgian alphabet while the combination of the two following letters read as ‘Gan’ and ‘Don’ is a slang and derogatory word for a condom)

“Georgian Dream” supporters themselves and they were particularly happy that Ivanishvili acted this way”, 5-11 September, P. 23).

It is worth noting that in two articles dedicated to two majoritarian candidates during the reporting period, a journalist exhibited extraordinarily positive attitude towards these candidates. For instance: “As soon as you meet Tsezar Chocheli for the first time, you find yourself in turbulence. He is an extraordinary personality, a bearer of immense energy, the man who resembles a mythological bird Phoenix by his life – Phoenix who possesses the faculty of self-ignition. Every time he was burnt to ashes, he managed to rise from these ashes”. (“He toiled, fought, appeared in front of the court, was acquitted and rose victorious!”, 12-18 September, P. 8); “goal-oriented, audacious, dynamic, bold, optimist, the one who can turn challenges into opportunities, a perfectionist, the person who kills it and is always open to changes”. (Gocha Eukidze: “We will win together and return life to the mountain!”, 19-25 September, P. 6).

We can conclude, that “Alia” systematically and severely violates journalistic standards and ethical norms.



„Kviris Palitra“

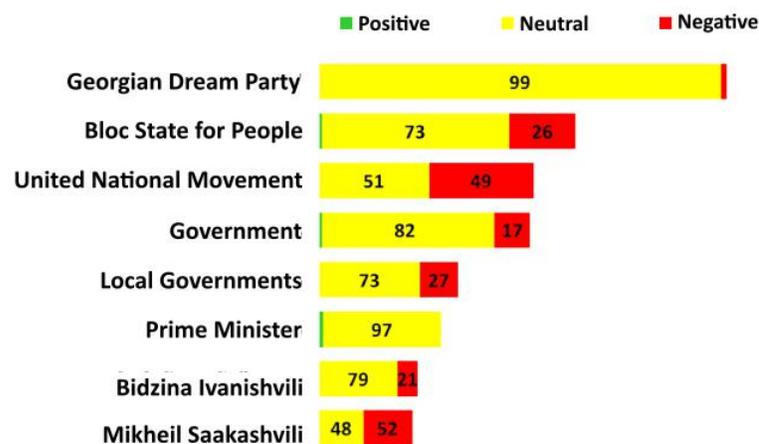
During the reporting period criticism of “United National Movement” and ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili dominated materials published by “Kviris Palitra”. However, it should be noted that criticism was mostly voiced in statements made by respondents rather than in journalists’ texts. There were no apparent cases of several violations of journalistic standards and ethical norms.

“Kvirs Palitra” newspaper most actively covered activities of the following political subjects: “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia (22%), bloc “State for People” (13%), and “United National Movement” (11%). Negative tones dominated the materials dedicated to ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili (52%), “United National Movement” (49%), local governments (27%) and bloc “State for People” (26%) while there were no indicators of a positive tone towards either of political subjects.

Findings of the monitoring suggest that “Kviris Palitra” follows journalistic standards and ethical norms. Like in the first round of the monitoring, the second round also found criticism towards “United National Movement” dominates the material published in “Kviris Palitra”.

Space allocated to the subjects in "Kviris Palitra" according to the tone (%)

31 August - 25 September, 2016



„Asaval-Dasavali“

“Asaval-Dasavali” continued to stand out with frequent and severe violations of journalistic standards and ethical norms in the third round of the monitoring. Journalists working for the publication routinely used extremely abusive and derogatory language in their coverage of certain political subjects. “Asaval-Dasavali” maintained extremely negative attitude towards “United National Movement”, ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili, Republican Party and the President of Georgia.

“Asaval-Dasavali” dedicated most of its space to the following political subjects: “United National Movement” (24%), ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili (15%), “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia” (13%) and ex-Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili (11%). Strongest negative tone indicators were identified in materials concerning the President of Georgia (88%), “United National Movement” (83%), ex-President Saakashvili (69%), Republican Party

(69%), the Government of Georgia (69%), "Georgian Dream - Democratic Georgia" (67) and bloc "State for People" (66). There were no strong positive tone indicators identified in relation to any political subject during the third round of monitoring.

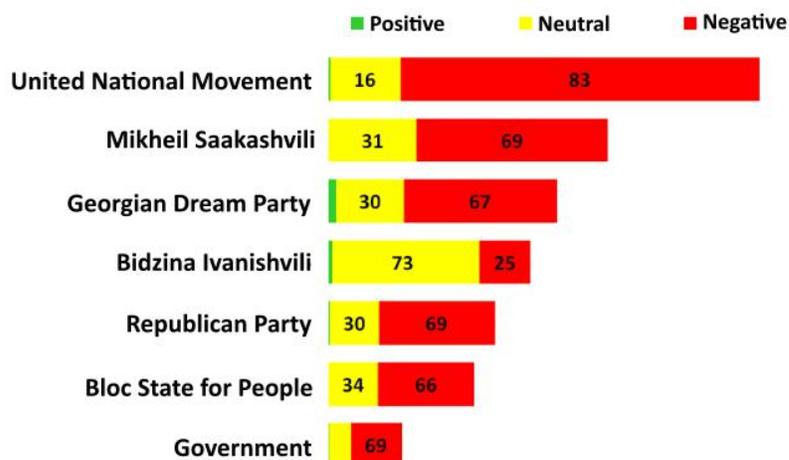
"Asaval-Dasavali" maintained its tendency to provide biased and one-sided account of events, unjustified analysis and the use of extremely abusive language towards certain politicians. These trends were more observable in materials concerning the parliamentary opposition, ex President Saakashvili, Republican Party, and the bloc "State for People". For instance: "...They are still broom-lovers...", "...As Mishtler² would say...", "...Saakashvili is a murderer, executioner and villain of Georgians!" ("We are taking a trip to Odessa!", 5-11 September, P. 18).

The reporting period saw increased cases of using derogatory language towards Republican Party labeled by a journalist of "Asaval-Dasavali" as "a political bunch of Georgian-hating Liberasts³", "anti-national sect" etc. ("that's who the "Georgian Dream" put on the heads of "Asaval-Dasavali" and the whole Georgia!", 12-18 September, P. 8).

The findings of the third round of the monitoring suggest that "Asaval-Dasavali" continues to routinely and severely violate journalistic standards and ethical norms. The newspaper stands out with its choice of extremely abusive and humiliating language.

Space allocated to the subjects in "Asaval Dasavali" according to the tone (%)

31 August - 25 September, 2016



„Akhali Taoba“

² A combination of the names of Mikheil Saakashvili and Hitler

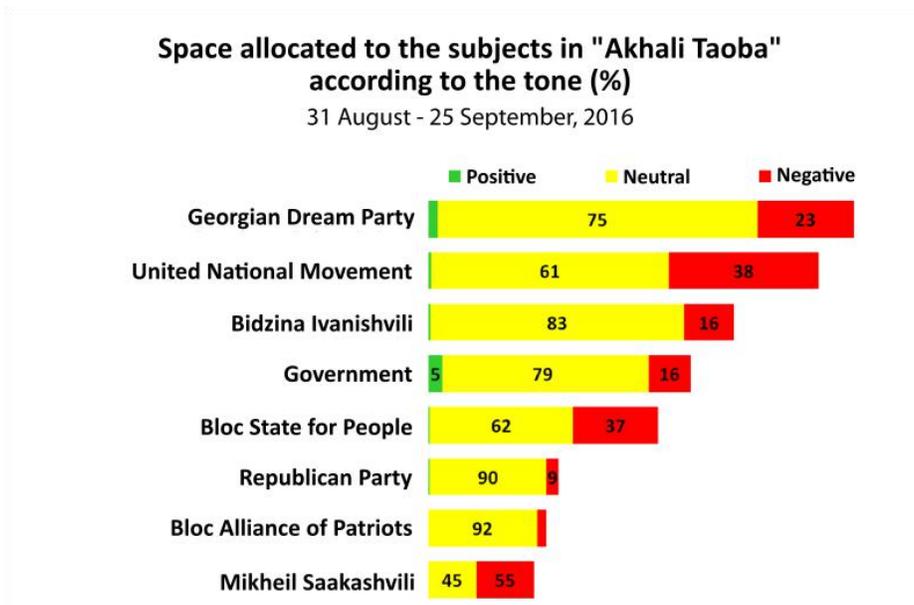
³ A combination of Liberals and a pederast, a derogatory term denoting gays

In the reporting period “Akhali Taoba” newspaper demonstrated strong criticism towards both the parliamentary opposition and ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili as well as towards the ruling party and ex-Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili. The publication also printed several materials which contained derogatory language towards subjects of articles.

The publication most actively covered “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia” (15%), “United National Movement” (14%), and ex-Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili (11%). Materials dedicated to ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili, “United National Movement” and the bloc “State for People” contained strongest negative tone indicators (55%, 38% and 37% respectively) followed by “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia” (23%). The Prime Minister was the one who was spared the highest percentage of positive tone indicators (29%).

There were several occasions of journalists using derogatory terms and abusive language. For instance, in an article concerning ex-Prime Minister Ivanishvili a journalists labels him as “no-longer-a-prime-minister” and a “key dreamer” (“Bidzina Ivanishvili: “Gubaz Sanikidze is upset for his failure to earn money and he blames me for this”, 20 September, P. 2).

It can be concluded that in the reporting period the publication exhibits negative attitude towards “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia” party, “United National Movement” and the bloc “State for People”.

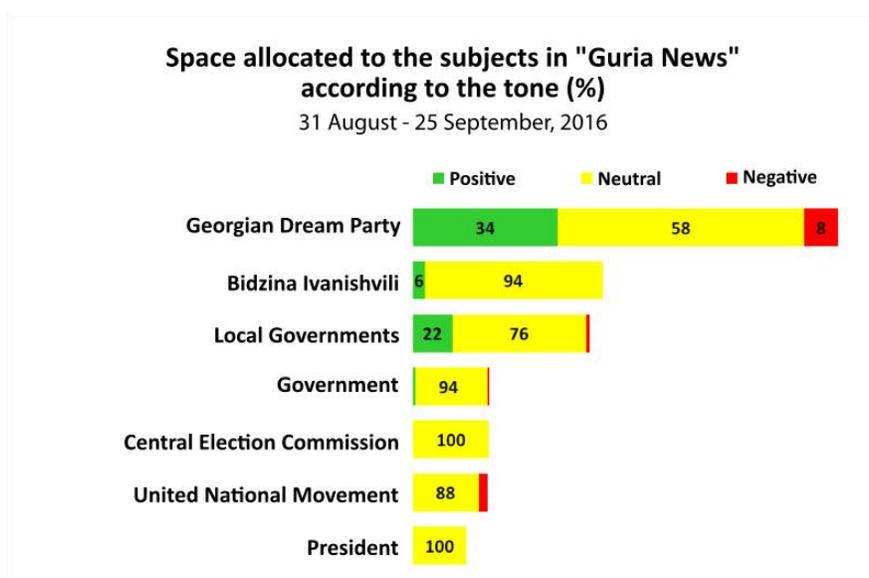


„Guria News“

The reporting period saw positive tone indicators towards “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia” on the rise in “Guria News”. There were no severe violations of journalistic ethical norms in the publication. However, commercial articles were often seen in the publication.

Most of materials printed in “Guria News” were dedicated to “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia” (34%), ex-Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili (15%), and local self-governments (14%). Strongest positive tone indicators were observed in materials concerning “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia” (34%) possibly due to the fact that the newspaper broadly covered a meeting of ex-Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili with regional journalists during which he spoke positively of the ruling party. Coverages of other political subjects did not provide either particularly negative or positive tone indicators.

Findings of the monitoring suggest that “Guria News” had increased positive tone indicators in covering activities of the ruling party. It was observed that the newspaper follows journalistic standards and ethical norms.



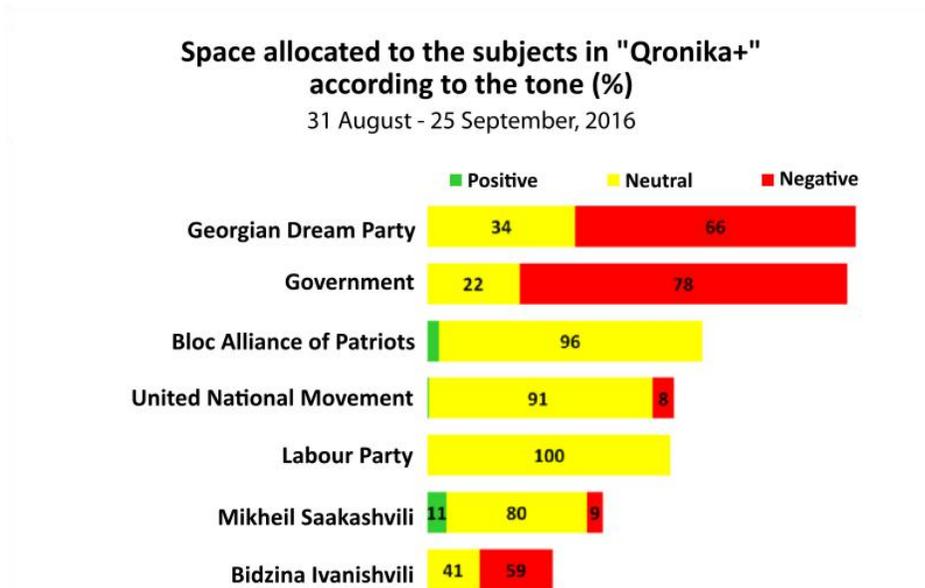
„Qronika +“

The third round of the monitoring has revealed that “Qronika+” maintained a negative tone in materials concerning the government and ex-Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili. In these materials journalists working for “Qronika+” openly criticizes the above mentioned subjects with occasional use of derogatory language. The monitoring has found a number of materials containing unverified information.

Most of materials published in “Qronika+” covered the activities of “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia” (18%) and the Government of Georgia (18%). These materials contained extremely negative tone indicators. The highest percentage of negative tone indicators was found in materials concerning ex-Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili (59%), while ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili was spared the strongest positive tone indicators (11%).

The materials published in "Qronika+" during the reporting period often contained unjustified reasoning and the use of abusive language towards various political subjects, in particular the ruling team, by the journalists. It should be noted that articles published in all editions of the newspaper dedicated to the critique of one person - deputy chief of the State Security Service Ioseb Gogashvili. Journalists often used derogatory language in articles covering the activities of Gogashvili. For instance, articles with the following headlines: "Soso, it's us again!" (6 September, P. 7); "A life ladder of a boy from Zemo Machkhaani" (13 September, P. 7) etc.

Findings of the monitoring suggest that "Qronika+" demonstrates negative attitude towards the governing team and ex-Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili. The publication violated journalistic standards and ethical norms while covering these political subjects on a number of occasions.



Conclusion

Selected publications continued to actively cover the ruling team and the parliamentary opposition in the third round of the monitoring. None of the selected publications dedicated its considerable space and resources to other political parties. All seven selected media outlets exhibit more or less explicit negative or positive attitudes towards political forces. Three publications have been observed to use abusive language, publish articles based on dubious sources and unjustified analysis by their journalists.

Publications "Alia" and "Asaval-Dasavali" continue to stand out with the frequent use of extremely abusive and derogatory language towards certain politicians. They routinely violate journalistic ethical standards and norms.

Findings of the monitoring suggest that the following are the major challenges faced by the Georgian press in the election run-up: biased attitudes of journalists towards various political subjects, frequent use of abusive language by journalists while covering activities of various politicians, unjustified reasoning and biased accounts of events.