



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

Monitoring of Print Media

July 11 – August 30, 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 11 July through 30 August.

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

- As during the previous round of monitoring, the “United National Movement” and the “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia” had the highest coverage among all political parties;
- The activities of the ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili and the former prime-minister Bidzina Ivanishvili were quite actively covered;
- Negative tone prevailed in 5 out of 7 outlets in their coverage of the United National Movement and the ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili;
- In contrast to the previous 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 team and the parliamentary opposition.
- The cases of violation of journalistic standards and ethical norms were encountered in “Alia”, “Qronika +”, and “Asaval-Dasavali” newspapers;

- Extreme cases of usage of abusive terminology was regularly observed in “Alia” and “Asaval-Dasavali” newspapers;

“Akhali Taoba”, “Qronika+”, “Alia”, and “Asaval-Dasavali” newsletters often publish unverified information.

“Rezonansi”

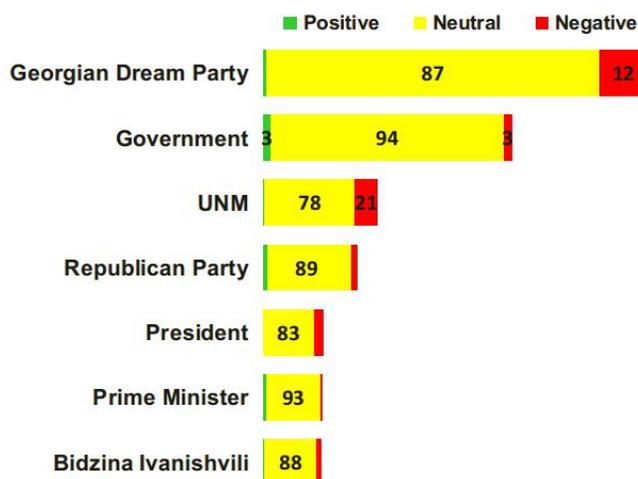
In comparison with the first period of monitoring a slight increase of negative tone indicators has been observed in the coverage of “Natal United Movement” by “Rezonansi” newspaper while neutral tone indicators dominated in their coverage of other subjects. The reporting period has not seen any violation of journalistic standards and ethical norms by “Rezonansi”.

“Rezonansi” most actively covered activities of “Georgian Dream - Democratic Georgia” party (20%) and the Government of Georgia (18%) while substantial coverage was also received by the “United National Movement” (8%) and the Republican Party (7%). Negative tone indicators were observed while covering activities of ex-President Saakashvili (52%) and the State for People Party (40%) while the “United National Movement” was the one claiming comparatively higher percentage of negative tone indicators (21%).

Findings of the monitoring suggest that “Rezonansi” newspaper exhibits negative tone indicators mostly in relation with the “United National Movement” and ex-President Saakashvili. However, it should be noted that, these negative tones are observed in statements made by respondents rather than in texts authored by journalists who do not show any positive or negative attitudes towards any of political subjects. The newspaper follows journalistic standards and ethical norms.

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

(July 11 - August 30, 2016)



“Alia”

Negative tone indicators were on a rise in “Alia” newspaper in comparison to the first round of monitoring. A negative tone was observed in coverages concerning incumbent authorities and ex-Prime Minister Ivanishvili, as well as the parliamentary opposition and ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili. Journalists working for “Alia” often resorts to using extremely derogatory and insulting terms while covering activities of a wide range of politicians.

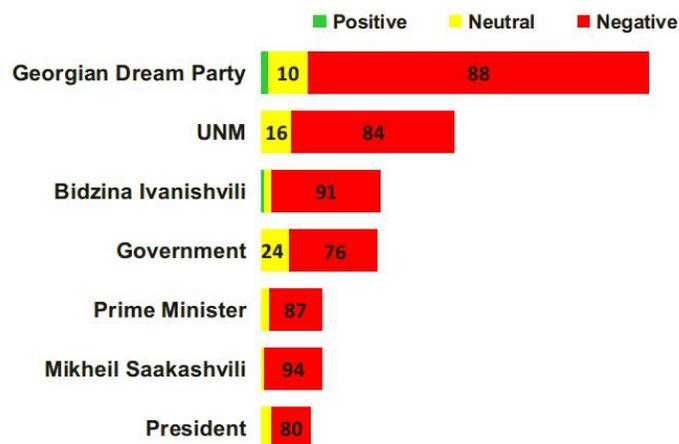
Political subjects having received the most coverage during the reporting period were as follows: “Georgian Dream - Democratic Georgia” (27%), “United National Movement” (13%), ex-Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili (8%) and the Government of Georgia (8%). Extremely negative tone indicators were observed in coverages received by authorities as well as the parliamentary opposition while no monitoring subject has claimed strong positive tone indicators.

Alia exhibited regular and severe violation of journalistic ethical norms with journalists using extremely derogatory language while referring to politicians. For example: ‘do you know why Khaduri has no hair on his head?! He is so lubricated with Vaseline that not even a single strand of hair can grow on his scalp. That is how much time he spends being stuck in some people’s arse...’ (‘the *Georgian Dream* has cheated you’, 15-21 August, P. 9). ‘Rest assured that, this team (or office??) if successful, of course, is going to finish off every dirty deed that Usupov’s three per cent parliament has started – they will legalize single sex marriage, incest, pedophilia and all the filthiness prevailing in the West...’ (‘Conspiracy against Georgia’, 1-7

August, P. 12). “Alia” newspaper openly calls on their readers to not vote for “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia”. Issues of 8-14 and 22-28 August had a figure designated to the above mentioned party crossed off. A 22-28 August issue of the newspaper had a front page article with a title ‘it is time to tear a Georgian Dream party list and put them deep in one place!!!’.

The findings of the monitoring suggest that journalists working for “Alia” systematically and severely violate journalistic standards and ethical norms. They notoriously stand out for frequent use of extremely degrading and humiliating language.

**Space allocated to the subjects in Alia
according to the tone (%)**
(July 11 - August 30, 2016)



“Kviris Palitra”

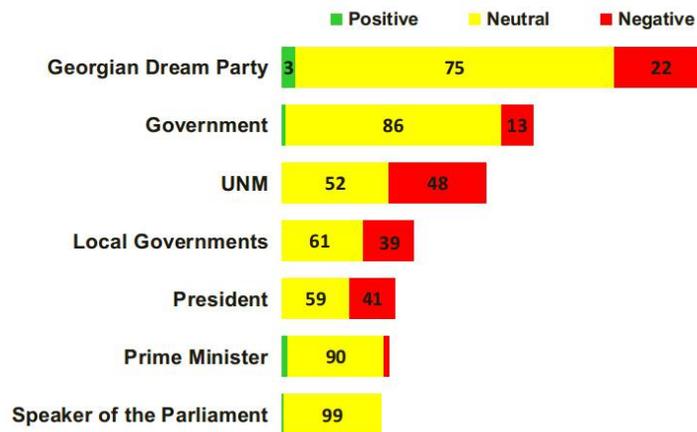
During the reporting period “Kviris Palitra” offered materials criticizing the “United National Movement”, President and local governments. However, it should be noted that criticism was voiced mostly in statements made by respondents rather than in actual texts written by journalists. There has been no identified violation of journalistic standards and ethical norms by “Kviris Palitra”.

Coverage of activities of the “United National Movement”, President, local governments and the “Georgian Dream - Democratic Georgia” contained quite strong negative tone indicators with 48%, 41%, 39% and 22% respectively. Strongly positive tone indicators were not spared to any of the subjects.

The following subjects received the most coverage in “Kviris Palitra”: “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia” (23%), Government of Georgia (14%) and “United National Movement” (11%).

Based on the findings of the monitoring, it can be assumed that “Kviris Palitra” follows journalistic standards and ethical norms. Similar to the first round of monitoring, the publication demonstrated more criticism towards the “United National Movement”.

Space allocated to the subjects in Kviris Palitra according to the tone (%)
(July 11 - August 30, 2016)



“Asavali-Dasavali”

“Asavali-Dasavali” continues to stand out with frequent and severe violation of journalistic standards and ethical norms. Journalists working for the publication systematically use extremely degrading language while covering activities of various politicians. Extremely negative tones were observed in relation to the “United National Movement”, ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili, the Republican Party and the President of Georgia.

The “United National Movement” (20%), ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili (15%), the “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia” Party (14%) and President (7%) received the most coverage during the reporting period. Extremely negative tone indicators were observed in materials concerning ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili (81%), the “United National Movement” (78%), Republican Party (67%) and President (59%) while negative tones dominated while covering activities of the Government of Georgia (52%), the “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia”

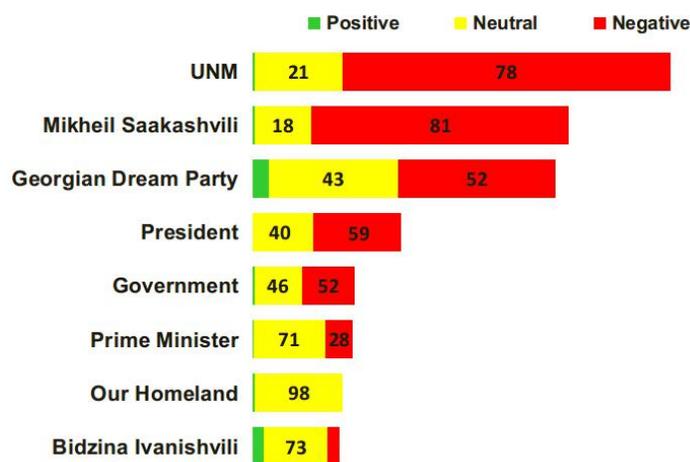
(52%) and the Prime Minister (28%). The publication seems to favor ex Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili (13%), bloc “Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi, Irma Inashvili - the Alliance of Patriots – United Opposition” (7%) and “For United Georgia” (4%). Importantly, the strongest positive tone was spared to Vladimer Bedukadze’s party “Centrists” (21%).

Every issue of “Asaval-Dasavali” demonstrates severe violation of journalistic standards and ethical norms. Journalists tend to systematically use extremely derogatory language, especially in regard with the “United National Movement” and Republican Party as well as in materials concerning ex and incumbent Georgian presidents. President Margvelashvili is referred to as ‘inflatable sex doll (for instance, in an article with the title ‘no to gay marriage!!!’, 15-21 August, P. 1. Journalists writing for “Asaval-Dasavali” systematically demonstrate judgement devoid of arguments, for instance: ‘Chergoleishvili and her company call on Giorgi Margvelashvili to hold back from the referendum! While they are backed up by whole international gay-mafia!’ (Mister President, make a choice: either Georgia or Chergostan!”, 8-14 August, P.7).

The findings of the monitoring suggest that articles in “Asavali-Dasavali” are prepared with severe violations of journalistic standards and ethical norms. The publication is biased and single-sided in their coverage of ongoing political processes while journalists fail to provide valid arguments for their judgement.

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

(July 11 - August 30, 2016)



“Akhali Taoba”

“Akhali Taoba” newspaper published unverified information during the reporting period several times while criticism dominates in materials concerning “United National

Movement”, “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia”, Republican Party, ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili and ex-Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili.

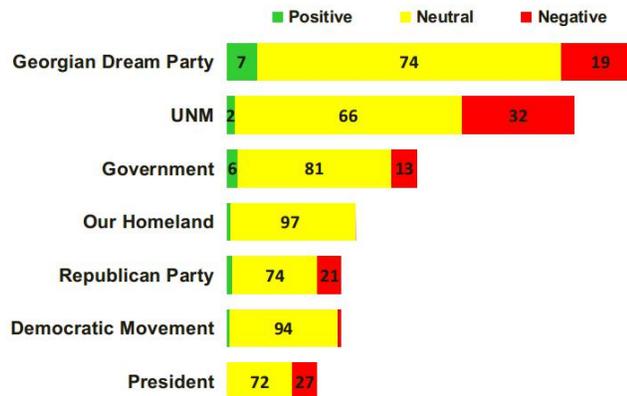
“Akhali Taoba” spared the most coverage to the “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia” (18%), “United National Movement” (15%), Government of Georgia (8%) and “Our Homeland” (6%). Strong negative tone indicators were observed in materials covering activities of local self-government bodies (48%), ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili (48%), “United National Movement” (32%), “Georgian Dream Coalition” (32%), the President (27%), Republican Party (21%) and “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia” (19%) while no subject was spared strongly positive tone indicators.

The reporting period saw several cases of unverified information being published in Akhali Taoba. For example: ‘they say that an idea of creating a messiah out of Gharibashvili was a bottomline of a table [dinner]...’. ‘the source says the same topic was discussed at dinner in a restaurant.’ (‘Is Gharibashvili coming back in politics?’ 19 July, P. 4); ‘according to unverified information the list had already been put together, but Bidzina Ivanishvili tore it down of those who worked on it’, ‘as widespread information suggests, an ex-National Forum member will hit the list..’, ‘as widespread information suggests Zakaria Kutsnashvili will be high and dry on the list...’, ‘as widespread information suggests the Georgian Dream was also negotiating with the Republicans regarding majoritarian [candidates].’ (Dreamers left beyond the list threaten with scandalous statements,” 12 July, P. 3).

It is worth noting that eight issues of the newspaper offered its readers an interview with the same individual, more specifically, a member of “Our Homeland”, Zviad Chitishvili who was particularly vocal in his vitriolistic comments on the United National Movement (for example, ‘signatures will soon be collected to ban the National Movement”, 13 July, P. 4; ‘We will burn Saakashvili’s toy images in all regions”, 1 August, P. 5).

Based on the findings of the monitoring it can be assumed that “Akhali Taoba” exhibits negative disposition towards the “United National Movement” and ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili while materials on the governing team members and ex-Prime Minister Ivanishvili also contained strong negative tone indicators. Presence of unverified information was observed on various occasions.

**Space allocated to the subjects in Akhali Taoba
according to the tone (%)**
(July 11 - August 30, 2016)



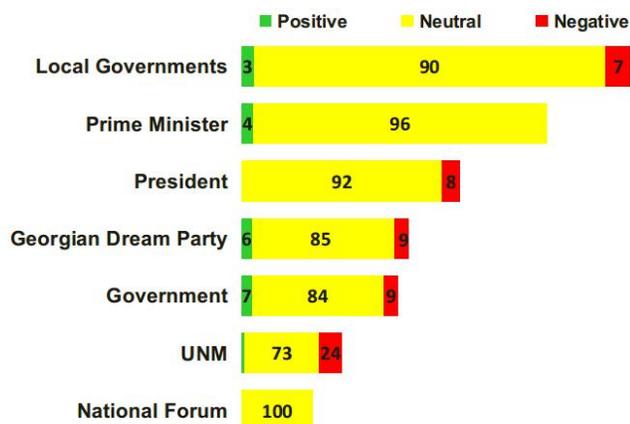
“Guria news”

Coverage of local authorities by “Guria News” contained less positive tone indicators in the reporting period as compared to the first round of the monitoring. In addition, the reporting period saw an increase of negative tone indicators with regard to the “United National Movement”. There were on severe violations of journalistic standards and ethical norms by “Guria News” observed during the reporting period. However, the publication often publishes paid, commercial articles.

During the reporting period “Guria News” most actively covered activities of local authorities (24%), Prime Minister (19%) and the President (14%) while “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia”, “United National Movement” and “National Forum” were forerunners among the parties receiving the most coverage with 11%, 6% and 4% respectively. Coverage of the “United National Movement” contained comparatively higher rate of negative tone indicators (24%). There was no high concentration of positive or negative tone indicators in relation to either of the subjects.

The findings of the monitoring gives ground to assume that there is no clearly observable negative or positive disposition towards any of political players in “Guria News”. The publication follows journalistic standards and ethical norms.

**Space allocated to the subjects in Guria News
according to the tone (%)**
(July 11 - August 30, 2016)



„Qronika +“

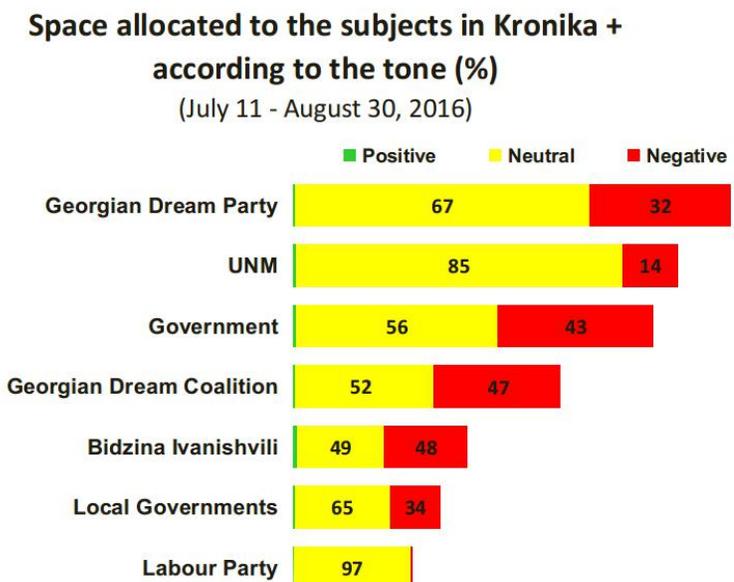
As compared to the first round of the monitoring, “Kronika +” showed no positive attitude towards the United National Movement, however, negative tone indicators were still present towards the government and ex-Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili. While providing coverage of above mentioned subjects journalists writing for “Qornika +” openly expressed negative attitudes and at times used derogatory language. The monitoring revealed that the paper published unverified information on numerous occasions.

“Qronika +” most actively covered activities of the following subjects: “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia” (18%), “United National Movement” (16%) and the Government of Georgia (15%). Higher percentage of negative tone indicators were observed in coverages concerning ex-Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili (48%), “Georgian Dream Coalition” (47%), the Government of Georgia (43%), local self-governments (34%) and “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia” (32%) while the most positive coverage was spared to “State for People” (11%).

The reporting period the use of unjustified judgement and derogatory language by the journalists towards various politicians, in particular with members of ruling political team. It should be noted that several articles were dedicated to criticize one individual, more specifically, a deputy head of State Security Service Ioseb Gogashvili. These articles published within the same reporting period contained derogatory language. For example: “Soso! What is the weather like in your area?!” (19 July, P. 7); “Soso, are you going to vote?” (2 August, P. 7).

The monitoring revealed that “Qronika +” has published information based on suspicious sources on numerous occasions.

The findings of the monitoring suggest that “Qronika +” exhibits clear indicators for negative attitudes towards the governing team and ex-Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili. On a number of occasions journalists have violated journalistic standards and ethical norms while covering activities of above mentioned subjects.



Conclusion

Selected publications remained active criticizing mostly governing team and parliamentary opposition. Other political parties did not get any particular coverage in either of selected publications. Five out of seven selected publications demonstrated either negative or positive attitude towards various political players. Three of these publications use derogatory language towards the subjects. The monitoring identified cases of publishing information based on suspicious sources and unverified judgement by journalists.

The second round of the monitoring saw an increase in the use of derogatory language in “Alia” and “Asaval-Dasavali”. These publications systematically violate journalistic standards.

Based on the findings of the monitoring we can assume that, bias demonstrated towards various political players by journalists, frequent use of derogatory language in coverages of various politicians, unjustified judgement and one-sided accounts of events represent major challenges faced by the Georgian printed media during the election run-up.