



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

Monitoring of Print Media

26 September – 2 November, 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 26 September through 2 November, 2016.

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

- “United National Movement” and “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia” again attracted the highest media attention;
- Five out of the seven print media outlets under monitoring displayed their largely critical attitude towards the “United National Movement” and the ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili;
- Only one newspaper (“Qronika +”) displayed clearly negative attitude towards the ruling team and the former Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili;
- High rates of negative tone were again observed in the 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 again encountered in “Alia”, “Asaval-Dasavali”, and “Qronika +” newspapers;
- “Alia” and “Asaval-Dasavali” newspapers continue to stand out with the use of extremely abusive terminology by their journalists;
- “Qronika +”, “Alia”, and “Asaval-Dasavali” newspapers continue to publish unverified information;
- None of the independent majoritarian candidates got substantial coverage in the print media;

- Newspapers paid little attention to individual candidates and mainly covered activities of their political parties. The only exception was the publication in “Alia” newspaper, where Mr Valeri Gelashvili, a candidate of the “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia”, was portrayed in excessively positive light;
- Coverage of the procedures related to the second round of elections was limited.
- The publication of the election results was accompanied by offensive language in “Alia” and “Asaval-Dasavali” newspapers.

“Rezonansi”

Negative tone indicators continued to dominate materials published in Rezonansi on the “United National Movement” and ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili during the fourth round of the monitoring. It is difficult to tell apart commercial articles from those prepared by the editorial board. No severe violations of journalistic ethical norms by “Rezonansi” have been observed during the reporting period.

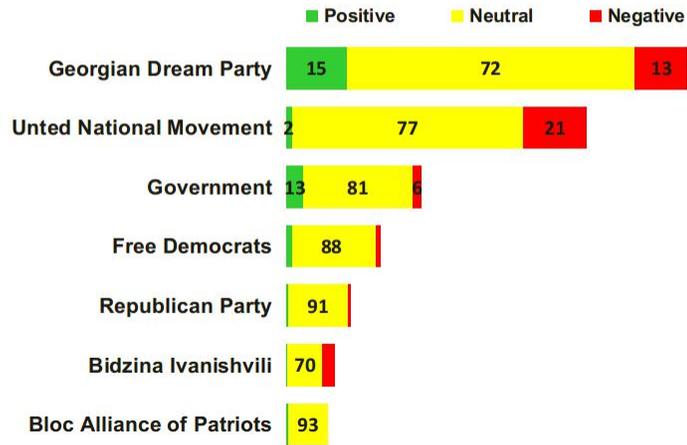
“Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia” party (29%), “United National Movement” (21%) and the Government of Georgia (10%) received the most coverage during the reporting period while materials concerning ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili, ex-Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili, “United National Movement” and “State for People” bloc contained high percentage of negative tone indicators (41%, 26%, 21% and 20% respectively). The strongest positive tone indicators were observed in the materials concerning “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia” party (15%), local self-governments (14%) and the Government of Georgia (13%).

It should be noted that articles prepared under commercial contracts which “Rezonansi” publishes are difficult to tell from those prepared by the editorial board. Commercial materials are typically put in a frame while a note that this type of materials are paid by clients and therefore the editorial board cannot be held responsible for facts, is printed with rather small fonts on the last page of the newspaper. It is recommended that this information is provided for each of articles prepared under commercial contract.

The findings of the monitoring suggest that materials concerning the parliamentary opposition and ex-President are dominated by negative tone indicators. However, these indicators are observed in statements of the respondents rather than in actual texts written by journalists. The newspaper follows journalistic standards and ethical norms.

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

(26 September- 2 November, 2016)



Alia

Negative tone indicators continued to dominate the materials covering almost all political subjects by “Alia” in the fourth round of the monitoring. The publication systematically and severely violates journalistic standards and ethical norms.

The following political subjects received the most coverage during the reporting period: “United National Movement” (20%), “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia” party (16%), ex-Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili (13%) and ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili (8%). Extremely high percentage of negative tone indicators were observed in materials covering activities of “State for People” bloc (84%), “United National Movement” (75%), ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili (68%), “Georgian Dream - Democratic Georgia” (60%), ex-Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili (57%), and the Government of Georgia (56%) while “Free Democrats” and “Georgian Hall” were spared the highest percentage of positive tone indicators (25% in each case).

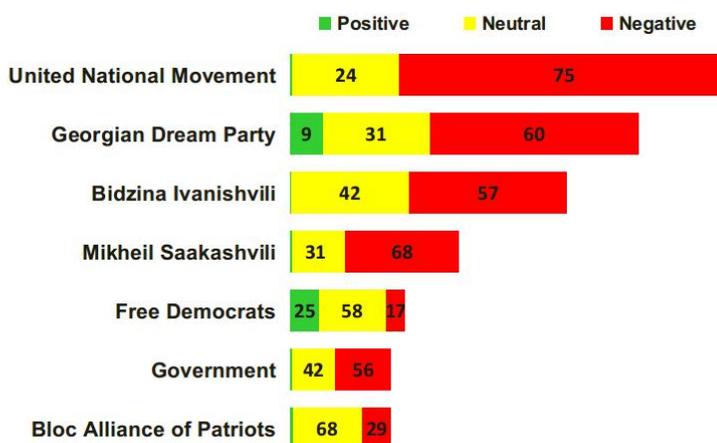
The reporting period saw the use of unverified information, reasoning without much grounds and extremely humiliating language while covering certain politicians by the journalists working for “Alia”. For instance, in an article “Who the “Georgian Dream” will appoint on high rank positions and who will move downwards?”, 31 October, P. 6, the journalist addresses a “Georgian Dream” member Zviad Kvachantiradze with insulting words. It should be noted that yet another member of the “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia” Valeri Gelashvili received surprisingly positive coverage from an “Alia” journalist in the same reporting period: “...Valeri Gelashvili is loyal to his principles, hard to break, extremely hardworking, a fighter, adamant, and he has proved all these virtues by his very own life! He’s meticulous, goal-oriented,

cautious and observant, and challenges towards achieving his goal only make him stronger...” (Valeri Gelashvili: I am not going to walk out from the politics until I send Mikheil Saakashvili to prison and the Nationalists are held responsible for crimes they have committed!”, 24 October, P.6).

The findings of the monitoring suggest that “Alia” systematically and severely violates journalistic standards and ethical norms.

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

(26 September- 2 November, 2016)



“Kviris Palitra”

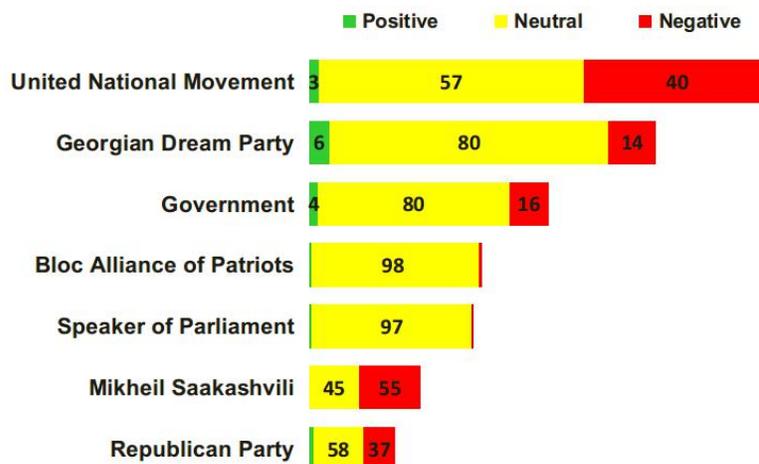
Criticism of “United National Movement” and ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili continued to dominate materials published by “Kviris Palitra” in the fourth round of monitoring. However, it should be noted that the criticism was mostly expressed in statements of respondents rather than in materials prepared by journalists per se. There have been no cases of violating journalistic standards and ethical norms observed during the reporting period by journalists working for “Kviris Palitra”.

In the given period of the monitoring the following political subjects received the greatest coverage in “Kviris Palitra”: “United National Movement” (24%), “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia (18%), and the Government of Georgia (12%). High percentage of negative tone indicators were observed in materials concerning “State for People” bloc (58%), Mikheil Saakashvili (55%), “United National Movement” (40%) and the Republican Party (37%) while the highest percentage of the positive tone indicators was observed in materials dedicated to the ex-Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili (26%).

The findings of the monitoring suggest that “Kviris Palitra” is negatively disposed towards the parliamentary opposition and ex-President Saakashvili.

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

(26 September- 2 November, 2016)



“Asaval-Dasavali”

In the fourth round of the monitoring “Asavali-Dasavali” continued to stand out with its frequent and severe violation of journalistic standards and ethical norms. Journalists working for the publication systematically use extremely derogatory and insulting language in their coverages of politicians. Materials published in “Asaval-Dasavali” continue to demonstrate extremely negative attitude towards the “United National Movement”, ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili, the Republican Party and the President of Georgia.

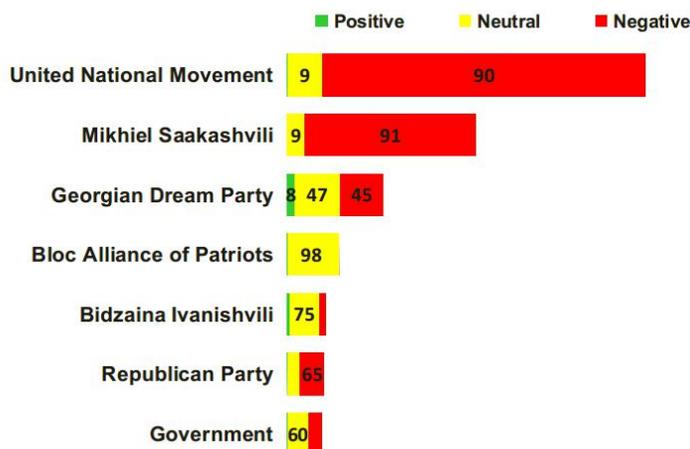
The following political subjects received the most coverage in “Asaval-Dasavali” during the reporting period: “United National Movement” (37%), Mikheil Saakashvili (19%) and “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia” (10%). Extremely highest concentration of negative tone indicators were observed in materials covering Mikheil Saakashvili (91%), “United National Movement” (90%), the President of Georgia (75%), “State for People” bloc (72%) and the Republican Party (65%) while materials concerning “Democratic Movement – United Georgia” demonstrated strongest positive tone indicators (18%).

“Asaval-Dasavali” continues to provide one-sided coverage, groundless judgements and the use of insulting language by the journalists while covering various political subjects. These violations were apparent both in the parliamentary election run-up period as well as in the

coverage of the election results. For instance: “Farewell to Republican Khlysts¹” (10 October, P.3); “Around 500.000 voters voted for brooms²!!!” (10 October, P.1).

The findings of the monitoring suggest that “Asaval-Dasavali” continues to severely violate journalistic standards and ethical norms. The newspaper stands out with its frequent use of extremely insulting and humiliating language towards political subjects.

**Space allocated to the subjects in "Asaval-Dasavali"
according to the tone (%)**
(26 September- 2 November, 2016)



“Akhali Taoba”

The fourth round of the monitoring did not see any severe violations of journalistic and ethical norms in materials published by “Akhali Taoba”. The publication continues to demonstrate strong negative attitude towards the “United National Movement”, ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili and ex-Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili. However, the criticism is mostly observed in statements made by respondents rather than in texts prepared by journalists working for the publication.

The “United National Movement” and “Georgian Dream” received the most coverage in “Akhali Taoba” with 23% and 22% respectively. Strongest negative tone indicators were observed in materials concerning “State for People” bloc (35%), Mikheil Saakashvili (31%), Bidzina Ivanishvili (24%) and the “United National Movement” (23%). The strongest positive tone indicators were spared to the “National Forum” (11%).

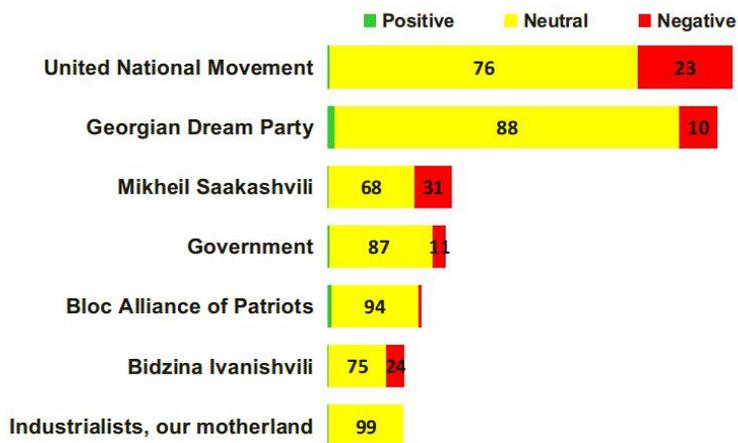
¹ **Khlysts** or **Khlysty** (Russian: Хлысты) was an underground sect from late 17th to early 20th century that split off the Russian Orthodox Church and belonged to the Spiritual Christians tendency.

² A reference to the footages of inmate torture in Georgia (released in the fall of 2012) suggesting that prisoners had been tortured and raped with brooms

The findings of the monitoring suggest that “Akhali Taoba” maintained impartiality while covering the results of the parliamentary elections. The reporting period saw decreased percentage of negative tone indicators while covering political subjects by “Akhali Taoba”.

**Space allocated to the subjects in "Akhali Taoba"
according to the tone (%)**

(26 September- 2 November, 2016)



“Guria news”

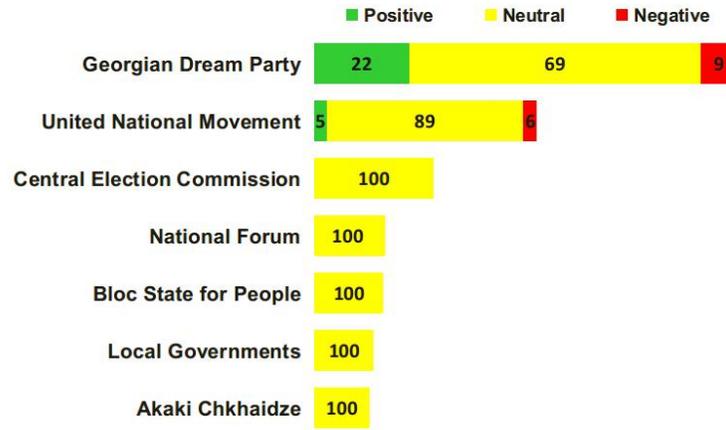
“Guria News” maintained positive tone indicators towards “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia”. There have been no cases of violating journalistic ethical norms observed during the reporting period in “Guria News”. The publication frequently publishes paid commercial articles.

The following political subjects received the most coverage from the publication during the reporting period: “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia” (34%), “United National Movement” (18%) and the Central Election Commission (10%). Materials concerning the “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia” exhibited the highest percentage of positive tone indicators (22%). There were no particularly strong negative or positive tone indicators observed in relation to any of the political subjects.

The findings of the monitoring suggest that “Guria News” continues to provide unbiased account of the political processes in the country and keeps following journalistic standards and ethical norms.

**Space allocated to the subjects in "Guria News"
according to the tone (%)**

(26 September- 2 November, 2016)



“Qronika+”

Negative tone indicators continued to dominate the coverage of the government team and the ex-Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili by “Qronika+” in the fourth round of the monitoring. Journalists working for the publication would explicitly express their negative disposition towards the above-mentioned political subjects and use derogatory language on occasions. The newspaper also published unverified information on several occasions in the reporting period.

“United National Movement” (25%) and “Georgian Dream - Democratic Georgia” (20%) received the most coverage in “Qronika+” with 25% and 20% respectively. The coverage of the following political subjects contained the highest percentage of negative tone indicators: the Government of Georgia (69%), the local self-governments (55%), “State for People” bloc (74%), ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili (47%) and the ex-Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili (34%) while no selected political subject were spared explicitly high percentage of positive tone indicators.

Similar to the previous monitoring rounds, the findings of the fourth period point out to the use of groundless judgement and derogatory language by “Qronika+” journalists towards the various political subject and in particular towards members of the ruling time. It is worth noting that all editions of the publication within the fourth period of the monitoring published materials dedicated to criticize one specific person – Ioseb Gogashvili, a deputy head of the State Security Agency. These materials often contained derogatory and insulting language used by the journalist. For instance, see articles “Soso³’s dream” (27 September, P.7); “The country

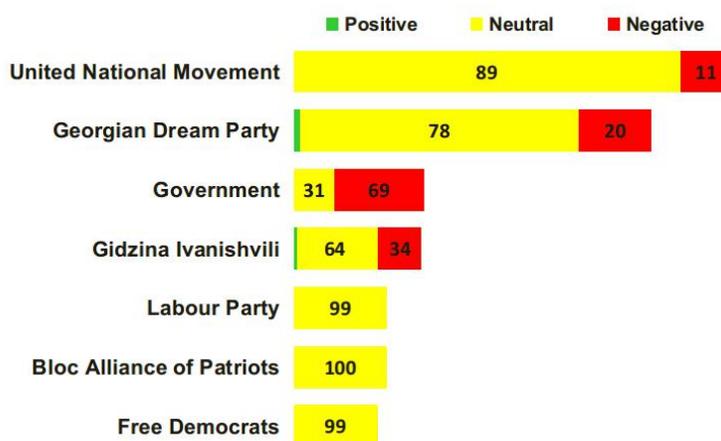
³ Soso is a diminutive version of the name Ioseb

where Antricotia organizes elections for us...” (4 October, P.7); “Crisis facing the country is also called Soso!” (18 October, P.7).

The findings of the monitoring suggest that “Qronika+” continues to demonstrate negative attitudes towards the ruling team and the ex-Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili. In addition, it was observed that journalists occasionally violated journalistic standards and ethical norms while covering the political subjects mentioned above.

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

(26 September- 2 November, 2016)



Conclusion

The findings of the monitoring of selected publications suggest that the ruling team and the parliamentary opposition continued to be in the focus of the coverage by the publications while other political parties did not manage to draw particular attention. Selected publications demonstrate varying extent of dispositions, both negative and positive towards, certain political subjects. Three publications occasionally resorted to the use of derogatory language by the journalist while the practice of publishing articles based on dubious or suspicious sources of information and unjustified and poor judgement by the journalists were also observed.

“Alia” and “Asaval-Dasavali” continue to stand out with their frequent use of extremely humiliating and insulting language while covering the activities of certain political subjects. These publications consistently violate journalistic standards and ethical norms.

Majoritarian candidates participating in the second round of the elections were not much in the focus of the publications which chose to keep a stronger emphasis on political parties. Journalists working for “Alia” and “Asaval-Dasavali” often used derogatory and insulting

language while covering the results of the elections. However, procedures related to the second round of the parliamentary elections received poor coverage by the print media.

The findings of the monitoring suggest that the bias of journalists as they covered activities of political subjects, the frequent use of insulting language towards certain politicians, judgement on poor grounds and single-sided account of events represent the key challenges of the Georgian press in the election run-up.