



Research on Media Coverage for 2016 Parliamentary Elections

Monitoring of Print Media

May 20 – July 10, 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 May 20 through July 10.

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

- “The United National Movement” and the “Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia” had the highest coverage among all political parties;
- There was quite an active coverage of the activities of the ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili and the former prime-minister Bidzina Ivanishvili;
- Rates of negative tone prevailed in 4 out of 7 outlets covering the United National Movement and the ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili;
- There is only one outlet (“Qronika +”), which has demonstrated clear negative attitude towards the ruling team and Bidzina Ivanishvili, as well as positive treatment of the United National Movement and Mikheil Saakashvili;
- Extremely high rates of negative tone revealed in case of two newspapers (“Alia” and “Asaval-Dasavali”) towards both the ruling team and the parliamentary opposition as

well. These outlets did not demonstrate high rates of positive tone while covering any other subjects;

- The cases of violation of journalistic standards and ethical norms were encountered in the newspapers “Alia”, “Qronika +”, and “Asaval-Dasavali”;
- Abusive terminology was regularly used by journalists of “Asaval-Dasavali” newspaper;

(Note: evaluations presented in this report are based only on the analysis of coverage of political subjects)

Rezonansi

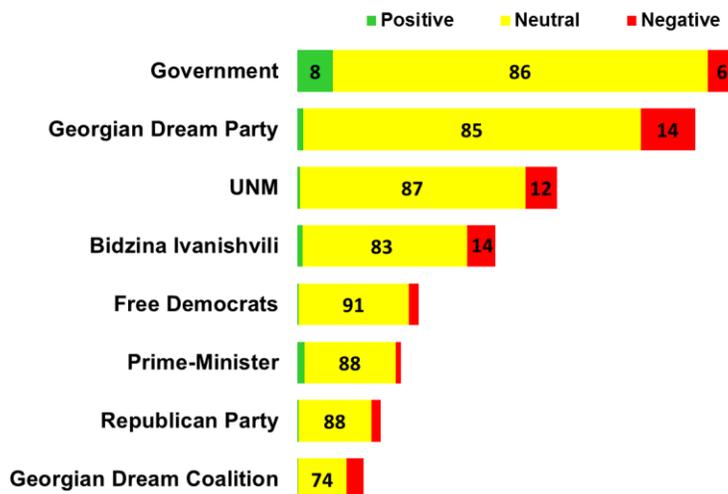
During this monitoring period, Rezonansi provided quite an objective and impartial coverage of the political process taking place in the country. There were no cases of violating the journalism ethics and standards observed in the newspaper.

Rezonansi most actively covered the activities of the government (22%). Out of political parties, the mostly covered ones were Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia (20%), United National Movement (13%), Free Democrats (6%) and Republican Party (4%). It is notable that there were no especially high rates of positive or negative tones when covering any political party. Relatively higher rate of negative tone was observed in the articles about ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili (27%).

The monitoring results let us conclude that there are no especially positive or negative dispositions observed in the Rezonansi towards any political group. The newspaper abides by journalism ethics and standards.

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

(May 20 - July 10, 2016)



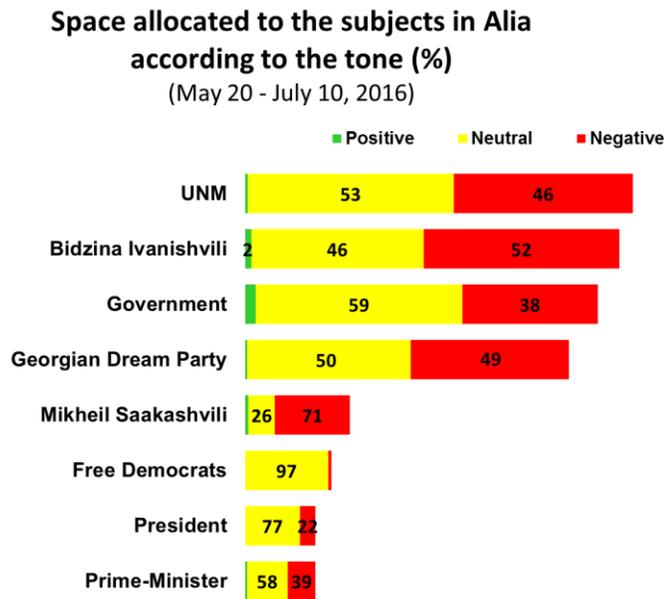
Alia

This newspaper demonstrated an extremely critical coverage of the ruling political group, as well as the parliamentary opposition, ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili and former prime-minister Bidzina Ivanishvili. This outlet often breached journalistic ethics and standards. Alia's journalists often used abusive terminology when writing about some politicians.

During this monitoring period, the most intensively covered subjects were: United National Movement (17%), former prime-minister Bidzina Ivanishvili (16%), the government (15%), and Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia party (14%). Extremely high rates of negative tone were demonstrated during the coverage of the ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili (71%), former prime-minister Bidzina Ivanishvili (52%), Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia (49%), local governments (46%), United National Movement (46%), and the Prime Minister of Georgia (40%). It is notable that there were no high rates of positive tone observed in Alia with regards to any of the subjects. High rates of neutral tone were observed while covering Democratic Movement – for United Georgia (99%), bloc Bloc Patriotic Alliance, United Opposition (99%), Girchi (99%), Republican Party (96%) and party For United Georgia (95%).

During this monitoring period, Alia’s journalist did not refrain from using abusive terminology when writing about politicians. When covering the ruling party and the parliamentary opposition, the journalists often used the terms “Natsebi” (members of the United National Movement), and “Dreamers” (members of the Georgian Dream party). Besides, big number of articles in Alia were written based on suspicious sources of information (for example: “This is why “Misha from Odessa” sent a message: don’t show me old faces any longer, I hate that garbage and those who want to go away, let them go away to hell...”, May 20-24/2016, page 3).

The monitoring results let us conclude that there is a negative disposition clearly observed in Alia towards the ruling team, also towards United National Movement, ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili and former prime-minister Bidzina Ivanishvili. The newspaper often violates journalism ethics and standards. Alia’s journalists often use abusive terminology when covering oliticians.



Kviris Palitra

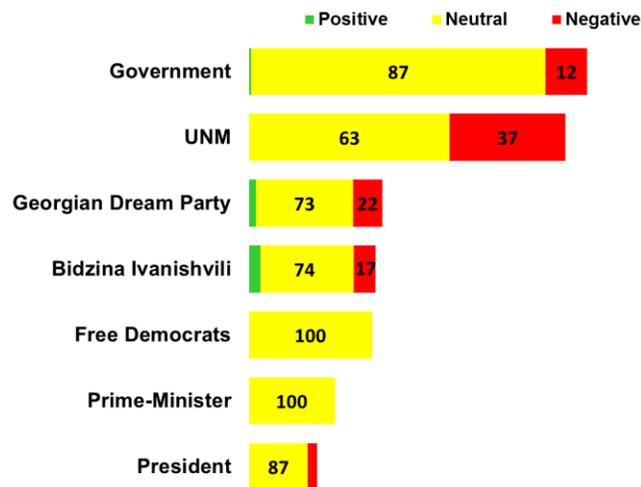
There was neither positive nor negative disposition observed in Kviris Palitra towards any political group during the monitoring period. However, the rate of negative tone prevailed when covering the United National Movement and Republican Party. There were no cases of gross violation of journalistic ethics and standards observed.

During this monitoring period, the most intensive coverage was provided for the activities of the government (22%). Among the political parties, the most coverage was dedicated to the United National Movement (21%), Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia party (9%) and Free Democrats (8%). Quite high rates of negative tone were observed in regards to Republican Party (64%), State for People (58%), ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili (45%) and the United National Movement (37%). The highest rate of positive tone was used for Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia (5%).

The monitoring results let us conclude that neither positive nor negative disposition is observed in Kviris Palitra towards any electoral subject, although the criticism of United National Movement, Republican Party and ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili prevails in the newspaper.

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

(May 20 - July 10, 2016)



Asaval-Dasavali

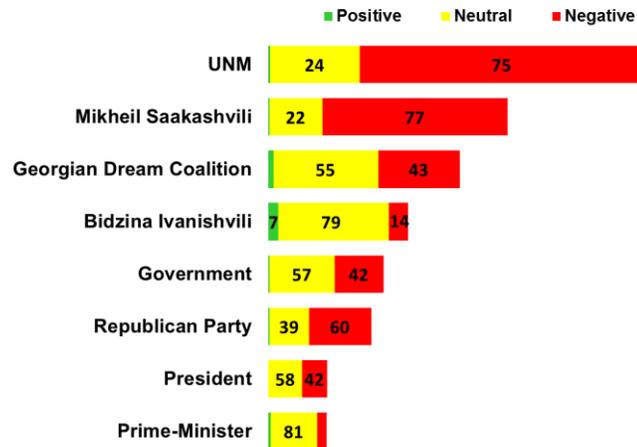
During the monitoring period we observed extremely negative coverage of United National Movement, ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili, Republican Party, and the President of Georgia. The newspaper regularly violated the journalistic ethics and standards. Asaval-Dasavali is distinguished with frequent use of abusive terminology by journalists.

Asaval-Dasavali most intensively covered United National Movement (23%); ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili (14%), Coalition Georgian Dream (12%) and former prime-minister Bidzina Ivanishvili (8%). Extremely high rates of negative tone were observed in regards to the ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili (77%), United National Movement (75%), the Speaker of the Parliament (60%) and Republican Party (60%). Quite high rates of negative tone were observed in regard to State for People party (47%), Coalition Georgian Dream (43%), President of Georgia (42%) and the government (42%). Highest rates of positive tone were identified when covering activities of the former prime-minister Bidzina Ivanishvili (7%), local governments (7%) and the parties: Industry Will Save Georgia (6%), and For United Georgia (5%).

During this monitoring period, we regularly encountered phrases with extremely insulting contents used by journalists while reporting about various politicians; for example: "... Elene Khoshtaria – a famous "NGOshnitsa" (an NGO representative), who has been working as a fig leaf for the Saakashvili regime, and shamelessly, as a true "Natsi", tries to justify the misfortunes brought by the 'brooms party' during 9 years (Saakashvili's fig leaves gathered at fig-ravine!)", 23-29/May/2016, page 2). We often encountered the abusive terminology in the article titles; for example: "Paatastrophy!" (refereeing to Paata Burchuladze. 23-29/May/2016, page 15); "Anatomy of National Fascism" (referring to United National Movement". 30/May-5/June/2016, page 9); "Margvelashvili Fandarast!" (20-26/June/2016, page 15).

The monitoring results lead us to the conclusion that cases of quite gross violation of journalism ethics and standards are regularly observed in Asaval-Dasavali. The newspaper's journalists regularly use extremely abusive terminology while reporting about various politicians.

**Space allocated to the subjects in Asaval-Dasavali
according to the tone (%)**
(May 20 - July 10, 2016)



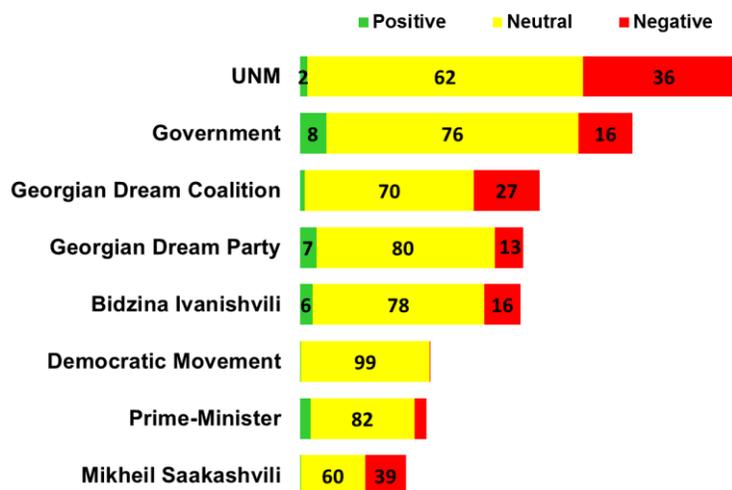
Akhali Taoba

During the monitoring period, the criticism of United National Movement and the ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili prevailed in Akhali Taoba. There were no cases of gross violation of journalism ethics and standards identified.

Akhali Taoba most intensively covered the activities of the United National Movement (18%), the government (13%), the Coalition Georgian Dream (9%), Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia party (9%) and the former prime-minister Bidzina Ivanishvili (9%). High rates of negative tone were revealed in the reports about the ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili (39%) and United National Movement (36%). The highest rates of positive tone were observed in case of the Prime-Minister (8%), the government (8%), the Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia (7%), and the former prime-minister Bidzina Ivanishvili (6%).

The monitoring results let us conclude that a relatively more negative disposition is observed in Akhali Taoba towards United National Movement and the ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili. On the other hand, there is relatively more positive disposition towards the ruling political group and the former prime-minister Bidzina Ivanishvili. There were no cases of gross violation of journalism ethics and standards identified in the newspaper.

**Space allocated to the subjects in Akhali Taoba
according to the tone (%)**
(May 20 - July 10, 2016)



Guria News

During this monitoring period, Guria News provided objective and impartial coverage of the political processes taking place in the country. There are higher rates of positive tone observed in the reports about local legislative and executive authorities. The newspaper quite actively reported about activities of the mentioned subjects. No cases of violation of journalism ethics and standards were observed.

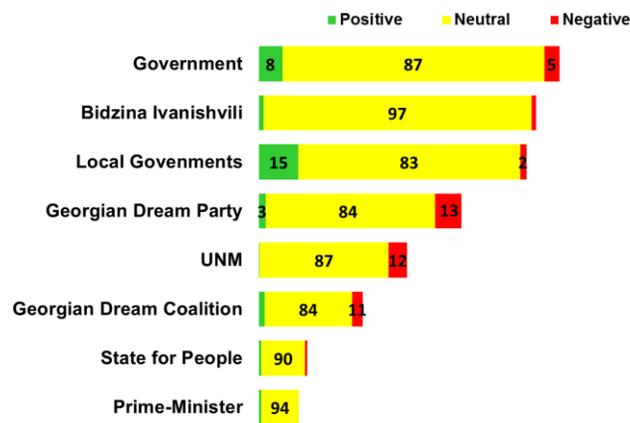
During this monitoring period, Guria News most actively covered activities of the government (19%), the former prime-minister Bidzina Ivanishvili (18%) and governments (17%). Among political parties, the most coverage was devoted to Georgian-Dream – Democratic Georgia (13%), United National Movement (9%), the Georgian Dream Coalition (7%) and State for People party (3%). There was neither no especially high rates of positive or negative tone observed while reporting on any political party. Relatively higher rate of negative tone was used with regards to State for People (22%). Also, relatively higher rate of negative tone was used in the reports about the President of Georgia (23%).

During this monitoring period, Guria News was publishing findings of various surveys (for example: “Shall Ivanishvili come back to politics?”, 6/June/2016, page 3-5; “Did the Georgian

Dream keep electoral promises?”, 20/June/2016, page 5-7). The results of these surveys were presented in the newspaper in a quite objective and balanced manner.

The monitoring results let us conclude that Guria News provides quite objective and impartial coverage of ongoing political processes. We do not encounter cases of violation of journalism ethics and standards.

Space allocated to subjects in Guria News according to the tone (%)
(May 20 - July 10, 2016)



Qronika +

During this monitoring period, Qronika + was quite critical towards the ruling team and the former prime-minister Bidzina Ivanishvili. The newspaper’s journalists often expressed their negative attitudes openly when reporting about these subjects. On the other hand, positive tone prevailed towards the United National Movement and the ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili. We often encountered the cases of gross violation of journalism ethics and standards in Qronika +.

Among the monitoring subjects, the newspaper most intensively covered the activities of the government (28%). Among the political parties, the most coverage was dedicated to United National Movement (13%), the Georgian Dream Coalition (8%), and Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia party (8%). The highest rates of negative tone were observed while reporting about the former prime-minister Bidzina Ivanishvili (47%), Georgian Party (47%), the Prime-Minister (46%), local governments (43%), the government (41%), Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia (39%) and the Coalition Georgian Dream (31%). The highest rates of

positive tone were observed in regards to State for People (28%), the ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili (18%), United National Movement (9%) and the President of Georgia (9%).

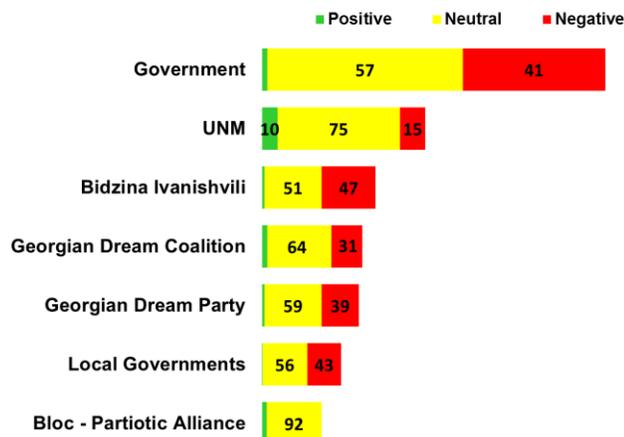
During this monitoring period, we often observed in Qronika + that journalists would use subjective judgment and abusive terminology in regards to various subjects, especially towards representatives of the ruling team. Quite big number of articles published with the criticism of one particular person, Ioseb Gogashvili, the deputy chairperson of State Security Service. We often encountered abusive terminology used by a journalist while criticizing this subject; e.g. in the articles “Soso, with the nickname “Antrikota”” (28/May/2016, page 7), “Ioseb, special teams will take you to the end” (5/July/2016, page 7).

At the same time journalists openly expressed their positive attitude while reporting about Levan Varshalomidze, member of the United National Movement. In the article “Chairs will bedt down in Batumi, i.e. Masha’s test #1” (5/July/2016 page 15), the journalist writes: “if we compare, Levan Varshalomidze indeed looks quite academic and self-confident. It seems that the voters have been missing the people like him in power – self-confident and able to build, and not bend chairs”.

The monitoring results let us conclude that there is on one hand a clearly negative attitude towards the ruling team and the former prime-minister Bidzina Ivanishvili in Qronika +, and on the other hand, there is a positive attitude demonstrated towards United National Movement and the ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili. We often come across the cases of violation of journalism ethics and standards in Qronika +. The newspaper’s reporters use abusive terminology with no restraints when reporting about politicians.

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

(May 20 - July 10, 2016)



Conclusion

During this monitoring period the selected newspapers actively covered activities of the ruling team and the parliamentary opposition. None of them provided particularly lengthy coverage of other political parties. 5 out of 7 media outlets selected for the monitoring demonstrated positive or negative dispositions towards various political powers. There were three outlets where the journalists were using abusive terminology. We have also encountered articles those were based on suspicious sources of information as well as cases of ungrounded reasoning by journalists.

Based on the monitoring results we can conclude that during the election period the Georgian press is facing the following key challenges: subjective attitude of journalists towards various political groups, frequent usage of abusive terminology by journalists while covering politicians, ungrounded reasoning by journalists and one-sided coverage of events.

Recommendations

- The press should report about the activities of politicians or political parties in an objective manner, based on facts and events, and not according to the sympathies or political taste of editorial board;
- It is desirable for the outlets to present different opinions in their articles. Especially if there is a severe allegation made towards a certain person;
- The journalists should provide their own opinion or evaluation without using abusive and discriminatory terminology;
- The journalist's reasoning and conclusions should be based on duly verified facts, provided by a reliable source of information. Especially in the cases of severe allegations expressed towards a particular individual.
- Media shall not agitate its readers to vote for the particular political party.
- It is desirable for the press to pay more attention to the coverage and analysis of particular election programs of political parties during the election period.