



TV Talk-Show Monitoring Report

May 3-23, 2014

CRRC Georgia is carrying out the media monitoring in connection to the local elections of 2014 within the frameworks of the project “Professional Media for Elections”, funded by the EU and UNDP. The monitoring is performed for the main evening news programs and political talk shows broadcasted during the prime time on the Channel One of the Public Broadcaster, Adjara TV, Rustavi 2, Imedi, Maestro, Kavkasia, TV3 (only the news releases), and Tabula (only the talk shows). This report presents the monitoring results for TV talk shows during May 3-23, inclusive. The following talk shows fell under the monitoring:

Channel One of the Public Broadcaster: “First Studio” – Eka Mishveladze;

Rustavi 2: “Choice” – Giorgi Gabunia, “Position” – Nino Shubladze;

Imedi: “Politics Time” – Tea Sichinava, “Reaction” – Inga Grigolia;

Maestro: “Subjective Opinion” – Diana Trapaidze and Teona Gegelia;

Kavkasia: “Spectrum Studio” – Davit Akubardia, “Barrier” – Nino Jangirashvili and Alexander Elisashvili;

Tabula: “Focus” – the program is alternatively hosted by Salome Ugulava, Nino Macharashvili and Irakli Kiknavelidze, “Theorem” – Tamar Chergoleishvili.

Methodology and Analysis

Election media monitoring of talk shows consists of only a qualitative part. Journalists, hosts, topics and the invited guests are monitored, and it is evaluated how much equal conditions the journalist is creating for the guests: whether the journalist’s questions are equally demanding/lenient to all the guests; or whether the host of the talk show let the guests express their opinions and if s/he interrupts them. Besides, the monitoring

evaluates how much the host is trying to get in-depth information from the guests and to provide comprehensive information to the audience regarding the discussed issue; or if the journalist identifies the source of information when asking questions or making a comment, and what kind of non-verbal language s/he is using. The monitoring also observes the usage of hate speech in talk shows (abusive or humiliating phrases/statement) by the hosts, and their reaction in case if their guests are using the hate speech. Besides, the journalists' role and involvement in the program is evaluated as well.

The report provides the media monitoring results of talk shows for the period from May 3 - May 23, inclusive.

Key Findings

During this period the political talk shows actively followed up on the topics about the currently ongoing events in the country. The topic of wiretapping was actively discussed. Besides, the election-related discussions became more frequent, and the talk shows presented the parties running in the elections and their political plans as well.

The monitoring was performed for 10 political talk shows, and majority of them presented the representatives of the authorities and main opposition forces as well, together with the mayoral and majoritarian candidates running for this elections. Detailed description of channels and programs is provided below.

Channel One

First Studio

First Studio is a political talk show, which is broadcasted twice a week via the Public Broadcaster, hosted by Eka Mishveladze, analyzing major events of the week. There were six programs broadcasted from May 3 until May 23, where the major events of the week were discussed together with the invited guests. Among the visitors were the members of the parliamentary majority and government, representatives of the parliamentary and non-parliamentary opposition and the NGO sector and the experts too. Two of the programs were dedicated to the election messages of the electoral

subjects. Besides, topical issues of the week were discussed during the talk show, among them:

- Covert wiretapping;
- NDI Researches;
- Foreign policy of Georgia;
- European Union Association Agreement
- Defense capability of the country, and NATO Summit in Wales;
- Local government elections and election environment.

First Studio discussed the topical issues and invited the representatives of various political forces, representatives from the ruling team, also from the majority and non-parliamentary opposition, NGO members and experts. Each of these invited guests had an opportunity to state their opinions, and the audience was able to listen to diverse information regarding the issue of the discussion.

The host was actively involved in the program, was well informed about the theme and asked exhaustive questions. Eka Mishveladze always provided level playing field to the guests and have equal opportunities to them to state their opinions. The journalist would interfere only if she wanted to ask a new question, probe or state a different opinion. However, the journalist was more a moderator and was not distinguished by being harsh and critical.

During this monitoring period there was no deviation from the topic in the talk how. The host did not use or report any unreliable inaccurate or unverified information. Neither the journalist nor the guests used hate speech or politically incorrect vocabulary.

Rustavi 2

Choice

“Choice” is a weekly public-political talk show, which is broadcasted via Rustavi 2 on Tuesdays and is hosted by Giorgi Gabunia. There were 3 programs broadcasted during the monitoring period, where the following issues were discussed:

- Law on wiretapping;
- Secret surveillance in Rustavi 2;
- Reasons of firing Lali Moroshkina;
- Election campaign of the Labor Party;
- Election program of the block “Non-Parliamentary Opposition”;
- Election program of the Rustavi mayoral candidate of the party “Our Georgia”;
- Election program of “Nino Burjanadze – United Opposition”.

The program Choice mostly consisted of two parts. The first part discussed the topical events taking place in the country, and the other part was completely dedicated to the presentations of the election program of political blocks or the parties.

The talk show invited the guests with various political and non-political backgrounds, including the representatives of parliamentary majority and minority, ex-mayor of Tbilisi – Gigi Ugulava, chief producer of Courier, journalists, NGO representatives, also the former advisor to the Minister of Corrections and Legal Assistance.

The programs were quite informative. The journalist was actively involved in the program, often asked questions and verified information. His questions were mostly demanding and topical. Giorgi Gabunia was trying to get in-depth information from the guests also to act in opposition to them. He was always aware of the issue and tried to ask informative questions and use a reliable source. He basically did not interrupt the guests, listened to them and let them finish.

During the election presentations, the respondents had a chance to speak for a long time and to do it freely. The journalist almost never interrupted them, and gave more time to the respondents for making a presentation about their election campaign, and thus he was less involved in the program. It is noteworthy that the journalist was positive to the guests and often smiled even when asking a demanding question.

We should point out the first part of the program on May 6, where the covert recordings were uncovered at Rustavi 2. Despite the topic of the program was directly related to

journalism, which was a professional field for Giorgi Gabunia, he remained objective and tried not to state his position.

The host of “Choice” did not use hate speech or abusive vocabulary. Neither was there any such case observed from the side of the guests.

Position

Another political talk show on Rustavi 2 – “Position”, hosted by Nino Shubladze¹, was broadcasted only once during the monitoring period, on May 9. The program was hosted by Giorgi Gabunia and referred to the topic of covert recordings. The program was visited by the members of the majority: Manana Kobakhidze and Gedevan Popkhadze, and also the members of the minority: Giorgi Vashadze and Gia Tevdoradze. The guests of the program had fundamentally different opinions; this is why the program was conducted in the mode of heated discussion. However, the host did not reveal any subjective attitude regarding the topic. He allocated equal portions of time to the both sides invited to the program and opposed to them the same way.

Imedi

Reaction

“Reaction” is a weekly talk show, which is broadcasted via Imedi on Fridays. It is hosted by Inga Grigolia and consists of several blocs. It is hosted by Inga Grigolia and there are usually several guests invited to the studio, with the audience. There were 3 programs of “Reaction” aired during May 3-23. The format of the program has slightly changed due to the election period, and the program is mostly dedicated to the political parties and their supporters. During this period, the Coalition Georgian Dream, the United National Movement and the Patriots Alliance presented the election programs of their parties in the program. Besides, the program was also hosted by the representatives of the government, parliamentary majority and minority, also those of the non-parliamentary opposition.

Together with the election programs of various parties, there were also other issues of current significance discussed in the “Reaction”:

¹ Nino Shubladze said on May 12 that she would temporarily discontinue her journalistic activities.

- Unlawful wiretapping;
- Antidiscrimination law;
- “Street law”;
- “What politicians promise and what we actually get”;
- Bonuses of officials.

Inga Grigolia was quite actively involved in the program. She asked many questions and tried to give exhaustive answers to all the questions asked. She often asked additional questions for clarification and actively opposed to them regardless their political affiliation. There was no bias or subjective attitude towards any of the sides in the journalist’s questions and attitudes.

The programs were quite balanced. There were always several parties represented except those when the program’s bloc was dedicated to the presentation of the election program of a certain party. Correspondently, the viewers had a chance to hear different positions about the discussed issue.

We need to point out the program of May 23, which was dedicated to the former and new authorities. Members of the United National Movement and the Coalition Georgian Dream were present among the guests. The talk show started with a quite harsh announcement. Question of the interactive survey was: “has your economic situation improved since October 1?” the journalist let both sides answer their opponents. She was quite critical and asked severe questions to the representatives of both sides. She opposed to each of the guests. Whenever the guest answered to her question, Inga Grigolia would ask the opponent to comment on the opponent’s answer. If heated debates emerged in the studio, Inga Grigolia would often ask them to let each other answer. Overall, the position of both sides was equally expressed and the airtime was also equally distributed among them.

The journalist did not use hate speech or politically incorrect expressions in the program, and if the program participants use unethical vocabulary, she almost always asked them to speak more ethically.

Politics Time

“Politics Time” is a weekly talk show, which is broadcasted via Imedi on Tuesdays. The program is hosted by Thea Sichinava. There were 3 programs broadcasted during the monitoring period, visited by the government members, representatives of the parliamentary majority and minority, the media and NGOs, ex-politicians, etc. The President of Georgia Giorgi Margvelashvili also visited the program. The talk show provided an overview of the main events of the week. Following issues were discussed in the program during this period:

- Covert surveillance at Rustavi 2;
- Street Justice;
- Relationships between the Prime Minister and the President;
- Antidiscrimination law;
- Political events taking place in the country;
- Bonuses of the government members.

“Politics Time” is a quite balanced talk show as a whole. It is noteworthy that the program is distinguished with its actualities, and the invited guests are competent and relevant to the topic. The journalist always asks questions from different positions and they are quite demanding and informative. There was no bias revealed in Sichinava’s questions and she tried to be a moderator and not to state her position.

The journalist was actively engaged in the program. She often asked probing questions to the respondents for obtaining more information or for clarifying something. However, it is also noteworthy that the journalist managed the program better when she was alone with the respondent. If there were debates in the program, then Thea Sichinava would play the role of a passive listener. In some cases she did not have any reaction to or would only smile if the guests addressed each other ironically and with politically incorrect vocabulary (May 6).

There were 3 programs broadcasted during the monitoring period and we did not observe any fact of diverting from the topic. The guests were selected relevant to the topic. There was no case of using hate speech or unethical expressions by the journalist or from the side of the invited guests, either.

Maestro

Subjective Opinion

The talk show “Subjective Opinion” is broadcasted via Maestro every business day. It is hosted by Teona Gegelia and Diana Trapaidze, and is divided into two parts: during the first part the hosts discuss the major news of the day, and then the discussion continues with the guests in the second part. There were 14 programs of “Subjective Opinion” broadcasted during the second part of the monitoring from May 3 until May 23, which were distinguished with the diversity of guests and the topics of discussion as well. There were representatives of the parliamentary majority and minority among the guests, also the non-parliamentary opposition, the mayoral and majoritarian candidates, NGO representatives, and other people interested in a certain issue or the interest groups as well. The following topics were discussed:

- Integration of Georgia into the NATO;
- Politicians in the NDI research;
- Visit of the French President to Georgia;
- Staff reshuffle at Rustavi 2 and covert wiretapping;
- Constitutional amendments;
- Election programs of political parties / preparations for elections by the parties;
- Street justice;
- Association agreement;
- Scandal about bonuses;
- Election program of an independent candidate;
- Local government elections and also the elections of National Communication Agency.

The journalists were quite actively involved in the program and asked quite demanding and harsh questions, also tried to seek for more information and actively stated their positions around the topics. Due to the format of the program, the hosts discussed the current events by providing their subjective evaluations. For example, the program of May 20, which was about the events developed around Maestro, the journalists stated the position of the channel and offered some suggestions to the government members.

As for the second part of the program, where the guests were invited, the hosts were actively involved in the discussion of the topical issues of the day together with the guests, and stated their positions. The journalists acted in a harsh opposition to the guests despite their affiliation and often delivered the second opinion that would be dissimilar to the guest's viewpoints.

In connection to the election period, the journalists were inviting various candidates. Their questions to all of them were quite demanding and hard. There was only one case on May 14, hosting Alexander Elisashvili, an independent candidate, when the hosts were loyal to the guest and they even asked the audience to vote for him – “vote for him, we are campaigning for him now”.

We did not observe any deviation from the topic during the program. The journalists often did not identify the source of information, relied upon the so-called “widespread information” or their assumptions. There was no case of using hate speech in the talk show. However, the journalists often used the humorous and ironical comments (for example, the program aired on May 23 about the relationship between the Prime Minister and the President).

Kavkasia

Barrier

“Barrier” is a political talk show, which is broadcasted four times a week via Kavkasia. The talk show has been hosted by Nino Jangirashvili only since May. “Barrier” is distinguished with a big number of its guests. There were 12 programs broadcasted during the monitoring period, visited by the representatives of almost all the political forces participated in the elections. They had an opportunity to state their opinions and present their program (the United National Movement, the Coalition Georgian Dream, Nino Burjanadze – United Opposition, Labor Party, Salome Zurabishvili – Georgia’s Way, non-parliamentary opposition – New Rights, Free Georgia, political union in the name of God – God is our Truth, the party “Future Georgia”). The program was also visited by the members of the parliamentary majority and minority, representatives of NGOs, other members of the public and experts. The talk show was also distinguished with the diversity of topics. There were following topics discussed during the monitoring period:

- Election environment and election programs of parties;

- Law on covert surveillance and events developed around Rustavi 2;
- Internal political events related to the signing of the European Union Association Agreement;
- Criminal situation in the country;
- Salary surplus and bonuses;
- Topical political processes developed in the country;
- Campaign about marijuana decriminalization.

Nino Jangirashvili has been actively engaged in the programs. She asked quite demanding and harsh questions, and often asked additional questions to the guests for obtaining more detailed information about the issue raised. As observed, the journalist was not biased towards any political side. Jangirashvili was equally opposing to all the guests and presented different opinions to them.

As far as there were always several guests invited to the program, the conversation would turn into heated debates. In this case Nino Jangirashvili would ask the guest to calm down and listen to each other's opinions. However, despite the attempts, she often failed to keep order. There were cases when the guests arbitrarily answered to one another, asked questions themselves and did not let each other speak. This is why the guests only, or the host and the guests would talk simultaneously, that eventually made it difficult for the audience to understand what positions and opinions were stated.

The journalist did not use hate speech in the program. Besides, she reacted to the hate speech used by the guests. For example, Irakli Batiashvili mentioned the word "faggots" in the program on May 14, for which Nino Jangirashvili made a remark and asked him to be politically correct.

The format of the program "Barrier" was different on Monday, May 19. The program was hosted by the journalist Irakli Kordzaia. The program also participated by the representatives of various media, who were also involved in the program, asked quite critical questions and represented the opposing positions.

Spectrum Studio

Davit Akubardia's talk show "Spectrum Studio" is broadcasted via Kavkasia every evening. There were 14 programs aired during the monitoring period from May 3 until May 23. Davit Akubardia would review the main topics of the day together with the guests, and also touch upon non-topical issues as well. Among the guests were: members of the government and the parliamentary majority, representatives of the non-parliamentary opposition, election subjects and mayoral candidates. There was a significant number of experts and NGO representatives among the guests. Following topics were discussed in the talk show:

- Problem of IDPs;
- Election environment and pre-election campaign;
- Wiretapping;
- Bonuses issued within the government structures;
- Economic situation of Georgia;
- Problems in Tbilisi;
- Visits of foreign delegations in Tbilisi;
- Constitutional amendments;
- Events in Ukraine;
- Presentation of Davit Zurabishvili's essays;
- Letter of cooperatives in the newspaper the Resonance;
- Outbreak of Meningitis.

There were diverse topics discussed in the "Spectrum Studio"; however, sometimes they lacked current significance. The host would not usually specify the theme of the program. Sometimes various issues were discussed within one program or a bloc. Correspondingly, the respondents and the host too would often go beyond the topic of the discussion. There were cases when there was only one side represented in the program, and the guests, who were invited as experts, were selected based on subjective criteria. This was evidenced by the host's favorable attitude to the guests and informal dialogue with them.

As a rule, Davit Akubardia was very actively involved in the program. His way of hosting the program was not academic: he mostly stated his opinions and discussed the issues in a quite “homey” setting. He actively expressed his attitude to the political processes and politicians. He often criticized the present and former authorities, made direct appeals and statements live. We should especially point out Davit Akubardia’s attitude towards Bidzina Ivanishvili – “Bidzina Ivanishvili is a revolutionist, I’m telling you, a gigantic man, created by the epoch” (May 5).

As for the host’s attitude towards the guests, he was mostly loyal to them and often positively characterized the guests invited to the studio: “Okay, bro, Okay”, “You are so good”; “We are so respectful to each other, with warm attitudes...”; “Oh, you are so right?!” The respondents, however, are not always in equal positions. This depended on how much the journalist and respondent’s opinions to each other. For example, the program of May 20 was hosting Davit Patsatsia, representative of the Georgian Dream, who was not given a chance to fully deliver his opinion. It is also noteworthy that Davit Akubardia has a habit of interrupting the guest with the purpose of stating his own position and proving that it is him who has the right opinion.

Unlike the guests invited to the program, who mostly did not use hate speech and unethical vocabulary, the host often used politically incorrect phrases. He used hate speech several times for Mikheil Saakashvili saying “Misha was a malefactor”, “when Misha came, this damned man”. He is also using the word “Nazi” towards the United National Movement. Akubardia referred to Arabs in the program on May 9 as “some guys [Arabs] wrapped in sheets”. He also mentioned the prosecutor’s office with the same tone: “is the prosecutor’s office sleeping or they are castrating themselves.”

Often the program would mention some information without indicating the source. For example “I am fascinated, even the Mtkvari riverbed is sold...” (May 6). “You know, they are installing cameras at kindergartens and all the kindergartens are now panicking” (May 5). The journalist often told his personal stories or hearsay.

Tabula

Theorem

There is Tamar Chergoleishvili’s program “Theorem” broadcasted via Tabula twice a week (co-author: Salome Barker), which highlights political, economic, social and

cultural topics. This report captures six programs of “Theorem”². The talk show discusses topical issues for the respective period and is related to the events taking place in the country. The following topics were discussed during the period from May 3 until May 23:

- Antidiscrimination law;
- Ivanishvili’s charity - a political project or not;
- How the West should resist Kremlin’s attempt to restore the Soviet Union and what Georgia should do;
- NDI’s poll and political ratings;
- Security policy of the Georgian authorities;
- Gela Khvedelidze court judgment;
- Russia’s soft power – Georgian orthodox church;
- Government expenses;
- Increased rate of women’s murder.

The program invited the guests mostly from the civil sector: political researchers, lawyers, psychologists, journalists, sociologists, representatives of NGOs and international organizations. Two members of the United National Movement were brought live during the program: Givi Targamadze from the Parliament in Kutaisi and Gigi Ugulava, who was speaking from the central office of the United National Movement. These live broadcasts lasted for 18-20 minutes and the participants were answering Tamar Chergoleishvili’s questions. Gigi Ugulava went live at the end of the convention of the United National Movement and he had a good opportunity to speak about the party’s plans and promises.

Representatives of the current government or the Coalition Georgian Dream were not invited to the studio. Neither were they brought live during the program. In this respect the host’s feedback was that the government representatives refused to visit the studio and to participate in live broadcasts; and they even sometimes “invented” some reasons to avoid the discussion of disputable issues. The position of government members was only visible in the news stories inserted in the program, when Tabula’s journalists asked

² Program of May 1 was rebroadcasted on May 1.

questions to them about various questions, and presented their comments in the talk show. Even in these cases the members of the majority and government were not presented in a credible way.

Consequently, the whole line of the program followed the criticism of the present government and highlighted the achievements of the former government. The host was often represented as a party who was confident in its positions and not as a free and impartial journalist. However, her subjective attitude was revealed regarding the issues and not regarding the guests of the program. The attitude towards the guests was not biased.

Other than criticism of the government, the talk show also had cases of negative presentation of Bidzina Ivanishvili as well. For example, second bloc of the program on May 22, which referred to the increased rate of violence against women and that hosted the NGOs working on these issues, Chergoleishvili asked a question, if this increased number of incidents was related to the aggravated criminal situation in general or not. This question was followed by the excerpt from one of the press conferences of Bidzina Ivanishvili, where he is answering to the Tabula's journalist, saying that the crime rate may increase due to the universal amnesty, but the population should "take it with understanding" and should "cope with this trouble". It looked as if this excerpt was making some indication to the question, although during the discussion the guests did not think that it would be reasonable to talk about the linkages between the amnesty and the increased rate of violence against women without conducting respective research.

It is noteworthy that the talk show would often become a place of interesting discussions, and the invited guests expressed diverse opinions. However, the host had a quite free style of talking. When asking a question or making a comment, the phrases like this would often be heard: "what are the chances of this politician in general, so that to manage demonizing the West with cheap methods and make the Georgian people get away from their choice because this will make all the men become faggots?" "The Beggar's Story" is not about a woman who became a prostitute" (May 19).

Focus

"Focus" is a daily talk show hosted by three people: Salome Ugulava, Nino Macharashvili and Irakli Kiknavelidze. They host the program in turn. This report covers 17 programs broadcasted from May 3 until May 23.

The topics discussed in the talk show were the follow-up on the events taking place in the country. During this monitoring period (May 3-23) they discussed the results of the NDI's polls, and also much time was dedicated to the issue of unlawful wiretappings. Besides, the issue touched upon the following issues:

- Political ratings;
- Investigation of Davit Kezerashvili's and Alexander Ninua's cases;
- Covert cameras found at Rustavi 2;
- Election plans of the National Movement;
- Current political events;
- Upcoming elections and the processes taking place in the country;
- Court decision on ousting Gigi Ugulava from mayoral position;
- Russia's warning and signing of the Association Agreement;
- Viral meningitis.

During this period the program was hosted by the members of the parliamentary majority and parliamentary minority, NGO representatives, political scholars, lawyers, journalists and experts. Besides, the representatives of the National Movement often visited the program. Members of the parliamentary majority also participated in the program, but less frequently and the hosts would point out in this respect that they were rejecting their offers to participate because of various reasons. Consequently, the position of the parliamentary minority and that of the National Movement was more often heard in the program. While discussing the topic of elections, the talk show hosted the leaders of the Christian-Democratic Movement, New Rights and the Georgia's Way once.

The guests were basically provided with equal conditions. The hosts' questions were about the topics of the discussion and the guests were able to express themselves. However, compared to the representatives of the United National Movement, in some cases there was more 'attack' felt against the members of the majority.

The hosts of the "Focus" did not use hate speech or unethical vocabulary. Neither did the guests use such expressions.