

MEDIA MONITORING REPORT OF THE 2016 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN GEORGIA

1 April – 15 October, 2016



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INTRODUCTION

Media Development Foundation (MDF) is conducting a pre-election media monitoring from April 1 to October 15, 2016. The monitoring is carried out with the financial support of the Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands in Georgia within the frame of the project *Transparent and Accountable Media for Enhancing Democratic Practices during Elections*.

The aim of the project is to study how political subjects are represented in qualitative and quantitative terms in primetime news programs of TV channels and in online media; to clarify whether media provides citizens with relevant information to help them make an informed choice. The aim of the project also is to reveal essential problems through publicizing the findings of the research and attract citizens' attention to the reliability of their sources.

The methodology for MDF's monitoring was developed by Dominique Thierry, consultant of Free Press Unlimited (FPU). The report was reviewed by FPU expert Jean-Marie Coat.

Primetime news programs of the following TV channels were selected as monitoring subjects: the Georgian Public Broadcaster (Moambe at 20:00), Rustavi 2 (Kurieri at 21:00), Imedi (Kronika at 20:00), Maestro (Kontakti at 20:00), Kavkasia (Dges at 20:30), Tabula (Focus at 19:00), GDS (20/30 at 20:30). From 1 June the list was extended to include TV Obieqtivi as this TV channel launched its news program (Akhali Ambebi at 19:30) on 16 May.

The monitoring subjects in online media are: Inter Press News (IPN), PiA, Netgazeti, Pirveli Radio, Marshalpress.

Monitoring subjects were selected on the basis of audience reach and influence. Due consideration was given to both TV ratings and the survey on the needs of political parties¹ conducted by MDF in 2016, before launching the monitoring, where political affiliation of certain media outlets were named by different political subjects themselves.

This report reflects the results of the monitoring carried out over the period from 1 April to 15 October 2016. Between 1 April and 1 June, the monitoring focused on news programs broadcast on weekdays (excluding weekends) alone. Since 1 June, the monitoring has been extended to include primetime news programs aired on weekends as well as weekly analytical programs such as Rustavi 2 (Kurieri P.S., aired on Sunday at 21:00) and Imedi (Imedis Dro, Sunday at 20:00). Where the news program is of mixed format (such as, for example, the primetime news program of GDS), the monitoring covers only the news section of the program.

In online media, monitoring also targets textual and photo aspects of news materials. But the qualitative part also discusses enclosed video materials.

¹ MDF (2016), Survey on Needs of Political Parties. <http://mdfgeorgia.ge/eng/view-library/33>

The monitoring is carried out by the quantitative and qualitative method according to the following variables: direct/indirect coverage of political subjects; tone of content and context of coverage (positive/negative/neutral); topics covered in relation to political subjects; gender representation; the qualitative aspect involves the assessment of elements of pre-election media ethics such as accuracy, impartiality and fairness, balance, visual and verbal manipulations, reporting sociological surveys.

In carrying out the qualitative analysis of the monitoring, the requirements and principles of the following laws, self-regulation and recommendation documents were observed: the Election Code of Georgia, the Law of Georgia on Broadcasting, the Code of Conduct of Broadcasters, the Code of Conduct of Georgian Public Broadcaster, the Charter of Journalistic Ethics, and Recommendation No. R (99) 15 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT. The first part of the report provides the overall data of TV news programs, reflecting direct/indirect coverage of political subjects, the tone of content and context. The second part reflect on topics in relation to which political subjects were covered. The third part of the report contains qualitative and quantitative data by each TV channel. The fourth part reflects the overall data for online media followed by the data on individual online editions. The final, concluding part contains recommendations.

Statistical data are provided according to the following principle: institutions (government; President's administration; CEC; Interagency Commission for Free and Fair Elections); qualified political parties²; parties having representatives in the Parliament³, and non-parliamentary parties, whose coverage was above 1% are calculated separately⁴; a category "other" unites those parties, whose coverage is below 1%, and independent (non-partisan) MPs and members of local councils (sakrebulo); non-parliamentary opposition unites those political parties, which have no representatives in elective bodies, and simultaneously, whose coverage is below 1%.

²The parties forming the Georgian Dream coalition were grouped before its disintegration and afterwards independently.

³Girchi; Tamaz Mechiauri – for United Georgia; New Georgia;

⁴State for People

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MAIN FINDINGS

The monitoring of primetime TV news broadcasts and online media, conducted from 1 April to 15 October, showed that the population was able to receive diverse information in the run up to the parliamentary elections in Georgia as the outlets operating on the media market pursued different editorial policies. Editorial policies of several media outlets towards individual political subjects were either explicitly pro or explicitly anti, which translated into external pluralism. Both the broadcast and online media, with very few exceptions, were dominated by three political subjects – the government, the ruling party Georgian Dream and the opposition party United National Movement (UNM).

TV Channels

- The majority of TV channels allocated the highest share of their total coverage of all monitored subjects to the government (25.98%); the exception was Rustavi 2 with its more extensive coverage of the Georgian Dream (26.2%). The leader by the amount of coverage of the government was the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB) with the corresponding indicator standing at 31.1%; conversely, Rustavi 2 spent the least time on the coverage of government (22.3%);
- Maestro TV was in the lead by the amount of reporting on the ruling political party Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia (27.1%). Moreover, the increase in the reporting by Maestro TV about the Georgian Dream was mainly seen towards the end of the monitoring period (1 August – 15 October). The least coverage of Georgian Dream was observed on the GPB (17.8%);
- The total amount of coverage of government and Georgian Dream in the reporting period made up 49.98%, i.e. half of the total coverage of monitored subjects. However, this indicator was lower than the similar indicator for the first four months (April-July) of the monitoring (56.5%). Accordingly, as the coverage of the government and the ruling party decreased over the last 2.5 months (August-September) the coverage of opposition political parties increased (from 36.4% to 45.62%);
- The second to the Georgian Dream by the amount of coverage received on seven TV channels was the UNM; the total coverage on all eight monitored TV channels comprised 16.4%. The largest amount of time was spent on the UNM by Rustavi 2 (20.2%) whereas the smallest amount of time was spent by TV Obieqtivi (10.5%). TV Obieqtivi was the only exception where the leader among the political parties by received coverage was the Alliance of Patriots (19.1%); the second to this political party was the ruling party Georgian Dream (14%);

- The highest positive tone in the coverage of the government was observed in the reporting by Maestro (18%) and GDS (15%) whereas the lowest positive tone in the coverage of the same subject was observed in the reporting by Rustavi 2 (5%). Consequently, Rustavi 2 had the most critical tone in its reports about the government (39%). The lowest negative tone in covering the government was applied by GDS (5%);
- The most positive tone in the reporting about the Georgian Dream was again observed on Maestro (26%), GDS (20%) and Imedi (19%) whereas the most negative tone in the reporting about the same subject was observed on Rustavi 2 (25%). The ruling party received the lowest negative reporting on GDS (6%) and the GPB (6%);
- The UNM was most positively covered by Rustavi 2 (9%) and most negatively by GDS (34%) and Obieqtivi (33%);
- The share of President in the total coverage of political subjects comprised 4.3%; the corresponding indicator for the Central Election Commission (CEC) was 1.7% and for the Interagency Commission for Free and Fair Elections was 0.1%;
- The least critical coverage of topics in the reporting about political subjects was seen on Maestro (18%) whereas the most critical coverage was seen on Rustavi 2 (51%);
- The qualitative study of broadcast media showed that journalists, in general, observed standards of journalistic ethics although instances of the lack of balance in reporting and the failure to communicate comprehensive information were observed the majority of TV channels.
- Biased reporting on separate TV channels were especially conspicuous in the coverage of the following topics: possible threat of destabilization in Georgia; attempt to blow up one of UNM leaders, Givi Targamandze; confrontation within the political parties the State for People and the Free Democrats; evaluation of the performance of the government, etc.;
- Biased reporting was mainly manifested in covering issues from one point of view, without providing comprehensive information; there were instances of manipulating facts;
- Although showing some improvement in the last two months, the violations of standards required by the law for reporting results of public opinion polls were widespread. Almost all TV channels had problems in providing comprehensive information about public opinion polls and/or full wording of poll questions. There was also an instance when the reliability of the poll conducted by a media outlet raised questions.

Online Media

- According to the results of monitoring, conducted from 1 April to 15 October, five monitored online media outlets most extensively covered the government (39.4). The highest amount of reporting on the government was seen on IPN (47.9%) and PIA (43.6%). However, over the last 2.5 months the indicators of both news agencies showed decrease as compared to corresponding indicators of the previous four months (1 April – 31 July: IPN – 54.6%; PIA – 53.9%). The abundance of government-related information on these two news agencies may be explained by their service contracts with various ministries, under which they release government information in exchange for financing.
- The tendency in the coverage of the ruling political party Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia remained unchanged throughout the monitoring period: Marshalpress allocated the highest share of the total reporting to the coverage of the party (29.3%) whereas IPN allocated the lowest share (16.1%). In both cases the direct reporting well exceeded the indirect reporting.
- The total coverage of the government and the ruling party made up 55.5%, down by 9.1% compared to the corresponding indicator of first three months of the monitoring (1 April – 31 July). The highest total indicator of these two subjects was shown by PIA.
- From opposition political parties, the highest amount of coverage was received by the UNM (10.1%), with Netgazeti and Marshalpress reporting on it most extensively (14.1% and 15%, respectively); however, the indirect reporting on the political subject by Marshalpress exceeded the direct reporting by the media outlet as many as 11 times (indirect – 28.7%, direct – 2.6%).
- The positive tone towards the government was the highest in the coverage by Marshalpress (29%) and the lowest in the coverage of Netgazeti (6%). The negative tone towards the government was the lowest in the coverage by PIA (1%) and Marshalpress (1%) and the highest in the coverage by Pirveli Radio (15%) and Netgazeti (13%).
- The positive tone towards the Georgian Dream was the highest in the coverage by Marshalpress (29%) and Pirveli Radio (20%). It is worth noting that the latter media outlet's positive tone increased mainly over the period from 1 August to 15 October (compared to 8% positive tone over the period from 1 April – 1 August). The negative tone towards the Georgian Dream was the highest in the coverage by Pirveli Radio again (15%) and Netgazeti (15 %). The least critical towards the party were Marshalpress (1%) and IPN (3%).
- The positive tone towards the UNM was the highest in the coverage by Netgazeti (6%) and the lowest in the coverage by PIA (2%). The negative tone towards the UNM was the highest in the coverage by Marshalpress (74%) and IPN (45%).

- The share of President in the total coverage by online media stood at 5.4%; that of CEC comprised 1.5% and of Interagency Commission for Free and Fair Elections was 0.01%.
- Statistically, the neutral context tone dominated the coverage of political subjects by online media. The most critical media outlet was Netgazeti with the highest indicator of negative context tone (31%) and the lowest indicator of positive context tone (2%). The highest positive context tone was seen in the reporting by Marshalpress (13%) with the negative context tone being a slightly lower (12%).
- Similar to TV channels, online media was also dominated by the information on activities of political subjects (20.1%); the least covered topic was environment (1%).
- Qualitative study showed instances of several media outlets (for example, Marshalpress, PIA, Pirveli Radio) covering the same event in a biased manner and in reporting relying on inadequate sources; or regular biased coverage of political subjects.
- Instances were observed of political parties exercising the right of reply in media outlets only in the form of paid news item (IPN).
- With the exception of Netgazeti, all online editions continued the practice of achieving balanced reporting not within a single news item but within all news items on the same issue taken together.
- Marshalpress continued to manipulate photos; over the past 2.5 months, in contrast to previous four months, this practice was no longer applied by Pirveli Radio.
- There were also instances of publishing allegedly promotional electoral or governmental information of identical content, which was not separated from editorial content. The exception was IPN which, on certain occasions though not regularly, separated promotional materials from editorial ones. Alike broadcast media, the online media failed to fully observe the requirements for the release of information about public opinion polls. Not only such news items lacked all compulsory data but they also manipulated results.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To avoid problematic issues identified as a result of monitoring, media must observe standards of reporting about elections, which are established by the law, the Code of Conduct for Broadcasters, Charter of Journalistic Ethics and international documents:

- **Equal coverage.** It is important that political subjects running for elections have equal conditions and media outlets define and publish their standard by internal regulations, which will establish uniform attitude towards both qualified and unqualified political subjects and will not selectively ignore electoral activities of separate subjects.
- **Balance.** To fully inform voters, it is important for media to ensure variety of sources so as to provide audience with diverse perspectives about an issue. When reporting, media outlet should take into account wide spectrum of different parties, including ruling and opposition parties and their diverse perspectives. Generalizing an opinion of one opposition party as that of the entire opposition may be misleading if the issue in question does not concern only one opposition party and there is a diversity of views about the issue among the opposition parties.
- **Balance in online media.** Online editions must ensure balanced reporting within a single news item and not within the entire information flow.
- **Reporting government activities.** When reporting government activities, it is important to also provide alternative opinions and to observe balance in reports about government activities by showing a different perspective. Media should distinguish between what is related to government activities (and public concerns) or political propaganda.
- **Practice of financed content.** Media outlets must clearly separate financed content from editorial content in order to avoid misleading of audience. This standard must be applied to content financed by the government as well as political parties and all financed content should be known to the public.
- **Social media as a source.** It is unacceptable to use social media as a source without proper verification of the information, or for releasing such opinions which are used to attack someone.
- **Public opinion polls.** Media must properly assess the reliability of a public opinion poll and only after that take a decision on its publication. Media outlets must also observe the rules established for publication of pre-election opinion polls and publish all those details which are important for audience to assess the data comprehensively. It is unacceptable to use poll results for manipulating public opinion especially when the amount of undecided voters is high. The Georgian National Communications Commission should use financial sanctions for

violating rules of publication of poll results as a last resort, only in apparent cases of manipulating public opinion, and should refrain from selective application of the law.

- **Gender sensitivity.** When selecting respondents media needs to be gender sensitive and by due representation of women respondents contribute to pluralism which also implies equality of women and men.
- **Hate speech.** Media must not avoid reporting hate speech of political subjects and public figures in order to inform audience about the values of respondents. However, at the same time, media must understand the threat of encouraging discrimination and must inform what type of speech the public deals with. Moreover, media should refrain from using hate speech of public figures in titles and announcements without noting what type of speech it is. Media should avoid reporting statements containing hate speech by non-public figures.
- To make the fight against hate speech effective within the scope of self-regulatory mechanism, it is necessary to amend the law to expand the notion of interested person. This will enable human rights watchdogs to defend core principles protected by the Code of Conduct for Broadcasters such as equality, non-discrimination and promotion of diversity.

1. UNIFORM DATA FOR PRIME-TIME TV NEWS PROGRAMS

The monitoring of primetime news broadcasts of TV channels (1 July – 15 October, 2016) showed that the largest amount of time in the total broadcast (19 338 reports) was spent on the coverage of the government (25.98%) and the ruling political force - Georgian Dream (24%), both making up 49.98%.

The second to Georgian Dream by the amount of coverage was the UNM (16.4%), which was followed by qualified political parties: Free Democrats (5.4%), Republican Party (4.9%), Alliance of Patriots (2.8%), Democratic Movement-United Georgia (2%), Labor Party (1.4%), and National Forum (1.1%). Among newly-established political parties, the highest indicator of coverage was received by State for People (3.3%), which was followed by Girchi (1%).

Those having received less than 1% of the total coverage were: the Industry Will Save Georgia and the New Georgia (0.6% each), Tamaz Mechiauri-United Georgia (0.4%), New Rights (0.2%), Kartuli Dasi (0.02%). The coverage of non-parliamentary opposition comprised 2.2% while that of independent deputies 1.3% of the total time.

The share of President in the total broadcast was 4.3%, that of CEC comprised 1.7% and of Interagency Commission was 0.1%.

Figure 1.1 Total reporting on political subjects, TV channels

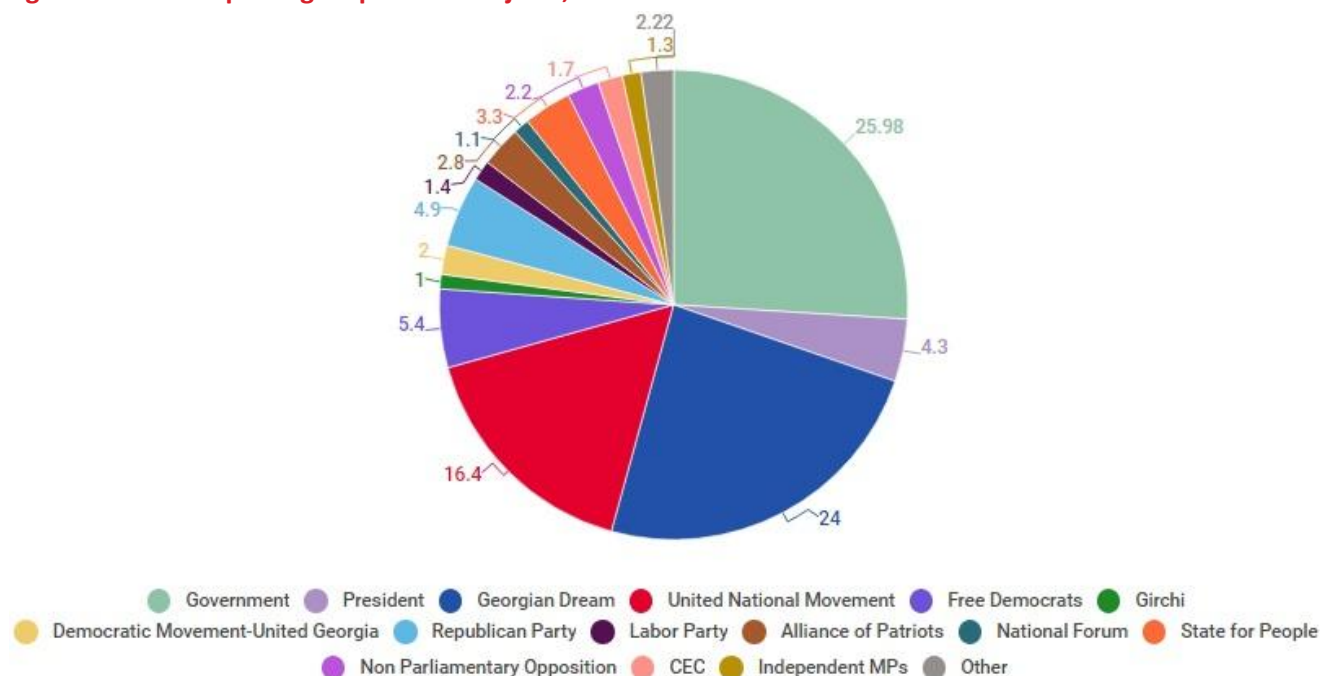
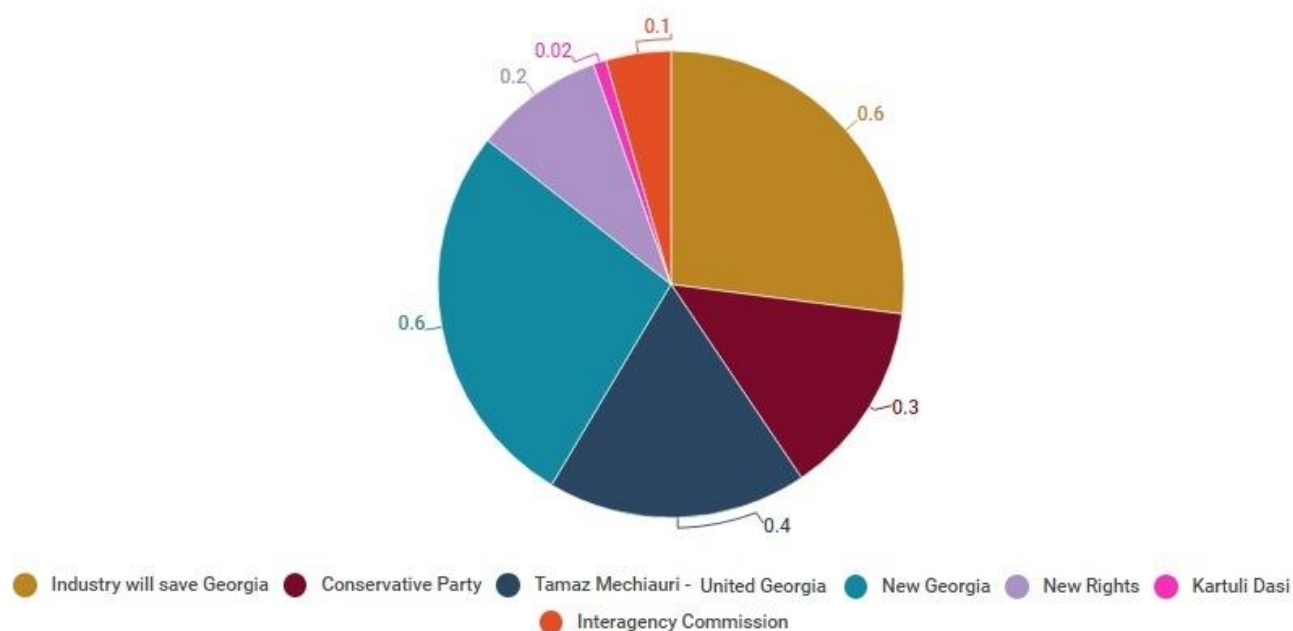


Figure 1.2 Political subjects having received less than 1% of total coverage, TV channels



1.1. Direct/indirect reporting of political subjects.

TV channels allocated the largest amount of coverage in the form of both direct and indirect reporting to the government and the Georgian Dream. The indirect reporting on the government (29.5%) exceeded the direct reporting on the same subject (24.5%); the same held true for the Georgian Dream (indirect – 24.6%, direct – 22.6%). In case of opposition political party UNM, the indicators of direct reporting and indirect reporting were almost similar (direct – 16.5%, indirect – 16.2%). Such results of the UNM were significantly influenced by the length of reports by Rustavi 2, which comprised 24% of the total reporting of all TV channels. However, the indirect reporting on the UNM by several media outlets (for example, Imedi, Maestro) significantly exceeded the direct reporting on the same subject.

As regards other political parties, as the Figure 1.3 shows, the direct reporting was mainly higher than the indirect reporting with the exception of State for People where indirect reporting (3.6%) exceeded the direct reporting (2.9%). The latter trend was observed in the coverage of non-parliamentary opposition (indirect – 2.5%, direct – 1.9%) as well as the following institutions: President (indirect – 4.8%, direct – 3.9%), CEC (indirect – 2.1%, direct – 1.4%).

Figure 1.3 Direct and indirect reporting on political subjects



Tone of content and context of political subjects. The highest positive content tone in the broadcast media was observed in the coverage of Free Democrats (positive – 13%, negative – 2%), followed by Labor Party (positive – 12%, negative – 7%). The highest negative content tone was seen in the coverage of Georgian Dream (negative – 21%, positive – 12%, neutral – 67%), followed by the UNM with almost similar indicator (negative – 20%, positive – 5%, neutral – 75%).

The indicator of negative tone was higher than that of positive tone in cases of Democratic Movement-United Georgia (negative – 8%, positive – 4%, neutral – 88%) and Republican Party (negative – 8%, positive – 2%, neutral – 90%).

Among other qualified political parties which received more positive coverage than negative were Alliance of Patriots (positive – 8%, neutral – 89%, negative – 3%) and National Forum (positive – 8%, neutral – 89%, negative – 3%).

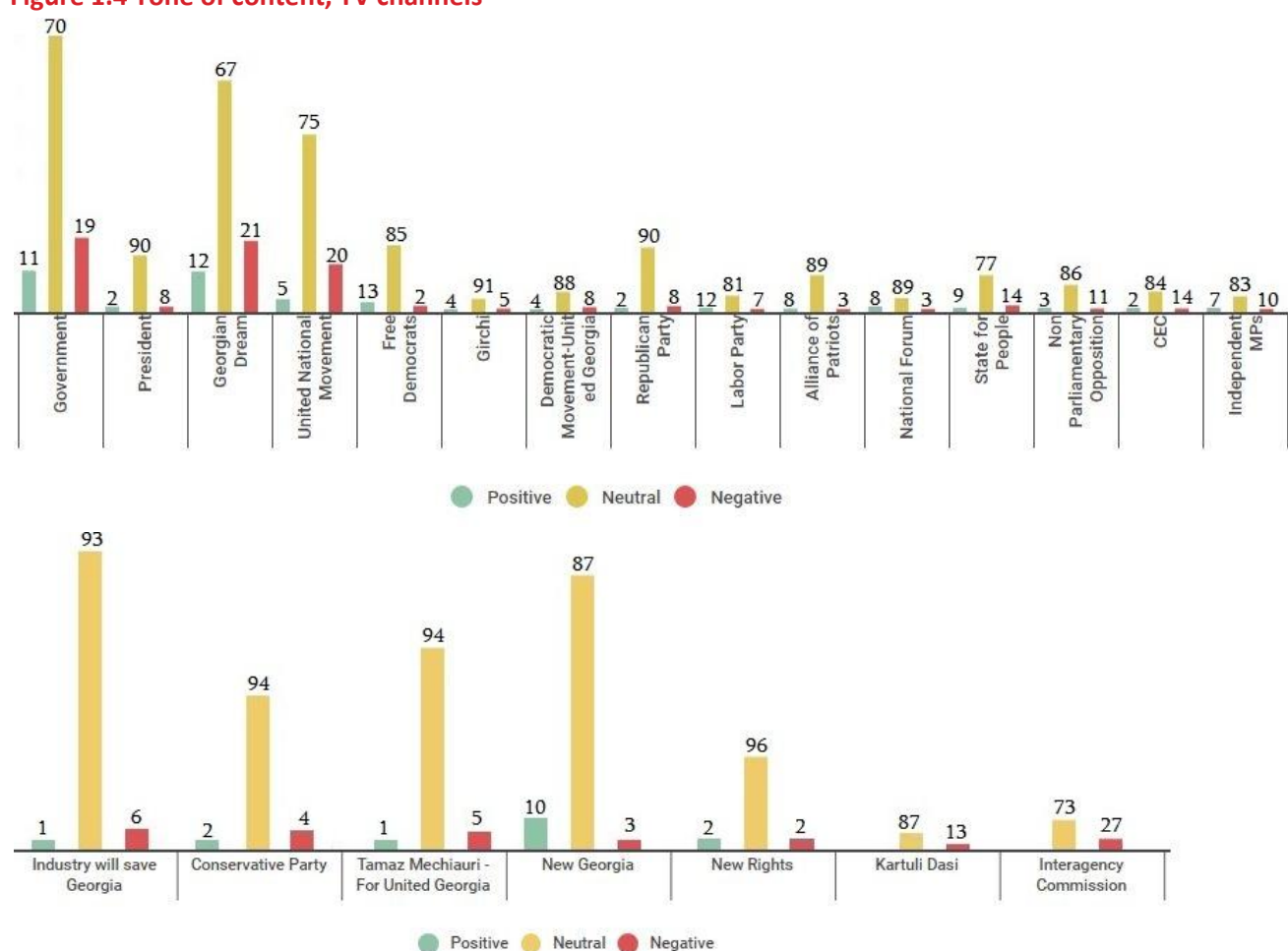
Among newly-established political parties, the most negative coverage was received by State for People (negative – 14%, positive – 9%, neutral – 77%); in case of Girchi, the high indicator of neutral content tone was observed (negative – 5%, positive – 4%, neutral – 91%).

The neutral content tone was high in the coverage of the President – at 90%, though negative tone (8%) exceeded the positive tone indicator (2%); the same was true for the CEC (negative – 14%, positive – 2%, neutral – 84%).

The similar trend was also seen in the coverage of non-parliamentary opposition (negative – 11%, positive – 3%, neutral – 86%) and independent deputies (negative – 105%, positive – 7%, neutral – 83%).

Among the political parties which received less than 1% of the total coverage the highest negative tone was observed in relation to Kartuli Dasi (negative – 13%, positive – 0%, neutral – 87%) and Industry Will Save Georgia (negative – 6%, positive – 1%, neutral – 93%).

Figure 1.4 Tone of content, TV channels



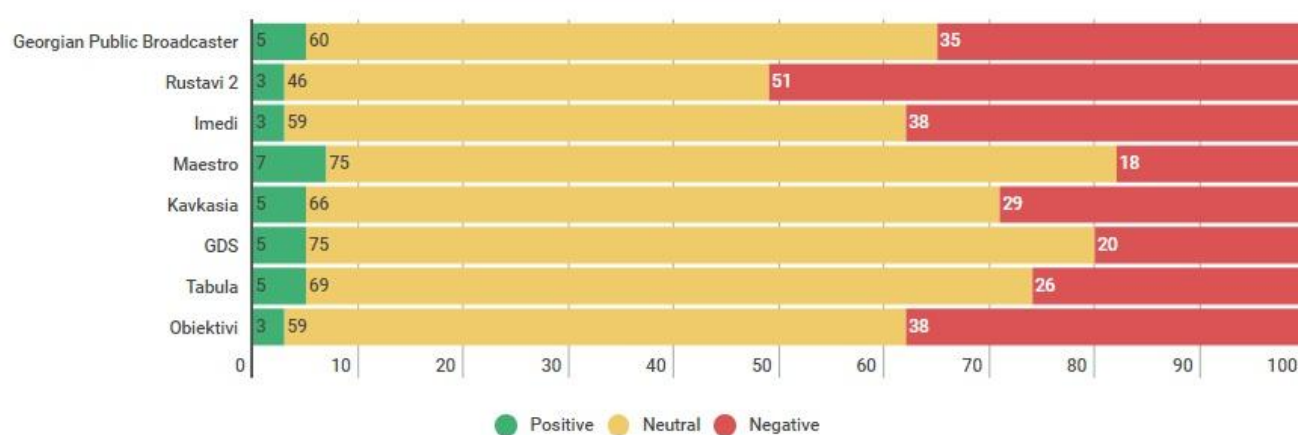
Tone of context. Statistically, the neutral tone of context dominated the TV coverage of political subjects. However, the statistics enable to separate media outlets which were more or less critical in their coverage of various topics.

The data showed that the coverage of critical topics, i.e. materials with negative context exceeded materials with positive context in TV media.

The indicator of negative context tone, i.e. the coverage of topics with the participation of political subjects, was the highest in case of Rustavi 2 – at 51%; the second by this indicator were Obieqtivi and Imedi – 38% each, followed by the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB) at 35%.

The indicator of positive context tone was the highest in case of Maestro (7%), followed by GPB, Kavkasia, GDS and Tabula. Corresponding indicators of Obieqtivi and Imedi were identical – 3%.

Figure 1.5 Tone of context, TV channels

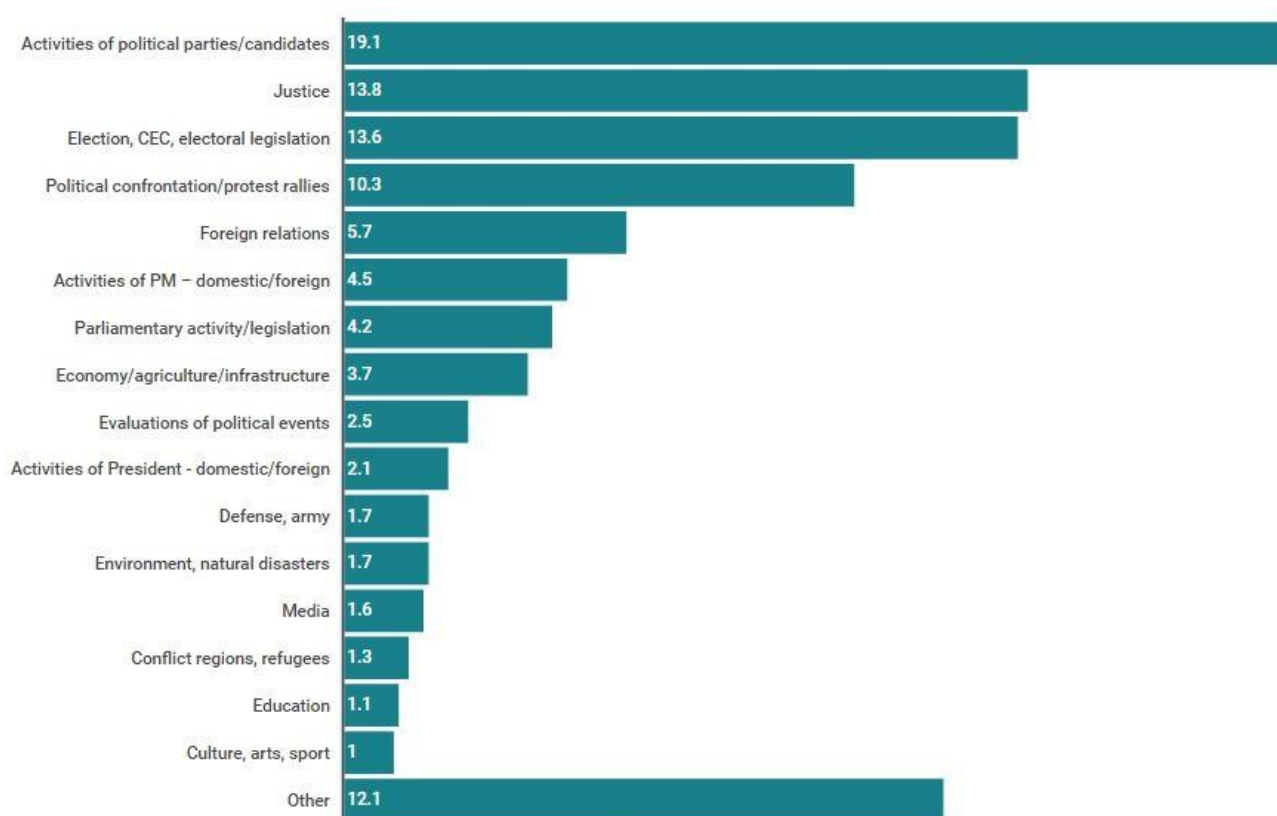


2. TOPICS COVERED IN TV REPORTING ON POLITICAL SUBJECTS

The analysis of topics in the coverage of political subjects (1 April – 15 October) shows that the trends observed in the first four months of the monitoring have largely maintained throughout the entire monitoring period. The leader by the frequency of coverage were the activities of political parties (19.1%), followed by justice (13.8%) and the election and electoral legislation (13.6%). Top five topics also included political confrontation/protest rallies (10.3%) and foreign relations (5.7%).

The topic of conflicts comprised 1.3% of total coverage of political subjects; this means that this issue was less topical during elections. The lower share of coverage was received by education (1.1%) and less than 1% of the total coverage was received by health care and social issues.

Figure 2.1 Topics in coverage of political subjects, TV channels



3. PRIME-TIME NEWS PROGRAMS DATA BY TV CHANNELS

3.1 Georgian Public Broadcaster — Channel One

About Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB): Georgian Public Broadcaster⁵ was established as a result of transformation of the State Television and Radio Corporation set up in 1956 after the Parliament adopted the Law of Georgia on Broadcasting in 2004. GPB, which currently unites two television and two radio channels, is a legal entity of public law that is independent of the state and accountable to the public. The governing bodies of the Georgian Public Broadcaster are the nine-member Board of Trustees approved by the Parliament and the Director General appointed by the Board. According to TVMR Georgia,⁶ the annual average rating (ARM) for Georgian Public Broadcaster's Channel 1 on media market was 0,74% for the year 2015, while the share (SHR) amounted 3,92 %.

Quantitative Data

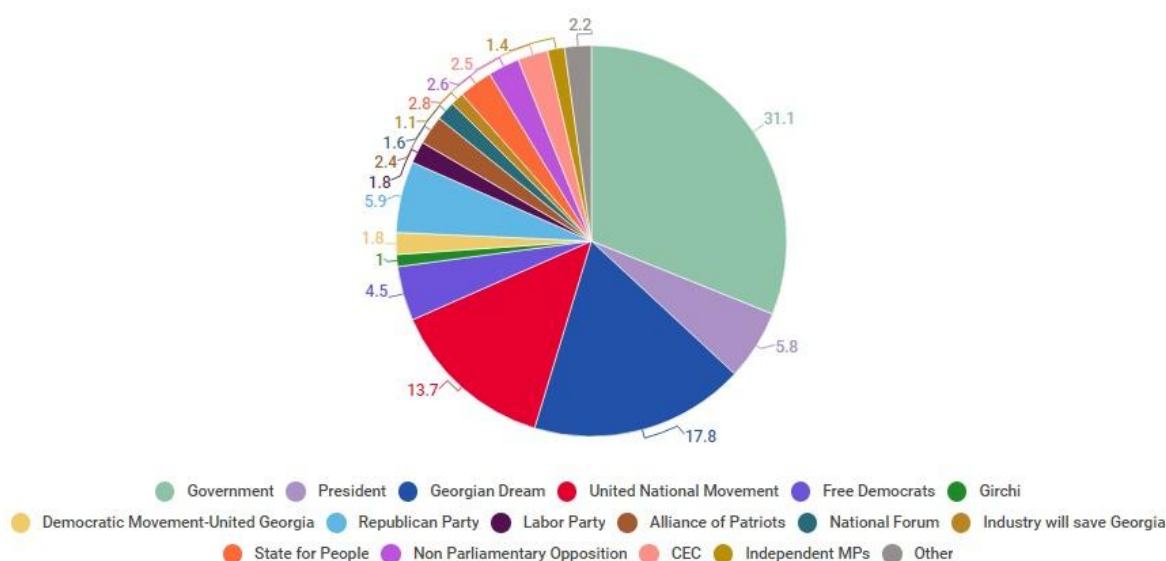
Total coverage. The monitoring of Georgian Public Broadcaster's (GPB) primetime news programs (April 1 – October 15) has revealed that in terms of total coverage (3317 stories) the TV channel dedicated its airtime to more political subjects (17) with over 1% of coverage than other televisions.

The TV channel dedicated the most of its airtime to the government (31.1%), followed by Georgian Dream (17.8%). In sum, it makes 48.9% of total coverage.

Among opposition parties, the United National Movement is in the lead with 13.7%. As for other qualified parties, Republican Party (5.9%) and Free Democrats (4.5%) were covered most intensively. Among qualified parties, coverage of the Conservative Party was below 1% (0.4%).

The President's share in total coverage is 5.8%; Central Election Commission (CEC) – 2.5%.

Chart 3.1.1. Total Coverage of Political Subjects, GPB – Channel One



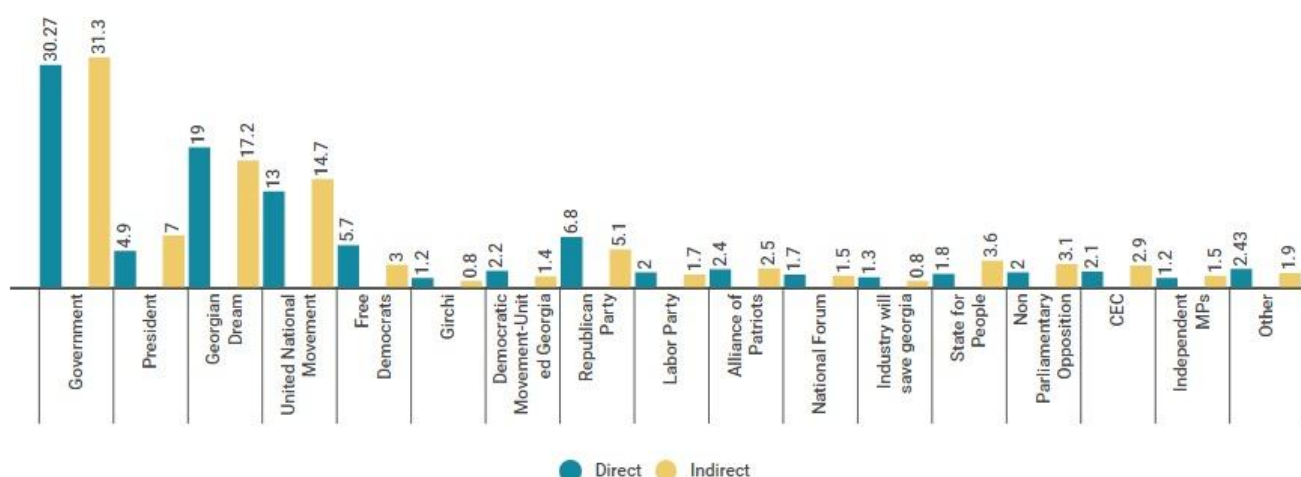
⁵ MediaMeter, MDF, GPB, <http://mediameter.ge/en/media-profiles/channel-1-public-broadcaster>

⁶ <http://www.tvmr.ge/en#!en/news/44/%26%234332%3B%26%234314%3B%26%234312%3B%26%234321%3B>

Direct/Indirect Coverage. Among main political subjects, direct coverage prevails over indirect coverage only in case of Georgian Dream (direct 19%, indirect 17.2%). In case of the government, direct coverage is 30.27% and indirect coverage – 31.3%. In case of the President, indirect coverage (7%) also prevails over direct coverage (4.9%). As for the National Movement, its direct coverage (13%) slightly lags behind indirect coverage (14.7%). In case of State for People, indirect coverage (3.6%) is twice more than direct coverage (1.8%).

In case of other political parties, direct coverage prevails over indirect coverage or there is a slight difference.

Chart 3.1.2. Direct/Indirect Coverage of Political Subjects, GPB – Channel One



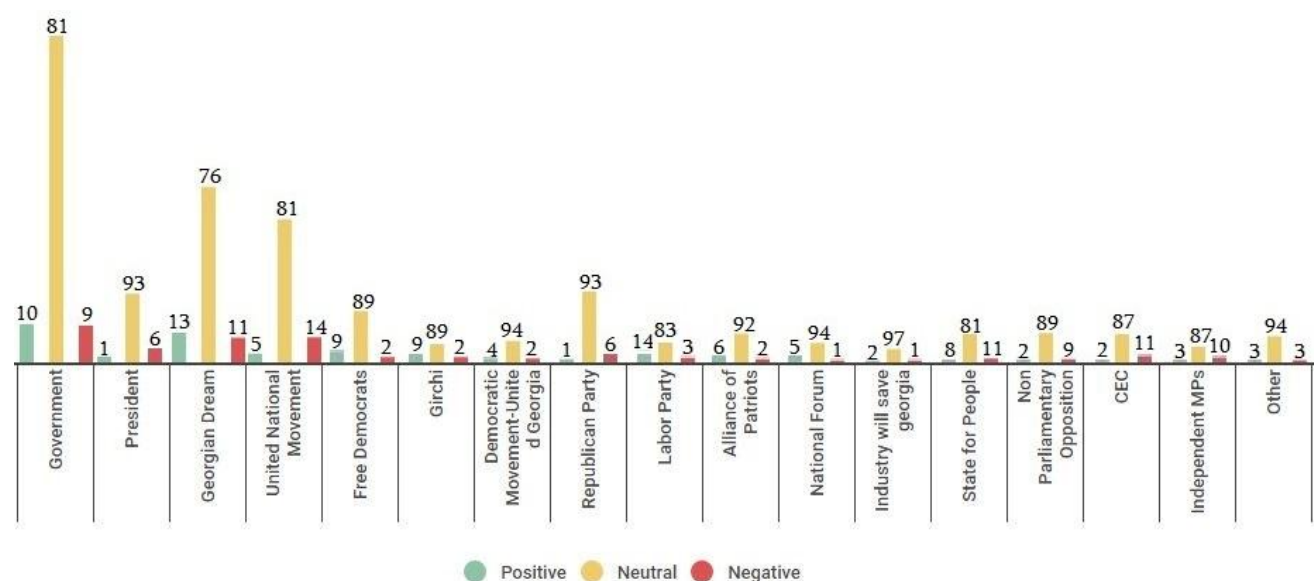
Tone of content in covering political subjects: The tone of coverage is highly neutral on GPB compared to other televisions. But certain differences were revealed between positive and negative tones when covering governmental and opposition parties.

In case of Georgian Dream, positive tone (13%) prevails over negative tone (11%) by 2%; the government's negative (9%) and positive (10%) tones are almost identical; in case of the opposition United National Movement, negative tone (14%) significantly prevails over positive tone (5%). As for State for People, negative tone (11%) prevails over positive tone (8%). Similar tendency was observed in case of non-parliamentary opposition (negative 9%, positive 2%).

Positive coverage is above negative coverage in case of Free Democrats and Girchi (positive 9%, negative 2%); Labor Party (positive 14%, negative 3%); Alliance of Patriots (positive 6%, negative 2%).

Coverage of the President was highly neutral (93%); however, negative tone of content (6%) prevails over positive tone (1%). Similarly, coverage of CEC was also covered highly neutrally (87%), but negative tone of content (11%) significantly prevails over positive tone (2%). The situation is similar in case of independent lawmakers – negative (10%) and positive (3%).

Chart 3.1.3. Tone of Content in Covering Political Subjects, GPB – Channel One



A share of subjects in positive and negative content of the TV channel. The government (positive 38.9%, negative 32.9%) and Georgian Dream (positive 30.2%, negative 22%) have the highest share in GPB's positive content. A share of the both subjects in positive content stands at 70%, in negative content – 54.9%.

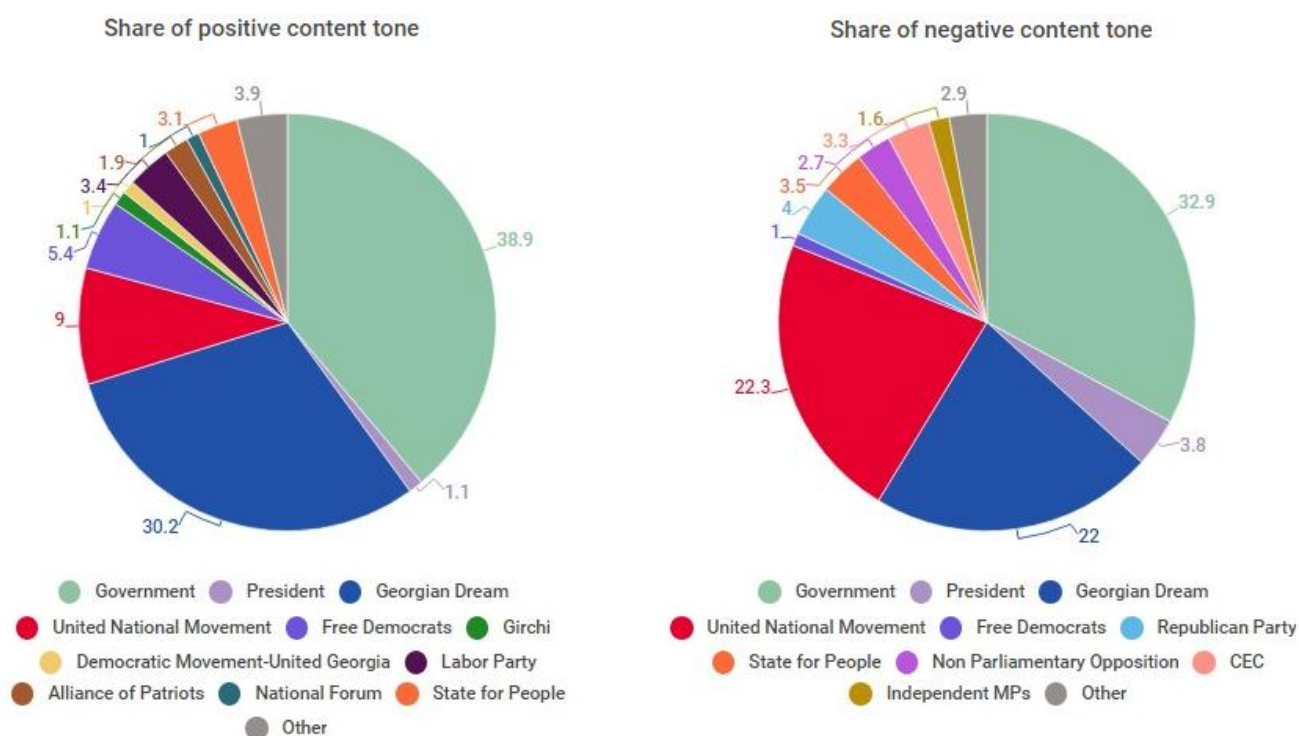
In case of the National Movement, a share of negative coverage significantly prevails over positive coverage (positive 9%, negative 22.3%). Among other qualified parties, a share of negative coverage of the Republican Party is relatively high (positive 0.9%, negative 4%). A share of Free Democrats in positive content prevails over its share in negative content (positive 5.4%, negative 1%); Labor Party – positive 3.4%, negative 0.7%.

A share of the President in positive coverage is low (positive 1.1%, negative 3.8%).

Positive coverage of CEC is 0.8% and negative coverage – 3.3%.

A category "other" unites all those parties, whose coverage is less than 1%.

Chart 3.1.4. A Share of Coverage of Political Subjects in Positive and Negative Content, GPB – Channel One



Qualitative Data

Accuracy/bias. On 29 September, at 20:02 o'clock, Moambe aired a report titled “cache of weapons” covering the discovery of weapons’ caches by law enforcement agencies in various regions of Georgia.

“Law enforcement bodies discovered a large amount of weapons, firearms and explosives in five different locations of Georgia. The list is quite long. According to law enforcement authorities, caches were arranged over the period between 2009 and 2011. Whom does the trace of weapons’ caches lead to? Law enforcement authorities decline to comment on this topic. Media, however, recalls a yesterday’s statement by Irakli Batiashvili, in which he spoke about hidden weapons. According to the ex-defense minister, weapons’ caches were arranged by the United National Movement before leaving the power. A statement of the former ruling party and doubts of experts...” – this was the lead-in of the report about the discovery of weapons, which was read by the presenter of the public broadcaster.

Although the law enforcement authorities did not disclose an official theory of investigation on whom this fact may be linked to, while representatives of the government made just general hints, the public broadcaster, in the introduction to the report, placed an emphasis on the accusation against the opposition political party – the UNM, although no evidence of that was provided by any respondent in the report.

The accusation against the UNM rested on two sources: the first was the ex-defense minister Irakli Batiashvili who was arrested by the former government for intellectual support to the revolt against the state and whose statement released by media was cited by the broadcaster; the second was a military expert, Vakhtang Maisaia, whom the former government incarcerated after the 2008 Russia-Georgia war on espionage charges. The report did not provide an assessment of an independent expert; nor did it show any attempt to find out whether the discovered weapons represented defensive secret caches which the state arranged to defend itself from the Russian aggression. This argument of the UNM was provided in the report by the broadcaster from Netgazeti, though it was not mentioned in the presenter's introduction as a counter argument to the accusation. Moreover, the military expert Vakhtang Maisaia said that after the 2012 elections, the government did not hand these military caches over to the new ruling team, which was a violation of the law. The journalist did not verify this information with the relevant ministry.

The report indirectly cited Prime Minister of Georgia Giorgi Kvirikashvili as saying that he was waiting for the completion of the investigation and rights after that provided a direct comment of the Prime Minister:

"The United Movement is trying to achieve something but we see that they do not have popular support. Today, people need stability, people need peace and a clear prospect of development."

The above comment strengthened the doubt about the link of the former ruling party with the discovered weapons' caches. A comment of a UNM representative, which was provided at the end of the report, was of a formal nature.

Balance. On August 5 (at 8:12pm) Moambe news program provided live coverage of the Tbilisi City Court ruling on the lawsuit filed by former deputy head of the Adjarian customs department, Roland Bladadze against then Chairman of the Constitutional Court, Giorgi Papuashvili concerning an apartment transferred to the latter by the state in 2007. Before confiscation (in 2004) the apartment was owned by Roland Bladadze. According to the live coverage, the court rejected Bladadze's lawsuit. The story provides the positions of the claimant's representatives – Roland Bladadze's wife and lawyer, who describe the court ruling as illegal. The material provides no information about the grounds of the court ruling, the essence of the case and the defendant's position. Thus, the coverage is unilateral in respect of both, the court and the defendant and therefore it is considered biased in favor of the claimant.

Violation of Standards for Coverage of Public Opinion Poll. The August 23 story "Political Ratings" aired by Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB) was dedicated to the results of the poll fielded by the company GFK for Rustavi 2 TV.

While reporting on the survey results, the journalist said that "according to the survey results, Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia (GDDG) has 35.9% support in political ratings, followed by the United National Movement (UNM) with 34.2% and third place is held by State for People...." The

story, however, did not mention that the above political ratings involved allocation of undecided respondents (19%) to political parties.

GFK released two separate results of party ratings with one involving the question – “If you decide to cast ballot, which party would you vote for,” where 25.8% of respondents said, they would vote for Georgian Dream and 25.5% - for UNM party. There was only a 0.3% difference between the two parties. 19% of respondents were undecided.

The other result of the survey involved party ratings with undecided voters allocated (19%), where Georgian Dream had 35.9% support and National Movement – 34.2%. GPB referred just to this result, where the difference between GDDG and UNM was 1.7%. The story, however, did not indicate that party ratings were determined as a result of allocation of undecided voters.

In addition, the story did not provide the number of those respondents, who refused to answer (7.7%), who would not vote for any party (3.0%) as well as the number of undecided voters (19%).

Similar presentation of public opinion survey results comes into conflict with those provisions of the law, which obligate televisions to ensure that in covering public opinion polls they provide exact formulation of the questions asked in the polls, present number of those respondents who refused to participate, who did not answer the question or whose interviewing was impossible; also to inform the public on other factors that might have significant effects on the results. When covering the poll, GPB named only 7 out of 11 compulsory requisites envisaged by legislation.

3.2 Rustavi

About Rustavi 2 TV: Rustavi 2⁷ TV was founded in 1994 by Erosi Kitsmarishvili, Jarji Akimidze and Davit Dvali. Following the Rose Revolution, when the National Movement came to power, Rustavi 2 TV changed hands 20 times. The first change took place in 2004, as a result of which the TV channel's shares appeared in the hands of Kibar Khalvashi and his company. In that period Kibar Khalvashi was a friend of then Defense Minister Irakli Okruashvili.

Four months before the 2016 parliamentary elections the Court of Appeals ruled in favor of businessman Kibar Khalvashi and declared him and his Panorama Ltd legal owners of the Rustavi 2 TV's property. Current owners of Rustavi 2 TV, brothers Giorgi and Levan Karamanishvili, as well as TV Company Georgia appealed the ruling over Rustavi 2 TV ownership to the Supreme Court.

According to TVMR Georgia, TV Channel Rustavi 2 is on the first place with an annual average rating (AMR) for the year 2015-5.43%, while the share (SHR) is 28.78%.

⁷ MediaMeter, MDF, Rustavi 2 TV, <http://mediameter.ge/en/media-profiles/rustavi-2>

Quantitative Data

Total coverage: The monitoring of Rustavi 2 TV's primetime news programs (April 1 – September 15) has revealed that in terms of total coverage (3158 stories) the TV channel dedicated the most of its airtime to Georgian Dream (26.2%). A share of the government in total coverage is 22.3%. In sum, it makes 48.5% of total coverage. Like in case of other televisions, except Obieqtivi TV, the opposition United National Movement party takes the third place with 20.2%. Compared to other TV channels, Rustavi 2 covered this party most intensively.

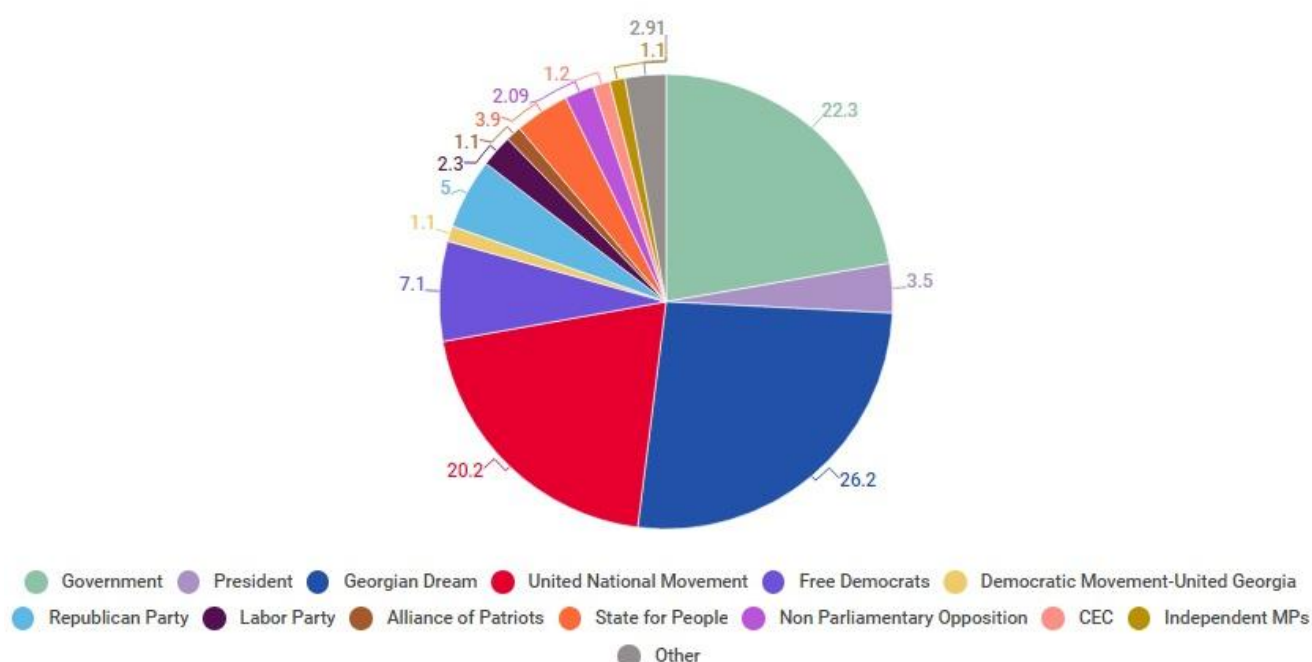
As for other qualified political parties, Free Democrats party has the highest share – 7.1%, followed by Republicans with 5% and Labor Party with 2.3%. Alliance of Patriots received slightly over 1% (1.1%).

Among newly established parties, State for People was covered most intensively (3.9%). Coverage of other parties is less than 1%.

A share of non-parliamentary opposition is 2.09% and independent lawmakers – 1.1%.

The President's share in total coverage is 3.5%; Central Election Commission (CEC) – 1.2%.

Chart 3.2.1. Coverage of Political Subjects – Rustavi 2

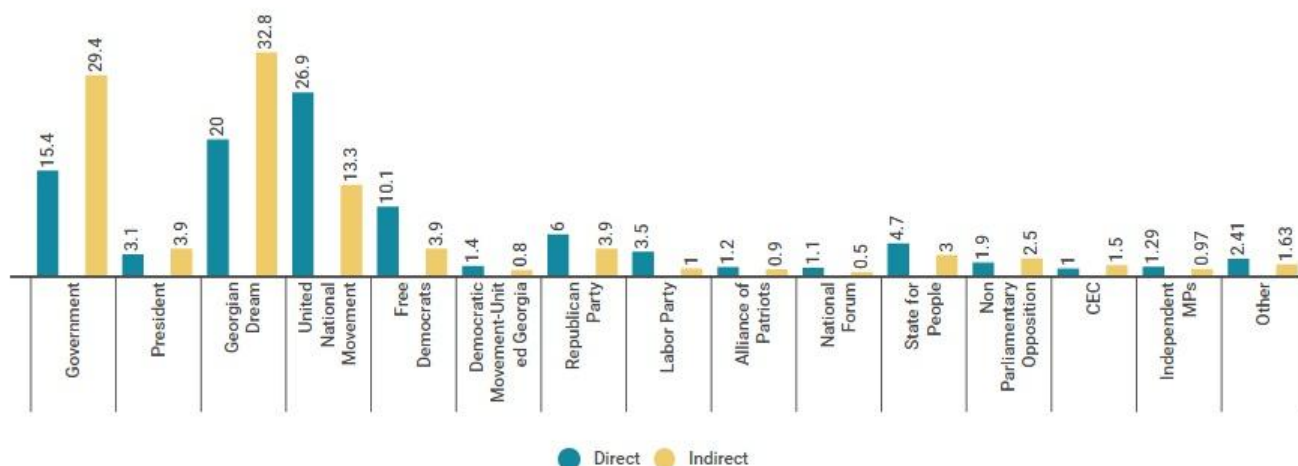


Direct/indirect coverage. Indirect coverage of Georgian Dream and the government in Rustavi 2 TV's primetime news programs significantly prevailed over direct coverage: Georgian Dream (direct 20%, indirect 32.8%); government (direct 15.4%, indirect 29.4%). In case of the National Movement, it was vice versa: direct coverage (26.9%) significantly prevailed over indirect coverage (13.3%).

As for the qualified parties, a tendency observed in total coverage was preserved in case of direct coverage. Free Democrats party was covered most intensively (direct 10.1%, indirect 3.9%), followed by Republican Party (direct 6%, indirect 3.9%) and Labor Party (direct 3.5%, indirect 1%). Compared to other parties, a share of coverage of State for People is relatively high (direct 4.7%, indirect 3%).

In case of the President and CEC, indirect coverage prevails over direct coverage: President (direct 3.1%, indirect 3.9%); CEC (direct 1%, indirect 1.5%).

Chart 3.2.2. Direct and Indirect Coverage of Political Subjects – Rustavi 2



Tone of content in covering political subjects: Analysis of the tone of content in covering political subjects shows that under conditions of general neutral coverage, the tone of coverage was extremely negative in respect of several subjects. These subjects are: Government (negative 39%, neutral 56%, positive 5%); Georgian Dream (positive 4%, negative 36%, neutral 60%).

The TV channel covered the President, Free Democrats and Republican Party most neutrally (88%).

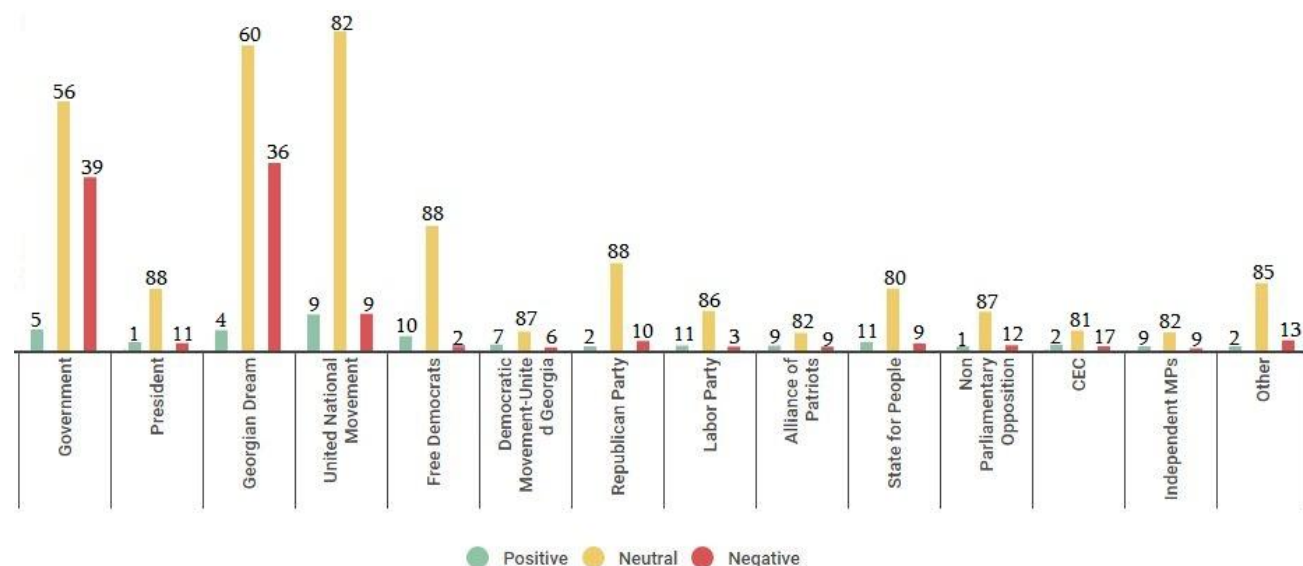
The results of negative and positive coverage are identical in case of the National Movement (9%) and a share of neutral coverage stands at 82%. Among the qualified parties, Republican Party has the lowest share in positive content (2%); Labor Party has the lowest share in negative content (3%); its share in positive content stands at 11%.

Coverage of non-parliamentary opposition was mostly neutral in tone (87%); its positive coverage (1%) significantly prevails over negative coverage (12%). In case of independent deputies, the results of positive and negative coverage are identical (9%); neutral tone of content stands at 82%.

A share of those parties, whose coverage is below 1%, is only 2% in positive content and 13% - in negative content.

Coverage of CEC was neutral in tone (81%); its share in positive coverage was 2% and negative coverage – 17%.

Chart 3.2.3. Tone of Content of Political Subjects – Rustavi 2



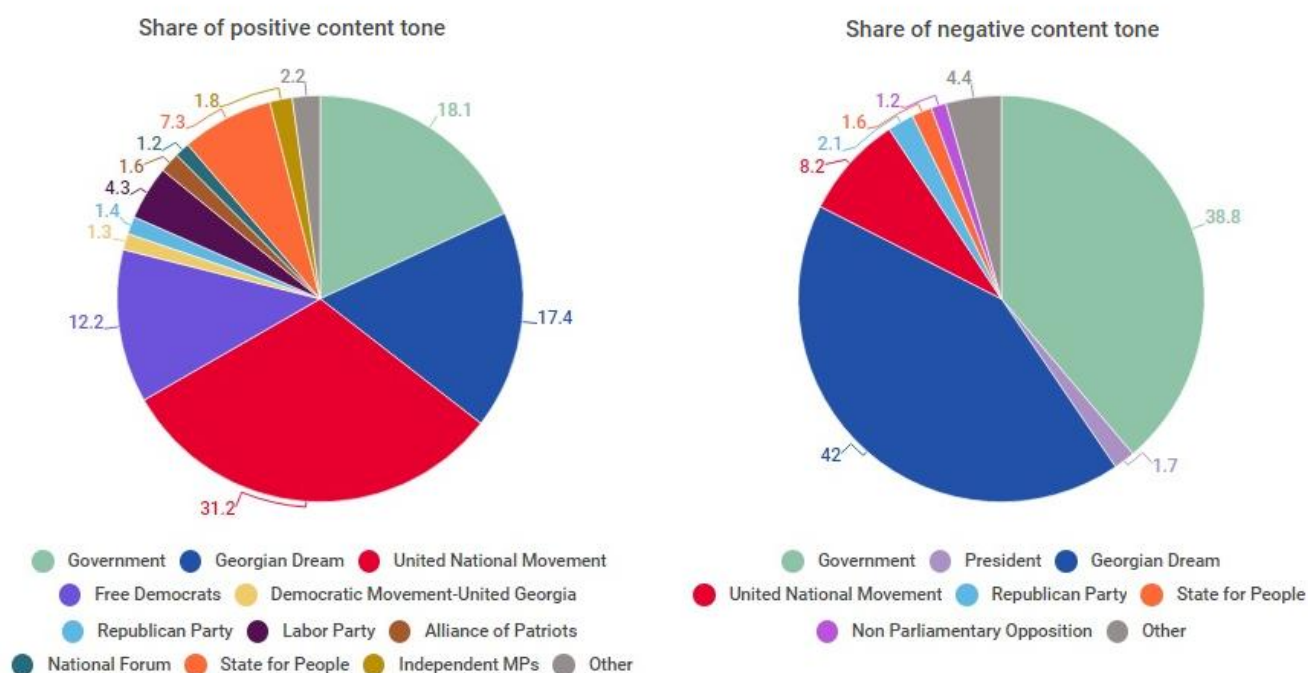
A share of subjects in positive and negative content of the TV channel. The United National Movement has the highest share in Rustavi 2 TV's positive content (positive 31.2%, negative 8.2%). It is followed by the government, whose share in negative coverage takes the second place (positive 18.1%, negative 38.8%); Georgian Dream falls behind these subjects in terms of positive tone, but in terms of negative coverage it is in the lead (positive 17.4%, negative 42%).

Among other qualified parties, Free Democrats has a highest share in positive coverage (positive 12.2%, negative 0.6%), followed by Labor Party (positive 4.3%, negative 0.3%). A share of State for People in positive coverage is high (positive 7.3%, negative 1.6%). A share of Democratic Movement – United Georgia, Republican Party, Alliance of Patriots and National Forum in both positive and negative coverage is about 2%.

A share of the President in positive coverage is very low (positive 0.6%, negative 1.7%).

Positive coverage of CEC is 0.5% and negative coverage – 0.9%.

Chart 3.2.4. A Share of Political Subjects in Positive and Negative Content – Rustavi 2



Qualitative Data

Impartiality. In an introduction to a report aired at 21:21 in the primetime news program of Rustavi 2 on 7 October, a presenter said: “the Georgian Dream has refused to participate in a parliamentary debate, thereby avoiding those questions which concern the four-year governance of the Georgian Dream.” The presenter went on to say that the activity of the current government had repeatedly came under scathing criticism and triggered loud protests. In a 17-minute-long report, the journalist covered those issues which were problematic during the four years in power and portrayed the government in the negative light.

The report offered a one-sided view of the developments. It highlighted only negative facts and provided negative contexts and assessments of developments. The report was entirely built on the archive material and comments of the government and the Georgian Dream coalition provided in it, as well as comments of others, served the negative portrayal of the governance of Georgian Dream.

Accusations voiced against the Georgian Dream in the report were left without the accused party’s replies; for example, the report discussed the decrease in beneficiaries of social assistance and showed hardships of these people; however, it did not provide arguments of the government or information about the causes of such a decrease. Nor did the report mentioned the government health care program which, according to surveys, is viewed as a successful government reform by the population.

The report also discussed an allegation about a corrupt deal struck between Nana Kakabadze, a representative of the nongovernmental organization Former Political Prisoners for Human Rights, and Manana Kobakhidze, vice speaker of parliament, when compiling the list of political prisoners; however neither the replies of accused persons nor the information evidencing the corrupt deal was provided in the report.

Consequently, the report was biased and represented an example of one sided coverage.

Balance/omission of facts. At 22:23 on 1 October, the primetime news program of Rustavi 2 reported about a visit of former President of Georgia and leader of United National Movement Mikheil Saakashvili to the United States. When introducing the report, the presenter of “Kurieri on Saturday,” which is an authored program, recalled that the Minister of Infrastructure and Regional Development called the former President a “sissy” and said: “using the vernacular of Javakhsivhili, we will now listen to the ‘sissy’

The journalist spoke about the details of Mikheil Saakashvili’s visit and provided a vast comment of Saakashvili in which the former President spoke about the future plans of the UNM and evaluated the activities of the Georgian government. It is worth noting that when reporting about the visit, Rustavi 2 also covered the meeting of the former President with Georgian diaspora; however, it omitted a rally staged outside the church, right before the meeting with the Georgian diaspora, to protest against the former President and his governance. This protest rally was covered by Imedi TV.

Violation of Standards for Coverage of Public Opinion Poll. The story aired by Rustavi 2 TV on October 1 was dedicated to the results of the public opinion poll commissioned to the company GFK for this TV channel.

The story met 9 out of 11 mandatory requirements set by the Georgian legislation for broadcasters; one requirement was met partially and the remaining one was omitted. In particular:

Like in case of covering the previous public opinion poll commissioned to GFK (on June 28), Rustavi 2 TV again did not name the company that fielded the poll. As other media outlets reported, GFK commissioned the company BCG to field the poll; its director is the wife of Levan Tarkhnishvili, a member of the opposition United National Movement.

In addition, the journalist did not provide the number of interviewed respondents, as well as the number of those respondents who refused to participate, who did not answer the question or whose interviewing was impossible. It should also be noted that the TV channel posted on its website that number of respondents, who refused to participate, who did not answer the question or whose interviewing was impossible amounted to 21%.

3.3 Imedi

About Imedi: Imedi TV company⁸ was established in 2001 by late billionaire Badri Patarkatsishvili, who held executive positions at various Russian companies in the 1990s (LogoVAZ, Russian Automobile Dealers), including at Russian TV-6 channel and the public broadcaster ORTV. In 2008, Badri Patarkatsishvili ran for president of Georgia.

Imedi TV changed hands after riot police raided it on November 7, 2007. On November 13, 2007, the channel was transferred to News Corp Europe Inc. with the 100% management right; since August 27, 2009, the TV channel became wholly owned by Georgian Media Production Group, where former Economy Minister Giorgi Arveladze of the National Movement owned 45% of shares. After the change in power as a result of the parliamentary elections in 2012, Imedi TV was returned to the Patarkatsishvili family on the basis of agreement on conceding the share at a symbolic price. According to the TVMR Georgia, Imedi took second place with annual average rating (AMR) 4,23% and share (SHR) - 22, 39% in 2015.

Quantitative Data

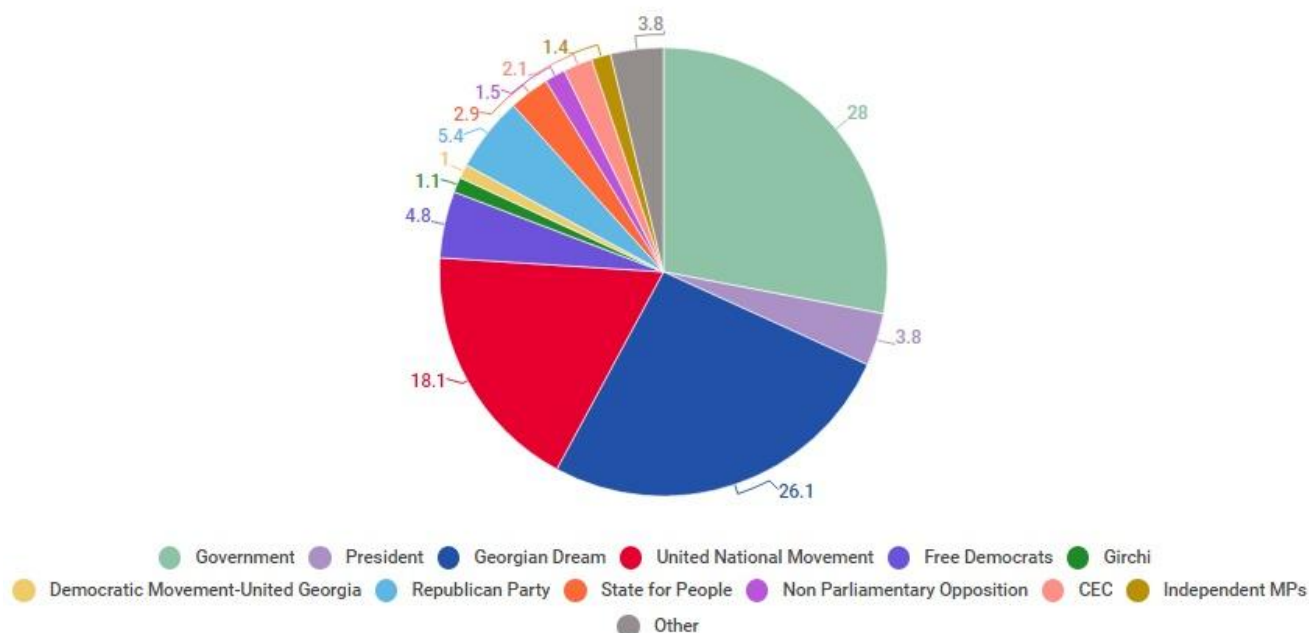
Total reporting. The monitoring of news broadcast of Imedi TV channel (1 April – 15 October) showed that 11 political subjects received more than 1% of the total coverage (2840 reports). Of these subjects, most extensively was covered the government (28%) and the Georgian Dream (26.1%). The total coverage of these two subjects made up 54.1%. The third by the amount of coverage was the UNM (18.1%).

The coverage of other qualified subjects was distributed as follows: Republican Party - 5.4%, Free Democrats – 4.8%, the remaining parties below 1%. More than 1% of the total coverage was received by such non-qualified parties as State for People (2.9%) and Girchi (1.1%). The share of non-parliamentary opposition stood at 1.5%.

The institute of the President received 3.8% while the CEC 2.1% of the total coverage.

⁸ MediaMeter, MDF, Imedi, <http://mediameter.ge/en/media-profiles/tv-imeri>

Figure 3.3.1 Total reporting on political subjects, Imedi

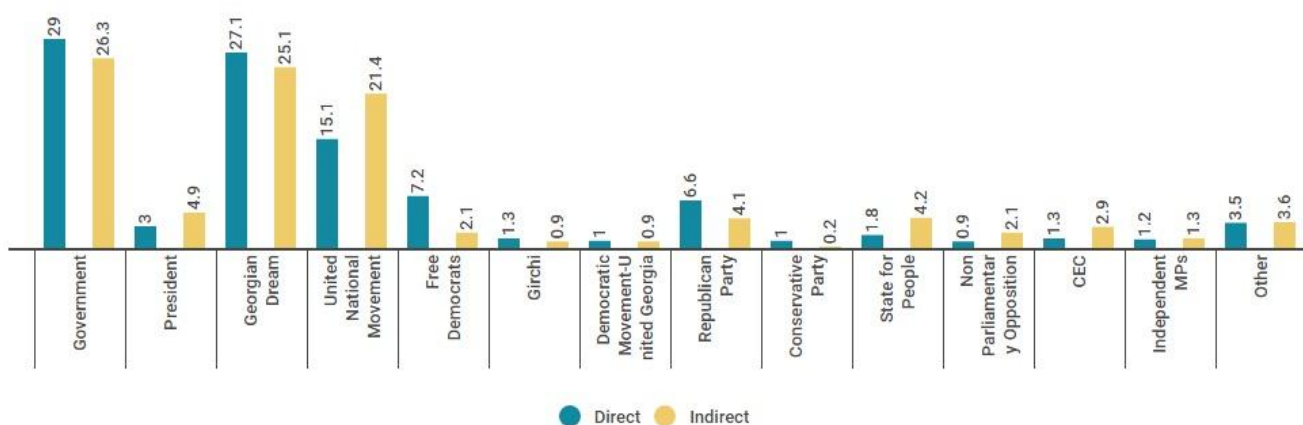


Direct/indirect reporting. The direct reporting exceeded the indirect reporting in the coverage of the government (direct – 29%, indirect – 26.3%) and the Georgian Dream (direct – 27.1%, indirect – 25.1%) and vice versa in the coverage of the UNM (indirect – 21.3%, direct – 15.1%) and the State for People (indirect – 4.2%, direct – 1.8%).

The direct reporting was also higher than indirect reporting in case of Free Democrats (direct – 7.2%, indirect – 2.1%) and Republican Party (direct – 6.6%, indirect – 4.1%).

The indirect reporting on President (4.9%) exceeded the direct reporting (3%) on the same subject; the same held true for the CEC (indirect – 2.9%, direct – 1.3%).

Figure 3.3.2 Direct and indirect reporting on political subjects, Imedi



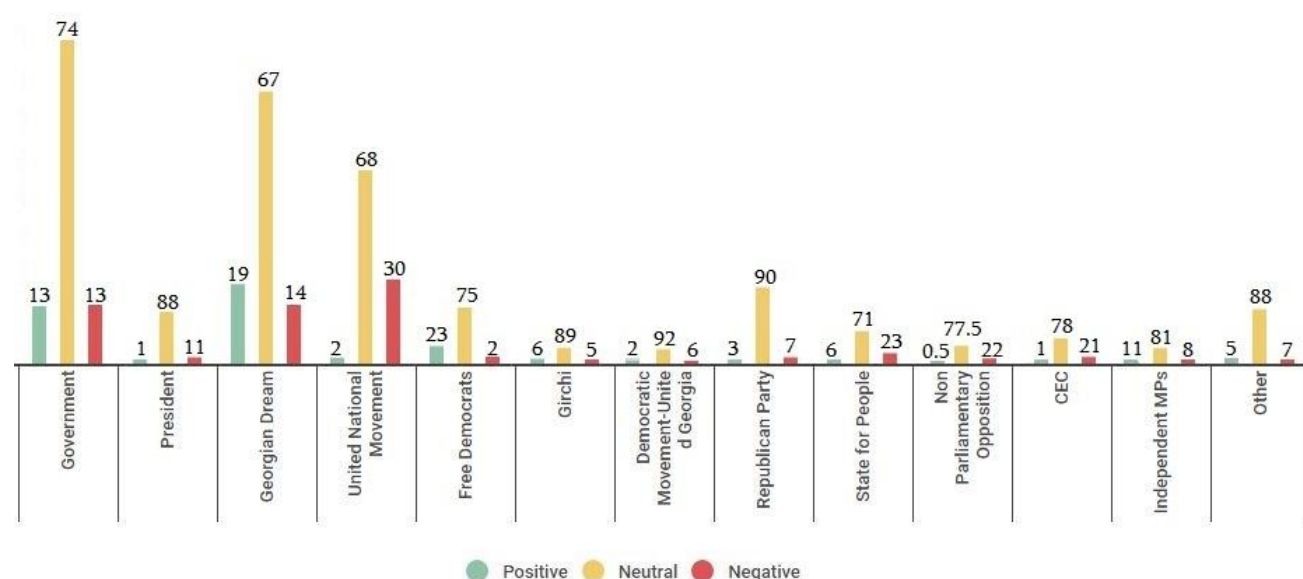
Tone of content. The neutral content tone prevailed on Imedi TV channel; however, significant indicators of negative and positive content tones were observed towards main political subjects.

The highest negative tone was applied to the UNM, with the difference between negative and positive tones indicators being the most striking (negative – 30%, positive – 2%). The high negative tone and big difference was also seen in the coverage of State for People (negative – 23%, positive – 6%).

Imedi was the only channel among monitored TV companies, in which the positive tone of content exceeded the negative tone in the coverage of Georgian Dream (19% and 14%, respectively); the coverage of the government showed equal indicators of negative and positive tones – at 13%. The positive content tone was higher than the negative tone in case of Free Democrats too (positive – 23%, negative – 2%) while in case of non-parliamentary opposition, the situation was opposite (negative – 22%, positive – 0.5%).

Largely neutral tone was applied in the reporting about the President (88%), though the negative tone indicator (11%) exceeded the positive tone indicator (1%) in the total coverage of the subject. The reporting on the CEC was more negative in content tone (21%) than positive (1%).

Figure 3.3.3 Coverage of political subjects, tone of content



Share of subjects in positive and negative content of TV channel. The highest share of positive coverage on the Imedi TV accounted for the Georgian Dream (positive – 45.6%, negative – 23.9%), followed by the government (positive – 33%, negative – 23.9%); consequently, 78.6% of the total positive tone was received by the government and the Georgian Dream together. If this figure is added the positive indicator of Free Democrats – 10.1% (negative – 0.7%), it will result in the total share of positive content tone of 11.3% in the reporting on all other subjects.

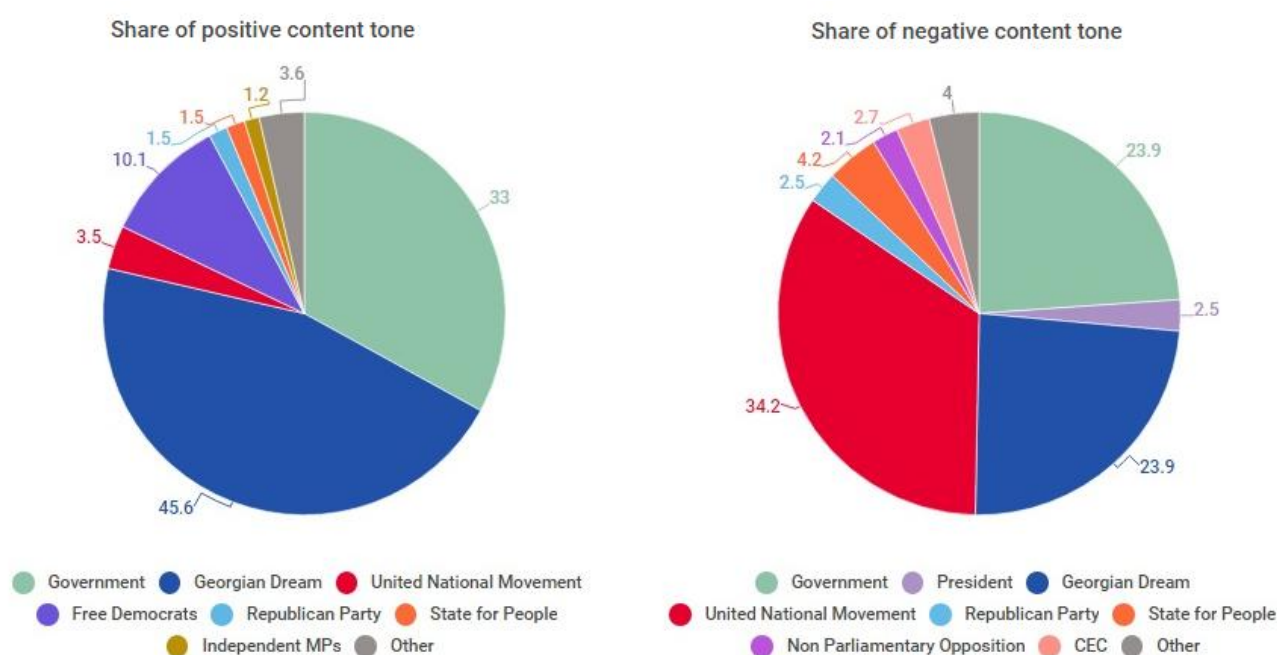
The highest negative share of coverage - 34.2%, in the total negative content, was received by the UNM (positive - 3.5%); the second and the third by a corresponding indicator were the Georgian

Dream and the government with identical shares (23.9% each). These were followed by State for People (negative – 4.2%, positive – 1.5%) and Republican Party (negative – 2.5%, positive – 1.5%).

The share of President in positive content was below 1%, namely at 0.4%, whereas the share of negative content was at 2.5%. As regards the CEC, the positive content share comprised 0.2% and the negative share stood at 2.7%.

“Other” on the figure below combines those political parties whose shares were less than 1%.

Figure 3.3.4 Share of coverage of political subjects in positive and negative content, Imedi



Qualitative Data

Accuracy. On 18 August, the prime time new program on Imedi TV dedicated two reports to the political party State for People. The first report covered the creation of a new alliance. The second report, aired at 20:04, recounted that several members of State for People left the political party. The report said that the political party’s single seat candidate for the Vazisubani constituency, Zurab Pinaishvili, left the party, and cited the consultations of State for People with other political forces as the ground of his decision. The report also provided a comment of Paata Burchuladze who declared that the political party had not yet nominated any single-seat candidate for Tbilisi and that he heard the name of that person for the first time from the TV.

The author of the report did not double check whether State for People had nominated Zurab Pinaishvili as the single seat candidate for the Vazisubani constituency, as he claimed, and did not find out which of the parties to this controversy was saying the truth. Zurab Pinaishvili was referred to both in the report and in the caption as a “former single-seat candidate”.

Factual accuracy/irrelevant sources. On October 7, a day before the elections, Imedi TV started its news program at 8pm with an announcement about a special operation ongoing in Gldani district of Tbilisi to arrest a person, who was allegedly involved in MP's car explosion. UNM lawmaker, Givi Targamadze and his driver survived car explosion in the center of Tbilisi late on October 4.

The announcement about special operation was followed by the Prime Minister's pre-election address, which was interrupted just three minutes after its launch to show the footage from the ground.⁹

During live broadcast a journalist mostly focused on the fact that a person, whose home was being searched by police at the moment of live broadcast, was a former law enforcement officer, who according to his neighbors, stayed in Ukraine. In particular, the journalist said: "This person is a former officer of the State Security Service and according to his neighbors, he apparently stays in Ukraine."

These introductory remarks are followed by footage, where Imedi journalist offers one of the respondents a certain version of a suspect's whereabouts and asks for several times, whether or not the suspect stays in Ukraine. In response, one of the neighbors says: "Either in Ukraine, or in Russia." When asked about how long the suspect has left the country, the same respondent answered: "I completed my shift work on 31st and when I asked about him, I was told that he had left for Russia."

The remarks made by another neighbor did not provide any information about the suspect's stay in any foreign country. Thus, the journalist's statement made during live broadcast, according to which "neighbors claim that the suspect apparently stays in Ukraine" is groundless.

In addition, during live broadcast on Rustavi 2 TV, covering police search at home of the alleged suspect, the latter's father notes that his son left for Russia five days ago. When asked by the journalist, whether the suspect used to travel to Ukraine, his father responds: "No, he had nothing to do in Ukraine. He left for Moscow." It should be noted that among other members of the suspect's family, Imedi TV aired only the comments made by his mother, who said nothing about her son's whereabouts.

Noteworthy that on October 5, a day after the car explosion, Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili and other representatives of the ruling party also supposed that the suspect was staying abroad. In particular, the Prime Minister said: "This grave crime can only be in the interest of a force, which is unable to adapt to free and peaceful electoral environment in our country... No immunity or foreign citizenship can protect criminals."

Reference to Ukraine might be an attempt to point a finger at ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili, who at that time held the position of Governor of Odessa region in Ukraine.

It should also be noted that some comments, including with the Interior Ministry's official, were recorded in the daytime, because during the live broadcast at 8pm it is already dark. During its

⁹ <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3013217>

announcement at 7pm, Imedi TV did not report on planned special operation. Other TV channels learnt about the ongoing special operation later.

Biased interpretation of fact. On 6 August, at 20:04, a report was aired in a news program on Imedi TV, titled Day of Shuamta – a politically busy public holiday in Beshumi.

In the lead to the report, the presenter said: “Today, politicians visited Beshumi; members of the United National Movement tried to thwart the speech of Prime Minister, but they were prevented from doing that by law enforcement officers. This pre-election confrontation was followed by political statements...”

The report featured the UNM leader in Ajara, Levan Varshalomidze, being prevented from approaching the stage; this action of Varshalomidze was assessed by the presenter as “an attempt to thwart the speech” of Prime Minister although the report itself did not offer such interpretation. The news agency InterPressnews described the fact of the opposition party leader’s arrival at the celebration of the public holiday as follows: “Varshalomidze approached a specially installed stage when Giorgi Kvirikashvili was addressing locals and congratulating them on the occasion of Day of Shuamta. Levan Varshalomidze together with his supporters tried to approach the stage to stand there, but law enforcement officers prevented them from doing that. Levan Varshalomidze joined people standing near the stage. His supporters were shouting “Vivat the UNM.”¹⁰

The lead of the presenter was a biased interpretation of the fact, which was not based on the report. Moreover, the report contained an archived material from 2012, featuring the Georgian Dream leader Bidzina Ivanishvili, who was in the opposition to the then government at that time, arriving at the Day of Shuamta celebration and the reporter saying that back then, UNM members did not allow Bidzina Ivanishvili to move.

Coverage of public opinion poll. A story aired by Kronika on Imedi TV on September 3 was dedicated to coverage of the results of public opinion polls commissioned by Imedi TV and conducted by the U.S. research company JPM.

In the story the TV channel fully named seven out of 11 compulsory requirements set by legislation for coverage of public opinion polls in a pre-election period; four requirements were omitted.

The journalist did not name such an important indicator as margin of error, though 1200 persons participated in the poll and information about the margin of error would have been essential for data perception. Neither did the story dedicated to coverage of the public opinion poll note the place, scope of field works, research methodology and category of those persons, who were selected for the poll.

¹⁰ <http://www.interpressnews.ge/ge/regioni/391597-shuamthobis-dghesastsaulze-misuli-levan-varshalomidze-samarthaldamcavebma-scenasthan-armiushves.html?ar=A>

Moreover, no information was provided about the factor that might have influenced the poll. According to the election code, it shall be feasible to provide convincing scientific explanation if there are significant discrepancies or changes in the results of the same or other comparative public opinion polls. The story provides the comments of only Davit Bakradze of opposition United National Movement party about discrepancies with other polls, whereas the material did not even mention possible factors determining these discrepancies.

3.4 Maestro

About Maestro TV: Besides the Rustavi 2 TV ownership dispute, a dispute on financial and ownership issues erupted between Maestro's co-owners and its management in late 2015 and early 2016.¹¹ In February 2016, configuration of shares was modified in favor of one of the owners, Giorgi Gachechiladze, who became a majority shareholder (55%) after he agreed with two co-owners – Giorgi Ebralidze and Levan Chikvaidze, to buy their shares, 15% from each.

In February, Giorgi Gachechiladze's brother, Levan Gachechiladze was appointed as new director of the TV channel. The latter ran for presidency in 2008. It was reported during the dispute between the TV channel's management and owners that the chairman of Imedi TV's supervisory board tried to buy Maestro's shares, but the sides failed to reach an agreement on the price. It was made public in January, 2016 that Imedi TV bought Maestro's and GDS's commercial airtime.¹² According to TVMR Georgia, Maestro is on the third place in an annual average rating for the year of 2015 with 1,18% AMR and 6, 27% share (SHR).

Quantitative Data

Total coverage. The monitoring of Maestro TV's main news programs (April 1 – October 15) has revealed that in terms of total coverage (2651 stories) the TV channel dedicated most of its airtime to the government (27.5%), followed by the ruling Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia party (27.1%). In sum, it makes 54.6% of total coverage. The United National Movement lags behind with 13.5%.

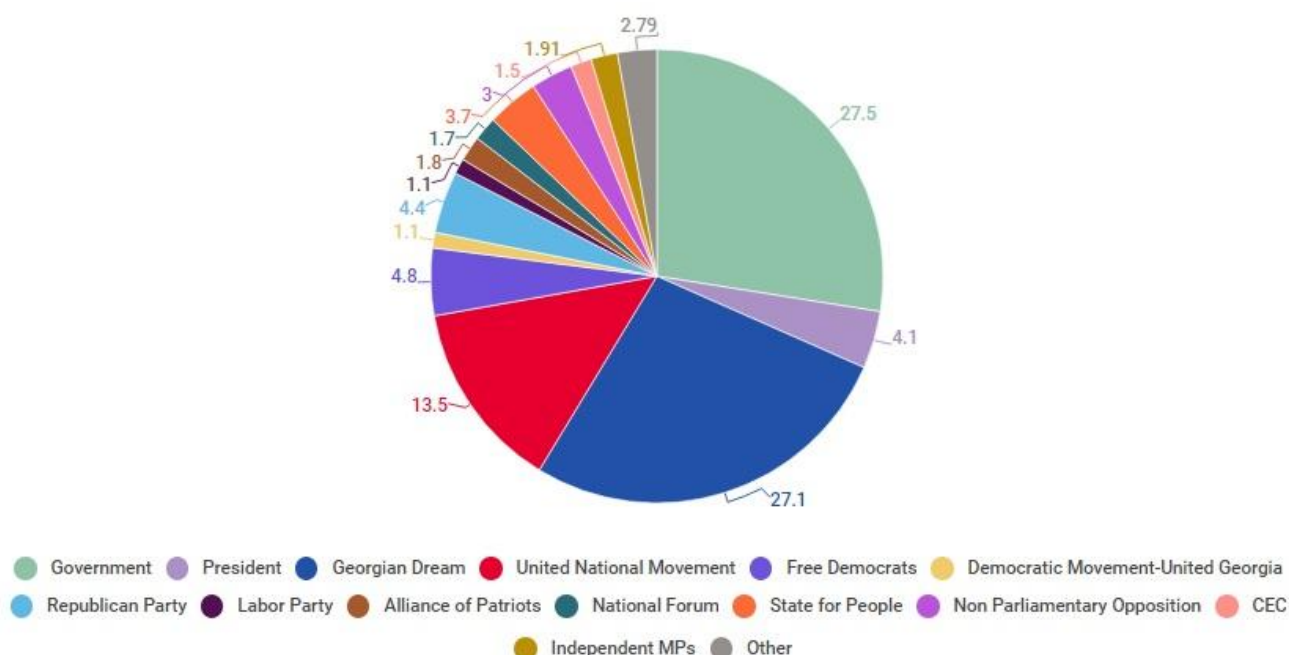
As for other qualified political parties, Free Democrats party has the highest share in Maestro's total coverage – 4.8%, followed by the Republicans with 4.4%. The results of newly elected party State for People (3.7%) are higher compared to other qualified parties. The following qualified parties have received more than 1% in total coverage: Alliance of Patriots (1.8%); National Forum (1.7%); Democratic Movement – United Georgia (1.1%) and Labor Party (1.1%). A share of non-parliamentary opposition in total coverage is 3%.

¹¹ MediaMeter, MDF, Maestro. <http://mediameter.ge/en/media-profiles/maestro>

¹² MDF, Media Freedom 2015, Media ownership, Chapter 3. <http://mediameter.ge/en/research/media-freedom-2015>

The President's share in total coverage is 4.1%; Central Election Commission (CEC) – 1.5% and interagency commission – 0.01%.

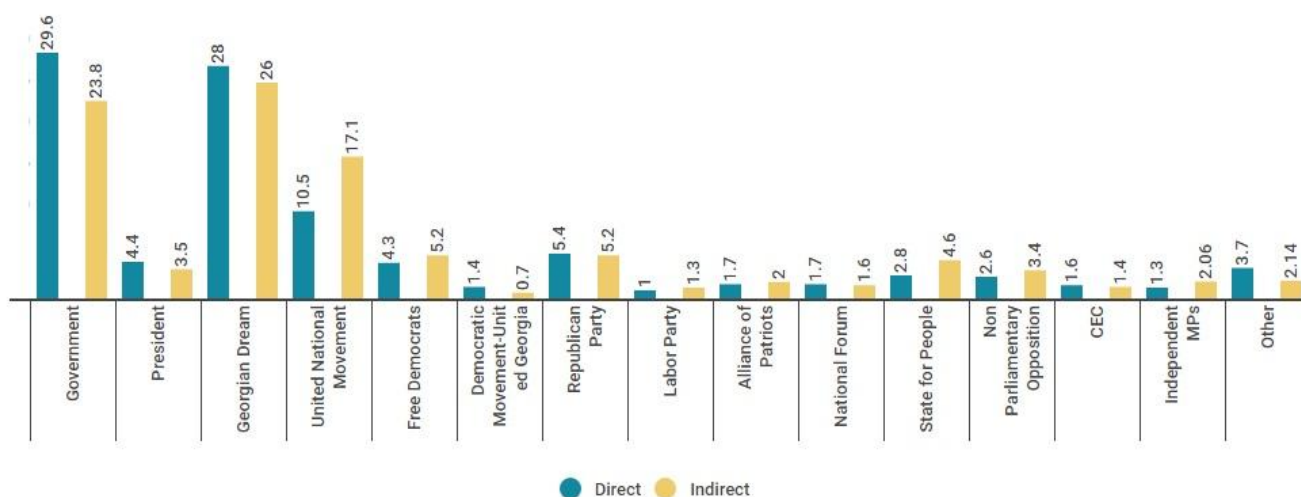
Chart 3.4.1. Coverage of Political Subjects – Maestro



Direct/indirect coverage. Like in case of Imedi TV, direct coverage of the government (direct 29.6%, indirect 23.8%) and the ruling GDDG party (28%, indirect 26%) prevails over indirect coverage. The situation is different in case of the National Movement, where indirect coverage significantly prevails over direct coverage (indirect 17.1%, direct 10.5%). In case of Free Democrats (indirect 5.2%, direct 4.3%), State for People (indirect 4.6%, direct 2.8%) and non-parliamentary opposition (indirect 3.4%, direct 2.6%), indirect coverage prevails over direct coverage.

In other cases, slight differences have been revealed.

Chart 3.4.2. Direct/Indirect Coverage of Political Subjects - Maestro



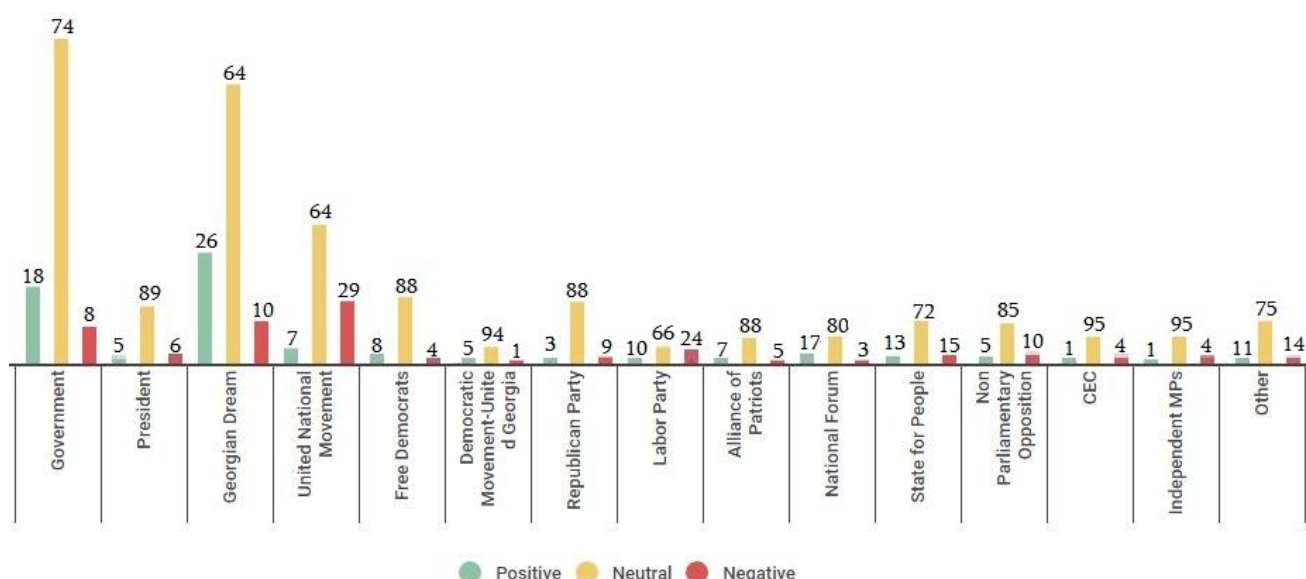
Tone of content of political subjects: Maestro TV covered Georgian Dream (positive 26%, negative 10%) and the government (positive 18%, negative 8%) most positively and the negative tone of coverage was significantly low.

The United National Movement has the highest share in negative coverage (negative 29%, positive 7%). As for other qualified parties, the tone of coverage was neutral (88%) in respect of Free Democrats, Republican Party and Alliance of Patriots. In case of the National Forum, positive tone (17%) significantly prevails over negative tone (3%). Among newly established political parties, a share of State for People in neutral coverage is 72%; there is no significant difference between its negative (15%) and positive (13%) tones.

Independent deputies (95%) and Democratic Movement – United Georgia (94%) were covered most neutrally.

Positive (5%) and negative (6%) tones of the President's coverage are almost identical; CEC was mostly covered negatively (4%) than positively (1%).

Chart 3.4.3. Tone of Content of Political Subjects – Maestro

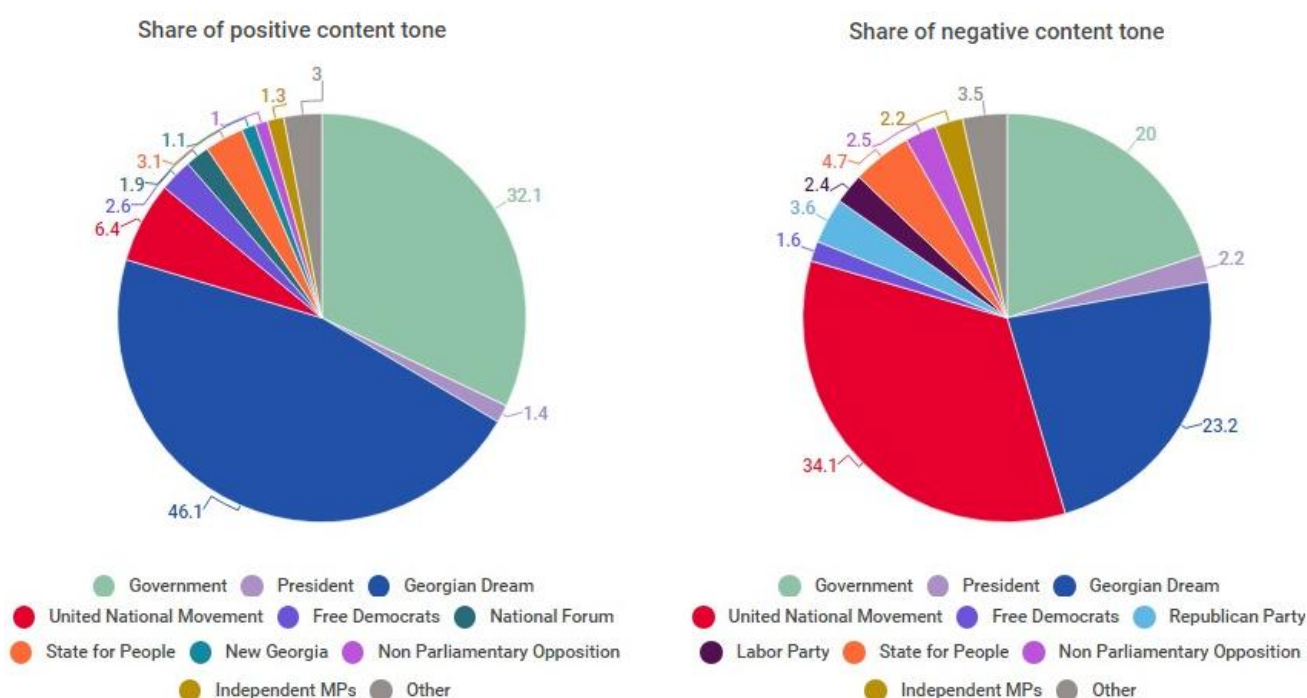


A share of political subjects in positive and negative content of the TV channel. Georgian Dream has the highest share in Maestro TV's positive content and it almost twice prevails over negative content (positive 46.1%, negative 23.2%). It is followed by the government (positive 32.1%, negative 20%). In sum, positive coverage of these two subjects (78.2%) almost twice prevails over negative coverage (43.2%).

The United National Movement has the highest share in negative content (negative 34.1%, positive 6.4%).

Negative content (2.2%) prevails over positive content (1.4%) in the President's coverage.

Chart 3.4.4. A Share of Political Subjects in Positive and Negative Content – Maestro



Among qualified parties, a share of negative coverage of the Republican Party is 3.6%; it is followed by Labor Party with 2.4% and Free Democrats with 1.6%. Among newly established parties, State for People has the highest share in negative content – 4.7%. A share of non-parliamentary opposition in Maestro’s negative content is 2.5% and independent deputies – 2.2%.

Qualitative Data

Reasonable balance/bias. On August 30 (at 20:03pm) Maestro TV aired a story covering the pre-election promises made by Paata Burchuladze, leader of State for People party. The story was introduced by the anchor as follows: “A message from Ganmukhuri has confused a great part of the society. Nobody tried to find the subtext of his promises and therefore it became necessary to make explanations about Burchuladze’s remarks. Khatuna Khvedelidze tells us about how people understood the promises given by the operatic bass...” Although the introductory remarks create an impression that the TV channel plans to discuss the party’s pre-election promises, actually in the story the leader and some members of the party are trying to justify themselves.

The story involved the following promise: “Presently, 500 000 persons are eligible to receive social aid and we will increase this number to 1 million.” According to Burchuladze’s comments, the existing number of socially vulnerable people does not reflect reality and their number will be increased if his party comes to power.

This statement is followed by Ramaz Sakvarelidze's critical comments about election promises and attention is drawn to nominating former members of the United National Movement by the party as its majoritarian MP candidates in the regions. The story also shows photos of a meeting between State for People's partner, Giorgi Vashadze and some former members of Georgian Dream. The entire story aims at critical portrayal of the party.

Factual accuracy/bias. On August 19 (at 8:13pm) main news program of Maestro TV aired the story about ex-First Lady Sandra Roelofs' decision to come to politics.

In her introductory remarks the anchor said that Sandra Roelofs "was nominated as a majoritarian MP candidate in one of the single-mandate constituencies of Zugdidi, as political analysts put it, under the influence of her husband, because the ex-President's role was emphasized in her policy for multiple times..."

It should be noted that this assessment has been made by Georgian Dream's representatives and not experts, as mentioned in the introductory remarks that creates a problem related to factual accuracy.

On the same day (August 19) Sandra Roelofs was introduced to voters in Kortskheli by the leaders of the United National Movement. The story does not provide either the details of her introduction, or the statements and main political messages made during the event.

Instead, a journalist says that "she (Sandra Roelofs) stressed Mikheil Saakashvili's role for several times," but in a footage shown after these words, Sandra Roelofs does not even mention Mikheil Saakashvili.

The journalist places emphasis on Mikheil Saakashvili's personality. The story involves comments by GD lawmakers, Zakaria Kutsnashvili and Nukri Kantaria, which contain the signs of sexism, because the respondents portray Sandra Roelofs as ex-President's puppet.

Zakaria Kutsnashvili: "He was always using Sandra as a shield in the relations with Georgian society. When you nominate your own wife as a candidate..."

Nukri Kantaria: "Nothing will help him, no matter whether he names his wife, his lover or someone else..."

Thus, the story portrays Roelofs' decision as the decision made by her husband; it does not provide the candidate's key messages to voters; this decision is assessed only by the representatives of Georgian Dream and no assessments of UNM party (its leaders), other political parties or independent experts are provided; so, it can be said that the story is biased in nature.

Balance/biased coverage. On September 27, Maestro TV dedicated five stories in its main news program Contact to coverage of a leaked audio recording and a threat of destabilization with the involvement of the opposition United National Movement.

- An audio recording leaked onto the Internet (at 20:01)
- Threat of destabilization (at 20:03)

- Chronology of secret recordings (at 20:10)
- Fate of the National Movement (at 20:14)
- Saakashvili's meetings in Odessa (at 20:17)

In an audio recording of conversation leaked onto the Internet on September 27, purportedly Georgia's ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili and some of the UNM leading members discuss possible revolutionary scenario and destabilization in Georgia.

With these stories Maestro actually echoes the version offered by official structures and portrays it as the fact. Although the authenticity of the recording had not been confirmed and the UNM members were voicing allegations on compilation of doctored recordings, in her introductory remarks the journalist focused on the content of the leaked recording. In particular, she said:

"The plan of Gaddafization from the authors of Rose Revolution. The political team that moved to opposition following the 2012 elections plans to occupy the residence of ex-Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili, to picket Rustavi 2 TV and plot a revolution. The audio recording of conversation, the authenticity of which has yet to be confirmed, was leaked via social networks today. The coup plot and the role of Rustavi 2 TV are also discussed in the recording."

The story contained full audio recording of conversation, as well as positions of the UNM party, government officials, President, personal data protection inspector and civil society organizations. However, when covering the issue, the TV channel tries to convince viewers of the authenticity of the recording. For example, the third story "Chronology of secret recordings" discusses the chronicle of recordings leaked in a pre-election period. Although investigative bodies have neither identified the origin of these recordings nor raised the issue of criminal charges against those featuring in the audio recording, the TV channel repeatedly offers almost full recording. In its fourth story "Fate of the National Movement", Maestro TV focuses on the possibility of revoking UNM's registration, though actually only Alliance of Patriots demands it. NGO sector claims that no suspension mechanism is envisaged by law. The positions of prosecutor's office, CEC or other official structures on this issue are not provided.

When presenting the fifth story, the journalist says: "Is Mikheil Saakashvili's arrival in Georgia a part of the revolutionary scenario? According to specified reports, ex-President Saakashvili is mulling over this plan." Citing an anonymous source, the journalist presents a revolutionary scenario as a real fact. The story also provides comments made by Tristan Tselashvili, who was arrested and charged with espionage in favor of Russia under the rule of the National Movement. Tselashvili claimed that the National Movement was training special groups in Khopa for their further activities in Adjara and that the party was getting ready for bloodshed throughout Georgia. This allegation, however, is not reinforced by any evidence. As the position of the other party, the story provides the statements made by Mikheil Saakashvili and his wife, Sandra Roelofs, according to which the ex-President plans to return to Georgia.

About GDS TV: GDS TV was founded in June 2012. Initially, it was named VTV and the channel was wholly owned by Vladimer Shengelia, technical director of Channel 9 TV. A month later the channel simultaneously changed its name and owner. Bera Ivanishvili, ex-Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili's son, became 100% owner of the TV channel. Initially, GDS owned a specialized (cognitive) broadcasting license. After license modification in 2015 it obtained the right to produce news and public-political programs. Following the license modification, the channel launched a talk show 2030, which was initially hosted by Bidzina Ivanishvili and which aimed, as Ivanishvili put it, to neutralize the propaganda unleashed by the opposition UNM party and Rustavi 2 TV. Ivanishvili's family, particularly Bidzina Ivanishvili's wife, Ekaterine Khvedelidze had owned 80% of shares in Channel 9 since 2012. Eight months after the parliamentary elections the channel was closed down. According to TVMR Georgia, an annual average rating (AMR) of GDS TV for the year of 2015 is 0,55%, while the share (SHR) amounts 2,92%.

Quantitative Data

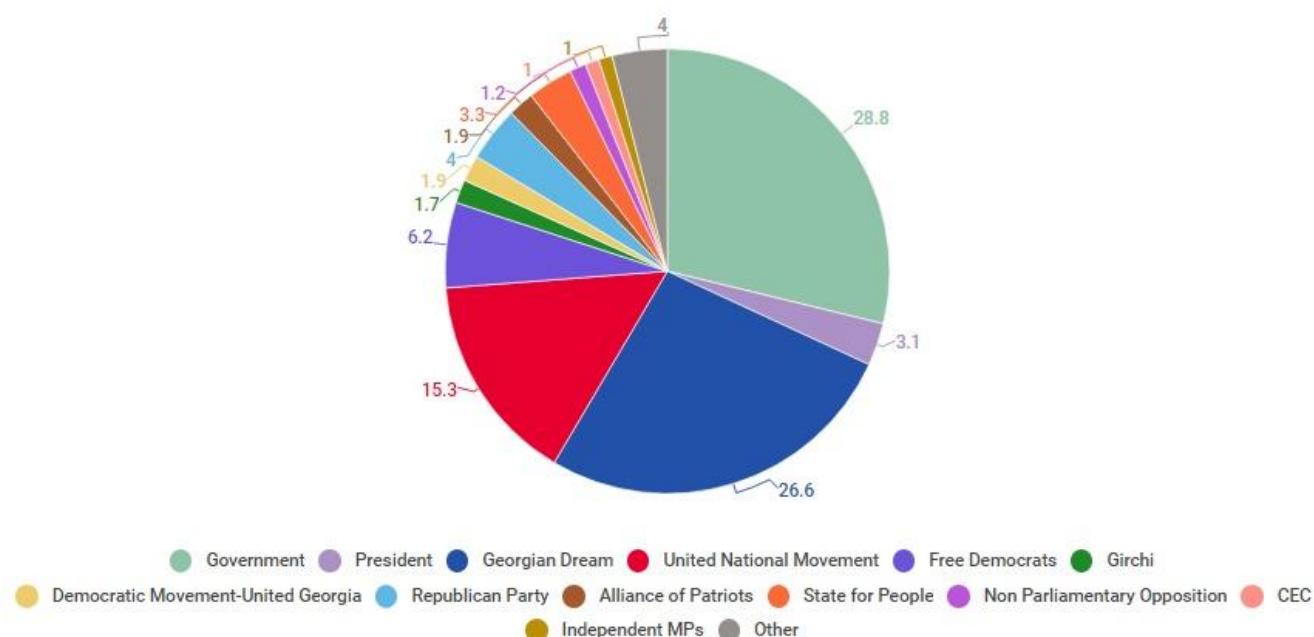
Overall broadcast. According to the results of the monitoring of the prime-time of the news programs (1,122 TV reportages) of GDS from the last 6.5 months (1 April – 15 October), the TV channel allocated the most of the time to the government (28.8%) and Georgian Dream (26.6%) that sums up to 55.4% in total.

Out of qualified parties, the United National Movement has the highest broadcast rate (15.3%), Free Democrats lag behind with 6.2%, followed by the Republican Party (4%). The Labor Party and Democratic Movement for United Georgia have the same rate (1.9%). The total broadcast rate of other electoral subjects is 3.9% and includes those parties, whose broadcast rate is less than 1%.

Out of the newly created parties, Girchi has 1.7%, whereas the rate of State for People (3.3%) adds up with other coalition members – New Georgia (0.8%) and New Rights (0.3%) that sums up to 4.4%.

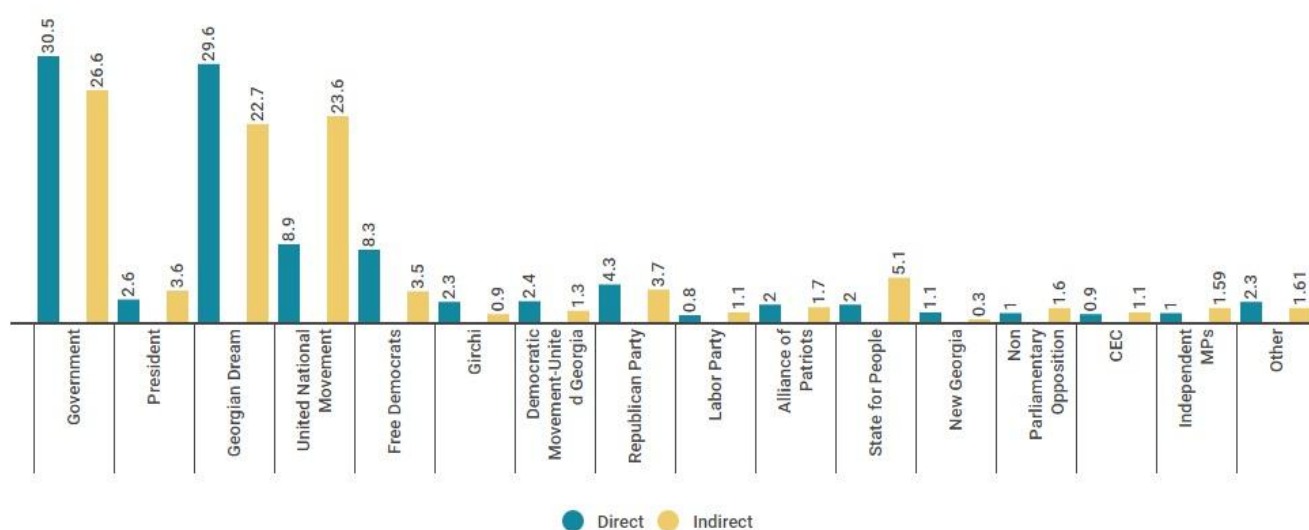
As for the institutions, the broadcast rate of the President decreased from initial 4.6% to 3.1%. The rate of the Central Electoral Commission is 1%, whereas the rate of the Inter-Agency Committee for Free and Fair Elections is 0.1%.

Diagram 3.5.1. Gross Broadcast of Political Subjects, GDS



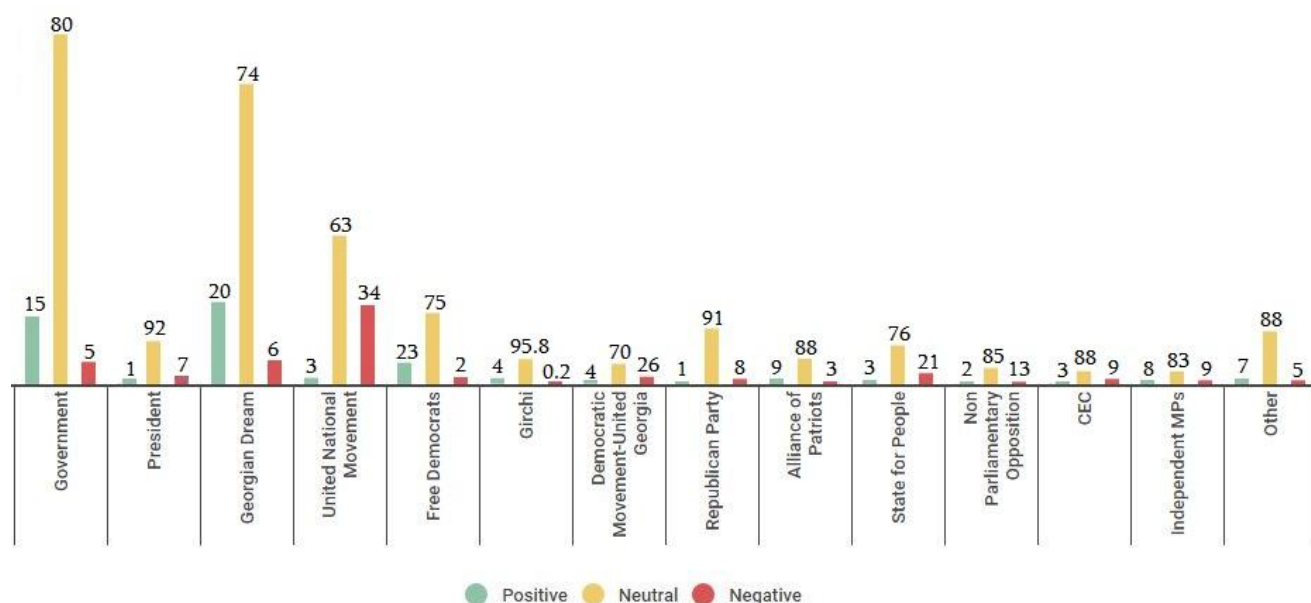
Direct and indirect broadcast. On GDS, the direct broadcast of the government (30.5%) surpasses the indirect broadcast (26.6%) by 3.9%, whereas the difference between the direct (29.6%) and indirect (22.7%) broadcast of the governing party is 6.9%. A different trend can be seen when it comes to the broadcast rate of UNM, for which indirect broadcast (23.6%) significantly exceeds the direct one (8.9%). The rate of indirect broadcast exceeds the direct one in two more cases: the President (indirect - 3.6%, direct - 2.6%) and State for People (indirect – 5.1%, direct – 2%). In case of other subjects, as the diagram 3.5.2 shows, the picture is either homogenous, that is the direct broadcast exceeds the indirect one, or the difference is small.

Diagram 3.5.2. Direct and Indirect Broadcast of Political Subjects, GDS



Tone of content in broadcasting the subjects. The highest level of negative tone of GDS' broadcast fell on UNM (34%). Democratic Movement for United Georgia (26%) and State for People (21%) also have high rates of negative tone. The TV channel was broadcasting with a positive tone the activities of the government (15%) and Georgian Dream (20%). The positive broadcast rate of Free Democrats is also high (23%). In other cases, the tone of broadcast is mostly neutral.

Diagram 3.5.3. Broadcasting Political Subjects, Tone of Content, GDS



Share of the subjects in the positive and negative contents of the TV channel. In the positive broadcast content, the government has 35.4%, while Georgian Dream has 42.8% that sums up to 78.2%. Therefore, 21.8% of gross positive tone falls on all the other subjects. At the same time, in the negative broadcast, the government has 13.6% and Georgian Dream has 14.6%.

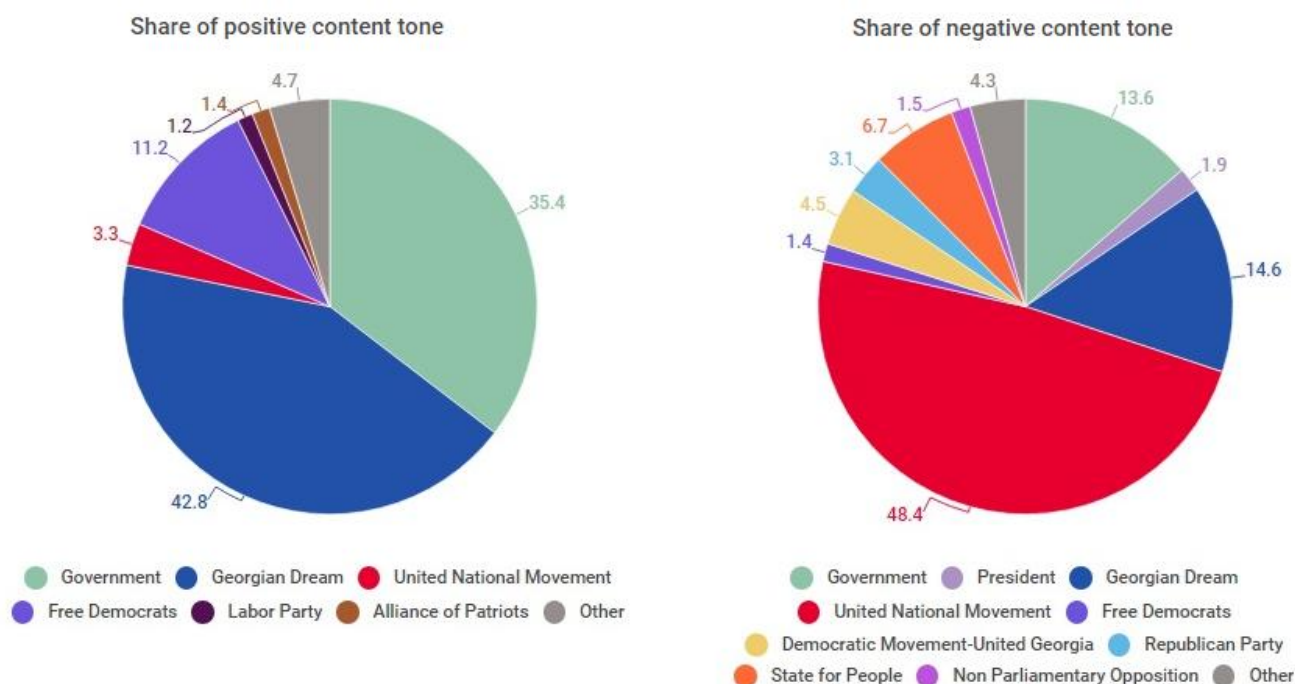
The highest share of the negative tone falls on UNM (48.4%) that exceeds the analogous share of the government (13.6%) and Georgian Dream (14.6%) three times. The rate of positive broadcast of UNM is 3.3%.

Apart from UNM, State for People has a high negative broadcast rate as well (6.7%), while the positive broadcast of the party is less than 1% (0.8%).

The total share of all the qualified and newly established parties that have the negative broadcast rate that is lower than 1% is 4.3% that is slightly different from the rate of positive content broadcast of these political subjects (4.7%).

Compared to the other parties, Free Democrats have a high positive broadcast rate (11.2%). The negative broadcast of the Republican Party (3.1%) exceeds the positive by seven times (0.4%).

Diagram 3.5.4. Positive and Negative Tones of the Content of Broadcast of the Political Subjects



Qualitative Data

Balance/accuracy. On October 5, GDS news program covered a rally held by the United National Movement. During the story the anchor and the journalist placed emphasis on a small number of supporters at the rally.

In her introductory remarks, the anchor notes that “the National Movement tried to mobilize its supporters” and the journalist says: “The rally planned at 4pm began an hour later, because the leaders were waiting for their supporters.”

The journalist also notes that the UNM members were talking about small number of supporters, claiming that the government obstructed full mobilization of their supporters; according to the journalist, the UNM members cited delays in the work of the Tbilisi Metro (Underground) as the reason. The story, however, does not provide similar comments made by UNM members. The journalist also quotes the Tbilisi Metro, saying that 15-minute delay was caused by technical reasons; however, the story does not provide similar comments made by the Tbilisi Metro; exact text of the above mentioned statement has not been shown either.

It should be noted that the story does not cover the statements and addresses made by UNM leaders at the rally. Some comments made by Gigi Tsereteli and Nugzar Tsiklauri were recorded in the course of the rally and they were mainly about the explosion of UNM MP Givi Targamadze’s car a day earlier as well as the ongoing rally.

Balance/bias. On October 5, GDS aired a story in its news program titled “Revolutionary Preparations?!” In the beginning, the anchor talked about audio recordings of conversation purportedly between Georgia’s ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili and UNM members, which were leaked over the past two years, as well as about the statements made by former members of Free Zone; the introductory remarks were completed with the words “Audio recordings and preparations for the revolution.”

The material prepared by the TV channel has not specified information about the authenticity of leaked recordings.

Only former members of Free Zone talked in the story about plotting a revolutionary scenario by the National Movement; in addition, one of former members of Free Zone, Beso Kaladze linked the fact of explosion of UNM MP Givi Targamadze’s car with this revolutionary scenario.

It is worth noting that at the moment of airing the story, investigation of the fact of explosion of Targamadze’s car was still underway. A five-minute story, where three sources are talking about apparent destabilization planned by the National Movement, does not provide comments made by any representative of the political party. Neither does the story provide the positions of those persons, whose secret audio recordings were aired by the TV channel.

Factual accuracy. On August 24 (at 9:05pm) GDS TV aired a story titled “Meeting with NGOs”. The story was about the meeting between Tbilisi Mayor Davit Narmania and some representatives of NGO sector held at the Tbilisi City Hall amid serious confrontation and noise.

The story noted that a part of NGO representatives, as well as some members of the opposition National Forum left the meeting as a sign of protest. The story provides their positions, as well as the comments of representatives of the Tbilisi City Hall and the Tbilisi Mayor.

The story, however, does not mention that Tbilisi Mayor Davit Narmania, insulted a civil rights activist calling him “Maimuno Virishvilo” (You, Monkey, Son of Donkey – mild swear words in Georgian). This remark has been immediately spread across media, prompting the Mayor to apologize for his words. By omitting this important fact, the TV channel violated the requirements for observing the principles of factual accuracy and provided incomprehensive information to viewers.

3.6 Tabula

About Tabula: Tabula TV began broadcasting in January 2013 after it purchased television frequency in 2012 and obtained a private broadcasting license. The TV channel was founded in 2010 by Civil Development Fund, as noted on the organization's website, with financial support of rightist businessmen with libertarian visions. The TV channel was created on the basis of Tabula magazine, which has not been issued since 2014. According to TVMR Georgia, an annual average rating (AMR) of Tabula TV was 0,20%, while the share (SHR) amounted 1,08%.

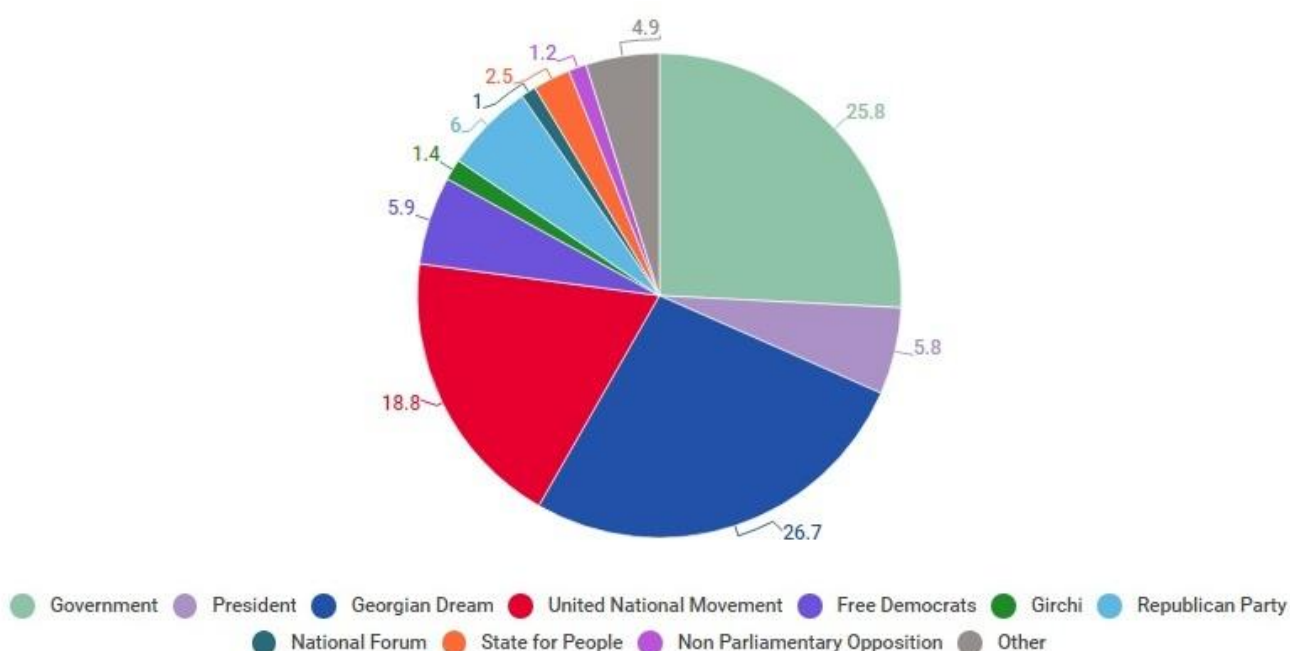
Quantitative Data

Overall coverage: A six-months monitoring (April 1 – October 15) of Tabula reveals that the TV channel allocates nearly the same amount of time to the Government (25.8%) and Georgian Dream (26.7%) in the prime-time news programs. The total rate of the given subjects is 52.5%. Shares of other qualified subjects following Georgian Dream in the gross coverage of the TV channel (1,239 reportages) were distributed as follows: United National Movement – 18.8%, Republican Party – 6%, Free Democrats – 5.9%, State for People – 2.5%, Girchi – 1.4%, National Forum – 1%, Non Parliamentary Opposition – 1.2%, Other – 4.9%.

The share of non-parliamentary opposition in Tabula's gross coverage is 1.2%. The 4.9% of *Other* includes the gross 3.99% of all those parties with less than 1% coverage, whereas 0.91% belongs to the institutes with less than 1% coverage.

From the institutes, President's share in the total coverage is 5.8%, Central Electoral Commission has 0.9%, while the Inter-Agency Commission has 0.01%.

Diagram 3.6.1. Coverage of Political Subjects, Tabula

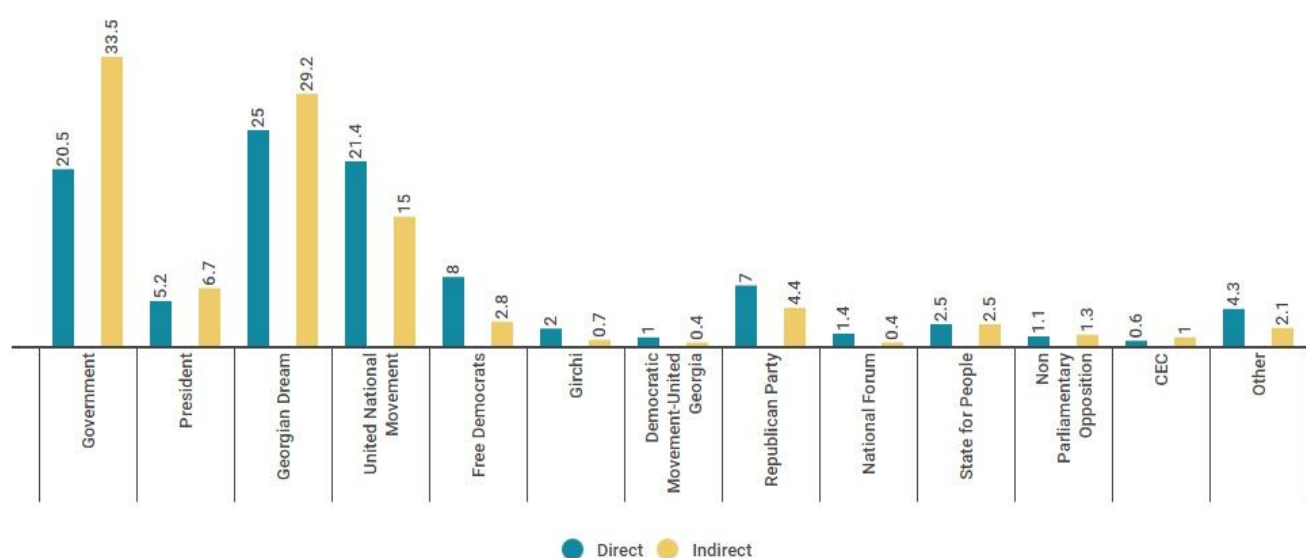


Direct and indirect coverage. On Tabula, indirect coverage of the Government (33.5%) significantly exceeds direct coverage rate (20.5%), with the same tendency taking place in case of Georgian Dream, however, the difference between the indirect and direct coverage indexes is relatively less (indirect – 29.2%, direct – 25%).

In case of other subjects, the direct coverage exceeds the indirect that is evident with a big difference in case of UNM coverage (direct – 21.4%, indirect – 15%). Same tendency took place in case of coverage of Free Democrats (direct – 8%, indirect – 2.8%).

Equal time on Tabula was allocated to the coverage of State for People party, with both indexes being equal to 2.5%.

Diagram 3.6.2. Direct and Indirect Coverage of Political Subjects, Tabula

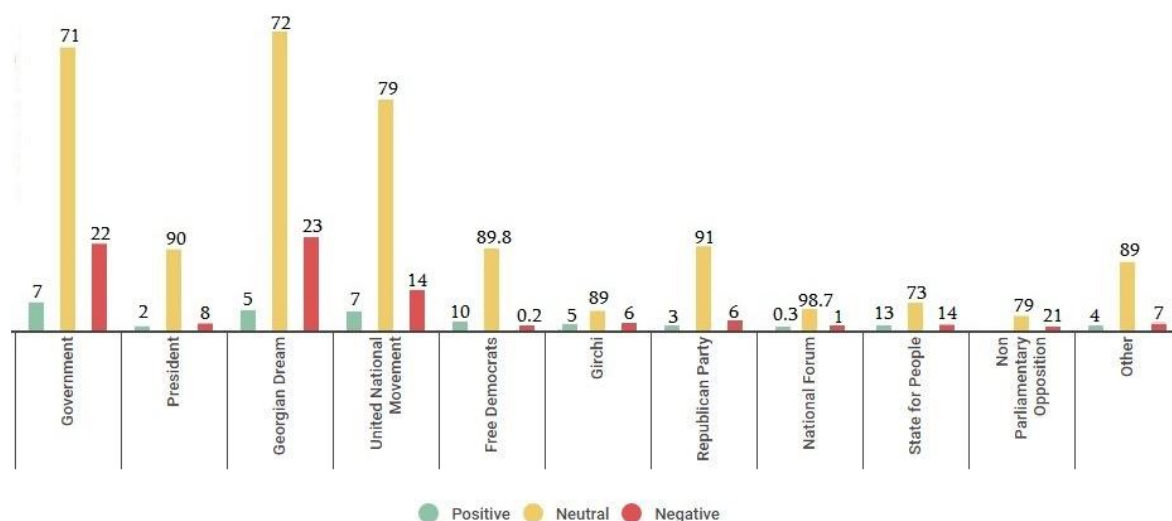


Tone of content in the coverage of the subjects. Tabula covered Georgian Dream (negative – 23%, positive – 5%) and the Government (negative – 22%, positive – 7%) with the highest negative content tone, followed by UNM (negative – 14%, positive – 7%).

Out of overall coverage volume, State for People has the highest positive tone, however, this index falls behind the negative coverage by 1% (positive – 13%, negative – 14%). Positive coverage rate of Free Democrats is also high (positive – 10%, negative – 0.2%).

From institutes, the Inter-Agency Commission was covered in a positive light for 100%. In case of the President, positive (2%) and negative (8%) coverage is dominated by neutral (90%). With a slight difference, a similar tendency was revealed in case of the CEC coverage on Tabula (neutral – 87%, positive- 5%, negative – 8%).

Diagram 6.5.3. Coverage of Political Subjects – Tone of Content, Tabula

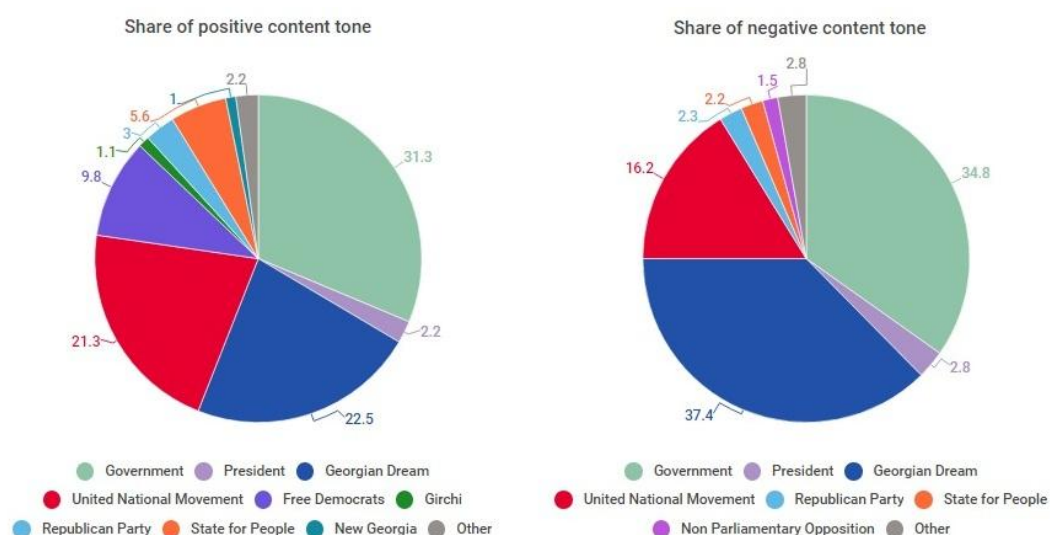


Share of the subjects in the positive and negative content of the agency. The Government (31.3%) and Georgian Dream (22.5%) have the biggest shares of the positive coverage on Tabula, with the negative coverage rate (Government – 34.8%, Georgian Dream – 37.4%) of these subjects surpassing the positive. A different tendency can be seen in case of UNM – the positive coverage rate (21.3%) is higher than the negative (16.2%).

UNM is followed by Free Democrats by positive coverage. The positive index of this subject (9.8%) significantly exceeds the negative (0.1%). The positive coverage share dominates also in the cases of State for People (positive – 5.6%, negative – 2.2%) and Girchi (positive – 1.1%, negative – 0.5%).

While covering institutes on Tabula, the negative coverage of the President (2.8%) slightly exceeded the positive (2.2%), while the positive coverage rate of the CEC (0.8%) is a bit higher than the negative (0.4%). The share of the Inter-Agency Committee in the positive and negative coverage on Tabula is not present, as the given institute was represented neutrally in the new programs of the TV channel in 100% of the cases.

Diagram 6.5.4. Share of the Political Subjects in the Positive and Negative Contents - Tabula



Qualitative Data

Balance. On 9 August, at 19:07, a voiceover-to-sound, titled Prime Minister's Present, covered a statement by the nongovernmental organization ISFED saying that the Prime Minister gave a gold ring as a present to a couple in Beshumi – something which in the pre-election period is qualified as voter bribing under the law. The NGO called on the prosecutor's office to investigate this action of Prime Minister and the local self-government. A journalist provided a detailed explanation of the relevant article in the law, which, according to the NGO, was violated. The news story contained a comment of the Executive Officer of ISFED; however it did not contain a comment of Georgian Dream.

On 17 August, at 19:08, in a report titled Four-Point Plan, Tabula covered the criticism by the UNM of problems existing in the country's economy. The UNM representative, Roman Gotsiridze, evaluated the four-point plan of the government and said that this plan did not have a form of a document and criticized it. The news story did not provide comments of the government or/and the Georgian Dream on that criticism; nor did it provide opinions of experts.

Reporting public opinion polls. On 23 August, the news program of Tabula TV, covered the results of public opinion poll which was commissioned by Rustavi 2 and conducted by the company GFK.

Out of compulsory 11 data which the Code on Broadcasting require to be indicated when covering poll results in pre-election periods, the report fully indicated eight and partially three data.

In covering the poll results, the Tabula TV partially observed the requirement of exact wording of the questions (3rd compulsory data); another partially observed data was the criteria for the selection of area and the category of people for the conduct of survey (6th compulsory data). Also the requirement for 8th compulsory data was not fully met, in particular, the report indicated that 7.7% of interviewees refused to answer the question "which party will you vote for in 2016 parliamentary election?" but did not indicate the total number of undecided voters, the share of those people who did not yet had the answer to the question which political party they would vote for.

3.7. Kavkasia

About Kavkasia: Kavkasia TV was established in 1994. Initially, the channel covered only Tbilisi and nearby areas, but after the switchover to digital broadcasting, the TV channel, starting from 1 February 2016, expanded its broadcast range to include Batumi, Zugdidi, Telavi, Kutaisi and Poti too. Initial co-founders of the channel were: Davit Akubardia (90%), Geno Khrikadze (7%) and Davit Gergedava (3%). At present, the 100% of the channel is owned by its director and journalist Nino Jangirashvili. According to TVMR Georgia, an annual average rating (AMR) of Kavkasia TV for the year of 2015 was 0,2%, while the share (SHR) amounted 1,04%.

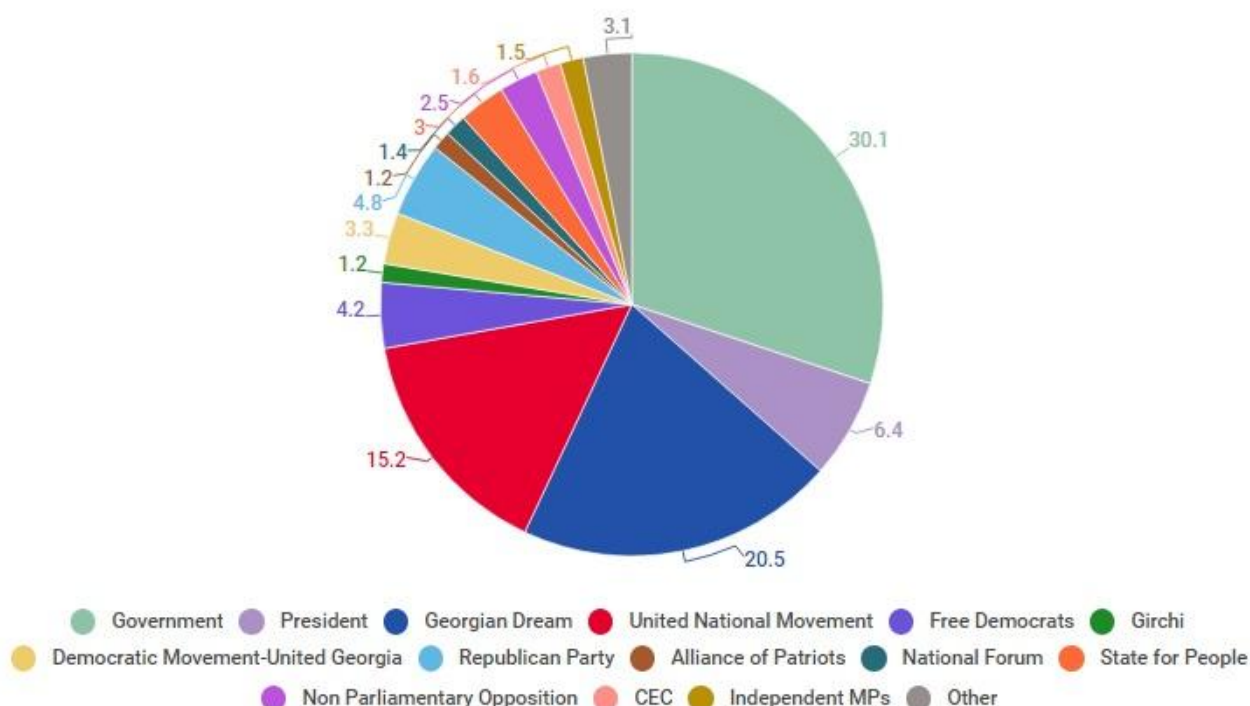
Quantitative Data

Total reporting. Kavkasia allocated the largest amount of time of its primetime news broadcast (2398 reports in total) to the government (30.1%) and the Georgian Dream (20.5%) which made up 50.6% in total.

From among qualified parties, the Georgian Dream was followed by the UNM (15.2%) and then, with almost equal indicators of coverage, the Republican Party (4.8%) and Free Democrats (4.2%). The Democratic Movement received 3.3% of total news broadcast of Kavkasia while Girchi and the Alliance of Patriots received 1.2% each.

The share of political subjects having received less than 1% of total coverage by Kavkasia made up 3.1% of which 0.01% accounted for the Interagency Commission. The share of President in total reporting comprised 6.4% while the share of CEC stood at 1.6%.

Figure 3.7.1 Total reporting on political subjects

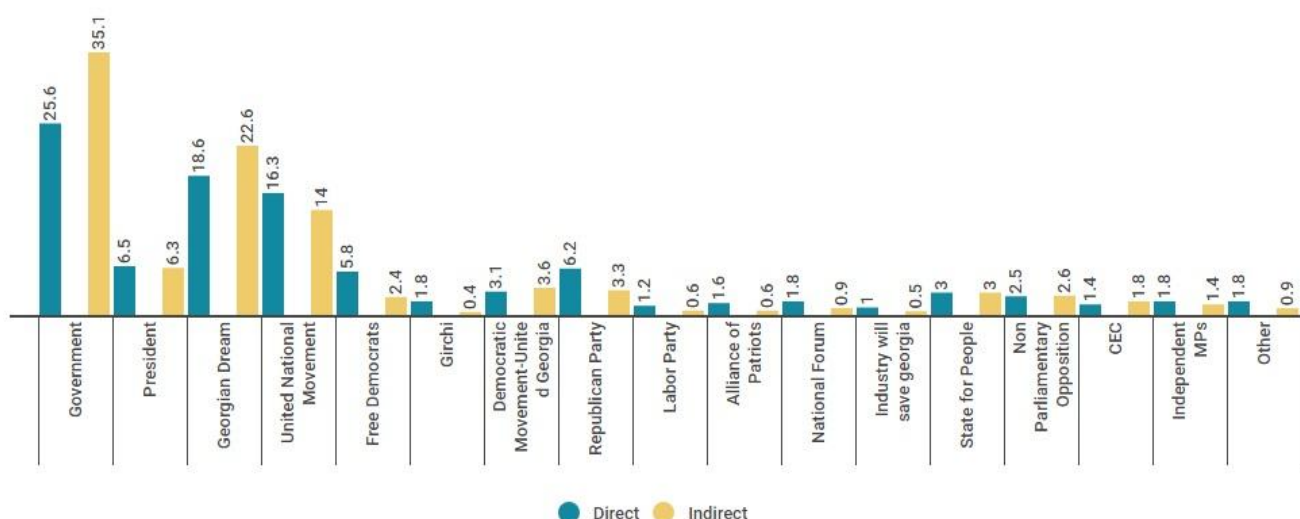


Direct/indirect reporting. In terms of both direct and indirect reporting, Kavkasia allocated the most of its news broadcast to the government (direct – 25.6%, indirect – 35.1%) and the Georgian Dream (direct – 18.6%, indirect – 22.6%). In both cases, the indirect reporting exceeded the direct reporting. A slight difference was seen between the indirect and direct reporting on the Democratic Movement-United Georgia (3.6% and 3.1%, respectively).

The direct reporting on the President (6.5%) was insignificantly higher than the indirect reporting (6.3%) on the same subject. In case of the CEC, the indirect reporting (1.8%) exceeded the direct reporting (1.4%).

As regards other political subjects, the picture was fairly similar, with direct reporting mainly exceeding the indirect reporting.

Figure 3.7.2 Direct and indirect reporting on political subjects, Kavkasia

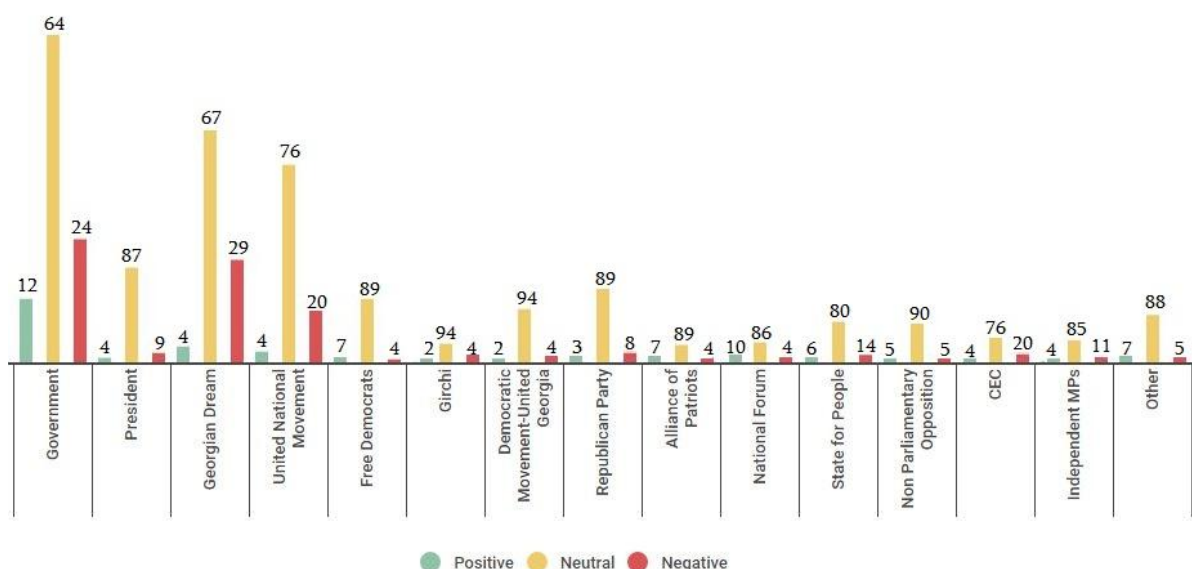


Tone of content. The highest indicator of negative tone was observed in the reporting on the Georgian Dream (29%), the government (24%) and the UNM (20%); at the same time, the positive tone in the coverage of the government (12%) notably exceeded the corresponding indicators of the Georgian Dream and the UNM (4%).

Positive tone dominated the coverage of National Forum (10%), Free Democrats (7%), Alliance of Patriots (7%). The indicators of negative tone in the coverage of the mentioned subjects were identical – at 4%.

The coverage of institutions by the TV channel was marked with a high negative tone towards the CEC (20%). The indicator of the negative tone, especially against a zero-amount of positive coverage, was quite high in the coverage of the Interagency Commission (54%). The negative coverage of the President (9%) slightly exceeded the positive coverage of this subject (4%).

Figure 3.7.3 Coverage of political subjects, tone of content, Kavkasia

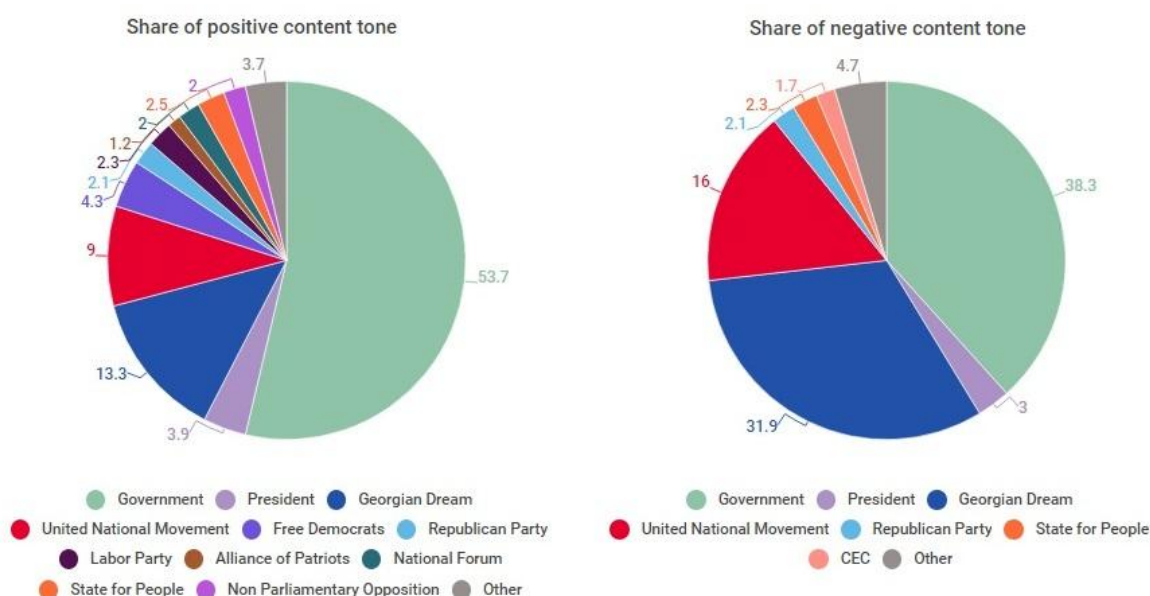


Share of subjects in positive and negative content of TV channels. The largest share of positive content of Kavkasia's news broadcast accounted for the government (positive – 53.7%, negative – 38.3%) and the Georgian Dream (positive – 13.3%, negative – 31.9%). It is worth noting that the indicator of negative coverage of the ruling party significantly exceeded its positive coverage. The trend was similar in the case of UNM (positive – 9%, negative – 16%).

A higher share of positive content was observed in the coverage of Free Democrats (positive – 4.3%, negative – 0.9%) while it was nearly equal in the coverage of State for People (positive – 2.5%, negative – 2.3%).

The coverage of the President was positive in 3.9% and negative in 3% of the total reporting on the subject. The negative coverage of the CEC (1.7%) was higher than the positive (0.8%) whereas the coverage of Interagency Commission was 0.01% in negative content.

Figure 3.7.4 Share of coverage of political subjects in positive and negative content, Kavkasia



Qualitative Data

Balance: Kavkasia TV mostly observes the norms of journalistic ethics in news coverage. There are separate cases, when certain accusations are aired in the format of live coverage and the position of the target of accusations is not provided. Analysis of these facts shows that balance is not violated deliberately, in favor of any separate political subject, but such facts are observed in respect of various political subjects that may be linked with lack of resources.

Balance. On August 1 (at 8:57pm) Kavkasia TV's news program Today covered the appeal of Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA) to the Central Election Commission, where GYLA requests the commission to fine the United National Movement for the participation of ex-President, Ukrainian citizen Mikheil Saakashvili in pre-election activities, through a video address during nomination of majoritarian MP candidates in Batumi. The story, however, does not provide the position of the UNM party on this issue.

Balance. On August 6 (at 8:50pm) Kavkasia TV provided live coverage of the National Movement's accusations against the Education Ministry. Some representatives of the UNM party claimed that the Ministry of Education signed a contract with a certain company in frames of which four times more amount was paid for printing textbooks for 2016-2017 years. The material provides comments of two members of the UNM party, but the positions of either the Education Ministry or the contractor firm have not been unveiled. Thus, balance has been violated.

Balance. On August 18, Kavkasia TV's news program (at 9:03pm) provided live coverage of a rally held by residents of so called Kolkheti settlement of Gldani district outside the Economy Ministry. The participants of the rally accused the Ministry of Economy of selling their bath house and leaving 14 families without baths. The rally was organized by majoritarian MP candidate in Gldani district, Kakha Kukava, whose comments were not provided in the live coverage. Neither does the material provide the comments of the Economy Ministry, owner of a disputable area or other stakeholders; thus, the material is considered unbalanced.

3.8. Obieqtivi

About Obieqtivi TV: Media Union Obieqtivi was founded in August 2010. Secretary General of Alliance of Patriots of Georgia (APG), Irma Inashvili was co-founder of the TV channel. Since 2014 she has not been involved in the channel's management. Several anchors of Obieqtivi (Bondo Mdzinarashvili, Vakhtang Begiashvili) were nominated by Alliance of Patriots as a candidates for the 2016 parliamentary elections. According to various surveys, Obieqtivi carries out an anti-western, Turkophobic and homophobic editorial policy. Discriminatory editorial policy of the Obieqtivi talk-shows were mentioned in the fifth monitoring cycle report of the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), which recommended the Georgian authorities "to review their contracts with media outlets and cancel or not renew them in cases where media are known to engage in racist or homo-/transphobic hate speech." The TV channel launched its pre-election news programs in May 16, 2016. Media Union Obieqtivi was not included in TVMR Georgia TV ratings in 2015. According to the financial declarations published on the website of the Georgian National Communications Commission (GNCC) for the 2016 (January 1 -June 30), among 8 TV Companies which are in lead on media market in terms of revenues, Media Union Obieqtivi is the only TV company with highest donation share (31 %).

Quantitative Data

Total reporting. Obieqtivi TV has become a subject of monitoring after the TV channel, on 16 May, began to produce news programs. Consequently, the presented data reflects the results of four and a half months' monitoring (1 June – 15 October).

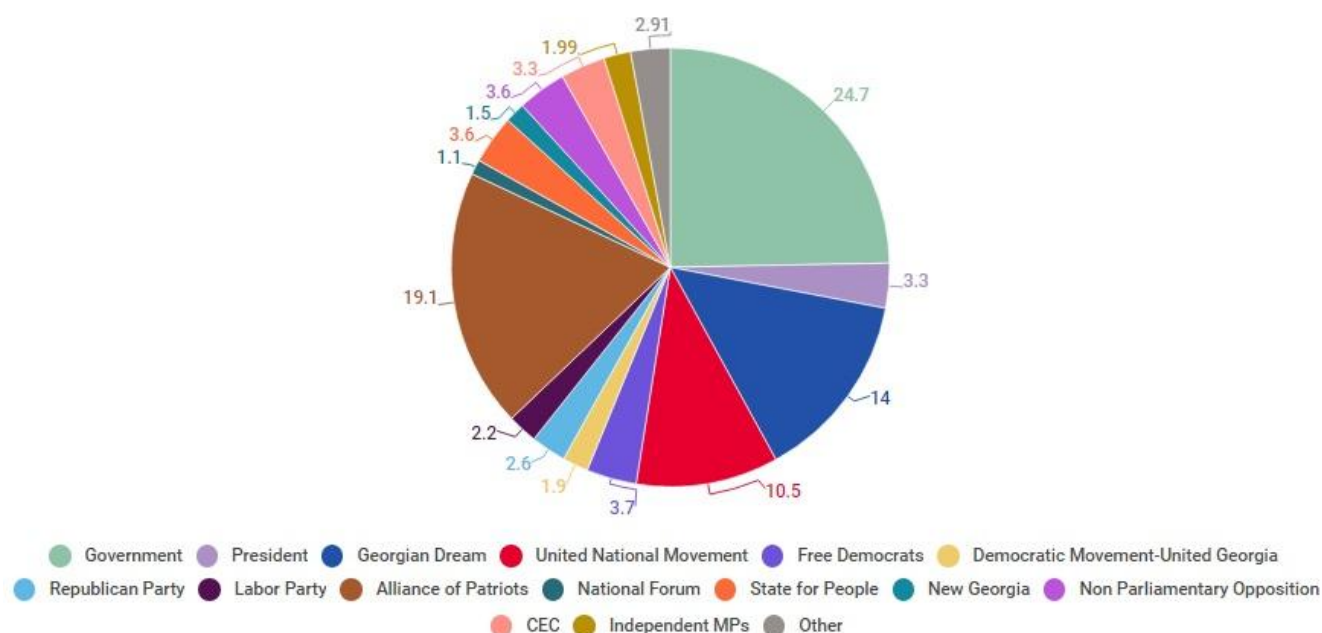
Obieqtivi allocated the largest amount of time of its primetime reporting (2357 reports in total) to the government (24.7%). In contrast to other TV channels, the second by the allocated amount of time was the Alliance of Patriots – at 19.1%, followed by the Georgian Dream (14%) and the UNM (10.5%).

The share of non-parliamentary opposition in the total reporting comprised 3.6%. The sum of various political parties, with each having received less than 1% of total coverage, made up 2.91%. The list of other political subjects having received more than 1% of the coverage on Obieqtivi TV channel was the broadest among the monitored channels: Free Democrats (3.7%), State for People (3.6%), Republican Party (2.6%), Labor Party (2.2%), Democratic Movement – United Georgia (1.9%), New Georgia (1.5%) and National Forum (1.1%).

The TV company allocated 1.99% of its total news broadcast to the coverage of independent deputies.

President and the Central Election Commission (CEC) received the same amount of time (3.3%) while the share of the Interagency Commission was less than 1% (0.1%).

Figure 3.8.1 Total reporting on political subjects, Obieqtivi (1 June – 15 October)

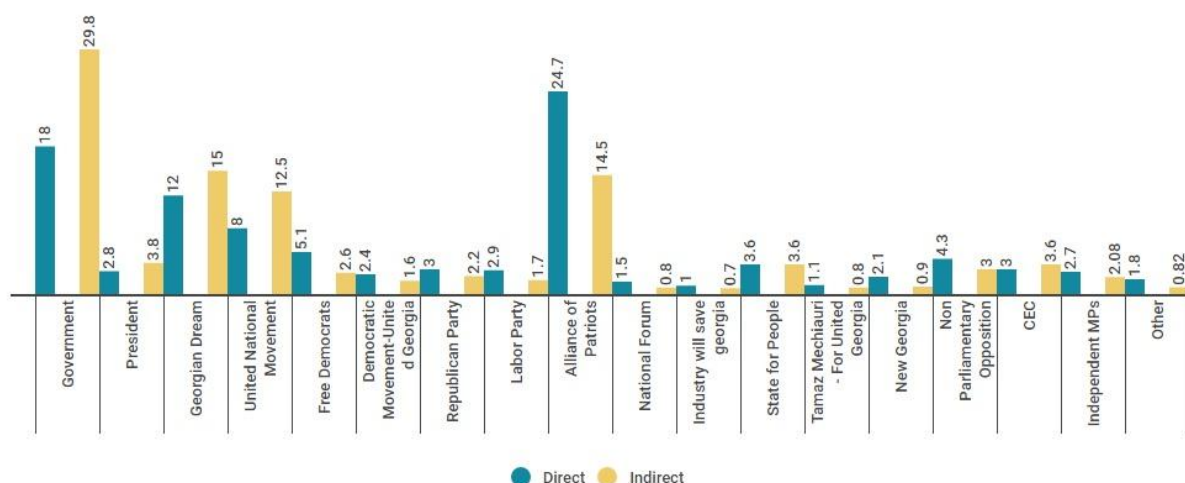


Direct/indirect reporting. According to the four-month data, the highest indicator of direct reporting by Obieqtivi was seen in the coverage of Alliance of Patriots; at the same time, the indicator of direct reporting (24.7%) well exceeded that of indirect reporting on the same subject (14.5%). The form of reporting on the government by Obieqtivi TV differed from those of other TV channels, with the indirect reporting on the government (29.8%) well exceeding the direct reporting (18%). A similar tendency was seen in the coverage of the UNM (indirect – 12.5%; direct – 8%) and the Georgian Dream (indirect – 15%; direct – 12%), though in both cases the gap between the two indicators was relatively narrower.

In the coverage of the institutions, the indirect reporting on the President was higher by 1% of the direct reporting on the subject (3.8% and 2.8%, respectively) whereas in case of the CEC, the direct reporting is slightly lower than the indirect reporting (3% and 3.6%, respectively). As regards the Interagency Commission, it received 0.2% of coverage in the form of indirect reporting and none in the form of direct reporting.

The situation with other political parties was similar, with the direct reporting slightly exceeding the indirect reporting.

Figure 3.8.2 Direct and indirect reporting on political subjects, Obieqtivi (1 June – 15 October)

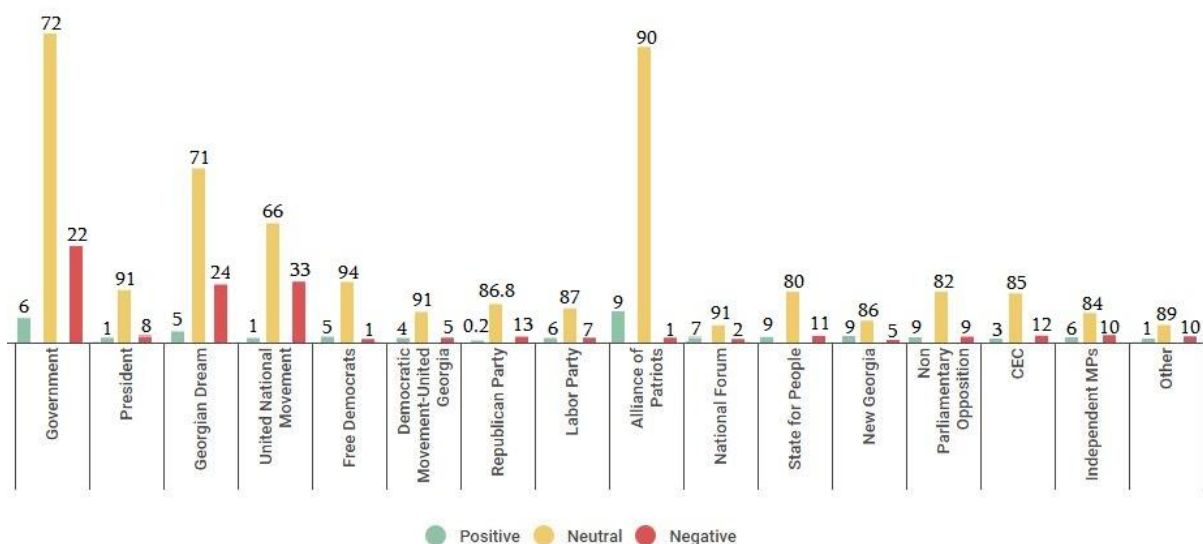


Tone of content. The highest indicators of negative coverage was seen in the reporting on the UNM (33%), the Georgian Dream (24%) and the government (22%); moreover, the positive reporting on the abovementioned subjects was well below the negative coverage thereof. The largest gap between the two indicators was seen in the coverage of the UNM (negative – 33%, positive – 1%), with the Georgian Dream following with the positive coverage at 5% and the government at 6%.

The highest indicator of positive content tone (9%) was observed in relation to four political subjects, however, difference among these subjects was seen in their shares of negative coverage. It is worth noting that Obieqtivi TV applied the least negative tone in the coverage of Alliance of Patriots (positive – 9%, negative – 1%), followed by New Georgia (positive – 9%, negative – 5%). In the coverage of State for People, the negative tone indicator (11%) exceeded the positive tone indicator (9%) by 2%. The non-parliamentary opposition received same amount of positive and negative coverage, comprising 9% each.

In the reporting on the CEC, the negative coverage (12%) significantly exceeded the positive coverage (3%); the trend was similar in the reporting on the President - 8% negative coverage against 1% positive coverage. The Interagency Commission received only negative coverage (6%).

Figure 3.8.3 Coverage of political subjects, tone of content, Obieqtivi (1 June – 15 October)



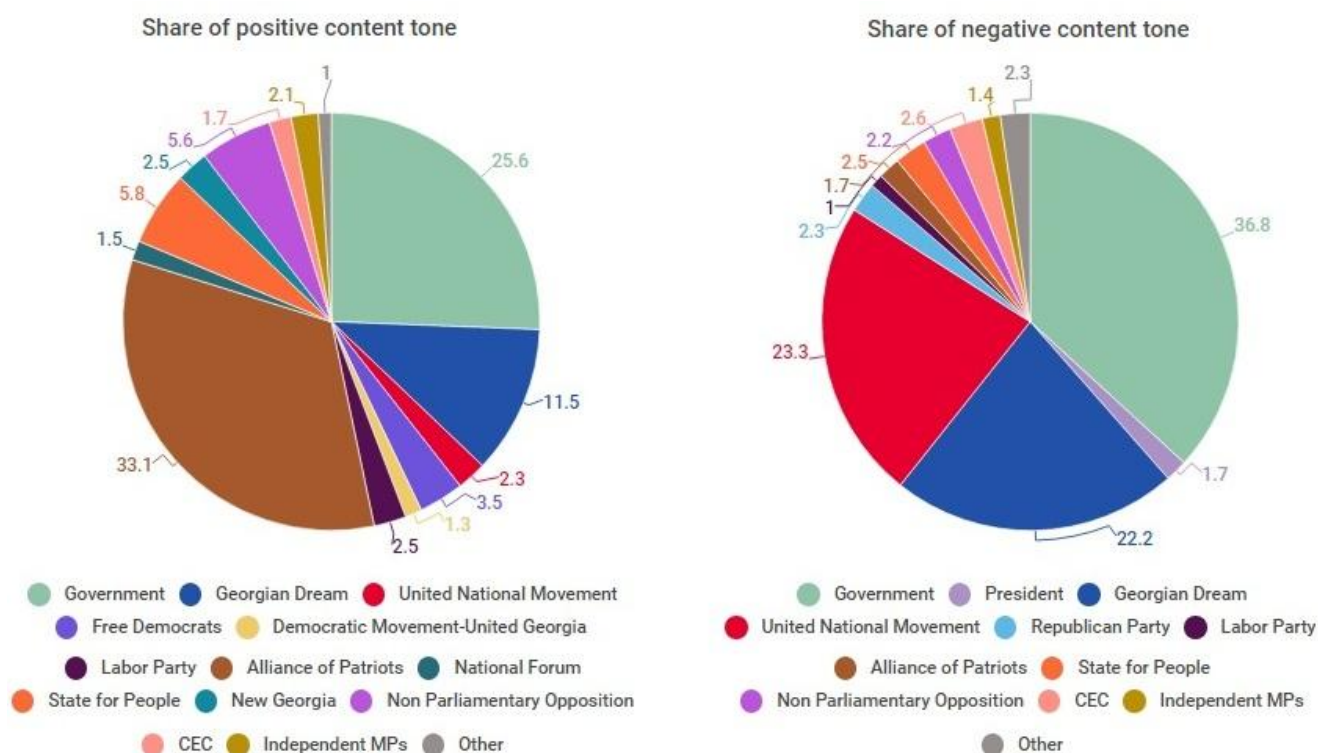
Share of subjects in positive and negative content of TV channels. Obieqtivi gave the most positive coverage to the Alliance of Patriots (33.1%) and the government (25.6%); however, the indicator of negative coverage of the government (36.8%) was way higher as compared to the positive indicator (25.6%) whereas in case of Alliance of Patriots, the indicator of negative coverage was insignificant (1.7%).

The negative content well exceeded the positive content in the coverage of UNM too (negative 23.3%, positive 2.3%). The similar trend, though with a narrower gap, was seen in the coverage of the Georgian Dream where the share of negative content (22.2%) was higher than the share of positive content (11.5%). The negative indicator (2.3%) exceeded the positive indicator (0.1%) in the coverage of the Republican Party too.

As regards the reporting on institutions, the negative content indicator slightly exceeded the positive content indicator: President (negative 1.7%, positive 0.69%), the CEC (negative 2.6%, positive 1.7%). As for the Interagency Commission it received 0.01% in negative coverage.

The picture was even in terms of the coverage of other political subjects, with the positive coverage mainly exceeding the negative coverage.

Figure 3.8.4 Share of coverage of political subjects in positive and negative content, Obieqtivi (1 June – 15 October)



Qualitative Data

Balance/sources/discrimination. On 30 September, Obieqtivi aired a report about a rally which the Alliance of Patriots planned to stage in Batumi. In the lead-in, a journalist said that at this rally the political party and its supporters would voice their protest against a threat of Turkish expansion in Adjara which had manifested itself in the opening of Turkish school and the step up in the activity of Turkish investors in the region.

In the report, members of the Alliance of Patriots made xenophobic statements. The single-seat candidate from the party for Batumi constituency said:

“We urge all the patriots who have dignity and respect themselves to assemble on the Era Square in Batumi tomorrow, on 1 October, at 3 o’clock to jointly save our homeland from Turkish expansion.”

Neither the journalist nor the presenter of Obieqtivi TV channel noted that the rally of the Alliance of Patriots as well as the statement of the candidate was xenophobic. Nor did the report provide a position of human rights defenders or those representatives of political spectrum, whose positions differ from that of Alliance of Patriots.

Moreover, at the end of the report the journalist declared that alongside the Alliance of Patriots, the protest against the threat of Turkish expansion was also voiced by local population. However, the report included a comment of a single respondent, a supporter of the political party, and this comment was generalized on the entire population; this was a factual inaccuracy and manipulation of public opinion.

On 21 September, a report aired on Obieqtivi concerned the opening of a Turkish school in Batumi. Interest of media towards this development was triggered by the fact that the building was constructed without a permit. The report contained a comment of the consul of Turkey saying that the school was built upon the agreement with the Education Ministry. It also contained a comment of the Education Minister Aleksandre Jejelava evaluating the issue of lawfulness of the building. With regard to this issue, the journalist provided the position of only one political party, namely, the General Secretary of the Alliance of Patriots Irma Inashvili who focused not on the violation of the law but on the Turkish origin of the school. The comment was xenophobic:

“The fact of opening a Turkish school in Batumi speaks about the ideological expansion already taking place too. The opening of Turkish school within the boundaries of the Georgian state, with teachers are invited from Turkey and teaching conducted in accordance with the Turkish education system does not serve the state interests of our country.”

The journalist did not mention the xenophobic content of the statement in this case either.

Balance/bias. On 5 August (at 19:44), Obieqtivi TV covered the fact of forwarding by the Central Electoral Commission of a petition of an initiative group, concerning the conduct of a referendum on

the issue of marriage, to the President. The initiative group petitioned for the conduct of the referendum on the following question: “Do you agree that civil marriage is defined as a union between a man and a woman for the aim to create a family?”

The report provided comments made by a member of the initiative group, Merab Shatirishvili; a representative of the Democratic Movement, Nino Burjanadze; a representative of the Georgian Dream, Eka Beselia; a representative of the Alliance of Patriots-United Opposition, Kakha Kukava, who supported this initiative. The report did not provide comments of either those political forces who did not support this initiative or nongovernmental organizations who viewed this issue from the human rights perspective.

With the analogous approach, Obieqtivi produced a report on 9 August (at 19:40) about the referendum on the issue of marriage. According to the report, the President postponed a meeting with the initiative group. Comments provided on this issue in the report were made by a representative of President, a member of a political party falling within the initiative group Sandro Bregadze, political parties as well as comments recorded during vox pop.

It is worth noting that the report included comments of only those political parties who supported the mentioned constitutional change: Tamaz Mechiauri-United Georgia (Sandro Bregadze), Georgian Dream (Dimitri Khundadze), Free Democrats (Giorgi Tsagareishvili), Democratic Movement (Dimitri Lortkipanidze).

Views of political parties who had a different position on this issue as well as those of human rights defenders were not provided in this report either.

Balance/bias. On August 8, Obieqtivi TV aired a story (at 7:40pm) titled “Causes and Consequences of the August War.” The story was presented in the following way: “Who started the August war? The Georgian side names occupant Russia as the main initiator of the war, but a part of politicians also speak about certain mistakes made by the previous authorities...”

The respondents of the story – Mamuka Areshidze (political analyst), Gia Zhorzholiani (Georgian Dream), Nino Burjanadze (Democratic Movement), Tamaz Mechiauri (Tamaz Mechiauri – United Georgia), Irma Inashvili (Alliance of Patriots) lay emphasis on the responsibility of the Georgian authorities, in particular ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili and his team.

The story also provides comments of Justice Minister Tea Tsulukiani and Parliament’s Vice Speaker, who speak about the need of investigating the issues of war crimes and ethnic cleansing.

The story does not involve the position of former officials or those parties, who believe that the war was unleashed by Russia. So, the story is biased and unbalanced.

Balance. On September 22, Obieqtivi TV aired a story about election programs and promises of political parties. Two out of three political parties featuring in the story (Ours – People’s Party; Georgian Troupe; Socialist Georgia) were pro-Russian. In the story, Jondi Bagaturia, leader of

Georgian Troupe, offers voters access to free education in Russia, and Tamaz Japoshvili, leader of the Socialist Party of Workers speaks about the advantages of Soviet socialism over today's Europe. The story did not provide a diversity of political parties, as well as the programs of those political parties that give preference to western integration in foreign policy; so, the balance has been violated.

Coverage of public opinion poll. On September 23, Obieqtivi TV aired a story dedicated to the public opinion poll conducted by the U.S. company Wilson Perkins Allen Research (WPA), which indicated only 7 out of 11 mandatory requirements for broadcasters to cover public opinion polls in a pre-election period.

It should be noted that the results of the public opinion poll conducted by WPA essentially differ from the results of other comparative public opinion polls. According to the results of the poll released by the U.S. company, Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia (GDDG) ruling party leads with 25% in political ratings, followed by Alliance of Patriots with 16%; the United National Movement comes next with 12% support. It should be noted that the latter took the second place in all other polls.

According to the election code of Georgia, "it shall be feasible to provide convincing scientific explanation if there are significant discrepancies or changes in the results of the same or other comparative public opinion polls." The story aired by Obieqtivi TV did not explain the reason of discrepancy in the figures provided by WPA; neither did it provide any information, such as survey methodology. In addition, the poll has not been published anywhere in its full form. As far as media outlets are concerned, besides Obieqtivi, only IPN news agency covered it.

In its story the TV channel said nothing about the companies that fielded, commissioned or funded the polls, how many persons refused to answer, etc. Neither did it provide information about margin of error. This requirement (margin of error), taking into account the number of respondents participating in the polls (1322 respondents), is necessary information for correct interpretation of the results published by the company. The story does not provide any information about the number of those respondents who support other parties (1%) and number of undecided voters (18%), as well as number of those respondents (16%), who do not support any party; this information was provided by IPN.

IPN and Obieqtivi covered the poll conducted by WPA differently. According to a Georgian translation of English-language comments made by WPA's representative, Paul Stakenas, which were aired by Obieqtivi TV, Georgian Dream leads with 39% in political ratings. However, during presentation of results in the story, Georgian Dream's percentage is seen as 25%. In IPN's article dedicated to the same public opinion poll, Georgian Dream leads with 25%.

The name of the company's representative was provided differently by the two media outlets. IPN and Obieqtivi introduced one and the same person by different names. In the story aired by Obieqtivi TV this person is introduced as Paul Stakenas, the head of public opinion research organization, whereas IPN introduced the same person as WPA's executive director, Chris Wilson.

4. UNIFORM DATA FOR ONLINE MEDIA

The monitoring of online media (1 April – 15 October, 2016) showed that the largest amount of the total coverage (32 009 items) was dedicated to the government (39.4%) and the Georgian Dream (22%), which made up 61.4% in total. It is worth noting that the government and the ruling party, taken together, received much more coverage in online media than in broadcast media where the corresponding indicator stood at 49.98%.

The share of UNM in the total online coverage comprised 10.1%; this was followed by Republican Party (5.8%), Free Democrats (2.9%) and Democratic Movement-United Georgia (2.9%). State for People, the political party established in the year of the parliamentary election, received 2.3% of total coverage; the share of non-parliamentary opposition comprised 1.7% and that of independent deputies totaled 1.6%.

The share of political parties having received less than 1% of the coverage made up 4.4% of total coverage and this coverage was distributed as follows: Alliance of Patriots – 0.8%, National Forum and Industry Will Save Georgia - 0.6% each, Tamaz Mechiauri-United Georgia - 0.5%, New Georgia - 0.4%, Labor Party – 0.3%, Conservative Party – 0.2%, New Rights – 0.1%, Girchi – 0.87%, Leftist Alliance and Kartuli Dasi – 0.01 each.

The coverage of the President by online media comprised 5.4%, that of CEC stood at 1.5% and Interagency Commission at 0.01%.

Figure 4.1 Total reporting on political subjects, online media

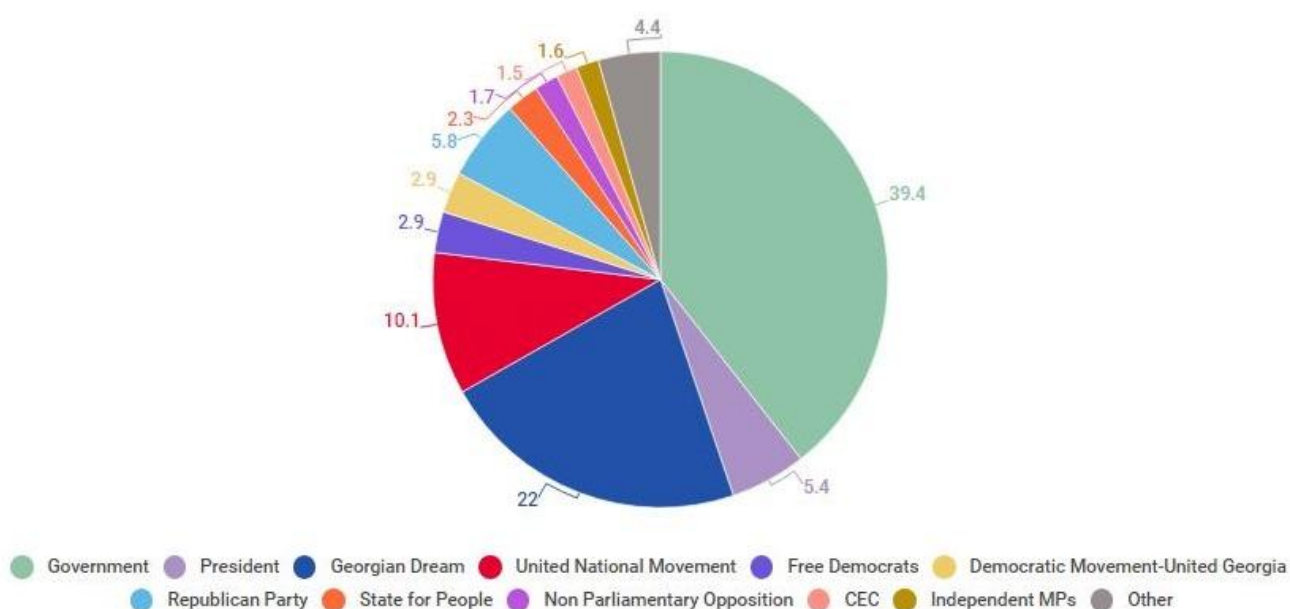
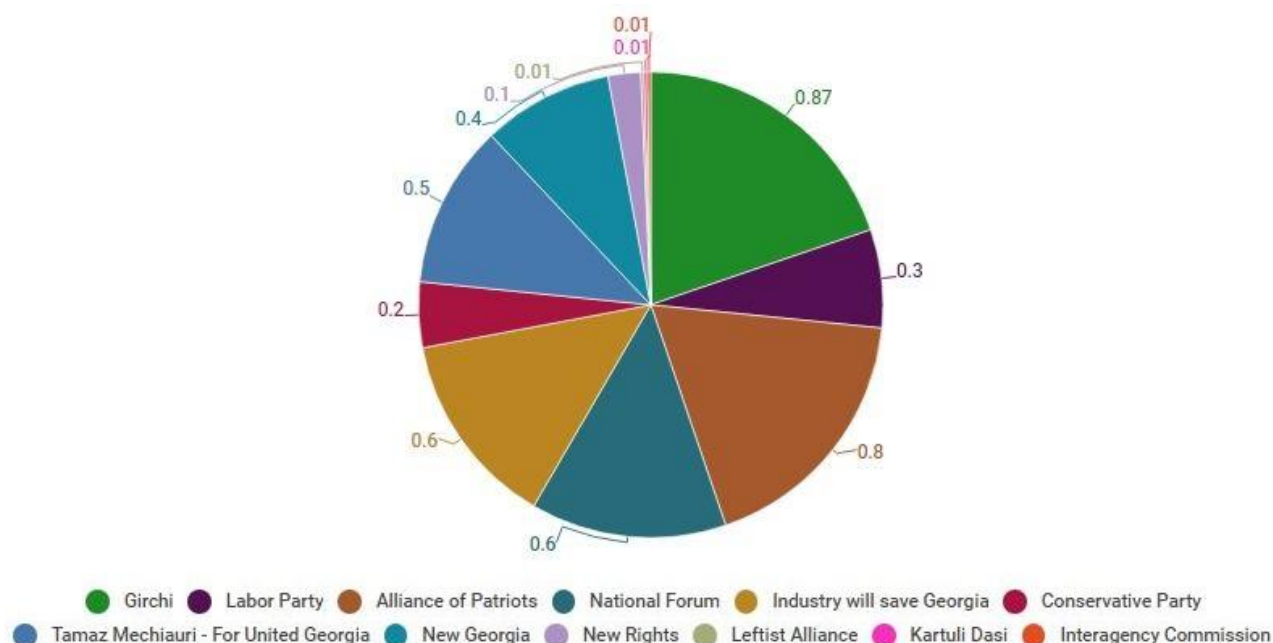


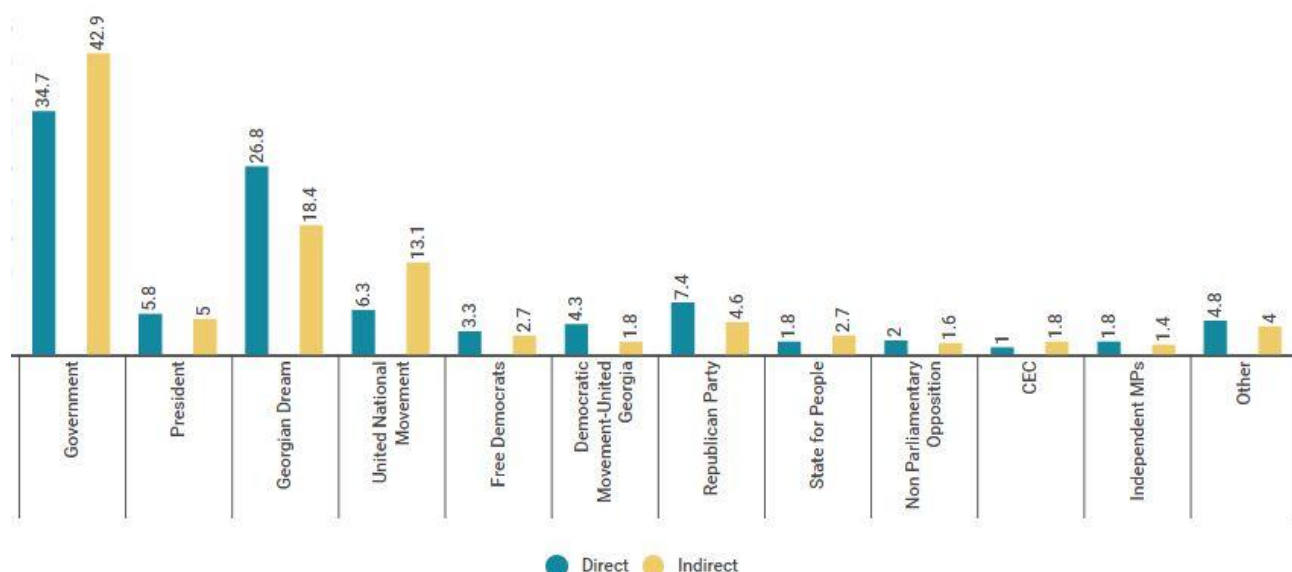
Figure 4.2 Political subjects having received less than 1% of total coverage, online media



Direct/indirect reporting of political subjects. Online media allocated the largest amount of coverage in the form of both direct and indirect reporting to the government and the Georgian Dream. The indirect reporting on the government (42.9%) exceeded the direct reporting on the same subject (34.7%) whereas in case of the Georgian Dream, the direct reporting (26.8%) was higher than the indirect reporting (18.4%).

In terms of opposition political parties, the indirect reporting exceeded the direct reporting only in the coverage of the UNM (indirect – 13.1%, direct – 6.3%) and State for People (indirect – 2.7%, direct – 1.8%). The trend was opposite in case of other subjects.

Figure 4.3 Direct and indirect reporting on political subjects



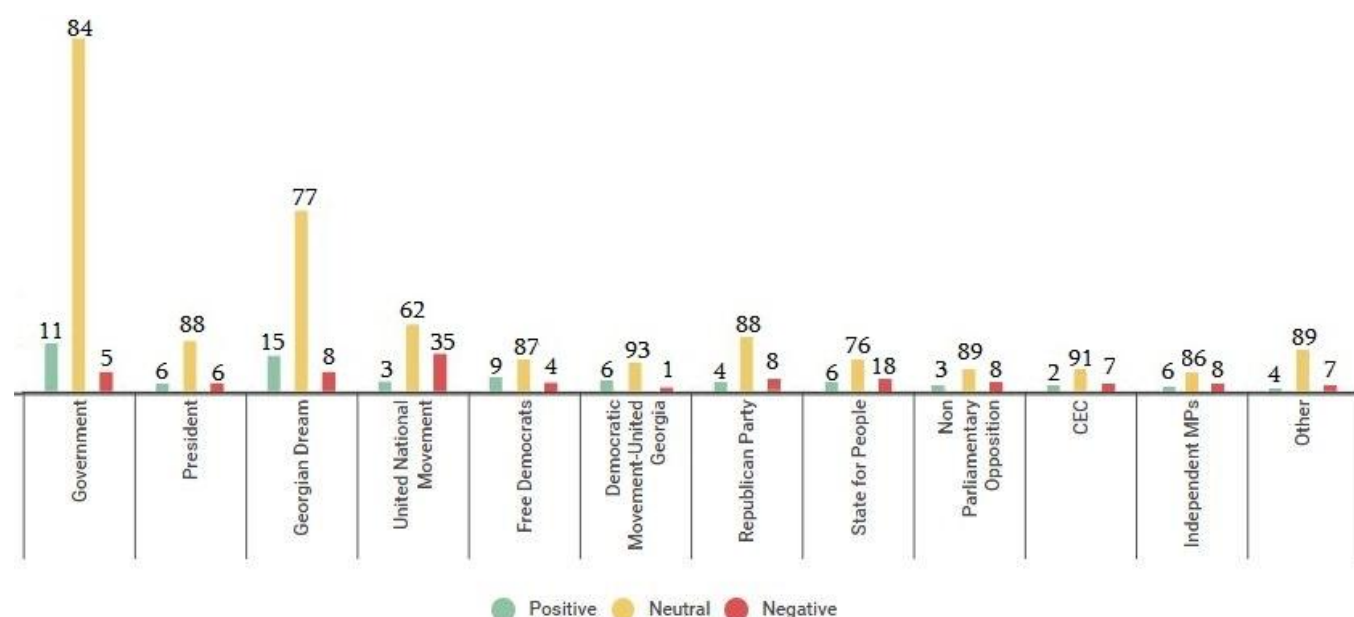
Tone of content and context of political subjects. The highest positive content tone in the online media (among the subjects having received more than 1% of total coverage) was observed in the coverage of Georgian Dream (positive – 15%, negative – 8%), the government (positive – 11%, negative – 5%) and Free Democrats (positive – 9%, negative – 4%).

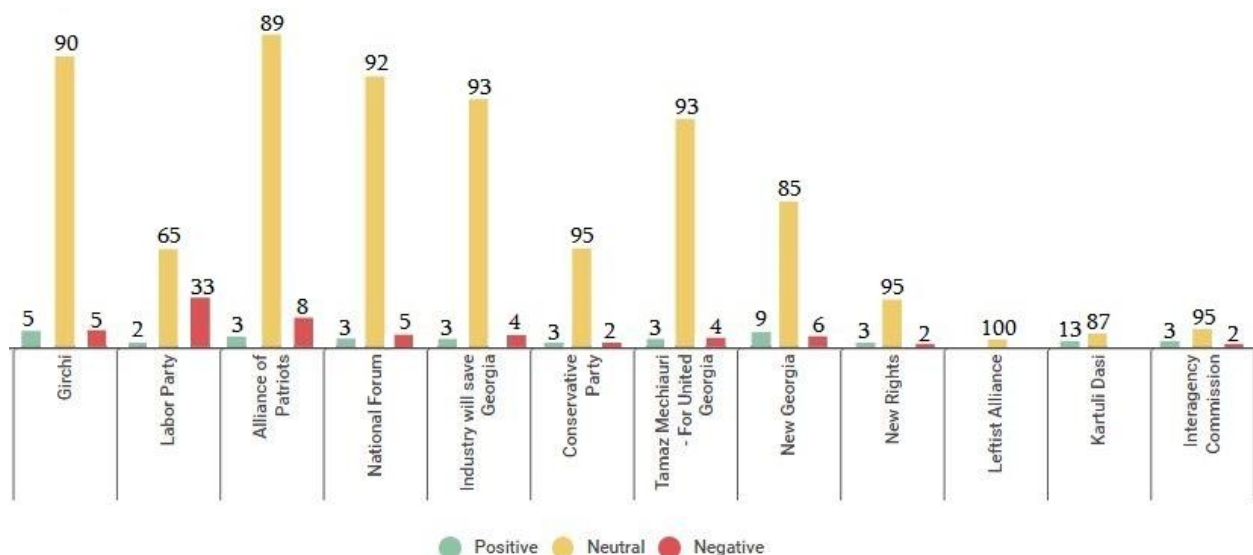
The highest negative content tone was observed in the coverage of UNM (negative – 35%, positive – 3%) followed by State for People (negative – 18%, positive – 6%), Alliance of Patriots (negative – 8%, positive – 3%) as well as the Labor Party (negative – 33%, positive – 2%) whose share in the total coverage was below 1%.

The highest neutral tone was seen in the coverage of Conservative Party (neutral – 95%, negative – 2%), also, New Rights (neutral – 95%, negative – 2%) and Democratic Movement-United Georgia (neutral – 93%, negative – 1%).

The indicators of negative and positive tones in the coverage of President were 6% each, while that of neutral tone was 88%. The corresponding indicators for CEC were 91% neutral, 7% negative and 2% positive.

Figure 4.4 Tone of content, online media





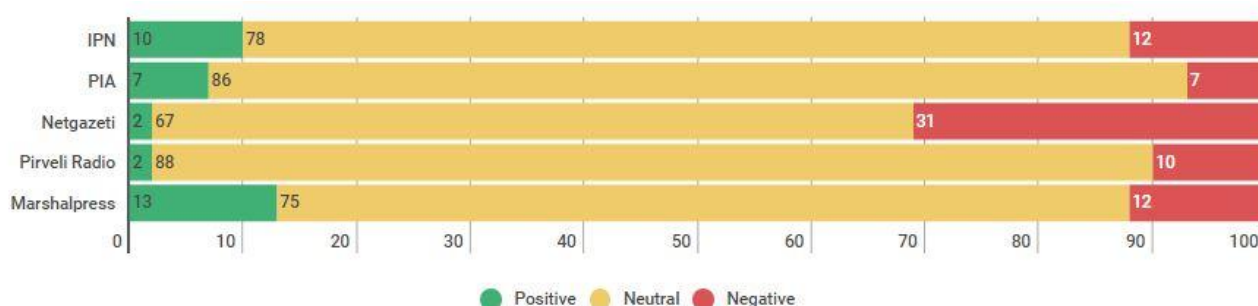
Tone of context. The tone of context gives an idea about the amount of those critical topics in connection with which political subjects are covered. The online media monitoring over the period between 1 April and 15 October showed that statistically, the neutral context tone dominated the coverage of political subjects.

The most critical online media outlet was Netgazeti where the indicator of negative context was the highest – at 31% whereas the positive tone was a mere 2%.

The highest positive context tone was observed in the coverage by Marshalpress (13%) with a negative tone of context being slightly lower (12%). The second by the indicator of positive tone was IPN, though the negative context tone of the news agency was higher than the positive one (positive – 10%, negative – 12%); the same was true for Pirveli Radio (negative - 10%, positive – 2%).

The news agency PIA had equal indicators of negative and positive tones – at 7%.

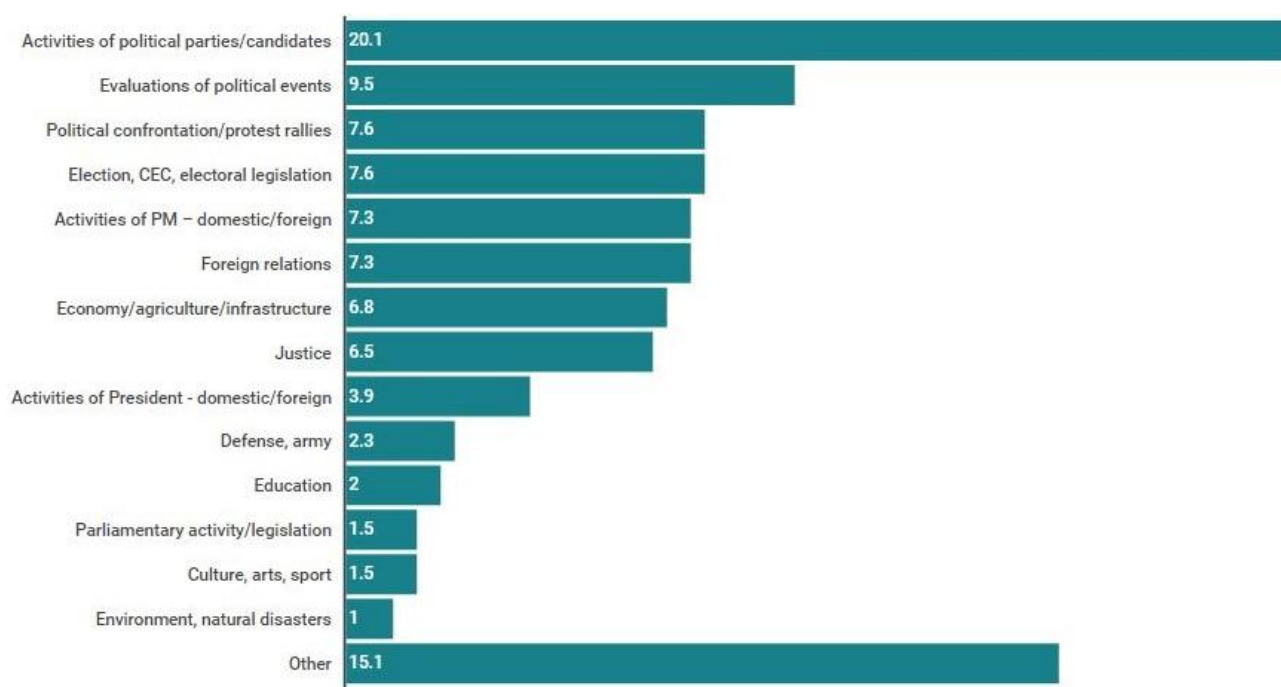
Figure 4.5 Tone of context, online media



5. TOPICS COVERED IN ONLINE MEDIA REPORTING ON POLITICAL SUBJECTS

According to the monitoring over the period from 1 April to 15 October, the online media showed a somewhat different picture of the coverage as compared to broadcast media. Here as well, the most extensive coverage was received by activities of candidates of political parties (20.1%), followed by evaluations by electoral subjects of political events (9.5%), political confrontation/protest rallies (7.6%), elections and CEC (7.6%). Activities of the Prime Minister and issues of foreign relations received equal coverage (7.3% each) with the topics of economy, agriculture and infrastructure lagging a little behind (6.8%). Relatively high indicators of the last three topics may be attributed to service contracts of budgetary organizations with IPN and PIA, for the release of information in exchange of financing.¹³ In general, the content of these two news agencies largely influenced overall trends of entire online media as the amount of materials on political subjects published by these two outlets comprised 19 490 whereas the total amount of materials on political subjects published by the rest of three monitored online outlets made up 12 519. The topic of conflicts received a lesser share in online media (less than 1%) than in broadcast media. Alike broadcast media, the online media showed a lower interest towards education (2%), environment (1%), healthcare and social issues (less than 1%).

Figure 5.1 Topics in coverage of political subjects



¹³ MDF (2016). Pre-election environment. <http://mediameter.ge/ge/research/cinasaarchevno-media-garemo-angarishi-2016>

6. ONLINE MEDIA DATA BY MEDIA OUTLETS

6.1 Interpressnews

About InterPressNews: Interpressnews (IPN.ge)¹⁴ was founded in 2002 and is one of the largest private news agencies in Georgia. The news agency, which is part of Media Palitra Holding, has changed hands several times. As of February 2015, shareholders of News Ltd are: Zaza Buadze – 12%; Irakli Tevdorashvili – 46%; Giorgi Tevdorashvili – 12%; Kviris Palitra Ltd – 15% (Zaza Buadze 25%, Irakli Tevdorashvili 75%) and Newsroom Ltd 15% (Kviris Palitra Ltd 100%). One of the shareholder, Giorgi Tevdorashvili also owns 50% of shares in Tri-Media Intelligence (TMI), the company measuring television audience. The news agency has contracts with various ministries and budgetary organizations on dissemination of information and other information services for which it received GEL 249 352 in 2015 - one of the highest amount among agencies.

Quantitative Data

Total reporting. The IPN allocated the largest amount of its total coverage (12029 news items) to the government (47.9%) and the ruling party Georgian Dream (16.1%). The total coverage of these two subjects made up 64%. The high indicator of reporting on the government may also be attributed to budgetary service contracts on the release of information, which the majority of ministries concluded with the IPN.

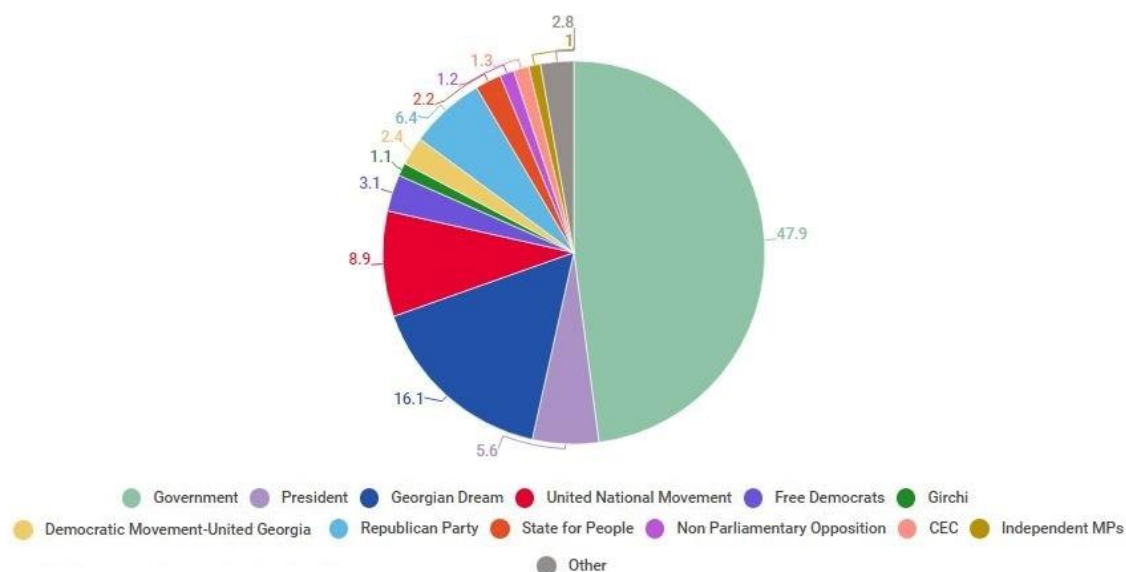
The coverage of third political subject, the UNM (8.9%), lagged significantly behind that of the Georgian Dream. Among other qualified subjects with higher indicators of coverage were the Republican Party (6.4%), followed by the Free Democrats (3.1%) and the Democratic Movement-United Georgia (2.4%). Other qualified subjects received less than 1% of the total coverage.

As regards non-qualified subjects, the IPN most frequently reported about the State for People (2.2%) and Girchi (1.1%).

The coverage of non-parliamentary opposition stood at 1.2%, of CEC at 1.3% and independent deputies at 1%. The President received 5.6% of the total coverage by the news agency.

¹⁴ MediaMeter, MDF, IPN, <http://mediameter.ge/en/media-profiles/interpressnews>

Figure 6.1.1 Total reporting on political subjects, IPN



Direct/indirect reporting. The news agency reported about the government indirectly (54.1%) more frequently than directly (38.2%), which may again be explained by the provision of paid service on the released of information from ministries. In case of Georgian Dream, the share of direct reporting (19.6%) was higher than indirect reporting (13.8%) in the total coverage of the subject. The trend was similar in the coverage of Republican Party (direct – 4%, indirect – 2.6%), Free Democrats (direct – 9.2%, indirect – 4.6%), Democratic Movement-United Georgia (direct – 3.8%, indirect – 1.5%) and Girchi (direct – 1.5%, indirect – 0.8%).

The indirect reporting exceeded the direct reporting in the coverage of the UNM (indirect – 9.2%, direct – 8.4%). Other qualified political parties received less than 1% of the total coverage.

The picture was similar in regards with other subjects, with no significant differences seen between the two indicators.

Figure 6.1.2 Direct and indirect reporting on political subjects, IPN



Tone of content. Against a generally neutral coverage in tone, the prevalence of negative tone over the positive one was observed in the reporting on several subjects.

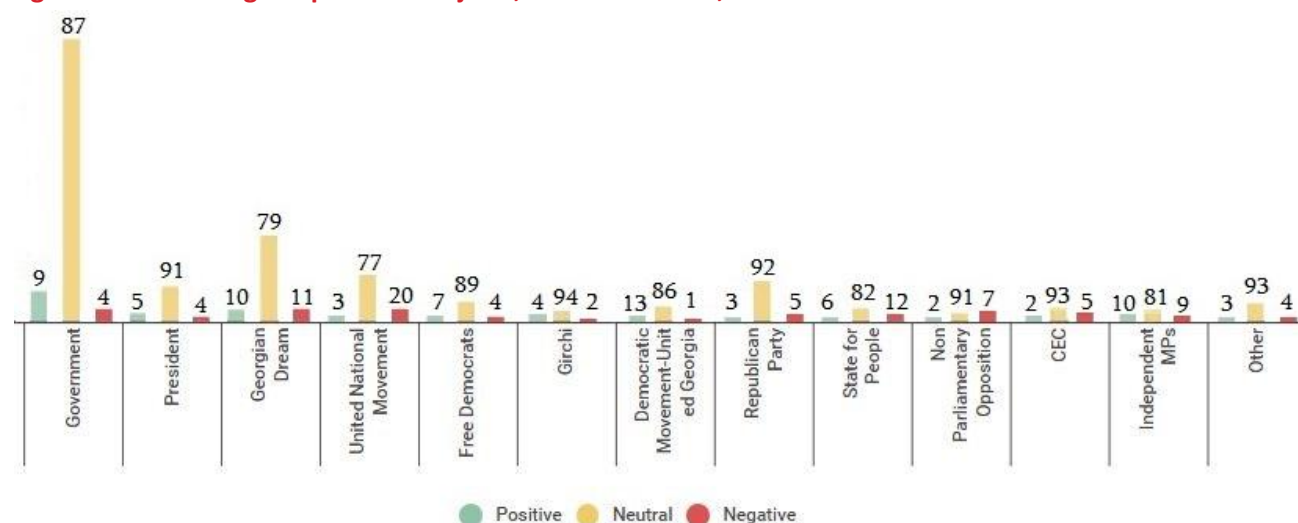
The government received a largely neutral coverage of 87%, with the share of positive reporting (9%) exceeding that of negative reporting (4%); in case of Georgian Dream, the difference between the two indicators was insignificant (negative – 11%, positive – 10%).

The difference between the negative and positive tones was stark in the coverage of the UNM (negative – 20%, positive – 3%). The negative tone also prevailed over the positive one in the coverage of State for People (negative – 12%, positive – 6%) and Republican Party (negative – 5%, positive – 3%).

As regards other qualified subjects, the indicator of positive tone (13%) was way higher than the negative tone (1%) in the coverage of Democratic Movement-United Georgia; a similar trend was seen in the coverage of Free Democrats (positive – 7%, negative – 4%).

The President received a largely neutral coverage (91%) with almost equal indicators of positive (5%) and negative (4%) content tones.

Figure 6.1.3 Coverage of political subjects, tone of content, IPN

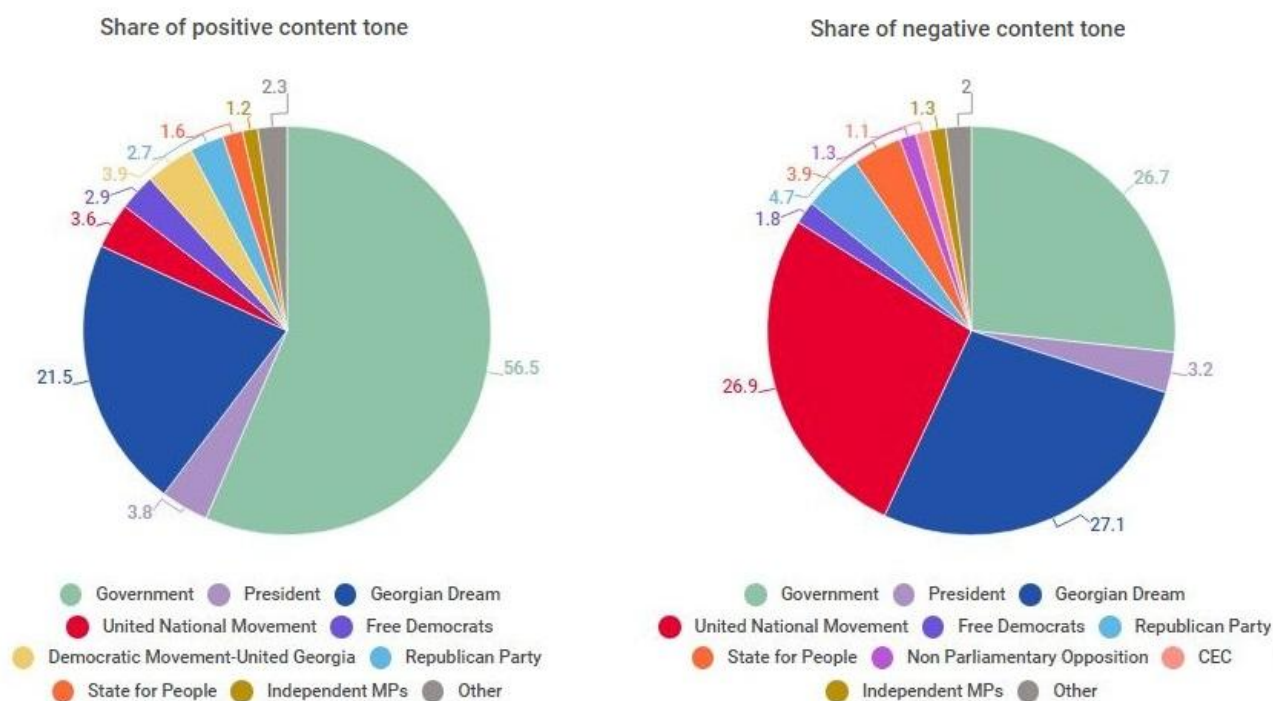


Share of subjects in positive and negative content of the news agency. The highest indicator of positive coverage by the IPN accounted for the government (positive – 56.5%, negative – 26.7%) which was followed by the ruling party Georgian Dream (positive – 21.5%, negative – 27.1%). In total, these two subjects accounted for 78% of positive content and 53.8% of negative content.

The third political subject by the amount of positive content – the Free Democrats, was well below the Georgian Dream and the government (positive – 2.9%, negative – 1.8%). The negative content tone largely exceeded the positive tone in the coverage of the UNM (negative – 26.9%, positive – 3.6%). The same held true for the Republican Party (negative – 4.7%, positive – 2.7%) and the State for People (negative – 3.9%, positive – 1.6%).

In case of the coverage of President, the positive content tone stood at 3.8% and the negative content tone at 3.2% while in the coverage of the CEC the negative tone comprised 1.1% and the positive 0.3%.

Figure 6.8.4 Share of coverage of political subjects in positive and negative content, IPN



Qualitative Data

Balance/practice of paid articles. IPN has an established practice of news coverage, when factual information is covered citing a single source and even this source is not rechecked. Although the news agency covers the positions of the other party in subsequent reports, such approach fails to balance the fact of disseminating inaccurate information.

For example, on August 20, at 2:33pm the news agency released an article titled “About 50 members quit the Poti regional office of Paata Burchuladze’s movement.” The news agency informs about the fact of quitting the movement by 50 members in an affirmative form and the executive secretary of the regional office is cited as the source of information. The news agency disseminated information without rechecking it with the party or providing any documents.

To reject this fact and provide assessments by Burchuladze’s movement, the news agency released a new article titled “Kote Kemularia: Not 50, but only four activists quit the State for People movement in Poti” at 7:57pm by the end of day. It should be noted that unlike the first case, this time the report cites the source already in the title of the news article to indicate that it is the position of the party. In addition, the report was disseminated using symbol NS (News from Subscribers). Thus, the news

agency disseminated the information provided by one party in an informative format and simultaneously, in an affirmative form, and the response of the other party to it was provided in a form of an advertisement that is violation of equal coverage of political subjects ahead of elections. Moreover, ultimately it remained unclear how many members actually quit Paata Burchuladze's party, because the information provided by the both parties is controversial and the news agency did not try to seek other sources or documentary substantiation.

It should also be noted that the news agency covered the fact of quitting Burchuladze's party by its members citing a single source (a member who quit the party) nine times in a period from August 12 to August 23. One of them titled "Majoritarian MP candidate in Akhalkalaki/Ninotsminda single-mandate constituency quit Paata Burchuladze's party" was released on August 21 with a symbol NS; it means that the material was financed by the opponent of State for People party.

Coverage of public opinion poll/factual inaccuracy. An article released by IPN on September 23 covered the results of public opinion poll conducted by the U.S. company Wilson Perkins Allen Research (WPA).

It should be noted that only two media outlets (IPN and Obieqtivi) covered the public opinion poll conducted by Wilson Perkins Allen Research; in addition, the results of this poll actually differed from similar political surveys released in the pre-election period. According to WPA, support of various political parties looks as follows: Georgian Dream – 25%; Alliance of Patriots – 16%; United National Movement – 12% - it should be noted that this latter usually takes the 2nd place in political ratings of other polls. The article did not mention the difference between the results of WPA's poll and other surveys. It did not provide the reasons or any scientific explanation for getting such results. IPN editorial board did not publish the method of conducted poll.

One factual inaccuracy is also observed in the article. The author notes that Chris Wilson, CEO of the the Survey Institute, presented the results of public opinion poll to the society; however, a photo of Paul Stakenas is attached to the article. The same person also presents the results of WPA's poll in the story aired by Obieqtivi TV, where he is introduced as "the head of public opinion research organization."

In coverage of the poll, the edition named 7 out of 11 compulsory requirements fully and one was named partially; 3 requirements (exact formulation of survey questions, margin of error and information about the factors affecting the survey) were not named at all.

Practice of paid materials/identical materials. On October 12, information¹⁵ posted on the Interior Ministry's official website was disseminated by IPN¹⁶, Marshalpress¹⁷ and PIA. The article was about opening a renovated building of the Fire and Rescue Service in Gori by Interior Minister Giorgi

¹⁵ <http://police.ge/ge/giorgi-mghebrishvilma-gorshi-shss-s-sakhandzro-samashvelo-samsakhuris-ganakhlebuli-shenoba-gakhsna/10085>

¹⁶ <http://www.interpressnews.ge/ge/samartali/401869-shs-ministrma-gorshi-shida-qarthlis-sagangebo-situaciebis-marthvis-sammarthvelos-ganakhlebuli-shenoba-gakhsna.html?ar=A>

¹⁷ <http://marshalpress.ge/archives/64230>

Mgebrishvili. The titles and texts of articles published by Marshalpress and PIA were identical to the information posted on the Interior Ministry's website, while IPN published the title and text of the article with slight modifications. Out of the three online editions, only IPN indicated that it was an advertising material.

	Official website	IPN	PIA	Marshalpress
Title	Giorgi Mgebrishvili opened a renovated building of the Interior Ministry's Fire and Rescue Service in Gori.	The Interior Minister opened a renovated building of the Shida Kartli Emergency Situations Management Department in Gori.	Giorgi Mgebrishvili opened a renovated building of the Interior Ministry's Fire and Rescue Service in Gori.	Giorgi Mgebrishvili opened a renovated building of the Interior Ministry's Fire and Rescue Service in Gori.
Form of release		With slight modification	Unchanged	Unchanged
Advertising symbols		*	X	X

On September 30 Nino Burjanadze, leader of Democratic Movement, met with the population of Marneuli and presented the party's election program to them. Information about the meeting was posted on the website of Democratic Movement¹⁸ as well as by news agencies IPN¹⁹ and PIA²⁰ with identical titles and contents.

18 <http://www.democrats.ge/ka/media/mimdinare-movlenebi/5558-nino-burjanadze-marneulis-mosakhleobas-shekhvda.html>

19 <http://www.interpressnews.ge/ge/politika/399833-nino-burjanadze-marneulis-mosakhleobas-shekhvda.html?ar=A>

20 http://pia.ge/show_news.php?id=78821&lang=geo

6.2. PIA

About PIA: The news agency Pirweli (PIA)²¹ was established in November 2006. It is associated with the name of Ani Mirotadze, representative of the party “National Forum” which was included in Georgian Dream coalition by May, 2016. In 2010, 100 percent of the shares in the news agency was owned by Levan Mirotadze; in 2013, the agency was registered in the name of Khvicha Senakia whilst in 2014, the owner of 100 percent of the shares became Dimirti Tikaradze. Editions linked to PIA are: Daijesti.ge, rubrica.ge, funtime.ge. In 2015, the news agency PIA received budget revenues from the contracts signed with state entities in the amount of 80 236 GEL.

Quantitative Data

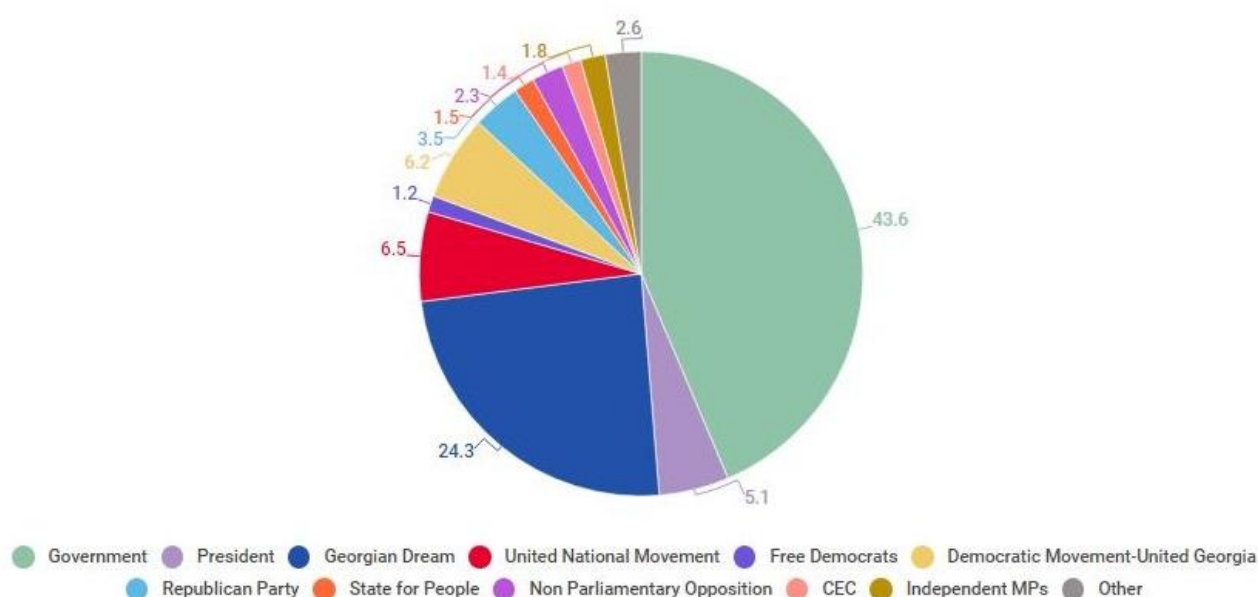
Overall coverage. Monitoring of Pirweli Information Agency (1 April – 15 October) has revealed that in the overall coverage of political subjects (7,461 pieces of information), just like in case of other agencies, two were most actively covered – Georgian Dream (24.3%) and the Government (43.6%) – they received 67.5% of the coverage in total which is the highest rate among all the online-media outlets. The third party by coverage is United National Movement (6.5%). With 6.2%, which is also one of the highest rates, Democratic Movement – United Georgia falls closely behind UNM.

Republican Party comes next in PIA’s overall coverage with 3.5%. The share of Free Democrats is 1.2%. Other parties’ share is less than 1%.

Among the parties created in 2016, State for People is on the first place with 1.5% coverage rate.

The coverage of the President is 5.1%, whereas the Central Electoral Commission’s coverage equals 1.4%.

Diagram 4.2.1. Coverage of Political Subjects – PIA



²¹ [MediaMeter, MDF, PIA, http://mediameter.ge/en/media-profiles/pia](http://mediameter.ge/en/media-profiles/pia)

Direct and Indirect Coverage. PIA was covering the Government more indirectly (46.9%) than directly (40%). In case of Georgian Dream, the data are reversed, as the direct coverage equals 28.8%, with the indirect being on the level of 20.2%. The total rate of the aforementioned two subjects is 68.8% for the direct and 67.1% for the indirect coverage.

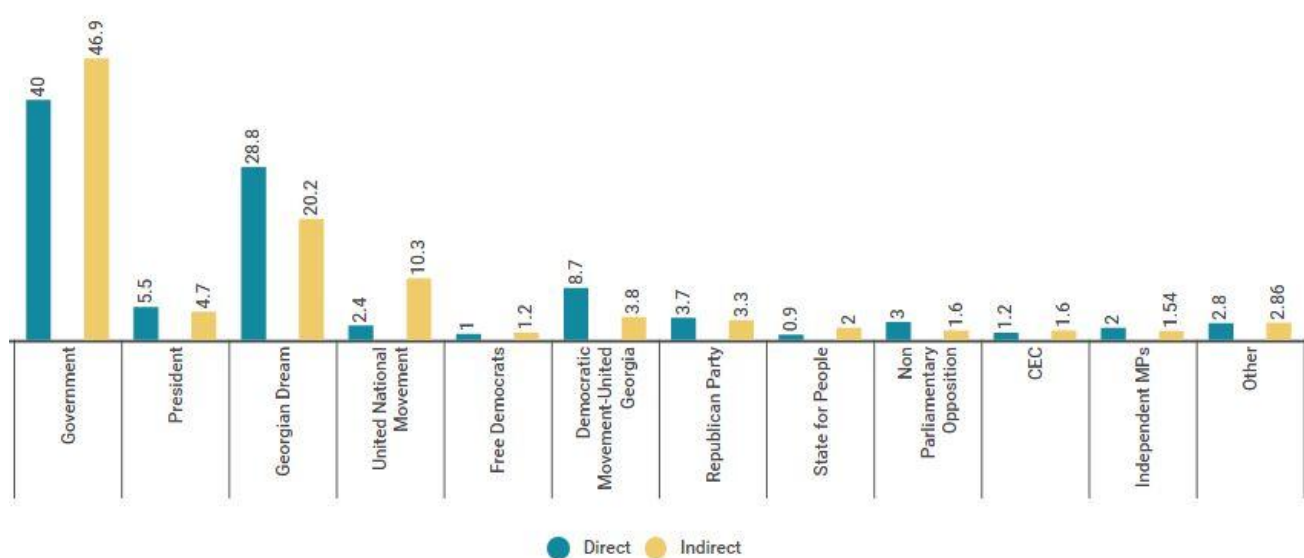
The third subject is United National Movement that was covered indirectly (10.3%) almost five times higher than directly (2.4%).

The direct coverage of qualified parties repeats the overall coverage tendency, with the highest coverage rate belonging to Democratic Movement – United Georgia (direct – 8.7%), while the indirect coverage of this party is 3.8%. In case of Republican Party, the direct (3.7%) and indirect (3.3%) coverage rates are nearly equal. Direct coverage rate of Free Democrats is 1%, indirect – 1.2%.

Out of other non-qualified parties, State for People was covered the most by indirect form (2%), as its direct coverage rate amounted to 0.9%.

In case of the President, the direct rate (5.5%) exceeds the indirect (4.7%) and in case of the CEC, the indirect rate (1.6%) is more than the direct (1.2%).

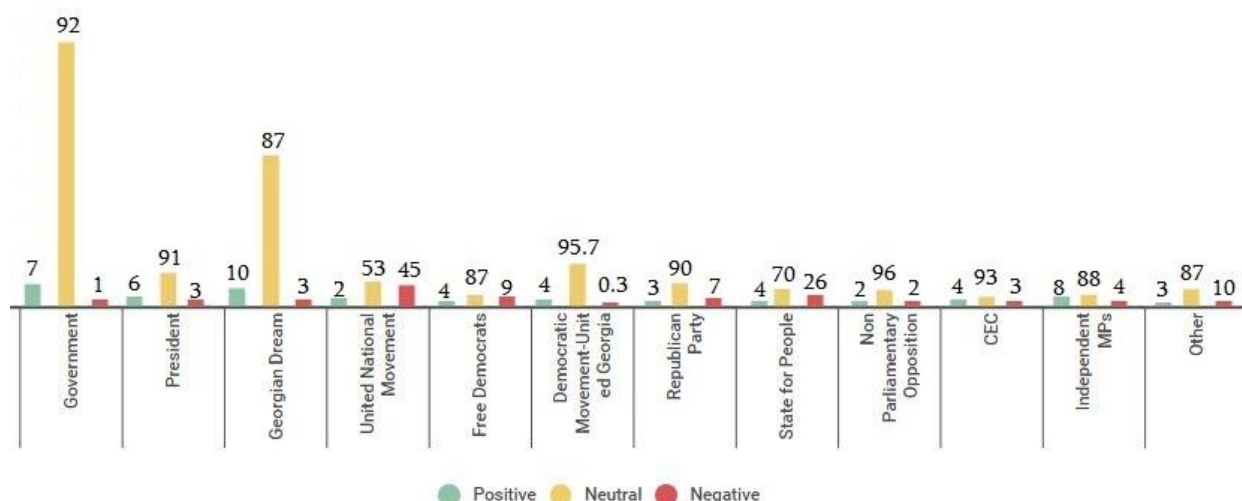
Diagram 4.2.2. Direct and Indirect Coverage of Political Subjects – PIA



Tone of Content in the Coverage of the Subjects. Analysis of the tone of content of covering the political subjects reveal that the agency, compared to other media outlets, covered the Government (positive – 7%, negative – 1%) and Georgian Dream (positive – 10%, negative – 3%) with the lowest tone of negative content.

In case of several subjects, the negative tone of coverage is quite high: UNM (negative – 45%, neutral – 53%, positive – 2%); State for People (positive – 4%, negative – 26%, neutral – 70%). The agency covers the non-parliamentary opposition the most neutrally (96%), then Democratic Movement – United Georgia with 95.7% (which has the lowest negative tone of content – 0.3%), followed by 93% of CEC (positive – 4%, negative – 3%); the tone of content of the President is 6% positive and 3% negative.

Diagram 4.2.3. Tone of Content of the Political Subjects, PIA



Share of the subjects in the Positive and Negative Contents of the agency. The Government has the highest share in the coverage by the positive tone of content (positive – 45.3%, negative – 7.1%); it is followed by Georgian Dream, the share of which in the positive content equals to 36.9%, while the negative share amounts to 12.5%. Therefore, in the positive coverage content, the total share of Georgian Dream and the Government is 82.2%, while all other subjects are left with 17.8%.

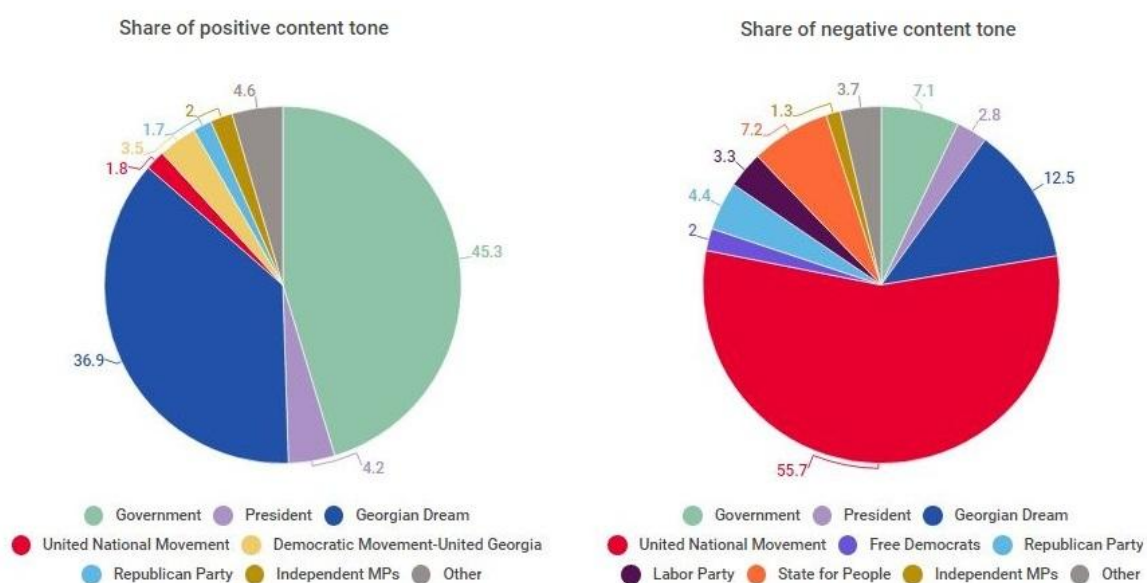
In the negative content, UNM has the highest rate – 55.7% (positive – only 1.8%). State for People comes after it with 7.2% (positive – 0.88%).

Next place in the positive content tone share belongs to the President, whose share is 4.2% (negative – 2.8%).

Out of the qualified parties, Free Democrats were covered with the least negativity (2%), followed by independent MPs (1.3%). Labor Party was covered negatively with 3.3% rate and positively by 1.7%.

The rate of CEC in the positive content is 0.8% and 0.7% in the negative.

Diagram 4.2.4. Share of coverage of political subjects in positive and negative content, PIA



Qualitative Data

Factual accuracy/balance. On September 20, PIA news agency covered a story titled “Sandra Roelofs should first respond to those people, who received torn bodies of their inmates,” which involved a fragment of the interview with Lali Moroshkina, majoritarian MP candidate of Alliance of Patriots, for “2030” program on GDS. Moroshkina accuses Georgia’s ex-first lady and UNM’s majoritarian MP candidate, Sandra Roelofs of coercing female prison inmates into hysterectomy procedures.

The material, which is based on verbal comments and does not provide any evidence, quotes Lali Moroshkina as saying: “Sandra Roelofs should first respond to those people, who received torn bodies of their inmates as well as to those women, who filed complaints against mistreatment in women’s prisons.”

Neither does the publication provide any comments by Sandra Roelofs; it actually represents an attempt to demonize the representative of the opposition party. It should be noted that Georgian tabloids periodically report on alleged involvement of Georgia’s ex-first lady in organ trade in Georgia and Ukraine. However, none of them has ever provided any justification or evidence.

On September 30, the same news agency covered a story titled “Sandra Roelofs, who was seen as lamb, is a typical criminal”, where former inmate, Alexander Akhalkatsi voices allegations against Sandra Roelofs and portrays her as a criminal. The respondent claims that thousands of people died after using poor quality tuberculosis drugs imported to Georgia from India and Sandra Roelofs had signed a lot of documents. It is not clear from the material, which is based on unilateral accusations, in what status Georgia’s ex-first lady might have signed the documents on bringing TB drugs to the Khudadov Hospital.

Photo manipulation. When covering the UNM’s campaign rally on October 5, a part of media outlets mostly focused on a small number of supporters. To strengthen this opinion, several news agencies, including PIA news agency, which is currently under monitoring, posted photo manipulations on their websites (at 5:30pm). The article titled “UNM Holds Campaign Rally on Rose Revolution Square” also included six aerial images of the rally to demonstrate that only a small number of UNM’s supporters gathered on the square.

According to the text of the news article published by the news agency, the rally was underway at the moment of publishing the material. “At this moment, the National Movement is holding a campaign rally on the Rose Revolution Square”; “Party leaders are addressing their supporters”. But the stage, where the party leaders should be addressing their supporters, is empty on all photos. It means that the photos were taken not in the course of the rally, but before its launch. Number of supporters on the photos disseminated by Netgazeti is much higher.

Manipulation with Reuters’ News on Election Results. On October 8, when the voting was still underway in Georgia (at 5:16pm), PIA news agency reported quoting Reuters that Georgian Dream party was apparently winning the elections (Headline: Georgian Dream is apparently winning elections – Reuters).

The title of the material released by PIA is manipulative and misleads the readers, as it creates an impression that it reflects real election results rather than the results of public opinion poll as noted

in Reuters' report. Although PIA notes in the text of its news that these results are based on public opinion poll and that number of undecided voters is high, the headline differs from the actual content of the text.

It should be noted that Reuters released an article titled "Election in ex-Soviet Georgia seen as test of stability after violence" on October 6. PIA news agency released its news on October 8. In addition, the Georgian news agency translated the title of Reuters' report incorrectly and misleadingly as shown in the table below, where the word 'violence' is actually omitted.

Reuters	PIA
"Election in ex-Soviet Georgia seen as test of stability after violence"	"Ongoing parliamentary elections in Georgia mean a test of stability."

Practice of paid materials/identical materials. On September 13, information about the meeting of Tbilisi Mayor Davit Narmania and Gamgebeli (head of municipality) of Tbilisi's Gldani district Dimitri Ormotsadze with the population of Mukhiani settlement was posted by three news agencies – IPN²², Marshalpress²³ and PIA. The articles were about the plan of construction of a new road in Mukhiani settlement.

All the three news agencies published the material with identical titles, almost identical texts and photos. The text, title and photos of the above mentioned material were posted on the official website of the Tbilisi City Hall²⁴. Among these three web portals, only IPN had a symbol NS (news from subscribers) at the end of its article.

	Official website	IPN	PIA	Marshalpress
Title	New road will be built in Mukhiani settlement	New road will be built in Mukhiani settlement	New road will be built in Mukhiani settlement	New road will be built in Mukhiani settlement
Form of release		With slight modification	Unchanged	Unchanged
Advertising symbols		*	X	X

²² <http://www.interpressnews.ge/ge/sazogadoeba/396716-mukhianis-dasakhlebashhi-akhali-gza-daigeba.html?ar=A>

²³ <http://marshalpress.ge/archives/58120>

²⁴ <http://www.tbilisi.gov.ge/news/2918>

On October 12, information²⁵ posted on the Interior Ministry's official website was disseminated by IPN²⁶, Marshalpress²⁷ and PIA. The article was about opening a renovated building of the Fire and Rescue Service in Gori by Interior Minister Giorgi Mgebrishvili. The titles and texts of articles published by Marshalpress and PIA were identical to the information posted on the Interior Ministry's website, while IPN published the title and text of the article with slight modifications. Out of the three online editions, only IPN indicated that it was an advertising material.

	Official website	IPN	PIA	Marshalpress
Title	Giorgi Mgebrishvili opened a renovated building of the Interior Ministry's Fire and Rescue Service in Gori.	The Interior Minister opened a renovated building of the Shida Kartli Emergency Situations Management Department in Gori.	Giorgi Mgebrishvili opened a renovated building of the Interior Ministry's Fire and Rescue Service in Gori.	Giorgi Mgebrishvili opened a renovated building of the Interior Ministry's Fire and Rescue Service in Gori.
Form of release		With slight modification	Unchanged	Unchanged
Advertising symbols		*	X	X

²⁵<http://police.ge/ge/giorgi-mghebrishvilma-gorshi-shss-s-sakhandzro-samashvelo-samsakhuris-ganakhlebuli-shenoba-gakhsna/10085>

²⁶<http://www.interpressnews.ge/ge/samartali/401869-shs-ministrma-gorshi-shida-qarthlis-sagangebo-situaciebis-marthvis-sammarthvelos-ganakhlebuli-shenoba-gakhsna.html?ar=A>

²⁷ <http://marshalpress.ge/archives/64230>

6.3 Netgazeti

About Netgazeti: Online edition Netgazeti.ge²⁸ was established by the newspaper “Batumelebi” in 2010. Founders of “Batumelebi” are private persons: Davit Gurgenidze(25%), Mzia Amaghlobeli(25%), Murad Amaghlobeli(25%) and Leila Turadze (25%). The online edition implements various projects with the financial assistance from international organizations.

Quantitative Data

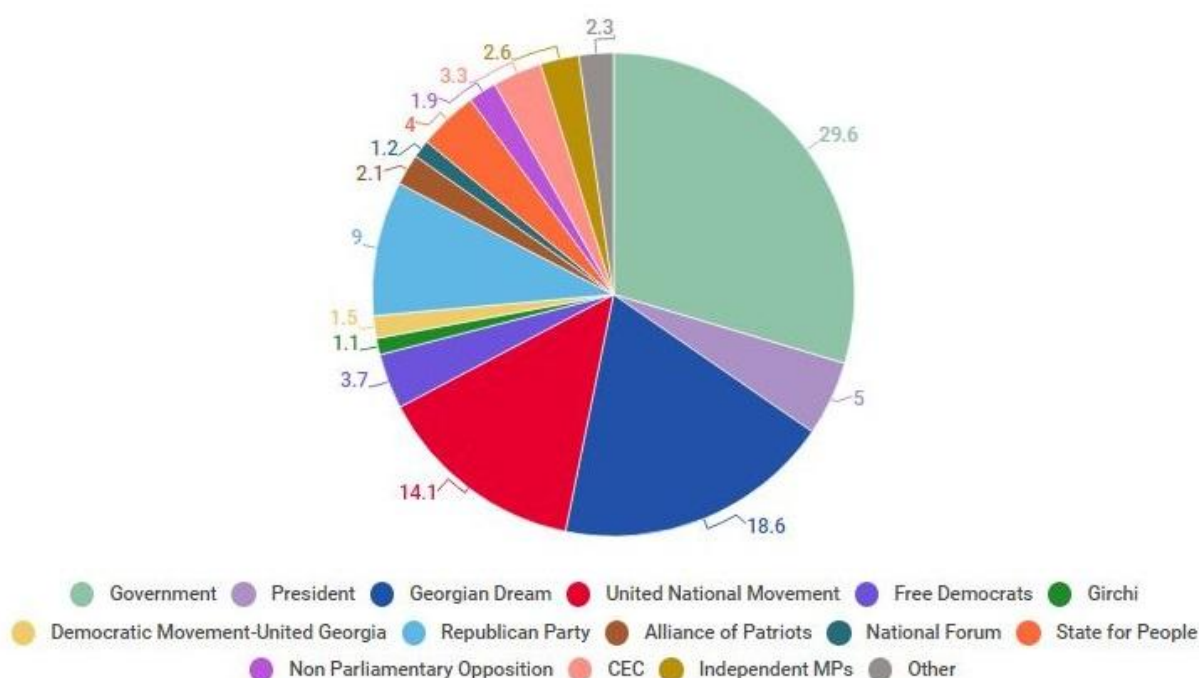
Total reporting. In the total reporting by Netgazeti (2606 articles) the largest shares accounted for the government (29.6%) and the Georgian Dream (18.6%) making up 48.2% in total. After the ruling force, the higher shares of coverage were received by the UNM (14.1%) and the Republican Party (9%) which were followed, with relatively lower shares, by State for People (4%) and Free Democrats (3.7%).

The political parties that received less than 3% of coverage included: Alliance of Patriots (2.1%), Democratic Movement-United Georgia (1.5%), National Forum (1.2%) and Girchi (1.1%).

Non-parliamentary opposition received 1.9% of the total coverage while the total amount of coverage of those subjects which received less than 1% of reporting made up 2.3%.

As regards the institutions, President was allocated 5%, the CEC received 3.3% and the Interagency Commission got a mere 0.01% of the coverage.

Figure 6.3.1 Total reporting on political subjects



²⁸MediaMeter.ge, MDF, Netgazeti, Media Profile. <http://mediameter.ge/en/media-profiles/netgazeti>

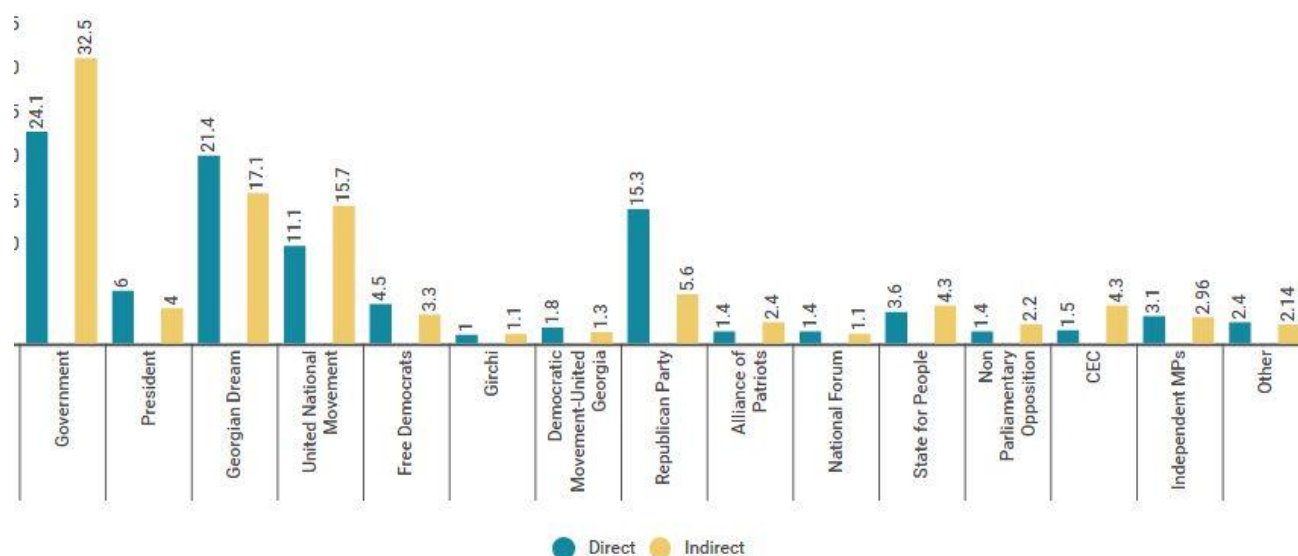
Direct/indirect reporting. The indirect reporting on the government (32.5%) exceeded the direct reporting on the subject (24.1%). A similar tendency, though with a narrower gap, was observed in the coverage of the UNM (indirect – 15.7%; direct – 11.1%), State for People (indirect – 4.3%; direct – 3.6%), Alliance of Patriots (indirect – 2.4%; direct – 1.4%) and Girchi (indirect – 1.1%; direct – 1%).

The trend differed in terms of the coverage of the Republican Party where the share of direct reporting (15.3%) notably exceeded the indirect reporting on the same subject (5.6%).

As regards the institutions, the direct reporting on the President (6%) exceeded the indirect reporting (4%) by 2%; in case of the CEC, indirect reporting (4.3%) was higher than the direct reporting (1.5%) while the Interagency Commission was reported only indirectly (0.04%).

The coverage of other political subjects was similar, with the direct reporting exceeding the indirect reporting.

Figure 6.3.2 Direct and indirect reporting on political subjects, Netgazeti



Tone of content. The highest indicator of neutral tone was seen in the coverage of Democratic Movement-United Georgia (93%), Free Democrats (91%), Republican Party (92%) and National Forum (92%). The indicator of positive coverage of Democratic Movement-United Georgia (5%) was higher than the negative indicator (2%). The same held true for Free Democrats (positive – 6%, negative – 3%). In case of Republican Party, both indicators were equal – 4%, whereas the National Forum received a higher amount of negative coverage (5%) than that of positive coverage (3%).

Netgazeti most negatively reported on the UNM (negative - 16%, positive – 6%), which was followed by the Georgian Dream (15%) and the government (13%). At the same time, the Georgian Dream received the highest share of positive coverage (10%). Equal amount of negative reporting – 12%, was observed in the coverage of the State for People and the Alliance of Patriots.

The coverage of President was largely neutral in tone (92%), with the negative tone (6%) exceeding the positive tone (2%) in the reporting on him. In case of the CEC, the negative coverage (18%) well exceeded the positive coverage (1%).

Figure 6.3.3 Coverage of political subjects, tone of content, Netgazeti

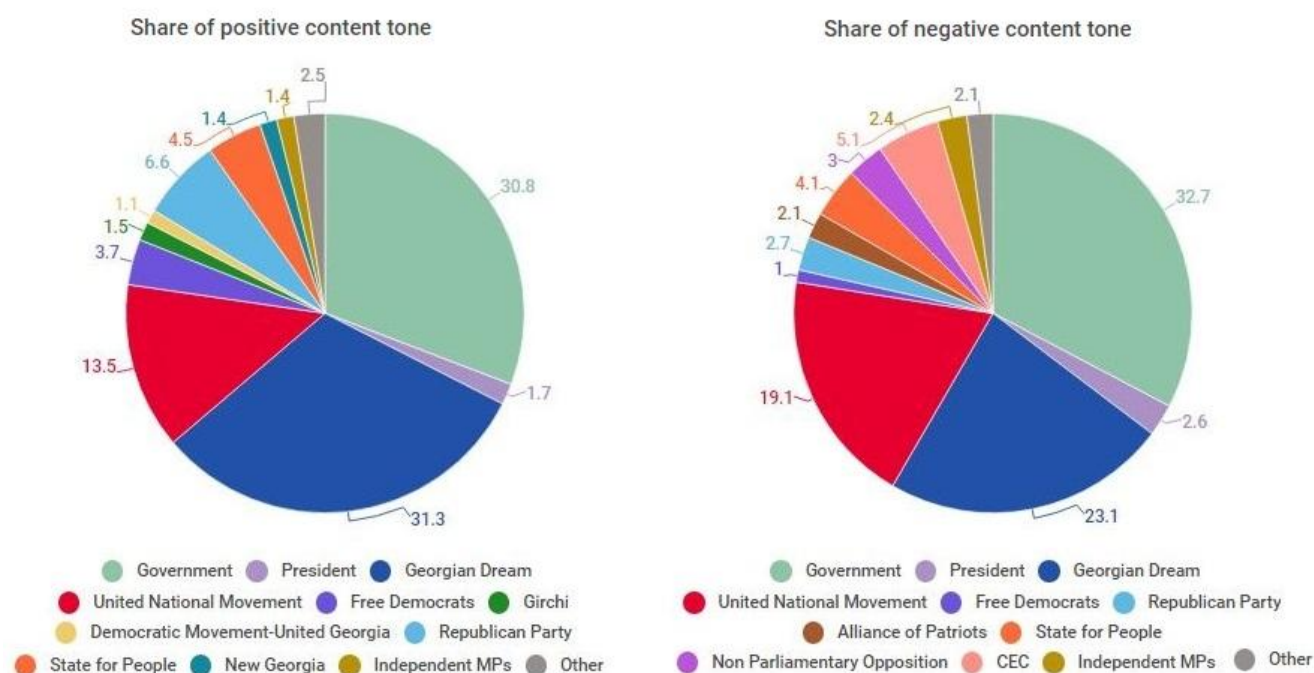


Share of subjects in positive and negative content of TV channels. The highest share of positive content was accounted for the Georgian Dream (31.3%) and exceeded the negative indicator of the same subject (23.1%). The ruling party was followed by the government (30.8%) and the UNM (13.5%) by the amount of positive content, though the positive shares of these subjects were higher than the negative shares (the government - 32.7%, the UNM - 19.1%).

The positive reporting in tone slightly exceeded the negative tone in the coverage of Free Democrats (positive – 3.7%, negative – 1%), State for People (positive – 4.5%, negative – 4.1%), Republican Party (positive – 6.6%, negative – 2.7%) and New Georgia (positive – 1.4%, negative – 0.1%).

In the total negative content of Netgazeti, the President received 2.6% as opposed to 1.7% of positive content. In case of the CEC, the corresponding shares were 5.1% negative and 0.7% positive.

Figure 6.3.4 Share of coverage of political subjects in positive and negative content



Qualitative Data

Balance. “Dismissal of Republican Chairperson of Sakrebulo in Kharagauli Failed” – it was the title of a material published by Netgazeti on August 1, where Chairperson of the Republican Party, Khatuna Samnidze comments on the fact of sacking the chairperson of Sakrebulo, claiming that “Inga Magradze’s dismissal was absolutely groundless and had no arguments”. She also described Magradze’s dismissal as politically motivated. According to the report, 20 members of the Kharagauli Municipality demanded Magradze’s dismissal. The story notes that the issue of her dismissal was pushed forward by Georgian Dream faction, but it does not provide any comments by the representatives of Georgian Dream’s faction in Kharagauli Sakrebulo or the Georgian Dream party about the reasons behind her dismissal. The media outlet fully relies upon the information provided by the Republican Party; by this, it violated the balance.

Balance. “Narmania: Reorganization of the Department of Environment and Green Spaces will Begin in September” – it was the title of the story released by Netgazeti covering the session of the Tbilisi Sakrebulo (City Council) on August 27, where a part of opposition members raised the issue of suspending the Tbilisi Mayor from office. It was preceded by cutting of trees on Kazbegi Street in Tbilisi and activists’ demand to dismiss the head of the Department of Environment and Green Spaces. The story mostly focuses on the reaction of the Tbilisi City Hall to the requirements of activists and a part of opposition that is also highlighted in the title. The information background is also provided. In addition, the story notes that the session was noisy, though it does not provide any comments made by opponents at the session or any assessments related to the Mayor’s remarks.

6.4 Pirveli Radio

About Pirveli Radio: Pirveli Radio²⁹ is a private company which, since 30 December 2011, is owned by Vasil Kobaidze who simultaneously holds 65% of shares in Pirveli Stereo. 14 days before (December 16, 2011) the owner of Pirveli Radio was Chemexim International Ltd, the company registered in Marshall Islands, simultaneously holding 20% of the shares in Rustavi 2 TV company. Between 2007 and 2011, the 100% owner of Pirveli Radio was Holding Georgian Media Incorporated Ltd. Before that, in 1999-2007, it was owned by five private persons. In 2013, Pirveli Radio recruited former journalists of Imedi TV company, who were dismissed from their former jobs following the return of the TV company into the ownership of Patarkatsishvili family.

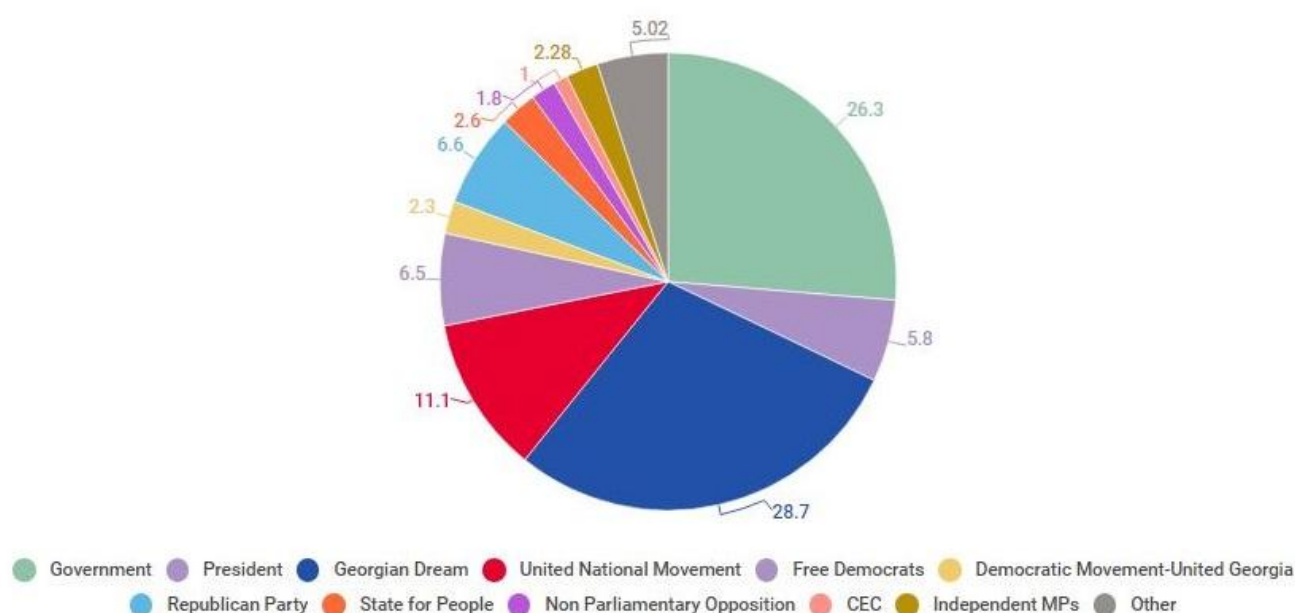
Quantitative Data

Overall coverage. Out of gross coverage of Pirveli Radio (5,823 articles), the majority concerned Georgian Dream (28.7%) and the Government (26.3%) that adds up to 55% in total. Out of other political subjects, United National Movement has the highest coverage rate (11.1%), followed by the Republican Party (6.6%) and Free Democrats (6.5%). State for People (2.6%) and Democratic Movement - United Georgia (2.3%) were aired with almost the same rate.

Non-parliamentary opposition has been allocated 1.8% of the publications, whereas the sum of those political subjects whose coverage does not exceed 1% is 5.02%.

President has been represented on Pirveli Radio with 5.8%, the share of the Central Elections Committee has been 1%, while the same index for Inter-Agency Commission has been 0.01%.

Diagram 6.4.1. Coverage of Political Subjects, Pirveli Radio



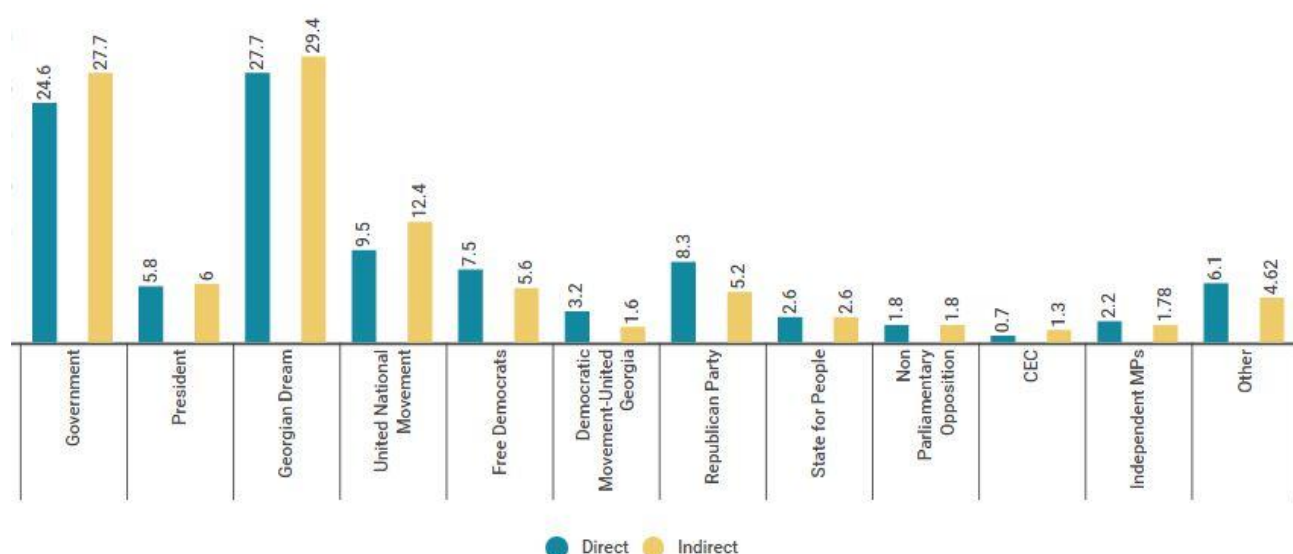
²⁹MediaMeter.ge, MDF, Media Profiles. <http://mediameter.ge/en/media-profiles/pirveli-radio>

Direct and indirect coverage. In case of Pirveli Radio, the indirect coverage rate slightly exceeds the direct coverage rate when it comes to Georgian Dream (indirect – 29.4%, direct – 27.7%), the Government (indirect - 27.7%, direct – 24.6%) and UNM (indirect – 12.4%, direct – 9.5%). Rates of indirect and direct coverage are equal for State for People (2.6%) and the non-parliamentary opposition (1.8%).

The indirect coverage rate of the President (6%) slightly surpasses the direct coverage rate (5.8%). Similar tendency can be seen with the CEC (indirect – 1.3%, direct – 0.7%), while the Inter-Agency Committee has been represented only indirectly (0.01%).

For other political subjects, the overall picture is the same, with a slight advantage of direct coverage over the indirect.

Diagram 6.4.2. Direct/Indirect Coverage of Political Subjects, Pirveli Radio



Tone of content while covering the subjects. The highest positive tone on Pirveli Radio has been recorded with regards to Georgian Dream (20% positive, 15% negative) and the Republican Party (13% positive, 1% negative), with the positive coverage of the Republican Party outscoring the negative by 12%.

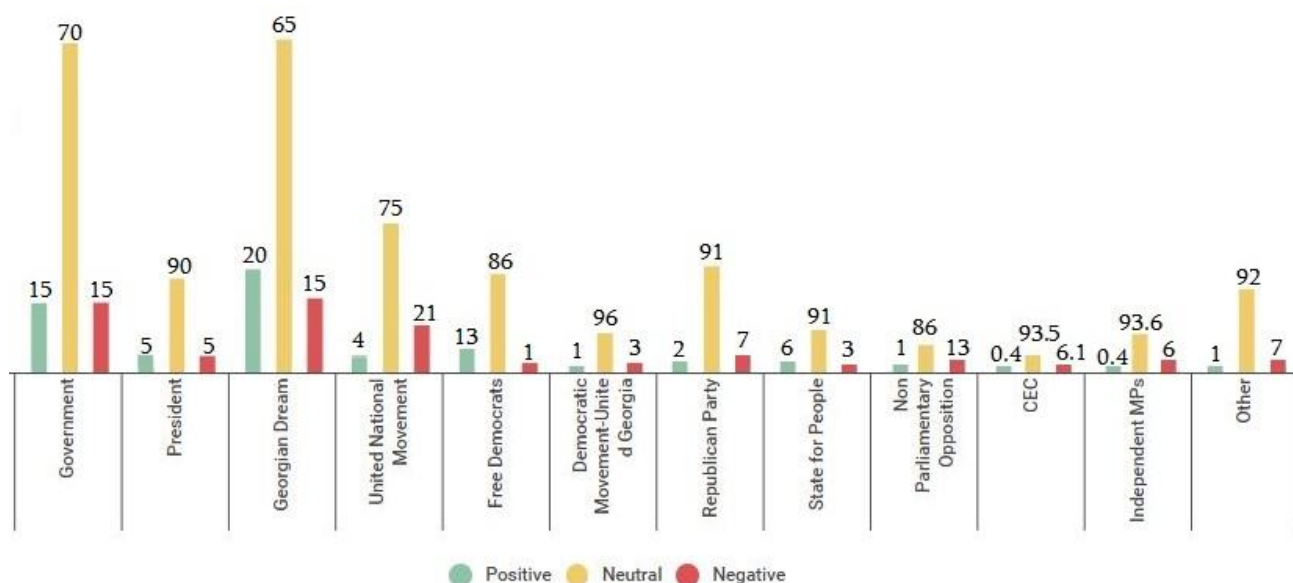
The rates of the positive and negative tone are the same for the Government and equals 15%, while its neutral coverage rate is 70%. The highest rate of the negative coverage belongs to UNM (21%), with its positive coverage rate being equal to 4%.

A high rate of negative coverage can be seen in the cases of State for People (91%), Republican Party (91%) and Democratic Movement -United Georgia (96%). Moreover, the negative coverage rate (3%) of Democratic Movement -United Georgia exceeds the positive (1%), with the similar tendency taking place in case of the Republican Party (negative – 7%, positive – 2%). As for the State for People, it has been represented on Pirveli Radio with 6% of positive and 3% of negative coverage.

The negative coverage rate of the CEC (93.5%) significantly exceeds the negative (6.1%) and positive (0.4%). The positive and negative coverage rates of the President are both equal to 5%.

The neutral coverage of the Inter-Agency Committee equals 100%.

Diagram 6.4.3. Coverage of Political Subjects – Tone of Content, Pirveli Radio

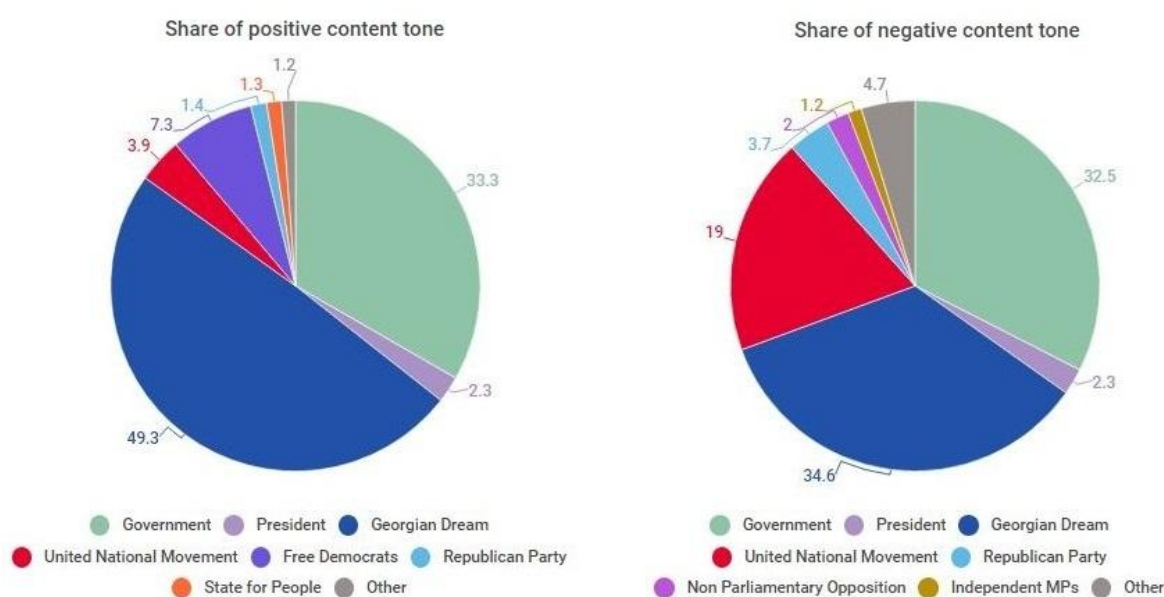


Rate of coverage of the subjects in positive and negative contents. Positive coverage rate (49.3%) of Georgian Dream is more than the negative (34.6%). The same tendency, with a smaller difference, can be seen in the coverages of the Government (positive – 33.3%, negative – 32.5%), Free Democrats (positive – 7.3%, negative – 0.7%) and State for People (positive – 1.3%, negative – 0.7%).

The highest rate of coverage in negative tone has been recorded in the case of UNM (19%), with the party's share in the positive content being 3.9%. Negative index (3.7%) slightly exceeds the positive (1.4%) in the coverage of the Republican Party.

The share of the President in the positive and negative content is 2.3% in the both cases; the CEC is represented with 0.5% in the negative content and 0.03% in positive content.

Diagram 6.4.4. Share of Political Subjects in the Positive and Negative Contents, Pirveli Radio



Qualitative Data

Factual accuracy/balance. On September 11, Pirveli Radio released an article titled “Eliso Kiladze: Dito Samkharadze, who is number 27 on GDDG’s party list of MP candidates, has a false diploma.” The news agency cited the editor of newspaper Kronika+ as its source. Although the story was about the ruling party’s MP candidate, the news agency did not even try to recheck the information either with the party or with the target of such allegations. Neither did the news agency indicate that it tried to act so. The respondent did not even provide any documents to prove her words. Although, as she said, she intended to request a copy of diploma on September 12, in the following days Pirveli Radio showed no interest in further development of this fact. So, Pirveli Radio disseminated compromising materials about GDDG party and its MP candidate without any substantiation, thus violating the principle of factual accuracy. It can be said that the material is biased.

Balance. On September 17, Pirveli Radio disseminated information citing a single source (United National Movement). In the news article titled “Irma Nadirashvili: GDDG physically assaulted Badri Basivhili in the village of Plavismani” UNM lawmaker Irma Nadirashvili accused Georgian Dream of sending a group of wrestlers and athletes to the village to physically assault UNM’s majoritarian MP candidate, Badri Basishvili. Later on the same day, the Georgian Interior Ministry said in a statement that “some locals did not allow UNM’s majoritarian MP candidate in Gori single-mandate constituency to display campaign posters that led to verbal confrontation.” Pirveli Radio did not cover this statement by the Interior Ministry. Thus, the coverage is biased.

6.5 Marshalpress

About Marshalpress: The news agency Marshalpress³⁰ appeared in the Georgian media landscape on February 18, 2015. Marshalpress.ge is managed by private company Marshalpress Ltd, which, as of 6 May 2015, was wholly owned by Otar Stepanishvili, former journalist from Info 9. As a result of changes carried out on November 24, 2015, the shares were redistributed between Otar Stepanishvili (49%) and Luka Antidze (51%).

Quantitative Data

Overall coverage: Marshalpress allocated the biggest part of its gross coverage (4,090 pieces) in the reporting period (April 1 – October 15) to the Government (31.9%) and Georgian Dream (29.3%) that sums up to 61.2%.

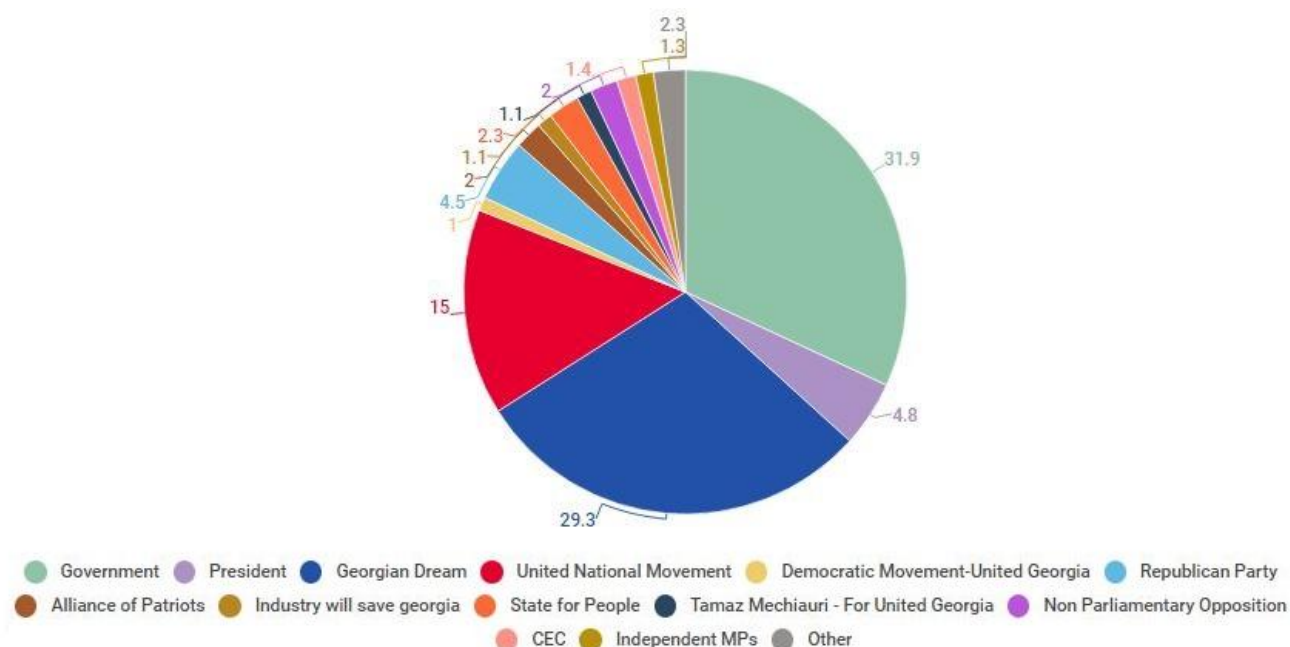
UNM, with 15% coverage rate, comes after Georgian Dream, while the rate of other qualified subjects, such as Republican Party (4.5%), State for People (2.3%), Alliance of Patriots (2%) and Democratic Movement for United Georgia (1%) is relatively low. The Industrial Party and United

³⁰ Mediameter.ge, MDF, Marshalpres, <http://mediameter.ge/en/media-profiles/marshalpress>

Georgia received 1.1% of gross coverage in Marshalpress each, independent MPs have 1.3%, while the total rate of all parties below 1% threshold accumulates to 2.3%.

The share of the President in Marshalpress' coverage is 4.8%, whereas CEC has 1.4%.

Diagram 6.5.1. Coverage of Political Subjects, Marshalpress



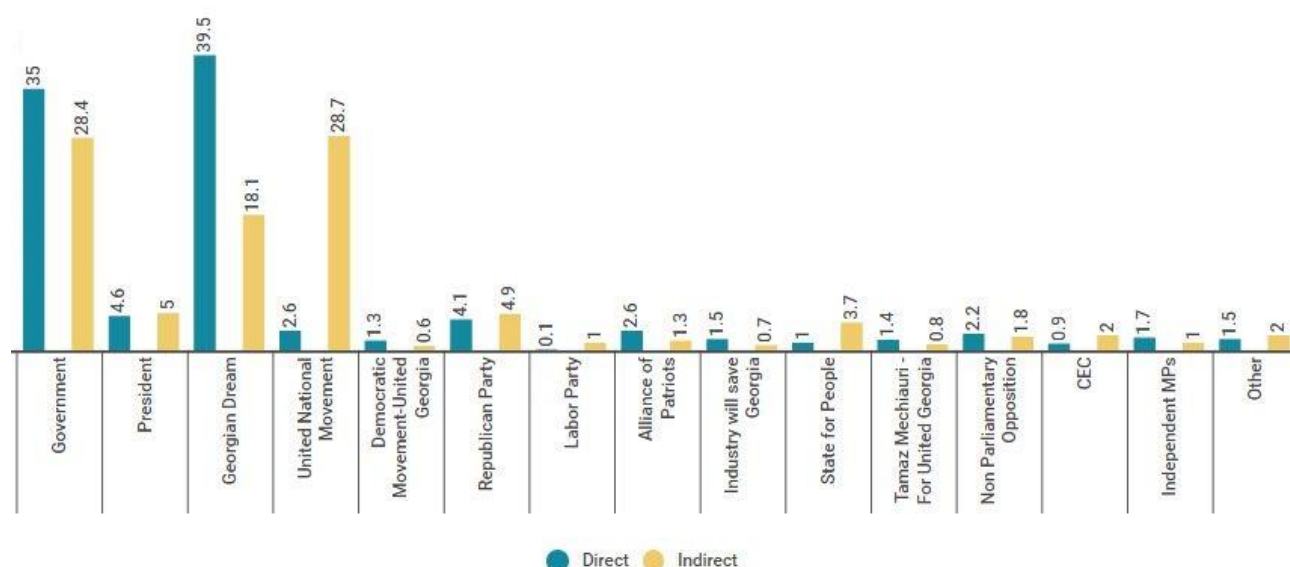
Direct and indirect coverage. Marshalpress allocated the major part of its direct coverage to Georgian Dream (39.5%) and the Government (35%), with the share of indirect coverage (GD – 18.1%, Government – 28.4%) being smaller than the direct in both cases.

The most significant difference between the direct and indirect coverages is visible in the case of UNM. Marshalpress indirectly covered the given political entity with 28.7%, with the direct coverage being equal to mere 2.6%.

The indirect coverage rate slightly exceeded the direct in case of the Republican Party (indirect – 4.9%, direct – 4.1%), State for People (indirect – 3.7%, direct – 1%) and Labor Party (indirect – 1%, direct – 0.1%).

As for the institutions, Marshalpress allocated 5% to the indirect and 4.6% to the direct coverage of the President. In case of the Central Electoral Committee, the indirect coverage rate (2%) surpasses the direct coverage (0.9%).

Diagram 6.5.2. Direct/Indirect Coverage of Political Subjects



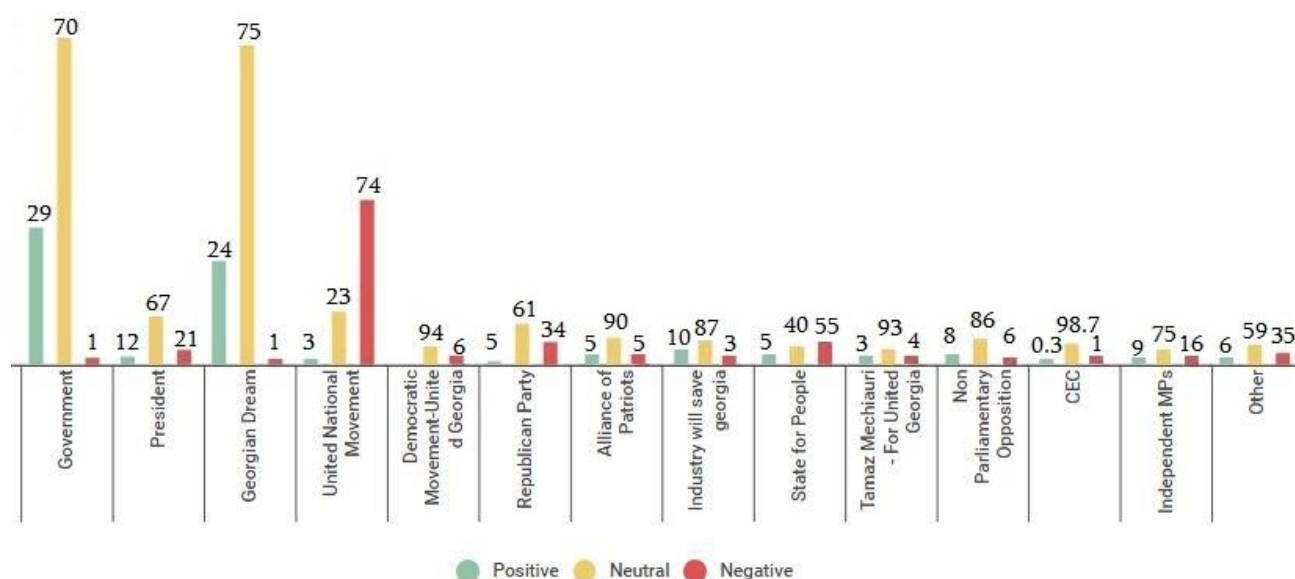
Tone of content in the coverage of the subjects. Unlike other agencies, strongly positive and negative tones towards certain political subjects are present in Marshalpress.

The highest rate of the positive tone of the agency can be seen in the coverages of the Government (29%) and Georgian Dream (24%). It is noteworthy that in case of these two subjects, the rate of the negative coverage is significantly smaller than positive, with the rate being less than 1% in both cases. Industry will save Georgia comes after Georgian Dream by positive tone equal to 10%, with the negative amounting only to 3%.

The UNM has the highest rate of negative coverage (74%), with the positive coverage being equal to 3%. State for People (negative – 55%, positive – 5%) and the Republican Party (negative – 34%, positive – 5%) follow the UNM by negative coverage rate. Alliance of Patriots stands out by its high rate of neutral coverage (90%), while both its positive and negative coverage rates are equal to 5% each. Democratic Movement - United Georgia, against the background of absence of positive coverage, received 94% neutral and 6% negative tone.

The negative coverage rate of the President (21%) is quite high and exceeds the positive coverage (12%). In case of the CEC, the neutral coverage rate (98.7%) outscored negative (1%) and positive (0.3%).

Diagram 6.5.3. Coverage of Political Subjects – Tone of Content, Marshalpress

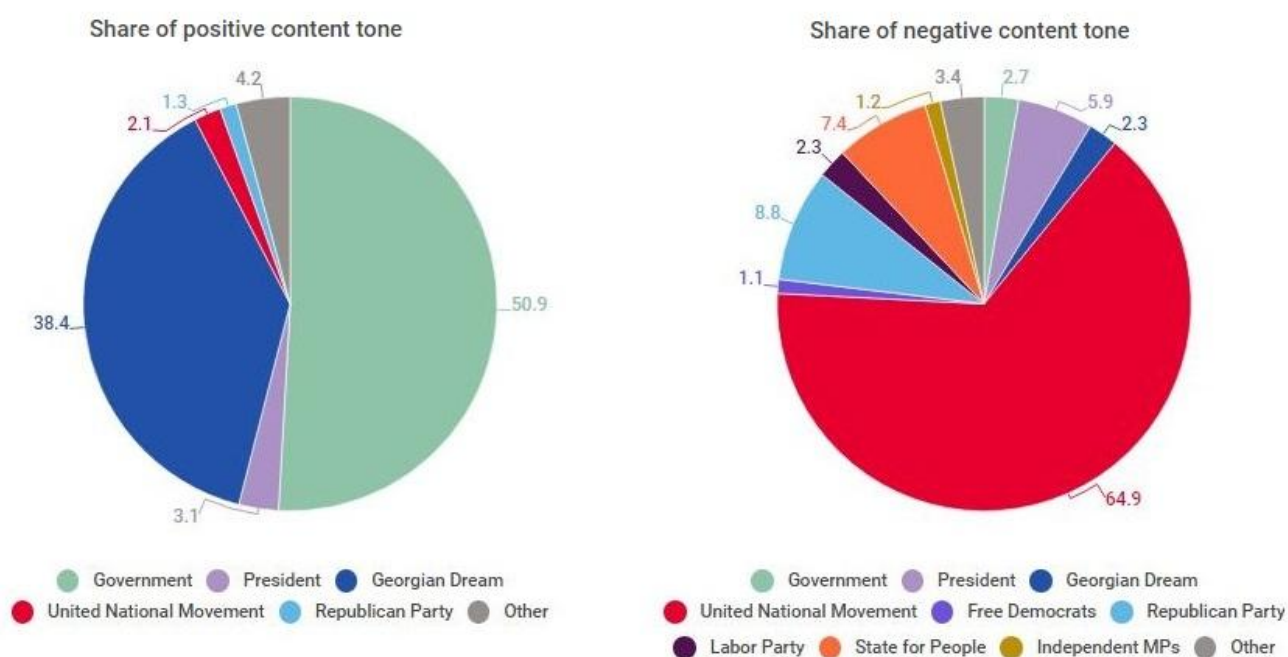


Share of the subjects in the positive and negative content of the agency. The highest share of the positive content on Marshalpress is distributed on the Government (50.9%) and the Georgian Dream (38.4%) that amounts to 89.3% of the total positive content of the edition.

The remaining 10.7% falls on the President (3.1%), the UNM (2.1%), the Republican Part (1.3%) and those political subjects that are below the 1% threshold of coverage (4.2%).

The UNM received the highest share (64.9%) of Marshalpress' negative coverage, followed by the Republican Party (8.8%), State for People (7.4%), the Government (2.7%) and the Georgian Dream (2.3%).

Diagram 6.5.4. Share of the Political Subjects in the Positive and Negative Contents



Qualitative Data

Factual accuracy. On May 7, Marshalpress released a translation of the material prepared by BBC about Georgia. An analytical article released by BBC with a title “Georgia: Orthodoxy in the Classroom” was about growing religious intolerance in Georgia's state schools and increasingly influential Orthodox Church.

Marshalpress published BBC’s article incompletely, with a changed title: “BBC: Orthodoxy in Georgian schools poses a threat to European path.” It should be noted that in the very first paragraph of the material posted on Marshalpress, the author focuses on the title.

In the article released by Marshalpress, the content of the sources used by BBC is not differentiated from the editorial text. For example, the comments made by Eka Chitanava from Georgia's Tolerance and Diversity Institute, according to which since 2012 children, especially Muslims and Jehovah's Witnesses, have been facing pressure at school, are presented as the position of the author of the article.

Factual accuracy/headline manipulation. On October 4, Marshalpress released an article titled “Gabunia: Unfortunately, Givi Targamadze is alive.” The material covered the status posted in social network concerning the explosion of UNM lawmaker Gigi Targamadze’s car. In particular, Koka Kandiashvili, Georgian government’s communications consultant, posted a status on his Facebook page, according to which “Giorgi Gabunia and entire National Movement

regret very much that Givi Targamadze is alive! For the first time in 20 years Rustavi 2 TV told the truth.”

According to the headline and the text released by Marshalpress, Rustavi 2 TV journalist, Giorgi Gabunia expressed his regret over the fact that explosion of the lawmaker’s car did not lead to fatal consequences. In addition, the footage attached to the article shows that the journalist regrets about the fact that the lawmaker may survive. In particular, he said: “Unfortunately, Givi Targamadze has survived accidentally. He might have been injured more severely as a result of this explosion.” Both the headline and the Facebook status represent manipulation. Moreover, Koka Kandiashvili is referred to as journalist and his official position is not indicated.

Accusations based on a single source/factual accuracy. Marshalpress dedicated several materials to the accusations against Georgia’s ex-first lady and UNM’s majoritarian MP candidate, Sandra Roelofs, which were based on oral statements made by a single source; the materials provided neither the position of the other party, nor any factual evidence. The accusations about organ trade and criminal scheme of tuberculosis treatment among inmates had a campaign nature. Below there are some examples of such coverage, where identical violations were revealed.

On August 22, Marshalpress released an article titled “Request figures about how many organs were removed during [the rule of] Sandra Roelofs – confrontation during a live broadcast (video)³¹”, where

³¹ <http://marshalpress.ge/archives/54588>

the news agency relies on a single source when voicing ungrounded allegations against Sandra Roelofs.

The accusations are based on the statement made by Nana Kakabadze of Former Political Prisoners for Human Rights during debates with Zviad Kuprava of Law Enforcement Reform Center. The same statement is used as the title of the news article. The text accompanying the video also repeats the title and portrays alleged involvement of Sandra Roelofs in organ trade as a proven fact.

On September 5, Marshalpress released a news article titled “‘Organ Trader’ – Incident Occurs at Sandra Roelofs’ Campaign Meeting”³², covering only that part of Sandra Roelofs’ meeting with local population, where a verbal confrontation took place between the National Movement’s supporters and several opponents. The issue of organ trade was raised during verbal confrontation between the parties, where the candidate’s supporters demanded explanations for such ungrounded allegations.

Like PIA, **on September 28**, Marshalpress released a news article titled “The Red Cross knew nothing about it – former inmate uncovers Sandra Roelofs”. According to the same report, the inmate plans to give a testimony against Sandra Roelofs and some former officials. However, it is not rechecked whether criminal charges have been brought involving this particular episode and whether there is evidence other than the inmate’s oral allegations to reinforce the accusations. The material does not provide the position of the other party either.

The titles of the following materials also confirm that release of negative materials against Sandra Roelofs, which are based on a single source, has a campaign nature:

“Instead of touring villages and cities, Roelofs would better ask God for forgiveness to avoid her sins be passed down to her children;³³” “‘Saakashvili must be stoned to death’ – it is unknown, whether Pirosmeni’s paintings taken out of museum by Sandra Roelofs have been returned.”³⁴

³² <http://marshalpress.ge/archives/56591>

³³ <http://marshalpress.ge/archives/61510>

³⁴ <http://marshalpress.ge/page/3?s=%E1%83%A0%E1%83%A3%E1%83%9A%E1%83%9D%E1%83%95%E1%83%A1%E1%83%98>