

3. PRIME-TIME NEWS PROGRAMS DATA BY TV CHANNELS

3.1 Georgian Public Broadcaster – Channel One

About Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB): Georgian Public Broadcast¹⁰r 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 Georgia¹¹, 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. According to the total monitoring results (1763 stories) for four months (April 1 – July 1), those subjects (13), whose coverage was 1% and above 1 % were covered most intensively by Channel One of Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB) in its primetime news programs. Most part of its airtime was dedicated to the Government (39.2%) and Georgian Dream (16.5%), totaling 55.7%.

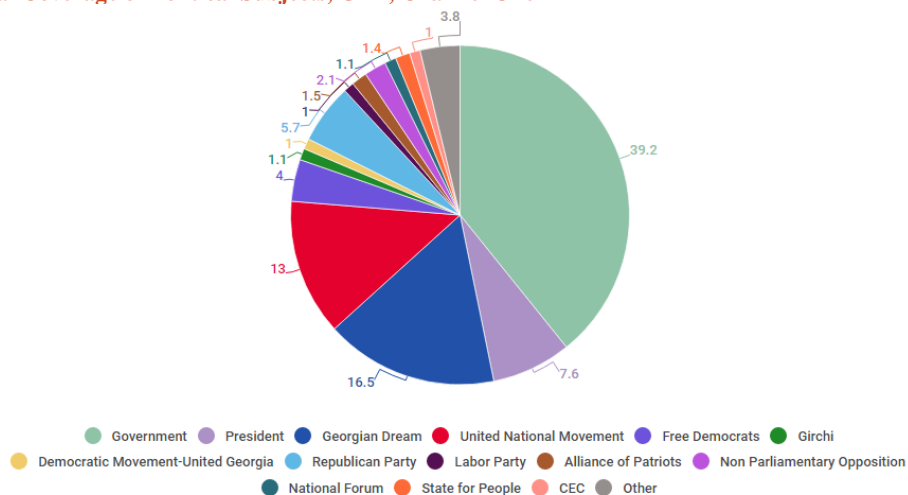
Among other parties, the United National Movement has the highest share (13%), followed by Republican Party (5.7%); Free Democrats (4%); those parties, whose coverage is below 1% (3.8%) and non-parliamentary opposition (2.1%).

A share of other qualified parties is lower: Alliance of Patriots – 1.5%; National Forum – 1.1%; Democratic Movement – United Georgia – 1.1%; Labor Party – 1%; Industry will Save Georgia – 0.7% and Conservatives – 0.6%.

Among newly created parties, State for People has the highest share (1.4%), followed by Girchi (1.1%); a share of New Georgia (0.6%) and Tamaz Mechiauri – United Georgia (0.3%) is relatively low.

The President’s share in total coverage is 7.6%; Central Election Commission (CEC) – 1%.

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



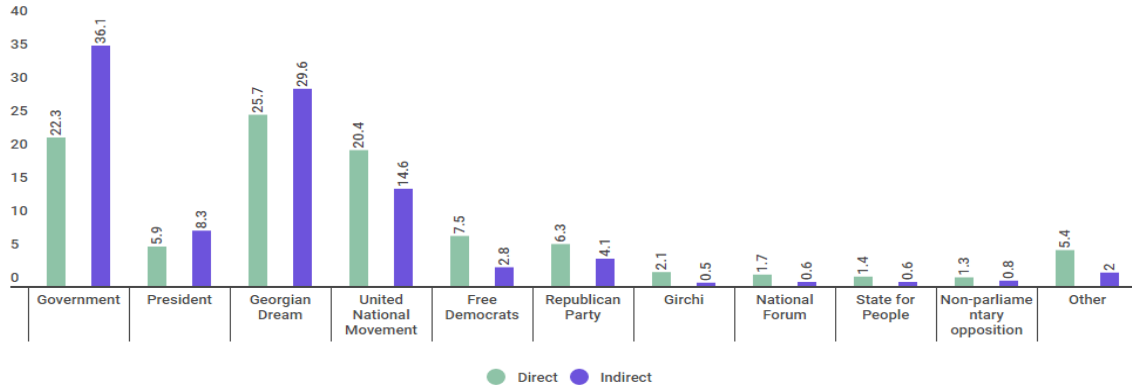
¹⁰ MediaMeter, MDF, GPB, <http://mediameter.ge/en/media-profiles/channel-1-public-broadcaster>

¹¹ <http://www.tvmr.ge/en#!en/news/44/%26%234332%3B%26%234314%3B%26%234312%3B%26%234321%3B>

Direct/Indirect Coverage. In terms of direct and indirect coverage, the Government (direct 39.1%, indirect 39.4%) and Georgian Dream (direct 16.7%, indirect – 16.2%) were covered most intensively by Channel One. It should be noted that in both cases the results of direct and indirect coverage are almost identical.

The situation is different in case of the United National Movement (direct – 11.9%, indirect 13.9%), the President (direct 5.7%, indirect 9.3%), non-parliamentary opposition (direct 1.8%, indirect 2.4%), State for People (direct 1%, indirect 1.7%) and CEC (direct 0.7%, indirect 1.3%), where indirect coverage prevails over direct coverage. In case of other subjects, direct coverage prevails over indirect coverage, or the results are almost identical.

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

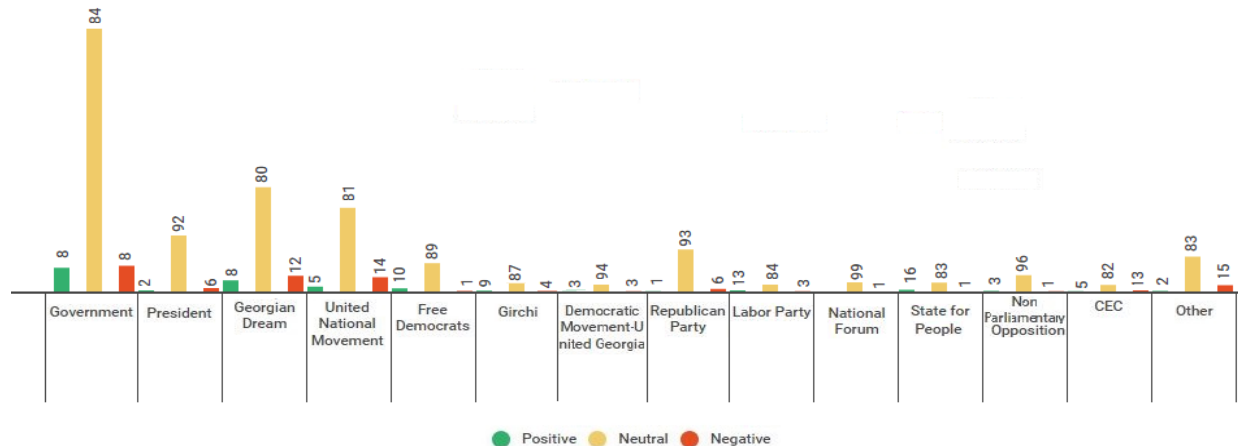


Tone of content in covering political subjects. Coverage of the following political subjects was most neutral in tone: National Forum (99%; negative tone – 1%); non-parliamentary opposition (96%; negative tone – 1%, positive tone – 3%); Democratic Movement – United Georgia (94%; negative tone 3%, positive tone 3%); Republican Party (93%; negative tone 6%, positive tone 1%).

Those subjects, whose coverage was below 1%, were covered most negatively in tone (15% in total); as for individual subjects, negative coverage of the United National Movement was 14%, positive coverage 5%; CEC - 13% and Georgian Dream - 12%. A share of the ruling party’s positive coverage is 8%. The results of the following subjects are relatively low: Government (8%); Republican Party (6%); President (6%); Girchi (4%); Labor Party (3%); Democratic Movement – United Georgia (3%) and others.

Although with low coverage, the following subjects were covered in highly positive tone: State for People (positive 16%, negative 1%); Labor Party (positive 13%, negative 3%) and Free Democrats (positive 10%, negative 1%). Among new parties, coverage of Girchi was highly positive in tone (9%); its negative coverage was 4%.

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

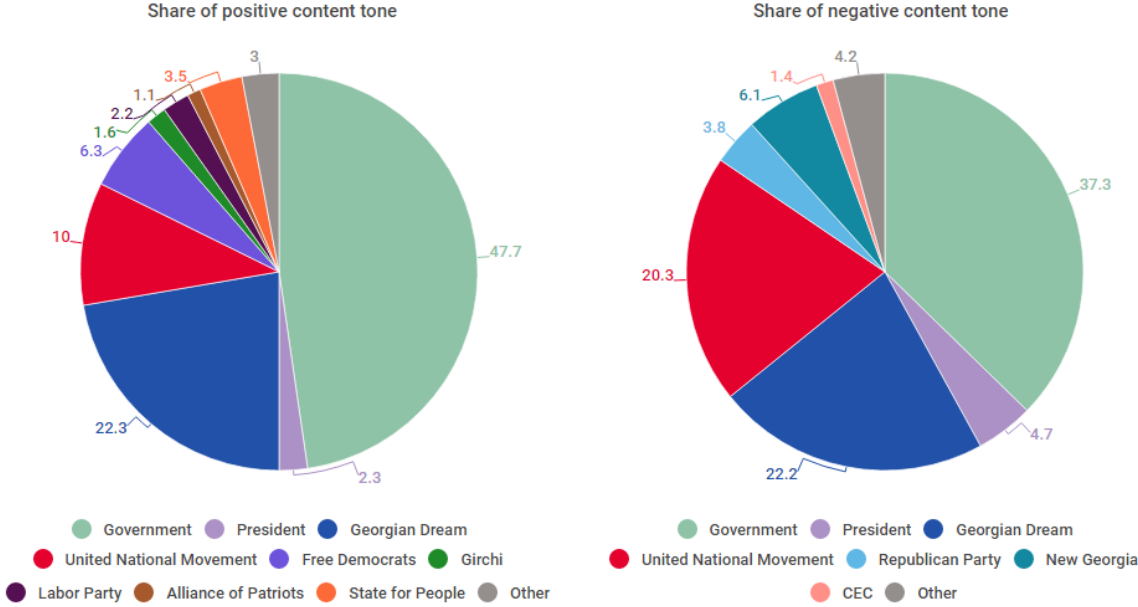


A share of subjects in positive and negative content of the TV channel. The Government (47.7%) and Georgian Dream (22.3%) have the highest share in Channel One’s positive content (70% in total). A share of Georgian Dream in positive and negative tone is almost identical (negative 22.2%). The remaining 30% is distributed among other political subjects. The Government’s share in negative content is higher (37.3%) compared to other subjects, but its share in positive content is smaller.

A share of the United National Movement in positive content is 10% and twice more in negative content - 20.3%; Free Democrats – positive content 6.3%, negative content 0.5%; State for People – positive content 3.5%, negative content 0.2%; Labor Party – positive content 2.2%, negative is less - 0.3% as well as Girchi’s share in positive content 1.6% is more than in negative 0,3%.

A share of the President’s coverage in positive content is 2.3%; negative content – twice more – 4.7%. Among newly established parties, a share of negative coverage of Tamaz Mechiauri – For United Georgia is quite high – 6.1%; while the positive coverage amounts 0.2%.

Chart 3.1.4 A Share of Covering Political Subjects in Positive and Negative Content – GPB



Qualitative Data

The monitoring of the Georgian Public Broadcaster showed that the GPB covered a broad spectrum of political subjects and it largely observed balance and ethical standards in its reporting. However, there were instances where balance was violated and information was incomplete thereby affecting accuracy. In covering public opinion polls, the broadcaster mainly complied with the established standard, though all requirements and data necessary for the reliability of survey were not always communicated.

Accuracy/complete information. On 22 May (at 20:01), in the introduction to a report about a physical assault on UNM members during the midterm local election in Kortskheli, Zugdidi district, the presenter placed emphasis on the response of law enforcement officers to the incident and noted that more than 10 citizens, including UNM leaders and acting MPs, sustained injuries. However, in the report itself the journalist said:

“According to eyewitnesses, the situation at the electoral precinct in Kortskheli grew tense at around 1 o’clock, when UNM member, Nika Melia, arrived at the precinct. A verbal altercation soon degraded into a physical confrontation.”

Though report presented versions of both sides, report did not include a comment of an eyewitness describing how the arrival of the UNM member caused physical confrontation. Neither a respondent nor the journalist spoke in the report about efforts of law enforcement officers to prevent the incident on the scene. Although the report noted that persons involved in the incident prevented journalists from performing their job, even hurling bottles and stones at them, it did not include the comments of injured journalists either. Nor did it contain comments reported by other media outlets, according to which assaulting sportsmen demanded from a journalist that she erase filmed material. The report did not inform the audience about the results of election in Kortskheli in which the UNM emerged as the winner.

Lack of balance/incomplete information. On 30 July, (20:00) the news program aired a report covering accusations made by several judges of the Constitutional Court against their colleagues with regard to the so-called case of cables. Five judges accused their colleagues of violating the rule of admitting and registering cases by the court and to prove it, referred to the case of cables which was associated with the former defense minister and leader of Free Democrats.

The report contained comments of both conflicting parties and a complainant: according to the accusing party, the complaint was added three pages over the week-end thereby representing the ground of violation, whereas according to another party as well as the complainant (Free Democrats), the clarification of the complaint was an accepted practice. The journalist failed to study into the legislative norms and regulations concerning the admittance and registration of complaints to find out whether the effective regulations allowed the clarification of complaints. Consequently, the audience was not able to learn from the report whether the accusations of one party were fair or arguments of another party were justified.

In the report, the journalist recalled old accusations towards the board of the Constitutional Court of Georgia which concerned the consideration of high profile cases (on Rustavi 2, cables, former Mayor of Tbilisi) at an accelerated speed. However, the report did not provide statistics showing an average length of consideration of cases, which would enable the audience to find out whether the terms of considering complaints of private TV company (Rustavi 2) and opposition political parties (Free Democrats and the UNM) were exceptions from the rule or not.

Balance. On 17 May, (20:21) the news program aired a report covering a court ruling on the so-called case of cables. By this ruling, former high officials of the Defense Ministry were sent to prison. The report covered accusations of Free Democrats saying that the judge Besik Bugianishvili fulfilled instructions from the prosecution. The report also contained comments of representatives of nongovernmental organizations, emphasizing the lack of reasoning of the ruling. However, the report lacked a comment of prosecution and showed only an excerpt from a statement released by the High Council of Justice, thereby failing to achieve proper balance.

Reporting public opinion polls/accuracy. On 28 June, the GPB covered a public opinion poll which was commissioned by Rustavi 2 and conducted by German-US company GFK. In the report, the broadcaster placed emphasis on the unreliability of the company that conducted the poll, referring to only problematic cases from the activity of the company. (For example, referring that the results of exit-polls conducted by the company in 2012 did not match the results of the elections; various problems appearing in Crimea and Turkey).

Moreover, the poll results were not covered comprehensively. For example, a journalist presented the ratings of the Georgian Dream and the UNM (Georgian Dream - 22,4%, United National Movement - 21,7%, State for People - 7,8 %) without naming the total number of respondents who answered the question “If you decide to participate in 9 October parliamentary elections, who would you vote for?” in the following way: refused to answer (10%), difficult to answer/have not decided yet (19.4%), will not vote for any party (3.9%). Nor did the broadcaster name the margin of error which is an important detail to have a comprehensive understanding of the poll results.

In the report the journalist said:

“The methodology and a contracting company that conducted field works are not known. Rustavi 2 has not made it public yet. It only informed that the poll was conducted in June and covered 2,200 respondents.”

Indeed, Rustavi 2 did not name the company which conducted field works but it made other information public, including the methodology. This information was reported on the TV and is also available on the website. Thus the GPB misinformed the audience.

Alike Rustavi 2, Maestro, Kavkasia and several other TV channels, the GPB covered on 14 April, (at 20:23) the results of in-house poll of the Georgian Dream, which were released by the news agency GHN. The report provided the rating of only several political parties and contained comments of representatives of two political parties.

Although a representative of the Georgian Dream denied that it was their political party's in-house poll and claimed that their poll results starkly differed, the GPB did not provide information on how the news agency obtained these poll results. Nor did it try to find out other details and necessary data of the survey (number of respondents, the methodology, the company that conducted the poll, margin of error, et cetera).

3.2. Rustavi 2

About Rustavi 2 TV: Rustavi 2 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%.

Quantitative Data

Total coverage The four-month monitoring of Rustavi 2 TV (April 1 – July 31, 2016) has revealed that in terms of total coverage (1728 stories) the TV channel dedicated a great part of its primetime news programs to the Government and the Georgian Dream coalition. A share of the government in total coverage is 28.2% and Georgian Dream – 25.1%. In sum, it makes 53, 3% of total coverage.

As for other qualified political parties, United National Movement has the largest share – 19.7%, followed by Free Democrats – 7.5% and Republicans – 3.3%.

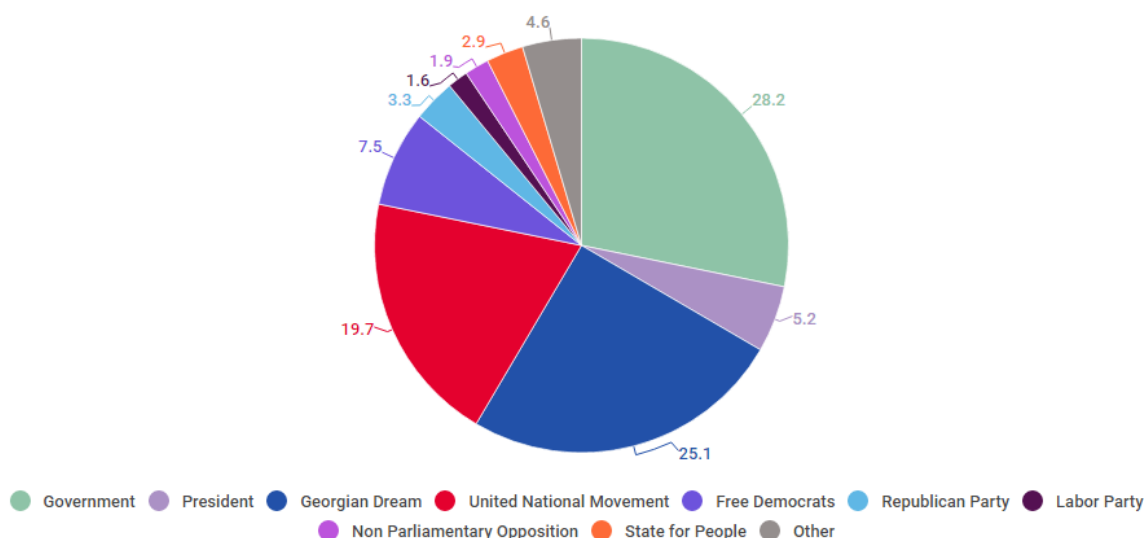
Compared to other media outlets, Rustavi 2 TV covered the Labor Party (1.6%) more intensively. Other qualified subjects received less than 1%: National Forum – 0.7%, Democratic Movement for United Georgia – 0, 7%, Alliance of Patriots of Georgia – 0.6%; Industry will Save Georgia – 0.4%, Conservatives – 0.1%. The activities of non-parliamentary opposition accounted for 1.9% of total data.

Among newly established parties, State for People was covered more intensively (2, 9%) compared to others. The share of other parties is relatively low: Girchi – 0, 4% and Tamaz Mechiauri for United Georgia – 0.3%.

Among institutions, the President's share of the total coverage amounted to 5, 2%, Central Election Commission (CEC) - 0, 6%.

¹² MediaMeter, MDF, Rustavi 2 TV, <http://mediameter.ge/en/media-profiles/rustavi-2>

Chart 3.2.1. Total coverage of political subjects, Rustavi 2

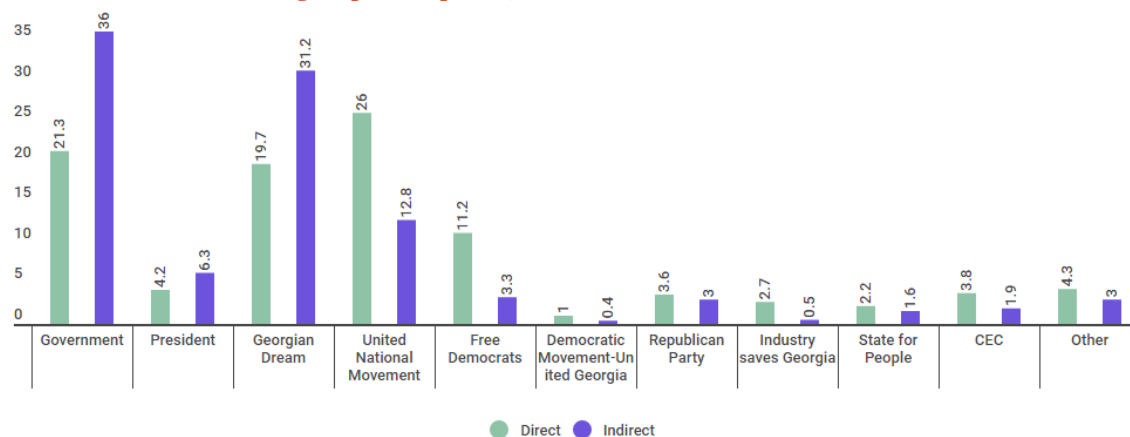


Direct and indirect coverage The direct coverage considerably prevails over indirect coverage in case of United National Movement (direct 26%; indirect 12.8%) and Free Democrats (direct 11, 2%, indirect 3, 3%). On the contrary, in case of the Government and Georgian Dream, indirect coverage prevails over direct coverage: Government – indirect 36%, direct 21,3%; Georgian Dream – indirect 31,2%, direct 19,7%.

As the chart 3.2.2 shows, the picture is homogenous in case of all other subjects except the President. Direct coverage prevails over indirect coverage or is almost equal. The situation is identical to the qualified subjects united in the category “other”, whose coverage was less than 1%.

Indirect coverage (6, 3%) of the President prevails over direct (4, 2%). On the contrary, in case of covering CEC the direct coverage (3, 8%) is higher than indirect (1, 9%).

Chart 3.2.2 Direct/indirect coverage of political parties, Rustavi 2

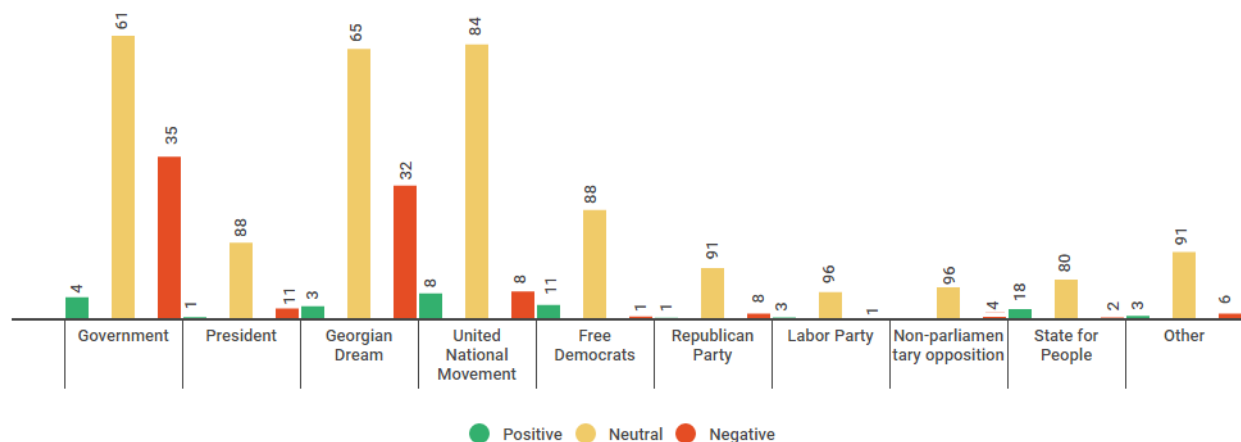


Tone of content in covering political subjects. Neutral tone prevailed in covering political subjects by Rustavi 2 TV in case of Labor Party (96%), non-parliamentary opposition (96%), Republican Party (91%), political parties united in the category “other”, whose coverage was less than 1% (91%), the President (88%), Free Democrats (88%) and United National Movement (84%). The highest negative tone was observed in covering the Government (35%) and Georgian Dream (32%), followed by the President (11%), United National Movement (8%) and Republic Party (8%); the last two subjects have identical results.

In covering political parties, the highest level of positive tone was observed with respect to the newly established State for People (positive 18%, negative 2%), as well as Free Democrats (positive 11%; negative 1%). Low level of negative tone is observed in case of both parties.

The tone of coverage of CEC – positive 4.5% and negative 15.8%.

Chart 3.2.3. Coverage of political subjects – tone of content, Rustavi 2

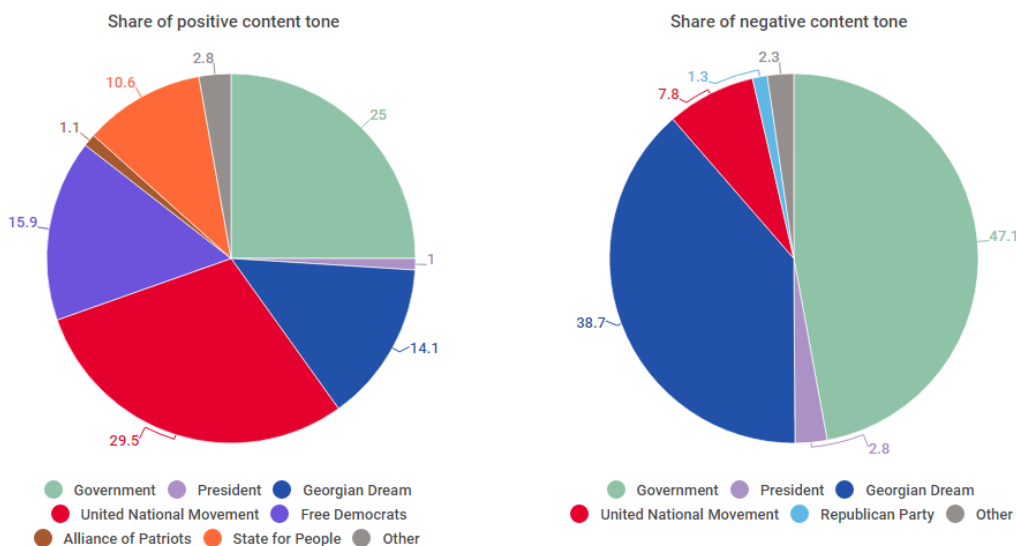


A share of subjects in positive and negative content. In regard to positive coverage, most of the airtime was dedicated to the United National Movement (29.5%). In case of negative content – 7.8%. The Government’s share in positive content amounted to 25%, in negative content - 47.1%. Free Democrat’s share in positive content was 15.9%, in negative content - 0.5%. Georgian Dream’s share in negative content (38.7%) exceeded its share in positive content (14.1%). State for People’s share in positive content (10.6) considerably prevailed over its share in negative content (0.2%)

The results of other qualified political parties look as follows: Alliance of Patriots – positive content 1.1%, negative 0.02%; Labor Party – positive content 0.9%, negative 0.1%; Republic Party - positive content – 0.4%, negative 1.3%. Other parties share is less than 1%.

Among institutions, the share of President in positive coverage amounted to 1%, in negative coverage - 2.8%; CEC’s share in positive coverage was 0.5%, in negative - 0.4%.

Chart 3.2.4 Share of Positive content and Negative content tone in coverage of political subjects, Rustavi 2



Qualitative data

Among other televisions, Rustavi 2 TV is most critical towards the government and Georgian Dream that is also confirmed by quantitative data. Coverage of the government and the ruling political team is highly negative in tone (67%) just on Rustavi 2 TV (Kavkasia – 49%; Obiektivi – 44%; Tabula – 21%; Maestro – 24%; Imedi – 22%; Georgian Public Broadcaster – 20%; GDS – 14%). The TV channel mostly covers a wide spectrum of different political subjects. As a rule, the stories present the positions of the parties, but there are a number of cases, when balance is artificial and is inclined towards one of the parties.

Bias/insufficient sources/factual accuracy. The story aired on July 11 “The Gift to the State” (9:33pm) was about the fact of handing over a newly built concert hall Black Sea Arena by ex-PM Bidzina Ivanishvili’s Cartu Bank to the state. The story provides one-sided coverage of the issue and mostly focuses on the fact that maintenance of the GEL 200-million building may place a heavy financial burden on the state. The story provides this opinion as the general position of promoters, though actually the story involves the position of only one promoter.

The story involves a journalist’s comment: “A modern concert hall has the capacity of 10 000. This large-scale project arises some questions about how much the maintenance of this facility will cost taxpayers, especially as no cost analysis has been done in advance.”

Though the question is legitimate, the journalist does not try to substantiate her suppositions about additional expenses. The same supposition was expressed in the respondents’ comments, among them the former Minister of Culture. The story does not provide the position of the Ministry of Culture; moreover, the journalist did not even try to recheck whether the Ministry has a business plan on the development of Black Sea Arena, how the state plans to manage it – directly or through a private company, how much the maintenance of the concert hall will cost the state and what is planned in a long-term perspective to ensure its financial sustainability.

The story also provides the position of the other party, involving Cartu Group and the director of the newly built concert hall, instead of the Ministry of Culture, which would have been a reliable source for achieving a balance.

Balance. On May 18 two stories were dedicated to the so called “cable case” (at 9:08pm and 9:15pm), involving the arrest of five former Ministry of Defense (MoD) and general staff officials over misspending charges; the case is associated with the Free Democrats opposition party. Its leader, Irakli Alasania was Defense Minister in that period. Tbilisi Court found five officials from MoD guilty of misspending of 4 GEL 4 million in an alleged sham tender on laying fiber-optic cable and sentenced them to seven years in prison.

Free Democrats, opposition and some non-governmental organizations condemned the arrest and guilty verdict as politically motivated. If the first story was more balanced, representing position of opposition, government and diplomats, in the second one all 7 respondents (2 experts, representatives of 4 political parties and 1 bar association) voiced their support to the former MoD and general staff officials and expressed accusations against the court and government. None of the stories provides the position of the court and the prosecutor’s office, not even journalist voiced their position.

Balance. The July 3 story (at 10pm) is about Maestro’s new management decision to suspend employment contracts with 32 employees of TV shows – Business Contact and Sakmiani Dila after changes in Maestro ownership and changes in management. According to the story, the sacked employees plan to apply to court. It also provides comments made, among others, by opposition parties, who hint at the government’s interests. The story does not provide the positions of either the government or Georgian Dream.

Balance. In the July 28 footage (at 9:59pm) the United National Movement expresses protest against the ruling of the Supreme Court of Georgia over the case of Revaz Karelidze, former deputy chairman of the Kobuleti Sakrebulo (local council). The story provides video comments made by UNM members, Giorgi Tugushi and Giga Bokeria, as well as Revaz Karelidze’s audio comment. The positions of the prosecutor’s office and the court are not provided. According to the story, Revaz Karelidze, who was serving a three-year sentence, was sentenced to 11 years in prison by the Supreme Court. The story says nothing about why the charges against Karelidze were re-qualified, as it does not provide the positions of the other party.

Coverage of public opinion poll/factual accuracy. The June 28 story “Political Ratings” was about the results of the poll fielded by German-American company GFK for Rustavi 2 TV.

When covering the poll, the TV channel comprehensively named 10 out of 11 compulsory requisites envisaged by legislation; the remaining one was named partially, as it did not name the company, which fielded the poll. According to the story aired by GDS TV, GFK commissioned the company BCG to field the poll; its director is the wife of Levan Tarkhishvili; the latter is a member of the opposition United National Movement. The fact that Rustavi 2 did not name in its story the company which fielded the public opinion poll was also mentioned by Zurab Japaridze, chairman of New Political Center Girchi, who declares mistrust to the survey. The story also provides the comments made by those representatives of Georgian Dream and other political parties, who declare mistrust to the survey; it also contains Zurab Japaridze’s allegations related to the activities of GFK in Ukraine. According to the poll commissioned by Rustavi 2, there is minor difference in ratings of Georgian Dream ((22,4%) and United National Movement (21,7%), while NDI’s study¹³ show 5% difference.

The results of the second public opinion poll were released by GHN news agency (April 14; 9:11pm). The news agency claims that the poll was commissioned by Georgian Dream. It is unclear from the story, how the news agency obtained this information; it only notes that the poll was allegedly commissioned by Georgian Dream; the latter denies any links with the poll. Still, the material provides the results of the public opinion poll and stresses that a 3% margin between Georgian Dream and National Movement coincides with the results of the poll released by the National Democratic Institute (NDI). According to the law, during a pre-election period a media outlet has to make sure of survey reliability and only afterwards it can release its results; this provision was violated by Rustavi 2 TV.

3.3. Imedi

About Imedi: Imedi TV company¹⁴ 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 coverage. The four-month monitoring of Imedi TV (April 1 – July 31) has revealed that in terms of total coverage (1 460 stories) the TV channel dedicated the greatest part of its primetime news programs to the government (41.2%) and Georgian Dream (21.6%). A total share of both of them is 62.8%. As far as other political parties are concerned, the opposition United National Movement has the largest share – 12.6%, followed by Republicans (6%), Free Democrats (3.1%) and National Forum (1%). A share of other qualified political subjects is less than 1% totaling 4.4%; a total share of non-parliamentary opposition is 1.4%.

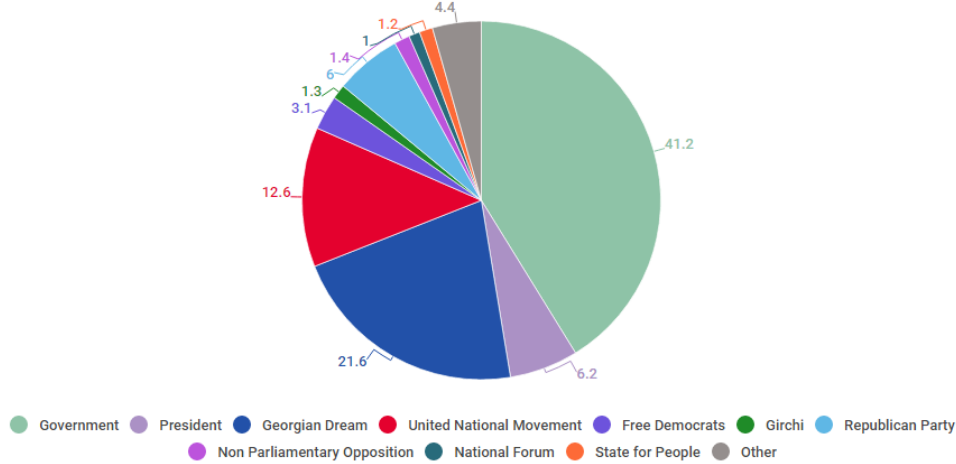
Out of newly established political parties, the shares of Girchi (1.3%) and State for the People (1.2%) are almost equal. A share of other new parties is below 1%.

The President’s share in total coverage is 6.2%; CEC – 0.3%.

¹³ <http://www.tabula.ge/ge/story/110317-ndi-archevnebsi-monatsileebi-19-ocneba-enm-14-uari-pasuxze-13>

¹⁴ MediaMeter, MDF, Imedi, <http://mediameter.ge/en/media-profiles/tv-imeri>

Chart 3.3.1. Total coverage of political subjects, Imedi

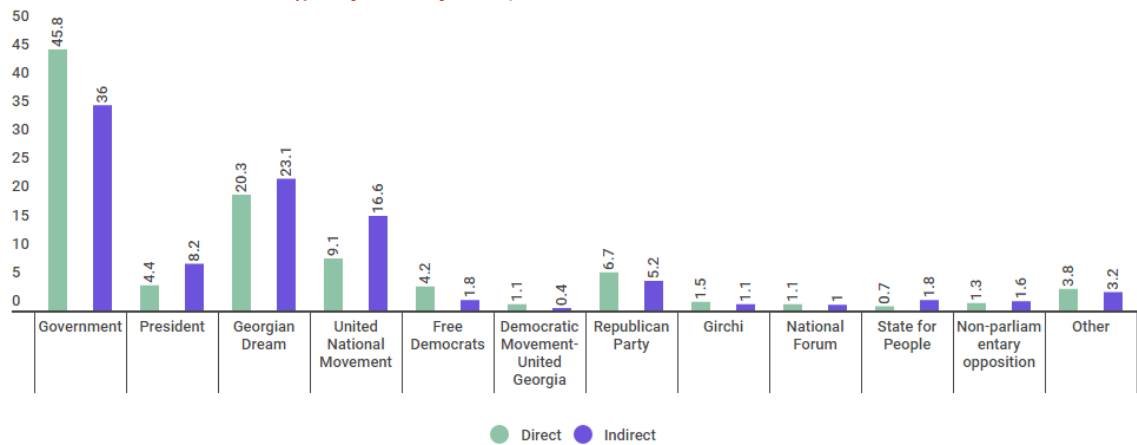


Direct/indirect coverage. Direct coverage of the government (45.8%) prevails over indirect coverage (36%); the same is in case of the Republican Party (direct 6.7% and indirect 5.2%) and Free Democrats (direct 4.2% and indirect 1.8%). In case of Georgian Dream (indirect 23.1%, direct 20.3%), National Movement (indirect 16.6%, direct 9.1%) and State for the People (indirect 1.8%, direct 0.7%), indirect coverage prevails over direct coverage; however, the percentage difference is higher in case of the National Movement.

Other qualified parties are mostly covered directly rather than indirectly. Some data are almost identical. New Political Center Girchi is mostly covered directly (direct 1.5%, indirect 1.1%) and State for the People – indirectly (direct 0.7%, indirect 1.8%).

Among Institutions, indirect coverage of the President (8.2%) prevails over direct coverage (4.4%); the same can be said about CEC – indirect 0.5%, direct 0.2%. The Inter-Agency Commission for Free and Fair Elections, which was set up in July, was covered only indirectly (0.03%).

Chart 3.3.2 Direct/indirect coverage of political parties, Imedi



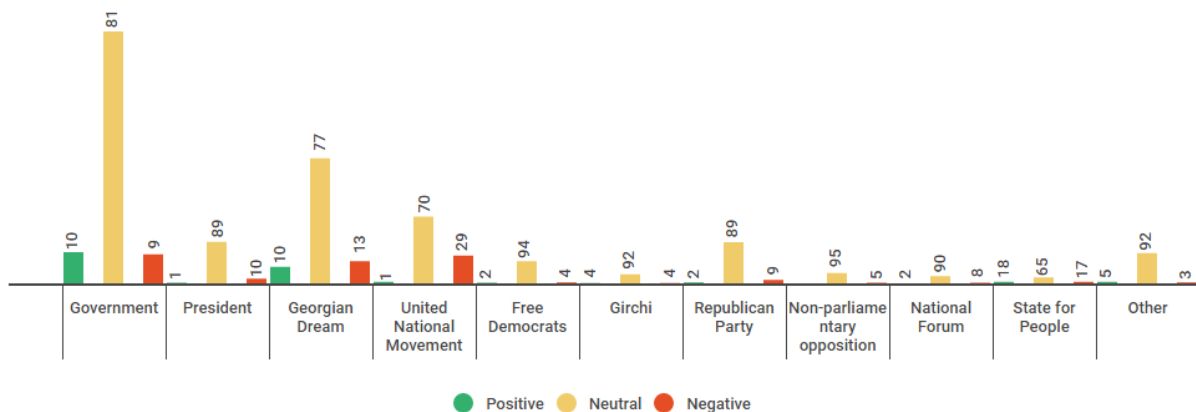
Tone of content in covering political subjects. The highest neutral tone in total coverage was observed in case of the non-parliamentary opposition (95%), Free Democrats (94%), Girchi (92%), political parties, whose coverage is below 1% (92%), Republican Party (89%) and President (89%).

While positive tone (10%) prevailed over negative (9%) for the government, in case of the ruling party Georgian Dream, it was just the opposite – negative tone (13%) prevailed over positive (10%). Parliamentary opposition - the

United National Movement was covered most negatively (29%), while positive coverage was only 1%. Negative (17%) and positive (18%) coverage of the new established party State for People was almost equal. Republican Party was covered negatively (9%), while its positive coverage amounted to 2%. National Forum received 8% negative, and 2% positive coverage. Girchi's negative and positive coverage was equal and amounted 4%. Georgian Dream was covered most positively (77%), while its negative coverage was 13%.

Big difference was observed between negative (10%) and positive (1%) tones of coverage of the President. CEC was covered equally in negative (4%) and positive tone (4%).

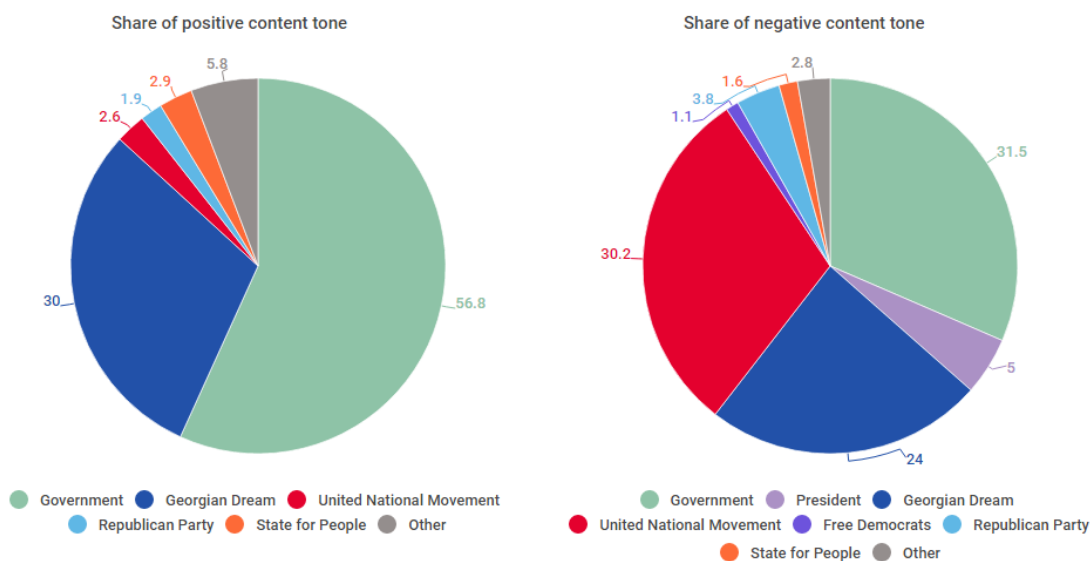
Chart 3.3.3. Coverage of political subjects – tone of content, Imedi



A share of subjects in positive and negative content. The government (56.8%) and Georgian Dream (30%) have the largest share in Imedi's positive content totaling 86.8%. They are followed by State for the People (2.9%), UNM party with 2.6% and Republican Party with 1.9%. A total share of positive content for other subjects, whose coverage was below 1%, amounted to 5.8%.

The largest share of Imedi's negative content comes to the government (31.5%) and United National Movement (30.2%), followed by Georgian Dream (24%) and relatively moderate Republican Party (3.8%). A share of negative tone (5%) of the President's coverage prevails over positive tone (0.9%); negative (0.2%) and positive (0.1%) tones of coverage of CEC are almost identical.

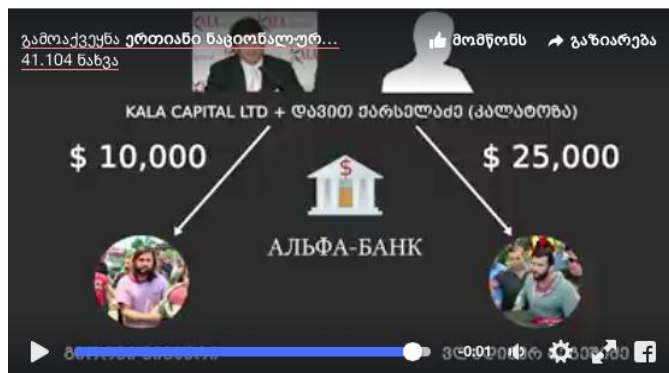
Chart 3.3.4. Share of Positive and Negative content tone in coverage of political subjects, Imedi



Qualitative Data

According to statistical data of four-month monitoring, Imedi TV channel allocated 86.8% of its positive content to the government and the ruling party Georgian Dream, while a share of other political subjects in positive content is only 13.2% in sum. TV company covered the activities of various political subjects and as a rule, provided positions of different sides. It also mainly observed ethical standards. However, there were instances when information was not provided in full thereby raising questions about accuracy, balance and impartiality in reporting.

Accuracy/impartiality. On June 17, Imedi TV covered accusations of the United National Movement of Kala



Capital and a crime boss Kalatoza¹⁵ transferring 35 000 USD to two persons (Giorgi Gigauri and Vladimir Gegeshidze) who were among those having physically assaulted leaders of the UNM during the midterm local elections on May 22 in the village of Kortskheli, Zugdidi district. At the news briefing, the UNM declared that the transfer was carried out via Alfa Bank and presented a document evidencing the transfer.

As the material on this topic, produced by the online edition Netgazeti, showed, at the news briefing the UNM presented a financial scheme with the crime boss Kalatoza being on the top and

Vice Prime Minister Kakha Kaladze involved. Vice Prime Minister Kakha Kaladze, who heads the election headquarters of the Georgian Dream, is a founder and partner of Kala Capital.

The Imedi report did not mention Kakha Kaladze as an addressee of UNM's accusations and entirely omitted the accusations about this top political official. Nor did the report explain the links between Kala Capital and the Vice Prime Minister. The material was focused on the denial of accusations. Apart from comments of politicians on the issue, the report provided a written explanation of Kala Capital as well as a comment of Alfa Bank to a news agency 20/30, according to which the presented documents were forgeries by the UNM.

Accuracy/balance. On 22 May, the program "Imedis Dro" (at 20:01) started with a no comment footage of physical assault on members of the UNM during the midterm local elections in the village of Kortskheli, Zugdidi district. Similarly to a presenter of Maestro TV channel, the presenter of Imedi also said that representatives of both sides sustained injuries, though did not identify any injured supporter of the Georgian Dream or report about any of them being hospitalized either on the day of incident or thereafter.

The discussion of the topic began with a live link-up from the Central Electoral Commission to convey the position of the Commission on the violations. It was followed by a live relay of speech of Kakha Kaladze, a leader of Georgian Dream, speaking about a provocation staged by the UNM in Kortskheli as well as other topics. Kakha Kaladze spoke about the midterm election for 304 seconds. There was another live relay of news briefing of Mamuka Mdinardze from the Georgian Dream office (186 seconds). The position of the UNM was provided after an hour of the start of the program (at 21:03) in the form of live link-up (Tina Bokuchava speaking for 229 seconds). Thus, in addition to accuracy the balance was also violated in the coverage.

Balance. On June 30, Imedi TV provided a live coverage of a news briefing of a member of city council from the UNM, Irakli Abesadze (22:34). According to the presenter, the financial director of city transportation company was dismissed because of misspending monies, which was revealed by the internal audit. A shot of internal audit

¹⁵ "Kalatoza" nickname for Davit Karseladze, so called "thief in law" (mafia) who was sentenced for the membership of organized crime group during the previous government. Membership of the community of thieves in law was criminalized in Georgia in 2006.

conclusion was provided, but no excerpt from that conclusion was shown, which would either confirm or deny the UNM's accusations. Instead of double checking the information in the document, the report provided comments of the former financial director of transportation company and the Mayor of Tbilisi, both dismissing accusations as unfounded. The report did not say either that the addressee of the accusations was son-in-law of Guguli Maghradze, MP from Georgian Dream.

Accuracy/balance. much like Maestro, Marshalpress and PIA, Imedi, on June 25, covered (at 20:15) accusations on misspending charity contributions by Charity Fund Iavnana, which, in turn, was linked to the founder of the fund Paata Burchuladze and his newly-established political party State for People. In contrast to other media outlets being monitored, Imedi did not name the source – a tabloid newspaper *Prime Time* alleging that only 3 million GEL out of total 9 million charity donations were spent on charity. In the introduction to the report, the publication of one newspaper was generalized on the entire print press. In particular, the presenter said:

“Press raise questions about the Charity Fund Iavnana. According to media reports, Charity Fund Iavnana received 9 million GEL in charity contributions over the years and only 3 million was spent for charity.”

The *Prime Time* article was used as a backdrop of the report while a confidential source was named as having provided information on misspending amounts. However, from comments provided in the report audience learned that in 2012-2015, the Charity Fund received 5 769 406 GEL of which 4 850 343 GEL was spent on charity; the documentation about the balance between revenues and expenditure was submitted to Tax Service. The report, however, made no efforts to find out over what period was that 9 million GEL income received, or whether the Revenue Service revealed any financial violations and if it did, since when.

Balance. On April 1, Imedi reported on an altercation between members of Georgian Dream and Republican Party, both former members of the Georgian Dream coalition, concerning the law on education (20:05). The material provided a comment by Eka Beselia from the Georgian Dream though did not provide position of Nodar Ebanoidze, one of the participant of the altercation from Republican Party. Neither position of any representative of Republican Party was presented either.

Reporting public opinion poll results. On June 30, Imedi reported results of semi-publicized in-house poll conducted by the Georgian Dream (at 20:09). When presenting the report, the presenter focused on those two components which the ruling political team made public. Namely, the presenter said:

“Initially, the Georgian Dream did not want to make results of the in-house poll public; nevertheless, society learned about two main accents: 1. The number of supporters of the ruling party is twice as many as those of United National Movement. 2. Almost similar picture is seen in the rating of leaders – Giorgi Kvirikashvili is in the lead.”

Each shot was accompanied with the text: “In house poll of Georgian Dream. According to data, the ruling team has 35% whilst the UNM - up to 13%.”

In a live link-up of a reporter, the answer was shown to the question: “In your opinion who will better solve existing problems as Prime Minister?” The answer to this question was presented, both in verbal and written form, as a single result: 41% supports Giorgi Kvirikashvili, the incumbent Prime Minister.

Another question was also presented in a manipulative way. In particular, while the question was provided in full in the form of text: “Regardless of your choice, which party, in your opinion, will receive the highest number of seats in parliament?” the reporter read the question only partially, omitting the first part of it “Regardless of your choice” which was an essential element for evaluating correctly public attitudes. The answer to this questions was also provided partially: 65% think that it will be the Georgian Dream.

Covering poll results selectively and not providing exact formulation of questions is misleading, especially when essential elements which may influence the results such as a margin of error, information about undecided voters, et cetera are not provided.

Out of 11 compulsory indicators to be provided in reports about public opinion poll in pre-election period, Imedi had only three – the organization that ordered the poll, the organization that conducted the poll and exact formulation of questions, the latter partially though.

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 2016.¹⁶ 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.¹⁷ 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

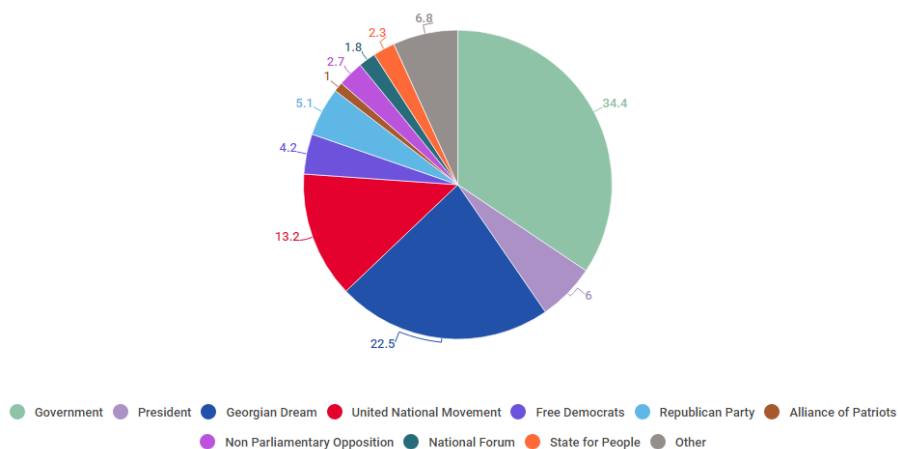
Total coverage. The four-month monitoring (April 1 – July 31) has revealed that in terms of total coverage, (1458 stories) the TV channel dedicated a great part of its primetime news programs to the Government (34.4%) and Georgian Dream (22.5%), which totals about 57%. Among other political parties, United National Movement has the largest share – 13.2%, followed by Republican Party (5, 1%), Free Democrats (4.2%) and newly established party State for People (Paata Burchuladze) (2, 3%).

Other qualified subjects fall behind National Forum (1, 8%) and Alliance of Patriots (1%) and their coverage is less than 1%: Democratic Movement – United Georgia (0.9%), Industry will Save Georgia (0.8%), Conservatives (0.7%). Except State for People, the share of other newly established parties is low: Girchi (0.8%), New Georgia (0.6%) and Tamaz Mechiauri – United Georgia (0.5%).

Non-parliamentary opposition received 2, 7% of the total coverage. All of the parties which are united in the category “Other” received 6, 8% in total.

Among institutions, the President’s share of the total coverage amounts to 6%, CEC’s – 0, 4%.

Chart 3.4.1. Total coverage of political subjects, Maestro



¹⁶ MediaMeter, MDF, Maestro. <http://mediameter.ge/en/media-profiles/maestro>

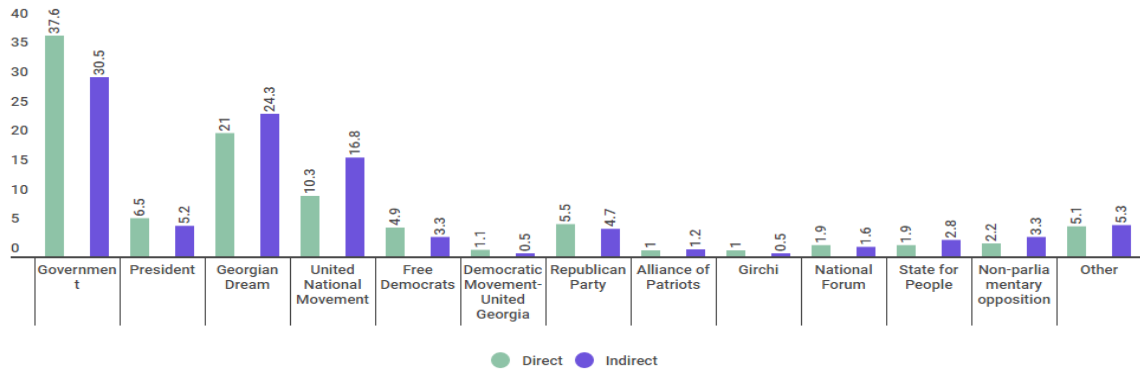
¹⁷ MDF, Media Freedom 2015, Media ownership, Chapter 3. <http://mediameter.ge/en/research/media-freedom-2015>

Direct and indirect coverage. In terms of both direct and indirect coverage, Maestro TV dedicates most of its airtime to the Government and Georgian Dream. Herewith, direct coverage of the Government (37, 6%) prevails over indirect coverage (30,5%), while in case of Georgian Dream indirect coverage (24, 3%) is slightly more than direct coverage (21%). In case of United National Movement, the difference between indirect (16, 8%) and direct (10, 3%) coverage is bigger.

Direct coverage prevails over indirect coverage in case of the President (direct 6, 5%, indirect – 5, 2%), Republican Party (direct - 5.5%, indirect - 4.7%), Free Democrats (direct - 4.9%, indirect - 3.3%), Democratic Movement – United Georgia (direct - 1.1%, indirect - 0.5%), National Forum (direct - 1.9%, indirect - 1.6%), Industry will Save Georgia (direct- 0, 8%, indirect 0,7 %) and Conservative Party (direct - 0.9%, indirect - 0.5%).

Out of new political subjects, State for People was covered most intensively. In this case, however, indirect coverage (2, 8 %) prevailed over direct coverage (1, 9 %). As for other parties, the differences are insignificant or do not exist at all.

Chart 3.4.2. Direct/indirect coverage of political parties, Maestro



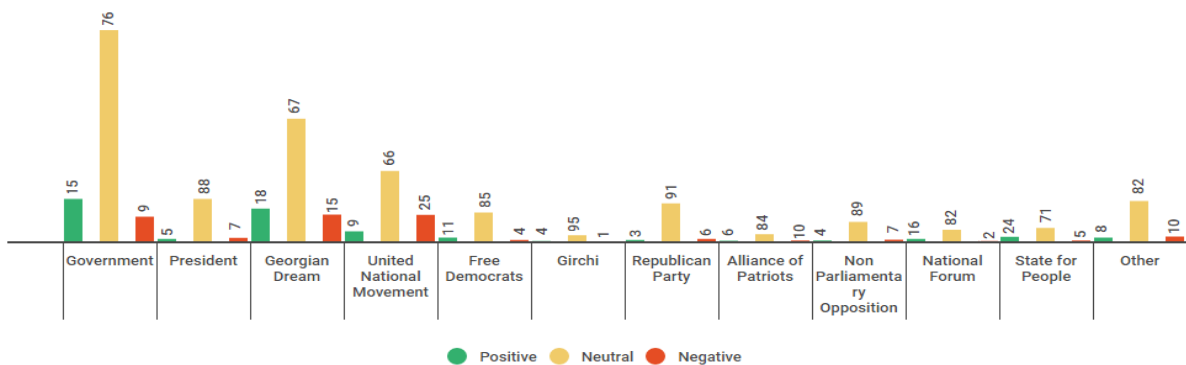
Tone of content in covering political subjects. Neutral tone prevails in covering new political subject Girchi (95 %), Republican Party (91 %), Non-parliamentary opposition (89 %), the President (88 %), Free Democrats (85 %) and Alliance of Patriots (84 %) by Maestro TV.

United National Movement was covered most negatively (25%) and this data prevails over its positive share (9%). Negative tone also prevailed over positive in the following cases: Alliance of Patriots (negative 10%, positive 6%), Republican Party (negative 6%, positive 3%).

The positive coverage prevails over negative in the following cases: Georgian Dream (positive 18%; negative 15%); the Government (positive 15%; negative 9%); Free Democrats (positive 11%; negative 4%); National Forum (positive 16%; negative 2%); State for People (positive 24%; negative 5%), Girchi (positive 4%, negative 1%).

As for non-parliamentary opposition, it was mostly covered negatively (7%) rather than positively (4%).

Chart 3.4.3. Coverage of political subjects – tone of content, Maestro



A share of subjects in positive and negative content. The Government (40.7%) and Georgian Dream (31.2%) have the largest share in Maestro’s positive content, which in sum amounts to 71.9%.

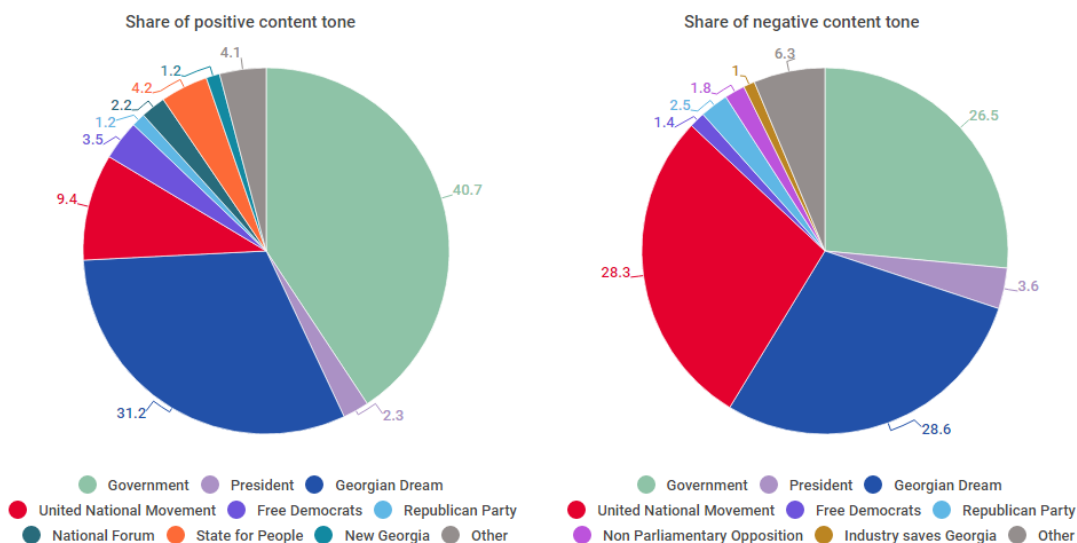
United National Movement’s share in positive content (9, 4 %) significantly falls behind its share in negative content (28, 3%) and is almost identical to Georgian Dream’s negative share (28, 6%). This is the highest result and is 2% lower than the Government’s (26, 5%).

The share of the President in positive coverage (2,3%) is lower than negative (3,6%), as well as in case of Republic Party (Positive - 1,2%, Negative 2,5%). On the contrary, a share of of Free Democrats in positive content (3,5%) is higher than in negative (1,4%).

The share of positive content (4, 2%) of new party State for People (Paata Burchuladze) is also high. As for negative content, the party’s share amounts to 0, 9%.

Other parties’ share in positive content is 4, 1%, in negative – 6, 3% in total.

Chart 3.4.4 A Share of Covering Political Subjects in Positive and Negative Content, Maestro



Qualitative Data

Maestro’s main news program covers a wide spectrum of political subjects. However, separate cases of factual accuracy, balance and bias are still met. In some cases, certain materials against the government’s political opponents with tabloid newspapers used as the source were aired without proper rechecking.

Factual accuracy/bias. On May 22, an incident took place outside a polling station in the village of Kortskheli of Zugdidi municipality during local by-elections, when several leaders of opposition United National Movement were beaten by supporters of Georgian Dream¹⁸. The story “Incident in Kortskheli” aired in the evening news program (20:01) on May 22 starts with the anchor’s introductory remarks, according to which the Interior Ministry launched investigation into the case; speaking about the incident the anchor notes that members of the UNM party, supporters and activists of Georgian Dream confronted each other; controversial allegations are made over the incident and the case has some “victims.” During the story a journalist and a hospital doctor speak about hospitalization of the UNM representatives only; injured activists from Georgian Dream are not featuring in the case either on May 22 or in the following days.

¹⁸ Fair Elections, Assessment of the October 8, 2016 pre-election environment (p.5)

In addition, the same journalist emphasizes that the situation further fueled up after “UNM leaders and athletes confronted each other.” Video footage shows that leaders of the opposition party were physically insulted. The story does not specify how the physical confrontation started. It only provides the comments of the President’s spokesperson, according to which video footage shows that an organized group and athletes were involved in the incident. The President’s spokesperson also focuses on the fact of verbal and physical assault on journalists.

The journalist’s comments are also biased as she tries to justify police inaction and notes that “police officers mobilized on the adjacent area tried to defuse tension. However, due to a small number, they failed to take preventive measures.” The story does not make it clear how many police officers were present on the ground and whether they neglected the opposition’s complaints, as the UNM members say in their remarks.

Balance/ Featuring. Two materials prepared by Maestro TV about Paata Burchuladze, leader of a new political subject State for People, are based on tabloids Marshalpress and Prime Time.

The June 2 story “Burchuladze’s Property” (at 8:14pm) cites Marshalpress news agency as its source. The latter, in turn, refers to the Facebook status of Bondo Mdzinarishvili, host of Obiektivi TV’s talk show. Although the material published by Marshalpress has not been researched and rechecked by the news agency, the author of the TV story claims that Marshalpress counted Paata Burchuladze’s property, while the publication is based on tens of documents from the public registry. The video footage also highlights the title of the article ran by Marshalpress¹⁹.

The TV story offers no rechecked data about how real the facts provided in the Facebook status are, according to which Burchuladze owns tens of property assets, or what particular documents from public registry were enclosed. Balance has a formal nature, because the story involves only Paata Burchuladze’s remarks, according to which neither his identification card, nor his name and surname coincide with real ones. The editorial board did not recheck either this statement by Burchuladze, or the documents from the public registry indicated in the materials of Marshalpress, some of which have been uploaded several times. One of the public registry’s documents reflects not the issue of ownership, but the case of leasing from the Tbilisi self-governing unit.

Following the ownership issue, the story develops in a quite different direction and tells about mutual accusations concerning the links with the National Movement.

The second story aired by Maestro TV on July 25 “Iavnanam ra hkmna” (The Lullaby, at 8:10pm), which also targets Paata Burchuladze, is mostly built on the article ran by newspaper *Prime Time*. In its turn, the latter refers to an anonymous source. The story notes that according to unspecified reports, out of GEL 9 million transferred to the Iavnana Charity Foundation set up by Paata Burchuladze, only GEL 3 million was spent on charity. The story also involves remarks by a representative of the Iavnana Foundation and a journalist’s editorial text says the following:

“Iavnana confirms that GEL 5 769 406 was donated to the foundation during past year, but only GEL 4 850 343 reached the right addressees.”

The story says nothing about incompliance between the data provided by *Prime Time* (out of GEL 9 million only GEL 3 million was spent on charity) and the figures provided by the journalist. Moreover, it does not explain how the remaining funds were spent. The story does not answer the question asked by the anchor in his introductory remarks - “Did the donated funds reach their addressees?” - that arouses additional doubts.

Balance/accuracy/bias. On June 14, Maestro TV dedicated two stories in its main news program to the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) into ex-Prime Minister Vano Merabishvili’s pretrial detention case (at 9:17pm). The first story covered ECHR’s ruling and the second one was about negative aspects of Merabishvili’s activities in the past. In the introductory remarks of the first story, the anchor focuses not on violation of the article, where the European court found the Georgian government guilty, but on those two articles, where no violation was found. In particular, the anchor says in the introductory remarks:

¹⁹ Marshalpress, June 1, <http://marshalpress.ge/archives/40682>

“In the press-release disseminated by the European court it is written that the pretrial detention of the former Prime Minister was entirely legal and justified”.

This assessment is partially correct because while the Strasbourg-based court found no violation in Merabishvili’s initial pretrial detention in May 2013, it ruled that remanding him in custody four months later lacked reasonable grounds, thus constituting violation of Article 5 §3 of the Convention. The story provides incomprehensive information about violation of Article 18 of the European Convention on Human Rights and it only focuses on the investigation into Merabishvili’s alleged removal from his cell. It says nothing about that part of the ruling, where the European court noted that Merabishvili’s pretrial detention was “used not only for the purpose of bringing” him before the relevant legal authorities on “reasonable suspicion” of various offenses, “but was also treated by the prosecuting authorities as an additional opportunity to obtain leverage” over investigations into various cases, including the one against ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili.

Although the journalist notes in the first story that the European court did not discuss the criminal charges against Merabishvili and focused only on the issues of violation of his rights, the second story is fully dedicated to the cases against Merabishvili. The story is dedicated only to the negative aspects of his activities. When introducing the second story, the anchor says:

“Some politicians say that if Merabishvili is granted a status of a political prisoner under any government, the country may appear on the verge of civil confrontation.”

The story itself does not contain a relevant comment, where respondents talk about the possibility of civil confrontation. The story, which is fully built on one-sided accusations against Merabishvili and does not provide the position of the other party, ends with the journalist’s remark according to which now it is up to the government whether it fulfills ECHR’s ruling and pays compensation to Vano Merabishvili, or challenges this ruling. This passage is manipulative because ECHR has not discussed either the criminal cases against Merabishvili or the allegations voiced in the story, and only found violation of his rights with respect to two articles.

Coverage of public opinion poll. Like Rustavi 2 TV, on April 14 Maestro TV also covered the results of public opinion poll released by GHN news agency (8:17pm), which, according to the news agency, was allegedly commissioned by Georgian Dream. Although the latter denied any links with the poll, Maestro still covered the results of the poll without indicating compulsory requisites established by law. The story contained no evidence that would have confirmed its reality and justified its release.

In addition, “based on its own information” the TV channel unveiled the results of the survey of “another political party”, which are less convincing than GHN’s poll, as it cites an anonymous party and source. The story provided information only about political ratings of Georgian Dream, National Movement and Free Democrats and noted that the results of Georgian Dream and Free Democrats might further improve. According to the law, during a pre-election period a public opinion poll shall be published by a media outlet “after double-checking the credibility of the methodology of the public opinion poll and objectivity of its results.” This provision was violated by Maestro TV.

On June 5 Maestro TV covered the results of another internal public opinion poll allegedly commissioned by Georgian Dream (8:06pm). GHN was again referred to as a source. The story notes that the poll was conducted through the method of phone interviewing. According to the election code, a public opinion poll “shall not be conducted via telephone, mail, and/or internet.”

3.5. GDS

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

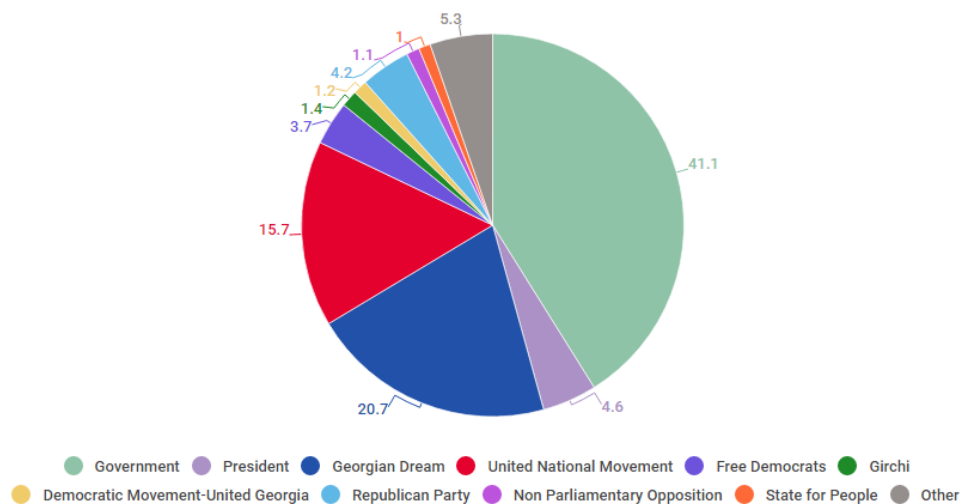
Total coverage. The four-month monitoring of GDS TV (April 1 – July 31) has revealed that the TV channel dedicated the greatest part of its primetime news programs (752 stories) to the Government (41.1%) and Georgian Dream (20.7%). A total share of their coverage is 61.8%.

As for other qualified subjects, United National Movement has the largest share (15.7%), followed by Republicans (4.2%), Free Democrats (3.7%) and Democratic Movement – United Georgia (1.2%). Total coverage of other parties is 5.3%, where coverage of qualified political parties looks as follows: Conservatives – 0.9%; National Forum – 0.7%; Alliance of Patriots – 0.5%; Industry will Save Georgia – 0.4% and Labor Party – 0.3%.

Among newly set up parties, Girchi has 1.4% and State for People – 1%.

The President's share in total coverage amounted to 4.6%, Central Election Commission (CEC) - 0.7%.

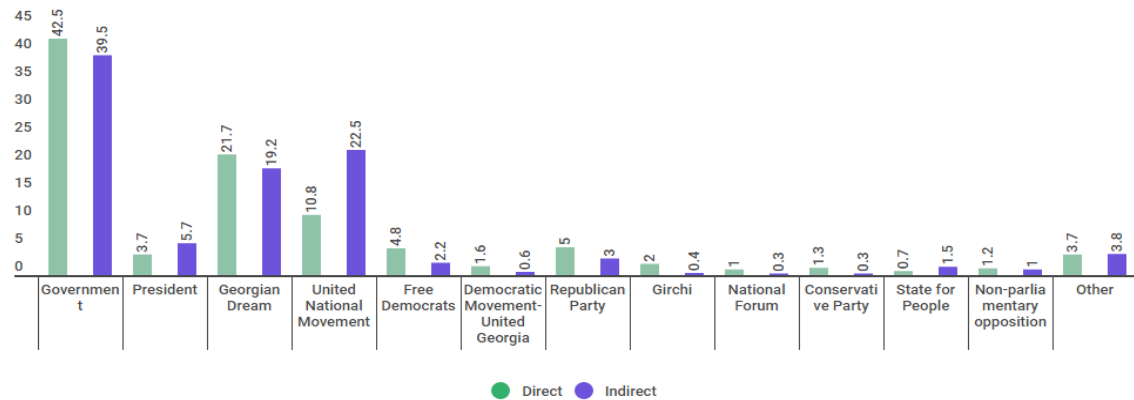
Chart 3.5.1 Total Coverage of Political Subjects, GDS



Direct/Indirect Coverage. Direct coverage prevails over indirect coverage in case of the Government (direct 42.5%; indirect 39.5%) and the ruling party (direct 21.7%, indirect 19.2%), though with a slight difference. On the contrary, in case of the United National Movement indirect coverage (22.5%) is twice more than direct coverage (10.8%). The situation is identical in case of the President (indirect 5.7%, direct 3.7%) and State for People (indirect 1.5%, direct 0.7%); however, the difference is insignificant.

In case of other political subjects, as chart 3.5.2. shows, mostly direct coverage prevails over indirect coverage.

Chart 3.5.2. Direct/Indirect Coverage of Political Parties, GDS



Tone of content in covering political subjects. New Political Center Girchi and Democratic Movement – United Georgia were covered most neutrally (100%) by GDS TV. The tone of coverage of other subjects was also mostly neutral with the exception of the United National Movement, where the highest negative tone (27%) and lowest positive tone (2%) were observed. In terms of negative coverage, the National Movement was followed by a group of various parties, whose coverage was below 1%; these parties are followed by non-parliamentary opposition (9%), Georgian Dream (8%) and the Government (6%).

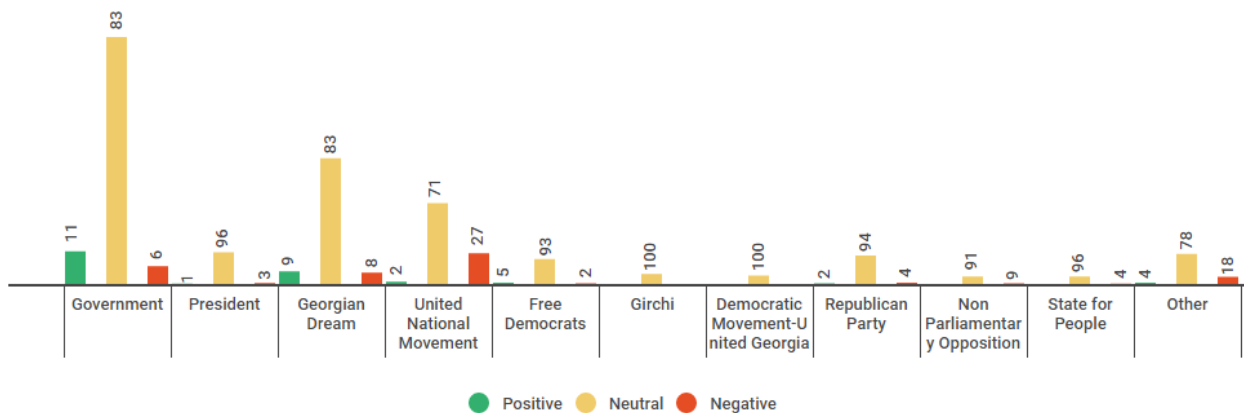
The highest level of positive tone was observed with respect to the Government (11%) and Georgian Dream (9%).

Newly established State for People and Republicans have identical coverage in negative tone (4%).

The President’s coverage was relatively neutral in tone (positive 1%; negative 3%). Among qualified parties, Free Democrats party was covered positively (positive -5%, negative - 2%).

The tone of coverage is 100% neutral with respect to Girchi and Democratic Movement – United Georgia. The tone of coverage is mostly negative in case of the Republican Party (4%; positive 2%); among newly established parties, coverage of State for People is negative in tone (4%). At the same time, coverage of State for People, like the President, was highly neutral in tone (96%).

Chart 3.5.3. Coverage of Political Subjects – Tone of Content, GDS



A share of subjects in positive and negative content. A share of the Government in positive content is 63.4%; Georgian Dream – 24.7%; their total share is 88.1%. All other subjects have a share of 11.9% in positive content. As for negative coverage, the Government’s share is 25.2% and Georgian Dream – 15.9%.

The highest share of negative content comes to the United National Movement (43.5%) that is almost twice more than the government’s share (25.2%) and three times more compared to Georgian Dream (15.9%); its share in positive content is 4.5%. Compared to other parties, a share of National Forum in negative content is also high (6.6%). The latter was not covered positively.

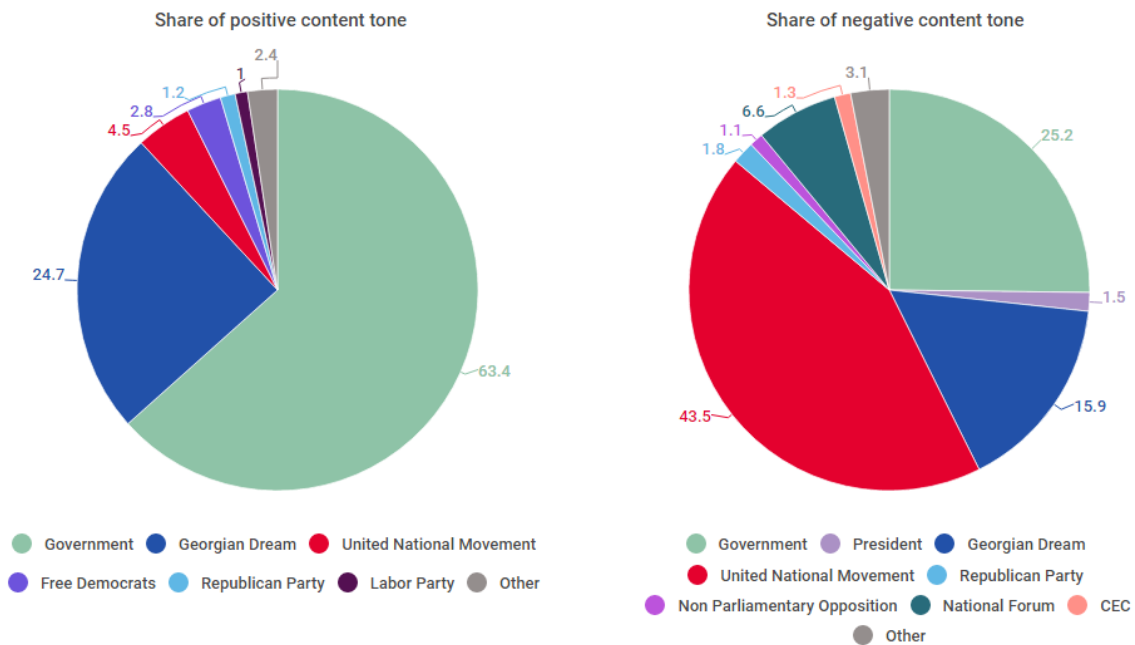
A total share of those qualified and newly established parties, whose share in negative content is less than 1%, amounts to 3.1% in negative content.

A share of Free Democrats in positive content is 2.8% and in negative content – 0.7%. A share of Republicans in positive content is 1.2% and in negative - 1.8%.

Among newly established parties, Tamaz Mechiauri – For United Georgia was mostly covered positively in tone (0.9%).

A share of the President’s coverage in positive content was one of the lowest (0.7%); negative content – 1.5%.

3.5.4 A Share of Political Subjects in Positive and Negative Content – GDS



Qualitative Data

The balance on GDS TV is inclined in favor of the ruling party and the government which is revealed by following statistical data - the total sum of a share of the government and the ruling party in positive content amounts 88,1%, while all other political subjects have 11, 9% share in positive content, respectively. Coverage of the government and/or activities linked to the companies owned by Bidzina Ivanishvili in the news programs of TV Company appears without background information and alternative opinion. Breaching standards regarding factual accuracy and covering public opinion polls is also revealed.

Accuracy of Facts/ Biased Coverage. The incident that took place on May 22, 2016 in the Village Kortskheli (Zugdidi Municipality) during the Midterm Local Elections, when the leaders of the United National Movement were physically abused, GDS TV covered on May 23, in the News Show “20:30” (on the 20:38 minute mark)²⁰. The coverage notes, that “out of 45 polling stations, this was the sole incident, reported during the Midterm Parliamentary Elections”

The coverage presents the incidents in the contexts of mutual responsibility: the two representatives of the opposition (United National Movement and Free Democrats) focus on the responsibilities of the Government, while the representatives of the ruling party – speak of the responsibilities of the UNM, which is being accused of provoking the violence. The Minister for Sports and Youth, Mr. Tariel Khechikashvili, as well as the member of the Georgian Dream, Mr. Leri Khabelovi, in their comments rejected the idea that sportsmen participated in the incident. Despite the fact that the videos air clearly shows the sportsmen²¹, the journalist fails to point out the factual discrepancy between the actual video documentation, and the comments made by the ruling team.

Towards the end of the coverage, it is pointed out, that out of 9 electoral districts, 7 was won by the Georgian Dream and 2 by the UNM representatives. The coverage in question fails to point out, that one of the districts were the National Movement had won is Kortskheli, where the incident took place.

Biased Coverage/Balance. On June 08, GDS covered floods that took place 1 year prior, on June 13 in the Vere Gorge in Tbilisi (on the 20:59 mark). The coverage mostly was dedicated to the rehabilitation infrastructural works of the Tbilisi Municipality and the assistance to the affected population. The journalist, based on the majority of the flooding victims, declares that “according to the majority of the June 13 flooding victims, they have already received compensation and housing space”. The statement is followed by Vake Gamgebeli (governor) comment, who notes that the majority of the victims have been satisfied and only several individuals remain out there that still dispute property and the categories assigned to them. Not only has the journalist failed to provide statistics on how many victims had been satisfied, but the coverage also fails to represent those individuals, who dispute the actions of the government with regard to their financial and material compensations. Only 2 victims were recorded, who recount development of events that took place 1 year ago. The coverage also fails to present comments of those NGOs, that monitored the process (Article 42) and advocated the rights of the flooding victims (Georgian Young Lawyers Association).

The second part of the coverage focuses on already carried out and the future recreational projects.

Biased Coverage/Balance. GDS covers the projects funded by the Georgian Co-Investing Fund. The Fund is established by Mr. Bidzina Ivanishvili, former Prime-Minister of Georgia.

For example, on **May 25 (20:32 mark)** the news service of the GDS TV prepared as a first story to run a list of projects funded by the Fund. “A new investment for the merger of the high class Marriot hotels, the three of which are under construction and will be merged under the brand “Autograph Collection”. These includes the hotel financed by the Co-Investment Fund on Freedom Square, in Sololaki and in Shekvetili. The total sum of the project equals to \$ 265 Million.” This is how the news anchor presented the story.

The coverage features comments of the Prime Minister of Georgia, the representative of the Marriot, the representative of the Advisory Board of the Co-Investment Fund and the Mayor of Tbilisi. Their evaluation of the project is overly positive. The Mayor of Tbilisi not only highlights the positives, but also adds that “these are the projects, that only have positive sides to them”.

The coverage fails to mention civil protests, which is addressed towards the construction of one of the components of the projects – “Panorama Tbilisi” to be built on the Sololaki Heights. The construction has been the reason for numerous public demonstrations of environmental activists.

²⁰ On Weekend, the 20:30 does not air.

²¹ E.g. Mr. Vladimer Gegeshidze- Greco-Roman Style wrestler. Mr. Koba Tkeshelashvili - a member of the Georgian National Team, also a founder of the Georgian Federation for Mixed Martial Arts and others.

Balance/Accuracy of the Facts/Coverage of Cases Related to the Previous Government . GDS TV broadcasted 752 stories, out of which 54 were dedicated to high level officials of the previous government and the criminal charges brought against them. Only in July, 21 news shows covered 17 stories on previous government. The existing practice shows that, frequently the position of the defendant party is not represented or in some cases the absence of the respondent party is explained away by their refusal to comment on the story.

For example:

April 26 announcement of the show and the subsequent coverage “the demand of Tsindeliani” (**20:38 minute mark**) was dedicated to the so called 2008 March 27 prison upheaval in the #5 Ortachala Penitentiary Establishment: prisoner disobedience of the authorities results in the death of 7 inmates. After 10 years, the former prisoner, Mr. Levan Tsindeliani demands the events to be reinvestigated. Mr. Tsindeliani declares, that Mr. Bacho Akhalaia, Megis Kardava and other high level officials pressured him and demanded he confess in masterminding the prison upheaval. He believes that the allegations brought forward to the accused in the case are too soft and is inadequate with the gravity of the crime committed.

The coverage brings minor quote from the words of Mr. Mikhail Saakashvili, where he can be heard saying, that he will not tolerate “the prison management by the thieves-in-law”. The coverage does not demonstrate exactly what role of the thieves-in-law in meant by the then President Saakashvili with regard to the prison upheaval in question, and it also does not say what were the initial findings of the investigation on the case. The coverage only offers the version of one contesting party and it is noted, that both the lawyers of Bacho Akhalaia and the Prosecutor’s office declined to comment on the case.

On June 25, 20:51 GDS TV covered testimony of the former Defense Minister, Irakli Okruashvili against the former President of Georgia, Mikhail Saakashvili; the coverage shows a question, asked by the attorney representing a party to the witness. Mr. Okruashvili did not respond to the question, however the journalist has recorded a comment of the Prosecutor of the case. The comment of Saakashvili lawyer, despite the fact that the lawyer was present at the hearing, was not aired at all.

Standard for Airing Public Opinion Survey. On July 29, GDS TV covered the results of the US National Democratic Institute (NDI) public opinion survey. In presenting the survey results, the news anchor focused on the distrust towards the instrument. Also, the announcement was selective in the survey results. Namely, the anchor noted that, “the majority of the surveyed plans to vote for the Georgian Dream again, while the majority of the surveyed will never vote for the United National Movement”. By announcing results of two, separate questions in one single sentence, the anchor highlighted the supremacy of the Georgian Dream and discontent with the UNM. Additionally, on the question of “Which party would you never vote for?” – 21% indicated the UNM, while 19% - the GD. It must also be noted, that standard deviation of the research was +/- 2,1%.

On June 28, (20:44) GDS aired a coverage titled “Who did Rustavi 2 contract to conduct research?!” The research in question was conducted by German-American organization GFK. The coverage illustrated responses to only one question out of the research: “If you are participating in the October 8 elections, which political party would you vote for?” and the video shows answers, according to which “the Georgian Dream” is favored by 22,4% of the surveyed, while the National Movement by 21,7%. The answer to the question is followed by “party ratings”, according to which the “Georgian Dream” has 30,5%, while the National Movement – 28,2%. However, the coverage does not specify to which question did these answers belong to.

Furthermore, the coverage only speaks about the problematic issues related to brand name of GFK. As the journalist has put it, the current “research has made analytics question it”.

The research methodology, dates, and deviation margins are not listed at all.

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%.

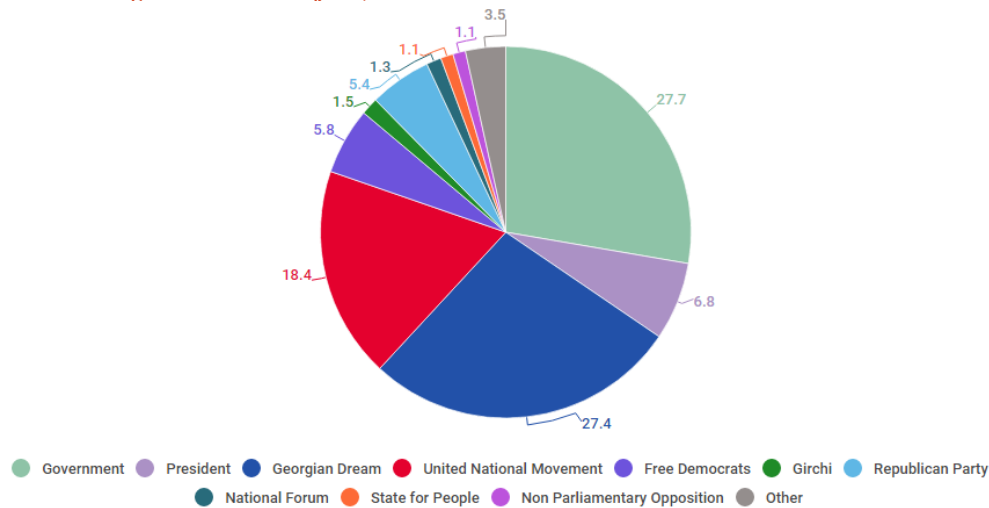
Quantitative Data

Total coverage: The four-month monitoring (April 1 – July 31) of Tabula TV (774 stories) has revealed that the TV channel dedicated almost equal part of its primetime news programs to the Government (27.7%) and Georgian Dream (27.4%) totaling 55.1%. Georgian Dream is followed by qualified political subjects: National Movement – 18.4%; Free Democrats – 5.8%; Republican Party – 5.4% and National Forum – 1.3%.

New party State for People and non-parliamentary opposition have a share of 1.1% each. A total share of subjects, whose coverage is below 1%, amounts to 3.5% and looks as follows: Industry will Save Georgia – 0.6%; Democratic Movement – United Georgia – 0.5%; Conservatives – 0.4%; Tamaz Mechiauri – United Georgia – 0.4%; New Georgia – 0.3%; Labor Party – 0.3%; Alliance of Patriots – 0.2%; independent lawmakers – 0.6%.

Among institutions, a share of the President in total coverage is 6.8%, CEC - 0.2%.

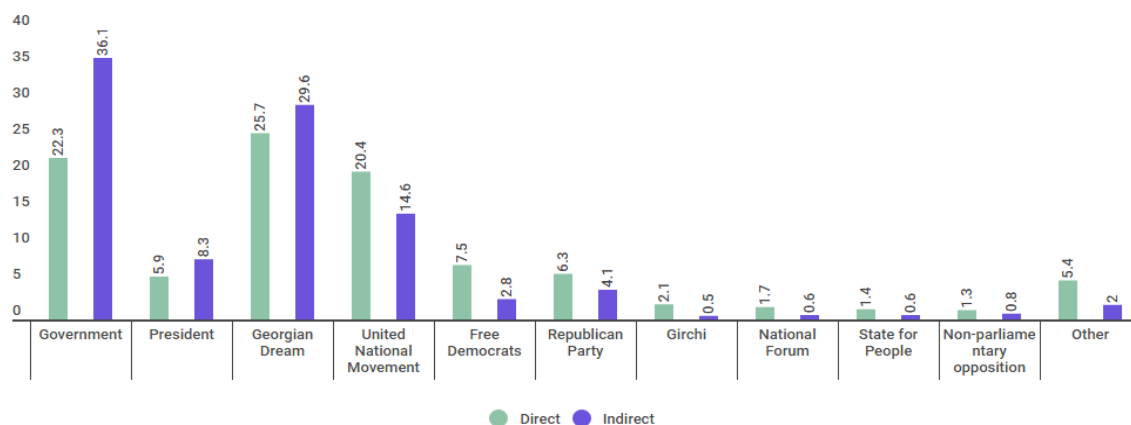
Chart 3.6.1 Total Coverage of Political Subjects, Tabula



Direct/Indirect Coverage. According to the results of four months, indirect coverage prevails over direct coverage in case of the following subjects: Government (indirect 36.1%, direct 22.3%); Georgian Dream (indirect 29.6%, direct 25.7%) and President (indirect 8.3%, direct 5.9%).

In case of other subjects, direct coverage prevails over indirect coverage and the difference is significant in case of National Movement (direct 20.4%, indirect 14.6%) and Free Democrats (direct 7.5%, indirect 2.8%). The same picture has been revealed in respect of the Republican Party, where direct coverage (6.3%) prevails over indirect coverage (4.1%).

Chart 3.6.2 Direct/Indirect Coverage of Political Parties, Tabula

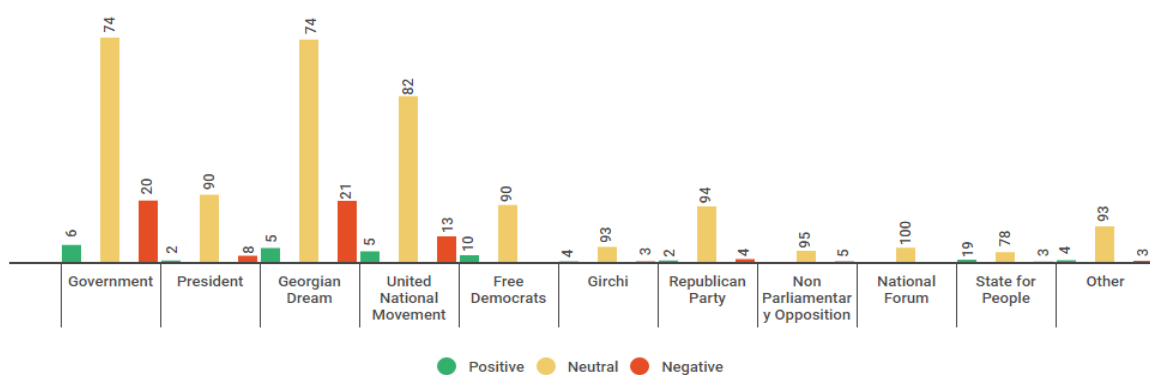


Tone of content in covering political subjects. Coverage of Georgian Dream (negative 21%, positive 5%) and Government (negative 20%, positive 6%) was most negative in tone, followed by National Movement (negative 13%, positive 5%).

In terms of total coverage, newly established State for People party was covered most positively in tone (positive 19%, negative 3%), followed by Free Democrats (positive 10%, neutral - 90%). Coverage of National Forum (100%) and non-parliamentary opposition (95%; negative 5%) was highly neutral in tone. The tone of coverage of Republican Party is also highly neutral (94%); its negative coverage is 4% and positive – 2%. Girchi was mainly covered neutrally (93%), its positive coverage amounts 4% and negative coverage - 3%.

Negative tone (8%) of the President’s coverage prevails over positive tone (2%). In case of CEC, it was covered in positive tone - 18% and in neutral - 82%. Negative coverage of CEC was not observed.

Chart 3.6.3. Coverage of Political Subjects – Tone of Content, Tabula

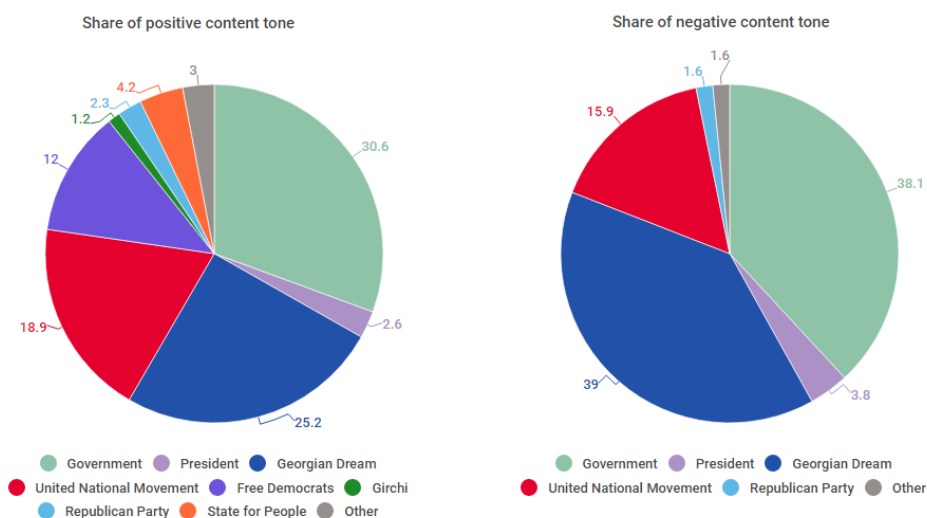


A share of subjects in positive and negative content. The Government (30.6%) and Georgian Dream (25.2%) received the highest share in Tabula’s positive content. Simultaneously, a share of these subjects in negative content is also highest (Georgian Dream 39%, Government 38.1%). A share of National Movement in negative content (15.9%) is slightly less than in a positive content (18.9%). A share of Free Democrats in positive content was 12%, while the negative coverage was not observed at all. In terms of positive coverage Free Democrats are followed by State for People - 4,2 %, whose coverage in negative tone amounted 0,2%.

A share of Republican Party in positive content (2.3%) prevails over negative (1.6%). A share of Girchi in positive content amounted 1.2%, in negative – 0.3%. A share of other parties, whose coverage is below 1%, amounts to 3% in positive content and 1.6% - in negative content.

A share of the President's coverage in negative content (3.8%) exceeds a share in positive content (2.6%); CEC's share in positive coverage is 0.9%.

Chart 3.6.4 A Share of Covering Political Subjects in Positive and Negative Content – Tabula



Qualitative Data

Tabula TV mainly covers developments through observance of ethical standards and political pluralism. However, there are some cases when the balance of coverage of political subjects has been violated.

Balance/Bias. On April 29 (at 7:03pm) Focus news program aired a story “A part of Botanical Garden owned by Ivanishvili.” Some representatives of civil society organizations (Sulkhan Saladze, GYLA coordinator; Nata Peradze, founder of Guerrilla Gardening) speak about a non-transparent auction, which was announced by the Tbilisi City Hall on privatization of a plot belonging to the Botanical Garden; they also accuse former Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili of some activities planned in the Botanical Garden as well as implementation of the Panorama Tbilisi project.

The story also involves comments by two members of the opposition United National Movement, Irakli Abesadze and Nika Melia, who say that the Tbilisi City Hall issued an illegal permit on building a hotel in the Botanical Garden. The opposition members threaten with holding protest rallies and unleash accusations against Bidzina Ivanishvili.

The story does not provide any comments by Bidzina Ivanishvili or any representative of the Tbilisi City Hall, other opposition parties, or the company owning the land. So, the story does not provide the attitude of the other party and therefore it is biased.

Factual accuracy/incomplete information. The May 11 story (at 7:11pm) “Amendments to Electoral System” is dedicated to the draft law on making amendments to the election code, which was submitted to the Parliament by GD lawmaker Giga Bukia from Conservative Party.

A journalist says that “the opposition slammed the draft law initiated by the ruling majority as obscure.” The same journalist claims that “the opposition has also submitted its own bill on amendments to the election code, which envisages replacing majoritarian component of the electoral system with regional-proportional system already in 2016.”

The story provides only the position of National Movement (four respondents from this opposition party), while the position of other opposition parties (parliamentary or non-parliamentary), including an inter-faction group, which works on the election code, has not been provided. It is not specified, which particular opposition party is referred to above. It should be noted that besides National Movement, other opposition parties also have their own initiatives

on electoral amendments (for example, Girchi, which held a presentation on April 1, 2016). So, the issue has been discussed only from the perspective of one opposition party.

Balance. On May 20, (19:12) Tabula dedicated a story to a topic “Paralympians Challenge the Results of Elections.” According to the story, Paralympians do not agree with the results of elections held at the Paralympic Committee on May 19. A journalist claims that the election “was held under pressure from the ruling party and therefore it is not legitimate.”

The story provides comments by Giorgi Tsidze (former head of the Paralympic Committee), who directly accuses Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs, Tanel Khechikashvili of “personal involvement in unrests.” The story also involves comments by Temur Arabidze (Paralympian), who makes similar remarks and speaks of government’s pressure.

The journalist provides the comments of the above mentioned persons as the position of the Paralympic Committee, whereas the position of those persons, who backed dismissal of Giorgi Tsidze is not provided in the story. Neither did the journalist seek the comments from the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs and Georgian Dream. So, the story is not balanced.

Coverage of public opinion poll/factual accuracy. On June 28 (at 19:01pm) Tabula TV covered a public opinion poll, which was commissioned by Rustavi 2 TV and fielded by German-American company GFK. Two stories were dedicated to the issue. The first story is about the results of public opinion poll, involving information about some questions of the survey. The story provides no information about how many respondents refused to answer, as well as about percentage of undecided respondents; information about the methodology is provided only partially. Mandatory requirements for covering public opinion poll are provided incomprehensibly that represents violation of regulation.

The second story “Assessments about the Poll” provides assessments made by a wide spectrum of political subjects from both the ruling party and parliamentary and non-parliamentary opposition. Although the remarks about reliability of the company GFK were made that day (in connection with phone interviews conducted in Ukraine, particularly in Crimea), the story did not cover either this information, or the background information about the company.

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 0,20%, while the share (SHR) amounted 1, 04%.

Quantitative Data

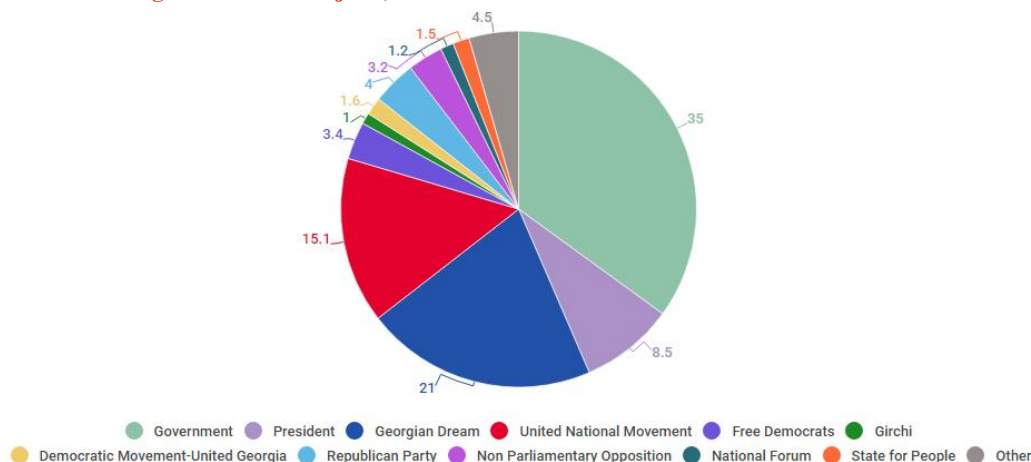
Total coverage. The four-month monitoring of Kavkasia TV (April 1 – July 31) has revealed that the TV channel dedicated the greatest part of its primetime news programs (total number of covered stories 1334) to the Government (35%) and Georgian Dream (21%). A total share of their coverage is 56%.

As for other qualified subjects, United National Movement has the largest share – 15.1%, followed by Republicans (4%) and Free Democrats (3.4%). The share of Democratic Movement – United Georgia (1.6%) and National Forum (1.2%) is relatively low; coverage of other qualified subjects is less than 1%: Labor Party - 0.7%; Industry will Save Georgia – 0.6%; Alliance of Patriots of Georgia – 0.5%; Conservatives – 0.5%; Christian-Conservative Party – 0.02%.

The non-parliamentary opposition received only 3.2%. Among newly established parties, State for People was covered more intensively (1.5%). The share of other parties is relatively low: Girchi – 1%, Tamaz Mechiauri for United Georgia – 0.4% and New Georgia – 0.1%.

The President’s share in total coverage amounted to 8.5%, Central Election Commission (CEC) - 0, 3%.

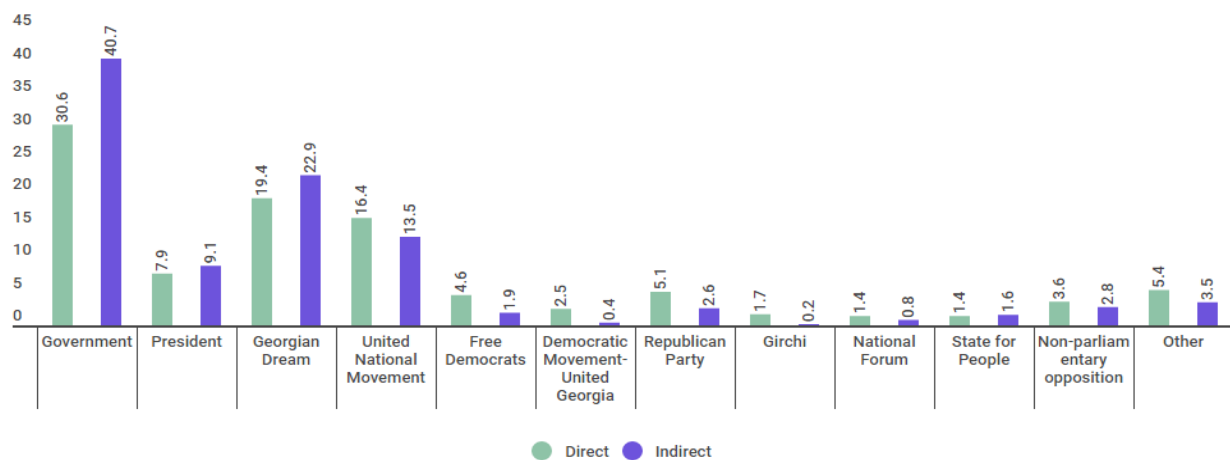
Chart 3.7.1 Total Coverage of Political Subjects, Kavkasia



Direct and indirect coverage. According to the four-month data, Kavkasia TV dedicated most of its airtime to both direct and indirect coverage of the Government (direct – 30.6%; indirect – 40.7%) and Georgian Dream coalition (direct – 19.4%; indirect – 22.9%). In the both cases indirect coverage prevails over direct coverage. In case of the President, direct coverage falls behind indirect coverage (direct 7.9%; indirect 9.1%).

As the chart below shows, in all other cases direct coverage prevails over indirect coverage or the results are almost identical.

Chart 3.7.2 Direct/Indirect Coverage of Political Parties, Kavkasia

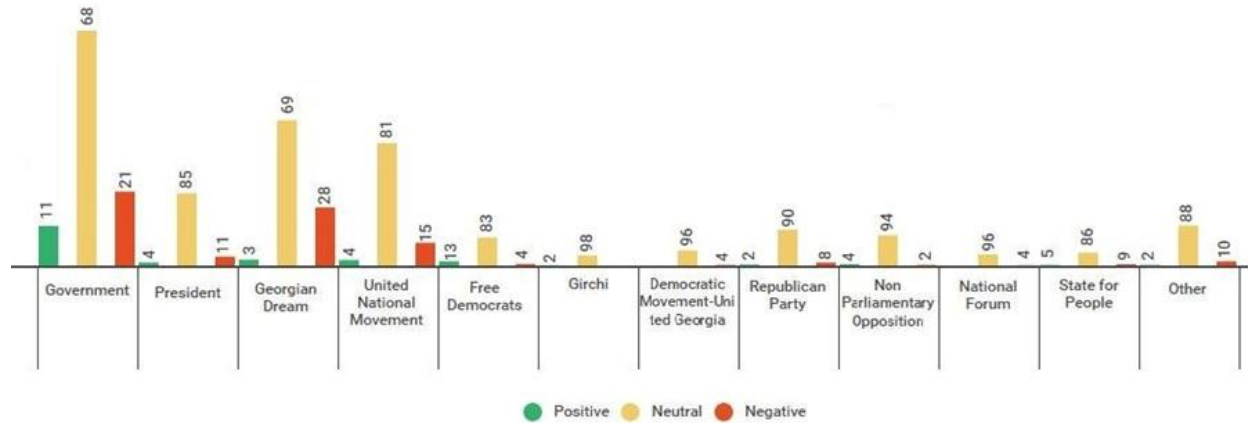


Tone of content in covering political subjects. New Political Center Girchi was covered most neutrally (98%) (negative coverage – 0%) by Kavkasia TV. The tone of coverage was also highly neutral with respect to Democratic Movement – United Georgia and National Forum (96%); a share of positive coverage of the both political subjects was 0%.

In covering political parties, the highest level of positive tone was observed with respect to Free Democrats (13%; negative – 4%), followed by the Government (11%). In case of this latter, a share of negative content was high (21%).

Georgian Dream (negative -28 %, Positive 3 %) and the Government (negative -21 %, Positive 11 %) received highest negative content. These subjects are followed by United National Movement (negative 15%, positive 4%), State for People (negative 9%, positive 5%) and Republican Party (negative 8%, positive 2%). As for the non-parliamentary opposition, their coverage on Kavkasia TV was more positive (4%) in tone than negative (2%).

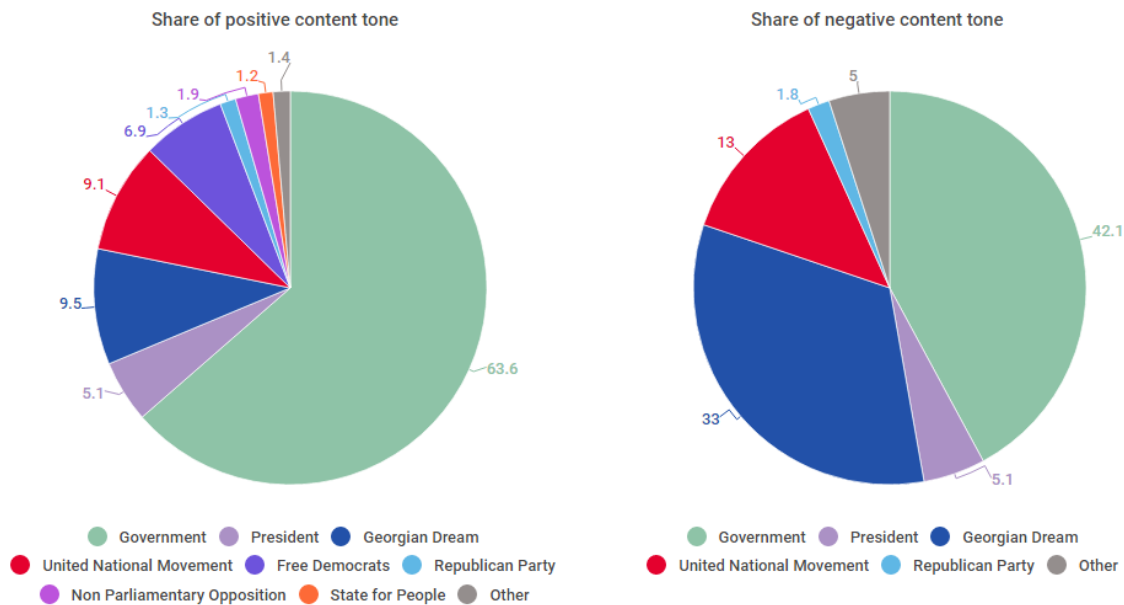
Chart 3.7.3. Coverage of Political Subjects – Tone of Content, Kavkasia



A share of subjects in positive and negative content. In terms of both positive and negative content, Kavkasia TV dedicated most of its airtime to the Government (positive 63.6%, negative 42.1%) and Georgian Dream (positive 9.5%, negative 33%). In case of Georgian Dream, a share of negative content significantly prevails over a share of positive content. In case of the United National Movement, a share of negative content (13%) prevails over positive content (9.1%) and in case of Free Democrats a share of positive content (6.9%) is much higher than a share of negative content (0.8%).

A share of the Republican Party’s coverage is almost identical in positive (1.3%) and negative (1.8%) tones, as well as a share of the President’s coverage (positive and negative 5.1%).

Chart. 3.7.4. A Share of Political Subjects in Positive and Negative Content – Kavkasia



Qualitative Data

As quantitative data shows, the Kavkasia TV is the second to Rustavi 2 by its critical coverage of the government and the Georgian Dream (48%). The TV channel mainly adheres to the principle of balanced coverage and ethical norms of journalism. There are technical problems often observed in news reports such as, for example, absence of captions sometimes making it difficult to fully understand reported events. Moreover, Kavkasia TV covers a great amount of stories in voice-over to sound on tape format which might be attributed to the lack of human and technical resources, though this format complicates the observance of balance.

Improper balance. On 17 May (at 20:40), the TV channel produced one report and two voice-overs to sound on tape. The report covered the Day of Family Purity and Respect to Parents which was established by the Patriarch of Georgian Orthodox Church in 2014 to counterpoise the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia, and the march organized to mark that day. The first section of the report was dedicated to the Day of Family Purity whilst another section covered the LGBT protest in front of the Interior Ministry, deprived of opportunity to mark 17 May for the second consecutive year, and the arrest of activists who were detained because of making inscriptions on the Patriarchate building. Although overall the report showed depth, there was a certain imbalance between the first section (the march of clergy and politicians) and the second section (LGBT protest). The first section contained six soundbites of participants of the march whilst the second section contained only two soundbites of LGBT rights defenders. Moreover, among the soundbites of the first section there were soundbites of only two members of Democratic Movement for United Georgia, Giorgi Akhvlediani and Dimitri Lortkipanidze, who spoke about the purity of family. For a properly balanced coverage, it would be desirable to also provide opinions of those politicians who do not agree to the idea of establishing an alternative to the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia and in contrast to the above named politicians, are not distinguished for their homophobic attitudes.

Balance. On 11 July (at 21:38), a voice-over to sound on tape story on problems of universal health insurance program was aired in news program of Kavkasia TV channel. The material contained a comment of UNM member, Zurab Chiaberashvili, alleging that the program came to face a problem of funding from the budget; he also alleged that a decree of the Health Care Minister restricted the participation of clinics in the program. The material lacked a position of the Health care Ministry.

Balance. On 15 June (at 20:49), the news program covered the fact of testimony given by the former defense and interior minister Irakli Okruashvili to the prosecution against the former President Mikheil Saakashvili and former interior minister Vano Merabishvili on the case of physical assault of businessman Valeri Gelashvili. The material contained only Irakli Okruashvili's comment whereas positions of lawyers of Mikheil Saakashvili and Vano Merabishvili were not provided.

Improper balance. On 17 May (at 20:31), the news program covered the speech of Tbilisi Mayor Davit Narmania to the City Council. The report contained 11 soundbites (some of them from the sitting of City Council and others recorded as comments) in which accusations were voiced against the Mayor. Soundbites of Tbilisi Mayor and a representative of the majority in City Council were taken from the City Council sitting. It did not provide comments, recorded separately, of defenders of the Mayor's positions.

Reporting public opinion poll results. On 14 May (at 20:48), Kavkasia (like Rustavi 2 and Maestro TV companies) covered the poll results, which were made public by the news agency GHN asserting that it was commissioned by the Georgian Dream.

Although Georgian Dream denied the authenticity of the poll, the results of the poll were presented as authentic. Moreover, apart from the organization that commissioned the poll, the report did not provide any other data compulsory for reporting public opinion polls in pre-election period.

On 30 June (at 20:40), Kavkasia TV channel also covered the results of Georgian Dream's in-house opinion poll. It is worth noting that in contrast to other TV channels (for example, Imedi, Maestro, etc.), the presenter as well as the

reported focused on the criticism caused by selective publicizing of results of only two political subjects (Georgian Dream and UNM). In contrast to other TV channels, Kavkasia, based on the source of the poll, also reported the period of time when the poll was conducted, the amount of respondents, the method and the margin of error. However, it did not provide exact formulation of questions, thereby misleading the audience. For example, similarly to Imedi TV channel, Kavkasia also said that 65% of respondents believed the Georgian Dream would win the elections; however, this 65% was the result of answers to the question: “Regardless of your choice, which party, in your opinion, will receive the highest number of seats in parliament?”

With regard to opinion poll results, Kavkasia TV provided comments of a wide spectrum of political parties (Georgian Dream, Free Democrats, UNM, Democratic Movement for United Georgia, State for People, Labor Party).

3.8. Obiektivi

About Obiektivi TV: Media Union Obiektivi 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 Obiektivi (Bondo Mdzinarashvili, Vakhtang Begiashvili) are nominated by Alliance of Patriots as a candidates for the 2016 parliamentary elections. According to various surveys, Obiektivi carries out an anti-western, Turkophobic and homophobic editorial policy. Discriminatory editorial policy of the Obiektivi talk-shows were mentioned in the fifth monitoring cycle report²² 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 Obiektivi was not included in TVMR Georgia TV ratings in 2015.²³ 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 Companies²⁴ which are in lead on media market in terms of revenues, Media Union Obiektivi is the only TV company with highest donation share (31 %).

Quantitative Data

Total coverage. Obiektivi TV became a subject of monitoring after the channel started to produce news programs on May 16. Thus, the below data (960 stories) reflect the results of two months (June 1 – July 31).

Like other TV channels, Obiektivi dedicated the greatest part of its primetime news programs to the Government (35.7%) and Georgian Dream (15.8%). Unlike other TV channels, in this case Georgian Dream is followed by Alliance of Patriots (10.2%); United National Movement falls behind with a small difference (9.8%).

A share of non-parliamentary opposition is 3.8%; a share of those parties, whose coverage is below 1% - 3.4%. The results look as follows: Republican Party – 2.3%; Free Democrats – 2.1%; Democratic Movement – For United Georgia - 1.8%; Labor Party – 1.9%; National Forum – 1%.

Compared to other TV companies, among newly set up parties, New Georgia has the highest share – 1.6%, followed by Tamaz Mechiauri – United Georgia – 1.5%; State for People – 1.3% and Girchi – 0.3%.

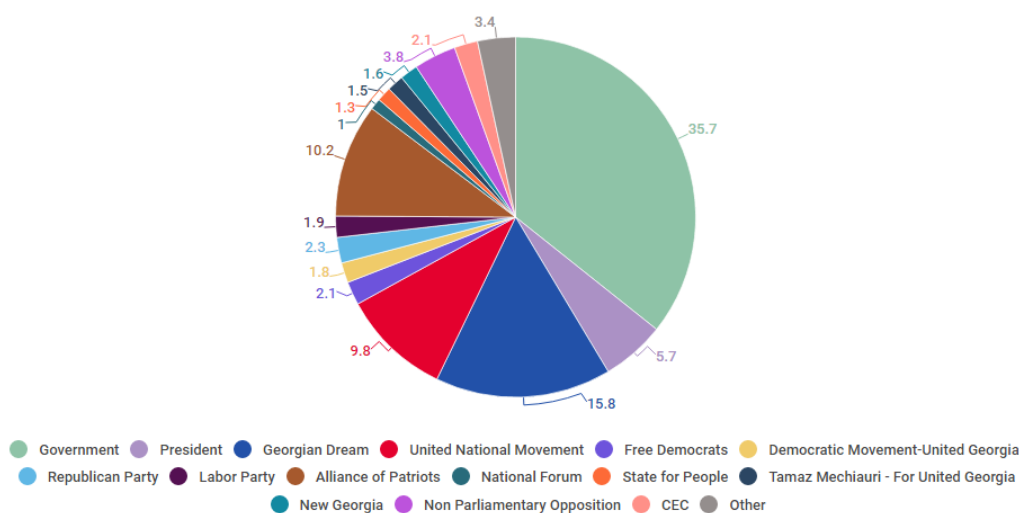
The President’s share in total coverage is 5.7%; Central Election Commission (CEC) – 2.1%.

²² <http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Georgia/GEO-CbC-V-2016-002-ENG.pdf>

²³ <http://www.tvmr.ge/en#!en/news/44/>

²⁴ A share of financial income of 8 TV companies in media market for January 1 - June 30, 2016 : Rustavi 2 (46%), Imedi (25%), Maestro (8 %), Georgia’s Media Network (7,5%), GDS (2,3%), Obiektivi (2 %), Iberia (1,9%) TV Pirveli (1%)

Chart 3.8. 1 Total Coverage of Political Subjects, Obiektivi (June 1 – July 31, 2016)

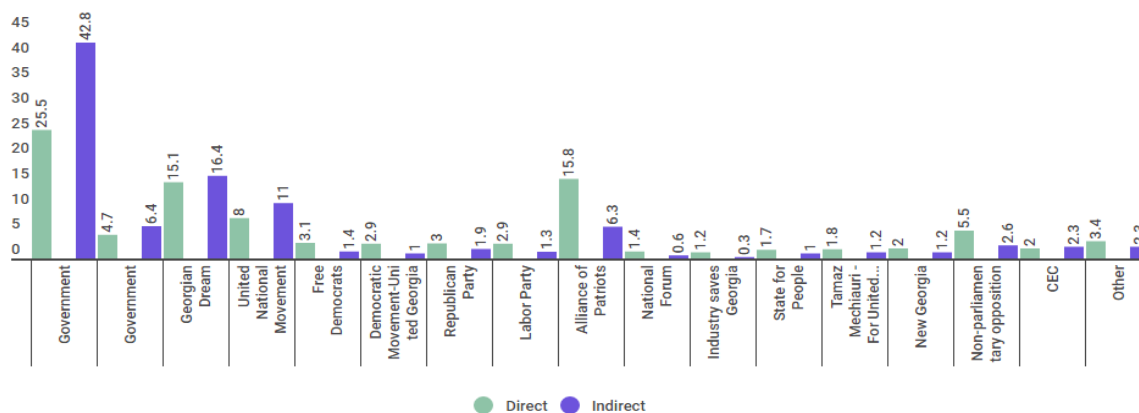


Direct/Indirect Coverage. Obiektivi covered most intensively the Government (25.5%), Alliance of Patriots (15.8%) and Georgian Dream (15.1%). Herewith, the greatest difference between direct (15.8%) and indirect (6.3%) coverage was observed in case of Alliance of Patriots. In case of the Government, indirect coverage (42.8%) significantly prevailed over direct coverage (25.5%).

Indirect coverage prevails over direct coverage in case of the following subjects: Georgian Dream (indirect 16.4%, direct 15.1%), National Movement (indirect 11%, direct 8%), President (indirect 6.4%, direct 4.7%).

In case of other political subjects, the direct coverage slightly prevails over indirect coverage. The only exception is CEC, where indirect coverage slightly prevails over direct coverage.

Chart 3.8.2. Direct/Indirect Coverage of Political Parties, Obiektivi (June 1 – July 31, 2016)

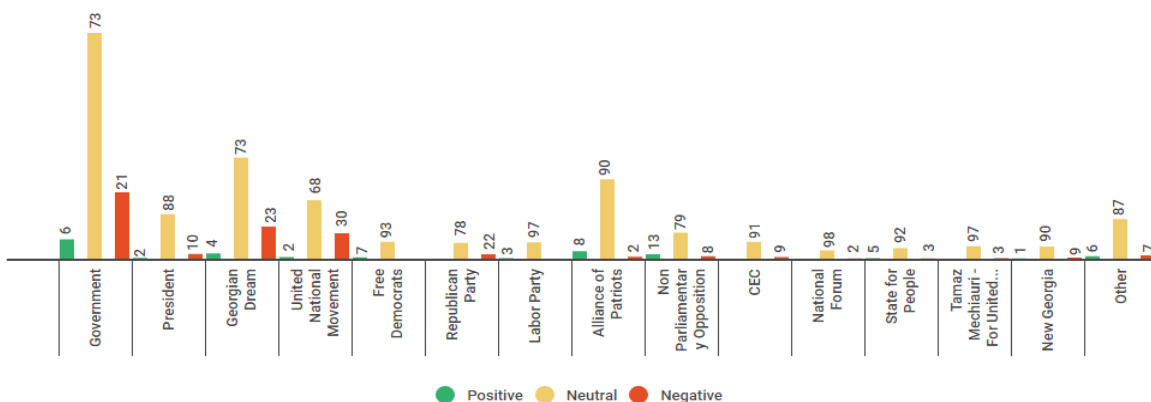


Tone of content in covering political subjects. Coverage of the following political subjects was most neutral in tone: National Forum (98%); Labor Party (97%); new parties Tamaz Mechiauri – United Georgia (97%) and State for People (92%), as well as Free Democrats (93%); CEC (91%); Alliance of Patriots (90%) and New Georgia (90%).

The tone of content was most negative with respect to National Movement (30%), Georgian Dream (23%), Republican Party (22%), Government (21%) and President (10%). In addition, the Republican Party has zero positive coverage.

Out of total coverage, the tone of content was most positive with respect to the non-parliamentary opposition (13%), Alliance of Patriots (8%), Free Democrats (7%), Government (6%) and political subjects with coverage below 1% (6%).

Chart 3.8.3. Coverage of Political Subjects – Tone of Content, Obiektivi (June 1 – July 31, 2016)



A share of subjects in positive and negative content. The Government (43.7%) and Alliance of Patriots (17%) have the highest share in Obiektivi’s positive coverage. The Government’s share in negative content is slightly higher (45.8%) and the share of Alliance of Patriots is much lower (1.4%).

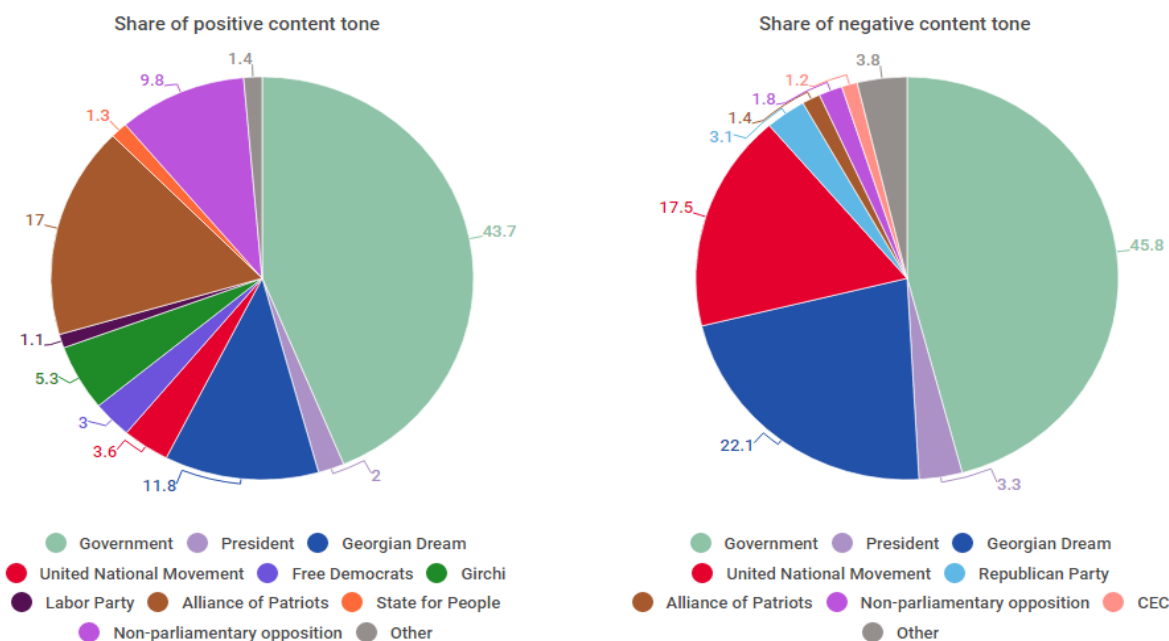
Georgian Dream’s share in positive content (11.8%) is much lower than its share in negative content (22.1%); the same is with the United National Movement, where a share in negative content prevails over a share in positive content (positive 3.6%; negative 17.5%).

A share of non-parliamentary opposition in positive content is also high (9.8%); negative (1.8%). A share of Girchi in positive content is high 5.3%, which was not covered negatively at all.

A share of the President’s coverage in positive content is 2%; negative content – 3.3%.

A share of qualified parties in positive and negative content looks as follows: Free Democrats – positive 3%, without any share in negative content. Labor Party’s share in positive content is 1.1%. A share of the following political parties is less than 1% in positive content: Nino Burjanadze’s Democratic Movement – United Georgia (positive 0.1%, negative 0.4%); Republicans (positive 0.1%, negative 3.1%); Industry will Save Georgia (positive 0.6%, negative 0.2%).

Chart. 3.8.4 A Share of Covering Political Subjects in Positive and Negative Content – Obiektivi (June 1 – July 31, 2016)



Qualitative Data

Obiektivi was the only TV channel in which the Alliance of Patriots is the second, after the Government and the ruling party, by the amount of coverage received (10.2%). Instances of reports presenting opinions of the Alliance of Patriots alone as an alternative to the government’s opinion were frequent, with opinions of other opposition parties – both parliamentary and non-parliamentary – being ignored. Balance in reporting was also violated in favor of various political subjects. Reports sometimes relied on only one source and accuracy was sometimes a problem too.

Balance/impartiality. News service of Obiektivi TV channel often produced reports in which alternative opinions were expressed by the Alliance of Patriots or subjects falling within the bloc alone and opinions of parliamentary opposition were totally ignored. For example:

On 15 July (at 20:01), the news program of Obiektivi aired the report concerning the increased state debt. The material contained only the comments of the chairman of budgetary committee of the parliament, Nodar Ebanoidze, and a member of the Free Georgia political party which falls within the Alliance of Patriots bloc, Kakha Kukava.

On 9 July (at 19:30), Obiektivi covered the topic of bonuses and salary additions in the Central Electoral Commission. The only alternative to the opinion of the Commission was the opinion of a member of the Alliance of Patriots, Gocha Tevdoradze.

On 7 July (at 19:52), a report covering a meeting between the Central Electoral Commission and opposition political parties contained a comment of Kakha Kukava alone, who is a member of Free Georgia political party which falls within the Alliance of Patriots bloc.

Balance/accuracy. On 7 July (at 19:48), Obiektivi covered the topic of Georgia’s position in international ratings, presenting a member of Alliance of Patriots, Gigi Maglakelidze, as an economic expert, which was misleading. The report did not provide comments of any other political party.

Bias/balance. A report of 8 July (at 19:44) on NATO’s challenges concerned the prospects of strengthening the defense of Black Sea territorial waters with the involvement of NATO. In the lead to the report the presenter raised a question of what that cooperation would bring to Georgia and announced two different opinions: a positive attitude of the government towards this process and probability of threats which this process could pose to Georgia. Apart

from comments of representatives of authorities, the report did not provide any additional information on what in particular this package of cooperation with NATO envisaged; nor did it mention the participation of Ukraine in it. In addition to different opinions of two experts, the report contained only a negative assessment of a member of Alliance of Patriots, Gigi Maglakelidze, who said that such cooperation would be dangerous for Georgia because it is not a NATO member state and consequently, not qualified for the defense mechanisms under Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. The report did not present opinions of that segment of opposition political parties which view such format of cooperation as favorable for the security and defense of the country.

Impartiality/balance. On 4 July (at 12:04) Obiektivi reported about an initiative of Kartuli Dasi leader, Jondi Bagaturia, regarding the registration of a question for referendum to find out whether the population supports NATO membership. Apart from Kartuli Dasi and ruling political team, the Alliance of Patriots was the only political subject whose opinion was provided in the report whereas opinions of that segment of opposition parties which support Georgia's NATO integration were ignored. Moreover, a journalist questioned the legitimacy of plebiscite on the integration into NATO, which was held simultaneously with the presidential election in 2008. In particular, the journalist said:

“The question whether Georgia should integrate into NATO, 80% of voters answered positively. However, in 2008, the opposition political parties and nongovernmental organizations spoke about the election fraud and consequently, tampering with results of the plebiscite.”

The opinion of the journalist about falsification of election and consequently plebiscite results was presented as the position of the entire opposition political parties and civil sector, which was misleading. Moreover, the material did not cite results of most recent opinion polls conducted by respected international organizations, which show that the majority of society supports the country's integration into NATO.

Balance/impartiality. On 29 July (at 19:34), Obiektivi aired a report about frequent visits of Russian MPs to Georgia. The report evaluated the aim of visits and interests of parties to this issue. The topic was evaluated by expert Irakli Toronjadze who spoke about unacceptability of such cooperation. As regards politicians, the report provided opinions of only those politicians who view such relations important; they were: MP from the ruling majority Davit Lortkipanidze and representatives of opposition political parties “Tamaz Mechiauri – United Georgia” and “Democratic Movement for United Georgia.” The report did not include opinions of representatives of those political parties who are skeptical about the cooperation with Russia and view the issue in the context of occupation.

Impartiality/balance. On 18 July, Obiektivi aired a report on possibilities of destabilization in Georgia. This topic was based on a statement made by Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu and released by the Russian Interfax news agency, saying that alike Syrian crisis, armed conflict may happen in any country, including post-Soviet countries, Central Asia and South Caucasus and in such a case, Russia would undertake adequate measures.

In the introductory part of the report, an expert noted that in the process of destabilization, Russia may use pro-Russian political parties such as the forces rallying around Vladimer Bedukadze, Nino Burjanadze, Tamaz Mechiauri, Gogi Topadze.

After the abovementioned comment of the expert, the report took an absolutely different development. MP Gia Volski, a representative of Georgian Dream, Zurab Tkemaladze, a member of Georgian Dream coalition from the faction of Industry Will Save Georgia, and Gigi Maglakelidze, a member of Alliance of Patriots, accused the United National Movement of efforts to stage destabilization after the elections. According to Volski, the interests of Russia and the UNM coincided in that. The actuality in the report showed Zurab Tkemaladze agreeing to a suggestion of the journalist that the UNM was a source of destabilization. In particular, he told the journalist:

“One of political forces which you meant – and perhaps I mean too – longs for provocation and destabilization.”

The comment of a representative of Alliance of Patriots in the report was presented as the position of the entire non-parliamentary opposition. The report noted that UNM declined to comment. Apart from choosing respondents

selectively, the report tried to link the statement of the Russian Defense Minister with the opposition political party and consequently, portrayed this party as a threat.

Accuracy/improper source. Accusations against Defense Minister Tina Khidasheli (a member of Republican Party), covered by Obiektivi twice, rested on a single respondent alone. Accusations voiced by two incumbent employees of the Ministry against the Minister were also presented as the position of the entire Defense Ministry.

On 1 June, Obiektivi news program aired a report - scandal around the Defense Ministry (at 19:31) - in which a dismissed officer Davit Nemsadze accused Minister Tina Khidasheli of torturing children, nepotism and corruption. Those accusations were based on verbal statements of Davit Nemsadze alone. The report included a comment of the Public Defender's Office saying that it was studying the case on the basis of application from Davit Nemsadze. The TV channel did not undertake any effort to certify this information. The report also lacked a position of the Defense Minister.

On 1 July (at 19:40), Obiektivi aired yet another similar material based on the same respondent. During a news briefing, the respondent declared that he had a list of 111 employees of the Defense Ministry of which 55 were nepotistic appointments. Obiektivi TV did not show any interest towards the content or origin of this list; nor did it double check details and accuracy of accusations.

Balance was also violated in an anti-Defense Minister report - defense Ministry accused of nepotism - which was aired on 26 July (at 19:33). Accusations of two employees blaming the Minister of partisan staff policy were presented the position of the entire Ministry. Both the presenter and the journalist declared that employees got to confront the Minister. The report contained a phone comment of the head of press service who said that they would study the issue and make a statement if appropriate.

Reporting public opinion polls. In the reporting period, public opinion polls were covered in the Obiektivi news program in a somewhat comprehensive way only on 29 July (NDI poll). However, even in this case, it reported results to only one question – “if parliamentary elections were held tomorrow who would you vote for?” The report indicated the time of poll, the number of respondents, the method, the amount of undecided voters (57%), the exact formulation of the question and the organization having commissioned the poll.