

Pre-election Media Monitoring in Georgia

July 2010

This report presents the main findings of the 2010 media-monitoring project carried out by CRRC-Georgia for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with funding from the European Union. For more information, please contact Country Director Koba Turmanidze at koba@crrccenters.org

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Contents

Introduction.....	3
Summary of the Main Findings.....	4
The quantitative component.....	4
The qualitative component	4
Quantitative Results	6
Time allocated to candidate/party.....	6
Direct & indirect types of coverage.....	7
Direct & indirect speech by periods	9
Coverage tone of candidate/party	11
Coverage tone by periods.....	12
Number of times the use of administrative resources was mentioned.....	14
Administrative resources by periods.....	15
Annex 1: Methodology	16
Annex 2: Qualitative Examples.....	19
April 26-May 5, 2010	19
May 6-12, 2010.....	23
May 13-19, 2010.....	25
May 20-25, 2010.....	29
May 26-June 1, 2010	31
June 2-6, 2010	34
Annex 3: List of Abbreviations.....	38

Introduction

Research has shown that most Georgians say they watch television every day,¹ and it follows that television was the primary source for people to get updates on the candidates and the issues related to the May local elections. To shed greater light on how the Georgian media provides this information to the public, the UNDP/CRRC undertook the pre-election media monitoring project. Within the project, the prime time news programs and selected talk shows on the six major Georgian television channels were monitored: Channel 1 (the Georgian Public Broadcaster), Rustavi 2, Imedi, Kavkasia, Maestro and Real TV. The monitoring period ran from April 26th to June 6th, five weeks before and one week after the May 30th local government and Tbilisi mayoral elections. The media-monitoring project took into account several quantitative and qualitative factors.

In the **quantitative** part of the monitoring, the project focused on the following components:

- Time allocated for each candidate/party,
- Ratio of direct and indirect speech within the allocated time,
- Tone of coverage of each candidate/party, and
- Coverage of the administrative resources.

The **qualitative** part of the monitoring centered on the following components:

- Objective/neutral coverage,
- Factual reporting,
- Hate speech,
- Propaganda,
- Hidden advertisement, and
- Black public relations (BPR).

The quantitative data was collected from the main prime time news programs on each of the six selected TV channels, while the qualitative analysis included both news programs and political talk shows. For more detailed information about the methodology, please see Annex 1. For weekly quantitative analysis, refer to *Civil.ge*'s website.² For qualitative reports, refer to Annex 2.

In the analysis, this report will focus on the main findings for the five qualified candidates and parties that passed the election barrier: Gigi Ugulava, the United National Movement (UNM); Irakli Alasania, the Alliance for Georgia (AFG); Giorgi Chanturia, the Christian-Democratic Movement (CDM); Zviad Dzidziguri, the National Council (NC); and Gogi Topadze, the Topadze Industrialists (TI). For a list of abbreviations, please see Annex 3.

The media monitoring quantitative analysis also covered a comparison of three periods: the first three weeks (April 26th–May 16th) of the media monitoring, the two weeks before elections (May 17th–May 30th) and one week after the elections, May 31st–June 6th.

¹ See, for example, CRRC's report "Georgia Comprehensive Media Research: Summary Findings", Aug.-Nov. 2009, <http://www.epfound.ge/files/geo_media_research_report_en_1.pdf>.

² <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22407&search=media%20mmonitoring>.

Summary of the Main Findings

The quantitative component

During the monitoring period from April 26th to June 6th, Kavkasia led the six stations in allocating the largest amount of time to election-related coverage, which totaled 532 minutes for the election candidates/parties. Rustavi 2, by contrast, assigned the smallest amount of time – 290 minutes – to election-related coverage. Gigi Ugulava and his party, the UNM, received the most coverage on the majority of the Georgian channels. Imedi led in this case, with 45 percent of the 380 minutes allocated for all candidates/parties given to Ugulava and the UNM.

Overall, Rustavi 2, Imedi and Real TV showed more support for Ugulava and the UNM. These channels showed Ugulava and the party in direct speech more often than other opposition candidates/parties. Kavkasia and Maestro, on the other hand, allocated more direct speech time for oppositional candidates and gave less direct speech time to the ruling party's candidate.

Whereas some TV channels (Rustavi 2, Imedi and Real TV) tried to portray a positive image of Ugulava and present the opposition candidates and parties in a more negative light, Kavkasia and Maestro did the opposite: their coverage of opposition candidates and parties was more neutral and the ruling party received more coverage that was negative. Other tones of coverage worth mentioning include that of the GPB's Channel 1, which demonstrated a more or less neutral and balanced approach to all candidates.

Furthermore, the results showed that the use of administrative resources was mentioned in only 65 news items, nearly half of which (30) was covered by Channel 1.

Additionally, when comparing the three periods of the media monitoring, some differences were observed among the six TV channels. Overall, the share of direct speech for all candidates/parties increased right before the elections (i.e. during the two-week period before Election Day). Furthermore, Channel 1 and Rustavi 2 aired more coverage which was negative in tone toward the opposition candidates/parties after the elections, i.e. during the third period of monitoring.

The qualitative component

- On both “pro-government” (Rustavi 2, Imedi and Real TV) and “pro-opposition” (Kavkasia and Maestro) channels, negative and often aggressive attitudes were used toward the opposite side/camp.
- Facts and information were often presented from one angle. There were frequent cases of covering only subjectively selected events, which were presented as if they were common occurrence.
- Subjectivity, low professionalism and media bias were more obvious on the political talk shows where respondents from the opposite party were not given the chance to speak and defend themselves.

- Both on the talk shows and news programs, journalists provided information, the source of which was often:
 - not presented in the story, e.g. a journalist said that a specific person made a statement but no visuals were then shown to confirm this;
 - not reliable, e.g. the reference for the information was a webpage that spread news based on hearsay; or
 - not named at all.
- In the pre-election period, the TV channels prepared stories to present candidates in a negative way. The method of the pro-opposition channels was to present the government's team negatively, and the pro-government channels spoke of confrontations and disagreements in the opposition camps, highlighting their alleged weaknesses and instability. Cases where the actions of one opposition party, for instance, were generalized to be indicative of the entire opposition were frequent.
- Monitored programs on Real TV and Kavkasia's *Spektri* and *Barieri* stood out for displaying a low degree of objectivity. During the pre-election period, these channels ran stories based on non-reliable sources in order to present opponents in a negative light.³

³ For the list of qualitative examples, see Annex 2.

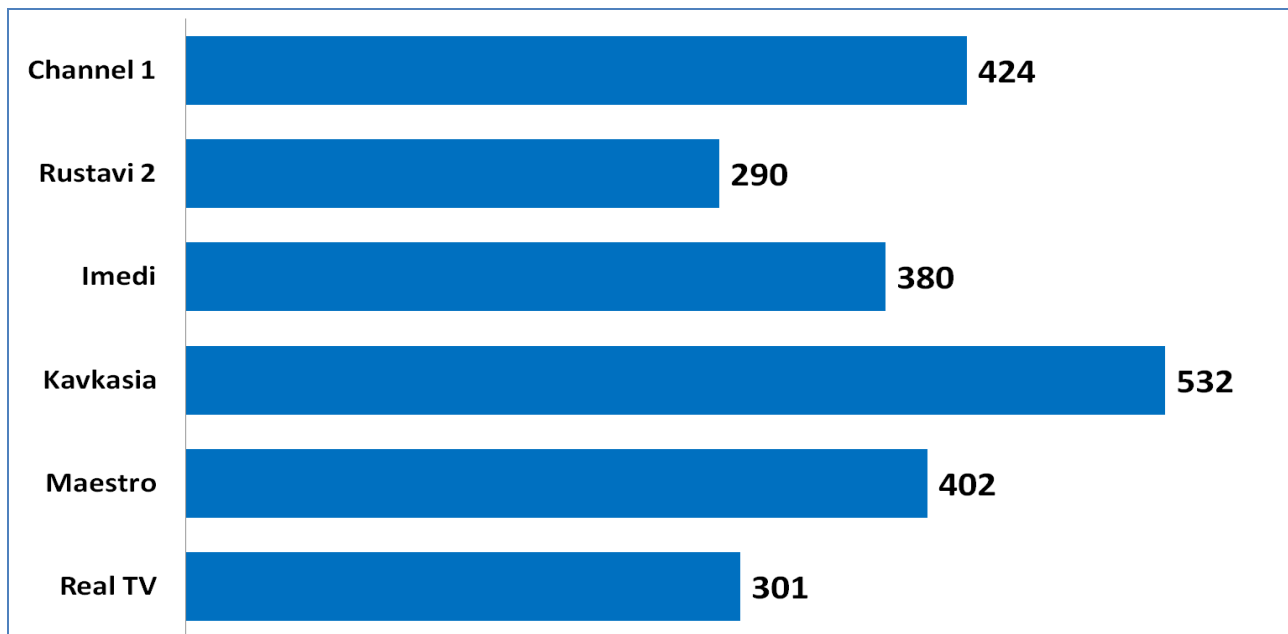
Quantitative Results

Time allocated to candidate/party

Candidates/parties received different share of the allocated time on the six channels. During the monitoring period, Ugulava and the UNM received the most coverage on almost every channel (excluding Kavkasia where Ugulava/UNM and Alasania/AFG had similar percentages). However, the amount of allocated time does not necessarily mean that the candidate/party was portrayed positively. The tone of coverage is the criterion that covers that in more details (see p. 11), whereas allocated time counts every second the channel showed or spoke about the candidate/party.

With the total time for election-related coverage, Kavkasia led the six channels with 532 minutes in total during the April 26th–June 6th period. Other channels gave less time to the campaign issues, Rustavi 2 coming in last place in this regard with 290 minutes. (*Chart 1*)

Chart 1. Total Time for Election-related Coverage (minutes)



On the GPB's Channel 1, Ugulava and the UNM received the most coverage: 24 percent of 424 minutes (refer to the tone analysis for data on the tone of coverage). Alasania and the Alliance for Georgia came second with 19 percent. Dzidziguri/NC, Chanturia/CDM and Topadze/TI followed them in the listed order. Other candidates/parties received no more than 2 percent of coverage time each.

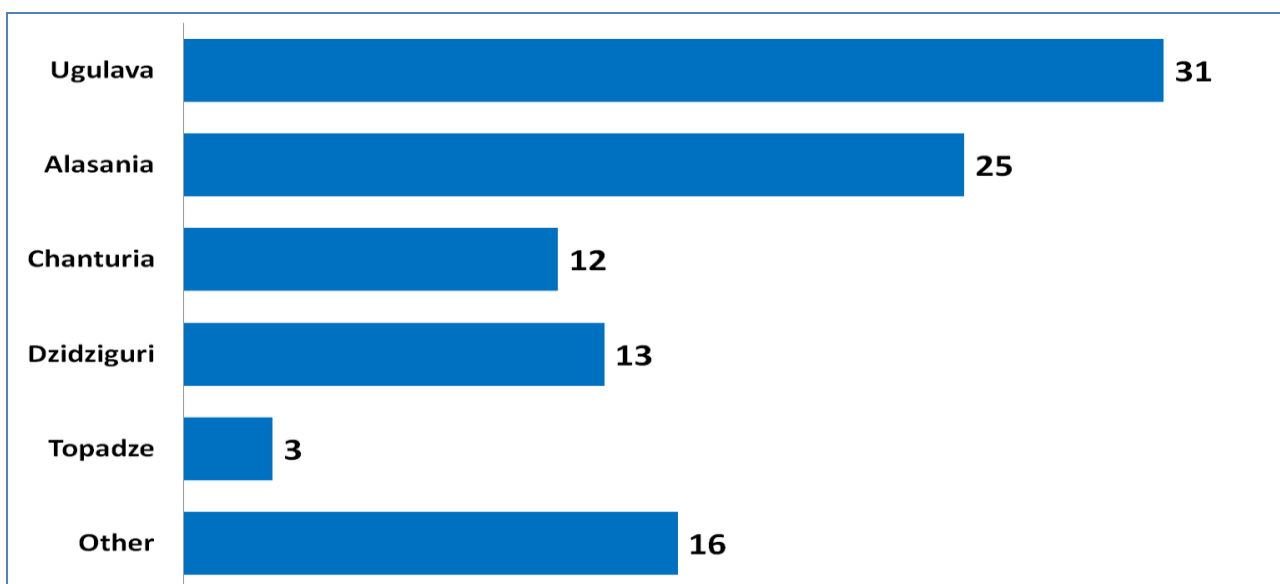
The picture is similar on Rustavi 2. Ugulava/UNM were allocated 34 percent of total election-related time (290 minutes), whereas Alasania/AFG only 24 percent. Other candidates' shares were 15 percent for Chanturia/CDM, 13 percent for Dzidziguri/NC and 8 percent for Topadze/TI.

Data on Imedi TV suggests a bigger contrast between Ugulava/UNM and the other candidates/parties. Ugulava/UNM was allocated 45 percent of the total 380 minutes, while Alasania/AFG was given only 15 percent and Chanturia/CDM only 12 percent. Dzidziguri/NC and Topadze/TI received 9 percent and 5 percent of the time, respectively.

Kavkasia covered Ugulava/UNM and Alasania/AFG more or less equally in terms of allocated time – 27 percent for Ugulava and 28 percent for Alasania. Chanturia/CDM and Dzidziguri/NC were also allocated an equal 14 percent of the total time each (out of 532 minutes). But Topadze and his party were covered for only 3 percent of time.

Maestro allocated 31 percent of its total election-related time (402 minutes) to Ugulava and the United National Movement, 25 percent to Alasania and the Alliance for Georgia, 12 percent and 13 percent of its time for Chanturia and Dzidziguri, respectively, and only 3 percent to Topadze and his party. (*Chart 2*)

Chart 2. Time Allocated for Candidate/Party (Maestro, 402 min, %)



The picture on Real TV also showed a bigger share of Ugulava/UNM coverage, 38 percent of total time (301 minutes), compared with the opposition candidates. Alasania/AFG received 23 percent; Chanturia/CDM 9 percent, Dzidziguri/NC 15 percent and Topadze/TI only 2 percent.

Direct & indirect types of coverage

Our group observed whether candidates/party leaders were given the chance to comment directly, or whether someone else, e.g. the anchor, reporter, another political figure or citizen, spoke about another candidate (indirect speech). Rustavi 2, Imedi and Real TV gave Ugulava/UNM more opportunities for direct speech than they gave to Alasania, the runner-up in the mayoral elections, and the Alliance. By contrast, Kavkasia and Maestro, allotted more time for the opposition candidates' direct speech. Though proportions of time given for both direct and indirect speech do not necessarily mean a certain channel is biased in any way, they perhaps

indicate a trend of drifting away from a neutral, balanced position. Below are the results for each channel.

According to the aggregated monitoring data, the GPB's Channel 1 gave all five candidates/parties a similar share of direct speech time, ranging from 44 percent to 56 percent, with Topadze and Chanturia having a slightly bigger share of direct speech time, albeit with less allocated time in total.

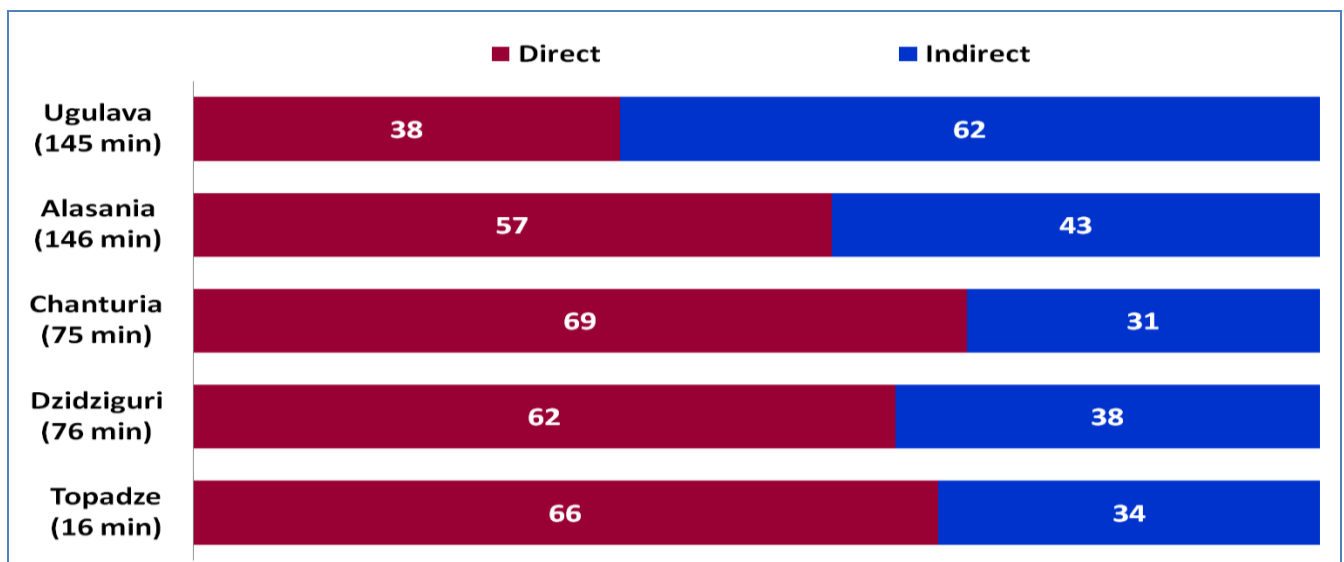
As for Rustavi 2, Ugulava/UNM had a higher percentage of direct speech (60 percent) than Alasania/AFG had (47 percent). Other candidates/parties from the opposition also had similar shares of direct speech: Topadze/TI (61 percent) and Chanturia/CDM (57 percent); however, they were allocated only half or, in Topadze's case, less than half the amount of total time on Rustavi 2.

Overall, Imedi TV allocated much more time to Ugulava/UNM compared with everyone else. In addition, out of those 169 minutes, 66 percent was direct speech from Ugulava or UNM representatives, whereas Alasania and the Alliance received only 57 minutes of coverage and 43 percent of direct speech.

Similarly, Real TV gave Ugulava/UNM the biggest share of direct speech (58 percent), whereas Alasania/AFG was given the chance to speak directly in only 20 percent of the allocated 70 minutes. Other opposition candidates/parties received less coverage, but had slightly bigger shares of direct speech – Chanturia/CDM (38 percent), Dzidziguri/NC (32 percent) and Topadze/TI (34 percent).

Kavkasia and Maestro gave the opposition candidates/parties more direct speech time. On Kavkasia, for example, Ugulava/UNM and Alasania/AFG were allocated almost equal time, 145 and 146 minutes respectively. But Ugulava's share of direct speech was 38 percent, whereas Alasania's was fully 57 percent. Chanturia, Dzidziguri, Topadze and their parties all had less time allocated but bigger shares of direct speech: Chanturia/CDM (69 percent), Dzidziguri/NC (62 percent) and Topadze/TI (66 percent). (Chart 3)

Chart 3. Ratio of Direct/Indirect Speech for Candidate/Party (Kavkasia, %)



On Maestro, Ugulava/UNM had the biggest number of allocated time, 126 minutes, but 46 percent of direct speech, unlike the opposition candidates. Alasania and his party had 67 percent of direct speech time, Chanturia/CDM 81 percent, Dzidziguri and National Council had 70 percent and Topadze and his party 64 percent.

Direct & indirect speech by periods

When broken down into periods,⁴ the general tendency was that right before elections (i.e. the two-week period before Election Day) the share of direct speech for all candidates/parties increased. This would seem logical, as the candidates/party representatives were using TV as a medium to connect with voters directly during their campaigns. However, an imbalance can be seen on several channels toward either the government or the opposition candidate/party.

On Channel 1, the increased direct speech time was noticeable for almost all candidates/parties. For Ugulava/UNM, the share of direct speech increased from 40 percent to 47 percent approaching the Election Day, and continued its increase even after that. For Alasania/AFG, the share of direct speech increased from 40 to 57 percent right before the elections, but decreased to 48 percent in the third period.

On Rustavi 2, the direct speech shares for all candidates and parties increased in the second period, right before the elections. Alasania/Alliance's share saw a sharper uptick: from 45 percent to 62 percent in the first two periods. After the elections, however, Alasania/AFG were more often the subjects of indirect speech, specifically 79 percent of indirect speech.⁵ For Ugulava/UNM, Dzidziguri/NC and Topadze/TI, the increase of direct speech continued even after the elections.

The picture was quite different on Imedi. The Ugulava/UNM had bigger shares of direct speech time in all three periods. Right before the elections, the ratio of Ugulava/UNM's direct speech increased from 55 percent to 67 percent, and after the elections it hit its highest mark, that is, 93 percent. Alasania/AFG saw a small increase in their direct speech ratio in the first two periods, from 44 percent to 50 percent, but after the elections this dropped to 26 percent. The direct speech time for Chanturia/CDM increased gradually over the three periods; right before the elections, it was 55 percent, but after elections 75 percent. In the case of Dzidziguri/NC and Topadze/TI, the direct speech time decreased in the second period before the elections (i.e. from 56 percent to 41 percent in Dzidziguri's case and from 50 percent to 44 percent in Topadze's case), and increased after the elections.

On Kavkasia, the opposition parties and candidates had almost equal direct speech time allocated in the first and second periods. As for the ruling party and its candidate, they had less direct speech time in the first period, 31 percent, but increased to 47 in the period before elections. In

⁴ As noted earlier, the three periods were April 26th–May 16th (period 1, the official launch of the pre-election campaign); May 17th–30th (period 2, two weeks before Election Day); and May 31st–June 6th (period 3, after Election Day).

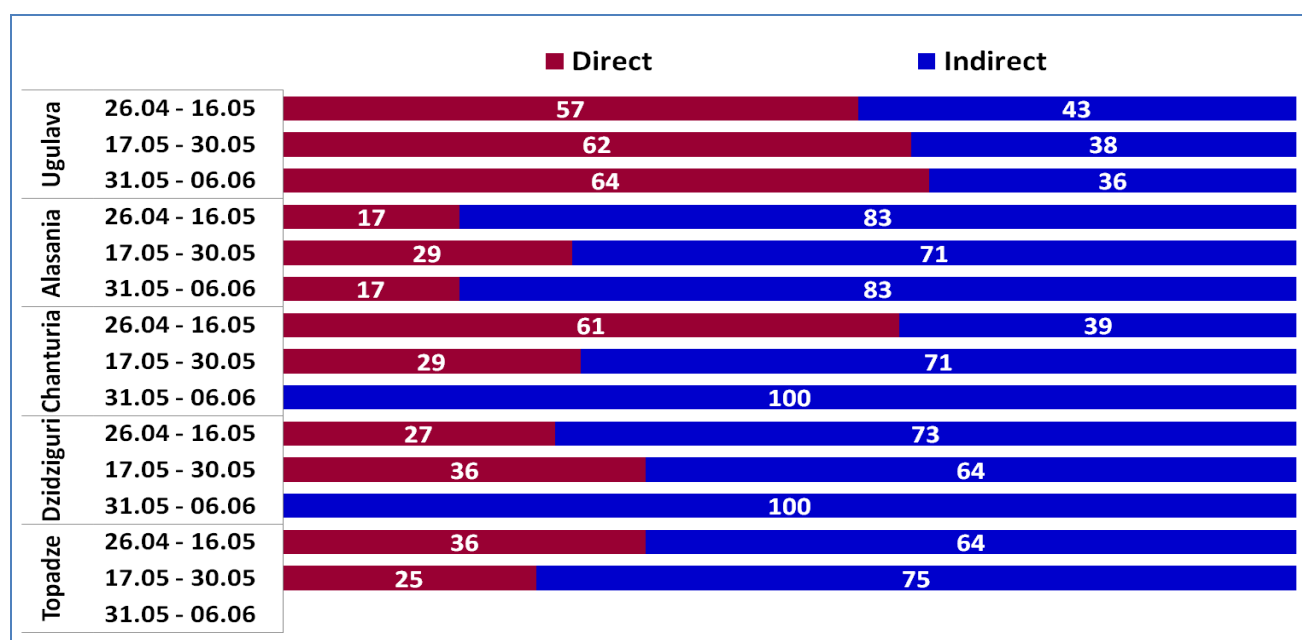
⁵ Direct-indirect speech ratios are counted from the time allocated to candidates/parties. Thus, some candidates might have had a high percentage of direct speech compared with others, but much less time allocated overall. For more on this, consult the aggregated direct–indirect speech data.

the period after elections, the share of direct speech decreased to between 30 percent and 35 percent for some of the candidates/parties (Ugulava/UNM, Alasania/Alliance, Topadze/TI); for Chanturia/CDM and Dzidziguri/NC it stayed more or less the same – 69 and 55 percent, respectively.

On Maestro, the trend was the opposite. In the first period from April 26 to May 16, all candidates and parties had bigger shares of direct speech than in the second period right before elections. After the elections, the share of direct speech time for the candidates/parties decreases further. Ugulava/UNM spoke directly 64 percent of time in the first period, 31 percent in the second period and 28 percent after the elections. Alasania/AFG had 81 percent of direct speech within the allocated time in the first period, 70 percent in the second period and 36 percent in the third. Chanturia/CDM had 90 percent, the highest share of direct speech in the first period, 69 percent in the second and 54 in the third. Dzidziguri/NC and Topadze/TI have the same 78 percent of direct speech in the first period. Their share of direct speech decreases after the first period; in the second period before elections they have 72 (Dzidziguri/NC) and 62 percent (Topadze/TI) and after elections 49 percent (Dzidziguri/NC) and 34 percent (Topadze/TI).

On Real TV, Ugulava/UNM had nearly equal and high percentages of direct speech in all three periods – 57, 62 and 64 percents, respectively. Indirect speech was mostly used for Alasania and the Alliance for Georgia during the monitoring period; however, during the two weeks before elections his and his party's direct speech percent increased to 29 from only 17 percent in the first and third periods. Chanturia/CDM started with quite a big share of direct speech, 61 percent in the first period. But the number decreased to 29 percent in the second period, and after elections he and his party representatives did not speak directly at all. Dzidziguri and the National Council had similar situation in the third period after the elections. Before the elections, however, they were covered 27 percent of the time directly, in the first period, and 36 percent in the second. Topadze/TI had the opposite results: 36 percent of direct speech in the first period, 25 percent in the second, and after the elections they received no coverage at all. (Chart 4)

Chart 4. Ratio of Direct/Indirect Speech for Candidate/Party (Real TV, %)



Coverage tone of candidate/party

Although in general all six channels usually used a neutral tone, according to the results, Rustavi 2, Imedi and Real TV portrayed a positive image of Ugulava and presented the opposition in a more negative light. Kavkasia and Maestro, by contrast, covered the opposition in a more neutral or positive tone and showed Ugulava/UNM in more negative manner. The GPB's Channel 1, however, demonstrated a more or less balanced approach toward all the candidates throughout the monitoring.

A news story was considered neutral if facts were presented neutrally, that is, without emphasizing either of the candidates/parties, or if the program or show gave all sides a chance to comment and present their arguments. We did not equate a neutral tone of coverage in a news story with the journalists' perceived levels of professionalism.

In total, Channel 1 showed 72 news items about Ugulava, of which 8 percent were covered in a positive way, 7 percent negatively and 85 percent in a neutral tone. The channel used mostly neutral tones for all other candidates, with Dzidziguri/NC covered negatively 5 percent of the time and Alasania/AFG and Chanturia/CDM each 1 percent of the time.

Rustavi 2 showed more bias toward the ruling party and its candidate compared with Channel 1. Out of 51 news items about Ugulava/UNM, 27 percent had positive tone and 73 percent a neutral one. In contrast to the coverage of Ugulava/UNM, three other opposition candidates and parties were covered more negatively overall. Alasania/AFG was in 50 news items, of which 16 percent were negatively and 84 percent neutrally covered. Chanturia/CDM received 5 percent negative and 92 percent neutral coverage out of 26 stories, with the remaining 3 percent covered positively. As for Dzidziguri/NC, they were covered in 51 news items, of which 25 percent of the coverage was negative in tone and 75 percent neutral.

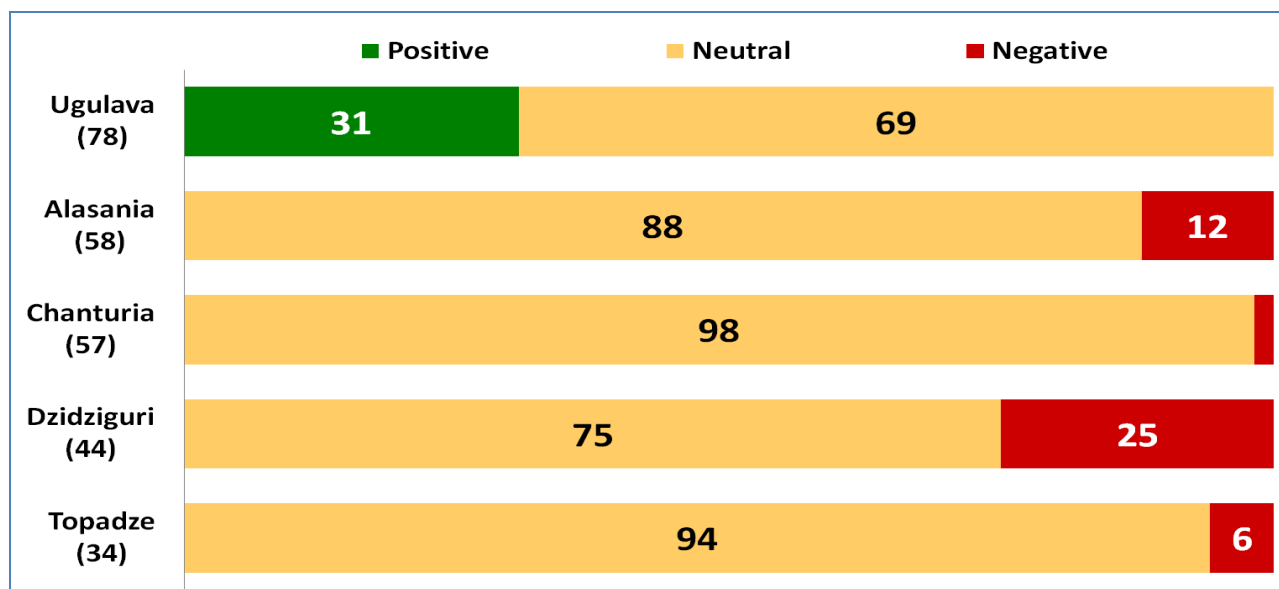
One of the most vivid examples⁶ of negative coverage of the National Council was the May 19th *Kurieri* broadcast, which spoke about party activists of Zurab Noghaideli (member of NC) who demanded their wages for the work they had done. Elements of black public relations (BPR) against Noghaideli were observed in the story. In addition, the journalist gave a subjective interpretation of the story. Conclusions were made based on sources that were not shown in the story; thus, statements were not supported by facts. The story pointed out negative events that had taken place in the past, and was an attempt to present Zurab Noghaideli negatively to the public. Following the issue of activists demanding salary, the story continued with the journalist's statement that "Zurab Noghaideli stopped financing not only party activists but National Council members." The source of information was not named as the source said he or she did not want to speak in front of the cameras. National Council members themselves denied the report. Nevertheless, the headline of the story was "No to Noghaideli" and its subtitle, "Noghaideli cuts funds not only to party activists but also to National Council members." The story touched upon Noghaideli's visit to Russia and gave the impression that Russia had given preference to Burjanadze and Noghaideli was left out.⁷

⁶ For more qualitative examples, see Annex 2: Weekly Qualitative Examples.

⁷ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iO6Ax9Xai9k>

Similar to Rustavi 2, Imedi also had portrayed the ruling party and its candidate positively and gave coverage which was more or less negative to the opposition candidates/parties. Imedi showed Ugulava/UNM in 78 news items. In all, 31 percent of these had a positive tone. By contrast, Dzidziguri/NC, Alasania/AFG, Topadze/ТИ and Chanturia/CDM had 25, 12, 6 and 2 percent, respectively, considered negative coverage. (Chart 5)

Chart 5. Coverage Tone of Candidate/Party (Imedi, %)



Unlike Channel 1, Rustavi 2 and Imedi, Kavkasia gave negative coverage of Ugulava and his political party: out of 82 news items, 35 percent were considered negative, 63 percent were neutral and only 2 percent were positive in tone. The opposition parties were covered fully neutrally on this channel, with the exception of Alasania, who had 4 percent of positive coverage tone out of 97 news items.

Similar to Kavkasia, Maestro also covered Ugulava/UNM negatively: out of 126 news items, in 26 percent of them Ugulava/UNM was covered negatively, and in 74 percent neutrally. All other candidates had 100 percent of coverage in tones considered neutral, except for Chanturia, who had 2 percent of negative coverage out of 86 news items.

Real TV covered only Ugulava positively, and gave negative coverage to all the main opposition candidates/parties. More specifically, Ugulava and his party had 24 percent positive and 76 percent neutral coverage tone out of 82 news items. By contrast, 58, 48, 20 and 18 percent of coverage negative in tone was given to Alasania/AFG, Dzidziguri/NC, Chanturia/CDM and Topadze/ТИ out of 55, 46, 25 and 11 news items, respectively.

Coverage tone by periods

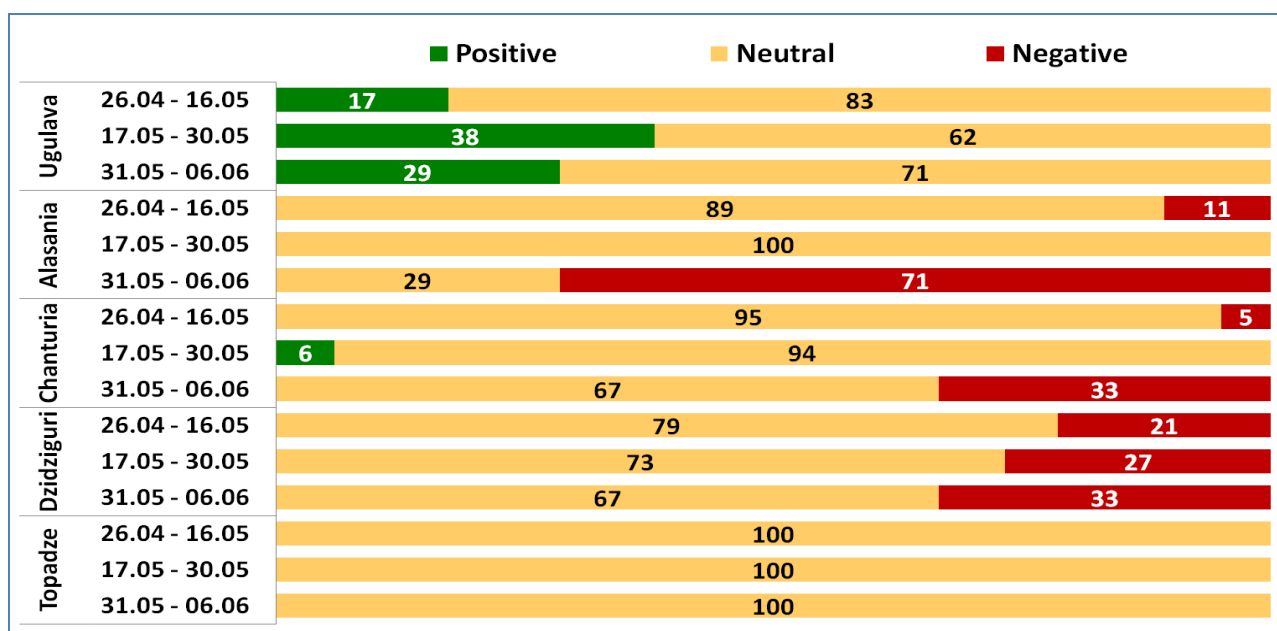
When broken down into periods, the coverage tone for some candidates has become more negative after the elections. Channel 1 covered Ugulava and his party neutrally after the elections, while some of the opposition candidates/parties were covered to some extent negatively. For

example, 8 percent of the news items about Alasania or his party were covered negatively. Chanturia had 11 percent of coverage negative in tone after the elections. Dzidziguri was covered negatively in all three periods. The period after the elections, however, had the largest percent of negative coverage (14 percent compared with 4 and 3 percent negative coverage tone in the first and second period, respectively). In addition, Topadze was covered neutrally during all three periods.

A common type of story during the pre-election period was the May 10th *Moambe* news item about candidates' meetings with voters in different parts of the city within their election campaign or campaign-related statements. The story portrayed Topadze/TI, Alasania/AFG, Ugulava/UNM, Grigolia/CDM, Bozhadze/NC and Giorgi Laghidze. Every part of the story was similar, candidates were given chance to comment, images of their campaign were shown, no additional statements from journalists were made and the candidates/parties were presented neutrally.⁸

Rustavi 2 had the largest percentage of positive coverage of Ugulava during the second period, i.e. two weeks before Election Day (38 percent). Other main candidates had negative coverage, which was largely demonstrated in the period after the elections. Seventy-one percent of the news items about Alasania were negative in tone in during the third period. Chanturia also had negative coverage after the elections. However, he also had some (6 percent) positive coverage during the two-week period before elections. The negative coverage of Dzidziguri increased in all three periods: 21, 27 and 33 percent of the news items about him were covered negatively in the three periods. Similar to Channel 1, on Rustavi 2 Gogi Topadze also had 100 percent neutral coverage during all three periods. (Chart 6)

Chart 6. Coverage Tone of Candidate/Party (Rustavi 2, %)



Similar to Rustavi 2, Ugulava had positive coverage during all three periods on Imedi. Forty-one percent of the news items about him or his party were covered positively and 59 percent

⁸ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hfCarDoxg84>

negatively during the two weeks right before the elections. In contrast to the ruling party and his candidate, the main opposition candidates/parties were covered neutrally and to some extent negatively on Imedi. Alasania's negative coverage, for instance, rose gradually: 11, 12 and 14 percent negative coverage during the first, second and third periods, respectively. Dzidziguri also had negative coverage in the first and second period: 25 and 30 percent, respectively. He and his party were covered in a neutral tone after Election Day. As for Topadze and his party, the coverage tone was mostly neutral; however, in the two-week period before Election Day, he also had 11 percent negative coverage.

On Kavkasia, the ruling party and his candidate were covered negatively during all three periods. Most of the negative coverage was demonstrated during the two weeks before the Election Day. Forty-seven percent of the news items about Ugulava/UNM were negatively presented. However, during the second period Ugulava/UNM also received 2 percent positive coverage.

This was the case when Kavkasia's news program *Dghes* broadcasted on May 25th the story of President Saakashvili and Mayor Ugulava opening the new road which connects Heroes' Square with Tamarashvili Street. A little over five minutes in length the story portrayed Saakashvili and Ugulava racing on the new road in Formula 1 cars, speaking positively about the new road and other projects they plan to implement. Although quite an unusual story for Kavkasia, it presented Ugulava in a positive way.⁹

As for other candidates/parties, the coverage was mostly neutral, with the exception of Alasania/AFG, who had 10 percent positive coverage during the two weeks prior to elections.

Similarly on Maestro, Ugulava and his party received negative coverage during all three periods. During the May 17th–30th period, 50 percent of the news items about him or his party was negatively presented. The opposition candidates/parties were covered neutrally, with the exception of Chanturia/ CDM, who had 9 percent negative coverage in the second period of the media monitoring.

On Real TV, the share of coverage negative in tone toward opposition candidates/parties was the largest. Alasania and his party received 74, 42 and 62 percent negative coverage tone in the first, second and third periods, respectively. Chanturia/CDM and Topadze/ТИ received negative coverage in the two periods before Election Day: 30 percent of the news items about Chanturia/CDM were covered negatively in the first period of the monitoring. Moreover, 59 percent of news items about Topadze/ТИ were negative in tone during the two-week period before the elections. The coverage tone of these two candidates was 100 percent neutral after Election Day. As for Topadze and his party, they received 25 percent negative and 75 percent neutral coverage in the first period, 100 percent neutral coverage in the second period and were not mentioned at all after the elections.

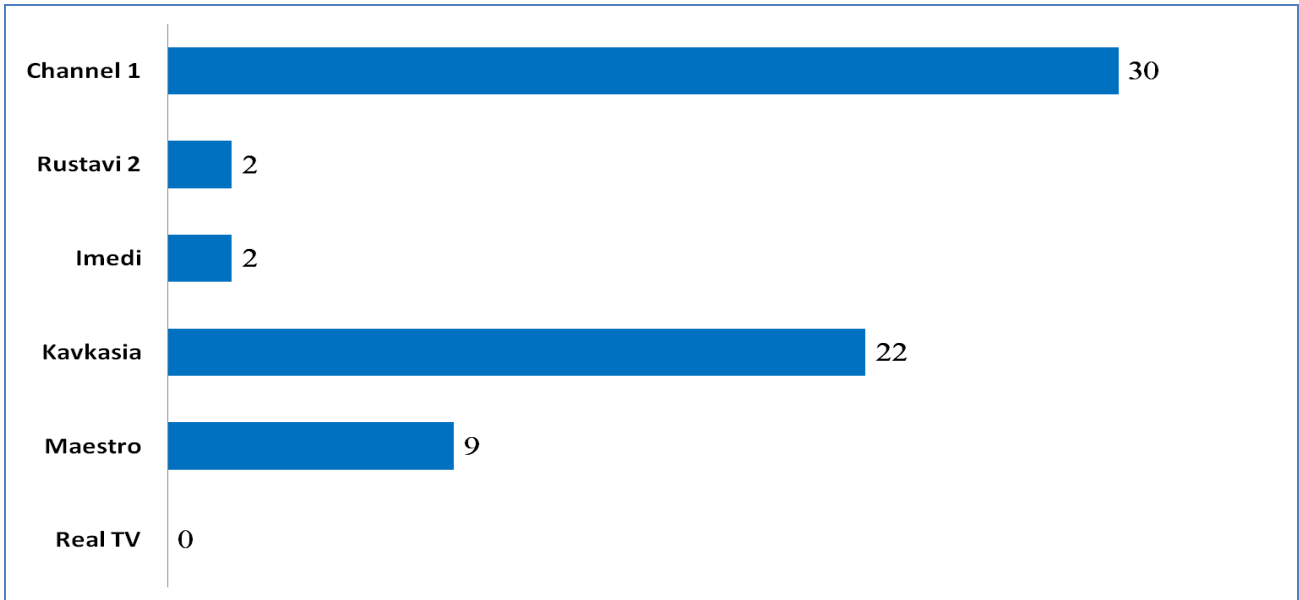
Number of times the use of administrative resources was mentioned

According to the results, the Georgian TV channels mentioned the use of administrative resources during the entire monitoring period 65 times. Channel 1 and Kavkasia covered the issue of the use

⁹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Legj8pkbDc>

of administrative resources the most overall, in 30 and 22 stories, respectively. Maestro mentioned it 9 times, and Rustavi 2 and Imedi only twice each. Real TV did not cover the use of administrative resources at all during the media-monitoring period. (*Chart 7*)

Chart 7. Number of Times the Use of Administrative Resources Was Mentioned



Administrative resources by periods

Channel 1 mentioned the issue of the use of the administrative resources during the first period most frequently, that is, 16 times. In the second and third periods of the monitoring, the use of administrative resources was fewer mentioned: 11 and 3 times, respectively. Kavkasia mentioned the use of administrative resources 9 and 13 times during the first and second period, though they did not raise this issue after the elections at all. Maestro mentioned the administrative resources 5 and 3 times during the first two periods, and once in the third.

Annex 1: Methodology

Aiming to observe the pre-election coverage of the candidates and parties participating in the May 30th, 2010, local elections in Georgia, UNDP/CRRC carried out media monitoring of six major Georgian television channels within the April 16th–June 6th, 2010, period.

Six monitors conducted daily monitoring of specific news programs and political talk shows on six of the selected channels: Channel 1 (GPB), Rustavi 2, Imedi, Kavkasia, Maestro and Real TV. Therefore, the results are based on the information and observations from a specific number of prime time news programs and political talk shows.

The following news programs were monitored:

- *Moambe* 20:00 (GPB Channel 1)
- *Kurieri* 21:00 (Rustavi 2)
- *Kronika* 20:00 (Imedi)
- *Dghes* 20:30 (Kavkasia)
- *Ukomentarod/Akhali Ambebi* 22:45/21:00 (Maestro)¹⁰
- *Time News*, the late evening edition (Real TV)

The monitoring of the main political talk shows during prime time took place on the selected channels:

- *Aktsentebi, Moambe Plus* (GPB Channel 1)
- *Archevani* (Rustavi 2)
- *Archevnebi 2010* (Imedi)
- *Barieri, Spektri, Tskheli Khazi* (Kavkasia)
- *Profesia Jurnalisti/Argumentebi, Live* (Maestro)
- *Khalkhis Azri, Kvelaperi Merobis Kandidatebis Shesakheb* [‘All about the Mayoral Candidates’] (Real TV)

According to the monitoring criteria developed by CRRC and UNDP, quantitative as well as qualitative data were gathered for the news programs. Overall, 271 news programs and 4893 news items were monitored, of which 2493 news items were relevant. As for the political talk shows, they were subject to qualitative analysis only.

Quantitative criteria:

- **Time allocated to candidate/party.** Amount of time, in seconds, allocated to a candidate or party, including both negative and positive coverage, time when candidates/party representatives were shown or spoke directly and time when others spoke about them.
- **Type of coverage of candidate/party.** Amount of time, in seconds, of direct speech from the candidate or party representative and indirect speech about candidate or party (e.g. an anchor, reporter, other political subject or person speaking).

¹⁰ Maestro reorganized the channel during the monitoring period, and after May 27th, new news programs and talk shows were broadcast.

- **Tone of coverage of candidate/party.** Overall evaluation of the tone of coverage of candidate/party in a news item on a five-point scale where '1' means negative, '3' neutral and '5' positive. An evaluation of the tone of the news item does not give enough information about the bias or professionalism of a journalist and/or channel. Theoretically, it is possible that covering a candidate/party in a neutral tone is a case of low professionalism or bias if a journalist suffices by simple dry coverage of candidate/party's activities and did not/could not manage to obtain necessary additional information for the story. Similarly, presenting a candidate/party in a negative context can serve as an example of professional journalism if as a result of a journalist's efforts viewers received well-documented information, even if it was not particularly favorable for said candidate/party. Therefore, a quantitative analysis of tone can only serve as a basis to speak about bias or professionalism of a journalist/channel if it is supported by a qualitative analysis of separate cases.
- **Coverage of administrative resources.** The count of the number of news stories covering the use of administrative resources.

Qualitative criteria:

- **Subjectivity of the journalist.** Whether the journalist expressed his or her sympathy or antipathy toward any of the candidates/parties; interpreted facts subjectively or tried to impose his/her personal opinion upon the viewers; or did not remain balanced and was not equally critical of all political actors.
- **Non-factual coverage, based on assumptions.** If the basis of the story was an assumption and not a fact; if conclusions made by the journalist were not supported by specific facts and quotes; if "facts" were constructed by comments, and not vice versa; and if information was not obtained from a reliable source and came from the third person most of the time.
- **Hate speech.** Offensive or discriminatory phrases or statements against a person, political or social group, which aimed to incite a negative attitude toward this person or group. Monitors observed only television anchors, journalists and reporters in this regard, and any use of hate speech on the side of a political subject against his or her rival was disregarded.
- **Propaganda and hidden advertisement.** Purposeful and consistent effort to influence public opinion through obvious advertisement of any ideology, political group or individual; presenting specific election subjects in a very positive way, extensive use of election video ads and materials provided by parties.
- **Black public relations.** Deliberate attacks against a political person or group; insinuation of accusations not supported by facts; emphasis only on negative facts, which was often related to the private life of a political subject and his or her political activities; and excessive emphasis and exaggeration of personal and political shortcomings.

After an intensive training course on how to gather quantitative and qualitative data correctly and consistently, six monitors were selected and placed in the CRRC-Georgia office and conducted daily monitoring of the selected news programs and political talk shows under constant supervision.

To ensure quality data was obtained, 30 percent of news programs and political talk shows were double-monitored. If by dint of double-monitoring significant differences in the collected data

arose, the news items were discussed with the third monitor/coordinator and an agreement was reached on the correct way to continue.

The CRRC manager coordinated the monitoring and data analysis, distributed programs to monitors and randomly selected items for double-monitoring. The monitoring results were summed up and entered into the database at the end of each day. Each week, the manager and analysts evaluated the data and prepared a qualitative report.

Annex 2: Qualitative Examples

April 26-May 5, 2010

The first stage of the media monitoring (April 26 to May 5) has revealed several cases of deviation from journalistic standards.

A favorable attitude toward the candidate of the National Movement, Gigi Ugulava, was recorded in the news programs of Rustavi 2, the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB), Imedi and, especially, Real TV. By contrast, a negative attitude toward the government candidate was observed during Kavkasia's programs.

Elements of covert bias were detectable in the April 26 news stories by the GPB,¹¹ Rustavi 2¹² and Imedi,¹³ dedicated to the official nomination of Gigi Ugulava as the mayoral candidate. All these news stories used identical visual material which obviously had been shot with the same camera and aimed at presenting the event in a positive light. The moving camera, the selected angles, the display of the election billboard clearly and repeatedly served to strengthen the visual bias, which, together with the positive tone of the narrative, gave the journalistic work the elements of a political advertisement. Since stories about the other candidates did not contain such sophisticated camera work, the government candidate was presented in way that set him apart from others, pointing to the bias of these news stories.

The examples discussed below are presented in chronological order.

Kavkasia – “Spektri”, April 26

During the entire show, the host, Davit Akubardia, openly expressed his negative attitudes toward the government and toward the reforms under way in the country; he paid particular attention to the reforms of the educational system. The guest of the program, Levan Berdzenishvili, often resorted to hate speech and insulting expressions toward, in particular, the Minister for Education (e.g. “...93% know that Shashkin is an idiot”). Akubardia, instead of protesting against these statements, chose to agree with him (“OK, let's dwell on that idiocy”).¹⁴

Akubardia also accepted information received from unreliable sources as fact. For example, he reported statements received by the editorial office via SMS as a fact: “10th or 11th graders of some school were made to miss lessons and taken by buses to Gldani to meet Ugulava”.¹⁵

¹¹ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O_RE20CHP_8

¹² <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=12Vn-TJ9dfI>

¹³ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D3qVY-9oOv8>

¹⁴ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J_EI7QkfTnk&feature=related

¹⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WLIaH63Wgek&feature=related>

Imedi – “Kronika”, April 26

A report of the April 26 “Kronika” covered a bloody dispute between two members of the Alliance for Georgia near the “Rachis Ubani” restaurant.¹⁶ None of the members of the Alliance confirmed the story, but the journalist tried to present it in the context of intra-party quarrels. The author of the story had difficulties backing up his thesis with evidence: he interviewed the service staff of the restaurant and a taxi driver, both of whom could not confirm that the fight had taken place. Elements of hate speech, as well as of negative PR, were detectable: “Members of Didube and Samgori branches of the party’s election office of the mayoral candidate have resorted to physical violence against each other. The bloody dispute between fellow party members took place in the “Rachis Ubani” restaurant.”

Channel 1 – “Moambe Plus”, April 26

In a conversation with the first guest of the program, Davit Usupashvili, the journalist was not neutral, talking only negatively about the opposition. He criticized them, for example, for nominating a joint candidate. When talking about opposition parties, particularly about Irakli Alasania, the journalist only resorted to negative opinions and expressions, which indicates a bias as he attempted to influence the public opinion in a certain way. At the same time, the journalist tried to present the government team as positively as possible. When Usupashvili was talking about the grave condition of refugees, the journalist tried to defend Gigi Ugulava, saying: “But Gigi Ugulava did name new priorities, and it was exactly refugees that these priorities are for.”¹⁷ The journalist was obviously biased toward the government.

Real TV – “Time News”, April 26

The biggest part (13 min.) of the total air time (18 min.) of the ‘Time News’ program on Real TV was dedicated to Gigi Ugulava’s election campaign. Nothing was said about the other candidates. The following edition (at 22:30) included a story entitled “A successful mayor”, which was entirely dedicated to the description of Ugulava’s accomplishments. In parallel with the election promises, the report contained a big number of positive assessments of Ugulava’s work as a mayor, expressed by different representatives of the public, but, apart from the expressions and opinions of political rivals, no critical assessments were sounded out.

Against the background of shots showing the mayor’s accomplishments, the host called the people who were critical of Ugulava “blind and ungrateful”, and to prove these opinions, the host quoted personalities well known to the public. The report did not include the personalities who assessed Ugulava’s accomplishments less favorably. In sum, the balance was grossly violated, in favor of one candidate.¹⁸

Real TV – “Time News”, April 26

¹⁶ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7yiw31f20U>

¹⁷ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wIJ7sMB5OJM>

¹⁸ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tju9PCgg1Ps>

During the monitoring period, Real TV was especially aggressive toward opposition candidates. April 26 news program was full of the journalist's subjective assessments, assumptions and a negative tone.¹⁹ The author of one of the news stories declared that Noghaideli was acting in accordance with the "Russian plan", but he did not bring a single fact or quotation confirming this opinion. The journalist also added that the supporters of Noghaideli, who were sticking posters on walls, had "invaded" the streets of Tbilisi.²⁰

Kavkasia – "Dges", April 27

The news program "Dges" ("Today") that was aired on Kavkasia on April 27 violated standards of journalistic objectiveness. Zurab Noghaideli's accusation addressed to the Central Election Commission's chairman Zurab Kharatishvili was covered. Noghaideli, leader of the party "For Fair Georgia", declared that the the United National Movement's victory of is already a given, and he even mentioned that they would win 65% of the votes. According to Noghaideli, the head of the CEC gave this information to him during a private meeting. Despite the gravity of the accusation, the journalists never tried to verify its source.²¹

Kavkasia – "Spektri", April 27

The host, David Akubardia, was not neutral; he systematically expressed evaluative arguments and periodically used insulting vocabulary toward the representatives of the government's team: "In my opinion, there is more to steal and that is why they are killing themselves"; "[Saakashvili] regurgitated stupidities";²² "What constructions? What has been built...? The constructions have stopped. Only Merabishvili's bureau ("kantora") and the tasteless bridge ("fintiklushka") were built".²³ Akubardia also mentioned facts that were not checked, e.g. "There is complete disorder in Senaki. The representatives of the different parties all appear to be from the United National Movement."²⁴ Moreover, he disregarded all arguments and facts that were against his own opinions, e.g. that the construction of apartment blocks was stopped due to the economic crisis.

Kavkasia – "Barieri", April 27

In the talk show "Barieri", a clear political bias was noticeable when the host, Aleksandre Elisashvili, was talking with representatives of the government's team (Soso Egutia and Sevdia Ugrekhelidze, candidates for the City Council). In particular, the host imposed his opinions upon the audience by attacking the government's achievements in a polemic way: he said, amongst others, that the government had "stretched the railway" and carried out "absurd projects". The host did not follow the rules of neutrality as his personal views dominated the tone of the show, as reflected in the frequent use of the first person: "In my opinion", "I did not like", "Futile, in my

¹⁹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VSGjx7jpp-4>

²⁰ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8xKtBMqm_IY

²¹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HnesAAbWpMY>

²² <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TTuon-5W4JQ>

²³ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jleb7W5Fmq8>

²⁴ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2H7RRY8z9c>

opinion”, and “What does it cost me?”²⁵ Elisashvili clearly showed a cynical and defiant attitude toward the guests of the program (“What does it cost me to keep that Soso Egutia?”), often bordering on hate speech. He did not try to keep a fair balance, and did not give the UNM's representatives any opportunity to respond to his accusations. During the first part of the program, the host’s vocabulary often went astray, beyond objective and politically correct formulations; whereas in the second part, when he had guests from the opposition parties, he took a significantly more loyal approach to the discussion.

Channel 1 – “Moambe Plus”, April 28

In the program, the host Eka Mishveladze expressed her sympathy for the ruling party and was apparently negatively disposed toward the opposition party. The first guest of the program was Salome Zurabishvili. While speaking with her, the journalist was stressing accusations voiced against the Alliance and negative facts connected with the actions of this political force. Once the conversation with the second guest, Levan Vepkhvadze, started, the host repeated the words that Zurabishvili had used in respect to Vepkhvadze, calling him “pocket opposition”. The questions asked by the host looked like an attempt to sow enmity.²⁶

Real TV – “Khalkhis Azri”, April 28

The host, Tamar Darsavelidze, was not neutral toward the guest, Tamaz Vashadze. She did not hide her sympathy toward the government. Quite frequently, the expression of support for Gigi Ugulava was not relevant to the issues discussed in the program; for instance, the host addressed Vashadze with a question: “Can you bake bread?”²⁷

Real TV – “Time News”, April 29

In one of the stories on Real TV, the news program “Time News” was devoted to the announcement by the Alliance for Georgia that Sozar Subari would not run for the office of the head of the council, the event was presented negatively. The author was hinting at disagreement between the leaders of the Alliance, without naming the source of information, and made this statement: “Based on the information that is available, disagreement between the leaders of the Alliance is caused by the distribution of candidates in regions. Alasania offered Subari to be the majoritarian candidate of Gldani; however, the former public defender wanted to be a majoritarian candidate of Vake. Because of that, Subari refused to run for the office.” The leaders of the Alliance, however, explained their decision with completely different reasons.²⁸

Channel 1 – “Accents”, May 2

²⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Que5MDN9cCc>

²⁶ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PL46dlbTO9w>

²⁷ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OH3vyV1-ozg>

²⁸ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YWQ94jicTZO>

Kakha Kukava had been invited to the political show aired on GPB on May 2, Sunday. The subject of the conversation was the visit of the representatives of the opposition to Russia. In spite of an attempt by the guest to prove that during their visit to Russia they had a number of important meetings, the main discussion which lasted for almost half an hour was about why Zhirinovskiy did not shake hands with Koba Davitashvili. This was the very first question asked by the host: “Why did Zhirinovskiy not shake hands with you? Why did he not consider you worth it?”²⁹ The host had attempted to stress the negative side of the story. Kukava was underlining the importance of meeting with Zhirinovskiy, as an attempt of the opposition to find ways out from the current reality, to which the host returned the question: “What did Zhirinovskiy say? How should we escape this situation?”³⁰ In the show, the host did not ask any questions about the specific outcomes of the meeting stressed negative aspects; thus, elements of black PR were present.

Real TV – “Time News”, May 4

On May 4, Real TV’s news program again violated the principle of objectivity. The host interpreted the facts one-sidedly and subjectively. The information was based on assumptions, and, as a result, the trustworthiness of the source of information raised serious doubts.³¹ The first story covered the internal conflict within the National Council, and the story was accompanied by the following subtitle: “A doubt has aroused in society that Noghaideli no longer finances Zviad Dzidziguri’s political career”. This general statement was not supported by facts and quotations. Based on an anonymous source, the host claimed that “because of his stinginess, Noghaideli is even threatened with exclusion from the National council.” At the end of the report, the host concluded without any factual arguments that meetings organized by Dzidziguri were “less attended” by the public.

May 6-12, 2010

Real TV – “Time News”, May 9, 10

In the last monitoring period a consistent slanting and editorializing of the news was observed on Real TV. The channel’s reporters tended to use aggressive, opinionated language and were violating almost every basic principle of professional journalism.

The May 9³² and May 10³³ stories about opposition figure Goga Khaindrava of the Defend Georgia activist group stand in a class by themselves. Both stories covered the May 6 rally in Tbilisi staged by a group of opposition leaders in protest of the Police Day celebrations. In a clear-cut case of

²⁹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=14aKsWCpwPI>

³⁰ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wrHOIW3FZl8>

³¹ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Q_ZcwyD1vY
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AFTroGGC8RM>

³² <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oq3zm1KseYY>

³³ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YRT5OQ4JMI4>

black PR, the authors of the report had hand-picked negative bits of information from dubious, second-hand sources and selectively chose facts to paint a negative image of Khaindrava. Through the use of vituperative language and manipulation of the visuals, the demonstration was held up as a disruption to the city's life, organized by a handful of destructive politicians, including Khaindrava. To make their point, the reporters had pulled negative imagery from Khaindrava's past activities. Real TV's other report was also an exercise in spin-doctoring meant to discredit Khaindrava and his political allies. The May 10 story did not dwell on the motivation of the protesters, and offered only the opinions of those, who opposed the demonstration. Through its headline "Insulted Tbilisians" the story attempted to nudge the viewers toward a prepackaged viewpoint.

Real TV – "Time News", May 6

While making brazen attacks on anti-government activists, Real TV's coverage of the government tends to be on the fawning side. A story on the ruling National Movement for Victorious Georgia's candidate for the City Council Mamuka Akhvlediani was arguably more of a political ad than a professional work of journalism. The report, called "A Day with the Godson",³⁴ told the story of Akhvlediani's selfless care for his little godson Giorgi. In a language laced with ingratiating remarks and hidden political messages, the journalist described how Akhvlediani would always find time to hang out with the boy despite being so busy working to "make the future of little Giorgi and his peers better." The gushing praise goes on, to the background of an uplifting tune, and Akhvlediani is only shown in a positive setting (e.g. a play area for children in a restaurant, a baptism at a church, etc.). The political candidate's schedule may "be full to the hour, but there is always time for the godson," the caption reads.

The report went out of its way to cultivate Akhvlediani's image as a doting custodian for the little boy and a tireless public official, who lives to make everyone's lives better. The boy knows that the godfather "will always be there for him," the report says in conclusion.

Maestro – "Ukomentarod" (No Comment), May 10

A certain amount of bias came in visual story-telling form in the May 10 story³⁵ on political ads in the streets of Tbilisi. A resident of the city complains about campaign posters being plastered on the building walls instead of in designated areas. But while many political parties resort to this form of advertising, the story featured only posters of the ruling party's candidate, incumbent Mayor Gigi Ugulava. Neither the reporter nor the disgruntled man mention the ruling National Movement or its mayoral candidate, but the close-ups showed only posters of Ugulava and his party. Therefore, the story only linked this type of activity to one political group.

³⁴ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Og6BSAnOb5U&NR=1>

³⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dldlbHhD030>

Kavkasia – “Tskheli Khazi” (Hotline), May 6

The hosts of Tskheli Khazi, a call-in talk show, were clearly prejudiced against the governing party’s candidate Gigi Ugulava. The topic of the program was the abuse of administrative resources during the election period, and viewers called in to share their accounts of such cases. The tone of the two hosts of the show was often cynical rather than critical. Viewers leveled many accusations against the National Movement, and the ruling party’s members were not given a chance to respond to the accusations. The reporters did not treat the viewers’ accounts critically, but rather accepted every accusation as fact. The hosts jumped to generalized conclusions and made highly judgmental and, at times, derogatory comments about the political group in question. Some comments bordered on hate speech. One viewer called to tell about National Movement activists’ reportedly bribing voters by donating mobile phones. The show’s host, Aleko Elisashvili, had this comment to offer: “Can I write a letter to Gigi Ugulava to say that I want Akhagori (a town occupied by Russian forces) instead? I want Akhagori with nearby villages. I do not want mobile phones.”³⁶

Not only was the information provided in a one-sided manner, but reporters made speculative and exaggerated statements. As a result, the program smacked of a gathering of an anti-government activists’ club rather than a professionally produced news show.

Kavkasia – “Spektri” (Spectrum), May 6

The host of Spektri, Davit Akubardia, treated the viewers to his personal views on May 6. The topic of the show was an anti-government rally held to protest the Police Day celebrations. Throughout the program Akubardia was venting his antipathy toward the government. He described in several statements the Georgian President as “bizarre”, “insulting”, “irresponsible” and “anti-historic”. Instead of offering a broad spectrum of views, the host in a didactic tone decided for the viewers who was right and who was wrong in the confrontation between government and opposition activists. He used some pejorative statements to describe policemen. “They said they were victims but they look like bucks to me.”³⁷

May 13-19, 2010

Kavkasia – “Spektri”, June 13

The June 13 show that revolved around military and tactical aspects of the Georgian-Russian war was a clear-cut case of opinionated journalism. The host Davit Akubardia offered a narrative based on his personal observations and subjective conclusions rather than expert assessments or hard facts. His speech was laced with derogatory references to government officials and their performance.

³⁶ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=imXI_TPMSo8

³⁷ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o0h_akgwbFO

For instance, Akubardia said that it was “stupid to purchase from Ukraine those decrepit tanks T-72”.³⁸ The military expert who was invited to speak said that he did not want to speak about neutrality. “This neutrality thing is stupid”, Akubardia responded.³⁹

Later in the show, the journalist said that while the Georgian army remains in a dire condition, the defense minister is “having fun opening television stations”.⁴⁰ Speaking about the political situation in Russia, the guest of the show said that every Russian leader is trying to copy or compete with Stalin. Akubardia interrupted him, saying “so does Saakashvili”.⁴¹

Kavkasia – “Spektri”, June 17

Akubardia’s attitude toward opposition mayoral candidate Irakli Allasania was diametrically different. On the June 17 show the reporter not only expressed strong sympathy toward the opposition leader but also displayed little regard for facts.

“I was in Batumi yesterday,” he said, “the entire city is empty – Kobuleti is empty, Ureki is empty,” he went on to say, referring to towns near Batumi, the seat of the Achara region. “Municipal officials were putting up posters of Number Five [the number of the ruling party and its mayoral candidate Gigi Ugulava]. In the whole of Batumi there are only numbers five and two written, not any others”.⁴² Viewers had to take his word for it, as there was no footage shown to provide visual evidence of this and other claims.

The journalist strayed further from the standards of good journalism and openly praised Alasania. Akubardia commended his guest for using public transportation, but criticized President Saakashvili for doing the same. A viewer inquired whether Alasania was trying to copy Saakashvili by using public transportation before the election, but Akubardia claimed in response that Alasania meant it when he travelled by metro, while Saakashvili did it as a PR stunt.⁴³

Real TV – “Time News”, May 16

Real TV was caught editorializing the news many times throughout the monitoring period. It ranged from injecting small portions of negative PR to a full-court press of propaganda. The May 16 show covered the National Council opposition group’s setting up of a branch office in Moscow. From the very start, the journalist offered a gross generalization of the news, equating one party with the entire political opposition. “Georgian opposition opens an office in Moscow”, the reporter said.⁴⁴

³⁸ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-GxUtYKNMg>

³⁹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DGen2CYwo-M>

⁴⁰ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJKLWO3mkD0>

⁴¹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3tktk3s6stU>

⁴² <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c68PqcFH7LI>

⁴³ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4sXwJU0Teel>

⁴⁴ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hQ2ho7gbqBw>

Real TV – “Kvelaperi Tbilisi Merobis Kandidatis Shesakheb” (All About The Tbilisi Mayoral Candidates), May 16

The show spurned virtually all norms of professional journalism. There was not even an attempt to maintain balance and neutrality. Hate speech was used. Journalist’s words were laced with cynicism and even bordered on hate speech. This was an egregious case of black PR against opposition politicians Gogi Topadze and Irakli Alasania.

As she was describing Topadze to viewers, journalist Maka Chikhladze spent most of the time harping on small details instead of presenting the mayoral candidate’s program or real issues. The reporter painted Topadze’s portrait in crude, biased strokes. “The really important thing that we have also found near [Topadze’s] Kazbegi brewery is the unsanitary conditions, which Topadze will probably have to take care of if he becomes a mayor”, Chikhladze reported.⁴⁵ Without providing any source for the information the reporter went on, saying: “and we have learned one seemingly unimportant but, I think, very important detail: the store in the district where the esteemed Gogi lives ran out of Kazbegi beer. And what is most important is he owes a little to his own store.”⁴⁶

She also pointed out that guns are allegedly Topadze’s weakness. “Not just guns – Russian guns and Russian women only, everything related to Russia he likes”, she said suggestively.⁴⁷

The same show presented another opposition leader Alasania in a highly unethical fashion. First goes some parallel editing images of Alasania and President Barak Obama meant to show how Alasania is borrowing his campaigns gestures from the US President.⁴⁸ The slideshow is accompanied by a Russian song that has the following lyrics: „Не похожий на меня... парень чернокожий“ (He is different from you... he is a black guy).

This report also focuses on irrelevant details (e.g. the bad dress of Alasania’s wife) rather than issues of legitimate interest for voters. The reporter underscores that while promising to work for the welfare of citizens, Alasania “has already taken care of his children’s welfare” by sending them to the United States. A source claims that Alasania stabbed his classmate in school. Neither the alleged victim nor his family are quoted in the report. The reporters had deliberately picked negative bits of information about the candidate, while failing to report anything on the positive side.⁴⁹

Imedi – “Kronika”, May 18

The report on Nino Burjanadze’s visit to Russia and her controversial newspaper interview comes close to negative PR. When speaking about Burjanadze’s accusation that Georgia bombed its own territories during the war with Russia, the reporter concluded that her visit to Russia “has

⁴⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HiVD8lxLDok>

⁴⁶ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m-ql3nzHNT8>

⁴⁷ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vt0Y76zoau8>

⁴⁸ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2jJROdVdI0o>

⁴⁹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0azn7PRj5jk>

produced results.” One of the respondents mentions a crow as a metaphor. The crow then becomes the headline of the story on Burjanadze. The footage of Burjanadze’s meetings with Russian officials is captioned “Nino and the Crows”.⁵⁰

Maestro – “Ukomentarod”, May 17

The report attempted to portray the government in negative light and, due to the creative audiovisual effects and the style of the narration used, falls in the category of negative advertisement rather than news reporting. The report opens with a recital of names of villages that have fallen outside of Georgia’s control in the wake of the 2008 war.⁵¹ The voiceover is done artistically to add dramatic effects. Images of the war and dramatic music further enhance the effect. It is then followed by an amateur camera recording of President Saakashvili as he says the following: “What did Russia really take as a result of the intervention last year? Just a few villages.” The preceding images, voiceover and music are meant to aggravate the context of Saakashvili’s comment. Saakashvili is shown alongside the incumbent mayoral candidate Gigi Ugulava.

Rustavi 2 – “P.S.”, May 15

A hidden advertisement of Gigi Ugulava was slipped into the news show. The show aired a report on a photo festival in Tbilisi. The correspondent reported the story live from the scene, focusing only on Ugulava despite the presence of number of other dignitaries. The images of Ugulava were shown in the report several times as the reporter was speaking about the event.⁵²

Kavkasia – “Spektri”, May 18

Mayoral candidate Tamaz Vashadze was the guest of the show that flouted the constraints of fairness and balance. The host fully expressed his support for the candidate while ridiculing his competitor, Ugulava. “I want to tell you that I am subjective and want to place on the record that we – Kavkasia’s crew and perhaps others – have a great appreciation for you. Almost all the journalists are in love with you, Mr. Tamaz, because you radiate kindness and Georgian warmth...”⁵³ The host went on to say: “In effect, our local governance is an institution of limited rights and influence. And the mayor is practically castrated...”⁵⁴

Rustavi 2 – “Kurieri”, May 19

The news program aired a story about activists from Zurab Noghaideli’s Justice for Georgia party who were demanding their pay for the door-to-door campaign activism they had carried out.

⁵⁰ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KEshLYTS_KA

⁵¹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-tGB8YxM4SM>

⁵² <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wy714n0fxiQ>

⁵³ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WxDCXXkQybw>

⁵⁴ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6lAxWuy4mkw>

Mixing old and current events, the story was a negative PR-style attack on Noghaideli. The reporter's claims were not validated by quotes, visuals or other forms of factual reporting.⁵⁵

Citing an anonymous source, the reporter claimed that Noghaideli stopped financing the National Council opposition group along with his party activists. The news has not been confirmed and one of the members of the National Council denied it.⁵⁶

May 20-25, 2010

Channel 1 – “Aktsentebi”, May 23

The first part of the show, which was meant to be a question-and-answer session, turned into a heated exchange between the show's host and its guest. The tone and wording of the reporter's questions (legitimate as they may have been) betrayed the host's antipathy toward her respondent.⁵⁷ The host, Eka Kvesitadze, would not let the opposition leader, Nino Burjanadze, respond properly and kept interrupting with caustic and disparaging comments. Kvesitadze went out of her way to defend the government from Burjanadze's criticism. Some of Kvesitadze's comments stretched the limits of appropriateness.⁵⁸ The show ended up resembling a televised debate between two competing politicians rather than an interview with a political figure. The journalist was not interested in the responses of the politician. Instead she tried to present Burjanadze in a negative light.

Imedi – “Kronika”, May 22

Attempts at balance were in short supply in the third report of the newscast. The report was a reality check of campaign promises made by the main political groups running in the local elections. Only one economics expert was interviewed and he claimed that all parties, save for the ruling National Movements, have made unrealistic promises to the voters.⁵⁹

Real TV – “Time News”, May 23

The show and especially the first and the fifth stories could serve as an object lesson for spin doctoring. The first story accuses the so-called radical wing of opposition of attempting to thwart Independence Day celebrations. The report however does not provide actual names, much less direct quotes, of the politicians, who allegedly plotted to foil the military parade. The only visual evidence meant to support the reporter's claim is footage of opposition Levan Gachechiladze, who wonders around the main avenue under influence of alcohol.⁶⁰ The fifth report attempts to

⁵⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ZTti4zEIWY>

⁵⁶ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iO6Ax9Xai9k>

⁵⁷ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GF9UbonY3rA>

⁵⁸ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=amStwXdeyjl>

⁵⁹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rv-Ps3HAsGI>

⁶⁰ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GAMEKV-D8C4>

construct and hyperbolize facts that are detrimental to dissenting politicians. The allegations are based on speculation in the press and no attempt was made to fact-check these claims. Without providing any evidence, the reporter alleges that there is rift in the former Prime Minister Zurab Noghaideli's party. "Petre Mamaradze [Noghaideli's right hand man] is also unhappy with the plans of the Kremlin's favorite [Noghaideli] and he suggests that the former Prime Minister change his ways," journalists says.⁶¹ His words are followed by footage of Petre Mamardaze, but his voice is inaudible and therefore the allegation looks unfounded. The government officials are speaking about Noghaideli's plans, while Noghaideli himself is only quoted making an unclear comment that leaves lots of room for interpretation. Through manipulation of visuals, facts, and comments the report is meant to discredit the political opposition and create a fake reality.

Imedi – "Kronika", May 23

Political bias and black PR antics were detected in the second story of the newscast.⁶² The camera focuses on a cartoon that mocks the election slogan of Gogi Topadze, leader of the Industrialists Party. The actual slogan says, "I Come with Business and I Promise You Business," while the send-up slogan states, "I Came with Beer and I Promise You Dry Fish," a satirical allusion to Topadze's beer brewery. The following story is about election campaigns of various parties. The story opened with the footage of a tumult near the office of the National Council. Activists were complaining about the backlog in pay for their work. In the context of the entire report this section looked like an attempt to associate the National Council with disarray and negative imagery.⁶³

Kavkasia – "Spektri", May 21

With his opinionated statements and little regard for facts, the show's host brings imbalance to the programme. Citing an anonymous source, Davit Akubardia declares that the government keeps people under "total terror." "One of the governmental candidates [in the local election] got in touch with me today," Akubardia said. "He said he wants to come forth to speak against intimidation of the population. They admit that people are intimidated and why would we need the election if people are under terror."⁶⁴ He did not bring facts that would fit into his description of the pre-election situation as total terror. He continued to offer his interpretation of current events. "Saakashvili here accused you [the audience] today that the demands you folks are making could put a stretch even on Japan's budget," he said referring to President Saakashvili's words that election promises must be realistic.⁶⁵

Maestro – "Ukomentarod", May 21

At face-value the format of the newscast leaves little room for political bias, but the very first report was short on balance and facts. The report speaks about the rumors of Georgian

⁶¹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=js7vHTtbZrs>

⁶² <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GSP3bmYZlg>

⁶³ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xrPqU-CIPlo>

⁶⁴ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ZLWJRbjnRg>

⁶⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GamsKPKwiiA>

government selling weapons but there are no facts mention to warrant these allegations. The story fleetingly refers to unnamed sources of opposition leader Zviad Dzidziguri, but offers no evidence to suggest that the news is real. “Military analyst Giorgi Melikauri says that the visit of the FBI director to Georgia... could be connected to the purchase of weapons from Ukraine and then selling them to Iran,” the reporter said.⁶⁶

Rustavi 2 – “Kurierī”, May 20

Signs of a hidden advertisement were visible in the story concerning the opening of a new tunnel in Tbilisi. The very long (five minutes) story elaborated on the merits of the new tunnel and how it is going to help the traffic problems in the city. A large part of the report showed President Saakashvili praising incumbent Mayor Gigi Ugulava.⁶⁷

Real TV – “Kvelaperi Tbilisis Merobis Kandidatebis Shesakheb” (All about Tbilisi Mayoral Candidates, May 23

The show profiled mayoral candidate Giorgi Laghidze. He was presented as not serious and lackluster. The reporter claims that the first thing the candidate intends to do after becoming a mayor is to bring back an old restaurant and soda water shop. In fact Laghidze only speaks nostalgically about the old restaurants and drinks shop, but does not make a vow to bring them back. The news presenter starts laughing after the report is over.⁶⁸

The reporter ironically notes that Laghidze, who hails from a village, could not remember a single song by the famous Georgian composer Revaz Laghidze.⁶⁹ The report caustically points out that not only Laghidze is a villager, but he also did poorly in school and is therefore not fit to be Tbilisi mayor.

May 26-June 1, 2010

Real TV – “Time News”, May 26

The show’s fourth report was an example of at best black PR and at worst hearsay journalism. The story was about an opposition candidate, Kakha Kukava, withdrawing his bid in a local election in favor of another opposition candidate, Davit Saganelidze. The two candidates say that they have made this decision based on the opinion polls that demonstrated that Saganelidze was more popular in the constituency. But this explanation is not good enough for the news presenter and goes on to allege without naming any sources that Kukava was paid 50,000 lari to withdraw from the race. Moreover, the anchor claims that another political figure, Koba Davitashvili, helped conclude the deal. Davitashvili is shown speaking about something else. The reporter cites rumors

⁶⁶ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ePQmvO3K9Ss>

⁶⁷ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w0pvW6NYIVE:45>

⁶⁸ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S2KWC3YkF-4>

⁶⁹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c42WI-E-9NY>

that Kukava himself angrily rejects. Kukava, in turn, declares that Real TV invented this. The report offered little facts to prove otherwise.⁷⁰

Real TV – “Time News”, May 27

The 16th report, which focused on the accusations of the former National Council members against ex-Prime Minister Zurab Noghaideli, approximated sensationalism and negative PR. The reporter voiced grave accusations against Noghaideli but neither the alleged authors of the allegations, nor Noghaideli himself, were quoted. While showing random footage that had no informational value, the reporter declares: “Scandalous accusations against Noghaideli. Former members of his party accuse him of fomenting a rebellion and protests. Several members of his party in Guria [region] have already left the National Council. They claim that the ex-Prime Minister is dangerous and supporting him amounts to treason”.⁷¹ No direct quotes were aired.

Kavkasia – “Dghes”, May 29

The show offered a relatively good example of a critical and balanced media oversight of the government’s work. One of the reports highlight how the ruling National Movement party mobilized supporters using public buses. A National Movement official was given a chance to comment on the news. He said his party rented the buses using the election fund money. Since the report still assumes that this was an instance of abuse of the administrative resources, it would be complete had the reporter tried to corroborate the official’s claim.⁷²

Kavkasia – “Spektri”, May 31

The show discussed electoral violations. Opposition candidate Irakli Alasania and opposition-leaning expert Ramaz Klimiashvili were invited to speak at the show.

The comments of the show host Davit Akubardia crossed the limits of professional journalism standards. He persistently expressed his support for the opposition and criticized the authorities. Akubardia called the election “a mess” and said he could not understand why anybody would vote for the governmental candidate.⁷³

Akubardia, who openly announced that he had voted for Alasania, sounded like a disenchanted voter. He uttered a litany of pejoratives such as “bandits” and “idiots” to describe Alasania’s competitors from the ruling party. He went as far as to describe the female activists from the National Movement⁷⁴ as “brothel owners”

Akubardia also claimed that he knew for sure that the ruling party barely got 25 percent of voter support, but he did not care to explain where he got this figure from. He was also rude to the

⁷⁰ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VXz2sMbTnY8>

⁷¹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vhzgPrVy45U>

⁷² <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YGlawGW6Hvk>

⁷³ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RhcXQe9aO74>

⁷⁴ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGPDmDnGWeY>

viewers, who called to express their support for the National Movement.⁷⁵ “I am sorry, but if you say that Alasania is not [real] opposition then you probably have problems...” he told one viewer.⁷⁶

Rustavi 2 – “Kurieri”, June 1

The report on the opposition parties’ post-election plans was larded with speculative assumption and negative tone. The first part of the story was about a meeting of opposition politicians Levan Gachechiladze, Koka Guntsadze and opposition-minded chief of Maestro television channel Erosi Kitsmarishvili. A journalist describes the meeting as “secret” even though it took place in a Tbilisi café in full public view. It is also unclear what made the reporter assume that at the meeting the three men tried to forge a common political strategy. The report offered no quotes or facts to support this assumption. The footage of the three men refusing to respond to Rustavi2’s questions served to create a negative context and a sense of conspiracy. A story about one business dinner was presented as a sensational and suspicious gathering with a secret agenda. The reporter’s unfounded claim sounds much like wishful thinking: “Chances are that Noghaideli-Dzidziguri-Davitashvili unity falls apart after the election.”⁷⁷ Nothing in the report suggests that this statement is true.

Kavkasia – “Barieri”, June 1

The show host Aleksandre Elisashvili in theory may have criticized his guest from the governing party for all the right reasons, but he did not provide the facts that would validate his criticism, which is poor journalism. The journalist dwelled on the negative, often in an opinionated and speculative form and the show came out biased or, at least, unprofessional. Elisashvili deliberately tried to exaggerate the problems as he cherry-picked the facts and generalized his personal experiences.

For instance, speaking about election violations, Elisashvili described a situation at one of the polling stations, where commission members could not reconcile the number of voters with the number of bulletins. The show’s host did not elaborate about the essence of the problem and only described it in broad strokes. “I am speaking about one randomly selected precinct in Mtatminda [district],” he said. “And I am not telling you tales, I am talking facts. I can show you footage. We were recording this for 13 hours. In the end they could not count it. They could not count the envelopes, voters, votes... There were 15 bulletins more than the signatures. Finally, they approved the minutes, everything. The observer from the Alliance [for Georgia] neatly put his signature on everything...”⁷⁸

Given that representatives of various competing political parties that participated in the count and most likely (the journalist did not provide any information to assume otherwise) it is assumed that they have all approved the executive report, it is therefore unclear whether this was a technical

⁷⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xVdv79Txuec>

⁷⁶ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OH0ILULColc>

⁷⁷ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ebv60bivluo>

⁷⁸ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZxNMKgUkft0>

mistake or an instance of vote-rigging. Elisashvili however was quick to claim that it was a case of falsification without explaining all the details or providing footage.

He also claimed that he personally became a witness of falsification. “When I was coming back I heard one phrase, god is my witness,” he said. “I can swear on it. One woman was on her phone. She was very worked up and was saying: ‘where are you? Don’t you even speak to me about getting a job for your son if you don’t come here right now and don’t vote before the district station closes.’ I am only saying what I heard.”⁷⁹

The show was largely about the host’s ego rather than facts and assessments by independent observers. Time and again Elisashvili swore to God and gave his word. That does not speak to high professional standard of the show. “God knows I am not trying to find fault and paint a dark picture...,” he declared. “I was going merrily to the election but when I saw what I saw my heart wrenched. And then I saw more of it.”⁸⁰

Eventually, the journalist painted a picture of wholesale falsification as he presented his experiences as the general situation. The viewers did not receive quality, fact-based information about the real scale of violations and had to take Elisashvili’s word for it.

Maestro – “Pirdapiri Saubari”, June 1

The show offered a relatively good example of neutral editorial position. The host, Eka Beridze, did not editorialize on the news as she spoke to opposition leaders Nino Burjanadze and Kakha Shartava. Beridze did not thrust on the viewers her own opinions. The only drawback is that Beridze let her guests expatiate on their views and plans and failed to pose critical questions.⁸¹

June 2-6, 2010

Rustavi 2 – “P.S.”, June 5

The second story of the newscast commands particular attention. Combining clear-cut antics of black PR and propaganda, the story aimed to discredit political opposition and contained persistent and deliberate effort to shape public opinion. The reporter tried to blow out of proportion the opposition’s failures and embellish the achievements of the governing political group. “Who can keep count of the opposition’s failures such as the one in the past election? And it is ascribed to the same banal and trivial reasons: sometimes [it is] the voter; sometimes it is the merciless competitor, lessons that we have persistently failed to learn and a loss that we keep calling victory, but [they] are never happy. Sometimes they are short on planning; sometimes they are short on money; sometime they go against one another; sometimes they take people to the

⁷⁹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UXlew1bz200>

⁸⁰ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IM_msH0epHs

⁸¹ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xW_9mCp5DpA

streets and then send them home again. Their election campaign has never been up to the task and they have never had a common leader,” the journalist opined.

In the beginning of the reporter, for about 13 minutes, it spoke superlatively about the ruling National Movement for Victorious Georgia’s victory in the local election. “The election is over,” he said. “No matter how big the government’s administrative resource may have been, the huge difference between the performances of the competitors clearly shows that results are beyond any doubt. For the National Movement this is a big challenge and responsibility, while it is an interesting outcome for the opposition to analyze as in their midst a clearly visible regrouping is taking shape, [a split] into so-called radicals and moderates.”⁸²

Real TV – “Khalkhis Azri”, June 4

A blatant neglect of the objectivity principle was detected. The call-in talk show host openly expressed his sympathy toward the government and antagonism toward the opposition. The Leader of People’s Party, Mamuka Giorgadze, was invited to speak at the show, where purportedly pending post-election dissolution of political coalitions was discussed. The topic became news after a slight reshuffle within the opposition camp. One weighty member of Alliance for Georgia, Koka Guntsadze, quit the group, while famous wrestler, Luka Kurtanidze, joined the team of the ex-Parliamentary Speaker Nino Burjanadze, the leader of Democratic Movement-United Georgia.

From the start, the host’s adopted a negative tone and was clearly prejudiced against the opposition. “The [New] Rights [a member of the Alliance for Georgia] were not saddened by Guntsadze’s leaving,” the host said. “As to Irakli Alasania [Leader of the Alliance for Georgia], when asked about the party member’s quitting he got confused, as is his custom. However, unlike the leader of the alliance, Levan Berdzenishvili [one of leading figures in the Alliance for Georgia] did not get confused and said jestingly that...”⁸³

The host had no qualms about using a mix of descriptive adjectives and ironic double-entendres. “Ex-Speaker’s political/sports trick, scandalously advertised, instead of a well-known and experienced politician – wrestler Luka Kurtanidze... Luka Kurtanidze has long nurtured dissenting views and searching for a worthy partner he turned out next to Nino Burjanadze.”⁸⁴

There may not be empirical evidence to prove this, but monitoring left an impression that calls from viewers were not made randomly but rather were prearranged.

Maestro – “Pirdapiri Saubari”, June 2

The talk show offered a good example of a moderate tone and a neutral position on the journalist’s end.⁸⁵ The show host, Eka Beridze, sat down with opposition leader, Irakli Alasania, to

⁸² <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyQzyn2qIqI>

⁸³ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZN8v_pXupA

⁸⁴ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tyX79AM5lsM>

⁸⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OuZjUz6P2A8>

discuss recent political developments. Her questions were moderately worded and germane to the ongoing political debate. Beridze did not air preconceived views and did not editorialize on events she discussed with the political leader.

Maestro – “Akhali Ambebi”, June 2

The second story that aired in the news show was, putting it charitably, an exercise in sensationalism but might as well been a case of deliberate political spin.⁸⁶ The reporter spoke about an alleged arms sale deal between influential ruling party Parliamentarian Givi Targamadze and Separatist South Ossetian Leader Eduard Kokoity's brother. The source of the potentially highly controversial claim is the dubious Russian Web site www.flb.ru, where a raft of conspiracy theories is discussed. Even this website only speculated about the deal and it was not reported as a fact. No major or relatively credible Russian news outlets carried the story. Thus, pursuing the story despite its dubious provenance and without having sound facts at hand betrayed poor news judgment if not editorial bias of Maestro's news producer. Moreover, Maestro tried to upgrade the story from a mere speculation to a big scandal. By selective choice of images and comments, the news channel tried to lend more legitimacy to the story constructed from a speculation posted online.

Kavkasia – “Barieri”, June 4

Overall, the show was reasonably balanced.⁸⁷ Journalist Nino Jangirashvili hosted the show in a very professional manner and treated with legitimate, well-grounded criticism the claims of the representatives of both ruling and opposition parties. She posed some tough questions, but doled out criticism in an equal fashion and did not put forth her personal views. Jangirashvili did not allow her guests to veer away from the main topic of the discussion, which was the local election. She might have been slightly more demanding toward the government official, but made a good effort to split the airtime evenly between the two officials.

Kavkasia – “Spektri”, June 2

The dynamics were diametrically different on this show. The personality of the show host dominated the program and he was venting his personal views throughout the show. Instead of focusing on electoral violations, Davit Akubardia was expressing his animosity, often in a derogatory manner, toward the political establishment. “I have just heard that a number of political players in Georgia are described as dregs and good-for-nothing”, he declared.⁸⁸

“And so they put the prosecutor's office in glass too [referring to a new glass building]...there is some kind of triumph of the power agencies [collective for the government bodies such as interior and defense ministries]. First they built that imbecility [new glass-covered interior ministry

⁸⁶ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TFQFfwk5mYI>

⁸⁷ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LtX9rtkRknl>

⁸⁸ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=te5Cg1xpSqk>

building] for Vanichka [Interior Minister Vano Merabishvili], now they have built it for the prosecutor's office... Can't they build toilets on Rustaveli [Avenue] instead?"⁸⁹

While having harsh words for the government and its handling of the election, Akubardia was openly lenient to his guest Gogi Topadze, leader of opposition Industrialist Party. The journalist claimed that the elections were "totally falsified" and backed up such assessment with little more than anecdotal information provided by those political groups that had lost in the election and therefore had biased takes on the electoral procedure. Akubardia did not cite observations of independent election monitors that would validate his claim of wholesale vote rigging.

"I was in Varketili district [in Tbilisi]," he narrated. "There are markets there by the metro station. Turns out they bought voters for 20-30 lari.... I have crunched numbers... For a million and a half or two million they are buying an entire district. It is not expensive at all, you know?"⁹⁰ The journalist did not name a source of this information.

The lack of balance was amplified by the fact that there was no government representatives or members of the election commission in attendance to respond to the accusations voiced during the show.

Imedi – "Kronika", June 3

The story depicts in a negative light the post-election reshuffle in the opposition camp.⁹¹ The journalist claimed that ex-speaker, Nino Burjanadze, is trying to pull into her orbit those politicians who have been disenchanted by the Alliance for Georgia's showing at the election. Referring to one political analyst's assessment, the reporter claims that Nino Burjanadze's moves are part of Moscow's political intrigues in Georgia. However, the analyst himself is not quoted saying anything about Russia. He only says that there is a trend of political forces coalescing around a new political pole.

⁸⁹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=te5Cg1xpSgk>

⁹⁰ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YlwHzQKA11k>

⁹¹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQFuer2QIKo>

Annex 3: List of Abbreviations

- [AFG – Alliance for Georgia]
- [CDM – Christian-Democratic Movement]
- [GPB – Georgian Public Broadcaster]
- [NC – National Council]
- [TI – Topadze-Industrialists]
- [UNM – United National Movement]
- [BPR – Black Public Relations]