

PRESIDENTIAL AND LOCAL ELECTIONS 2009

No. 3

MEDIA MIRROR

APRIL 2009



НВО ИНФОЦЕНТАР

Media Monitoring in the Republic of Macedonia, 2008 / Editor: Goran Stojkovski, Ph.D / Analysts: Biljana Mihajlovska, Daut Dauti, Vasil Ashtalkovski, Marijana Markovic, M.A / Monitors: Aleksandar Stevanovski, Aneta Necak, Edmond Sotir, Sultana Culeva / NGO Info - center: Nikola Trimpare 18-1/5 1000 Skopje; tel/fax: (02) 3233 560; (02) 3216 690, contact@nvoinfocenter.org.mk; info@nvoinfocenter.org.mk www.nvoinfocenter.org.mk

CONTENTS

1. Introduction	3
2. Media Approach and Coverage of Social-Political Events During the Election Campaign	4
2.1. General Conclusions	4
2.1.1. Comparative data on the coverage of campaign activities of political parties, coalitions and candidates running in Elections	5
2.2. Comment on the treatment the media reserved to the topics covered by this analysis	5
APPENDICES	15
Intensity of Coverage per Media	16

1. INTRODUCTION

"Media Mirror" is a program for continuing monitoring of media in the Republic of Macedonia, with the aim to present a clear picture of professional standards and criteria of reporting applied by the media, and on the manner in which they cover and interpret the key social processes and events.

This edition of the "Media Mirror" presents the results of the monitoring and analysis of the media coverage of the Presidential and Local Elections 2009, for the period between March 23 and April 8, 2009.

A special methodology was devised for the purposes of this monitoring, first of its kind in Macedonia. The methodology was tested by a team consisting of an editor, four analysts and four monitors.

The monitoring program covers six daily newspapers and six national television broadcasters: "Vecer", "Vreme", "Dnevnik", "Utrinski vesnik", "Koha", "Nova Makedonija", A1 TV, Kanal 5 TV, MTV1, AlSat-M TV, Sitel TV and Telma TV. The media included in the monitoring program were selected on the basis of the estimated influence they have, or may have on the public opinion in the Republic of Macedonia.¹

The methodology aims to show if the media approached the events in a comprehensive, unbiased and neutral manner, if articles and stories are supported by statements of named or unnamed sources, if they consulted all parties involved in conflict situations, if they avoid making arbitrary comments and opinions, etc. In addition, the analysis focused on the manner of presentation of information (scope, timing, sources and location); if illustrations and filmed footage were used; what was the treatment of different political options and personalities, ethnic and cultural values, through the language and terminology used by the media; the use of journalistic genres; and, what were the differences, if any, in the presentation of same events and phenomena by individual media.

The main objective of the monitoring and analysis is to present data and arguments about the positions the media adopted regarding campaign activities of political parties and coalitions running in the Elections.

The monitoring and the analysis show if articles and stories covered by the monitoring program were positive/affirmative, negative or neutral in their approach to the activities of the political parties and campaign activities. Special attention was also paid to the reports that referred to individual political figures, institutions, the ethnic and religious communities in the context of the Elections, not just to political parties, coalitions and their campaign efforts.

The analysis focused on the treatment the media reserved to:

1. VMRO-DPMNE (The For Better Macedonia Coalition; candidate Gjorge Ivanov);
2. SDSM (Ljubomir Danailov Frckoski)
3. DUI (Agron Buxhaku)
4. DPA (Mirushe Hoxha)
5. ND (Imer Selmani)
6. Independent candidate Ljube Boshkovski
7. LDP (Nano Ruzin)

The persons and political parties listed above were selected on basis of three criteria: 1. The current position in terms of representation in the Parliament; 2. the results and numbers of MPs won in the last Parliamentary Elections; and 3. their assumed influence on the media, politics, society and the general public.

A total of 1.155 articles and stories published and broadcast during the period covered by the monitoring was included in the analysis: Articles, illustrations, comic strips and cartoons published in the daily newspapers and news stories in the central news programs of national TV broadcasters.

¹ Due to our limited technical and material resources, this edition of "Media Mirror" didn't include the coverage in the other daily newspapers and TV stations. Their popularity and influence in Macedonian society remain, of course, undisputed.

Paid political advertisements and commissioned reports from campaign rallies were not included in the monitoring. However, the analysis took into consideration the campaign ads broadcast in the news programs, but not those aired in regular advertising blocks, outside the news programs.

The monitoring activities covered the following broadcast news programs:

1. A1 TV 23.03- 7.03.2009: 19:00 h.
2. Kanal 5 TV 23.03- 7.03.2009: 17:00 h.
3. MTV 1 23.03-8.04.2009: (19:30, 23:00 h., and the daily overview of campaign activities “Election Chronicle”)
4. AlSat TV 23.03- 7.03.2009: 20:00 h.
5. Sitel TV 23.03- 7.03.2009: 18:00 h.
6. Telma TV 23.03- 7.03.2009: 18:30 h.

2. MEDIA APPROACH AND COVERAGE OF SOCIAL-POLITICAL EVENTS DURING THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN

2.1. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

- In their analysis of the initial reactions of the opposition parties and the expert community to the election of Gjorge Ivanov to the Office of the President, the media focused on two key issues - legitimacy and authority the future president will have. All media noted the weak turnout of the Albanian voters in the second round of Presidential Elections. The media paid great attention to the agreement reached by VMRO-DPMNE and DUI for cooperation in the second round of elections. That agreement was subject to special analyses motivated, on one hand, by DUI's failure in the local elections in Tetovo and Gostivar and, on the other hand, the low turnout of Albanian voters in the Presidential Elections. Therefore, some media conclude that „*Gjorge Ivanov was elected president, but without the votes for the Albanians and in spite of the agreement VMRO-DPMNE and DUI made*”, because of the fact that “*Ivanov (and Frčkoski) failed to win over the Albanian voters*”, while “*the agreement reached by the coalition partners VMRO-DPMNE and DUI was ultimate in unprincipled rape of the right to democratic and individual choice*”.

- Noting that the Government, Prime Minister and VMRO-DPMNE totally dominated and micromanaged Ivanov's campaign, the media expressed serious doubts about the independence of the President-elect. However, there were doubts expressed about his personal political integrity and identity.

- The incident on the “Macedonia” square in Skopje was used by the media for serious criticism of the violence used by the supporters of the initiative to build a church on the square who defended their cause with fists and insults. The Government and the Prime Minister were criticized for their lukewarm reaction, with media believing that “*when students are getting beaten – the Prime Minister should apologize for the non-democratic environment in the country that made the incident possible*”. Most media criticized the inefficient action by the Ministry of Interior (MVR), while others criticized the Government of being nationalist, xenophobic, authoritarian and totalitarian. On the other hand, it is worth noting that some media didn't tie the ruling VMRO-DPMNE to the events on “Makedonija” square in any way or fashion, but placed all the blame on the opposition SDSM. Yet a third group of media claimed the „responsibility was shared equally by the two parties”. However, the common note for the majority of the media included in this report is that they directly, or indirectly, stood in defense of the right to protest and were opposed to any use of violence of any kind.

- There was a general conclusion that the solid number of votes won by the parties and candidates that are not part of the ruling coalition and are outside the big shadow cast by VMRO-DPMNE did get the attention of the media. There was a prevailing opinion that the political mood is starting to shift and that the “*citizens didn't dismiss the option promoting a compromise (on the name dispute with Greece)*”. Some media saw that as a sign of “*a waking opposition*”, that “*for the prime minister, the time of advertisements, statues and empty rhetoric slowly, but steadily, passes away*” and that “*Macedonia is*

waking from the orange enchantment". Other media believe that the results "reflect a picture of a party wiped out, of a formerly great party on the political scene who can't seem to come to his senses" (referring to SDSM), i.e. that "SDSM failed in the elections in spite of the prevailing, dominant and even aggressive support in the media".

- Majority of the media commented that DUI had a "fiasco" in the elections, remaining the "the strongest party in the Albanian bloc" in terms of total number of votes and mayors, but is "truly the biggest loser in the elections", winning only in Struga and Čair among the bigger municipalities, while it lost the control of the Polog valley, i.e. Gostiva and Tetovo. Some see the reason in the mutual support with VMRO-DPMNE which "proved a failure" so that we had a "triumph for VMRO and debacle for DUI".

- Another reason for the media to comment on DUI's "debacle" was the fact of the "clear" victory for Sadi Bexheti in Tetovo which showed that "people may have written DPA off prematurely". The win in the mayoral race in Tetovo was seen by the media as injection of new energy into the DPA, especially after the internal rift in the party and the leaving of a part of the membership led by Imer Selmani, then the vice-President of the party. The media noted that for the Albanian parties, the Office of the Mayor in Tetovo has the same importance as the Office of the Mayor of Skopje for the Macedonians. DPA's success in Tetovo is related to the passive attitudes adopted by DUI, but also to numerous political deals. The media summarized and further augmented the expert view that "Selmani is a threat to DUI", emphasizing Selmani's rising profile and the falling importance for DUI.

2.1.1. Comparative data on the coverage of campaign activities of political parties, coalitions and candidates running in Elections

The detailed statistical overview of the coverage in each individual media, broken down by political parties and coalitions, is attached to this report (*Table on Intensity of Coverage Per Media*).

2.2. COMMENT ON THE TREATMENT THE MEDIA RESERVED TO THE TOPICS COVERED BY THIS ANALYSIS

VMRO-DPMNE (The For Better Macedonia Coalition; candidate Gjorge Ivanov);

Noting that the Government, Prime Minister and VMRO-DPMNE totally dominated and micromanaged Ivanov's campaign, the media expressed serious doubts about the independence of the President-elect. However, there were doubts expressed about his personal political integrity and identity.

In the view of the media, Ivanov faces the challenge to establish his own identity in relation to the Prime Minister and the Government. Reporters saw evidence of Ivanov's political inferiority when the final speech in the rallies was reserved for the Prime Minister, but also the fact that his TV appearances were decided by Gruevski's office and that his statements were usually written by Government employees (as presented in the article "Between the Rudder and the Paddle", "Dnevnik", April 6, 2009). After the elections, most media pointed out that Ivanov will not be president of all citizens, since the Albanian electorate didn't vote for him.

His election with a "narrow" census, assisted by the extreme promotion of Government's investment projects and the institutions' involvement in his and VMRO-DPMNE's activities that earned strong criticism by the media. The incident at the protest rally of the architecture students just increased the criticism, augmented with the generally negative public uproar over the issue. Government policies faced increasingly intensive and explicit media criticism.

The issue of the Election census was comprehensively approached and covered in the period between the two rounds of elections. The required census was brought in connection with the need for Selmani's and Boškovski's voters, as well as those of the DUI, to turn out and vote in the second round. The estimates created space for articles that elaborated on various deals possible between the two rounds, with the focus primarily on the negotiations between the two partners in the ruling coalition - VMRO-DPMNE and DUI.

The media paid great attention to the deal the two parties reached that provided that VMRO-DPMNE was to support DUI's mayoral candidates in Struga, Gostivar and Tetovo, while DUI had to return the favour in Resen, Kruševo, Veles, Karpoš and the City of Skopje. Also, DUI was to back VMRO-DPMNE's presidential candidate Gjorge Ivanov. That agreement was subject to special analyses motivated, on one hand, by DUI's failure in the local elections in Tetovo and Gostivar and, on the other hand, the low turnout of Albanian voters in the Presidential Elections.

In their analysis of the initial reactions of the opposition parties and the expert community to the election of Gjorge Ivanov to the Office of the President, the media focused on two key issues - legitimacy and authority the future president will have.

Almost all media noted the weak turnout of the Albanian voters in the second round of Presidential Elections.

According to AlsatM TV (broadcasting in Albanian) „*Gjorge Ivanov was elected president, but without the votes for the Albanians and in spite of the agreement VMRO-DPMNE and DUI made*” (April 6). The low turnout of Albanian voters (*“approximately three percent”*), according to “Koha” daily and the analysts it quote, manifests the actual reception of policies applied and promoted by VMRO-DPMNE and its candidate. That opinion was condensed in the headline *“Albanians Denounce the Concept of Church-Building”* (“Koha”, April 7). On the turnout of Macedonian Albanians at the ballot, or the lack thereof, “Koha” analyzed the agreement reached by Ahmeti and Gruevski. The daily, nonetheless, put the blame on VMRO-DPMNE: *“DUI feels betrayed by VMRO”* (“Koha”, April 8).² “Nova Makedonija” daily also noted that *“In Tetovo region ‘presidential’ ballot boxes remains half empty”* and that *“Albanians in Struga, too, voted for the mayor, but not for the president”*. The daily concluded that *“Ivanov (and Frckoski) failed to win over the Albanian voters”*, blaming them for the fact that *“neither Ivanov nor Frckoski showed any interest to win over the votes of the Albanians”* (“Nova Makedonija”, April 6). The daily also criticized the agreement reached by the Government coalition partners, VMRO-DPMNE and DUI. The daily noted it was *“ultimate unprincipled rape of the right to democratic choice”* (*“The People Learned their Lesson, it's Now the Politicians' Turn to Learn Theirs”*; *“DUI will Investigate if VMRO-DPMNE Voted for Hazbi Lika in Tetovo”*; “Nova Makedonija”, April 7, April 8).

“Vreme” had no doubts that VMRO-DPMNE *“triumphed”* in the elections, which didn't stop the daily from criticising the party for some aspects of the campaign, or the Government for the moves it made. After the first round, “Vreme” noted that VMRO-DPMNE *“strengthened its rule vertically and horizontally”*, winning a lion's share of the local governments and possibility to realize its plans, but also *“...a historical responsibility to solve the difficult problems...”*, denied of the opportunity to *“use as excuse any obstacles, or to feel obligated to worry about its public ratings for the foreseeable future...”* (*“Everybody Claim the Victory”*; *VMRO with a Triumph, DUI with Debacle*”, March 24, April 7).

One characteristic of the reporting during the period covered by this report is the great attention that the media paid to the protests held on the central square in Skopje. However, the common note for the majority of the media included in this report is that they directly, or indirectly, stood in defense of the right to protest and were opposed to any use of violence of any kind. Majority of the media didn't express direct opinions either pro or against some of the involved entities, but presented the views of all involved (politicians, experts, NGOs, diplomats) who condemned the violence. The incident on the “Macedonia” square in Skopje was used by the media for serious criticism of the violence used by the supporters of the initiative to build a church on the square who defended their cause with fists and

² In the article “Amnesty for Sopot, Brodec and Ibrahim Sulejmani” (March 26), “Koha” noted that *“Gjorge Ivanov, at the times when he was nobody, gained certain notoriety with his views against the territorial division of the country, that gave the Albanians not more than 11 percent of the country. For that gentleman, that was too large a territory to be governed by Albanians and he saw that as giving up to the Albanians”*. On the other hand, the daily suggested to Albanian leaders to bargain with the votes of the Macedonian Albanians and condition the support in the second round with an amnesty for several convicted Albanians who *“are no criminals”* and *“convicted by politics, can be released by politics”*. In that context, the daily appealed to the leaders of Albanian parties: *“You know that Frckoski and Ivanov are prepared to amnesty them to get our votes”*. “Koha” believed that *“250,000 Albanian votes will again decide the future president of the country”*. After Ivanov's victory, the daily didn't minimise the role of Albanian votes, considering the three percent of the Albanians that did come out to vote contributed to reach the 40 percent threshold and decided the winner (*“The 3 percent of Albanians elected Ivanov”*, April 7).

insults. The Government and the Prime Minister were strongly criticized for their lukewarm reaction. "Nova Makedonija", for example, comments that *"when students are getting beaten – the Prime Minister should apologize for the non-democratic environment in the country that made the incident possible (it is his job to provide a secure environment, see the example of France)"* (*"Manifesto of Suppressed Uprising"*, "Nova Makedonija", April 1). A1 TV indirectly criticized the inefficient reaction of the MVR in the reports that the Police identified two of the attackers, while the broadcaster presented footage in which more than two persons were clearly identifiable.³ "Dnevnik" criticized the Government of promotion of nationalism and xenophobia, authoritarian and totalitarian tendencies (*"The Swastika Squad from Duraku Street"*; *"Greenhorn Government, Sensible Public"*, "Dnevnik", April 1 and April 2).⁴

"Večer" daily and Sitel TV continued with their outright support for the Government and its policies, the Prime Minister, VMRO-DPMNE and candidate Ivanov.

After the final results were published, Sitel TV noted that with the 55 municipalities won by VMRO-DPMNE-led coalition and the 12 municipalities won by DUI, the *"ruling coalition got massive support for its policies and trust for the policies they are expected to implement in the future"* (April 6). Ivanov's victory, on the other hand, was reported with an opinion that he was the president *"that nobody objects"*, i.e. *"is the first president of Macedonia elected without ballot stuffing, blackmail and deals between political parties, without violence, in elections that nobody disputes"* (April 6). "Večer" daily, too, reporting on the results of Presidential Elections, pointed out that *"this is the first President elected without ballot stuffing, without violence and incidents on the ballot day"* (*"Macedonia Got a President, One for All"*, "Večer", April 7). Unlike the other media, "Večer" didn't tie the ruling VMRO-DPMNE to the events on "Makedonija" square in any way or fashion, but laid all the blame on SDSM and President Branko Crvenkovski. The daily put emphasis on the views of the Prime Minister Gruevski and the official reports the Ministry of Interior issued on the incidents. MTV1 reports on the incidents was neutral in tone, with a note that there were *"...protests 'for' and 'against' the plans to build a church on 'Makedonija' square"* which erupted in *"... violence between the two opposed groups"*, and the broadcaster didn't point out who provoked the incidents (MTV1, March 3). Thus, the broadcaster suggested that the responsibility is divided equally among the two groups of protesters.

SDSM (Ljubomir Danailov Frčkoski)

The media were largely satisfied by SDSM's tally in the elections, i.e. the relatively big number of votes for Frčkoski, but also for SDSM and the opposition in general. Some media saw that as a positive impulse in the development of Macedonian democracy, while some believed that it was just maneuvering of political parties in the political process. Some media saw that as a sign of "a waking opposition", that "for the prime minister, the time of advertisements, statues and empty rhetoric slowly, but steadily, passes away" and that "Macedonia is waking from the orange enchantment". Other media believe that the results *"reflect a picture of a party wiped out, of a formerly great party on the political scene who can't seem to come to his senses"* (referring to SDSM), i.e. that *"SDSM failed in the elections in spite of the prevailing, dominant and even aggressive support in the media"*.

There was a general conclusion that the solid number of votes won by the parties and candidates that are not part of the ruling coalition and are outside the big shadow cast by VMRO-DPMNE did get the attention of the media. There was a prevailing opinion that the political mood is starting to shift and that the *"citizens didn't dismiss the option promoting a compromise"* (on the name dispute with Greece).

³ A1 TV aired on several occasion frozen images the clearly show four or five of the instigators of the violence, marking their faces with red circles. The same footage was used to illustrate reports presenting different opinions on the incidents (March 28-31).

⁴ *"Anathemas flow from the headquarters of fundamentalist conservatism... There is no greater tragedy than the moment demagoguery turns into state ideology. There is no greater evil, racism, fascism and madness if you mark the people as unwanted for their ethnic origin"; "From that source of authoritarian and totalitarian rule come orders to be happy that somebody else thinks for us and makes all decisions... The campaigns of brainwashing produce the prototype of desirable citizen – poor, manipulated, crushed and silent"...*

Sitel TV and “Večer“ maintained their critical treatment of SDSM and Frčkoski during the whole campaign, presenting the opposition in a negative light, all the while emphasizing the positive views of the Government. Public service broadcaster MTV1 was openly, while Kanal 5 TV was partially inclined to favour the Government. “Nova Makedonija” was a staunch and uncompromising critic of the opposition, SDSM in particular, of Frčkoski and Crvenkovski. Some media (“Utrinski vesnik”, “Dnevnik”) were softer and more moderate in their comments on SDSM and its candidate, in contrast to the emphasized critics” of the ruling coalition, the Government and candidate Ivanov. A part of the other media, equally criticized and praised Government and opposition parties and candidates (A1 TV, “Vreme”, “Koha”). A few media were neutral, offering little, if any, analyses, comments and opinions (AlSatM TV, Telma TV).

After the elections, “Večer” continued its feud with the opposition and the media critical of the policies and governing practices of the ruling coalition, especially in the context of the announced return of incumbent President Crvenkovski on the helm of SDSM (“*SDSM Wires an Ethnic Time Bomb in Macedonia*”; “*Crvenkovski and Kerim Work to Undermine Presidential Elections so they Fail*”, April 8 and March 28). The vote tally of independent candidate Ljube Boškovski, in “Večer’s” view, result from the “direct support by SDMS voters with intent to present some sort of rift in the ruling party” (“SDSM pumped Ljubes tally and halved its own result”, “Večer“, March 25). Sitel TV commented after the second round of elections that SDSM failed in the elections in spite of the “*prevailing, dominant and even aggressive support in the media*” (April 6). To put an emphasis on SDSM’s defeat, Sitel TV reminded the public that the 2008 Parliamentary Elections, in which the party won more votes than Frčkoski total in these elections “*were seen as a serious defeat*”, leading to Radmila Šekerinska's resignation from party presidency (March 24).

Between the two rounds of elections, the media were mostly interested in the negotiations and bargaining between the parties. Writing about SDSM's expectations regarding Presidential and Local Elections, such bargaining obviously included DUI, Ljube Boškovski and Imer Selmani, due to the actual events and existing realities (“*Possible Deals Concentrate on Boškovski, Selmani and DUI*”, “Nova Makedonija”, March 25)⁵. In an article titled “*Bargains Made on the Census and Shady Deals to Push for Early Elections*” (March 27) “Nova Makedonija” predicted the events will develop along the “*second direction of the scenario*”, according to which “*Ahmeti's party will lie low until the end of the Elections, and will then present Gruevski with demands that he would find unacceptable*”. The daily predicts that “*with joint forces, in eight to nine months, they could provoke a crisis that could be resolved with early parliamentary elections*”. Ljube Boškovski and his surprising tally of 150,000 votes are related by “Nova Makedonija” to Crvenkovski’s plans, reporting that in their meetings “*the incumbent President didn't ask for support for Frčkoski, but promise from Boškovski that he won't endorse Ivanov*”, March 27). “Dnevnik” reported that SDSM negotiated with Ljube Boškovski and Imer Selmani (“*Boškovski Negotiates with Crvenkovski*”, March 26), while it cancelled its support to Stevčo Jakimovski (LDP's candidate for Mayor of Karpoš Municipality), since LDP “*had no plans to redirect Nano Ružin's voters towards Frčkoski*” (“*SDSM Gives Up on Stevčo*”, March 26). Invoking anonymous sources in the opposition party, sources in SDSM, “Dnevnik”, too, speculated that discussions were held for “*preparation of the ground for early parliamentary elections to be initiated by SDSM and DUI*” (“*Zaev Recruits Ahmeti*”, March 28). Sitel TV discussed the same topic: “*fierce opponents*” Boškovski and Frčkoski “*join forces in a campaign*” and “*defend Greek interests, spitting on the national interests of the Republic of Macedonia*” in a TV show aired on the Greek National TV dedicated to the name-dispute; also “*Ljube Boškovski went this morning for a lecture by Crvenkovski*” (March 25). A1 TV also speculated on secret negotiations between political parties to ensure mutual support. The Zaev-Ahmeti meeting was covered with official and unofficial information, but also with a hint of irony, such as in the note “*all together and all for themselves*”. Kanal 5 TV also note that “*tactical play and pre-election bargains put to the fore some rather improbable combinations*” (March

⁵ SDSM’s expectations that “*in the best possible case their candidate could win about 400,000 votes from pro-European voters*” relate to party’s calculations that it could collect “*about 90% of Ružin’s votes, about 40,000 votes that Selmani won in central and eastern parts of the country, the voters disappointed in SDSM that it had to win back. SDSM counts on at least a half of votes that went to Boškovski, assuming that the other half will go to VMRO-DPMNE or will not vote at all in the second round*”.

26). In the article *"Amnesty for Sopot, Brodec and Ibrahim Sulejmani"* (March 26), "Koha" Daily proposed an initiative to the parties of Macedonian Albanians to condition the Albanian turnout in the second round, reminding the general perception of Albanian population of candidate Frčkoski (VMRO-DPMNE's candidate was also mentioned in the same article). The daily believes that both candidates *"more or less are Albanian-haters"*, pointing out that *"Albanians from Skopje won't forget the role he (Frčkoski) played in the events in Bit Pazar (in Skopje) when two innocents Albanians were killed, on his orders, by the police and hundreds of others were harassed"*.

"Večer" constantly warned of "conspiracies to cause a failure of presidential elections" (*"Crvenkovski and Kerim Work to Undermine the Presidential Elections!"*, March 28). On the other hand, in a single positive opinion on the opposition during the whole campaign, Sitel TV praised acting leader of SDSM Zoran Zaev who *"expressing exceptional correctness and culture"* appealed to the voters to come out and vote in the second round (seen as *"positive political statement"*, March 31). Contrary to "Večer's" claims, A1 TV quoted an unnamed source in SDSM saying that *"risking a defeat, they still lobby for elections to succeed and president is elected"*, so that VMRO-DPMNE will have no excuse to avoid its responsibility (April 1).

All media focused on the protests on "Makedonija" Square that resulted in violent incidents. "Večer" was among the few media who offered little or no criticism of the violent mob that attacked the students. The daily presented the information in a manner to suggest a link between the protests and the opposition SDSM and, again, Crvenkovski, using the events for another attempt at discreditation (*"Chaos and Unrest: Branko is Back!"* and *"How Sonja Ismail, Vlade Milčin and Jovan Despotovski became architecture students"* March 30). The daily used its coverage and comments to put the whole blame for the incidents on SDSM. "Vreme" criticized both SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE. According to the daily, SDSM *"incited"* the students and even the most naive among us didn't believe it was a *"spontaneous civic gathering of a group of young people"*, while VMRO-DPMNE *"activated its hawks to recruit a group of crusaders that were to fight the heretics with all they had"* (*"Rape"*, March 30). "Nova Makedonija" condemned the violence, but did comment on the protests from the point of view of political (opposition) influence on their logistics. For that reason, the daily was equally critical of the two parties (*"Thugs Beat Up People in the Name of the Church"*, *"Don't Suffocate Skopje"*, *"Manifesto After the Suppressed Uprising"* and *"The State will Colide with the Constitution if it Finances the Building of the Church"*, *"Where Were You then, Students!"* and *"Enough of the Faking"*, March 30, March 31, April 1/2, April 3).

To "Vreme" daily, it was clear after the first round of elections that SDSM still has its loyal following, managing to attract some new voters (*"Elections Suprisingly Predictable"*, March 24), while it noted after the second round that the failure should shake up the opposition that is a need of serious reform, since the country needs strong opposition. The daily condensed its opinions in the headline *"SDSM Puts All Hopes on Branko Crvenkovski"* (April 8). Crvenkovski's return at the helm of SDSM was seen by "Utrinski vesnik" as a sign of hope that SDSM will return to its strong position in national politics. The daily pointed out that the party will focus on the economy, social issues and human rights (*"After the Defeat, SDSM Waits for Crvenkovski to Return"*, April 8). "Utrinski vesnik" believes the opposition should offer a true alternative, noting that *"the leftist social-democrats will have to walk through hell and back to convince the citizens that they are a true alternative, with ideas and solutions, not just a party capable of criticism"* (*"Election Wake-Up Call"*, "Utrinski vesnik", March 24).

DUI (Agron Buxhaku)

DUI was the most attractive Albanian political entity for the media, both in the period between the two rounds and after the elections. That media attention was due to several reasons. In the beginning, the media observed DUI as one of the key factors, together with Boškovski's and Selmani's voters, to secure the 40 percent turnout census necessary in the second round of Presidential elections, but also in terms of possible deals inside the ruling coalition (at one point connection was made with SDSM, too, regarding the possibility to provoke early parliamentary elections). The party became even more interesting after it found itself in a position of threaten primacy in the Albanian political bloc after the defeats in the local elections in Tetovo and Gostivar.

“Nova Makedonija” daily lead the way among Macedonian language media in terms of its interest in DUI (see the *Table attached at the end of the report*). DUI was presented as a protagonist in the bargaining surrounding the census and the behind-the-scene negotiation to provoke early elections, in the various scenarios developed by both VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM. On the relations inside the ruling coalition, the daily noted that *“the two leading parties play their own games”*, so, “Nova Makedonija” reports that *“DUI believes Gruevski wants to secure a new Albanian partner should DUI decide to leave the Government”, most likely Imer Selmani and his New Democracy party* (“*Bargaining the Census and Behind the Scenes Games to Provoke Early Elections*”, March 27). In the same article, the daily predicts, on future relations between DUI and SDSM, that *“with joint forces, in eight to nine months, they could provoke a crisis that could be resolved with early parliamentary elections”*. After the elections, invoking *“high ranking sources in the party”*, “Nova Makedonija” pointed out that *“the Democratic Union for Integration will seriously review the results in the local elections in Tetovo to determine if VMRO-DPMNE voters supported their own candidate Hazbi Lika”* (“*DUI will Investigate if VMRO-DPMNE Voted for Hazbi Lika in Tetovo*”; April 8, April 9).

Almost all media involved in this monitoring program reported on DUI's activities in reports that simultaneously analyzed the election results and party's relations with VMRO-DPMNE.

The results of the second round added fuel to the media suspicions about VMRO-DPMNE and DUI actually sticking to the deal they made before the ballot day. Almost all media reported on expert opinions and views presented by anonymous sources, usually “party officials”, on the perceived respect of the agreement VMRO-DPMNE and DUI reached on the local and presidential elections, with suspicions expressed if Macedonians in Tetovo actually voted for Sadi Bexheti, or that DUI failed to support mass support among Macedonian Albanians for Gjorge Ivanov.

Analyzing results as a whole, “Vreme” daily noted that DUI suffered a “fiasco” in the elections, remaining the *“the strongest party in the Albanian bloc”* in terms of total number of votes and mayors, but is *“truly the biggest loser in the elections”*, winning only in Struga and Cair among the bigger municipalities. According to the daily, one reason lies in the announced mutual support with VMRO-DPMNE which *“proved a failure”* (“*Triumph for VMRO and debacle for DUI*”, April 7). “Vreme” speculated that *“DUI may demand a new agreement”*, i.d. redefinition of its relations with VMRO-DPMNE, *“or face further decline”* (“*DUI Will Seek New Agreement with Gruevski*”, April 8). A1 TV speculated that some members of DUI held doubts about the success of the Presidential Elections (April 1), and commented on the promises made to DUI for its support for Ivanov (April 2)⁶, and the possible cooperation of DUI with SDSM (March 27). The broadcaster carried speculations coming from DUI about possible *“reshuffle of Government cabinet”* (April 1), and the denials of the party that *“the defeat in Tetovo will shake the foundations of the ruling coalition”* (April 8). “Dnevnik”, too, reviewed the various deals DUI made with SDSM and with VMRO-DPMNE, but pointed out that the party constantly loses its standing in the Albanian electorate. Invoking its sources (“high ranking DUI official told ‘Dnevnik’”), the daily comments that *“DUI has been in shock for two days now after the defeat in Tetovo, Gostivar and Aračinovo”*, but that the party will *“demand from the Prime Minister an explanation why VMRO-DPMNE didn't honor the agreement for mutual support...”* (“*Tetovo Shakes Up VMRO-DPMNE and DUI*”, April 8). The daily noted that the Albanian electorate demonstrated integrity and refuses to be directed by party goals. Similarly, the other Macedonian language media put emphasis on the fact that DUI was the biggest loser in the elections, losing the trust of the voters. The reasons for that lost trust was sought in the betrayed will and unrealized rights of the citizens (“*Census and Celsius*”, “Dnevnik”, April 7). “Utrinski vesnik” commented that the abstinence of Albanian voters was a form of “silent boycott”, due to lacking motives to come out and vote and the refusal to accept the role of *“and object of political deals with unclear goals and aims”*. According to the daily, Albanians didn't vote for Ivanov because of his *“rigid positions on the Ohrid Agreement, the territorial division, his murky views on the solution to the name-dispute”*, while they won't forget Frčkoski's term as minister of police and the events in Bit Pazar (“*Painted in Orange*”, April 7). The daily concluded that DUI lost the Polog valley because of its marginalized role in the Government (*“Those well-informed tend to*

⁶ The editorial office commented on the views of Agron Buxhaku, who made it clear in the last debate on A1 TV that *“his votes will go to Gjorge Ivanov, under condition that an Albanian is voted president in 2014”* (March 25).

comment that the outcome is a reflection of the party's participation in the Government, which is seen as marginalized", "DUI Lost the Polog", April 7). According to "Utrinski vesnik", DUI lost its positions in the Albanian electorate because of its coalition with VMRO-DPMNE, emphasizing that *"the relationship in the ruling coalition took its toll on DUI which loses its primacy as the main political party in the Albanian camp"* ("Gruevski Increases his Power", March 24). Before noting that *"nobody knows who supports whom"*, AlSatM TV asked the rhetorical question and concluded, with irony, that *"DUI supports VMRO-DPMNE in the second round and Ahmeti demands that Gjorge Ivanov is voted in as President – is this an agreement or April Fool's Day joke"* (April 3 and April 1).

In a series of articles, "Koha" daily tried to promote the idea to trade the votes of Macedonian Albanians for the freedom of several prisoners. Through statements of analysts, NGOs, politicians, the daily noted and appealed the fate of the prisoners is in the hands of Albanian politicians in Macedonia. *"Ahmeti, Thaqi and Selmani should come forward with a demand for their liberation. The candidate, who promises to free them, will have the votes of all Albanians in the second round... Their fate is in your hands, Albanian politicians. You know that Frčkoski and Ivanov are prepared to amnesty them to get our votes"*, said "Koha". The main point of the daily's coverage was in the fact that it met nothing but silence among the named politicians, leading it to conclude that *"Sopot and Brodec are the Pepper that Irritates Ahmeti"* (April 1).

"Koha" criticized both Ahmeti and Thaqi for condoning to *"depreciation of the value of Albanian votes"* when election census was reduced from 50 to 40 percent turnout. "Koha", too, believed that *"DUI felt betrayed by VMRO"* after the voting (April 8).

Kanal 5 TV alone was adamant that *"in spite of the doubts that VMRO-DPMNE's votes went to DPA, Ahmeti will remain partner with Gruevski"* (April 7).

DPA (Mirushe Hoxha)

When analysing the election results, the media commented that DUI suffered a "debacle" due to, among other things, the "clear" victory for Sadi Bexheti in Tetovo which showed that *"people may have written DPA off prematurely"*. The media note that, although it was one mayoral position, its importance helped "DPA to avoid a total defeat and gave the party reason to celebrate". The win in the mayoral race in Tetovo was seen by the media as injection of new energy into the DPA, especially after the internal rift in the party and the leaving of a part of the membership led by Imer Selmani, then the vice-President of the party. The media noted that for the Albanian parties, the Office of the Mayor in Tetovo has the same importance as the Office of the Mayor of Skopje for the Macedonians. DPA's success in Tetovo is related to the passive attitudes adopted by DUI, but also to numerous political deals.

In the context of political wheeling-dealing, A1 TV commented that, according to unnamed sources in DUI, *"Thaqi's sole battle is to ensure that Selmani doesn't win a single mayoral elections making him the leader of the Albanian opposition"* (April 1). After the second round, when sources in DUI announced an analysis of the results and pointed out, indirectly, the origin of some of DPA's votes in Tetovo, the broadcaster informed that Thaqi and Boškovski met. A1 TV also quoted a source from VMRO-DPMNE that speculated that *"the agreement between Thaqi and Crvenkovski worked out"* and that *"Ljube Boškovski's votes went to DPA, i.e. it candidate Bexheti"* (April 8). A1 TV reported all such speculations regarding DPA's tally in the elections, but refrained from further comments. On the other hand, the media didn't perceive DPA as a factor that could have serious impact on the presidential race. The party's own position that it is focused on the local elections worked in favour of such a view, so it was presented predominantly as the party *"that shows little interest in the second round of the Presidential Elections"*. The results in the Albanian political camp, according to experts quoted by "Nova Makedonija", indicate that *"for the first time, we see a major dissipation of Albanian votes, which could benefit primarily VMRO-DPMNE and PM Gruevski"*. According to the daily, Bexheti's victory in the Tetovo mayoral race is the key event that will help DPA survive as an important political factor in the national political scene (*"Elections Bring About Great Dissipation of Albanian Votes"*, April 7).

Sitel TV commented on another aspect of DPA's election results. Immediately after the first round of Elections, Sitel TV noted that DPA is *"truly in a "to be or not to be" situation after the elections"*, depending largely on *"which path forward it may choose"*. The broadcaster found the situation of DPA and SDSM quite similar, with both parties *"facing numerous problems after the elections"*, since charismatic leaders are no guarantee of a victory, while *"the tastes of citizens have changed. They want honest people..."* (24.01.2009).

MTV1 alone among Macedonian language media commented on DPA's victory in Tetovo: *"DPA celebrates Tetovo although it won nothing else"* (April 7).

"Koha's" approach to DPA is critical. Thaqi was attacked, too, by the daily, for agreeing last year to the lowering of the electoral census from 50 to 40 percent turnout, thus depreciating the value of Albanian votes, but also for his passive policies that prevent Albanians in Macedonia from gaining stronger positions.⁷

Unlike the other media, "Utrinski vesnik" kept its focus on the profiles of presidential candidates. The daily compared Hoxha to Arben Xhaferi, former leader and sort of a legend of the party, to emphasize similarities in their views and positions. The daily notes those were *"the views on consensual democracy and parallel institution that were the focus of Hoxha's policies, this time failed to irritate Macedonian ethnic community because of her personal charm that she used to great effect when presenting those views... Mirushe Hoxha proved she is a good politician..."* "Utrinski vesnik" presented the dilemma if Hoxha will remain politically active and get a significant position in DPA hierarchy, or if she will return to the realm of academia (*"Mirushe Hoxha - the Person of the Campaign"*, March 26).

ND (Imer Selmani)

The media saw in Selmani's results a potential for a new political force to be reckoned with by both Albanian and Macedonian politicians. The disproportion between his tally in the presidential elections and the much lower figures achieved by his party in the local elections, demonstrates the support that Selmani received from the non-Albanian population in Macedonia. There was a lot of speculation that Selmani may be inclined to join Gruevski, emphasizing his personal friendship with the prime minister, but also his possible wish to enter the Government. The almost identical tallies Boškovski and Selmani won in the elections reserved them almost equal treatment by the media who emphasized the importance of their votes for the final outcome of the Presidential Elections. The analyses of their election results was seen by the media as a possibility to elaborate on the chances for emergence of a new political option that could *"replace the eternal SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE"*.

"Utrinski vesnik" commented that *"Selmani was successful in the presidential race, but lost locally to DUI"*, and was the first to predict that *"Selmani is likely to get closer to his friend Gruevski"*. The daily noted that *"Gruevski solidifies his power"* (March 24). "Nova Makedonija" noted that Selmani was *"the first Albanian that broke the ice for Macedonian voters"*. The daily's attention was attracted not just by his result of 146,975 votes, but by the fact that *"he presented something new in Macedonia, allegedly burdened by nationalism and stretched between the 'antiquisation' and 'Slavisation', the fears of divisions and dissolution of the state and the need to keep the backbone straight"* (*"Warning to VMRO-DPMNE, No Award for SDSM"* and *"Selmani Destroys Voting Traditions of Albanians"*, March 24). "Nova Makedonija" viewed Selmani's role in the "games" played by VMRO-DPMNE to produce a new coalition, with New Democracy replacing DUI in the Government (*"VMRO-DPMNE and DUI will Help Each Other in the Second Round"*, March 24). Similar views were presented by "Vreme" daily, which interpreted the opinions presented by the analysts it consulted with the conclusion that: *"Selmani Erodes DUI" ("Election Results Change the Political Landscape/Selmani Erodes DUI"*, March 26).

⁷ "Koha" ironically commented on the role played by Albanian parties: *"Have you heard a demand that will strengthen the real position of Albanians in the country?"*, only to respond itself: *"Don't worry, you haven't and you won't, since such ideas are absent from the heads of our politicians. The price is rather small to pay. The same as when they made Gligorov, Boris Trajkovski or Crvenkovski presidents. People who consider themselves Albanians and are involved in politics, profited themselves from the sale of over 250,000 Albanian votes"* (*"Amnesty for Sopot, Brodec and Ibrahim Sulejmani"*, March 26).

“Vreme” comments that the elections “*passed the European test in democracy, but not the American*” and that “*they didn’t turn out to be a wonder of democracy – Albanian candidate in the second round, or even winning the elections with the votes of both Macedonian and Albanian voters*”. The daily thinks it would have been too much to expect in a country that still licks its wounds earned in 2001, but did emphasize that Selmani won the sympathies of many Macedonians, yet not enough to make it into the second round (“*They All Claim they Won*”, March 24). Using the views presented by experts he consulted, “Vreme” noted that Selmani’s tally was a surprise, especially in view of the “*failure his party suffered on local level*” (“*Elections Surprisingly Predictable*”, March 24). A1 TV also was impressed by the phenomenon of Imer Selmani. After the results of the first round were announced, A1 TV commented that Selmani, with his 150,000 votes, is “*promoting himself as a significant player in the political arena*” (March 23) and that “*with 50,000 votes of non-Albanians and decisive victory in all areas with dominant Albanian population, Selmani tore down the ethnic and party barriers in the elections*” (March 24). Selmani’s results were compared by A1 TV with the results of Albanian candidates in previous elections and concluded that “*the almost 150,000 votes won by Selmani are the record for an Albanian presidential candidate*” (March 24).

Independent candidate Ljube Boškovski

The media kept their attention on Ljube Boškovski, considering him a serious factor that could decide the meeting of the 40 percent census in the second round, but also as a potential founder of a new political party, i.e. as person that would promote the idea of faction activities inside VMRO-DPMNE. A part of the media held Boškovski in a positive view, some criticized and attacked him, while a number of them were neutral with very limited coverage or completely ignored his candidacy.

“Utrinski vesnik” named Boškovski the Person of the day on March 26. The daily noted that, Together with Selmani, Boškovski “*was the most pleasant surprise in the elections for president of the state*”. “Utrinski vesnik” pointed out that Boškovski succeeded as an independent candidate, “*without strong party machinery to back him, with modest campaign and limited finances, to achieve results worth respect, especially for a former minister of police who is considered 'hard-line nationalist', a man who returned from the Hague Tribunal, but who managed to overcome his own shortcomings and recognized the European idea and Macedonian reality*” (“*Person of the Day: Ljube Boškovski*”, March 26). “Vreme”, too, commented that Boškovski’s candidacy was “*an achievement*” that gains in importance having in mind that Macedonia will “*remain for a long time in the firm grip of the 'partocracy'*” (meaning that party backing, not personality of the candidate, will decide the outcome of elections). “Vreme” says that Boškovski’s voters could play an important role in the second round (“*Everybody Say they Won*”, March 24). “Nova Makedonija” also believes that the “*bargaining focuses on Boškovski, Selmani and DUI*”, because “*no bargain may mean no census*”. The daily concludes that “*Boškovski will move to establish a new party*” and in that regard, that “*the third way faces a cross-roads*” (March 25/26/27).

On the other hand, Boškovski had not only critics, but direct political opponents in some media. In the period between the two rounds of elections, Sitel TV continued to attack him using rather strong and suggestive language. Without commenting on his results directly in the context of the analysis of results achieved by Frčkoski, Sitel TV commented that Boškovski “*definitely got half of his votes from SDSM*”, because the differences in the results of the party and its candidate show that “*the votes cast for SDSM’s municipal council lists and mayoral candidates didn’t go to Frčkoski but to Boškovski*” (March 24). That should be seen more as attempt to discredit his declared pro-VMRO orientation and affiliation rather than a praise of his skill to attract voters. Both before and after the elections, Sitel TV suggested that Boškovski is very close to SDSM. Several media were very interested in the meeting Boškovski held with President Crvenkovski. In that context, Sitel TV reported that “*Earlier today, Ljube Boškovski went for a lecture by Branko Crvenkovski*”. The broadcaster suggested that the sponsors “*of the self-proclaimed third factor on the national political scene*” demand from his to create a party that will have “*the sole task to spit poison on Gruevski*” (March 25). Sitel TV commented “*fierce opponents*” Boškovski and Frčkoski “*join forces in a campaign*” and “*defend Greek interests, spitting on the national interests of the Republic of Macedonia*” in a TV show aired on the Greek National TV

dedicated to the name-dispute (March 25). "Večer" daily continued where Sitel TV stopped. It pointed at Boškovski as *"one of the actors in the conspiracy Crvenkovski and Kerim prepare to orchestrate the failure of the presidential elections"*. "Večer" included "SDSM's new player Ljube Boškovski" into that "conspiracy" because of the fact that *"after his meeting with Crvenkovski yesterday, he said he won't call his voters to vote for any of the candidates"*, but also *"didn't call them to vote at all"* (*"Crvenkovski and Kerim Work Together to Undermine the Presidential Elections"*, March 28). Ljube Boskovski and his surprising tally of 150,000 votes are related by "Nova Makedonija" to Crvenkovski's plans, reporting that in their meetings *"the incumbent President didn't ask for support for Frčkoski, but promise from Boskovski that he won't endorse Ivanov"*. The daily presented its suspicions in an article titled "Bargains Made on the Census and Shady Deals to Push for Early Elections" (March 27). "Dnevnik" holds quite the opposite opinion. The daily pointed out that it was Boškovski who asked for a meeting with Crvenkovski to inform him about the elections, while the caption under the photo of the two emphasized Crvenkovski's role in redirecting Boškovski's votes to SDSM (*"Will the supreme commander reroute Ljube's votes to Frčkoski"*; *"Boškovski goes to Bargain with Crvenkovski"*, March 26).

According to A1 TV, *"in public they all fake certainty in the win for their candidate, and secretly negotiate"*, with VMRO-DPMNE *"hoping secretly"*, that some of Boškovski's votes will go to Ivanov (March 26). Kanal 5 TV pointed out that *"Ljube Boškovski will try to reform VMRO-DPMNE"* (March 27).

LDP (Nano Ruzin)

The interest in the candidacy of Nano Ružin almost completely died out. The media simply carried the position he shared with LDP that they will leave it to the citizens to make their own choice what to do in the second round.

A1 TV reported the information that LDP didn't intend to trade the votes and redirect them to Ivanov or Frčkoski (March 24 and March 25). Regarding relations between LDP and SDSM, A1 TV informed that SDSM made it clear that *"they will stand behind Stevče Jakimovski and Ace Kocevski to the end"*, in spite of the fact they *"parted ways with LDP and the clear message that Frčkovski should not count on their support and indorcement"* (March 26). Sitel TV reported Ružin's results in the first round and mentioned his name in the context of the "Rating" agency's poll and analyses of the possible redirection of votes in the second round, noting that *"Gjorge Ivanov could count, at best, on Boškovski's votes, while Frčkoski can count on Ružin's voters"* (March 30). Apart from articles on possible calculations with Ružin's votes and reports on his results in the elections, "Nova Makedonija" carried his statement that *"he would not come out with a statement instructing his voters to vote for Frčkoski"* (*"Deals Concentrate on Boškovski, Selmani and DUI"*, March 25).

APPENDICES

INTENSITY OF COVERAGE PER MEDIA

For the period: March 9-21, 2009

Topic	Media											Total (per topic)	
	A1	Nova Makedonija	Vecer	Vreme	Dnevnik	Kanal 5	MTV 1	ALSAT M TV	Sitel	Telma	Utrinski vesnik		Koha
1. VMRO-DPMNE For Better Macedonia Coalition;	32	43	39	42	30	45	67	31	42	35	58	12	476
2. SDSM	30	31	20	21	12	25	38	29	53	30	28	9	326
3. DUI	9	17	6	11	9	7	8	9	11	6	8	42	143
4. ND	5	12	3	4	4	3	6	19	5	2	2	14	79
5. DPA	6	6	2	5	3	3	4	10	5	4	2	25	75
6. Ljube Boskovski	6	9	4	4	3	2	5	3	4	4	4	1	49
7. Nano Ruzin	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	7
Total (per media)	91	118	74	90	61	85	128	101	120	82	102	103	1155