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Freedom of expression in the Republic of Georgia: framing the attempted shut-down of the independent TV station

George Sulkhanishvili

Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College

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FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN THE REPUBLIC OF GEORGIA:
FRAMING THE ATTEMPTED SHUT-DOWN OF THE
INDEPENDENT TV STATION

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree
Master of Mass Communication

in

The Manship School of Mass Communication

by
George Sulkhanishvili
Tbilisi State University, 1996,
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the perception and the level of freedom in the media of the Republic of Georgia. The study examines the media's perception of freedom by identifying the frame newspapers used while covering the event between the government and the independent media outlet. The main interest is to define the predominant frame.

A content analysis of 115 news articles of the four Georgian daily newspapers find that responsibility and conflict frames were more frequently used than economic consequences frame and morality frames.

The study concludes that the Georgian media have considerable freedom from external restraints but less understanding of what may be accomplished by freedom.

INTRODUCTION

The events that led to the resignation of Eduard Shevardnadze as president of the Republic of Georgia in November 2003 drew the world's attention to this small Eastern European country that had been carved out of the former Soviet Union in the 1980s. The world's media were there to chronicle and comment on the public protests against a parliamentary election rigged by the government to make it appear that Shevardnadze had been re-elected. Ordinary citizens protested en masse the falsification of their electoral voices and the government's disregard for their right to choose. Opposition leaders demanded the results of the elections be abolished and new elections held with improved administration and monitoring. Eventually this demand turned into calls for the resignation of president Shevardnadze and his government. Shevardnadze, well-known and liked in the West for his role in helping dismantle the former Soviet Union in the late 1980s, resigned on November 23, 2003, to avoid a bloodshed and civil war.

The Western and local media quoted the leaders of opposition who described the event as "velvet revolution" (Mydans, 2003) and considered it a crucial step toward democratic changes in Georgia. It was one of very few events that signaled change in that direction. Few such signs of democratic transformation were evident during Shevardnadze's 11-year rule. Since 1992, the country had gone through two civil wars and was in a deep political, economic, and social crisis by the beginning of the 21st century. Corruption had blossomed in almost every structure and system. The democratic transformation that began after the collapse of the Soviet Union seemed to be less successful in Georgia than elsewhere.

One of the most significant transformations that swept across East Central Europe since the end of 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, was the liberation of the media from totalitarian control. In the Republic of Georgia, the status of the mass media was an especially acute problem. The progress that had been made toward the creation of a democratic institution always seemed precarious, and it was never certain that the changes were not irreversible. The Georgian media had to be watchful not to lose its achievements toward greater openness. International and local media experts continued to observe a number of serious restrictions imposed on the media in Georgia, many put in place only a few years ago.

While the Western press took notice of the 2003 ousting of Georgia's president, it largely missed a similar event in Georgia two years earlier that had similar, profound implications for the country's ability to establish a democratic society. That event occurred in October 2001 when the government attempted to shut down Georgia's most popular independent TV station *Rustavi 2*. The station and competing media ran broadcasts and stories about the attempt, and this led to three days of non-stop protest demonstrations in front of the parliament building. Eventually, several ministers resigned and *Rustavi 2* continued operating as before.

Obvious threats to press freedom come from state institutions such as this, but the situation is not so simple. There also are threats from the wider society in which change is not always welcomed, and from journalists themselves. There the level of practitioner professionalism is poor and there is a lack of transparent self-regulatory mechanisms. The absence of a perception of freedom among journalists often makes it easy for different

influential groups in society to violate the freedom of expression that has been gained, and simultaneously prevents an increase in solidarity among journalists.

While the lack of a democratic political culture during the decades of communist rule contributes to the low level of perception of freedom in the society, the way the media frame different cases of the government-media relationship can demonstrate the existing level of perception of freedom, show how the media and journalists understand freedom and what they communicate to audiences.

The events of Fall 2001 between the government and the independent TV company received broad coverage by all media across the country and offers an excellent opportunity to examine the perception of press freedom in Georgia.

This study will use a content analysis of the four most highly circulated Georgian newspapers during the period of October 31 to November 14, 2001 -- the two-week period after the government attempted to shut down the most popular independent TV station in the country. The 115 articles cover not only the attempt itself but the processes that followed: public protest, resignation of several ministers, and other political changes.

Since the media reflect society, and certain communities in Georgia maintain the attitude that the media gained too much freedom over the past decade, it is important to study what frames these four newspapers chose to cover the event. A particular frame of the events between the government and an independent media outlet can be an indicator of the existing perception of freedom of the press and freedom of expression in society.

So far, there are no academic and scientific studies of mass communication in Georgia. No studies have analyzed the way freedom of expression is constructed and communicated to individuals, or what the role of the media is in the process. This study

will allow media owners, editors and journalists to better understand the media environment in which they operate, to better understand how they perceive freedom of expression, and how they frame and communicate it to the public. This study will examine the present condition of the Georgian media and where they may be heading.

This study is important for Georgian journalists because it will describe their understanding of freedom of the press in one particular case. While one case study can never be generalized, it represents a start in the cumulative process of understanding a phenomenon using social scientific methods. This study will offer a deeper perspective of how freedom of the press is perceived in Georgia and constructed in the news. Georgian journalists often think of themselves as just narrators of events, and they are unaware of their power to raise the salience of certain issues for the public.

The Georgian public has a heritage of the Communist system, often regarding the state and government as something untouchable. Very often, the public, including the media, does not actively challenge the government's decisions or its actions – a holdover behavior from the old regime. The public considers it the media's job to obey and follow government policy as if it was still a state institution. This study is important because this event represents one of the first times that journalists and the public worked together to oppose the government to achieve greater press freedom and freedom of expression for all. This event shows the role the media can play in the process of learning about and adopting greater freedom. This study is important because giving the media more freedom is an essential step for greater freedoms for all.

This study will examine how freedom was framed by the media in Georgia. Framing of this issue is not investigated in Western mass communication research, yet it

is vital to understand how the media perceive this issue and what messages they communicate to audiences in countries that are just developing a free press and democratic society. Issues of framing freedom by the media which are just starting to be practiced in a free press system, and which represent a society without a strong conceptualization of freedom, are important to understand how the media value freedom and understand it, and therefore, communicate that understanding and value to the public. Freedom of the press is a mainstay of Western civilization but it is a novel and unfamiliar, if essential, idea for societies in transition such as Georgia. This study will begin a body of work in hopes of encouraging others to explore this topic as Georgia and other emerging democracies proceed through their transformation process.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Background

Georgia has not experienced the development of the media and other democratic systems the way Western countries have. The development of the media in Western countries was influenced by several factors including the emergence of the middle class and development of a libertarian philosophy. All these factors were interrelated and the development of the media was a form of evolution. The processes of replacing the authoritarian press system with a libertarian system began in the early 18th century. Meanwhile, in most of the post-Soviet countries, including Georgia, the Soviet Communist model of the media dominated until the late 1980s. Siebert and colleagues describe this media model as “Grounded in Marxist determinism and in the harsh political necessity of maintaining the political ascendancy of a party which represents less than 10 percent of the country’s people, Soviet press operates as a tool of the ruling power just as clearly as did the older authoritarianism. Unlike the older pattern, it is state rather than privately owned. The profit motive has been removed, and a concept of positive liberty has been substituted for a concept of negative liberty. Perhaps no press in the history of the world has ever been so tightly controlled” (Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956, p. 5).

Even though it has been 13 years since the independent Georgian media emerged, questions remain: Does Georgia’s heritage of limited freedom of the press and limited freedom of expression make the Georgian society and media ill equipped to adjust and incorporate the Western concept of freedom? What is the level of perception of freedom in the society and is there a need for more freedom?

For ordinary citizens, freedom means the ability to do whatever they want. Understanding freedom, however, can be much broader. Freedom is the condition of being able to choose and carry out purposes (Muller, 1905). This definition has two immediate implications, according to Muller, the dictionary meaning of an absence of external constraints and a practical meaning of “an actual ability with available means” (Muller, 1905, p. 5). It accordingly involves the common ideas of *freedom from* external restraints, and *freedom to* achieve something.

The concept of freedom of the press and freedom of expression came along with establishing “freedom” and “individual freedom” as mainstays of human thought at the end of the 18th century. Libertarians, the chief advocates of individual freedom, believed that “all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” (Jefferson, 1776, p. 9).

Freedom, in Libertarian understanding, chiefly means the absence of any kind of external restraint (Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956). It is freedom *from*. It equally refers to individual and press freedoms. In other words, if there are no external restrictions on the press, its freedom will allow the press to fulfill its goals to serve individuals’ needs to express themselves and to keep themselves well informed – they are rational creatures. The First Amendment was an embodiment of this philosophy: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”

Theoretical Framework

This study employs theoretical perspectives derived from First Amendment theory, framing and agenda-setting.

First Amendment. According to Libertarians, the creators of the First Amendment, the main way to arrive at truth for individuals is the free competition of opinions in the open market. For this to occur, individuals must be allowed to freely argue, express their opinions, and provide others the opportunity to do so. A free press has a chief role in fulfilling this goal. “Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter” (Jefferson, 1787, p.198). The media change form and shape according to the socio-economic and political environment in which they exist (Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956). Besides constant changes of social and political structures, the Libertarian approach to freedom remains the underpinning of freedom of press and freedom of expression in cultures of Western democracies.

Since the Republic of Georgia is in transition from the Communist system to the Western type of democracy, applying not the First Amendment but the concepts it embodies as a theory would demonstrate how the freedom of press may be perceived in Georgian society and particularly by Georgian media.

The First Amendment was adopted in 1791. Even though different socio-political situations over the years have influenced changes in the First Amendment interpretations, the 45 words which it contains have been never changed since their adoption. It is a unique document because it guarantees freedom of press by restraining the government from making any restrictions on the press and meanwhile imposes no responsibilities on

the press. Moreover, “the mandate for a free press is not a constitutional gift to publishers alone. The reader, the public, and in a larger intellectual sense, the world of ideas, all have a stake in the press. That indeed is the reason for the special status of the press in the United States” (Barron, 1992, p.18).

The First Amendment was created and adopted in the period when the government was considered the main threat to individual freedoms, including the freedom of speech, freedom of expression, and freedom of the press. By adopting the First Amendment, government officials literally imposed limitations on their own power and authority. The First Amendment erects wall between the government and the media, defending the media from the government interference.

Overt threats by government are not the only threat to press freedom. Various countries claim that the media must be free, while also imposing certain responsibilities on them. Bearing responsibilities, such as service to public or any other goal, limits the freedom of the press. Responsibilities, while seemingly noble, have the effect of restricting media freedom. The First Amendment contains no such words or meaning.

The 20th century brought an important shift from the libertarian vision of the press in the United States. A new theory of the press, called the Social Responsibility Theory, brought with it the idea that with freedom comes responsibility. “Freedom carries concomitant obligations; and the press, which enjoys a privileged position under our government, is obliged to be responsible to society for carrying out certain essential functions of mass communication in contemporary society” (Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956, p. 74). The press first ignored the recommendations from the Hutchins’ Commission that responsibility is an inherent component to freedom, and then protested

vigorously the idea that its First Amendment right requires concomitant responsibilities. Eventually though, responsibility came to be tacitly accepted in the 20th and 21st centuries in the U.S. These responsibilities have been defined as responsibilities to the public, not to the government. Furthermore, it is not expected that the media are required to do certain things, but that the public has a right to expect certain things from the media in exchange for its guaranteed freedom. The public's right to expect certain things from the media and the media's responsibility to public is not a law but a social norm. Anything that the government does to preserve these social norms occurs after the fact because there are no prior restraints.

The concept of democratic freedoms, embodied in the First Amendment, which defends the media from governmental restrictions and from required responsibilities, may be applied to any press system in any democratic society. The First Amendment contains very basic principles of press freedom. Cultural, social, political and even technological changes that have been taking place within the U.S. society in past two centuries have not downplayed the importance of the First Amendment principles. The concepts of freedom may be applied to any society that values and moves toward democracy and freedom of the press as ultimate goals. The perception and preservation of the principles of freedom are indicators of the levels of press freedom in society.

Framing Theory. The media produce news, but news does not stand alone; it is constructed from everyday happenings and is the result of subjective decisions of newsmakers. The process of selecting and organizing pieces of information for producing stories is called framing (Ryan, 1991). Various researchers define framing differently. Among the most widely used are Reese's definition: "Framing refers to the way events

and issues are organized and made sense of, especially by media, media professionals, and their audiences” (Reese, 2001, p. 7), and Entman’s definition: “To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (Entman, 1993 p. 52). Another widely used definition is: “A frame is a central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration” (Tankard, Hendrickson, Bliss, & Ghanem, 1991, p. 11).

Recent developments of the structure of the mass media made it an important political actor in public deliberation (Cook, 1998). Mass media have the ability to “frame issues and public deliberation in a particular way” (Reese, 2001, p. 25). “Public deliberation, therefore, is not a harmonious process but an ideological contest and political struggle. Actors in the public arena struggle over the right to define and shape issues, as well as the discourse surrounding these issues. Sometimes, actors struggle mightily to keep important issues off the public agenda” (Pan & Kosicki, 2001, p. 36).

Thus, the contemporary mass media play the role of political actor in public discourse, social movements, and political debates because they are able to raise the salience of one particular issue and put the story in a certain light. “Frames invite us to think about social phenomena in a certain way, often by appealing to basic psychological biases. Studies have examined, for example, the effects of information that emphasizes positive or negative aspects, the individual or the collective, and the episodic or the thematic” (Reese, 2001, p. 27).

Framing is a crucial point in the news-making process. The choice of a frame is a moment in a chain of significance. As sources promote “occurrences” into “events,” as journalists define and seek out information that fits their organizing ideas, frames can help designate any number of moments when we can say that a certain organizing principle was operating to shape social reality. These moments being fluid make it risky for us to fix one point in time that happens to be most visible, such as in a news story. When issues are analyzed, we tend to prematurely think of their definition as self-evident. It is, of course, useful to partition off a set of concerns and call it, for example, the “drug issue,” but framing reminds us that the way issues are defined is itself problematic.

Framing has special importance for this research. Using framing theory to organize this study will allow us to see which aspects of the events between the government and the independent media outlet were highlighted the most, how the media reflected the social and political instability that followed, and what agenda the media offered the public during the event.

Agenda Setting Theory. The agenda-setting function refers to the media’s ability to raise the importance of an issue in the public’s mind. This idea has its roots in a seminal book, *Public Opinion* by Walter Lippmann (1922), suggesting that mass media create our pictures of the world, which are often incomplete and distorted. McCombs and Shaw (1968) conducted the first empirical test of Lippmann’s thesis during the 1968 presidential elections in Chapel Hill, N.C. They chose Chapel Hill because of the high number of undecided voters there, which was fertile ground for determining the effects of the media. The study tried to discover the correlation between the salience of an issue and the media content. Research showed a strong relationship between the public’s and the

media's agenda of issues. In other words, the study provided evidence of the media's ability to set the public agenda.

Agenda-setting theory is regarded as the groundwork for framing theory. Framing theory, as it refers to the ability of the news media to frame issues in the public mind, is also known as the second level of agenda setting (McCombs & Bell, 1996). The first dimension, agenda setting itself, refers to transmitting issue salience from the media to the public. The second dimension refers to the media's role in framing these issues in the public's mind (McCombs & Bell, 1996).

There are no studies about the influence of the media agenda on the public agenda in societies such as Georgia. Because the memory of Soviet Communist media is still fresh, the media have low credibility with the public. It is unclear whether the media set the public's agenda, or in what capacity they participate in the public agenda-setting process. It is unclear because Georgian society remains a society of oral culture in which the informal, personal sources have the highest credibility.

Agenda setting theory is important to this research in a tangential sense; this study will not determine whether the media influenced the public agenda in this particular case between the government and the media; since this event occurred in 2001, too much time has passed to conduct the public opinion survey that would be needed to compare the media agenda with the public's agenda. However, because numerous studies of agenda setting have shown that the media do have this ability, it is important to know what agenda the media communicated in the likelihood that the media in Georgia also perform an agenda-setting function. Additional research should be conducted to determine if the agenda the media set in other events was adopted by the public.

Empirical Evidence

It is essential to this topic to define what Western democracy and its framework represent in order to understand the transformation processes of post-Soviet societies toward Western-style democracy. Contemporary Western democracy is based on liberal philosophy and thought, where individual liberty, including the freedom of expression, is dominant. “Liberalism conceived of the problem of freedom in terms of a simple juxtaposition between society and the state. It saw the sole threat to individual freedom in the state, conceived either as an aristocratic minority or as democratic majority” (Morgenthau, 1957, p. 721). Hence, liberal policy had an aim to erect a wall between the government and the individuals, behind which the people would be secure, and to confine the government behind that wall in as narrow a space as possible. “The smaller the sphere of the state, the larger the sphere of individual freedom was bound to be” (Morgenthau, 1957, p. 721).

The post-Soviet societies experienced the system in which the wall mentioned by Morgenthau left a very little, and often no space for individual freedom. The collapse of the system brought an opportunity to gain more space. However, it is unclear how well post-Soviet societies are equipped to claim more freedom. In the study *Democratic Values and Transformation of the Soviet Union*, 1992, the researchers identified seven major sub-dimensions of basic democratic rights and liberties, which are essential for citizens to practice more individual freedom. Those are: 1) political tolerance; 2) valuation of liberty; 3) support for the norms of democracy; 4) rights consciousness; 5) support for dissent; 6) support for an independent media; and 7) support for the institution of competitive elections (Gibson, Duch, & Tedin, 1992). “The need for an independent

media in democracies is obvious. The media that are dependent upon the government – either due to direct censorship or even through political control of the allocation of paper – cannot serve as a check on arbitrary and autocratic government” (Gibson, Duch, & Tedin, 1992, p. 348).

Only a few empirical studies have examined press freedom in former Soviet countries. One study was a survey of former Soviet citizens in Russia; it demonstrated ambivalent views of the media (Gibson, Duch, & Tedin, 1992). On one hand, the researchers found agreement among the public that there was too much criticism in the contemporary press. On the other hand, the study showed that the vast majority of those surveyed preferred to see the press protected from government persecution. The researchers concluded there were no clear results about Soviet attitudes toward the press (Gibson, Duch, & Tedin, 1992).

There are number of reasons for the absence of comprehensive media research on Eastern and Central Europe. First, the media system’s evolution has been so rapid and often so unexpected, that findings are quickly overtaken by events; too often, after just a few months, an analysis becomes “history” (Coman, 2000). The information about these changes is incomplete, unreliable and sometimes biased (Coman, 2000). There are no established systems for monitoring the media and media economics, distribution systems, and audience demographics. Information about some countries’ media is more accessible than others. This is an indication that the media and mass communication of post-Soviet countries do not have developed and well-shaped forms yet. Georgia is one of the countries in this situation: “The Fourth Estate in Georgia is an active lobby, but fractured and disorganized Many (media) are critical of the government, but their impact on

public opinion dwindled since the perestroika years. They have lost their oppositionist appeal” (Jones, 2000, p. 57).

Georgian media maintained some measure of independence because of international pressure on the country’s president. However, Georgian society and its media are not entirely free from old, authoritarian habits (Jones, 2000, p. 57). A number of examples confirm certain types of authoritarian regimes that are tolerant of criticism. “Recently, development in the post-Communist states also demonstrated that some post-Communist authoritarian regimes, such as Russia and Poland, made much progress in relaxing press control, but others, such as Yugoslavia or Romania, did not” (Wang, 1994, p. 218). Even some Communist countries in the past in various periods allowed a limited freedom of press to overcome contemporary socio-political tensions, as happened in China during the One Hundred Flowers campaign in the 1950s and then later in the 1980s with Deng Xiaoping’s reforms (Wang, 1994).

It is unclear how stable the freedom of the press is in Georgia. It is also unclear whether the government, while giving up some of its freedoms in favor of those of individuals, is merely trying to give the appearance of greater freedom of expression and openness of information, or is truly committed to a sustainable free Georgian society.

Because of the paucity of studies specifically related to the topic of this research, studies of other issues related to the international press will be examined, followed by framing studies whose goals bore some similarities to the goals of this research. In Korea, one study (Youm & Salwen, 1990) showed how periodic waves of expansion of media freedom did not mean final liberation. Koreans first practiced the Western type of press freedom after World War II under the U.S. military government, but shortly thereafter,

the Korean military government established censorship over the Communist press. Syngman Ree, the head of the first Korean republic, guaranteed freedom of expression as a constitutional right, but during the second half of his 12-year rule he imposed serious restrictions on the press.

In a study of the period surrounding the Amsterdam meeting of the heads of Europe in 1997, which aimed to finalize the agreement on monetary union, Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) identified five predominant frame types. The responsibility frame was used the most followed by the conflict, economic consequences, human interests, and morality frames. The researchers also discovered that serious media outlets mostly used responsibility and conflict frames, while sensational media preferred the human interest frame (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). This study is similar to the one conducted here since it examines the use of various frames in an international, political event.

Another study that is important for this work examined the post-Cold-War military conflicts through the prism of framing (Thussu, 2002). It found that the major U.S. television networks framed the U.S. military actions as “humanitarian intervention” and thus followed the government’s foreign policy agenda. The author argued that U.S. television’s approach to this military conflict influenced the media in different parts of the world; they presented as an example the conflict over Kargil, a disputed valley in the Kashmir region between Pakistan and India in 1999. Similar to this study, the Georgian media might also tend to frame issues according to the government’s agenda.

Another study, about the conflict in Nagorny-Karabagh in Azerbaijan found that war was fought not only on the battlefields, but also in halls of the U.S. Congress (Ambrosio, 2002). Nagorny-Karabagh is a region on the territory of Azerbaijan currently

occupied by Armenian military forces. The researcher argued that the result of the war and its outcomes were determined by successful framing of the conflict by the Armenian-American lobby. During the fights in Karabagh and immediately after, there was clear correlation in the position of the Armenian-American lobby and resulting legislation. This study is relevant to the one here since it demonstrates that framing has the power to influence results of global issues.

Other framing studies offer guidance for this research. For example, Husselbee and Elliott (2002) analyzed coverage of the hate crimes against an African American man in Texas and a gay teenager in Wyoming to determine how the newspapers portrayed the communities, their residents, and the issues related to the hate crimes. The results allowed them to refute the public perception of journalists as sensationalistic rumor-mongers in these cases. Similarly, this study of the conflict between Georgia's independent TV station and the government will allow this researcher to determine what public perception might be based on the news coverage and its frames.

Miller, Andsager, and Reichert (1998) examined how the 1996 presidential candidates framed themselves in press releases and how elite newspapers covered them. The researchers used concept mapping, an innovative method of content analysis that uses computers instead of individuals to code categories. The results of this study demonstrated that candidate images were distinct in both press releases and in news stories and the media did not reflect the images that the candidates were trying to project. This study demonstrated that analysis of "frames can suggest the extent to which the media imprint their own power on issue coverage" (Miller, Andsager, & Reichert, 1998, p. 314). Similarly, this study of Georgia's independent TV station and the government

will identify the type of frames and help better understand the role of media and their power while covering the event.

Another framing study by Andsager (2000) examined how pro-choice and pro-life interest groups tried to frame the abortion debate in 1995-1996 and “analyzed the vocabulary emerging from news releases, position statements, and direct quotes in news stories to determine the frames that each interest group attempted to develop in shaping public opinion on the issue” (Andsager, 2000, p. 578). This study shows that key terms used by interest groups shape not only the frames but also identify other political actors involved in the issue, such as politicians and religious leaders. Similarly, in the study of Georgia’s independent TV station and the government, the key terms serve to identify the perception of freedom among the sources, journalists, and the public.

Conceptual definitions. To examine the media’s perception of freedom of the press in Georgia and how they convey it to the Georgian public, this study will examine how the Georgian press framed the events between the government and an independent TV station. Several key frames have been identified in framing research: conflict, human interest, economic consequences, morality, and responsibility, among others (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). This study began with a close reading of the articles by the researcher, who determined that the frames most likely used by the major four newspapers were conflict, economic consequences, morality and responsibility. It is possible that a single article in some issue might focus on the human interest frame, but the vast majority of articles were expected to use either conflict, economic consequences, morality, or responsibility frames.

The conflict frame stresses disagreement or differences of opinion between individuals, institutions or different groups, and the government to capture the audience interest (Neuman, 1992). Research shows that the discussion between political powers in the news often reduces multilayer political debates to overly simplistic conflict. Because of the emphasis on conflict, the news media have been criticized for inducing public cynicism and mistrust of political leaders (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997).

The economic consequences frame pictures an event, problem or issue focusing on the financial impact, which it might have on an individual, group, institution, region, or country (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). The broad economic impact of an event or an issue bears a special importance as a news value and thus the media often focus on the economic side of an event (Graber, 1993).

The morality frame highlights an event, problem or an issue from ethical or even religious perspectives. Because of the professional standards of ethics and objectivity, journalists often have someone else raise a particular issue. If journalists use the views of interested sides to raise a particular question, it means they indirectly refer to the morality frame (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000).

The responsibility frame portrays an issue or problem in a way that attributes causality to government, interest groups, individuals, or society (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). News – by covering an issue or problem in terms of an event, instance, or individual (episodically) rather than in terms of the larger historical social context (thematically) -- encourages people to offer individual-level explanations of problems (Iyengar, 1991). This may be especially important in the case of freedom of expression

and the press in Georgia; if the media frame the issue episodically, then the public may be less likely to see societal solutions to the problem.

Drawing from the literature and theory outlined above, the research questions for this study are:

RQ1: How did the four major Georgian newspapers frame the event between the government and independent TV station?

RQ2: What types of sources were quoted in the four major Georgian newspapers' coverage of the event between the government and independent TV station?

RQ3: What keywords, phrases, and thematic clusters were used by Georgian journalists to construct and communicate perceptions of press freedom and freedom of expression in coverage of the event between the government and independent TV station?

METHOD

To assess the level of freedom of expression in Georgia, this study will employ a descriptive content analysis. Content analysis is the systematic assignment of communication content to categories according to rules, and the analysis of relationships involving those categories using statistical methods (Riffe, 1998). “Content analysis is any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages” (Holsti, 1969, p. 14). This study employs a descriptive content analysis rather than an inferential one. Descriptive content analyses are “reality checks, whereby portrayal of groups, phenomena, traits, or characteristics are assessed against a standard taken from real life.... Moreover, descriptive content analyses sometimes serve as a prelude to other types of research, often in domains not previously explored” (Riffe, 1998, p.10). Because the event being studied had a limited duration – two weeks – it is possible to examine every newspaper article on the topic. The universe is not so large that study of this subject would be impossible. Therefore, no inferences to the entire population need to be made from a smaller sample. Also, since Georgian media and freedom of expression in Georgia in general are not well researched fields, descriptive content analysis can help assess the situation by applying standard indicators to the behavior of newspapers in this particular case. Descriptive content analysis is relevant to this study because it often serves as an entry study in a field not previously researched.

This study will examine the four Georgian newspapers: *Akhali Taoba* (New Generation), *Akali Versia* (New Version), *Alia*, (Message) and *Rezonansi* (Resonance) about one particular event. On October 26, 2001, Tbilisi District Court authorized the

Investigative Department of the Ministry of National Security to investigate economic violations of the most popular independent TV station, *Rustavi 2*. On October 30, National Security agents, equipped with all the necessary documentation, entered the company's office requesting the records for an investigation. The management and the staff of the TV station blocked the entrance, refusing to give out the requested documentation. At the same time, the channel aired the address to its audience asking for support from the government investigation. This led to an immediate media and public reaction and eventually ended in the resignation of several political figures. National Security never received the documentation it demanded and *Rustavi 2* continued operating.

By 2001, when the conflict between the government and *Rustavi 2* took place, the four newspapers used in this study had the highest circulation rate in the Georgian newspaper market, which, because of a weak distribution infrastructure primarily consists of the capitol of Tbilisi. There is no strict division in Georgia between elite and non-elite press the way there is in the U.S.; however, since the four newspapers had the highest circulation rates, they tend to be considered the most popular and credible papers on the market. But even these newspapers did not and still do not have clear general political leanings. They could change their political leaning from issue to issue, from day to day, or week to week.

Daily *Akhali Taoba* was established in 1994. Three individuals own the paper and it has been run by the same editor since its establishment. By October-November 2001 it had a circulation of around 8,000.

Daily *Alia* was founded by an individual in 1995. He remains the sole owner and the general editor of the paper. By the time of the event between the government and the TV station, *Alia's* circulation was approximately 11,000.

Daily *Rezonansi* was founded by two individuals in 1991. It was one of the first independent newspapers after the collapse of the Communist system. Even though in 2001 it had a lower circulation than *Akhali Taoba* and *Alia*, just 6,000, *Rezonansi* had a reputation as the most reliable and serious newspaper in the country.

Weekly *Akhali Versia* was founded by the business group Akhali Versia in 2000. As opposed to other weekly newspapers that mainly provide the digest of daily papers, *Akhali Versia* runs its own news-making policy and has on its staff several well-known journalists. Its circulation in 2001 was approximately 30,000 copies per issue.

The time frame for analyzing the content of these newspapers is two weeks: October 31, 2001, the day after the event began, and November 14, 2001. This was chosen as the ending date because public protests ended on that day. The study analyzed content of every type regarding the event, its political consequences and public reaction: news stories, interviews and editorials. The unit of analysis for this study was the paragraph.

The first step involved identifying unique frames and keywords for each side of the event, based on terms appearing in news stories. The terms used to comprise frames and keywords in this study constituted recurring words, phrases and themes identified by the researcher in a close reading of the texts. Four dominant frames were identified that paralleled the frames identified in previous framing studies (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). They are: responsibility, conflict, economic consequences, and morality. The

human interest frame, which is often noted in other framing studies, did not appear frequently enough in these stories to be included in this study.

The conflict frame was defined as emphasizing disagreement or differences of opinion between individuals, institutions or different groups, and the government. The economic consequences frame was defined as focusing on the financial aspects or impact which it might have on an individual, group, institution, region, or country. The morality frame stressed an event, problem or an issue from an ethical point of view. The responsibility frame portrayed an issue or problem in a way that attributes causality.

Recurring keywords and phrases identified by reading sample texts included: “Revolutionaries,” “manipulated people,” “legal action,” “illegal resistance,” “attempted coup,” “invasion of TV Company,” “suppress of civil rights,” “freedom fighters,” “threat to freedom of expression,” and “necessity for the government resignation.”

Out of 10 recurring keywords and phrases the following five were considered pro-government:

1) “Revolutionaries” -- This word indicated that resistance to the government decision was a revolt, uprising, or rebellion. The word is used to describe the TV staff as well as the TV company public supporters. An example of its use in prints is, “One can only guess what these new types of revolutionaries can contribute to our society.”

2) “Manipulated people” -- This term is often used for blaming certain politicians by manipulating the public to protest against the government and therefore emphasize the weakness of public opinion. It refers to the idea that people would not protest for the TV station on their own and they would only do so if someone made them. An example is,

“This might be the theme of separate investigation to bring to light who manipulates protesting people in front of the parliament building.”

3) “Legal action” -- The term is often used to justify the authorities actions against the TV company. Example: “There is no reason to doubt that what was done by the National Security agents was a legal action”.

4) “Illegal resistance” -- This term is used to say that the TV company staff had no legal right to resist the national security agents. Example: “Upon entering the *Rustavi 2*’s office the National Security agents faced absolutely illegal resistance.”

5) “Attempted coup” -- This term is used by the representatives of the government who said that the street protest and involvement of opposition politicians in the processes was an effort to disobey or overthrow the government. Example: “Disorders and demands of the public and certain politicians is nothing other than an attempted coup.”

The following five recurring keywords and phrases were considered pro-media:

1) “Invasion in TV company” -- This was the most common pro-media phrase indicating the government’s aggression against the media outlet. Example: “Agents of the National Security literally invaded the office of television.”

2) “Suppression of civil rights” – This represented journalists’ generalizations of the case and convey the meaning that the government action was not only against this particular TV company, but an attempt to suppress the civil rights of all citizens of Georgia. Example: “This is another example of ongoing suppression of basic civil rights in our country.”

3) “Freedom fighters” -- This term indicated that protesters were considered to be

defenders of freedom of expression and other civil liberties. Example: “The people in front of the parliament building are freedom fighters because they defend one of the highest values of our society -- freedom of the press.”

4) “Threat to freedom of expression” – To many people, freedom of expression is considered one of the few (and sometimes the only) achievement of the Georgian society in the last decade. Many publications expressed the fear that this event threatened this achievement. Example: “The experience of other countries shows that such conflicts make a total threat not only to a particular media outlet, but to freedom of expression in general.”

5) “Necessity for the government resignation” -- This term was mostly used by different sources evaluating the events after the conflict. This term stressed high responsibility of the government in the conflict. Example: “After committing the mistake and insulting the whole society this government has nothing left to do but to resign.”

Coders were also asked to identify the length of the study units since agenda-setting studies have shown longer stories have more impact on the public agenda; placement of the study units, as front-page stories emphasize the higher salience of an issue; and sources used in the articles -- government officials, including representatives of any government institution or any political party; TV station officials and employees; and other individuals, like students or just random citizens.

The coding of content was conducted according to the procedures described by Riffe (1998). The articles served as study units and the recording unit was the appearance of the references of the indicators which represent the variable. The author of this study and another Georgian language mass communication graduate student carried out the

coding. To ensure the accuracy of coding procedures and its results, the coders were trained and inter-coder reliability tested at the beginning and in the middle of coding. Coding reliability was calculated using Scott's Pi, which corrects for random chance agreement of nominal categories, and Pearson's correlation for ratio or interval measures. All but one coding category reached acceptable levels of agreement after the first week of training sessions; a second set of training sessions concentrated on that variable and acceptable reliability was achieved. Scott's Pi was calculated for the variables as follows: newspaper = 1.0; placement = 1.0; revolutionaries in title/lead = 1.0; manipulation in title/lead = 1.0; legal action in title or lead = 1.0; illegal resistance in title/lead = 1.0; coup in title/lead = 1.0; invasion in title/lead = 1.0; suppression in title/lead = .81; freedom in title/lead = .81; threat in title/lead = 1.0; government resignation in title/lead = 1.0. Pearson's correlations were obtained as follows: length in paragraphs $r = 1.0$, $p < .001$; government official source $r = 1.0$, $p < .001$; pro-government statement by government official $r = 1.0$, $p < .001$; anti-government statement by government official $r = .99$, $p < .001$; neutral statement by government official $r = .98$, $p < .001$; TV official source $r = 1.0$, $p < .001$; pro-TV station statement by TV official $r = 1.0$, $p < .001$; anti-TV statement by TV official $r = 1.0$, $p < .001$; neutral statement by TV official $r = 1.0$, $p < .001$; other sources $r = .89$, $p < .001$; pro-government statement by other sources $r = .89$, $p < .001$; anti-government statement by other sources $r = .69$, $p < .001$; pro-TV station statement by other sources $r = .99$, $p < .001$; anti-TV station statement by other sources $r = 1.0$, $p < .001$; neutral statement by other sources $r = .98$, $p < .001$; revolutionaries $r = 1.0$, $p < .001$; manipulation $r = .87$, $p < .001$; legal action $r = .97$, $p < .001$; illegal resistance $r = .91$, $p < .001$; coup $r = 1.0$, $p < .001$; invasion $r = .97$, $p < .001$; suppression

$r = .95, p < .001$; freedom $r = .94, p < .001$; threat $r = .99, p < .001$; government resignation $r = .95, p < .001$; responsibility frame $r = .96, p < .001$; conflict frame $r = .96, p < .001$; economic consequences frame $r = .72, p < .001$; morality frame could not be computed since it did not appear in any of the articles during the inter-coder reliability test.

Since this was a non-probability sample and this study is primarily concerned with describing content rather than comparing or generalizing, data will be analyzed using frequencies and percentages.

FINDINGS

There were 115 stories on the Georgian government's attempt to shut down the independent TV station. The average story was 13 paragraphs long; stories ranged from 2 to 40 paragraphs. Seventy-five percent of the stories were placed inside, not on the front page.

In answer to the first research question about how the four major Georgian newspapers framed the conflict between the government and independent TV station, this study found that the responsibility frame was most prevalent; 76.5% of the stories contained one or more paragraphs that used the responsibility frame. A close second was the conflict frame, with 67.8% of the stories having at least one paragraph using this frame. The economic frame was far behind the conflict and responsibility frames; 17.4% of the stories had at least one paragraph using the economic frame. The morality frame was used the least, only 6% of the stories contained paragraphs with this frame.

Analyses for the second research question regarding the types of sources quoted showed that government officials were quoted far more often than any other type of source; 74% of the stories quoted at least one government official. In contrast, only 16% of the stories quoted a TV company official. There were other types of sources such as students, representatives of non-governmental organizations or random citizens in 39% of the stories.

This study also measured the valence of the statements by these sources. It found that 55% of the stories had government sources who made neutral statements, 42% of the stories had government sources who made anti-government statements, and 31% who made pro-government statements. Of the 16% of the stories with TV sources, 12% of

those stories had TV officials making neutral statements and 10% of the stories had TV sources making pro-TV statements. Fewer than 1% of the stories had TV sources who made anti-TV statements. In fact, there was only 1 story with any anti-TV statements by TV officials, and that story contained 5 such statements.

Finally, the research question regarding the keywords, phrases, and thematic clusters that were used to construct and communicate perceptions of press freedom and freedom of expression, this study found the following:

The keywords, phrases and thematic clusters that were considered to be against the government were combined into an index; this index was found to appear in 85.5% of the stories. Broken down individually, the theme of invasion of the TV station was the most prevalent with this theme appearing in 56% of the stories. It was followed closely by the theme of threat to freedom of expression, 54%, and slightly behind were themes of suppression of civil rights, 47%, and the need for government officials to resign, 46%. The theme of TV supporters as freedom fighters was represented in 39% of the stories.

By contrast, the keywords, phrases, and thematic clusters that were considered pro-government appeared in only 52% of the stories. Broken down, these keywords, phrases and themes represented the media's manipulation of people, which appeared in 39% of the stories, TV supporters as revolutionaries, 20%, government's action as legal, 19%, illegal resistance by TV supporters, 16%, and attempted coup by TV supporters, 15%.

DISCUSSION

The findings have some important implications. First, the framing results indicate that the newspapers primarily used the responsibility and conflicts frames to cover the event. This means that the newspapers did not accept the frame offered by the government; economic circumstances was the official version used by the government to justify its action. Almost all government officials whose pro-government statements were quoted in the newspapers emphasized that the government's only goal was to fight the economic violations in the TV company, not to violate anyone's freedom of speech or press. They also said that the only reason for entering the company's office was to check the financial documentation. In other words, the government tried to convince the media to cover the event through the economic consequences frame. The fact that this frame offered by the government was not the primary frame bears special importance. The closing of media outlets by governments for economic violations, thereby effectively suppressing a free media, is still a practice in some post-communist countries. The vague and ambiguous tax laws in such countries allow governments to fabricate the economic reasons and close down any unfavorable media outlet without accepting any blame for abuse of press freedom. In this way, these governments manage to maintain a pro-democracy image, while at the same time getting rid of a critical media outlet.

Using the responsibility and conflict frames indicates that the Georgian newspapers portrayed the event in a light that showed economics were not the only consideration, but one of many and that abuse of a free media by the government is another. If one function of the media is to give a deeper perspective to events and illuminate the essence of events, then the frames used by the media can indicate how they

fulfilled this function. Moreover, using certain types of frames can also indicate the level of freedom of the media. Because applying the second implication of freedom, “freedom *to* achieve something,” and if achieving something means balanced coverage and promoting public debates about the event, then using a certain frame is a valid indicator of media freedom. By using the responsibility and conflict frames in their coverage, as well as the economic frame, Georgian newspapers demonstrated that they are not under the government’s control, since they did not predominantly use the frame most favorable to the government. This means the newspapers have at least some level of “freedom *from*.” In addition, by denying the economic consequences frame as a major one and using the responsibility and conflict frames, the newspapers relied on their freedom to achieve balanced coverage of the event and promote public debates. In other words, they showed disagreement with the government’s standpoint, while not squelching it entirely, offered various other possible frames and implications to the event, possibly triggering public debates.

Even though they demonstrated a certain level of freedom, does this mean that the newspapers in Georgia are free? The case of government investigating the TV company for economic violations threatened the future of the newspapers, too. Potentially, each of them could be in a similar situation as the TV company. The behavior of the newspapers, while not accepting the governmental frame, also could be motivated by the idea that the government threatened the freedom of a media outlet. It might mean that the newspapers defended the media freedom as their own self-interest but not as a concept and social value. The newspapers played a watchdog role and practiced a certain level of freedom when their own interest was involved. It is the subject of further research to identify how

the Georgian media perceive the concept of freedom when it stands beyond their own interest.

The findings from the source coding indicate that the newspapers primarily relied on governmental sources. It can be implied that the newspapers did not seek to find balance in presenting sources; however, the unbalanced presentation of sources may have other explanations as well. One party to the event, the TV station, had a limited number of employees authorized to present company's official point of view. On the other hand, many more political actors were involved in the event. The newspapers quoted politicians representing the establishment party and multiple opposition parties as well. Since the event between the government and the TV station turned into a conflict between the political parties, the newspapers tried to achieve balance by using as sources representatives of various political parties. Moreover, the large number of anti-government statements by government officials indicates that newspapers tended to quote more representatives of opposition parties than representatives of the establishment. The situation in Georgian politics was changing rapidly in those days and it was difficult to define who represented the establishment and who represented the opposition. The large number of anti-government statements indicates that newspapers primarily relied on sources criticizing the government.

It is important to emphasize some observations on ethical and stylistic norms in the Georgian press that will help to better understand the findings of the last research question. The most obvious ethical or stylistic deviation was the mixture of facts and opinions. Paragraphs presenting the facts were often followed by the personal opinion of the journalist and vice versa. For example: "Two ministers resigned yesterday but

perhaps it does not mean that they will give up their power” (daily *Alia*, November 7, 2001). Another example: “On October 31 employees of *Rustavi 2* did not let the national security agents in the office. Of course they should not do so” (daily *Rezonansi*, November 2, 2001).

The frequent changes of styles within the single article and lack of consistency made the articles chaotic. This kind of article and the newspapers in general make it hard for readers to understand. Chaos and inconsistency made the newspapers’ messages unclear to the public. Often, the newspaper articles seemed to be aimed not for a wide audience but for people with special knowledge of Georgian politics. For example one of the articles from the daily *Rezonansi*, November 3, 2001 said: “Yesterday during the meeting of the cabinet of the ministers, one of the ministers said to another that he was responsible for the current events.” The author never in the article named either minister, assuming most of the people who knew the situation would realize who told what to whom. Furthermore, there are no common ethical or professional norms among Georgian journalists. Stories are often built along the journalist’s emotional curve, not by any commonly accepted standard. That is one reason why the key words and thematic clusters appear in the stories not only while quoting the sources, but also in journalists’ narrations, which means Georgian journalists did not hesitate to use the words or phrases indicating their bias toward one of the sides of the conflict. For example, this appeared in the daily *Akhali Taoba*, November 4: “The brutal invasion of *Rustavi 2* was an attempt by the government to close down not only the TV company but to devastate the freedom of expression and the free press in all.... This government should resign with all its

members.” This part contains three anti-government thematic clusters used not by a source but by the journalist, which certainly indicates bias.

However, it is still very significant that of 10 thematic clusters, the five most frequently used were anti-government phrases. “Invasion of TV company” was the most frequently used thematic cluster, which indicates a negative attitude by journalists to the government’s action. Such frequent use of an anti-government phrase without any ambiguity points out that the newspapers did not even try to maintain balance between the two sides. Even though the journalists also tried to present the government’s point of view, describing the government visits to the TV company’s office as “legal action,” or TV company’s protest as “illegal resistance,” the newspapers’ frequent use of “invasion of TV company” and other anti-government phrases indicates the newspapers’ pro-media bias. The most frequently used pro-governmental cluster was “manipulated people.” It refers to the idea that those protesting for the TV station would not do so on their own. Since protesting for the TV station already meant being anti-government, the phrase “manipulated people” refers to the people who were provoked to protest against the government by opposition political parties, but not by their own will. Using this phrase while quoting establishment sources, and in their own narrations, journalists demonstrated disbelief in public understanding of concepts of press freedom and in public support of a free media.

It is also interesting that for more than 10 days almost the entire country was involved in the event, yet only 25% of the stories appeared on the front pages of the newspapers. Editors may have avoided placing more than one story about the government and TV station on the front page for different reasons. If we assume that placing the story

on the front page raises the salience of the issue in public opinion, it can be inferred that the newspapers did not really seek to do so; in other words, the newspapers downplayed the role of the public. They did not seek to raise the salience of the event in public opinion. This shows that the press still may not think of freedom of speech and the press as extending beyond narrow media interests, extending to the entire public.

CONCLUSION

The behavior of Georgian newspapers may be characterized as a fight for freedom *from*, but it barely demonstrates an understanding of freedom *for*. In this study, freedom is defined as a combination of “freedom from” and “freedom for.” It can be implied that the Georgian media are ready to defend their freedom from external restraints, but they are weakly equipped with an understanding of how to achieve freedom *for*. The media regarded freedom in concrete terms, and the issue of freedom became actual for them when it came to their own welfare. They acted as if this was a struggle for their own self-interest, not a struggle for a universal principle that would benefit society as a whole.

The Georgian newspapers failed to fulfill their primary function: to conduct full and thorough discourse in the society. Low circulation may be one reason for this, with the average circulation of daily papers being 8, 000. Low circulation prevents the newspapers from reaching a broad audience and representing multiple opinions from various parts of the society. The perception of journalists that politics is the primary, if not the only, news source may be related to low circulation. If journalists see their primary readers as political insiders, journalists may be inclined to write for that audience rather than the broader audience of the general public. A lack of social-issue reporting is one of the greatest flaws of Georgian journalism. Predominant orientation to politics makes the newspapers, and all the media, distant from the public.

The frequent use of governmental sources while covering the government and the TV station event indicates that the newspapers are a tool for politicians to express themselves. The newspapers are open to politicians and their speeches, and the same politicians and those in circles close to them are the primary readers of the newspapers.

As for the public, their protest of the abuse of media freedom demonstrated that freedom of the press and other civil liberties are respected values in this society. People who never protested poor economic conditions did so when it came to defense of the freedom of the press. The recent “velvet revolution” in which the president of Georgia was forced to resign is another example of that; because the public protested the government’s disregard for the people’s right to vote and choose their own leaders. The behavior of the media during the recent events in Georgia may be a subject for further research. If, two years later, the media shows a change in the way they framed a related event, it may mark a more positive outlook for the future of press freedom in Georgia, as well as individual freedom for all.

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APPENDIX 1
CODING SHEET

Coder: Nico Guga

Newspaper (1) Akhali Taoba (2) Alia (3) Rezonansi (4) Akhali Versia

Date: _____ Headline: _____

Story Placement (1) Front (2) Inside

Length of the story in paragraphs: _____

SOURCES (Count each source only once; count the number of each kind of statements)

Government Officials _____

Pro-government statements: _____

Anti-govt. statements: _____

Neutral statements: _____

TV station officials _____

Pro-TV statements: _____

Anti-TV statements: _____

Neutral statements: _____

Other _____

Pro-government statements: _____

Anti-govt. statements: _____

Pro-TV statements: _____

Anti-TV statements: _____

Neutral statements: _____

KEY WORDS & position

(Count number of times each keyword appears)

Pro-Government:

Revolutionaries: In Title: Yes No In Lead: Yes No

Other : _____

Manipulated People: In Title: Yes No In Lead: Yes No

Other : _____

Legal Action: In Title: Yes No In Lead: Yes No

Other : _____

Illegal Resistance: In Title: Yes No In Lead: Yes No

Other : _____

Attempted Coup: In Title: Yes No In Lead: Yes No

Other : _____

Pro-Media

Invasion in TV Company: In Title: Yes No In Lead: Yes No

Other : _____

Suppression of Civil Rights: In Title: Yes No In Lead: Yes No

Other : _____

Freedom Fighters: In Title: Yes No In Lead: Yes No

Other : _____

Threat to Freedom of Expression: In Title: Yes No In Lead: Yes No

Other : _____

Necessity for the government resignation: In Title: Yes No In Lead: Yes No

Other : _____

Frames (count the number of paragraphs of each)

Responsibility _____

Conflict _____

Economic Consequences _____

Morality _____

APPENDIX 2

CODING BOOK

1. Newspaper -- Select which newspapers the material was published in.
2. Placement -- Select one of the categories based upon where the article appears: front page or inside.
3. Length of the unit in paragraphs

Count the number of paragraphs the article consists of.

4. Sources

Select one from the list that applies (give number of each; count each source only once):

- a) Government officials: the individuals, who represent any governmental institution, or represent any political party. The individuals who were directly involved in conflict, or, represent the government institution directly involved in conflict, or any other official advocating the action of Ministry of National Security. Example: the special agent of National Security who take part in attempt to get economic documentation from the TV company, or, the minister of National Security, or, the representative of State Chancellery. individuals who represent the ruling party, or other interest groups officially support the government. Example: members of parliament representing the majority, and representatives of business sector having strong lobby in government.

Indicate valence of each statement. A source can and probably will make more than one statement in each story, so number of sources and number of

statements will not be the same. A statement can be an entire paragraph, a sentence or an independent clause – the key is that each statement contains one discreet idea. So, if a paragraph says something like “The government went about this in the wrong way, but the TV station compounded the problem,” that would contain 2 discreet ideas or statements, each in an independent clause, even though it is only one sentence. Code the first as negative-government and the second as positive-government (anti-TV station, so pro-government). Valence is defined as positive, negative, neutral – whether their statement about the government was pro-government (positive), anti-government (negative) or neutral towards the government. If a government official makes statements against the TV station, then that is implied to be pro-government.

b) TV station officials and employees: individuals who represent the managerial staff of *Rustavi 2*, or journalists of the TV company, or any other employees of the company.

Indicate valence of each statement: positive, negative, neutral. Same as above.

c) Other: students, citizens, or any other people not clearly in the above two categories.

Indicate valence of each statement: positive, negative, neutral.

5. Key words and key terms and their position in articles.

Select one of the categories where the particular key word or key term was used. The key words and key terms indicate either pro-governmental or

pro-media frame. Their position either in title of article, either in lead, or in body enforces the importance of a particular frame.

Pro Governmental key terms:

a) “revolutionaries”

This word in materials bears the indication that resistance to the government decision inherently means to be a revolutionary. The word is used to describe the TV staff as well as the TV company public supporters.

Example: “One can only guess what these new type of revolutionaries can contribute to our society.”

b) “manipulated people”

This term is often used for blaming certain politicians in manipulating public to protest government and therefore emphasize the weakness of public opinion.

Example: “This might be the theme of separate investigation to bring in light who manipulates protesting people in front of the parliament building.”

c) “legal action”

The term is often used for justification the authorities action against the TV company.

Example: “There is no reason to doubt that what was done by the National Security agents was a legal action”.

d) “illegal resistance”

This term is used to describe that TV company staff had no legal right to resist the national security agents practice their duties in the office of the company.

Example: “Upon entering the *Rustavi 2*’s office the National Security agents faced absolutely illegal resistance.”

e) “attempted coup”

This term is rather used by the representatives of the government while asked for opinion, who tried to claim that all the street protest and involvement of opposition politicians in the processes was an attempted coup.

Example: “Disorders and demands of the public and certain politicians is nothing else than attempted coup.”

Pro Media key terms:

a) “invasion in TV company”

This certainly the most common pro-media key word.

Example: “Agents of the National Security literary invaded the office of television.”

b) “suppress of civil rights”

Many journalists try to generalize the case and give the meaning to the government action that this was not only against the particular TV company, but attempt to suppress the civil rights in Georgia.

Example: “This is another example for ongoing suppress of basic civil rights in our country.”

4) “freedom fighters”

This term indicates that protesters were considered as defenders of freedom of expression.

Example: “The people in front of the parliament building are freedom fighters because they defend one of the highest values of our society as freedom of press is.”

5) “threat to freedom of expression”

By many people freedom of expression is considered one of the few (and sometimes the only) achievement of the Georgian society in the last decade. Many publications expressed the fear that this event threatened the achievement.

Example: “The experience of other countries shows that such conflicts make a total threat not only to particular media outlet, but to freedom of expression in general.”

6) “necessity for the government resignation”

This term is mostly used by different sources evaluating the events after the conflict. This term stresses high responsibility of the government in the conflict.

Example: “After committing the mistake and insulting the whole society this government has nothing left to do but to resign. ”

6. Frames

Besides the key words and key terms the context of particular paragraph of the article might indicate a certain frame. Therefore, the unit of analysis should be each paragraph of the articles. Select one of the following categories: responsibility frame, conflict frame, economic consequences frame, and morality frame.

Responsibility frame: Places blame or attributes cause. Portrays an issue or problem in a way that attributes responsibility for its cause to government, individuals, or interest groups

Example for the responsibility frame: “The results of the conflict are: chaos in parliament, chaos in the streets, and chaos in the society. All because somebody hides the documentation.”

Conflict frame: stresses conflict or disagreement between individuals, institutions or different groups, and the government to capture the audience interest.

Example for the conflict frame: “Presently it is clear: there is no dialogue between the government and the public. At least the part of the public which protests the government’s action. We are on different sides without a bridge in between.”

Economic consequences frame: pictures an event, problem or issue focusing on the economic impact, which it might have on an individual, group, institution, region, or country

Example for the economic consequences frame: “What is clear for now is that this chaos will not bring unreleased salaries and pensions. Whatever happens in coming days, will not serve to the improvement of poverty in Georgia.”

Morality frame: highlights an event, problem or an issue from moral or even religious perspectives. Because of the professional standards of ethics and objectivity, journalists often have someone else raise a particular issue. If journalists use the views of interested sides to raise a particular question, it means they indirectly refer to morality frame.

Example of the morality frame: “Our government never feels any responsibility to the society’s needs and interests. However we have a government which we deserve.”

VITA

George Sulkhanishvili was born on October 11, 1973, Tbilisi, Republic of Georgia. In 1990 he entered the Tbilisi State University, Department of Linguistics. After graduation in 1996 George Sulkhanishvili started to work at Open Society Georgia Foundation as a mass media program coordinator. Within the period of 1996-2000 while being a media program coordinator he co-developed and co-implemented various projects aimed to support the newly emerged independent Georgian media. From 1998 to 2002 George Sulkhanishvili was a member of public diplomacy and participated in various projects, which aimed to resolve conflicts in the Caucasus region. In 2001 he started to work at the United States Peace Corps as a cross-cultural coordinator. In March of 2002 he was selected as a teaching assistant at the Caucasus School of Journalism and Media Management. The same year he received a scholarship from International Center of Journalists for earning a master's degree in mass communication at Louisiana State University. Currently he is a candidate for the Master degree of mass communication.