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## **PR AND MEDIA COVERAGE OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN UZBEKISTAN**

Мақолада Ўзбекистондаги мавжуд тўртта сиёсий партиянинг жамоатчилик билан алоқалари ва бунинг матбуотда ёритилиши таҳлил этилган. Сиёсий партияларнинг аудитория билан матбуот воситасидаги коммуникацияси республикадаги ўнта умуммиллий газеталар – “Ўзбекистон овози”, “XXI аср”, “Миллий тикланиш”, “Адолат”, “Халқ сўзи”, “Народное слово”, “Правда Востока”, “Хуррият”, “Моҳият” ва “Жамият” мисолида очиб берилган. Мазкур газеталарнинг 2010–2015 йиллардаги сонлари уларда чоп этилган материаллар сони, қайси саҳифада чоп этилганлиги, ҳажми, жойлаштирилиши, муаллифлар ёндашуви нуқтаи назаридан (ижобий, нейтралёкисалбий) ўрганилган.

В статье дается описательный анализ ПР и освещение политических партий в Узбекистане. Рассмотрен медиа-канал коммуникации политических партий на примере десяти общенациональных газет республики, таких как “Ўзбекистон овози”, “XXI аср”, “Миллий тикланиш”, “Адолат”, “Халқ сўзи”, “Народное слово”, “Правда Востока”, “Хуррият”, “Моҳият” и “Жамият”. Анализируются все материалы, опубликованные с 2010 до 2015 г. с точки зрения количества, положения в номере, объема и подхода авторов (положительного, нейтрального или негативного).

This article gives descriptive analysis of PR and media coverage of political parties in Uzbekistan. The paper explores media channel of communication of four political parties in the country and their media coverage received from the year 2010 to 2015. Ten Uzbek nationwide newspapers – O'zbekiston Ovozi, XXI asr, Milliy Tiklanish, Adolat, Xalq So'zi, Narodnoe Slovo, Pravda Vostoka, Hurriyat, Mohiyat and Jamiyat were studied and evaluated by its amount of stories, prominence and valence.

**Калит сўзлар:** ОАВ, паблик рилейшнз, медиа-канал, газета, сиёсий партия.

**Ключевые слова:** СМИ, паблик рилейшнз, медиаканал, газета, политическая партия.

**Key words:** mass media, public relations, media-channel, newspaper, political party.

Mass media and journalists play an essential role in shaping public opinion by connecting events occurring in the world with the images of these events in people's minds. Since most people lack direct experiences with an event their opinions on some subjects are mainly based on the information they received from [www.journal.fledu.uz](http://www.journal.fledu.uz)

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the mass media. As pointed out by W.Lippman, events regarding public affairs would be out of reach, out of sight, out of mind for citizens if the media happen not to cover them(1). Later McCombs and Shaw published their study on agenda-setting role of mass media in 1972(2). According this theory, editors and journalists enjoy considerable freedom in deciding what is newsworthy and what is not, and these choices affect the perception of citizens about different issues in the world. Since then various studies have tested the idea that there is a strong correlation between the amount of coverage certain issues receive and the importance attributed to these issues by mass audiences. That is why public relation services of different organizations and governmental structures pay a great attention to partnership with mass media. For PR services mass media is one of the main channels of communicating with audience.

According to the definition given by The Chartered Institute of Public Relations in Great Britain "Public Relations is about reputation - the result of what you do, what you say and what others say about you. Public Relations is the discipline, which looks after reputation, with the aim of earning understanding and support and influencing opinion and behavior. It is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its publics" (3).

In 2012 PRSA defines it as following: **“Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics”**(4).

American scholars Cutlip, Center and Broom say “public relations is the management function that identifies, establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and its publics upon whom its success depends”(5, 6).

According to Frank Jefkins, a British author “public relations consists of all forms of planned communication both inward and outward between an organisation and its publics for the purpose of achieving objectives concerning mutual understanding” (6,3).

PR uses a lot of channels to communicate with public. PR has media (TV, radio, newspaper, magazine, web-sites, direct mailing, media pamphlets, booklets, posters) and non-media channels (meetings, briefings, conference, seminar-trainings, exhibitions) of communicating with public. Media channels are divided to earned media (coverage generated through editorial), owned media (own publication, broadcast or website) and bought media (advertisement). Achieving effective communication with public depends on selecting effective methods of communication. Every channel has its advantages and disadvantages. PR-man should choose right method of delivery messages to address various audiences.

In this article the media channel of Uzbek political parties' public relations service is described, i.e. 4 political parties in Uzbekistan are researched in media coverage level of PR The years from 2010 to 2014 were covered.

All 3 kinds of newspaper media channels are studied:

a) Number of publications in earned media (Xalq so'zi, Narodnoe slovo, Pravda Vostoka, Hurriyat, Mohiyat, Jamiyat Newspapers).

b) Number of publications in owned media (Uzbekiston ovozi, XXI asr, Milliy Tiklanish and Adolat Newspapers).

c) Number of publications in bought media (advertisement posters in all above mentioned newspapers).

The media's coverage is analyzed in terms of the amount, prominence and valence of the coverage. Ten major Uzbek newspapers were taken as object of the research. Six of them are central nationwide newspapers: Xalq so'zi, Narodnoe slovo, Pravda Vostoka, Hurriyat, Mohiyat, Jamiyat; and four of them are political parties' owned newspapers: Uzbekiston ovozi, XXI asr, Milliy Tiklanish and Adolat (nationwide as well). Only stories with strong and direct connections with the political parties in those newspapers were included in the dataset. The articles were browsed from the newspapers' web-sites, and the ones which missed from the web-sites were taken from editorial offices' electronic database (PDF or PageMaker versions). And it should be noted that not all articles with strong and direct connections with the political parties were taken for the research due to the problem of getting their electronic versions from newspapers' web-sites and editorial offices. Some articles and editions of the newspapers missed both in the newspapers' web-sites and in the editorial offices' database. Altogether, 8261 stories about political parties were picked up from the 10 newspapers. Table 1 reflects the amount stories about political parties in each newspaper in each year.

Table 1. The media coverage of all parties in each year

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total
Hurriyat	8	5	2	6	15	36
Mohiyat	22	14	5	4	23	68
Pravda Vostoka	17	16	13	9	56	111
Narodnoe slovo	27	34	17	44	70	192
Xalq so'zi	42	33	21	43	72	211
Jamiyat	50	156	82	35	149	472

XXI asr	268	345	301	261	308	1483
Milliy tiklanish	266	301	388	412	490	1857
O'zbekiston ovozi	257	268	462	378	540	1905
Adolat	224	363	343	459	537	1926
Total	1181	1535	1634	1651	2260	8261

But some of the articles were about just one political party, some of them about two or three parties, and some of them about all four political parties in Uzbekistan. That's why the stories which are about several parties were attributed for each of the political party. Overall, Liberal Democratic Party of Uzbekistan were written about in 2196 stories, Milliy Tiklanish Democratic Party in 2435 stories, People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan in 2533 and Adolat Social Democratic Party in 2578 stories in five years.

Since political parties are the unit of analysis, each political party was coded for the amount, prominence and valence of coverage it receives in the media.

The amount of coverage was measured by counting the total number of news articles about a given party in the ten newspapers.

Prominence of each story was calculated by multiplying the length of the article (total number of words an article contains) with its placement, which is defined as the page on which an article appears, with front page coded as 2, and any other page as 1.

Valence was measured on how the depiction of a party appears to common people. Positive is coded as 3, neutral as 2 and negative as 1. Positive news associates a party with progress. For example, an event organized by any branch of a party, any activity or speech of a party member or a fraction's member on some issues, praise or support of a party's policy is regarded as positive. When a story associates the party with weakness, inefficiency, it is coded as negative. For example, weak organization, a person's opinion against a party's policy was coded as negative. Stories that is balanced between positive and negative sides, or hard to determine its valence fall into the neutral category. The coverage of both strong and weak local branches of a party in the same story was usually coded as neutral.

Besides the researcher, an experienced journalist devotes did all the coding. About 10 percent of the articles were first coded by both coders to assure the intercoder reliability, to check the researcher's fairness and the rest done by the researcher. Calculated by the software Stata the intercoder reliability for valence is .89 according to the Pearson correlation coefficient.

Descriptive statistics for media coverage variables.

Table 2. Media coverage of Adolat Social Democratic Party by Uzbek media.

Adolat	amount	valence	prominence
2010	335	944	2459180
2011	484	1359	3331266
2012	472	1259	3441328
2013	573	1679	3946792
2014	714	2075	5758633
Mean	515.6	1463.2	3787439.8
St. Dev.	139.80	430.99	1225067.12

Table 3. Media coverage of UzLiDeP by Uzbek media

UzLiDeP	amount	valence	prominence
2010	404	1123	2711511
2011	483	1346	2979329
2012	451	1199	3257642
2013	376	1109	2493569
2014	482	1395	3327859
Mean	439.2	1234.4	2953982
St. Dev.	47.76	130.03	354756.32

Table 4. Media coverage of MT DP by Uzbek media

MT DP	amount	valence	prominence
2010	372	1060	2639878
2011	406	1163	2623527
2012	482	1367	3448062
2013	521	1528	4633078
2014	654	1885	5615106
Mean	487	1400.6	3791930.2
St. Dev.	110.52	325.75	1307873.78

Table 5. Media coverage of People's Democratic Party by Uzbek media

PDP	amount	valence	prominence
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2010	361	988	2613520
2011	411	1153	2909481
2012	584	1610	3843295
2013	473	1392	3734282
2014	704	2047	5665303
Mean	506.6	1438	3753176.2
St. Dev.	138.23	414.22	1191149.14

If to compare the numbers above, Adolat SDP is leading in amount and valence aspects of media coverage among other political parties. An average 515 articles were published in one year about Adolat Social Democratic Party in the ten newspapers. And this party is leading in valence aspect too (mean=1463) according to the score it gathered, that means it received more positive coverage in media than other parties.

But by the prominence aspect Milliy Tiklanish DP is leading among other political parties (mean=3791930.2). MTDP gathered the most biggest score for its prominence, that is the placement and length factor. The more articles about Milliy tiklanish DP were published in the front page and with longer length than about other political parties.

Most articles are placed in any other page rather than front. During five years 37.20 percent of all articles about UzLiDeP was placed in the front pages. 41.70 percent of all articles about Adolat SDP, 39.06 percent of all articles about MTDP was placed in the front pages. Only articles about PDP mostly were published in front pages (57.56 percent).

The overall tone of media's coverage of political parties is leaned to the positive side. Out of 2578 articles about Adolat SDP only 69 are negative (2.68 %), 280 are neutral (10.86 %) in five years. Out of 2196 articles about UzLidep only 116 are negative (5.28%), 184 are neutral (8.38). Out of 2435 articles about Milliy tiklanish DP only 58 are negative (2.38 %), 186 are neutral (7.64%). Out of 2533 articles about PDP party only 115 are negative (4.54%), 179 are neutral (7.07 %).

So, in the result of descriptive analyzes of media coverage on political parties in Uzbekistan, we came to the conclusion that the level of media coverage of political parties is increasing year by year in Uzbekistan. And it is leaned to be mostly positive in all ten newspapers. Most articles are placed in any other page rather than front. Newspapers owned by political parties covered political parties much more than other newspapers. But if not to take these 4 political parties' newspapers into account, Jamiyat Newspaper covered the political parties most of all other earned newspapers. Hurriyat and Mohiyat Newspapers covered political parties the least of all other newspapers.

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