



مركز القاهرة لدراسات حقوق الإنسان

Media Monitoring Program for the 2010 Parliamentary Election

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Introduction

Media plays a major role in keeping citizens abreast of current events and raising awareness of various issues in any society. It also has an extremely significant role in influencing the public's views and way of thinking. Media is the primary means through which public opinion is shaped and at times manipulated. If this is the media's role under normal situations, then it is logical to believe that its role becomes even more vital during exceptional periods. The electoral period is one of the most important periods in which media is a primary player. Elections constitute a real challenge to media, putting its impartiality and objectivity to the test. The task of media is not and should not be limited to providing a channel for promoting any governmental body or candidate. This is especially the case for state-owned media. Its main role should be to enlighten and educate public opinion and act as a free and neutral platform for debate and presentation of all points of view.

This first phase report presents the preliminary findings of media monitoring of Egyptian private and state owned media in its coverage of the 2010 parliamentary elections. It includes quantitative and qualitative analysis of the performance of eight TELEVISION channels (CH1, CH2, Nile News, Mehwar, Dream 2, ONTELEVISION, Haya1, and Faraeen) and 16 daily and weekly newspapers (Ahram, Ahram al-Masa'i, Akhbar, Gomhouriya, Rozal-Youssef, Nahdat Masr, Masry Al Youm, Dostour, Shorouk, Al-Usuba, Watani, Youm7, Fagr, RozalYoussef weekly, Musawer Magazine, and Sawt al-Umma) during the period from 28 October to closing the candidate application phase on 7 November.

The findings of the first phase of media monitoring show the impact of the unprecedented pressures put on press and visual media during the months preceding this election, which created a climate of fear and panic among non state-owned media. This is especially the case after the closure of 12 television channels, warnings were directed to other channels, controversial political programs were cancelled and those responsible for them removed, and the sacking channels of editor in chief of the most critical independent paper.

The report's most significant findings are as follows:

1. Most of the visual media is biased toward the National Democratic Party (NDP) and its candidates (the NDP received 54% of airtime devoted to political parties). It also seems clear that state owned media has adopted the quasi-official line that the Wafd party will be the second largest party in the new parliament. Together, the NDP and the Wafd party were given 94% of the coverage devoted to political parties on CH1 (61% and 33% respectively). At the same time, the Muslim Brotherhood was devoted only 11 seconds of coverage.
2. Although the NDP filed a complaint against Dream 2, alleging bias in an episode of "Ashira Masa'an," (10 PM) a review of Dream 2's coverage indicates that it one of the largest channels interested by the NDP, even in comparison with state-owned TELEVISION channels. The NDP was given 70% of the channel's airtime devoted to political parties.
3. ONTELEVISION is found to be the one with the most balanced coverage of political parties. This might partially explain why it received two warnings, despite the official cause of the warnings.
4. The Wafd Party received the greatest share of coverage on Haya Channel, owned by the head of the party himself. The amount of coverage on this station was not significantly greater than that on the state-owned CH1.
5. The same pro-NDP bias was evident in the press, where it was the subject of 52.6% of all election coverage. It was followed by the Muslim Brotherhood, which received 12% of the coverage. This indicates that press suffering from less pressure than television, which has a higher penetration rate as it can reach even the illiterate citizen.
6. The state-owned Akhbar Newspaper exhibited the most bias toward the NDP, with 79 % of its election coverage devoted to the party, followed by the independent Sawt al-Umma with 73 %, although most of the coverage was critical of the NDP. The state-owned Gomhouriya was the least critical of the NDP, with only 2 % of its coverage criticizing the party.

7. Press coverage of all political parties, including the NDP, was generally uncritical. Sixty % of the coverage of the independent Shorouk Newspaper was impartial.

It is thus important to monitor media performance during elections with regards its coverage of both candidates and political parties. This is not the first media-monitoring project undertaken by the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS). We had previously monitored media during the 2005 parliamentary and presidential elections. At that time it was a pioneering experience in Egypt, which produced material for all those interested in media development and performance. Most importantly, this experience provided the cornerstone allowing us to see media today in comparison with five years ago.

The project this time comes as part of the “Independent Coalition for Elections’ Observation”, which is composed of three organizations. These are the Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement (EACPE), Nazra Association for Feminist Studies, and CIHRS. EACPE is providing field monitors for all stages of the parliamentary elections, while CHIRS is focusing on media monitoring and Nazra is monitoring gender and women as voters and candidates.

Quantitative analysis

I. Television coverage

Contrary to expectations that elections would dominate television coverage, the reality came quite different. Indeed, the generally sparse amount of time devoted to coverage of parliamentary elections is one of the major findings of our survey of eight terrestrial and satellite channels over an 11-day period. A total of 25 hours were devoted to elections, with an average of 2.3 hours daily distributed amongst the eight channels.

Notably, more than one-third of this coverage (35 % or about nine hours) came from the private satellite channel, ONTELEVISION. This is more than double the time of the channel offering the second highest rate of coverage, Dream 2, also a private satellite channel, which devoted 4.1 hours to elections. Next was the private satellite channel Fardeen, with 3.9 hours, followed by CH 1, a terrestrial channel, with 2.2 hours, Mehwar, a private satellite channel, with 1.8 hours, Haya, a private satellite channel, with 1.7 hours, CH 2, a terrestrial channel, with 1.3 hours, and finally Nile News, with 1.2 hours of election coverage. It was expected that the latter, as a news channel, would rank much higher on the list.

As evidenced by these findings, the parliamentary elections did not incite the interest of governmental channels as much as it did for private satellite channels. The three government channels, among them one devoted specifically to news, only allotted 4.7 hours to election coverage in the period under review, or only 19 % of the total election coverage. In contrast, one private satellite channel, ONTELEVISION, gave nearly double this amount of airtime to elections.

Regarding the share of various governorates in the overall coverage, airtime was split. Notably, Cairo did not receive most coverage, but was overshadowed by a significant margin by Daqahliya, which received about 90 minutes of airtime devoted to election coverage. This was followed by Cairo with 38 minutes; Sixth of October with 30 minutes, and Helwan with 22 minutes. Several governorates received no television coverage at all, among them South Sinai, the New Valley, Ismailiya, and

Beni Soueif. The largest portion of airtime was devoted to coverage of elections and political actors without reference to governorate, which is understandable in the period preceding election campaigning.

Regarding the distribution of airtime among various types of candidates, coverage was highly unbalanced. Candidates affiliated to political parties received 358 minutes of airtime (24 % of the total television time), although they represent the smallest segment of candidates. In contrast, independent candidates, whose numbers are far greater, received 147 minutes of airtime (about 10% of total coverage). Candidates running on the women's quota received 697 minutes of coverage (46.5%), although they constitute only 7% of candidates. Candidates whose political affiliation was as yet unclear received 444 minutes of airtime (30%).

As for political parties and forces, the NDP and its candidates received the lion's share of the coverage, with 777 minutes (54% of the total airtime) devoted specifically to political parties. All other parties received the remaining 46% of airtime, led by the Wafd Party, which received 308 minutes of coverage (24%). The Wafd Party was trailed by the Muslim Brotherhood, with 154 minutes of airtime (10.7%); the Ghad Party (Mousa and Nour), with 43 minutes of airtime (3%); the Ahrar Party, with 19 minutes (1.3%); and the Tagammu Party, with 18 minutes (about 1.2 %).

Turning to each channel's coverage, the NDP received 84 minutes of CH1's direct coverage of political parties (61%), and none of this was negative coverage. The Wafd Party received 45 minutes (about 33%), with only 3.5% of it being negative. That is, the NDP and Wafd Party combined received 94% of the total time devoted to political parties on CH1, in coverage that was almost entirely lacking any critical viewpoint. The other parties received only 6% of the airtime, with the Muslim Brotherhood receiving only 11 seconds, virtually all of it unbiased.

On Mehwar the NDP received 80 minutes of airtime (about 49% of the total coverage of parties), and only 2.4% of this was negative. The Wafd Party followed with 56 minutes of airtime (about 35%), with only 7.3 % of which was negative.

Altogether, the NDP and Wafd received 84 % of the airtime devoted to political parties on Mehwar. The Muslim Brotherhood received two minutes of coverage (1.2%) and 30 seconds of this (25%) was negative.

Dream 2 devoted 183 minutes (70% of the total direct coverage of political parties) to the NDP, most of which (64%) was negative. The Wafd received 67 minutes of airtime (26%), with only 2 % of this negative. Together, the NDP and the Wafd received 96 % of the airtime devoted directly to parties on Dream 2. The Muslim Brotherhood received 3.5 minutes of coverage, or about 1.4 % of the total, 58 % of which was negative.

The NDP received 61 % of the airtime devoted to parties on CH 2 and Faraeen, although the coverage on CH2 was entirely positive, whereas 9.3 % of Faraeen's coverage of the NDP was negative. The NDP also received 51 % of the airtime on Haya, with only 5 % of it negative coverage.

The NDP received the least airtime on ONTELEVISION, taking 39 % of the coverage, 14 % of which was negative. The Muslim Brotherhood received 30 % of the airtime, with 67 % of this negative, while the Wafd Party received 17 % of the coverage, with 11 % of it negative. As such, ONTELEVISION was the most balanced in its coverage of political parties in terms of the distribution of airtime. The Muslim Brotherhood also received the largest share of coverage on ONTELEVISION, although most of it was negative. The Wafd Party received the greatest amount of coverage on Haya, taking 39 % of the time devoted directly to parties, and only 1 % of this was negative. The Muslim Brotherhood received 4.7 % of the time on Haya, with 20 % of the coverage negative.

To round up the picture, we must consider the nature of the coverage offered by these channels. Overall, television coverage of various candidates and political forces was largely impartial. Some 51 % of the election coverage was positive, 30 % was impartial, and 18 % was negative. The most impartial coverage of candidates and political forces appeared on Haya, with 47 % of its total election coverage unbiased, followed by ONTELEVISION with 46 % and Channel 2 with 38 %. The Mehwar channel offered the least impartial coverage, with only 10 % of airtime unbiased, followed by Faraeen and Dream 2 with 14 % of respectively. Dream 2 offered the

most negative coverage, with it taking up 44 % of the airtime devoted to elections, followed by ONTELEVISION with 24 %. Nile News offered no negative coverage at all. Finally, al-Mehwar offered the most positive coverage—80 % of its airtime on elections—followed by Fardeen, CH1, and Nile News. The least positive coverage came from ONTELEVISION, with only 30 % of its election coverage classified as positive.

II. Press coverage

The status of the press, in terms of the space available, its qualifications, and its diversity, even within a single paper, allows it to cover major events like elections more professionally and objectively than television, although this does not rule out a degree of imbalance and lack of objectivity similar to television coverage. Indeed, some of the major trends—bias toward the NDP, for example—exist in the press as well, although to a lesser extent than television. The survey of the election coverage in 13 independent and national papers led to the following basic conclusions:

First, Egyptian press devoted substantial space to coverage of the elections—a total of 209,398 sq cm, the equivalent of 127 pages of a regular daily paper or about 11.5 pages a day. State owned newspapers led the way in terms of the amount of coverage, as more than half (55.7 %) of the total space was devoted to elections, compared to 44.3 % in the independent press. Gomhouriya led the list, with 14.8 % of the total press coverage of elections. It was followed by Akhbar with 13.6 %, Ahram al-Masai with 11.4 %, Ahram with 6.6 %, and RozalYoussef with 5.3 % in addition to 4% in RozalYoussef's weekly magazine. Among the independent press, Dostour accounted for 9.7 % of the total coverage, followed by Nahdat Masr with 8.5 %, Shorouk with 8 %, and Masry Al Youm and Sawt al-Umma with 6.5 % each. The papers with the least amount of election coverage were Watani with 2 % of the total and Al-Usuba with 3 %.

Second, regarding the distribution of coverage among various candidates and parties, the imbalances were striking. Independent candidates received less than a quarter (23.5 %) of the coverage devoted to candidates on party lists. In contrast to

television, female candidates competing for the women's seats received extremely scant coverage when compared to party and independent candidates—only 2 % of the coverage received by party candidates.

The imbalance is also clear when looking at the coverage each party received. The NDP leads by a substantial margin, garnering 52.6 % of the total election coverage in the press, 13 % of which was negative. It was followed by the Muslim Brotherhood with 12 % of the coverage, 38 % of which was negative (Here it is clear that press has much greater freedom to cover news of the Muslim Brotherhood than the television). Next came the Wafd Party with 7.2%, of which 8.7 % was negative, followed by the Tagammu with 2.6 %, of which 3 % was negative, and the Ghad Party with 1 %, of which 7.7 % was negative. The paper that devoted the most coverage to the NDP was Akhbar, which allotted 79 % of its election coverage to the party, only 3% of which was negative. It was followed by Sawt al-Umma, which devoted 73 % of its election coverage to the NDP, most of which (70.7 %) was negative, and Al-Usuba, which devoted 70 % of its coverage to the NDP, 5 % of which was negative. Ahram allotted 42 % of its coverage to the party, 4 % of which was negative. Rozal Youssef and Shorouk offered the least coverage of the NDP, with 32% and 35 % respectively, but only 3% of Rozal Youssef's coverage was negative, compared to 16.5 % in Shorouk. Gomhouriya offered the least negative coverage of the NDP, giving over only 2% for negative coverage. Some 4 % of Nahdat Masr's coverage of the NDP was negative, while 13 % of the NDP coverage in Masry Al Youm was.

Third, generally positive or impartial coverage was not the rule only for the NDP. Nearly all press election coverage can be characterized the same way with the exception of Sawt al-Umma, 61% of whose election coverage was negative. Watani was the least negative in its election coverage, with only 2 % of its coverage critical, followed by Akhbar, Gomhouriya, and al-Usuba with 5 % negative coverage. Among the national press, the daily Rozal Youssef was the most negative with 16 % of its coverage, followed by Ahram and Rozal Youssef magazine with 14 % each negative coverage.

The most impartial paper was Shorouk, with 60 % of its coverage unbiased. It was followed by al-Usuba (52 %), and Ahram and al-Dostor (50 % each). Sawt al-

Umma and Akhbar offered the least impartial coverage, with 22% and 25 % respectively. Among the national papers, Ahram offered the most impartial coverage, with 50 % of its total coverage unbiased, followed by Gomhouriya (45%) and then Akhbar being the least impartial.

The newspaper offering the most positive coverage was Akhbar, with 70 % of its election coverage positive, followed by Gomhouriya (50 %), Ahram al-Masai (47 %), Rozal Youssef magazine (46 %), Rozal Youssef newspaper (44 %), and Ahram (36 %). As indicated by the findings, the national papers offered generally more positive coverage of the elections than the independent press. Among the independent papers, al-Usbua offered the most positive coverage, with 43 % of its election content positive, followed by Masry Al Youm (42 %), Nahdat Masr (38 %), Watani (37 %), al-Dostor (32 %), Shorouk (29 %), and Sawt al-Umma (17 %).

Qualitative analysis

This section offers a qualitative measure looking at how media address certain issues, primarily with regards to raising awareness of voters and interest in women's issues. The qualitative analysis is important as it complements the quantitative analysis that relies on statistics, numbers, and graphs and clarifies our point of view on the performance of media in the electoral process and its surrounding events.

The preliminary findings of the qualitative analysis revealed that there was relatively weak interest in educating the voters, as evidenced by the lack of programs or space devoted to the issue. Virtually the entire media limited itself to points that came up incidentally during news coverage or discussions with guests and sources. Attempts to educate the voters were largely confined to discussions of the role of the Supreme Electoral Commission. Haya, for example, aired street segments that looked at people's views of participation in elections, showing the public's lack of faith in the results of elections. Another story illustrated the public's lack of knowledge of the management of elections. The channel devoted some time to educating voters on the importance and role of the Supreme Electoral Commission, its role, and how it performs it.

The parties and political forces that received the lion's share of the coverage were the NDP, followed by the Muslim Brotherhood and the Wafd Party. Television channels, state-owned press, and the private satellite Faraeen channel were all clearly biased toward the NDP and against the Muslim Brotherhood. For example, the director of the Faraeen channel used his appearance on his show to campaign for himself and the NDP. It also campaigned against the Muslim Brotherhood, offering negative coverage throughout the entire period under review. Faraeen and other state-owned media focused on conspiracies hatched by the Muslim Brotherhood, their extremism, and their ostensible danger to Egypt's security.

The bias was clearer in the press than in the visual media. The state-owned television channels exhibited bias toward the NDP in their selection of news coverage and their descriptions, but the lack of heavy election coverage in general, when compared to the press, made this bias less noticeable than in the press, which carried

more news of various candidates and political parties. All the state-owned papers, without exception, showed clear bias toward the NDP in terms of the amount of space devoted to the party and its assessments, as well as a strong bias against the Muslim Brotherhood. This bias was less apparent in privately owned newspapers and television channels. Some of these were biased toward the Wafd Party, for example, but this bias was not as marked as the state-owned press's bias for the NDP and against the Muslim Brotherhood. Ahram al-Masai, for example, carried a series of exposes discussing the history of the Muslim Brotherhood and their involvement in assassinations and political seditions.

The most prominent criticisms in the media were directed against the NDP and the Muslim Brotherhood. Critics of the NDP focused on the party's monopoly of power, fears of rigged election results to favor the party, and the security control that favors the party. Criticisms of the Muslim Brotherhood were grounded in the rejection of religious groups in general. The media, especially printed media and state-owned media, did not include space with countering arguments regarding criticisms of the Muslim Brotherhood to the criticisms directed against it.

It should be noted here that there is nothing wrong for a media outlet to adopt an editorial position. However, it is still important to present the opposing opinion so as to uphold the readers' or viewer's right to know and in defense of freedom of expression and media diversity, which is a basic means of raising awareness which is the important social role that any serious media can play.

Regarding women, the elections, and the new quota system, media did not devote sufficient coverage to presenting women as fundamental, active partners in Egyptian society and elections. Interest in women's issues was entirely focused on the quota system and did not seek to deepen voters' awareness of women's issues, their rights, and the role they may play by becoming partners in the political and electoral process. For example, on 27 October, ONTELEVISION described campaigns by female candidates as "men's-style campaigns," a description that is wholly incompatible with the very idea of equality. News of female candidates were also presented in the context of the NDP electoral slate without reference to female candidates from other parties.

In light of the Egyptian state's refusal to allow international monitoring of the elections as it considers it to be a breach of state sovereignty and the restrictions imposed on serious civil society organizations, especially those monitoring the elections, the findings of the qualitative analysis of media content confirms the lack of political will to permit independent bodies to monitor elections. Civil society was allotted some negative media coverage, but the most significant discussions regarding its role in elections was the issue of funding for those local organizations engaged in election monitoring. Some media outlets issued statements accusing civil society organizations of disloyalty and agency to foreign interests as they play the role of "the eyes and arms" for parties abroad. This indicates either the media's lack of awareness of the role of civil society or an intentional smearing of civil society groups before readers and viewers, both of which should be avoided by any serious media. Criticism is important and allows both government and civil society to correct its course, but accusations and wholesale smears of civil society cannot be considered professional conduct.

How do we monitor television and the press?

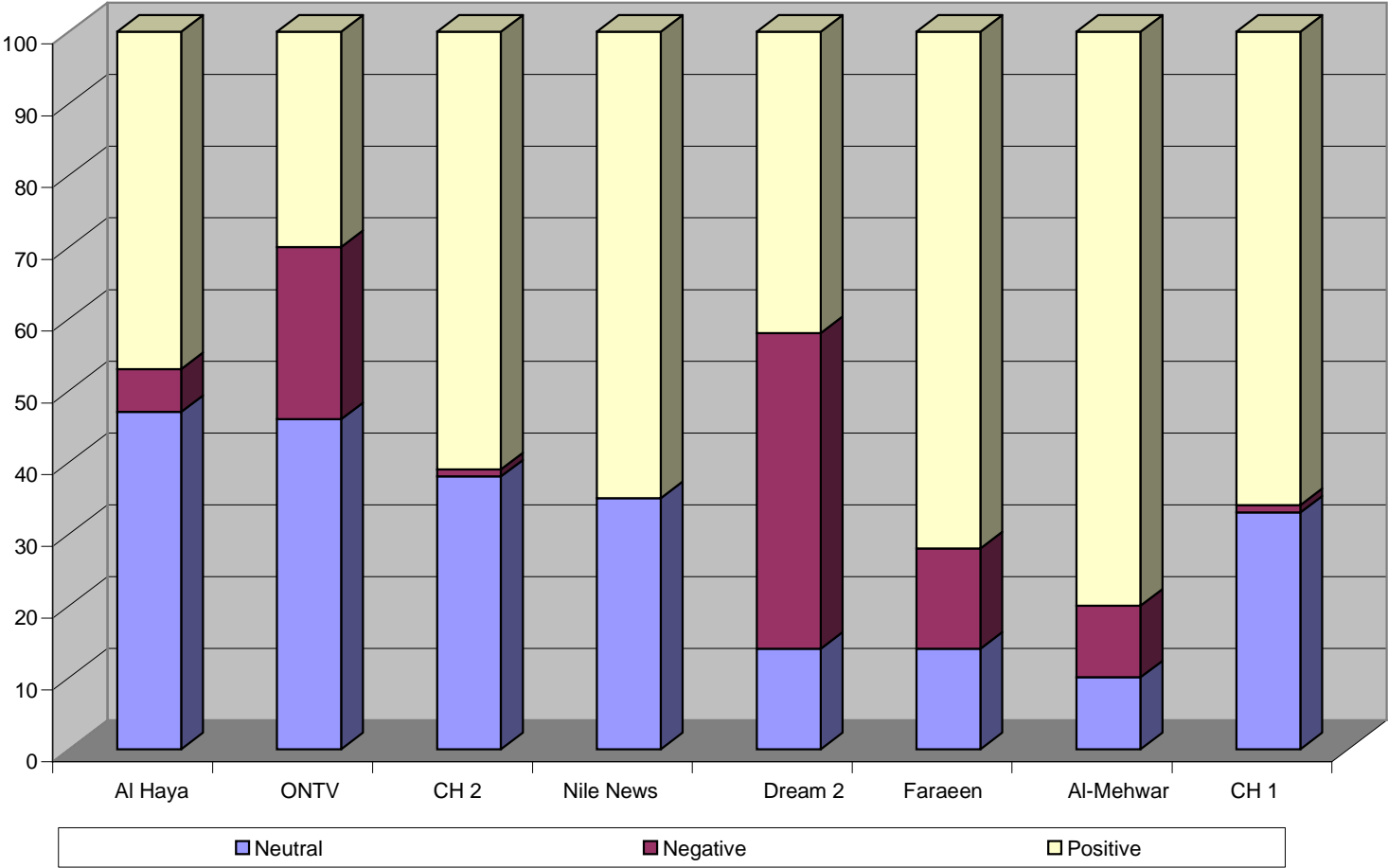
Using the methodology established by the Italian Osservatorio di Pavia and as used by MEMO 98 and adapted by the CIHRS, media coverage of elections was monitored using a sample of newspapers and television channels. This methodology is used in tens of countries around the world. The methodology includes two components: quantitative measurement and qualitative measurement.

For television Channels, the quantitative monitoring focuses on recording all that are aired by each channel on a daily basis during the monitoring period. In this case we chose to record airing during prime time, which we defined to be between 7 pm and 1 am. Using a stopwatch, the monitor times each news item, a story, or a segment about a political actor, candidate, or party. The researcher then determines whether the coverage was direct or indirect. This is primarily determined by whether the coverage allowed the candidate to appear and speak (direct) or not (indirect). The researcher then evaluates the material as negative, positive, or impartial using several indicators established by the project supervisors. In addition, a qualitative analysis questionnaire is prepared with a number of questions to be answered by the monitor regarding the coverage.

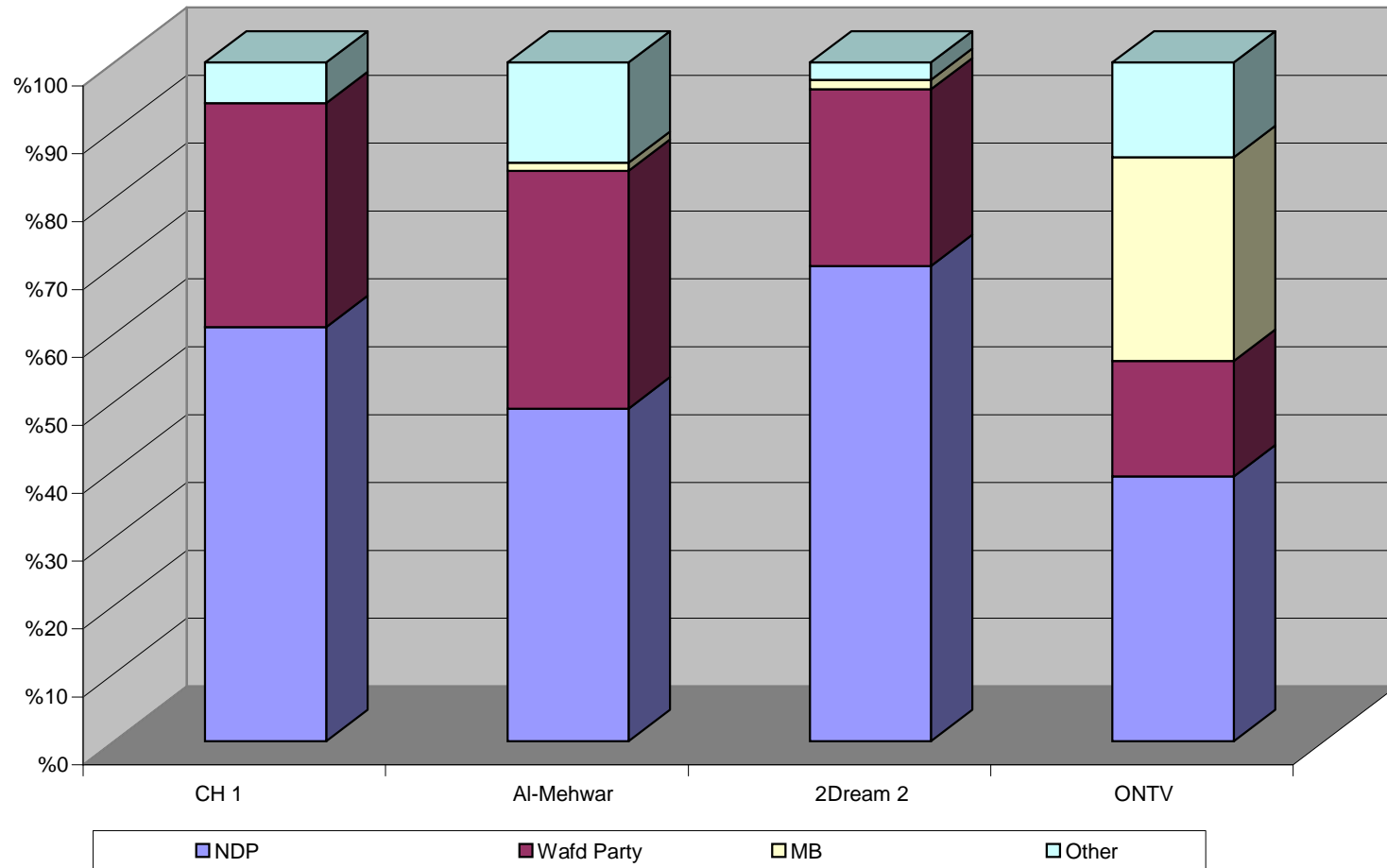
For press, quantitative analysis is done by monitors measuring the size of a news item, coverage, or story about a political actor, candidate, or party in square centimeters, including the headline and any photos used in the piece. The monitor may even devote a separate analysis to headlines and photos. The monitor then turns to the type of coverage and whether it is negative, positive, or impartial. In addition, the monitor resorts to the qualitative analysis questionnaire to insert responses to specific questions.

Appendices

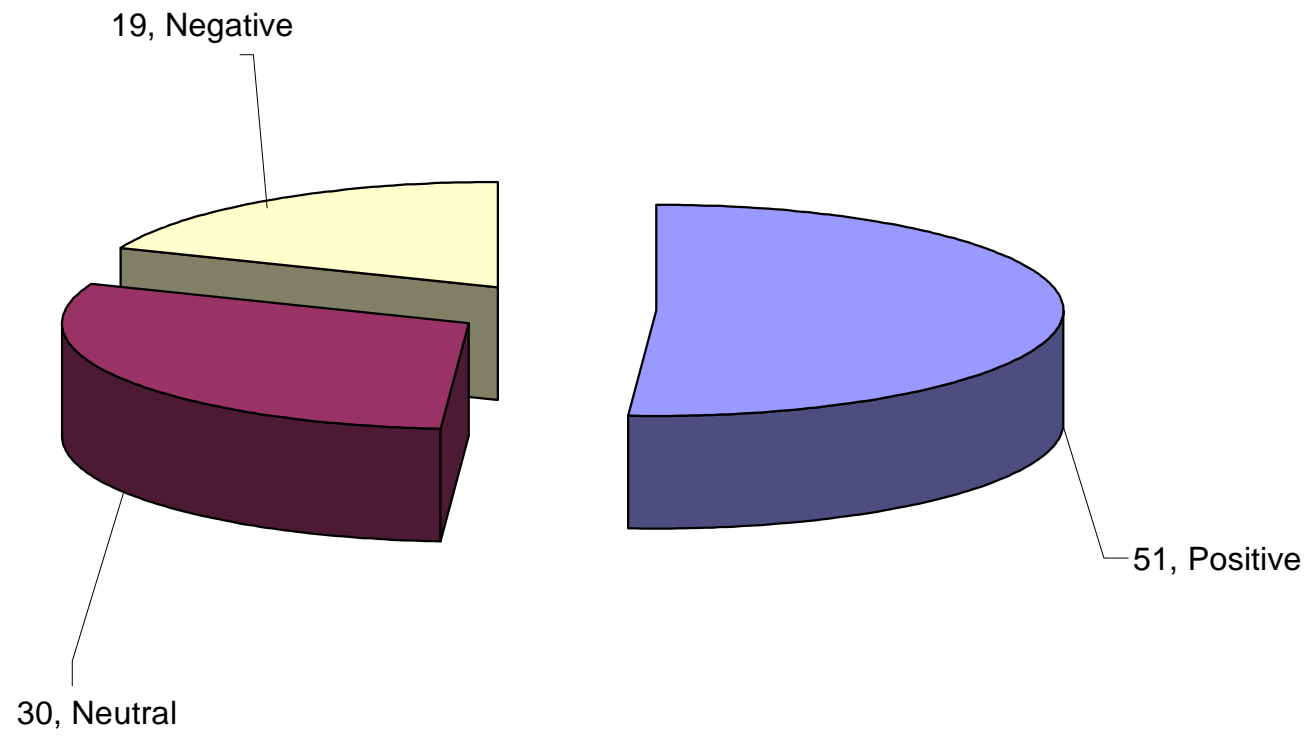
Tone of coverage for each of the eight TV channels



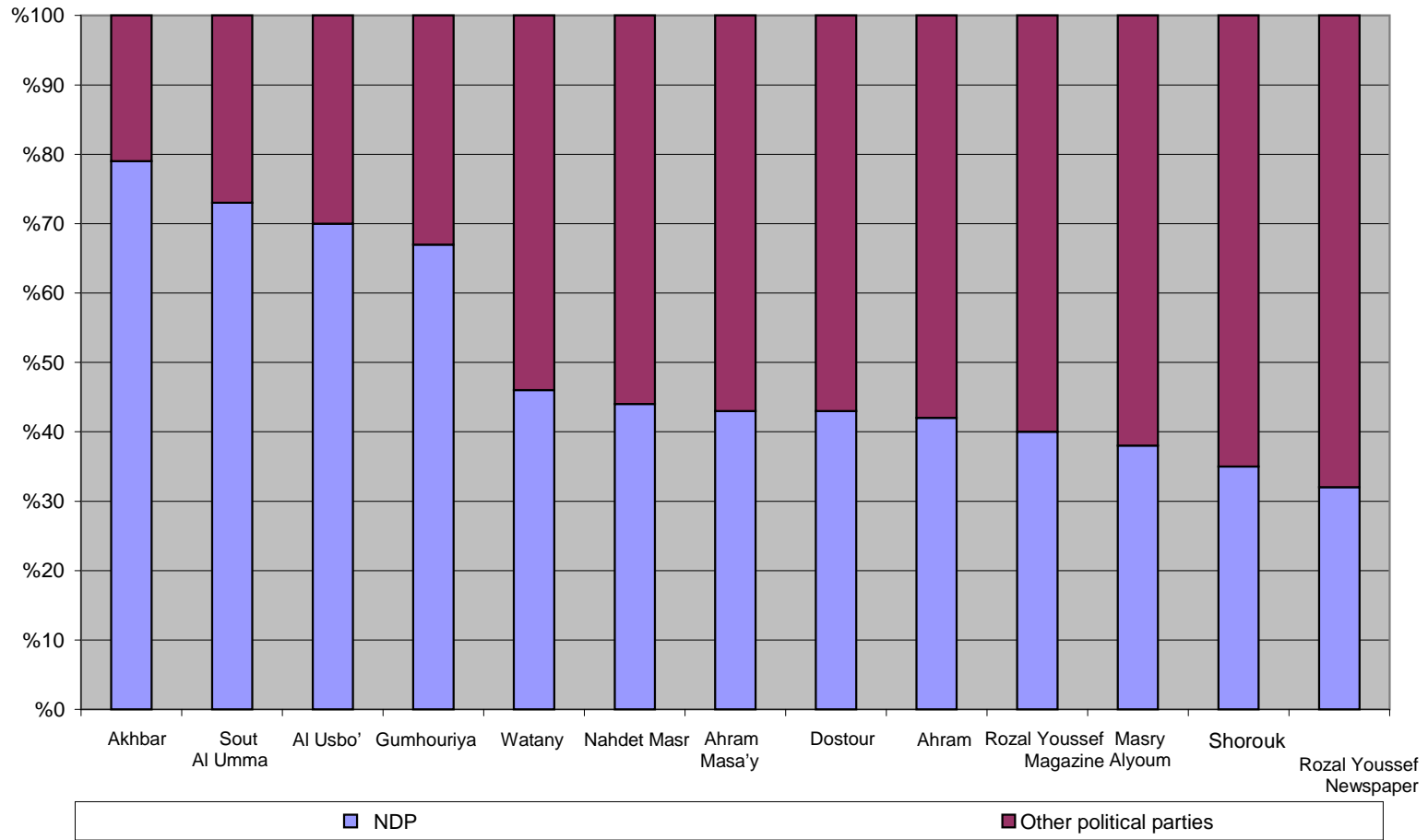
TV coverage of political parties



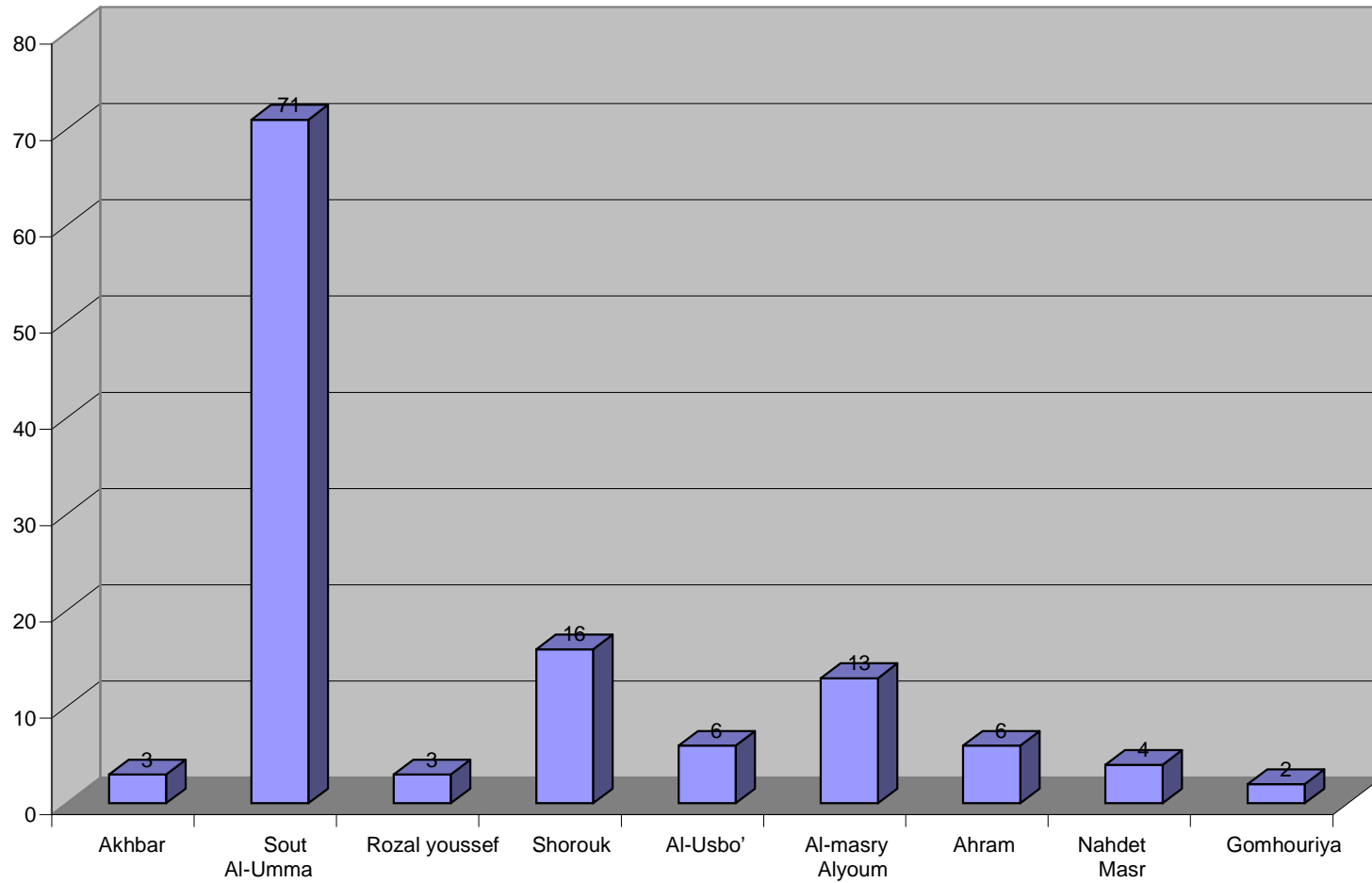
Tone of total TV coverage



NDP allocation in comparison with other political parties in the press



Negative coverage of the NDP in the press



Tone of press coverage

