

# **Bosnia and Herzegovina General Elections, 2010: Analysis of Pre-Election Rhetoric**

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## **Introduction**

This text represents summary version of the final report on research conducted as part of the project of 'Monitoring candidates' respect of their commitment to ethical behavior during the election campaign.' (or 'Monitoring of pre-election campaign') Research was conducted during period of June 1, 2010 to November 1, 2010 on the entire territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H). The aims of research titled 'Monitoring candidates' respect of their commitment to ethical behavior during the election campaign' were to conduct monitoring of pre-election rhetoric of 1. key political subjects, 2. most influential media and 3. inside institutions of power and entire public discourse for the first time in B&H.

Objects of monitoring were 12 leading political parties which had majority participation in institutions of power in the period 2006 to 2010 and/or public opinion polls conducted in the first half of 2010 have given them solid chance to be in such position after general elections in October 2010. These are: SDA, SNSD, SB&H, SDS, PDP, SDP, SBB, HDZ, HDZ 1990, RZB, NS and NSP. Indirectly, objects of monitoring are also most prominent electronic and print media, actually 15 of them, whose way of reporting (citations and interpretations) about moves and rhetoric of party representatives has given additional content to research subject. Also, research team has followed political rhetoric and practices of elected subjects inside institutions of legislative organs (state and entity parliaments) through continued presence in sessions of these organs. Finally, CCI has ensured monitoring of most of pre-election rallies of abovementioned political parties, which was additional source of verification of the research findings.

## Methodology

Having in mind subject of research, i.e. of monitoring and evaluation of candidate's respect for ethical behavior during election process inside media space, official institutions and public discourse, research methodology relies on standard methods of empirical research, and primarily on content analysis (media publications and public discourse) and on comparative method and desk analysis.

Also, in view of the subject of research we have consulted local and international norms of good practices of media reporting and leading of pre-election campaign. In 2002, Bosnia and Herzegovina became a member of The Council of Europe, by which it has obliged to protect and strengthen promotion of democratic values and norms in the country with its capacities and legislative capabilities. Also, as a member of The Council of Europe, B&H has accepted to practice and impose professional and ethical standards in media space in the whole state. B&H has committed itself to implementation of measures which would ensure that media in the country, in their reporting, follow fundamental principles of fairness, balanced reporting and impartiality.

Therefore, one of the main tasks of this analysis was insight into extent to which these international and local codexes are implemented and respected on behalf of political representatives and media actors during election process. Towards this task, we have determined few fundamental variables which measured negative pre-election rhetoric, and in three segments:

1. Press clipping-monitoring of media content;
2. Monitoring of rhetoric inside highest legislative bodies (The Parliamentarian Assembly of B&H and entity parliaments)
3. Monitoring of rhetoric in pre-election rallies of political parties.

Largest part of analysis is related to media space content. Unit of analysis is defined as one publication. Under such media publication we assume independent unit of content, print space or TV report which has encompassed basic text, title, subtitles, eventual picture additions and empty spaces between paragraphs. We have analyzed publications in daily newspapers (articles) and TV channels (reports) and extracted those publications which have contained following elements of negative rhetoric:

- Hate speech towards other: 1) nations, 2) races, 3) religions, 4) political opponents, 5) representatives of other sexual orientation and 6) other people in general;

- Enticing of conflict (making of conflict atmosphere through prosecution, sarcasm, irony etc.- against opponents, political opponents- as opposed to love, cooperation, dialogue, cohesion);
- Spreading of utilitarianism (maximizing own pleasure or personal interest, competition, immodesty, apolitical behaviour- as opposed to solidarity, moral, activism);
- Prejudicing and meddling with work of executive organs (wide and negative interpretations, pressures, incomplete or incorrect informations etc.);
- Non-objectivity (limiting space to the 'other' sides);
- Impolite vocabulary (vulgarity, slang etc.).

Besides numerical data, we have given graphical presentation, for easy comparison. Parallel with presenting of data from press clippings, we have presented and main data on monitoring of rhetorics inside legislative organs and pre-election rallies, as well as main findings from other reports on election process.

## **Summary Results of Research**

Holding of free and democratic elections represents very important and may be crucial moment in development of democratically organized countries, where citizens have an opportunity to choose their political representatives by their free will and decision-making. However, very often political representatives use very negative, immoral and/or undemocratic rhetoric directed towards their political rivals, even towards electorate, which is very destructive to building of democratic ambient in the entire society. In many democratic and open societies following and monitoring of ethical behavior of political subjects and their candidates during election campaign, becomes permanent and very widespread practice which is accompanied by various independent agencies, nongovernmental organizations and different international organizations and institutions.

Taking into consideration fact that Bosnian society has been for almost five decades functioning under communist regime which to large extent degraded and purposely stopped any form of development of democratic culture and open political dialogue, today's public discourse in which political actors in the state act, appears as a special subject of research. Therefore, research and monitoring related to ethical behavior of political parties in pre-election period represents good step towards building of more successful and coherent society.

Elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina are held every fourth year starting from November 1990 (except for the war period 1992-1995), which are considered and

first free multiparty elections. Namely, it is important to mention that all elections in post-war B&H from 1996 to 2000 have been conducted in organization of OSCE and under the oversight of very large number of international observers. By time, social, political and institutional conditions have been reached for directing and organization of elections by domestic bodies.

Today, The Central Election Commission of B&H (CECB&H) is responsible for organization of election process and regulation with respect to all of election related questions in entire country and across all levels of government. This state institution plays crucial role in preservation of responsibility of holders of key functions, transparency and legality of financing of political parties and organization of free and fair elections. Through their activities and acts CECB&H is building or degrading trust of citizens of B&H into whole election process. Therefore, role of CECB&H is of fundamental importance for success of whole process of democratization of B&H and building of open and free society which is firmly relying on fundamental international democratic norms and principles.

Having in mind post-war public discourse in Bosnia and Herzegovina marked by very slow development of healthy and positive democratic communication between political subjects, monitoring of ethical behaviour of political parties in pre-election period is imposing itself as very important imperative for independent and serious research on behalf of independent and nongovernmental bodies. Besides that, years long continued existence and widespread presence of negative nationalistic and often militant rhetoric between political parties in B&H, represents special reason for monitoring of ethical behaviour of political subjects during election campaign, primarily through public discourse which is shaped by media.

Talking about media, it is of utmost importance to mention crucial role which media houses have in the process of transmission and distribution of information to wider public and creation of democratic awareness of citizens. In other words, in democratic societies media represent crucial communication channel between political subjects and citizens/voters. Also, media have very important role in informing public during pre-election period with respect to party programs and offered strategies and candidates of political subjects in election market. It is necessary that media base their reports on truthful, precise and objective information and facts in impartial and neutral way without favoritizing of certain political subject. Media are obliged to respect fundamental professional standards of ethical reporting which are based on international conventions and local normative acts. In democratic societies media should be positioned on equidistance with respect to all of political parties, as only in this way they can fulfil the role

which is assigned to them. In the absence of objective and impartial media reports during pre-election campaign, process of democratization in a society becomes 'mission impossible'. Therefore, having in mind enormous and crucial importance of the media in forming of public opinion and election decisions of citizens, it is unavoidable to perform wide-scope monitoring of media reports about activities of political representatives during election period.

.It is also heart-warming fact that large number of independent agencies as well as local nongovernmental organizations has conducted different kinds of monitoring in connection with behaviour of political representatives and/or media subjects during pre-election period of General elections 2010. Independent and impartial research, and monitoring of activities of political subjects and media houses, can through their analysis and reached results, in significant way contribute to development of democratic society in the future. Furthermore, this kind of research can offer quite clearer and exact representation to citizens about content of pre-election rhetoric of their political representatives. Also, through this kind of analysis political representatives themselves can understand advantages and disadvantages of their political appearances and public debates with their political opponents, which can contribute towards development of positive and democratic directions and strategies in their future political engagements. Finally, but not less important, independent research and monitoring of work of media can significantly help media workers to base their professional work on high ethical standards and values. Therefore, increased dedication and focus of different organizations on monitoring of political subjects and media during election campaign can in significant part contribute to faster and more stable process of development of democratization of BH society through professional analysis and offered directions and recommendations.

During pre-election period, few researches were conducted related to monitoring of election process and behaviour of political subjects during this process. One of the researches was conducted by 'Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in B&H'. Their main conclusion was that pre-election campaign was held in language of hate and demagogy. Helsinki Committee makes constatation that it is visible that political actors have not restrained from earlier used methods, so that nationally oriented discourse has dominated with features of hate language, with very pronounced demagogical approach to basic themes such as employment policy and social politics.

Also, 'Association of BH Journalists' has conducted monitoring of media and their following of pre-election campaign in B&H. Preliminary results of this monitoring indicate that during this period aims of fair and just reporting have not been

reached and that registered cases of abuse of media space, favoritizing of certain party candidates and partial and not all encompassing and balanced reporting. Also, available results of monitoring often do not show exact examples of hate language but they often note statements which are on the verge of nationalistic and verbal abuse over other political candidates and journalists.

One more nongovernmental organization which has conducted monitoring of pre-election campaign in B&H this year is 'ACIPS'. ACIPS has analyzed pre-election appearances of representatives of 12 political parties through six printed, six electronic media and three internet portals. Major remark of ACIPS is that pre-election campaign in B&H was 'extremely dirty'. Majority of political parties which they have overseen had very antagonistic campaigns towards their political rivals and have not been involved with key problems and themes of priority for the citizens.

Finally, research of CCI is to large extent based on few innovative and unavoidable segments which enrich final analysis, make it more concrete and reliable. Besides months long and wide scope monitoring of print and electronic media about activities of political representatives in pre-election period, CCI's research has included following of all sessions of highest legislative organs; The Parliamentary Assembly of B&H (both houses), The Parliament of Federation B&H (both houses) and The Peoples' Assembly of RS. Namely, this aspect of monitoring of political representatives represents very important component which explicitly presents political rhetoric of political representatives and their behaviour inside public space, which adequately reflects entire context of (un) democratic communication in the country. Furthermore, by the act of following pre-election rallies, as a third component of this research, public is presented with almost overall political rhetoric and way of communication of political representatives with their opponents in election race.

### ***Normative Framework***

Internal legislative framework plays very important role in organizing and regulation of media space towards professional, ethical, impartial and correct reporting, and especially in time of pre-election campaign. Primarily, Election Law of B&H represents basic normative frame which clearly regulates and determines professional and ethical standards in connection to media reports during election process. Election Law of B&H has come into force in 2001 so that domestic organs could overtake full responsibility for organization and oversight of election process in B&H, after years' long practice of elections being organized by international organizations and bodies, led by OSCE. According to rules of behaviour in election

campaign, political parties, coalitions, lists of independent candidates and independent candidates have the right and obligation to lead election campaign in peaceful atmosphere, organize and hold public rallies in which they can freely state their opinions and party programs, and print and distribute printed materials, posters and other materials in connection with election campaign.

Also, in article no. 16, which regulates responsibilities of media in election campaign, Election Law of B&H obliges media in B&H to fairly and professionally follow election activities with consistent following of codex of journalism and generally accepted democratic principles and rules, especially of basic principle of freedom of expression.

Election Law of B&H and especially its article 16 plays very important role in regulation of behaviour of media actors during pre-election reporting. According to this law it is possible to establish and make constatation on how much media space in B&H respects principles of fair, impartial and wide encompassing informing of citizens during pre-election reporting.

The Central Election Commission of B&H (CECB&H) is responsible for organizing and regulating election process in the whole country. The role of CECB&H is of crucial importance for success of the whole process of democratization of B&H and development of open and free society which is firmly relying on fundamental international norms and principles. CECB&H is a state body whose task is decision making relating to implementation of Election Law of B&H, three existing laws on conflict of interest and law on financing of political parties as well as giving check on public representatives. Therefore, this important state institution plays crucial role in preservation of responsibility of holders of public functions, transparency and legality of financing of political parties and organizing of free and fair elections.

On a few occasions during pre-election period CECB&H has warned that it will use all its legal jurisdictions in order to sanction hate speech during pre-election campaign. Also, calling upon all of the actors of political campaign to restrain from using nationalistic and anti-state rhetoric, to refrain from statements which arise tensions, to lead fair campaign, CECB&H has before the start of official campaign, especially stressed responsibility of media in entire election process and importance of trust of BH citizens into election process.

The Communications Regulatory Agency of B&H (CRAB&H) is next key institution for conduct of positive regulation during pre-election time. CRAB&H has established processional rules and regulations in the area of electronic media built on fundamental principles of protection of rights on freedom of expression,

freedom to truth, right of access to information, and European professional codexes of journalism. CRAB&H has obligation to issue permits for emitting frequencies and telecommunication in a transparent and just way, and to promote highest degree of professionalism and economic sustainability of communities of telecommunication operators and electronic media in B&H.

CRAB&H is organ entrusted with following of work and emitting of electronic media in the context of their reporting in time of pre-election campaign. Therefore, month before official start of pre-election campaign CRAB&H sends reminder to electronic media in relation to their responsibilities during election process. Also, CRAB&H has ingerencies and responsibility to determine sanctions to those electronic media for which it is established that they have breached certain rules and regulations which this agency has established.

### ***Press Clipping<sup>1</sup>***

As it was previously described, first of the three segments inside of which we have followed variables of this research is segment of media publications, so called press clipping. Press clipping was conducted by analysis of content of 5 daily newspapers with largest circulation (Dnevni Avaz, Oslobođenje, Glas Srpske, Blic, Večernji list), and 6 TV stations (BHT, FTV, RTRS, HAYAT, ATV, BN).

#### ▪ ***Dnevni avaz***

*Daily newspaper established in 1993 in Sarajevo. For a number of years already it is best-selling newspaper in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Founder and owner is also the founder and president of Savez za bolju budućnost BiH-SBB), political party formed in 2010, which has contested in past elections.*

#### ▪ ***Oslobođenje***

*Oslobođenje is daily newspaper with longest tradition in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The paper has been published for the first time on 1943. Majority owner is private corporation MIMS, while director of newspapers is at the same time vice president of political party SDP.*

#### ▪ ***Večernji list***

*Daily newspaper which is published in the neighbouring state, Republic of Croatia, which has a special BH edition where it allocates 70% of the space to happenings in B&H. Their inclination towards leading political parties with croatian prefix in B&H is visible.*

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<sup>1</sup> Press clipping was conducted by agency City Management Group. All statistical data represent original data from agency report. Author is not responsible for correctness, consistency and/or relevancy of these data.



- **Glas Srpske**

Daily newspaper published in Republic of Srpska. Under the title 'Glas Srpske' it is published since 2003. Majority owner is also owner of the publishing company *Nezavisne novine*. It is close to political party SNSD.

- **Euro Blic**

Daily newspaper published in neighbouring state, Republic of Serbia, which has a section (in the middle of the magazine is inserted addition) which mainly treats happenings in territory of RS. Newspaper owner is international corporation, so that there is no visible connection with one of political parties.

- **BHT 1** – Public TV station – state television, without visible connection or stronger influence of any political party.

- **FTV** – Public TV station – entity television of FB&H, with latent influence of political party SDP on editorial policy and/or favoritizing of this political party on behalf of editorial board and journalists.

- **RTRS** – Public TV service – entity TV with visible influence of the Government of RS, and especially political party SNSD on its editorial policy.

- **HAYAT** – private TV station headquartered in Sarajevo, with reduced content of information-political character and without stronger connections with any political party.

- **ATV** – private TV station headquartered in Banjaluka without stronger connections with any political party.

- **BN Televizija** – Private TV station headquartered in Bijeljina with latent favoritizing of SDS party in its editorial policy and by its journalists.

Total number of examined newspaper articles which in their content mention some of the observed political parties or their representatives in connotation of elements of negative rhetorics in the period from June 1 until October 8, 2010 is 813, where we examined over 10,000 articles.

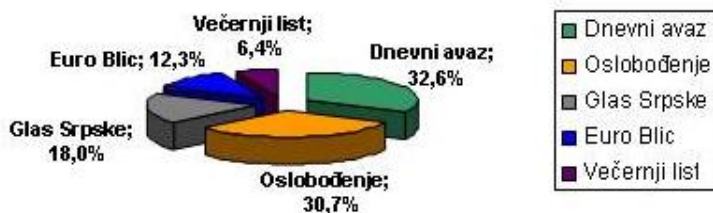


FIGURE 1: Percentages express appearance of reports which satisfy some of the elements of negative rhetoric in daily newspapers

Analyzed daily newspapers differ by number of published articles which satisfy some of the elements of negative rhetoric. Largest number of content which has some of the elements of negative rhetoric is found in Dnevni Avaz with 32,6% (265 articles), *Oslobođenje* with 30,7% (250 articles), Glas Srpske with 18,0% (146 articles), Euro Blic with 12,3% (100 articles) and Večernji list with 6,4% (52 articles).

Following part of analysis is related to content, or representation of particular elements of negative rhetoric inside examined articles in daily newspapers.

Category of negative rhetoric	Daily newspaper				
	Dnevni avaz	Oslobođenje	Večernji list	Glas Srpske	Euro blic
Hate speech	40	31	4	14	7
Enticing of conflict	120	152	39	97	51
Spreading of utilitarianism	10	9	1	4	6
Prejudicing	44	20	4	14	10
Non-objectivity	11	6	3	4	3
Innapropriate vocabulary	40	32	1	13	23

TABLE 1: Number of articles with negative rhetoric content in daily newspapers

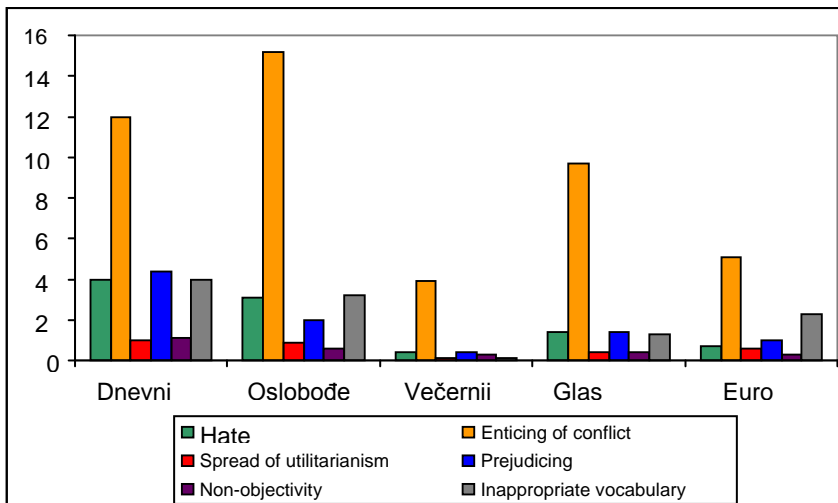


FIGURE 2: Number of articles with negative rhetoric content in daily newspapers

According to the data, in the period from June 1 to October 5, 2010 in pre-election campaign in Bosnia and Herzegovina largest number of articles published in daily newspapers contained element of negative rhetoric defined as enticing of conflict.

Relationship between number of statements/reports on statements about political parties and their representatives, and number of reports with comments of journalists/editors in daily newspapers is in ratio of 589 statements/quoted statements against 224 author texts of journalists or editors.

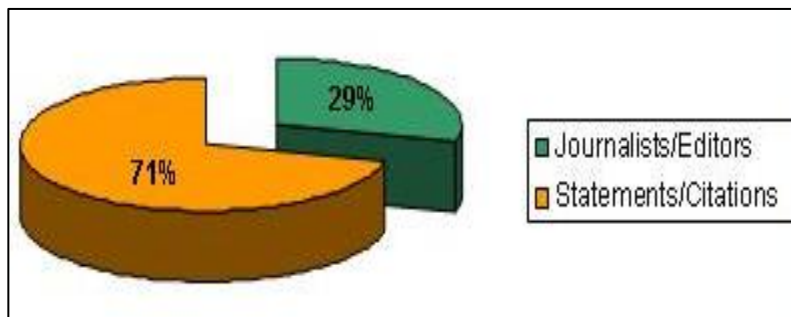


FIGURE 3: Relationship of number of reports with statements/citations about political parties and their representatives and number of reports with comments of journalists/editors in daily newspapers

Next table shows relationship between number of reports with statements/quoted statements about political parties and their representatives and number of reports with comments of journalists/editors in daily newspapers.

Source of Rhetoric	Daily newspaper				
	Dnevni avaz	Oslobođenje	Večernji list	Glas Srpske	Euro blic
Rhetoric of POLITICS (statements/citations)	86	107	39	94	69
Rhetoric of MEDIA (comments/feuilletons)	75	68	3	13	6

TABLE 2: Relationship of number of statements/citations about political parties and their representatives and number of reports with comments of journalists/editors according to daily newspapers

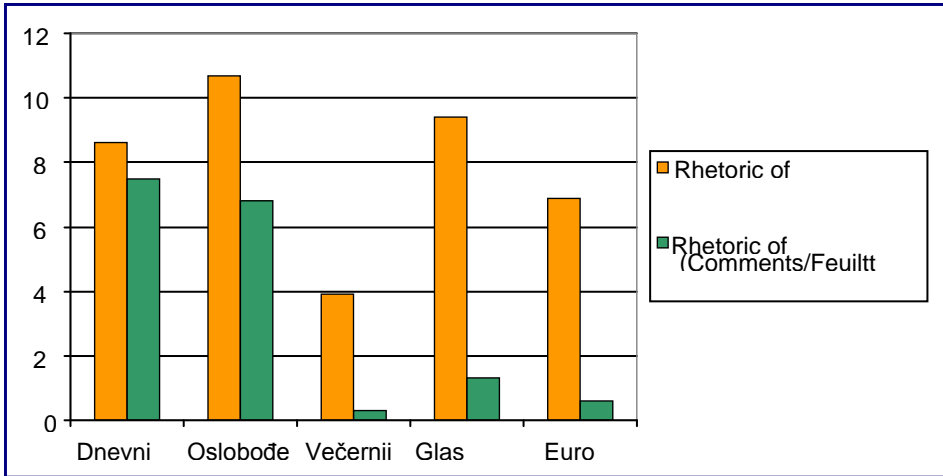


FIGURE 4: Relationship between number of reports with statements/citations about political parties and their representatives and number of reports with comments of journalists/editors according to daily newspapers

Representation of all political parties inside articles which contain elements of negative rhetorics in daily newspapers is shown in the following table:

Political party	Daily newspaper				
	Dnevni avaz	Oslobođenje	Večernji list	Glas Srpske	Euro Blic
SDA	94	28	6	14	9
SBIH	54	23	2	7	3
SDP	21	21	10	16	4
SBBBBIH	24	12	1	2	0
HDZ BIH	14	26	13	7	5
HDZ 1990	4	14	11	1	3
SNSD	45	96	11	57	55
PDP	13	21	1	21	25
SDS	14	24	1	16	24

TABLE 2: Representation of all political parties inside articles which contain elements of negative rhetoric in daily newspapers

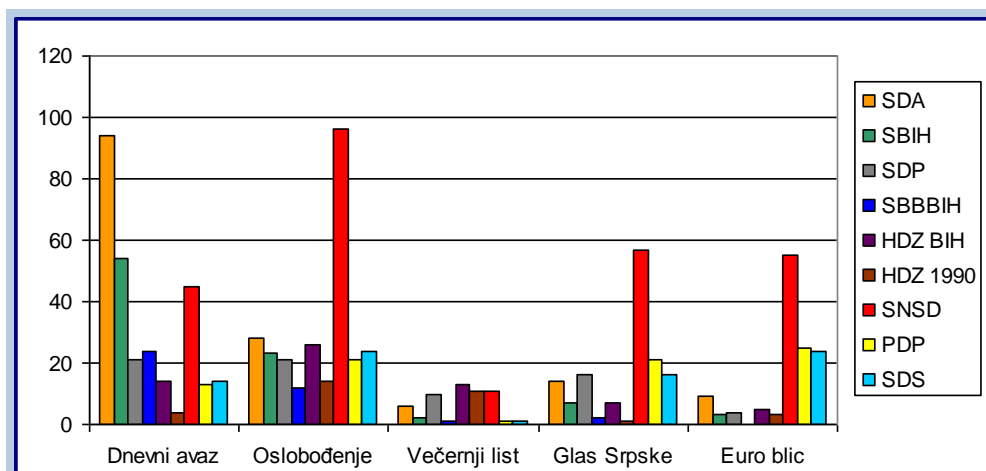


FIGURE 5: Representation of political parties inside articles which contain elements of negative rhetoric in daily newspapers

Largest number of published articles which contain elements of negative rhetorics is related to political party SNSD. Total number of reports which contain elements of negative rhetoric and which relate to SNSD is 264, then SDA - 151, SBIH - 89, PDP - 81, SDS - 79, SDP - 72, HDZ BiH - 71, SBBBiH - 39 and HDZ 1990 - 34 articles.

Next part of analysis relates to extent to which rhetoric is directed towards political parties, as well as towards their representatives inside published articles, as shown in the next table.

Political party	Daily newspaper				
	Dnevni avaz	Oslobođenje	Večernji list	Glas Srpske	Euro blic
SDA	56	11	4	10	4
SBIH	26	6	1	8	3
SNSD	29	50	4	7	20
HDZ BiH	2	9	3	0	1

TABLE 3: Number of articles which contain elements of negative rhetoric which is directed at particular political party which have originated by media

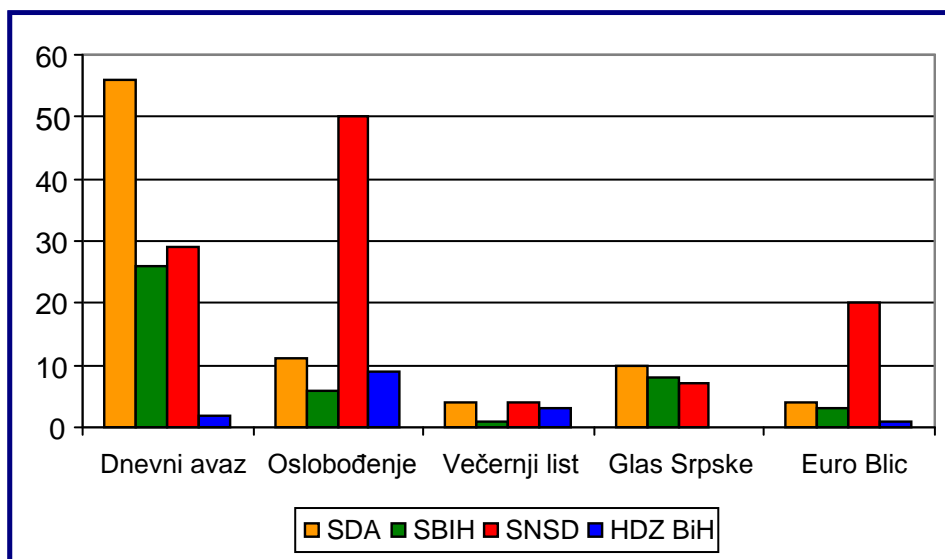


FIGURE 6 : Number of articles which contain elements of negative rhetoric which is directed at particular political party according to daily newspapers and have originated by media

Largest number of newspaper articles which contain elements of negative rhetoric is directed towards political party SNSD with 110 reports, SDA - 85, SBiH - 44 and HDZ BiH with 15 reports.

Next table presents extent to which articles containing negative rhetoric have originated from political party.

Political party	Daily newspaper				
	Dnevni avaz	Oslobođenje	Večernji list	Glas Srpske	Euro blic
SDA	3	5	2	3	3
SBiH	1	8	1	2	0
SNSD	10	26	6	44	29
HDZ BiH	11	7	9	6	9

TABLE 4: Numer of articles which contain negative rhetoric and which have originated from political party

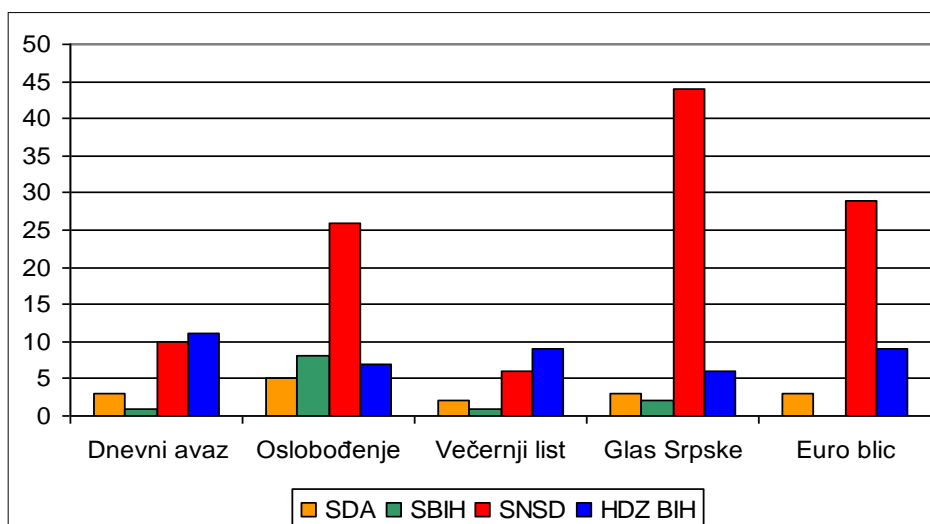


FIGURE 7: Numer of articles which contain negative rhetoric and which have originated from political party

Largest number of articles which contain elements of negative rhetoric originated from SNSD - 115, HDZ BiH - 42, SDA - 16 and SBIH - 12. Largest number of articles whose content has elements of negative rhetorics, viewed according to leaders of political parties individually, have originated from Milorad Dodik(SNSD) - 77, Dragan Čović (HDZ BiH) 20, Fahrudin Radončić (SBB BiH) 16 and Mladen Ivanić (PDP) 10.

Overview of articles with elements of negative rhetoric in their content directed towards representatives of political parties and which originated from journalists/editors, is shown in the following table.

Politician	Daily newspaper				
	Dnevni avaz	Oslobođenje	Večernji list	Glas Srpske	Euro blic
F. Radončić	0	4	0	0	0
H. Silajdžić	30	6	0	11	0
D. Čović	1	6	0	0	0
S. Tihić	18	2	1	1	0
M. Dodik	22	48	1	0	1

TABLE 5: Number of articles which contain elements of negative rhetoric directed towards representatives of political parties and which originate from journalists/editors

### *Representation Of Reports With Negative Rhetoric Content On TV Stations*

Total number of noted reports which mention one of the political parties or their representatives and contain elements of negative rhetorics in the period of June 1 to October 5, 2010 is 106, where total number of reports analysed is over 1000 reports.

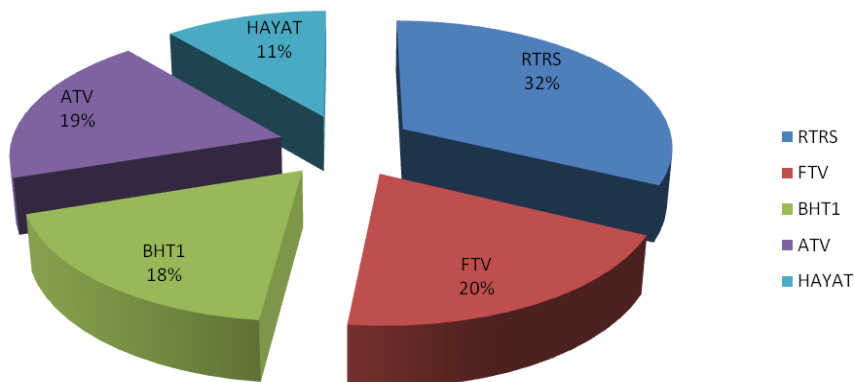


FIGURE 8: percent representation of reports that contain elements of negative rhetoric by TV stations

TV stations differ to quite an extent according to number of reports aired which satisfy one of the elements of negative rhetoric. Most of reports which contain elements of negative rhetorics was aired on RTRS - 32%, FTV with 20%, ATV with 19%, BHT - 18%, Hayat - 11%.

Next part of analysis is related to content, or representation of particular element of negative rhetoric inside TV reports and is shown in the following table.

Category of negative rhetoric	TV station					
	BHT	FTV	RTRS	HAYAT	ATV	BN
Hate speech	0	0	2	0	0	0
Enticing of conflict	3	4	15	1	11	7
Spreading of utilitarianism	8	13	6	5	6	2
Prejudicing	1	2	4	1	7	3
Non-objectivity	3	0	0	0	0	0
Innapropriate vocabulary	1	0	4	0	6	1

TABLE 6: Number of reports with particular negative rhetoric content according to TV stations



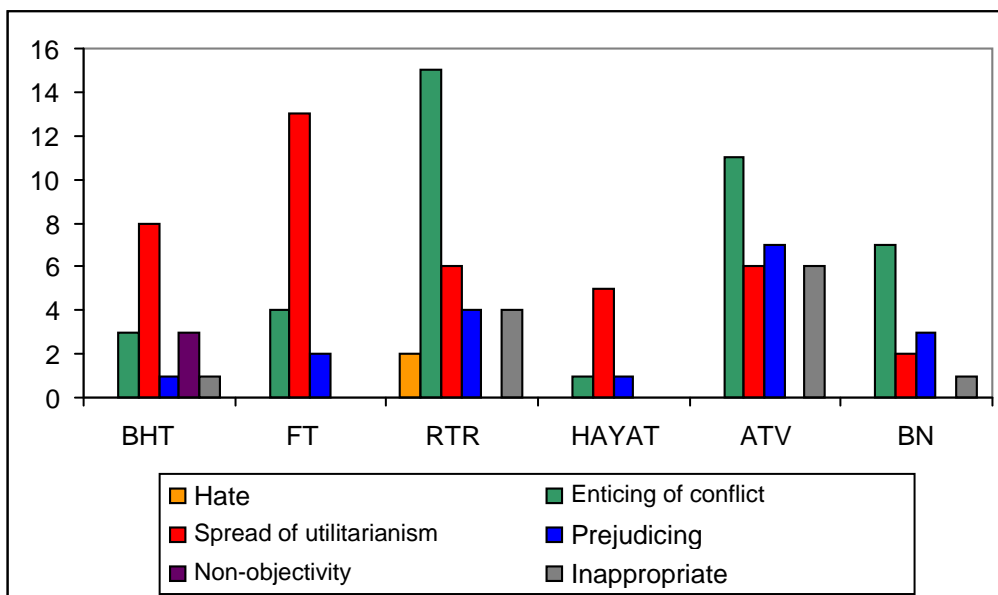


FIGURE 9: Number of reports with particular negative rhetoric content according to TV stations

In accordance with abovementioned, in period July 1 to October 5, 2010, in pre-election campaign selected TV stations had largest number of reports which contained element of negative rhetoric defined as 'Enticing of conflict'.<sup>2</sup>

In summary, it is noted that largest number of reports which contain certain elements of negative rhetorics is relating to SNSD, as well as to leader of this party Milorad Dodik. This is case with statements of representatives of SNSD, but also with journalist comments, which leads to conclusion that this party and its leader has generated most of negative statements and most of negative reactions of other political parties and journalists. Among other parties and their representatives, largest number of mentionings in negative context are related to SBiH and its president Harisa Silajdžića, then HDZ and its president Dragan Čović.

### *Rhetorics Inside Legislative Bodies*

Other segment of monitoring, as it si previously described, was following of work of highest legislative organs in B&H, on state and entity level.

<sup>2</sup> Due to nature of this report and complex mechanism of analysis we do not present examined content that aired on TV stations.

Pre-election campaign, primarily informally started inside legislative bodies (The Parliamentary Assembly of B&H and entity parliaments). Even though we have not noted large number of breaches of codes of conduct and rules of procedure of legislative bodies, high level of conflicting rhetoric, low efficiency of work and media sensationalism have marked pre-election months of monitoring of legislative bodies. From June 1, to October 5, 19 sessions of these bodies have been held:

- 8 sessions of both houses of The Parliamentary Assembly of B&H;
- 7 sessions of both houses of The Parliament of Federation of B&H;
- 4 sessions of The People's Assembly of RS.

Inside The Parliamentary Assembly of B&H, there were no incidental situations or rude breaches of Code of Conduct, and Rules of Procedure by representatives/delegates of PAB&H. Of course, during whole period, there was visible stronger pre-election rhetoric, which in few instances has threatened to turn into serious accidents with negative consequences on the work of the parliament. Usual phenomenon was rhetorical confrontation of parties from different entities and with different national sign, and large number of laws and other decisions were represented as vital national interest and have not received necessary support of parliamentarians, which has then served as material for continuation of clashes through the media. Similar situation has marked few pre-election months of work of Parliament of FB&H, while due to stable parliamentary majority and regime orientation of leading media in RS, this dialectic has entirely been absent in this entity.

Data from monitoring of work of institutions indicate anew that same parties and individuals whose negative rhetoric has marked media discourse, also lead in this kind of rhetoric in legislative bodies- even though with lesser intensity and reduced content, primarily because of limitations imposed by Rules and sporadic obediances of Code of Conduct.

### ***Rhetoric of Pre-Election Rallies***

Even though negatie rhetoric was less pronounced than in previous pre-election campaigns, without doubt parties have played dirty in fighting for votes. Critics of political opponents were mainly 'blows below the belt' and sometimes have referred even to phisical appearance of the candidates. Opposite to inventiveness and studious approach which some non-governmental organizations have shown in pre-election period-political parties have mainly remained at level of simplified phrases, nonargumented promises about prosperity and to negative rhetorics. During pre-election campaign, leaders have spoken the least about Euro-Atlantic

integrations, and pre-election rallies have been place of most dirty vocabulary, uncivilized critic of political opponents, and most eclatant examples of hate speech and enticing of conflict. Marked appearances of some political representatives speak in favor of hypothesis that political party work at the grassroots level, which is hidden from the eyes of mass media, public opinion criticism, local or foreign observers is space for most dirty part of the campaign.

Data from the ground indicate again and again that same parties and individuals whose negative rhetorics has marked media discourse, lead in this kind or rhetorics in pre-election rallies- in this case with noted extremely negative examples of the same.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Analysis of content of five daily newspapers and six TV stations in the period of June 1, to October 5, 2010 in pre-election campaign for General Elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which have been held on October 3, 2010, have tried to establish main features of media's following of politics in pre-election period and main features of political rhetoric on behalf of candidates in their pre-election campaign. Objects of monitoring were 12 chosen political parties: SDA, SNSD, SBiH, SDS, PDP, SDP, SBB, HDZ, HDZ 1990., RZB, NS and NSP.

Indirectly, objects of monitoring were most pronounced electronic and printed media, 15 of them, whose way of reporting (citation and interpretation) about moves and rhetoric of political party representatives have given additional content to the subject of monitoring. We analyzed announcements which have contained the following elements of negative rhetorics: hate speech, enticing of conflict, spreading of utilitarianism, prejudicing or meddling into work of executive bodies, unobjectivity, inappropriate vocabulary.

Also, by continued presence in sessions of highest legislative bodies (state and entity parliaments) research team has followed political rhetoric and practice of chosen subjects inside these institutions. Also, it was ensured that monitoring of most of central pre-election rallies of listed parties was done in order to provide additional source of verification of research conclusions.

Pre-election campaign has started without stronger stress of concrete social problems, and main topic of media following of politics and political communication were elections themselves, their organization and pre-election activities of the political parties. Rhetoric of representatives of political parties was mainly not

affirmative, hundreds of statements and journalist comments were noted which could be characterized as negative pre-election rhetoric.

For the needs of this analysis, we have extracted media announcements in which political party actors have referred to other parties in negative context (pointing to their deficiencies or unfavorably speaking about other political party in general. Part of the total negative remark of pre-election campaign has related to the fact that some candidates have not directed their critics and negative rhetoric only to political opponents but also to entire ethnic groups, religious groups, international community, media, nongovernmental organizations, apolitical individuals, etc.

Offering of solutions to concrete problems has been entirely lacking, and most represented were statements in which politicians have given only generalized promises, where some of them were direct attack on constitutional order, state integrity, two-entity state organization etc. This points to the fact that in current pre-election political communication in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we can recognize trends which speak about 'political packaging', creating of 'political spectacles' and 'colonization of politics by the media'.

General remark for pre-election rhetoric, and candidates' respect of their responsibility of ethical, constitutional and legal behaviour during pre-election campaign, is mainly negative. Amount of noted media publications with elements of negative rhetoric, then negative rhetoric inside highest legislative bodies, and especially on pre-election rallies of political parties, in combination with frequent negative journalist comments, have in the start predetermined negative cumulative assessment of campaign, appearances of political parties and their candidates.

Also, findings of monitoring of some other aspects of pre-election campaign which has been conducted on behalf of independent bodies such as OSCE/ODHIR, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, Association of BH journalists and ACIPS, also confirm negative assessment of the pre-election process.

If we add to this post-election affair due to large number of invalid votes, worryingly small difference between gained votes between leading candidates for Bosniak and Serb member of The Presidency, unacceptance of election results on behalf of few relevant parties, few noted anomalies in election law, as well as in segment of pre-election, and post-election process, it can be concluded that entire legislative and practical ambient in B&H is fertile ground for development of non-democratic, anti-plural, anti-ethical and anti-contemporary principles of leading pre-election campaigns.

Still, we should anyway mention that not all key political subjects had equally

negative campaign. Among observed 12 political parties, it is possible to separate extremely negative and extremely positive examples of pre-election rhetoric. Among observed 12 parties only one half has pronounced negative campaign, while others can be given a passing mark.

Furthermore, the role of media after finished pre-election campaign has shown itself as crucial. Often the media, especially the one under majority or lesser control of certain political parties have had the taks to 'package' or 'spinning the reality', either through interpretation of certain political decisions or stand, or through interpretation of public opinion polls with respect to political preferences of voters, or through obvious negative campaign directed against political rivals of the option close to particular media. It can be said that majority part of negative mark for pre-election campaign is merit of active political position of leading media, which in fact have had a dominant role in creating entire pre-election atmosphere by choice of topics, selection of content, chosen journalist style, etc. This is especially relating to active political position of public emitters on entity level which obviously had their election favorites. In this way, media have in fact overtaken role of political party 'hawks' and have done on their behalf the dirtiest part of job, and at the same time had influenced formation of public opinion and on final result of election itself.

In summary view, we can list few noted trends, or generate conclusions of this research:

- Socio-political system and constitutional structure of Bosnia and Herzegovina do not contribute and do not motivate political parties and other subjects to mutual cooperation, especially on entity level, which is directly reflected on functionality of state institutions and efficiency of highest legislative and executive bodies. This unfunctionality is obvious partly also in Federation of B&H, due to complex multiparty coalitions, in which all ruling parties, due to necessity of ethnic votes, can block and blackmail legislative and executive bodies;
- Existance of institution of OHR reduces sovereignty of domestic government, where it is visible escaping of institutional and political party responsibility, which, on the other hand favors mutual clashes of political conceptions, parties and individuals, by which pressure is exerted on OHR to support one of the parties. Any kind of decision of OHR or absence of the same is capitalized as political point by all sides, where clashes are deepened, society and state further desintegrated and political elites do not bear any kind of consequences for generating such condition. On the contrary, representing themselves as protectors of collective, ethno-national interests, in elections they are rewarded by voters trust.
- Level of negative social tendencies such as powerty, unemployment, corruption

etc. is in favor of keeping right wing ideology, where blame for such bad condition in the country is addressed to opponents from other nationality, ethnicity or even international community.

- Election Law of B&H and corresponding legal framework, as well as competent institutions, can not solve abovementioned challenges, due to obvious anomalies of election legislation, undercapacity of Election Commission of B&H, Communication Regulatory Agency of B&H, and other organs responsible for ensuring fair and just elections.
- Political influence on Election Commission of B&H, Communication Regulatory Agency of B&H, media and nongovernmental organizations exist, even though it is hard to prove, due to entangled institutional ambient, internal obstructions, low interest of investigative organs etc.
- Overall ambient favors and even generates negative pre-election campaign and rhetoric, and cases of sanctioning such practice are rare. Political representatives consciously attack constitution and laws, generating dissatisfaction of the voters and inspiring national homogenization and bigotry between entities and nations.
- Utmost negative pre-election rhetoric opposite to rules of Election Law and other relevant domestic and international norms is usual phenomenon, and media even use it for generating sensationalism, atmosphere of fear and clash with political opponents.
- Media play a key role in pre-election campaign, and past insufficiently active role of CRAB&H, along with ECB&H, has partly caused such condition of pre-election process.
- Rules of Procedure and Code of Conduct inside of highest legislative bodies, especially during pre-election period, are often breached without adequate sanction.
- Pre-election rallies of political parties are most often the place of dirtiest pre-election rhetoric, at the same time they are not considered media appearances, and ECB&H and CRAB&H act only based on complaint/notification. Reaction of ECB&H or CRAB&H, even when they receive such complaints, can not be prompt due to complex procedure, due to which oftenly adequate and timely sanctions for breachers of laws and rules are absent.

Finally, it is possible to give few recommendations, which would lead to improvement of existing condition, in the context of need for just and fair elections, as well as ethical behaviour of candidates in pre-election campaign:

- Ensure institutional mechanisms for sanctioning of open attacks by individuals on consitutional order and legislative frame, during pre-election campaign and in general;

- Ensure qualitative upgrading of election legislation so as to correct noted anomalies in order to base pre-election campaign as much as possible on international norms, fair, just and ethical leading of the campaigns;
- Ensure satisfactory capacity of competent institutions and organs for conduct of fair and just elections and protection of constitutional and legislative ambient;
- Ensure neutral position of public emitters in pre-election period, and to the largest possible extent more correct and ethical position of other media including respect of basic principles of justice, balanced reporting and impartiality;
- Ensure as high as possible level of transparency of election process, free participation of citizens and nongovernmental organizations in expressing civic activism, and enable and support independent monitoring of election process which can be executed by domestic civic observers and non-governmental organizations.

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## Summary

### **Bosnia and Herzegovina General Elections, 2010: Analysis of Pre-Election Rhetoric**

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Bosnia and Herzegovina, as a postconflict and transitional country with *sui generis* political system of low efficiency, creates and conducts its politics in a specific ambient of reduced sovereignty and responsibility of domestic institutions and other political subjects. Such political ambient is suitable to proliferation of nationalistic, confrontational and anti-constitutional rhetoric and practices, which reach its peak during period of pre-election campaigns.

Unfinished legislative election framework, purposeful obstruction of international election standards and domestic legislative on behalf of most of political subjects, deficiency of professional and independent media, undeveloped civic society, and politicized and undercapacitated institutions which are involved with subject of regularity of the election process, are the reason for lack of candidate's will for constitutional, legislative and ethical behaviour during pre-election campaign.

Due to this, pre-election campaign of most of political subjects is mainly negative, and not focused on elementary questions of standard of living and priority challenges of state and society (necessary constitutional reforms, Euro-Atlantic integrations, structural economic reforms, unemployment etc.), but on mutual confrontations, stress on big political questions of the status of entities and constituent nations, then on nationalistic rhetorics of negating constitutional and historical facts, and on mutual ungrounded discreditation, which generates atmosphere of fear, national homogenization and searching of the culprit for bad situation in society, inside of other national corpus, and not among own political representatives.

**Key words** Elections, Bosnia and Herzegovina, pre-election campaign, rhetoric, politics, candidates, messages, ethics, behavior, practice;