

Public Abstract

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Title: Kosovo's developing free press: How do newspapers in a transitioning society behave under international supervision and what role do they play in local elections?

This study examined the extent to which political party affiliations affect the news coverage of six daily Kosovar newspapers. The study was conducted following the declaration of independence on February 17, 2008 by the Kosovo Assembly, which was recognized by the majority of Western countries. The study sought to examine the coverage of policies that are dependant on domestic institutions and the role newspapers play in keeping those institutions accountable to the public. Through textual analysis, media framing was discerned based on a comparison between two time periods when different coalition parties were in power. Moreover, the study expanded on the results based on semi-structured interviews with the newspapers editors in chief.

The study results show that the Kosovar daily newspapers fail to keep government fractions to a high degree of accountability. The general tendency was to merely replicate the rhetoric of party members during their election campaigns. Rarely were such claims challenged or did the newspapers reference to the performance of political parties during authority. Accountability was generally sought through party attacks on one another; such frames were subject to the political affiliation of the newspapers.

The study also acknowledges that opportunities for more thorough and informative coverage did exist, and the dailies could have provided more extensive summaries and reviews of the Kosovo government performance. Such good, professional practice was attainable if only the dailies had grasped their role more firmly. The Kosovar media to embrace more aggressive and ethical media practices. Only then will local actors feel pressured to fulfill their claims and gain the support of society.