

РОЗДІЛ 2

ЕМПІРИЧНІ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ СУЧАСНОГО СУСПІЛЬСТВА

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ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS IN POST-SOCIALIST COUNTRIES: THE ROLE OF POLITICAL CONSULTANTS.

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Last 20 years electoral campaigns have become the topic of public and scientific importance while having received a significant attention from the media. There is little debate on whether these campaigns are the fundamental basis of the contemporary version of the electoral democracy. In the process of campaigning the society constitutes and expresses its nature, that is manifested in its culture, norms, myths, etc. Electoral campaigns, as everything in the modern world, require a professional approach, and are institutionalized in the form of a specific political institution with all its attributes and quite a significant professional group emerged and functioning within this institution. This article is an attempt to analyze modern electoral campaigns and the role of political consultants in their process.

Key words: democracy, modernization, elections, electoral campaigns, political consultants.

За последние 20 лет электоральные кампании превратились в тему, постоянно присутствующую в публичном и научном дискурсе и являющуюся неотъемлемым атрибутом полемики в СМИ. Не вызывает сомнений, что эти кампании являются фундаментальной основой современной версии электоральной демократии. В процессе кампаний общество выражает свою сущность, которая проявляется в общественных нормах, культуре, мифах и т.д.. Электоральные кампании, как и всё в современном мире, требуют профессионального подхода. Они институционализированы в виде специфического политического института со всеми его атрибутами и их функционирование обеспечивается довольно значительной профессиональной группой, оформившейся и действующей в рамках данного института. В данной статье делается попытка анализа современных электоральных кампаний и роли, которую играют в них политические консультанты. Эта роль может быть как прогрессивной, так и тормозящей развитие демократических выборов. Эта проблема рассматривается в рамках концепции «американизации» электоральных кампаний. В статье подвергаются анализу два подхода к концепции «американизации» электоральных кампаний: диффузионный и модернизационный.

Ключевые слова: демократия, модернизация, выборы, электоральные кампании, политические консультанты.

За останні 20 років електоральні кампанії перетворилися в тему, що постійно є присутньою в публічному та науковому дискурсах та є невід'ємним атрибутом полеміки в ЗМІ. При цьому, не викликає сумнівів, що ці кампанії є фундаментальною основою сучасної версії електоральної демократії. У процесі кампаній суспільство виражає свою сутність, що проявляється в суспільних нормах, культурі, міфах і т.д. Електоральні кампанії, як і все в сучасному світі, вимагають професійного підходу й оформлені у вигляді специфічного політичного інституту з усіма його атрибутами й досить значною професійною групою, що оформилася й функціонує в рамках даного інституту. У даній статті робиться спроба аналізу сучасних електоральних кампаній та ролі, яку грають у них політичні консультанти. Ця роль може бути як прогресивної, так і тією, що гальмує розвиток демократичних виборів. Ця проблема розглядається в рамках концепції «американізації» електоральних кампаній. У статті піддаються аналізу два підходи до концепції «американізації» електоральних кампаній: дифузійний і модернізаційний.

Ключові слова: демократія, модернізація, вибори, електоральні кампанії, політичні консультанти.

The rituals and protocols by which elected officials seek support and people select their leaders are part of the essential character of a democracy. Electoral practices are one of the fundamental forms through which democratic societies constitute and express their nature, and they are connected reciprocally to the civil, moral, economic, mythic, and other forms that create the public and private faces of every culture. To be sure, many important aspects of society have nothing to do with electoral campaigns, but in a democracy's electoral practices the influence and imprint of much that makes a culture as it is are found, thus, electoral campaigns speak beyond themselves, and it is for this reason that significant changes in a democracy's

electoral processes may reflect and portend related transformations in some of the institutions and relationships that shape nations.

Electoral practices are, of course, dynamic. Change is more or less constant in the customs and practices of seeking office and, in any given country, no election campaign is precisely like any other. But in recent years we have seen the emergence of an at least superficially common pattern in the kinds of innovations in campaigning that have surfaced at an accelerating pace within democracies of all kinds (established democracies with stable political cultures, newly created or restored democracies, and democracies that labor under powerful and potentially destabilizing internal and external tensions).

In proposing the term modernization to describe a wide-ranging ensemble of social and institutional changes that lead to the innovations of modern electoral campaigning, we sought to employ a usage that is fairly conventional and readily understood. For some scholars, however, modernization suggests a linear pattern of development among related institutions and processes that moves inexorably in the same way in every country toward a foreordained conclusion. The term might be taken, as well, as expressing a value-laden preference for modernization over other patterns of social and institutional development. We suggest that modernization undermines the organic relationship between citizens and political parties that, in the traditional view, constitutes the basis of effective democracy. Some of the consequences of modernization, such as the surrender by political parties, to the media and other institutions, of the parties' traditional functions of political socialization and informing the public about political affairs, also seem to be widespread in the transforming countries.

The few international comparative studies published so far contain a vast amount of evidence for the continuing professionalization, personalization and mediatization of political communication in Western Europe [1].

The central topic of this article is the ongoing process of professionalization and internationalization of electioneering and campaign practices in emerging democracies. Only recently, scholars have begun to study the professional norms and standards of a new power elite: the professional political consultants [2]. Prominent figures of the American political consultancy business have worked as overseas consultants outside the United States since the 1970s. In the 1980s they concentrated on Latin America and Western Europe. Since 1989 the former socialist countries of East Central Europe, and since 1993 the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and also the newly democratized countries in Asia and Africa, have become competitive marketplaces for American overseas consultants and a market-driven proliferation of American campaign techniques [3].

Since the 1980s, observers of Western European and Latin American election campaigns have stated that there is a universal process of Americanization, though this concept is defined in many different ways [4; 5; 6]. The global diffusion of a common "Americanized" model has been explained, stressing "imitation, desire to implement new technologies and practices thought to be effective and the influence of American consultants selling their wares in other countries" [7].

However, the advocates of *modernization theory* argue differently. They consider the Americanization of election communication to be the consequence of an ongoing structural change in politics, society and the media system [8; 9; 1; 10]. The fragmentation of the public sphere linked to these changes leads to a higher degree of specialization and professionalization among the actors of political communications [11]. From this point of view, similarities in the practice of election communication such as excessive personalization, a political star system, mass media impression management and an increasing negativity of campaigns, and the coverage thereof, are the consequences of an endogenous change. The supporters of this theory admit that some campaign practices are borrowed from the far more professionalized competition of the United States; the characteristic components of political communication in Europe, Latin America or East Asia, however, are basically retained, they say [12]. Thus, Americanization is seen as a synonym for *modernization* and *professionalization* [13]. Accordingly, what is happening between the United States and Western Europe or Latin America, is a process of *nondirectional* convergence, which results in an increased similarity between the political communication process in media-centered democracies [14; 3; 7; 10].

Table . Two Approaches to the Concept of Americanization

Modernization Approach	Diffusion Approach
<p>Americanization as a consequence of the Modernization of media systems and voter-party relationship</p>	<p>Americanization as a consequence of the Transnational Diffusion and Implementation of US concepts and strategies of electoral campaigning</p>

From the viewpoint of modernization theories, structural changes on the macro-level (media, technologies, social structures) lead to an adaptive behavior on the micro-level (parties, candidates and journalists), resulting in gradual modifications of traditional styles and strategies of political communications. The outcome of these modifications might at first glance be seen as a transnational pattern of uniformity, but after taking into consideration the cultural and historical *path-dependency* of modernization processes it can be assumed that culture- and context-specific factors determine the reaction to changing technological and environmental conditions. On the contrary, the diffusion approach to the phenomenon of

Americanization concentrates on a voluntary proliferation of US-campaign styles. The focus is primarily on the micro-level of entrepreneurial actors, exporting their strategic know-how to foreign contexts by supply- or demand-driven consultancy activities, thus changing and modifying the campaign practice in the respective countries. After carefully differentiating between various long-term technological, structural, cultural and regulatory factors and conscious choices as short-term factors, Gunther and Mughan conclude “that the most decisive determinants of media effects are the strategies and behavior of elites, particularly political elites” [15]. Explaining the ongoing modernization of campaign practices worldwide as partly caused by an elite-driven diffusion of US-campaign styles, it is therefore necessary to take a closer look at the most advanced campaign professionals worldwide: the influential role of American overseas consultants shaping and changing campaign practices on the global political marketplace. The practice of political communication in the United States is regarded as “the cutting edge of electioneering innovation” [11] by international experts. Therefore, it is no exaggeration to say that the American campaign expertise is an international “role model of campaigning” [6]. The transnational diffusion of US-American campaign and marketing techniques is fostered by the internationalization of the campaign consulting business [16; 17; 3]. It is effected via a complex “international network of connections through which knowledge about new campaign practices and their uses is disseminated constantly across national borders by independent consultants for economic reasons, by ideologically kindred political parties for political reasons and by the mass media to aspiring political candidates and interested members of the public worldwide” [7].

American political consultants play a leading role in this ongoing process. The glut in the domestic consultancy business market, the increasingly fierce competition for lucrative consultancy contracts in the United States, as well as an increase in overhead costs for full-service firms, have led top consultants to change into the field of corporate consulting, issue management and public affairs consultancy [18] or trying to tap new markets outside the United States. Presidential elections in Latin America as well as parliamentary elections in Western Europe and the post-socialist polities have meanwhile become attractive business areas for US overseas consultants [19].

Furthermore, Democracy Assistance Programs of organizations such as the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and the Soros Foundation or the International Republican Institute (IRI) are also instrumental in making the American campaign techniques proliferate [18;19]. Within the scope of these programs, leading political consultants are sent to Eastern Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa to familiarize candidates and party managers with the bases of professional political management [18;19]. The role of American consultants in the first democratic election in South Africa 1994 has been discussed in detail [19]. Milosevic’s overthrow in the Serbian presidential election of 2000 may go down in history as the first poll-driven, focus-group-tested “revolution” based on the expertise of American consultants and funded by donor-driven Democracy Assistance Programs (*The Washington Post* December 11, 2000). It was followed then by a number of so called “color revolutions” with “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine being the most recent example. In some cases enormous sums of money are invested in donor-driven elections and a “culture of high campaign spending is spreading to countries that can hardly afford it” [20]. However, not only donor-driven campaigns within the scope of Democracy Assistance Programs contribute to the proliferation of money- and media-driven campaigning, but also the foreign visitor programs of the USIA, during the course of which every year several hundred party operatives and candidates from emerging democracies in Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa can observe the US style of campaigning.

Since the breakdown of the socialist regimes in Eastern Europe and the democratization of the post-socialist systems, East Central Europe and FSU (especially Russia and the Ukraine) have become an expansive political marketplace for American overseas consultants. They have left their footprints in East Central Europe as early as 1990. Their first activity in Russia took place in 1993, when a team of US media consultants produced TV spots for the Yeltsin government. These TV spots “skillfully framed the choice as going backward into the grainy, combative, black-and-white harshness of Communist rule or forward into a sunlit future characterized by blossoming opportunities for children and families” [21]. Approximately one in every two overseas consultants has worked as a campaign consultant in post-socialist countries during the last few years. Parliamentary campaigns in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland, presidential campaigns in Russia, the Ukraine, Romania, Poland and Serbia, but also elections in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia opened up lucrative business areas for dozens of American consultants.

First, there is an enormous demand for the professional know-how of modern media campaigning. Second, in most post-socialist countries it is permitted to buy TV time for political spots and election broadcasts, which complies with the professional role definition of the American media and communication consultants [20; 21].

However, not only consultants but also vendors of campaign technologies, professional pollsters and experts in the field of direct marketing, phone banks and call centers meet interested partners in Eastern Europe, who want to employ high-tech campaign techniques to compensate for the organizational weaknesses of their parties. Despite considerable language barriers, socio-cultural misunderstandings, an infrastructure of campaign headquarters that is often disastrous, and a diffuse and unpredictable electorate, prominent American consultants have managed to establish themselves as key advisors offering

their strategic and technical expertise. “For the adventurous political consultants, emerging democracies are becoming a place to consider” [21].

First democratic elections (*founding elections*) with donor-driven assistance of international organizations, but also demands by local political parties, established new business areas for American overseas consultants. Enormous sums of money spent on election campaigns, well-funded interest groups and international Democracy Assistance Programs have made the emerging democracies a financially attractive political marketplace for foreign political consultants and vendors of campaign technologies.

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