PRIKAZI KNJIGA

BOOK REVIEWS

Otto Eibl and Miloš Gregor (eds)

THIRTY YEARS OF POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

Political marketing as a subdiscipline of political science has recently started to gain academic attention in countries other than those labelled as Western Democracies. While for the Western democracies "free elections were the backbone of their political lives" (p. 416), the countries of the former Eastern bloc "have been seen as the Cinderellas of electoral campaigns" in the early 1990s. The book edited by Otto Eibl and Miloš Gregor, both from the Department of Political Science, Masaryk University, Brno, gives insights into the development of electoral campaigns in eighteen countries divided into four regions. This is also reflected by the structure of the book, which, except from the introductory chapter and the conclusion, contains four parts: *Baltic States*, *Central Europe*, *The Balkans* and *Eastern Europe*, written by thirty-one authors.

The first chapter *A Brief Historical Overview of Political Campaigning: Theories, Concepts and Approaches* defines political marketing within the rapidly changing political landscapes of many countries. It focuses on "the evolution of campaigning in modern democratic states and locates the most important milestones which changed the relationship among political parties and voters across the world in the twentieth century" (p. 2). The focus is mostly on the two concepts, which, according to the editors present an "integral part of processes witnessed in many Central and Eastern Europe countries in connection with the development of campaigning" (p. 10): professionalisation and personalisation. Methodology used in the book by all contributors consists of grading a single professionalisation activity with points, leading to the results which indicate the actual level of professionalisation of a given campaign. The results are presented in the form of comprehensive and organized tables at the end of all country cases under study. Regarding personalisation, the authors followed "the logic of changes in the focus of politics from topics to people and from parties to politicians" (p. 14).

The core four parts follow the same pattern starting with the characteristic of the given region, countries-specific case studies, each accompanied by a brief country overview, most important features of election systems, a review of the most relevant rules and laws related to campaigning, a historical overview of campaigning, the development of the political marketing tools, as well as the biggest current challenges, followed by a short analysis with conclusions for each region (p. vii). The first part deals with the Baltic states, which represent parliamentary republics, stable and pro-Western oriented democracies, with parties running "central campaigns and candidates focusing on their personal campaigns" (p. 84). Research shows that campaigns became more professionalised in the second half of the 1990s, with professionalisation trends rising after 2000 with new political parties. This was followed by higher personalisation. What is indicative is that Baltic political parties use campaign tools very similar to those of other Western democracies, with Lithuania and Latvia applying marketing strategies only before an election. Central Europe represented by the Visegrád Group countries, depicted in the second part of the book, encountered bumping roads in building liberal democracy, especially after the first decade of the twenty-first century. Although they

did not encounter armed conflicts nor strong Russian minority like Baltic states, they experienced changes in the party system and the influence of intra-party changes. At the very beginning of the process, free elections and the establishment of election campaigns were guaranteed, while, afterwards, the new elements in electoral campaigns and a higher degree of professionalisation in the political communications were noticed (p. 168). The early 1990s offered strong personalities with high popularity of political party leaders associated with the regimes' transformation, as well as "enthusiasm for a democratic regime" (p. 168). In the early twenty-first century, campaigns have become more professional with a more significant role of foreign consultants, while the socio-economic issues, which were dominant up to then, were again replaced between these two phases with personalised campaigns. In the region of Central Europe, analysis has also detected the rise of populism. The Balkan region or South East Europe turns out to be the most diverse group of countries with diverse historical, transition and integration patterns, as well as with significant influence of foreign actors, in particular Russia, Turkey, China, the Arab states, the United States, the European Union and the North Atlantic Alliance. Although the region is currently more stable, the consequences of wars and conflicts are reflected on the development and professionalisation of electoral campaigns (p. 344). Some similarities with other observed regions are visible in the form of anti-establishment and right-wing populist movements. The analysis highlights the implementation of political campaign rules, the funding of electoral campaigns, access to the media, legislation, the main communication channels, corruption and migration as the topic of electoral campaigns, as well as the recent problem of hate speech and fake news. The last part entitled *Eastern Europe* would be the most challenging one if it had encompassed all countries from the region. However, "different trajectories of their various statehoods and political communities would not provide much in terms of generalising" (p. 351). Therefore, only three countries were analysed: Russia, Moldova and Ukraine, which opted for different political systems settings. The following patterns have been identified in all countries: influence of oligarchs and their ties to political parties, many formal equality campaigning rules being violated, biased media, and misuse of administrative, public or state resources by incumbent candidates and parties (pp. 410-411). Because of the elections being just partially free, it is quite challenging to address the professionalisation of election campaigns and political communication. The entire political system is personalised with voters' focus being mainly on candidates. What is even more alarming according to the authors is the use of negative campaigning, and in some cases even police investigations against opposition politicians (p. 412).

The case studies presented offer very significant insights into political systems of the analysed countries, their changing political climate, transition and obstacles experienced during the process and, most importantly, the development of the use of political campaigning and marketing techniques. This book represents a handbook for anyone who is willing to explore similarities and differences of the analysed election patterns and confront them with those of Western democracies: laws and rules governing electoral campaigns, financing, tools, strategies and communication channels used. It outlines the history and the present state of political marketing in each country of the former Communist Bloc. Thirty years of political campaigning in Central and Eastern Europe with contributions by thirty-one scholars makes this book a stepping stone in exploring

political marketing and communication tools used in election campaigning in these countries which were neglected by previous research.

Đana Luša

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In the book *Social theory after the internet: media, technology and globalization,* the author Ralph Schroeder claims that new media can not be studied as a part of two dominant traditions in the study of communication – mass and interpersonal communication. Instead, he suggests the principle between the two that has to be recognized since it defines the practice – for example, user behaviour on Facebook, where people in most cases do not interact one-on-one, nor broadcast their messages to masses. The book is organized into seven sections.

The first section, *The internet in theory*, begins with the thought that although digital media have influenced so many things in society, in theoretical terms, there is little agreement on how to observe these changes. Schroeder explains that the question this book tries to resolve is: "at what point must a contemporary theory of society take into account that the internet plays a significant role in social change" (p. 5)? The main focus is on the three determinants: economy, politics and culture. Relevant processes are global. Yet, this does not mean that significant differences between countries can not be identified. Therefore, the study concentrates on four countries: the United States, Sweden, India and China.

The second section, *Media systems, digital media and politics*, consists of five chapters. The first chapter, *Theories of digital media and politics*, defines, among others, the well-known agenda-setting theory as important in understanding the dynamics in old and new media interplay. The next chapter is entitled *Media systems in Sweden and America*. As Schroeder notes, the main contrast between the two lies in the market-dominated system which is characteristic of the United States on the one hand, and a tradition of public-service media in Sweden on the other. The third chapter, *Digital media and politics in Sweden and America*, focuses on specific tools, like Facebook and Twitter, and their use in politics. The author cites Bimber (2014), who argues that the Obama campaigns of 2008 and 2012 were the best examples of successful voters targeting up to date (p. 37). Following the same pattern, the last two chapters in this section, *Media systems in China and India* and *Digital media and politics in China and India*, provide relevant comparison of countries that, put together, represent over a third of the world's online population.

Digital media and the rise of right-wing populism is the third section of the book. It introduces and defines populism, a political phenomenon that functions very efficiently on digital platforms. The four countries are the subject of discussion in this section as well. Schroeder argues that in China and in America populism lacks strong organization, while in India and Sweden there are organized bases. However, in all four cases, social media have been used in order to avoid the gatekeepers of traditional media.

The following two sections, *The internet in everyday life I: sociability* and *The internet in everyday life II: seeking information*, thematize how and for what purposes people in the four countries use social media. The first of the two sections is divided into six chapters: *Tethered togetherness*, *The spread of social media*, *Sociability and social divides*, *Visual co-presence*, *Alone or together* and *Globalizing sociability*. Here Schroeder reveals some interesting facts concerning interaction with content posted on social media. For example, he cites Doner (2015) who established that in India and China many non-instrumental uses of the mobile internet are important as much as usage linked to economic activity and the like. On the other hand, in Sweden and America many people see mobile access as an addition to other ICT uses, say tablets (p. 88). Of course, this issue is related to general internet penetration rates that differ in India and China and other regions.

As it is mentioned, the fifth section concentrates on seeking information on the internet. The author suggests that the Web should be understood as an infrastructure for information. Nowadays, information seeking tends to be a routine activity. However, notable differences emerge regarding questions such as: "How do people use search engines, and what kind of information do they seek?". The final chapter in this segment, *Information seeking and gatekeeping*, underlines the role of users in shaping search engines, but also brings up the question of minorities and their rights, which could easily be harmed if the simple majority rule is to be applied.

The sixth section is entitled *Big data: shaping knowledge, shaping everyday life*. As Schroeder says (p. 127), this part of the book covers two issues: how media research has advanced with big data, and how the use of big data knowledge is shaping media uses and has broader social consequences. In terms of media studies, big data can help to make findings more quantitative, and thus precise. Social context is here related to usage of statistics in order to target audiences, not only for commercial, but also policymaking interests. Schroeder highlights Sweden, a country where system of personal identifiers ('person numbers') helps the government organize healthcare, national statistics or taxation.

The final, seventh, section is *Futures*. It is organized in nine chapters. Within an interesting chapter, titled *Separate changes and limited impact*, Schroeder states that social theory must take the internet into account (p. 166). That has to be done since the internet extends the process of mediatization of society. These forces are taking place in three directions: digital media enable new political actors to gain visibility, people become increasingly linked to each other and to information and audiences are being targeted more. However, traditional media still play their important role as a source of many items of information.

This book has a lot to offer. It summarizes some of the key concepts regarding dynamics between new media and society, with special focus on the three domains (politics, culture and economy) and the four countries (the United States, Sweden, China and India). Although some modern changes are universal, it is very important to understand the complexity of various contexts and outcomes it generates. That is the best way to help media studies go forward.

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