

Aspects of Electoral Campaign from Economic Point of View

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ABSTRACT

In the general elections in Albania held in June of 2009 were observed several elements which demonstrate the transfer of methods and techniques used in presidential campaigns in America in the realization of the electoral campaign for at least three main parties as a Democratic Party, Socialist Party and the Socialist Movement for Integration. Like private organizations, for political parties was too important product marketing to voters. Regardless if it's a private organization or political party every offer starts by understanding the customer needs. Political organizations can not exempt. Main parties shaped their communication policies to reflect what public opinion polls identified as the priorities of the electorate like employment, economy, poverty, corruption and inflation. Negative advertising have started to use as a main tool in electoral campaign from political parties in Albania. The commitment of large value funds has known the roof in recent elections. The problem of disclosure and donor of funds were not resolved, and discussions for income and expenses of the parties are going to be politicized every time.

Keywords: Electoral Campaign, Campaign Financing, Negative Campaigning, Poverty, Corruption,

AMERICANIZATION OF ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN IN ALBANIA JUNE 2009

In the general elections in Albania held in June of 2009 were observed several elements which demonstrate the transfer of methods and techniques used in presidential campaigns in America in the realization of the electoral campaign for at least three main parties as a Democratic Party, Socialist Party and the Socialist Movement for Integration. Most visible elements of these techniques related were poll-based campaigning, personalization of campaigning, mediatization of the election, intensive use of consultants, etc.,.

Table 1: Election results compared with recent polling results for the three companies.

	Alliance of change	Union for change	Socialist alliance for integration	Freedom Pole
Election results	46.90%	45.34%	5.56%	1.82%
Zogby International	41.0%	42.0%	4.0%	2.0%
Deviation	5.90%	3.34%	1.56%	-0.18%
Gani bobi	42.1%	36.5%	3.1%	0.6%
Deviation	4.80%	8.84%	2.46%	1.22%
IPR Marketing	47.9%	44.40%	6.0%	1.5%
Deviation	-1.00%	0.94%	-0.44%	0.32%

Unlike previous campaigns in these elections was noticed an increasing number of media companies that contracted foreign well known companies in the field of surveys on behalf of these media polls completed in different periods before the official opening of the campaign, during the campaign and last day of elections. Main medias were included like TV Klan, Top Channel, Ora News that contracted respectively Gani Bobi, Zogby and IPR Marketing.

Despite accuracy in predicting the final outcome where deviation presented in the table below has some benefits that gave polls for political parties participating.

Democratic and Socialist parties shaped their communication policies to reflect what public opinion polls identified as the priorities of the electorate like employment, economy, poverty, corruption and inflation. The parties understood that the emphasis should be put off the undecided electorate who can do the difference in final outcome of elections.

One other very visible element of electoral campaign americanization is the personalization of campaign. Even more than ever because of changing the electoral code by establishing regional proportional electoral system with closed lists made that in this campaign to have personalization of campaign and specifically to the three main leaders in the Democratic Party Sali Berisha, Edi Rama in the Socialist Party and Ilir Meta to Socialist Party for Integration. This was noticed in every element of the campaign as in meetings, publicity spots, television programs, brochures, where the emphasis put on the name of the leader of each party and not to party or team.

The media play a crucial role in elections today, as intermediaries between parties and voters. Television, and particularly the private channels, is the preeminent medium here in Albania. The

National Council of Radio and Television (NCRT) has currently awarded broadcast licenses to three commercial TV stations with national coverage, 69 local TV stations and 50 cable TV stations.¹ Due to the lack of systematic and reliable audience research, the real market share of individual broadcasters is not known. Twenty-one daily newspapers compete for a total readership believed to be less than 60,000. Most of the media in Albania, visual or written almost appeared open support for their preferred party if we put the minutes available even in the tone used. According to preliminary report by media monitoring Observation Mission of OSCE / ODIHR, three main stations in the country have favored in content Socialist Party during the campaign for elections June 28. So News 24, in 64% of broadcasting time for the Socialist Party has spoken to the positive tone, while 39% of the time the Democratic Party has reserved convey a negative tone. Also, Top Channel has favored the Socialist Party with 58% positive reflection, while the Democratic Party received 39% negative reflection at the time reserved for it. Although more neutral in tone of coverage of the Socialist Party, the Vision Plus has reflected negatively Democratic Party with 46%. Finally, TV Klan and VAT have been more positive in reflection to the Democratic Party, which have also given much more time compared with the Socialist Party, without being negative, however, in coverage of activities reserved for the Socialist Party. Also in the spectrum of print media was noticed the support for Edi Rama, as for example from the gazeta "Shekulli", "Gazeta Shqiptare", "Shqip", "Korrieri" and MAPO magazine, while more reserved to Rama was the largest daily in the market, the newspaper "Panorama". Party communication strategies also relied heavily on American-style advertising spots: short, appealing to the emotions, many of them negative. The Internet, facebook, sms, email, youtube, finally, provided additional means of communication. Informative, frequently

¹ See NCRT: www.kkrt.gov.al.

updated sites allowed the parties to establish a two-way interpersonal dialogue with the citizens and thus in these elections make the first significant steps towards 'electronic democracy'.

Intensive use of consultants was another important element in electoral campaign in June 2009 in Albania. The three major parties employed well-known mostly American companies to take care about the every detail of their campaign. The consultants may have remained behind the scenes, but communications consultants nonetheless played a leading role in the 2008 elections. Image-makers, spin doctors, advertisers, campaign directors, pollsters and other specialists formed what Scammell described as the 'war room' that plotted out the party's communication policy, advised candidates continuously on how to present themselves and what to say, and set up events for maximum media impact and exposure. These professionals essentially replaced the party officials that used to perform these duties. The outcome for Albania is that gradually the power to make decisions and trace policy appears to be shifting from party officials to professional marketers and public relations specialists.

NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE CAMPAIGNING

Negative advertising have started to use as a main tool in electoral campaign from political parties in Albania. Political advertising is now the most dominant form of communication between politicians and their publics (Kaid 1997). Political advertising is thus defined as the process whereby a candidate and/or party will pay for a form of non-personal communication that promotes their superior attributes or policies over those of their opponents and that is designed to elicit specific behaviours, such as voting, and/or increased awareness of the

candidate or party. Negative political advertising serves a number of campaign functions (Johnson-Cartee and Copeland, 1991):

- 1) Creates awareness about candidates and their issue positions;
- 2) Helps voters in setting issue priorities on their political agenda;
- 3) Increases interest in the campaign by stimulating interpersonal and public discussion of it and by generating media coverage;
- 4) Increases voters' evaluation of the sponsoring candidate while decreasing it for the targeted candidate;
- 5) Ensures that voter evaluations of the candidates become polarised and thus the electoral choice becomes more simple.

Political advertising thus aims to ensure that the public is aware of an opponent's weaknesses whilst promoting the sponsoring candidate's strengths and policy differences (O'Cass 2002; Pinkleton 1998; Meirick 2002; Roddy & Garramone 1988). Candidates can control the message sent to the target audience and its format, and can associate the sponsoring candidate with positive images and their opponent with negative images (Roddy & Garramone 1988; Christ, Thorson & Caywood 1994; Niffenegger 1989). As political products are usually associated with a personality, several researchers have suggested that the most effective means of highlighting differences between one political product and another is to use advertising that associates negative images with opposing candidates (Roddy & Garramone 1988; Lau et.al. 1999; Pinkleton, Um & Austin 2002; Meirick 2002; James & Hensel 1991; Sorescu & Gelb 2000). Over time, political candidates' use of this advertising has evolved and led researchers to identify three types of advertising: attack advertising; comparative advertising, and negative advertising.

Each type is different to the other, and can be adapted to any stage of a campaign (Pinkleton 1997; Lau et.al. 1999).

- Attack political advertising involves an aggressive, one-sided assault designed to draw attention to an opponent's weaknesses in either character or issue positions. It is the most malicious form of negative advertising (Pinkleton 1997; Johnson-Cartee & Copeland 1991, Merritt 1984; Pfau & Kenski 1990; Surlin & Gordon 1977).
- Comparative political advertising identifies a competing candidate and, by drawing comparisons, implies inferiority and degrades prospective voters' perceptions of the targeted candidate (Merritt 1984; Pinkleton 1997; Rossiter & Percy 1987). Comparative messages may use opposing candidates' records, experiences, or issue positions either to communicate negative information about these or to imply the sponsoring candidate's superiority (Gronbeck 1985; Pfau & Kenski 1990; Salmore & Salmore 1989; Rossiter & Percy 1987).
- Negative political advertising assaults a targeted candidate's image or position. Negative advertisements can be defined as those that only present negative information about a competing candidate (Meirick 2002). Negative advertisements can be broken down into subsets based on whether they dealt primarily with issues or images (Johnson-Cartee & Copeland 1991).

Related with negative campaigning in Albania some evidence can be shown:

1. Candidates who expect to lose will employ more negative campaigning. In general election 2005 former chairman Socialist party Fatos Nano followed a negative

campaigning against challenger for Prime Minister Sali Berisha. He focused on the events of 1997 and the danger to return Berisha in government. Berisha avoided negativist debate, although with great difficulty. Also Sali Berisha has used negative campaigning in the local elections 2007 against Edi Rama. Knowing from polls that Edi Rama was advanced he used a aggressive negative campaigning when one of them was presentation of pictures Edi Rama nudo in the massive media and internet.

2. Challengers facing an incumbent will use more negative campaigning in the mostly cases. In the last general elections the Socialist Party used more negative campaigning than Democratic Party (DP). Democratic Party held in most of the time a positive campaigning by highlighting the achievements of government during four years of governance. Socialist Party used more negative campaign highlighting the growing problems, failures and scandals of the Democratic Party's government, while the SMI was based more on an issue that the economic crisis, as well as a leading political force wanting to portray as a man with a plan.
3. Candidates with relatively less resources will employ more negative campaigning. In this case we can mention the G99 Party which most of the events, activities, and advertisings were based to show to electorate the Democratic Party weakness.
4. Candidates whose opponents engage in negative campaigning will respond with some negative campaigning as well. In this case we see that mostly in the last days of campaigning when a party use negative campaigning the opponent is going to follow.

FINANCING OF ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN IN ALBANIA

Financing as one the most important elements of an electoral campaign is emerged more and more as an important factor. 18-year history of the Albanian electoral campaigns has recognized an increase in giant steps to their costs, especially the two main parties.

Electoral code prepared for the general election campaign of 2009 has set the way and opportunities as a political party that could provide funding sources. Based on the experience of European countries to code are predicted all possible circumstances and legal sanction quantitative limits and boundaries of resources for financing the election campaign of June 2009. In Sections 87-91 of the election code are sanctioned rules for public sources, private and auditing of campaign funding by political parties. But the financing of political parties still faces problems in its implementation. Taking into consideration the controversial level of informal economy in Albania that ranges from 30% - 55%, and the politicization of the process of auditing the finances of political parties true power of the code remains to financing political entities from state budget funds. Even there have determinations which were found to not apply the rules. Thus, for example, under article 89 of the electoral code in point 3 / b is stoped providing funds on account of political parties by legal or if any shareholder exercises his activity in the field of media. In fact monitors of campaign whether pulic or non-public found not

a little time by the media excesses of financing political parties different in kind funds (publicity). Problems in the implementation of election code were run and a very important point for monitoring and auditing process of financing political parties. The main source and one of the main ways that the electoral code provides for the financing, bank account number, should be declared at least three days after the start of the campaign. But up until the election day only 4 parties (SP, DP, SMI and G99) had stated their number of bank account in CEC. This not implemented code in the first moments of the campaign was preceded its implementation problems and long and after being overshadowed many facts regarding the finances of political parties.

Transparency of political party funding sources has never been complete. You can say that the problem declaring party financing source remained the same in the last general elections. Currently, although the process has months that have finished, information on the finances of political parties is incomplete. The data provide only party financing figures from the state budget and has no party to give information on funds that have benefited from donors. Violation of election code at this point and other problems identified with party funding make necessary that audit process have to be preceded by a monitoring process step by step of private funds collection by political parties.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it could fairly be argued that, in spite of the socio-political and legal differences, Albania's 2008 general election were strongly Americanized, at least with regard to the three

main parties. This is evident particularly on the strategic planning and campaign levels. Most visible elements of these techniques related were poll-based campaigning, personalization of campaigning, mediatization of the election, intensive use of consultants, etc.,. Unlike previous campaigns in these elections was noticed an increasing number of media companies that contracted foreign well known companies in the field of surveys on behalf of these media polls completed in different periods before the official opening of the campaign, during the campaign and last day of elections. The media play a crucial role in elections today, as intermediaries between parties and voters. Television, and particularly the private channels, is the preeminent medium here in Albania. Intensive use of consultants was another important element in electoral campaign in June 2009 in Albania. The three major parties employed well-known mostly American companies to take care about the every detail of their campaign. Negative advertising have started to use as a main tool in electoral campaign from political parties in Albania. Political advertising is now the most dominant form of communication between politicians and their publics (Kaid 1997). Related with negative campaigning in Albania candidates who expect to lose will employ more negative campaigning, challengers facing an incumbent will use more negative campaigning in the mostly cases, candidates with relatively less resources will employ more negative campaigning, candidates whose opponents engage in negative campaigning will respond with some negative campaigning as well.

Audit of financing of political parties continues to be a not realized process because of his politicization of the moment to start. One such phenomenon occurs not only to large parties but also for small parties or for parties without mandates in parliament. This situation was repeated and in the last election which was due to non implementation of electoral code regarding the financing of political parties and causing a financial cost to the state budget. At

such a point would be recommended appointment of a reliable executive non-public with duty to collect the financial obligations of political parties. Successful realization of this process primarily will promptly resolve financial problems between political parties and state. Secondly it would aware more political parties to be carefully and analyze the details whenever are created new codes and laws related with party finances. Third, collection of obligations for parties that do not have the expected results in elections helps to reduce excessive costs of electoral campaigns by preventing a party to be engaged in campaigns greater than its political and financial potential. This will most focus the right funds for the purpose of financing political parties by helping to increase the efficiency of their use.

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