POLITICAL PARTIES AND DEMOCRACY IN THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL PERSPECTIVES

DEVELOPMENTS IN PARTY COMMUNICATIONS

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PREFACE

A democracy needs strong and sustainable political parties with the capacity to represent citizens and provide policy choices that demonstrate their ability to govern for the public good. With an increasing disconnect between citizens and their elected leaders, a decline in political activism, and a growing sophistication of anti-democratic forces, democratic political parties are continually challenged.

For more than 20 years, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) has worked with political parties around the world to create more open political environments in which citizens can actively participate in the democratic process. As a political party institute, NDI approaches its work from a practical viewpoint, offering assistance to promote parties' long-term organizational development, enhance their competitiveness in local and national elections, and help them participate constructively in government. This support takes many forms, from interactive training and guided practice to consultations and tailored resources that help parties become more open and representative organizations.

In 2004, NDI began producing a series of research papers that examine four topics central to the role and function of political parties. Two of the papers, "Adopting Party Law" and "Political Finance Policy, Parties, and Democratic Development," discuss regulatory mechanisms that directly impact parties, while the other two, "Implementing Intra-Party Democracy" and "Developments in Party Communications," relate to parties' internal governance and organization. Together, these papers aim to provide comparative information on elements of party politics and to shed light on different methods and their associated causes and effects. They also examine some of the implications of a political party's action or strategy in each area.

These papers do not offer theories on party organization or instant solutions for addressing the issues explored. Rather, they consider obstacles to, and possible approaches for, creating more effective and inclusive political parties. They flag potential pitfalls and bumps along the way, and illustrate the practical considerations of which parties may need to be aware. The papers also encourage greater exploration of the many excellent resources, articles, and books cited by the authors.

It is hoped that the *Political Parties and Democracy in Theoretical and Practical Perspectives* series will help readers gain a better understanding of each topic and, in particular, the complexities of the issues addressed. This paper, "Developments in Party Communications," focuses on the communication channels parties can use to strengthen their linkages with citizens, and relates these developments to the communication policies governments can adopt to improve free and fair party competition.

The series is an experiment in blending theoretical knowledge, empirical research, and practical experience. NDI invited four eminent scholars to write the papers and engaged a range of people—including party leaders, democracy practitioners, NDI staff members, and other noted academics—in every stage of the process, from developing the initial terms of reference to reviewing outlines and drafts. NDI is indebted to a large number of people who helped bring this series to fruition, particularly the authors who took part in a cumbersome, collaborative process and graciously accepted feedback and guidance, and the project's consultant, Dr. Denise Baer. Special appreciation is due to NDI Senior Program Officer Victoria Canavor, who managed the project from its inception.

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DEVELOPMENTS IN PARTY COMMUNICATIONS

Since the outset of the global "third wave" of democratization in the early 1970s, political development in transitional and consolidating democracies has focused principally on three general goals: fostering free and fair competitive elections held among multiple parties and candidates; building civic society, with programs designed to assist grassroots organizations, citizen advocacy groups, and independent media; and strengthening the core institutions of the state, by encouraging independent judiciaries, effective legislatures, and efficient bureaucracies.[1]

Far less emphasis, however, has been placed on developing effective political parties. But the role of political parties has long been essential to the functioning of modern, representative democracy. And at the outset of the twenty-first century, the specific role of *communications* has never been more essential to the functioning of political parties. Strong party-based communications provide vital avenues for public participation, structure citizens' electoral choices, and connect leaders and elected officials around common programs. This paper focuses on the development of the most important communication channels that parties can use to strengthen their links with citizens, and relates these developments to the most important communication policies that governments can adopt to improve free and fair party competition.

The rapid pace of technological development today means that party leaders must continually reconsider their communications strategies. Those who exploit new technologies in innovative ways ahead of their rivals often find that this helps them gain new constituencies or achieve greater credibility among existing supporters. Developing direct channels of communication is especially important in emerging democracies, as it allows parties to speak directly to supporters, independently of the filter of potentially hostile or indifferent news media. Indeed, effective party communications are rightly considered important tools of democratic development. To the extent that parties in emerging democracies can communicate with and persuade more citizens of their message, they not only increase their capacity to earn voting support but they also improve the vitality of electoral politics itself—by developing party accountability, engaging newly mobilizing sectors, promoting new communications technologies, and strengthening party competition.

THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF PARTIES

There are of course divergent views about the appropriate role and function of political parties. Current advocates of "participatory," "direct," "deliberative," or "strong" democracy often regard parties with considerable suspicion, on the grounds that citizens should discuss issues and determine priorities within each community, "uncontaminated" by partisan bias. This perspective is hardly new; as far back as the eighteenth century, Madison and Rousseau viewed party organizations as "sinister interests" prone to undermining, perverting, or usurping the will of the majority.[2] Yet in reality direct forms of decision making—such as referenda, initiatives, and community town hall meetings—can only ever play a limited role in determining policy for and governing mass societies. At the level of the nation-state, political parties are indispensable to the practical workings of government. Indeed, without parties, modern representative democracy is simply unworkable.[3]

Political parties can serve multiple functions. They are necessary to build and aggregate support among broad coalitions of citizens' organizations and interest groups; to integrate multiple conflicting demands into coherent policy programs; to select and train legislative candidates and political

leaders; to provide voters with choices among governing teams and policies; and, if elected to office, to organize the process of government and stand collectively accountable for their actions in subsequent contests. Representative democracy is impossible without multiparty competition. Political parties accordingly function uniquely and constitute a cornerstone of democratic society. The long list of their potential functions can be summarized under five key headings: (1) the integration and mobilization of citizens; (2) the articulation and aggregation of interests; (3) the formulation of public policy; (4) the recruitment of political leaders; and (5) the organization of parliament and government.[4]

Given the central role of political parties in representative democracy, along with the increasing importance of communications to the functioning of political parties, what can be done to strengthen their capacities to communicate more effectively? This paper identifies two broad, complimentary strategies. The first suggests how political parties can improve their capacity to communicate with supporters and the general public. And the second suggests how governments can develop communication policies through appropriate democratic reforms within each country to improve freedom of the media and to produce fair regulation of party competition.

CHANNELS OF PARTY COMMUNICATION

The stages and primary channels of party communications are illustrated in **Figure 1**, on the opposite page.

The Context of Communication

Parties' communication environments are determined by a number of factors: the structure of the mass media, including the composition of the newspaper market and readership; the range of private sector and public service audiovisual channels; the size of the audience reached by newspapers, television, and radio; and the diffusion of new information and communication technologies, such as the Internet and even mobile telephones. The context is also determined by communication policies—which set out the legal regulation of political communications, especially during election campaigns—exemplified by the rules

concerning party fundraising and expenditure, campaign advertising, political broadcasts, and freedom of the media. Questions of social structure also bear importantly on how parties communicate. Literacy rates and levels of access to mass media, for example, influence whether parties must rely on face-to-face meetings or can reach electors via newspapers, television, or radio.

Within such environments, parties can formulate and develop their specific communication objectives. When planning these, parties must consider a range of questions—for example, what issue agendas and public policies they want to prioritize; what party images and leadership messages they seek to convey; what groups and sectors they want to target; and what channels they can use. Party messages can be transmitted through different types of communication channels, *direct* and *indirect.*

Types of Communication Channels

Direct channels of communication are those that party organizations control. Examples include local branch meetings, regional or national party conferences, local campaign rallies, candidate debates, town hall meetings, traditional leadership speeches, and whistle-stop tours. Parties also use a range of publications bearing official symbols, logos, and slogans—such as newsletters, pamphlets, banners, stickers, badges, posters, flags, and yard-signs—as well as periodically issuing longer policy documents and, at the outset of election campaigns, official party manifestos.

Parties may also use local canvassing operated by members, volunteers, or paid activists seeking to contact voters—an especially common technique when contests are held in single-member or small multimember districts. The use of political advertisements—such as billboards, paid newspaper, radio, or TV ads, and unpaid party political broadcasts—where legally allowed, is also important. Another communications venue for parties is television coverage of gavel-to-gavel legislative debates through dedicated public service channels, such as C-SPAN in the U.S., or continuous coverage of party conferences, as in the U.K. Newer forms of information and communication technologies are playing growing roles, as well—especially Internet and intranet websites, activist weblogs ("blogs"), and e-mail networks. In

Political Parties and Democracy in Theoretical and Practical Perspectives

FIGURE 1: CHANNELS OF PARTY COMMUNICATION

CONTEXT	PARTY ORGANIZATIONS	PEOPLE-INTENSIVE CHANNELS	PUBLIC OPINION
Structure of the Mass Media		Party Meetings Local Rallies Pamphlets Canvassing Speeches	Information
Legal Regulation of Parties		**BROADCASTING CHANNELS** Newspapers Magazines Television Radio Paid Ads	Persuasion
Social Structure		**INTERNET CHANNELS** News Websites Party Websites Group E-mail	Mobilization

Feedback Loop

general, direct channels are usually most effective at connecting with and mobilizing party activists, supporters, and sympathizers, all of whom are relatively highly predisposed toward the party to begin with. Direct channels are also effective at reaching the more attentive sectors of the general public, media professionals in particular.

To reach broader audiences, including undecided, wavering, or floating voters, political parties rely heavily on indirect (or "mediated") channels—so named simply because parties do not control them directly. Indirect channels include regular press conferences, press releases or news briefs, leadership interviews, participation in leadership debates, opinion and editorial commentary, write-in campaigns to newspapers and phone-in campaigns to talk radio, and the development of periodic policy launches. These techniques are all designed to get party messages out through newspaper

coverage, magazines, radio or television news, current affairs programs, and documentary films. Parties also try to shape their messages on websites controlled by the media, policy advocacy networks, and public interest groups.

Indirect communication channels are indispensable, since they reach a wider audience beyond parties' smaller circles of supporters and activists. Journalistic coverage, for example, provides a filtering mechanism that is often regarded by the public as a more trustworthy, reliable, and authoritative source of information than more partisan channels. In using the mass media, however, parties are obviously more restricted in their control, since they have to work with journalists, broadcasters, editors, and news executives, who process party messages according to independent frameworks of presentation and analysis.

Together, direct and indirect channels of communication

link party organizations internally (or vertically) among their members, activists, and officials, as well as externally (or horizontally) by connecting party leaders and representatives with the electorate and other political groups.

Parties communicate with the aim of informing, persuading, and mobilizing public opinion. They provide the public with information about their policies, leadership, activities, and principles and also seek to persuade the public and thereby influence favorable attitudes toward their issue concerns, records, and policy proposals. Parties aim to mobilize members, activists, and electors, as well, to "get out the vote" and to generate support through fundraising, recruiting volunteers, and expanding memberships.

Public Feedback

Party communication is often seen as a one-way flow from parties to the public. In a democracy, however, parties also seek to learn more about the public's policy concerns, issue priorities, and political preferences—as illustrated by the feedback loop shown in Figure 1. This figure represents the interactive, or "bottom-up," flow of communications that allows parties to develop their policies and fine-tune their messages in light of the public's responses. To learn about public opinion, and respond to public concerns, parties may conduct outreach via community meetings, "meet the people" leadership tours, members' "surgeries," interactive websites, opinion polls, or focus groups. Parties may also provide feedback channels through which grassroots members, activists, and local officials can participate in policy debates, vote on conference motions, and develop the official party platform. Parties can thereby mobilize get-out-the-vote drives, generate party support, encourage membership activism, provide information about their policies and leaders, and learn about public concerns and priorities.

The way of understanding the main stages in the party-communication process illustrated in Figure 1 raises a number of questions about how the components of this process fit together. In particular: Are direct channels, such as local canvassing and town hall rallies, still important today compared with political coverage as carried in editorial columns or on evening television news shows? Are parties availing themselves of new channels for interactive communication afforded by the Internet, and do these channels reach significant numbers of undecided voters? How do these channels vary by region, country, or party? For example, do major parties in poorer developing countries continue to use face-to-face voter contact, while the major parties in affluent nations have increasingly moved their communications activities online? And what are the consequences—for party finances, the role of the news media, and civic engagement—of the changes that have occurred in the major channels of political communications?

The Main Types of Party-Communication Channels

Parties can communicate through three main channels—namely traditional people-intensive campaigns, modern broadcasting campaigns, and Internet campaigns, as **Table 1**, on the opposite page, indicates.

The role of traditional people-intensive forms of party-campaign communications, such as local rallies and door-to-door canvassing, has come under debate. Many accounts have noted a decline in the use of these techniques in post-industrial societies and a simultaneous growth in reliance on television news. Studies suggest that these changes have been accompanied by a weakening of the role of party members and activists, and a growing professionalization of campaign communications through the use of media managers, press officers, marketing and advertising experts, survey analysts, and political consultants. Recent developments include parties' widespread adaptation to newer information and communication technologies—notably party websites, which started to develop in the mid-1990s, alongside the growing use of mobile phones, fax machines, text messages, e-mail, and, most recently, activist weblogs. Accounts have interpreted these developments as representing a "rise of political marketing," whose techniques have been borrowed from the private sector, or the "Americanization of campaigning," emulating patterns originating in the United States.

Many parties today, at any rate, use all these forms of communication simultaneously, with newer, interactive technologies providing some of the traditional advantages

TABLE 1: CHANNELS OF PARTY-CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATIONS

	Traditional People-Intensive Channels	Modern Broadcasting Channels	Internet Channels
Predominant Era in Established Democracies	Mid-19th century–1950s	Early 1960s–late 1980s	1990s+
Party Campaign Organization	Local and decentralized party volunteers	Nationally coordinated with greater professionalization	Nationally coordinated but with decentralized targets, use of volunteers and paid party workers
Direct Channels	Local rallies and public meetings, whistle-stop leadership tours, candidate debates, hustings and speeches, posters and billboards, leaflets, flags, stickers, badges/rosettes	Daily press conferences, controlled photo opportunities, paid TV ads and party political broadcasts, targeted direct mail	E-mail, online discussion groups, party intranets, activist weblogs
Indirect Channels	Partisan newspapers and election radio broadcasts	Television broadcasting through news and current affairs programs on the major channels	Television narrowcasting through more specialized channels (for example, CNN, C-SPAN), talk radio, media and policy advocacy websites
Campaign Preparations	Short-term, ad hoc	Long campaign	Permanent campaign with the extension of news management to routine politics and government
Central Coordination	Party leaders	Central party headquarters, some specialist advisors, more professional news management	Party "war rooms" and greater use of professional consultants, pollsters
Public Feedback	Doorstep canvassing and local rallies	Occasional opinion polls	Regular opinion polls, focus groups, e-mails, and interactive websites
Costs	Low budget	Moderate	Higher costs for professional consultants

of people-intensive campaigns. How rapidly these communications have been adapted varies substantially among parties, even within the same country; among campaigns held at local, regional, and national levels; and among older and newer democracies.

Traditional people-intensive types of campaigns display three main characteristics: (1) The campaign organization is based on direct forms of interpersonal communication among candidates and citizens at local levels, with short-term, ad hoc planning by the party leadership. (2) In the news media, newspapers sympathizing with different parties provide ways for them to get their message out to the general public. And (3) the electorate is often anchored by strong social cues and party loyalties, with a majority of people voting for the same party over successive contests.

Typically, in traditional people-intensive campaigns, local or regional party organizations concentrate on distributing leaflets, pamphlets, banners, flags, and stickers; targeting, contacting, and mobilizing electors; planning campaign expenditures and the deployment of volunteers; and generally providing all the local or regional machinery necessary for linking candidates with their

supporters. Local party communication relies heavily on face-to-face interactions among armies of volunteers. For citizens, these campaigns are essentially local-active, meaning that most activity is concentrated within local communities, conducted through relatively demanding activities such as attending rallies, talking with canvassers and candidates, and going to local party meetings. Communications in such campaigns are largely interpersonal, supplemented by the messages and party images conveyed by local posters, partisan-leaning newspapers, and radio or TV airwaves.

> *"Today, traditional people-intensive forms of campaign communication have essentially been supplemented, not replaced. In electoral systems where politicians compete in multimember seats with others from the same party, local campaigning tends to remain particularly important."*

People-intensive campaigns were most common in established democracies during the 1950s, immediately prior to the rise of television. But people-intensive modes of communication continue to play important roles today, especially in subnational contests—such as early caucuses and primaries in U.S. presidential races, as well as elections predicated on single-member districts or small regional-party lists, where candidates seek to make personal contact with voters. In newer democracies also, parties have been able to build up significant mass memberships and strong party loyalties on the basis of enduring social cues. The African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa is a major example. By contrast, people-intensive communication is less common in, for example, parties that remain essentially leadership factions without mass-membership bases, attracting few local activists or voting loyalists; in electoral systems using large regional lists; or

in large districts (such as in the Senate race in California) where candidate-voter contact remains uncommon. In these circumstances, other communications channels often prove more effective.

Modern broadcasting campaigns typically use broadcast media to convey the same message to all voters, in contrast to "narrowcast" messages delivered more privately to targeted groups. Where broadcasting campaigns are party-based, they are highly capital-intensive, with the message generally coordinated at the central-party level by political leaders advised by external professional consultants. In such campaigns, parties tend to communicate their core messages, leadership speeches, and election events primarily through the national television news media. Broadcasting campaigns also tend to see electorates become increasingly decoupled from party and group loyalties. The strategy for politicians and professional advisors in these contexts is to conduct opinion polls; design advertisements; schedule leadership tours, news conferences, and photo opportunities; handle the press; and battle to dominate the nightly television news. For citizens, broadcast campaigns tend to make the elections a more passive experience, since the main focus of the campaign is now on television, meaning that most voters become more distant and disengaged spectators in the process.

Lastly, Internet campaigns are those where coteries of professional consultants specializing in advertising, public opinion, marketing, and strategic news management vie with politicians themselves for importance within parties. In such campaigns, these consultants tend to coordinate grassroots activity very tightly and, ultimately, when their clients are elected, to assume influential roles within government, running "permanent campaigns," as ongoing political public relations efforts are now termed. The news media tends meanwhile to be relatively fragmented in Internet campaigns, with more complex communications environments, composed of multiple channels, outlets, and levels, each of which has highly specialized "niche" audiences. While the Internet campaign as a voter contact method is limited to communication-rich environments, even in emerging democracies, new information and communication technologies—including websites, e-mail, listservs, and weblogs—play a growing role for all parties: among other

things, as a way of linking leaders, candidates, activists, and supporters interactively. The electorate, meanwhile, tends to become more "dealigned" in its voting choices. For some citizens, the new technologies may resemble a return to the traditional interactivity of people-intensive campaigns, as the new forms of communication potentially allow for greater dialogue among citizens and party officials.

The dominant features of these strategies can be expected to vary from one context to another. It is commonly claimed that party campaigns in many established democracies are abandoning the traditional staples of party rallies, volunteer canvassing, and personal contacting in favor of either professionally run media campaigns focused on television news and advertising or Internet campaigns. But it seems more accurate to say that party communications are now everywhere arrayed in one way or another from the people-intensive to the technology-intensive ends of the spectrum, even in countries at the forefront of technology-intensive developments, such as the United States. The extent to which parties are altering their channels of communication depends on a range of factors—for example, the level of social access to new technologies; whether the election is for local, regional, or national office; the type of electoral system; the impact of legal regulations; and the organizational resources of each party. In presidential elections in the United States, for example, the early caucuses and primaries remain highly people-intensive, mixing local meetings with new online technologies. Both of the major parties focus more resources on television ads in the key swing states during the later stages of the presidential race, but these are combined with people-intensive candidate rallies.

People-Intensive Campaigns

People-intensive communications originated in Europe during the nineteenth century following the expansion of the franchise. This form predominated in recognizable form throughout most post-industrial societies until at least the 1950s, when the advent of televised campaigns and the publication of regular opinion polls started to transform party communications. In general elections, the people-intensive era was characterized by campaign organizations with a party leader at the apex, surrounded by a few close

political advisers, who ran relatively short, ad hoc national campaigns. The party organization was then predominately locally-oriented, involving politicians, party volunteers, and citizens in direct, face-to-face contact, through activities exemplified by town hall hustings, door-step canvassing, and local branch party meetings. In mass-branch party organizations, grassroots members provided unpaid labor that helped the local candidate, advised by a local party agent, who was in turn a full-time party official, usually paid. Party campaigns relied heavily on the partisan press—either directly owned and subsidized by party organs, or independently owned and managed but providing sympathetic, partisan spin through editorial columns and journalistic commentary—as the main outlets of mediated information. In many established democracies during the 1920s, newspapers began to be supplemented by radio and film, important sources of news during the interwar period. Even prior to the age of television, these new media started to nationalize party-election campaigns and focus greater attention on party leaders.

In the United States and Western Europe during the 1950s, leading theories of voting behavior stressed the stability of the electorate, anchored by social and party loyalties. The classic theory of Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, for instance, stressed that European parties drew votes from stable social sectors, with the divisions of class, religion, and region providing the main bedrocks of electoral support.[5] The earliest studies of campaign communications in the United States, by Paul Lazarsfeld and his colleagues, emphasized that elections served primarily to reinforce partisan sympathies rather than to produce new converts.[6] And the classic accounts of U.S. electoral behavior during this time, by Angus Campbell and his colleagues, argued that most citizens were guided by partisan identities that represented enduring loyalties or "standing decisions," which determined voting choices over successive contests.[7] If electorates were largely stable, the main function of party organizations during campaigns was to energize and mobilize parties' traditional bases of electoral support in order to "get out the vote."

Today, traditional people-intensive forms of campaign communication have essentially been supplemented, not replaced. The traditional campaign, built on personal

networks of volunteers and face-to-face candidate-voter communications, continues to be particularly common in developing nations with poor levels of literacy and restricted access to television and the Internet. People-intensive strategies also remain common in affluent countries when it comes to mobilizing voters in contests for local, municipal, or state-level elected offices; in countries where mass-branch party organizations maintain significant networks of active party members; and among minor parties with limited financial resources.[8]

In electoral systems where politicians compete in multimember seats with others from the same party, local campaigning tends to remain particularly important. This pattern is evident in Ireland, for example, where candidates from the same party compete in each district under the Single Transferable Vote (STV) electoral system. In Japan, as well, politicians competing in multimember districts with others from their party have traditionally relied on a local association (or *koenkai*) acting as an election machine for maintaining contact with voters.[9] Even in the United States, "retail" politics continues in the New Hampshire primaries, district and state caucuses, and general elections, whether with candidates meeting activists in local living rooms and diners or with displays of yard signs and bumper stickers.[10] Robert Huckfeldt and John Sprague have emphasized the political importance in U.S. presidential elections of local mobilization efforts, party canvassing, and discussion networks.[11] Long-term trends in the proportion of U.S. citizens engaged in campaign activism show no consistent or substantial decline across most people-intensive dimensions, such as working for a party, donating money, or attending meetings. The proportion of U.S. citizens contacted by the major parties, either face-to-face or by telephone, has not fallen, either. Nevertheless, during the 1950s, the rise of television caused a revolution in post-industrial societies with respect to the communication channels that parties use in election campaigns. In general elections, people-intensive forms of party communication became ancillary to broadcasting channels.

Yet elsewhere, particularly in developing countries with low levels of literacy and limited access to new technologies, people-intensive forms of party communication remain central to campaigns. In India, for example, politicians long

relied heavily on vibrant local rallies, mass meetings, colorful banners, flags, fliers, poster hoardings, constituency work by parliamentary candidates, and party-leadership whistle-stop tours—although in recent Indian elections, the use of many of these traditional party symbols has been increasingly sidelined as campaigns have come to rely increasingly on text messaging, group e-mailing, and phone campaigns.

BROADCASTING CAMPAIGNS

Party communications in established democracies have undergone a number of related developments that accompanied the rise of broadcasting: a move from dispersed state and local party organizations to a nationally coordinated strategic campaign; a move from a reliance on party officials and volunteers to a reliance on paid professional consultants specializing in communications, marketing, polling, and campaign management; a shift from heavily partisan newspapers toward more politically autonomous national television news; and the development of a more detached and instrumental electorate, less anchored to party loyalties and social groups. In elections, the "long campaign" in the year or so before polling day has gradually become as strategically important to parties as the short, "official" campaign.

Party communications in emerging democracies have followed a different trajectory. Where travel by party leaders and elected officials back to their constituencies is generally difficult, publicly funded party advertisements on radio and television offer opportunities for national parties to campaign on equal footings. In these circumstances, broadcast campaigns may comprise the only major, national means of party communication.

In most post-industrial democracies, the critical shift toward a reliance on broadcasting channels started in the 1920s with the rise of radio and then accelerated during the 1950s with the rapid spread of television, along with the publication of regular opinion polling. This process gradually shifted the main emphasis of party communications from print to broadcast media, particularly to the evening news on the major national television networks. The printed press remains politically important, yet many parties have seen

their traditional links with the press weaken. Angelo Panebianco has interpreted this weakening as connected to the rise of a more autonomous news industry, one that follows a "media logic" (concerned primarily with generating mass audiences for the purpose of maximizing newspaper sales and TV advertising revenue) rather than a "party logic" (concerned with conveying ideological messages to a habitual and loyal partisan audience).[12] Journalists are widely regarded as playing a less partisan role than in the past—no longer just passively reflecting but also actively shaping the salient issues on the national-policy agenda. Newspapers have become more and more politically independent, selecting news on the basis of the commercial logic of increasing sales rather than the political logic of strengthening party support.[13]

As newspapers came increasingly to be supplemented by audiovisual media, the main focus of party-communication strategies became achieving favorable coverage and dominating the agenda of the main evening TV news shows, current affairs programs, and leadership debates. Party activities—from morning press conferences through the day's events, visits, and photo opportunities, to evening rallies and speeches—became focused on this core objective. Until the early 1980s, most post-industrial countries had only two or three television stations each; major news programs occurred at regular primetime slots in the evening rather than on a 24-hour cyclical basis; and most countries restricted paid political advertising on television. So to a large extent, what was reported on the flagship news programs *was* the heart of any party's campaign, setting the agenda for the following morning's newspapers. The more prominent role of television news heightened the control of party leaderships over increasingly nationalized campaigns.

A number of commentators have suggested that the contemporary focus on television campaigns has strengthened the spotlight on party leaderships, moving electoral politics from issue-based conflicts over party programs toward a "personalization" of politics.[14] Case studies suggest that this trend is particularly marked with respect to presidential elections, notably those in Latin America, but it is apparent in parliamentary elections as well, as has been evident recently in Europe. The shift in the media's center of gravity from newspapers to television has probably heightened the visibility of leaders, although we lack the systematic evidence that would be necessary to confirm whether this is a general trend in democracies.[15]

Following the rise of television, parties developed increasingly coordinated national and regional campaigns, using means of communication designed and operated by

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"In many consolidating democracies, broadcasting channels have been crucial means of reaching electorates, while television and radio news programs have been particularly critical for parties lacking large, grassroots membership bases."

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professional specialists skilled in marketing, advertising, and polling. These new modes of communication were not adopted overnight. Rather, parties gradually integrated particular techniques that seemed to work into their existing machineries on a more or less ad hoc basis. One recent study of European political marketing accordingly describes this process as a "shopping model."[16] Party adaptation to professional campaigns was particularly evident following extended periods in opposition. This move was marked by the more frequent use of specialist media managers, press officers, public relations experts, advertising consultants, public opinion pollsters, and professional fundraisers, who all came to influence strategic campaign decisions formerly made by leaders, candidates, or party officials.[17]

Ever since the expansion of the franchise required high-level campaign coordination, there has always been some "professional" party staff, whether full-time local agents or party managers, along with press officers and research units at central headquarters. The new professionals, however, were usually in essence "hired guns" from outside the party, often working on campaigns in different countries at different times. The increased use of paid consultants, public opinion polls, direct mail, and professional television broadcasts, along with the extended duration of campaigns, led to rising

costs and the shift from labor-intensive to more capital-intensive campaigns.

The professionalization of the political consultancy industry has developed furthest in the United States, fueled by the traditional weakness of U.S. party organizations, the rise of the candidate-centered campaign in the 1960s, the capital-intensive nature of advertising-driven campaigns, and the number and frequency of U.S. primary and general elections.[18] Outside of the United States, the rise of independent political consultants has been slower, mainly because parties have incorporated professionals within their ranks, though we may now be seeing the development of a more distinctively European style of political marketing.[19] Organizations such as the International Association of Political Consultants (IAPC) and the World Association of Public Opinion Research, along with their regional affiliates, meanwhile bring together polling experts, advertising specialists, and campaign consultants worldwide.

The emergence of the broadcasting campaign was related to major changes in the electorate, as well. Many studies have highlighted how the erosion of traditional partisan loyalties in established democracies gave rise to a more instrumental electorate that supported different parties on more contingent bases related to their policies and performance. The familiar social divisions of class and religion, which had long anchored the European electorate, proved weaker predictors of voting behavior in many countries, while political issues, party images, and leadership evaluations became increasingly decisive.[20] Under the new mode of campaigning, electorates became less likely to encounter demanding, people-intensive forms of party communication, such as direct face-to-face discussions with party activists on the doorstep or in local meetings, and more likely to experience elections via more passive and indirect forms of involvement, such as simply watching television news.

Earlier theories suggested that the "dealignment" of electorates was largely a product of long-term socioeconomic trends gradually transforming the mass public. These theories stressed rising levels of education, class mobility, and cross-cutting cleavages like race and gender. More recent accounts have emphasized that parties have both contributed to and sought to benefit from these changes by developing more "catch-all" strategies, designed to attract voters from outside parties' core constituencies.[21] The modern campaign thus took on a recognizable pattern across many post-industrial societies, with similar, though not identical, changes becoming evident in how general-election campaigns were run.

In many consolidating democracies, as well, broadcasting channels have been crucial means of reaching electorates, while television and radio news programs have been particularly critical for parties lacking large, grassroots membership bases. Without the ability to mobilize voters face-to-face, parties are forced to rely on direct channels, such as advertising, as well as indirect channels, such as television broadcasts of leadership speeches, campaign events, and party rallies.

INTERNET CAMPAIGNS

Generally, commentators identify only two main channels of party communication, while regarding the age of television broadcasting as the height of innovation in election campaigning. Since the early 1990s, however, the Internet has changed party communications in complex ways. The emergence of the Internet has meanwhile been accompanied by other important developments across many post-industrial societies—notably the fragmentation of television channels and a shift from national broadcasting toward more diverse news sources, including satellite and cable stations, talk radio, and 24-hour rolling news bulletins. In response to a more complex, fragmented, and rapidly changing news environment, parties have attempted to reassert control through strategic communications and media management, relying on continuous feedback provided by opinion polls, focus groups, and public meetings—and no longer just in campaigns but also in routine decision making.

The pervasive characterization of this range of recent changes as a "rise of political marketing" emphasizes the strategic activities of parties, politicians, and campaign advisers in their attempts to maintain or expand their share of support among the electorate. At the heart of the "political marketing" interpretation is a shift in focus from "selling" existing "products" (through advertising party policies, leaders, and images) to "putting the customer first,"

Box 1: What is the Impact of Different Communication Channels?

The effects of communication efforts depend on the audience as much as on the channels themselves. Generally, messages—particularly if they are in tension with existing attitudes and opinions—will be disregarded unless they are repeated, delivered by trusted leaders, and in a context in which there is a concrete opportunity to act. It also makes a difference whether the target audience is composed of isolated individuals or groups, and whether parties want to change the views of opinion leaders or encourage potential supporters to vote.

Interpersonal, or "direct," communications are most effective for changing attitudes and mobilizing support.

Media-based, or "indirect," communications can be used to establish the credibility of messages delivered directly and to extend their reach to larger audiences.

- *Newspapers and print media* provide the most information and are best used for conveying complex messages or introducing new issues. Generally, those who read newspapers are most likely already to be politically active; newspaper and print media consumption is positively associated with voting. Newspapers in particular can be very effective in changing the views of opinion leaders and thereby in laying groundwork for interpersonal communication campaigns.

- *Television* has the advantages of providing visuals, being virtually instantaneous, and personalizing issues. Television is, however, limited in its ability to mobilize voters. Often, television news stories are taken from print news stories.

- *Radio* can be used to target specific groups and provide for extended discussions of issues that interest those groups. It can also amplify debates on public issues.

- *Internet* communications have been found to assist, in particular, isolated individuals who already hold relatively intense views but are unaware of others who share them. It can also be used to great effect in organizing such people.

While some believe interpersonal communications have become outdated, recent research measuring the impact of voter contact techniques on individual voter turnout in U.S. political campaigns found that door-to-door personal contact remains the "gold standard," over direct mail, phone calls, door hangers, and e-mails. Donald P. Green and Alan S. Gerber of Yale University conducted more than 20 rigorous scientific experiments between 1998 and 2002. See *Get Out the Vote! How to Increase Voter Turnout* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2004).

using research into voters' needs, wants, and drives as revealed through polls or focus groups—which means in turn strategically developing a dependable reputation for reliable service-delivery on key policy issues so as to maximize votes. While the "political marketing" approach does provide good insights, this paper ascribes greater importance to changes to the context of political communications to which *all* actors—parties, campaign professionals, and journalists—have been forced to respond: notably the rise of the Internet.

In a sense, the adoption of interactive technologies represents a return to some of the more localized forms of party communication that characterized the people-intensive era. This includes the development of political discussion user groups on the Internet; internal party intranets; interactive political sites used by government agencies; community associations or policy advocacy networks; the use of e-mail or listservs to mobilize and organize; and activist weblogs. All of these are reminiscent, in some important respects, of the interactivity and targeted forms of communication characteristic of face-to-face party meetings, canvassing, and local party newsletters. As information and communication technologies continue to evolve, though, so will the political uses of the Internet.[22]

Information and communication technologies may,

meanwhile, serve multiple internal, administrative, and organizational functions for parties, linking them horizontally as well as vertically. Fax machines, cell phones, e-mail, listservs, and intranets can help integrate internal communications among branches, while computers and electoral databases can help with campaigning, canvassing, and direct mail. E-mail has become particularly important for strengthening one-to-one communications and group networks within party organizations, as it has in linking parties with citizens.[23] Technologies like fax machines and mobile phones serve to supplement or replace the functions of older machines without essentially changing the contents of communications. Detailed case studies now illustrate the dynamics of different modes of campaign communication, such as targeted mailing and telephone canvassing, e-mail, electronic discussion groups, and virtual conferences.[24] These developments help parties raise money, attract members, organize workers, gather feedback, and get out their message, all in new ways. Among the parties and candidates exemplifying the greatest innovation in the use of interactive technologies, Howard Dean's 2004 primary bid for the Democratic Party nomination in the U.S. presidential elections stands out. Dean's campaign went beyond using the Internet for fundraising or as a media resource, deploying it also to encourage supporters to "meet up" in person, thereby generating new potential for people-intensive strategies.

In general, U.S. elections are characterized by two major parties in winner-take-all contests, with armies of technical consultants for hire, the widespread use of capital-intensive TV ads in a fragmented multichannel environment, the rapidly expanding political use of the Internet, and an electorate with weakened party loyalties. Such an open environment is ideal for entrepreneurial approaches to maximizing electoral support. Traditional people-intensive party communications continue to characterize numerous other types of contest, though, including U.S. primaries, local elections in Europe, and general elections in many developing societies. In societies with low literacy and relatively limited access to television and new technologies, in particular, parties continue to rely primarily on grassroots members, activists, and candidates to contact voters and mobilize partisan support locally. There is, in these contexts,

less emphasis on gaining national coverage on television or in newspapers, the chief means of publicity being poster displays, flags, banners, meetings, and rallies.

The Impact of these Communication Channels

Given these developments in contemporary party communications, to what extent have parties in older democracies now abandoned traditional people-intensive forms of campaign communication, such as canvassing? Do broadcasting communications predominate? And how far have parties adapted to the newer forms of interactive technological campaigning? Moreover, do party-communication processes differ sharply between older and newer democracies?

Unfortunately, we know more about the basic impact of communication channels in established democracies, as summarized in **Box 1** on the previous page, than we do in emerging democracies.

Nevertheless, to examine the impact of the most common channels of party communication we can compare the 25 member states of the EU, including newer post-communist democracies in Central Europe and older West European democracies, during the 2004 campaigns for elections to the European Parliament. To what extent were voters contacted directly by parties? Did they access alternative sources of information? Did they seek political information via the Internet? The European elections are low-key contests, and as such we would expect party campaigns to reflect a "mixed" model, combining elements of both people-intensive and broadcast channels of communication—with variations among countries reflecting their respective electoral, political, and media environments—which is indeed what we find.

As the Eurobarometer survey indicates,[25] the single most common type of campaign-related activity during the 2004 elections was watching television programs about the election, as did nine out of ten citizens. Watching party or candidate advertisements was also common. And about two-thirds of citizens received campaign leaflets in their mailboxes or read about the campaign in newspapers. A majority discussed the election with friends or family. By contrast, the impact of people-intensive forms of communication was far more

TABLE 2: TURNOUT AND PARTY COMMUNICATIONS IN ELECTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, JUNE 2004

European Union Member States (25)	Voted	Did Not Vote	Difference
Seen/heard about campaign on TV/radio	92	86	6
Seen party ads	85	79	6
Received election leaflet	75	62	13
Read about campaign in papers	75	57	18
Discussed with friends	67	47	20
Aware of non-party voting campaign	42	31	11
Contacted on the street	15	10	5
Searched for info on Internet	10	5	5
Canvassed by party at home	7	4	3
Contacted by party by phone	6	3	3
Took part in public meeting	9	2	7
Feel close to one party	65	37	28

NOTE: The percentage reporting "yes" to each of these activities is reported.
SOURCE: "Post European Elections 2004 Survey," Flash Eurobarometer 162, June 2004, European Commission/Gallup N. 24,000.

limited, with only a small minority of Europeans having been canvassed at home or contacted by phone, or participating in public meetings. In these elections, broadcast media were the primary means by which most parties connected with citizens, and few people reported more interpersonal, face-to-face forms of contact with party representatives or candidates.

There were some interesting contrasts from country to country, however, notably with respect to canvassing voters at home in Ireland and Malta (both of which use relatively complex STV electoral systems), and with respect to street contacts in Ireland, Italy, and Denmark. Party rallies and public meetings were more popular than average in Italy, Lithuania, and the Czech Republic, moreover, while campaign leaflets were a relatively common form of communication in Ireland and Luxembourg, and relatively uncommon in Portugal and Greece. Similar patterns were found in the previous European elections (in 1994 and 1999), where, again, few among the electorate (7 percent)

reported being contacted by party workers, while at the other extreme almost two-thirds were made aware of the campaigns by way of television and radio. Use of the Internet has been rapidly expanding in Europe, yet few citizens (7 percent) were sufficiently motivated in these contests to seek out campaign information via this channel. These patterns were evident in older democracies as well as newer ones; for example, eight out of ten citizens reported receiving an election leaflet in Hungary and Slovakia, far more than in Greece (18 percent), the Netherlands (53 percent), or Germany (55 percent).

Did these forms of campaigning have substantial effects in informing, persuading, and ultimately mobilizing voters? Although evidence is limited, **Table 2**, above, indicates, not surprisingly, that people who reported exposure to all of these forms of campaign communication proved more likely to vote than did those who "tuned out" of the campaign. The "communication gap" was often modest in size but it was consistently observable. It remains difficult, however,

FIGURE 2: TYPES OF MEDIA SYSTEMS

Press Freedom in the World 2000 (**Freedom House, 2000**)

Media Access — TVs and Radios and Newspapers (World Bank, 2001)

Development

■ High
▲ Medium
■ Low

Rsq = 0.2577
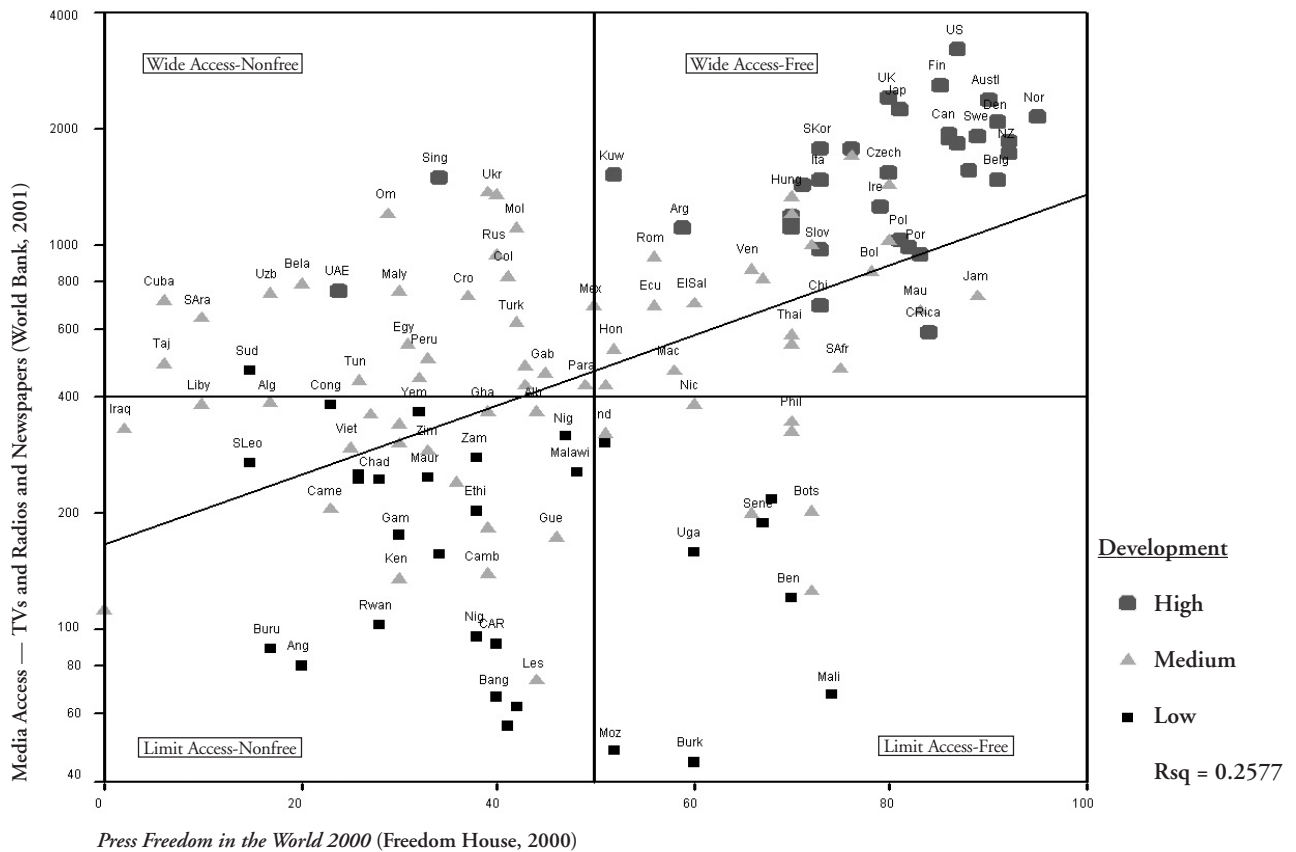
to interpret this evidence as conclusively demonstrating that it was the activities of the parties and candidates per se that mobilized voters. An equally plausible interpretation is that those Europeans who were more interested in the election to begin with both paid more attention to campaign communications and were more likely to cast a ballot.

COMMUNICATION POLICY

Parties, then, can use various channels of communication to reach supporters, but these channels work within broader environments, which are strongly influenced by media systems and public policies implemented in accordance with a wide range of legal regulations—concerning political parties, electoral law, and freedom of the media—often administered by electoral-management bodies and broadcast-regulation agencies. Party communications can be strengthened by considering the most appropriate regulations, including those affecting media access, ownership, and control; media freedom; the role of public sector broadcasters; the regulation of party funding, and the regulation of election-campaign communications.

Media Systems

Levels of public access to mediated channels of communication influence their scope and reach—how widely politicians can reach the public through them—as well as the extent to which citizens can use them to learn about public affairs. All else being equal, the higher the level of public access to news from daily papers, radio, television, and the Internet, the greater the potential for media impact. The range of mass media today typically includes the printed press (newspapers and magazines), the traditional electronic broadcast media (radio and television), as well, more and more, as the new technologies associated with the Internet (including e-mail). Media access can be measured by the

circulation of daily newspapers, as monitored in the World Bank's *World Development Indicators*; the distribution of radio receivers and television sets per 1,000 population in 135 nations; the proportion of the population with Internet access; and the weighted distribution of Internet hosts (see the **Appendix** on pages 22-26).[26] These indicators of media diffusion are strongly interrelated, although some societies (for example, South Korea, Norway, Romania, and Israel) rely more heavily than average on the printed press, while others (for example, the United States, Portugal, and El Salvador) rely more on television. Given the strong pattern of correlations, media access can be combined into a single scale, standardized to 100 points, comprehending the per capita circulation of daily newspapers, the availability of radio receivers and television sets, the proportion of the population using the Internet, and the distribution of Internet hosts.

The degree of media freedom in a given society can be expected to influence whether the impact of the news media promotes pluralistic voices and government accountability or reinforces the power of established interests and state control. Media freedom is far more complex and difficult to assess in any comprehensive fashion than media access, but the annual Freedom House press freedom survey can be used as the standard cross-national indicator. Media freedom is measured by how much the diversity of news content is determined by legal and administrative decisions; the structure of the news industry; the degree of political influence or control over the media; the economic influence of the government or private entrepreneurs; and the incidents of press-autonomy violation, including censorship, harassment, and physical threats to journalists. Evaluations of media freedom in 186 countries were available in the Freedom House survey.

The Map of Media Systems

Figure 2, on the opposite page, shows the distribution of 135 countries across these dimensions. The scatter of societies in the top-right corner shows that in many older democracies, as well as some newer democracies—such as the Czech Republic, Thailand, the Republic of Korea, Jamaica, and Venezuela—liberal patterns of media freedom are strongly related to widespread media access. Some of these societies are among the most affluent in the world, while only moderate levels of human development characterize others among them, such as South Africa, El Salvador, and Poland. By contrast, in societies located in the top-left corner of the map—for example, Singapore, Belarus, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Russia—there is relatively widespread access to television and most other modern forms of mass media, and yet limited media freedom. In these latter cases, domestic news channels are easily used by government, official agencies, and established interests as agents of partisan bias or even state propaganda, on scales that allow them to reach large sectors of the population.[27]

Media systems in countries like India, Botswana, Namibia, and the Philippines—located in the bottom-right corner of the scatter plot—are characterized by a flourishing independent press and yet limited public access to newspapers, television, and the Internet, due to relatively low levels of literacy and high levels of poverty. In these countries, the media can be expected to have a positive impact on pluralism and government accountability—especially through competition among elites in civil society—but to exert only limited influence on the general population due to the media's limited reach. Lastly, most countries with low per capita incomes are scattered in the bottom-left corner—such as Angola, Rwanda, Cambodia, and Bangladesh—where there are major restrictions on free media as a force capable of challenging government authorities, and yet the role of the media is also limited as a channel of state propaganda because of restricted levels of mass access to newspapers, television, and the Internet. In these countries, traditional forms of campaign communication—such as local rallies, posters, community meetings, and grassroots party organizations—are likely to be more important in mobilizing political support than are mediated channels.

Ownership and Structure of the Mass Media

The ownership and structure of the mass media also varies substantially among countries, even among societies with similar levels of development within the same region—such

as in Italy, France, Britain, and Sweden—as well as among transitional and consolidating democracies worldwide.[28] The basic indicators shown in the Appendix also illustrate some of these contrasts. The "digital divide" arising from the unequal diffusion of new information and communication technologies is well known, but similar disparities exist in levels of access to the older technologies, like radio, telephones, and television.

The ownership and control of radio and television stations varies widely worldwide. The United States and much of Latin America have followed a commercial or free-market model of radio and television broadcasting in which public broadcasting services have traditionally played only a minor role. By contrast, the public service tradition of broadcasting has predominated throughout Western Europe, as well, for example, as in Israel and Japan.

State control of radio and television predominated under communism in Central and Eastern Europe, and continues in some authoritarian regimes today. The case of Burma illustrates the way in which state control, the persecution of journalists, and the censorship of opposition parties and dissident movements continue in the world's most authoritarian regimes. The mass media in Burma is highly regulated, with the state holding a monopoly on television, radio, and the press. Although one of the worst cases, Burma is far from alone; many other regimes continue to suppress basic human rights. In such cases, the establishment of the conditions for free media remains an essential first step in any transition to democracy. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) election observers report strong pro-government bias within the electronic news media in coverage of recent presidential elections in Russia and Belarus, and media watchdogs such as the French-based Reporters Sans Frontier (Reporters Without Borders), the U.K.-based Amnesty International, and the U.S.-based Freedom House publish annual reports highlighting similar problems limiting media freedom and curtailing criticism of the government, common in many transitional democracies.

Elsewhere, among the most striking developments in communications since the early 1980s has been the dramatic deregulation of broadcasting in Western and post-communist Europe. Countries in these regions have seen a substantial expansion of television channels via terrestrial, cable, satellite, and broadband technologies, mostly commercially owned. The rise of new information and communication technologies during the last decade has led to a further diversification and fragmentation of media markets. These trends have generated challenges for public broadcasting networks, as well as considerable concern about their consequences for traditional standards of journalism, sparking debate about appropriate kinds of regulation over political and campaign coverage in the new multichannel environments.

In the United States, where commercial television has always predominated, there has been widespread concern about plummeting audiences for the evening news programs on major network television and the consequences for standards of journalism in a more fragmented, competitive 24/7 news environment. The print sector has also experienced important changes during recent decades—particularly with respect to the ownership of newspapers and magazines—following the growth of multinational, multimedia publishing corporations, such as Bertelsmann and the News Corporation. Notable developments also include mega-mergers between media companies, such as Time-Warner and AOL.

Media markets have experienced rapid changes in many developing nations in Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Asia, as well. These include positive changes—notably a growing liberalization of the newspaper market in China and the emergence of new television channels, such as *Al Jazeera,* in the Arab region—as well as negative changes, such as the challenges facing free media in Russia; the state persecution of journalists and continuing restrictions on the media in Zimbabwe; and continuing government repression of the media in Burma and Cuba.

Party Campaign Organizations and Funding

An extensive literature has documented changes in the structure, membership, and finance of party organizations.[29] Drawing primarily on party documents and reports, Richard Katz and Peter Mair have concluded that the role of party organizations in Western democracies has evolved or adapted since the 1960s, rather than simply weakened. Documenting

trends in party membership in ten European countries from the early 1960s to the end of the 1980s, the Katz and Mair study recorded a decline across eight countries in the proportion of electors who are party members, ranging from a very modest slippage (in Sweden) to far sharper falls (in Denmark, from 21.1 percent of the electorate in the early 1960s to 6.5 percent in the late 1980s). This decline was strongest in relative terms, meaning that party membership failed to keep up with expansions in the population. Survey evidence from 15 West European countries also indicates a modest long-term erosion of party membership in many established democracies, although not a steep or uniform decline.[30] Mair and Ingrid van Biezen, along with Susan Scarrow, confirm that many parties in established democracies have experienced contracting membership rolls since the 1950s, though there remain substantial variations in levels of party membership, even within relatively similar West European democracies.[31]

Given this trend, membership in the mass-branch organizations typical of some parties in established democracies appears to be contracting, potentially thereby limiting opportunities for political participation and weakening both civil society and the accountability of party leaders to followers. Most studies assume that the shrinkage in party membership and the erosion of party loyalties indicates problems for the health of democracy itself—that it signals, for example, a widespread public rejection of parties caused by a general disaffection with their performances. Yet in truth, the causes and consequences of these developments remain unclear. As Scarrow suggests, parties may have been losing support and membership fees from more passive members at the periphery, but they may be retaining the active support of the core activists who run local branches, raise funds, deliver leaflets, select candidates and leaders, attend conventions, debate policies, and otherwise man the volunteer, grassroots bases in mass-branch parties.[32] Moreover, the mass party is not an essential feature of representative democracy. Many countries, France among them, have always been characterized by elite-led party organizations, run by elected officials in the legislature and elsewhere in government, with minimal membership. Where public policy affords free access to media, public subsidies and mediated channels of campaign communication have

supplemented many of the basic functions of party volunteers.

This may be a communications-related public policy issue that leaders of emerging parties wish to consider along with the issue of regulating parliamentary parties. Katz and Mair report that, since the 1960s, many countries have experienced a substantial increase in parliamentary-party staff paid by state funds. Where parliamentary-party personnel and resources are derived from state subventions, it may indicate a shift from "mass-branch" parties based primarily on voluntary labor toward a "cartel" party organization, more dependent on public resources.[33] This pattern is clearer in some countries than in others. State subsidies toward parties are far more generous in Germany, Sweden, and Norway, for example, than in Ireland, Britain, and the Netherlands, where party income remains more dependent on membership dues. Since the mid-1990s, direct funding for parties or candidates has become common. In some countries—like Canada, France, and Australia—public subsidies are designed to reimburse some election expenditure; in others—like the Netherlands, Ireland, and Denmark—funds are designed for other purposes, such as general administration, policy research, political education, or to promote the participation by young people and women.[34] Public funding is often justified as lessening the risk of parties and candidates becoming dependent on large donations or falling under the influence of lobby groups.

The question of whether the "cartel" party represents the emergence of a new and distinctive type of party organization remains controversial.[35] Important questions also surround the consequences of the decline of party membership, and in particular whether this decline has been concentrated mostly among less active, older members, or whether it represents an across-the-board contraction. Nevertheless, what does seem well established by these studies is that many European countries experienced a gradual shrinkage in grassroots party membership from the 1960s through the late 1980s, probably reducing the pool of volunteer labor available for traditional local campaigning. On the other hand, parties have seen growing numbers of professional staff employed in parliament and at central party offices, as well as more generous financial resources from public funds. These developments have contributed to a greater general reliance on mediated forms of

campaigning, although even without large membership bases, new technologies allow parties to return to some of the characteristics of people-intensive communications.

The Regulatory Framework

Many regulations govern party communications. The most important during election campaigns concern: (1) the purchase of paid political advertisements; (2) the allocation of unpaid party political broadcasts; and (3) rules and procedures governing political balance in campaign debates, news coverage, and current affairs programs. During the era when public service channels predominated in most established democracies, severe restrictions limited the ability of political parties to purchase any airtime on television. A comparative survey of Western societies in the late 1970s found that only five of the 21 countries surveyed had commercial channels, and paid political advertising on television was allowed only in Australia, Canada, Japan, and the United States.[36] By the mid-1990s, however, following the deregulation and explosion of commercial channels documented above, about half of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries allowed paid political advertising on television.

In practice, the use of paid TV advertising by political parties varies substantially from country to country, as well as between public service and commercial channels.[37] In the Netherlands, for instance, political commercials were first introduced in 1994, but in practice limited financial resources have restricted their use.[38] By contrast, campaign ads are used in the United States for every level of office, producing highly capital-intensive campaigns. For example, about 60 percent of expenditure in recent presidential campaigns has gone to paying for the production and airing of TV and radio commercials.[39]

Following the long tradition of public service broadcasting, all OECD countries except the United States allocate some free airtime to parties, either on a legal basis or by virtue of a longstanding agreement with broadcasters. International IDEA found that today, among 111 countries compared worldwide, 71 (64 percent) gave political parties some entitlement to unpaid media access. Of these countries, two-thirds (69 percent) gave each party equal access. Strict equality between all parties is mandated in such countries as the Czech Republic and Mexico—in the latter of which the Federal Electoral Institute buys 15 minutes per month of advertising on television and radio for each party. In another eight countries, the allocation of free broadcasting time is determined by each party's performance in the previous general election. In 15 countries, it is determined by the party's current legislative representation. For example, Greek parties are given free airtime based on the size of their memberships in the previous parliament, with a modest allocation for parties with no representatives but many candidates. In 13 countries, the distribution is determined by the number of candidates running in the current election.[40] In Britain, for example, the major parties—Labour and the Conservatives—each usually receive five party-promotion broadcasts during the campaign; the Liberal Democrats get four slots; and other minor parties with at least 50 candidates get one each, with additional arrangements for the regions.[41]

The length of these free-access party broadcasts varies substantially, from the 30- or 60-second advertisements common in Italy, to two-and-a-half minutes in Germany, to four minutes in France, and up to ten minutes (usually only partially used) for British party-promotion broadcasts.

In addition, many countries have some fair-balance rules regulating political coverage on television news, current affairs programs, and leadership debates during election periods—either formally embodied in law or informally implemented through broadcasting guidelines and journalistic codes of practice. In Britain, for instance, the 5:5:4 ratio used in party-promotion broadcasts is also used to allocate the time balance for coverage of the main parties on the news. The U.S. presidential debates have followed different formats and schedules over the years. For example, questions have been asked either by selected journalists, or members of the public pre-selected for an invited audience, or by a mix of both. But all U.S. presidential debates follow a strict allocation of time and detailed procedures designed to be impartial to all candidates, determined by negotiations between the parties and the debates commission.[42]

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

David Swanson and Paolo Mancini, among many other commentators, regard contemporary political party

communications as involving an "Americanization" of campaigning, suggesting that this process has produced similar developments across many societies.

Around the world, many of the recent changes in election campaigning share common themes despite great differences in the political cultures, histories, and institutions of the countries in which they have occurred. Increasingly, we find such common practices as political commercials, candidates selected in part for the appealing image they project on television, technical experts hired to produce compelling campaign materials, mounting campaign expenses, and mass media moving center stage in campaigns.[43]

The key features of "Americanization" in this account are certain aspects of campaigning understood to have originated in U.S. elections, which were subsequently "exported'" to other countries. Swanson and Mancini stress four major developments: the *"personalization"* of politics, as leaders and candidates rise in importance; the *"scientificization"* of campaigning, as technical experts like opinion pollsters come to make decisions formerly exercised by party officials; the *detachment* of parties from citizens, as politicians become increasingly reliant on opinion polls rather than direct contact with grassroots activists and voters; and the development of more *autonomous* structures of communications, as news media become more determined to pursue their own interests than to serve the needs of politicians.

Yet the impact of these practices varies substantially among nations, depending on such factors as the level of development and the institutional context of election campaigns—the latter of which includes, for example, the legal rules governing campaigning, the strength of traditional mass-branch party organizations, and the structure of the electorate. Some countries, like Norway and Japan, maintain high levels of newspaper readership, while others, like the United States and Mexico, have developed greater reliance on television news. Even with the growth of commercial television, there continue to be major differences among broadcasting systems that are predominately either wholly commercial, mixed, or public service oriented. The regulation of campaign ads, party-promotion broadcasts, and campaign finance also varies substantially across different countries.[44]

As a result of such structural contrasts, rather than following a single "American" model, party communications and election campaigns in different societies continue to display striking differences.[45] The rise of television-dominated and personality- and money-driven campaigns—often seen as characteristic features of an "Americanization" of campaigning—has probably gone further in Italy, Venezuela, and Israel, for example, than it has in Britain, Germany, or Sweden.

This paper has emphasized that greater reliance on broadcasting and technological channels has not necessarily replaced local, people-intensive activity, whereas the process of canvassing and leafleting continues in many countries with traditional party organizations. Party volunteers and parliamentary candidates still engage in the day-to-day activity of organizing, canvassing, leafleting, and mobilizing support, just as they did in older democracies a century ago.[46] Nevertheless, with new technologies, central campaign headquarters can now much more tightly coordinate local activity.[47] Even in the United States, many of the features of traditional people-intensive campaigns persist; retail, face-to-face politics remains important for presidential candidates in the Iowa caucus and the New Hampshire primary, as well as in many local and state races. In the same way, the printed press remains a vital channel of political communications, particularly in societies with high levels of newspaper readership.

These channels have been sustained even though the primary focus of party-campaign activities shifted during the 1950s toward national television news and then subsequently diversified across a wide range of channels, such as radio talk shows, party websites, activist weblogs, and e-mail networks, in a more fragmented electronic environment. The development of the technologically intensive campaign has therefore altered the techniques of electioneering, but mainly by supplementing rather than replacing older channels. As we have seen, party websites are now common, but they remain underdeveloped in societies lagging behind with respect to Internet access. Moreover, use of the Internet as a source of campaign information, even within Europe, is far less common than learning about parties from broadcast media. We can conclude that political parties' communications environments are now more complex but also afford more opportunities to connect with voters through diverse channels than ever before.

Nation	Media freedom – 2000 (i)	Newspapers per 1,000 – 1996 (ii)	Radios per 1,000 – 1997 (iii)	TV sets per 1,000 – 1999 (iv)	% of pop. online – 2000 (v)	Media access (ii to v)	Communication Index (freedom + access)
Afghanistan	10	.	.	.	.	.	.
Albania	44	36	217	113	.0	7	37.8
Algeria	17	38	241	107	.0	8	15.1
Angola	20	11	54	15	.1	2	4.1
Antigua and Barbuda	54	.	.	.	4.3	.	.
Argentina	59	123	681	293	1.0	22	79.4
Armenia	43	23	224	238	.1	9	41.7
Australia	90	293	1376	706	37.4	55	156.5
Austria	88	296	753	516	5.5	33	133.7
Azerbaijan	30	27	23	254	.0	6	23.5
Bahrain	25	.	.	.	5.4	.	.
Bangladesh	40	9	50	7	.0	1	4.6
Barbados	84	.	.	.	1.9	.	.
Belarus	20	174	296	322	.1	16	23.9
Belgium	91	160	793	523	19.8	34	139.2
Belize	75	.	.	.	4.3	.	.
Benin	70	2	108	11	.1	2	26.9
Bhutan	24	.	.	.	.	.	.
Bolivia	78	55	675	118	.1	17	95.9
Bosnia and Herzegovina	44	152	248	112	.0	9	41.6
Botswana	72	27	156	20	.2	4	44.3
Brazil	67	40	444	333	4.1	17	82.2
Brunei	26	.	.	.	3.1	.	.
Bulgaria	70	257	543	408	1.8	24	97.0
Burkina Faso	60	1	33	11	.0	1	-3.8
Burundi	17	3	71	15	.0	2	3.3
Cambodia	39	2	127	9	.0	5	27.4
Cameroon	23	7	163	34	.0	4	14.0
Canada	86	159	1077	715	41.9	49	145.0
Cape Verde	68	.	.	.	.0	.	.
Central African Rep.	40	2	83	6	.0	2	10.2
Chad	28	0	242	1	.0	5	19.2
Chile	73	98	354	240	1.0	14	83.5
China	20	.	333	292	.7	.	.
Colombia	41	46	581	199	.9	17	50.5
Comoros	60	.	.	.	.1	.	.
Congo, Dem. Rep. of	23	8	375	2	.1	10	23.4
Costa Rica	84	94	271	229	.8	15	99.4
Cote D'Ivoire	26	17	164	70	.04	5	18.2
Croatia	37	115	336	279	2.22	15	43.5
Cuba	6	118	353	246	.22	14	6.9
Cyprus	84	.	.	.	4.35	.	.

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Czech Republic	80	254	803	487	2.83	31	**119.2**
Denmark	91	309	1141	621	20.75	46	**151.4**
Djibouti	37	.	.	.	.15	.	.
Dominica	84	.	.	.	.31	.	.
Dominican Republic	70	52	178	96	.24	7	**57.2**
Ecuador	56	70	419	205	.04	16	**66.9**
Egypt	31	40	324	183	.62	10	**30.8**
El Salvador	60	48	464	191	.50	24	**82.6**
Equatorial Guinea	22	.	.	.	.01	.	.
Eritrea	32	.	91	16	.03	.	.
Estonia	80	174	693	555	10.86	30	**117.6**
Ethiopia	38	1	195	6	.01	4	**23.0**
Fiji	42	.	.	.	.63	.	.
Finland	85	455	1496	643	28.04	60	**151.1**
France	76	218	937	623	10.60	38	**119.6**
Gabon	45	29	183	251	.27	5	**32.9**
Gambia	30	2	169	3	.04	4	**16.3**
Georgia	53	.	555	474	.09	.	.
Germany	87	311	948	580	14.97	40	**139.6**
Ghana	39	13	238	115	.08	7	**33.0**
Greece	70	153	477	480	1.05	22	**94.3**
Grenada	80	.	.	.	2.00	.	.
Guatemala	46	33	79	61	.46	5	**31.6**
Guinea-Bissau	44	5	44	.	.04	.	.
Guinea	29	.	47	44	.22	.	.
Haiti	42	3	55	5	.03	1	**4.3**
Honduras	52	55	386	95	.27	11	**53.5**
Hungary	70	186	689	448	4.96	27	**100.7**
Iceland	88	.	.	.	40.36	.	.
India	58	.	121	75	.08	.	.
Indonesia	51	24	156	143	.04	6	**40.9**
Iran	32	28	265	157	.15	9	**30.6**
Iraq	2	19	229	83	.	.	.
Ireland	79	150	699	406	12.00	28	**114.0**
Israel	70	290	520	328	10.17	25	**97.5**
Italy	73	104	878	488	15.68	33	**110.6**
Jamaica	89	62	480	189	1.97	15	**104.4**
Japan	81	578	955	719	15.48	48	**136.4**
Jordan	43	58	287	83	.82	8	**39.1**
Kazakhstan	32	.	384	238	.12	.	.
Kenya	30	9	104	22	.16	3	**13.0**
Kiribati	83	.	.	.	.38	.	.

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Korea, Republic of	73	393	1033	361	21.88	40	116.9
Kuwait	52	374	660	480	3.69	31	77.6
Kyrgyzstan	39	15	112	57	.05	3	21.0
Laos	34	4	143	10	.	.	.
Latvia	76	247	710	741	4.07	30	112.2
Lebanon	39	107	906	351	4.26	28	56.5
Lesotho	44	8	49	16	.03	2	9.5
Liberia	33	.	.	.	.01	.	.
Libya Arab Jamahiriy	10	14	233	136	.	.	.
Lithuania	80	93	513	420	2.16	22	107.1
Luxembourg	90	.	.	.	11.90	.	.
Macedonia	58	21	200	250	1.00	10	57.1
Madagascar	68	5	192	22	.03	4	43.5
Malawi	48	3	249	3	.06	5	33.9
Malaysia	30	158	420	174	2.86	15	35.7
Maldives	35	.	.	.	.54	.	.
Mali	74	1	54	12	.01	1	9.5
Malta	83	.	.	.	5.26	.	.
Marshall Islands	92	.	.	.	.	.	.
Mauritania	33	0	151	96	.01	5	22.6
Mauritius	83	75	368	230	3.55	14	95.4
Mexico	50	97	325	267	.95	14	57.2
Micronesia, Fed. Stat. of	76	.	.	.	.91	.	.
Moldova	42	60	740	297	.08	22	56.3
Mongolia	71	27	151	61	.05	5	48.6
Morocco	51	26	241	165	.45	9	47.7
Mozambique	52	3	40	5	.07	1	-.6
Myanmar (Burma)	0	10	95	7	.	.	.0
Namibia	66	19	144	38	.56	4	40.7
Nepal	41	11	38	7	.06	1	1.9
Netherlands	86	306	978	600	24.36	42	139.9
New Zealand	92	216	990	518	14.77	39	146.0
Nicaragua	60	30	285	69	.34	10	60.4
Niger	38	0	69	27	.01	2	10.8
Nigeria	47	24	223	68	.01	6	37.4
Norway	95	588	915	648	41.59	52	162.8
Oman	29	29	598	575	1.74	25	40.4
Pakistan	36	23	98	119	.04	4	22.4
Panama Canal Zone	70	62	299	192	1.08	11	73.4
Papua New Guinea	72	15	97	13	.00	3	31.3
Paraguay	49	43	182	205	.02	7	39.9
Peru	33	84	273	147	.08	10	33.1

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Philippines	70	79	159	110	.45	7	**59.2**
Poland	81	113	523	387	5.17	22	**108.9**
Portugal	83	75	304	560	2.02	19	**106.2**
Qatar	38	.	.	.	4.58	.	.
Romania	56	300	319	312	.67	17	**69.2**
Russian Federation	40	105	418	421	3.66	20	**51.7**
Rwanda	28	0	102	0	.01	2	**8.7**
Saint Lucia	87	.	.	.	1.33	.	.
Sao Tome and Principe	73	.	.	.	.29	.	.
Saudi Arabia	10	57	321	263	.58	13	**11.1**
Senegal	67	5	142	41	.09	4	**38.7**
Seychelles	50	.	.	.	3.00	.	.
Sierra Leone	15	4	253	13	.01	5	**11.0**
Singapore	34	360	822	308	14.71	34	**52.2**
Slovakia	70	185	580	417	9.44	25	**98.2**
Slovenia	73	199	406	356	23.00	24	**100.8**
Solomon Islands	82	.	.	.	.48	.	.
Somalia	12	.	.	.	.	.	.
South Africa	75	32	317	129	4.18	10	**76.0**
Spain	82	100	333	547	7.85	21	**107.7**
Sri Lanka	30	29	209	102	.08	7	**24.6**
St. Kitts and Nevis	82	.	.	.	3.75	.	.
St. Vincent and Grenadine	84	.	.	.	1.82	.	.
Sudan	15	27	271	173	.00	8	**13.3**
Suriname	69	.	.	.	1.64	.	.
Swaziland	23	.	.	.	.30	.	.
Sweden	89	445	932	531	44.38	48	**149.9**
Switzerland	92	337	1000	518	16.44	42	**148.9**
Syrian Arab Republic	27	20	278	66	.07	7	**23.4**
Taiwan	79	.	.	.	21.84	.	.
Tajikistan	6	20	142	328	.	.	.
Tanzania	51	4	279	21	.02	6	**40.0**
Thailand	70	63	232	289	.22	11	**72.0**
Togo	26	4	218	22	.12	5	**17.8**
Trinidad and Tobago	72	123	534	337	1.56	20	**93.9**
Tunisia	26	31	223	190	.52	9	**25.0**
Turkey	42	111	180	332	.95	12	**45.0**
Turkmenistan	14	.	276	201	.	.	.
Uganda	60	2	128	28	.05	3	**29.9**
Ukraine	40	54	884	413	.29	29	**58.3**
United Arab Emirates	24	156	345	252	8.88	18	**30.0**
United Kingdom	80	329	1436	652	23.90	54	**138.4**

Nation	Media freedom – 2000 (i)	Newspapers per 1,000 – 1996 (ii)	Radios per 1,000 – 1997 (iii)	TV sets per 1,000 – 1999 (iv)	% of pop. online – 2000 (v)	Media access (ii to v)	Communication Index (freedom + access)
United States	87	215	2146	844	39.11	73	161.9
Uruguay	71	293	607	531	2.73	24	97.4
Uzbekistan	17	3	465	276	.04	15	19.9
Vanuatu	56	.	.	.	.06	.	.
Venezuela	66	206	468	185	.35	17	81.6
Vietnam	25	4	107	184	.02	3	12.5
Western Samoa	66	.	.	.	.24	.	.
Yemen	32	15	64	286	.04	2	10.8
Yugoslavia	19	107	297	273	.94	13	21.5
Zambia	38	12	121	145	.10	5	27.9
Zimbabwe	33	19	93	180	.27	3	15.2
Total							
179	**179**	**136**	**143**	**142**	**169**	**130**	**131**

NOTES:

Media Freedom Scale	Diversity of news content is measured in the 2000 Freedom House annual survey of media freedom according to the structure of the news industry, legal and administrative decisions, the degree of political influence or control, the economic influences exerted by the government or private entrepreneurs, and actual incidents violating press autonomy, including censorship, harassment, and physical threats to journalists. The 100-point scale combines the broadcasting and newspaper scores and the scale is reversed so that a higher score represents greater media freedom. See www.freedomhouse.org.
Newspapers	Daily newspaper circulation (published at least four times a week) per 1,000 people, 1996. *UNESCO Statistical Yearbook 1999* (Montreal: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 1999).
Radio Receivers	Radio receivers in use per 1,000 people, 1997. *World Telecommunications Indicators Database 2000* (Geneva: International Telecommunication Union, 2000).
TV Sets	Television sets in use per 1,000 people, 1999. *World Telecommunications Indicators Database 2000* (Geneva: International Telecommunication Union, 2000).
Online Users and Hosts	The percentage of online users in the adult population derived from national surveys asking respondents whether they use e-mail or the World Wide Web. The figures represent the latest survey available in fall 2000. See www.nua.ie.
	Computers with active Internet Protocol (IP) addresses connected to the Internet, per 100 people, July 2000. See www.netcraft.com. Hosts without a country code identification were weighted and relocated. See Pippa Norris, *Digital Divide: Civic Engagement, Information Poverty, and the Internet Worldwide* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001).
Media Access	A summary logged standardized scale of the proportion of newspapers, TV sets, radio receivers, online users, and Internet hosts.
Communication Index	This combines the logged media access scale and the press freedom scale.

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