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**Exploring the 'Americanization' of political
campaigns
Croatia's 2003 and 2007 general elections**

Milly A. Doolan,
MSc in Politics and Communication

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Exploring the 'Americanization' of political campaigns: Croatia's 2003 and 2007 general elections

Milly A. Doolan

ABSTRACT

The starting point for this research was an ongoing debate relating to political campaigning developments in recent years, which have been labelled by the term 'Americanization'. On the one hand, the developments are seen as being adopted directly from the United States. However, on the other, they are seen as being part of more general developments touching on politics, media and society, grouped in the term 'modernization'. Some of the central characteristics of a seeming convergence of political campaigning practices in diverse political and social systems round the globe include catch-all policies, personalization, media-centricity, professionalization and political marketing.

The driving force behind the research was to explore in more detail why these trends were occurring and what was influencing them. Most importantly, could this convergence also be generalised to a young democracy such as Croatia? And if so, can it be attributed to more exterior (top-down) or interior (bottom-up) influences on campaigning techniques? In an effort to answer these questions, the researcher decided to identify and problematize the main characteristics of this 'Americanization' process and set up a methodological framework that would attempt to explore its characteristics in a Croatian setting. The 2003 and 2007 general elections were taken as a litmus test for this purpose.

Using the term 'Americanization' as a question rather than a conclusion, critical discourse analysis was applied to television campaign advertisements of the three main political parties in Croatia from the 2003 and the 2007 elections. The analysis was supplemented with interviews with campaign experts. The findings indicate that some of the campaigning developments were more 'bottom-up' than 'top-down' in the sense that they came from within society. Instead of calling this 'modernization', this research will refer to these changes as democratic progress.

1. INTRODUCTION

There are varied conceptions of what constitutes a democracy. To illustrate this point with regard to the political involvement of citizens as just one indicator of democratic life, these conceptions range from the more 'minimal' understandings (usually associated with representative democracies) where the citizen is primarily seen as a private individual 'with the task of voting wisely for representatives' (McLaughlin 1992: 237), to the more participatory approaches where the citizen is also more actively involved in the shaping of his or her community. This latter conception gives us 'the image of a democratic society, a society in which ordinary people are heavily involved in deciding issues and achieving goals, not just voting for governments and then letting governments make decisions for them' (Miller 2000: 29). Now, what we can superficially decipher from these conceptions of the democratic citizen is that they differ with regard to the passive or active attributions they give the citizen, but at the same time they share a central ingredient: they presuppose citizens who have the right to have a say in how their countries are governed, voting at elections being the basic mechanism through which they can exercise such a right. In this sense, one can assume the importance of election campaigns, which provide information on the basis of which citizens could potentially make a 'wise' decision. This significant role of the election campaign is recognised by authors, such as Swanson and Mancini (1996) who claim that:

'The shared values, history, and aspirations celebrated in election campaigns are perhaps the clearest expression of a democracy's continually evolving mythology and perception of its own essential character' (1).

It has been acknowledged in recent years that election campaigns in democracies around the globe have started to look alike in spite of the possibly different conceptions of democracy that the countries they take place in embody, as well as the country's specific values, history and aspirations. Such similarities have become apparent in observations of the style of campaigning or, more specifically, the campaigning techniques applied; according to authors such as Plasser (2002) and Butler and Ranney (2005), these techniques having originated from the United States. Indeed, as a result of associating these seemingly world converging campaigning trends with the U.S. as their origin, academic literature began labelling this apparent convergence as 'Americanization'.

The term was soon seen as a too simplistic way of describing more general campaign changes and a stream of academic theory argued that it was important to bear in mind the local factors that could shape a campaign, such as the nature of a country's electoral system, structure of party competition, regulation of campaign activities, and the national media system. For these reasons a replacement term, that of 'modernization' was suggested. According to the modernization hypothesis, 'Americanization' implies a top-down influence and neglects the fact that social change could also impact campaigning trends, which implies a more bottom-up influence.

The questions that sparked this research were connected to this broad sweep impression that similar campaigning trends can be found in dissimilar national contexts in democracies around the globe. More specifically, the researcher was interested in exploring in more detail why these trends were occurring and what was influencing them, as well as whether these similarities were more apparent than real. Most importantly, could this convergence also be generalised to a young democracy such as Croatia? And if so, can it be attributed to more exterior (top-down) or interior (bottom-up) influences on campaigning techniques? In an effort to answer these general questions, the researcher decided to identify and problematize the main characteristics of this 'Americanization' process and set up a methodological framework that would attempt to explore its characteristics in a Croatian setting (Croatia being a young democracy with changing campaigning techniques). The 2003 and 2007 general elections were taken as a litmus test for this purpose.

The research carried out is presented in the following order: the first section discusses the main theories that surround the debate, namely the 'Americanization' and the 'modernization' hypotheses. This section also outlines Croatia's political and electoral genesis, placing focus on specific characteristics of the Croatian electoral and media system, and considers the possible barriers to an 'Americanization' of campaigning trends in the Croatian context. This is followed by the methodology section in which the use of critical discourse analysis is justified as the most suitable approach to analysing political campaign television advertisements. The section also outlines why interviews were chosen to serve as the context for analysing the advertisements. The final section outlines the results and interpretation, which then leads to a general conclusion on the topic.

It is important to note that this research does not attempt to draw general conclusions about the 'Americanization' debate, but rather simply contribute to the discussion

on why campaigning similarities occur in specific national contexts and what they could potentially be attributed to. In addition, since this topic is largely under-researched in Croatia, the research also hopes to contribute to the academic understanding of campaigning developments in such a context.

2. THEORETHICAL OUTLINE

FRAMING THE DEBATE ON CAMPAIGN CONVERGENCE

In the late 1990s, interviews were conducted with 502 political consultants from the U.S., Latin America, Western and Eastern Europe, Russia, Australia and South Africa, among others (Plasser, 2002). The point of this global interviewing spree was to get an idea of how these campaigning experts evaluate the campaigning techniques and strategies being used. In the conclusion to this research study, Plasser (2002) argues that 'tracing the worldwide proliferation of American campaign techniques is indispensable in understanding why 84 percent of our respondents reported that the style of election campaigns in their countries has changed dramatically during the last few years' (45).

The U.S. being identified as the origin of these campaigning trends, this assumed convergence came to be known in academic writing as 'Americanization'. However, this term has been critiqued by certain scholars (e.g. Plasser (2002), Scammell (1998), Norris (2004), Swanson and Mancini (1996)) as being a conventionalized term for more complex social changes and as rejecting the possibility of internal as opposed to external influences on electoral campaigns. They argued that a more appropriate term for this convergence would be 'modernization'. Although scholars might debate the appropriateness of the label, across the board they seem to agree that campaigning trends have started to look alike in recent years on a worldwide scale.

To gain a more detailed appreciation of the term 'Americanization' and what it entails, this chapter will identify its main characteristics and discuss the debate surrounding it. It will also present the Croatian context in which the term will be more closely analysed. Finally, the chapter will outline how the 'Americanization' of campaigning will be explored on the example of Croatia's 2003 and 2007 general elections.

THE 'AMERICANIZATION' OF POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING?

The term 'Americanization' first appeared in the early 19th century and referred to '...the real or purported influence of one or more forms of Americanism on some social entity, material object or cultural practice' (Van Elteren, 2006: 3). In the field of political communication the term refers to the worldwide proliferation of American campaign techniques. It implies that the U.S. is leading trends in a direct way by exporting American-style campaigning, through American consultants working abroad and through a global acceptance of the U.S. as the most important role model of how to run campaigns (Scammell, 1998). For Swanson and Mancini (1994), the term is a good starting point for comparing campaign practices in different countries, and for Butler and Ranney (2005), it is a suitable description of campaign innovations that have emerged and are continuing to surface in many democracies around the world.

However, the term has been challenged in scholarly writing. According to Swanson and Mancini (1994: 4) 'The appropriateness of the term is contested, however, by some who argue surface similarities obscure important national adaptation and variations'. Because the term blurs national campaigning traits, Swanson and Mancini believe the term should be used more like a reference point and a working hypothesis or an open question rather than a conclusion.

Plasser (2002) treats the concept of the 'Americanization' of political campaigning as 'elusive' and goes on to distinguish between two further approaches: the modernization approach, where the Americanization of campaigning is seen as a consequence of the modernization of media systems and voter-party relationship, and the diffusion approach, where it is seen as a consequence of the transnational diffusion and implementation of US concepts and strategies of electoral campaigning. Plasser takes the diffusion approach even further by distinguishing between two models of the global diffusion of American campaign techniques: the shopping model and the adoption model. The former implies the import of professional campaign techniques from the United States 'which are then modified and implemented taking the national context of political competition into account' (Plasser, 2002: 18). The latter suggests that foreign observers tend to adopt the strategies of US-American consultants uncritically. Similarly to Plasser's notion of the shopping model, Norris refers to the convergence of political campaigns as '...rather than a specifically American development,..., it seems more accurate to understand this process as an 'import-export'

shopping model with campaigners borrowing whatever techniques are believed to work' (Norris, 2004: 1).

The academic debate on the appropriateness of the term 'Americanization' has resulted in the emergence of suggested replacements for the term which has been labelled as simplistic. Plasser (2002) argued the possibility of Americanization emerging as a consequence of 'modernization'. Also, Swanson and Mancini (1996) believe modernization to be a more holistic term than Americanization.

THE 'MODERNIZATION' OF POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING?

From the point of view of the 'modernization' of campaigning hypothesis, attention is focused not on associating one country with the imposition of a single social concept, but that the changes in campaigning are a part of a more general change occurring in democracies around the world. As Swanson and Mancini hypothesise, 'adoption of Americanized campaign methods may reflect a wider, more general process that is producing changes in many societies, changes which go far beyond politics and communication...we call this more general process modernization' (1996: 6). They argue that the more advanced the process of modernization in a country, the more likely we are to find innovations in campaigning being adopted and adapted (Swanson and Mancini, 1996: 6).

At the core of the modernization theory lies the viewpoint that structural changes on the macro-level (media, technologies, social structures) lead to an adaptive behaviour on the micro-level (parties, candidates and journalists), resulting in gradual modifications of traditional styles and strategies of political communications (e.g. Kavanagh (1995), Norris (2004), Negrine and Papathanassopoulos (2005)). These scholars agree that the changes in election communication are the consequence of an ongoing structural change in politics, society and media systems. Indeed, Holtz-Bacha (2004) emphasises that 'the hypothesis of Americanization that regards U.S. campaigns as a role model has changed into the modernization hypothesis that regards professionalization as a necessity resulting from the social differentiation and the changes of the media systems' (Holtz-Bacha, 2004: 226). Holtz-Bacha is here pinpointing developments in the media that have resulted in changes in campaigning.

That the emergence of the mass media as an autonomous power centre has been one of the main influences in political campaigning trends is argued by scholars such as Meyer (2005), Blumler and Gurevitch (2001). Meyer (2005) argues that candidates and politicians in general have had to adapt to a new media environment. Swanson and Mancini argue that this effect has occurred in many countries around the world:

'This is a process of media 'globalization', referring not just to the international spread of media contents and forms, but also to structures of relationship and ownership that increasingly are assimilating the systems of mass communication found in different countries' (1996: 13).

It is from this debate that the notion of Americanization as being the older brother to globalization emerged (Blumler and Gurevitch, 2001). Also, Scammell (1998) argues that globalization may describe a process of convergence in which indigenous factors (most importantly television and changing patterns of partisan identification) are the driving forces. Although globalization was introduced as another possible term for describing the campaigning developments, its basic implications (interior developments influencing change) are the same as the 'modernization' hypothesis. Nonetheless it introduces a broader perspective to understanding the developments in campaigning and society in general.

To sum up, there is an ongoing debate relating to political campaigning developments in recent years. On the one hand, changes are seen as being adopted directly from the United States (either selectively or not). On the other, they are seen as being part of more general developments touching on politics, media and society. The term itself is disputed, but scholars nonetheless agree they come from the U.S. Before setting the debate in a specific context, it is important to outline what in fact are the developments the debate entails.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF 'AMERICANIZED' CAMPAIGNING TRENDS

There are several characteristics of 'Americanized' campaigning trends as identified in the literature. These include: catch-all policies, personalization, media-centricity, professionalization and political marketing.

To begin with catch-all policies, one of the main characteristics associated with 'American' influenced campaigning trends has been a shift in strategy from ideology to catch-all policies (e.g. Kavanagh (1995), Swanson and Mancini (1996)). As Swanson (2005) argues, this shift can be attributed to the weakening of citizens' ties with political parties. Similarly, Swanson and Mancini (1996) point out that catch-all parties allow the assimilation and representation of diverse interests and demands of different groups, and may even embrace ideologically contradictory policy alternatives. The authors go on to explain that the main goal of catch-all parties is to raise consensus at the election moment. Furthermore, the decline of a party's power to reel in public support not only gives rise to catch-all policies but also to a party leader being the focus of aggregating support at election time.

Building on this point about the rise of the party leader, Kavanagh (1995) explains that 'there has been a 'presidentialism' in the sense of television focusing more on the activities of the party leaders in an election campaign' (212). For Swanson and Mancini (1996), empowering individual figures at the expense of the authority of the political parties within which the figures operate is a consequence of modernization: 'This has occurred within the last few years in Europe, where the role of stable internal factions has been declining, while the capacity of individual politicians to aggregate the support of diverse groups has been expanding' (10). This rise of the individual results in a personalization of politics. Swanson and Mancini recognise this personalization of politics as one of the major elements associated with modernized or Americanized campaigning where 'the voter's choice depends increasingly upon the voter's relationship with the individual candidate' (1996: 14).

With regard to media-centricity, there has been much debate on what in fact gave rise to such personalization in political campaigning. One strand argues that it was the changing media environment to which politicians had to adapt: '...mass media emerge in modern polyarchies as an autonomous power centre in reciprocal competition with other power centres' (Swanson and Mancini, 1996: 11). Indeed, authors such as Meyer (2005) argue that to get the media coverage they needed, parties had to produce a charismatic leader. Built up by the mass media system, these leaders could reengage citizens with the parties. What also gave rise to media power was the emergence of television as the main conveyor of political information (Plasser, 2002). As the media moved to become a major part of political communication, media and television-centeredness became a central feature of election campaigning (Plasser, 2002).

With campaigns becoming more and more media focused and with the rise of the political leader, parties found that they needed media savvy experts to manage the campaign. Borrowing the term from Habermas, Swanson and Mancini point out the 'scientification' of politics, where campaigning is seeing an increasing number of technical experts 'supplying expertise and making decisions that formerly were made within the party apparatus' (1996: 14). Not only were campaigns in need of technical experts, but they were also in need of professionals hired to navigate the campaign's message and strategy. With the emergence of campaign advisors, emerged the term 'professionalization' of campaigning.

The final recurring characteristic addressed here is the rise of political marketing as a campaigning tool. Scammell (1998) argues that tools such as identifying target voters and concentrating campaigning resources on those targets were taken from marketing. Also, market research has meant the increasing use of focus groups and polling for the 'positioning' of the candidate/party in relation both to the targets and the opponents' (Scammell, 1998: 16).

To sum up, catch-all policies, personalization, media-centricity, professionalization and political marketing have been argued to be some of the central characteristics of a seeming convergence of political campaigning practices in diverse political and social systems round the globe. To explore this seeming convergence from a practical as well as a theoretical perspective, its properties will be examined on the example of Croatia and its two most recent general elections.

CROATIA'S POLITICAL AND ELECTORAL GENESIS

The first free multiparty general elections were held in Croatia in 1990. Although these elections are considered to be pre-founding democratic elections (Kasapović, 2000), since Croatia was at the time still part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, their significance is undisputable. Namely, with these elections began Croatia's transition from 'authoritarian socialism towards a multiparty parliamentary democracy' (Deren-Antoljak, 1993: 80). Deren-Antoljak points out that the choice of an electoral model was a key issue for the democratic development of Croatia, as was the development of the country's political parties.

In looking at the genesis of the Croatian political system since Croatia's independence from the former Yugoslavia in 1991, Zakošek (2002) identifies the rise and fall of three political systems. He claims the first was established following the first free elections in 1990, which saw the end of the one-party system and the development of a two party system: a right wing party (HDZ or the Croatian Democratic Union) and a left-wing party (SDP or Party for Democratic Change), with the HDZ gaining almost two-thirds of the seats. The second political system developed with the 1992 elections for the Representative House of Parliament¹ which saw the rise of the HDZ (61% of the seats in Parliament) into the dominant party². The third system rose from the 1999 Parliamentary elections which saw the fall of the conservative HDZ Party and the rise of a coalition-led Government headed by the SDP (the Social Democratic Party). From 2000 to the general elections in 2003, it became clear that the political system with one dominant political party was over (Čular, 2004).

The 2003 elections saw the rise of a reformed HDZ, with a new president, Ivo Sanader, at the helm. Although the Party secured 62 seats in Parliament, this was not enough to form a Government so a coalition Government was formed with four smaller parties, giving HDZ and its allies control of 76 out of 152 seats. SDP won 34 seats and the Croatian People's Party (HNS) became the third largest party in the new parliament with ten seats (source: NORDEM).

In November 2007, the Croatian Democratic Union or HDZ secured a second term in office again by establishing a coalition with two smaller parties. The largest opposition party was and remained the Social Democratic Party or SDP. HDZ secured a total of 66 seats in Parliament, SDP 56 and HNS as the third largest party 7.

Political analysts have argued that the past two elections, especially the 2007 election, demonstrate a move towards a two-party political system. They have also argued that the past two elections have seen a rise in 'Western style campaigns' (Živković, 2008), where 'Western' is used as a generic term referring to any practices established in developed

¹ Amendments to the 1990 Croatian Constitution saw the establishment of two Houses of Parliament: Representative and County Houses. In 2001 the two Houses merged to form the Croatian Parliament.

² Other larger parties that were elected to Parliament included the Social Liberal Party or HSLS (10% of seats), the Social Democratic Party (former Party for Democratic Change) or SDP (8%), the People's Party or HNS (4%) and the Party of Rights (3%).

democracies. Before exploring such influences in any detail, it is important to first consider the barriers to their possible application.

CROATIA'S MEDIA AND ELECTORAL SYSTEMS

For Norris (2004), barriers to 'Americanization' include cross-national variations produced by the structure of the media system (such as the role of public television) and legal electoral regulations. Negrine and Papathanassopoulos (2005) point out one distinct feature of the U.S. which is that candidates can almost appear out of nowhere, while in Europe they cannot progress without extensive party control. Also, their research found a variety of regulatory frameworks and restrictions regarding access to political television and the viability of country-specific campaign cultures.

When comparing the U.S. and Croatia, several limitations become apparent. For one, Croatia has strong public broadcasting while the States have strong commercial media. Also, in the U.S. there is a free purchase of airing time policy during the campaign period, while in Croatia equal time is given to each party (up to 2 minutes). Another apparent difference is the length of the campaign; in the U.S. it can last up to six months, in Croatia the official campaign period is only one month long. A further key difference is that negative television campaigns in Croatia are against the law. However, there is an important similarity between the two countries in that there is no official limit to campaign spending.

These are some of the more apparent barriers to adopting American campaigning techniques. One of the aims of this study was to detect where such barriers had an impact and where they were overcome.

CONCEPTUALIZING THE DEBATE AND ITS PLACEMENT IN A CROATIAN CONTEXT

The theoretical chapter of this study aimed to present the main arguments for and against the use of the term 'Americanization' when referring to apparently similar campaigning developments in otherwise different national contexts. The chapter observed the term independently, also including its central substitute: modernization. Both terms entail different approaches to the mentioned campaigning developments, which primarily include the personalization of campaigns, their professionalization, media-centricity,

marketing and the use of catch-all policies. What scholars agree on across the board is that campaigns in democracies around the world seem to be adopting these techniques. They also agree that these techniques were first developed and used in the United States.

The aim of this research is to explore the debate surrounding campaign developments by placing it in the context of Croatia's 2003 and 2007 general elections. It is important to note at this point that the term 'Americanization' will be used as a starting point and a 'question rather than a conclusion' (Swanson and Mancini, 1996) for framing the debate in a Croatian context.

To gain a better understanding of how the theory falls into the research, the theoretical framework will be observed on a macro and a micro level. The micro level will analyse the data concerning each election year. The macro level will aim to cross-analyse the data, relating it back to the outlined theory and research questions. Specifically, the research aims to contribute to the debate by exploring whether we can speak of Croatian electoral campaigns as partaking in the general electoral campaign convergence trend and if so, speculate on whether this is American trends influencing Croatian campaigning or whether campaign developments are part of a more general process of 'modernization'. Furthermore, the research will draw on Plasser's adoption versus shopping model in determining what could be influencing potential campaigning developments in Croatia. Also, the research shall address Norris's notion of an export and import, implying a two-sided influence when dealing with campaigning trends.

It is in this researcher's opinion that Croatia can serve as a good litmus test for continuing the debate on campaigning similarities for the following reasons: firstly, Croatia is a young democracy on the path towards European Union membership. This means that it is evermore open to foreign influence, which can also include campaigning trends. Secondly, while research has looked into the packaging of politics in Croatia's elections (Lalić, 2004) and into the personalization of presidential campaigns (Grbeša, 2004), political campaigning in Croatia remains largely under-researched. Thirdly, the research that has been conducted so far points to changes in campaigning practices in Croatia but does not dwell upon the potential influences behind their emergence.

It is therefore the objective of this research to shed light on the 'Americanization' debate by specifically looking at a young democracy with changing campaigning techniques.

By focusing on Croatia's 2003 and 2007 general elections, this research could detect whether these changes can be attributed more to exterior (top-down) or interior (bottom-up) influences on campaigning techniques. This could further shed light on general developments within Croatia, namely, the political process, the media and society in general.

The main questions that sparked the research were connected to the notion that similar campaigning trends can be found in dissimilar national contexts in democracies around the globe. But why do these trends occur and what influences them? Are these similarities more apparent than real? When applied to Croatia, these questions become more specific. Therefore, the research questions that are the driving force of this research will attempt to determine to what extent Croatian elections have been influenced by 'Americanization'. Also, how do the 2003 trends differ from the 2007 trends? Which trends were used in 2007 that were not used in 2003? Overall, the research aims to see whether we can speak of an 'Americanization' in the sense of Plasser's shopping or adoption model, whether it is more of Norris's notion of an import-export of trends or whether these changes came from society, indicating that it is more of a case of Swanson and Mancini's societal modernization that has influenced campaigning developments.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

METHODOLOGY REVIEW

The main questions that sparked this research were connected to the notion that similar campaigning trends can be found in dissimilar national contexts in democracies round the globe. To try and answer these questions, this research aims to explore them through the example of Croatia's 2003 and 2007 general elections. More specifically, the questions will attempt to determine to what extent Croatian elections have been influenced by American campaigning trends.

One of the ways of obtaining this information was to go directly to the source of campaign implementation and development. Therefore this researcher interviewed officials from the three main political parties in Croatia³ involved in both the 2003 and 2007 campaigns. A fourth interview was conducted with an elections analyst with the purpose of obtaining a more neutral perspective on campaigning trends.

One of the main reasons for selecting interviewing as an approach to the topic was that such interviews could offer a detailed insight into a party's campaign mechanism. As Bryman notes: 'In qualitative interviewing, the researcher wants rich, detailed answers' (2001:313). In the case of this research study, qualitative interviewing was seen as enabling the researcher a unique approach to understanding how a campaign works, what its priorities are and which tools are considered to be the most salient, enabling the interviewee to develop his or her own themes as the interview progresses, rather than just confirming or revoking the interviewers' set questions. Therefore, a strength of interviewing is that one often obtains unexpected information that other forms of research might not discover (Berger, 1998).

However, there are also disadvantages to conducting interviews. That is, the interviewer is relying on the informant's account of actions that occurred elsewhere in space

³ The Social Democratic Party (SDP), the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) and the Croatian People's Party (HNS).

and time⁴. One must also take into account the possibility of the informant omitting important details that are for him or her commonsensical which, as Gaskell (2002) notes, 'may lead to the interviewer making invalid inferences about situations and events' (44). Nevertheless, it is from the accumulation of insights from a set of interviews that one comes to understand the issue at hand straight from the source.

Conducting interviews enabled the researcher to obtain a unique perspective on campaigning trends and preferences. However, to go deeper into the analysis it was necessary to select a campaign element that represented a concise synergy of both campaign message and strategy. This was found in political television advertisements. Namely, television advertisements serve as a good campaign element for analysis because they are 'produced by the parties themselves and are not being 'distorted' by journalistic selection' (Papathanassopoulos, 2002: 10).

For data analysis, this researcher first considered content analysis as an approach. However, it was assessed that if the aim of the overall research was to go beyond a basic detection of elements of 'Americanization', then an approach that goes under the surface meaning was required. On that basis, discourse analysis was selected as an adequate approach. Such a choice allowed the researcher to attain a more detailed insight into what messages these advertisements contain. Indeed, as Paltridge (2006) explains, discourse analysis looks at patterns of language across texts and considers the relationship between language and the social and cultural contexts within which it is used. However, what one has to keep in mind with discourse analysis is that there are at least fifty-seven varieties of it (Gill, 2000). Also to bear in mind is that the meaning, scope and application of discourse analysis is relative to the different theoretical systems in which it is embedded (Howarth, 2000). Because of this relativity it is very important to select the discourse analysis that suits the research questions and the context of the research.

A critical discourse analysis approach was deemed as adequate for this study since, as Paltridge points out, the aim of a critical approach to discourse analysis is to help reveal hidden values, positions and perspectives (2006: 178). Paltridge further states that critical discourse analysis examines the use of discourse in relation to e.g. politics and asks why a

⁴ In this sense, it would have been valuable if the researcher could have conducted participant observation when the campaigns were being shaped. However, this retrospective take on the issue does not lend itself to such a methodological decision.

discourse is used in a particular way and what the implications are. Discourse itself refers to 'language use as a social practice, language used within a specific field and a way of speaking which gives meaning to experiences from a particular perspective' (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002: 67). Fairclough (1992) argued that discourses should be analyzed within their social context. To study them, Fairclough (1992) proposed a three-dimensional model which first looks at the linguistic features of a text, processes relating to the production of the text and the wider social practice to which the communicative event belongs (Phillips, Jorgensen, 2002: 71). Supplementing the three-dimensional model is the order of discourse approach to analysis which implies 'the sum of all the genres and discourses which are in use within a specific system or domain' (Phillips, Jorgensen, 2002: 70). This implies that the political discourse of a television political advertisement can contain other discourses, which points to 'interdiscursivity' (Phillips, Jorgensen, 2002: 74).

Observing the shortcomings of critical discourse analysis, Phillips and Jorgensen (2002) argued that it takes into account one text. For that reason, this research will also examine the texts on a cross-textual basis. A more general shortcoming of discourse analysis is the debated lack of objectivity of the research⁵. Phillips and Jorgensen (2002) argue that one way of dealing with objectivity is through 'scientificity' (206). This term implies that 'just because knowledge production is political, does not mean it cannot have scientific value' (2002: 206). What they are saying is that this knowledge needs to be produced following rules, e.g. the general steps of the research should be made transparent, the argumentation should be consistent, and that empirical support should be given for the interpretations presented. The researcher was aware of this throughout the study.

There are many criteria used to assess the adequacy of a study. In qualitative research, the ones most widely used are the criteria of confidence and relevance. Gaskell and Bauer argue that confidence indicators allow the reader to be 'confident' that the results of the research are not made up' (2002: 344). These indicators include transparency, procedural clarity and thick description. A further important indicator of a study's reliability is that of triangulation (Gaskell, Bauer, 2002: 345), by which the design of the analysis forces the researcher to address inconsistencies as an ongoing part of the study, using different sources to corroborate findings. In this research study, interviews with campaign experts

⁵ According to Black (2002), data quality is judged by indicators of reliability, validity and objectivity.

were set against the television political advertisements and then further seen in relation to the interview with a more neutral specialist.

An important point for this study has been the issue of 'construct validity', which according to Yin (2003) requires the establishment of correct operational measures for the concepts being studied. It is hoped that in-depth reading of appropriate literature around 'Americanization' has contributed to this.

RESEARCH DESIGN

As mentioned earlier, this research included interviews with campaign experts from the three main political parties in Croatia: Miroslav Kovačić from the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), Milan Živković from the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and Igor Kolman from the Croatian People's Party (HNS)⁶. The respondents were interviewed due to their direct insight into the campaigns development and implementation. They were chosen for the interviews based on a recommendation from each of the three parties. A fourth interview was conducted with professor Goran Čular from the Faculty of Political Science at the University of Zagreb, who had previously analyzed Croatian electioneering. The motivation behind conducting the fourth interview came from the need for a more neutral analysis of the 2003 and 2007 election campaigns.

Two of the interviews were face-to-face semi-structured interviews (HDZ and SDP) and two were conducted through electronic correspondence (HNS and professor Čular). The former, expectedly, enabled a more probing approach, whereas the latter were more structured. The interview with Mr. Živković was recorded while the interview with Mr. Kovačić was not in respect of his request.

Prior to conducting the interviews, a topic guide was created that would guide the inquiry. As Gaskell points out, 'a good topic guide will create an easy and comfortable framework for a discussion, providing a logical and plausible progression through the issues in focus' (Gaskell, 2000: 40). However, although the researcher had a list of specific topics to

⁶ In an effort to observe research ethics, the researcher outlined the general scope of the research study and asked for informed consent. The interviewees were assured that if they wish confidentiality to be observed about any part of the interview, the researcher would respect this. One of the interviewees wanted the opportunity to approve the interview transcript and this was also respected.

be covered, the interviewees also had a great deal of leeway in how to reply (Bryman 2001:314).

After the interviews were conducted and received, the next step was to produce a transcript for the face-to-face interviews and translate the interviews from Croatian into English.

The sampling method for the television political advertisements proved more tasking. Namely, in 2003, the HDZ party had 13 different political advertisements, the SDP had 11 and the HNS party had 4. In 2007 the HDZ had 18, HNS had 18 and SDP had 7. After considering several options for data collection, this researcher decided to follow three criteria. The first criterion was to focus on the advertisements aired in prime time television which is between 8pm and 10pm (source: Nacional magazine). The second criterion was to select the advertisements that synthesized the various messages presented in the television advertisements as a whole. The third criterion was to select the advertisement the parties themselves considered to be their main advertisement aired in the final two weeks of the campaign.

On this basis, three television advertisements, one from each party, were selected from the 2003 election and from the 2007 election. This gives a total of six political advertisements. The 2003 advertisements were obtained through the archives of the national television broadcaster Croatian Television. The 2007 television advertisements were obtained from the three parties' official web pages.

The next step was to outline the conceptual framework for analyzing the data. As explained above, for the purpose of this research Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis was selected. The first task included conducting a detailed analysis of the linguistic elements of the text, which meant looking at wording and grammar. This researcher decided that visual analysis of the images would also be conducted. The next level was the level of discursive practice (Fairclough), which implied looking at what discourses the text draws on. The third level of 'social practice' includes looking at 'the wider social practice to which the communicative event belongs' (Phillips, Jorgensen, 2002: 71), which means placing the texts within a wider context. For the purpose of this analysis, the wider context was supplied by the conducted interviews. Basically, the analysis involved analyzing the texts, tracing underlying ideologies in the texts and then relating the texts to other texts (Paltridge, 2006: 178).

After presenting the theory and methodology that drive this research, it is important at this point to reiterate the specific research questions that underlie the analysis. The aim of this research was to determine whether we can speak of an identified trend of political campaign convergence in the Croatian context and, if so, whether this was a result of what has been referred to as 'Americanization' or as also being part of a general change that is occurring on other social levels (i.e. top-down versus bottom-up influences). Also, are these changes occurring because American trends are being adopted or are they being adapted to the local setting? Which trends were used in 2007 that were not used in 2003? More specifically, the research questions behind the analysis are how is the language in the data constructed and what kind of a message does it form? What are the discourses that can be detected in one text and across the texts? Also, what is the image of the television advertisements telling us that the words are not?

Before continuing to the actual analysis, it is worth discussing some of the gaps in the research. The first gap is connected with the theoretical outline. While this research focuses on the five main characteristics associated with 'Americanization', considering these to be the most widespread and most relevant, it does not explore Norris's notion of the post-modern campaign. Also, while this research acknowledges the influence of the media on campaigning developments, it does not explore them in detail; however, through acknowledging the influence of the media on campaigning, the research is establishing new routes for continuing research.

The methodological gaps are connected with the possibility of continuing research into the media and elections. Although content analysis was rejected as an insufficient approach to television political advertisement analysis for this topic, it would serve as a sufficient approach to analyzing media content and relating it back to the Americanization debate. In addition, the study could have been strengthened by broadening its scope, i.e. conducting more face-to-face interviews with campaign experts from each party, analyzing more political advertisements and even possibly playing the advertisements to the interviewees and asking them to talk the researcher through them. However, the time limit on the research did not enable a more detailed approach.

4. RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

OVERVIEW

So far this research has outlined the general theory behind the analysis and the methods driving the analysis which aims to explore the emergence of similar campaigning trends in dissimilar national contexts around the globe. Specifically, it aims to look at how and to what extent are trends⁷ that have emerged in the U.S. being applied in Croatia.

By focusing on Croatia's 2003 and 2007 general elections, this research could speculate whether these changes can be attributed more to exterior (top-down) or interior (bottom-up) influences on campaigning trends. Overall the research aims to see whether we can speak of an 'Americanization' in the sense of Plasser's shopping or adoption model, whether it is more of Norris's notion of an import-export of trends or whether these changes came from society indicating that it is more of a case of Swanson and Mancini's societal modernization that has influenced campaigning developments. The term 'Americanization' is therefore used as a question rather than a conclusion.

To get a practical as well as a theoretical understanding of the research aims, this research analyzed campaign television advertisements of the three parties from the 2003 and the 2007 elections. A second viewpoint was obtained through conducting three interviews with party officials involved in the campaigns and one interview with a professor whose work has dealt with elections. After considering the appropriate approaches to data analysis, this researcher decided to apply Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis. The first two levels of the model look at the text, i.e. the transcribed television political advertisement. The third level places the text into a wider context of campaigning, which was supplemented by the interviews. The interviews were initially analyzed on the basis of a coding sheet that was created containing the five elements associated with 'Americanized' campaigning similarities; however, finer grained analysis was developed through close reading of the texts which built on these themes.

⁷ The five trends explored include campaign personalization, professionalization, media-centricity, catch-all policies and the use of marketing and advertising as campaigning tools.

The results of the analysis will be presented on two levels: the micro level will observe party television advertisements and interviews relating firstly to the election year 2003 and then to 2007. The results will then be brought together and analyzed on a macro level while placing the results in the context of the research questions and outlined literature.

CROATIAN GENERAL ELECTIONS 2003

As was outlined in the research design section, the television advertisements were selected on the basis of three criteria: they had to have been aired in prime time television, they had to present a synthesis of the various messages presented in the other aired political advertisements and they had to be advertisements that the parties themselves considered to be central to the final two weeks of the campaign.

The first task was to transcribe both the visual and the verbal elements of each advertisement⁸. The second task was to decide on a unit of analysis for the advertisements. In previous analyses of such political advertisements (Lalić, 2004), the unit was the change of a scene. This researcher decided to use a time cue of 5 seconds. The advertisements were then analysed drawing on Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model of analysis (linguistic elements and discursive elements). Added to the linguistic level of analysis was the visual level.

2003: 'Yes for SDP'

The Social Democratic Party's campaign advertisement for 2003, selected for the purpose of this analysis on the above mentioned criteria, was entitled 'Yes for SDP' and was 28 seconds long. It shows the party president at the time, Ivica Račan, in his office working at his desk, talking to his wife, talking on his mobile phone, with his coat on and also with his coat off. In the scene where he is talking to his wife, they are sitting close to each other and smiling. When Račan is sitting at his desk, the Croatian flag is in the background. These images can be seen as separate discourses, as proposed by Gill (2000), functioning within the general political discourse of the advertisement.

⁸ Please find a sample in the appendix.

When analyzing the wording, we can detect the use of short sentences that contain two 'powerful' words, for example, people and family, job and life, country and love. At the end, Račan says 'You too say yes for SDP', implying that if citizens vote for the party, they are saying yes to family, yes to jobs and yes to their country. On the grammatical level, Račan uses of the first person singular ('...the country that I love' or '...this job that I do') and at the end uses the second person plural when he addresses the camera and says 'You too say yes...', implying an identification between himself and the voters.

The discourses both the speech and the image convey are responsibility (party president in his office), patriotism (flag in the background, him saying he loves his country) and family (smiling with wife). These discourses are not ideology based but could rather appeal to a larger population. The message that we are receiving is that president Račan is the one who will give us, the voters, a future of jobs, family and country.

As Fairclough(1992) pointed out, it was important to place the analysed text into context on the social practice level of the three-dimensional model. Referring to the 2003 campaign, Mr. Milan Živković (SDP) explains that there was a move to catch-all policies, especially in the final two weeks of the campaign when the television advertisement was aired. He said that while some television advertisements produced for the 2003 campaign were issue and people based, it was decided that in the final weeks the campaign advertisement would be personalized, that is, it would focus on Mr. Račan as the leader of the party. Professor Goran Čular of the Faculty of Political Sciences elaborated on this shift by saying the SDP's 2003 campaign shifted to a personalized campaign in the final two weeks before the elections because the polls were not moving in their favour.

HDZ 2003: 'Let's get Croatia moving'

For the 2003 general elections, the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) opted for a campaign that was almost entirely focused on the new party president, Ivo Sanader. The main television advertisement entitled 'Let's get Croatia moving' was 44 seconds long and was entirely image based. What we see is the party president first in casual clothes, greeting an elderly woman, a family, students (all profiles: the sportsman, the couples, one listening to music). A student passes a basketball to president Sanader, looks at him with respect and recognition of his authority. At this point the background is the capital Zagreb. Then it changes and we see president Sanader in a typical Dalmatian town where elderly men are

playing a traditional bowling game. We see Sanader among them, as one of them, throwing the ball and winning the game. Then the background changes and he is in the east of Croatia, again in a very traditional setting. He is greeted by the locals dressed in traditional clothing. He is given a traditional heart shaped candy which turns into the background of St. Mark's Church in Zagreb, a landmark opposite the Government buildings. Now he is wearing a suit and is greeted by his party members. As he walks through the crowd of his party members, the background is presented as a blueprint with the European Union stars. The background changes into the Croatian flag. At the bottom we see Sanader's signature and the campaign slogan, 'Let's get Croatia moving'.

The first discourse that really comes out during the advertisement is that Sanader is the personification of success, winning and leadership. The advertisement covers all the age groups and Croatia's regions, and everywhere Sanader is recognized with authority and presented as 'one of the people'. The blueprint at the end is telling us 'this is a process, we are still building our country' and with the EU stars in the background the feeling transmitted is that Sanader is the one that can lead the country in that direction. Therefore Sanader represents power. Each of the clips present a social configuration, and what we are being told by this advertisement is that Sanader perfectly fits in any Croatian setting. He is the embodiment of power and leadership and we should trust him, as the people he meets in the advertisement do, to take us into the European Union. For an advertisement that has no words, the images are strong enough to give us the campaign message, 'Let's get Croatia moving'.

Miroslav Kovačić, who was directly involved in the 2003 campaign, explained it was all about EU and NATO membership. One campaign advertisement even featured foreign officials, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel, talking about Croatia and the European Union. Kovačić explained that the messages were constructed based on polling results and that the campaign was all about using catch-all messages which were not ideology based. The US Democrats were listed as an example and their 1992 'It's the economy stupid!' message 'which is not really a message typical of the Democrats. We now live in a post-ideological society where the slogan doesn't have to be ideological' (Kovačić, 2008). Kovačić also explained that society itself had changed as people wanted to move from the post-war period.

HNS 2003: 'Let us build our future together'

The Croatian People's Party (HNS) campaign advertisement selected for this analysis was entitled 'Let us build our future together' and was 30 seconds long. It featured the party president at the time, Vesna Pusić, and the former construction minister Radimir Čačić - the current HNS president. We see president Pusić walking down the streets of Zagreb coming into contact with young people, while Mr. Čačić is seen supervising a construction site. We further see president Pusić being recognized as an authority by the youths: two teenage girls call to her using her first name, a young man wants to shake her hand and gives her the thumbs up, break dancers dancing in the background. Towards the end of the advertisement, we see the two together now walking up the steps leading to the Government buildings. The power that the images possess is in combining a youth connection with responsibility. The images are closely connected with the campaign slogan 'Let's build our future together': we see young people, who are generally considered to represent the future, and we see construction, the need for building that future within the European Union.

When examining the wording and grammatical structure of the audio material, a purposeful juxtaposition becomes apparent. The juxtaposition is along the 'us versus them' form. For example, president Pusić starts the advertisement by saying 'While others kept quiet, we knew we had to speak'. She also says '...we directed Croatia towards the European Union'. Mr. Čačić continues by saying 'we built the building...let us give it a European roof'. It is interesting to observe the power relations presented in this advertisement through the words used. Mrs. Pusić and Mr. Čačić are presented as the ones who spoke while others, implying all other politicians, kept quiet. And now they are the ones who can truly bring Croatia to the EU. They had the power to resist the political silence⁹ and they are the ones with the real power to take the country to the EU. Both the imaging and the wording are pointing to interdiscursivity. On the image level we see youth, building, future. On a linguistic level we see power (to resist and move forward).

The images and the words used in the campaign advertisement were aimed at appealing to voters that research showed would vote for the party, explained HNS

⁹ They are most likely referring to the mid to late 1990s period in Croatia which saw an autocratic regime under Franjo Tuđman.

spokesperson Igor Kolman: 'This meant citizens up to the age of 40, with a high level of education, from urban areas, with middle or high income levels' (Kolman, 2008). Kolman further explained that polling was not used to form the general campaign messages but that other types of voter research¹⁰ were used. Although president Pusić and Mr. Čačić were both in the campaign advertisement, Kolman explained that the aim was to present Pusić as a leader of a team that can implement the outlined party project.

CROATIAN GENERAL ELECTIONS 2007

SDP 2007: 'Every person is equally important'

The Social Democratic Party's (SDP) main campaign video in the final weeks of the 2007 campaign was 45 seconds long and carried the slogan 'Every person is equally important'. We see the party president Zoran Milanović, casually dressed, as one of the people in a crowd walking towards the camera. In the shots in which we do not see the president addressing the voters, we see a manual worker painting a fence, a businessman carrying a briefcase, elderly men, and a young girl holding her father's hand. When the shot goes back to president Milanović, he is walking forward along with the other people surrounding him.

The people presented in the advertisement cover all the age groups and are dressed in everyday clothes. President Milanović is dressed like them, implying he is one of them, he goes through what they do, he can understand their problems, and he can understand the needs of the average citizen. When observing the images, it becomes apparent that president Milanović is addressing the general voter when speaking. However, with the spoken message of the advertisement, the number of people addressed is narrowed down.

In the first sentence president Milanović says a large part of the population earns its bread the honest way. By saying large part and not saying simply 'This is a country where people earn their bread in an honest way', he is stressing who he is addressing. In Paltridge's (2006) terms this could count as 'foregrounding' which implies emphasis. Mr. Milanović continues this emphasis by saying that for these people, a society will be created where everyone is equally important before the law. He states that a team of experts has

¹⁰ It was not indicated in the interview what kind of research.

been gathered for the purpose of returning fairness, expert knowledge and credibility to Croatian politics, '...which has been missing in the past four years' (Milanović, 2007). Here Mr. Milanović is clearly juxtaposing 'team of experts' with 'lack of expert knowledge' from the current HDZ Government.

The images and the wording point to a number of discourses that can be read from the advertisement: equality (even in the slogan itself), reform (justice system that works, credible Government), team work (he says a team has been gathered, and at the end he addresses the voter and says 'You are also part of that team'). This interdiscursivity points to a catch-all policy campaign advertisement. However, it is important to place the text into the overall campaign context.

For the 2007 campaign, SDP had 7 videos from 21 to 45 seconds long. Four of them were very similar in that they featured party members outlining the party's program. Their slogan was 'People are the strength'. Since one of the criteria set out before was that the advertisement had to be the main video in the final campaigning weeks, the researcher decided to analyze the advertisement 'Every man is equally important', which stresses team work but is more catch-all oriented than the other SDP campaign advertisements. This video brings together the main messages from the other advertisements: an honest Government, anti corruption, the individual as the focus of the campaign, restoring faith in politics. However, it fails to mention some other messages that the campaign really became known for¹¹.

Milan Živković explains that the policies had to be different from the opponents: 'In 2007 SDP wanted to move from a catch-all strategy. We wanted to present the party as being truly socially democratic, not as a catch-all party' (Živković, 2008). Živković went on to explain another reason for wanting to move from catch-all policies: 'Parties are starting to look alike. Such a democratic development is not necessary and for this reason the SDP decided to take a different course' (Živković, 2008). Živković explained that the messages were influenced by the use of focus groups. In general Živković believes the campaign was more professionally run than in 2003 but pointed out that that is a natural progression in general.

¹¹ Such policies included annulling the expatriate communities' right to vote in Croatian elections. Also, getting rid of catechism-based religious education in schools.

Professor Čular explained that in 2007 the SDP went with an ideological campaign (Church, taxes, expatriates) while in the 2003 campaign there were issues people agreed on. 'In general the 2007 campaign tried to put policies into the limelight, but as the elections approached, Milanović and HDZ's president Sanader dominated the media' (Čular, 2008).

HDZ 2007: 'Let's move on'

Just as in 2003, the HDZ's central campaign advertisement in 2007 focused on president Sanader. However, while the image was at the focus in 2003, the focus was on Sanader's speech in 2007. It was one minute long and carried the slogan 'Let's move on'. The image and the speech go hand in hand in this advertisement and shall be observed accordingly.

Mr. Sanader starts by saying that he is satisfied with the successes of the 2003 to 2007 Government and continues by listing them. The areas he focuses on in his speech are education, economic growth and stability, construction and improved living standards. As he walks forward towards the camera, groups of people appear in the background as part of a billboard. They hold up various banners, for example '129 thousand new jobs', 'pensioners' debt returned', '435 kilometres of new highways'. As Sanader moves forward, the people carrying the various banners step out of the billboard and start walking behind him. In both image and speech, the stress is on achieved successes and successes to be achieved in the future. President Sanader is the leader who is being followed by students, businesspeople, pensioners, construction workers. At the end of the advertisement, the camera stops moving and they all move forward together and exit the scene.

The central discourse of the campaign advertisement is power. Sanader is the leader and the people following him see him as such. Both the image and speech are focused on success, which is a source of power. The power discourse is central and brings together other discourses such as education, construction and quality of life. These discourses appeared in the 2003 campaign as well.

What was different from the 2003 campaign was that this advertisement was even more personalized as no one from the party but Sanader appears in it. Miroslav Kovačić explained that Sanader was used more because in 2003 people still were not as familiar with

him. Referring to the 2007 campaign, professor Čular drew attention to a short documentary produced by a commercial television station in Croatia called 'A day in the life of Sanader and Milanović'. Professor Čular found it interesting how although the SDP wanted to distance themselves from a personalized campaign, they showed president Milanović travelling and meeting SDP officials. The segment focusing on president Sanader showed him on a bus with other party members.

HNS 2007: 'We choose our future now'

Selecting a campaign advertisement from the HNS's 2007 campaign proved to be a challenge because the party had 18 advertisements lasting from 8 to 17 seconds. The problem was that, unlike the other parties that had separate advertisements with separate messages that were then infiltrated into one central advertisement, the HNS did not have the one linking them all. All of the videos showed a journalist interviewing people and asking them who they were going to vote for. It was always one person interviewed of a specific age group and profile. For example, an architect, a young baker, a businessman, businesswoman, a retired couple, unemployed man, female student, three musicians, a waiter, a single mother, a fishmonger, a construction worker, etc. Each of these persons focused on a specific area from the party's program: fisheries, employment, culture, education, economic development, construction, pensioners' rights, etc. They all ended with either the party president Čačić or the former party president Pusić saying 'Thank you' with the slogan at the end reading 'We choose our future now'. What the videos do have in common is that they feature people saying why they would vote for the party instead of the party saying why people should vote for them. Because the advertisements are short and because they represent a separate message, this researcher shall outline one advertisement¹², but will approach the others as representing separate discourses.

In this one advertisement, which lasts 15 seconds, three young people in a car say they will vote for president Čačić because he was behind the construction of the main highways through Croatia. The young man in the car points out that Čačić also employed local workers and he did all this as promised, on schedule. The three people are in their mid-twenties and casually dressed.

¹² The one to be outlined was chosen on the basis that it was the first of eighteen campaign advertisements presented on the HNS website.

President Čačić says 'Thank you' at the end of 9 of the 18 advertisements and former president Pusić says 'Thank you' at the end of the other 9. Mr. Čačić is in this particular advertisement presented as someone to be trusted, who gave jobs to local workers and someone who carries out his promises.

The discourse in this advertisement is that of responsibility. Others include employment (an unemployed man standing at the central employment office), a functional judicial system (featuring a single mother saying the HNS supported stricter alimony regulations). In one advertisement, a group of young musicians say they will vote for the HNS but do not know why; they shrug their shoulders implying they did not know why, but that they just will.

The power of these campaign advertisements lies in the fact that they feature actual people saying why they will vote for the party, listing positives ranging from their political successes to the party president's good looks. They basically cover the main areas of the party program and have people listing the various reasons to vote for them as opposed to politicians saying them.

This approach was in line with the way the campaign was structured in 2007, claims Igor Kolman of the HNS. He explained that in 2007 the campaign had a very bottom-up approach in the sense that it was 'aimed at reaching citizens directly through the party leader' (Kolman, 2008). For this reason Čačić was presented as the potential Prime Ministerial candidate whose aim it was to establish personal contact with the larger public. For this reason claims Kolman 'sending messages through the media was in second place, which becomes obvious when one observes the 2007 television advertisements' (Kolman, 2008).

Unexpected findings

Before moving on to the macro level of the interpretation, it is worth elaborating on some of the campaign elements that came out in the interviews which could not be picked up in the analysis of the television advertisements. These findings are worth mentioning because they can be directly linked back to the research question that asked what triggered the changes that have occurred in campaigning trends. The first of these findings concerns

the impact the media have on campaigns. The second concerns how the role of the Internet in campaigning has changed. The third is linked to a question posed in all of the interviews which focused on the influence of foreign advisors on campaign development.

When talking about the differences in campaigning approaches in recent years, Mr. Živković of the SDP explained that 'the impact of the media leads to a Western model of campaigning' (Živković, 2008). In 2007, the party had an office at journalists' disposal 24 hours a day; however, the party spent more money on phone identification of voters and on polling than it did on advertising 'because the media demand certain information to publish the story and this was a way to directly reach voters' (Živković, 2008). Similarly, Igor Kolman of the HNS claimed campaigns were run according to the pace of media coverage: 'The way a campaign is conducted and its relationship with the press is very much determined by the fact that the media have become profit-oriented corporations' (Kolman, 2008). Professor Čular had a different assessment of the media's impact on campaigning, believing that the influence of the media has increased in the political realm but is far from actually determining election results.

Mr. Živković explained that one of the ways of avoiding the traditional media was through the Internet, which is why the SDP's 2007 campaign was heavily covered on the party's web page. Miroslav Kovačić said that the HDZ ran an online campaign as well, especially when it came to countering claims made by some media outlets. Similarly, Mr. Kolman (HNS) argued that 'blogs and political web pages and virtual communities have become an important arena for communicating political messages and party presentation' (Kolman, 2008).

The three campaigners agreed that what has been over-exaggerated in the media is the role foreign advisors play in campaign development. Mr. Kovačić stressed that there is only so much foreign advisors can do: 'Their main limitation is that they are not familiar with the local political system' (Kovačić, 2008). Kolman explained that the HNS hired a foreign consultancy to work on the 2007 campaign, but that this proved to be fruitless since the company had no insight into the Croatian political scene.

2003 AND 2007 RESULTS: A MACRO PERSPECTIVE

When asking the question which 'American' trends were present in 2007 and were not present in 2003, it would be very difficult to point them out. In both years, the SDP, HDZ and HNS campaign television advertisements focused on appealing to the general voter rather than a specific party voter. In both years, the campaigns were personalized, even with the SDP's 2007 stress on team work. In both years, the linguistic and the visual levels of the advertisements formed catch-all discourses, although the SDP advertisement was less catch-all in 2007. In both years, polling (HDZ, HNS) and focus groups (SDP) determined the party policies, but at a more professional level in 2007.

To what can these trends be attributed? The SDP interview revealed that the SDP turned to a personalized campaign in the final two weeks of the campaign in both 2003 and 2007 as a reaction to the polls. Furthermore, the party decided to move away from catch-all policies in 2007 because voters felt all politicians were the same. This leads to the conclusion that this change was influenced by a general feeling in society. Živković explained that polling and focus groups were more developed in 2007 because the agencies themselves became more professional, which points to a marketing approach to campaign message development. In addition, the interviewees pointed out the growing influence of the media on how campaigns are run, causing campaigns to become more 'Western'; for example Mr. Živković (SDP) believes that the rise of personalization can be attributed to a growing media influence.

What has seen in increase from the 2003 to the 2007 general election campaigns is the use of the Internet. The SDP saw the Internet as a channel for distributing party messages and for avoiding the traditional media who select what they publish (Živković, 2008). The HNS also saw it as a channel that should not be neglected considering the rise of political blogs and their readership. The HDZ also gave greater attention to their web page as one needs to adapt to the changing times to win elections.

Concerning the role of foreign campaign experts in Croatia, the three campaigners agreed that their contribution is limited by a lack of knowledge of the local political system. Also, Mr. Kovačić pointed out that it is more of a mutual exchange of ideas than actual campaign management.

To sum up, the analysis revealed the use of 'American' campaigning trends in Croatia: trends such as the use of catch-all policies, personalization and a marketing approach to message formation were to an extent present in 2003 as well as 2007. The 2007 campaign was more professional but, as the interviewees pointed out, this was due to more developed polling agencies and a generally natural progression in campaign management. What was different in the 2007 campaign was that it became more media-centred; it was found that this was due to media commercialization and more of a 'tabloid' (Živković, 2008) approach to reporting politics.

5. CONCLUSION

The motivation for conducting this research came from learning that similar campaigning trends were occurring in countries around the world despite their specific political cultures, histories and societies. What furthered the motivation was learning that these trends originated in the United States and were the focus of much scholarly debate. The debate was centred on the question of what to call this emergence. Is the appropriate term 'Americanization', which implies one-way influences with no room for adaptation to a local context? Or are the changes part of a wider concept of 'modernization', which implies change on a larger scale of politics, media and society in general?

Using the term 'Americanization' as a question rather than a conclusion, critical discourse analysis was applied to television campaign advertisements of the three main political parties in Croatia from the 2003 and the 2007 elections. The analysis was supplemented with interviews with campaign experts.

This combination of text and context revealed that 'American' campaigning trends have found their way into Croatian campaigning. These trends include the use of catch-all policies in television advertisements, a focus on the party leader, a marketing approach to message formation, a rise in campaign professionalism and a campaign that is media-centred. These findings could lead to the conclusion that in Croatia we can speak of Plasser's diffusion approach to 'Americanization'. Therefore American trends are being adopted in Croatia in spite of the outlined differences in media structures and electoral laws. However, a deeper analysis of the findings reveals a different image.

First of all, personalization was present in both 2003 and 2007 in varying degrees. The variation came from the SDP which decided to stress team work in 2007. Secondly, it was revealed that while the 2007 campaign was more professional, this was due to a professional development of polling agencies and a generally natural progression in campaign management. Also, catch-all policies were present in 2003 as well as 2007. It was claimed that their appearance are a sign of a post-ideological society that is less concerned with ideology and more with development. The SDP did move away from them in 2007, a decision prompted by voters generally thinking politicians were all the same and this was a way of telling the voters the SDP was different.

What was different in the 2007 campaign was that it became more media-centred. At the same time, campaigns were looking to the Internet as an alternative to traditional media for message conveying. The reason for this was that the media had acquired a 'tabloid' approach to reporting politics and were selective when it came to publishing campaign messages.

This deeper analysis of the findings indicates that some of the campaigning developments were more 'bottom-up' than 'top-down' in the sense that they came from within society. This points to Swanson and Mancini's notion of 'modernization', which implies that structural changes on the macro-level (media, technologies, social structures) lead to an adaptive behaviour on the micro-level (parties, candidates and journalists), resulting in gradual modifications of traditional styles and strategies of political communications. Evidence was also found of Norris's idea of campaigning being more of an import and export of ideas as opposed to a one-sided influence. This stems from the exchange of ideas between campaigning experts.

After considering the theory and the empirical results, this research concludes that 'Americanization' is indeed an indicator of change. This change does not only refer to political campaigning trends but also to a society in general. In the case of Croatia, it is an indicator that a country that was almost twenty years ago still under socialism is now a democracy in which catch-all messages have replaced those framed by ideologies. It is also a society where the role of a free media in the political process has increased, compared to the 1990s when it was largely state run. Furthermore, personalization means increased accountability, while a marketing approach of selecting campaign policies based on focus groups means more power to the voter. Therefore, instead of calling this 'modernization', this research will refer to these changes as democratic progress. The negative aspects of this progress could be the focus of further research. However, at this point in the life span of a young democracy like Croatia, 'Western' style campaigning can only mean progress.

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