1. Funding and propaganda

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AT WHAT COST? THE TROUBLE(S) WITH ESTIMATING SPENDING ON PROPAGANDA

At its core, politics is about attracting the faithful, bringing in militants, convincing citizens and gaining votes. On a day-to-day basis – whether in the midst of political upheavals, scandals and electioneering, or not – it therefore relies on so many acts of communication, information and propaganda which must be paid for. And yet, trying to analyze spending by political parties in general, and the part that is devoted to propaganda in particular, is fraught with at least three different kinds of difficulties.

The first difficulty is that political parties only rarely give precise and systematic information on the money they spend. For example, in 2010, in Kenya, out of the 44 official political parties, 30 were not even able to produce a financial report (Falguera et al. 2014). In Latin America, even though political parties have long been mandated by law to publish regular reports on their financing, most observers question the reliability, accuracy or truthfulness of these reports. As a general rule, every effort at international comparison of political parties' finances has bemoaned the absence of standardized, uniform and detailed data. Even when the data does exist, it is better to use it with great caution. Political organizations that may have spent money in violation of the law (to buy votes for example) would quite logically either hide this spending or simply refrain from reporting it. The official 'accounting lingo' also creates its own loopholes. For example, in France, political parties give to the Commission nationale des comptes de campagnes et des financements politiques (CNCCFP) a financial statement that seems transparent enough. It breaks down their spending into several categories with clear titles. Among those, one can find the official 'Propaganda and communication' category which includes two line-items: one for political rallies, conferences and talks; and one for print journalism, publishing, TV and ad space. Still, in 2002, an eventful year that saw presidential and parliamentary elections to determine who would control the French government, on average, French political parties officially spent only €160 000 on propaganda and communication. Among the 231 parties registered with the CNCCFP, 92 reported that they did not spend even one euro on 'Propaganda and communication'. Five years later, with the same type of elections taking place, five of the eleven major French political parties reported most of their spending under the category 'Other external costs' (with rent and travel expenses not included). That same year, this category represented over 95 percent of total spending for 55 of the 296 political parties registered with the CNCCFP! That such a loosely defined category could amount to so much while communication and propaganda seem to amount to so little is obviously intriguing. At the very least, it shows how difficult it is to have a clear picture of the financial situation of political parties, even for the institutions that are supposed to control them. The lack of details makes it almost impossible to study the ordinary efforts at political communication of these

organizations – beyond the activities that occur during election season. Even when this type of spending is actually identified, it remains quite imprecise and incomplete. One just has to look at what Ebiquity – a company specializing in ad analysis – found when ABC News asked them to go over the different types of media platforms, from network TV to newspapers and radio, and identify the messages broadcast by the political parties in the 2016 Australian elections (Blumer 2016). On the strength of their analysis, ABC News estimated that the three main political parties spent almost \$7 million on this campaign. Yet, this figure can only be estimated since, like any company vying for advertising space or time, parties negotiate rates. More fundamentally, this already painstaking work only gives us a very limited view of the Australian parties' overall communication budget since it does not include the ad production cost and also fails to take into account the cost of mail-outs, cable TV ads and online presence.

The second difficulty that arises stems from the fact that the term 'political party' does not always apply to the same reality. The seemingly simple term can prove deceptive as its narrow legal or constitutional definition often leads to the multiplication of outside organizations that exist in the shadows of the parties themselves and whose political spending may not be tracked. One can think of party caucuses in legislative assemblies, local officials' associations, foundations, youth groups, student unions, women's groups, publishers, or consulting firms with close ties to the parties themselves. In some political systems, such as the Canadian or the British ones, many other entities named 'Third Parties' can also spend money to promote candidates or parties, even in the periods when the official campaign spending by the political parties is being monitored (GRECO 2008: 11). Identifying the amounts spent by the parties on communication can therefore prove an elusive task, especially if one fails to recognize that the complexity of campaign finance systems only echoes the complexity of the political systems themselves. In the United States, the two major political parties actually operate as conglomerates of distinct political organizations. At the federal level, the Democratic National Committee (DNC) is a separate entity from the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC), which itself is independent from the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (DSCC). These federal organizations (and others) also collaborate with a myriad of different institutions from the county level to the state. And yet, to this already rich organizational tapestry, one must also add an almost infinite number of independent groups – Political Action Committees (PACs), Super PACs, 527, 501(c) and so on. Because of their various legal statuses, they all must abide by different disclosure requirements. Keeping track of their spending can thus prove quite challenging.

The third difficulty is that, beyond the problems raised by the rather loose definition of the category 'political party', simply estimating the cost of political propaganda itself can be problematic. Most scholars look more broadly at party finance in general. Others are specialized in political communication per se. Only rarely do these two research fields meet. Studies on party finance are finding it very difficult to create complete, coherent and comparable datasets that could give a clear account of the various activities of these organizations and their respective cost. In this context, it can indeed be quite daring to attempt to give reliable estimates of the money spent specifically on communication and propaganda. Some of the previous work on this topic ignored this problem altogether and simply assumed that these costs of communication were identical to the amounts that partisan organizations reported having spent on propaganda in the official campaign.

There are two obvious problems with this approach. First, political parties themselves only account for a fraction of the total cost since, in many countries, it is rather the candidates themselves and not the parties who shoulder most of the financing for the campaign. Simply adding an analysis of the candidates' financial reports and pretending they are the functional equivalent of the parties – as some have done in the past – will not do. Second, in this era of permanent campaign in the United States (Ornstein, Mann 2000) but also beyond, trying to identify the official electoral season may also turn into a fool's errand.

These preliminary remarks help explain why we are still building so much of the necessary data that must be the sound footing on which to reflect and draw conclusions on political parties' propaganda. A collective effort to gather this data is sorely needed. It should be undertaken with the most deliberate speed. For one, it would help scholars improve their comparative analysis and finally dispel some long-held myths such as the belief that today's campaigns are more expensive and that this inflation should be attributed to the rise of the modern means of communication (see Pinto-Duschinsky 2013). Constructing this dataset would also allow us to see that the evolution of party spending on propaganda is a reflection of the changes in the way politics is actually conducted and – to put it simply – that it often serves as an indictment of the professionalization of politics. Finally, on a more practical level, it would allow us to avoid some corruption scandals. The example of the Bygmalion case in France is illustrative.¹ Had we had a tool to track the overall spending on political communication and propaganda, the officials at the UMP (Union pour un Mouvement Populaire) would not have been tempted to hide some of their candidate's excessive spending above the statutory limit by illegally transferring it to the party's budget (Lazard 2014). Likewise, having a clearer picture of the cost of political propaganda would have allowed us to identify much earlier the type of illegal party financing scheme that the Front national is now being accused of.²

This chapter proposes to reflect on the relationship between funding and propaganda using a three-pronged approach. The first part will provide some estimates of the amounts spent on propaganda both during and outside of the traditional campaign season and try to link them to the various types of partisan organizations that underwrote them. The second part will attempt to describe some of the underlying social and political constraints that guide this type of spending. The last part will focus on the impact of the campaign finance legal framework on the way political parties communicate to explore the extent to which the law can affect how much parties spend on their communication efforts and what forms their propaganda takes.

POLITICAL MACHINES AND SPENDING ON PROPAGANDA

Despite the difficulties involved in the assessment of the amounts political parties spend on propaganda, one can at least break down this spending into two broad categories: the funds devoted to communication and propaganda in the day-to-day operations on the one hand, and the funds used in electoral campaigns on the other.

In the ordinary course of business, political parties must spend money to organize meetings, conferences and conventions that allow the mingling of its officials and the grassroots, the taking of decisions, elections of officers and – sometimes – communicating

basic contents to the 'outside world'. These costly real-life interactions are made even more expensive by the additional costs that they are associated with: transportation, food and lodging, renting office space for meetings, and so on. The amounts spent toward those ends are usually not detailed in the financial reports of the party organizations:

The share of these costs in party budgets is rarely known to the public. Australia is no longer interested in spending details. The United States does not consolidate information on spending. In Israel such particulars are not available in English, and other democracies (among them Austria, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland) apply more general categories. (Nassmacher 2009: 67)

The parties' internal communication costs also include the price of mailing and subscriptions for the use of telecommunication networks such as the Internet and telephone as well as the cost of creating, editing and publishing of internal newsletters or newspapers. Only rarely do political parties give a detailed account of each of these budgetary items. As Karl-Heinz Nassmacher observed, Canada stands out in this respect. There, the major parties' official financial reports give a rather systematic breakdown of this spending. Rather than the use of multiple examples from different countries with data that are not comparable or even reliable, we decided therefore to rely on the Canadian example to offer a reasonable estimate of what these costs may be.

The period we examined included the federal elections of 1994 and 1998. Interestingly, we see that the five main parties actually devoted fewer resources to the types of spending discussed above in those two years (Table 1.1). When adding the relevant items (Table 1.1, rows 5 to 9), we see that these broadly defined internal communication costs represent as much as approximately a third of the overall spending by the parties. Further, in the

Table 1.1 Canadian registered political parties' fiscal period returns

Type of spending	Percentage of total spending						
	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Salaries, wages and benefits	33.1	33.7	33.1	28.6	33.3	32.9	26.4
Legal and audit fees	2.0	2.2	2.0	2.3	2.6	3.0	3.5
Rent, heat, light and power	5.4	4.1	3.6	4.1	4.3	4.6	4.1
Printing and stationery	8.0	8.8	13.8	13.7	9.6	10.6	10.3
Telecommunications	3.0	3.3	3.0	3.5	3.3	3.4	2.9
Traveling expenses	6.0	8.5	8.5	9.6	9.3	10.1	8.7
Party conventions and meetings	11.4	10.7	11.7	6.6	9.9	7.3	11.5
Advertising	7.4	8.0	7.9	7.1	4.9	4.1	7.3
Broadcasting	0.0	0.0	1.5	4.6	0.0	0.0	5.3
Miscellaneous expenses	23.7	20.7	16.9	19.9	22.8	24.0	20.0
Total %	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
In million Can\$	13.526	16.336	19.192	23.054	17.031	17.416	23.436

Source: Elections Canada (from Nassmacher 2009: 67).

Table 1.2 *Spending on propaganda by major French political parties (2006, 2012, 2015)*

Party	Year	Total expenses (€)	Propaganda and communication (€)	Financial assistance to the candidates (€)	Financial assistance to other political entities (€)
Les Républicains (UMP)	2015	29 464 288	2 768 144	177 402	19 000
	2012	97 891 059	33 329 182	4 061 952	1 201 297
	2006	56 411 681	13 271 597	56 043	2 218 696
Parti socialiste	2015	54 848 901	5 264 615	3 308 755	475 622
	2012	70 281 939	5 558 063	5 861 844	631 170
	2006	49 354 506	3 244 059	144 560	137 514
Parti communiste français	2015	28 342 431	1 594 990	953 878	55 142
	2012	33 438 163	2 632 201	1 557 008	244 636
	2006	33 107 510	3 878 696	27 833	106 376
Europe écologie les verts (Les Verts)	2015	7 589 180	249 803	472 677	115 169
	2012	9 295 720	367 259	1 257 357	102 140
	2006	5 379 338	247 733	73 982	28 120
Front national	2015	13 968 410	2 358 785	618 347	133 754
	2012	8 964 433	1 163 936	992 570	40 000
	2006	7 922 682	729 016	816 157	0
Lutte ouvrière	2015	3 472 432	1 201 103	1 450 605	0
	2012	3 789 524	1 278 436	1 714 878	0
	2006	3 937 936	1 147 308	500	0
Mouvement démocrate (UDF)	2015	1 759 422	229 896	216 209	102 190
	2012	5 246 221	420 297	1 572 787	462 204
	2006	7 996 520	3 134 090	19 102	50 000
Parti radical de gauche	2015	2 205 334	502 721	29 361	180 395
	2012	2 363 289	744 176	339 507	4300
	2006	1 848 216	124 917	4 285	0

Source: Annual reports of the CNCCFP (<http://www.cnccfp.fr>).

era of the digital campaign, old-fashioned propaganda continues to thrive with ‘Printing and stationery’ and ‘Party conventions and meetings’, representing together around 20 percent of total spending at the dawn of the 21st century.

Communication costs incurred by the parties in electoral campaigns can usually be broken down into publishing costs, radio, advertising and direct marketing. Parties also devote funds to commission opinion polls, surveys and research. Table 1.2 provides an estimate of the spending toward electoral propaganda for some French political parties – eight organizations with receipts over €1.5 million – in 2006, when no specific elections were held, 2012, when there were presidential and parliamentary elections, and 2015, when there were elections for the ‘département’ and regional levels. The table tracks only the amounts reported to have been spent on propaganda and communication, those given to the candidates and those given to other political entities. It does not include whatever in-kind benefits the parties may have provided the candidates.

The data must therefore be parsed with some caution, especially since there is no global financial return by the parties that could give a view of the totality of their involvement and break it down for every electoral contest. That being said, what stands out from this table is that French political parties spend relatively little on electoral communication and propaganda. For the four parties with the most expenses (Les Républicains, Parti socialiste, Parti communiste, Front national), spending on communication and propaganda often represents less than 10 percent of total spending. In 2012, with control of the presidency and the National Assembly in play, only Les Républicains dared spend more than one third of their resources on these activities – and they were the heaviest spenders overall that year. The Front national only devotes one sixth of its budget to ‘Propaganda and communication’.

As mentioned above (and as can be seen from Table 1.3), Canadian parties must submit to a higher degree of scrutiny. They provide scholars with detailed financial data from which we can observe that their efforts toward communication and propaganda are more intense than those of their French counterparts. If we add up the amounts spent by the three most profligate parties on advertising and surveys, we find that they devote from half to two thirds of their spending to this kind of spending.

In the United Kingdom, spending on propaganda by the parties who competed in the 2015 General Election represented 90 percent of total spending (Table 1.4, rows 1, 2, 5–9). Among those, we note here as well that traditional means of communication – notably print material and campaign rallies – are still an important source of expenses, accounting for 25 percent of total expenditure.

Beyond the overall figures and the way they break down between traditional or more modern forms of communication, it is necessary to look at the relationship between these efforts to fund propaganda and the diverse type of partisan organization that underwrite them.

Historically, the first great mass political parties appeared as the old western democracies enfranchised new categories of the population and allowed for a more open electoral competition. The new parties were collective political enterprises with national aspirations that, on the strength of the sheer number of their partisans, attempted to contest the monopoly that the great notables had on political representation. The notables’ power was based on the social influence they amassed through good works and patronage. They spent tremendous sums to keep up vast networks of citizens who would be in their debt and could thus be used to further their political purposes. Unable to compete on these grounds, the promoters of the first mass political parties tried to replace such traditional electoral transactions for others. Their candidates had to run for office on a common platform of political and policy proposals (in France, it was only in 1881 that a document of the National Assembly first compiled the candidates’ electoral manifesto – thus forcing the candidates to submit to this more political understanding of the meaning of the election. To this day, it is still known as ‘le Barodet’ – after Désiré Barodet, a representative from the Parti radical, who was behind this political innovation). New rules were adopted to fight clientelism and the notabilities’ vote buying, such as the requirement for secret ballots. These helped forge this new idea of the vote as the expression of a free and personal choice. The development of political propaganda was built on this great political transformation (which is analyzed notably by Garrigou 2002 and Stokes et al. 2013, Chap. 8).

Table 1.3 Breakdown of election expenses of registered political parties – 2015 general election

Registered political party	Advertising – radio/TV (\$)	Advertising – other (\$)	Elections surveys or other research (\$)	Voter contact calling services (\$)	National office (\$)	Professional services (\$)	Leader's tour (net) (\$)	Travel (other than leader's tour) (\$)	Salaries and wages (\$)	Other (\$)	Total election expenses subject to the limit (\$)
Liberal Party of Canada	18 900 322	8 806 909	993 663	436 271	1 794 662	907 854	7 014 377	582 833	3 520 621	161 453	43 118 967
Conservative Party of Canada	17 260 996	1 957 978	1 383 410	5 124 357	1 644 781	2 505 714	7 035 930	105 597	2 257 574	2 595 238	41 871 574
New Democratic Party	9 087 891	3 431 396	1 168 444	1 010 853	2 389 183	749 077	5 893 666	691 738	4 875 546	443 404	29 741 200
Green Party of Canada	889 322	430 739	144 764		384 433	1 014 736	211 882	99 648	732 500		3 908 024
Bloc Québécois	942 353	222 532	25 443		256 072	39 713	267 645	47 711	795 507	73 648	2 670 624
Christian Heritage Party of Canada	3980	8871		1861	14 685				40 684	11 193	81 274
Animal Alliance	9723	41 397			3714	12 737		789	5241		73 602
Environment Voters Party of Canada							4113	1208		4047	24 896
Communist Party of Canada		15 528									
Forces et Démocratie		7988	2960		2933		2000	700		312	16 893
Libertarian Party of Canada		5124			10 344			106		1169	16 743
Marxist-Leninist Party of Canada		1351			3000	4380					8730
Canadian Action Party		6738			222						6959
Progressive Canadian Party			630		791	1000					2421
Pirate Party of Canada		1501				673					2174
TOTAL	47 094 587	14 938 053	3 719 314	6 573 342	6 504 819	5 235 884	20 429 612	1 530 332	12 227 674	3 290 464	121 544 082

Source: Elections Canada (<http://www.elections.ca>).

Table 1.4 Party spending for the United Kingdom parliamentary general election 07/05/2015

Description	No.	Total value (€)
Unsolicited material to electors	2356	17 903 304
Advertising	1767	8 180 733
Transport	1408	1 986 981
Overheads and general administration	1277	241 5925
Rallies and other events	893	2 962 846
Market research/canvassing	725	9 016 943
Media	304	391 468
Manifesto or referendum material	168	376 024
Campaign broadcasts	98	1 056 575
Total		44 290 798

Note: No. refers to the accounting code number of the expenditure.

Source: Electoral Commission, <http://search.electoralcommission.org.uk/Search/Spending?currentPage=1&rows=10&sort=DateIncurred&order=desc&tab=1&et=pp&evt=ukparliament&ev=445&optCols=CampaigningName&optCols=ExpenseCategoryName&optCols=FullAddress&optCols=AmountInEngland&optCols=AmountInScotland&optCols=AmountInWales&optCols=AmountInNorthernIreland&optCols=DateOfClaimForPayment&optCols=DatePaid>.

Yet, not all political parties were naturally predisposed to rely solely on purely programmatic promises and campaign platforms to gain votes and power. They continued to rely on more clientelistic modes of mobilization. The political machines that long ruled over American cities are a prominent example. These machines were based on extremely intricate webs of exchange, where votes were traded for services, loyalty for jobs and favors for kickbacks. The money that was collected from businesses was used to subsidize the fidelity of the activists and the services to the citizens (Banfield 1961). In Palermo, the Christian Democratic Party sold its services to the highest bidder but was always very careful to be parsimonious in its generosity. Its success was built on the great care the party took to give its voters enough so that they would be grateful but not so much that they would not still require more help from it. By keeping this precarious balance, the party could ensure their indefatigable support (Chubb 1981). In Tunisia, the Rassemblement constitutionnel démocratique mastered the art of clientelism to make itself the beating heart of the old authoritarian regime. Under Ben Ali, this partisan organization was fully committed to large-scale clientelism. It assisted the administration in orienting public policy toward the most underprivileged parts of the country for sheer electoral gains (Allal, Geisser 2011).

This model of ‘business firm party organizations’ (Hopkin, Paolucci 1999) underscores the entrepreneurial and capitalist nature of party organizations as well as the importance of their marketing, advertising and survey expenses. It echoes the earlier reflections of Weber (1965 [1921]) and Schumpeter (1942) who saw political parties not simply as groups of volunteers guided by collective objectives or even the common good, but also as organizations geared toward the personal interest of the political entrepreneurs who lead them. In the late 1980s, Panebianco’s work on what he called professional political parties substantiated those claims (Panebianco 1988). He built a model of political parties

around limited ideological commitments, a weak relationship with the electorate and centralization of power in the hands of a few party leaders. This internal professionalization coupled with an increased reliance on consultants outside the party, notably political marketing and polling specialists. Forza Italia is the perfect illustration of this type of partisan organization, with Silvio Berlusconi as the businessman turned party leader. Berlusconi relied on the financial resources and manpower of his companies to build his party. Within Forza Italia, party control was highly centralized and political marketing was given a central role. Former managers for Berlusconi's Fininvest started their own polling firm called Diakron. Publitalia 80, another branch of Fininvest which was specialized in advertising, was tasked with recruiting the right candidates, while marketing experts crafted the political messages of the party. These political goods were marketed, distributed and sold just like any other, and Berlusconi's media empire ensured that they saturated the airwaves.

In the 1990s, other scholars went a step further and identified cyberparties. Helen Margetts uses the example of British political parties to describe their emergence. She drew a link between what she saw as 'changing patterns of political participation' and the development of the Internet. This new technology promised a 'direct linkage to the voters' and a more open party competition for voters with much weaker party identity as the barrier to entry for membership in a party was lowered to include potentially all voters. The parties now had to be understood 'as organizations (not institutions) operating in the boundary between state and society' (Margetts 2006).

There is indeed growing reliance on new technologies in politics, but it comes in different shades. As Nick Anstead (2008) demonstrated, the Internet makes it possible for party organizations to develop fundraising in a manner that is seen as socially desirable since it tends to magnify the influence of small donors. The comparative study headed by Bastien and Greffet (2009) also showed that the development of the websites of the major Canadian and French parties was a means for them to disseminate information. They centralized important information such as press releases, electoral news and a schedule for future events as well as information on the candidates and the party platform. These websites also allowed for more interaction between the grassroots and party officials as virtual forums allow everyone to air their opinions and share their views (De Luca, Théviot 2014).

As we can see, the transformations of spending patterns on partisan propaganda only echo deeper structural changes. Political entrepreneurs adapt their modes of communication to their electorate and make do with or without an enlightened citizenry. As the shape of the political market changes, and as the information technology evolves, they also adapt their means of propaganda. It is to these relationships that we now turn.

POLITICAL PROPAGANDA AND SOCIO-POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS

The cost of political communications must be understood within a specific political system. Thus, it is obvious that trying to address the 3 million voters that live on the 51 000 square kilometers of Costa Rica cannot compare with mobilizing 800 million Indian voters spread across 3 million square kilometers. In India, the 2014 parliamentary elections were held in nine different steps, from April 7 to May 12, to allow voters to cast

their ballot in one of the million polling stations across the country (*Le Monde* with AFP 2014). The example of the United States also reminds us that the size of the electorate is a central factor in the equation. When attempting to account for the rising cost of US elections over the last 50 years, it is necessary to remember that ‘between the years of presidential elections in the United States of 1968 and 2012, the population of voting age more than doubled. Between 1968 and 2012, parties and candidates had to supply their messages to twice as many electors’ (Nassmacher 2009: 157).

As party organizations turn to social networks, online ads and video content, their ranks swell with friends and followers who coexist with more traditional party activists. This is part of a broader trend for party organizations operating in a changing political market, as Susan Scarrow demonstrated in *Beyond Party Members* (2015). Her comparative study of party organizations in 19 democracies showed that they operate more and more as ‘organizational hybrids, which allow for multiple ways for supporters to affiliate’. By looking at Facebook status, surveying card-carrying party members and poring over the websites of these groups, she was able to give a new analysis of how parties try to mobilize their base in this new era where the very concept of party affiliation has become more complex and diverse: from a simple ‘like’ on Facebook, to the stronger commitment of volunteers actually knocking on doors for a candidate or a cause. This transformation in the parties’ mode of association can at least partially be explained by changing social demands but, more broadly, reminds us that the legitimacy of political parties is dependent on their capacity to convince the electorate that they are still socially relevant.

It is also worth pointing out another important institutional aspect of this discussion. Most of the research dealing with party spending on propaganda tends to focus on very specific ballots, notably presidential elections. This often unintended bias leads us to pay disproportionate attention to these national campaigns where it is necessary to mobilize a very large group of voters spread across a wide territory. By their very nature, these elections tend to push parties and candidates – whose time and resources are often spread thin – to resort more heavily to so-called modern means of mass communication in an attempt to reach as many voters as possible as fast as possible. The same kind of time and financial constraints obviously play much less of a role for a local election in a rural community.

Table 1.5 shows just how much of a financial sacrifice campaign organizations can

Table 1.5 Communication spending in the United States for the 2012 cycle

Description	Total value (\$)
Unspecified media buys	594 690 686
Web ads	94 473 107
Media consulting	30 087 695
Media production	17 885 512
Miscellaneous media	15 438 098
Broadcast ads	8 548 406
Print ads	2 398 810

Source: <http://www.opensecrets.org/pres12/expenditures.php> (based on Federal Election Commission data released electronically on Monday, March 25, 2013).

make to advertise themselves in the media. Still, the very impressive nominal amounts (totaling \$763.5 million) have to be put into perspective. As Ansolabehere et al. (2003: 120) point out: 'Real campaign spending has grown sharply, although somewhat more irregularly, over the last 120 years. However, campaign spending as a fraction of national income has shown no growth at all'. As a share of gross national product (GNP), investing in US electoral campaign appears fairly affordable – especially when one considers the potential returns on investment (Gilens 2012). After all, as columnist George Will likes to point out, every year Americans spend more money on potato chips than on politics.

As a matter of fact, the common wisdom that modern forms of political communication are more expensive may be inaccurate. Table 1.6 details campaign spending by a typical notable at the turn of the 19th century. It shows that the old electioneering practiced by the ancient notables was comparably more onerous than our modern campaigns.

A few comments are warranted. First, when adjusted for inflation, the 5400 francs that the Baron de Mackau spent to get elected in 1902 actually amounts to slightly more than €2 million in 2015. Second, for the record, today's campaign spending ceiling for the current third district of the Orne (more or less the Baron de Mackau's district) is less than €63 000. That being said, the most conspicuous part of the notable's campaign spending is what is devoted to almsgiving. Election year or not, donations to the poor represent between 10 and 25 percent of his annual expenses. This form of perennial charity may look disinterested but it creates a capital of goodwill, loyalty and gratefulness that can be tapped come Election Day. Another interesting insight is that the composition of campaign spending by the notable changes over time. Initially, the largest share was claimed by spending on agents: small sums of money handed out, free drinks, free food . . . standard clientelist expenses. As the baron converts to the modern ways of campaigning that share goes down, while the share devoted to political communication increases dramatically and becomes the number one source of expenses. Interestingly enough, this transformation happens while the overall amounts actually decline, thereby demonstrating that political propaganda actually proves more cost-effective (Phélippeau 2002).

Skipping over a century to look at campaign spending in the 2012 French presidential elections, one cannot fail to notice that the investment is rather limited when compared with US elections, for reasons mostly having to do with widely different legal campaign finance frameworks (Table 1.7).

Most of the money in French elections is spent on activities that produce information. The lion's share is taken by expenses on campaign rallies. These rallies are very poor means of direct mobilization (not to mention persuasion), but they are used as an indirect means to broadcast a message. Indeed, as candidates for French elections are prohibited by law to produce and air campaign ads, organizing public rallies and working very hard to have the media cover them is a way for them to try to circumvent this fairly strict limit. Next to public rallies, come expenses on print propaganda. This reliance on one of the oldest forms of propaganda also appears to be a choice by default, imposed by restrictions on using other media platforms. Here, the limited share taken by expenses on the candidates' websites (less than 5 percent) raises the question: are the candidates spending so little on the web because it is a very cheap tool or because they are still not quite convinced of its political efficacy?

As Pinto-Duschinsky (2013) explained, the growing importance of political advertising tends to be overstated. Even in the United States, if TV ads do play a major role in

Table 1.6 The financial trace of the political conversion of a 'grand notable'

	1866	1885	1889	1893	1898	1902	1906	1910	1914
Ordinary expenses (Current francs)	33 200 (1863)	39 500 (1883)		78 000 (1892)	61 000 (1896)				
% Alms	10%	25%		13%	22%				
Campaign spending (Current francs)	18 100	27 600	12 300	18 200	5600	5400	4700	7500	4400
Adversaries	Duke d'Audiffret- Pasquier	Party list	Courtone teacher	Boschet lawyer	–	Philbois (?)	Caresmel teacher	Amourel doctor	–
Number of votes for Baron de Mackau	c. 14 000		15 379	13 026		13 743	13 626	11 284	11 450
Spending on agents	42%	50%	81% 32%	64% 41%		88% 38%	84% 25%	65% 25%	52% 24%
Spending on total spending (% of total spending)			28%		35%		37%	40%	
Spending on political communication (% of total spending)									

Note: Years correspond to those with legislative elections; years in brackets are those for which we have been able to obtain the ordinary expenses of Mackau.

Source: Phélippeau (2002).

Table 1.7 Breakdown of campaign spending for ten candidates to the French presidential elections of 2012

Spending	Amount (euros)	%
Public rallies	31 577 955	50.48
Print propaganda	11 156 991	17.83
Personnel	6 709 335	10.72
Miscellaneous	3 478 312	5.56
Website	2 903 600	4.64
Campaign office	2 061 940	3.30
TV propaganda	1 540 110	2.46
Other propaganda	1 514 320	2.42
Communication consulting	865 511	1.38
Polls and surveys	557 788	0.89
Telephone marketing	192 959	0.31
Total	62 558 821	100.00

Source: CNCCFP (<http://www.cnccfp.fr>).

campaigns for the most important federal offices, such as the presidency or Congress, those elections actually represent a sliver of the 519 682 popularly elected officials (Lawless 2012). The overwhelming majority of those elections are contested without a single ad being produced and aired. The same appears to be true in Canada where much of the expenses were incurred on TV and radio advertising by national parties at the federal level, but very little was actually spent on media by the individual candidates themselves (Aucoin 2005). While it must be acknowledged that candidates running for the highest office in the United States are not the only ones who are resorting to political advertising, it bears noticing that the practice is far from being universal either. At the local level, candidates for mayor in French rural communities tend to forgo advertising entirely (Vignon 2016). They prefer to rely on mailed questionnaire or e-mail surveys to get their constituents' input on local issues. Town-hall meetings and press releases are becoming more popular, but they remain fairly exceptional. The local media is used to announce a candidacy, take a stand on an issue and attack opponents. Much more than digital social networks, mayors continue to rely on print propaganda and going door to door to meet their constituents. Both techniques are supposed to best answer what they believe to be the expectations of citizens who value access and attention to constituents.

Countries where there are few statutory limits on the use of new technologies for political purposes and actual structural incentives to employ them, have witnessed a shift in what political campaigns look like. The United States is often used to buttress that point. Candidates buying ad space from media corporations became prevalent as early as the 1920s. In the 1930s they moved to the radio, and in the 1950s to television. The 1980s saw the rise of new marketing tools (e.g. direct mail) before these gave way in the late 1990s to the Internet and social media. Still, as was already mentioned above, the importance of digital campaigns must not be overstated. In their review of state party online presence in the 2000 US elections, Farmer and Fender (2005) demonstrated that not all state parties actually took advantage of the possibilities offered by new technologies. Instead many

state party websites seemed to have been mostly empty shells, with inelegant graphics and no useful content. On the other end of the spectrum, one could also find state-of-the-art websites with fully functioning streaming videos and all the requisite digital expertise.

It is also worth noting that the development of these new methods of political communication is not always impeded by legislation. In some countries, it is rather social norms that lead candidates to display some restraint and at least give the appearance of being reluctant to ask for votes. This expectation of modesty is often associated with Scandinavian cultures, but it can be found elsewhere (Dalož 2006). Especially where there was a long tradition of suffrage restrictions, a time when candidates and voters were to be found among the select few, one did not dare to campaign for office but was instead expected to semi-spontaneously emerge on the strength of personal attributes – and with not-so-subtle backing by friends and relatives (Tudesq 1964). Social taboos can lead party organizations to abstain from political advertising overkill just because it would be seen as gauche and might eventually prove counterproductive. This tradition continues to haunt our modern democracies. Pierre Joxe was a famous French politician who, for well over 25 years, was a very close ally of François Mitterrand. In the 1970s and 1980s, as he was running for a seat in the National Assembly in the 5th district of Saône-et-Loire, he was faced with the voters of this rural district, who were wary of aggressive ‘American-style’ electioneering with placards and leaflets (Joxe 1997). As he ensconced himself in this district and became a fixture in it, he had absolutely no need for partisan propaganda to ensure his name recognition. In a certain way, because they become so well known and legitimate for having been in the district for so long, incumbents are often spared the indignity of actually running for office and communicating with their voters. As Jennifer Steen (2006) demonstrated with her study of self-financed candidates, even in the United States, elected office does actually seldom go to the highest bidder. On top of this, specific legislation trying to regulate campaign finance and political communication also impacts the behavior of party organizations and candidates. It is to this relationship that we now turn.

HOW LEGISLATION INFLUENCES HOW MUCH MONEY IS SPENT ON POLITICAL PROPAGANDA AND WHAT MEANS OF COMMUNICATION ARE USED

Students of political party funding find themselves in a situation that could be compared with that of a natural experiment, because they can easily compare countries where political advertising is legal and those where it is not and start to draw some conclusions. Each democratic system has to face the conundrum of how to allow for the maximum freedom of expression and, at the same time, ensure equal representation of all viewpoints to ensure the citizenry can make an enlightened choice. The tension between freedom and equality in the field of political advertising ensures that no solution is without flaws. In a system that insists on freedom of expression and simply allows for parties and candidates to advertise on all media, the danger would be that – in a media environment dominated by television where the supply of airtime is constrained – the dramatic spike in demand for precious access around election time would ensure that advertising rates on TV become so prohibitively expensive that only the richest parties or candidates could afford to broadcast their views.

Most countries have tried to solve this problem by offering free airtime to political candidates. A comparative review led to the construction of a database (Ohman 2012) that details whether countries offer free or subsidized media access. This database allows us to see that this practice has become widespread, with more than two thirds of the countries intervening in such a way. The practice is quite common in Latin America (Austin, Tjernström 2003), with some different systems depending on whether the government orders only public media or also private media corporations to make some time slots available for free for electoral messages and whether paid political advertising is allowed, regulated or banned altogether, as is the case in Brazil and Chile. When the state provides for free or subsidized media access, it has to decide how to allocate airtime among the parties and candidates, with some countries choosing to give equal access to all candidates or parties and others doing it in proportion with their past electoral success. The choices made on that point have to be linked with the issue of the cartel party discussed in several chapters in this Handbook (notably Chapter 5).

Prohibition of paid political advertising is also the law of the land in France. By statute (article 15 of the decree of March 8, 2001 taken in application of the November 6, 1962 law about the election of the president) each candidate is given a set amount of airtime on TV and radio on public TV and radio stations for every round of balloting. The length for each segment is set by an independent agency, the Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel (CSA), in consultation with the candidates, but it must be at least 15 minutes for the first round and 1 hour for the second round unless the two candidates who qualified choose otherwise. In practice, this means that the CSA is the producer of the 'ads' that each candidate will air. The agency contracts out this work to a professional media production firm and then ensures that the content is actually broadcast on public media. The agency struggles with how to guarantee that each candidate gets the same treatment with strict regulation of the content of the ads and, at the same time, allow for enough creative license to avoid a litany of drab campaign spots with only the candidates facing the camera reciting their traditional stump speeches. Since 2007, the rules surrounding the production of these ads have been loosened in an attempt to make them more appealing to the viewers. Candidates have been given permission to shoot outside and can even add their own internally produced visual content, provided that these inserts do not constitute more than 50 percent of the total campaign spot. Perhaps as a consequence of these changes, ratings for these special electoral ads seem to have slightly improved, with 115 million viewers in 2012 as opposed to 108 million in 2002. In the end, 250 of these campaign ads had been produced for a total cost of €1.8 million. They were broadcast for nine hours over eleven days for the first round and two hours over five days for the second one (Denis 2012; see also Rambaud 2016). These fairly stringent regulations were instrumental in dramatically reducing the cost of this type of propaganda.

In the struggle between equal access and freedom of expression, it would be an understatement to say that the United States took a very different approach. Clearly, the idea that all the candidates would be given equal airtime and that the overall cost of production for political advertising on TV and the radio could fall below €2 million may seem fantastical to an American politician (and the political consultants that bill the candidate for their services). Since the 1976 landmark case *Buckley v. Valeo*, the Supreme Court has tended to insist on the protection of free speech and assimilated campaign spending to speech, as in the US private media environment candidates and parties must pay to broadcast their

ads. In its jurisprudence, the Court has mostly left aside the equality rationale according to which one legitimate end of campaign finance regulation could be to ensure a level playing field (see, among others, Mendilow, Brogan 2016; Hasen 2016). There were nonetheless certain legislative attempts to regulate the content of and financing of political messages in the media, the latest example of which being the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002, better known as McCain–Feingold, after the names of its two main sponsors in the Senate. Among its various measures, the law tried to stem the rise of mostly negative ‘issue ads’ paid for by outside groups (unions, corporations and non-profits) or political parties to denigrate a candidate in the run-up to an election. The Supreme Court upheld most of these regulations in a 2003 decision (*McConnell v. Federal Election Commission*), but they were later rendered essentially moot by the 2010 decision *Citizens United v. FEC* which confirmed the possibility for certain outside groups (independent expenditures committees) to freely broadcast political advertising with little constraints as to the source of funding or content as long as they remained independent from the candidates.

When candidates cannot advertise freely – whether because of an outright ban, or because of regulation on ad contents, broadcast and so on – they tend to rely more on old-fashioned methods of mobilization and propaganda centered on the work of volunteer party activists, with public rallies and door-to-door actions. It is especially true when there are constraints on how much candidates or parties are allowed to spend. The IDEA database shows that spending limits on the candidates (44 percent of countries) are more common than spending limits on the parties (29 percent) and that these types of constraints are found more often in Europe and Asia than on the other continents (Ohman 2012). In France, a survey of the people who act as the candidates’ campaign fiduciaries in local elections confirms the intuitive notion that when spending limits are set quite low, candidates revert to more conventional forms of mobilization (Phélippeau 2010; see also Lagroye et al. 2005) and rediscover the importance of their volunteers (Andolfatto 2002) and their proximity to the voters (Le Bart, Lefebvre 2005).

CONCLUSION

In all democracies, candidates, party organizations and many other political institutions (e.g. ministries or local government bodies) continue to allocate a major part of their resources to political communications. By taking these expenses seriously, we can deepen our understanding of the transformation of large party organizations that try to maintain connections to and within civil society. The data we can rely on remains incomplete. It does indicate, however, that political parties are adjusting to broader structural evolutions of the body politic. It also puts into question the conventional wisdom that the development of paid political advertising is responsible for the rising price tag of political propaganda. Both the historical record and more contemporary accounts force us to recalibrate our expectations of the cost of more traditional modes of mobilization.

Electoral campaigns are underpinned by competing political messages and communication efforts by candidates and parties, but the contours of this competition are undoubtedly shaped by legislation regulating whose voice can be heard and what can be said. When confronted with spending caps, party organizations and their candidates rediscover the virtues of nominally cheaper forms of propaganda (e.g. by switching from

paid TV ads to the free labor of volunteers) – or forgo the limits altogether by not reporting certain expenses. Every prohibition tends to lead to new loopholes. In France, the ban on paid political advertising is pushing candidates toward online video sharing platforms to promote themselves and their ideas. In the United States, the constraints put on the fundraising of political parties and candidates has led to the growth of unaccountable outside groups who are not subject to very few limits on either the size of the contributions they receive or the origin of the funds. To quote from the oft-repeated aphorism of the US Supreme Court in *McConnell v. FEC*, ‘money like water, will always find an outlet’. The same could probably be said of political propaganda.

NOTES

1. That scandal centers on a company called Bygmalion, owned by friends of Jean-François Copé, an ex-leader of the Union for a Popular Movement (UMP). That company first alleged having been strong-armed into falsifying Mr. Sarkozy's re-election campaign bills or risk not getting paid. Later, Jérôme Lavrilleux, Mr. Sarkozy's former deputy campaign manager and Mr. Copé's lieutenant, claimed that bills for the former president's campaign were passed off as invoices for party meetings in order to skirt round France's strict limits on campaign financing. Finally, more than €20 million of ‘false invoices’ for Sarkozy's 2012 re-election campaign were billed as party expenses.
2. Le Pen's party is under investigation for having forced their candidates to buy overvalued campaign materials with money they borrowed from the party with very high interest rates. The scheme allegedly allowed the Front national and its contractors to pocket the generous margins while the candidates themselves were not adversely affected since their electoral spending was at least partly reimbursed by the state (Vaudano 2017).

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