

European Elections and Commission Presidency 2014: The “Americanization” of the Electoral Cam- paigns and the Role of the Two Major Political Par- ties

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Abstract

The current paper aims to present and analyze the role of the two major political European parties through the electoral campaigns during the 2014 European elections, namely the European People’s Party (EPP) and the Party of European Socialists (PES). The 2014 Election campaigns worth specific attention, as for the first time, there was a direct correlation between the vote of the EU’s citizens and the election of the European Commission President. In view of this and expanding the argument of “Americanization” this study suggests that the EPP and the PES 2014 election campaigns tend to resemble the United States’ Presidential campaigns.

Keywords: European Elections, European People’s Party, Party of European Socialists, President of the European Commission, Americanization.

Introduction

Since the landmark year of 1979, when for the first time the European citizens voted for the Members of the European Parliament, the member states’ campaigns for the Euro elections have been perceived as being concentrated on national issues rather than European issues (Holtz-Bacha, 2004). It is true that the European elections are often being characterized as second-order elections (Schmitt, 2005) without having a primary political interest. However, during the years, a cascade of changes occurred regarding the European Union’s (EU) structure.

In this regard, while there is a lot of multifaceted controversy within both academic and political circles about the EU's democratic legitimacy or democratic deficit (Follesdal & Hix, 2006; Moravcsik, 2008), from the 23rd to 25th of May Europe's citizens were asked to vote in the most crucial European Parliament elections so far (Hix & Crombez, 2013). Hix and Crombez (2013) stressed that not only did the 2014 European elections constitute a great opportunity for the EU citizens to express their approval or disapproval on the way Europe's leaders handled the financial crisis within Eurozone, or to select the general political orientation of the Union, but more significantly, for the first time the European citizens indirectly decided who would captain the ship of the European Commission (EC)¹.

Meanwhile, the European Parliament endorsed this first-ever EU-wide political race for the post of the EC's President passing a resolution including several recommendations for the organizational improvement of the forthcoming Euro-elections.

In accordance with this resolution, the European political parties were committed to nominate their candidates for the EC presidency, paving the way for interactive campaigns and open debates throughout the EU. The media soon adopted the term "*spitzenkandidaten*" to refer to the Europarties' top candidates, while there is a common belief that the 2014 European elections were further Europeanized (Sasmatzoglou, 2013).

Thus, this paper aims to explore and analyze the election campaigns for the 2014 European elections of the two most powerful European political parties in terms of electoral performance, namely the *European People's Party (EPP)* and the *Party of European Socialists (PES)*. Significantly, this article argues that, because of the new legislative landscape introduced by the Lisbon Treaty (Art. 17(7) TEU) with respect to the election of the EC's President, the 2014 election campaigns of the EPP and the PES tend to resemble the United States' (US) Presidential campaigns. In this context, it will be examined whether the EPP and the PES election campaigns were professionalized and personalized.

In order to examine the abovementioned hypothesis, the "*Americanization theory*" is employed. The term "*Americanization*" first appeared in the beginning of 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, p.3). In the field of critical political analysis and communication the term refers to the worldwide spread of successful election campaign elements and strategies, in terms of electoral performance, that were firstly deployed in the US. Some of the Americanized trends that have been enumerated are the following categories of analysis: *professionalization of campaigning* and *personalization* (Lilleker, 2007). Although, several scholars have challenged the validity of treating these trends as "*Americanized*", stressing that the worldwide adoption of these campaigning techniques/practices is resulted due to changes in societal and technological structures, rather than being the consequence of an unconditional US influence (Norris, 2004; Scammell, 1997; Swanson & Mancini, 1996; Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999), there is a common consensus when trying to trace the origins of the aforementioned trends. In this regard, US is perceived as the major election campaigning innovator (Blumler, Kavanagh, & Nossiter, 1996), while Plasser, Scheucher, and Senft (1999) argue that, "*if there is a European style of political marketing, then its core is a modification of the American role model*" (p.96).

This article aspires to contribute to the heated and open-ended debate about the EU's democratic deficit/legitimacy. Additionally, the 2014 Elections campaigns deserve specific attention and analysis, as for the first time, there was a direct correlation between the vote of the EU's citizens and the election of the EC President.

¹ See Art. 17 (7) Treaty of the European Union

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Soon after the Second World War (WW II), fundamental changes have occurred in media and societies thus influencing the field of political action and communication, especially those practices developed during the electoral campaigns (Vliegenthart, 2012; Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999). However, there is a strong consensus that the origins of these practices developed either in the context of Norris' postmodern structure of campaigning (2004), or Blumler and Kavanagh's "Third Age" (1999), during worldwide electoral campaigns stem from the US (Scammell, 1997; Negrine & Papathanassopoulos, 1996). Numerous political communication experts stress that successful strategies and various campaigning practices that are deployed firstly in the US, are copied by the rest of the world; the latest process being reinforced by the US' exportation of several election campaigning experts (Lilleker, 2007).

Thus, not only do electoral campaigns evolve worldwide entailing several Americanized characteristics such as *personalization and professionalization* (Lilleker, 2007), but they also seem to converge into a single set of commonly accepted practices (Plasser, 2002). In this respect, although the evolution of the electoral campaigns within countries are shaped through indigenous factors, the US is seen as the major innovator and exporter in terms of political marketing (Scammell, 1997).

The "Americanization" of Electoral Campaigning

As far as the field of political communication is concerned, *Americanization* refers to the successful patterns/techniques and strategies, in terms of electoral performance, that originate from the US and are progressively spread over the world through the framework of globalization. For instance, Blumler and Kavanagh (1999) recognized the significant role of numerous Americanized methods exercised by the Labor Party of Tony Blair, during the elections of 1997, while Negrine & Papathanassopoulos identified that techniques followed worldwide such as the "*emphasis on photo opportunities, the use of spin doctors and of image consultants*" (p.49) originated from the US political market. Thus, pursuant to Scammell (1997), the US tend to become (if not already done so) the "*Mecca of political campaigning*" (p.1). Indeed, the on growing sector of political advisors/experts in the US, their role and willingness to get involved in the process of electoral campaigns providing their expertise both within US' borders and abroad [e.g. the concept of internationalization as developed by Farrell (1998)], as well as the pivotal position of the US in the communications technology industry lead to the latter conclusion (Scammell, 1997).

However, even though various campaign techniques have been developed firstly in the US and then the rest of the world followed, not all the processes with a US origin diffused to the rest of countries at the same extent or intensity (Swanson & Mancini, 1996). Additionally, although Scammell (1997), admitted the worldwide incorporation of Americanized practices/strategies during electoral campaigns, especially in the countries that shared similarities, common cultural values and social attitudes with US electoral-political conditions, the extent of adopting Americanized campaigning elements depend on various contextual circumstances, that is, inter alia, the political-electoral system and the type of media system (Scammell, 1997).

Thus, although methods and strategies of political campaigning that have been exercised within US, "*are perceived as on the cutting edge of electioneering innovation*" (Blumler, Kavanagh, & Nossiter, 1996, p. 56), the term of "Americanization" is elusive (Plasser, 2002), and it is rather preferable that one might speak about a "*modern model of campaigning*" (Swanson & Mancini, 1996, p. 250). In this regard, innovations that were developed during electoral campaigns over the last two decades, and resemble methods deployed firstly in the US, reflect in reality wider societal transformations that took place in the context of post-

industrialism or in other words in the general context of a post-modern approach of political communication (Norris, 2004; Swanson & Mancini, 1996; Caspi, 1996; Holtz-Bacha, 2004).

Professionalization

To start with, in the 1960s the term “scientificization” was introduced by Habermas in order to portray the greater involvement of experts and scientists in the political process (Swanson & Mancini, 1996). This concept is based on the notion that the political communication in late modernity has mutated more or less to an instrumental and sometimes bureaucratic institutional tool which contributes to the de-ideologization of policy communication. The latter is likely to be resulted by the political actors’ willingness to retake their positions in the process of communication since “*political institutions are increasingly [...] dependent and shaped by mass media*” (Brants & Voltmer, 2011, p.5).

As far as the election campaigning is concerned, political specialists have sprang up since the 1960s, providing both their knowledge and expertise (know how) in political parties and replacing the, until then, traditional structures of campaigning (Swanson & Mancini, 1996). Strömbäck (2007) providing a definition about professionalized election campaigning, distinguished some characteristics that took part during this type of election campaigning, that is: permanent presence with fluctuating degree of intensity, the greater involvement of the campaign headquarters in terms of diffusing political messages and managing the campaign through the use of political experts, the conducting of opinion polling in order to reach out parties’ members, interest groups and other relevant stakeholders as well as the conduction of opposition research for conceptualizing political enemies’ strengths and weaknesses. Although several reasons might have contributed to the emergence of this trend, Holtz-Bacha (2004) refers to the “dealignment process” (p. 216) between political parties and citizens, reinforced by the change of societal and civic values, as well as the overall increase of the education level.

Personalization

As far as the trend of personalization is concerned, McAllister (2007) argued that “*there is little doubt that politics has become more personalized over the past half century*” (p.584). While this trend is mostly observed in the already personalized presidential systems, it has been visible also in the parliamentary democracies that have evolved from the 1960s. Although the causes of this trend vary, Brants and Voltmer (2011) perceived personalization as the result of the changing media environment, especially the rising of television. Similar analyses tend to agree with the latter (Lang & Lang, 2008; Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995). In this regard, personalization refers to the on growing focusing on individual politicians/candidates instead of paying attention to political parties (Vliegenthart, Boomgaarden, & Boumans, 2011). From the modern era (since 1960s) various changes have been brought in the field of politics, among others, the loosening of the traditional ties of loyalty between political parties and voters (Norris, 2004; Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999). Election/political choices become more individualized instead of depending on a social collectivity through the expressions of the political parties (Dalton, 2000). Thus, since political parties tend to weaken both in organizational and in symbolic terms, citizens’ votes are dependent on their ties with individual candidates (Swanson & Mancini, 1996).

Research Plan

Methodological Remarks

In order to estimate the professionalization of the EPP and the PES' 2014 election campaigns, this paper is based on Gibson and Römmele's (2009) index that entails various empirical indicators.

However, the Campaign Professionalization index is treated as a reference point for the existence or not of each relevant indicator within the EPP and PES' election campaigns. In this regard, this table will not measure each indicator on a scale of 0 – 3 as was done for other election campaigns in the past (Gibson and Römmele, 2009). The latter will be done for good reasons. Firstly, the European Parties constitute the service providers as well as the coordinators of the national parties as will be presented in the following sections. In view of this, the European parties cannot be treated as the national ones. The existence of the indicators below should not be taken for granted since the Europarties have comparative disadvantages both in terms of budget, internal structure, public resonance, and discretion of actions in comparison to the national ones. Thus, it may be appropriate to search for the presence or the absence of these indicators within European political parties, rather than exploring the extent to which these practices took place. Another challenge for the Euro parties that has been identified during these elections, was according to the Spokesman of the EPP and the EPP's campaign manager for the 2014 European elections, Mr. Kostas Sasmatzoglou (personal communication, June 2014), the fact that there was no precedent template – a how to- campaign. Thus, the experience was very new for the EPP Communications team and the EPP Staff. The campaign had to be built from scratch and whilst it consisted a great experience, it required more effort than it would normally take.

Additionally, data were collected on the basis of qualitative, semi-structured and structured interviews with key-persons. Mr. Kostas Sasmatzoglou, the EPP's Spokesman, the Head of the Communications Department and the Head of the EPP's Election campaign for the 2014 European Elections and Mr. Tim McPhie, the PES Press Officer and 2014 Campaign Spokesman were interviewed live. Additionally, Mr. John Lageson, the Assistant to the Campaign Director, Juncker for President was interviewed by email. The interviews aspired to offer an inside view on the evolution of the parties' political campaigns and their campaign strategies.

The EPP and PES' Electoral Campaigns in the First Post-Lisbon European Elections (2014): An Evolution or a Communicative Mutation?

Looking back at the Euro-elections' campaigns of 2004 and 2009, one may argue that the European political parties have concentrated their activities on adopting manifestos and acting as service providers for their member parties (e.g. distribution of election material, organization of heads of state summits before the European Councils, arrangement of events) (Gagatek, 2009a). Indeed, Mr. Kostas Sasmatzoglou the Spokesman of the EPP and the EPP's campaign manager for the 2014 European elections, argued that although some congresses took place in order for the 2004 and 2009 manifestos to be adopted, there was a limited set of activities performed by the European political parties in the pre-Lisbon Euro elections. To make the role of the European parties even more limited, there was actually little evidence that the manifestos were used for election campaigning purposes' by the national political parties (personal communication, June 2014). Thus, Euro manifestos have been characterized as just a set of policies constituting the lowest common denominator amongst the European political families. In this regard, Peglis (2011) negatively criticized the *modus operandi* of the European political parties during the 2009 EU elections.

However, during the first post-Lisbon election campaign for the European Parliament, one may observe an important shift in Europarties' role, from service providers to pro-active players in the 2014 election campaign arena. Indeed, the Spokesman of the EPP and the EPP's campaign manager for the 2014 European elections, Mr. Kostas Sasmatzoglou, pointed out that the responsibility for organizing the 2014 campaign rested solely on the European parties. Put differently, although, the political parties associated with the relevant European parties were running their election campaigns at national level, the responsibility of the centralized, European campaign rested on the Europarties (e.g. putting into motion the process of candidates' nomination for the Commission Presidency, promoting them in the member states, planning and conducting their campaigns).

The EPP 2014 Electoral Campaign: Plan and Basic Features

In 1986, Miller, Wattenberg, and Malanchuk referred to primaries as *"America's most original contribution to the art of democracy"* (p.533). Twenty eight years later, in 7 March 2014, through a primary, the EPP's Congress elected Mr Jean-Claude Juncker, as the party's candidate for President of the EC. It was the first time ever that the EPP would hold elections for the post of the EC's President. The proposal that the Europarties select their *"lead candidates"* was part of a greater effort to persuade European citizens to vote and make the EU Elections more attractive to them. After the Congress, a frenzied period of campaigning began as Mr Juncker hit the road on his campaign bus for a tour across Europe! Meanwhile, back in Brussels, Mr Juncker's team was campaigning, along with his e-campaigners. In the context of the EPP's digital strategy, a special room, the so-called *"War Room"* was set up at the EPP headquarters, accommodating 25 young people to take over the online campaign transmitting messages, mainly, through Facebook and Twitter (Transparency International, 2014). Moreover, directly after his election, Mr Juncker rushed to appoint a director of his campaign, who was also holding an office, along with his cabinet, at the EPP's headquarters (EPP Press, 2014).

Furthermore, the EPP attributed great importance into persuading the voters to exercise their voting rights, mainly through the use of social media (Transparency International, 2014). The EPP used largely its Twitter and its Facebook account to spread this message. Twitter and Facebook national accounts were also created to support the EPP's action in each member state. Moreover, immediately after the election of Jean-Claude Juncker as the EPP candidate in Dublin, EPP's @EPPDublin Twitter account was re-named @JunckerEU to kick-start Juncker's communication on Twitter; also, Juncker's dormant Facebook account was re-activated for the campaign.

In this respect, the Assistant to the Campaign Director, Juncker for President Mr. Lageson (personal communication, July 2014), agrees *"that some specific elements of this campaign had a very American flavour. Some of these elements were quite visible, while others took place more behind the scenes. For example, with regard to the visible elements, there was the "Juncker bus" which travelled to different campaign events across Europe, with Mr Juncker at times travelling on the bus himself"*. He also mentioned that *"the candidates squared off in live TV debates, and there were even some "town hall" style campaign rallies like one might see in a US campaign"* (ibid.).

The EPP developed an internal internet communication system. EPP's intranet and extranet allowed a rapid coordination of the EPP in Brussels and its member parties. Moreover, through the EPP website and Mr Juncker's website, fans and press could register to receive emails and notifications regarding the EPP's campaign. The EPP allocated 1.65 million euro for their Election campaign, coming from the party's operating budget (Transparency International, 2014; Europolitics, 2014). Nevertheless, the EPP Spokesman (Personal Communication; June 2014), highlighted the contrast between Europarties and American

parties, as European political parties do not proceed to fund-raising. Additionally, a lot of attention was given to the participation of civil society and youth proposals. As might be expected, communication was at the core of the campaign. Mr. Kostas Sasmatzoglou (personal communication, June 2014), stressed that such a campaign was organized by the EPP for the first time, thus there was no template to guide them and it was a very new experience. As Mr. Lageson characteristically mentioned, “*the 2014 campaign of the EPP was completely uncharted territory*” (personal communication, July 2014).

One of the most difficult tasks for the press and communication team (consisted of both EPP staff and Juncker’s private office) was to convey to the people Mr Juncker’s European vision, the EPP’s messages and the messages that its member parties wished to communicate to the people at the same time (Sasmatzoglou, personal communication, June 2014). The press and communications team was also in charge for media relations, external communications, opposition watch, and the day-to-day running of the digital “war room” (Ibid.).

One important strategy decision taken by the campaign team of Mr Juncker, and also proving the strong emphasis put on the digital field, was the production of a YouTube advertisement to support Mr Juncker’s first (out of five) priority “*to put policies that create growth and jobs at the centre of the policy agenda of the next Commission*”. The EPP also used promoted tweets to push the messages of Mr. Juncker, and to promote his Twitter account @JunckerEU.

The PES’ 2014 Election Campaign: Plan and Basic Features

On November 6th 2013, the PES has announced that Martin Schulz, after his nomination by 19 PES parties, was going to be the PES only candidate for the EC Presidency. His nomination was confirmed by the PES Congress in Rome, on the 1st of March 2014 (Party of European Socialists, 2014a). After the Congress, Schulz initiated an unprecedented campaigning tour in EU member states, starting from Greece. At the same time, a grassroots movement has arisen consisting of the PES communications team, activists and the PES member parties. For the first time, the EU’s socialists, coming from 28 different member parties would be supporting a common candidate, running a common campaign in all of the EU’s member states. The PES campaign “knock the vote”, inspired by Obama’s 2012 presidential campaign was organized to push forward Mr Schulz candidacy, and as PES describes it, it was “*Europe’s first ever continent-wide grassroots mobilization*” (Party of European Socialists, 2014b).

Under the “knock the vote” campaign, volunteers would campaign door-to-door for 90 days, spreading the PES and Schulz’s message to European citizens. In 2013, a digital initiative was launched by the PES called “#knockthevote for MartinSchulz” aiming to mobilize grassroots (Party of European Socialists, 2014c). A special hashtag #knockthevote was also created in order for the PES to approach online voters via social networks. “*Our model is the election campaign of Barack Obama*”, stated Brian Synnott, PES press officer (Deutsche Welle, 2014). The online campaigning was of utmost importance in the PES strategy (Transparency International, 2014; McPhie, personal communication, July 2014).

The goal of the PES was to win the European Parliament Elections and thus bringing their Candidate, M. Schulz one step closer to becoming the next EC President. According to the PES Press Officer, Mr. McPhie (personal communication, July 2014), in order to help the PES win the elections, the UK Progressive think tank “Fabian Society” has conducted a study, calculating the votes that the socialists would need. The PES goal was to convince 5% of the voters who didn’t vote in the 2009 European Elections to go out and vote for them².

² See PES: Knock the Vote. Retrieved from YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0CrwVinFMEg>

He continued stressing that: “*Our strategy was all about mobilizing (...) Getting people who say: I’m a socialist, I’m a social-democrat, I’m a labor, to actually go out and vote on the Election Day*” (Ibid.). A PES campaign video proclaims: “*We know it works! Just ask Barack Obama, whose ground game made a difference in being reelected*”³. It is very interesting to notice here the frequent reference to Barack Obama’s American Presidential campaign. The PES conducted a pyramid structure campaign (McPhie, personal communication, July 2014). On the top of the pyramid, the socialists’ campaign was directed by the communications team and a team of young activists. The Communications team was working directly with the PES member parties as service providers, as well as with Mr. Martin Schulz. The communications team was engaged with press inquiries and requests for interviews with Mr. Martin Schulz, as well as briefing their top candidate and preparing him for the debates. The activists’ team, was consisting of 30 people, coming from various PES member parties to participate in the campaign. They were entrusted with the responsibility of “*mobilizing, training, encouraging activists from different member parties*” (McPhie, personal communication, July 2014). These activists would also visit different EU states, to meet the grassroots, train them, and organize seminars and campaign events.

In terms of communication tools, the PES had “*an internal internet communication system*” enabling communication officers of all the member parties to share information (McPhie, personal communication, July 2014). Additionally, the PES used “Google ads” and “Facebook ads” in order to promote Martin Schulz’s election campaign (Transparency International, 2014).

This section made an attempt to present the main elements of the PES campaign for the European Parliament 2014 Elections. This overview revealed several similarities between the PES campaign and American Presidential Campaigns (especially Obama’s 2008 Presidential Elections campaign). However, a very important difference between American Presidential Campaigns and European Election campaigns resides in the fact of the limited funding resources. While the funding for American campaigns is rather large and is gathered from various sources, very specific rules define the funding of the European Parties.

The European Televised Debates

Before proceeding to test the “Americanized” elements as were discussed earlier, within the EPP and the PES election campaigns, it might be useful to refer to the first-ever European Televised Debates, between the candidates for the EC Presidency. In view of this, the current section serves as a first step towards the “Americanized” campaigning practices. Tracing the history of televised debates, one may find that the first broadcasted debate took place in the US between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon in 1960. While a lot has changed since then, in general, these debates has been praised for reaching a great amount of viewers, attracting media coverage to a large extent as well as for being direct information facilitators to the majority of citizens (McKinney & Carlin, 2008). Elsewhere, it has been noted that televised debates constitute a “*political and media yardstick for measuring political candidates*” (Kraus, 1999, p. 395).

Starting the analysis with the second televised debate, this debate was held in the European Parliament on the 15th of May among the candidates for the Commission Presidency. The candidates were standing at their podiums having one minute to answer each question asked by the moderator, while the latter was at an opposite side podium. Even though, discourse analysis of this debate falls outside the scope of this paper, at this point it might be appropriate to highlight the issues that were discussed. In this respect, the five candidates touched upon, inter alia, youth unemployment, banking regulation, the situation in Ukraine,

³ (Ibid.)

immigration, institutional and financial corruption, and the previous European Elections low turnout. Similarly, in the first European Presidential Debate in Maastricht the four candidates for the European Commission's highest post (Alexis Tsipras from the European Left did not participated) expressed their positions about Europe's Economy, Euroscepticism, and EU's Foreign Policy. The debate was conducted in English, while again there were limitations regarding the time frame for answers. However, both Mr. Sasmatzoglou and Mr. McPhie admitted that these TV debates did not attract a large number of audience in contrast to what McKinney and Carlin's (2008) suggested about televised debates in general. In addition, while the debate in Maastricht was transmitted by the Euronews channel, the majority of broadcasters did not perceive the TV debate in the European Parliament as a source of bringing a large amount of viewers. In this respect, the latter was not broadcasted in peak viewing channels.

Meanwhile, although the EU is not a federal state (or differently a single country) like the US, there is a common consensus that these two European televised debates tend to resemble the US Presidential debates (Sasmatzoglou, personal communication, June 2014; Lageson, personal communication, July 2014; McPhie, personal communication, July 2014). Indeed, exploring both debates' setting (e.g. candidates' standing), internal rules (e.g. time frame for answers), as well as the policies that have been covered during these political "battles" as were mentioned above, confirms the argument of many common elements being present between the European and the US debates.

Testing the "Americanized" Trends of the European People's Party and the Party of European Socialists' Campaigns

Earlier, it was stressed that when referring to Americanized practices/techniques that have been deployed during electoral campaigns, the relevant bibliography practically refers to, *inter alia*, intense professionalization and personalization (Lilleker, 2007, Swanson & Mancini, 1996). This section will test whether these "Americanized" techniques were present in the campaigns of the EPP and the PES.

Professionalization

Tenscher, Mykkänen, & Moring (2012) suggested that the professionalization of electoral campaigns depends on numerous factors classified into two broad categories: (i) the organizational campaigning structure, as well as (ii) the strategies deployed during campaigns (division between "*software*" and "*hardware*" respectively, p.149).

In the same line, Gibson and Römmele (2009) identified a lengthy list of empirical indicators used for measuring professionalized campaigning. More concretely, this list entails the following indicators: the use of telemarketing, direct mailing activities, the setting up of an internet communication system within political parties, the creation of e-mail subscription newsletter, permanent campaigns, the cooperation between political parties and outside political/media experts, the establishment of campaigning headquarters outside political parties' offices, the use and conducting of opinion polling and opposition research, as well as the establishment of computerized databases.

According to Mr. Tim McPhie (personal communication, July 2014), the PES 2014 campaign was indeed professionalized, in terms of Gibson and Römmele's (2009) indicators. More concretely, he argued that: "*A lot of these tools were used by the member parties at national level; however, in terms of what the PES did, we have an internal internet communication system, while setting up a number of networks online. Also we have a media network*"

Similarly, during the US presidential campaign of 2008, an extensive use of social media was realized, where party supporters were involved in the election process, as well as volunteers were hired (Fletcher & Young, 2012). Returning to the case of the PES, according to Mr. Tim McPhie, closed Facebook groups were created by PES activists for both internal communication purposes as well as for promoting PES and especially Mr. Martin Schulz during the election campaign⁴. Additionally, he underlined the establishment of a new website for campaigning purposes that was programmed via the online tool "*Nation Builder*", where e-mail subscription newsletter was provided (personal communication, July 2014). Notably, the same tool was used by Barack Obama in the US and by the labor party in the UK. Another important element is the creation of computerized databases; there were about 30 000 people signing up for the PES, consisting of PES supporters and journalists.

However, opinion polling was an element that was missing during the PES campaign, while the conducting of opposition research was an ongoing exercise (Ibid.). In this respect, the EU Policy Unit of the PES was responsible for drawing the legislative cycle, supporting the work of the Council, liaising with the Socialists and Democrats (S & D) in the European Parliament, researching the opposition parties' election manifestos, highlighting the differences between these manifestos and finding the points of opposition.

On the other hand, the Assistant to the Campaign Director, Juncker for President, Mr. John Lageson admitted that some of the abovementioned empirical methods of election campaigning were not exercised by the EPP-based political campaign, but by the EPP national parties (personal communication, July 2014). In this regard, even though EPP Headquarters did not get involved in telemarketing activities, a website of Jean-Claude Juncker was provided where online visitors could sign up to the EPP's mailing list in order to receiving press releases as well as a database of contacts was set up.

The table below (Table 1) summarizes the presence of the indicators discussed within the EPP and the PES' 2014 election campaigns.

Examining the table below one may support the argument that the EPP and the PES' election campaigns were more or less professionalized despite the absence of various indicators in their political campaigns, such as the use of telemarketing, the outside campaign headquarters, and the limited use of opinion polling.

Taking into consideration that the European political parties:

- (i) are not subjected to the same legal status as the national political parties are,
- (ii) in the pre-Lisbon elections the European political parties acted only as service providers to their national member parties focusing on adoption of election Manifestos, as well as
- (iii) the lack of any precedent template on how to campaign, it would be possible to argue that even the partial presence of the indicators presented below in the election campaigns of the EPP and the PES contributes to the professionalization of their campaigns.

⁴See **#knockthevote** on Facebook and Twitter

Table 1: Campaign Professionalization index

	EPP	PES
Use of telemarketing	-	-
Use of direct mail	√	√
Setting up of an internet communication system	√	√
Email ‘sign-up’ or subscription list for regular news update	√	√
Outside campaign headquarters	-	-
Permanent Campaigning	-	To a certain extent
Use of outside public relations/media consultants	?	?
Use of computerized databases	√	√
Use of opinion polling	To a certain extent	-
Conducting opposition research	√	√

Source: Gibson R. & Römmele A. (2009). Measuring the Professionalization of Political Campaigning

Another important element of professionalization is “negativity” in which the weakest points of political opponents in terms of argumentation, personal background, political skills or behavior are underlined through confrontational political ads (Lilleker, 2007; Kaid, 2008). Negative ads were dominant during 2012 US Presidential elections, between Barack Obama and Mitt Romney. However, it is possible for one to stress that the negativity was not applied to the EPP and the PES’ election campaigns. Indeed, Mr. McPhie admitted that the 2014 election campaigns of the Europarties were less confrontational than what happens in the US (personal communication, July 2014). In this regard, there was an agreement between the two leading candidates, Martin Schulz and Jean-Claude Juncker to run a clean campaign, speaking about policies, while not building their argumentation in verbal personal attacking, since “*whatever the European election results were going to be, nobody was going to have a clean majority*” (Ibid.). Thus, this abstention of confrontational political narratives confirms the argument that limited negative advertising has been observed in countries where coalition is an integral part of setting up governments, e.g. Germany (Holtz-Bacha, Kaid, & Johnston, 1994).

Personalization

While the existence of personalization as a general trend during election campaigning has been contested (Kriesi, 2011), Rahat and Shaefer (2007) classified the latter in three categories, namely:

- (a) Institutional personalization,
- (b) Media personalization,
- (c) Behavioralpersonalization.

Significantly, the first term is defined as the setting of these norms and institutional arrangements that emphasize on individual candidates rather than on political parties. Subsequently, the second term is related to a shift of media’s traditional narratives regarding

the political sphere, thus focusing on candidates and not on political groups. The third term correlates the personalization with candidates' individual practices; meaning that politicians tend to behave as autonomous actors and not as parts of a collectivity (Rahat & Shaefer, 2007). Furthermore, Van Aelst, Sheaffer, & Stanyer (2012) identified two forms of personalization in the field of political campaigning. More concretely, the first refers to a focus on individual candidates as main players in the electoral process, carrying on their perceptions/ideas, policies, and capabilities ("individualization"), while the second form of personalization indicates "*a shift in media focus from the politician as occupier of a public role to the politician as a private individual*" ("privatization") (Van Aelst, Sheaffer, & Stanyer, 2012, p.205).

In this regard, having watched how the EPP and the PES conducted their campaigns for the 2014 Euro elections as was analyzed earlier, one may observe an increase of personalization in campaigning. For instance, the organizational structure of both the European political parties that were under study, their campaigning techniques/narratives, as well as their electoral material (e.g. a photo of Jean-Claude Juncker was accompanying the introduction and conclusion of the EPP's election manifesto, while several PES' posters have been launched portraying Martin Schulz), may prove the argument above. Indeed, the Spokesman of the EPP and the EPP's campaign manager for the 2014 European elections, Mr. Kostas Sasmatzoglou (personal communication, June 2014), stressed that the entire EPP's campaign was built around Mr. Juncker. Put differently, much more Europe citizens knew that this electoral campaign was of Mr. Juncker rather than of the EPP. In this regard, Mr. Sasmatzoglou (ibid.) concluded that "*Mr. Juncker was essentially our election campaign*"! In the same lines, the PES press officer and the 2014 campaign spokesman, Mr. Tim McPhie, underlined that the PES communication team was focused on the Martin Schulz's campaigning tour, making him the figure-head of the campaign (personal communication, July 2014). However, another important element that one may identify during the PES campaigning is the "privatization" aspect in accordance to the Van Aelst's et al. (2012) twofold division. To bring again the example of the US Presidential Elections campaign, during the 2008 Democratic National Convention in the US, a video of Barack Obama's biography was broadcasted before his acceptance speech. That would help the audience connect better to Barack Obama and to identify the person behind the politician. In the same line, pursuant to Mr. McPhie's words, the communications team wanted to present Martin Schulz as an individual personality, and not just a typical politician. In this respect, Martin Schulz's personality, story, and background were reflected during the campaign. As Mr. McPhie put it, "*he [M. Schulz] has an interesting background. In Brussels perspective he is not the typical politician. He didn't go to university, he wasn't a national minister. He was running his own business for ten years before getting into politics. He had his bookshop in his local town and I think that connected him with people as well*".

Conclusion

The present paper analyzed the 2014 European Election campaigns of the EPP and the PES. More concretely, the Europarties' campaigns were examined in the light of the new institutional landscape introduced by the Lisbon Treaty, under which the European Political Parties were invited to nominate their top candidates for the Commission Presidency and run pan-European campaigns. As it has been often suggested that the EU Election campaigns tend to adopt more and more elements of "Americanized" electoral campaigns, this paper focused on exploring whether the 2014 European election campaigns of the EPP and the PES resemble the political campaigns deployed for US Presidential elections, as a consequence of the new framework defined by the Lisbon Treaty (Art. 17(7) TEU).

The findings of this study suggest:

- The EU election campaigns of these Euro-parties were both professionalized and personalized, indicators that constitute evidence of campaign “Americanization”.
- Moreover, this study discussed that even though one may observe a certain increase of political advertising in the campaigns of the EPP and the PES, these Europarties refrained from exercising practices of negative advertising among each other. In this regard, the political competition for the European Parliament Elections, even though it contained Americanized elements, it was less confrontational in comparison to the “struggle” of the US’ Presidential elections for the White House.

As mentioned earlier, in order to estimate the professionalization of the EPP and the PES’ 2014 election campaigns, this study refers to the Campaign Professionalization Index. Examining the indicators proposed by the abovementioned Index, one may notice that the majority of these indicators were indeed present in the EPP and the PES campaign. Moreover, by presenting and analyzing the EPP and the PES campaigns, this article proved that not only did the EPP and the PES focus their campaigns on Mr. Jean-Claude Juncker and Mr. Martin Schulz respectively, but in fact these European political parties built systematically their election campaigns around their candidates.

In addition, except from the US fundamental elements of political campaigning, while examining the EPP and PES campaign, this paper identified some additional Americanized campaign techniques and practices. More concretely, as far as the EPP is concerned, there was a sort of “primary process” in Dublin Congress where Mr. Jean-Claude Juncker was elected to lead the race of the EPP for the EC’s highest post. Also, the “Juncker bus” as well as the digital “war room” within the EPP headquarters gave an American flavor to the election race.

At the same time, examining the PES knock the vote campaign, this paper identified, again, some “Americanized” campaign elements, such as door-to-door activities, the PES’ online presence (e.g. hashtag #knockthevote), and the newly established PES’ website programmed via the online tool “NationBuilder” that was also used by US Democrats in the American Presidential Elections of 2012.

Significantly, another Americanized empirical indicator is the “*Spitzenkandidaten*” televised debates that were held among the five leading candidates for the EC’s Presidency. There is no doubt that several similarities exist between these European televised debates with the respective ones conducted for the US Presidential elections. Nevertheless, the US televised debates, on the one hand cover a wider range of policies, on the other hand, US Presidential candidates analyze more in depth their suggested policies.

In light of the above, the paper’s findings suggest that: there are indeed a lot of similarities, between the EU Election campaigns and the US Presidential campaigns, even though one cannot claim that the EU Election campaigns are identical to the American campaigns, as a lot of differences still remain. All interviewees confirmed this argument, highlighting that the European campaigns were at a certain extent Americanized, while some differences between EU – US systems remaining. Taking into account that the EU constitutes a paradigm of a *sui generis* federal state (Tommel, 2011) and that the relationship between the EU’s two biggest parties (the EPP and the PES) is *sui generis*, even though it reminds the traditional government – opposition correlation (Gagatek, 2009b), this paper concludes that the Europarties’ 2014 campaigns can be characterized as *sui generis*.

In conclusion the 2014 European Parliament Elections were drastically different. It is the researchers’ firm belief that the 2014 EU Elections were a milestone for European Democracy and also a milestone for the European Parties’ role. In 2014 a new example was set for the future EU campaigns. The 2019 campaign, will be even more Americanized, but even more Europeanized as well.

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