

Media Effects in Campaigns in Elections in East Central Europe

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Abstract

This paper discusses the media and political contexts of campaign effects in the newer democracies of Central Europe, and draws upon examples from the 1994, 1998 and 2002 Hungarian national elections, as well as recent elections in Romania. Research (by the authors) on the 1994 and 1998 Hungarian elections found important campaign effects though these were not consistent from one election to the next, and also not always in line with what the campaign strategists had intended. The main findings from research on the 1994 and 1998 Hungarian elections are summarized, and changes in the media and political systems are discussed before turning to the post-election 2002 survey for analysis of the relationship between media use on the one hand, and political attitudes, evaluations, and vote choice on the other. In addition, one panel, and a three-wave longitudinal survey covering the 1996 and 2000 national elections in neighboring Romania are analyzed to assess the validity of three possible explanations of why the partisan abuse of public television broadcast by government parties can sometimes help them in the electoral arena, and yet have a potential to grossly backfire in some elections.

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Most research on campaign and media effects in elections focused on countries where television coverage of politics is strongly shaped by the non-partisan traditions of either the BBC, or the German and Scandinavian public televisions, or the main American networks, or all of these. To what extent the findings obtained in these countries can generalize to other contexts has always been uncertain.

In the present paper we are concerned with the short-term electoral effects of television broadcast only, and only in a post-communist context. We focus on television broadcast that was, presumably, shaped by the desires of election campaigners. No other forms of campaign effects will be explored. We do not consider established democracies where, as in some Latin countries of Europe, television coverage may, at times, be highly partisan too. We do not consider non-democratic countries or new democracies with a long-established market economy either. Rather, our investigation is limited to new democracies where public television, at least in the first years after a transition to democracy, had an unusually central role in political communications.

Apart from this characteristic of the media scene, the cases that we look at are also similar in the presence of a peculiar political opportunity structure that authoritarian legacies create. Thus we conceive them as a natural laboratory to study variance in television impact and its possible causes while keeping a host of cultural, social and political variables constant. Altogether we consider five election campaigns, which, we believe, were typical for many late democratizing countries. The key question leading our inquiry is as follows: under what circumstances does the apparent (ab)use of public television for electoral propaganda purposes benefits incumbents in elections, and when does it hurt them?

There are a number of reasons why this question assumes particular relevance in new democracies, especially where private business and especially private television used to have weak or no presence. First, many channels of party-voter communication are hard to use in campaigns in these countries. For lack of both cash and service providers, electoral campaigns can rarely rely on paid advertisements and direct mail in a major way. At the same time, parties may also lack the membership base necessary for large-scale personal canvassing and packed rallies. At any rate, since parties and party-voter linkages are necessarily new, it is unusually hard to tell supporters, swing voters and committed opponents apart. Therefore, the impact of get-out-the-vote campaigns, even when they are feasible at all, is uncertain: they may easily mobilize opponents as much as supporters. Targeting isolated voters by taking position on issues may not be a panacea either, since the calculation of vote-maximizing party positions is greatly hampered by the presence of numerous parties with shifting ideologies and the lack of historically cumulated experience with citizens' preferences.

Second, the inevitable weakness of party loyalties in new democracies must leave unusually great opportunities for campaign influence. For the same reason the stakes are equally unusual. Defeat may often mean the total disappearance of a party from electoral competition, and victory seems to be within reach for quite a few competitors. The combination of high stakes and great uncertainty must push party leaders to make full use of whatever tools of campaigning they can rely on – even if the use of these techniques contradicts their own commitments to democratic ideals and/or seems risky.

Third, many post-authoritarian democracies inherited government-controlled public television channels from the ancien régime. Incumbents' influence over public television is variable, just like the means via which this influence is exercised. Direct instruction and briefing of news editors may be unusual. Yet the experience of the two countries covered in our analysis suggests that indirect means – like the appointment of trusted partisans to head public service media, intimidation of editors through threatened budget cuts, and providing loyal journalists attractive career opportunities when the next government fires them – can still assure that many journalists end up acting like party delegates. Part of the explanation is presumably the understandable lack in many new democracies of a culture of public service journalism, and the dominance of a 'political advocate' rather than 'watchdog' and 'information provider' role definition among journalists. The frequent result is that journalists spontaneously assure that their party gets extensive and predominantly positive coverage in any politically relevant communications under their control. They can often take it for granted that they will keep or lose their job depending on the electoral success of a party - a situation not unlike that of ordinary campaign personnel. Thus, media coverage – and probably even more frequently in publicly funded than commercial media – frequently assumes propagandistic overtones.

Fourth, new democracies are middle- or low-income countries, hence government-controlled electronic media may be the only mass media most or at least many citizens are exposed to. Where governments, presidents and/or parties try to use public television to spread thinly veiled partisan propaganda, this fact almost always contradicts more or less strong popular expectations of a non-partisan political coverage on major and publicly financed providers of political information. This tension often turns into a major political issue itself, with intriguing implications for campaigns.

Thus, our analysis focuses on public television broadcast that, we believe, was meant to serve the electoral interests of the main party, alliance or presidential candidate(s) representing in an election the incumbents of the day. The cases covered show some variation in the characteristics that our previous analyses suggested as possible explanations for governmental abuse of public television coverage helping the incumbents in intended ways in some elections, but having backfired in others.

We start by presenting the results of a previous study of ours where we demonstrated that pro-governmental coverage of public television does indeed show such varied effects, and offered some possible explanations for the occasional occurrence of boomerang effects. By adding three more elections to our analysis, now we have an improved ability to consider which of the three may fit the facts best. This new analysis is presented in the second half of the present paper. We conclude with evaluating the results and briefly discussing how further evidence could substantially improve our analysis.

1. A Hungarian case study

Our previous study of boomerang effects focused on the 1994 and 1998 Hungarian elections, which were covered by closely comparable panel survey data (see Popescu and Tóka 2002). In Appendix 1 we offer an overview of the media and party political landscape in Hungary, which backs up our interpretation. Readers

can ignore this overview without any loss if they are not particularly interested in context-specific information.

As Appendix 1 shows, regular news coverage and other television programs obtained a particularly important role in campaign communications in Hungary. Television had a pre-eminent role: in a poll of eligible voters carried out in the middle of the 1994 campaign, 65 percent said that television, and only 14 and 11 percent said that newspapers or radio, respectively, were their main sources of information about the election. Other information sources were mentioned by just 7 percent of the respondents.¹

Against this background, it became a major topic of speculation how the pro-governmental coverage of public television influenced election outcomes, if at all. Although no systematic assessment has been carried out for all the elections, we believe that the bias was clearly present in all election years, although more blatantly so in 1994 than in later years. Indeed, literally all media personnel who controlled the news programs on public television lost (or judiciously quit) their job shortly after the opposition victories in the 1994, 1998 and 2002 elections - and had had little reason to expect that they can keep it in such an eventuality. Thus, they were arguably more in the position of campaigners than of public service journalists. At least in 1994, this was also reflected in how they were perceived by the public. In the surveys that we shall analyze below, 45 percent of the 1994 respondents named the ruling MDF as a party favored by public television coverage on the first place, and 9 percent named so the main challenger party, the MSZP. Four years later the perceived bias was lesser: only 22 percent named the main government party, MSZP as the one favored by public television on the first place, and 7 percent attributed this status to Fidesz-MPP, the key challenger and eventual winner in that year's election.²

An excess of the 1994 public television programs gives a better idea than any number about how dubiously newsworthy and how overtly propagandistic these programs were at their worst. One week before voting day, the evening news magazine aired an interview with an émigré suggesting that the leader of the then most popular opposition party, the ex-communist MSZP, had tortured a political prisoner after the suppression of the 1956 uprising, kicking out some teeth of the sympathetic interviewee. Neither historians nor the party leader were asked to comment on whether he - much criticized for admittedly joining a pro-Soviet paramilitary unit in 1956 - could possibly serve in any prison at all. Half an hour later, a 90-minute documentary - broadcast as the main Sunday evening program - was exclusively devoted to repeating a 40-years old, but never substantiated allegation that many (presumably political) prisoners were starving in a secret underground prison during the 1956 revolution. The documentary implied that the MSZP probably picked its post-1989 headquarters so as to hide the access route to the underground prison.

It is certainly not obvious that spreading poorly supported allegation about the chief opposition party on a publicly financed television could help the incumbents, especially if this happens in the context of a long controversy over governmental control of public broadcasting, and the dissatisfied viewers cannot

¹ These data were made available to us by the Median Public Opinion and Market Research Institute, and are based on a random route sample (N=1200), weighted to match the demographic composition of the adult population.

switch to a rival channel before they would get mad about what they see. And this is exactly how things were in 1994. The media war regularly filled headlines and editorials for about three years between 1991 and 1994, featuring unusual presidential vetoes, Constitutional Court rulings, parliamentary hearings, street demonstrations, and spectacular confrontations between government and the - eventually removed - presidents of public television and radio. There was little chance that someone did not discover that many critiques deemed the political coverage on public television strongly biased in favor of the main government party.

In contrast, in 1998 private channels already had a strong presence. Fewer people watched public television in 1998 than in 1994, and the political coverage was, according to our impressions, at least, less one-sided. The relationship between government and public service media as well as political coverage on the latter was – temporarily - free of controversy, and the adoption of the 1995 media law gave the center-left government credibility as a supporter of pluralism and public service ideals. But did all these changes make the electoral impact of public television politically neutral, or did they just make the pro-governmental propaganda hidden, subtle, and hence more effective?

Our previous analysis relied on election studies that allowed us to regress attitude changes between pre- and post-election interviews on variables measuring exposure to various media outlets, while controlling for pre-campaign attitudes, socio-demographic characteristics, political involvement, and party sympathies among the respondents. The results suggested that exposure to public television broadcast -, and its news magazine in particular - reduced the probability of voting support for the main government party during the final weeks of the 1994 election campaign, and increased the probability that the viewer ended up voting for the main opposition party. The effect occurred partly through a change in party sympathies associated with public television exposure during the campaign. However, some of the effects of exposure on vote choice were direct, even after controls for television's impact on party sympathies, issue positions, personal perceptions of the likely winner of the election and of economic conditions. All these results proved robust after controls were introduced for demographic variables, newspaper reading, exposure to private television broadcast, and political interest. This suggested to us that public television broadcast probably became a salient issue concern itself, which was further activated by exposure to public television. Thus frequent watching of public television could move voters away from the main government party and into the opposition camp.

In contrast, in the 1998 data the same regression models revealed that exposure to public television during the campaign had no direct effect on the vote, but indirectly helped the main government party through its short-term impact on party sympathies. The stark contrast between media effects in the two election years could probably be explained with the opposition's success in 1994 in highlighting the widely perceived pro-governmental bias of public television as proof of authoritarian tendencies in the government itself. Indeed, as shown above, in 1998 much fewer people perceived such bias, and the opposition was also largely silent about governmental influence on public television.

² Most of the remaining respondents either could not positively answer these questions, or thought that the coverage was always fair and balanced. Only ten percent in 1994, and 3 percent in 1998 mentioned some

Alternatively, the unskillful, unprofessional, and blatantly propagandistic tone of the programs in 1994 may have caused the boomerang effect too. Indeed, some of our previous findings suggested that the subtler the forms of influencing voters were, the more reliable they were in delivering the intended results. For instance, we found that even in 1998, public television exposure during the campaign, despite the likely intention of news editors, failed to make people more likely to believe that the economy was in a good shape. However, both in 1994 and 1998 public television primed citizens' vote choices on issue concerns and economic evaluations very much the way government party campaigners presumably desired. Thus, it seems that relatively subtle forms of media influence – like priming – could work in intended ways even when the media in question is widely perceived as biased. At the same time, even a relatively credible source – like public television in 1998 – may fail to have a straight persuasive impact on relatively strongly held citizen opinions.

Third, it is also conceivable that the presence or absence of alternative television channels was the key reason for pro-governmental television broadcast having a boomerang effect in 1994, but helping the government in 1998. Since there was no noteworthy televised alternative to the political coverage of public television in 1994, dissatisfied viewers could not simply switch to news programs on other channels. As a result, people with an interest in watching politics on television kept following public television broadcast even if they found it biased and objectionable. It is plausible that their continued exposure to a disliked source kept their dissatisfaction with government-controlled media very much on their mind when thinking about the parties and casting their vote. The situation was quite the opposite in 1998, and probably that is why the net impact of public television broadcast was favorable for the main government party.

A fourth possible explanation is offered by an argument that is frequently heard in some circles in post-communist countries, namely that most top journalists, especially so in the electronic media, are entrenched holdovers from the media personnel of the ancien régime, and therefore sympathizers of the ex-communist parties. Thus, their influence on message content on public television may always work in favor of the former communist parties, whether they are in government or opposition. Given our – admittedly impressionistic – knowledge of the partisanship of those in control of political coverage on Hungarian public television and the scale of repeated changes in personnel, we do not find this explanation particularly plausible. Yet, it is certainly consistent with the survey data that our previous analysis presented – as are the three other explanations too. Hence they all deserve further analysis.

2. Hypotheses

To sum up, our previous analysis leaves us with four hypotheses about the emergence of boomerang effects:

Exposure to public television broadcast will reduce sympathy and voting support for representatives of the main governmental party vis-à-vis the main opposition party if:

- (Hypothesis 1) the political opposition is vocal and active in demonstrating undue governmental influence in public television and a pro-governmental bias of coverage;

other parties as most favored by the coverage.

- (Hypothesis 2) the pro-governmental bias of public television is particularly blatant, i.e. visible to viewers even in the absence of any opposition criticism;
- (Hypothesis 3) the political coverage on public television does not face serious competition from alternative television channels;
- (Hypothesis 4) the ex-communists and their potential allies are the major party alternative to the incumbents, because holdover journalists from the ancien régime have a preponderant influence on relevant aspects of television coverage, no matter what governments do.

Although we derived these hypotheses from a Hungarian case study, they are applicable to - and probably sufficiently plausible in - other political contexts as well. Only the specific reasoning behind hypothesis four would have to be adjusted should the hypothesis be applied beyond the post-communist world.

To improve our ability to test these explanations empirically, the present paper analyzes 1994, 1998 and 2002 post-election survey data from Hungary, as well as pre- and post-election surveys from the 1996 and 2000 Romanian elections. In three of these cases the incumbents were anti-communist center-right formations: the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) and the Fidesz-MDF joint list in the 1994 and 2002 Hungarian parliamentary elections, respectively, plus the members of the governmental coalitions as well as their presidential candidates in the 2000 Romanian elections. In the 1996 Romanian and the 1998 Hungarian elections, ex-communist politicians dominated the government, and were represented in the election by the Romanian Party of Social Democracy (PDSR) as well as its presidential candidate Ion Iliescu, and the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP), respectively. Hence, our analysis can control for changes in government partisanship. If hypothesis four is correct, then exposure to public television should have increased sympathy and voting support for the main government party in the 1998 Hungarian and the 1996 Romanian election, but had the reverse (or at least neutral) effect in the other three elections covered by the present analysis.

We believe that there also was some variance across the five elections that is relevant for the assessment of the other hypotheses (see Table 1). Unfortunately, we cannot back every detail of this claim with hard data. Yet we think that probably all non-partisan observers would agree that public television coverage had a pro-governmental bias in all five elections, and at least some of the key journalists and editors in charge of news programs were keen to promote the electoral fortunes of the main government party. We also venture that in none of the other four elections was this bias as blatant as in the 1994 Hungarian election. Hence, if the blatant bias itself was the cause of the boomerang effect in 1994, then in no other election should we detect anything similar. Further evidence in favor of hypothesis two would be obtained if subtler media effects - like priming on issues by public television according to the likely desires of pro-governmental campaigners - were more frequently observed in the data than straight persuasion effects on such relatively stable attitudes as party sympathies or performance evaluations.

Table 1 about here

This additional evidence regarding priming might help us to differentiate between hypotheses two and three. Both would lead us to expect that boomerang effects only occurred in the 1994 Hungarian elections. However, the hypothesis about the availability of an exit option (i.e. the ability to switch from public to private television channels) would not be able to explain if priming effects were to be found more frequent than persuasion effects. The other hypothesis comes closer to saying that priming – since it is subtler than persuasion – is more likely to occur. Thus, if priming effects are rare compared to persuasion effects, and the boomerang effect only occurred in the 1994 Hungarian election, then hypothesis three would look slightly more plausible than hypothesis two.

If neither of the two is correct and it was, instead, opposition criticism of governmental influence in public television that made citizens sufficiently resistant and averse to biased coverage in Hungary in 1994, then probably the 2002 Hungarian election should also have witnessed a similar boomerang effect as the one in 1994. This should be so since between 1999 and 2002 the Hungarian opposition, just like in the run-up to the 1994 election, continuously argued that the center-right government was undermining the democratic process, not the least by various measures promoting governmental influence in public service media.³ In addition, the opposition parties frequently tabled well-publicized complaints in the respective complaints commissions against politically biased coverage on public television. Although the issue was not as central then as in the 1994 election, nonetheless in the 2002 Hungarian it certainly had a far stronger presence than either in the two Romanian or the 1998 Hungarian elections.

Since we have no strictly comparable survey data for all five elections, our tests of these hypotheses are going to be much less clean and neat than we would desire. Yet, empirical tests are better than none at all, so we undertake whatever is feasible given the data available to us.

3. Data

In our previous analysis we used panel survey data collected at the time of the 1994 and 1998 elections. They combine personal interviews carried out a few weeks before the first round of the election with interviews conducted with the same respondent a few days after the first round. For the 2002 Hungarian elections, only a post-election survey is available to us. This survey, however, used some of the same questions – most notably on media exposure –, and had its fieldwork scheduled between the two rounds of the elections just like the 1994 and 1998 post-election waves of the panel studies. In all three years, random route samples of the adult population were interviewed by the Medián Public Opinion and Market Research company with standardized questionnaires for the first – and in 2002 the only – wave of the survey. In 1994 and 1998 a total of 719 and 1525 out of an initial 1200 and 2400 pre-election respondents were successfully re-interviewed between the two rounds of the elections. The data are weighted so that the weighted proportion of 40 non-overlapping demographic groups (defined in terms of gender, age, urban vs. rural

³ The most important reference point of this argument was the blocking in parliament the election of any opposition representative to the supervisory boards of public television and radio.

place of residence and education) in the sample equal those reported in the estimates of the Central Statistical Office for 1996 and 2001, respectively.

Therefore, we have roughly comparable post-election survey data for these three Hungarian elections, and for two of them we also know what results the same kind of analysis yielded when pre-election party sympathies and other political attitudes were controlled for. This will enable us to determine whether the patterns observed in the 2002 post-election data are more akin to those in the 1994 post-election data, or to the patterns observed in the 1998 post-election data. In 1994, according to our panel data, public television broadcast had a boomerang effect on sympathy and voting support for the incumbents. The 1998 data, in contrast, were witness to a positive effect of exposure to public television on sympathy – and via that voting support - for the main governmental party. Given these benchmarks, the analysis of the cross-sectional data from the three elections should tell us something about the likely direction of the effect of public television on voting support for the government in 2002.

We analyze media effects in the 1996 Romanian election with the help of a three-wave panel survey carried out by interviewing a nationwide stratified random route sample first in late September 1996. The second interview, with 987 of the initial 1263 respondents, was carried out in late October 1996, still before the first round of the concurrent presidential and parliamentary elections. The third wave of interviews was carried out between the two rounds of the presidential election – the parliamentary election is completed in one round – in mid-November 1996 with 898 of the original 1263 respondents.

For the analysis of the 2000 Romanian elections we rely on a three-wave longitudinal survey. Once again, the three waves were carried out in September, October and November, but the first round of the election then occurred shortly after the last wave of interviews. For each wave a fresh stratified random route sample was interviewed, involving 2438, 1460, and 1241 respondents, respectively.

The 2000 Romanian data are certainly not ideal for comparison with the post-election data from the other elections covered here. However, by estimating similar statistical models for each of the three surveys in 2000, we can establish the direction and size of the change in relevant parameters over the course of the campaign. This should give at least some clue as to the occurrence and direction of media effects on vote choice and political attitudes. Appendix 2 provides contextual information on Romanian media and electoral politics.

4. Empirical analysis

Briefly put, our statistical analyses try to determine how, if at all, public television broadcast affected vote choice – either directly or indirectly through party sympathies, issue attitudes, performance evaluations and possibly priming. We start the analysis with the most suitable data set in the present analysis, i.e. the 1996 three-wave panel from Romania.

Figure 1 sketches the path model that we estimated for this data set. Appendix 3 provides a detailed description of the variables. The key independent variable is *Public tv exposure*, capturing individual-level variation in the frequency of watching public television during the campaign. The key dependent variable is *Vote choice* (as reported in the third wave of the panel, after the first round of the

election). It is coded 1 if the respondent voted for the government party (PDSR) in the elections to the lower house, minus one if s/he voted for any one of the three opposition parties (CDR, PD, UDMR) that formed the government after the election, and zero otherwise.

No direct effect of media exposure on *Vote choice* is expected. Mere watching of television programs – over and above its indirect impact through its influence on generalized party sympathies, issue attitudes and the like – is not expected to make people vote in a particular way. We would rather argue that such a direct effect can only occur if public television coverage itself becomes an issue that moves people to vote against (or, what would be harder yet to imagine, for) the main government party.

Of course, any correlation between *Vote choice* and *Public tv exposure* may also be caused merely by the audience of the public television having some socio-demographic characteristics that, entirely independently from the political effects of public television, are correlated with party choice. Therefore we introduced a series of control variables in the model to control for such spurious relationships between vote choice and television watching. The sketch in Figure 1 is simplified in that it does not list the individual control variables separately, just signals their collective presence in the statistical models. The control variables in question measured the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents as well as their exposure to the two main private television channels, PRO TV and Antena 1 (see the note to Figure 1). Since we are not interested in the effects of these control variables themselves, the respective parameter estimates are not displayed.

The remaining variables are expected to mediate the impact of public television on vote choice. They are *Party affect* – understood as a running tally of party evaluations stored in citizens' short-term memory, and calculated as the difference between the respondents' evaluations of the government party and whichever of the three mentioned opposition parties they liked most –, *Issue attitude*, and an interaction term between *Issue attitude* and *Public tv exposure*. Should second wave (i.e. late-campaign) *Party affect* be positively influenced by *Public television exposure* even when we control for first wave (i.e. early-campaign) *Party affect* and other possible determinants, we would infer that public television exposure during the campaign made people like more the government party, and/or less the opposition. If, as it is to be expected, *Party affect* has a huge positive effect on *Vote choice*, this would mean that public television promoted the electoral fortunes of the incumbents through its impact on party sympathies.

In the case of the 1996 Romanian election *Issue attitude* refers to a set of issues, which the main opposition party relentlessly tried to put on the political agenda. This is so because in that year the main government party did not run a particularly issue-centered campaign, and therefore we could not find any item in the survey questionnaire that could have tapped respondent's attitudes on an issue that the government had tried to use in the campaign. The coding of the variable is such that the higher the respondents' score, the closer their attitudes were to the issue position of the government party. Thus, a positive effect of public television on these issue attitudes would mean that public television helped the government party in the election by making viewers adopt increasingly pro-governmental attitudes on these issues during the campaign. Such a positive effect would be signaled if the *Public television exposure*

variable positively impacted second wave *Issue attitudes* even after the effect of first wave *Issue attitudes* and all the control variables were taken into account.

Finally, if public television primed voters' choices on exactly these issues, than the interaction between the *Public television exposure* and *Issue attitudes* variables must positively affect *Vote choice*. Since it was the opposition that promoted the issues in question, we would rather expect the opposite: i.e. that the viewers of public television were less primed on these issues than other people, and hence the effect of the interaction term is negative.

Figure 1 about here

The parameter estimates were obtained with rough and dirty linear regression models, estimated separately for each dependent and intervening variable in the path model.⁴ Because of panel attrition and missing values, the number of cases on which the various parameter estimates are based varies: it is 536 for effects on second wave party sympathies, 615 for the effects on second wave issue attitudes, and 447 for the regression of *Vote choice* on its determinants. Figure 1 also displays the parameter estimates of interest from the regression equations.

It can be readily seen that the only statistically significant effects in the model are the impact of first wave (early-campaign) party affect on second wave (late-campaign) party affect, and the latter on vote choice. But some of the insignificant effects may be insignificant only because of the relatively small sample size or poor measurement: after all, the impact of *Public television exposure* on second-wave *Issue attitude* is quite comparable in size and significance level to the impact of first-wave *Issue attitude* on second-wave *Issue attitude*. This latter effect must be real if issue attitudes had any stability at all over the one-month period separating the two interviews in time. Hence the statistically insignificant effect of *Public television exposure* - given that its significance level is .22 and the N in the respective equation is as low as 615 - should not be dismissed lightly. At any rate, the direct effects of exposure to public television on party affect and issue attitudes are both positive and close to conventional significance level. The probability of these two positive effects occurring simultaneously just by chance, in the absence of any one of them being truly positive in the population of interest, can be approximated by multiplying their significance levels: .22 times .10=.022. That is to say, the chances are roughly 2 out of 100 that none of these apparent positive effects in the data is more than just a random occurrence.

Our tentative conclusion is that in the 1996 Romanian public television was more likely to help than to damage the campaign efforts of the main government party. The impact of the interaction term between *Issue attitude* and *Public tv exposure* also goes in the expected negative direction, but it clearly fails to come close to statistical significance. Thus, pro-governmental priming effects were less likely to have occurred in this election than pro-governmental persuasion effects of public television. Last but not

⁴ Given the measurement level of the different dependent and intervening variables as well as a preference for listwise deletion of missing values, this solution is not entirely satisfactory. A mix of simultaneously estimated linear and ordered logit models would have yielded more reliable results. However, time constraints prevented us from going in that direction.

least, the direct effect of *Public tv exposure* on *Vote choice* is not only insignificant, but is positive: hence a boomerang effect of pro-governmental coverage on public television is very unlikely to have occurred in the 1996 Romanian election.

These findings are consistent with all hypotheses: public television is more likely to help than undermine pro-governmental campaigns, at least when (1) the opposition is not vocal in condemning governmental influence in public television; (2) the bias of the political coverage is not blatant; (3) there are significant private television channels; and (4) political forces associated with the ancien régime are in government. All these conditions were present in 1996, thus the 1996 results cannot give us much ground to tell which hypothesis about the occurrence of boomerang effects is more likely to be correct. Only hypothesis 3, emphasizing the blatant vs. subtle character of the pro-governmental bias, is slightly undermined by the striking weakness – and likely non-existence - of the priming effect that we looked at.

Figure 2 shows a simplified sketch of the path model that we estimated for each cross-sectional data set that included all the variables that the model requires. These surveys are the first two waves of the 1996 Romanian panel, now treated separately; the three waves (all pre-election) of the 2000 longitudinal election study in Romania; and the post-election surveys from the three Hungarian elections. Note that for three of the five elections covered by these data – i.e. the 1996 Romanian elections and the 1994 and 1998 Hungarian elections analyzed by Popescu and Tóka (2002) - we can tell whether the patterns observed in the cross-sectional data match what we found in panel data. As we will see, broadly speaking they do, and this gives us some confidence to draw inferences about media effects in the 2002 Hungarian and the 2000 Romanian elections merely from cross-sectional data.

Figure 2 about here

The model is merely a simplified version of the one shown in Figure 1 and an only slightly more complex one used by Popescu and Tóka (2002). The statistical models estimated are again linear regressions, and the same for the two countries, except for some inevitable differences between Hungary and Romania in the relevance and availability of some control variables, and some frustrating differences in instruments and relevant issue items across the five elections. The key independent variable is once again *Public tv exposure*, and the ultimate dependent variable is *Vote choice*, coded 1 if the respondent voted for the main government party, minus 1 if s/he voted for the main opposition party, and zero otherwise. In the analyses of the pre-election data sets, responses to a voting intention question are used to measure (likely) vote choice. In the 1996 Romanian election there was no single major flag-bearer among the opposition parties, and in the 2000 Romanian election the main government party received extremely little electoral support. Therefore, in 1996 the CDR, PD and UDMR together are – just as in the analysis of the panel data – considered the main opposition party, and in 2000 the CDR, PD, PNL and UDMR together are considered the main governmental party, both in the construction of the *Vote choice* and the *Party affect* variables.

In the analysis of the 1996 Romanian election the *Issue attitude* variable refers to the salience of the same opposition-promoted issues as before; to general performance evaluation in the 2000 Romanian election, an issue which then certainly favored the opposition campaigning on governmental incompetence; to anticommunist attitudes, which the main government party tried to appeal to, in the 1994 Hungarian election; to a set of welfare state issues promoted by the opposition in the 1998 Hungarian election; and to retrospective economic evaluations - that the then government appealed to - in the 2002 Hungarian election. The coding of the variable is such that it should always be positively related to a pro-government vote. However, a positive interaction effect of *Public television exposure* and *Issue attitude* on *Vote choice* would signal pro-governmental priming where – as in the 1994 and 2002 Hungarian elections – the issue in question was promoted by the government, and pro-oppositional priming in all other elections.

The relevant parameter estimates – once again omitting the effects of the control variables and the intercepts – are shown in separate tables. For instance, Table 2 shows – for all surveys in question - the direct effects of public television on party sympathies, and of party sympathies on vote choice. On top of each causal arrows of interest in Figure 2, a number is printed that shows which table displays the relevant parameter estimates.

Tables 2 to 5 about here

The cross-sectional data seems to reveal much the same pattern for the 1996 Romanian and the 1994 and 1998 Hungarian elections as the panel data did. That is, public television seems to have had a direct anti-governmental effect on vote choice in the 1994 Hungarian election (cf. Table 5), and no significant indirect effect either through party affect or issue attitudes (cf. Tables 2 and 3). In the 1998 Hungarian election and the 1996 Romanian election exposure to public television had no direct effect on the vote (cf. Table 5), but an indirect and pro-governmental effect via party affect (cf. Table 2) and, in the Romanian election, also via issue attitudes (cf. Table 3). The results regarding priming are broadly consistent with the findings based on panel data: no significant effect in Romania in 1996, and pro-governmental priming in both the 1994 and the 1998 Hungarian election. However, in the present analysis no priming effect reaches statistical significance, either in these three elections or the two in 2000 and 2002, respectively (cf. Table 4).

The 2002 Hungarian data shows some evidence of pro-governmental effects of public television. Except for priming, all observed effects of public television are in a pro-governmental direction, albeit all are weak, and none is significant at the 5 percent level. However, the indirect persuasive effects come close to reaching this conventional significance level, with $p=.10$ in the case of the impact of public television exposure on party affect and $p=.14$ in the case of the impact on issue attitudes (cf. Tables 2 and 3). It also seems clear enough that the relatively vigorous and sustained opposition criticism of governmental influence in public service media before that election failed to create a boomerang effect of public television broadcast (cf. Table 5).

The 2000 Romanian data yields the most intriguing new results. The persuasive effects of public television on issue attitudes and party affect tend to be close to zero at the beginning of the campaign. Then they become negative and very nearly significant by the last days of the campaign in November 2000, with $p=.08$ in the case of both effects (cf. Tables 2 and 3). Note that in this – as well as in all other analyses reported in the tables – we rely on a very poor measure of exposure to specifically political coverage on political television, since the only relevant item available in all the 2000 surveys is about general exposure to particular channels. However, in the September 2000 survey there also were two questions about exposure to political news magazines and political talk shows – the latter are unusually frequent and popular on Romanian television – on public television, respectively. We replicated our analysis of the September data replacing general exposure to public television with both items, and in both cases we could register statistically significant negative effects of these alternative measures of exposure to public television on *Party affect*. Also considering the statistically insignificant, but intriguing change of the respective parameter estimates in the course of the campaign (see Tables 2 and 3), we find it quite likely that the political coverage of Romanian public television in 2000 made a small contribution to the crushing electoral defeat of the government parties in that year.

5. Discussion

Where do all the diverse findings leave us? Bits and pieces of the present analysis certainly helped to illustrate the old truism that significant media effects are rarely easy to detect with non-experimental data, especially when exposure to relevant television programs is poorly measured via general exposure to particular channels (Bartels 1993; Zaller 1996). Yet, our analysis also suggested that it is probably wise to invest a measure of trust in findings from cross-sectional data about seeming media effects. Another methodological lesson of our study seems to be that priming effects may be hard to detect because it is not so frequent, after all, that campaigners would set crystal clear targets in terms of agenda-setting, and work for them consistently. At any rate, future studies of the impact of more and less blatant means of influencing voters should, if possible at all, use content analysis and data on citizens' perception of media outlets to determine where and which message flows seemed to be more and less blatant.

In terms of substance, our analysis seems to have found relatively clear evidence, from panel data too, that exposure to public television generated additional electoral support for the main government party in the 1996 Romanian election. We have some tentative evidence that probably the same happened in the 2002 Hungarian election, and that the opposite – a boomerang effect – occurred in the 2000 Romanian election. All in all, we venture to suggest that at least in the post-communist context it may be the rule, rather than the exception, that the political coverage of public television shapes the distribution of votes in elections – in intended as well as unintended ways. Probably most importantly, the 1994 Hungarian and the 2000 Romanian findings suggest that it is probably not infrequent that a political coverage controlled by loyal supporters of the government does damage to the government parties in the electoral arena – either despite, or exactly because of its pro-governmental bias.

On the basis of our previous study of the issue, we developed four hypotheses to account for this striking variation across elections. Given the rather small sample of elections that we could look at here, we are still far from a comprehensive test of these propositions. However, a few things are now clearer than when we started our analysis.

First, we are yet to find an election where a boomerang effect of a government-controlled public media occurred under an ex-communist government. However, in the 2002 Hungarian election the center-right government party, on the short run at least, probably gained – and at least did not lose – electoral support due to the pro-governmental bias of public television. This seems to contradict hypothesis 4, i.e. that the electoral effect of coverage is shaped by the alleged ex-communist sympathies of holdover journalists inherited from the ancien régime.

The evidence also seems to contradict hypothesis 2, namely that boomerang effects are to be expected when the bias of pro-governmental television is too blatant. Although we lack any hard data to support this inference, we think most outside observers would not have seen a major difference in this respect between the 1996 and 2000 political coverage of Romanian television – yet the impact of television on electoral support for the government seems to have been different in these elections. Moreover, significant priming effects appear to be relatively rare, rather than more frequent than persuasion effects. To an extent this also contradicts the proposition that subtler ways of influencing voters are more effective and reliable than straightforward propaganda.

The tentative signs of a boomerang effect of public television coverage in the 2000 Romanian and a pro-governmental effect in the 2002 Hungarian election contradict hypothesis 1. The 2002 Hungarian opposition was definitely more vocal, consistent, and active than its 2000 Romanian counterpart in demonstrating governmental influence in public television and a pro-governmental bias of coverage. Yet, our tentative findings show far more signs of a boomerang effect in the Romanian than in the Hungarian election.

Last but not least, if a boomerang effect did indeed appear in the 2000 Romanian election, as we are inclined to think now, then that certainly contradicts hypothesis 3 about the importance of an exit option for viewers. Yet, our findings still leave open the possibility that boomerang effects are enlarged if, as in the 1994 Hungarian election, they occur in the absence of any serious competition to public television in the air.

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Appendix 1: Elections, parties and media in Hungary

Among the post-communist countries, Hungary was one of the first in completing a full transition to democracy in spring 1990. Through negotiations between the democratic opposition and a reform-oriented ruling party of ex-communists, the institutional framework for a parliamentary democracy and a mixed electoral system was agreed upon. The political transition started back in May 1988, and gave considerable time and space for new political parties to emerge and institutionalize already before the first free election in March-April 1990. Meanwhile the ruling communist party was largely reconstructed, and its main offspring contested all subsequent elections as the democratically oriented, center-left Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP).

The institutional framework changed relatively little after the transition. All legislatures and governments served their maximum possible 4-year term, leading to two-round parliamentary elections in May 1994, May 1998, and April 2002. Every election since 1990 was lost by the government of the day, and the democratic process remained intact and fairly orderly.

The first election was won by the center-right Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), which, together with the somewhat more conservative Independent Small Holders Party and Christian Democratic People's Party, could form a parliamentary majority and government. The parliamentary opposition of the time consisted of two liberal parties – the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ) and the Alliance of Young Democrats (FIDESZ) – as its major, and the ex-communist MSZP as its minor component.

By the time of the 1994 election, the MSZP became by far the most popular party, and the mixed electoral system converted its 33 percent of the popular vote into a single-party legislative majority. Nevertheless, the MSZP formed a coalition government with the second biggest party, the SZDSZ, the chief representative of communist-era dissenters and human rights activists.

Between 1994 and 1998 the SZDSZ suffered major electoral losses, while FIDESZ – now renamed as Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Party (Fidesz-MPP) – turned into a moderately nationalist, anti-communist formation dominating and eventually uniting most of the political right. As a result of these developments, the 1998 election was won by a right-wing electoral alliance between the Fidesz-MPP, the MDF and the FKGP. Under the coalition government of these three, all the smaller right-wing parties lost ground to Fidesz-MPP, which – running a joint list with the tiny MDF – only very narrowly lost the 2002 elections to the center-left alliance of the MSZP and the SZDSZ (on election results see <http://www.essex.ac.uk/elections>; for further details on parties see Tóka forthcoming).

The Hungarian media landscape

Like other countries in the region, Hungary saw a fast development of a free and private press, and a slow demise of state-controlled television after 1989. But in both respects Hungary was a relatively extreme case. On the one hand, there has been a political and economic context of fast liberalization and democratization, including the emergence of a fully private and pluralistic press in the very early 90s. On the other hand, private nation-wide television channels have been in operation only since October 1997.

This was due not the least to the belief of politicians of all orientations in the tremendous propaganda power of the television, which led to continuous attempts by all governments to control the television.

Due to political and economic changes, including significant changes in legal provisions, the print media saw a rapid development in the late 80s and early 90s both in terms of number and range of publications. The number of national dailies remained constant between 1990 and 1998, although titles changed, and some newspapers disappeared while new ones were launched. In 1998 there were 10 national daily newspapers, including one sport and two economic dailies, a number that places Hungary among the most crowded European markets (Bajomi-Lázár 1999; Kaposi 2000). The circulation of newspapers decreased by about 20 percent during the economic recession of the early 1990s (see Table 4 of Popescu and Tóka 2000), but the total readership slightly increased since. According to the post-election surveys analyzed in this paper, 22 percent of the adults read a national newspaper every day in May 1994. A further 31 percent only read local papers – usually of thin political coverage - on a daily basis. By May 1998, the two figures were up to 27 percent and 42 percent, respectively, only to turn 27 and 33 percent by April 2002. Among people with less than secondary education, the proportion of those who read a national newspaper nonetheless fell from an already low 15 percent in 1994 to 11 percent in 2002.⁵

The privatization of the Hungarian press started in the late 80s, with major changes in ownership taking place in 1990, sometimes through non-transparent deals, still before the first democratically elected government, provided by a center-right coalition, came into office in May 1990. After the 1994 elections a new socialist-liberal government decided that the state had no place in the press market and sold all remaining shares of the state in the papers. Thus, by 1994 the Hungarian newspaper publishing became "a private enterprise, facing the same problems as publishers in other democracies" (Gálik 1997: 5) - or so it seemed at least until 1998. Then the re-nationalization of a nearly bankrupt commercial bank by the center-right government re-established, for a while, government control over a substantial media portfolio, most of which was then sold to domestic investors associated with the main government party.

The Hungarian press remains fairly partisan, and nearly all newspapers have an identifiable political stance, be it socialist, liberal or conservative-nationalist. With the exception of the socialist *Népszabadság*, no national circulation paper has formal links with a political party or party-related foundation. Yet, the owners of media outlets often have strong political preferences and owners' editorial interference is not unheard of (for an overview of ownership, partisanship and circulation of the main Hungarian dailies in 1998 see Tables 4 and 5 of Popescu and Tóka 2000).

The most important quality papers have always been considered to be in the left-liberal camp, at least ideologically. Even in 2002, after the conservative *Magyar Nemzet* became the second most widely read broadsheet, its readership was still around four percent in the adult population – compared to ten percent for the socialist *Népszabadság* alone. The socialist-liberal dominance of the press was a constant complaint of right-wing governments, which encouraged the creation - and directly or indirectly co-financed - the publications of conservative rivals. The socialist-liberal dominance of the press was also used

⁵ All the data reported in the paper on the readership of newspapers is based on the post-election wave of CEU election surveys that we use in the analysis.

as argument for stricter control of public television and radio during the so-called media war of the early 1990s.

Unlike the press, Hungarian electronic media and television in particular did not go through systemic organizational changes in the early 90s – although content and program structure were certainly altered. The airwaves remained the monopoly of the two channels of the public television and of the radio stations – most of which also remained publicly owned. In 1990, a frequency moratorium was introduced in order to prevent commercial broadcasting before the adoption of a democratic media law.⁶ Legislation on the media required a two-thirds majority in parliament to be passed – a hurdle that was not passed for years. Consequently, the only way private channels could operate was via cable, which limited their reach to a minority of the population.

A comprehensive media law eventually passed parliament at the end of 1995, and then with a far bigger super-majority than the 72 percent that the two government parties themselves controlled in the Parliament. The law opened up the way to private terrestrial channels. The importance of this change should not be underestimated, especially since the percentage of daily television viewers climbed up from 71 percent in May 1994 to 85 percent by the time of the next election in 1998.

The developments in the sphere of public service broadcasting before the adoption of the media law are crucial for an understanding the context of the 1994 elections both in terms of media coverage and salient political controversies. In May 1990, following a comprehensive political deal between the main government and opposition parties, i.e. the MDF and the SZDSZ, respectively, the indirectly elected – and largely ceremonial - President of Hungary named non-partisan social science celebrities as presidents of the Hungarian Television and the Hungarian Radio. These appointments reflected the consensus-seeking spirit of the larger deal and symbolized the intention that the public media should follow the public service ideal without direct governmental control. However, dissatisfied with the activity of the new presidents, in summer 1991 the conservative government decided to use a 1974 decree on Hungarian Television that placed *MTV* under government supervision.⁷ This is sometimes considered the formal starting point of the long-lasting "media war" that featured legal battles, parliamentary hearings, street demonstrations, and numerous politically motivated sackings in the public media. In the standard interpretation, the 1990-94 government repeatedly tried to (A) replace the presidents of the two electronic media with their cronies; (B) impose the 1974 decree on governmental supervision of the *MTV* by introducing an operative control over the media; (C) stop the independent functioning of public radio and television by depriving them of the

⁶ The frequency moratorium was introduced by a government decree. Several times MPs requested to pass the moratorium through parliament as such regulations were constitutionally within the competence of the parliament. It was never adopted by the parliament, however, and therefore it could be considered illegal (Halmai: 219). The illegal moratorium was thoroughly ridiculed by a pirate radio station that started to broadcast from a moving location at irregular intervals only in order to invite the police for a catch-me-if-you-can game.

⁷ Later on, during the media war, the Constitutional Court found this decree unconstitutional, but postponed its nullification until the new media law passed. The court based this decision on the argument that it is better to have unconstitutional governmental supervision than not to have any supervision at all (Halmai: 220, refers to the Decision of the Constitutional Court No. 37/1992).

budgetary resources needed for their functioning; and (D) pass a media law favorable to their goals without securing the prescribed 2/3 majority for it in parliament (cf. Arato 1996: 226).

It is hard to judge the validity of the widely divergent claims about how much attention the general public devoted to the media war, and which side found more favor with them on the bewildering number of smaller and bigger issues that divided the feuding sides. But certainly in the parliament and the press there was vocal opposition to the government's media policy. The battle became particularly visible as the President of the Republic repeatedly refused to sign the removal of the Presidents of the Radio and TV and to accept the logic of the government regarding media supervision. The parliamentary opposition appealed to the Constitutional Court against the governments' use of the 1974 decree, and prevented the governmental majority from passing media legislation through parliament. Larger or smaller street demonstrations took place ostensibly in support of the freedom of the press and against what was described as the authoritarian and right-wing extremist tendencies in the government parties. Meanwhile public media came to be run by the vice-presidents loyal to the government, and the tone of the political coverage on public television (see below) became a major point of controversy itself.

During the 1994 election campaign the two channels of the state-owned national Hungarian Television could be received everywhere in the entire country, while few of the cable channels – which anyway reached only a minority of the households - provided any political coverage. The activity of the Hungarian television at that time was supposed to be under the control of a Supervisory Board of eleven politically independent members, chosen by the Chairman of *MTV* (Lange: 26). In the rather peculiar extra - legal situation that evolved through the confrontation between the President and the government and the absence of binding provisions apart from general constitutional principles on press freedom, they were handpicked by the pro-government television Vice-Chairman, and their independence was doubtful. In any case, the board had no executive or editorial powers; its observations were supposed to be taken into account by *MTV*'s management and could be sent to the parliament and/or publicized.

After the 1994 elections, the new MSZP-SZDSZ coalition committed itself to a new beginning, and a broadcasting act was at last passed on 20 December 1995 with almost 90% of MPs voting in favor. This was a lengthy (over 100 pages), often cumbersome piece of legislation, with a clear preference for political compromise over clarity, consistency and precision. Its main merit has been to open the way to a pluralist electronic media and complicate the life of any government who would try to control the public service media.

The entire electronic media were placed under the supervision of the National Radio and Television Commission (ORTT), which is an independent body reporting directly to the Parliament.⁸ A Complaints Committee deals with any issues "related to the violation of the criteria of providing balanced information" (Art. 1, Ch. 3, Section 47 of the 1995 Media Law).

The public service media were to be established as public foundations, and supervised by politically broad-based and representative boards of trustees, functionally equivalent to the BBC's Board of

Governors.⁹ The work of the boards remained relatively uncontroversial until 1999, although the extent to which their existence prevented governmental influence on public service media remained in doubt. In 1999, a new wave of political confrontation over public radio and television started, as the parliament failed to elect opposition representatives to the boards. All way long up to the 2002 election it remained contested both in courts and in public debates whether the functioning of the new boards was illegal, and who was to blame for the failure to elect any opposition representatives.

Heavy contestation of the tender for distribution of licenses accompanied the eventual launch of two major commercial television stations. In a move that the Supreme Court was, a few years later, to deem a violation of the terms of the tender, one of the two licenses was granted to a competitor with an invalid application package, against the highest bidder, the Central European Media Enterprise. The apparent motive for the controversial decision was the worry of both socialist and right-wing politicians that CME-executives sympathized with the liberal party (SZDSZ).

The channels (*RTL Klub*, *TV2*) that have won the concession started broadcasting nationally on terrestrial frequencies in October 1997, and all but about a tenth of the population can receive their programs. Their programming is similar to the commercial stations in the West, with series, films, talk shows and various entertainment program as well as regular, substantial news program and weekly political magazines.

The operating company of *RTL-Klub*, MRTL, is owned by the CLT-UFA - the biggest entertaining communication group of Europe at the time of gaining license in Hungary -, the Hungarian telecommunication monopoly, the Pearson Group, and Unicbank. In 1998, half of the Hungarian adults watched *RTL-Klub* daily, but the proportion increased to 70 percent by the time of the next election.

TV2 is operated by MTM-SBS of the Swedish Broadcasting System, MTM Communication Ltd. (a Hungarian production company) and Tele München. In 1998, 62% of Hungarians watched *TV2* daily, and 66 percent in 2002. For a while, CME sustained its on channel, *TV3*, as a cable-based competitor, but eventually discontinued the loss-making enterprise in March 2000. At the time of the 1998 election, however, *TV3* was still watched by almost a half of the adult population, and broadcast significant political news programs too. At the time of the 2002 election, *ATV* – owned by domestic investors and watched by 13 percent of the population every day – was the most significant cable-based private channel that offered very substantial political coverage. The coverage on this channel was politically balanced over the whole

⁸ The ORTT is elected for a four-year term by a simple majority of all members of Parliament, and comprises no less than five members nominated by each of the parliamentary factions. It is chaired by a person jointly nominated by the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister.

⁹ The Boards of Trustees are composed of members elected by Parliament and members delegated by civic, cultural, religious, local, professional, ethnic, etc. organizations (as specified in Section 56, 1 and 2 of the media law). The members elected by Parliament constitute the Presidential Body of the Board of Trustees, which has a four-year term in office. The Parliament elects eight or twelve members to the Boards of Trustees by a simple majority vote for each member individually. However, half of the members must be nominated by the governing parliamentary factions, and the other half by the opposition factions, and at least one member has to be nominated by each faction. The President of the Commission has to be nominated by the government party factions, and the vice-president by the opposition (Broadcasting Act Section 55). For more details on the functions of the board of trustees see Law No. 1 1996 on Radio and Television (http://www2.essex.ac.uk/elect/jp/hu_med196.htm, or <http://www.ortt.hu/english/act1.html>).

range of programs, rather than within its numerous political talk shows, which, in their turn, often generated significant public controversies because of their tone.

Politicians occasionally accuse the private channels with unduly advocating particular issues - in the 1998 campaign, for instance, the private channels brought extensive coverage and public attention to a controversial case of pro-life activists and a local court preventing a minor to have abortion -, or to concentrate more on sensation than substance. Overall, however, the private channels are rarely if ever condemned for systematic political bias.

The publicly owned Hungarian Television has two channels, plus – since 1993 – a satellite broadcaster (*Duna TV*). This latter has a relatively small audience and is meant to target the potentially sizeable ethnic Hungarian audience in neighboring countries.¹⁰ By 1998, the main public channel was still watched daily by 70% of Hungarian citizens, but only 40% watched the second public channel every day, which, after being moved to a satellite channel in 1997 to make space of the new private broadcasters on the terrestrial channel, could only be received by 50% of the total population. By the time of the 2002 election only 40 and 12 percent, respectively, watched the first and second channel every day.

Mass media and election campaigns in Hungary

According to the election campaign regulations, which hardly changed in this respect since 1990, parties competing in the election have to be given "equal opportunities to electoral calls" on national and local broadcasting channels, at least once free of charge. During the 30 days preceding the election the parties presenting national lists have to be granted free coverage in the electoral reports on national radio and television, on an equal footing, "but in proportion to the candidates nominated." Moreover, on the last day of the electoral campaign all parties that have a national list (which, in its turn, presumes that they have regional lists in at least seven-eight of the twenty multimember districts) have to be granted a summary of their electoral message.

Paid advertisement is also possible but has to be clearly indicated as such. In 1998, a limit on campaign spending was introduced (at 1998 value roughly five thousand US dollars per candidate above the state campaign financing allocated to the parties), although it seemed to be neither respected nor enforced (Fowler 1998: 258). Paid advertisement was present in all campaigns both in the press and on TV, in a proportion reflecting the limited – and unequal - size of party coffers.

A key similarity in campaign technologies between all Hungarian elections until 2002 was that the major contenders relied mostly on paid advertisements and centrally produced billboards, posters, and leaflets, randomly bombarding voters across the country. However, modest campaign budgets curtailed these efforts: the fattest party coffer in either year contained roughly one US dollar per each eligible citizen. Although rallies had a significant place in the campaign of some smaller parties, and mass telephone canvassing made a nebulous debut in 1998, their overall role in the campaigns was secondary to that of

¹⁰ Duna TV has two news bulletins daily and most of the program is composed of Hungarian films, high-brow conversations and other cultural programs. In 1998 42% of Hungarians in Hungary could not receive it, and only 15% of Hungarians watched Duna TV every day and another 14% several times a week.

mediated messages. Direct mail and the role of internet news sources have only become noteworthy in 2002.

In the 1994 and 1998 campaigns, the press provided more and better quality of information than the electronic media, especially television. By 2002, the entertainment – but in our impression also of the information - value of campaign coverage in the electronic media greatly increased. This was due partly to the intense coverage on some strongly partisan private radio stations, but mainly to the lively political coverage on the two major private television channels and some popular talk shows on public television.

Regarding the coverage of the election campaigns on public television, the first point that needs to be mentioned is the discrepancy between the existing regulations regarding campaign broadcasting and public broadcasting in general and the actual performance of the national public service TV channels, especially in 1994. One constant was that the main governmental party always had two bites of the cherry: one as government and one as party. There were, however, significant differences between the campaigns in the electronic media, the main one being that *MTV* was the only television with a national audience in 1994, while in 1998 and 2002 private channels were already available in the entire country.

For the 1994 election the national television channel (*MTVI*) adopted in March 1993 an Ethical code, as an addition to its organizational and operational Statute; before the elections an Electoral Ethical Code was created on the basic principle "that the news coverage on the electoral preparations of the political parties should be balanced and fair" (cited by Lange: 14). However, this did not stop *MTV* from having a biased coverage both in terms of time allocated to opposition parties in editorial/news coverage and in terms of tone of the broadcasting.¹¹ Although the partisanship of *MTV* was quite obvious, it is hard to precisely quantify the inequality in time and tone of the coverage. First, the appearances of correctness were maintained by allocating to the parties the legally prescribed free time. Second, the parties were given the possibility of paid advertisement at favorable rates (10 percent of the usual price), and most parties readily used this opportunity. Thirdly, a number of clearly partisan programs, defaming the socialists and their leader, were introduced as documentaries and other non-electoral programs.¹²

The quantitative analysis of the EIM shows that in terms of editorial coverage the Democratic Forum (MDF) alone had 64 percent of the time the first public channel allotted to politics, all being entirely positive coverage. The Socialist Party received only 11 percent of the time and the liberal oppositional Free Democrats 5 percent, a significant part of which contained negative coverage. On the satellite public channel, *Duna TV*, the Democratic Forum had 83% of the time slots. The socialists had a mostly negative

¹¹ An extreme example from the 1994 campaign was the inauguration of a short part of a motorway. This event was given several minutes in the 30 minutes of the main evening news bulletins of three days (2, 3, and 4 May). In addition, two longer programs (30 and 25 minutes long, respectively) focused on the achievements of the government in repairing the roads, and they replaced previously scheduled programs (Lange: 37).

¹² The most famous example of this was the allegation, aired on the last Sunday before voting, that as a young communist militiaman (which he was known to have been then), Gyula Horn tortured a political prisoner after the suppression of the 1956 revolution. Neither historians nor Horn were asked to comment on whether this could have happened. A one-sided 90-minute documentary shown as the main program on the same evening argued that some secret underground prisons may have existed in the 1950s, and that the Socialist Party chose the location of its post-1989 headquarter in order to cover up the access route.

coverage during the 2 percent of the political editorial time they were allotted, whilst the Free Democrats were not at all present in the *Duna TV* editorial coverage (Lange 1994).

No comparable content analysis is available for the 1998 and 2002 election. But to be sure, the Hungarian electronic media landscape was fundamentally different at the time of the 1998 and 2002 elections compared to 1994. If in 1994 the public television was alone in the air, from 1997 on a dual media system was in place. The three public service television channels (*MTV1*, *MTV2* and *Duna TV*) were also subject to the 1996 media law, although these institutional checks and balances are often considered inefficient and even counter-productive. The private television channels provided extensive political coverage, which aimed at higher entertainment and information value than achieved by public television, and thus probably offered a friendlier channel for the transmission of opposition messages.

In this context, the public service television tried to present at least the appearance of a balanced political coverage. In the news programs the governmental coalitions of the day (and especially the MSZP in 1998, and Fidesz-MPP in 2002) had disproportional coverage, although to a probably lesser extent than MDF in 1994. They were shown both as candidates in the electoral reports and as dignitaries in their official governmental duties, arguably more time and commentary allocated than the newsworthiness of the action justified. In contrast, the specifically electoral programs were balanced in the literal and strictest sense. The format of the debates between party representatives was, up until 2002, extremely rigid. They were organized as if their only purpose was to give each party's representative exactly the same amount of time. Alarm clocks were running on the screen while debaters were presenting their message, while debate hosts continuously reminded everyone the number of seconds left for each debater and dutifully interfered when the allocated seconds run out. Most importantly, there was basically no interaction between the participants, just a series of monologues talking past each other. Moreover, the rule that all parties that set up a national list must be granted equal airtime led to the cumbersome situation of having ten-plus party representatives on the same show, mixing up potential or actual cabinet members with unknown representatives of obscure parties never seen before or after the televised debates by most viewers.

The topics of the debate were apparently selected with the consensus of the parties, but only included major policy areas broadly corresponding to the jurisdiction of cabinet ministries, with each debate restricted to that particular topic domain. Thus, many issues of unequal relevance for the public were covered in a very repetitive manner. The parties could neither choose to emphasize issues they considered salient nor present their positions in a more interactive manner. This may have made it difficult for the opposition and the smaller - though still relevant - parties in particular to get their campaign messages through. Overall, the format of these programs – itself probably the product of the self-protective tendency of the journalists – assured the lack of any entertainment value and killed audience interest – in 1998 as well as in 1994. The exceptional, and widely watched head-on confrontation between the leaders of the top two parties before the second round of the 1998 elections – as well as a similar one back in 1990 - was unrelated to these officially scheduled rituals.

The 2002 campaign coverage on television was incomparably livelier than in previous years. The formal debates of party representatives became interactive, lively, argumentative, and entertaining. The

formalistic egalitarianism of previous years disappeared, as the parties that seemed irrelevant in the polls were relegated into separate debates, leaving only the six major contenders in the prime time debates. For the first time ever, the prime ministerial candidates of the two key contestants – now each expected to poll around or above 40 percent of the popular vote - met for an eye-to-eye debate on the last night of the campaign before the first round of the elections. While the news programs of the public television were still considered politically biased in favor of the government, their audience fell far behind those of the uncontroversial and popular news programs of *RTL-Klub* and *TV2*. But even the bias of public television was probably less obvious in the talk shows than before, and it remained relatively subtle in its expression – certainly far more so than in 1994.

Appendix 2: Elections, parties and media in Romania

Unlike in Hungary, in Romania the transition to democracy started abruptly after the fall of the Ceausescu regime at the end of December 1989, no public expression of (dissenting) political views or of association on such grounds being at all possible until then. There was certainly no question of private newspapers and the state television in the last years of communist was almost exclusively dedicated to the Ceausescu and the successes of the regime, with limited if any information content. Consequently, both a free press and political parties started to be formed after the fall of communism and the first post-communist elections took place a very short time after the fall (in May 1990). The anti-communist historical parties had little time and few means to organize and run a campaign that could shake the popularity of the National Salvation Front (FSN) largely based on the image of ‘creation of the Revolution.’¹³ After the 1990 elections the FSN obtained a large majority of votes and seats in parliament.¹⁴ Otherwise, the Parliament was fairly fragmented, 17 parties plus 9 ethnic minority representatives gaining seats in the lower chamber.¹⁵ Since 1990, post-communist Romania has a bicameral parliament elected by proportional representation and a directly elected president, with elections taking place concurrently (for more see Popescu 2003; on election results see <http://www.essex.ac.uk/elections>).

Despite few changes in the institutional framework regarding representative institutions and elections, the Romanian party scene has been in an apparent constant flux. Splinters and mergers of political parties and alliances, changes in party name and changes in party affiliation of more or less prominent politicians are the most emphasized characteristics. Yet, despite name changes and temporary alliances, roughly the same political entities were represented in parliament since 1990 and the political scene has been dominated by the less reformist splinter of the initial National Salvation Front winner or the 1990 elections and its leader Ion Iliescu. The Social Democratic Party, as it is called since 2001,¹⁶ is a party considered by most commentators and political scientists as the communist successor party due more to its policies and membership (numerous second and third rank former Communist Party activists) than to its

¹³ The Council of the National Salvation Front, as well as regional Councils of the National Salvation Front were formed as state institutions in order to replace the communist time institutions that fell in December with the departure of Ceausescu. The decision of some of the members of the Council of the Front to form the National Salvation Front and run in the elections triggered demonstrations of the supporters of the historical parties who felt excluded from the ruling bodies. Consequently, the Provisional Council of National Unity (CPUN) was constituted on 16 February 1990. The constitutive principle was that half of its members were the members of the former Council of the Front and the other half were representatives of the registered political parties. Ion Iliescu, the president of CFSN, remained president of the CPUN. Yet, although through the CPUN the other parties increased their visibility and could contribute to the legislative process, not least of electoral legislation, they could not fill the gap in visibility and legitimacy separating them from Ion Iliescu and the FSN. On the discussion of the composition of the CPUN and its internal rules see *Monitorul Oficial al Romaniei*, Year 1, Second Part, No. 1.

¹⁴ FSN obtained 66.31% and 67.02% of votes, 66.41% and 76.47% of seats in the lower and higher chambers, respectively.

¹⁵ The Assembly of Deputies comprised 11 minority organizations except the Democratic Union of Hungarians, among which two have gained representation without the help of the special provisions. In the Senate 7 parties and one independent were elected. See election results at <http://www.essex.ac.uk/elections>.

¹⁶ From 1991 to 1993 the party was called the Democratic National Salvation Front and from 1993 to 2001 the Romanian Party of Social Democracy, running in the 2000 elections in an alliance with the historical

claims or its image within the Romanian electorate.¹⁷ This party was in government since 1990, first as part of the FSN, then from 1992 to 1996, supported by and for a period in coalition with the nationalist parties, and currently since 2000 as a minority government, in a parliamentary agreement with the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania. Ion Iliescu was president of Romania before the enactment of a new constitution between 1990 and 1992 and then from 1992 to 1996 and again from 2000 until 2004.

The last two elections were lost by the governmental parties. The 1996 elections brought the first alternation in government in post-communist Romania as well as a new president, whilst the 2000 elections brought back to government the Social Democratic Party and Ion Iliescu as president. In 1996 the high initial expectations were soon followed by disappointment: the promised change was not visible either in the functioning of the economy or in the style of politics. On the contrary, the governmental coalition was marred by incessant conflicts between the component parties, as well as by corruption and incompetence scandals. The 2000 election campaign focused mainly on government economic and political performance issues. The senior partner in the governmental coalition did not even pass the legal threshold to enter the new parliament, and the other two governmental parties, the liberals and the democrats, fared rather poorly. The nationalist-populist Greater Romania Party fetched the second place both in the parliamentary and presidential races (for more details see Popescu 2003).

The early 90s saw not only a proliferation of political parties but of newspapers. A significant increase in number of dailies took place in 1990 compared to 1989, then there was a continuous growth until 1996 when the highest number of dailies was reached (106), up from 100 in 1994, then down to 95 in 1998 (Ulmanu 2002). As the economic situation of the population deteriorated, the initial fervor of newspaper readership declined and television remained the sole most important source of (political) information for the majority of Romanians. According to the data of the Public Opinion Barometer on average 65% of Romanian citizens tune in to television for their political information, only 7% relying primarily on newspapers. Moreover, television played a central role in the December 1989 revolution and the subsequent events, which rendered it a significant symbolic asset in the eyes of politicians of all orientations (Teodorescu 1996). Romanian private broadcasting was among the first to emerge within the post-communist world, even preceding the early adoption of a media law in 1992 (Gross 2002). An alternative to the national public television channel was one of the demands of the anti-government demonstrations in the University Square in 1990 and throughout the early 90s, yet only in 1995 private television has reached a potential (not actual) national coverage.

The 1992 media law has regulated both the granting of licenses for broadcasting and public broadcasting. The National Council for the Audiovisual (CNA) is the licensing and regulatory agency. One of its eleven members is nominated by the President, and three each by the Senate, the Chamber of Deputies, and the Government. Their mandates are meant not to fully overlap with the period in office of the nominating institution and have different lengths. Although the members of the council must not be

Social Democratic Party and Humanistic Party of Romania, the party of a millionaire businessman owner of the television channel Antena 1 and employed the same acronym P.D.S.R.

¹⁷ For more on its successive names and its history see Popescu 2003, Birch, Millard, Popescu and Williams 2002.

members of any political party, some had been and even more had known strong partisanship; the balance of opposition and government supporters was hard to reach given the provisions regarding nomination. Numerous doubts were also formulated as regards granting of licenses for programming that did not comply with legal content guidelines, to companies technically and financially unprepared and to extreme nationalist owners, a problem shared by other post-communist countries including Hungary (Gross 1997:79, Popescu and Tóka 2000). Moreover, in Romania, over time, members of the license-granting agency had stakes in different broadcasting companies, which prevented them to judge correctly the merits of competing channels (IREX Media Sustainability Index 2001).

Like in Hungary, regulation of public broadcasting, although rather promising on paper, did not turn the public television overnight into the public service it was meant to be; resemblance to the BBC in terms of political balance and information quality is largely formal. The Romanian Radio and Television companies are independent public companies under the direct supervision of the Parliament and whose administrative councils are not nominated by the CNA but elected by Parliament following the suggestions of each of the two Chambers of Parliament (four seats each chamber), the Romanian presidency (one seat), the Government (one seat), the parliamentary groups of the national minorities (for one seat) and the professional staff of the two institutions (two seats).¹⁸ Despite the legal framework, in place since 1992, both during the 1992-1996 and the 1996-2000 governments it occurred that the administrative board of the television did not function legally (Teodorescu 1996; Gross 1999b). For instance in 1996, not long before the elections not all members of the administrative board were duly elected by Parliament (Teodorescu 1996:184). During the Democratic Convention's government, Stere Gulea, a cinema director close to the Convention, was appointed President of the Romanian Television, and Alina Mungiu, a journalist and political commentator also politically close to the Convention was appointed head of the information (news) department. These appointments were considered at the time as politically motivated, and were never approved by Parliament (Gross 1999b; Ursu 1998).

Despite the early enactment of a media law and the presence of small local private televisions from the early 90s, the first private channels with national coverage only went on air in 1995 and virtually all television channels are transmitted by satellite, cable or by agreement with local terrestrial channels (a national channel being the sum of its local branches). This was the case mostly because the CNA (National Council for the Audiovisual) had started with the allocation of local terrestrial licenses, which was a major strategic mistake, according to Iolanda Staniloiu, journalist and member of the first council (Gross 1997: 79). Consequently, Romania has the fifth largest cable network in Europe, with 70 to 80 per cent of households with a television set being linked to cable. Yet cable remains an unaffordable alternative for rural areas remote from large urban concentrations, which leaves many rural areas enjoying access only to

¹⁸ The administrative councils comprise the president of the Television/Radio and the heads of departments, including the all important news department. See Law 104/1992, Law 48/1992, Law 303/1993, Law 41/1994, with 1996 and 1999 revisions. See also Marinescu 1995, Gross 1996, Gross 1999a, IJP Press Overview, Ulmanu 2002.

the first channel of the national public television¹⁹. Therefore at the time of the 1996 elections ProTv was not watched at all by 57.9% of the population and Antena1 by 58.8%, and by 92% of the rural population whilst only 9.7% and 15%, respectively, never watched TVR1²⁰.

¹⁹ This is a major difference compared with Hungary where after the adoption of the media law private television channels were granted licenses and nation-wide terrestrial frequencies.

²⁰ Figures calculated from a post-electoral survey of the Department of Sociology, University of Bucharest, N=1158, kindly shared by Professor Alfred Bulai and his research team.

Appendix 3: Variables in the analysis

Public TV Exposure: frequency of watching the first channel of public television measured in the Hungarian data on a six- (in 1994 five-) point scale running from 0=never to 1=every day; in the 1996 Romanian data on a six- (in the third wave four-) point scale running from 0=never to 5(3)=every day; the 2000 Romanian data offers only a choice of channels to which the respondent is exposed.

Party affect: the difference between the respondent's pre-election rating of the government party(ies) and the opposition party(ies). Positive values stand for more positive evaluation of the main government party than the main challenger. In the Hungarian data the difference is calculated between the main government party (MDF in 1994, MSZP in 1998, Fidesz-MPP in 2002) and the main challenger party (MSZP in 1994, Fidesz-MPP in 1998, MSZP in 2002) on a seven-point feeling thermometer. In the Romanian 1996 data the difference is calculated between the government parties (PDSR in 1996, CDR, PNL, PD, UDMR in 2000) and the opposition parties (CDR, PD, UDMR in 1996, PDSR in 2000) on a five-point trust scale in 1996 and a four-point trust scale in 2000.

Issue attitude: respondents' position on selected issues, with high values indicating more agreement with government than opposition. For Hungary 1994, the issue variable sums responses to two agree-disagree questions about the need to remove communist-era managers and journalists from their positions. For Hungary 1998, the issue scale runs from -10 to +10, and sums the original post-election responses, recorded on eleven point scales, to self-administered questions about respondents' preference between tuition-free higher education vs. cost-based tuition at universities, and universal vs. means-tested eligibility for child-care allowance. For Hungary 2002, the question is a retrospective evaluation of how the national economy changed in last 12 months. In the 1996 Romanian data respondents were asked to select the three most important issues of the day from a list. There, *Issue attitude* is the negative of a weighted count of how many of the following topics – stressed in the campaign of the opposition - were selected by the respondent: corruption, privatization, NATO and EU Integration, human rights and democracy. The topic selected as most important was weighted in the count three times, and the topic selected as second most important twice as much as the topic mentioned as third most important. The variable equals the weighted count multiplied by minus one, so that high scores stand for low personal salience of opposition-promoted issue. In the 2000 Romanian data the *Issue attitude* variable is an evaluation of whether the country is going in the right or the wrong direction.

Issue attitude times Public TV Exposure: the product of the two variables.

Vote choice: always coded 1 for the main governmental party (or parties) and -1 for the main opposition party (or parties). In the Hungarian data the main government party was MDF in 1994, MSZP in 1998, and Fidesz-MPP in 2002, while the main challenger party was MSZP in 1994, Fidesz-MPP in 1998, and MSZP in 2002, In the Romanian PDSR was coded the main government party in

1996, and the main opposition party in 2000. In 2000, CDR, PNL, PD, UDMR were coded as the government parties and CDR, PD, UDMR as the main opposition parties in 1996.

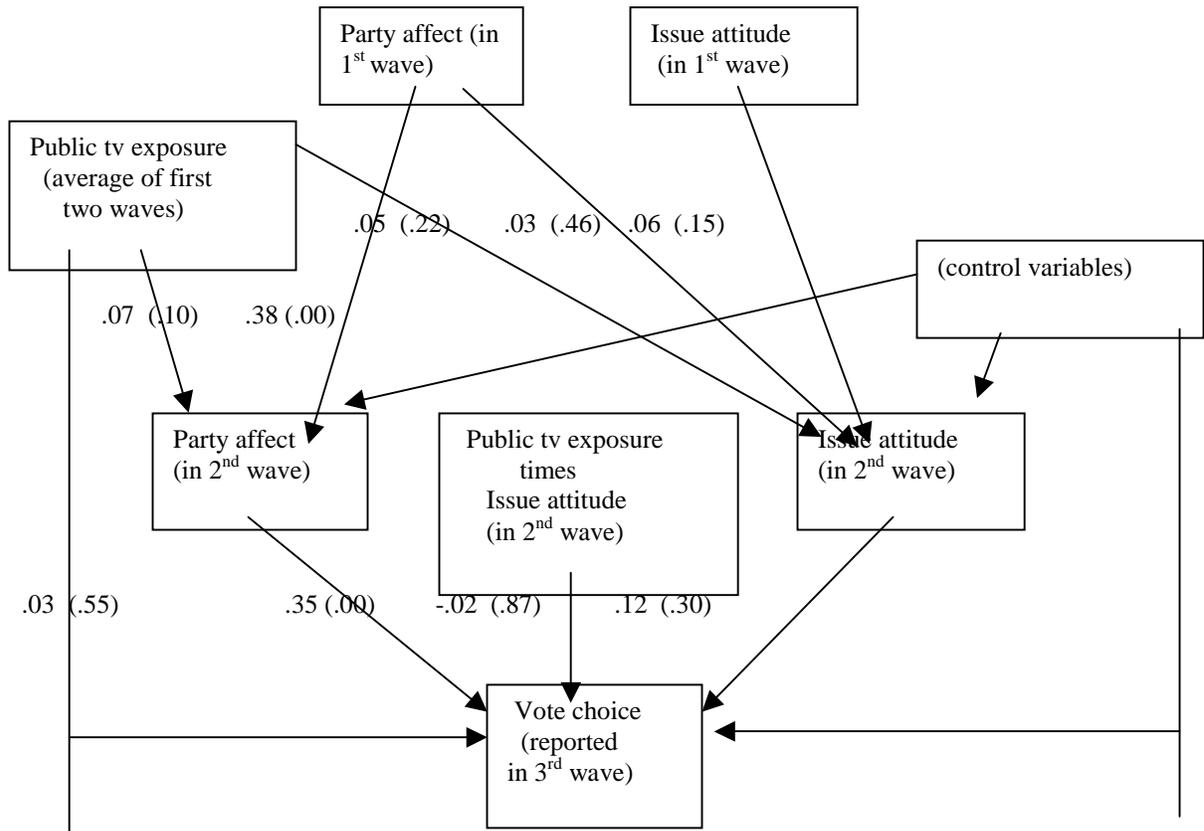
Control variables (entered in all equations): *Gender, Age, Age squared, Education, Place of residence* (urban vs. rural), *Ethnicity* (minority Hungarian or not), *Income*, and *Exposure to Pro TV* and *Exposure to Antena 1* (the two major private television channels) in the Romanian data; and *Gender, Age, Age squared, Education, Place of residence* (urban vs. rural), *Employment status* (active or not), *Log of household income, Frequency of church attendance, Former communist party membership*, and - in 1998 and 2002 – the *Highest reported frequency of watching any of the three main private television channels* in Hungary.

Table 1: The constellation of four possible determinants of boomerang effects across five elections

	Hungary 1994	Hungary 1998	Hungary 2002	Romania 1996	Romania 2000
opposition criticism of					
governmental influence	very	insig-		insig-	insig-
in public television	strong	nificant	some	nificant	nificant
public tv blatantly biased	yes	no	no	no	no
weak or no presence of private tv	yes	no	no	no	no
government right-wing	yes	no	yes	no	yes

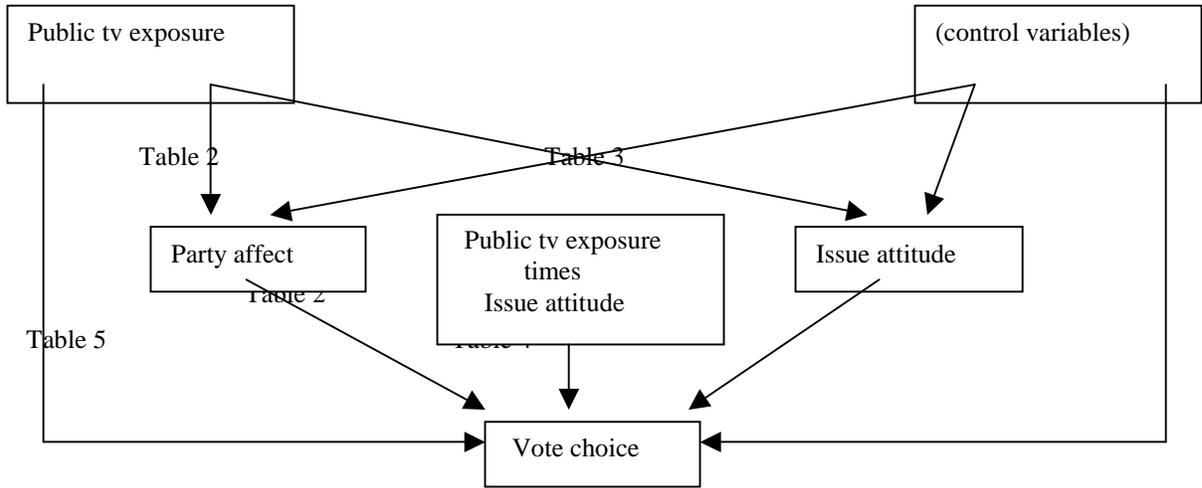
Note: According to hypotheses 1 to 4, a boomerang effect – i.e. a negative (direct or indirect) impact of public television exposure on voting support for the government – can occur where a “yes” (or “very strong”) appears in the table.

Figure 1: Simplified sketch of the path models and selected parameter estimates (with their significance level in parenthesis), estimated with three-wave Romanian election panel data for 1996



Note: the control variables in the model were gender, age, age squared, education, place of residence, ethnicity, income, and the frequency of watching Pro TV and Antena 1 (the two major private television channels). The effects of the control variables and intercepts are not shown. For a technical description of the variables see Appendix 3.

Figure 2: Simplified sketch of the path models estimated with all cross-sectional data sets



Note: the control variables in the models for Romania were as stated in the note to Figure 1. In the models for Hungary they included gender, age, age squared, education, employment status, place of residence, log of family income, frequency of church attendance, former communist party membership, and - in 1998 and 2002 – the highest frequency of watching any of the three main private television channels.

Table 2: Persuasive effects of public television exposure on vote choice via party affect: relevant parameter estimates for eight cross-sectional data sets

Survey:	Effect of <i>Public tv exposure</i> on <i>Party affect</i>			Effect of <i>Party affect</i> on <i>Vote choice</i>		
	beta	p	N	beta	p	N
Romania, September 1996	.02	.65	786	.62	.00	786
Romania, October 1996	.12	.00	575	.76	.00	575
Romania, September 2000	-.00	.94	1948	.72	.00	1740
Romania, October 2000	.05	.29	1341	.55	.00	1258
Romania, November 2000	-.12	.08	1097	.77	.00	1015
Hungary, May 1994	-.02	.30	1953	.62	.00	1616
Hungary, May 1998	.11	.00	1419	.60	.00	1414
Hungary, April 2002	.07	.10	1152	.80	.00	1115

Note: the parameter estimates in the table (standardized beta, two-tailed significance level and the number of cases in the analysis) come from multivariate linear regression models fitting into the more general path model displayed in Figure 2. For a further discussion of model specifications and effects omitted from this table see the main text and Figure 2.

Table 3: Persuasive effects of public television exposure on vote choice via issue attitude: relevant parameter estimates for eight cross-sectional data sets

	Effect of <i>Public tv exposure</i> on <i>Issue attitude</i>			Effect of <i>Issue attitude</i> on <i>Vote choice</i>		
	beta	p	N	beta	p	N
Survey:						
Romania, September 1996	-.01	.81	786	-.04	.49	786
Romania, October 1996	.08	.05	575	-.04	.57	575
Romania, September 2000	.04	.28	1948	.02	.32	1740
Romania, October 2000	.03	.62	1341	.06	.05	1258
Romania, November 2000	-.13	.08	1097	.05	.05	1015
Hungary, May 1994	.00	.92	1953	.03	.72	1616
Hungary, May 1998	.00	.96	1419	.13	.06	1414
Hungary, April 2002	.06	.14	1152	.01	.92	1115

Note: the parameter estimates in the table (standardized beta, two-tailed significance level and the number of cases in the analysis) come from multivariate linear regression models fitting into the more general path model displayed in Figure 2. For a further discussion of model specifications and effects omitted from this table see the main text and Figure 2.

Table 4: Priming effects of public television exposure on vote choice: relevant parameter estimates for eight cross-sectional data sets

	Effect of the <i>Public tv exposure</i> times <i>Issue attitude</i> interaction term on <i>Vote choice</i>		
	beta	p	N
Survey:			
Romania, September 1996	.11	.14	786
Romania, October 1996	.04	.52	575
Romania, September 2000	.01	.58	1740
Romania, October 2000	.02	.45	1258
Romania, November 2000	-.03	.20	1015
Hungary, May 1994	.06	.46	1616
Hungary, May 1998	-.11	.09	1414
Hungary, April 2002	-.01	.94	1115

Note: the parameter estimates in the table (standardized beta, two-tailed significance level and the number of cases in the analysis) come from multivariate linear regression models fitting into the more general path model displayed in Figure 2. For a further discussion of model specifications and effects omitted from this table see the main text and Figure 2.

Table 5: Direct effects of public television exposure on vote choice: relevant parameter estimates for eight cross-sectional data sets

	Effect of <i>Public tv exposure</i> on <i>Vote choice</i>		
	beta	p	N
Survey:			
Romania, September 1996	.01	.72	786
Romania, October 1996	-.01	.84	575
Romania, September 2000	-.04	.13	1740
Romania, October 2000	-.02	.68	1258
Romania, November 2000	.01	.78	1015
Hungary, May 1994	-.07	.00	1616
Hungary, May 1998	-.02	.42	1414
Hungary, April 2002	.02	.51	1115

Note: the parameter estimates in the table (standardized beta, two-tailed significance level and the number of cases in the analysis) come from multivariate linear regression models fitting into the more general path model displayed in Figure 2. For a further discussion of model specifications and effects omitted from this table see the main text and Figure 2.