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MEDIATIZATION OF POLITICS DURING U.S. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 2008

ABSTRACT

The thesis of this paper applies to the mediatization of politics process during American presidential campaign of 2008. It is entrenched in the theory of political communication. Because of the primary assumptions in the analysis below, political communication is considered mainly from perspective of the models of relations between the mass media and politics, which are treated as systems. It is justified because those relations influence the abovementioned systems and play the biggest role in affecting mass society and culture. In this thesis, the public is considered as having less influence on entire process of political communication.

In order to clarify the subject of the research, the division into structural and functional mediatization was created. Structural mediatization, which is the main subject of the analysis, occurs when structures of the media and political systems come into dependence and subordination relation. Parts of the media system dominate over the analogical elements in the political system, internalizing media logic. Individual elements of the political world comply to the media logic and the media orders. Subjects of the political system implement political marketing methods to use the dominant role of the media in the process. Functional mediatization can be defined as a transfer of systemic relations at the smallest possible level – specific case in micro scale, when the medium controls a political actor. Here, the mediatization takes its most radical form. The medium on every stage of constructing the political reality can manipulate and deform a media political reality.

Key words:

mediatization of politics, modernization, structures, functions, election, media

1. Introduction

The main subject of paper is the mediatization of politics and the central hypothesis is strongly connected with it: mass media in relations with politics gains a central position and this determines what this relationship looks like. In order to extend this approach we can point out some supplementary hypotheses. First, the mass media collects and selects political information and broadcasts it, availing specific news values. Second, the mass media, as the system's gatekeeper, decides about the presence of political actors and institutions in the media. Third, the media introduces the media logic into the functioning of the political system, which acts according to this "guideline". Fourth, the media construct a media political reality from which society almost entirely derives its knowledge of politics.

The mediatization of politics in the United States is a distinct and dynamic process. On the level of political and media systems, it is influenced by specific conditions. Mediatization is a phase process, which is why it may affect, to a certain degree, individual structures of the mentioned systems. Each of succeeding presidential elections allows for a complex analysis of mediatization tendencies in a particular social context. Campaigns clearly present the progress of mediatization tendencies. A specific (singular) description of the mediatization process could be observed during presidential campaign of 2008. In this campaign, new tendencies in relationship between the media and politics could be recognized. The developing role of new communication technologies was of crucial value and influenced the whole process. In terms of political system mediatization, the tendencies deepened even more in the context of the political image of candidates. This resulted from the modern way of managing a democratic campaign.

The media, as the focal point of relations with the world of politics, may, in a sense, impose forms and rules of acting on the political stage. With the development of mediatization tendencies since 1950's, the role of the political system is getting weaker and its specific elements take up media logic patterns of behavior. Hence why the birth and expansion of the theory and practice of political marketing are treated by "politics" as an effort to response to the increasing role of mass media. Contemporary actions of political staffs are mainly focused on the media campaign while actions "in the background" that do not involve the mass media

are on the decline. Political campaigns are, on one hand, the right moments for political actors to use media power. On the other hand, it exposes the domination of broadcasters. Without the media, it would be impossible to reach society. This is why the electoral race changes as a result of a sequence of media and mediatized events, mainly directed by the media and political staff.

Apart from the category of mediatization of politics, the paper includes research on the 2008 American presidential election. Whereas, the methods used to carry on the research were the discourse analysis on the micro and macro political level, treated as the methodological and theoretical approach of the research of the language used by media and politics¹. The subjects of the analysis were mainly the media texts; news; conversations; political speeches; advertisement contents (the micro political level); as well as several parts of the mediatization of politics, including the mediatized images, the media events, the staffs, and mass media activities (the macro political level). The entire research has been supplemented with a comparative specification of the election campaign together with the media content. Hence the need of usage of the quantitative and the qualitative content analysis, including the graphic and audio-visual material broadcasted by the candidates.

2. Mediatization of politics – theoretical approach

The mediatization of politics is an element of political communication considered as a theoretical model of relations between the mass media and politics. At the beginning of analysis, it is necessary to explain what mediatization is. Mediatization, or *mediatisierung* in German, means a form of intercession between two parts of any system or systems. However, one more distinction should be made to tell mediatization apart from another similar concept – mediation of politics. Those concepts are usually used to describe parallel processes connected with the mass media and politics. Mediation is a phenomenon of positive characteristic, when the media only transmit communication, levering up the level of participation and political knowledge in society². In mediation, a political system and society need the mass media coverage to understand each other. In other words, politics is me-

¹ T. Van Dijk, *News as Discourse*, Hillsdale–New Jersey–Hove–London 1988; N. Fairclough, *Analyzing Discourse. Textual Analysis for Social Research*, London 2003.

² B. McNair, M. Hibberd, P. Schlesinger, *Mediated Access: Broadcasting and Democratic Participation*, Luton 2003.

diated always when the media is the main channel of political communication: “In such a situation, people depend on the media for information about politics and society in a broad sense of the words, just as politicians and other powerful elites depend on the media for information about peoples’ opinions and trends in society, and for reaching out to people. Stated differently, the media mediate between the citizenry, on one hand, and the institutions involved in government, electoral processes, or, more generally, opinion formation, on the other. Politics could thus be described as mediated whenever the mass media are the main channels through which politics is communicated and when, as a consequence, the depictions of *reality* that are conveyed through the mass media presumably have an impact on how people perceive *reality*”³.

Mediation process is older than mediatization and its beginnings can be dated to the 18th and 19th centuries. Mediation is strictly connected with the formation of national states, broader access to education, the development of social benefits, and the evolution of the press.

On the other hand, the mediatization of politics is distinctive for the 20th and 21st centuries. The beginnings of mediatization are connected with the rapid mass media revolution, especially after audio-visual media appeared on the social stage. We can consider the mediatization concept as a mediatization of social communication, mediatization of social relations *sensu largo*, or mediatization of political life⁴.

The mediatization of politics can be understood as a process in which the mass media colonize politics⁵. During that process, the components of a political system are under the pressure of the media, and, hence, they obey laws and rules of the mass media.

Winfried Schulz and Gianpietro Mazzoleni published the most complex theoretical analysis of mediatization in article *Mediatization of Politics: A Challenge for Democracy*⁶. They describe mediatization as a phenomenon of all democratic political systems, but they point out that it can develop at different speeds and forms. According to Schulz, mediatization is connected to social changes caused by the mass media and their communications. In his opinion, we can distinguish four

³ J. Strömbäck, *Four Phases of Mediatization: An Analysis of the Mediatization of Politics*, “The International Journal of Press/Politics” 2008, No. 3, Vol. 13, p. 230.

⁴ B. Dobek-Ostrowska, R. Wiszniowski, *Teoria komunikowania publicznego i politycznego. Wprowadzenie* [Theory of Public and Political Communication. An Introduction], Wrocław 2007, p. 127.

⁵ T. Meyer, *Mediated Politics*, Cambridge 2002.

⁶ G. Mazzoleni, W. Schulz, “*Mediatization*” of Politics: A Challenge for Democracy, “Political Communication” 1999, Vol. 16, pp. 247–261.

dimensions of social changes in which media played key role⁷. The first is the extension of human communication possibilities. Mass media extend those abilities to transmit and code/decode the transmission. The second dimension is the substitution of basic social activities. The media influences some of social spheres and institutions. Hence, it changes the specifics of those institutions. When the media influences traditional forms of communication and political events, they automatically modernize the institutions that have to comply to media logic. Otherwise, these institutions would be uninteresting for the mass media. The amalgamation, blending, and supplementing of human activities is the third dimension. Mass media enter in every possible social space melting together private and public spheres: "For example, we listen to the radio while driving, read the newspaper in the metro, watch television during dinner, and have a date at the movies. As media use becomes an integral part of private and social life, the media's definition of reality amalgamates with the social definition of reality"⁸. The last one is accommodation, which is the adjustment of the political system to media requirements. It can be especially apparent in the economic sphere, when the media generates a large amount of revenue. Hence, political system actors have to adjust to the media's rules and then accept the media's logic in all political actions. It influences and cause changes in the political process itself.

Schulz and Mazzoleni based their hypothesis on the observation of how the mass media creates political content and how they interfere in the political process. They concluded that the mediatization of politics is composed of five basic processes⁹:

1. The mass media, during creation of information, present only a highly selected sample of events. Moreover, those events have to fulfill the strict criteria of selection called news values. Only a small part of those criteria refer to the essence of event. Usually, the process of selection is determined by the opinions of journalists and news production guidelines. The final effect of the selection process is news that is reckoned by recipients to be a source of political information and political reality.
2. Despite the ideals of democracy, modern societies are characterized by mediatized participation in which the media designs the public sphere and controls the access and agenda in this sphere. The media, having an access

⁷ W. Schulz, *Reconstructing Mediatization as an Analytical Concept*, "European Journal of Communication" 2004, No. 1, Vol. 19, pp. 88–89.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 89.

⁹ G. Mazzoleni, W. Schulz, "*Mediatization*" of Politics..., *op.cit.*, pp. 250–252.

- to the political process, can assign value and meaning to some themes and skip others.
3. The mass media uses a specific pattern of references. Within this pattern, they create the meanings of events and personalize communication. In other words, the mass media uses media logic to make forms and techniques of political communication and political discourse more spectacular: “The adaptation of political language to the media’s commercial patterns has been observed in three domains: (a) the communication “outlook” of political actors, be they the government, the parties, leaders, or candidates for office; (b) the communication techniques that are used; and (c) the content of political discourse”¹⁰.
 4. If political actors know the media requirements, information production ways, rules of access to broadcasters, they can adjust to them. And, when politicians adjust to a media rules, they create their own media events. Although it can be seen as an attempt by political actors to instrumentalize the media system.
 5. The mass media exercises particular political functions, stresses different opinions in discourse, supports political actors, or “watches” them. Hence, many editors clearly declare political support in presidential or parliamentary elections. This endorsement is an important element in the candidates’ campaigns.

To summarize the classical approach of mediatization, we can quote Jesper Strömbäck. According to Strömbäck, who says that the mediatization of politics is composed of four aspects, “the degree to which the media constitute the most important or dominant source of information on politics and society. A second aspect is the degree to which the media are independent from political institutions in terms of how the media are governed. A third aspect is the degree to which the media content is governed by a political logic or by media logic. A fourth aspect, finally, is the degree to which political actors are governed by a political logic or by media logic”¹¹.

This definition will be the key to understanding mediatization in its classical and modern form. Thus, the mediatization of politics can be treated as an effect or parallel process to modernization tendencies commonly present in American political discourse. If mediatization is used to describe relations of the media and politics, modernization applies not only to the political system, but also – or may-

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 251.

¹¹ J. Strömbäck, *Four Phases...*, op.cit., p. 234.

be especially – the media system. When we consider the mediatization of politics as an element of American political and media process, it's obvious that both analyzed systems have dynamics that prevents one from assigning strict timeframes to each stage of the process. That is why all mediatization of politics stages in United States run simultaneously and supplement each other. The stages of mediatization are important in detailed research and depictions of system relations. This is especially true because they permit the tracking of the development of mediatization tendencies, correlations, and dysfunctions of the diffusion processes between specific media and political system. On the other hand, the stages of mediatization make it possible to identify a phase of shifts in the modernization process in each structural element of the analyzed system. Therefore, the mediatization of politics equally affects all political actors, institutions, media organizations, or media types. Some of the above-mentioned, like presidential candidates, members of parliaments, or, on the other hand, TV stations and media tycoons get more rapidly along the mediatization process. Other institutions, such as juridical, bureaucratic, some government agencies, press, or alternative media are subjected to a phase shift in mediatization¹².

3. Mediatization of structures and functions

From the analysis above, emerges a dichotomic image of mediatization. Therefore, it has to be emphasized and divided into two different forms of mediatization. On the one hand, the mediatization of politics can be considered as the dependence of politics on the mass media. When the media became the most important news and information source, elements of the political world adapted to the needs of the mass media. The media system became independent from political influences and inoculated its logic to the political ground. This is structural mediatization of politics – a continuum of the modernization process of the media and political systems. Therefore, politics, adjusting to a key role of broadcasters, implements political marketing methods to use the dominant role of media.

On the other hand, the mediatization of politics gains a more radical form – functional. The broadcasters have a possibility to create and manipulate political reality in each stage of selection and transmission of information. They influence a social reception of politics and create the public sphere. The mass media moving

¹² M. Jezinski, *Marketing polityczny a procesy akulturacyjne. Przypadek III Rzeczypospolitej* [Political Marketing and Acculturation Processes. Case of the Republic of Poland], Toruń 2004, pp. 33–35.

towards the center of relations with politics, take on a part of democratic system functions. As a result, we can observe the transformation of democracy to a mediocracy, a system where the media can *de facto* shape political system, political actors, and create electoral behaviors.

Structural mediatization is superior to functional. During the process of structural mediatization, different structures of the mass media system and political system are subjected to diverse phases and different speeds within the phases. We can observe that some structures are more resistant to media logic than others. Those “resistant” features of the media and political systems are especially exposed among structures that are unattractive for the mass media. Moreover, we can analyze the situations when some parts of the media system and politics are at the beginning of the mediatization process; whereas, other parts are fully mediatized.

The mediatization process can be primarily analyzed through the structures of the systems. And, only on the basis of the observation of these structures, we can holistically describe it. Functional mediatization is a specific case of structural communication. In other words, mediatized structures of systems manifest their functions in the communication process. Each system is a combination of communication in two ways. First, systems are based on the communications of its elements. Second, each system needs to communicate to be a part of the social system.

4. Verification of the hypothesis

Both described forms of mediatization have complete representation in the United States. And, the presidential race season is most relevant to the analysis. In order to conduct a complex research, the presumed hypothesis was: the mass media is taking a central role in relations with politics and they, to the greater extent, decide how these relations are being conducted. Furthermore, one must point out the following supporting hypotheses, which are helpful in getting the full image of the mediatization of politics.

1) In order to disseminate information, the mass media collects and selects the political information using the specific determinants of news importance

The media broadcasts on the presidential campaign are composed of a form of the political reality. Their complex analysis allows one to complete the picture of the

mediatization of politics process. Thus, the researched discourse has been enriched with a substantial, qualitative, and quantitative data, allowing a complete depiction of the media's campaign reality. While covering the Presidential Campaign in 2008, the media used three dominant styles of broadcast creation (*de facto* the selection criteria).

The first one was to depict the elections as a horse race. According to the research taken between January and October 2008, the race/campaign made up 53% of the media coverage. During the last three election weeks, this index reached almost 66%¹³. Horse race was the most common metaphor used to depict the election campaign.

The second one contained pseudo-scandals. The pseudo-scandalous rhetoric focused mainly on a few topics during the presidential campaign. Nevertheless, none of the pseud-scandals had any influence on the image reception of the candidates and their opinion polls.

The last way of covering the campaign displayed the elections in the pop cultural context. A favorable depiction of the political parties' conventions as a pop cultural phenomenon permitted the parties to reach a new electoral segment, i.e. the young and those not yet interested in politics. That was a double opportunity for the politicians. The candidate could show himself from a new and more private side by applying the rules of the entertainment media, which allowed his image to gain a new and attractive component for the unfamiliar recipient. Furthermore, gaining the support of the young electorate, both the party and the politician got a chance to repeat the same attitude in the following elections, creating a certain voting pattern in the political behavior of Americans.

2) The media presence of the political actors and institutions is determined by the Mass media making them the system's entry and exit guardians

The mediatization of politics process mainly takes place on the system level and, in particular, considers how the specific structures function. The research revealed solid determinants that conditioned the political system in relationship with the media system.

The first one being the result of the U.S. political tradition is the presidential system position. The main reason behind such depiction is the greater degree of

¹³ *Winning the Media Campaign: How the Press Reported the 2008 Presidential Election*, Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism, Washington D.C. 2008.

the personalized election struggle as the result of the influence of the substantial presidential competence, the area of media interest and the cultural determinants along with both mythical and symbolical spheres.

The second determinant is the weak system position of the political parties (along with the “third parties”) and the independent candidates. The insignificance of the above-mentioned subjects causes the two main candidates to strengthen their position and further the intensification of the personalization tendencies. Furthermore, the weak party structure, lack of a clear leadership on both state and federal level, different rules of membership, and the multitude of the horizontal structures in the parties all contribute to the low value of the Republicans and Democrats during the campaign.

The third determinant – long-lasting presidential campaigns in the United States – allows to lead a coherent media narration which sometimes takes on a mythical character. Pre-election time, primaries and caucuses, conventions, and the main elections should be included in the election limits.

This is reflected in the expenditures meant for marketing operations, which would be impossible without media intervention. The increasing costs of a political campaign are the effect of the private broadcasters’ central position in the American political process (since the beginning of 90’s the percentage of the financial means being consumed by political ads has risen to 75% of the entire campaign budget).

Despite the firmness of some of the political system’s components in its relationship to the media system, one must point out several important tendencies in the media system that influences its leading position. So far, the American media system is still dynamic and the changes within it are reflected in the political system’s transformation thanks to the constant modernization tendencies, particularly convergence, ownership accumulation, the media commercialization, transmission homogenization, and the deregulation of the media market. All of the mentioned factors are causing the media system to have a stronger position in relation to the political system. Its current shape and development is independent from the external institutions and mainly from the political ones.

Two major tendencies dominated the media system in 2008: the increased importance of cable TV, taking over the dominant broadcaster role from the traditional television networks, and the increasing role of digital media, distinguishably the internet taking over the role of the press as the second source of political information in the United States.

3) The media introduce the media logic into the political system's acting that is aspiring to be present in the media and is acting accordingly to the media outlines

Research into the 2008 presidential campaign allows the new trends and tendencies during the mediatization of politics process to significantly influence its final shape. The research largely concerned the basic marketing actions performed by the candidates' campaigns.

The first and the most expressive example of taking over the media logic by the political actors was the mediatized image. Examining the detailed structure of Obama's image allows one to point out the large extent of the mediatization process. The Democrat's image consisted of four major components (narrative forms) that depicted him as an African American, a man from nowhere, bringing restoration to the United States, and having a perfect election organization. The pop cultural image undertone was quite interesting because it allowed the candidate and the media to reach the youngest and least politically interested voters. In this case, the mediatization process reached its highest stage and still shows a growing tendency.

On the other hand, McCain's image mediatization took a different turn than Obama's. The Republicans were dealing with a well-known product with a stable position on the political market. The attempt to create a maverick and war veteran image clashed with the media image construct of him being George Bush's political continuator and as being too old to become president.

The media events, such as both parties' conventions and the presidential debates (including vice presidential debates) treated as the mediatization of politics determinant are the second important marketing element being subjected to the mediatization of politics. Their presence confirms the mass media's central role. Due to the overly staged form of party conventions, the role of conventions during the mediatization of politics had been continuously decreasing in previous electoral cycles. They've been changed to become a coronation, designed only to anoint the party's candidate. The 2008 election was a turning point in the denoted tendencies. Despite leaving some parts of the pageantry characteristics of the conventions, the conventions were definitely more dramatic and designed in a less traditional fashion. Designed this way, these shows attracted a record-breaking audience¹⁴.

The collected data shows the following: in the case of the political debates, the media's principal assumption is to create a media show – a contest where a winner

¹⁴ Compare: D. Dayan, E. Katz, *Media Events. The Live Broadcasting of History*, Cambridge 1992.

emerges even if it has no effect on the election results. In that situation, the media cannot actively influence the electorate position. They have a greater opportunity to freely shape the peripheral debate areas, including the predictions, media speculations, and the debate commentary¹⁵. The debates, similar to conventions, are losing their influence during the mediatization of politics process. The main depreciating factor on the debates' potential influence on the election results is their timing. By the time of the first debate, both parties' electorates and the undecided voters had already taken their polarized stance. The debates did not cause any major electorate flux; they only strengthened the already existing trends.

The media events, treated as one of the primary determinant of the mediatization process, are evidence of the impeding mediatization tendencies. Reaching the mediatization's highest phase, they've stopped evolving. They've become a milestone that determines the shape of the process, but does not subject itself to any major modernization tendencies.

Political advertisements, along the politicians' image, are one of the classic examples of taking over the mass media logic by the political system. Included in the field of marketing activities, political advertisements have become the candidate's tool to influence the media coverage content. By making the use of it both, Obama and McCain were actively trying to shape the theme agenda. However, political advertisements did not dominate the mass media and political discourse in 2008. Their presence took an insignificant role in the media coverage. During the examined campaign, political ads were the subject of just 10% media coverage¹⁶. Furthermore, political ads made up about 5% (108 spots) of the Obama campaign's entire film clips (movies), depicting a new trend in the audio-visual marketing.

The fact that political staffs' use new communication technologies was one of the most visible and dynamic spheres of the process of the mediatization of politics. During the campaign, the number of participants on the internet was constantly rising, unlike through TV or the press. On the one hand, the mass media used new political communication channels, confirming its central role in the relationship with the political system. The media convergence process resulted in a clear transmission of the media content to the network. However, in the hands of political actors, the internet became a new marketing tool. They could, thanks to the internet, avoid the broadcasters and reach the voters as efficiently as with help of a TV. Obama's internet campaign was the perfect example of using the web

¹⁵ M.S. McKinney, D.B. Carlin, *Political Campaign Debates* [in:] *Handbook of Political Communication Research*, L.L. Kaid (ed.), Mahwah–New Jersey–London 2004, p. 214.

¹⁶ *Winning the Media Campaign...*, op.cit.

to reach supporters. By creating a virtual community, he established the electoral attitude so desired by the staff. The Democrat had an advantage over McCain in every field of internet activity.

The analyses showed one more trend connected with the internet – the increased number of the political content users on the internet. The research shows that during the 2008 campaign nearly three quarters (74%) of internet users were searching for election-related information. Taking the entire voting population into account, it accounts for 55% of the voting population, making this a record-breaking development in U.S. history¹⁷.

4) The media designs the media political reality and draws the information about the politics from the society

The fact that media design the political reality has been partially confirmed with the hypothesis (1) and (2). The first indicator confirming the hypothesis is the level of the intensity of the media broadcast that has the political content. Three subjects dominated the media throughout the entire campaign year. The presidential election placed first, accounting for more than 35% of the media coverage. Other issues covered in media were economic issues (less than 15%) and the Iraq war (about 4%)¹⁸.

The second indicator was the intensity of the media broadcast with the certain narrative themes. The campaign depicted through the economy and the financial crisis – 18.4%. Less than two percentage points falls to the presidential and vice presidential debates – 16.6%. Third place in the media coverage came to Sarah Palin with 13.9%. The releases covering solely McCain made up only 1.9 % of the media coverage¹⁹.

The third indicator was the tone of the media coverage regarding the candidates. During the analyzed period (the final stage of election), Obama was mostly presented in a positive light: 36% of the coverage was positive, 35% neutral, and 29.2% negative. However, the positive coverage was decreasing since the pre-elections time²⁰. On the one hand, this shows how strong the electoral rivalry was, forcing both candidates to use negative methods. On the other hand, it showed

¹⁷ *The Internet's Role in Campaign 2008*, Pew Internet & American Life Project, Washington D.C. 2009.

¹⁸ Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism, *State of the Media*, www.stateofthemediamedia.org, <http://www.stateofthemediamedia.org/2009/index.htm> [access: 14.11.2009].

¹⁹ *Winning the Media Campaign...*, op.cit.

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

a slow depletion of a certain concept of politics of change and revival that was proclaimed by the Democrat. Along with the increasing level of positive media coverage, the support for the Democrat was also rising. In the case of a strong decrease in the positive broadcast, the election support results did not stop rising. It shows that the electorate's attitudes towards the candidate were strongly rooted. Furthermore, this tendency emphasizes how little effect the media pseudo-scandals had. It has confirmed the thesis that the media have no possibility to functionally influence the electorate behavior.

It completely corresponds with the opinion on sustaining the tendencies to have a strategic voting by the media coverage in which the voters are following the leader being under the influence of the media and the public effect (the bandwagon effect). The beginning of the financial crisis was the turning point for Obama's campaign, allowing him to get a substantial advantage in the polls and media coverage. The Democrat's restrained reaction allowed him to be portrayed as a statesman, a leader on whom Americans could rely. Thanks to that, that year, the positive media depiction of the Democrat dominated the two most frequently discussed subjects – the political campaign and the economy (financial issues).

Whereas, McCain was described in a definite negative tone: 57.3%. Only 14.2% of the coverage/news had a positive undertone and 28.5% had a neutral one²¹. The dynamic loss of a positive coverage during the campaign was correlated with McCain's declining electoral support. Despite the fact of the sustained decline of the support in the ballots, it has not been as drastic as the analogic inclinations in the media coverage tonality. The results show 6% decrease of support and 30% decline of the number of positive coverage. This shows that despite the decreasing number of positive reports and electoral support, the correlation between them had been small. The downward trend shows that it would not lead to a breaking of the electoral support even when faced with a total lack of a positive material. This is yet another proof of the existence of only a structural mediatization, not a functional one.

5. Summary

In just a few decades, politics and the media, in a sense, became complementary institutions that affect one another. During second half of the 20th century, the mass media, especially television, gained a central position on the political scene and

²¹ Ibidem.

became an active political player. Hence, it changed the broadcaster's function from "reporting" to "creating" political reality. And, now, we can observe the process of pauperization of politics. The expanding influence of the media on politics has erased the border between public and private spheres.

New trends occurred during the process of mediatization in 2008 American presidential election. Today, all of the analyzed mediatized elements have futures specific for the last mediatization stage. In the 2012 campaign, the decreasing role of the press and radio in the mediatization process was observed. Television, however, maintained the same level of mediatization as it did in 2008. In fact, TV had the most influence on political communication and the mediatization of politics. The real "battlefield" is the internet, which is used both by the media and political marketing strategists. That is why we can assume that the future of mediatization will be concentrated on the internet.

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