

Permanent Campaigning: a meta-analysis and framework for measurement

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Permanent campaigning emerged as a concept in the 1970s in studies of US politics but is now recognized as a universal phenomenon. Despite its long history, there has been no attempt to build a holistic picture of the elements that constitute a permanent campaign. Generally, researchers focus on tactical elements, situating their use within an overall permanent campaign strategy, but there is a lack of a broader methodological framework for holistically measuring adherence to a permanent campaigning mode. This article presents results of a meta-analysis of relevant research to provide a framework to understand how permanent campaigning is practiced according to scholarship in the field. Our meta-analysis showed there were three reasonably discrete forms of campaigning activities that had been identified: those in which permanent campaign strategies are related to capacity building and strategy; a second, in which permanent campaigning relates to paid and owned media; and a third in which earned media is the main focus. In mapping these studies, we identify the common features of permanent campaigning, identifying strong and weak indicators and the extent these are employed by government, parties or elected representatives and within which political systems: parliamentarism or presidentialism. Our framework can be applied in future comparative research in order to understand trends in political communication

Keywords: permanent campaign; political communication; political marketing; meta-analysis; methodological framework

Introduction

The concept of permanent campaigning goes back to the United States of the 1970s when the pollster and consultant Pat Cadell advised president Jimmy Carter (1977-1981) “governing with public approval requires a continuing political campaign” (Bowman 2000, 63). Although there are records of politicians concerned about their images since the eighteenth century (Heith 2004; Nimmo 1999), this became the starting point for further studies (Blumenthal 1980). Over intervening decades, studies

have burgeoned across nations using a range of criteria to identify and measure permanent campaigning. However, there is a lack of academic research that seeks to systematize the criteria of investigation and measurement of permanent campaigning in a similar way to studies of professionalization (Gibson and Rommelle 2001; Tenscher, Mykkänen, and Moring 2012; Tenscher et al. 2016).

The main objective of this paper is to fill this gap. We analyzed 87 studies of permanent campaigning to identify and systematize these criteria. The selected research includes investigations related to the practice of permanent campaigning in 32 countries, in addition to the representatives of the 28 member states elected to the European Parliament. All the papers were analyzed to verify what criteria researchers identified, which were subsequently divided into three types: those in which permanent campaign is related to capacity building and strategy; those in which paid and owned media resources were the focus; and a third where focusing on earned media was the main element.

The paper begins with the presentation of the key concepts, before introducing the research thematically demonstrating there are strong and weak indicators of permanent campaigning that relate to the level of politics under analysis and the political system of each country. We then present the overall framework which can be used for future research in this field.

Debating permanent campaigning

The permanent campaign concept suggests political representatives need to pursue actions consistent with election campaigning in non-electoral periods to maintain a positive image among the public and thus enable future electoral successes. The phenomenon includes various communication strategies, such as being visible in key locations that yield electoral benefits and advertising, as well as fund-raising

(Blumenthal 1980; Doherty 2007; Heclo 2000).

While intrinsically linked to Caddell's advice to Carter in 1976, permanent campaigning has a long history. There are records of self-promotion strategies used by eighteenth-century British politicians, for example MP and mayor John Wilkes (Nimmo 1999) and straw polls and canvassing carried out by American officials (Heith 2004). Nevertheless, it was in the second half of the twentieth century that studies find a fairly consistent increase in permanent campaigning activities. US President John F. Kennedy (1961-1963), for example, argued: "the power of the president is the power to persuade" (Heclo 2000, 13) implicitly suggesting a permanent campaign ethos. More concretely, Nixon (1969-1974) is remembered for using opinion polls, being advised by public relations professionals and attacking his rivals while in office and subsequently we find the majority of US elected representatives using their mandates as a means of securing popular support to enable re-election (Heclo 2000).

According to Blumenthal (1980, 1), the professionalization of campaigning in the US and growing influence of political advisors underpin the entrenchment of permanent campaigning: "Political consultants are the new power within the American political system. They are permanent; the politicians ephemeral. The consultants have supplanted the old party bosses as the link to the voters". In this context, the growth of the influence of the consultants is arguably concomitant to the weakening of the political parties (Charnock 2005).

Heclo (2000, 11-12) argues that campaigning and governing should be distinguished in at least three ways: first, while the electoral contest seeks victory at the polls, government assumes the pursuit of several positive outcomes over a mandate; second, while elections are "a zero-sum game" and therefore necessarily lead to confrontation, governance requires collaboration and bridge-building across partisan

divides, with a “continuing invitation to consult, bargain, compromise, and renegotiate”; finally, campaigning is an exercise in persuasion, which consists of assurances and affirmations, while governing presupposes deliberation and the search for consensus even with opponents.

Yet, as Blumenthal (1980, 7) argues, “the permanent campaign is the political ideology of our age. It combines image-making with strategic calculation. Under the permanent campaign governing is turning into a perpetual campaign”. So the permanent campaign aims to maintain the electoral climate throughout the term, which some suggest displaces “responsibility for the common good – for all citizens – in favor of technical management of continued electoral success” (Elmer, Langlois, and McKelvey 2012, 3).

While many posit therefore that permanent campaigning is bad for democracy (Elmer et al 2012) and increased public cynicism and disengagement (Ornstein and Mann 2000), others argue that this context is independent of political strategies, recognizing the ongoing campaign as a necessity for democratically elected governments (Marland & Giasson 2020). Debates on the impact of permanent campaigning are often linked to a specific nation or regime, and hence emphasize the need for a more holistic exploration of political communication during non-electoral periods. Hence, as Marques, Aquino, and Miola (2014, 2) suggest, “regular communication between elected representatives and citizens (one that covers mandates, and not elections) demands specific attention from research”. What may be the key differentiator and determine the broader impacts, positive or negative, may be the form that regular communication takes and the overt objectives that are pursued.

Political communication within a permanent campaign strategy

The professionalization of political communication and campaigning is a process

whereby political actors adapt, and adapt to, the norms and logic of the media environment, constantly seeking to exploit the affordances of technologies to gain an edge over their opponents. As the greatest innovations occur within election campaigns, it is useful to explore the literature on these to understand the evolution of political strategies. Television began to exert significant influence over election campaigns from the 1952 American election which culminated in the victory of Dwight Eisenhower, the first to hire an advertising agency (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995; Blumenthal 1980). While professional communication techniques were restricted to elections until the 1970s when political consultants began to offer permanent support for political communication, developments in communication technology increased some aspects of permanent campaigning (Heclo 2000). Hence the permanent campaign started to be seen as a mediated phenomenon, with politicians seeking positive coverage on television, radio, in print, and more recently, online (Marland 2015; Rose 2012).

The emergence of the CNN network cable TV in the US in the 1980s was important to this process since it expanded the space for political coverage and influenced the profusion of channels specialized in the news globally. In response, the permanent campaign became “a process of gaining greater control over political messages, particularly mass-mediated or reported events” (Elmer et al. 2012, 3). With political communication increasingly following “media logic”, party strategy shifted towards image promotion and presentation (Strömbäck 2008). “Parties themselves becoming more like commercial organizations in using a wider range of market research techniques in order to project their messages” (Sparrow and Turner 2001). The weakening of parties, alongside an ideological fragmentation of the electorate, generated a greater level of personalization, with representatives permanently seeking to communicate a positive image to the public (Veneti et al 2019). Thus, permanent

campaigning became inseparable from the development of communication systems (Elmer et al. 2012).

Research has found it common for governments and representatives to set up communication structures headed by media-relations experts, usually referred to as spin doctors, which attempt to secure positive media coverage, respond to criticism and plan, create and broadcast an official message – processes that have similarities with electoral communication (Diamond 2019; Medvic and Dulio 2004). Where regulations permit, some parties broadcast their own radio and TV programs, through which government officials and parties developed a direct communication channel with the population. Such initiatives bypass the media filter (Edwards 2003; Leal et al. 2019) but do not eliminate the importance of conventional media. Even in what some term the Internet age, mass media remain a key means by which “governments use marketing techniques extensively and continuously target the citizens through means of communications” (Kiss and Szabo 2019).

However, the access and usage of digital technologies offered new means for political actors to communicate directly to potential voters (Elmer et al. 2012; Larsson 2014; Wen 2014). Parties, governments, and representatives soon began to exploit the affordances of email, websites and social media platforms during non-election periods to attack opponents and develop a strategy of personalization (Lalancette and Tourigny-Koné 2017). Webmail was also used to engage citizens during terms of office, for fundraising, and inviting supporters to official or partisan events (Marland and Mathews 2017). Social media platforms such as Twitter, was also seen as having the potential to influence the offline public debate and the mass media agenda (Gainous et al 2019). The intense battle for relevance between parties and their candidates has driven the uptake of

marketing principles and approaches, the professionalization of political communication and thus are important in shaping permanent campaigning strategies (Marland 2015).

Social media have also been used for targeted, voter mobilization strategies. Barack Obama's 2008 campaign for the US presidency was a watershed moment. The campaign combined community organization with fund-raising across multiple platforms offering a blueprint for the use of the digital environment for political communication (Ceccobelli 2018). These developments also shaped permanent campaigning, as shown by survey data from several countries such as the UK, Canada, Brazil, and Greece (Elmer et al 2012; Giasson and Small 2017; Koliastasis 2016; Marques et al. 2014). Hence, marketing the party or candidate directly to an electorate as well as facilitating closer relationships with current and potential supporters has driven the uptake of digital technologies (Elmer et al. 2012). Social media is hence argued to have reconfigured political communication, both during elections and terms of office (Elmer et al. 2012; Larsson 2014, 2015), particularly as it offers the potential to publish, re-edit, comment, and circulate networked political content 24/7 (Elmer et al. 2012). Social media's importance to the permanent campaign is due to the fact that: "having a vibrant, frequently updated and interactive web presence is, almost, de rigueur. The corollary of these developments may be that members feel closer to the party, better connected with other members" (Lilleker 2015).

Hence this new communication environment emphasizes a need for, while also facilitating, permanent campaigning as: "Networked permanent campaign intersects three constantly shifting phenomena: the spaces of communication and campaigning (SNS); partisan participation, action, and subjectivity; the digital encoding and circulation of political communications" (Elmer et al. 2012).

Having discussed the concept of permanent campaign and the link between this strategy and political communication, we proceed by outlining our meta-analysis strategy designed to provide a framework for understanding how permanent campaigning is practiced according to scholarship in the field.

Methodology

This paper developed a clear set of criteria by which to assess the extent permanent campaigning is taking place and how it is conducted. To do this we performed a meta-analysis of peer-reviewed papers published in journals, as well as academic books and book chapters. Meta-analyses are systematic reviews of published research which aid the development of a holistic picture when the research is fragmented across time and nations and adopts a granular approach focusing on single components of a larger phenomenon (Glass, 1976). The method has been used widely in a range of contexts for the purposes of hypothesis building and testing and thus is seen as a means for identifying trends in findings, patterns across nations and the development of holistic frameworks (Boulianne, 2015).

The majority of works identified for our meta-analysis are in English, the most common language of academia, and work published in Spanish and Portuguese given the significant number of high-quality journals in these languages and they are the second and third most popular languages used in relevant disciplines. The works included were identified by searching the Scopus database and Google Scholar, using “permanent campaign” and synonyms¹ as the Boolean search term with appropriate

¹ The other terms used in the Boolean search are “*campaña permanente*” and “*campanha permanente*”.

terms in Spanish and Portuguese derived from the literature.

The criteria for inclusion in the data base was that the published works focused on permanent campaigning in a political context as well as explored at least one activity which is consistent with a permanent campaign strategy. Where this was not clear from the abstracts, the methodological sections were analyzed and in some cases the full papers. This process resulted in 87 journal articles, book chapters, and books that investigated permanent campaigning focusing on at least one measurable criterion, the full list of references is in Appendix 1. The publications all investigate one or more political strategies carried out in non-election periods by politicians representing 32 different countries and the European Parliament. The countries include most continents and a range of political systems: Central America (El Salvador, and Nicaragua), Asia (Taiwan), Europe (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, and UK), North America (Canada, Mexico, and US), Oceania (Australia, and New Zealand), and South America (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela). Unfortunately, we could not find papers investigating any nation from the African or Middle-eastern regions.

Having built a database, we classified the permanent campaign features identified in the research according to their political objectives, dividing them into three categories. The first category predates the coining of the term permanent campaign and includes variables related to capacity building and strategy such as institutional adaptations, fund-raising, polling, and seeking citizen data during the term.

The second category is comprised of paid and owned media and focuses on political communication produced for direct consumption by citizens, for example, advertising including negative campaigning, engaging, personalised and microtargeted

communication, posting frequency on SNS, hyperlinking and interacting with citizens. While this and the third category corresponds to current marketing thinking (Lovett & Staelin, 2016) we conflate paid and owned due to the limits imposed on political advertising via mass media within the majority of nations meaning that their owned channels are the only means of advertising.

The third category is earned media which is political communication designed to generate positive media coverage, the political communication and marketing literature does not focus on earned media via word of mouth beyond earning shares on social media. This category includes promoting public events, speeches, and traveling.

There is a degree to which certain features could be categorized in paid and owned as well as earned media, in particular because political actors tend to simultaneously promote their activities via social media while seeking to generate earned media coverage. Led by the literature gathered for the meta-analysis we place them in the category to which they best apply, for example travelling will be promoted via Twitter, Facebook and similar platforms. However, the objective of traveling is to reach a broader spectrum of citizens than their followers on social media. Hence, such activities have similar aims in the social media age (Burrier, 2019) as they did prior to social media becoming embedded within political communication strategy (Charnock, 2005). Literature has also focused on personalization and agenda setting in political discourse on social media platforms. While these are strategies that are media neutral, they are only studied when analyzing the use of paid and owned media as these channels provide the best means for direct communication from the politician to citizens as well as journalists. All of these variables are elucidated, in relation to the literature, in subsequent sections.

After grouping the variables as above, we identified whether they were identified as features of presidential or parliamentary systems, and the level of government that was studied (government, parties, or elected representatives). In addition, based on the number of studies that identified this feature, we measured the perceived importance or prominence among researchers and defined indicators as strong, average or weak suggesting some variables are better measures of permanent campaigning than others. Further elucidation is offered alongside the presentation of the results of our meta-analysis.

Defining permanent campaigning criteria

Criteria linked to capacity building and strategy

The predominant focus of research has been the communicational aspects, however, there are further dimensions that indicate a permanent campaign is implemented. These features facilitate developing a permanent campaign infrastructure as well as informing communication strategy.

One of the most referenced features is constant fund-raising by parties and candidates (Corrado 2000; Doherty 2014; Flanagan 2012; Giasson and Small 2017; Heberlig and Larson 2005; Loomis 2000; Marland, Esselment, and Giasson 2017; Marland and Mathews 2017; McGrane 2017; Medvic 2014; Pal 2018; Rose 2012). Some claim: “Members of Congress are constantly raising money for their own campaigns in an effort to retain their positions” (Corrado 2000, 102-3). Furthermore, US presidents can adopt the dual role of national as well as party leaders and use their position to fund-raise for their parties, Obama’s record donations for his 2012 re-election campaign being an exemplar (Doherty 2014).

Evidence of permanent donation seeking has also emerged in Canada (Flanagan 2012, Giasson and Small, 2017, Marland, Esselment et al. 2017, Marland and Mathews 2017; McGrane 2017, Pal 2019, Rose 2012). Flanagan (2012) shows the public funding regime introduced in 2004 (Bill C-24) paved the way for proactively seeking funds from supporters by political parties.

Another indicator of permanent campaigning not directly related to communication is conducting public opinion polls to measure public satisfaction with government, and gauging key concerns and desires (Blumenthal 1980; Bowman 2000; Crespo 2018; Edwards 2003; Fernandes et al. 2017; Grussell and Nord 2016; Heith 2004; Koliastasis 2016; Lalancette and Cormack 2018; Lathrop 2003; Marcus 2010; Marland, Lewis, and Flanagan 2017; McGrane 2017; Medvic 2014; Medvic and Dulio 2004; Norris 1997; Sparrow and Turner 2001; Tenpas 2000; Turcotte and Vodrey 2017; Van Onselen and Errington 2007; Zareba 2016). Norris (1997) highlights the case of the British Labour Party, which, after defeat at the 1992 elections, designed a long-term strategy for victory. “Opinion polling was carried out regularly from late 1993, including focus group research to monitor reaction to Labour’s policies. Strategy meetings were conducted almost daily from late 1994, tackling Labour’s weaknesses well before the official campaign came close” (Norris 1997, 12).

Similarly but less formally, research has identified a constant search for information on the preferences and data of citizens throughout government (Edwards 2003; Esselment et al. 2017; Giasson and Small 2017; Kiss and Szabo 2019; Lilleker 2015; Marland, Esselment et al. 2017; McKelvey and Piebiak 2019; Paredes and Moncayo 2018; Patten 2017; Van Onselen and Errington 2007). One method is to obtain citizens data through the support of activists, volunteers, neighborhood precinct captains, affiliated groups, and parties, and then use this information to get in touch with

possible voters as well as to plan future campaign strategies (Edwards 2003; Van Onselen and Errington 2007). More recently, parties have started using computerized databases to aid targeting. Data is used to efficiently direct “door-to-door canvassing and voter contact through telephone banks” using ICT in the form of apps accessible by phone or tablet and monitored in real-time (Patten 2017, 56).

Institutional adaptations designed to deliver future electoral successes, such as law changes, promoting referendums, the creation of public opinion monitoring departments, and the inclusion of political consultants in the administration staffs are also cited as permanent campaign features (Burrier 2019; Blumenthal 1980; Conaghan and De La Torre 2008; Craft 2017; Diamond 2019; Doherty 2012; Edwards 2003; Esselment and Wilson 2017; Koliastasis 2016; Marland, Esselment et al. 2017; Medvic 2014; Tenpas 2000; Turcotte and Vodrey 2017; Zaręba 2016). For example, the creation of a “war room” by the US Clinton administration and UK Labour party, centralizing communication within a single office bringing together political and communications staff (Tenpas 2000).

Research in Ecuador suggested president Rafael Correa (2007-2017) used referenda for similar purposes. Ecuadorian voters were invited to vote on issues of national interest, including the setting up of a new Constituent National Assembly in his first year in office. These measures, it is argued, allowed the government to defer legislative decisions to popular opinion, to nurture a positive evaluation of Correa (Conaghan and De La Torre 2008).

Table 1 presents a summary of the permanent campaign criteria linked to capacity building and strategy:

[Table 1 near here]

As can be seen, there are four permanent campaign features relating to capacity building and strategy – all of them investigate party strategies, three analyze presidents, members of the Executive and MPs. All the strategies were identified in countries with parliamentary and presidential systems, which means they are not specific to one or another group of countries.

Criteria linked to paid and owned media

Advertising is the most often referred strategy within permanent campaigning literature, being used to promote the government, persuade citizens to support projects, promote awareness of the actions of the Executive, representatives or the party in the government, defend points of view or even matters related to a politician's personal life (Conaghan and De La Torre 2008; Flanagan 2012; Jiménez 2017; Lalancette and Cormack 2018; Lathrop 2003; Lewis and Cosgrove 2017; Marland 2015; Marland, Lewis et al. 2017; McGrane 2017; McKenney and Coletto 2017; Medvic 2014; Medvic and Dulio 2004; Norris 1997; Oliveira and Chaves 2016; Oliveira et al. 2017; Pal 2018; Rose 2012; Van Onselen and Errington 2007). While a feature of well-funded US representatives since the mid-1970s, advertising use has extended to Canada: “Since 2004, we have witnessed election-style ads with greater frequency in non-election years” (Rose 2012, 159).

A greater use of negative campaigning is also identified (Ceccobelli 2018; Coimbra et al. 2018; Conaghan and De La Torre 2008; Crespo 2018; Flanagan 2012; Kiss and Szabo 2019; Koliastasis 2016; Lalancette and Cormack 2018; Marangoni and Verzichelli 2019; Marland 2015; Oliveira and Chaves 2016; Oliveira et al. 2017; Pal 2018; Rose 2012; Van Kessel and Castelein 2016; Wen 2014, Zaręba 2016). Hecló (2000, 19-20) states American parties have become more adept at constructing

strategies to attack their rival making the “two-party conflict in Congress more ideologically charged and personally hostile”, suggesting that the penetration of marketing into politics has contributed to creating and maintaining a climate of permanent opposition, in the constant battle for public support.

For Rose (2012), Canadian political parties have become more fragile and, as a result, through turning to permanent campaigning have increased the use of negative propaganda. Outside North America, Kiss and Szabo (2019) concluded both government and opposition in Hungary attacked each other during the term.

Another important component of the paid or owned permanent campaign is the use of marketing techniques to influence public perceptions during periods of office (Azevedo, Camargo, and Viana 2016; Esselment, Marland, and Giasson 2017; Esselment and Wilson 2017; Giasson and Small 2017; Grussell and Nord 2016; Hecl 2000; Heith 2004; Jiménez 2017; Kiss and Szabo 2019; Leal et al. 2019; Marcus 2010; Marland, Esselment et al. 2017; McGrane 2017; Medvic 2014; Nimmo 1999; Norris 1997; Sparrow and Turner 2001; Stanyer 2003). In 1982, for example, Clinton employed political marketing and used opinion polls to gauge reactions to his planned political agenda, his campaign, and subsequent administration as governor of Arkansas (Marcus 2010).

Some scholars have highlighted the similarity of themes stressed during election campaigns and then periods of governance (Cook 2002; Espíndola, Carvalho, and Leal 2019; Fernandes et al. 2017; Massuchin and Silva 2019; Parmeggiani 2015; Rafalowski 2019). “During the campaign, Bush focused on five core issues: tax cuts, education reform, the faith initiative, Medicare and social security, and defense modernization. Not surprisingly, then, these became the central focus of his domestic appearances” (Cook 2002, 760).

Digital technologies have expanded the range of owned media that can be utilised for permanent campaigning as well as offering new ways of identifying and measuring the way permanent campaigning is practiced. Social media usage and posting make political marketing communication strategies more visible, capturable and analysable. For example studies have social media posts, coding them as political or personal, with an excess of personal posts denoting permanent campaigning (Azevedo et al. 2016; Ceccobelli 2018; Crespo 2018; Fernandes et al. 2016, 2017; Giasson and Small 2017; Gregor 2019; Lalancette and Tourigny-Koné 2017; Leal et al. 2019; López-Rabadán, López-Meri, and Doménech-Fabregat 2016; Marland, Esselment et al. 2017; Metz, Kruikemeier, and Lecheler 2019; Nuernbergk and Conrad 2016; Parmeggiani 2014; Wen 2014). According to Jackson and Lilleker (2011, 90), politicians have used the Internet for personalized communication as part of an impression management strategy “providing details of their personal interests in music, sport or films, showing a sense of humor or displaying any other of a myriad of personal traits they wish to disclose”.

The frequency of publication on social media is also usually referenced as a permanent campaign variable (Ceccobelli 2018; Domalewska 2018; Elmer et al. 2012; Espíndola et al. 2019; Koliastasis 2016; Leal et al. 2019; Larsson 2014, 2015; Marques et al. 2014; Sobaci 2018; Van Kessel and Castelein 2016; Vasko and Trilling 2019; Wen 2014). These studies suggest elected representatives can build a positive image among potential supporters by establishing mechanisms for ongoing communication (Elmer et al. 2012; Giasson and Small 2017; Rose 2012). Studies have thus focused on two methods for measuring the frequency of permanent campaigning online. Firstly comparing the amount of content published during the electoral and non-electoral periods – when the latter is equal to or greater than the first there is an indication of

permanent campaigning (Ceccobelli 2018; Larsson 2014; Wen 2014). Secondly, calculating the average posting rate across a legislature – those politicians above the average rate of the sample are considered in a permanent campaign mode (Larsson 2015).

A further criterion is the level of interactivity, asking not just about posting frequency but whether they respond to questions, mention, retweet, or share content from other users (Espíndola et al. 2019; Lilleker 2015; Nuernbergk and Conrad 2016; Parmeggiani 2014, 2015; Raynauld & Greenberg 2014). Earlier studies of elections focused on the interactive potential different platforms offered (Lilleker and Jackson 2011), the use of which can be translated into indicators of personal campaigning.

Additional indicators include the number of page followers, the levels of engagement (likes, shares, retweets or similar) (Azevedo et al. 2016; Domalewska 2018; Larsson 2014, 2015; Lilleker 2015; Marques et al. 2014; Raynauld and Greenberg 2014; Rodríguez 2013) although these could perhaps be interpreted as the outcome of communication as opposed to evidence of permanent campaigning, studies demonstrate that levels of engagement do correlate with high-frequency communication; there is also a correlation between engagement levels and interactivity on the part of the host (Lilleker 2015).

In addition to quantitative measures of campaign activities and effects, studies have analyzed online discourse. Wen (2014) categorized Taiwanese politician's posts as political or personal. Political posts were those referring to past achievements, specific plans, and general goals. Massuchin and Silva (2019) classified posts as pragmatic, emotional, political/ideological or unidentified. In Brazil, pragmatic posts were defined as publicizing government actions, and so not considered as permanent campaign indicators.

Similarly, hyperlinks to partisan organizations or interest groups represent visible instantiations of partnerships and relationships that might contribute to a broader permanent campaign strategy (Elmer et al. 2012, 2014; Lilleker 2015).

A feature which emerged alongside the popularization of SNS is the possibility to micro-target messages online, choosing groups of citizens by features like location, age, gender, job and others (Crespo 2018; Esselment et al. 2017; Giasson and Small 2017; Lilleker 2015). This strategy was verified among British and Canadian parties, where individualized messages were found to be a key aspect “of maintaining an active presence online between elections” (Giasson and Small 2017).

Table 2 presents a summary of earned media and offline permanent campaign criteria:

[Table 2 near here]

As demonstrated, there are twelve permanent campaign criteria related to paid and owned media covering all levels of governance. Eleven features were found in the permanent campaign strategies of parties, ten in the strategies of members of the Executive, and seven among MPs, including four utilised by members of the European Parliament. Eleven are identified in parliamentary systems and ten in presidential systems with one also identified as a feature of the semi-presidential Taiwanese system.

It is important to note that some of these strategies, like negative campaigning and the prioritization of campaign themes, have become more prominent in the age of digital media. For example, Ceccobelli (2018) found a majority of political leaders from 18 European, North and South American, and Oceanic countries as well as European

Parliament members attacked opponents more on their Facebook pages between rather than during electoral campaigns.

Criteria linked to earned media

Earning media coverage is a key element of the permanent campaign. While governments are naturally able to generate coverage, all elected members need to reach out to citizens and be seen active beyond the confines of government buildings and capital cities. They also need to ensure they make political initiatives relevant and salient. Therefore, alongside developing promotional communication for social media they need to also gain the attention of journalists, at a local and national level, and be present across media in order for policy and image messages to be amplified.

One prominent feature of this strategy is the increase in presidential domestic travel while in office, as well as the selection of places visited in order to have a presence in states favorable to the incumbent and/or with a history of close contests and so be widely visible to key parts of a nation or region (Charnock 2005; Charnock et al. 2009; Cook 2002; Doherty 2007; Edwards 2003; Kitzberger 2012; Koliastasis 2016; McGrane 2017; Medvic 2014; Paredes and Moncayo 2018). According to Charnock (2005), presidential travel for campaigning has been growing in the US since Nixon, except for Reagan (1981-1989). Bush (2001-2009), for example, traveled most to the states that had the tightest election results in 2000 (Charnock, 2005). Presidential travel thus targets large, competitive states, and strategic targeting has increased over time (Doherty 2007). Research shows the amount of trips increases in the final years of their terms (Charnock et al. 2009), though Cook (2002) highlights Bush's extensive travel and speech making was notable from his first year in office.

In the UK, Stanyer (2003) argues every aspect of party conferences is carefully planned with the help of marketing consultants to present a good image of the party: the

agenda, the location, the speeches, the avoidance of conflicts. The orchestration of events for media consumption is contiguous to the colonization of political parties by consultants who progressively have input into planning and communicating the actions of parties and governments (Jiménez 2017; Medvic and Dulio 2004; Norris 1997; Rose 2012; Stanyer 2003), a process described as “the gradual evolution of the permanent campaign where the techniques of spin doctors, opinion polls, and professional media management are increasingly applied to everyday politics” (Norris 1997, 11).

Constantly communicating to the public, whether in face-to-face speeches or via mainstream or public media, has equally become a central feature of the permanent campaign (Cook 2002; Coimbra et al. 2018; Conaghan and De La Torre 2008; Edwards 2003; Fernandes et al. 2016, 2017; Gregor 2019; Kitzberger 2012; Koliastasis 2016; Leal et al. 2019; Martins et al. 2017; Medvic 2014; McGrane 2017; Norris 1997; Paredes and Moncayo 2018; Van Onselen and Errington 2007). Rafael Correa promoted his political agenda and criticized the press in Ecuador through his programs on radio and TV as well as speeches in events and interviews to local media in a strategy known as “Citizen link” [Enlace ciudadano] (Conaghan and De La Torre 2008; Kitzberger 2012; Paredes and Moncayo 2018). During his time as British Prime Minister, Tony Blair tried to build relationships with the public through face-to-face contact with citizens (Norris 1997), whereas the New Democratic Party government in Canada sought to approach traditional allies, civil society actors and other third-party validators, like unions, business, churches, or ethnic groups (McGrane 2017). Public events perform similar functions, allowing direct communication to citizens (Charnock 2005; Giasson and Small 2017; Kitzberger 2012; McGrane 2017; Medvic 2014; Paredes and Moncayo, 2018; Stanyer 2003; Vincent 2017). In the US, the era of “frenetic appearances” began during the Clinton Presidency and continued with Bush (Charnock

2005). In South America, leftist governments in Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Uruguay, and Venezuela promoted “itinerant cabinets, presidential tours, and other controlled institutional events” (Kitzberger 2012) to plant “unfiltered” messages into independent media.

The promotion of these public events gains spontaneous positive media coverage, another permanent campaign indicator (Burrier 2019; Charnock 2005; Crespo 2018; Diamond 2019; Edwards 2003; Esselment et al. 2017; Koliastasis 2016; Lewis and Cosgrove 2017; Marland, Esselment et al. 2017; Medvic and Dulio 2004; Norris 1997; Stanyer 2007). The same can happen when communication consultants from government officials and representatives try to guide the media to publicize the actions of their advisers. The more a politician appears in the media, be it a local or a national channel, the more likely they are in permanent campaign mode.

Table 3 presents a summary of the permanent campaign criteria related to online communication:

[Table 3 near here]

As demonstrated, there are four features of permanent campaign criteria identified which apply to earned media which apply across all levels of parliament, the Executive, Legislative, and members of national parliaments and the European Parliament. They also apply across both parliamentary and presidential systems.

Discussion and conclusion

The analysis of 87 studies of the permanent campaigning of national executives, parties, and members of legislatures resulted in the identification of twenty criteria. Four are indicators linked to capacity building and strategy, while another twelve involve the use

of paid and owned media; four to earned media. The large number of features relating to owned media reflects the increased use of digital environments for permanent campaigning as well as heightened academic interest in the use of email, websites and most recently social media. In avoiding the contentious separation of online and offline media and recognising cross-media synergies (Naik & Peters, 2009) we focus on the predominant function of communication strategies. Strategies which build an infrastructure to facilitate permanent campaigning and then tactical elements which communicate directly to citizens in unmediated spaces while also seeking accelerated reach and celerity through the generation of media coverage. Our meta-analysis emphasises the centrality of communication for permanent campaigning and the face validity of the claim that it is practically unimaginable for any government, party or political representative to eschew being in campaigning mode between elections (Elmer et al. 2012). The widespread identification of features across systems and political levels clearly demonstrates the widespread adherence to a permanent campaign strategy.

Methodologically we are also able to demonstrate that some strategies are more important indicators than others of permanent campaigning, which can be employed for comparative, single nation or single party studies. We divide the indicators into three groups according to their prominence in the results of our meta-analysis, considering that the more a strategy is researched by scholars the more important it is as an indicator. Table 4 shows the division of the indicators between strong, average and weak.

The first group of determinants is used in 15 studies or more, which highlights they might be “strong indicators” of permanent campaigning. They are polling, advertising, the adoption of marketing during the governing term, negative campaigning, public speeches, and a personalized communication focus. The most

frequent strategy is the use of public opinion polls. Twenty-one papers identified using this criterion to determine the practice of permanent campaign. This is one of the oldest strategies used by political representatives to campaigning during terms, having been referenced since Blumenthal (1980). The longevity with which it has been researched is one of the reasons for it being the most cited by scholars.

The other strong indicators are the adoption of marketing techniques and advertising (both used in 18 studies each), negativity (17), frequent speeches to the public through broadcast media or face-to-face contact (15), and personalized communication (15). It is important to note that four indicators are longstanding features of political communication, bridging all communication platforms, demonstrating their centrality to permanent campaigning. Advertising, for example, is focused on traditional media, such as the amount spent on TV and radio spots and programs, however, some studies analyze overall advertising spend independently of placement (McGrane 2017, McNeney and Coletto 2017). Moreover, research on personalization focuses purely on the digital online environment and so is driven by the use of SNS by politicians, governments and parties.

The second group we define as “average indicators” of permanent campaigning, used in 8 to 14 studies. Some are related to capacity building and strategy, such as the institutional adaptations representatives promote (used as a variable in 14 studies), fundraising (12), and data collection on citizen preferences and opinions (10). Most of this research was carried out prior to digital technology becoming mainstream and arguably have gradually been replaced with strategies involving owned media, particularly SNS. Also included in this second group is generating positive media coverage (13) – which shows that traditional media remain important and relevant, official travel while in government (10), and promoting or attending public events (8). The group of average

indicators is completed by frequently posting content on social media (13), and high audience engagement on SNS (8) – these are specifically related to digital technological developments.

The third group are weak indicators, used in seven studies or less and includes the transference of themes from electoral to non-electoral periods (used as a variable in 6 papers) and online communication strategies, such as the level of interactivity (6), microtargeting (4), the use of hyperlinks (3), and the adoption of a promotional discourse (2). These are criteria that are not necessarily of low relevance, as yet they do not find broad academic support. It is possible that some are not widely studied because they are recent developments, for example, microtargeting or hyperlinking, or because the indicator has only been studied by a small number of researchers, such as the adoption of a promotional discourse, and so remains understudied. Weak indicators may hence be strategies fertile for further exploration across a broader range of systems

[Table 4 near here]

It is important to note the application of these indicators according to the object of analysis. Researchers prefer to investigate the permanent campaigning of parties: 19 out of the 20 criteria were found in studies of this level. This prioritization is natural, given that parties are fundamental in developing strategies for future electoral success. Moreover, 17 variables were applied to study the permanent campaign carried out by presidents, governments or members of the Executive, which may be skewing our results due to an over-concentration on the US presidential communication, the cradle of permanent campaign research. Members of Legislatures feature in 14 studies indicating a potential gap for future research.

Regarding the political systems in the countries studied in the papers included in this meta-analysis, 19 out of the 20 were applied in parliamentary countries, the only indicator not applied here is promotional discourse. Moreover, 18 variables were used in investigations that focus on presidentialist nations, hyperlinking and microtargeting being the exceptions. This context allows us to say that permanent campaign strategies are spread across diverse political systems.

To conclude the meta-analysis offers a schematic of indicators for identifying and measuring permanent campaigning. We recognize it is impossible to include all studies which make reference to communication strategies that relate to permanent campaigning, our meta-analysis was limited by the need to restrict search terms. We are also limited by the fact that studies tend to look back over periods of governance, one might expect that reviews of US President Trump's permanent campaign will increase the prominence of posting frequency due to his use of Twitter for direct communication to his supporters while also maintaining a high profile in mainstream media (Brookey & Ott 2019). Despite these limitations, focusing on studies which engage with permanent campaigning literature allows the development of a theoretically informed model for the study of permanent campaigning. The model requires empirical validation, along the lines proposed by Tenscher et al. 2016, and can be developed as research responds to the diffusion and appropriation of technological innovations for political communication. The model allows us to ascertain the components of a permanent campaign and test the extent of adherence while also identifying differences within and between nations. Scoring parties for their adherence and comparing the outcomes to election results can also be used to explore the extent permanent campaigning might determine an election outcome. If Elmer et al (2012) are correct in stating we live in the

age of permanent campaigning, our model allows the testing of this empirically, assessing the extent of embeddedness across political systems and levels.

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Table 1. Permanent campaign criteria linked to capacity building and strategy

Criteria	Sources	Object of analysis	Political system
Institutional adaptations	Burrier, 2019; Blumenthal, 1980; Conaghan & De La Torre, 2008; Craft, 2017; Diamond, 2019; Doherty, 2012; Edwards, 2003; Esselment & Wilson, 2017; Koliastasis, 2016; Marland, 2017; Medvic, 2014; Tenpas, 2000; Turcotte; Vodrey, 2017; Zaręba, 2016	Executive, Legislative (including MPs), and parties.	Parliamentarism, and presidentialism
Fund-raising	Corrado, 2000; Doherty, 2014; Flanagan, 2012; Giasson & Small, 2017; Heberlig & Larson, 2005; Loomis, 2000; Marland et al, 2017; Marland & Mathews, 2017; McGrane, 2017; Medvic, 2014; Pal, 2018; Rose, 2012	Executive, Legislative, and parties.	Parliamentarism, and presidentialism
Research citizens' preferences and data	Edwards, 2003; Esselment et al, 2017; Giasson & Small, 2017; Kiss & Szabo, 2019; Lilleker, 2015; Marland et al, 2017; McKelvey & Piebiak, 2019; Paredes & Moncayo, 2018; Patten, 2017; Van Onselen & Errington, 2007	Parties	Parliamentarism, and presidentialism
Conducting public opinion polls during the term	Blumenthal, 1980; Bowman, 2000; Crespo, 2018; Edwards, 2003; Fernandes et al, 2017; Grussell & Nord, 2016; Heith, 2004; Koliastasis, 2016; Lalancette & Cormack, 2018; Lathrop, 2003; Marcus, 2010; Marland et al, 2017b; McGrane, 2017; Medvic, 2014; Medvic & Dulio, 2004; Norris, 1997; Sparrow & Turner, 2001; Tenpas, 2000; Turcotte & Vodrey, 2017; Van Onselen & Errington, 2007; Zaręba, 2016	Executive, Legislative, and parties.	Parliamentarism, and presidentialism

Source: The authors, 2020.

Table 2. Permanent campaign criteria for paid and owned media

Criteria	Sources	Object of analysis	Political system
Negative campaigning	Ceccobelli, 2018; Coimbra et al, 2018; Conaghan & De La Torre, 2008; Crespo, 2018; Flanagan, 2012; Kiss & Szabo, 2019; Koliastasis, 2016; Lalancette & Cormack, 2018; Marangoni & Verzichelli, 2019; Marland, 2015; Oliveira & Chaves, 2016; Oliveira et al, 2017; Pal, 2018; Rose, 2012; Van Kessel & Castelein, 2016; Wen, 2014, Zaręba, 2016	Executive, parties, and European Parliament	Parlamentarism, and presidentialism
Institutional advertising	Conaghan & De La Torre, 2008; Flanagan, 2012; Jiménez, 2017; Lalancette & Cormack, 2018; Lathrop, 2003; Lewis & Cosgrove, 2017; Marland, 2015; Marland et al, 2017b; McGrane, 2017; McKenney & Coletto, 2017; Medvic, 2014; Medvic & Dulio, 2004; Norris, 1997; Oliveira & Chaves, 2016; Oliveira et al, 2017; Pal, 2018; Rose, 2012; Van Onselen & Errington, 2007.	Executive, Legislative, and parties.	Parlamentarism, and presidentialism
Travel during the term of office	Charnock, 2005; Charnock et al, 2009; Cook, 2002; Doherty, 2007; Edwards, 2003; Kitzberger, 2012; Koliastasis, 2016; McGrane, 2017; Medvic, 2014; Paredes & Moncayo, 2018	Executive, Legislative, and parties.	Parlamentarism, and presidentialism
Themes of election transferred to governance	Cook, 2002; Espíndola et al, 2019; Fernandes et al, 2017; Massuchin & Silva, 2019; Parmeggiani, 2015; Rafalowski, 2019	Executive, and parties.	Parlamentarism, and presidentialism
Use of marketing during terms of office	Azevedo et al, 2016; Esselment et al, 2017; Esselment & Wilson, 2017; Giasson & Small, 2017; Grussell & Nord, 2016; Hecl, 2000; Heith, 2004; Jiménez, 2017; Kiss & Szabo, 2019; Leal et al, 2019; Marcus, 2010; Marland et al, 2017; McGrane, 2017; Medvic, 2014; Nimmo, 1999; Norris, 1997; Sparrow & Turner, 2001; Stanyer, 2003	Executive, Legislative, and parties.	Parlamentarism, and presidentialism

Building a following on social media for direct communication	Azevedo et al, 2016; Domalewska, 2018; Larsson, 2014, 2015; Lilleker, 2015; Marques et al, 2014; Raynauld & Greenberg, 2014; Rodríguez, 2013	Executive, Legislative, parties, and European Parliament	Parliamentarism, and presidentialism
Engaging political and personalized communication	Azevedo et al, 2016; Ceccobelli, 2018; Crespo, 2018; Fernandes et al, 2016, 2017; Giasson & Small, 2017; Gregor, 2019; Lalancette & Tourigny-Koné, 2017; Leal et al, 2019; López-Rabadán et al, 2016; Marland et al, 2017; Metz et al, 2019; Nuernbergk & Conrad, 2016; Parmeggiani, 2014; Wen, 2014	Executive, Legislative, parties, and European Parliament	Parliamentarism, and presidentialism
Frequent publication	Ceccobelli, 2018; Domalewska, 2018; Elmer et al, 2012; Espíndola & Carvalho, 2019; Koliastasis, 2016; Leal et al, 2019; Larsson, 2014, 2015; Marques et al, 2014; Sobaci, 2018; Van Kessel & Castelein, 2016; Vasko & Trilling, 2019; Wen, 2014	Executive, Legislative, parties, and European Parliament	Parliamentarism, and presidentialism
Hyperlinking	Elmer et al, 2012, 2014; Lilleker, 2015	Parties.	Parliamentarism
Interactive communication	Espíndola et al, 2019; Lilleker, 2015; Nuernbergk & Conrad, 2016; Parmeggiani, 2014, 2015; Raynauld & Greenberg, 2014	Executive, Legislative, and parties.	Parliamentarism, and presidentialism
Promotional discourse	Massuchin & Silva, 2019; Wen, 2014	Executive	Presidentialism and semi-presidentialism
Microtargeting audience	Crespo, 2018; Esselment et al, 2017; Giasson & Small, 2017; Lilleker, 2015	Parties	Parliamentarism

Source: The authors, 2020.

Table 3. Permanent campaign criteria related to earned media

Criteria	Sources	Object of analysis	Political systems
Generating positive media coverage	Burrier, 2019; Charnock, 2005; Crespo, 2018; Diamond, 2019; Edwards, 2003; Esselment et al, 2017; Fernandes et al, 2017; Koliastasis, 2016; Lewis & Cosgrove, 2017; Marland et al, 2017; Medvic & Dulio, 2004; Norris, 1997; Stanyer, 2003	Executive, Legislative, and parties.	Parlamentarism, and presidentialism
Public events	Charnock, 2005; Giasson & Small, 2017; Kitzberger, 2012; McGrane, 2017; Medvic, 2014; Paredes & Moncayo, 2018; Stanyer, 2007; Vincent, 2017	Executive, Legislative, and parties.	Parlamentarism, and presidentialism
Travel during the term of office	Charnock, 2005; Charnock et al, 2009; Cook, 2002; Doherty, 2007; Edwards, 2003; Kitzberger, 2012; Koliastasis, 2016; McGrane, 2017; Medvic, 2014; Paredes & Moncayo, 2018	Executive, Legislative, and parties.	Parlamentarism, and presidentialism
Broadcasted and face-to-face speeches	Cook, 2002; Coimbra et al, 2018; Conaghan & De La Torre, 2008; Edwards, 2003; Fernandes et al, 2016, 2017; Gregor, 2019; Kitzberger, 2012; Koliastasis, 2016; Leal et al, 2019; Martins et al, 2017; Medvic, 2014; McGrane, 2017; Norris, 1997; Paredes & Moncayo, 2018; Van Onselen & Errington, 2007.	Executive, Legislative, and parties.	Parlamentarism, and presidentialism

Source: The authors, 2020.

Table 4. Strong, average and weak permanent campaign indicators

Criteria	Number of sources
Strong indicators	
Conducting public opinion polls during the term	21
Institutional advertising	18
Use of marketing during term periods	18
Negative campaigning	17
Broadcasted and face-to-face speeches	15
Engaging personalized communication	15
Average indicators	
Institutional adaptations	14
Frequency of posting	13
Generating positive media coverage	13
Constant search for fund-raising	12
Expansion of travel during the term of office	10
Constant search for information on the preferences and data of citizens	10
Public events	8
Building a following on social media for direct communication	8
Weak indicators	
Interactivity level	6
Themes of election transferred to governance	6
Microtargeting audience	4
Hyperlinking	3
Promotional discourse	2

Source: The authors, 2020.

Appendix 1. Titles included in the meta-analysis

Journal articles	Azevedo et al 2016; Ceccobelli 2018; Charnock 2005; Charnock et al 2009; Coimbra et al 2018; Conaghan & De La Torre 2008; Cook 2002; Doherty 2007, 2014; Fernandes et al 2016, 2017; Grussell & Nord 2016; Heberlig & Larson 2005; Jiménez 2017; Kitzberger 2012; Koliastasis 2016; Lalancette & Cormack 2018; Larsson 2014, 2015; Leal et al 2019; Lilleker 2015; López-Rabadán et al 2016; Marangoni & Verzichelli 2019; Marcus 2010; Marland, Lewis et al 2017; Massuchin & Silva 2019; McKelvey & Piebiak 2019; McKenney & Coletto 2017; Medvic & Dulio 2004; Metz et al 2019; Nuernbergk & Conrad 2016; Oliveira & Chaves 2016; Oliveira et al 2017; Paredes & Moncayo 2018; Parmeggiani 2014, 2015; Sobaci 2018; Rafalowski 2019; Raynauld & Greenberg 2014; Sparrow & Turner 2001; Stanyer 2007; Turcotte & Vodrey 2017; Van Kessel & Castelein 2016; Van Onselen & Errington 2007; Vasko & Trilling 2019; Vincent 2017; Wen, 2014; Zaręba 2016
Books	Crespo 2018; Edwards 2007; Diamond 2019; Doherty 2012; Elmer et al 2012; Medvic 2014
Book chapters	Bowman 2000; Burrier 2019; Corrado 2000; Craft 2017; Elmer et al 2014; Espíndola et al 2019; Esselment et al 2017; Esselment & Wilson 2017; Flanagan 2012; Giasson & Small 2017; Gregor 2019; Heclo 2000; Heith 2004; Lalancette & Tourigny-Koné, 2017; Lathrop 2003; Lewis & Cosgrove 2017; Marland 2017; Marland, Esselment et al 2017; Marland & Mathews 2017; Marques et al 2014; Martins et al 2017; McGrane 2017; Nimmo 1999; Norris

1997; Pal 2018; Patten 2017; Rodríguez 2013; Rose 2012; Tenpas

2000
