

Campaign Effects in the 1994 and 1998 Parliamentary Elections in Hungary

Marina Popescu

Department of Government, University of Essex, Colchester

<mpope@essex.ac.uk>

and

Gábor Tóka

Department of Political Science, Central European University, Budapest

<tokag@ceu.hu>

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ABSTRACT

A surprisingly widely shared but empirically untested consensus among political commentators depicts campaign effects and the most important traits of the campaign efforts of the major parties in the 1994 and 1998 Hungarian elections approximately like this:

Both campaigns were fought nearly exclusively in the mass media and on billboards. The main government parties claimed credit for their supposedly good performance in office and pre-election improvements in economic conditions, but offered little fuel for policy-oriented prospective voting. Public television was a good partner in this both because of the pro-government bias of its news programs and because of the unappealing format of its campaign programs that turned off voters and probably made it difficult for the opposition to get more elaborate messages through.

A major difference between the two campaigns was that in 1998 private television channels were already active and provided extensive political coverage, while public television was less overtly partisan than in the previous election. This gave a better chance for the opposition to focus the campaign agenda, and allowed exposure to public television to have less effect on vote choices than in 1994. However, it is also possible that in 1994 the public television overdid pro-government propaganda, and had an unintended boomerang effect on voters attitudes. Thus, the more subtle pro-government tone of public television in 1998 could have helped the incumbents more than the 1994 effort.

In both years one opposition party (SZDSZ in 1994 and Fidesz-MPP in 1998) managed to increase its support during the campaign, supposedly via their successful and deliberate priming of the voters decision, among other things. In 1994 SZDSZ primed voters on the evaluation of their prime ministerial candidate mainly through paid advertisements, while the 1998 Fidesz-campaign stressed a particular issue agenda and that they - but only they - could defeat the government. The electronic media did not provide any polling information about the standing of the parties in either year, while (some of) the national papers did. This way the electronic media implicitly but powerfully contributed to an exaggerated expectation of a government victory by some (in fact, in 1998 by most) voters. An important element of the 1998 Fidesz-MPP-campaign was to counter this impression with helping the production and dissemination of polling data and related commentary that stressed their interpretation of the state of the race.

We derive testable propositions from this conventional wisdom about priming, bandwagon/tactical voting and persuasion effects that one should expect to have been linked to exposure to various media in the two years. We frame these as hypotheses about campaign effects, because mass media is not regarded here as the source of the agenda or as an independent source of campaign messages, but rather as the central means through which the parties transmitted their messages in these elections. The hypotheses are tested on panel data from election surveys in 1994 and 1998.

Acronyms used in the text:

EIM	European Institute for the Media
FIDESZ	Alliance of Young Democrats (1988-95)
Fidesz-MPP	Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Party (1995-)
FKGP	Independent Small Holders Party (1930-1949, 1988-)
KDNP	Christian Democratic People's Party (1989-)
MDF	Hungarian Democratic Forum (1988-)
MIÉP	Party of Hungarian Justice and Life (1993-)
MTV1	First channel of the Hungarian public television
MTV2	Second channel of the Hungarian public television
MSZP	Hungarian Socialist Party (1989-)
SZDSZ	Alliance of Free Democrats (1988-)

INTRODUCTION

The motivation behind this paper is twofold. The first author is interested in interactions between the kind of information effects that occur in electoral contexts on the one hand, and the characteristics of the voters, the mass media, and the party system on the other. The second author was interested in testing some of the conventional wisdom about the short-term factors that shaped voters' decisions in the 1994 and 1998 Hungarian elections. The intention was not to add one more piece of evidence that, despite the bold counterintuitive claims in classic works to the contrary (cf. Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet 1944; Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee 1954), both election campaigns and mass media can, from time to time, have electoral effects other than the priming of the vote or the activation and reinforcement of pre-existing partisan loyalties. Rather, what we aspire to advance in an admittedly inductive way is chiefly our understanding of how and to what extent government-controlled media can be put to good use in election campaigns, and whether there are some limits to what incumbents can achieve while relying on the help of such media.

The 1994 and 1998 Hungarian election campaigns occurred in very different media environments: government-controlled media had a monopoly of political coverage over the wire in 1994, but not any more in 1998, when it was also far less openly partisan than during the previous campaign. Therefore, it can be instructive to make a parallel examination of media effects in the two elections in order to understand the roots of some apparent differences between the parties' campaign strategies in 1994 and 1998, respectively.

The reader may find it problematic that the distinction between media and campaign effects often disappears in our analysis. However, this blurring of boundaries is only natural given the central question of our analysis. We assume that at least in the 1994 election campaign, public television was hardly an autonomous agent. Rather, its program were either strictly regulated by the election law and the decisions of the National Election Commission, or subjected to the partisan logic of the editors and anchor persons of the news programs. Thus, the effects of public television exposure on vote decisions and political attitudes in 1994 are better described as political campaign than mass media effects.

Our analysis suffers from an obvious methodological pitfall that also forces us to abandon the distinction between campaign and media effects. Namely, we have no other data about the party's campaign efforts than the conventional wisdom about the dominant themes of the campaigns. Since these "data" show no variance either across time or across respondents in surveys that we could relate to variation in voters' attitudes, we measure exposure to party campaigns among the voters by exposure to media of different partisan orientation. Obviously, this is a rather poor measure of the reception of particular kinds of campaign messages, and raises the danger of artifactual zero-findings (cf. Bartels 1993). However, in the absence of better alternatives we decided to proceed with poor measures. We try to avoid the possible overinterpretation of weak and zero findings by trying to focus as much on the substantive consistency of parameter estimates across several equations as on whether any one of them reaches conventional statistical significance levels.

The first section of the paper provides a brief overview of Hungarian party politics in the period under examination. The second is devoted to the most important developments in the mass media system, and discusses the media coverage of the two campaigns. Readers may as well start with the third section where we

spell out the hypotheses that are empirically tested in section four, and return to the background information in the previous sections only afterwards.

1. PARTIES AND CAMPAIGN THEMES IN 1994 AND 1998

The recent Hungarian transition to democracy was completed in 1990. The results of all national elections in the 1990s are shown in Tables 1 to 3. In each election, six parties entered the parliament, with only one of the erstwhile players (the KDNP) replaced by a newcomer (the MIÉP) in the 1998 election.

The parliamentary parties defined themselves as members of three ideological families: Christian-national (or centre-right, more recently also called civic), liberal and socialist. The winner of the 1990 election was the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), a broadly pro-market and Christian, and emphatically patriotic party. The MDF soon became split between conservatives aspiring to turn the MDF into a Hungarian equivalent of the German CDU, and the eventually expelled radical nationalists (Pataki 1992; Oltay 1993b, 1993c), whose major organisation became MIÉP. After the 1990 election the MDF attempted to integrate the Christian-nationalist block through a governmental coalition, joined by the essentially Christian-socialist KDNP (Christian Democratic People's Party) and the agrarian-populist FKGP (Independent Small Holders' Party). However, the latter soon came to be dominated by a maverick party leader who led the party out of the governmental coalition in March 1992, and became subsequently ostracised by the rest of the Christian Right until after the 1998 election.

The parliamentary opposition of the first centre-right government consisted primarily of two monetarist, pro-market and secular liberal parties, the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ) and the Alliance of Young Democrats (FIDESZ), which also had strong pro-democratic credentials. Of the two, the SZDSZ was the more ideological and radically anti-nationalist party from the beginning, and soon became the anti-pole of the Christian-national block on the party scene. From 1992 on, the party engaged in various forms of co-operation (including a governmental coalition between 1994 and 1998) with the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP), the reformist heir of the former communist party, but otherwise maintained its initial political identity. The FIDESZ developed in the opposite direction: it retained its anti-communism and pragmatism, but otherwise adopted the ideological and issue positions of the MDF moderates. For the 1994 election, SZDSZ and FIDESZ still formed a liberal electoral alliance. But it was clear that the first would, in the case of such a choice, definitely prefer a coalition with the MSZP to one with the Christian-national parties, while the second would equally strongly prefer the other alternative. By 1995, FIDESZ was renamed Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Party (Fidesz-MPP), and became the leading force of the centre-right, competing with the FKGP to become the most popular opposition force under the socialist-liberal government of the MSZP and the SZDSZ. This competition was convincingly decided in favour of the Fidesz-MPP in the 1998 election, which led to the formation of a Fidesz-FKGP-MDF coalition government.

The legal heir of the former communist party, the MSZP, played an important and widely recognised role in both market-oriented reforms and the democratic transition. Nevertheless, in the immediate aftermath of the transition it was entirely isolated on the party scene and entirely lost significance for a while. By 1993, however, the MSZP became capable to capitalise on the unpopularity of the government. This unpopularity

stemmed partly from the deep economic recession of 1990-93, but probably also from what many saw as arrogant ideological militancy and incompetence in the government ranks, which compared unfavourably with most voters memories of the last socialist government that reigned over the transition (Tamás 1999). Due partly to the highly disproportional allocation of seats under Hungary's mixed member electoral system (see Benoit 1999; Tóka 1995), the MSZP won an absolute majority of seats in the 1994 election. Yet, in the apparent pursuit of legitimacy, it offered a coalition to second-placed SZDSZ, which accepted that after being granted extensive veto rights that both partners were to retain in the coalition (Bozóki 1999).

The major issue controversies of the 1990-94 period were related to non-economic issues articulating and pitting against each other nationalist and cosmopolitan, religious and secular, anti-communist and ex-communist political identities (Tóka 1998; cf. also Kitschelt *et al.* 1999). Economic issues rarely prompted hot partisan controversies. For most of its reign, the government apparently felt that any more talk of economic problems and how they were to be cured by market forces would make it even less popular. The opposition, in its turn, apparently felt that criticising the government for not being radical enough in the pursuit of economic reforms would be unpopular with the public. They either did not want to loudly advocate a less pro-market alternative, or understandably believed that this would not sound very credible from them.

The 1994 campaign did not bring about new themes, except that the main government party made performance a central theme of their campaign, while SZDSZ made a previously little known personality its candidate for premier, making the trustworthiness of this person the central theme of their campaign. Otherwise, the same issues dominated the campaign agenda as in previous years: the democratic credentials and relative competence of the different parties, various themes related to the religious vs. secular, anti-communist vs. ex-communist, nationalist vs. cosmopolitan divide, or the ongoing "media war" (cf. Oltay 1994a; Pataki 1994; Tamás 1999). The choice of performance as a campaign theme by the MDF may have been unwise given the rather bleak popular assessment of the government's record and the opposition parties' enthusiasm to discuss governmental incompetence. In making this choice the party seemed to be motivated by two concerns: to stress the rapid improvements in some economic indicators (inflation rate, wages) in the months preceding the election, and to convince the public that after the expulsion of the radical nationalists, the MDF was finally a pragmatic, level-headed, moderate party.

While the identities of the parties remained defined in terms of the same non-economic divides as before, the 1994-98 period saw a major change in the issue agenda (cf. Tóka 1998). Economic strategy, foreign policy, crime, and a major money scandal of the two government parties became the most central topics of the political discourse. The event that most powerfully defined - and cemented - the socialist-liberal coalition was the introduction of an economic austerity program in 1995, which has been attributed extraordinary consequences - of opposite sign - by critics and supporters ever since. For the first time since the 1991 debates on property restitution, there was a clear, loud, and ideologically articulate partisan disagreement between the parties on major economic policy issues. The austerity program created an excellent opportunity for the right-wing opposition to show that regarding a number of issues, it had a more pro-welfare, caring, and economic growth-oriented policies than the socialist-liberal government, which usually followed a monetarist philosophy.

At the time of the 1998 election the great non-economic issues of the 1990-94 period were largely dormant. The one new theme introduced by the opposition (to be precise, the Fidesz-MPP) during the campaign was a very concrete, down-to-earth list of election pledges. Prominent among these was the reversal of the cutback on welfare entitlements (like free higher education and universal, rather than means-tested entitlement for child-care benefits) introduced by the 1995 austerity program. Overall, the 1998 campaign was "less visible and confrontational than those of 1990 and 1994," and the confrontation of conflicting world-views was largely absent (Fowler 1998: 258). The government parties (MSZP and SZDSZ) insisted mostly on the need to maintain their achievements and pursue much the same route of macro-economic stabilisation and western integration. The Fidesz-MPP attacked regional disparities, growing income inequalities, better chances for big multinational companies than small and medium Hungarian businesses, population decline, cutback in education, healthcare, and family welfare. These themes neatly fitted both the immediate electoral purposes and the goal of giving Fidesz-MPP a distinct ideological identity that could appeal to the Christian-national activists and politicians, but appear as far more pragmatic and moderate. The proposals included cuts in corporate taxes and social security contributions as well as higher welfare spending in particular areas, and a stronger state more resolutely fighting corruption and promoting law and order (cf. Fowler 1998: 258, 259). The last two were particular sensitive points for the governmental parties, the first due especially to the 1996 money scandal that kept being scrutinised throughout the election year, and the latter to an outbreak of shootings and bomb-explosions in Budapest during the spring of the election. The FKGP emphasised rural issues more, but largely backed the Fidesz-MPP agenda.

A final element of the 1998 campaign that offers itself for empirical examination was the attempt by the Fidesz-MPP and its centre-right allies to persuade the voters that despite the widespread expectation that the MSZP was to easily win the election (and the FKGP may snatch second place), they actually became a credible contender for election victory. After the meteoric fall in the polls before the election that FIDESZ went through in 1993-1994, from a huge lead over all competitors just a year before to sixth place in the event of the election, this would have been an uphill battle even if the MSZP had not led in most polls. The presentation of Fidesz-MPP as *the* right-wing alternative of the MSZP required, among other things, the better dissemination of poll findings - particularly the more promising ones. To that end, the Fidesz-MPP and its allies appear to have sponsored two series of opinion polls before the 1998 election, which were publicised through national newspapers with the commentary that the race is not yet over and that it is between MSZP and Fidesz-MPP.

Whether due to the polls or the results of the first rounds of voting, the Fidesz-MPP persuaded nearly all the right-wing parties and a sufficiently great number of their voters to concentrate their support in the runoffs in the single-member districts on the best placed right-wing alternative to the socialist candidate. This usually meant Fidesz-candidates, one-third of whom were joint candidates with the MDF. Consequently, despite the fact that the MSZP got more votes than the Fidesz-MPP in both rounds of the election, the Fidesz-MPP won more seats, and together with the FKGP and the MDF had an overall majority in the new parliament.

2. THE MEDIA SYSTEM

Like most post-communist countries, Hungary too saw a fast development of a free and private press, and a slow demise of state-controlled television after 1989. But in both respects Hungary was a relatively extreme case. On the one hand, there has been a political and economic context of fast liberalisation and democratisation, including the emergence of a fully private and pluralistic press in the very early 90s. On the other hand, the monopoly of the national state television was broken only in 1996, and private nation-wide television channels have been in operation only since October 1997. This was due not the least the belief of politicians of all orientations in the tremendous propaganda power of the television, which led to continuous attempts by all governments to control the television. Thus, the coverage of the election campaigns differed significantly between the printed press and public television, as well as between the two elections.

Print media

Due to political and economic changes, including significant changes in legal provisions, the print media saw a rapid development in the late 80s and early 90s both in terms of number and range of publications. The number of national dailies remained constant between 1990 and 1998, although the names changed, some newspapers disappeared and new ones were launched. In 1998 there were 10 national daily newspapers, including one sports and 2 economic dailies, a number that places Hungary among the most crowded European markets (Bajomi-Lázár 1999; Kaposi 2000). The circulation of newspapers has continuously decreased since 1989-90 (see Table 4). While in 1991, 63 percent of the population read a daily newspaper at least once a week, only 50 percent were doing so in 1996 (Gálik 1998, cited by Bajomi-Lázár 1999). The readers are to be found disproportionately among those with higher education: for instance 31% of those with college or university education read *Népszabadság* compared to 17% of those with secondary education completed and only 7% of those with lower education. The same pattern can be noted for other papers. Nine percent of the college/university educated read *Népszava* every day, 3 percent several times a week and 6 percent sometimes, compared to just 2 percent in the adult population; 12 percent of those with college/university level education read *Magyar Hírlap* every day and several times a week (combined) compared to the 4 percent of all Hungarians that read it every day and several times a week.¹

As already mentioned, the privatisation of the Hungarian press started in the late 80s, with major changes in ownership taking place in 1990, sometimes through non-transparent deals, which was, however, not a peculiarity of media privatisation. After the 1994 elections the socialist-liberal government decided that the state had no place in the press market and sold all remaining shares of the state in the papers. Thus, by 1994 the Hungarian newspaper publishing became "a private enterprise, facing the same problems as publishers in other democracies" (Gálik 1997: 5) - or so it seemed at least until 1998, when the re-nationalisation of a nearly bankrupt commercial bank by the centre-right government re-established government control over the substantial media portfolio of the bank in question.

Distribution was by law a state monopoly until 1990. A number of small companies as well as a rather big Austrian distribution company Mediaprint - tried unsuccessfully to challenge the distribution monopoly of

¹ All the data reported here on the 1998 readership of the newspapers is based on the post-election wave of CEU election survey that we use in the analysis. The data on readers is still unweighted, so Budapest is slightly underrepresented.

the Hungarian Post. Their combined market share is around 5 percent at the national level. In its turn the Hungarian Post restructured itself into eight wholesalers (seven regional and one national) that maintained their distribution network and also have contracts with various independent retail outlets. As this business is rather profitable, significant changes in ownership are considered unlikely. At the local/regional level the Hungarian Post lost its privileged position by losing in 1994 the subscription-based home distribution (Gálik 1997).

The Hungarian press is fairly partisan and the newspapers have an identifiable political stance, be it socialist, liberal or nationalist. With the exception of *Népszabadság*, no national circulation paper has formal links with a political party or party-related foundation. Yet, the owners of media outlets often have strong political preferences and owners' editorial interference is not unheard of (for an overview of ownership, partisanship and circulation of the main Hungarian dailies in 1998 see Tables 4 and 5). The most important quality papers have always been considered to be in the left-liberal camp, at least ideologically. The economic liberalism, at least, can be explained by the nature of the written media market (private ownership, major foreign investments and extreme competitiveness, in itself a consequence of the first two points). The liberal bias of the press was the constant complaint of the right-wing governments, which encouraged the creation and indirectly co-financed the publications of conservative rivals. The liberal bias of the press was also used as argument-excuse for stricter control of public television and radio during the so-called media war and until the 1994 elections (see next section).

The information quality of the Hungarian press has been a concern for Hungarian media analysts as an expansion of the tabloid and middlebrow press could be noticed over time. This has been often considered to happen at the expense of the national "quality" press and it is likely to remain a trend. In terms of high information quality press, the weekly *HVG (Heti Világgazdaság / Weekly World Economy)* needs to be mentioned. It is a liberal economic-political information weekly with an attractive packaging and a large audience among the educated urban population. Its circulation of 120,000 is surpassed among weeklies only by *Szabad Föld (Free Soil)*, a family weekly for country people (Juhász 1998). The owners of the profitable *HVG* enterprise are mostly the journalists who started it and are usually leaning in a liberal direction (in the ideological sense and not strictly regarding party orientation).

In the post-communist period, the main national dailies have been *Népszabadság* (People's Freedom), *Népszava* (People's Voice), *Magyar Hírlap* (Hungarian Herald), *Magyar Nemzet* (Hungarian Nation), *Új Magyarország* (New Hungary, later recalled *Napi Magyarország*, Daily Hungary), *Pesti Hírlap* (Pester Herald) and the tabloids *Mai Nap* (Today), *Kurír* (Courier) and *Blikk*.

Népszabadság (People's Freedom) was established in 1956 as the official national newspaper of the ruling communist party and it was privatised in early 1990. The ownership is divided between Bertelsman AG Germany with 50%, the Free Press Foundation (a foundation of the Socialist Party, MSZP) 26%, the First Hungarian Investment Fund (16.8%), and the Editorial Staff Association (6%). The members of the editorial staff hold 0.6% and have the right to appoint the Chief Editor (Lange 1994: 29). *Népszabadság* has a left-wing leaning and it is the newspaper with the highest circulation, although it can be considered a relatively high-brow paper. In 1994, according to the European Media Institute, it had a circulation of 300,000 (400,000 on Fridays)

out of which 218,000 (73%) came from subscriptions. In 1998 13% of the Hungarians read *Népszabadság* every day and another 7% and 6% several times a week or less frequently, respectively.

Népszava (People's Voice) is the oldest Hungarian daily and used to be the paper of the Social Democratic Party before communism, and of the official trade unions under communism (cf. Lange 1994: 30). For most of the 1990s its owners were Hungarian companies, the majority share held by the VICO publishing group (61%). The editorial staff retained the right to approve the appointment of the editor in chief. Since its acquisition by VICO the paper has had a liberal leaning - VICO's chief executive-owner was considered to be an active supporter of the Free Democrats (SZDSZ). After his assassination in early 1998, the profile of the paper remained unaltered, but ownership was eventually transferred to the editors. In 1998 the circulation of the paper was 140,000 copies; 2% of Hungarians read it every day, 2% several times a week and 3% less frequently.

Magyar Hírlap (Hungarian Herald) was privatised in 1989 and then belonged to the Maxwell empire until its collapse. By the time of the 1994 election, the Jurg Marquand Group (Switzerland) acquired 96% of the shares and the Magyar Hírlap Journalists Foundation had the remaining 4%. Its circulation has decreased slowly and slightly over the years (from 80,000 in 1994 to 70,000 in 1998 - Lange 1994; Juhász 1998; Bajomi-Lázár 1999). *Magyar Hírlap* is read on a daily basis by 2%, several times a week or less frequently by an additional 4%. The paper has been considered liberal throughout the period, although it became somewhat less engaged and partisan over the years. After the 1994 election, the chief editor was sacked by the owners reportedly because they found the paper too critical of the 1990-94 government.

Controversies over its privatisation and the successive changes of ownership surrounded *Magyar Nemzet* (Hungarian Nation), and damaged its reputation and viability. It was first privatised in 1990 by the Christian-conservative government, which vetoed its imminent sale to the Swedish liberal newspaper Dagens Nyheter of the publishing group Marienberg. Instead, over 90 percent of the shares were sold to Hersant of France, seen as substantially closer ideologically to the MDF. In the weeks before the 1994 elections the paper was sold by Hersant for 1 million USD to a state-owned publishing company. After the 1994 elections, with the withdrawal of the state from direct ownership in the press, the newspaper was sold to a later re-nationalized commercial bank. It has a conservative leaning and its circulation decreased continuously, from well over 100,000 in 1989 to around 70,000 in 1994 and 50-55,000 in 1998. In 1998, 1% of Hungarian adults read it daily, with an additional 3-4% reading it less frequently.

Új Magyarország (New Hungary) was established in 1991 by the government, and has had a militantly right-wing tone ever since. Erstwhile it was owned mainly by Hírlapkiadó Vállalat (the state-owned publishing company) and two state-owned banks. It was also supported indirectly by various state-companies and the privatisation agency, moved by government decree or encouragement to advertise in this little-read outlet (Lange 1994: 31; Bajomi-Lázár 1999). Yet, it stayed at a circulation of 50,000 and did not become profitable. After 1994 elections it was privatised and now its editorial staff publishes it as *Napi Magyarország* (Daily Hungary). After various foundations and domestic investors made their turns among the owners and on the board, the paper developed a more moderate stance and turned into a supporter of Fidesz-MPP, while retaining its peculiarly argumentative style.

Pesti Hírlap (Pester Herald) was another publication established more or less indirectly by the MDF-led Government. Launched in February 1992, its owner was a foundation of the editor in chief, who ran as an MDF candidate in the 1994 elections and was an articulate representative of the party's more radical factions. The paper was supported financially in a similar manner as *Új Magyarország*, and remained a loss-making enterprise with a circulation of 35,000. It ceased publication two weeks after the 1994 elections.

Mai Nap (Today) has the highest circulation (80,000 and 120,000 on Sundays) among the tabloids and is the third biggest-selling paper overall. It is uniquely commercial and non-partisan among the major papers. Another relatively important tabloid, *Kurír* (Courier) had a circulation of 70,000 (in 1994) and was regarded as radical, left-liberal (Lange 1994: 32); it ceased publication in 1998.

The local press usually offers scant coverage of domestic and international politics, but reaches a fairly large segment of the electorate. Each of the 19 counties has its own local paper, which are generally the titles owned by the local communist party organisations till March 1990, and sold to foreign investors shortly after the 1990 election, still before the new government would have been formed (Lánczi and O'Neil 1997; Bajomi-Lázár 1999). They are the main printed information channel of the regions, often preferred over national publications. These papers tend to be commercially viable and safe, with 80 to 90 per cent of their readership based on subscriptions (Bajomi-Lázár 1999). In 1998 56% of the population read a regional newspaper every day and another 11% several times a week. Several attempts to establish a second media outlet failed in a number of counties, due, on the one hand, to the small size of the local markets, and to the structure of ownership (large companies own several county papers,² which allows for special inter-county deals with advertisers and limit the commercial chances of success of small independent enterprises) on the other. As these newspapers are basically local monopolies, their potential political role is an intriguing question. However, reliable data on their partisanship could not be found to this date.³

Electronic media

Unlike the press, Hungarian electronic media and television in particular did not go through systemic changes in the early 90s. In 1990, a frequency moratorium was introduced in order to prevent commercial broadcasting before the adoption of a democratic media law.⁴ Legislation on the media required a 2/3 majority in parliament to be passed and failed to be adopted for years. Consequently, the only way private channels could operate was via cable, which limited their reach to urban settlements. The media law passed in 1996 only, although then with a far bigger super-majority than the 72 percent that the two government parties themselves controlled in the Parliament. It was essential mostly because it opened up the possibility of a private and pluralistic broadcasting

² For instance in 1998 the German Axel Springer had 9 county newspapers, *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* 5 and the Austrian *Funk, Verlag and Drukerei GmbH* 3 (Bajomi-Lázár 1999; Juhász 1998).

³ The EIM report on the 1994 elections assesses one of them, the *Új Dunántúli Napló* (New Transdanubian Journal) published in Pécs, owned by Springer Verlag (86.5%) and a circulation of 86,000 copies, as generally not taking any strong editorial line on political issues (Lange: 32).

⁴ The frequency moratorium was introduced by a government decree. Several times MPs requested to pass the moratorium through parliament as such regulations were constitutionally within the competence of the parliament. It was never adopted by the parliament, however, and therefore it could be considered illegal (Halmai: 219). The illegal moratorium was thoroughly ridiculed by a pirate radio station that started to broadcast from a moving location at irregular intervals only in order to invite the police for a catch-me-if-you-can game.

environment. The importance of this change should not be underestimated especially as television is indeed an ubiquitous medium, with 85% of Hungarians watching television daily (CEU survey data from 1998).

The developments in the sphere of public service broadcasting before the adoption of the media law are crucial for an understanding the context of the 1994 elections both in terms of media coverage and salient political controversies. In May 1990, following a comprehensive political deal between the main government and opposition parties, i.e. the MDF and the SZDSZ, respectively, the newly elected President of Hungary, János Árpád Göncz, named non-partisan social science celebrities Elemér Hankiss and Csaba Gombár as Presidents of the Hungarian Television and the Hungarian Radio, respectively, until the promulgation of a media law. These appointments reflected the consensus-seeking spirit of the larger deal and symbolised the intention that the public media should follow the public service ideal without direct governmental control. However, dissatisfied with the activity of the new presidents, in summer 1991 the conservative government decided to use a 1974 decree on Hungarian Television that placed *MTV* under government supervision.⁵ This is sometimes considered the formal starting point of the long-lasting "media war" that featured legal battles, parliamentary hearings, street demonstrations, and, needless to say, numerous politically motivated sackings in the public media. In the standard interpretation the 1990-94 government repeatedly tried (a) to replace the presidents of the two institutions with their cronies, (b) to impose the 1974 decree on governmental supervision of the TV by introducing an "operative control over the media", (c) to stop the independent functioning of the TV and Radio by depriving them of the budgetary resources needed for their functioning, and (d) to change the provision of a 2/3 majority required for media law in order to pass a law favourable to their goals (cf. Arato 1996: 226).

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

During the 1994 election campaign the state-owned national Hungarian Television, with its two channels were available in the entire country while few of the cable network provided any political coverage, easily dominated the broadcasting world. The activity of the Hungarian television at that time was supposed to

⁵ Later on, during the media war, the Constitutional Court found this decree unconstitutional, but postponed its nullification until the new media law passed. The court based this decision on the argument that it is better to have unconstitutional governmental supervision than not to have any supervision at all (Halmai: 220, refers to the Decision of the Constitutional Court No. 37/1992).

be under the control of a Supervisory Board of eleven politically independent members, experts on science and culture, chosen by the Chairman of *MTV* (Lange: 26). In the rather peculiar extra-legal situation that evolved through the confrontation between the President and the government and the absence of binding provisions apart from general constitutional principles on press freedom, they were handpicked by the pro-government television Vice-Chairman Gábor Náhlik, and their independence was doubtful. In any case, the board had no executive or editorial powers; its observations were supposed to be taken into account by *MTV's* management and could be sent to the parliament and/or publicised.

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

As stated in its preamble, the Broadcasting Act was meant "to promote the freedom and independence of radio and television broadcasting, and of expressing opinion, to ensure the equilibrium and objectivity of information provided and the freedom of acquiring information, and also to support the assertion of the diversity of opinion and culture, as well as to prevent the emergence of information monopolies."⁶ The public service media were to be established as public foundations, and supervised/managed by boards of trustees, functionally equivalent to the BBC's Board of Governors.⁷

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

There are three public service broadcasters in Hungary: the Hungarian Radio, the Hungarian Television and *Duna TV*. All three are publicly owned. According to the ruling of the Hungarian Constitutional Court, public service broadcasters must be independent both in terms of operation and finance. Therefore they must not be connected either directly or indirectly to the funds of the central budget. The implementation of this clause, by the transformation of both the Hungarian Radio and the Hungarian Television into corporations took longer

⁶ See the ORTT website at <http://www.ortt.hu/>.

⁷ The Boards of Trustees are composed of members elected by Parliament and members delegated by civic, cultural, religious, local, professional, ethnic, etc. organisations (as specified in the law Section 56, 1 and 2. The members elected by Parliament constitute the Presidential Body of the Board of Trustees, which has a four-year term in office. The Parliament elects eight or twelve members to the Boards of Trustees by a simple majority vote for each member individually. However, half of the members must be nominated by the governing parliamentary factions, and the other half by the opposition factions, and at least one member has to be nominated by each faction. The President of the Commission has to be nominated by the government party factions, and the vice-president by the opposition (Broadcasting Act Section 55). For more details on the functions of the board of trustees see Law No. 1 1996 on Radio and Television (http://www2.essex.ac.uk/elect/jp/hu_medl96.htm, or <http://www.ortt.hu/english/act1.html>).

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

than expected, and, even in the opinion of the National Commission for Radio and Television, the "modernisation of both institutions is proceeding at a slower pace than planned".⁹

Before privatisation, the Hungarian Television had two terrestrial channels *MTV1* and *MTV2* that covered the entire country, and the satellite broadcaster *Duna TV*. This latter has a relatively small audience and is meant to target the potentially sizeable ethnic Hungarian audience in neighbouring countries.¹⁰ By 1998, *MTV1* was still watched daily by 70% of Hungarian citizens, with the audience among lower educated people being 82%, and among college/university educated 61%. However, only 40% watched *MTV2* every day, which, after being moved to a satellite channel in 1997 to make space of the new private broadcasters on the terrestrial channel, could only be received by 50% of the total population.

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

The channels (*RTL Klub*, *TV2*) that have won the concession started broadcasting nationally on terrestrial frequencies in October 1997, and all but about a tenth of the population can receive their programs. Their programming is similar to the commercial stations in the West, with series, films, talk-shows and various entertainment programmes as well as regular, substantial news programmes and weekly political magazines. The operating company of *RTL-Klub*, MRTL, is owned by the CLT-UFA, which is the biggest entertaining communication group of Europe, MAT_V (the Hungarian telecommunication company), the Pearson Group, and Unicbank. In 1998, half Hungarians watched *RTL-Klub* daily, though only 35% of those with college/university education. *TV2* is operated by MTM-SBS of the Swedish Broadcasting System, MTM Communication Ltd. (a Hungarian production company) and Tele München. In 1998, 62% of Hungarians watched *TV2* daily, the differences in audience per education being less significant as for the public service TV. For a while, CME sustained its on channel, *TV3*, as a cable-based competitors, but discontinued the loss-making enterprise in March 2000. At the time of the 1998 election, however, *TV3* was still watched by almost a half of the adult population, which broadcast significant political news programs too. Though politicians occasionally accuse the private channels with unduly advocating particular issues (in the 1998 campaign, for instance, the private channels brought extensive coverage and public attention to a controversial case of pro-life activists and a local court preventing a minor to have abortion) or to concentrate more on sensation than substance, the new channels are otherwise rarely if ever condemned for political bias.

The mass media and the two election campaigns

⁹ See the ORTT website at <http://www.ortt.hu/>.

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

According to the election campaign regulations, which hardly changed between 1994 and 1998, parties competing in the election have to be given "equal opportunities to electoral calls" on national and local broadcasting channels, at least once free of charge. During the 30 days preceding the election the parties presenting national lists have to be granted free coverage in the electoral reports on national radio and television, on an equal footing, "but in proportion to the candidates nominated." Moreover, on the last day of the electoral campaign all parties that have a national list (which, in its turn, presumes that they have regional lists in at least seven-eight of the twenty multimember districts) have to be granted a summary of their electoral message. Paid advertisement is also possible but has to be clearly indicated as such. In 1998, a limit on campaign spending was introduced (1 million forints per candidate above the state campaign financing allocated to the parties), although it was probably not respected in all cases (Fowler 1998: 258).

In both campaigns, the press provided more and better quality of information than the electronic media, especially TV. During the 1994 election campaign, in a context of strong anti-socialist propaganda on TV, *Népszabadság* provided a balanced coverage of the campaign, which was positively appreciated by almost all parties and independent candidates. The content analysis of the European Media Institute shows this balance: MDF had 27% of the unpaid coverage (30% of the free information coverage and 25% of the editorial content), MSZP 24% (16% free and 33% editorial coverage), SZDSZ 16% (20% free and 15% editorial; for all content analysis data cited here see Lange 1994). In 1998, the papers socialist leaning was more pronounced, especially in tone, as the Socialist Party needed extra support being heavily criticised for money scandals and other misdemeanours. Of course, the readers may well be aware of the partisan bias of the paper they read and even like it (Miller 1991: 106-31). At the same time, the newspapers, often in accordance to market research studies, offer to their (potential) readers what they expect, which is generally information with entertainment value and partisan leaning. Thus, the 1994 representation of the parties in *Népszava*, *Magyar Hírlap* and *Magyar Nemzet* can be appreciated as balanced in tone and even equitable in shares. *Népszava* allocated the highest coverage to MSZP: 29% of the unpaid campaign coverage (26% of the news stories and 33% of the editorials). In *Magyar Nemzet* and *Magyar Hírlap*, MDF had the strongest coverage, 35% (46 and 23 percent of news and editorials) and 26% (23 percent of news and 32 percent of editorials), respectively. This is not disproportionately higher compared to the other two major contenders: in *Magyar Nemzet*, SZDSZ and MSZP were allotted 20% (14% of the news stories and 26% of editorials) and 19% (21% of news and 17% of editorials), respectively; in *Magyar Hírlap* SZDSZ received 22% (10% of the news and 33% of the editorials) and MSZP 17% (11% of the news and 22% of the editorials). Moreover, no commentary denigrating political parties or candidates was observed by the EIM team (see Lange 1994).

In 1994, the conservative newspapers, strongly pro-governmental, offered different amount of information on the other parties depending on their quality and professionalism. *Pesti Hírlap*, closely trailed by *_j Magyarország*, was the most extreme outlier. The MDF received 54% of the space allotted to electoral politics in *_j Magyarország* and 46% in *Pesti Hírlap*, compared to 9% allocated to MSZP and 3-4% to SZDSZ. The tone of the coverage in *Pesti Hírlap* was invariably negative for MSZP and for most of the time for the SZDSZ, whilst in *_j Magyarország* it was rather negative for SZDSZ. The apparent lack of professionalism and balance in these two newspapers was often criticised by the competition and didn't make these publications very

popular outside of the small pro-governmental circle. Taking into account their small circulation their impact on the public opinion was probably minimal, but the reinforcing effect and the impact on shaping the attitudes of their readers and radicalising them should not be completely disregarded.

The tabloids allotted very little space to the election campaign and took a rather sensationalist stand. In 1994, according to the analysis of the EIM, *Kurír* had left-wing sympathies and *Mai Nap* right-wing conservative. The same can be said about 1998.

Paid advertisement was present in both campaigns both in the press and on TV. The amount of advertising placed can be linked with each party's reliance on the mass media for presenting its message, the liberals doing this to the greatest extent and the Small Holders the least. In 1994 the liberal Free Democrats (SZDSZ) placed the highest number of advertisements in the largest number of papers (38% of the total paid advertisement in *Népszabadság*, 44% in *Magyar Hírlap*, 64% in *Népszava*, 45% in *Magyar Nemzet*. The SZDSZ did not place any advertisements in the tabloid *Mai Nap* and in the strongly nationalist and pro-government *Pesti Hírlap* and *_j Magyarország*, and neither did the socialists.

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

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

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

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

The quantitative analysis of the EIM shows that in terms of editorial coverage the Democratic Forum (MDF) alone had 64% of the time *MTVI* allotted to politics, all being entirely positive coverage. The Socialist Party received only 11% of the time and the Free Democrats 5%, a significant part of which contained negative coverage. On *Duna TV*, the Democratic Forum had 83% of the time slots, and their coalition partners the Christian-Democrats (KDNP) 2%. The socialists had a mostly negative coverage during the 2% of the political editorial time they were allotted, whilst the Free Democrats were not at all present in the *Duna TV* editorial coverage (Lange 1994).

The cable private television channels tried to play the role decent public service broadcasting is meant to. *Nap TV* (an independently produced morning program broadcast by *MTVI*) allocated 31% of the political editorial time to MSZP, 25% to MDF, 23% to SZDSZ and smaller slots to the other parties. *TV4* was more favourable to the opposition, allocating significantly more time to MSZP (35%) and SZDSZ (40%) than to MDF (25%) and other right wing parties (KDNP and FKgP received 3% each). As already mentioned, their (possible) audience was very limited due to technical reasons and consequently their impact was most likely negligible (Lange 1994).

The Hungarian electronic media landscape was fundamentally different at the time of the 1998 elections compared to 1994. If in 1994 the public television was alone in the air, in 1998 a dual media system was in place. The three public service television channels (*MTVI*, *MTV2* and *Duna TV*) were also subject to the 1996 media law, although these institutional checks and balances are often considered inefficient and even counter-productive. The private television channels provided extensive political coverage, which aimed at higher entertainment and information value than achieved by public television, and thus probably offered a friendlier channel for the transmission of opposition messages.

In this context, the public service television tried to present at least the appearance of a balanced political coverage. In the news programmes the socialists had two bites of the cherry, although to a lesser extent than MDF in 1994. They were shown both as candidates in the electoral reports and as dignitaries in their official governmental duties, arguably more time and commentary allocated than the newsworthiness of the action justified. In order to cover up the socialist bias several of its journalists and to avoid any complaints, the electoral programmes were balanced in the literal and strictest sense. The format of the "debates" was very rigid, the parties' representatives were given exactly the same amount of time, with alarm clocks running on the screen while they were presenting their message, and there was basically no interaction between the participants, just a series of monologues. Moreover, the rule that all parties having national lists must be granted equal airtime led to the cumbersome situation of having 12 party representatives - mixing potential or actual cabinet members with unknown representatives of obscure parties never seen before or after the televised debates by most viewers. Many issues of unequal relevance for the public were covered in a very repetitive manner. The parties could neither chose to emphasise issues they considered salient or to present their positions in a more interactive manner.

Due mostly to this self-protective tendency of the journalists, the format of the programmes had no entertainment value and killed audience interest in the campaign. This may have made it difficult for the opposition and the smaller - though still relevant parties - in particular to get through with their campaign

messages. This may be quite a perverse effect as it may have even reduced some voters' temptation to follow the campaign and vote. Many commentators argued that the rather quiet and unimaginative socialist campaign - allegedly based on the premise that, if only nothing happened during the campaign, the MSZP already won the election - may have added to the general dearth of the campaign. At any rate, 1998 was a far less intense race than 1994 on both criteria suggested by Zaller (1992), i.e. overall volume of communication and balance of the communication. Some observers suggested that this dearth of campaign actually helped the opposition Fidesz-MPP to set the issue agenda of the election.

3. THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Our starting point is that more easily retrievable information "tends to dominate judgements, opinions and decisions," especially "in the weights individuals assign to various considerations when expressing attitudes or making choices." (Iyengar 1990: 2). As the more accessible information is the one more frequently or more recently conveyed by the media (Iyengar 1990: 11), and as most campaign messages are transmitted through media channels, this idea of accessibility bias and the effects derived from it clearly appear as extremely useful in connection to campaign effects. For instance, a variety of studies done in both experimental and natural settings on priming suggest that the media have the capacity to make particular issues weightier in the evaluation of political actors (Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Krosnick and Kinder 1990; Miller and Krosnick 1996; Krosnick and Brannon 1993; for a recent overview see Miller and Krosnick 1997). Clearly, electoral campaigns often try to achieve exactly this effect.

A priori it is very likely that any kind of information has the greatest effect on recipients' evaluations when they have a relatively modest stock of previous information available about the object of evaluation, and when the flow of new information is relatively one-sided, i.e. most or all information are likely to be positive about certain objects and negative about others (Zaller 1992). One obvious reason for electoral volatility to be high in new democracies is that the parties are new, and therefore the voters have a very modest stock of previous information about each. If, in addition, an unusually large part of the population depends for political information on government-controlled media outlets, and these latter are largely one-sided in how they cover parties, then campaign effects may be higher yet.

Following this reasoning we would expect that the 1994 MDF-campaign (as transmitted through the political coverage of public television) was far more persuasive than the 1998 MSZP-campaign. Voters certainly knew more about the parties by 1998, and the flow of information was less one-sided than it was in 1994.

However, it is not obvious exactly what kind of previous information can facilitate resistance to incoming messages. For instance, in an experimental context but using controls for demographics, previous political attitudes and preferences and party identification, it has been revealed that positive news coverage of a party consistently increases support for that party more than negative coverage decreases. A plausible explanation is that the British public is used to negative coverage and can disregard it (Sanders 1999: 142). The same way, the Hungarian public may be accustomed to the pro-governmental bias of the public TV and might be able to ignore it. Especially in 1994, enduring exposure to opposition criticism of governmental control of the public broadcast media, politically motivated appointments, and biased coverage may have prepared the voters

to see television news programs more as a confirmation of the well-known opposition charges than as genuinely new information depicting the government in favourable and the opposition in unfavourable light. Indeed, there were many speculations among Hungarian commentators that the coverage of public television had an unintended boomerang-effect, i.e. it did not help the transmission of the governments' messages and reduced, rather than decreased support for the MDF. A priori, it is hard to tell which, if any, of the two reasoning is correct. To operationalise the two theories, we formulate a set of more concrete propositions.

The impact of public television and government party campaigns

We do not offer here new empirical evidence that the dominant theme of the 1994 MDF- and the 1998 MSZP- and SZDSZ- campaigns was, as was suggested above and our impressions confirm, their supposedly good performance in office and the pre-election economic upturn. However, to the extent that this was the case and public television willy-nilly but nevertheless effectively assisted the campaign of the government parties in both years, in the audience of this medium we should find a stronger relationship than usual between voting preferences on the one hand, and performance evaluations on the other (HYPOTHESES 1). It can also be expected that exposure to public television led to more favourable evaluations of economic conditions, especially towards the end of the campaign (HYPOTHESES 2).

A second possible effect of public television - that is, the pro-government campaign that relied on it - was to increase voting support for the major government party not only indirectly, through improved performance evaluations, but also directly. Obviously, the audience of the public television may have been recruited disproportionately from among government - or, for that matter, opposition - party supporters even without any media effect on their partisan preferences. Therefore, a simple correlation between exposure to public television and voting support for the incumbents would not be sufficient evidence that the latter followed a good (or bad) instinct when they tried to assure favourable coverage for themselves on public television. Rather, this would be demonstrated if exposure to public television led to an increase in support for the main government party and possibly to a decrease in support for the opposition parties over time (HYPOTHESES 3).

Individually and collectively, the first three hypotheses, if supported, would suggest the positive electoral utility of conquering television programs. Finding empirical support for these propositions in the case of Hungarian public media would be particularly relevant, since both communist legacies and the protracted "media-war" of the 1990s could be expected to have made Hungarian voters particularly well-prepared to discount for the pro-government bias of public media.

The impact of privately-owned media and opposition party campaigns

In both years, but especially in 1994, privately-owned media seemed to be more hospitable towards the opposition parties than public broadcasting. This meant not only - not even necessarily - more positive coverage, but also - or, indeed, primarily - a better opportunity to get their campaign messages through to the electorate. Thus, in the audience of these media, and particularly of those generally more favourable to the respective parties, deliberate attempts by opposition parties to prime vote decisions on particular factors (on a particular set of issues in the case of the 1998 Fidesz-MPP-campaign) had to be more successful (HYPOTHESES 4).

A parallel hypothesis could be forwarded regarding the attempt of the 1994 SZDSZ-campaign to prime voter decisions on the party's prime ministerial candidate. However, this attempt worked mainly through visual information, i.e. billboards and paid advertisements on the only television channels that existed at that time - meaning public television and possibly some local cable networks. Since we have no appropriate measures of exposure to paid advertisements apart from our measures of exposure to public television, this hypothesis will not be examined below. This is a pity indeed, since one could venture the argument that compared to the 1998 Fidesz-MPP campaign the 1994 opposition campaigns (by FIDESZ, SZDSZ and MSZP alike) were weak in political substance because it was so difficult, under the circumstances, to get through to the voters with the kind of more complex, prospective, policy-related non-visual messages that dominated the 1998 Fidesz-MPP campaign.

To the extent that private media - unlike public television - also carried polling information that should have created stronger expectations of an opposition victory than the news coverage of public television, the audience of private media had to have different, and better informed expectations regarding the outcome of the election than other citizens (HYPOTHESES 5). If such expectations also had a bandwagon effect on voting decisions (HYPOTHESES 6), then the 1998 Fidesz-MPP-campaign was wise to facilitate the dissemination of poll results, and so were the pro-government editors of the public television when they blocked any reference to such information in their news programs and political magazines in both election years. While hypothesising a bandwagon effect, we leave the question about the exact micro-mechanism that generated it entirely open. Whether it was voters' desire to vote in a smart, tactical way, or their use of the perceived standing of the political parties in the race to figure their own political utility from supporting each party, or, what we find rather unlikely, conformism to some sort of perceived group norm that was behind the effect, is simply irrelevant to the questions that we raised, and thus we can avoid answering.

In a nutshell, it is assumed here that throughout the 1990s private broadcast media and the most widely read newspapers have been far more autonomous here vis-a-vis political actors than public television. It was simply the observance of some norms of fairness and objectivity plus probably commercial calculus that made them - and maybe public radio too - easier to use for agenda-setting by opposition parties than public television was in either year. Hence, privatisation and increasing pluralism of the media environment made the electoral arena presumably more suitable for the transmission of relatively complex campaign messages that assume a relatively balanced, rather than one-sided flow of political information.

4. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

We test the hypotheses with panel data from the two elections collected by the Department of Political Science of the Central European University, and available (or, in the case of the 1998 data, soon becoming available) from the Hungarian data archive TARKI and its German counterpart, the Zentralarchiv. Three random route samples of the adult population (1200 respondents at a time) were interviewed with standardised questionnaires in April 1994 (about three weeks before the first round of the 1994 election), March 1998, and April 1998 (approximately six and three weeks before the first round of the 1998 election, respectively). The last two data sets are merged in the data analysis below. Between the first and second round of balloting, as many of the

respondents in the pre-election interviews as could be reached were contacted again, with 719 and 1525 of them successfully re-interviewed in May 1994 and May 1998, respectively.

Only these latter respondents are included in the analysis below. The data are weighted so that in both years the weighted proportion of 40 non-overlapping demographic groups (defined in terms of gender, age, urban vs. rural place of residence and education) and of the partially overlapping group of Budapest residents correspond to the findings of the 1996 micro-census by the Central Statistical Office. All independent variables in the analysis save measures of media exposure and the issue variables used in the analysis of hypotheses 4 come from the pre-election waves of the two election surveys. The variables and their coding are listed in the Appendix.

Hypothesis 1

This hypothesis states that public television - following a campaign agenda set by the senior partner in the government coalition - primed voters on performance evaluations in both 1994 and 1998. Since these evaluations were predominantly negative in 1998 and especially in 1994, this may not seem a particularly wise choice on the part of the government parties. Nevertheless, this is what, according to our impressions, they tried to do in 1998 and to some extent also in 1994. Therefore, until we see some quantitative evidence to the contrary, we assume that this is what they tried to do and conceive the empirical test of the respective hypothesis as test of the effective transmission of their campaign messages.

The dependent variables are voters' ratings of each of the five major parties on seven-point feeling thermometers in the pre-election wave of the panels. The key independent variable, performance evaluations, is captured through the first principal component of three variables: satisfaction with government performance, and retrospective evaluations of the development of household finances and the national economy in the last twelve months. The sample mean of the performance factor scores is zero, with negative scores standing for evaluations that were even more negative than the national average, and scores increasing as we move towards more and more positive assessments. To see whether the relationship between performance evaluations and party sympathies was contingent on exposure to public television, the thermometer ratings were regressed on performance evaluations and their interaction with exposure to public television. Since observed values on all our media exposure variables run from 0 to 1, all respondents with zero exposure to public television were coded zero on the interaction term, independently from what they thought about the state of the economy and government performance. Respondents with at least some exposure were assigned a negative or positive value depending on whether their performance evaluations were more or less positive than the sample mean. Their exact score is the product of their performance evaluation and exposure scores.

Lest the interaction term unintentionally captures the impact of media exposure (or something correlated with the latter), the latter variable also enters the equations simultaneously with performance evaluations and the interaction term. Thus, there is an inevitable multicollinearity between the independent variables, making it relatively difficult to register a robust significant effect of the interaction term, in particular. The results are nevertheless in line with the hypothesis, at least as far as the 1998 data are concerned. (See Table 6.)

Table 6 about here

In the 1998 data, the $PERFORM*PUBTV$ interaction shows the expected negative effect on the thermometer ratings of two of the three opposition parties, and the expected positive effect on both government parties. According to the logic of the hypothesis, we would expect a robust effect of the interaction term especially in the case of the senior government party, which had the greatest influence, in one way or another, on coverage on public television. And indeed, despite the clearly significant effects of both of its components, i.e. the $PUBTV$ and $PERFORM$ variables, the interaction term still has a sizeable positive effect on $MSZP$ -ratings, significant at the .07 level that we deem satisfactory for a one-tailed test like the one at hand. Note that whatever partisan and other differences there may have been between the audience of public television and other citizens, the effect of those influences is already captured by the impact of the $PUBTV$ and $PERFORM$ variables themselves. What the separate effect of the interaction term shows is that among the viewers of public television, performance evaluations - whether positive or negative - were more closely connected to $MSZP$ -ratings than in the population at large.

The 1994 results are far less than convincing, though. As one would expect, performance evaluations were positively and significantly related to the evaluations of the main government party, MDF , negatively to that of the major challenger on the opposition side, the $MSZP$, and somewhat inconsistently but always insignificantly to the evaluation of the remaining parties (see the parameters associated with variable $PERFORM$). But contrary to the hypothesis, the interaction effect fails to register a single significant effect across the five equations. This does not necessarily contradict the hypothesis as far as the evaluation of the opposition parties is concerned (why, after all, the pro-government propaganda of television news editors would foolishly have tried to link opposition-evaluations to the predominantly negative popular opinion about economic conditions and government performance), but suggests that either public television editors were reluctant echoes of the MDF -campaigns' - possibly self-defeating - emphasis on performance, or the message, though present, did not get through to the voters. While the coefficient has the expected positive sign in the case of MDF , its significance level is as high as .38 - hardly supportive of the hypothesis.

However, considering the small number of cases in the analysis, the multicollinearity between the independent variables, and how weak the impact of performance evaluations themselves is (even this extraordinarily straightforward effect reaches only a T-value of 2.7, significant at the .008 level), we would not call this evidence contradictory of the original hypothesis. The more discouraging finding, at least at first sight, is rather that the strongest - though still insignificant - positive effect of the interaction term in the 1994 data is registered in the equation for $FIDESZ$ -ratings, and the one in the MDF -equation is only second strongest. However, this puzzle can be explained away in a way that is consistent with the spirit of the hypothesis. $FIDESZ$, as will be remembered, was an opposition party in 1990-94, but in the months before the election it rapidly moved closer to MDF on all sorts of issues, and eventually advocated a renewal of the incumbent coalition with the addition of the liberal parties ($FIDESZ$ and $SZDSZ$), rather than its replacement with a new government coalition between the liberal and socialist opposition parties. This move probably contributed to the

rapid fall of FIDESZ-popularity in the polls after Spring 1993. The positive effect of the interaction term of our equations on FIDESZ-popularity is sizeable, although - presumably because of the small N and the high multicollinearity - still insignificant. Nevertheless, what it may suggest is that frequent viewers of public television were more likely than other citizens to learn that FIDESZ, a previously credible and articulate opposition party, came so close to endorsing the incumbent government. Thus, while in the electorate at large there still was a negative - though weak, and presumably weakening - relationship between performance evaluations and FIDESZ-ratings, the relationship started to reverse among frequent viewers, who more rapidly came to judge FIDESZ as a pro-government party than other voters.

Table 7 about here

Table 7 supports this explanation. Here we enter two more independent variables in the previous equation regarding FIDESZ-ratings. These are the feeling thermometer scores for MDF, and their interaction with exposure to public television. This latter variable was constructed exactly as the $PERFORM*PUBTV$ interaction term, except that the performance evaluations of the respondents were replaced with their MDF-ratings. As can be seen, the simple effect of MDF-ratings on FIDESZ-sympathy is negative (though insignificant), just as we would naively expect given the different incumbency status of the two parties. However, the $MDF*PUBTV$ interaction has a positive effect on FIDESZ-ratings and is significant at the .06 level. Thus, it looks quite probable that a few weeks before the election the relationship between MDF- and FIDESZ-ratings was already reversed among frequent television-viewers, although not in the population at large. Finally, after controlling for the very nearly significant positive effect of the $MDF*PUBTV$ interaction term on FIDESZ-popularity, the previously puzzling impact of the $PERFORM*PUBTV$ interaction terms reduces to near zero in the equation.

Hypothesis 2

Given the emphasis on government performance in the campaign of the incumbents in both 1994 and 1998, and our impression that the public television news programs acted as willing - or even devoted - aides in these campaigns, exposure to public television is expected to have led to more favourable evaluations of economic conditions, especially towards the end of the campaign (HYPOTHESES 2). To test this hypothesis the net impact of the $PUBTV$ variable on two variables is examined. The dependent variables are performance evaluations (the already familiar $PERFORM$ attitude index), and change in one of $PERFORM$'s components - namely retrospective evaluations of the national economy -, about which we have both pre- and post-election measurements in both election years. The D_NATECO variable shows simply the difference between pre- and post-election responses to the respective questions, with positive values standing for change towards more favourable assessments than held about three weeks before the election.

Obviously, both $PERFORM$ and D_NATECO may be influenced by the respondents' partisan orientations (measured through the feeling thermometers that were our dependent variables above), and the usual demographic correlates of the latter (from age and sex to church attendance and former communist party

membership). Because of the nature of attitude change and the censored character of the original variable measuring economic evaluations, D_NATECO may also be influenced by regression to the population mean over time, a tendency that should be neatly captured by a negative effect of the pre-election value of the NATECO variable on D_NATECO. To prevent the rise of any suspicion that the observed impact of PUBTV is spurious and only captures the impact of other variables like political interest, attentiveness to news, and so forth, we enter three more control variables to the equation, measuring newspaper reading, frequency of listening to radio news, exposure to private television, and political interest.

The only coefficients of interest in Table 8 are those showing the net impact of PUBTV (exposure to public television) on the two dependent variables. Our discussion can ignore all other independent variables, since their inclusion in the model only served control purposes.

Table 8 about here

In both the 1994 and 1998 surveys, frequent viewers of public television had *ceteris paribus* more positive perception of the national economy during the campaign than other citizens, but the differences were far from being statistically significant and may thus reflect mere sampling error. Indeed, the only significant coefficient of interest is contrary to Hypothesis 2: exposure to public television made the evaluation of the national economy more negative, not more positive, over the last few weeks of the 1994 campaign. In contrast, intra-campaign changes in these perceptions were clearly unrelated to PUBTV in 1998.

The anomalous negative effect in the 1994 data is puzzling. Arguing that pro-government propaganda on public television led to a boomerang effect does not sound very plausible when the puzzle involves increasing economic pessimism among viewers, and not an increasing criticism of the government parties. Indeed, when we replaced the PUBTV variable with PUBTVNEWS that measured frequency of watching the two major news programs of the public television (instead of public television in general), the puzzling negative effect disappeared (data not shown). Since these were exactly the programs that were dominated by pro-incumbent propaganda, the boomerang hypothesis can be rejected. However, this leaves the puzzle begging for an explanation, and we cannot readily provide one.

Hypothesis 3

The analysis of the direct impact of public television exposure on intra-campaign change in the feeling thermometer ratings of the parties is analysed exactly the same way as D_NATECO above. The same set of independent variables are employed, except that the regression to the mean tendency is now captured in each of the five equations by one of the variables that are anyway present among the controls for partisan orientation.

Table 9 about here

The 1994 results again show some unexpected anomalies. The only statistically significant effect of PUBTV in that election that may be seen as consistent with hypothesis 3 is the negative impact of PUBTV on

changes in FIDESZ-ratings. However, the similarly negative impact on the change over time in MDF-ratings and the positive one on FKGP-ratings speak out loudly against the hypothesis that public television not only tried but actually managed to boost support for the main government party, and to reduce sympathy for its rivals, like the opposition small holders, who left the government coalition in early 1992 and were subsequently ostracised by the centre right for this disloyalty to the MDF-led coalition. In the last weeks of the campaigns, at least, public television seems to have had the opposite, clearly unintended effect: reducing support for MDF and its emerging new ally, FIDESZ, and boosting support for the maverick FKGP. The boomerang hypothesis now receives stronger support than above, since replacing PUBTV with PUBTVNEWS now leaves the picture essentially unchanged (data not shown).

The 1998 results are rather different. In that year, exposure to public television - by then, only one of the three-plus national television channels that provided extensive political coverage - led to an increasingly positive assessment of both government parties during the campaign. The net effect of PUBTV is clearly significant on changes in either MSZP- or SZDSZ-evaluations. Among the opposition parties, intra-campaign change in the evaluation of the main challengers - Fidesz-MPP and FKGP - seems to have been unaffected by exposure to public television. There still is a puzzle - changes in MDF-evaluation were also positively related to PUBTV -, but it involves a much less significant opposition party than the FKGP was in 1994. Overall, then, the 1998 results are once again far more supportive of the initial hypothesis than the 1994 findings. The significant effects of public television on party evaluations is particularly noteworthy against the background of the three other media variables (radio listening, watching commercial television channels and newspaper reading) failing to register a single significant effect across the 10 equations - even by chance, one would have expected at least one of these 25 coefficients to be significant at the .05 level.

Hypothesis 4

The proposition that opposition parties could better convey their campaign messages through private than public media will be first tested on the example of the Fidesz-MPP attempt at priming voters choices on a particular set of issues in the 1998 campaign. Respondents' positions on the best known of the Fidesz-MPP-promoted issues were measured in the post-election wave of the survey. Consequently, the dependent variables are the post-election feeling thermometer ratings of the parties. We are to examine whether there was a stronger relationship between the issue positions in questions and party evaluations among the audience of private television channels and national newspapers than in the general population, and among the audience of public television in particular.

To this end, we enter three interaction terms in the equations. Each of these multiplies exposure to a particular kind of media (public television, private television, and newspapers, respectively) with the respondents' position on the ISSUES scale. On this issue scale -10 stands for the most consistent and intense pro-government position and +10 for consistent and intense support for the position adopted by the Fidesz-MPP. The scale simply sums the original responses, recorded on eleven point scales, to two questions regarding welfare provisions (tuition-free higher education and universal, rather than means-tested eligibility for child-care allowance) that were originally installed by the communist regime and were abandoned by the 1995 austerity

program with a good measure of ideological support from the ruling socialists and liberals. Fidesz-MPP laid a strong emphasis in its campaign to the pledge that they would undo the 1995 reforms in both areas not only because of the apparent popularity of this promise,¹³ but also because it was most suitable to communicate the more general point that the nominally centre-right Fidesz-MPP offered a more caring, statist, and yet pro-middle class alternative than the socialists and SZDSZ, whose alliance with foreign capital was most powerfully symbolised by the austerity program. Given the usually stronger support for anything associated with the communist past among the supporters of the socialist party and the central importance of the two issues for the Fidesz-MPP campaign, our three interaction terms must be particularly helpful instruments in detecting which kind of media could be best used by the opposition during the 1998 campaign.

Table 10 about here

Since the question of theoretical interest only concerns the net impact of the interaction terms, and not those of the exposure and issue variables themselves, only the components of the interaction terms are entered as controls, and no demographic or partisanship variables occur among the independent variables in the equation. The results, displayed on Table 10, are most remarkable. The direct effect of the ISSUES variable is positive and clearly significant on socialist sympathies, and negative (although not significant at the .05 level) on Fidesz-MPP ratings. That is to say, the socialist voters in the general population were more likely to oppose the reforms introduced by the MSZP and the SZDSZ than the Fidesz-MPP supporters themselves. However, the ISSUES*NEWSPAPS interaction term registers a statistically significant effect on the ratings of each party, but in the opposite direction. That is, among frequent newspaper readers the supporters of the socialists and SZDSZ were most likely to support the 1995 reforms, or, to put it the other way round, the right-wing parties could better appeal to the far more numerous supporters of the anti-reform than the pro-reform opinion.¹⁴

There are bits and pieces of evidence that exposure to both private and public television could have had similar effects (cf. the significant positive effect of the ISSUES*PUBTV interaction on Fidesz-MPP-ratings, and the nearly significant negative effect of both the ISSUES*PUBTV and the ISSUES*PRIVTV interactions on MSZP-ratings), but the results are far weaker and more inconsistent than in the case of the newspapers. Thus, it seems that despite the predominantly left-liberal partisanship of the best-selling newspapers, they were far more effective transmitters of the Fidesz-MPP-message in 1998 than the non-partisan commercial channels and the

¹³ In the survey data that we analyse, the Fidesz-position was supported more or less intensely by 77 and 56 percent on the issue of university tuitions and child-care benefits, while the government's line - which even divided the Socialist Party - was supported by 12 and 34 percent, respectively, with the rest of the respondents taking a neutral position or not answering the question.

¹⁴ The suspicion naturally arises that the impact of the NEWSPAPS*ISSUES interaction may be spurious, and only reflect differences between issue voting among the more and less knowledgeable voters. To check this possibility, the equations were re-run with the PUBTV and RADIOLIS variables replaced by political interest (INTEREST) and political knowledge (KNOWLEDGE). Similarly, the PUBTV*ISSUES and RADIOLIS*ISSUES interaction terms were also replaced by the interactions between the two sophistication variables and the issue scale. The results suggest that these controls indeed pick up some, but certainly not all of the impact of the NEWSPAPS*ISSUES interaction, which tended to register statistically significant effects in these equations too.

less obviously non-partisan public television. However, we find absolutely no evidence of the expected difference between the priming effect of public and private television channels.

Hypothesis 5

We expect that the audience of private media, which carried polling information that should have created stronger expectations of an opposition victory than the news coverage of public television, had to have different, and better informed expectations regarding the outcome of the election than other citizens (HYPOTHESES 5).

Table 11 about here

Table 11 shows which parties the general public expected to win the two elections, and what was the average finding about the likely distribution of party list votes in the last published pre-election polls. The two kinds of data were collected approximately at the same time. In both years, the MSZP led in the average pre-election poll, was expected to win by a plurality of the voters, and did in fact obtain the highest number of votes (cf. Tables 2 and 3). However, given their relatively narrow lead in 1998, and the fact that the Fidesz-MPP won more mandates, one may argue that the chances of the latter party were underestimated by the public - indeed, after the election several pundits admitted to have underestimated them -, and those of MSZP were exaggerated. Similarly, one could argue that in 1994 too, public perceptions of the odds had a pro-incumbent bias. Given the huge lead of MSZP and the clear underdog position of MDF in the polls, it seems rather odd, at least, that more people believed that the eventually third-placed MDF could win the election than as many actually voted for that party.

Following - in this one and only respect - the spiral of silence theory (Noelle-Neumann 1984), we hypothesise that exposure to public television might have, via its pro-government bias and excess coverage of the incumbents, distorted popular expectations. This could have taken the form of both an incorrect perception of which opposition party had the best chances, or an exaggerated expectation of government victory. Since previous research showed that given credible and ample information, the electorate as a whole can develop expectations regarding the election outcome that accurately reflect poll results (Schmitt-Beck 1996), we expect that the newspapers - many of which published poll findings more or less regularly - promoted a more accurate perception of the state of the race than the population average.

These propositions are examined via regressing three dummies on our measures of media exposure and a long list of control variables. The three dependent variables show whether the respondents expected the first, second or third-placed party to win the election, respectively. The control variables include demographic variables, a measure of general political knowledge, political interest, and the party thermometer-ratings. They are included in the equation to eliminate any spurious association between the dependent variables and media exposure that may stem from wishful thinking among the voters, or from differences between the various media in the demographics and political sophistication of their audience.

Table 12 about here

The results are shown in Table 12. By and large, they support rather than contradict the hypotheses. Although the impact of public television on the perceived chances of the main government party (MDF in 1994, MSZP in 1998) is sizeable and positive in 1994, it is about zero in 1998 and is not significant in either year. Yet, a pro-incumbent bias seems to emerge in both years in that exposure to public television made the respondents less likely to expect the chief opposition alternative (MSZP in 1994, Fidesz-MPP in 1998) to win the election, and at least in the 1998 sample this negative effect is statistically significant. This slight pro-incumbent bias is also remarkable because it has no trace in the findings regarding the impact of radio news and private television, which - similarly to public television - also refrained from making any reference to pre-election poll results.

The impact of newspaper-reading seems to be an increase in the probability to name the front-runner, and a decrease in the probability of the second-placed party as the likely winner of the election. Although only two of the four effects in question (i.e. the positive effect on MSZPWINS in 1998 and the negative effect on SZDSZWINS in 1994) are statistically significant, and the impact on the probability of naming the third-placed party is both insignificant and inconsistent, the results can be read as evidence that newspaper-reading actually made people more knowledgeable.

Hypothesis 6

If expectations regarding the election outcome were capable to generate a bandwagon effect on voting decisions (HYPOTHESES 6), then the 1998 Fidesz-MPP-campaign was wise to facilitate the dissemination of poll results, and so were the pro-government editors of the public television when they blocked any reference to such information in their news programs and political magazines in both election years. Although we see no evidence that fear of social isolation can generate bandwagon effects in elections, such effects may nevertheless occur if some cognitive misers make sweeping inferences about the political value of a party on the basis of its standing in the polls, or convert the latter information into - possibly misinformed - attempts at smart strategic voting. On the basis of anecdotal and circumstantial evidence, we hypothesise that such possibly ill-conceived attempts at tactical voting are not absent from party list voting in Hungarian elections, and favour the parties that are expected to win more votes. Thus, we enter the dichotomised dependent variables of the above analysis as independent variables in equations where vote for the first, second, and third-placed party in the election are the dichotomous dependent variables. The usual set of control variables is applied.

Table 13 about here

Three of the six equations identify statistically significant, apparent bandwagon effects: for SZDSZ in 1994, and MSZP and Fidesz-MPP in 1998, respectively (see Table 13). Given that the equations control for the pre-election thermometer ratings of the five major parties, political sophistication, media exposure, and a host of demographic variables, we think that the probability is slim that these are just spurious relationships between expectations and behaviour.

Conclusion

We started our investigation hoping that we may be able to link changes in the media system to changes in the opportunity structure faced by campaign managers. It seemed tempting, for instance, to explain with the domination of the media market by a monopolistic and government-controlled public television why, compared to the 1998 Fidesz-MPP campaign, the 1994 opposition campaigns (by FIDESZ, SZDSZ and MSZP alike) were weak in political substance. It seemed plausible that in 1994 it seemed very difficult for the opposition to get through to the voters with the kind of more complex, prospective, policy-related and non-visual messages that dominated the 1998 Fidesz-MPP campaign. Thus, they rather opted for simpler messages and visual information, since they had equal and unfettered access to paid advertisements, but not to political coverage on public television.

However, we found practically no evidence that the political colour of the media would have any impact on whose campaign messages prime the partisan sympathies of the audience. Despite its pro-government bias, public television did not seem to be particularly instrumental in priming voters on government performance in either year. Despite their predominant partisan colour, the national newspapers seem to have helped to prime voters on Fidesz-promoted issues in 1998. Despite their relatively non-partisan nature, neither radio news nor private television channels were more helpful in priming voters on these issues than public television or the newspapers were. It would seem, then, that something else - maybe the depth of political coverage on a particular media - may be a more important influence on the suitability of various information channels for priming by political parties.

This is not to say that government-dominated public media would not have distinctive persuasion effects. Our 1998 findings suggest that incumbents can, in fact, advance their cause in the electoral arena by assuring that journalists sympathetic to them edit the news programs of public television. Less trivially, however, we unearthed some evidence that the impact of this instrument may depend on how it is used and abused. It seems that under some circumstances the weapon may backfire, even if such boomerang effects may require major efforts by the opposition to discredit the public media.

Not too surprisingly, we found evidence that public perceptions of the state of the race between parties may well be influenced by the presence or absence of polling information in the media. We also showed that these perceptions had electoral effects in the 1994 and 1998 Hungarian elections. No wonder, then, that where the voters' information environment is not saturated with credible and consistent polling information, political parties devote considerable energy to persuade voters about how strong support they actually have. Paradoxically, then, extensive horse-race coverage in the media — something that did not abound in the elections that we analysed here — may, paradoxically, help parties to focus on more substantive questions.

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Table 1: The 1990 parliamentary elections

Date: 25 March 1990, 8 April 1990

Turnout: 65.09% (first round), 45% (second round)

<i>Party / Coalition</i>	<i>Mandates in single- member districts</i>	<i>% list votes</i>	<i>Seats obtained on</i>		<i>Total Seats</i>	<i>% Seats</i>
			<i>Regional list</i>	<i>National list</i>		
MDF (Hungarian Democratic Forum)	114	24.73	40	10	164	42.49
SZDSZ (Alliance of Free Democrats)	35	21.39	34	23	92	23.83
FKgP (Independent Small Holders Party)	11	11.73	16	17	44	11.40
MSZP (Hungarian Socialist Party)	1	10.89	14	18	33	8.55
FIDESZ (Alliance of Young Democrats)	1	8.95	8	12	21	5.44
KDNP (Christian Democratic People's Party)	3	6.46	8	10	21	5.44
ASZ (Agrarian Alliance)	1	3.13			1	0.26
Independents	6				6	1.55
Joint candidates	4				4	1.04
MP, ex-MSZMP (Workers Party)		3.68				-
MSZDP (Social Democratic Party of Hungary)		3.55				-
MZP (Green Party of Hungary)		0.36				-
Others*		3.24				-
TOTAL	176		120	90	386	100.0

* Parties in the other category only contested this election and none won any seats

Table 2: The 1994 parliamentary elections

Date: 8 May 1994, 29 May 1994

Turnout: 68.92% (first round), 55% (second round)

<i>Party / Coalition</i>	<i>Mandates in single- member districts</i>	<i>% list votes</i>	<i>Seats obtained on</i>		<i>Total Seats</i>	<i>% Seats</i>
			<i>Regional list</i>	<i>National list</i>		
MSZP (Hungarian Socialist Party)	149	32.99	53	7	209	54.14
SZDSZ (Alliance of Free Democrats)	16	19.74	28	25	69	17.88
MDF (Hungarian Democratic Forum)	5	11.74	18	15	38	9.84
FKgP (Independent Small Holders Party)	1	8.82	14	11	26	6.74
KDNP (Christian Democratic People's Party)	3	7.03	5	14	22	5.70
FIDESZ (Alliance of Young Democrats)	0	7.02	7	13	20	5.18
ASZ (Agrarian Alliance)	1	2.10				0.26
Joint VP-FIDESZ-SZDSZ-ASZ-candidate	1				1	0.26
MP, ex-MSZMP (Workers Party)		3.19				
MSZDP (Social Democratic Party of Hungary)		0.95				
VP (Party of Entrepreneurs)		0.62				
MZP (Green Party of Hungary)		0.16				
Others*		5.64				
TOTAL	176		125	85	386	100.0

* Parties in the other category only contested this election and none won any seats.

Table 3: The 1998 Parliamentary elections

Date: 10 and 24 May 1998

Turnout: 56,26 % (first round), 57,01 % (second round)

<i>Party / Coalition</i>	<i>Mandates in single- member districts</i>	<i>% list votes</i>	<i>Seats obtained on</i>		<i>Total Seats</i>	<i>% Seats</i>
			<i>Regional list</i>	<i>National list</i>		
Fidesz-MPP (Alliance of Young Democrats Hungarian Civic Party)	55	29.48	48	10	113	29.27
Fidesz-MPP + MDF (Hungarian Democratic Forum)	35	-			35	9.07
MSZP (Hungarian Socialist Party)	54	32.92	50	30	134	34.72
SZDSZ (Alliance of Free Democrats)	2	7.57	5	17	24	6.22
FKgP (Independent Small Holders Party)	12	13.15	22	14	48	12.44
MDF-Fidesz-MPP	15	-			15	3.89
MDF (Hungarian Democratic Forum)	2	2.80			2	0.52
MIÉP (Party of Hungarian Justice and Life)	0	5.47	14		14	3.63
Independent candidates	1				1	0.26
MP, ex-MSZMP (Workers Party)		3.95				
MSZDP (Social Democratic Party of Hungary)		0.08				
KDNP (Christian Democratic People's Party)		2.31				
VP (Party of Entrepreneurs)		0.05				
MSzZP (Social Green Party of Hungary)		0.07				
EMU (Together for Hungary Union)		0.19				
NF (Forum of National Minorities)		0.13				
_SZM (New Alliance for Hungary)		0.49				
TOTAL	176		128	82	386	100.0

Table 4: Circulation of national political daily newspapers, 1989-1993

Title	Jan. 1989	Jan. 1991	July 1992	March 1993	1994	
Népszabadság	460,000	327,000	316,000	305,000	300,000	2:
Népszava	222,000	181,000	135,000	102,000		7
Kurír (morning + evening edition)		134,000	120,000	100,000		
Mai Nap		140,000	104,000	85,000		1:
Magyar Hírlap	107,000	78,000	75,000	65,000		7
Magyar Nemzet	132,000	121,000	70,000	55,000		
Esti Hírlap	133,000	93,000	70,000	60,000		
_j Magyarország			52,000	45,000		
Pesti Hírlap		27,000	45,000	30,000		
Total	1,054,000	1,101,000	987,000	865,000		

Sources: Juhász 1998; Bajomi-Lázár 1999; Lange 1994.

Table 5: The national political dailies and their owners, 1998

Title	Orientation	Owner	Circulation
Népszabadság	Left-wing	Bertelsmann (D) Free Press Foundation (H)	220,000
Népszava	left liberal	Vico (H)*	70,000
Napi Magyarország	right-wing	MAH_R (H)	30,000
Napi Gazdaság	business	Co-Nexus Inc.	14,000
Magyar Hírlap	liberal	Jürg Marquard (CH)	70,000
Mai Nap	popular		120,000
Magyar Nemzet	conservative	Postabank (H)	55,000
Világgazdaság	business		18,000
Blikk	popular	Ringier (CH)	100,000

*: In early 2000 Vico sold the loss-making paper to the editors.

Sources: Juhász 1998; Bajomi-Lázár 1999; Lange 1994.

Table 6: OLS-regression of feeling thermometer ratings of the five main parties on performance evaluations (PERFORM), exposure to public television (PUBTV), and their interaction (PERFORM*PUBTV)

	Dependent variable:				
	FIDESZ	FKGP	MDF	MSZP	SZDSZ
Year: 1994					
Independent variables:					
PERFORM	-.111 (.284)	.208 (.296)	.715 (.267)	-.644 (.314)	.085 (.276)
PUBTV	-.150 (.309)	-.458 (.323)	.324 (.292)	.262 (.346)	.417 (.299)
PERFORM*PUBTV	.417 (.315)	-.208 (.328)	.262 (.297)	.062 (.349)	-.143 (.306)
Constant	4.184	3.289	2.910	4.164	4.209
R-squared	.016	-.001	.223	.071	-.001
N	667	674	664	657	652
Year: 1998					
PERFORM	.029 (.182)	-.802 (.194)	-.045 (.154)	.687 (.187)	.666 (.168)
PUBTV	-.040 (.196)	.187 (.211)	.198 (.171)	.697 (.204)	.338 (.185)
PERFORM*PUBTV	-.334 (.202)	.238 (.216)	-.095 (.170)	.376 (.208)	.132 (.187)
Constant	4.302	2.779	2.654	2.929	3.311
R-squared	.019	.080	.006	.230	.175
N	1404	1409	1373	1405	1390

Note: Table entries are metric regression coefficients (their standard errors are shown in parentheses), adjusted R-squares and the weighted number of cases. For a description of the variables see the Appendix.

Table 7: OLS-regression of feeling thermometer rating of FIDESZ in 1994 on performance evaluations (PERFORM), exposure to public television (PUBTV), their interaction (PERFORM*PUBTV), MDF-rating (MDF), and its interaction with exposure to public television (MDF*PUBTV)

Dependent variable: FIDESZ

Independent variables:

PUBTV	-1.287 (.649)
PERFORM	.153 (.333)
PERFORM*PUBTV	-.037 (.374)
MDF	-.170 (.158)
MDF*PUBTV	.332 (.176)
Constant	4.781
R-squared	.28
N	655

Note: Table entries are metric regression coefficients (their standard errors are shown in parentheses), adjusted R-squares and the weighted number of cases. For a description of the variables see the Appendix.

Table 8: OLS-regression of performance evaluations (PERFORM) and change in economic evaluations during the campaign (D_NATECO) on exposure to public television (PUBTV) and control variables

	Dependent variable: PERFORM		1998	
	Year: 1994			
Independent variables:	b	s.e.	b	s.e.
PUBTV	.12	(.13)	.05	(.09)
SEX	-.11	(.07)	-.12	(.05)
AGE	-.06	(.01)	-.01	(.01)
AGESQ	.00	(.00)	.00	(.00)
EDUCAT	.04	(.03)	.02	(.02)
RURALRES	-.09	(.07)	-.00	(.05)
EMPLOYED	-.00	(.09)	.13	(.06)
LNINCOME	.13	(.07)	.17	(.04)
CHURCHAT	.07	(.03)	.04	(.02)
CPMEMBER	-.10	(.10)	-.10	(.08)
INTEREST	.03	(.04)	.13	(.02)
RADIOLIS	-.04	(.02)	.01	(.01)
PRIVTV	-	-	.08	(.08)
NEWSPAPS	-.02	(.03)	.12	(.06)
FIDESZ	.02	(.02)	-.01	(.01)
FKGP	-.03	(.02)	-.04	(.01)
MDF	.21	(.02)	-.04	(.02)
MSZP	-.08	(.02)	.14	(.01)
SZDSZ	.03	(.02)	.09	(.02)
Constant	.56		-1.42	
R-squared	.30		.31	
N	719		1525	

(continued)

Table 8: (continued from previous page)

Independent variables:	Dependent variable: D_NATECO		1998	
	b	s.e.	b	s.e.
PUBTV	-.38	(.16)	.04	(.10)
SEX	-.08	(.08)	-.02	(.05)
AGE	-.02	(.01)	-.03	(.01)
AGESQ	.00	(.00)	.00	(.00)
EDUCAT	.01	(.04)	.05	(.02)
RURALRES	-.11	(.08)	.01	(.05)
EMPLOYED	.05	(.10)	-.01	(.07)
LNINCOME	.03	(.08)	.04	(.04)
CHURCHAT	.06	(.03)	.03	(.02)
CPMEMBER	-.05	(.12)	-.14	(.09)
INTEREST	.03	(.04)	.03	(.03)
RADIOLIS	-.07	(.03)	.05	(.01)
PRIVTV	-	-	.03	(.09)
NEWSPAPS	-.06	(.03)	.05	(.07)
FIDESZ	.01	(.02)	.00	(.01)
FKGP	.07	(.02)	-.06	(.01)
MDF	.05	(.02)	-.01	(.02)
MSZP	-.01	(.02)	.05	(.02)
SZDSZ	-.04	(.02)	.02	(.02)
NATECO	-.74	(.04)	-1.23	(.03)
Constant	2.84		3.81	
R-squared	.38		.71	
N	686		1428	

Note: Table entries are metric regression coefficients (their standard errors are shown in parentheses), adjusted R-squares and the weighted number of cases. For a description of the variables see the Appendix.

Table 9: OLS-regression of change in feeling thermometer ratings of the five main parties during the campaign on exposure to public television (PUBTV) and control variables

		Dependent variable: D_FIDESZ		1998	
		Year: 1994			
Independent variables:					
	b	s.e.	b	s.e.	
PUBTV	-.85	(.26)	.06	(.18)	
SEX	.37	(.13)	-.02	(.09)	
AGE	-.07	(.02)	-.00	(.01)	
AGESQ	.00	(.00)	-.00	(.00)	
EDUCAT	.15	(.06)	.02	(.04)	
RURALRES	-.01	(.13)	-.02	(.10)	
EMPLOYED	.17	(.16)	.26	(.12)	
LNINCOME	-.21	(.12)	-.16	(.09)	
CHURCHAT	-.02	(.05)	.05	(.04)	
CPMEMBER	.08	(.19)	.07	(.16)	
INTEREST	-.03	(.07)	-.06	(.05)	
RADIOLIS	.02	(.04)	.03	(.03)	
PRIVTV	-	-	.09	(.17)	
NEWSPAPS	.01	(.05)	-.16	(.12)	
FIDESZ	-.63	(.04)	-.56	(.03)	
FKGP	-.01	(.03)	.03	(.02)	
MDF	-.01	(.03)	.08	(.03)	
MSZP	-.14	(.03)	-.12	(.03)	
SZDSZ	-.02	(.04)	-.02	(.03)	
Constant	4.88		3.20		
R-squared	.39		.27		
N	648		1345		

(continued; see notes on last page of table)

Table 9: (continued from previous page; notes on last page of table)

	Dependent variable: D_FKGP		1998	
	Year: 1994			
Independent variables:	b	s.e.	b	s.e.
PUBTV	.73	(.26)	.04	(.19)
SEX	-.10	(.12)	-.09	(.09)
AGE	-.02	(.02)	.00	(.01)
AGESQ	.00	(.00)	.00	(.00)
EDUCAT	-.08	(.06)	-.10	(.04)
RURALRES	.45	(.13)	.13	(.10)
EMPLOYED	.12	(.16)	.09	(.12)
LNINCOME	-.09	(.12)	-.04	(.09)
CHURCHAT	.03	(.05)	.04	(.04)
CPMEMBER	.03	(.19)	.06	(.16)
INTEREST	.03	(.07)	.04	(.05)
RADIOLIS	-.00	(.04)	.06	(.03)
PRIVTV	-	-	-.16	(.17)
NEWSPAPS	-.03	(.05)	-.18	(.13)
FIDESZ	-.06	(.04)	-.02	(.03)
FKGP	-.52	(.03)	-.53	(.02)
MDF	.02	(.03)	.10	(.03)
MSZP	-.17	(.03)	-.11	(.03)
SZDSZ	.04	(.04)	-.08	(.03)
Constant	2.82		2.20	
R-squared	.36		.30	
N	654		1349	

(continued)

Table 9: (continued from previous page; notes on last page of table)

	Dependent variable: D_MDF		1998	
	b	s.e.	b	s.e.
PUBTV	-.92	(.26)	.42	(.18)
SEX	.13	(.12)	-.09	(.09)
AGE	-.01	(.02)	-.01	(.01)
AGESQ	.00	(.00)	.00	(.00)
EDUCAT	.08	(.06)	.00	(.04)
RURALRES	-.08	(.13)	-.15	(.09)
EMPLOYED	.07	(.16)	.15	(.11)
LNINCOME	-.04	(.12)	-.11	(.08)
CHURCHAT	.11	(.05)	.12	(.04)
CPMEMBER	-.22	(.19)	.08	(.15)
INTEREST	-.07	(.07)	.06	(.05)
RADIOLIS	-.03	(.04)	.02	(.03)
PRIVTV	-	-	.25	(.16)
NEWSPAPS	-.07	(.05)	-.10	(.12)
FIDESZ	.05	(.04)	.06	(.03)
FKGP	.06	(.03)	.07	(.02)
MDF	-.59	(.03)	-.69	(.03)
MSZP	-.12	(.03)	.02	(.03)
SZDSZ	-.07	(.04)	-.12	(.03)
Constant	3.27		1.18	
R-squared	.31		.27	
N	643		1273	

(continued)

Table 9: (continued from previous page; notes on last page of table)

	Dependent variable: D_MSZP		1998	
	Year: 1994			
Independent variables:	b	s.e.	b	s.e.
PUBTV	.05	(.29)	.76	(.21)
SEX	.05	(.14)	.23	(.10)
AGE	.01	(.02)	.02	(.02)
AGESQ	-.00	(.00)	-.00	(.00)
EDUCAT	-.11	(.06)	-.12	(.05)
RURALRES	-.00	(.15)	-.07	(.11)
EMPLOYED	-.19	(.18)	.01	(.13)
LNINCOME	-.06	(.14)	.08	(.10)
CHURCHAT	-.07	(.06)	.01	(.04)
CPMEMBER	-.38	(.21)	-.55	(.18)
INTEREST	.06	(.08)	-.15	(.06)
RADIOLIS	.06	(.05)	.02	(.03)
PRIVTV	-	-	.07	(.18)
NEWSPAPS	.05	(.06)	.20	(.14)
FIDESZ	-.07	(.04)	-.10	(.03)
FKGP	-.06	(.04)	-.11	(.03)
MDF	-.15	(.04)	-.09	(.03)
MSZP	-.55	(.04)	-.51	(.03)
SZDSZ	.11	(.04)	.10	(.03)
Constant	3.86		2.48	
R-squared	.38		.34	
N	636		1357	

(continued)

Table 9: (continued from previous page)

	Dependent variable: D_SZDSZ		1998	
	Year: 1994			
Independent variables:	b	s.e.	b	s.e.
PUBTV	.44	(.27)	.51	(.19)
SEX	.22	(.13)	.17	(.09)
AGE	-.01	(.02)	.01	(.02)
AGESQ	.00	(.00)	-.00	(.00)
EDUCAT	.07	(.06)	-.04	(.04)
RURALRES	.24	(.13)	-.19	(.10)
EMPLOYED	.17	(.16)	.15	(.12)
LNINCOME	-.09	(.13)	-.01	(.09)
CHURCHAT	-.04	(.05)	-.03	(.04)
CPMEMBER	.11	(.19)	-.28	(.16)
INTEREST	.11	(.07)	-.07	(.05)
RADIOLIS	.00	(.04)	.03	(.03)
PRIVTV	-	-	-.09	(.17)
NEWSPAPS	.04	(.05)	.04	(.13)
FIDESZ	-.01	(.04)	-.05	(.03)
FKGP	-.01	(.03)	-.07	(.02)
MDF	-.11	(.03)	-.08	(.03)
MSZP	.08	(.03)	.21	(.03)
SZDSZ	-.67	(.04)	-.66	(.03)
Constant	2.61		2.20	
R-squared	.28		.23	
N	627		1323	

Note: Table entries are metric regression coefficients (their standard errors are shown in parentheses), adjusted R-squares and the weighted number of cases. For a description of the variables see the Appendix.

Table 10: OLS-regression of feeling thermometer ratings (in the 1998 post-election wave) on issue positions (ISSUES), media exposure (PUBTV, PRIVTV, NEWSPAPS) and their interactions

	Dependent variable:				
	FIDESZ	FKGP	MDF	MSZP	SZDSZ
ISSUES*PUBTV	.202 (.058)	-.047 (.061)	.002 (.050)	-.075 (.069)	.036 (.060)
ISSUES*PRIVTV	-.022 (.056)	.085 (.059)	.028 (.049)	-.108 (.067)	-.023 (.058)
ISSUES*NEWSPAPS	.100 (.037)	.103 (.039)	.108 (.032)	-.090 (.044)	-.116 (.038)
PUBTV	-.927 (.374)	.309 (.395)	.898 (.321)	2.219 (.442)	1.006 (.384)
PRIVTV	.408 (.331)	-.478 (.349)	.106 (.289)	.356 (.393)	.431 (.338)
NEWSPAPS	-.800 (.234)	-1.497 (.249)	-.570 (.201)	.828 (.278)	.788 (.240)
ISSUES	-.110 (.059)	-.021 (.062)	-.037 (.052)	.158 (.070)	-.007 (.061)
Constant	6.446	4.154	2.394	2.681	3.204
R-squared	.30	.28	.02	.03	.02
N	1423	1420	1367	1434	1403

Note: Table entries are metric regression coefficients (their standard errors are shown in parentheses), adjusted R-squares and the weighted number of cases. For a description of the variables see the Appendix.

Table 11: Which party do you think has the best chance to win the election? Percentage distribution of responses among election panel respondents before the 1994 and 1998 elections, respectively, compared to average support in the last pre-election polls and election forecasts published before the election

	1994 perceptions	1994 polls	1998 perceptions	1998 polls
FIDESZ (Fidesz-MPP in 1998)	3	12.3	15	29.4
FKGP	3	8.0	10	13.8
KDNP (MIÉP in 1998)	2	7.8	0	3.4
MDF	13	11.3	1	3.5
MSZP	37	34.8	45	33.2
SZDSZ	13	16.0	3	9.6
other parties	2	-	1	-
do not know, no answer	27	-	25	-

Source: Popular expectations regarding the outcome of the election are reported for the 719 and 1525 respondents interviewed in both waves of the CEU panel studies. The average pre-election poll figures were calculated by the authors on the basis of Tóka (1998: Tables 7 and 8).

Table 12: Logistic regression of dichotomized dependent variables measuring the perception of the likely winner in 1994 and 1998 on media exposure and various control variables

Independent variables:	Year: 1994					
	MSZPWINS		SZDSZWINS		MDFWINS	
	b	s.e.	b	s.e.	b	s.e.
PUBTV	-.33	(.41)	-.05	(.58)	.79	(.62)
NEWSPAPS	.13	(.08)	-.24	(.11)	.06	(.12)
RADIOLIS	.09	(.06)	.08	(.09)	-.01	(.09)
KNOWLEDGE	.03	(.01)	.03	(.02)	.02	(.02)
INTEREST	.21	(.11)	-.13	(.16)	.22	(.16)
SEX	-.39	(.20)	-.04	(.26)	.32	(.27)
AGE	-.01	(.03)	.06	(.05)	-.02	(.04)
AGESQ	-.00	(.00)	-.00	(.00)	.00	(.00)
EDUCAT	-.01	(.09)	.29	(.12)	-.14	(.12)
RURALRES	-.42	(.21)	-.07	(.28)	.50	(.27)
EMPLOYED	.24	(.26)	.07	(.32)	.64	(.36)
LNINCOME	.31	(.20)	-.25	(.22)	-.16	(.25)
CHURCHAT	.03	(.08)	.12	(.10)	-.12	(.11)
CPMEMBER	.33	(.30)	-.42	(.38)	-.44	(.40)
FIDESZ	-.19	(.06)	.04	(.08)	.01	(.08)
FKGP	-.01	(.06)	-.10	(.07)	-.10	(.07)
MDF	-.24	(.05)	-.06	(.07)	.62	(.07)
MSZP	.51	(.06)	-.32	(.07)	-.13	(.07)
SZDSZ	-.02	(.06)	.56	(.09)	-.18	(.08)
Constant	-4.11		-3.64		-3.04	
N	719		719		719	

(continued; see notes on last page of table)

Table 12: (continued from previous page)

Independent variables:	Year: 1998					
	Dependent variable:					
	MSZPWINS		FIDESZWINS		FKGPWINS	
	b	s.e.	b	s.e.	b	s.e.
PUBTV	-.06	(.25)	-.56	(.32)	1.03	(.47)
PRIVTV	-.04	(.23)	.15	(.32)	-.19	(.40)
NEWSPAPS	.45	(.18)	-.18	(.23)	.03	(.34)
RADIOLIS	.01	(.04)	-.08	(.05)	-.07	(.06)
KNOWLEDGE	.03	(.01)	.02	(.01)	.04	(.01)
INTEREST	.32	(.07)	.22	(.09)	-.29	(.12)
SEX	-.21	(.13)	-.12	(.17)	-.13	(.23)
AGE	-.01	(.02)	-.02	(.03)	.08	(.04)
AGESQ	.00	(.00)	.00	(.00)	-.00	(.00)
EDUCAT	.04	(.06)	.08	(.08)	-.30	(.12)
RURALRES	.05	(.14)	-.08	(.19)	.12	(.22)
EMPLOYED	.12	(.17)	.28	(.23)	.46	(.29)
LNINCOME	.09	(.11)	-.03	(.15)	.13	(.25)
CHURCHAT	.01	(.05)	-.17	(.07)	.16	(.09)
CPMEMBER	.08	(.24)	.33	(.38)	-.40	(.51)
FIDESZ	-.09	(.04)	.55	(.06)	-.25	(.06)
FKGP	-.17	(.04)	-.12	(.05)	.73	(.06)
MDF	-.04	(.05)	.03	(.06)	-.15	(.08)
MSZP	.52	(.04)	-.30	(.05)	-.27	(.08)
SZDSZ	-.11	(.05)	-.06	(.06)	.05	(.08)
Constant	-2.84		-3.55		-5.30	
N	1525		1525		1525	

Notes: table entries are logistic regression coefficients (with their standard errors in parentheses). For a description of the variables see the Appendix. The weighted and unweighted number of cases in these analyses coincide.

Table 13: Logistic regression of vote choice variables on the perception of the likely winner in 1994 and 1998 and various control variables

Independent variables:	Year: 1994					
	Dependent variable:					
	MSZPVOTE		SZDSZVOTE		MDFVOTE	
	b	s.e.	b	s.e.	b	s.e.
MSZPWINS	.04	(.28)	.31	(.35)	.56	(.55)
SZDSZWINS	.28	(.37)	.78	(.36)	-.36	(.77)
MDFWINS	.02	(.41)	.67	(.41)	.28	(.47)
PUBTV	1.26	(.52)	.25	(.59)	-1.68	(.72)
NEWSPAPS	.13	(.09)	-.02	(.10)	-.35	(.21)
RADIOLIS	-.04	(.07)	-.02	(.08)	.15	(.13)
KNOWLEDGE	.01	(.01)	.03	(.02)	.03	(.03)
INTEREST	-.01	(.13)	-.07	(.15)	.07	(.22)
SEX	.20	(.22)	-.09	(.25)	1.13	(.42)
AGE	.08	(.04)	-.02	(.04)	-.00	(.06)
AGESQ	-.00	(.00)	.00	(.00)	.00	(.00)
EDUCAT	-.01	(.10)	.04	(.12)	-.24	(.18)
RURALRES	-.22	(.23)	-.08	(.27)	-.82	(.44)
EMPLOYED	-.33	(.29)	.87	(.33)	-.32	(.50)
LNINCOME	-.25	(.22)	.29	(.29)	.15	(.38)
CHURCHAT	.05	(.09)	-.02	(.11)	-.09	(.13)
CPMEMBER	-.69	(.30)	.21	(.38)	-.74	(.60)
FIDESZ	-.13	(.06)	.10	(.08)	.10	(.11)
FKGP	-.11	(.06)	-.04	(.07)	-.20	(.10)
MDF	-.20	(.06)	.00	(.07)	.90	(.13)
MSZP	.65	(.08)	-.20	(.07)	-.24	(.11)
SZDSZ	-.05	(.07)	.55	(.09)	-.07	(.12)
Constant	-3.26		-7.05		-4.82	
N	719		719		719	

(continued; see notes on last page of table)

Table 13: (continued from previous page)

Independent variables:	Year: 1998					
	Dependent variable:					
	MSZPVOTE		FIDESZVOTE		FKGPVOTE	
	b	s.e.	b	s.e.	b	s.e.
MSZPWINS	.85	(.22)	-.03	(.20)	-.17	(.31)
FIDESZWINS	.19	(.35)	.59	(.21)	-.53	(.42)
FKGPWINS	.17	(.45)	-.67	(.36)	-.11	(.32)
PUBTV	1.02	(.37)	.45	(.33)	.82	(.48)
PRIVTV	.34	(.30)	.56	(.31)	-.18	(.38)
NEWSPAPS	-.24	(.23)	.15	(.21)	-.32	(.37)
RADIOLIS	-.02	(.05)	.06	(.05)	.04	(.06)
KNOWLEDGE	.01	(.01)	.01	(.01)	.00	(.01)
INTEREST	-.02	(.10)	-.00	(.09)	-.04	(.13)
SEX	.11	(.17)	.15	(.16)	-.13	(.24)
AGE	.02	(.03)	-.04	(.03)	.12	(.04)
AGESQ	-.00	(.00)	.00	(.00)	-.00	(.00)
EDUCAT	.03	(.08)	.13	(.07)	-.07	(.11)
RURALRES	-.35	(.17)	-.11	(.17)	.30	(.23)
EMPLOYED	-.11	(.22)	.08	(.21)	-.49	(.30)
LNINCOME	.12	(.14)	-.26	(.12)	.52	(.28)
CHURCHAT	-.11	(.07)	.13	(.06)	.10	(.09)
CPMEMBER	-.77	(.24)	.95	(.41)	-.48	(.43)
FIDESZ	-.21	(.05)	.55	(.06)	-.22	(.07)
FKGP	-.18	(.06)	-.17	(.05)	.60	(.07)
MDF	-.08	(.06)	.10	(.05)	-.03	(.08)
MSZP	.52	(.05)	-.19	(.05)	-.13	(.08)
SZDSZ	.01	(.06)	-.11	(.05)	-.15	(.09)
Constant	-3.28		-4.78		-7.78	
N	1525		1525		1525	

Notes: table entries are logistic regression coefficients (with their standard errors in parentheses). For a description of the variables see the Appendix. The weighted and unweighted number of cases coincide.

Appendix: Variables in the analysis

Note: missing values on all independent variables in all reported equations were replaced with the sample mean of the respective variable.

AGE: the age of the respondent in years.

AGESQ: squared value of AGE.

CHURCAT: frequency of church attendance measured on a six-point scale, where 1=never, and 6=several times every week.

CPMEMBER: respondents recalling to have been communist party members some time before 1990 are coded 1, and all else 2.

D_NATECO: the difference between the pre- and post-election values of the NATECO variable, with positive values standing for change towards more favourable retrospective assessments of the national economy than held about three weeks before the election.

D_FIDESZ: the difference between the pre- and post-election values of the FIDESZ variable, with positive values standing for change towards more favourable assessments.

D_FKGP: the difference between the pre- and post-election values of the FKGP variable, with positive values standing for change towards more favourable assessments.

D_MDF: the difference between the pre- and post-election values of the MDF variable, with positive values standing for change towards more favourable assessments.

D_MSZP: the difference between the pre- and post-election values of the MSZP variable, with positive values standing for change towards more favourable assessments.

D_SZDSZ: the difference between the pre- and post-election values of the SZDSZ variable, with positive values standing for change towards more favourable assessments.

EDUCAT: educational attainment of respondent, measured on a four-point scale where 1=less than primary completed, and 5=university or college degree.

EMPLOYED: 1=respondent works or studies in full- or part-time, and 0=all else.

FIDESZ: pre-election rating of FIDESZ on a seven-(in the 1998 post-election interview 11-) point feeling thermometer, where 1=strongly dislikes, and 7=strongly likes.

FIDESZVOTE: 1=in the post-election interview respondent recalled to have voted for the FIDESZ party list, 0=all else.

FIDESZWINS: 1=in the pre-election interview respondent reckoned that FIDESZ had the best chance to win the election, 0=all else.

FKGP: pre-election rating of FKGP on a seven-(in the 1998 post-election interview 11-) point feeling thermometer, where 1=strongly dislikes, and 7=strongly likes.

FKGPVOTE: 1=in the post-election interview respondent recalled to have voted for the FKGP party list, 0=all else.

FKGPWINS: 1=in the pre-election interview respondent reckoned that FKGP had the best chance to win the election, 0=all else.

INTEREST: political interest, measured on a four-point scale, where 1=not at all interested, and 4=very interested.

ISSUES: issue scale in 1998, where -10 stands for the most consistent and intense pro-government position and +10 for consistent and intense support for the position adopted by the Fidesz-MPP. The scale simply sums the original responses, recorded on eleven point scales, to self-administered questions about tuition-free higher education vs. cost-based tuitions at universities, and universal, rather than means-tested eligibility for child-care allowance.

ISSUES*NEWSPAPS: product of the ISSUES and NEWSPAPS variables.

ISSUES*PRIVTV: product of the ISSUES and PRIVTV variables.

ISSUES*PUBTV: product of the ISSUES and PUBTV variables.

KNOWLEDGE: the number of politicians from a given list whose name the respondents claimed to recognise when asked to evaluate them, theoretically ranging from 0 to 40.

LNINCOME: natural logarithm of monthly net household income per capita, in 100 HUF.

MDF: pre-election rating of MDF on a seven-(in the 1998 post-election interview 11-) point feeling thermometer, where 1=strongly dislikes, and 7=strongly likes.

MDF*PUBTV: product of the MDF and PUBTV variables.

MDFVOTE: 1=in the post-election interview respondent recalled to have voted for the MDF party list, 0=all else.

MDFWINS: 1=in the pre-election interview respondent reckoned that MDF had the best chance to win the election, 0=all else.

MSZP: pre-election rating of MSZP on a seven-(in the 1998 post-election interview 11-) point feeling thermometer, where 1=strongly dislikes, and 7=strongly likes.

MSZPVOTE: 1=in the post-election interview respondent recalled to have voted for the MSZP party list, 0=all else.

MSZPWINS: 1=in the pre-election interview respondent reckoned that MSZP had the best chance to win the election, 0=all else.

NATECO: responses to the question: "Do you think that in the last 12 months the economic situation (1) has got much worse, (2) has got somewhat worse, (3) stayed the same, (4) has got somewhat better, or (5) has got much better?"

NEWSPAPS: frequency of newspaper reading measured on a four-point scale, running from 0=never to 1=every day.

PERFORM: performance evaluations, measured as first principal component of responses to three questions about satisfaction with government performance, retrospective evaluations of the development of household finances in the last twelve months, and NATECO. Scores increase as we move towards more and more positive assessments.

PERFORM*PUBTV: product of the ISSUES and PUBTV variables.

PRIVTV: frequency of watching private television channels measured on a six-point scale running from 0=never to 1=every day.

PUBTV: frequency of watching the first channel of public television measured on a six- (in 1994 five-) point scale running from 0=never to 1=every day.

PUBTVNEWS: frequency of watching news programs on the first channel of the public television, measured on a five-point scale running from 0=never to 1=every day.

RADIOLIS: frequency of listening to radio news measured on a six-(in 1994 five-) point scale running from 0=never to 1=several times a day.

RURALRES: place of residence, with 1=village and 0=city/

SEX: 2=woman, 1=man.

SZDSZ: pre-election rating of SZDSZ on a seven-(in the 1998 post-election interview 11-) point feeling thermometer, where 1=strongly dislikes, and 7=strongly likes.

SZDSZVOTE: 1=in the post-election interview respondent recalled to have voted for the SZDSZ party list, 0=all else.

SZDSZWINS: 1=in the pre-election interview respondent reckoned that SZDSZ had the best chance to win the election, 0=all else.