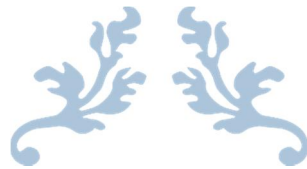


BABEŞ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY



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# HABILITATION THESIS

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Political communication and cultural diplomacy in  
the international relation postmodern system



ANDRA SECELEANU

CLUJ-NAPOCA

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The present Thesis consists of my main preoccupations with mass communication and international relations, with two main components: the first component highlights the main results of my scientific research, after receiving the Doctor of Philosophy title, with *cum laude* honors (Iași, 2007). This materialized in various publications and presentations at conferences, as well as the coordination and implementation capacity of the research projects. The second component focuses on the presentation and evolution of the didactic career and the research pathways development plan.

The theme of this Thesis tackles the role of media institutions and social networks in the international relations dynamics, as well as the cultural and representational impact, the latter playing an important role upon the postmodern configuration of the international relation system and upon the new influence poles. This role was magnified by the access to information and generalisation of communication, which are no longer mediated by national governments.

There are of course, other secondary areas which I had the opportunity to explore, namely: a constant interest in educational communication with an emphasis on language violence and integrated analysis of the briefing, counseling and professional training activities.

International relations have always been accompanied by communication. James N. Danziger (1994) stated that we cannot imagine the international political society's existence outside communication. Globalisation played its part also on communicational flows, one of the important pillars developed by it being mass-media and lately, social networks.

Without any doubt, understanding the particularities of the communication process and its functions represents a very important aspect in order to understand the

modern day international environment. In this environment, knowledge has diversified shapes, hence the development of political communication.

The scientific research activity encompassed by this theme has so far focused on analysing different components pertaining to the modern day media and political realities through a new epistemological vision of communication.

In many of my works I have performed screenings of the media's favourite approached themes regarding the **social problems**; other works focus on the **analysis of the communication and political action in the media space**. These phenomena occupy a central spot in social reality and indicate the need of perfecting political praxis from the perspective of mass-media specific contribution to the **political campaign** study case, as a central event of the political life.

Since 2007, as Head of the “Andrei Şaguna” Social-Human Study and Research Centre, I have directly coordinated more than 20 research contracts on **public opinion analysis studies regarding election themes and exit-polls**, carried out at a regional level. Research was also longitudinal by encompassing a **comparative analysis of the election campaigns in Romania, throughout different temporal timeframes**. The investigative proceedings were followed by **comparative analyses regarding media and political communication**, both between east European countries as well as west European ones (there are very few studies of this kind), and at EU level.

I also took account of the fact that on one hand, new communication technologies have significantly increased the individuals' capacity to express themselves in the public space, and on the other hand, have paradoxically limited the individuals' participation to political communication and public debate on political decisions.

Ulterior research dealt with two aspects: media and its audience. In case of the elections, the information producer is none other than the politics through its parties and

candidates supported by them. The justification of the proceeding relies on the agenda setting concept which explains that mass-media selects the information which would afterwards be conveyed to the readers with the intent of channeling the attention into the desired direction to favour certain aspects or make others seem insignificant.

The analysis of the election coverage generated the following important characteristics; success rather depends on the candidate's qualities and image construction; the political agenda is different from that of the population. In this context, I have used media coverage as a concept referring to the process of the increasing media influence. (Asp, 1986; Hjarvard, 2008; Mazzoleni, 2008a, 2008b; Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999; Strombäck, 2010; Strombäck & Esser, 2009).

In Romania, solely in the last years, social networks have started playing a major role in the election campaigns also because half of the population lives in the rural areas. If only 3.5% of the population had internet access in 2000, in 2008 the percentage skyrocketed to 53.9%, and 70% in 2016, which explains the major mutations which appeared in the political communication.

Political dynamics in Romania have been dramatically changed by this dispersion, up to the point where we can say that the history of election campaigns can be divided into two periods: BC (before computer) and AC (after computer). These mutations could not be left unnoticed, therefore, ulterior research also included some items regarding the influence of the on-line environment.

Parting from the necessity of analysing the positive and negative effects of the globalisation processes (using new communication technologies on an increasing scale), I have conducted research with implications in the social processes which transcend identity values. The analysis focuses on the citizens – electors and political phenomenon people and is relevant to the developed democracies from Western Europe, as well as

the younger, Central and East European ones. Studies which allow for understanding the similarities and differences between them are necessary in this context.

The following researches approached the analysis of **political communication from the international relations' perspective**, in the 2008-2016 period, being a member of two researcher groups which have together carried out studies on subjects with international span: euro parliamentary elections, the Ukraine conflict, use of news sources in the international relations as well as participating in expanding the European Journalism Observer Transnational Network (EJO).

Another analysis subject was the way in which media content plays an important role in the social construction of significance, with an emphasis on the media-built heroes – either positive or negative –, on language strategies, mediatisation of mediocrity, on the assimilation capacity's tolerance limit, on the new public space specific functions, existing at the junction between the journalistic, politic and cultural fields, understood in a broader way.

Given that in the last years there has been a significant increase in the attention given to the cultural impact and representations, the latter having an important part in the postmodern configuration of the international relation systems and new influence poles, amplified by information access and communication generalisation which are not mediated by national governments, I have also approached the meanings given to the concept of culture (the cultural phenomenon!) which oscillate between various reference poles: nature and society, civilisation and consciousness, free personality and chiseled behaviour.

Knowing about the communication process' particularities and its needs is, without any doubt, an urgent need of understanding the evolution of the international modern day environment, thus I have tackled multiculturalism, which in the light of recent evolutions has once again, become a discussed and controversial concept.

The migration crisis in Europe, the biggest in the last decade and the first time in the history of the European Union with so many refugees coming from outside of the continent, has produced a real cultural shock, both for the Europeans as well as for the refugees and brought up for discussion the concept of multiculturalism and the presence of some already existing national policies for redesigning this concept.

Starting from the reality that cultural diplomacy is that domain of diplomacy whose objective is establishing, developing and maintaining relationships with other states through culture, art, education and science, I have coordinated 3 projects overseeing three different areas: the Balkan area, the Black Sea area and China.

Another research subject consists of the aspects related with mass-media, communication, and education seen as elements which can be either a **stabilizer** or **destabilizer** of the security, stability and cooperation within the Black Sea region, given the geostrategic importance of the area and the fact that the region dynamics is strongly influenced by the mutations happening over the last years in Europe, Middle East and Asia.

As a set objective I shall continue analyzing the effects of using new communication technologies on a growing scale, with implications which transcend identity values, in the social processes. Further research shall focus on the reports between citizens – electors and political people, a relevant phenomenon especially in the “fake news” “globalization” phenomenon and new analysis directions, which appeared particularly after the last presidential elections in the USA.

Lack of unification of the European public space, **considering external news as soft-news** with application of national stereotypes, creates the possibility of easily influencing citizens. This is a recent phenomenon and, at least at EU states level, that is why there is a lack of national and comparative studies. Despite EU’s intensified efforts to diminish communication deficit which translates as the European institution’s

incapacity to get closer to the citizens, the euro-skepticism - lack of trust in the European governing mechanisms – is skyrocketing.