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Miloš Zeman and Andrzej Duda – reinventing image for election campaign purposes¹

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to present a comparative analysis of selected elements of strategies for building political image of Miloš Zeman and Andrzej Duda, applied in the presidential campaign in Poland and Czechia in 2013 and 2015. The paper presents not only basic information about both campaigns, but primarily points to a number of common features, such as main motifs (history, family, the future), the target group and its image, communication channels, all used in both strategies for communicating with voters, despite different PR and cultural sphere of application.

Political communication is a two-way process in a defined communication space of a social, political, media and cultural nature. It presents mutual relations in two areas of human activity – in politics and in communication². One of its forms is represented by the election

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² For more on the political communication process see also: Křeček, 2013, Dobek-Ostrowska, 2006, pp. 127–161.

campaign, namely activities carried out in a strictly defined time and political space designed to generate maximum support for the given political actor³. The latter, especially the way he or she is represented, becomes the key element here. The term "image" is defined differently by different academic disciplines⁴. The political image can be described in short as a set of features that, in the eyes of the voter, are characteristic of the given political actor. It comprises three basic aspects: a cognitive one, namely the knowledge of the given person, an emotional one, i.e. all emotions that this person triggers and the conative one connected with the attitudes expressed towards the candidate that later translate into election results⁵. The foundation for building an image involves external features connected with the appearance of the politician, his or her behaviour in various situations that are more or less artificially created for the purposes of the campaign. The creation can be analysed on a number of levels (Bobrowska, Garska, 2012, p. 149).

The first level is the psychological one, which focuses on the mechanisms of perceiving and processing information in the minds of the audience. This means that the stimuli applied in communication with potential voters have to be as legible to them as possible and they need to address their social needs in a possibly satisfactory way. The second level is the sociological one which emphasizes the group and institutional affiliation of persons who are the audience of the given creation. Very often their actions are based on the reliable opposition *familiar versus strange* that proved efficient in political battles, and that allows one to clearly define both the group of supporters and the group of opponents of the given candidate. The marketing dimension forces one to approach the image as a measurable value created with

³ Cf. Bradová, 2005, pp. 20–26. For more on the election campaign see also: *Kampania wyborcza*, 2001.

⁴ On types of definitions of the analysed term see also Kolczyński, 2008, pp. 274–275. From the rhetoric point of view the ethos of a politician is an image category, see also: Budzyńska-Daca, 2015, pp. 143–149.

⁵ D. Nimmo and R. Savage concept, see also: Nimmo, Savage, 1976.

the use of specific promotional tools. Traditional marketing-mix elements are thus reinterpreted for the purposes of the political marketing, and as a result the politician becomes a product (cf. Cichosz, 2007, pp. 60–62), where his or her social support stands for the price, while communication channels that give access to him or her, but primarily, to information about him or her represent distribution. Types, conditions and the role of the latter define also the final, fourth dimension of an image, namely the communicational dimension.

A political image is not just a projection of characteristics of the given person or party. It is also closely connected with the politically defined *here and now*, which means that it is necessary to adapt it to the changing political or campaign reality⁶. This fact may force political actors to develop their image from scratch or to modify their current image to some extent. It is a relatively new phenomenon referred to as political rebranding⁷. Examples of this phenomenon, also from the Polish political scene⁸, show how risky and difficult it is to implement it.

This paper attempts to provide a comparative study of the strategy used to build the image of two politicians, implemented as part of presidential campaigns in Poland and in the Czech Republic⁹. The first one is the campaign of Miloš Zeman before to the presidential election in 2013, the second one is the campaign of Andrzej Duda before the 2015 presidential election. In both cases we witness a process of developing political images that may be regarded as new. For we see Miloš Zeman, who returns to Czech politics after a few-year break and decides to run for president in the first ever direct vote in the Czech Republic. Andrzej Duda on the other hand, faces the challenge of stepping out of the political shadow and increasing the group of supporters for his party as much as possible before the imminent parliamentary

⁶ For more on the topic see also: Jeziński, 2005, pp. 120–124.

⁷ For more on the topic see also: Klepka, 2012, pp. 88–103.

⁸ The new image of Jarosław Kaczyński in his 2010 presidential campaign may serve as an example here.

⁹ Due to limited space, the paper herein shall examine only selected elements of both strategies that are most significant in the opinion of the authors.

elections. It is interesting to compare both these strategies not only in terms of political communication, but also intercultural communication, because it will help us answer the question on the universal character of specific methods applied in the campaigns carried out in two similar cultural circles.

New – old political actors

The analysed Miloš Zeman campaign¹⁰ was very specific in its nature for a number of reasons. Firstly, the current voting format for electing the Czech head of state changed after years of vivid debates on this standby topic in the Czech public life¹¹. It was the first ever direct vote which meant a new procedure for election had to be implemented. From March till June 2012 the first phase of the above-mentioned campaign was carried out: the signatures of the candidate's supporters were gathered, and a supporting advertising campaign was organized¹². It ended successfully with 82856 signatures officially validated as authentic. This number became a kind of promise for the potential hidden within the group of possible voters for the candidate. It was important, since the Czech general public was presented with a very particular political actor. Miloš Zeman is an experienced politician, who already held the highest posts in the country¹³. He also ran, unsuccessfully, in the 2003 presidential election¹⁴. Afterwards he de-

¹⁰ For more on the campaign, see also Rusin Dybalska, 2014.

¹¹ For more on the topic see also: *České prezidentské volby...*, 2013; *První přímá volba...*, 2014.

¹² A presidential candidate is required to document the support of 20 members of parliament, 10 senators or 50000 citizens. Zeman was a candidate nominated by a public petition – he was put forward by the SPOZ party he had established, however, the party had no representatives in the parliament, thus he was forced to seek support among the general public.

¹³ He was the Speaker of the Chamber of the Deputies from 1996 to 1998 and the Czech Prime Minister from 1998 to 2002.

¹⁴ His native party members voted against his candidacy.

cided to withdraw from politics but resurfaced on the political scene in 2009. This was when he established his party Strana Práv Občanů (SPOZ – Citizen Rights Party) which as a new political group failed to get into the parliament in the elections held a year later. Thus, for Zeman the subsequent presidential election became the final opportunity to reach the top of the Czech political scene. He made good use of it and became the first Czech president ever elected by the entire nation; the fact he liked to often emphasize¹⁵.

The candidacy of the young¹⁶ doctor iuris, Andrzej Duda for the highest post in the state was officially confirmed by the head of the PiS party, Jarosław Kaczyński, on the 11th of November 2014 during the National Independence Day event in Cracow¹⁷. True, his political experience was rather scarce compared to Miloš Zeman¹⁸, however, he was not a freshman on the Polish political scene. He took his first political steps in Unia Wolności party in 2001–2002, but his political career took off in 2005 when he joined the ranks of PiS (Law and Justice party)¹⁹. Since his native party operated under a strong leader figure, Duda was not the one in the limelight. This is why the basic objective

¹⁵ In the first round of the presidential election held on 11 and 12 January 2013 (in the Czech Republic there is a two-day ballot, on Friday from 2 p.m. till 10 p.m. and on Saturday from 8 a.m. till 2 p.m.) he received the biggest support of 24.21%, while in the second round on 25th and 26th of January 2013 he received 54.80 % votes.

¹⁶ He was 42 when he announced he would run for president.

¹⁷ Political Board of PiS endorsed his candidacy for the Polish president on 6 December 2014

¹⁸ His political opponents used this as their argument in their campaign battles, and coined such phrases, as e.g. *Mr. Nobody* or *the third-row politicians*.

¹⁹ From August 2006 till November 2007 he held the post of the Deputy Minister of Justice, from January 2008 till July 2010 he was the Undersecretary of State in the Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland under Lech Kaczyński, since 2010, after the lost election for the mayor of Cracow, he became a councilman of this city and the head of the PiS Councillors Group; in 2011 he won a seat in the parliament as a Prawo i Sprawiedliwość MP, and in May 2014 was elected to the European Parliament in the campaign run by PiS and served as an MEP.

of the campaign for this candidate was to increase his recognisability mainly among PiS electorate, but also to win over new voters. This was to be ensured not only by his young age, his appearance, openness in his interactions, but also by his talent for public speeches already tried in the political fire²⁰. All these characteristics underlying the emerging image were in absolute opposition to his rival in the election, the then president, Bronisław Komorowski. The driving force for the Duda's PR strategy were numerous direct meetings with the voters, local media outlets, as well as electronic media. The efficiency of this campaign translated into his victory both in the first and in the second round of the election²¹. Andrzej Duda thus became one of the youngest presidents not only in Europe, but worldwide.

Campaign highlights

Miloš Zeman's campaign was carried out under a number of slogans, and each one would come to symbolize a specific motif that was a part and parcel of the entire PR strategy. The first slogan²², *Zde domov můj* [English: Here is my home], was unique in its character, because it was a modified line from the Czech anthem lyrics²³. It was combined with a supplementary slogan: *Srdcem za lidi, rozumem za republiku* [English: Heart for the people, reason for the republic],

²⁰ His best known speeches in the Polish parliament included e.g. his speech on the Amber Gold Ponzi scheme (August 2012), on the exhumation of the Smoleńsk air disaster victims (September 2012), on the Bajkowski family case (March 2013); for more see also: Moneta, 2015, pp. 244–271.

²¹ In the 1st round of the election held on 10 May 2015, A. Duda received 34,76% votes, while in the 2nd round held on 24 May 2015 – 51,55% votes.

²² The slogans are presented in the order of their appearance throughout the campaign.

²³ *Kde domov můj* [English: Where is my home] is the title of the Czech anthem. The remake proposed in Zeman's slogan is not any original idea. In 2008 a composer, Varhan Orchestrovič Bauer, proposed a new version of the Czech anthem. The start of the new wording read as follows: *Kde domov můj, zde domov můj* [English: Where is my home, here is my home].

which was presumably pointing to the harmony that future activities of the candidate would foster, but also presented the audience with main points of reference, namely the society and the country. His next slogan, *Zeman na Hrad. Vaš hlas bude vždy slyšet* [English: Zeman for the Castle. Your voice will be heard, always], followed the same line, as it was meant to assure the voters about the loyalty of the candidate towards his potential electorate. In order to diminish the distance between himself and his supporters, the current and the new ones alike, a family theme was employed. Miloš Zeman's daughter, Katarzyna²⁴, was very actively involved in the campaign and was also one of the protagonists of the first political spot ad²⁵. Here you can see the candidate presented e.g. as a caring father who lives his life in such a way, so that *neither him, nor his daughter would have to feel ashamed for his actions*. The daughter also is the face of the future which is the key point of reference for all actions of the presidential candidate. History was yet another active theme applied in the campaign. You could find references to history in the following slogans: *I v roce 1968 jsem byl s vámi* [English: I was here for you in 1968] and *I tehdy jsem byl s vámi. Byl součástí události sametové revoluce* [English: I was here for you then. I was the part of Velvet Revolution events]. Their aim was to directly link the candidate with one of the most important events in the modern Czech history²⁶, while at the same time they were supposed to show the role he played in them. The historical theme was also present in the references made to the actions of his predecessors. They were mostly referred to in the presented forms of interaction with the voters in general terms, as *dull, boring politics filled with larceny and scandals*. The future presidential agenda is presented in an

²⁴ His wife refused to participate in the campaign, and as a result the phrases like *First Miss* or *First Daughter* were coined.

²⁵ To watch the spot please visit: www.youtube.com/watch?v=fhOcWIRX550.

²⁶ 1968 – the so-called Prague Spring that was suppressed by the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact army, 1989 – the Velvet Revolution.

²⁷ Specifics of potential actions of the candidate were revealed during direct interactions in meetings and interviews.

equally laconic manner, and it is manifested as a burning candle that brings hope for the future²⁷. The final phase of the campaign before the second round of the election focused on attacks on the government. The main reason for this was the person of the political rival, namely Karel Schwarzenberg, the deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the government at the time. This part of political battle was conducted in the atmosphere of anti-government protests under the banner *STOP této vládě. Volte Zemana!* [English: STOP this government. Vote for Zeman!]. One of its special manifestations was a political spot ad²⁸, where the main role was played by the increasing group of people shown against the background of grey factory halls. It presents the candidate as the president of ordinary people who live off their pay or pension and who are mostly affected by such actions as *price increase, tax increase, lower pay or church assets restitution*. The political ad becomes a kind of portrait of the potential electorate of the presidential candidate who is thus directly contrasted with the so-called *Prague society* or *Prague elite* supporting his opponent. The criticism of government actions was enhanced by an issue which has become a true evergreen for most Czech elections, namely the Beneš decrees and the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans. Also this time around it became a hot topic, since the rival had a very strong view on the matter, and more importantly, a completely different view than Zeman. And that was the reason why a few days before the election the mudslinging became a significant element of this political endeavour²⁹. The above slogans were mainly presented in press releases and on billboards. Both these communication formats were not particularly sophisticated in their style. The smiling presidential candidate was the central point: always dressed formally and posing against

²⁸ To watch the ad please visit: www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detail_page&v=PmJ2g34wnb0.

²⁹ Its first part included the public endorsement of Zeman by the former president Vaclav Klaus and his family together with the criticism of his rival. The second part comprised an ad in the format of an arrest warrant that was printed a day before the election.

a carefully selected background, e.g. Czech landscapes, period photos or the view of the Prague Castle, which is the seat of the Czech president. These images never lacked special patriotic elements. The Czech flag is the permanent feature here, with dominant colours of white, blue and red, moreover, a lime leaf, which is considered the Czech national tree, is used as a dot here³⁰. The image under development is warmed not only by the above-mentioned family theme, but also by including information about unusual habits of the candidate. For example, his first ad begins with a scene where he strokes trees to absorb the power, peace and wisdom from nature.

Andrzej Duda's campaign was led under three basic slogans. The first one read: *Przyszłość ma na imię Polska* [English: Poland is the name of the future]. Although its wording refers to what will happen, however it is closely linked to historical themes strongly present in his campaign. The history was presented in three different settings. The first one was the Polish history from the period of the Second Polish Republic. The candidate often referred to the period when the Polish country was re-established after reclaimed independence and presented this process as the example and proof that change was possible. One should point out that names of national heroes of that time were brought to the foreground in this context together with phrases such as *our grandfathers*. The second instance of presenting history referred to more recent events and figures. Already in the first political ad *Wigilia* [English: Christmas Eve]³¹ the political patron of the candidate appears in the person of the former president Lech Kaczyński, who died tragically. As his former associate rooted in the same political background, Duda wishes to follow in the footsteps of Kaczyński and continue his interrupted mission. The third way the history is introduced is in reference to the latest events, connected with activities

³⁰ To see selected billboards please access: www.regionpodlupou.cz/827-dlouhy-byl-v-plzni-zbytecne-prezidentska-kampan-se-presto-rozjizdi.xhtml; zpravy.ihned.cz/c1-59090520-zeman-kampan-hrad-penize-zemanovci, www.mediaguru.cz/2013/01/prezidentska-kampan-graduje-v-komunikaci-priostruje.

³¹ To watch the ad please visit: www.youtube.com/watch?v=i0OqAArWJPY.

of his political rivals that are mentioned here in a way of warning and a word of caution. They become a part of the negative campaigning built on strong contrasts devised not only based on presented contents, but also on the way this content is presented³². Yet another slogan is released as a sort of response to the criticism of the above tactic: *Godne życie w bezpiecznej Polsce* [English: Live with dignity in the safe Poland]. It summarizes the plan of action of this candidate defined in the document called *Umowa programowa Andrzeja Dudy z Polakami* [English: Programme Contract by and between Andrzej Duda and the Poles]³³ focusing on 4 main pillars, namely family, work, safety and dialogue. Thus defined framework is also introduced in his political ads. In some ads the candidate is depicted as an expert who explains economic intricacies in a professional, well documented way³⁴. Others are much less sophisticated in their structure and bear a greater emotional charge reinforced by negative campaigning elements³⁵. You can also see potential beneficiaries of the planned changes here, namely *ordinary Polish families, ordinary Poles, the old and the young*. The family is present in candidate's efforts not only on the level of his political programme. Both his wife and his daughter are actively involved in the campaign from the very start. Both ladies, who as an additional asset have impeccable looks, support the candidate both in his direct activities³⁶, and in indirect ones by becoming protagonists of

³² In campaign ads this would be alluded by e.g. the colours, quality of the picture or the background music. See also the ad: *Odważne decyzje* [English: Brave decisions]: www.youtube.com/watch?v=AOzw3IpTNf0.

³³ Cf. http://bartlomiejwroblewski.pl/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Andrzej_Duda_Umowa_programowa_z_Polakami.pdf.

³⁴ See also ads: *Kwota wolna od podatku* [English: Tax credit] – www.youtube.com/watch?v=v4Y5D7-NhvY, *Služba zdrowia* [English: Healthcare] – www.youtube.com/watch?v=yBiiNovBg3w.

³⁵ See also ads: *Rodzina* [English: Family] – www.youtube.com/watch?v=DMLLJg67buE, *Praca* [English: Work] – www.youtube.com/watch?v=PRUipI5lOuA.

³⁶ E.g. attending campaign conventions or other meetings organized as part of the campaign.

his political ads³⁷. The last slogan introduced in the campaign, namely *Dobra zmiana* [English: The good change] serves as a bridge linking both the plan of action of the presidential candidate and the change on the highest post in the state connected therewith³⁸.

Presented slogans were included not only in television ads and press communication, but also on billboards. The latter because of their limited potential were not used to create the image in any particular way. They only presented an image limited to the picture of the candidate dressed in formal clothes together with his political slogan and with the addition of a patriotic element in the form of the Polish flag³⁹. Also for this candidate one can point to certain efforts undertaken in order to warm his image. Apart from standard examples, such as less formal clothes or speaking in a slightly less “primed” way that one can find in the above mentioned ads, one should also mention his unconventional efforts. As an example, his April Fools' ad is worth noting, where the candidate follows the formal dress code with a hint of casual, as he is not wearing his tie, and is reading and commenting on the tweets about him⁴⁰.

Both presented campaigns, due to their specifics, featured a high level of personalization and mediatisation, but were carried out in different PR spaces. Nevertheless, one can point to a number of clear common features they share. Both PR strategies aimed at electorate are an example of a successful – in terms of the results – combination of two styles of public activity: conciliatory and conflictual. In both analysed cases they included actions covering the entire spectrum,

³⁷ See also ads: *Ja będę głosować na Andrzeja, mojego męża* [English: I vote for Andrzej, my husband] - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=divBP2bM_zg, final ad - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xyqHx7GQ5Hg>.

³⁸ This slogan later came to symbolize changes introduced not only by the president, but also by the new government formed after parliamentary elections by his native political group.

³⁹ To see a sample billboard please access: 300polityka.pl/news/2015/02/15/poniedzialek-na-pelna-skale-startuje-kampania-billboardowa-dudy.

⁴⁰ To watch the ad please visit: www.youtube.com/watch?v=WmLjMH639A8.

starting from the past, where the history, both remote and modern plays a significant role, through the present times, usually painted in blurred, dark colours and as such demanding an immediate, more or less radical change, up to the future, which obviously is painted as a somewhat more rosy picture. What is distinctly different about the Czech campaign is that it lacks strong programme features. Future agenda of the presidential candidate in the analysed PR forms of addressing electorate does not offer the specific, professional setting of Andrzej Duda's campaign. It is clear even purely from the analysis of political slogans of Miloš Zeman, most of which are of a PR nature. Despite the significant age difference between the candidates, their efforts are addressed at roughly the same target group. These are ordinary citizens coming from the lower and middle social classes, who respect basic values such as work, health, family, and who feel strong affiliation with their own country⁴¹. And because of that, as J.-M. Cotteret defines it⁴², we are faced with the audio-visual rhetoric here that is based on images, comparisons, metaphors and that mainly appeals to emotions. Political actors apply a defined, relatively fixed pool of notions and expressions that they use to build a simple message, clear to most voters. It is supposed to be validated by numerous interactions with the potential electorate during direct larger or smaller meetings. In case of Duda this is mainly carried out during his countrywide travels with his Dudabus, while Zeman excels in so-called field visitations. In the Czech campaign there are no such events as an electoral convention. This stems from the specific character of the Czech PR space, but also from the political context: A. Duda was put forward by a specific party, while M. Zeman was a candidate nominated by a public petition. Family also plays an important role here. It is meant not only to warm the image, but also to expand the electorate, which was evident in the Polish campaign. Candidate's daughter, her involve-

⁴¹ The question remains open as to whether this group of voters becomes such an appreciative audience of all campaign efforts because of the strong patriotic attitude or rather is the most susceptible to the campaign persuasion.

⁴² As cited in Dobek-Ostrowska, Wiszniowski, 2002, pp. 131.

ment and efforts within the campaign had undeniable impact on the attitudes among many young people. For the first time ever we have also seen the institution of the *first parents* that demonstrates the involvement of candidate's parents in the campaign. The candidate is styled as *an ordinary citizen, an everyman*, which can be also traced in his behaviour, habits or language. It is very conspicuous as far as Miloš Zeman is concerned, especially in his love for typical Czech simple dishes and drinks, in his use of simple expressions, often almost vulgar, or in his sense of humour referred to as plebeian (more on the topic: Rusin Dybalska, 2016).

Most differences in the described actions can be identified in the choice of communication channels for interactions with the electorate. It unarguably partly stems from the fact that the Czech campaign was the first of its kind presidential campaign, and that there is a time gap between the two campaigns. The Czech strategy was based more on traditional media and was much more modest when compared with the Polish one. M. Zeman presented only two campaign ads, however, he used as many as 13 slogans. On the other hand, A. Duda's campaign relied only on 3 campaign slogans, but the candidate presented as many as 23 campaign ads, some even in different versions. A. Duda's campaign made greater use of new, electronic communication channels and applied unconventional formats, e.g. kind of happenings that would sometimes comment on the efforts of his rival in a very particular way (Bronko-Market, Muzeum Zgody [English: Consensus Museum]). The final image of both candidates is the result of this diversity and can be hardly categorized as one specific type. Based on Jeziński's typology (Jeziński, 2005, pp. 124-129) one can find in the analysis herein traits of both *an everyman*, or *a father*, but also *an expert*, *a beau* or *an eccentric*.

The proposed analysis for selected political actors needs to be approached as only the first stage of the ongoing study. Everything seems to suggest that the successful fight of Miloš Zeman for his reelection in 2018 can soon become a relevant point of comparison for the attempt for re-election of Andrzej Duda. The time will show whether and to what extent the created images will become useful in

terms of the new campaign and new PR strategies aimed at the electorate.

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