



---

Political Consultancy Overseas: The Internationalization of Campaign Consultancy

Author(s): David M. Farrell

Source: *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Jun., 1998), pp. 171-176

Published by: [American Political Science Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/420246>

Accessed: 03/09/2013 11:52

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at  
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



American Political Science Association is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *PS: Political Science and Politics*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

## Political Consultancy Overseas: The Internationalization of Campaign Consultancy\*

David M. Farrell, *University of Manchester*

The work of campaign consultants in elections outside of their countries of origin is a relatively recent phenomenon. Joe Napolitan is credited as becoming the first international consultant in modern times when, in 1969, he worked on the successful reelection bid of Ferdinand Marcos. As recently as 1972, Napolitan wrote of a certain reticence in some countries toward using non-native campaign consultants. A decade later, Larry Sabato (1981) saw evidence that use of non-native consultants was becoming a more accepted practice in campaigns worldwide. By the end of the 1990s, according to David Swanson and Paolo Mancini (1996), consultants from the U.S., Germany, France, and Britain were becoming increas-

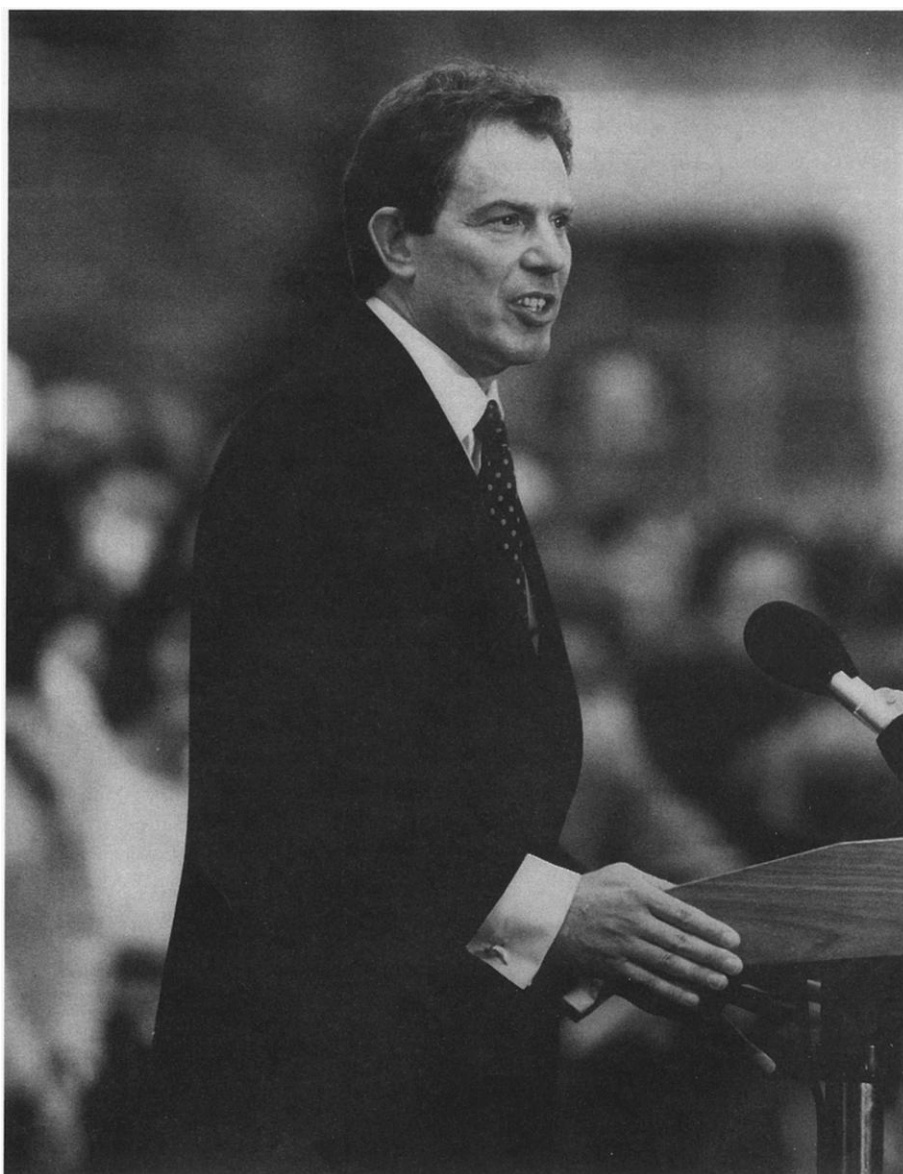
ingly active in elections outside their own countries. Since the use of non-native campaign consultants is likely to increase into the foreseeable future, I would like to use this article to set forth the beginnings of a research agenda, to present an outline of a project worth pursuing, for determining how and why foreign consultants are being, can be, or should be used. The article has three parts. First, I present an overview, based on available evidence, of the nature of overseas work by campaign consultants. Second, I explore some possible explanations for the rise of this phenomenon. Third, I assess the main institutional factors affecting the internationalization of consultancy.

### The Nature of Consultancy Internationalization

International work by campaign consultants can take a number of forms, some more formal than others. Jacques Ségéula, the advertising adviser of the late French president Mitterand, has worked on Austrian, Italian, and Swedish campaigns;

Philip Gould, a senior consultant for the British Labour party, was used by the Danish and Swedish Social Democrats, and by Bill Clinton in 1992 (to counter the negative campaign of the Republicans who were being advised by British Conservative consultants); consultants who had worked in Margaret Thatcher's

campaigns of the 1980s have been prominent in many recent Latin American elections; Joe Napolitan, noted for his work with the Democrats, claims to have worked on campaigns in at least nine other countries outside of the U.S.; Phil Noble has worked on ten overseas campaigns and has a permanent office in



Tony Blair addresses a rally on the eve of his election as Prime Minister of Britain.

Sweden; and Stanley Greenberg and Frank Greer, both of whom had worked as media advisors for Bill Clinton, worked for the South African A.N.C. during their 1994 campaign.

One other striking case worth citing in this context is that of the U.K. advertising agency, Saatchi and Saatchi (whose founders have now reestablished themselves as M&C Saatchi), which has been employed in campaigns in a number of countries. Saatchi's clients have included the British Conservatives (1979–97), the Danish Conservatives (1990), the Dutch Social Democrats (1989), the Irish Fianna Fáil party (1989–92), the Polish Liberal-Democratic Congress (1993), the South African National Party (1994), and Russian parties in recent elections. In 1989, the company established a division specializing in election campaign consultancy, Saatchi and Saatchi Government Communications Worldwide. The fact it was prepared to work on overseas campaign for parties of varying ideological hues is consistent with Sabato's observation that "crossing . . . borders seems to [be] ideologically liberating" for many consultants (1981, 59).

Over time, international political consultancy has developed into a profession with its own norms, standards, and associations. The International Association of Political Consultants (IAPC) was founded by Joe Napolitan and the French political consultant Michel Bongrand in Paris in 1968. Today its membership stands at ninety-one. In its *1997 Register of Members*, the breakdown is as follows: 45 U.S. consultants, ten from Germany, seven from Sweden, four from Australia, three each from France, Italy and Venezuela, and the remainder from Argentina, Austria, Canada, Costa Rica (two), Israel, Japan, Puerto Rico (two), Russia (two), South Africa, Spain (two), Switzerland, and Turkey. Thirty-three of IAPC's members claim to have worked on campaigns outside their native countries. In 58% of the cases (19) the consultants are U.S.-based; of the remainder, only German (3), Swedish (3), and Venezuelan (3) consultants show any kind of proclivity for overseas work.

At the start of the 1980s, Sabato (1981, 67) referred to the "recent" establishment of a European Association of Political Consultants. And in the early 1990s, there was the emergence of a Latin American Association of Political Consultants. Another international organization that facilitates the exchange of campaign ideas is the World Association of Public Opinion Research, which includes among its members Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, who has been prominent in German Christian Democrat campaigns, and Robert Worcester, who in the past has provided polling advice for the British Labour party.

### Explaining the Internationalization of Campaign Consultancy

Over the past two decades, the internationalization of campaign consultancy has been on the increase. In a *Campaigns & Elections* feature at the end of the 1980s, the suggestion was made that "some of those involved are convinced that the potential in overseas markets is virtually limitless" (West 1989). The issue now is how to explain the rise of this phenomenon. There are three possible sources of explanation.

#### 1. "Americanization" (and "Modernization")

There is a debate in the academic literature over whether the changes in campaign styles across the developed world are the result of "Americanization," a process through which the dominant U.S. model of electioneering is adopted by other campaign organizations, or whether the changes merely reflect a general process of "modernization," driven by socio-economic and technological development, to which all systems in some way or another are inevitably susceptible (see Negrine and Pathanassopoulos 1996; Swanson and Mancini 1996). Regardless of which perspective one adopts, there is a dominant role being played by the U.S., either because the changes originated in the U.S., or because

the changes occur first in the U.S. As Scammell comments: "The key point . . . is that there is some consensus that 'Americanization' is useful as a shorthand description of global trends and that the U.S. is the leading exporter and role model of campaigning" (1997, 4).

There is no doubt that political consultancy is big business in the U.S., and that, like all people engaged in money-making enterprises, political consultants constantly search for new markets. Despite the well-deserved reputation of the U.S. as the busiest electoral market in the world, there are limitations on the extent to which political consultants can expand their operations in the North American market. It is not surprising, then, that more and more of them should start touting for business overseas. Given that the U.S. is where much of the new techniques of campaigning originate, and where most of the world's political consultants are based, it is inevitable that the bulk of overseas consultants would originate from there. But increasingly, U.S.-based consultants are facing competition from European consultants.

#### 2. The Transnationalization of Parties

There may be another twist to this discussion. A clue is given by Blumler, et al., who suggest that: "Since broadly shared political affinities structure many of [the overseas] contacts, we witness, in a sense, not simply an Americanization of campaigning but its globalization along partisan lines" (1996, 57). The point is that it is not simply (or, at least, always) the case that consultants find themselves working for any old client in the overseas market; the contract may have emerged from a more complex process of international contact between kindred spirits.

Take the developing situation in western Europe where, as the process of integration gathers momentum, we are seeing ever-closer cooperation between the political parties within transnational party family groupings (Hix and Lord 1997). In large part, these groupings provide a



useful forum for leaders of sister parties to cooperate on policy proposals. There is also some financial cooperation (such as aid to weaker national organizations), and support during election campaigns. The latter can come in any number of forms, such as the offering of senior politicians as guest speakers at party rallies overseas, or invitations to send observers to pick up campaign tips. One consequence of such cooperation will inevitably be access to consultants already employed by an affiliated party, and this may be a factor behind the growing tendency for European consultants to cross national borders. This comradely behaviour is not unique to Europe, as we see next.

### 3. Political Aid and its Consequences

Political aid reflects the desire on the part of certain donor countries to foster and nurture the development of particular political practices in receiving countries. Prominent here is the work of the German state-funded party foundations, and U.S. nongovernment agencies.

To speed the rebuilding of political parties after the Nazi period, the German government established party foundations, one for each of the main parties, and endowed each with substantial amounts of public money. Anxious to further the development of democracy in other countries, these foundations started funding overseas political activities from the late 1950s onwards. By 1988, the estimated total amount involved was more than \$170 million (Pinto-Duschinsky 1991). Despite conducting most of their work in underdeveloped countries, the foundations have also established offices in industrialized countries and, in recent years, their efforts have increasingly centered on the newly emerging democracies of east and central Europe and the former Soviet Union. In 1989, for instance, the Social Democrats' Friedrich Ebert Foundation had projects in at least 100 countries. The Christian Democrats' Konrad Adenauer Foundation has focused its attentions on Latin America, while the (Bavarian-based)

Christian Social Union's Hanns Seidel Foundation concentrates its activities in Africa.

On the basis of their annual reports, Pinto-Duschinsky (1991) estimates that somewhere between one-quarter and one-half of the Foundations' total expenditures are for "political education," which includes grants to party-related organizations. Grants to trade unions amount to a further 15–18% in the case of two of the foundations. The foundations are not allowed (by German law) to support campaign activities directly; however, there is always the possibility of developing ways to skirt around these strictures and to provide such support indirectly.

U.S. government support is on a smaller and more diverse scale, routed through a series of nongovernment agencies, such as the National Endowment for Democracy, the International Department of the AFL-CIO, and the "Human Rights and Democratic Initiatives Program" and "Democracy Program" for Latin America administered by the Agency for International Development. Pinto-Duschinsky (1991) estimates that the total cost of the U.S. government's political aid program in 1989 was just under \$100 million. The National Endowment for Democracy's funds are for the most part channeled through the U.S. equivalent of party foundations—for example, the National Republican Institute for International Affairs, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, the Free Trade Union Institute (affiliated with the AFL-CIO), and the Center for International Private Enterprise (affiliated with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce).<sup>1</sup>

What relevance has this discussion of political aid to overseas political consultancy? It is possible that recipient parties may use some of these resources to employ the services of overseas consultants; alternatively, political aid might actually take the form of flying in consultants to help conduct campaigns. It is likely that in such circumstances, the overseas consultants will come from the donor countries.

### Factors Affecting the Internationalization of Campaign Consultancy

Campaign consultants cannot ply their trade willy nilly across international borders. A number of factors can limit the scope for using techniques tried and tested in one country in another. A common explanation refers to the cultural reticence of certain countries. As Napolitan observes, "there are some delicate areas in campaigning abroad, because politicians in many countries are fearful of the reaction in their own countries to the use of American consultants. This isn't true in some countries—but in others the feeling is strong indeed" (1972, 244). A much-cited case in point is the U.K. Despite its suitability in terms of common culture and language and economic wealth, it appeared hesitant both to use U.S. campaign techniques, and, more particularly, to employ U.S. campaign consultants. For instance, in the early 1970s, Joe Napolitan (1972, 255), with evident exasperation at what he sees as a British "chauvinistic shell," cites his difficulties in attracting any kind of British interest in the activities of the IAPC. By the end of the 1970s, the shell was seen to have cracked when the 1979 campaign of the Conservative party made extensive use of techniques and personnel from the U.S., prompting Sabato to remark that the "aloof and skeptical British politicians [were] coming around" (1981, 61).

But too much can be made of cultural reticence. As some U.K. observers have noted, the explanation for late U.K. conversion to the use of campaign consultants must also have had something to do with institutional factors such as campaign laws, the infrequency of elections, and the media and party systems (Kavanagh 1995; Scammell 1995). Of the 11 European countries in Table 1, Britain stands alone as having the most restrictive campaign environment. TV spots are not permitted; to date, the principal parties have refused media invitations for leaders' debates (though they came close to accepting during the 1997 campaign); the parties receive no cam-

**TABLE 1**  
**The Campaign "Environment" in a Range of West European Countries and the U.S.**

	TV spots	Leaders' "debates" <sup>a</sup>	Restrictions on TV access <sup>b</sup>	Other campaign restrictions	State Campaign finance
Austria	Yes	Yes	Proportionate		Yes
Belgium	No	Yes			No
Denmark	No	Yes	Equal		No
Finland	No	Yes	Equal		No
Germany	Yes	Yes	Proportionate		Yes
Ireland	No	Yes	Proportionate		No
Italy	Yes	No	No	7-day ban on polls	Yes
Netherlands	No	Yes	No		No
Norway	No	Yes	No		Yes
Sweden	Yes	Yes	Equal		No
U.K.	No	No	Proportionate	limits on local expend.	No
U.S.	Yes	Yes	No	limits on Pres. expend.	Yes (for Pres.)

Notes: Wherever I am uncertain, I have made no entry.

<sup>a</sup>In some cases (notably Scandinavia), there is little actual debate between the candidates, who are instead quizzed by a panel of journalists.

<sup>b</sup>In some cases by law, in others, according to rules set by broadcasters.

paigned or organizational state finance; and there are limitations on local expenditure by individual candidates. Other countries share some of these restrictions, but no other country in this table imposes quite so many in combination. Many of the other countries now permit TV spots, and, with the sole exception of Italy, all other countries allow leaders' debates. Most provide some form of state funding for the campaigns (and in some of the cases where there is no campaign funding, the parties benefit from state funding of their organizations). Of course, other campaign restrictions can apply. For instance, polling is restricted in the closing days of campaigns in Italy and France, and in France there are restrictions on campaign advertising (Kaid, et al. 1991). Probably the most difficult advanced industrialized democracy in which to conduct a campaign is Japan, where parties and candidates operate under a panoply of legal restrictions (Curtis 1988).

Table 2 sets out the factors that influence the ability of a campaign consultant to operate successfully. The two principal features of the "modern" campaign are, first, the extent to which it is "capital-intensive" by making full use of new cam-

paigned technologies, and second, the extent to which the campaign has a candidate-orientation (Farrell 1996). To run a capital-intensive campaign, by definition, a campaign organization needs to make full use of professionals who are fully versed in the use of new campaign technologies. The relevance of the candidate-centered versus party-centered distinction for campaign consultants is that, in the former case, there is much more scope for individual candidates to employ their own specialists to fight the election campaign; by contrast, in a party-centered system, such as in western Europe, it is more likely that the political parties will have their own campaign professionals as full-time employees (Bowler and Farrell 1992; Farrell 1997). In short, then, those political systems which promote candidate-centered styles of campaigning and, equally, those systems which facilitate a capital-intensive style of electioneering are more likely to be the cases where campaign consultants will be operating, and therefore are more likely to be targets for international consultants.

The economic system is crucial. On the face of it, an impoverished system simply cannot afford the luxury of overseas consultants and, for that matter, where such systems re-

main largely rural with highly dispersed, and often illiterate populations, there is little scope for Madison Avenue techniques (Darnolf 1997; Manor 1992). Of course, not all impoverished systems are in this category. In highly inequitable systems, where resources are kept (plundered?) by the ruling classes, there is nothing to stop them flying in consultants to help them maintain their hegemonies. Another possibility, as we saw, is that the underdeveloped system may be the target of "political aid" from overseas which might help finance the use of outside professionals.

Media systems can also vary, as was illustrated in Table 1. Restrictions on media access can limit a campaign's ability to make full use of capital-intensive techniques and thereby rule out the need for international experts. The same applies wherever there has been little penetration of television. Two cases in point are Botswana and Zimbabwe. In analysing election campaign strategies in the late 1980s, Staffan Darnolf observed that: "In Zimbabwe less than nine percent of voters reported getting political information from television, while in neighboring Botswana there was, for the most

**TABLE 2**  
**Factors Affecting Overseas Consultancy**

Nature of Effect	Institutional factor	Main areas of difference
Effects on degrees of Capital-Intensity	Economic system	Level of economic development
	Media system	State-run monopoly vs. open competition Rules on access to broadcasting media TV penetration
Effects on degrees of Candidate-Centeredness	Governmental system	Presidential vs. parliamentary systems
	Electoral system	Candidate- vs. party-based electoral systems
	Party system	Electoral strength of parties Organizational strength of parties

part, „no local television broadcasting” (1997, 49).

The remaining institutional factors shown in Table 2 would appear to have much more of an effect on the levels of candidate-centeredness of a campaign. The governmental system is an obvious case in point. Napolitan's first overseas campaign experience was in presidential systems like the Philippines and France. Given the fact that American consultants, in particular, are accustomed to operating in the candidate-centered system of the U.S., presidential systems are much more suitable targets than party-centered parliamentary systems. It is no surprise, therefore, to find some Latin American scholars arguing that campaigns in the predominantly presidential systems of that continent manifest more capital-intensive techniques than in much of western Europe, which largely comprises parliamentary systems (Angell, et al. 1992).

The electoral system is another possible factor. Richard S. Katz (1980) was the first to place emphasis on the effects of different electoral systems on styles of campaigning. A distinction can be drawn between electoral systems which are candidate-centered, where the vote involves a choice between competing candidates (e.g., single member simple plurality, majoritarian, single transferable vote, open-list PR), and those which are party-centered, where the vote involves a choice between competing parties (e.g., closed-list PR). In the former case, there is greater scope for candidates to campaign independently of the

central party apparatus, and therefore greater likelihood that they will employ the services of campaign consultants.

Finally, the party system can also influence the campaign process. Wherever parties are weakly organized, with little central control and highly decentralized operations, there is greater scope for candidates to strike out alone and employ their own professional staff. Relatedly, in the case of systems where parties are electorally vulnerable—where voters are more volatile and susceptible to switching loyalties—there is greater scope for candidates to try running their own campaigns.

### Conclusion: Prospects for Future Research

The cross-national study of election campaigning points to clear similarities in campaign styles across the developed (and developing) world. Inevitably there is some adaptation to local institutional and cultural contexts, but in essence the campaigns are very similar (see, for example, Bowler and Farrell 1992; Butler and Ranney 1992; Swanson and Mancini 1996). While some of the explanation for this can be put down to the process of “modernization,” it is clear that particular actors have played some role also. As Swanson and Mancini argue, “perhaps the best description of the present situation is an international network of connections through which knowledge about new campaign practices and their uses is dis-

seminated constantly across national borders by independent consultants for economic reasons, by ideologically kindred political parties for political reasons, and by mass media to aspiring political candidates and interested members of the public worldwide” (1996, 250). The overseas work of campaign consultants, particularly from the U.S. but also from other countries, is playing an important role in influencing the style of campaigning worldwide. It is important that we accumulate more information about these international consultants: who they are, where they come from, and what role they play in foreign campaigns.

### Notes

\* This article was drafted while I was a Fellow at the Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, in the spring of 1997. I am grateful to colleagues there for their encouragement, and to the participants at the POP Workshop for helpful feedback.

1. For discussion on the work of U.S. non-governmental agencies in the South African elections of 1994, see Sisk (1994).

### References

- Angell, Alan, M. D'Alva Kinzo, and D. Urbaneja. 1992. “Latin America.” In *Electification*, ed. D. Butler and A. Ranney. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Blumler, Jay, Dennis Kavanagh, and T. J. Nossiter. 1996. “Modern Communications versus Traditional Politics in Britain: Unstable Marriage of Convenience.” In *Poli-*

- tics, Media, and Modern Democracy: *An International Study of Innovations in Electoral Campaigning and Their Consequences*, ed. D. Swanson and P. Mancini. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Bowler, Shaun, and David Farrell, eds. 1992. *Electoral Strategies and Political Marketing*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Butler, David, and A. Ranney, eds. 1992. *Electioneering*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Curtis, G. 1988. *The Japanese Way of Politics*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Darnolf, Staffan. 1997. *Democratic Electioneering in Southern Africa: The Contrasting Cases of Botswana and Zimbabwe*. Göteborg: Göteborg University.
- Farrell, David. 1996. "Campaign Strategies and Tactics." In *Comparing Democracies: Elections and Voting in Global Perspective*, ed. L. LeDuc, R. Niemi, and P. Norris. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- . 1997. "Campaign Professionalization and Political Parties." Presented at the Workshop on Change in the Relationship of Parties and Democracy, Department of Political Science, Texas A&M University.
- Hix, Simon, and Christopher Lord. 1997. *Political Parties in the European Union*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Kaid, L., J. Gerstlè, and K. Sanders, eds. 1991. *Mediated Politics in Two Cultures: Presidential Campaigning in the United States and France*. New York: Praeger.
- Katz, Richard. 1980. *A Theory of Parties and Electoral Systems*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Kavanagh, Dennis. 1995. *Election Campaigning: The New Marketing of Politics*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Manor, James. 1992. "India." In *Electioneering*, ed. D. Butler and A. Ranney. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Napolitan, Joe. 1972. *The Election Game: And How to Win It*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- Negrine, R., and S. Papathanassopoulos. 1996. "The Americanization of Political Communication: A Critique." *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 1(2): 45–62.
- Pinto-Duschinsky, Michael. 1991. "Foreign Political Aid: The German Political Foundations and their U.S. Counterparts." *International Affairs* 67(1): 33–63.
- Sabato, Larry. 1981. *The Rise of Political Consultants: New Ways of Winning Elections*. New York: Basic Books.
- Scammell, Margaret. 1995. *Designer Politics: How Elections are Won*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- . 1997. "The Wisdom of the War Room: U.S. Campaigning and Americanization." *Joan Shorenstein Center on Press, Politics and Public Policy Research Paper*, R-17, April.
- Sisk, Timothy. 1994. "A U.S. Perspective on South Africa's 1994 Election." In *Election '94 South Africa: The Campaigns, Results and Future Prospects*, ed. Andrew Reynolds. Cape Town and Johannesburg: David Philip.
- Swanson, David, and Paolo Mancini. 1996. "Patterns of Modern Electoral Campaigning and their Consequences." In *Politics, Media, and Modern Democracy: An International Study of Innovations in Electoral Campaigning and Their Consequences*, ed. D. Swanson and P. Mancini. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- West, Paul. 1989. "America's Latest Export: Political Consultants." *Campaigns & Elections* 10(1): 15–20.

---

## About the Author

**David M. Farrell** is a senior Jean Monnet Lecturer at the University of Manchester, UK. Coeditor of *Party Politics*, and author of books and articles on parties, campaigning and electoral systems, Dr. Farrell's most recent publications include *Comparing Electoral Systems* (Prentice-Hall, 1997), and *Party Cohesion, Party Discipline and the Organization of Parliaments* (coeditor, Ohio State University Press, 1998).