
**A Review of *Political Communication*, by Antonia
Enache and Marina Militaru
(Editura Universitară Publishing House, Bucharest, 2013)**

ALINA MARIA SEICA

The study *Political Communication*, written by Antonia Enache and Marina Militaru, stands out primarily due to its comprehensive scope – the research bridges multiple disciplines (linguistics, political science, communication studies and, last but not least, psychology); moreover, it does not just theorize, it provides real examples from Romanian, American, and French political campaigns (1996-2012). Its approach is innovative in that it blends universally applicable, unwritten laws of political communication with culturally specific aspects, which results in a complex, nuanced, culturally balanced perspective on the way in which political actors communicate with their audiences.

The volume presents a groundbreaking framework from the very beginning; one of its main strengths resides in the classification of *discourse strategies* politicians use into positive, negative and neutral, which we see in Part 1; this approach puts forth a clear analytical lens and enhances the reader's understanding of political speeches in general. The examples supporting the authors' findings illustrate the workings of public discourse in multiple democracies; while this, on the one hand, suggests universal patterns in political communication that are explained using research-based psychological insights, the analyses provided also do justice to the aspects pertaining to each country in part. Equally importantly, Part 2's focus on nonverbal communication fills a gap in Romanian academic literature on this topic, since research in this area was at the time, and still is, significantly scarce.

The theoretical foundations the study builds on are solid and diverse. On the one hand, the research integrates classic as well as contemporary scholarship, combining foundational work (such as the theory of Paul Ekman and Wallace F. Friesen) with modern political marketing concepts – an approach that is as original as it is insightful and versatile; on the other hand, the authors synthesize democracy theory, power dynamics, and communication strategies, which together deliver the proper setting for impactful political communication.

Part 1 revolves around the *promise* as a central concept, the authors describing it as the “backbone” of any political message, a construct that gives credibility to the speaker and significantly contributes to building rapport with the audience, thus influencing the results of current and future elections. The political promise is seen as an inherent part of *permanent campaigning* (a concept coined by Darren Lilleker in 2006, the respective theorist pointing out that the campaigns political actors engage in go beyond the confines of electoral periods, covering more or less the entire time they spend in the public eye; therefore, any instance of communication that emerges therein can help or hurt the initiator in the long run), and several types of promises are analysed. For

example, if a *firm promise* comes across as a form of commitment from the initiator to deliver a specific outcome, a *mitigated promise* turns the pledge into an intention, as contingencies may arise, whereas a *conditional promise* brings forward the existence of aspects that may influence the future course of events. The concepts are analysed in nuanced ways, taking into account subtle undertones such as, primarily, the distinction between an unmet promise and a lie, or the way in which promises can be manoeuvred by politicians acting in ill faith.

The discourse analysis methodology combines verbal and nonverbal elements, while the relevance of the breakdown can be described as timeless, despite the arguably dated examples – although the examined campaigns go as far back as 1996 and stretch only until 2012, the strategies identified remain equally applicable today.

The study puts forth other original insights; for example, the comparison between political and commercial advertising, with all its implications for democratic engagement, since the interest in politics has the potential of turning a concerned citizen into a mere “consumer” of political candidates and slogans; the discussion of modern communication channels such as the internet and social media (given the fact that, at the time the book was written, the latter were only emerging, the approach was revolutionary for its time), as well as highlighting the priority of emotion over reason in political persuasion and voter decision-making.

Among other unique contributions of the study for Romanian readers, it is important to point out that it addresses a significant gap in Romanian-language literature on nonverbal political communication; equally, combining text and gesture analysis reveals an unprecedented undertaking. The “3Vs” framework (Verbal, Vocal, Visual elements – Mehrabian's 7-38-55 rule applied to politics), the visual framing taxonomy (the “ideal candidate”, “populist campaigner”, and “sure loser” frames), as well as the gesture classification applied to politicians stand out as conceptual innovations providing Romanian readers with extensive tools for processing political communication beyond speech alone.

The volume also presents an undisputed pedagogical value: by including practice files for classroom use, questions encouraging critical analysis skills, and a mix of theory and application, it serves not only as a reference work, but also as a valuable teaching resource for courses in political communication, media studies, and discourse analysis.

If we were to address its potential limitations, we would point to the time-sensitive nature of the examples (up to 2012) which is, however, unavoidable in any study of this nature, since an author can only discuss a corpus existent before the publication of the research; along the same lines, there is limited treatment of the transformative impact of social media which, as noted earlier, was only emerging at the time of writing. We equally believe the study could benefit from more non-Western democratic examples; that addition would offer a broader comparative perspective, thereby enhancing its relevance for readers worldwide.

The target audience of the volume includes advanced undergraduate and graduate students in political science, communication, economics, and journalism, political campaign professionals and consultants, journalists covering politics, campaign advisors, as well as citizens looking to become more media-literate voters.

To conclude, it is important to point out that the study *Political Communication*, written by Antonia Enache and Marina Militaru, fills an important gap in Romanian academic literature by demonstrating that political communication is an elusive, versatile science following relatively predictable strategies, yet rich in nuance

and implication. It represents a valuable contribution to understanding how democracies function through impactful communication, while the interdisciplinary approach helps strengthen rather than dilute the analysis.