

Campaign Strategies: How the Campaign Was Won and Lost

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The political landscape as Ireland approached its 2016 general election was almost unrecognisable from the stolid certainties that characterised much of the country's history. In recent decades even the rise of new actors such as the Progressive Democrats (PDs) and the Greens had not entirely disrupted the old two-and-a-half-party system; in some respects, they actually reinforced it. By 2016, however, all had changed utterly. The behemoth that was Fianna Fáil was a shadow of its former self. Labour had surged in 2011, but then fallen away and now the party faced a showdown with voters that some party members feared could destroy it as a viable political entity, such were the levels of public antipathy towards its candidates. Fine Gael had replaced Fianna Fáil as the largest party, but approached the election not confident in its new status, but wondering how it could best contain inevitable losses. It waited, increasingly impatiently, for an anticipated recovery in its fortunes to arrive. Momentum was with the

This chapter relies heavily on the author's own coverage of the campaign in *The Sunday Business Post*, and subsequent to the election in *The Irish Times*. Further sources include a series of background interviews with politicians and campaign staff in all parties. Where possible, sources have been cited.

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M. Gallagher, M. Marsh (eds.), *How Ireland Voted 2016*,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-40889-7_4