



## MANAGING ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS AND PROGRAMS IN IRAQI TV CHANNELS AND THEIR IMPACT ON THEIR ELECTORAL BEHAVIOR

**Assistant Prof. Dr. Muhammad Bashir Mansour, Dr. Saleh Youssef Sharaf, Abdul Latif Muwaffaq Al-Zaidi**

University of Al-Jazeera, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Republic of Sudan

[a.m.lateef@uoanbar.edu.iq](mailto:a.m.lateef@uoanbar.edu.iq)

### *Abstract*

Most contemporary societies have adopted a democratic system of government as an alternative to totalitarianism or a one-party system. The trajectory of this alternative approach can be traced from the 1970s through attempts to generalize it and announce its adoption on a global scale during the first decade of the current century. This was evident in the historical transformations and the trend toward adopting a democratic system that occurred in the societies of Southern Europe, Latin America, some Asian and African societies, and Eastern European societies after the fall of the Soviet Union. It is also possible to recognize the generality of the call to adopt a democratic system of government, in the social issues raised in the context of the call for political reform in societies whose systems of government still rely on traditional tribal foundations and principles, such as Gulf societies. These societies sought to achieve advanced steps toward establishing legislative institutions and related modern political processes, such as parliamentary elections and local council elections, given the importance of elections. It plays a pivotal role in building political trust and in fulfilling society's desires and demands.

With the growing importance of elections and political parties in democratic systems, electoral campaigns gained increasing importance beginning in the last decade of the twentieth century, especially after the diminishing influence of ideology, which had previously performed two essential functions: First, it was the primary determinant governing the interactions of political parties and forces, both among themselves and with the ruling political system, and regulating their engagement with domestic and foreign issues. Second, it was also the decisive factor in citizens' adherence to one party or another. In other words, ideology was one of the determinants of distinction between parties and political forces present on the domestic scene. The researcher's study of the electoral behavior of Iraqi youth is what prompted him to choose this topic for study, and to determine the importance of youth exposure to Iraqi television channels and the impact of this exposure on their electoral behavior.

### **Introduction**

#### **Research Problem:**

Awareness and definition of the problem is the starting point and the most important step in scientific research, as it is the basis for other steps and procedures. Selecting and defining the

problem is a fundamental step, as it entails implementation procedures, analysis, analysis, and formulation. A scientific problem is defined as "an ambiguous situation, a situation fraught with doubt, a phenomenon requiring explanation, or an issue that has been disputed and views differ, and the research process essentially requires it.

### **The Importance of the Study**

There must be convincing justifications for conducting scientific research. These justifications lie in the importance inherent in the research. Research that does not have a specific importance is not warranted. Research gains its importance from the contribution it makes to the scientific research movement, which is supposed to be new in its field, as well as its benefit to the community concerned with the phenomenon or problem the researcher is studying, in addition to its importance to the researcher himself. In order for the researcher to begin his research, he must clearly state the importance of his research. In this regard, specialists emphasize that the researcher must reveal the importance of his research in convincing terms. These terms must highlight two basic aspects:

1. What is the theoretical importance of the research? How do the results of the study fit into resolving controversial theoretical problems? What new facts and information will it add to knowledge in the field of specialization?
2. What is the practical importance of the research, and how can the results be utilized in real-life situations? In light of these implications, the importance of this research can be explained in the following points:
  - This research derives its importance from the political significance of the Iraqi elections and their role in revitalizing the electoral political culture among Iraqi youth, who have been exhausted by wars, armed conflicts, and economic and social crises.
  - This study addresses the issue of the Iraqi parliamentary elections, which Iraqi society has experienced as one of the most important political manifestations expressing youth participation in political life. It also highlights the importance of this participation in light of contemporary democratic transformations.
  - There is a dearth of studies focusing on youth and the impact of Iraqi media on their electoral behavior during the election period. Youth participation in political life is crucial, as it restructures the country's political life and restores vitality and vigor.
  - The research contributes to filling the gap in research addressing youth exposure to Iraqi television channels during the election period and the impact of this exposure on their electoral behavior.
  - Benefits for the Iraqi media community, as the results of the analysis resulting from the research provide media workers with an objective view of television media materials related to elections and electoral programs.
  - Identifying its strengths and weaknesses in terms of form and content, and introducing them to how the media deals with election campaigns and the election period in a way that makes these materials interesting to youth and all age groups in Iraqi society.
  - Television format is of paramount importance in influencing audience behavior due to its multiple technical characteristics, such as sound, image, color, and movement. It should be noted that television media materials related to elections and election programs derive their effectiveness primarily from their content, television format, and the manner in which these

election programs are presented, as many candidates may not be known to the Iraqi voting public.

Through the researcher's review of media studies, he found a clear lack of studies on this topic at the Iraqi level.

### **Third: Study Objectives:**

Since scientific research is an organized and purposeful intellectual activity, it is imperative for the researcher to define the objectives he or she seeks to achieve by studying the problem he or she is addressing. The purpose of the research refers to the aims and objectives the researcher seeks to achieve in order to achieve the general objectives of science, which are represented by "firstly, detection, analysis, clarification, description, and interpretation; secondly, the desire to control and manage variables and data; and thirdly, prediction and generalization."

This research seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To uncover the role played by Iraqi satellite channels in influencing the electoral behavior of Iraqi youth during the election period.
2. To analyze the content of the television discourse of Iraqi satellite channels, which addresses the process of behavioral influence on Iraqi youth regarding elections and electoral programs.
3. To identify the media forms presented on Iraqi satellite channels for electoral programs and campaigns.
4. To clarify the trends in television material covering the Iraqi elections broadcast by the Iraqi satellite channels under study.

### **Study Community and Sample:**

1. The study concerns the Iraqi elections taking place across all Iraqi territories, which the researcher used as a model for the study. Therefore, the research community is assumed to consist of all media materials broadcast by the Iraqi television channels under study and application (Al-Iraqiya TV and Zagros TV) about the election campaigns and programs during the time period of the last elections held in Iraq in 2018.
2. The homogeneity of the research community lies in the fact that all materials revolve around the elections in Iraq. In cases where the research community is homogeneous, the researcher can adopt a simple random sample to select a sample from it. Therefore, the researcher will select two media materials from each channel as a sample for the study.

### **Managing Election Campaigns and Their Associated Programs**

Election campaign management is a set of rules and ongoing processes for optimally exploiting available human and material resources and capabilities to achieve a specific, clear, and declared goal. Through sound management, those in charge of election campaigns decide what they want, what they will do, where, how, and when, what their resources are, and who their people are. The organizational structure in election campaign management is the starting point for determining the goal. The distribution of responsibilities represents the structure or framework that defines the departments or internal components. These are the organizational divisions and units that carry out the work and activities required to achieve the objectives. Election campaign management draws on numerous scientific concepts, which necessitates research into these concepts to distinguish them from election campaigns and focus on their

effectiveness in managing election campaigns. Political marketing is one of the most important scientific fields that has grown rapidly in recent decades. It is a scientific and applied field resulting from the convergence and integration of politics and marketing. The emergence of this research and applied field coincided with the emergence of what is known as the consumer trend in the political environment and the growing power of the political consumer. This is because all political media activities seek to influence the recipient (the voter) to persuade them to vote for one candidate over another or to accept a marketed political idea. The need to avoid improvisation in the matter of candidacy and election campaign management has led to the adoption of what is known as "political marketing," which, in its broadest sense, constitutes a set of activities and methods that help candidates and political parties understand the electorate and their needs, with the aim of defining goals and programs in a manner consistent with them. Voter aspirations; in its narrow sense, it refers to political communication between political leaders and citizens.

In other words, the term political marketing refers to the planning and implementation of building public support for a political institution or candidate, and maintaining this support by achieving competitive advantages for the institution, party, or political candidate. This is achieved by using strategic plans that rely on direct and mass political communication channels to achieve the desired impact of marketing ideas or individuals.

### **The Relationship of Political Marketing to Election Campaigns**

There are various opinions regarding the relationship between political marketing and political science. One view is that political marketing offers new ways to understand modern politics, as the concept in this respect is broader than what political parties and candidates do to influence citizens' behavior in elections. It examines and explains the leading behavior of political actors, regardless of their positions and goals. Its focus extends from election campaigns to the highest levels of government policy and to the management of political institutions and political parties. Political science then contributes to understanding the background of the political process or what lies behind these processes. It helps create explanatory models for the behavior of political parties and leaders. It also clarifies the relationship between parties and voters, and the extent of citizens' interest in democratic practice and its outcomes. Another view asserts that the adoption of political marketing during election campaigns has led to the emergence of a serious approach to political work that seeks to understand voter demands and aspirations, and subsequently develop a candidate's platform to suit them. It is worth noting that the priority of "demand" constitutes the most prominent characteristic of political marketing. This means that every action is undertaken based on what the public is believed to support or demand, including the candidate's selection of important issues to be addressed during the campaign. The campaign works to align the political offering with popular demand by employing market research techniques and exploring the electoral market through:

1. Segmenting voters according to various criteria, including social, demographic, and political.
2. Targeting voter segments that must be contacted individually according to their classification criteria.

The candidate's positioning relative to competitors can be determined through methods and techniques of collecting and analyzing information, such as opinion polls.

Thus, political marketing and electoral marketing share a common goal. Both aim to present a positive image to the political consumer in order to gain public support, which can only be achieved by studying the political market to understand the hopes and aspirations of the political masses. However, in terms of difference, it can be said that political marketing is more comprehensive and continuous in its communication than electoral marketing, which may sever its connection with the public (voters) once the candidate wins the election or the campaign period ends. Election campaigns are similar to political marketing in many respects. Some have argued that election campaigns are political marketing, while others have taken the opposite view, arguing that there is a difference between the two concepts.

Political marketing is primarily concerned with promoting a program or project that is implemented on an ongoing basis, rather than merely a temporary, partial project like election campaigns. Furthermore, the results of political marketing are tangible to citizens in real terms, while the results of election campaigns involve future issues and remain a matter of doubt for voters. Political marketing systems are constantly being renewed with each new political or electoral campaign, as they provide political communication with all the necessary information. It is one of the most important elements used in election campaigns, especially in light of the developments witnessed by communication media. It is a modern model used by candidates in their campaigns to convey the candidate's message to the public.

### **Political Advertising and Election Campaigns**

Political advertising is one of the most influential means of political communication among the population in general, and the electorate and public opinion in particular. It is a key variable that cannot be overlooked by those in charge of election campaigns during elections and political events that witness competition between candidates representing different orientations. Many political leaders employ available means of communication to serve their electoral programs, goals, and objectives. Through these means, the ideology of the party and the candidate is presented through a specific communication approach with the aim of promoting it to public opinion. Therefore, advertising is accused of being the direct cause of many of the problems that people suffer from, such as marketing candidates like films and TV series, and exaggerating in giving them attributes that have no connection to reality. In this regard, some countries set laws and legislation that limit this type of advertising and the amount of money spent on any type of political candidate advertisement. Advertising as a tool is often used in the commercial field, but recently it has begun to be used in election campaigns as a means of campaigning. Political electoral advertising is defined as: the activity that aims to organize the number of supporters for a political candidate, or for a specific party, including financial and public support using all means of political communication. Political electoral advertising aims to sell the political product, which is a program or idea related to a party or candidate, i.e. communicating the program or idea to the target audiences and convincing them of it, i.e. creating the targeted impact on the voting public, as it works to spread ideas and news that people's minds want to believe by influencing their minds and emotions to achieve specific goals through a simple advertising message free of complications so that the recipient does not find it difficult to receive it, as it is linked to the social environment of the state, far from lying,

as advertising exposes the advertiser or candidate to losing credibility in front of the public. The famous saying of the Nazi Minister of Propaganda (Joseph Paul Goebbels): "Lie, lie, until people believe you" has become useless in our time because the facts are clear to most people.

### **New Media**

New media is a term that refers to a multi-media media system that differs in its concept from other media systems. It is distinguished by several features, the most important of which are interactivity and ease of movement, ensuring widespread popularity and dissemination. It is based on the integration of old media tools with digital tools and the World Wide Web (the Internet), facilitating the rapid dissemination of information and news. It also provides an interactive process between the sender and the receiver, enabling the sender to communicate with the receiver and gain insights into any published topic. It includes all communication technologies that rely on digital means to transmit content. The emergence of the Internet has been an unprecedented revolution in the field of communication, enabling the freedom, ease, and speed of information exchange and flow around the clock, and providing a variety of services, including websites, forums, browsing, chat rooms, news groups, email, social networks, and more. New media has given electoral campaigns great flexibility in communication, and has supported the role of the recipient, enabling them to become both an active recipient and producer, as well as a sender, without restriction or censorship, and in accordance with the criteria they choose and determine. Through new media, anyone can publish news and information and pass it on to others, attaching appropriate images or video clips. These new tools play an effective role in mobilizing public opinion, communicating, and participating in all societal issues and events, as they are an interactive form of media that enables all participants to express their opinions with absolute seriousness, exchange opinions and information, and express themselves in various media forms, thus becoming a new media mechanism and a source of information for many segments of society. Hence, the emergence of alternative media, represented by the Internet, came as a reactionary movement or a violent reaction to the social reality imposed by communications technology, which provided alternative means of publication with a high degree of freedom, ease of use, and low cost. This was to eliminate the control of the media elite over traditional media in society, and the lack of credibility in traditional media. New media has changed the consumer nature of the public. Despite the fact that the audience of traditional media has actually decreased due to the attraction of large numbers of them to the various applications of new media, the spread of these new tools has raised several issues, including that the audience of these new media has the freedom to choose what they watch, and as a result, it weaves content according to its preferences. The Internet allows voters, even at home, to obtain information about candidates. It is an important source of information and two-way communication between candidates and voters. It plays an important role, just like other means of communication used in election campaigns. Perhaps a contemplator of the reality of election campaigns in Iraq reveals the presence of the technological factor in most of the electoral experiences it has undergone. The electoral process is no longer traditional, but has begun to move on multiple backgrounds in light of modern means of communication. This is what the researcher observed in the election campaigns for the 2018 House of Representatives elections, where the phenomenon of using the Internet by candidates emerged, and many of them sought to create their own pages on

social networking sites such as (Facebook, Twitter), and even private channels on (YouTube), to broadcast their electoral message and present the electoral program.

### **The Concept of Political Behavior**

Political studies have begun to address the concept of "political behavior" as an approach to the new field of political science. This has begun to revive psychological interest in political studies, as well as other sciences such as individual psychology, social psychology, sociology, anthropology, and, most recently, political sociology. This is because an individual's political behavior is part of their overall behavior. There has been increased interest in the potential non-political effects of shaping political behavior. Political behavior addresses phenomena specific to political elites, such as the personality, motivations, and actions of political leaders. It also examines personal motivations in domestic and foreign political decision-making, and even in international conflict and dispute resolution. It also addresses the dynamics of political behavior, including voting and collective action, the effects of political communications, political socialization, civic education, and social justice. Political scientists have developed numerous approaches that enable them to investigate key behavioral patterns in politics. This research has encompassed diverse fields, such as election campaigns, political communications, the media, electoral behavior, public opinion, propaganda, and various activities with political implications. Therefore, definitions of the concept of "political behavior" have varied, diverse, and differed in their definition of the concept and the driver or driver of behavior. "Political behavior" represents a pattern of social behavior, and Zainal Agha Oji defined it as: "An important pattern of social behavior, subject to the same conditions, specifications, rules, and laws." However, it focuses on activities and events related to governance, leadership, organization, and the coordination of society to achieve its goals and satisfy the ambitions and aspirations of its members. These must be consistent with the nature of the social system, which the political leadership seeks to strengthen and protect from internal and external dangers and challenges. At the same time, it strives to consolidate, develop, and advance this system in service of the goals of the social system.

### **Electoral Programs of Alliances and Political Parties in the 2018 Elections**

The political experience over the past fifteen years has produced hundreds of parties in the Iraqi political arena. This arena is characterized by instability, conflict, and the influence of foreign intervention. The inherent characteristics of the Iraqi politician, a product of a past characterized by a totalitarian regime that ruled the country for decades, have left their mark on the nature of these parties, their electoral programs, and their political discourse. This has led to the spread of a populist culture that has left its mark on all aspects of political and social interaction in Iraq, even extending to most executive, legislative, and judicial decision-making positions. When we read the electoral programs and what the political parties have put forward in their media appearances in the various political communication means (debates and television programs), in addition to the visual political messages that the candidates and political parties promote through their various means, and when the researcher obtains the electoral programs of the political parties and alliances, the following becomes clear to us:

A. The electoral programs of political alliances were characterized by a marketing tone for their leaders. For example, the electoral program of Al-Nasr was characterized by a clear

promotional nature for the alliance leader (Haider al-Abadi), as was the case for the Fatah Alliance led by Hadi al-Amiri.

B. The electoral programs of political parties and alliances were characterized by similarity in the provisions they called for upon assuming power. However, despite this similarity between political alliances and parties, there was no centralization between the allied parties and the central political program of the alliance, let alone the central program of the alliance and the programs of the candidates. There was an electoral program for the alliance, an electoral program for the candidate, an electoral program for the party within the alliance, and so on. The 2018 Iraqi parliamentary elections witnessed an unprecedented state of chaos in electoral programs and objectives, and a lack of centralization, which is one of the foundations of electoral campaigns and the implementation of their goals. They were characterized by personalization and improvisation on the part of the candidates.

C. Electoral programs are presented in a lengthy, descriptive narrative style, detailing the demands voters hope to achieve. It is common practice in drafting electoral programs to be brief, one or two pages long, and to focus on specific themes stemming from the problems of electoral districts. These issues are discussed in media appearances across various communication channels. This is what we call "reliable electoral competition."

D. While the programs of Iraqi political parties and alliances are presented in books and volumes that outline the parties' pledges to voters, this explains the parties' evasion of responsibility if they fail to implement their programs should they come to power. Despite this, defining these mechanisms could make the programs more realistic and more accessible to voters, convincing them of the validity of the promises and distancing them from being merely a collection of boring slogans. The pledge to achieve constitutional, governmental, and parliamentary reform, and to achieve security, sovereignty, and services, must be achievable and implementable. The electoral programs, and the manner in which they are addressed, are among the criteria for characterizing the extent to which these entities respect democratic values and adhere to them in both rhetoric and practice.

E. Any electoral program presented in the electoral campaigns of parties competing in the House of Representatives elections reinforces the parties' vision within the government. We did not find an electoral program that adopts the option of opposition, oversight and follow-up. Moreover, these programs exceed the limits of the powers and duties of the representative and the nature of his work. If electoral programs are the means of communication between candidates and voters in democratic systems, then in the political work in Iraq they are not as important as what exists in other democratic countries. This is because the Iraqi people do not consider them the basis for electing candidates to the executive authority. The inclinations of the Iraqi voter are religious, sectarian, national, governmental, or political, without a shrewd political awareness that enables them to understand the nature of the representative's work. Is it to appoint the voter and enable him to obtain a job? Or to pave a street? Or to preserve the egg of the clan, sect and nationality? The representative's duties are to legislate laws and monitor the work of the executive authority, but the candidates continue to imitate the simple understanding of the voter's understanding of the nature of the work of the House of Representatives, and this has led to electoral programs becoming a redundant link in the political process in Iraq. Therefore, we always find that these electoral programs are almost a



copy of the majority of competing political entities, as we find the same topics and visions but with different formulations repeated in the programs of the various parties.

### **Electoral Platforms and Political Discourse in Election Campaigns**

Research has demonstrated the weakness of the explanations long offered by researchers in Iraq, as they have focused on the emergence of political parties and the political elite's understanding of society. However, actual reality has confirmed the futility of this perspective and the need to focus on a political understanding that stems from the bottom, not the top. Many political discourse researchers have emphasized that many forms of social inequality, such as those based on gender, class, race, religion, and so on, are portrayed, maintained, and legitimized through text and discourse, particularly within the public discourse dominated by symbolic elites such as politicians, journalists, scholars, writers, and bureaucrats. Election campaign practices and the promotion of a party's or political alliance's electoral platform are driven by what candidates, parties, and political entities present in media appearances, including seminars, conferences, television channels, and so on. Therefore, Iraqi political parties and alliances, with their candidates and campaign machinery, have worked to broadcast these electoral programs through various means, including television debates, television programs, video campaign messages, some general items and objectives in pictures and banners, electoral rallies and conferences, etc. It appears that the political discourse of candidates and bloc leaders is predominantly populist in its presentation and discussion of electoral programs in the 2018 political arena. This is a clear indication that the post-2003 Iraqi political experience has not reached a sufficient stage of maturity in its engagement with the country's issues. It is impossible to identify speeches and programs from Iraqi parties that offer a reasonable level of realistic plans or visions that work to put future solutions on the right track, or that adopt solutions and proposals that courageously address the political, security, economic, and social challenges facing the Iraqi state-building process.

### **References**

1. Hamid Jaed Mohsen, (2004) *Fundamentals of Methodological Research*, Baghdad, Al-Hadara Printing and Publishing Company, p. 34.
2. Muwaffaq Al-Hamdani and others, (2006), *Scientific Research Methods: Fundamentals of Scientific Research*, Amdan, Amdan Arab University for Graduate Studies, p. 86..
3. Raja Mahmoud Abu Alam, (2010) *Research Methods in Psychological and Educational Sciences*, Cairo, Dar Al-Qahira, pp. 24-25.
4. Abdul Rabbo Abdul Qader Al-Anzi, *Political Marketing Theory: Concepts and Implications in the Political Field*, Strategic Visions Magazine, Issue 52, Al-Azhar University, Palestine, 2016, pp. 1-2.
5. Muhammad Saad Abu Amoud, *Political Marketing and Election Campaign Management*, previously mentioned source, p. 11.
6. Jocelyn Al-Bustani, *Election Campaigns (Management and Secrets)*, 1st ed., Dargham for Publishing and Distribution, Beirut, 2014, pp. 24-25.
7. Laila Filali, *Formation and Guidance of Public Opinion in Election Campaigns*, Al-Mi'yar Journal, Issue 12, Emir Abdelkader University, Algeria, 2005, p. 410.

8. Abdel Salam Abu Qahf, Advertising and Public Relations Engineering, Al-Isha'a Technical Press, Cairo, 1999, p. 108.
9. Mustafa Abdelkader, Marketing Politics and Services, previously mentioned source, p. 37.
10. Samira Shakhanin, New Media in the Information Age, Damascus University Journal, Issues One and Two, Damascus University, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, 2010, p. 442.
11. Hussein Shafiq, Media Misinformation and Professional Coma, Fikr wa Fann Printing and Publishing House, Cairo, 2011, pp. 82-83.
12. Mohamed Shoman, Citizen Media (Future Trends), Press and Media Pamphlets, Issue 1, Al-Ahram Regional Institute for Journalism, Cairo, 2012, p. 2.
13. Sherif Darwish Al-Labban, Facebook and Alternative Media, Center for Political and Strategic Studies, Civil Society Program, Al-Ahram Foundation, Cairo, 2009, pp. 2-3.
14. Essam El-Din Farag, Media Professionals and Elections, 2nd ed., Al-Ahram Foundation and Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Liberty, Cairo, 2011, p. 47.
15. Walid Rashed Zaki, Technological Agents in the Electoral Process, Democracy Magazine (Elections), Issue 45, Al-Ahram Foundation, Cairo, 2012, p. 161.
16. Quoted from: Raghad Nassif Jassim, previously mentioned source, p. 280.
17. Ihsan Muhammad Al-Hassan, Political Sociology, 1st ed., Wael Publishing and Distribution House, Amman, 2005, p. 115.
18. Quoted from: Hassan Saab, Political Science, Dar Al-Ilm Lil-Malayin, Beirut, 1985, p. 68.
19. Ismail Abdel Fattah Abdel Kafi, Dictionary of Globalization Era Terms (Political, Economic, Social, Psychological, Media), 1st ed., Dar Al Thaqafiya for Publishing, Cairo, 2004, p. 32.
20. Ihsan Muhammad Al Hassan, previously cited source, p. 116; Raghad Naseef Jassim, previously cited source, p. 281.  
Ahmed Adnan Al Mayali, Electoral Programs of Iraqi Political Entities: Reading Between the Lines, Future Center for Strategic Studies, International Information Network (Internet), at the link: <http://mcsr.net/news379>.