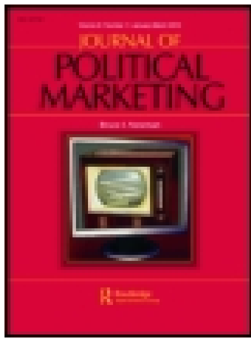

Journal of Political Marketing

ISSN: 1537-7857 (Print) 1537-7865 (Online) Journal homepage: http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/wplm20

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Adam Harmes

To cite this article: Adam Harmes (2016): Political Marketing in Post-Conflict Elections: The Case of Iraq, Journal of Political Marketing, DOI: 10.1080/15377857.2016.1193834

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15377857.2016.1193834

Accepted author version posted online: 03 Jun 2016.
Published online: 03 Jun 2016.

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Political Marketing in Post-conflict Elections: The Case of Iraq

Adam Harmes

Address correspondence to Adam Harmes, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Western Ontario, 4155 Social Sciences Building, London, ON N6A 5C2, Canada. 416-346-4770. E-mail: aharmes@uwo.ca

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Abstract

This article examines political marketing in post-conflict elections through an illustrative case study of post-Saddam Iraq. It does so through articles and media reports as well as interviews and participant-observation research conducted in Iraq during the 2014 national and provincial elections. The article argues that, despite having a number of the comparative and ethnic conflict country characteristics that work against a market oriented approach, Iraqi political parties have become increasingly professionalized and, to a lesser extent, willing to change their product in response to market research. It further argues that the Iraqi case can contribute to broader debates in the political marketing literature over the definition of market orientation and over the comparative factors that can help or hinder the spread of political marketing techniques.

Keywords:

The literature on political marketing has grown from its initial focus on the Anglo-American countries to take into account a broader comparative perspective (Lilleker and Lees-Marshment, Eds. 2005b; Lees-Marshment, Stromback, and Rudd, Eds. 2010). This has included a wider range of developed countries as well as a growing number of developing and transition

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countries. One area that has yet to be significantly explored, however, is the nature of political marketing in post-conflict elections. The need to understand post-conflict elections is increasingly important given that elections "have become the mechanism of choice for facilitating the passage from civil war to peace" as well as "an important benchmark for the international community in assessing the institutionalization of a peace process" (Garber and Kumar 1998, 35). At the same time, given their deep internal divisions, security problems and political and economic underdevelopment, post-conflict countries are an interesting test case for political marketing theory as they would seem to constitute a 'least likely' case (Odell 2001) for where we would expect to see parties adopting a market oriented approach. Thus, while there are expanding literatures on both political marketing and on post-conflict elections, there has been little work seeking to combine the two.

Reflecting this gap in the literature, the purpose of this article is to provide an initial exploration of political marketing in post-conflict elections through an illustrative case study of post-Saddam Iraq. It does so through articles and media reports as well as interviews and participant-observation research conducted in Iraq during the 2014 national and provincial elections. The article argues that, despite having a number of the comparative and ethnic conflict country characteristics that work against a market oriented approach, Iraqi political parties have become increasingly professionalized and, to a lesser extent, willing to change their product in response to market research. It further argues that the Iraqi case can contribute to broader debates in the political marketing literature over the definition of market orientation and over the comparative factors that can help or hinder the spread of political marketing techniques.

POLITICAL MARKETING THEORY

As Lilleker and Lees-Marshment (2005b, 6) note, "[p]olitical marketing is the use of marketing concepts and techniques in politics". Moreover, political marketing can be viewed, in part, as the recent trend towards the greater professionalization of political management, one where a difference in degree has come to represent a difference in kind. Political marketing theory includes both the 'how-to' literature directed at practitioners as well as the more academic attempts to describe, evaluate and compare this trend across different countries. In the latter case, the main focus has been on distinguishing the use of political marketing from other, earlier forms of campaigning and trying to "understand what causes some political parties to become more market oriented than others, and what impact this is having on the political system as a whole" (Lees-Marshment 2010, 2). The comparative approach also seeks to identify "systemic features that inhibit or facilitate the adoption of professional political marketing techniques and approaches within different nations" (Ibid.).

To distinguish the use of political marketing from earlier forms of campaigning, Stromback notes that "several authors have identified three different phases" since the Second World War (2007, 51). For example, both Norris (2000) and Plasser and Plasser (2002) refer to the 'premodern', 'modern' and 'postmodern' phases. Others use different terms but also identify three phases (Farrell 1996; Blumler and Kavanagh 1999; Farrell and Webb 2000). Each of these phases are viewed as part of an ongoing evolution in political campaigning towards ever-greater professionalization. Equally important, according to Stromback, is that many of these authors "include 'political marketing' in one way or another, as part of the 'third' or 'postmodern' stage" (2007, 55). Therefore, much of the literature associates political marketing with professionalization and views it as the currently most advanced form of political campaigning.

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To further describe the political marketing trend and distinguish it from earlier forms of campaigning, the literature has also employed the concept of 'market orientation' drawn from the commercial marketing literature (e.g. Kohli and Jaworski 1990; Narver and Slater 1990; Deshpande, Farley, and Webster 1993; Slater and Narver 1995, 1998). Moreover, "In addition to a market orientation, the commercial marketing literature also acknowledges the existence of product and sales orientations...[and]...It is generally agreed in the commercial marketing literature that both are subordinate to a market orientation" (Ormrod 2007, 74). In the commercial literature, therefore, a market orientation was also viewed as part of a linear evolution towards greater professionalization among firms with a market orientation being the most modern and effective. Illustrating this point, Johansen cites Robert Keith, a former director of the Pillsbury Company, who "described how the company had developed through three managerial phases. They started out in the production-oriented stage, proceeded to the sales-oriented stage, before successfully ending up as a truly market-oriented organisation geared to the satisfaction of customer needs and wants" (2012, 115–16). In contrast to product and sales orientations, a market orientation was viewed as one where firms adopt a 'needs assessment approach' to product development based on market research. Summarizing this view, Stromback notes that "[t]he essence of marketing is that no producer should develop his/her products without first having researched the perceived needs of the targeted consumers" (2007, 56). Additionally, while some in the commercial marketing literature defined a market orientation in terms of a strong emphasis on consumers (e.g. Deshpande, Farley, and Webster 1993), others argued that the interests of other stakeholders were also important and that product development that is solely customer-led is not the same as having a market orientation (Slater and Narver 1995, 1998). Thus, the literature also distinguishes between a 'market*ing* orientation' which "refers to the activities of the marketing department that encourage

the organisation to become more responsive to the requirements of customers" and a more comprehensive 'market orientation' which "is implemented by the entire organisation and refers to an acceptance of the importance of relationships with all stakeholders, and aims towards being responsive to the internal and external markets in which it operates" (Ormrod 2006, 113).

When initially applied to the new political marketing trend (i.e. the third phase of political campaigning noted above), the concept of a market orientation was also viewed as a key component of this trend that helped to distinguish it from earlier forms of political campaigning (Smith and Saunders 1990; Newman 1994). A market orientation was thus viewed as the currently most advanced and effective form of political campaigning in an ongoing evolution towards ever-greater professionalization. However, the definition of market orientation and its link to professionalization became somewhat altered through the work of various scholars who sought to further develop the concept in the political realm (e.g. Newman 1994; O'Cass 1996, 2001a, 2001b; Lees-Marshment 2001). The most prominent work here is the Lees-Marshment model of political market orientation and the comparative framework and case studies that were based on it (Lees-Marshment 2001; Lilleker and Lees-Marshment 2005a; Stromback 2007; Lees-Marshment, Stromback, and Rudd 2010; Stromback 2010). As Ormrod notes, "Lees-Marshment's...process models are widely used as empirical frameworks in the literature and as pedagogical tools" (Ormrod 2011, 402).

The Lees-Marshment (2001) model sought to explicitly categorize political parties in terms of the three ideal-types of product, sales and market orientation to better describe their behaviour and the current trend towards political marketing. The first ideal-type is the product oriented party (POP). This is described as the most 'traditional' and basic approach to campaigning where a party argues for a particular ideology that it believes in (Lees-Marshment 2001, 2010). For Lees-

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Marshment, a POP is “devoid of awareness and utilization of communications techniques and market intelligence” and, instead, seeks to attract like-minded people solely based on the strength of its ideas (2010, 9). For proponents of this model, the main examples of POPs today are the more ideological fringe and single-issue parties or smaller, newer parties that lack the resources necessary to adopt political marketing techniques (Delacourt and Marland 2009). Lees-Marshment’s second ideal-type is the sales oriented party (SOP). This is where a party has an ideology it seeks to promote but recognizes the need to sell its ideas to the public through the use of political marketing techniques. It has more resources and is more professionalized than a product oriented party (Ibid.). Moreover, while market intelligence is used to better target and persuade voters, a sales oriented party is not willing to compromise its ideology or redesign its policy ‘product’ in order to better attract voters. In the Lees-Marshment model, this latter point is important when distinguishing a sales oriented party from her final ideal-type which is a market oriented party (MOP).

In the original outline of the Lees-Marshment model, a MOP is viewed as the most professionalized type of party in terms of employing political consultants and making use of sophisticated political marketing techniques. The defining characteristic of her market oriented party, though, is that it adjusts its product to better attract voters. As Lees-Marshment notes, a MOP conducts market research on voter preferences and then “designs a product that will actually satisfy voters’ demands: that meets their needs and wants, is supported and implemented by the internal organisation, and is deliverable in government” (2001, 30). Important here is that adjusting the party product to better attract voters, including moving towards the policy centre, was viewed as more advanced, more effective and better for democracy (Lees-Marshment 2001). The Lees-Marshment model was thus consistent with the earlier literature which viewed political marketing,

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and a market oriented party, as the most recent phase in a continuing evolution towards ever-greater professionalization. Pointing to this more linear view of a MOP, Lees-Marshment notes that: "Until the 1990s the common view of political marketing was that it was purely about the use of sales techniques in election campaigns. The Lees-Marshment model challenged this…By distinguishing between a sales and a market orientation, it enabled us to capture a change in party behaviour" (2006, 119). From this perspective, therefore, the expectation was that as parties became more professionalized, so too would they become more market oriented.

However, while the Lees-Marshment definition of a MOP did mention the internal market of party members, critics noted that the use of the model in practice put a strong emphasis on the needs and wants of voters (Savigny 2004; Ormrod 2006, 2007; Johansen 2012; Ormrod and Savigny 2012). Used in practice, it also seemed to define the party's 'product' somewhat more narrowly by emphasizing policy rather than other factors mentioned in the formal definition such as candidates and party brand (Ormrod 2007). Together, the emphasis on voters as the market and policy as the key product led to a definition of market orientation that became operationalized primarily in terms of ideological compromise and a shift to the policy centre (e.g. Stromback 2007, 2010). Illustrating this view, Delacourt and Marland summarize the Lees-Marshment model by noting that: "What's different is that the political product is malleable. A MOP responds to the median voter's preferences by demonstrating ideological flexibility and, if necessary, a willingness to change leaders" (2009, 48).

Reinforcing this definition was that the comparative work that built on the Lees-Marshment model also emphasised ideological compromise. For example, in summarizing this work, Stromback, Lees-Marshment and Rudd discuss systemic factors that can influence a party's ability to become a MOP by noting how certain factors make it "harder for parties to '*shift to the center*'"

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(2012, 82, emphasis added). Accordingly, many of the party and country factors identified in Stromback's (2010) comparative framework are those which influence a party's ability to move towards the median voter through ideological compromise rather than it's ability to become more professionalized. As Stromback earlier noted, "the choice and constraints facing political parties regarding what orientation to follow and whether to become as professionalized in their campaigning as possible, are fundamentally different" (2007, 57).

The findings of these comparative studies then worked to further sever the link between professionalization and market orientation in the Lees-Marshment model. Specifically, they found that most parties had not shifted to the policy centre, some parties shifted to the centre and then back again, and that shifting to the policy centre was not always the most electorally effective (Lilleker and Lees-Marshment 2005a; Lees-Marshment, Stromback, and Rudd 2010; Stromback, Lees-Marshment, and Rudd 2012). Therefore, rather than being the most advanced phase of professionalization, a market orientation defined in terms of ideological compromise became a strategy that a party can choose to adopt or not, meaning that a fully professionalized party is not necessarily market oriented. As Stromback notes, "a political party can choose to be market oriented, but it can also choose to be sales or product oriented" (2007, 57).

This severing of the link between market orientation and professionalization then created a conceptual problem in the Lees-Marshment model. Specifically, the term 'market oriented *party*' implies a type of party or stage of party development whereas the definition of a MOP, as used in practice, implies a *strategy* that can vary from election to election. Illustrating this latter point, Lees-Marshment, Rudd and Stromback note that: "There is no irreversible, linear progression of party development. Parties shift from sales- to market oriented and back again" (2010, 290). In contrast, there does seem to be a more linear and one way progression of party development when

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it comes to professionalization and, in the commercial marketing literature, of company development from product to sales to market orientation. Thus, a key difficulty in the Lees-Marshment definition of a market oriented *party* is that it attempts to combine the degree to which a party is professionalized (which is linear and additive) with the extent to which it compromises its ideology (which is non-linear). This is problematic. As Stromback argues, "the conceptual relationship between political marketing and the professionalization of political campaigning is unclear" and "the distinction between political-marketing, market-orientation and marketing techniques is also often blurred, resulting in a conceptual lack of clarity" (2007, 50).

To resolve this issue, scholars such as Robert Ormrod have sought to return the definition of a market orientation to one that is more in line with the commercial marketing literature and, in particular, its distinction, as noted earlier, between a 'market orientation' and a 'market*ing* orientation' (Ormrod 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2011; Savigny 2004; Coleman 2007; Johansen 2012; O'Shaughnessy et al. 2012; Ormrod, Henneberg, and O'Shaughnessy 2013). As Ormrod argues, "Lees-Marshment...does not distinguish between these two related concepts, and while the party type is labelled as market oriented, it is in fact closer to a marketing-oriented party" (2006, 114). Moreover, while both types of party conduct market research and employ advanced marketing techniques, a market*ing* oriented party has a more limited focus on voters in a way that leads to the 'customer-led' and 'follow the market' strategy of the Lees-Marshment MOP (O'Shaughnessy et al. 2012).

In more closely applying the commercial notion of market orientation, Ormrod's model expands the focus of a political market orientation (PMO) from voters to a wider array of stakeholders including voters, competitors, party members, the media, interest groups and citizens (Ormrod 2004, 2005; Ormrod and Savigny 2012). He also expands the tasks of market research

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and communication from a narrow function of "party professionals principally during the run-up to an election" to a wider organizational philosophy "characterized by all party members feeling a responsibility for taking part in both the development of policies and their implementation and communication" (2006, 113). Taking these together, Ormrod defines a PMO as one where the members of a party "are sensitive to the attitudes, needs and wants of both external and internal stakeholders, and to use this information within limits imposed by all stakeholder groups in order to develop policies and programmes that enable the party to reach its aims" (2007, 77). This expanded focus on all stakeholders, including members, means that ideology matters and that market research, in contrast to a customer-led market*ing* orientated party, is used to inform strategy rather than being a strategy in its own right (Ormrod and Henneberg 2010). As Ormrod and Savigny note, "understanding the nature and extent of the party's level of PMO towards each of the...stakeholder groups and the effect this has on member behaviour can be used to construct a profile. The profile can in turn be used to inform on organizational decisions regarding the development of the party's offering rather than being the reason for them" (2011, 496).

Ormrod's incorporation of stakeholders beyond voters fits well with earlier works that broaden the definition of the party's product beyond just policy to include other factors such as candidates and the party brand (Kotler 1975; Sharma 1976; Mauser 1983; Newman 1994; Scammell 1995). Together, they allow for a definition of a market oriented party that goes beyond shifting to the policy centre and that is better integrated with the broader and more linear evolution of political campaigning towards ever-greater professionalization. Such a definition would also seem to be more consistent with the original Lees-Marshment model. As Lees-Marshment (2006) later emphasized in response to critiques, her model views ideology and the internal market, and not just the median voter, as being important to parties. Therefore, by combining the parsimony of

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the Lees-Marshment model with the comprehensiveness of the Ormrod model, it would seem possible to create a revised descriptive typology of product, sales and market oriented political parties. In doing so, it is useful to make an analytical distinction between a party's product development and its communications, as outlined in **Figure 1**, when distinguishing between the different types of parties. It is also useful to make a distinction between the overall characteristics of each type of party and the specific characteristics that constitute the threshold between each type. Of course, such thresholds will always be somewhat arbitrary given Ormrod's point that a "market orientation is normally conceptualised as a point on a continuum rather than as an either/or construct" (2005, 48).

From this perspective, a product oriented party remains one that does not use market research, advanced marketing and communication techniques, or consultants in either its product development or communications. Moreover, as Ormrod notes, "Parties that follow the POP process model are rare in recent elections because of their defining characteristic of not using the marketing tools that are essential to modern political campaigning" (2011, 401). Thus, the specific threshold between a product and sales oriented party is arguably the use of advanced marketing and communications techniques – such as earned, paid and social media, war rooms, narrative and framing techniques, and message segmentation and discipline – to sell the party's product to voters. A sales oriented party can also be characterized by the use of party professionals and consultants as well as the use of market research for communications but not for product development. The use of market research to inform (but not determine) product development – including policy, candidates and brand – is the threshold characteristic that moves a party from being sales to market oriented. Also, in different degrees, this research would focus on members

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and other stakeholders as well as voters meaning that ideology will always be relevant to product development.

Therefore, rather than being customer-led, a market oriented party is willing to adjust and customize its product based on context and market research, but will not necessarily do so. This can result in a variety of potential strategies such as shifting to the policy centre to persuade swing voters, becoming more ideological to mobilize base voters, emphasizing (or de-emphasizing) different policies to different voters, and adding boutique policies to attract specific segments of voters. A market oriented party may also be characterized by more deliberate efforts to use market research, product customization and advanced marketing and communications techniques to mobilize members and fundraise from donors. Thus, just as market research will focus on all stakeholders, so too will communications. Doing so can give the party greater options in terms of product adjustment and campaign strategy by getting buy-in from the internal market. In the commercial world, firms engage in public and customer relations but also shareholder relations, employee relations, government relations and stakeholder outreach. Finally, other characteristics of a market orientation may include an emphasis on branding, leaders and identity over detailed policy platforms, the notion of the 'permanent campaign' and, as outlined in Ormrod's (2006) more comprehensive model, an organizational philosophy where party members are more involved in both market research and communications.

Defining and operationalizing a market oriented party in this way, as part of an ongoing trend towards greater professionalization, may clear up the confusion over whether a shift to the policy centre defines a type of party or is simply one of a number of possible strategies. It also fits better with the comparative finding that most parties have not shifted to the policy centre (or have shifted to the centre and back), but to still distinguish the more recent trend of political marketing

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from earlier, sales oriented forms of campaigning. This more linear definition might also help to explain why a market*ing* orientation that simply shifts towards the median voter is not always more effective and why market oriented parties may not be better for democracy in that they may focus on the needs and wants of very targeted segments of voters, including their base, rather than on all voters or the median voter (Savigny 2004; Johansen 2012).

COMPARATIVE POLITICAL MARKETING AND POST-CONFLICT ELECTIONS

To further explore the nature of market oriented parties, we can turn to a second, more comparative debate in political marketing theory. This is over how political marketing techniques have spread beyond the United States and the systemic factors that influence the ability of parties to become more professionalized and market oriented. One strand of this debate is the comparative work built on the Lees-Marshment model including the comparative framework developed by Stromback (Lilleker and Lees-Marshment 2005a; Lees-Marshment, Stromback, and Rudd 2010; Stromback 2010). This framework identifies a variety of country and party characteristics that can influence the "extent to which political parties are, attempt to be or are likely to become market oriented in different countries around the world" (Stromback 2010, 19). For example, Stromback notes that "parties are more likely to be or become market-oriented in a) majoritarian systems with b) few significant parties and c) a less crowded political landscape where d) social, political and ideological cleavages are not very pronounced" (Ibid., 20).

This implicitly leads to the hypothesis that market orientation is unlikely to spread to post-conflict states given that they generally possess the opposite characteristics. First, post-conflict states are characterized by deep social and political cleavages which are generally either

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ideological or ethnic-sectarian in nature, with the latter being the currently most dominant. As Kaufmann notes, "[e]thnic identities are hardest, since they depend on language, culture, and religion, which are hard to change, as well as parentage, which no one can change...Ethnic identities are hardened further by intense conflict, so that leaders cannot broaden their appeals to include members of opposing groups" (1996, 141). Accordingly, most political parties in post-ethnic conflict states tend to be ethnically-based and there are few swing voters across ethnic lines. As Reily notes:

> Because of the underdeveloped and deeply divided nature of most post-conflict societies, elections often have the effect of highlighting societal fault-lines and hence laying bare deep social divisions. In such circumstances, the easiest way to mobilize voter support at election time is to appeal to the very same insecurities that generated the conflict. This means that parties have a strong incentive to 'play the ethnic card' or to take hard-line positions on key identity-related issues (2002, 133).

Reinforcing this fact is the predominance of ethnically-based media and that "[i]n typical transitional or post-conflict environments, many citizens have never voted in meaningful elections, lack basic information about the process, or face strong disincentives to participate" (Bjornlund, Cowan, and William 2007, 133). The result is that many voters simply follow tribal, sectarian and ethnic leaders, and the traditional parties to which they are connected, when deciding how to vote.

In addition to being characterized by deep social and political cleavages, post-conflict states, particularly post-ethnic conflict states, often have proportional representation electoral systems. As Reilly observes, "[t]he scholarly orthodoxy has long been that some form of proportional representation (PR) is all but essential if democracy is to survive the travails of deep-rooted divisions" (2002, 127). Accordingly, electoral systems in post-conflict states often follow

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a standard template recommended or imposed by the international community. This template, generally referred to as 'power-sharing' or 'consociational democracy' (Kaufmann 1996; Lijphart 1969), includes various institutional mechanisms designed to keep multi-ethnic states together. This includes decentralization, ethnic autonomy, minority vetos and proportional representation. In the latter case, Stromback notes that: "The aim of proportional systems is to include as many voices as possible, emphasizing the need for bargaining and compromise within parliament, government and the policymaking processes. Majoritarian systems are called adversarial systems whereas proportional systems are called consensual systems" (Stromback 2010, 19). While quite appropriate for post-ethnic conflict states, Stromback notes that proportional representation systems create multi-party systems that can work against the adoption of market oriented strategies. This is the case as "bonding appeals directed at particular groups in society are more likely in proportional systems, in contrast to majoritarian systems where catch-all and bridging appeals are more likely" (2010, 20). It is also the case because a large number of parties can make it harder for individual parties to shift to the policy centre.

While Stromback's framework implicitly views the spread of a market orientation to post-conflict states as unlikely, it is important to recall that this framework – along with other comparative work based on the Lees-Marshment model – operationalizes market orientation primarily in terms of ideological compromise. Therefore, while some of Stromback's characteristics influence professionalization, many only influence the ability of parties to shift to the policy centre. In other words, the framework is more about the factors that influence strategy than those which affect a broader market orientation. In this respect, Stromback's framework lines up with Ormrod and Henneberg's (2010) view that majoritarian systems can favour strategies with some ideological compromise (including positions they refer to as the 'tactical populist' and

‘relationship builder’) while proportional representation systems can favour an emphasis on ideology (a position they refer to as the ‘convinced ideologist’). While clearly useful in understanding how systemic factors can affect campaign strategy, Stromback’s framework needs to be revised to better emphasize the factors that influence the spread of professionalization and market orientation.

In contrast, if the definition of market orientation is reintegrated with professionalization, as outlined in the previous section, it means that market orientation is a set of best practices that inform strategy rather than being a strategy in itself. Applied comparatively, this leads to the hypothesis that political marketing techniques and a market orientation will, eventually, spread to all modern democracies – including post-conflict countries – regardless of whether they are majoritarian or proportional representation. Useful here, in terms of theorizing how and when professionalization will spread, is the second key strand of the comparative debate; that is, between ‘modernization theory’ which emphasizes internal factors relating to how politically ‘modern’ a country is and ‘transnational diffusion theory’ which emphasizes external factors. As Schafferer notes: “Modernization theorists claim that structural changes at the macro-level (changing media, political and social structures) have caused adaptive behavior at the micro level (parties, candidates, and journalists)...The globally observed changes in electoral campaigning...are thus rather seen as a process of modernization and professionalization than as a consequence of the expanding consultancy industry” (2006, 5). On the other side of the debate is ‘transnational diffusion theory’ which views the spread of political marketing as being externally driven by either U.S. consultants (Americanization) or Western consultants (globalization) who are exporting their techniques.

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While a clear debate exists, much of the literature seems to believe that both internal and external factors play a role (Harris, Perrin, and Simenti-Phiri 2014). That is, modernization – including a number of the factors identified by Stromback such as stronger political competition, more swing voters and a more commercialized media – creates demand for new approaches which foreign political consultants (or observing Western elections) can then provide. Pointing to this view in the literature, Schafferer argues that "[t]he worldwide proliferation of the new media and money-driven form of electoral campaigning is partly seen as the result of modernization processes and partly considered as the consequence of a transnational diffusion and implementation of US concepts and strategies of electoral campaigning" (2006, 4). Applied to developing country democracies, however, the literature generally assigns a somewhat greater role to transnational diffusion. As Schafferer argues:

> Are modernization processes also the driving force behind the proliferation of US-style campaign techniques in new and emerging democracies? The answer to this question is country specific, and largely depends on the existing environment in the pre-democratizing era...Third-world democracies, on the other hand, are more likely the victims of donor-driven involvement of overseas consultants. Modernization processes will probably play a neglecting role in bringing about US-style electoral campaigns there (2006, 7).

This hypothesis is also a relevant starting point for post-conflict countries given that they are frequently characterized by more transnational linkages and less modernization. In the former case, post-conflict countries are often client states of Western countries and/or international organizations. As a result, diffusion of political marketing techniques may occur through the way that national governments and international organizations sponsor exchanges and visits between post-conflict and Western politicians as well as through the growing internationalization of

Western political consultants. As Sussman (2005, 133–34) observes: "In the 1990s, an accelerated transfer of American-style electioneering techniques was added to U.S. developmentalist and 'democracy assistance' programs". Equally important is the growing role of non-US consultants who are exporting similar, and increasingly hybridized, techniques. As Lees-Marshment and Lilleker report, "our data suggested that campaigning ideas are shared across all countries, not just from the USA to other countries, supporting the globalisation thesis rather than Americanisation...While the USA may have led the way in the 1980s and 1990s, the adaptations of innovations developed elsewhere is now feeding back into US political campaigning" (2012, 350).

Post-conflict countries are also often characterized by a lack of modernization. For example, the previous (and frequently ongoing) security situation, as well as the political and/or economic underdevelopment that characterizes post-conflict states can further work against the adoption of more market oriented techniques. For example, as Bjornlund, Cowan and William (2007, 112) observe, "a lack of government infrastructure, the threat of violence, and the existence of internally displaced persons (IDPs) all present particular problems...For political parties, the inability to safely travel or meet with supporters can cripple their ability to effectively take part in the political process". Of further importance to a market oriented approach can be the lack of demographic information (due to poor census-taking and destruction of past records) and the sometimes more intermittent use of telephones and internet. Thus, "[t]echniques such as polling and constituent outreach will not be as effective if constituents are inaccessible" (Ibid., 112). Finally, as Marland (2005) notes with respect to developed countries, resources matter. Thus, lack of economic development can also mean that parties in post-conflict states simply do not have the resources available to adopt more advanced political marketing techniques.

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It is these characteristics – deep internal divisions, proportional representation, ongoing security issues and political and economic underdevelopment – that make post-conflict states such as Iraq interesting test cases for political marketing theory. In particular, post-conflict states would seem to constitute a 'least likely' case for where we would expect to see parties moving toward a market oriented approach. As Odell notes:

> Probably the closest a single case study can come to approximating a neutral test would be when the research selects an extreme case that is highly unlikely to confirm, and finds that even this case does so. Such a least likely case study would provide strong, though not unqualified, support for the inference that the theory is even more likely to be valid in most other cases, where contrary winds do not blow as strongly (2001, 165).

Therefore, if political marketing techniques and a market oriented approach are spreading to post-conflict countries such as Iraq, it would lend support to the broader view of market orientation as a form of best practices that will, eventually, spread to all modern democracies. At the same time, the relative roles of modernization and transnational diffusion are brought into sharper relief in post-conflict countries. They can thus be explored through within-case 'process tracing' to identify links between electoral modernization, foreign political consultants and the professionalization of election campaigning. As Mahoney and Villegas (2007, 76) note, "some historical researchers use insights from within their cases to locate the intervening mechanisms linking a hypothesized explanatory variable to an outcome...The effort to infer causality through the identification of mechanisms can be called 'process tracing'".

COUNTRY CHARACTERISTICS OF POST-SADDAM IRAQ

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In terms of the 'least likely' case method, this section first demonstrates that post-Saddam Iraq has many of the post-ethnic conflict country characteristics that work against a market oriented approach including deep ethnic divisions, proportional representation, an ongoing security situation, economic and political underdevelopment and the dominance of ethnically-based political parties. It then argues that Iraq also possesses a number of characteristics related to modernization and transnational diffusion that creates the potential for a market oriented approach. These include an electoral system modernizing towards greater intra-ethnic political competition, a relatively higher degree of economic resources and strong transnational linkages with US and Western democracy promotion agencies and private political consultants.

Post-conflict Characteristics

In terms of ethnic divisions, Iraq is characterized by three main Islamic ethno-sectarian groups which are further subdivided into numerous tribes. These groups include Arab Sunnis, Arab Shiites and the Kurds. Under Saddam Hussein and his Baathist Party, relatively secular Arab Sunnis ran the country. After the 2003 U.S. invasion deposed Saddam and removed many Sunnis from positions of power through a process of 'de-Baathification', the Sunnis became the most disaffected group and constitute the bulk of the insurgents. Key among these insurgents are the more fundamentalist Sunnis associated with Al Qaeda and its local offshoot the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Since the U.S. invasion and the shift to democratic elections, Arab Shiites are now the majority population group in Iraq and they have come to dominate the national government. Standing somewhat outside the broader Sunni-Shiite conflict that exists across the region are the Kurds who are concentrated in the north of Iraq. The Kurds are non-Arabs who are distinguished by their own culture and languages (Kurmanji and Sorani) and a generally more secular brand of Sunni Islam. Oppressed under Saddam Hussein and elsewhere, the Kurds have

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long sought to create an independent country. After the U.S. invasion and the writing of a new constitution in 2005, the Kurdish region in the north obtained a semi-autonomous status with its own regional government (the Kurdish Regional Government or KRG) and military (the *pershmerga*).

In addition to the ongoing Sunni-based insurgency and the autonomy of the Kurdish region, Iraq's deep ethnic divisions have manifested themselves in the dominance of ethnically-based political parties and very little swing voting across ethnic lines. While a few secular and cross-ethnic parties have emerged, they have tended to only garner support from moderate Sunnis and are thus often viewed as Sunni parties. Iraq's first national election was held in January of 2005 to elect a Transitional National Authority, a proto-parliament elected to write a new national constitution. This election followed the international template of a proportional representation system. This included a 275 seat 'closed-list' system where "[e]ach party received a number of seats proportionate to its vote share, but the decision as to who would actually fill those seats belonged not to voters but to party leaders alone" (Dawisha 2010, 31). At the same time, for simplicity in terms of voter registration and organizing the polls, the entire country was treated as one large district. Following the drafting and ratification of the Constitution, Iraq held another national election in December of 2005 to elect members to the new permanent national parliament. One rule change for this election was that the initial use of the whole country as single district was changed so that slightly over 80% of seats were divided among eighteen multi-member districts mapped onto the eighteen provinces (or governorates) with the remaining seats coming from national party lists to achieve overall proportionality. This included Iraqis living abroad, seats reserved for certain minority groups and 'compensatory' seats to achieve overall proportionality.

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In 2005, therefore, Iraq had many of the post-ethnic conflict country characteristics that work against a market oriented approach. This included economic and political underdevelopment, deep ethnic divisions, a party-based media, a violent ethnically-based insurgency, a proportional representation electoral system characterized by a more party-centred 'closed list' system, a seat distribution model biased against smaller parties and a single nationwide electoral constituency that "favoured those parties seeking to maximise their vote through sectarian rhetoric" (Dodge 2012, 149). These characteristics, in turn, created an incentive for parties within the same ethnic group to form large coalitions which decreased intra-ethnic political competition. Specifically, most Shiite parties ran as the United Iraqi Alliance, Kurd parties under the Democratic Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and Sunni parties under the Iraqi National List and the Iraqi Accord Front (or Tawafuq, a more Islamist-oriented party). As Dodge notes, this lack of intra-ethnic political competition meant that, "[i]n both sets of elections held in 2005, ethnic and sectarian mobilisation triumphed" (Dodge 2012, 149). This, of course, "was a typical case for post-conflict political parties which emphasize ethno-religious identity for instant collective mobilization in the absence of official institutions for doing so" (Sakai 2012, 211).

Political and Economic Modernization

In addition to its broader transition from an authoritarian regime to a nascent democracy, Iraq has also experienced a growing modernization of its electoral system since the 2005 elections. Most important in the run-up to the next national election, in March of 2010, was the shift from a party-centred 'closed-list' to a candidate-centred 'open-list' system. Under the open-list system, voters can vote for parties and/or for a specific candidate on the party list for their district. As Sakai reports, the "introduction of an open-list system, which put more importance on the candidate's fame in his or her constituency, affected the political behaviour of the major parties" (2012, 214).

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In particular, it led to a relatively greater focus on individual qualifications and the issues rather than simply on sectarian rhetoric. As Dodge argues, "[t]he reduction of sectarian mobilisation was aided by changes in the voting system" (2012, 149). In the Sunni community, this was reflected in the more secular, non-sectarian and issues-focused Iraqiya party (formerly the Iraqi National List) growing from 25 to 91 seats while the more sectarian and Islamist Tawafuq party dropped from 44 to 6 seats. Also important was the increase in intra-ethnic political competition among Shia parties which split into the State of Law Coalition and the Iraqi National Alliance. The Kurdish parties remained united under the Kurdish Alliance.

In 2013, a new electoral law adopted two measures that led to a greater fragmentation of electoral coalitions and thus an increase in intra-ethnic political competition. The first was the reallocation of the national compensatory seats to the provinces in a way that benefitted smaller parties. The second was the enshrining of a new precedent established after the 2010 election. Where the Iraqi constitution gives the head of the largest electoral coalition the first chance to become prime minister and form a government, the new precedent and law allowed for the formation of governing coalitions *after* the election. As Benraad (2014, 3) reports, "[t]his change has given incentives to political parties to run individually rather than in the framework of broader lists which used to garner as many votes as possible in order to gain power". The result was a greater fragmentation of coalitions. In the 2014 election, each ethnic group had three main parties and numerous smaller parties. The main Shia parties were the State of Law Coalition, the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (or Al Muwatin) and the Sadrist Movement. The main Sunni parties were Al-Wataniya, Muttahidoon and Al-Arabiya. The main Kurdish parties were the Kurdish Democratic Party, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and the Gorran ('Change') party.

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Overall, while the Iraqi political system has many of the post-ethnic conflict country characteristics that work against a market oriented approach, there has been a modernization of the electoral system towards increasing intra-ethnic competition. When this occurs, the situation is more akin to each ethnic group having their own election meaning that more of Stromback's criteria in favour of a market oriented approach will be present *within* each ethnic group. This includes lower social divisions, higher electoral volatility and a smaller number of competitive parties. In post-ethnic conflict countries, therefore, the electoral system may be a much more significant country characteristic in that a number of the other characteristics are dependent on it. Finally, also important from a modernization perspective is Iraq's oil wealth which has provided well-connected individuals and dominant political parties, particularly the key Shiite and Kurd parties (which control Baghdad and the Kurdish Regional Government respectively), with the means to fund expensive campaigns. As Al Jazeera reported, political parties "have established deep roots in the state. They have access to ministry funds and contracts, they own property, businesses, television channels, etc." (Al Jazeera 2014).

Transnational Linkages

Reinforcing this indigenous potential for a more market oriented approach has been the strong transnational linkages resulting from Iraq's status as a strategically-important oil state and, in the decade following the toppling of Saddam Hussein, a U.S. client. These linkages may work in favour of a more market oriented approach by providing greater resources to key political parties and by promoting the diffusion of Western political marketing techniques through democracy promotion agencies and private political consultants. In the former case, Iraq's strategic importance combined with no campaign finance laws has meant that key parties are believed to have received enormous funds from abroad with Shia parties receiving money from Iran and Sunni

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parties from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States. Whatever the source of the funds, "[t]he glossy billboards testify to the big money necessary for campaigns in Iraq..." and "[o]ne Islamist candidate estimated to Reuters the cost of his parliamentary bid at a over a million dollars" (Rubei'i and Parker 2014).

At the same time, U.S. democracy promotion efforts began shortly after the toppling of Saddam Hussein. In the run-up to the 2005 elections, for example, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) provided funding for the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI) to provide training and support to Iraqi political parties. This included the NDI opening training facilities in Baghdad and the Kurdish capital of Erbil as well as conducting opinion polls and focus groups to provide market research to political parties (National Democratic Institute 2014). Finally, as outlined below, Iraq's transnational linkages with the U.S. and other Western countries, combined with the money available for political campaigns, has led to growing contacts with Western political consultants and the diffusion of Western campaign techniques.

ASSESSING PROFESSIONALIZATION AND MARKET-ORIENTATION IN IRAQ

This section argues that, due to both the modernization and transnational linkages outlined above, a number of Iraqi political parties have adopted a more market oriented approach. This is evident in terms of various components of professionalization as well as in their willingness to use policy as a political tool and to redesign their 'product' (policies, brand and candidates) based on market research. This section further argues that these developments represent a modernization-professionalization, rather than an Americanization, of Iraqi election campaigns.

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Professionalized Training and Market Research

Over the last decade, the National Democratic Institute and other agencies have expanded their operations in Iraq to cover more parties and to provide a wider range of training and support. Moreover, the content of this training and support clearly indicates the diffusion of a more professionalized approach to campaigning as well as the potential for using market research to influence the parties' product. As the NDI website reports:

> NDI has conducted 20 training sessions for more than 460 candidates since December 2012, focusing on message development and delivery, campaign development, voter targeting and citizen outreach. Before national elections in April 2014, NDI held training with individual candidates and parliamentary blocs aimed at strengthening party platforms and political party branches, and identifying voter targeting techniques. The Institute also presented specialized briefings with political parties on relevant findings from NDI's nationwide pre-election opinion poll to assist candidates in crafting issue-based policies, campaign strategies and effective party communication (National Democratic Institute 2014).

Also significant is that, in 2013, the NDI produced a 344 page *Campaign Skills Handbook* (O'Connell, Smoot, and Khalil 2013) which includes all manner of professionalized techniques associated with a political marketing approach. Key chapter titles include: Research, Strategy and Targeting; Voter Contact; Issue Identification and Policy Development; Message Development; Becoming a Powerful Communicator; Building a Communications Strategy and others.

In terms of market research, the NDI has conducted opinion research in election and non-election periods since 2003 including thirty-eight nationwide surveys and over 400 focus groups

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and provided the information to political parties. Detailed market research has also been conducted by Western pollsters and political consultants who are directly employed by individual political parties (Hastings 2010). Citing one example, Hastings notes that U.S. political consultant Joe Trippi used market research in his work for the Ahrar party. Specifically: "They've also conducted polling – including a recent survey of 2,600 people across Iraq" (Hastings 2010).

Advanced Marketing and Communication Techniques

As early as the 2005 elections, one National Democratic Institute official remarked that: "I think we are really observing an increasing maturity and level of understanding and sophistication on the part of some of the larger political parties on what an election is really about and what campaigning is really about" (cited in Leyne 2005). Confirming this view, BBC reporter Jon Leyne reported that "[t]he evidence of that is ever present on the television. Slick American-style election adverts are everywhere. Press conferences are neatly staged to appeal to TV, just like in London or Washington" (Leyne 2005). Also interesting was the growing professionalization among some of the more Islamist (and thus ideological) political parties. For example, a senior official with the (Sunni) Iraqi Islamic Party "described how they had been learning from election techniques around the world. They have even been taught to speak in sound bites" (Leyne 2005). At the same time, "[i]nside the party offices there's a 'war room', where party workers sit at a bank of computers exchanging the latest intelligence" and the party even persuaded a prominent football star, Ahmed Radhi, to endorse them (Leyne 2005).

Professionalized Local Campaigns

At the more local level, the widespread use of more professionalized tactics has given recent Iraqi campaigns a very Western feel, albeit one that is more characteristic of a sales oriented

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approach. On the first day of the 2014 campaign, the large parties used paid contractors to hang posters and distribute flyers. Banners and streamers crisscrossed all the main roads, and posters of varying size went up everywhere. Some larger parties got around election rules banning campaign posters before the official campaign period by putting up colour-coded posters in support of Iraqi army operations in Anbar province. As one report noted: "Political parties are illustrating their 'support' for troops by making large signs and banners that depict the leader of their bloc, or other sympathetic politicians, surrounded by military men. The signs carry messages about their support for the Iraqi army and often the messages or the signs are also in the parties campaign colours" (Habib 2014a). Another tactic to start campaigning early involved the use of supporter-sponsored Facebook sites. Specifically:

> One of the most common loopholes involves social media site, Facebook. There are now dozens, if not hundreds, of Facebook pages promoting certain Iraqi politicians, advertising their election promises or broadcasting the serial numbers their parties will use for identification in the election. Hundreds of ordinary Iraqis have been receiving mysterious friendship requests and unsolicited letters from candidates. The majority of Iraqis using Facebook are younger so a lot of the letters talk about youth friendly topics, such as sports or cultural events (Habib 2014a).

While these early sites violate election law, candidates simply claim that it was their supporters and not their official campaign running the sites.

In addition to posters and Facebook, many local campaigns were characterized by the familiar routine of candidates attending televised debates, large party rallies and visiting the village elders and tribal leaders who are key to mobilizing blocks of voters (Jano 2014). Important here was the way that the shift to a candidate-centred 'open-list' system further increased political

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competition. Thus, just as the growing fragmentation of electoral coalitions gave rise to greater competition between parties within the same ethnic group, the open-list system led to greater competition among candidates within the same party. During participant-observation research of the campaign for a Kurdish Democratic Party candidate in the Dohuk region in northern Iraq, different types of campaign strategies became evident. For many candidates, family, village and tribal affiliation were central for mobilizing votes. Accordingly, some campaign posters have tribes showing their pride over having one of their own running for parliament while others mention the names of prominent family members. For some female candidates with the more conservative Islamic parties, it was common to use photos of their brothers and husbands rather than their own.

For candidates who did not come from prominent families, there was a 'new guard' strategy that placed more emphasis on education and merit and such candidates often made more use of professional networks for fundraising and volunteer mobilization. One candidate commented that this strategy was more successful in national elections than in those for the Kurdish Regional Government (Jano 2014). He explained that in the latter, families and tribes sought to promote their own to gain specific advantages. In national elections, in contrast, Kurdish interests were more united and this led to a greater emphasis on merit in order to have skilled members of parliament making the Kurdish case in Baghdad. Key to this candidate's ultimate success in the 2014 election was his level of education and very strong performance in a series of debates (Bamerni 2014). This led many village leaders to view him as a strong and able champion for Kurdish interests. Moreover, where posters and debates were the key elements of the candidate-level 'air war', the 'ground war' component of their campaigns were dominated by Facebook and telephone voter contact as well as the candidate's tour to give speeches and meet with village

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elders. Facebook was a significant tool to build relationships with voters and, in particular, to post TV debates and interviews to further advertize the success of their candidate (Jano 2014).

Overall, to the extent that most local campaigns used contemporary techniques to emphasize the personal qualifications (whether tribal or merit-based) of their candidates, most of the local level campaigns would be best categorized as having adopted a more sales-oriented approach. Reinforcing this categorization was the lack of more sophisticated, data-driven get-out-the-vote efforts or evidence of a 'permanent campaign'. However, as competition between candidates and parties increases, both of these seem likely to change. For example, a number of village leaders in the Dohuk campaign commented on how the previous candidate had taken them for granted and only showed up at election time. This was not lost on the new candidate who emphasized the need for stronger and more ongoing relationship-building (Jano 2014). His campaign manager also emphasized their growing collection of data from campaigning and Facebook as well as a greater emphasis on developing voter lists at the central party level (Jano 2014).

Use of Political Consultants

In addition to the activities of the NDI and other agencies, the diffusion of more market oriented campaign techniques has been facilitated by US and Western political consultants who have been directly employed by Iraqi political parties. In the 2010 election, for example, an investigative story by the US news website thedailybeast.com reported that Joe Trippi, a US political consultant who managed Governor Howard Dean's 2004 run for president, "is one of a group of American campaign consultants descending on Baghdad in hopes of shaping the March [2010] elections and the shape of politics to come" (Hastings 2010). More specifically:

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> There are at least four other prominent candidates who've brought on American and European firms. Sheik Tariq Abdullah, a Sunni businessman and parliament candidate who has hired the D.C. firm Opinion Makers International, said his campaign was prepared to spend $10 million. Iraq's minister of interior, Jawad Bolani, has recently employed the services of the New York and London strategic communications firm Brown Lloyd James, and reportedly is preparing to spend $15 million. Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki has hired a Swedish firm...Longtime U.S. favorite and former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi has asked a well-known American polling firm to run his campaign (Hastings 2010).

These examples highlight the financial resources available to some candidates and demonstrate the potential for a more market oriented approach. For example, while the parties often deny hiring these consultants for fear of being portrayed as Western stooges, such consultants have been used to conduct polling and to design TV commercials and election posters.

In the case of Trippi and the Ahrar party, the report notes that Trippi's firm, in addition to trying to "re-brand" the party, "put together a campaign strategy to try to build a grassroots network and strengthen the Ahrar party by training the dozens of candidates on the Ahrar list from all of Iraq's provinces. The campaign also includes more familiar campaign techniques – like producing television advertisements, tailored to both national and provincial audiences"(Hastings 2010). The company "has also posted YouTube videos, reached out to the Western media, and is planning to make use of text messaging (mobile phones are the primary means of electronic communication in Iraq) (Hastings 2010). In the 2014 campaign, there were similar reports of U.S. consultants being hired by Iraqi political parties. One example was Iraq's deputy Prime Minister Saleh Mutlaq who hired US political consultant Sam Patten. Highlighting the variety of techniques employed, one reporter noted that "[n]o matter how many polls, focus groups, Facebook posts, PR releases

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and TV ads the campaign churns out, Mutlaq – a chain-smoking agricultural economist with a professorial air – remains a hard sell" (Leiby 2014).

Interesting in this case was the seeming clash of cultures when Patten wanted to employ the classic campaign stunt of calling an opponent a chicken for not wanting to debate and then releasing live chickens in front of his political HQ as a media stunt. Mutlaq rejected this out of hand noting that this type of personal attack was out of bounds. In an interview, a Kurdish candidate for the KDP made a similar point about this type of very personal, negative campaigning (Jano 2014). He pointed to the strong role of honor in Iraqi culture and how that kind of negative campaigning could lead to a violent response from supporters or family of the targeted candidate. This is similar to the findings of Lees-Marshment and Lilleker (2012) in the case of South-East Asia who found evidence of hybridization rather than Americanization. Specifically, they cited consultants who noted "a range of local contextual factors that impede adaptations from the US campaigning model. For example the use of negativity, particularly in South-East Asian countries was suggested to be the wrong approach" (Lees-Marshment and Lilleker 2012, 348). Thus, while some consultants may attempt to apply a cookie cutter approach, the local campaigns provide a strong corrective which pushes in the direction of hybridization and the need to adapt professionalized techniques to the local context. This is likely to be reinforced by the large number of non-U.S. consultants and the resulting globalization rather than Americanization of campaign knowledge.

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Strategic Approach to Policy, Candidates and Party Brand

In addition to the use of political consultants, evidence of a more market oriented approach is found in the growing willingness among Iraqi political parties to use policy as a political tool

and to redesign their product (policy, brand and candidates) based on market research. As already mentioned, various reports of Western political consultants and training agencies making use of polls and focus groups, engaging in 're-branding' efforts, and providing training on voter contact and issue identification is already suggestive of a more market oriented approach. Also suggestive is the way that various political parties have changed their branding, candidates and messaging from election to election. In the 2005 elections, as outlined earlier, the newly established electoral system created incentives toward ethnically-based coalitions and political mobilization based on sectarian and religious rhetoric. This caused more secular candidates to compromise their normal positioning by employing religious and sectarian symbols and language in order to win votes. The result was that religious and ethnically-based coalitions did well while the more secular and non-sectarian Iraqi National List did not. In the former case, Nouri al-Maliki's United Iraqi Alliance won the Shia vote, and the election, making Maliki Prime Minister.

In the run-up to the 2010 election, violence had decreased due to the U.S. surge and this led to a decline in sectarian emotions. To take credit for the improved security situation, Prime Minister Maliki engaged in a deliberate re-branding exercise just before the 2009 provincial elections. He did so by changing the name of his Dawa Party (formerly part of the broader United Iraqi Alliance) to the strategically-named 'State of Law' coalition "to convince the population that it was his policies and actions that had brought increased law and order to Iraq" (Dodge 2012, 160). Notwithstanding these efforts, the decline in violence led to a greater focus on corruption in the 2010 election as well as on the lack of employment and services for much of the population. The chief beneficiary of the decline in sectarianism was former Prime Minister Iyad Allawi and his more secular and non-sectarian Iraqiya Party (formerly part of the Iraqi National List). However, its failure in the more sectarian environment of 2005 meant "that Iraqiya could no longer

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make use of its characteristics as secularist where the mechanism of sectarian mobilization had already consolidated and penetrated into Iraqi society in the south". As a result, "Iraqiya was forced to reconsider its electoral strategy for gaining more support in the third election in March 2010" (Sakai 2012, 214).

It did so by shifting from a national to a more regional and targeted focus in the recruitment of candidates. In particular, "[i]n the national election in 2010, Iraqiya adopted a strategy of nominating local political figures whose fame was established through their social relations and activities based in their constituency in the governorates of Ninawa and Anbar, while it recruited those whose political ability had already been tested as ministers, or as members of national or provincial councils, in the governorates of Diyala and Salah al-Din" (Sakai 2012, 225). From a political marketing perspective, this is significant because "Iraqiya transformed the formation and membership of its coalition drastically, responding to a variety of voter preferences for political representation among the central governorates" (Sakai 2012, 218). In the 2010 election, the result of this more targeted strategy, combined with the decline in sectarianism, was that Iraqiya did significantly better and ultimately won the most seats (although Alawi did not become PM due to post-election coalition deals).

Also interesting in the 2010 election was the way that Prime Minister Maliki's State of Law party began to use policy as a political tool in response to the growing strength of Iraqiya. Specifically, a few months before the election, the Iraqi Justice and Accountability Commission, the government agency previously responsible for de-Baathification (the purging of members of Saddam Hussein's Baath Party) issued edicts to ban 511 candidates from participating in the election and this policy was then rubber stamped by the Maliki-controlled electoral commission.

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This policy was designed to specifically target Allawi's Iraqiya Party and not other Sunni parties. As Dodge reports:

> It was the coalitions who sought to build cross-sectarian support – in particular Allawi's Iraqiya – that saw the largest number of their candidates excluded. This implies that state institutions were being manipulated to increase sectarian tension as an election ploy...In the aftermath of the bans the 'Ba'athist threat' became a key plank of Maliki's election campaign. When faced with an increasingly cynical electorate alienated by his government's continued inability to deliver jobs and services, Maliki chose to conjure up the spectre of Ba'athism, playing to sectarian sentiment in order to solidify his vote (2012, 154).

In the 2014 election, Maliki used similar methods to increase sectarianism, change the channel away from corruption issues and consolidate the Shiite vote. In addition to again trying to ban a number of Sunni candidates, he played up military operations in the Sunni-dominated Anbar province and provoked a budget crisis with the Kurds over transfer payments. As Abbas notes, "Maliki effectively used the Anbar crisis in the election. He wasted no opportunity to use the Anbar crisis to differentiate himself from other Shiite forces regarding the best policy to deal with the crisis. He used all available means to turn the Anbar crisis into an existential issue for the public" (Abbas 2014).

Maliki also oriented his key election messaging around the Anbar crisis to build his brand as a strong leader and nationalist. His key slogan was "Together to eliminate terrorism" and his main election posters, advertisements and speeches all reflected this theme. For example, one prominent poster showed a tank and a rifle-wielding soldier with the phrase "Expel terrorism" below the State of Law party logo, while another had the hand of a soldier and the hand of a

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businessman tearing the black flag of ISIS (Bradley and Nabhan 2014). On the budget issue, Maliki rejected concessions that would have resolved the crisis in order to continue to use it as a wedge issue. As Sowell argues, "Maliki has chosen to use the budget as a wedge against his Shia rivals in a way that is exacerbating the country's two major challenges: the conflict over oil between Baghdad and the Kurdish region, and the security conflict focused in the Sunni-majority provinces...This makes Maliki's intent crystal clear – it makes no practical difference whether the budget is passed this week or next, but the closer they get to the election, the more damage this will do to any Shia party" seeking a compromise (Sowell 2014).

In the case of former Prime Minister Allawi, his Iraqiya bloc fragmented and he sought to design his new party to strongly reassert his core brand of secularism and non-sectarianism in order to differentiate from the other parties. As Habib notes, "Allawi is distinguishing his party, Wataniya, from other parties by attempting to exclude almost all religious overtones; his candidates consist of civil society activists, women's rights campaigners and personalities from Iraq's secular society. It seems that Allawi wants to send a loud and clear message that he remains a liberal personality who believes in the separation of church and state" (Habib 2014b). In a similar fashion, a small bloc called the Civil Democratic Alliance, an alliance of smaller secular and liberal parties, used market research to develop some specific policy positions that would appeal to voters. Specifically, it conducted an online poll about what Iraqis wanted in a candidate. Then, "[b]ased on the survey, some of their candidates have signed a pledge, if elected, to give up their parliament pension and allowances for bodyguards and other bonuses, which regular Iraqis see as perks of a pampered elite" (Rubei'i and Parker 2014). A final indicator of an emerging market orientation in the 2014 election was the clear emphasis among most parties on leaders and brands over policy (including attacking those of their opposition). As the Al-Monitor news website reported in the

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2014 campaign, “none of the political blocs has put forward an electoral program or platform”. Instead, they have “slogans marketed as programs, such as ‘eliminating terrorism’” (Al Kadhimi 2014).

Summary of Findings and Implications for Theory

To the extent that Iraq is characterized by deep ethnic divisions, proportional representation, ongoing security issues and economic and political underdevelopment, it constitutes a ‘least likely’ case for where we would expect to see parties adopting a market oriented approach. Despite these characteristics, many political parties in Iraq became increasingly professionalized over time and some crossed the threshold for becoming a market oriented party. In terms of the typology outlined in **Figure 1**, this includes the use of political consultants, advanced marketing and communications techniques and, most importantly, market intelligence to inform product development. It also includes a strong emphasis on candidates and party brand as well as the strategic use of policy. These findings support the broader view of market orientation that is reintegrated with professionalization and the idea that Stromback’s framework applies more to strategy than market orientation. In other words, they support the view that market orientation is a set of best practices that inform rather than determine strategy and that will eventually spread to all modern democracies. This view is reinforced by the additional findings that the highly ideological Islamist parties are also becoming more professionalized and how push-back from local campaigns and the large number of non-U.S. consultants indicate an increasingly hybridized, rather than Americanized, approach.

The Iraq case also supports the hypothesis that transnational diffusion will play a significant role in the spread of political marketing techniques to post-conflict states. Moreover, it

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helps to further operationalize the specific channels through which transnational diffusion may occur. This includes: political consultants hired directly by parties; political consultants employed by Western and international development agencies; the use of handbooks and other training materials produced by foreign political consultants; the observation of Western elections through exchanges and media; and the provision of funding necessary for parties to adopt advanced political marketing techniques. In addition to transnational diffusion, however, the Iraq case demonstrates that – somewhat counter-intuitively – modernization can also be important in post-conflict states. Particularly important in the Iraq case was the gradual modernization of the electoral system towards greater intra-ethnic political competition. This increased the demand for political marketing techniques by creating a situation more akin to each ethnic group having their own election. This meant that some of Stromback's criteria in favour of a market oriented approach (those consistent with modernization theory) began to emerge *within* each ethnic group such as a smaller number of competitive parties, lower social divisions and higher electoral volatility.

Taken together, these points indicate that it may be possible to synthesize the insights of modernization theory, transnational diffusion theory and some of the points from Stromback. This would allow for a revised comparative framework that explains the spread of professionalization and market orientation rather than a shift to the policy centre. For example, rather than examining whether a political system is majoritarian or proportional representation, greater emphasis would be placed on its degree of modernization defined in terms of declining party identification, greater competition and more swing voters. Also important to influencing the spread of political marketing techniques and market oriented political parties would be the degree of media modernization/commercialization as well as the financial resources available to political parties.

Finally, also examined would be the extent of a country's links to U.S. and Western political consultants through the various channels outlined earlier.

CONCLUSION

This article has sought to provide an initial exploration of political marketing in post-conflict elections by examining the case of post-Saddam Iraq. In doing so, the emphasis was on how the Iraq case – as a 'least likely' case – could contribute to debates in political marketing theory over the definition of market orientation and over how and when political marketing techniques have spread beyond the U.S. However, political marketing theory can also offer insights to those studying post-conflict elections. For example, when market orientation is reintegrated with professionalization into a more linear and additive definition, the characteristics of product, sales and market oriented parties can provide further benchmarks for assessing the institutionalization of elections and the broader democratic process. Additionally, while much more research is needed, the role of political consultants in post-conflict elections, particularly those employed by national and international democracy promotion agencies, may be a potential site for influencing the specific campaign strategies adopted by political parties. Important here would be to promote campaign strategies that avoid 'playing the ethnic card'. Such an approach may allow political marketing to act as a further tool in the post-conflict nation-building toolkit.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thanks Zheger Hassan and Renas Jano for their generous help with the research for this article. I would also like to thanks the anonymous reviewers for their very helpful comments.

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Figure 1. Key Characteristics of Product, Sales and Market Oriented Parties.

	Product Oriented Party	**Sales Oriented Party**	**Market Oriented Party**
Product Development (policy, candidates, brand)			
• Use of market intelligence and consultants?	• NO • ideology determines product	• NO • ideology determines product	• YES • focused on voters, members and other stakeholders • ideology matters but policies can be customized to different voter segments, members and donors for persuasion, mobilization and fundraising • more emphasis on candidates and brand
Communications			
• Use of advanced marketing and communications techniques?	• NO	• YES • product sold to voters	• YES • product sold to voters, stakeholders and members (to get buy-in)
• Use of party professionals and consultants?	• NO	• YES	• YES
• Use of market intelligence?	• NO	• YES • focused on voters	• YES • focused on voters, members and other stakeholders

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