

## SHAPING THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE: MEDIA POWER ON POLITICAL COMMUNICATION



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### **Abstract:**

*Communication as a means of interaction has seen a wide-ranging impact on various aspects of human life, particularly in the political arena. the subject of this paper delves into the complex relationship between politics and information by exploring the multidisciplinary nature of political communication while researching its multifaceted roles within political systems. In this regard, this study highlights the transformative impact of information on the political process and examines its functions by revealing the dynamic interaction of political communication. Also, this paper emphasizes the media's vital role as a core channel of political communication, both as a transmitter and as an influencer of public perception. The study also emphasizes the relationship between political culture and the media, recognizing the media's role in building the citizenships and its related concepts on the public sphere, while also recognizing its ability to manipulate and represent biased. Looking ahead, the emergence of new media in the digital age prompts inquiries about its future trajectory and implications, spurring avenues for further research into political communication.*

**key words:** political communication; political culture legitimacy; participation; public opinion.

### **Introduction:**

Communication is an interaction of mutually recognized signals means. It was enjoyed a great vogue in the mid to late twentieth century as a “master discipline”. Since it was an aspect of virtually all human and quite a bit of non-

human activity, it seemed appropriate for an academic discipline founded in its name to harbor similar ambitions. Thus, the communication study commence to assume some of the mantle of philosophy, seeking to explain humanity to itself. Numerous stands of otherwise disconnected thought contributed to this process (Hartley, 2004, p. 32).

From European structural linguistics and Russian formalism emerged the notion of underlying universal structures in human language. Additionally, American comparative linguistics, influenced by Benjamin Lee Whorf and Edmund Sapir, introduced the concept of 'linguistic relativity', suggesting that language molds perception, with each language shaping it uniquely. However, the configuration of reality was influenced by how communication systems organized the world. In a parallel vein, French structural anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss associated communication with key cultural aspects like marriage and money, proposing that the circulation of signs (through language and arts), women (within kinship systems), and money (in the economy) revealed fundamentally similar structures. These, Lévi-Strauss believed, unveiled universal elements of the human psyche.

Concurrently, the American empirical research in social sciences delved into the micro-processes of contemporary life, introducing communication as a formal subject of study. It concentrated on the pragmatic intricacies of how mass society internally communicated. This began with the enigmatic challenge of a society where masses remained anonymous to each other and to influential elites, yet wielded constitutional and commercial sovereignty as citizens and consumers. In this paradoxical context, mass communication's strategic importance surged, particularly concerning aspects such as advertising (Hartley, 2004, p. 33), journalism, public relations (PR), and political propaganda (Schudson, 2001, p. 33). The effects of "mass" entertainment on autonomous yet sovereign individuals also gained significance. In the United States, communication schools prospered, aiming to democratize the republic's public life, expanding their curriculum to encompass media, PR, journalism, and advertising. Canadian literary historian Marshall McLuhan (1962-1964), blending his field with cognitive psychology and Harold Innis' communication philosophy, also significantly influenced the elevation of communication studies.

But a darker side has emerged, as governments have begun to exert significant influence over communications. Despite obvious ideological conflicts, such as the Cold War concept of "mutual assured destruction" and the national liberation struggles across Africa and Vietnam, the opposing ideologies were never

truly opposing. In doing so, it prompted the urgent need to understand the practical dynamics of communication within and between militarized states.

Thus, it can be said that the last half of the twentieth century witnessed diverse academic trends, intricately intertwined but not seamlessly integrated, during which the initial aspiration to create a comprehensive scientific framework for communications was not realized. Instead, communication has assumed a secondary role, appearing in specialized areas that cater to distinct needs.

According to Harold D. Lasswell: “The communication process in society performs three functions: first, is the surveillance of the environment, disclosing threats and opportunities affecting the value position of the community and of the component parts within it; second, the correlation of the components of society in making a response to the environment; and third, the transmission of the social inheritance. In general, biological equivalents can be found in human and animal associations, and within the economy of a single organism” (Lasswell, 1971).

By understanding Lasswell's framework along with the evolution of the role of communication in political science, we realize that communication is not only a means of transmitting information but a catalyst for change, a tool for coordination, and a bridge that spans generations. In essence, the communications process from observation to coordination and transmission is reflected in its journey from its historical origins to its contemporary role in shaping the political landscape. This coherent progression underscores the integral nature of communication within society, and especially within the complex world of politics.

Delving into this subject raises an academically intriguing question:

**How does political communication shape and influence the dynamics of governance, public opinion, and policy making within the interactions of the political process?**

This query forms the core academic problem to be addressed in the study of political communication.

Through this study, we followed the descriptive approach by describing, analyzing, and interpreting the nature of political communication and its interactions within both civil and political society. We also adopted the case study method by tracking the status of the course of media interactions with politics and the intersection of these relations within the political system

We will address the topic of our research paper by dividing it into two axes: the first axis discusses the nature of political communication and its controls,

while the second one deals with the media power on political process through the political communication approach.

## **THE FIRST TOPIC:**

### **UNVEILING POLITICAL COMMUNICATION:**

#### **FROM HISTORY TO DEFINITION**

According to Kenterelidou, « Politics, as an ongoing conversation about social issues, encompass a broad scope of political communication and demonstrate the ubiquity of political communication in contemporary life and even in non-electoral periods » (Kenterelidou, 2005, p. 05). From this idea we underscores the indelible nature of political communication in our lives. It compels us to recognize that political engagement is not confined to specific junctures but rather an ongoing journey that shapes our societies and influences our collective destiny's course. As scholars and citizens, we could unravel the intricacies of this dynamic interplay and strive to foster a more informed, engaged, and participatory political landscape for generations to come.

#### **1. Unraveling the Threads of Political Communication: Historical Analysis**

Although political communication has emerged as a focal point to researchers in political science, communications, and social sciences”, this phenomenon notion is not an invention of the 20th century and its initial precursors can be traced back many centuries ago, it finds its origins in Greek civilization where the works of both Aristotle and Plato echoed in this field.

As for political communication as a precise and significant concept, it began to emerge as a cross-disciplinary field of study during the 1950s, when the term appeared to describe an intervening process by which political institutions and citizens interact with each other and political influences are mobilized and transmitted. Over 60 years ago, this term has been a widespread sense among political communication scholars and researches, and so, have the mounting evidence presented, that “political communication is undergoing rapid, perhaps profound changes in many countries and that the character of these changes might be worrisome.

In the midst of successive historical developments, as a field of inquiry to this phenomenon, political communication is intellectually rooted in five research

traditions. These five traditions later evolved in to two dominant approaches in political communication research; rhetorical criticism and social-scientific analysis. These two approaches have generated most of the studies in the field. These studies are usually considered mainstream political communication research. In the field of political communication research both of the above dominant analysis/approaches make important contributions, but neither of them establishes hegemony. yet, the diversity of research topics and methods are the basic features that reveal the maturity of the field (Graber & Smith, 2005, p.p. 489-491).

While charting the evolution of political communication's dynamic, scholars are now orientating to concepts such as the 'modern publicity process', the loss of the traditional form and function of the political parties, the competition for control of the media, public and political agenda, the development of political marketing and the professionalism in campaigning, the rise of infotainment and the permanent campaigning, the appearance of political professionals in the decision making process within political parties, the audience's reception of politics.... On the whole, all the forenamed are describing current changes of political communication.

In this context, the political, social, cultural and media differences that overlap in their interactions must be recognized by influencing the process of political communication as determinants affected by this phenomenon and influencing it, in order to adopt certain political behaviors. As that political communication principles are subject to continuous changes to comply with the requirements of the times required by globalization, electronic democracy, civil society, noting the evolution of political communication studies and a greatest amount of scholarship can be found in all areas of the world (America; Europe; great Britain and Germany, and Asia; China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, Japan). However, political, social, cultural and media system differences should be acknowledged (Kenterelidou, 2005, p. 04).

Consequently, modern public communication and information tools are developed. As a result, in terms of politics, western cotemporary democracies are experiencing the transformation of the political party in power, in the long run, to a governing party exclusively. Continually, the governing party ends up privileging itself, directly or indirectly, in order to empower its positing in the national political scene. This phenomenon was detected first U.S.A and is now being observed over the world.

## 2. Political Communication: Deciphering Definitions and Dimensions

According to Keriakakis V, Political communication is the most «encephalic combination of art and science ». In this definition, Keriakakis V gave the impression of practices characterized by skills that mixt harmoniously art with science. While David L. Swanson & Dan Nimmo defined it as: "the strategic use of communication to influence public knowledge, beliefs, and action on political matters", where they emphasize the strategic nature of political communication, highlighting the role of persuasion in political discourse (Graber & Smith, 2005, p. 490).

Whereas Doris A Grabber considered this field as the construction sending receiving and processing of messages that politics have a significant direct or indirect impact on politics, focusing on the key element that message has a significant political effect on the thinking beliefs and behaviors of individuals group institution and whole society and the environments in which they exist (Crozier). McNair provided a similar definition when he explained that political communication is: "purposeful communication about politics" (Political communication). For McNair this means that this not only covers verbal or written statements, but also visual representations such, so his definition was holistic, combining several variables.

Whilst Denton & wood ward provided one definition of political communication as a pure discussion about the allocation of public resources official authority (who is given the power to make legal, legislative, and executive decision) and official sanctions (what state rewards or punishes) (McNair, 2011, p. 03).

From these definitions, we conclude that political communication is a mental and physical interactive behavior that reflects understanding, knowledge and awareness of the surrounding political field and its positive and negative interactions.

This communication on the political field requires tools to interact and influence. In this regard, Media comes as one of the most important tributaries of its importance in delivering political messages, whether on the official or popular scale. This is what we will discuss by explaining, analysing and interpreting in the next axis.

## **THE SECOND TOPIC:**

### **MEDIA AS A TRIBUTARY OF THE POLITICAL PROCESS: COMPONANTS AND CONTENTS**

It is inevitable to acknowledge that the internal and external channels of political communication are the nerves of the government. The political system cannot function without effective networks of these channels able to transmit political messages, foremost among them is Media.

#### **1. Harnessing media components for the political sphere: insights and implications**

Discussing about media, we shall be working with the widely-accepted idea that the media are central channels of popular information and knowledge and that, they necessarily exert a degree of defining power over the character and the terminology of popular political understanding. The particular measuring of this power is a matter for audience studies and poses a methodological challenge.

However, in large term the influence character of media's 'knowledge effect' seems to be something that we can bring in to our analysis straight away, even if particular instances always need care (for example: the media power levels achieved in shaping public understanding of a shift in economic policy might be different from those achieved in respect of food security or even climate change).

Hence, there is much concerns about political communication such as an inactive and uniformed public at the societal level, as most political action and power relationship operate at that or other systemic levels; the message leads to the seeking of a more properly functioning acts. Moreover, this new political communication's aspect, is clearly a product of the second half of the 20th century (Blumler & Coleman, 2015, p. 116).

No doubt that political power works through meanings and semantics, but it also works through direct legislative constraints, involving various forms of penalty, including fines and imprisonment. Power of this kind is exerted on the media system of most countries to some degree, through the general framework of the law and the specific framework of media regulation. With a measure of simplification, it is possible to see two conflicting tendencies at work in current thinking about the way in which politics and media interact as spheres of activity. In one view, politics is still the dominant partner, even if this is not always visible, and media activities are framed by political factors that severely reduce the scope and independent agency of the media system. Inless, no one attaches importance to the economic factors of how the Media get its revenue!

Nowadays the Internet for the first time is more popular than the other means of political communication. Popularity of the Internet increased for all the age

categories. However, it is among peoples under the age of 35 years old mainly used the media gives people chance to make a direct communication of the subject of their interest. Moreover, Media constitute a societal carrier for managing politically the public sphere (Kenterelidou, 2005, p. 07).

Practically, McGuire argues that there are five contributory factors to the creation of a media effect: Message, source, recipient, channel, and context. While it may be tempting to focus solely on the persuasive influence of the message, media effects scholarship encompasses much more than just this aspect of communication. Understanding a media message requires considering the message's source, a variety of recipient characteristics (such as demographics, needs, and traits), the delivery context, and the presentation channel (such as television, radio, or newspaper). To fully grasp the impact, all five communication components are essential. (Demlie, 2015, p. 23)

## **2. Dynamic Influence of Media's contents on Political Communication:**

Media plays the greatest role in political communication; we concentrate it on four (04) major issues

### **- Shaping Perceptions: Media's Impact on Political Culture and Power:**

Political culture is the setting within which the apparatus of politics works and within which we think, feel and act as citizens in relation to the self-presentations and claims of politicians and the accounts of political journalists. It constitutes a set of shared attitudes, beliefs, values, and norms that inform and shape political behavior and decision-making within a society or political system. It encompasses the general outlook and conception of government and its purpose, the role that citizens should assume in the political process, and the norms and expectations that guide political behavior.

Given the broad diversity of political cultures observed across societies and political systems, political culture has a significant impact on the functionality and stability of political institutions. Consequently, understanding political culture is of utmost importance for policymakers and researchers seeking to identify the root causes of political behavior and design effective policies and institutions that are capable of responding to the values and needs of the people they serve. In sum, political culture is a complex and multifaceted concept that affect and can have a significant impact on political communication. It is shaped by a range of individual, social, and historical factors and influences citizens' attitudes and beliefs towards politics, which in turn impacts their likelihood to engage in political activities.

It is easy to leave 'political culture' out of the picture when studying politics, seeing it perhaps as a 'soft' and un-measurable extra. However, if the

growth of cultural studies has taught us anything, it is the importance of attending to systems of meaning and value underlying surface structures and behaviors, whatever the analytic challenge this brings with it. Certainly, when we look at some of the changes that have shown themselves in the media-political relations of many countries in recent years (Arab Spring, Brexit, Ukran war) then engagement with the cultural becomes a requirement. This is because we are talking about matters of political subjectivity, about the way people experience politics, consciously and unconsciously, in their everyday lives (Richardson, Parry, & Corner, 2013).

At present, the key role of fragmented and dedicated media in producing political culture is evident by giving people new ideas, services, and even political awareness, in the air of the emergence of a new form of communication related to the culture and technology of the network society, and based on horizontal networks of communication. In spite of this complex, multidimensional social evolution, the decisive process shaping society, both individually and collectively, is the dynamics of power relations. And power relations, in the social and technological context, which are largely dependent on the process of socialized communication (Castells, 2007, p. 240).

#### **- Participation in the political sphere: Media's Influence**

The relation among Media and participation in political life has been the subject of a much contestation. While a few students have hailed the media (old and new) as forces of social mobilization, which generate political interest and an active citizenry, others have condemned them because the motive of loss of trust in politics, political apathy, cynicism, and alienation.

Some researchers have shown a positive correlation between media consumption and levels of political talk and participation and a positive effect of the internet in levels of political information and political participation, as well as in the empowerment of marginalized groups. Others have found evidence that television distances people from community life and promotes civic disengagement; have claimed that the internet reproduces differences of power and participation and that it 'increasingly encourages the individual to look for private solutions to the problems of public nature which contributes to the understanding of citizenship not as a public but predominantly as a private affair. Finally, some studies have concluded that attitudinal differences may be associated with consumption of specific types of media content (news or entertainment on television) rather than with a medium as a whole (Kim & Vishak, 2008, p. 356).

In spite of these ambiguities in research, it is undeniable that the media are the main arenas for citizens' understanding of political struggles in our times. The notion of 'mediated citizenship' acknowledges the centrality of the media in contemporary public spheres and in the construction of notions of the 'citizen', their rights, their responsibilities and their space for political action. In a media-saturated environment, perceptions of distribution of power, of the role of individuals in democracy and of the effectiveness of civic action are a function of multiple discursive representations that can be accessed via television news, street billboards, blogs, radio talk-shows or mass emails, amongst many other forms. Crucially, media(ted) discourses also influence.

In other sense (way) Media can make voters more active, make passive citizens participate in elections, keep supporters, update and make stronger the already created beliefs, change political preferences. These tasks are solved by means of TV debates, TV duels and other forms of "battles" between politics' celebrities, constructed as wrestling. The role of media in our modern world is so great that they sometimes create news including political ones.

In sum, regardless of the time, culture and location of geographical communication, politicians seek to convey any view to guide images of nature, lightness, peace, war, disease, health, navigation and navigation (Amatov, et al., 2020, p. 146).

#### **- Media and Political Legitimacy: Catalysts or Dilemmas ?**

We can observe an extensive crisis of political legitimacy in practically all countries, and different kinds of nationalist medium work to Create a sense of loyalty and national unity, in way to achieve political development. So, we can constate the predominant role of media politics, in the opposite case media have interaction with the crisis of political legitimacy in most countries around the world. However, any political intervention in the public space requires presence in the media space. And since the media space is largely shaped by business and governments that set the political parameters in terms of the formal political system, albeit in its plurality, the rise of insurgent politics cannot be separated from the emergence of a new kind of media space: the space created around the process of mass self-communication (Castells, 2007, 246).

#### **- Media as the pulse of the political process: shaping public opinion**

A research tradition that made its unique contribution to the emergence of the new area of the communication study (political communication), is the tradition of political propaganda study during the period of post-World War II.

Scholars like Laswell and Doob, focused on how different government used persuasive messages to influence public opinion. Laswell's quantitative analysis of messages generated by the government demonstrated the power of mass political communication in forming public opinion.

Another tradition is a tradition of institution study of the press and government and their relation to public opinion. The political effects of the mass media according to this tradition are the result of the media agenda-setting process in which media may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling people what to think about.

people's view of their own position in the chessboard of politics and are also constitutive of the political self, cultivating dispositions to action or inaction. Individual self-recognition as a (potential) political agent therefore relates to one's (perceived) symbolic standing. The 'political self' is understood here as an interpretive construct regarding one's own position in the political world ; it is a crucial dimension of political subjectivity, the (mediated) experience of politics and associated views and beliefs (Carvalho, 2010, p. 174).

In the larger realm of politics and in the small world of intimate social life, certain general concerns that dominate thoughts and conversation are always present. Thus collective attention appears as a process in which the group acts upon itself. Thus, Collective interest emerges as a process in which the Community acts itself (LANG & LANG, 2009, p. 1007), reflected in public opinion that can influence the political process positively and negatively.

Agenda setting remains the prevailing theoretical approach to analysing the impact of media messages on the public. Its viewers emphasize the importance of the political views of the public and elites on the relative importance of political events and that political conditions are shaped by information made available directly or indirectly by the media. in the sense that information information is the basis for the formation of public opinion; and the advantages of presumed governance in functioning democracies.

In a practical context, employing campaign periods as a paradigm to elucidate the pivotal role of media in the realm of political communication, a pertinent insight emerges from the scholarly work of Camelia Beciu. Beciu's comprehensive research has meticulously delineated the intricate functions that the media assumes within the intricate triad comprising the political actor, the media apparatus, and the electorate. By navigating her nuanced analysis, we uncover a multifaceted framework that encapsulates the symbiotic dynamics characterizing

this relationship, unveiling the multifarious ways through which the media orchestrates the exchange of information and influences the political discourse as follows:

- Politicians broadcast their controlled messages without interruptions from journalists or opponents.

- Political opinions shared in traditional media are mirrored online, enhancing visibility to targeted audiences.

- Politicians leverage new media to launch presumed political and media agendas, with journalists highlighting social media statements.

- Leaders utilize mass communication methods to project themselves as effective governors by promoting policies and decisions.

- New Media introduces novel formats like interactive, narrative, and conversational forms to advance political doctrines and policies.

- Crafting online electioneering is integral to candidates' strategies, each online resource serving a specific campaign purpose.

- The Internet mobilizes voters for opinions and public discussions on issues of societal importance.

- Internet use enables politicians to interact more efficiently with voters, transcending institutional barriers.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, our paper affirms the vital role of language in facilitating societal communication, a significance that resonates across various disciplines, particularly within the realm of politics, where it underscores the interactions between the political community and the civic realm. The interconnection between politics and communication is indelible; politics devoid of communication is an implausible notion. Consequently, the reliance on communication experts becomes an essential facet for politicians, constituting an integral part of the perpetual campaign inherent in governance.

Amid these dynamics, media emerges as a paramount conduit for communication between governing bodies and civil society. It offers an array of advantages, such as directing public attention towards urgent societal issues—be it education, healthcare, transportation, or governmental corruption. Furthermore, it transcends geographical boundaries, disseminating global events to remote communities, fostering rapid connectivity, and nurturing spaces for dialogue and

idea exchange. However, media also carries its share of disadvantages, including the propagation of libel, scandals, promotion of specific cultures, political manipulation, and biased policy representation. Thus, media emerges as a double-edged sword within the arena of political communication.

Moreover, the emergence of new media in our digital age has affected culture by bringing about a radical shift in the general lifestyle, without the digital revolution of today's globalized world, especially in the field of communication technology, such a transformation would not have been possible. This new (informal) media raises interesting questions about its impact on the political landscape. Will it replace traditional media in the future? Can it be harnessed and controlled to serve the interests of its managers? These questions, among others, warrant further exploration and constitute fertile ground for future research endeavours.

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