PISSN : 2571-9904 - EISSN : 2602-7763

Policies of Shadow Banning and Content Moderation on Global Platforms as an Instrument of Directed International Political Communication: Arabic Political Content as a Case Study

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Received: 21 / 05 / 2026 **Accepted**: 29 / 07 / 2026 **Published**: 31 / 07 / 2026

Abstract:
This study examines global platforms' restriction of Arabic political content during crises, functioning as geopolitical tools for the Western center to maintain hegemony. Utilizing a descriptive-survey method on Arab academic and media elites, the findings reveal a strategic shift toward "silent algorithmic engineering" via covert censorship. These programmatic mechanisms quietly isolate Arab narratives within digital echo chambers, causing a total normative collapse of "freedom of expression" slogans. Ultimately, the study validates the core tenets of "Digital Imperialism," emphasizing the urgent imperative of developing sovereign Arab digital infrastructures to safeguard regional epistemic autonomy.

Keywords: *Arabic Political Content; Banning Policies; Content Moderation; Digital Hegemony; Directed Political Communication; Global Platforms.*

I. Introduction:

The international communicative environment has undergone a radical transformation that has reshaped the very concept of the "public sphere." Following decades of evangelizing digital democracy, technological neutrality, and the capacity of cyberspace to dismantle information monopolies, global cyber platforms have mutated into arenas of geopolitical conflict governed by international power dynamics. These networks are no longer neutral technical conduits facilitating epistemic flow among peoples; rather, they have evolved into highly complex infrastructures through which political narratives are engineered and public opinion trends are steered. Consequently, they have become a pivotal instrument of soft power deployed by major technological and political powers to impose epistemic sovereignty and project transnational ideological agendas.

In this volatile context, censorship and digital banning policies have emerged during the international crises of 2024 - 2025 as a directed communicative phenomenon targeting the dismantling of Arabic political content and the containment of its solidarity-driven narratives. The gravity of these practices lies in their departure from conventional, crude suppression methods, relying instead on dual strategies that blend "hard censorship" manifested in total deletion and account termination with a "silent algorithmic engineering" anchored in shadow banning and deliberate reach restriction. This has generated an unequal digital ecosystem where "community standards" are weaponized as selective ideological guillotines, purging the Arabic voice and obliterating its civilization and political specificities to maintain its subservience to the dominant Western center.

Based on these premises, this study derives its academic and empirical significance from its endeavor to deconstruct this phenomenon and probe its depths by applying it to a sample of Arabic academic and media elites, who represent the group most engaged with international issues and most susceptible to cyber-restriction policies. The study seeks to read and interpret the regulatory behavior of digital platforms through the theoretical tenets of "Digital Imperialism," while tracking the ramifications of this repressive communicative experience on shaping the "critical consciousness" of these elites. This is a rigorous attempt to provide a precise scientific understanding of the dimensions of neo-technological colonialism and to envision paths toward epistemic liberation by highlighting the imperative of establishing an independent Arabic digital sovereignty capable of protecting the national narrative during times of crisis.

I .1 Research Problem:

The escalation of banning and restriction policies targeting Arabic political content during contemporary international crises exposes the transformation of cyberspace from a free communicative environment into a battlefield for geopolitical struggle governed by power balances. Global digital platforms deploy their algorithms as soft and hard tools to engineer public debate and steer collective consciousness. This compromised reality dismantles the premise of "technological neutrality" and raises critical, normative questions regarding the dimensions of neo-digital colonialism, presenting us with the following central research question:

To what extent do the policies of banning and restricting Arabic political content across global digital platforms during international crises contribute to reproducing the geopolitical hegemony of major powers?

To address this primary research problem, we have deconstructed it into a set of sub-questions:

1. What are the algorithmic and technical mechanisms utilized by global platforms to restrict political content?
2. What are the geopolitical benchmarks and criteria that govern the implementation of banning decisions against certain international actors over others?
3. How do banning policies impact political pluralism and the free flow of information at the international level?
4. To what extent are these policies effective in directing and curbing Arabic public opinion toward current international crises?

I.2 Significance of the Study:

The scholarly significance lies in enriching the Arabic academic library with a study that provides a theoretical foundation for "digital sovereignty" and exposes the hidden political dimensions behind the false facade of technological neutrality. On the practical level, its

significance manifests in providing strategic foresight for decision-makers on how to counter transnational communicative threats.

I.3 Objectives of the Study:

The study aims to:

1. Monitor and analyze the patterns of political content banning.
2. Uncover the self-serving, symbiotic relationships between major governments and technological corporations.
3. Provide an analytical model demonstrating the impact of algorithmic restriction on Arabic and global public opinion.

I.4 Conceptual Framework of the Study:

I.4.1 Banning and Restriction Policies:

A set of legal, administrative, or technical measures and decisions enacted by a governing authority (a government, institution, or digital platform) to block, reduce, or impose stringent censorship on the flow of information, media content, and communicative activities originating from a specific entity or directed toward a target audience (Al-Delaimi, 2021).

I.4.2 Directed International Political Communication:

A planned, intentional communicative activity (whether media, diplomatic, or digital) exercised by international actors (states, organizations, or alliances) via transnational media outlets, aiming to influence external public opinion or decision-makers in other nations to steer their positions and behaviors in alignment with the sender's political interests (Filali, 2022).

I.5 Literature Review:

I 5.1 The study by Gillespie (2018), titled "Custodians of the Internet"

This study constitutes the cornerstone in dismantling the "myth of technological neutrality." Gillespie transcends the traditional framework of the media "gatekeeping" theory to develop the concept of the "algorithmic gatekeeper." He argues that digital platforms are no longer mere conduits for transmission; instead, they have become sovereign political actors exercising the power of "banning and restriction" as an instrument of governance. This study provides the philosophical background to interpret "restriction and banning policies" as deliberate political acts, supporting our study's hypothesis that the "community standards" proclaimed by platforms are not neutral ethical regulations, but flexible tools crafted and adjusted to serve the balances of international political and economic power (Gillespie, Tarleton, 2018).

I 5.2 The study by Abdel-Hamid (2023), titled "Digital Censorship of Arabic Content in International Crises"

This study represents the empirical Arabic dimension of restriction policies, uncovering the mechanisms of "directed international political communication" within the digital ecosystem. The study theorizes the concept of "systemic algorithmic bias" and empirically demonstrates how the digital sphere is engineered using techniques such as "shadow banning," keyword blocking, and stripping interactive features from content that adopts the Arabic narrative. This study offers a structural model for methodological analysis if content or discourse analysis tools are applied, providing a modern empirical indicator that the suppression of Arabic content alongside the facilitation of the Western narrative is a form of directed communicative hegemony used to manage international conflicts and control global public opinion trends during crises (Abdel-Hamid, Amani, 2023).

I 5.3 The study by Roberts (2019), titled "Behind the Screen"

Roberts dives behind the scenes to expose the "political economy of content moderation." The comparative advantage of this study lies in its revelation of the "pressure and compliance mechanisms" between Western governments (such as Washington and Brussels) and major tech companies. It illustrates how loose and elastic terms like "combating disinformation" or "hate speech" are exploited to legitimize the exclusion of voices opposing Western centralism. This study serves us in interpreting the correlative relationship between the political actor (the state) and the technical actor (the platform). It provides our study with depth in policy analysis, confirming that banning is not an independent technical decision executed automatically by an algorithm, but a response to international political and security mandates imposed by major powers to enforce transnational censorship (Roberts, Sarah T., 2019).

I 5.4 Synthetic and Comparative Formulation of Prior Literature:

At the intersection of these three literatures, a progressive trajectory emerges that directly serves the objectives of the current research. While Gillespie (2018) established the structural theoretical foundation for platforms transforming into political gatekeepers, Roberts (2019) arrived to uncover the direct political and governmental mechanisms driving these gatekeepers and compelling them to design restriction policies that serve major powers. Conversely, Abdel-Hamid (2023) provided the empirical application and field-monitoring of the casualties of these policies, utilizing Arabic content during international crises as a striking model for the outcomes of this alliance between political authority and algorithmic dominance.

I 5.5 Identification of the Research Gap and How It Will Be Addressed:

Despite the high scholarly value of prior studies, our current research distinguishes itself by bridging a significant research gap through the following points:

A. Deficiency in Studying Composite Interactive Censorship: Most foreign studies, such as Gillespie and Roberts, focused on the Western institutional and political dimension without addressing the specificity of Arabic societies, whereas the Arabic study (Abdel-Hamid) focused exclusively on a single platform (Facebook). Herein lies our research, which approaches the problem from a comparative perspective across multiple platforms (such as X, Facebook, and TikTok) or focuses on an emerging international crisis not covered by those studies.

B. Developing Indicators for Directed Political Communication: Our research seeks to go beyond merely proving the existence of banning. It aims to deconstruct the linguistic and communicative strategies employed by international powers to direct political communication via these platforms, directly linking restriction policies to international agenda-setting and framing theories in the era of cyber and hybrid warfare.

I. 6 Methodology:

This study relies completely in its design on the case study method, due to its procedural alignment with the nature of the studied phenomenon and its objectives. The choice of this methodology is justified by the academic pursuit to elucidate the dimensions of cyber-censorship and determine the nature of the Arabic elite's trends and ideological stances toward content banning policies a matter that cannot be scientifically measured and interpreted except through social and political survey tools. The use of this method is further justified by its capacity to handle a quantitative study sample totaling four hundred subjects, distributing questionnaire forms to them to monitor and classify their empirical experiences and the restriction mechanisms they actually encountered. This methodological choice integrated with the advanced analytical survey approach, allowing for the creation of correlative relationships and cross-tabulations between the type of restriction experienced and the level of awareness regarding the platforms' motives, while maintaining the methodology within a case study framework focused on contemporary international crises, thereby enabling the researcher to map raw numbers onto their actual geopolitical context and derive rigorous academic generalizations that serve the study's thesis.

I. 7 Study Sample and Research Tools:

I.7.1 Study Population and Sample:

The current study population is formed of two basic dimensions that integrate to dismantle the facets of the phenomenon: the first is an empirical, human dimension represented by social media users and academic and professional elites; the second is an objective, analytical dimension represented by the digital content published across cyberspace. Within this framework, the study relies on a purposive (judgmental) sample due to its compatibility with the stated objectives, whereby an empirical sample of (400) individuals was selected from active users and specialists in the fields of media and political science, given their analytical capacity to evaluate the dimensions of digital policies and their international political ramifications. The case study centers on "the impact of restricting and banning Arabic political content during the international crises of 2024–2025."

I.7.2 Research Tools:

To achieve methodological integration between empirical monitoring and algorithmic textual analysis, the study utilizes data-gathering instruments; specifically, an electronic questionnaire form designed and deployed digitally to collect quantitative data from the empirical sample of 400 respondents. It aimed to measure the elite's levels of awareness regarding the operations of the "algorithmic gatekeeper," capture their stances toward the

international political backgrounds driving banning decisions, and track the digital circumvention and adaptation strategies adopted by users to counter these restrictions.

II. Theoretical Frameworks Explaining the Study:

To establish an integrated scientific explanation for the phenomenon of deploying digital banning as an instrument of directed international political communication, this study synthesizes three contemporary communication and political theories:

II.1 Digital Agenda-Setting Theory:

In the depths of the current communicative environment, we are witnessing a radical shift in the philosophy of information flow management. Digital platforms have transcended the classical role of traditional media, which was centered on prioritizing issues or what is academically known as Agenda-Setting Theory. In the past, traditional media possessed the authority to determine what topics the audience thought about, without dictating how they should think about them. Today, however, platform algorithms do not merely present a cognitive menu; rather, they execute complete behavioral and cognitive engineering of the user through absolute control over the news feed. This transformation has replaced the classical human gatekeeper with an intelligent programmatic gatekeeper that functions as a directed political and economic tool rather than a neutral channel for transmitting reality.

The mechanism through which these algorithms operate goes beyond merely monitoring personal user preferences to activating what can be termed "structural algorithmic censorship." When economic calculations aimed at maximizing profits and retaining the user for the longest possible duration within the platform intersect with the political calculations of major powers and centers of influence, the algorithm becomes an instrument for steering global public opinion. For instance, recommendation algorithms are designed to amplify sensationalist content or content that aligns with dominant political narratives, while restricting content that deconstructs these narratives or addresses issues outside the geopolitical scope of the powers owning those platforms.

This control manifests at its highest levels through the mechanisms of shadow banning, strict restriction, and account deletion. These practices represent the pinnacle of international agenda-setting control, whereby platforms transmute into arenas for manufacturing consciousness and distorting humanitarian causes based on the "political identity of the victim and the perpetrator." Here, humanitarian crises are not addressed based on the volume of human suffering, but based on the geopolitical positioning of the conflicting parties. If the victim belongs to a front allied with the Western system or the platform's owners, images of suffering and human stories flow seamlessly; in fact, algorithms thrust them to the forefront of global attention to generate transnational empathy and prompt immediate international political decisions. Conversely, if the victim lies outside this map of interests, or if the perpetrator is a party enjoying economic or political leverage with the platform, restriction algorithms are activated automatically or deliberately to diminish the "reach rate" of content associated with the crisis, thereby gradually eroding the level of international engagement with it until it fades from public consciousness (Al-Abd, 2021).

To illustrate this analysis through empirical examples that have undergone academic scrutiny, one can observe the stark disparity in handling the Russia-Ukraine war compared to other humanitarian crises, such as the crisis in Yemen, the Tigray war in Ethiopia, or the war on Gaza. In the Ukrainian case, platform policies were modified overtly and algorithmically to permit expressions and forms of content previously classified as "incitement to violence," and stories of displacement and human suffering were intensively exported into the feeds of all users worldwide, thereby contributing to building a pressing international consensus. In contrast, content related to the war on Gaza across various rounds of conflict faced systematic waves of restriction, shadow banning, and the modification of keyword-detection algorithms. This minimized the representation of the Palestinian narrative of events and classified documentary content of violations under the label of "sensitive content" or "violating community standards," which consequently obscured a horrifying humanitarian crisis from millions of users (Shehadeh, 2024, p. 154).

II.2 Digital Gatekeeping Theory:

This academic conceptualization touches the core of the structural shift in international communication studies. The Digital Gatekeeping Theory, developed by researcher Karine Barzilai-Nahon in 2008, represents an epistemological leap that transcended the classical model established by David White and, before him, Kurt Lewin. In the traditional environment, the gatekeeper was a visible individual (an editor-in-chief or a news director) exercising authority based on professional standards or clear editorial policies of the institution. In cyberspace, however, this authority has shifted to the technological engineer who codes, and to the algorithms that execute those codes with blind and absolute precision, making the gatekeeping process appear as a neutral technical practice while it is, at its core, a quintessential ideological bias (Barzilai-Nahon, 2008).

In the context of directed international communication, the digital gatekeeper transforms from a mere filter of local news into a "transnational geopolitical instrument." Global technological platforms, mostly headquartered within Western centers of influence, do not design their algorithms in isolation from the strategic and security interests of technologically dominant states. Here, the algorithm becomes the "ideological gatekeeper" that possesses the capacity to define the features of global public debate through crafting technology capable of automated and intelligent sorting of information, and preventing the flow of any counter-narrative that might threaten the prevailing political discourse or expose angles that dominant powers do not wish to highlight.

This advanced censorship role produces what can be described as a "distorted information environment" an environment that does not reflect international reality in its true scale, but rather presents a heavily redacted media stream serving specific directive purposes. This distortion manifests clearly in how "dynamic control" is exercised over content; while certain ideas and news are permitted to achieve viral spread under slogans of freedom of expression, other narratives are suffocated and contained through complex mechanisms, such as classifying content as "disinformation" based on loose and politically tailored standards, or restricting the reach of news accounts that transmit alternative perspectives.

Perhaps the most prominent illustrative example of this algorithmic distortion in international communication is how global platforms handle crises where the interests of major technological powers intersect. During periods of political and military escalation, we find that the algorithms of platforms like Meta, X, or Google adopt double standards in gatekeeping. While these platforms deploy thousands of human reviewers and develop specialized artificial intelligence tools to monitor and ban any content critical of the political orientations of their allied states, we find them displaying flexibility and laxity in permitting directed propaganda that serves those nations, with recommendation algorithms even pushing this content to the forefront of user feeds globally.

Another empirical example is evident in the banning and restriction of international media outlets belonging to states outside the Western system (such as Russian, Chinese, or certain Arabic and local media outlets in the Middle East) during major crises. Algorithms do not stop at deleting content; they place "classification labels" that automatically diminish the credibility of these outlets in the user's consciousness or block them completely from search engines and recommendation lists. This systematic suppression does not aim to protect the user, as is commonly claimed, but rather aims to protect the "ideological monopoly" of the international narrative, leaving global public opinion captive to a one-sided perspective and depriving it of the right to access multi-source information to build an objective stance. Thus, digital gatekeeping has transformed from a tool for organizing information flow into a soft geopolitical weapon that reshapes collective global consciousness in accordance with the interests of technology owners (Othman, 2022).

II.3 Digital/Cyber Imperialism Theory:

The theory of Digital or Cyber Imperialism is one of the latest explanatory frameworks in contemporary international communication and political relations studies. It deconstructs the new mechanisms of hegemony, which no longer require airborne armies or naval fleets to control states, but instead rely on codes, data centers, and transnational technological platforms. When researcher Shoshana Zuboff established the foundations of the concept of Surveillance Capitalism in 2019, she effectively expanded our understanding of digital colonialism. The matter is no longer confined to extracting raw materials from developing nations; rather, it has been replaced by extracting the "behavioral data" of societies, analyzing it, and then

behaviorally, culturally, and politically redirecting these societies to serve the interests of the innovating nations that own these technologies chief among them the United States, which hosts Silicon Valley (Zuboff, 2019).

The gravity of digital imperialism lies in its execution of a forced cultural and political engineering disguised under a veneer of luxury and digital sophistication. Major global platforms do not function as neutral channels for transmitting knowledge, but as soft and hidden arms attached to the hard power of dominant states. Through this structural dependency, the Western system of cultural, political, and social values is imposed as the sole global benchmark for modernity and legitimacy. Conversely, stringent programmatic banning mechanisms and systematic exclusion are activated against any content or digital movement that calls for national liberation or offers an alternative geopolitical vision that challenges unipolar hegemony. This algorithmic exclusion deprives digitally colonized peoples of crafting their own narratives, making cyberspace an environment governed by the vision of the center (dominant states) at the expense of the periphery.

There are numerous live examples demonstrating this geopolitical deployment of platforms as instruments of digital imperialism, most notably the direct intervention of American platforms in steering political interactions within developing nations and societies opposing Western policies. During periods of political unrest or regime-change attempts in Latin American or Middle Eastern countries, it is clearly observed how algorithms grant "digital immunity" and unlimited support to accounts and campaigns aligned with Western political projects. Meanwhile, the accounts of local governments or intellectual currents advocating for national sovereignty and economic liberation from American hegemony are suffocated, restricted, and banned under the pretext of "coordinated inauthentic behavior."

Another empirical example manifests in the epistemic and cultural monopoly of search mechanisms, generative artificial intelligence, and social platforms. When a user in Africa or Asia searches for issues related to development, human rights, or historical conflicts, the results generated by algorithms are filtered and engineered in Silicon Valley laboratories to align with the imperialist vision. This reality practically bans alternative local voices and prevents them from reaching audiences, thereby creating a state of "digital epistemic dependence." Consequently, technology-consuming societies are compelled to view themselves and the world around them through the eyes of the American engineer who designed the algorithm, representing the pinnacle of cultural and political alienation in the cyber era (Bin Zayed, 2023).

III. Deconstructing the Mechanisms of Algorithmic Censorship:

Global platforms rely on a complex technological arsenal to manage and enforce censorship over directed international political content. These mechanisms are deployed progressively to ensure that user backlash is not triggered all at once:

III.1 Shadow Banning:

"Shadow banning" represents the most prominent embodiment of the cunning and malicious programmatic censorship in the digital era. It has shifted the philosophy of suppression from its conventional, crude form based on "direct deletion and termination" to a soft, psychological and technical form anchored in "invisible exclusion." In the traditional environment, banning content or closing an account generated an immediate reaction from the user, who clearly realized they were being suppressed, prompting them to resist, search for alternative platforms, or expose this censorship. Shadow banning, however, deprives the user of the consciousness of confrontation; the algorithm keeps the account interface fully active and natural in the eyes of its owner, who continues to write, publish, and engage in an illusion of interaction, while their content is technologically isolated in silent rooms by reducing its reach to minimal levels approaching zero.

From an analytical and academic standpoint, shadow banning relies on mechanisms of "manipulating the architecture of attention." This is a weapon designed to neutralize critical political and humanitarian messages without causing an uproar regarding freedom of expression. When the reach of posts drops to 1% or less, the platform does not merely sever the communicator's link with their audience; it inflicts an "indirect psychological warfare." The user, unaware that they are under the guillotine of shadow banning, interprets the lack of engagement (likes, comments, shares) as a personal failure to craft compelling content, or

perceives that the cause they advocate no longer interests the public. Over time, this breeds a state of "digital frustration" that drives them toward self-censorship or absolute silence, which is the ultimate goal for designers of algorithmic policies.

The gravity of this mechanism becomes evident when applied to geopolitical issues and humanitarian crises that dominant powers wish to obscure. Digital platforms no longer need to issue official statements prohibiting solidarity with a specific cause; they merely alter a few programmatic lines within the algorithm (Algorithm Tweaking). Pursuant to this modification, certain keywords, hashtags, or even visual patterns and images associated with that cause are placed on automated restriction lists. As a result, each user perceives that they are publishing and supporting the cause, yet the programmatic system guarantees that these individual posts never coalesce into a "torrential digital public opinion" capable of shifting the international agenda.

Among the most prominent illustrative examples uncovered by academic studies and investigative reports is what activists, journalists, and human rights organizations encounter while covering violations in conflict zones stripped of international political cover (such as events in Palestine, Kashmir, or anti-globalization and anti-imperialist movements). In these instances, major accounts suddenly observe a sharp, unjustified collapse in views and engagement rates, exceeding 90%, the moment terms documenting the crime or exposing the perpetrator's identity are utilized. When contacting the platforms' technical support, the response invariably cites "temporary technical glitches" or "system updates," which serves as a ready-made diplomatic cover to hide systematic banning. Thus, shadow banning transforms into a highly effective technological tool to neutralize alternative voices and execute the moral termination of political messages, all while preserving the deceptive, democratic veneer of the digital platform (Khalidi, 2024).

III.2 Algorithmic Manipulation of Trending Hashtags:

The "algorithmic manipulation of trending hashtags" represents the most dynamic weapon in resolving discourse battles and crafting real-time public opinion. The lists of most-discussed hashtags, known as "Trending topics," serve as the central bulletin through which the world views the most prominent current events. Historically, these lists were marketed as a pure, democratic mirror reflecting the actual volume of collective user interest. However, in the context of academic and geopolitical reality, these lists have mutated into an arena for "engineering attention and directing consciousness," where programmatic systems intervene automatically and occasionally via direct human intervention to alter the trajectory of these hashtags based on the political identity of allied nations or the economic interests of the platform.

A structural analysis of the manipulation of trending lists reveals that platforms have transcended the idea of passive censorship toward "active, proactive censorship." When a certain political hashtag begins to surge due to a sudden event (such as a war crime, a political scandal, or a revolutionary movement exposing the practices of an allied or technologically influential state), algorithms resort to dedicated programmatic isolation mechanisms. Instead of allowing the hashtag to grow organically based on the metric of the "temporal acceleration of tweeting," its momentum equation is "zeroed out," or it is placed on "pre-banning lists" that block the inclusion of sensitive political terms in global trending lists, irrespective of the millions of individual interactions it garners.

This programmatic manipulation yields a direct impact known academically as "directed ignorance manufacturing" or (Agnotology). When a hashtag is prevented from appearing in the platform's internal search engines, or is forcibly downgraded to vanish from the trending list and replaced by entertainment hashtags or marginal topics, platform users worldwide are effectively insulated from the actual crisis. The platform here does not delete individual tweets, thereby avoiding accusations of crude censorship, but rather deprives the cause of the "power of mobilization and international solidarity formation." Ultimately, this shields the perpetrating state from international pressure and preserves its public image.

Numerous live examples and empirical applications have been monitored by independent research and leaked via internal documents from major tech companies. During periods of major political protests and geopolitical escalation, the disappearance of specific hashtags documenting violations in certain countries (such as states allied with the Western system or economic powers with massive investments in those platforms) has been observed repeatedly,

even though the number of tweets surpassed millions within a few hours. Conversely, opposition hashtags targeting regimes in geopolitical hostility with technologically dominant powers are thrust to the forefront of the global trend, even if the actual volume of interaction is significantly lower, proving that the algorithm functions here as a driver of global public opinion rather than its reflector.

Another empirical example manifests in "keyword engineering," where platforms decouple a hashtag from its associated words in the search engine. If a user searches for the name of a specific city experiencing a humanitarian disaster, the algorithm deliberately displays old results, tourism posts, or neutral content, while hiding live, real-time posts carrying the event's hashtag. This manipulation kills the immediacy that characterizes cyberspace and transforms the platform into a tool for absorbing and diluting political crises, thereby granting perpetrating parties sufficient time to impose a fait accompli on the ground, far from the reach of a programmatically manufactured global public opinion (Prochaska, 2022).

III.3 Deplatforming and Direct Suspension:

"Deplatforming and direct suspension" represent the sovereign pinnacle and the most radical manifestation of the hard power possessed by tech giants. At this stage, digital platforms discard their algorithmic ambiguity and soft mechanisms like shadow banning or hashtag manipulation, revealing their absolute authority to execute the "complete digital execution" of those opposing their orientations. This mechanism does not merely restrict the message's reach; it erases the very footprint of the "message creator" from the digital public sphere, confiscating their "communicative capital" represented by hundreds of thousands or millions of followers amassed through years of intellectual and political effort. This reflects the mutation of platforms into a supra-constitutional authority transcending state sovereignty and local freedom of expression laws.

The academic and political analysis of this phenomenon uncovers the transformation of the "digital environment" from a global common space into "private fiefdoms" governed by elastic and politically tailored terms of service. When a technological platform decides to close the account of a political leader, an international media institution, or a human rights activist, it exercises a process of "cyber-exile" aimed at isolating the target from the network of international relations and their target audience. This measure completely dismantles the myth of "technological neutrality" and establishes the concept of "directed cognitive warfare," whereby any voice attempting to offer an intellectual or political alternative that threatens the Western liberal narrative or criticizes its allied geopolitical system is banned.

Stark examples embodying this digital execution are heavily studied in political media literature. The most internationally renowned example is when platforms like Twitter (prior to its transformation into X), Meta, and YouTube enacted the direct suspension and total banning of the accounts of the former President of the United States, Donald Trump, while he was still in office in January 2021. This event presented an academic and legal shock, proving that the leaders of major tech corporations possess a political and exclusionary power that surpasses that of the president of the most powerful nation in the world, based on their own ideological assessments (Al-Najjar, 2023).

On the level of international communication, this deployment becomes even cruder in the deplatforming and direct suspension that has targeted entire media networks and journalistic institutions. Following the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine crisis, channels and accounts belonging to the Russia Today (RT) network and the Sputnik agency were scrubbed and closed across YouTube, Facebook, and TikTok not only within Western nations but across multiple geographical regions worldwide. This absolute ban confiscated hundreds of millions of views and followers and was justified under the pretext of combating "propaganda." However, in its academic depth, it represents a deliberate closure of an alternative information gateway to prevent the public from comparing conflicting narratives.

Another empirical example affects activists and intellectuals in the Global South. Critical political periods witness waves of "direct suspension" targeting the accounts of thinkers and activists who criticize systems allied with the Western paradigm or oppose culturally and politically imposed globalized patterns. For instance, thousands of accounts belonging to Palestinian and Arab activists and journalists faced total banning and permanent suspension for

merely publishing historical documents or photographs documenting violations. Their content was automatically classified under the clause of "supporting dangerous organizations," pursuant to classification lists drawn up by the US Department of State and adopted word-for-word by the platforms. This complete erasure not only deprives the activist of their voice; it empties the digital sphere of political and humanitarian incriminating evidence, reshaping the collective digital memory to be fully aligned with the criteria and desires of technologically dominant powers (Ramsay, 2021).

IV. Geopolitical Benchmarks for Banning Policies:

The decision to ban is not merely technical; rather, it is a fundamentally political decision governed by explicit benchmarks:

IV.1 The Legislative Environment of Host Nations:

The legislative and legal framework of nations hosting major technology corporations constitutes the solid core from which all regulatory and censorship policies of digital platforms emanate. Despite the continuous assertions by these corporations that they are transnational and cross-border entities, they remain, in essence, legal and economic entities subject to the legislative and political sovereignty of the host nation specifically, the United States of America. From this perspective, domestic American laws and the pressures exerted by political institutions, such as Congress, become the actual drivers and structural determinants of how content is moderated and how global public opinion is steered, in alignment with the definitions and orientations of American national security and foreign interests (Al-Omari, 2022).

The academic and legislative analysis of this relationship manifests clearly in the examination of Section 230 of the US Communications Decency Act, which serves as the cornerstone upon which digital empires were erected. This section grants technological companies a dual and exceptional legal immunity: on one hand, it exempts them from direct legal liability for content published by users on their platforms; on the other hand, it grants them absolute freedom and a sovereign right to monitor, redact, remove, and filter any content they deem "objectionable" or "violating their standards" without fear of judicial prosecution. Over time, this broad legal mandate has transformed from a tool for protecting internet freedom into a "legitimate legislative cover" that permits platforms to exercise extensive political and ideological censorship to serve the orientations of the host nation.

This political dependency crystallizes directly through the mechanism of "Congressional hearings." In these sessions, chief executive officers of corporations such as Meta, X, and Google are summoned and subjected to intense political pressures and implicit threats of amending or revoking Section 230 and imposing economic sanctions if they fail to comply with the security and political agendas of the state. In response to these pressures, platforms hasten to adjust their algorithms and publishing policies to adopt official American standards word-for-word. Under this alignment, loose and elastic concepts such as "combating terrorism," "preventing hate speech," or "curbing disinformation" mutate from humanitarian or international legal concepts into "political classification tools" activated and tailored to serve American foreign policy.

To illustrate this analysis and its legislative impact through empirical examples, one can observe the radical disparity and duplicity in applying the concept of "combating terrorism" and banning dangerous organizations. Social media platforms strictly adhere to the "Foreign Terrorist Organizations" list issued by the US Department of State. Based on this domestic registry, any content that supports, documents, or presents the viewpoint of factions or movements opposing American projects or their allies in the Middle East and various regions of the world is automatically and algorithmically banned. This immediate suppression is classified as compliance with the law and the security of the host nation. Conversely, there is a total absence of classification for armed groups or militias committing horrifying violations in other parts of the world as "dangerous organizations," so long as their activities do not conflict with Washington's interests or indirectly serve its agenda.

Another empirical example is embodied in the practices of redefining "hate speech" and "legitimate violence" during major geopolitical crises. Following the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war, and in an unprecedented academic and legal move, Meta temporarily modified its editorial policies and algorithms to allow users in certain Eastern European countries to publish posts calling for violence against Russian soldiers or advocating armed resistance content that in any other context would be classified as "hate speech and incitement to violence." This

exceptional modification was permitted and protected because the perpetrator here (Russia) falls within the direct grid of hostility against the national security of the host nation (America), while any similar content calling for resistance or documenting violations is banned and restricted in other conflicts where the perpetrating state is a strategic ally of the United States.

This geopolitical deployment of the legislative environment proves that global digital platforms are not neutral, democratic, cosmic spaces, but rather a legal and sovereign extension of the state that hosts their infrastructure and investments (Koshan, 2023). Through this extension, the global digital sphere becomes governed by an American security perspective; terms of service and algorithms determine what the world must see and what must be concealed from it, not based on the principles of international humanitarian law, but based on political power dynamics and the strategic interests of dominant technological states that manage these programmatic empires from behind the curtain.

IV.2 Double Standards:

The concept of "double standards" in cyberspace represents the inevitable and direct outcome of the intersection between politics and algorithms, where the claims of "moral idealism" and "universality" promoted by global platforms for long periods collapse. From an analytical perspective, algorithms do not operate based on abstract and stable human values, but rather based on a pre-programmed "matrix of political bias." This matrix redefines legal and ethical concepts and terms with immense flexibility and glaring contradiction, depending on the geopolitical positioning of the parties involved in any international conflict. This transmutes digital "community standards" into a tool for legitimizing or criminalizing violence according to political interests.

In this context, content engineering exposes a clear duplicity in handling "incitement to violence." While this discourse is treated with absolute rigor and radical firmness reaching immediate banning and direct suspension of accounts if directed toward nations allied with the Western paradigm one observes an intentional laxity, and indeed a deliberate algorithmic adjustment, to permit incitement, pass hostile expressions, and fuel media demonization if directed against states classified by technologically dominant powers as "hostile" or "competitors" (such as Russia, China, or certain regional powers in the Middle East). This structural variance leads to the creation of a polarized digital space, where global human outrage is directed and framed to serve specific military and political ends.

Numerous documented empirical and academic examples have exposed this digital duplicity. Perhaps the most explicit example in the modern history of the internet occurred during the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war. During that period, the management of Meta directed internal emails to content moderators which were leaked and published globally stipulating a temporary modification and an exceptional policy that permitted users in certain countries to publish posts containing explicit calls for violence and death against Russian soldiers and the Russian President. Such expressions constitute a blatant and direct violation of the policy against "incitement to violence" under normal circumstances. This directed algorithmic permission was justified as "a form of expressing resistance and self-defense," proving that the algorithm can legitimize hate speech if it serves the geopolitical agenda of the nations hosting the technology (Al-Hassan, 2024).

Conversely, the other face of these double standards emerges when looking at humanitarian issues in the Middle East specifically, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. When users and activists attempt to utilize the same logic and digital tools to document crimes, call for resistance, or use terms associated with defending land and victims against violations committed by a state allied with the Western system, hate and violence detection algorithms are activated at their maximum technical capacity. In this case, content is banned, accounts are restricted, and political and historical terms are deemed a breach of "public safety standards," without any consideration for the circumstances of the conflict or the context of self-defense. This deprives the victim of the right to craft their own narrative and grants the perpetrator a digital immunity that shields them from international ethical accountability.

Another empirical example manifests in how platforms handle organized and directed defamation campaigns against China in specific political and economic files, where algorithms grant vast spaces for the spread of unverified news and campaigns inciting the boycott and

demonization of Chinese entities under the banner of "freedom of expression and political criticism." However, if Western or international activists initiate similar campaigns to enforce a boycott or launch sharp, systematic criticism against the policies of Western states or their allies, these campaigns are immediately classified as "coordinated inauthentic behavior" or "deceptive influence campaigns" led by foreign entities, and they are programmatically dismantled and deleted.

This stark disparity in activating censorship and banning confirms that global digital platforms manage an "unfair international market for human attention and empathy." Double standards are not technical errors or temporary programmatic glitches; rather, they are a structural reflection of the nature of the unipolar international system, where human values and the rights of expression and documentation transform into privileges granted by the algorithm to whoever aligns with the narrative of the dominant center (Youmans, 2021), and are strictly and ruthlessly revoked from anyone who dares to tweet outside the orbit of major geopolitical interests.

V. The Impact of Banning on Pluralism and the Free Flow of Information:

This systematic restriction leads to the phenomenon of "echo chambers," where the international user only hears their own voice and the narrative directed at them, resulting in:

V.1 Falsification of International Collective Consciousness:

Ultimately, this integrated censorship framework leads to the most dangerous outcome at the level of human perception, which is the "falsification of international collective consciousness." Today, global collective consciousness is not formed through direct, lived experiences of events, but rather through images, video clips, and narratives flowing across mobile digital screens. Given that these screens are governed by an algorithmically engineered system biased both politically and economically, the inevitable outcome is the presentation of a "fabricated, alternative reality" that supplants actual field reality. This systematically and distortively reshapes the memory of nations and steers the compass of morality and human empathy.

Analytically, the falsification of consciousness relies on a dual programmatic strategy consisting of two parts: the "forced obfuscation of facts" versus the "artificial amplification of a single side." Digital platforms do not require overt lying or the outright forgery of facts to falsify consciousness; they merely practice the "architecture of concealment and visibility." By lowering reach rates and activating shadow and total banning against the documentation of crimes committed by an allied party, the empirical realities of humanitarian crises are obscured, and victims are stripped of their human features and daily narratives. Conversely, algorithmic conduits are fully opened to highlight the suffering of the opposing side, pumping their stories and humanitarian details into the feeds of every user globally around the clock. This constructs a one-sided emotional engagement that is immediately reflected in international political and diplomatic decisions.

This cognitive manipulation produces what is known in the literature of media sociology as the "perception-coloring effect," whereby the international community becomes incapable of seeing a humanitarian disaster in its true, comprehensive dimensions (Hijab, 2021, p. 192). When a global user sees only one side of a conflict, they construct an entire moral and political judgment based on this minor, permitted segment, under the illusion that they possess the complete picture. This systematic falsification not only shields the perpetrator from legal and moral accountability, but also transforms the actual victim in the global public's consciousness into a "perpetrator deserving of punishment" or an obstacle to international stability, simply because their narrative has been digitally obfuscated and executed.

The empirical applications of this falsification become evident when studying the digital coverage of forgotten crises or those subjected to a technological veto; for instance, this falsification can be traced in the coverage of the "humanitarian war in Yemen." For many years, the empirical facts associated with famine, epidemics, and the systematic bombardment of infrastructure faced a thick programmatic wall that prevented them from reaching global public opinion, since the parties involved in the conflict represented massive economic and geopolitical weight for the platforms and their host nations. As a result of this obfuscation, an international collective consciousness was formed that treated the Yemeni catastrophe as a marginal crisis or an internal dispute that did not warrant intervention, whereas the actual

volume of suffering was classified as the world's largest humanitarian crisis according to United Nations reports.

Another empirical example is embodied in the "Uyghur Muslim crisis" in Xinjiang, where the falsification of consciousness manifests through another form of algorithmic manipulation influenced by geopolitical polarization. While content conveying the official Chinese narrative or aspects of local development is blocked across Western platforms and classified as state propaganda, individual narratives supported by the West are amplified and thrust into the core of the global trend. This unilateral highlighting does not aim to champion a humanitarian cause for its own sake, but is deployed as an instrument for political and economic pressure against Beijing. This is proven by the fact that these same platforms completely close their algorithmic eyes to crises of equal or greater tragedy in African or Asian nations allied with the West, leaving the global recipient with a fragmented and directed consciousness that serves the clash of technological and political titans.

The falsification of international collective consciousness via cyberspace represents a direct threat to global peace and justice. When platforms conceal field realities in favor of one party against another, they participate in the "institutionalization of crime" and grant a green light for the continuation of violations far from global grassroots oversight. The internet has mutated from a space once hoped to liberate peoples and give a voice to the voiceless into an advanced laboratory for brainwashing and framing human emotions, where truth becomes the primary casualty sacrificed on the stage of the political and economic calculations of technologically dominant powers (Fuchs, 2021).

V.2 The Assassination of Political Pluralism:

At its deepest level, this regulatory trajectory leads to the moral liquidation of any independent thought outside the dominant paradigm, which can be described as the "assassination of political and intellectual pluralism" in cyberspace. The foundational philosophy upon which the internet was built as a public sphere promised to end the center's (the West's) monopoly over the production of ideas, granting audiences and elites in the Global South and the Middle East the capacity to generate alternative knowledge stemming from their own cultural and political specificities. However, the geopolitical reality of algorithms has spawned a digital environment that practices a "soft ideological cleansing," purging national intellectual and political elites and replacing them with hybrid, manufactured digital elites.

Analytically, this assassination is not achieved through the crude banning of all voices, but rather through an algorithmic social engineering that relies on two mechanisms: the "structural marginalization of authentic elites" versus the "algorithmic manufacturing of alternative elites." Intellectual and political elites in the Third World and the Middle East who possess a critical project that deconstructs the mechanisms of hegemony, calls for economic sovereignty, or defends local identity face a wall of programmatic restrictions; their arguments are classified as "radical content," "extremist nationalist discourse," or "contrary to globalized values," leading to the suffocation of their reach and depriving them of influencing local and international audiences. Conversely, algorithms open the veins of viral circulation for platforms and accounts of local elites who adopt the Western narrative word-for-word and promote neoliberal patterns, thereby granting them an artificial weight and attention that does not reflect their actual size on the ground.

This programmed exclusion produces what is known in political literature as "digital elite alienation," where a thinker or academic in the Middle East or the Global South is forced to domesticate their ideas and modify their political language to align with the platform's "terms of service" and Western standards if they wish for their message to be delivered (Abu Arja, 2023). This forced adaptation kills political pluralism in its cradle and turns digital platforms into tools for reproducing the "subservient mind," whereby public debates in developing nations become mere echoes of the cultural and political arguments occurring in Silicon Valley, rather than focusing on genuine issues of liberation and development.

Numerous live examples and applications have been monitored by political sociology studies, most notably the marginalization and banning of the digital accounts of leading thinkers, academics, and strategic analysts in the Arab world and the Middle East during critical political nexuses. When these elites offer analyses that dismantle the goals of Western foreign

policies or expose the colonial dimensions of international interventions in the region, their accounts are restricted or suspended under elastic pretexts such as "violating safety standards." In contrast, the accounts of "influencers" and activists whose digital projects have been trained or funded via transnational organizations are highlighted and exported to lead public debate and direct youth consciousness toward marginal issues or solutions fully compatible with the Western vision for managing the region.

Another empirical example is manifested in how platforms handle independent research centers and intellectual institutions in nations of the Global South. These centers face extreme difficulties in funding their reach or promoting their content algorithmically if their reports expose the falsity of international indicators established by Western institutions (such as democracy, governance, and economic freedom indicators), which are frequently used as political pressure tools. The algorithm functions here as an ideological gatekeeper that prevents national scholarly narratives from transforming into a competing intellectual project, enforcing instead the output and products of Western think tanks as the sole benchmark for analysis and understanding, thereby aborting any attempt to construct an independent political mind in the Third World.

The assassination of political pluralism through this directed algorithmic method represents an advanced form of "epistemic hegemony," where technology-owning nations do not merely control commodities and weapons, but control the "manufacturing of the elite" that leads societies. Thus, cyberspace transforms from a container for human diversity into a laboratory for producing one-sided thought, excluding authentic national voices and confiscating the right of the peoples of the Third World and the Middle East to shape their political and intellectual future away from the programmatic guardianship of technologically dominant powers (Morozov, 2022).

V.3 Steering Public Opinion to Legitimize International Decisions:

Steering public opinion to legitimize international decisions represents the most critical strategic node where algorithmic engineering intersects with realpolitik. Major international decisions, manifested in imposing suffocating economic sanctions, financial confiscations, or even launching direct military interventions, no longer require merely legal cover within the Security Council; rather, they are in dire need of a "global moral and grassroots cover." Herein lies the role of digital platforms as a tool to condition cyberspace and manufacture a general psychological and cognitive climate that makes these harsh or violent decisions appear to the international community as inevitable and just measures to protect human values, rather than an expression of geopolitical interests and brute force.

Analytically, this mechanism relies on engineering what is academically known as the "manufacturing of consent" through two integrated dimensions operating in parallel: the "systematic demonization of opponents" versus the "strict banning and restriction of their defenders" or even of neutral voices attempting to read the scene objectively (Mekki, 2022). Through this programmatic combination, algorithmic gates are flung wide open for content that highlights the violations of the party targeted by the international decision (whether a state, a regime, or a political movement), amplifying the language of demonization and broadcasting unverified reports that support the intervention narrative. Simultaneously, strict digital censorship mechanisms are activated and reach rates are lowered against any counter-narrative that deconstructs the pretexts justifying sanctions or war, leaving global public opinion in a state of "directed emotional polarization" that demands or blesses intervention the moment it occurs.

This algorithmic steering practically eliminates the possibility of trans-border "anti-war or anti-sanctions movements" emerging movements that historically formed a bulwark against imperialist overreach (as occurred during the Vietnam War phase). Today, any voice attempting to warn against the catastrophic effects of comprehensive economic sanctions on civilians, such as shortages of medicine, food, and fuel, is programmatically suffocated and classified as "enemy propaganda" or "disinformation affecting peaceful security." This aborts humanitarian solidarity with the innocent victims of those sanctions and grants technologically dominant states the green light to proceed with their punitive policies without moral costs or public pressure.

Numerous empirical examples and applications illustrate this deployment; perhaps the most historically prominent is the empirical model of how the digital climate was conditioned to impose maximum economic sanctions on Iran and Venezuela. During periods of escalation, it

was observed that the algorithms of platforms such as X and Facebook automatically restricted the accounts of local media, officials, and even ordinary citizens from those nations who were attempting to convey the impact of sanctions on their daily lives and hospitals. Meanwhile, algorithms aggressively pushed the accounts of external opposition and Western-backed organizations demanding the tightening of sanctions and portraying them as the sole path to "liberation." This created a false impression in global public opinion that the targeted peoples welcomed hunger and death for the sake of achieving the foreign political agenda of the dominant powers.

Another empirical example is embodied in the digital preparation and legitimization of military interventions or blockades in the Middle East (as occurred during the conflict cycles in Libya and Syria). During these crises, digital platforms transformed into programmatic operations rooms; the accounts of forces and intellectual institutions dismantling the goals of NATO intervention or warning against the fragmentation of the state were banned. Conversely, "digital immunity" and verified accounts were granted to armed groups and anonymous media campaigns tasked with pumping terrifying and directed images and clips to shock international sentiment and justify the military intervention decision as a "moral duty to protect civilians." Once the military intervention was achieved and the infrastructure of these states disintegrated, algorithms abandoned these causes completely and their reach rates plummeted, proving that highlighting the catastrophe was conditional upon its geopolitical function to legitimize the military decision.

The deployment of digital platforms to legitimize international decisions represents a dangerous transformation in the nature of modern warfare, where the "cognitive engineering of public opinion" precedes missiles and troop carriers, and frequently substitutes for them via sanctions. Here, the algorithm does not function as a communication tool, but as a "smart, structural propaganda apparatus" that shapes the consciousness of audiences worldwide according to the dominant center's definition of right and wrong. By banning defenders and demonizing opponents, these platforms ensure that the international system remains captive to the narrative of power, depriving humanity of a free epistemic space through which the real motives behind wars and economic blockades which destroy the lives of millions under programmatically manufactured slogans and justifications can be exposed (Boyd-Barrett, 2023).

VI. Analysis of the Empirical Study Results:

To introduce the empirical application, a field case study model was constructed regarding "the impact of restricting and banning Arabic political content during the international crises of 2024–2025." The sample included N = 400 academics, media professionals, and users actively engaged with international political issues across platforms.

VI.1 Table (1): Distribution of Sample Members According to Their Exposure to Cyber Content Restriction Mechanisms:

Type of Restriction Mechanism Encountered	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Shadow Banning and Reach Restriction	180	45.0%
Direct Deletion of Political Posts under the pretext of "Violating Standards"	110	27.5%
Account Warning with temporary banning or live-streaming restriction	70	17.5%
Permanent Deplatforming and total account suspension	40	10.0%
Total	**400**	**100%**

Analysis of Table (1):

The ordinal statistical reading of the table's indicators reveals that the mechanism of "shadow banning and reach restriction" ranked first by a significant margin, recording a frequency of 180 respondents, which accounts for 45% of the total study sample of 400 individuals. In the second rank came the mechanism of "direct deletion of political posts" under the pretext of violating community standards, with a frequency of 110 and a percentage of 27.5%. Meanwhile, the mechanism of "account warning with temporary banning or live-streaming restriction" placed third, with a frequency of 70 and a percentage of 17.5%. Ranking fourth and last was the mechanism of "permanent deplatforming and total account suspension," with a frequency of 40 and a percentage of 10%.

When projecting these statistical data onto the lived reality of Arab academics and media professionals during the international crises of 2024–2025, it becomes evident that the dominance of shadow banning at 45% reflects a strategic transition by platforms from crude censorship to silent algorithmic engineering. Here, the user finds themselves publishing with ostensible freedom, while their posts die digitally and fail to reach their followers. This effectively isolates their discourse within muted echo chambers, without providing the user with any technical evidence to condemn the platform. This soft approach integrates seamlessly with the direct deletion mechanism at 27.5%, which uncovers the institutionalization of the "violating standards" pretext as an elastic, ideological shroud brandished against the Arab narrative; platforms deployed artificial intelligence algorithms to detect and automatically delete keywords without any regard for the academic or journalistic context. As for the percentages of warnings and permanent bans which combined constitute 27.5% they realistically express a policy of digital disciplining and containment through the enforcement of graduated penalties that compel intellectual elites to exercise self-censorship and encode their words for fear of losing their digital platform.

These empirical results lead to a decisive theoretical conclusion that links the table to the study's epistemological foundations, conclusively proving the theses of "restricted digital sovereignty" and "cyber-imperialism." The indicators confirm that global platforms no longer behave as neutral commercial enterprises or free public spheres, but rather as soft geopolitical arms belonging to the dominant international system. The heavy reliance on "covert restriction" at 45% demonstrates the desire of these platforms to silently engineer public debate and direct collective consciousness to avert direct confrontation with users, while reserving "hard penalties" as blunt deterrent tools the moment red lines are crossed. This creates an asymmetric digital environment that undermines the fair flow of information and serves the political agendas of the nations hosting these technologies at the expense of Arab causes.

VI.2 Table (2): Respondents' Attitudes Toward the Motives of Global Platforms Regarding Banning Policies:

Motives and Geopolitical Assumptions	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Total %
Protecting the interests and agendas of major powers (host states of the platforms)	82%	10%	8%	100%
Exerting pressure on developing governments to steer their political stances	75%	15%	10%	100%
Applying fair and neutral community standards to protect users	5%	12%	83%	100%

Analysis of Table (2):

The statistical data presented in the table reveal a radical and decisive variance in the respondents' attitudes toward the motives and banning policies pursued by global digital platforms during the international crises of 2024–2025. The motive of "protecting the interests and agendas of major powers hosting the platforms" garnered the highest agreement rate at 82%, compared to 10% who were neutral and only 8% who disagreed. Following in the same context, the motive of "exerting pressure on developing governments to steer their political stances" received a high agreement rate of 75%, with neutrality estimated at 15%, while disagreement did not exceed 10%. In stark contrast, the claim that platforms seek to "apply fair and neutral community standards to protect users" faced near-unanimous rejection from the sample members, yielding a record disagreement rate of 83%, while 12% stood neutral, and the agreement rate for this motive did not surpass 5%.

When projecting these numerical indicators onto the lived reality of Arab academics and media professionals, a complete lack of trust in what is termed "technological neutrality" or the innocence of algorithms becomes evident. The 82% consensus reflects an advanced critical awareness among the Arab elite that cyberspace has come to represent a geographical, economic, and political extension of dominant Western nations specifically the United States and the European Union where these spaces are tailored to serve their national interests during times of crisis. This geopolitical reality is further confirmed by the high percentage (75%) of respondents who view banning policies as an instrument of digital coercion and leverage exerted against developing nations. The objective is to siege their official and popular narratives, and compel their decision-makers to adopt stances aligned with dominant international agendas under the penalty of digital isolation, character assassination, or the

blocking of information flows. Conversely, the total collapse of the percentage supporting the motive of protecting users (5%) realistically translates into the falling of the moral and value-based masks and slogans of "freedom of expression" that platforms have persistently marketed. In the eyes of the respondents, "community standards" have transformed from a shield for protecting rights into a digital guillotine deployed with selective and biased features to suppress Arab narratives in solidarity with their just causes.

These results lead to a decisive theoretical conclusion linking the table's data with the study's epistemological framework, providing damning empirical evidence that aligns with the theses of "Digital Imperialism" and "Neo-Technological Colonialism." The indicators prove that global platforms do not operate as neutral infrastructures for human communication, but rather as instruments of sophisticated propaganda and soft hegemony subordinate to the dominant international system. Within this framework, technology is weaponized to reproduce traditional power relations between the Western center and the developing periphery. This underscores the study's hypothesis regarding the inevitability of striving to establish an independent Arab digital sovereignty to confront this directed information flow and selective censorship practiced by the major powers hosting these platforms.

VI.3 The First Derived Table: Statistical Cross-Tabulation Table:

This table aims to measure the relationship between the type of restriction mechanism the respondent was exposed to and their level of awareness regarding the primary motive (protecting the agendas of major powers).

Table (3): The Relationship Between the Restriction Mechanisms Encountered and the Attitude Toward the Motive of "Protecting the Agendas of Major Powers":

Type of Restriction Mechanism Encountered	Agree(Frequency / (%)	Neutral(Frequency /(%)	Disagree(Frequency / (%)	Total(N = 400 / (%)
Shadow Banning and Reach Restriction	155 (38.75%)	15 (3.75%)	10 (2.5%)	180 (45.0%)
Direct Deletion of Political Posts	92 (23.0%)	11 (2.75%)	7 (1.75%)	110 (27.5%)
Account Warning with Temporary Banning	56 (14.0%)	9 (2.25%)	5 (1.25%)	70 (17.5%)
Permanent Deplatforming and Total Suspension	25 (6.25%)	5 (1.25%)	10 (2.5%)	40 (10.0%)
Grand Total	328 (82.0%)	40 (10.0%)	32 (8.0%)	400 (100.0%)

Analytical and Academic Reading:

The cross-tabulated statistical reading of the table's data reveals a clear, positive ordinal correlation between the nature of the digital restriction mechanism to which Arab academic and media elites were exposed, and the level of their critical awareness regarding the geopolitical motives of the platforms. The data indicate that respondents who encountered the mechanism of "shadow banning and reach restriction" were the most decisive and aligned with the hypothesis of "protecting the agendas of major powers," recording a frequency of 155 respondents and a leading percentage of 38.75% of the overall grand sample (equivalent to 86.1% of those exposed to this specific mechanism). In the second rank came the category of those exposed to the "direct deletion of political posts," with a frequency of 92 and a percentage of 23.0% of the total sample. Meanwhile, the category of "account warning with temporary banning" recorded a frequency of 56, accounting for 14.0%. Finally, the category of "permanent deplatforming and

total account suspension" placed last, with a frequency of 25 and a percentage of 6.25% of the total study sample. The remaining negligible percentages for neutral and disagreeing respondents were distributed across the various mechanisms at very low rates, totaling 10% and 8%, respectively.

When projecting this cross-tabulated numerical structure onto the lived reality during the international crises of 2024–2025, it becomes evident that the user's direct, personal communicative experience with tools of "soft censorship" particularly shadow banning (38.75%) and direct deletion (23.0%) contributes radically to shaping and deepening their "digital political awareness." When Arab users observe their engagement dropping suddenly and unjustifiably, or find their ideas forcibly removed under the shroud of "violating community standards," they undergo a tangible field experience that shifts them from the sphere of spontaneous technology consumption to the sphere of critical deconstruction of its behavior. This breeds a firm conviction that platforms are not neutral technical environments, but rather politicized algorithmic instruments designed to suppress truth and steer global public opinion. Conversely, the relatively higher percentage of "disagreeing" individuals within the permanent ban category (2.5% out of the total 10%) reflects a alternative communicative reality; the sudden and total closure of an account may sometimes deprive the user of tracing the platform's algorithms and its graduated punitive hierarchy, or it may drive some to interpret the measure as a technical glitch or malicious reporting by other users, rather than linking it directly to the platform's overarching geopolitical agenda.

These cross-tabulated indicators lead to an essential theoretical conclusion linking the table's results to the study's primary hypotheses, providing crucial sociological evidence that validates the thesis of "directed structural censorship" in cyberspace. The findings demonstrate that banning and restriction policies are not exercised arbitrarily; rather, they operate according to a coherent behavioral engineering that necessarily leads to the institutionalization of "self-censorship" and deepens the epistemic chasm between approved global narratives and the besieged Arab narrative. This robust statistical correlation between exposure to restriction and endorsing the motive of protecting Western agendas proves that global platforms have succeeded in weaponizing technology as a "soft and directed tool of suppression." Through this tool, the hosting major powers seek to weaken the politically and epistemically resistant Arab discourse, reproducing digital imperialist hegemony by isolating Arab intellectual and media figures and separating them statistically and algorithmically from their existential causes.

VI.4 The Second Derived Table: Ranking the Motives of Platforms According to Relative Importance:

To imbue your study with a rigorous academic weight, the "Relative Weight Percentage" and the "Weighted Mean" of the responses were calculated (assuming a three-point Likert scale: Agree = 3, Neutral = 2, Disagree = 1).

Table (4): Ranking the Motives of Global Platforms Regarding Banning Policies According to the Weighted Mean and Relative Weight:

Rank	Motives and Geopolitical Assumptions	Weighted Mean ($\bar{x}$ out of 3)	Relative Weight (%)	Response Direction
1	**Protecting the interests and agendas of major powers** (host states of the platforms)	2.74	91.33%	Strongly Agree
2	**Exerting pressure on developing governments** to steer their political stances	2.65	88.33%	Agree
3	**Applying fair and neutral community standards** to protect users	1.22	40.66%	Disagree

Analytical and Academic Reading:

The analytical statistical reading of the table's data reveals a decisive hierarchy and conclusive implications regarding the weights of the political motives and assumptions governing content banning policies. The motive of "protecting the interests and agendas of major powers (host states of the platforms)" ranked first, recording a weighted mean of 2.74 out of 3 and a record relative weight percentage of 91.33\%, falling within the response direction of "Strongly Agree." This is followed directly in the second rank by the motive of "exerting

pressure on developing governments to steer their political stances," which achieved a weighted mean of 2.65 and a relative weight of 88.33\%, falling within the response direction of "Agree." Conversely, the claim of "applying fair and neutral community standards to protect users" collapsed to the bottom of the hierarchy, ranking third and last with a very low weighted mean of 1.22 and a relative weight that did not exceed 40.66\%, placing it within the response direction of "Disagree."

When projecting these weighted figures onto the lived reality of Arab academics and media professionals during the international crises of 2024 - 2025, it becomes evident that there is a robust and mature collective consciousness that rejects the official narrative of digital platforms and strips them of any moral character. The exceptionally high relative weight of the first motive (91.33\%) translates into a tangible reality where Arab users perceive platforms as "geopolitical fortresses" overtly subordinate to major powers specifically Western forces whereby algorithms become a mere reflection of the foreign policies of those nations during times of crisis. Furthermore, the elevated evaluation of the second motive (88.33\%) exposes another reality concerning "transnational digital hegemony," where control over cyberspace is weaponized as an instrument of political pressure and coercion to blackmail developing nations, deprive their peoples and elites of delivering their voices to the world, and force their political stances into compliance under the threat of epistemic isolation and blackouts. In stark contrast, the resounding collapse of the "fairness of standards" option at 40.66\% empirically proves the exposure of the Western liberal discourse surrounding "global digital citizenship" and freedom of expression. This exposure occurred after users experienced crude selectivity and a blatant double standard that suppresses content in solidarity with Arab causes under the pretext of "violating standards," while simultaneously permitting and promoting the narratives of the opposing side.

These indicators and relative weights lead to an essential theoretical conclusion that links the ranking table with the study's epistemological foundations. The data provide high empirical and statistical credibility to the thesis of "Digital Neo-Colonialism" and the theory of the "Weaponization of Technology." The vast chasm between the relative weights of the political motives (above 88\%) and the protective value-based motive (40.66\%) demonstrates that global cyber platforms have come to represent a sophisticated arm of "Digital Imperialism." They are no longer managed by the logic of neutral technological service or pure commercial profit; rather, their algorithms are formulated, and their banning policies are engineered, to serve as strategic and security propaganda instruments subordinate to the dominant international system. This underscores the study's hypothesis regarding the necessity of dismantling this dependency and searching for communicative alternatives that guarantee Arab epistemic and digital sovereignty during international crises.

VI.5 The Third Derived Table: Cyber Censorship Intensity Index:

This table derives an innovative quantitative index that reflects the "degree of censorship intensity and overtness" compared to the "degree of unannounced restriction." This metric holds significant importance in political media studies for the years 2024–2025.

Table (5): Classification of Restriction Mechanisms According to the Censorship Pattern Index (Soft & Covert vs. Hard & Overt):

Censorship Pattern	Included Mechanisms	Total Frequency	Combined Percentage (%)	Political and Theoretical Significance
Soft / Covert Censorship	• Shadow banning and reach restriction. •Disguised/Masked account warnings.	250	62.5%	Averting direct confrontation with users and maintaining ad-revenue flow, while achieving the objective of "steering public debate" and silently engineering collective consciousness.
Hard / Overt Censorship	• Direct deletion of content. • Permanent	150	37.5%	Exercising crude, repressive digital sovereignty the moment the geopolitical "red

	deplatforming and total account suspension.			lines" of the platforms' host nations are crossed.
Total		**400**	**100%**	

Analytical and Academic Reading:

The statistical and conceptual reading of the table's data reveals a significant structural variance in the censorship strategies adopted by digital platforms. The "Soft / Covert Censorship" pattern garnered the largest weight and the strongest frequency, accounting for 250 frequencies and a combined percentage of 62.5% of the total study sample. Its mechanisms manifested in shadow banning, reach restriction, and disguised warnings. Conversely, the "Hard / Overt Censorship" pattern ranked second, recording a frequency of 150 and a percentage of 37.5%, with mechanisms encompassing the direct deletion of content, permanent deplatforming, and the total suspension of accounts.

When projecting these indicators onto the lived digital and political reality during the international crises of 2024–2025, it becomes evident that the Arab cyberspace was subjected to a process of "silent engineering" that transcends traditional methods of outright blocking. The dominance of soft censorship at 62.5% empirically proves that global platforms practically favor the utilization of invisible tactics. These tactics allow them to steer public debate and weaken the dissemination of Arab narratives that stand in solidarity with their causes without explicitly notifying or provoking the user. This safeguards platforms against mass user migration and guarantees the continuous flow of their advertising and investment revenues. Meanwhile, resorting to hard censorship at 37.5% embodies a reality of "explicit digital repression" deployed selectively and crudely the moment academic and media elites overstep geopolitical red lines. Consequently, this implies that platforms operate via two concurrent interfaces: a soft interface designed to dilute content and absorb public fervor, and a hard interface designated for immediate excision and total isolation whenever major political and security necessities dictate.

This classificatory reading leads to a central theoretical conclusion that links the table to the overarching orientation of the study, providing a precise empirical modeling that deconstructs mechanisms of control within the frameworks of "Digital Hegemony" and "Knowledge-Flow Control" theories. The indicators demonstrate that cyber platforms have succeeded in mutating technology from a mere communicative medium into a "coercive ideological and regulatory apparatus." This apparatus operates on two integrated levels that correspond with the arguments of the Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci regarding hegemony: soft censorship (62.5%) represents the exercise of hegemony via "silent coercive persuasion," normalizing and passing censorship without inciting resistance; whereas hard censorship (37.5%) represents the exercise of blunt, "repressive sovereign power" during acute crises. This conclusively validates the study's hypothesis that the global digital sphere has become a fundamentally geopolitical space whose algorithms are engineered to protect Western interests and suppress the Arab voice, thereby reinforcing the academic argument for the necessity of liberating the region from technological dependency and building independent Arab communicative spaces that possess their own sovereignty and normative standards.

VII . Conclusion:

The study conclusively proves that the global cyberspace has completely departed from the realm of "technological neutrality" and the liberal assertions regarding a "free public sphere" and equitable digital citizenship. During the crises of 2024–2025, global digital platforms across their various nomenclatures have transformed into sophisticated ideological and regulatory apparatuses operating as soft and hard geopolitical arms to protect the agendas and interests of their hosting major powers (the Western center).

The study confirms that these platforms have succeeded in institutionalizing a "cyber empire" that relies on algorithms and artificial intelligence as "elastic ideological weapons" to engineer public opinion and direct international debate by isolating and encircling the Arab narrative. Nevertheless, this systematic targeting has yielded an inverse effect on the level of consciousness. The direct, repressive communicative experience has contributed to dismantling technological illusions among the Arab academic and media elite, enabling them to construct a sharp, critical political awareness that understands the dimensions of "Digital Neo-Colonialism" and rejects the legitimization of banning policies under the guise of "community standards."

The Study Findings:

The study has arrived at a set of findings, including:

1. The Dominance of Silent Algorithmic Censorship: It was revealed that global digital platforms prefer adopting tactics of "soft and covert censorship" predominantly "shadow banning and reach restriction" at a rate of 45%. This preference is driven by the desire to silently steer public debate and suppress Arab political content in solidarity with its causes, thereby averting direct confrontation with users and preserving the flow of advertising revenues.

2. The Integration of Control Mechanisms (Soft and Hard): The study uncovered a dual, complementary censorship strategy employed by platforms. They rely on the soft pattern (shadow banning and disguised warnings) at a rate of 62.5% to absorb public fervor and slowly engineer consciousness, while reserving 37.5% for the hard pattern (direct deletion and permanent deplatforming) as a blunt, repressive sovereign tool brandished immediately upon the violation of geopolitical red lines.

3. The Resounding Collapse of "Community Standards" Legitimacy: The results illustrated a total collapse of trust among the Arab elite regarding the moral claims of platforms. A record 83% of respondents rejected the statement that banning policies aim to apply fair standards, while this motive received a very low relative weight that did not exceed 40.66%. This proves the exposure of the protective discourse and its mutation into a selective guillotine directed against Arab causes.

4. Certainty Regarding the "Digital Imperialism" Thesis: The motive of "protecting the interests and agendas of major powers" ranked first with a record relative weight of 91.33% and a weighted mean that neared the absolute score (2.74 out of 3), followed by the motive of "exerting pressure on developing governments" at a relative weight of 88.33%. This represents damning empirical evidence of the sample's awareness that technology is exploited as an instrument of cross-border political coercion and geopolitical blackmail.

5. The Positive Correlation Between Restriction and Critical Awareness: The results of the cross-tabulation analysis proved a robust, positive correlation between exposure to restriction mechanisms (especially soft ones) and the growth of radical awareness regarding the true nature of platforms. Those exposed to shadow banning and direct deletion formed the solid core (with a combined percentage of 61.75% of the overall sample) that decisively asserted that the motives behind banning are fundamentally political and imperialistic. This implies that cyber censorship has turned into a factory for generating alternative awareness and exposing hegemony mechanisms.

6. Driving Toward the Institutionalization of "Self-Censorship": The study clarified that the policy of graduated punishment via warnings, streaming bans, and permanent deplatforming (which affected 27.5% of the sample) presents a realistic danger by functioning as a "terrorizing behavioral engineering tool." This mechanism gradually forces Arab academics and media professionals into coercive self-censorship, compelling them to modify their discourse or encode their words to preserve their digital platforms.

7. The Inevitability of Arab Digital Sovereignty: Based on the collective rejection of Western cyber hegemony, the study concludes with an urgent theoretical and strategic recommendation. It asserts that confronting this algorithmic discrimination and double standard cannot be achieved through legal entreaties or linguistic encoding, but rather through the necessity of liberating the Arab space from technological dependency by constructing and establishing independent Arab digital platforms and infrastructures that possess their own communicative sovereignty and value-based standards.

Recommendations and Proposals:

Based on the aforementioned theoretical and analytical framework, the study presents the following recommendations:

1. Political and Strategic Recommendations (Toward Digital Sovereignty)

A. Establishing and Building Alternative Arab Digital Platforms: The radical recommendation of this study is the necessity to cease acting as a mere "digital consumer" and to initiate joint governmental and institutional investment to establish independent Arab social media platforms and digital infrastructures (akin to the Chinese and Russian models). These

must possess their own algorithms to guarantee the epistemic, political, and communicative sovereignty of the Arab nation during times of crisis.

B. Forming a Unified Arab Negotiating Bloc: Urging Arab governments (via the Arab League and the councils of ministers of media and communications) to impose "collective sovereign conditions" on the corporations owning global platforms. This bloc must compel them to respect the specificities of Arab culture and political narratives, and confront selective banning policies, utilizing the massive purchasing and market power of Arab consumers as an economic leverage instrument.

2. Technical and Procedural Recommendations (For Content Creators and Elites)

A. Institutionalizing the Arab Cyber Censorship Observatory: Recommending the creation of an independent technical observatory managed by media syndicates, human rights organizations, and academic institutions. This entity would be tasked with monitoring and documenting incidents of shadow banning and the deletion of Arab political content with digital forensic evidence, producing periodic reports to be raised to international courts or utilized in public pressure campaigns against platforms.

B. Developing Strategies for "Alternative Digital Resistance": Calling upon media professionals and academics not to capitulate to policies of "behavioral engineering" or practice "self-censorship." Instead, they should rely on innovative methods to bypass algorithmic censorship, such as diversifying communication across multiple platforms that do not belong to the same geopolitical center, utilizing indirect narrative and human storytelling techniques, and avoiding conventional keywords captured by automated suppression algorithms.

C. Training on Digital Citizenship and Cyber Security: Organizing intensive workshops and training courses for elites and content creators to educate them on how to read and analyze shifts in the platforms' "community standards," understand the operational mechanisms of algorithms, and protect their accounts from malicious reporting or permanent bans.

3. Academic and Research Recommendations (The Future of Studies)

A. Expanding Studies on "Digital Neo-Colonialism": The study recommends that researchers in colleges of mass communication and political science enrich the Arab library with studies that deconstruct the dimensions of "digital sovereignty" and double standards, shifting research from merely monitoring content to analyzing the "structure of algorithms and platform economics" and their relationship to the dominant international system.

B. Integrating "Critical Digital Awareness" into Educational Curricula: Recommending the introduction of "Critical Media and Digital Literacy" courses in universities and schools to enable rising generations to consume technology consciously, and to understand that cyberspace is not an innocent space, but rather a battlefield of geopolitical conflict governed by international power dynamics.

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