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Functional work of political communication within the framework of digital diplomacy: a systematic reading of the transformations of the role

Travail fonctionnel de la communication politique dans le cadre de la diplomatie numérique : une lecture systématique des transformations du rôle

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Abstract:

The digital space represents unlimited areas for interaction between individuals and systems without being subject to space-time constraint. This symbolic framework has created the possibility of the presence of various institutions and the transfer of communication practices to the digital space, including political communication, especially if it is linked to diplomacy through new media platforms. In this regard, the extent of the feasibility of this link between political communication and digital diplomacy has been raised according to the function and role index in the context of the digital space.

Accordingly, our study attempts to discuss the issue of political communication outside the classical frameworks, and then its ability to be linked to the variable of digital diplomacy, in terms of effectiveness and strategies of teleological work, within the intentional systems to influence the public functionally, framed by the methodology of diplomatic practice as an act that carries an implicit intention.

Keywords : Communication ; Political communication ; Digital diplomacy ; Digital space; Digital Public Domain.

Résumé :

L'espace numérique représente des espaces illimités d'interaction entre les individus et les systèmes sans être soumis à une contrainte spatio-temporelle. Ce cadre symbolique a créé la possibilité de la présence de diverses institutions et du transfert de pratiques de communication vers l'espace numérique, y compris la communication politique, surtout si elle est liée à la diplomatie à travers de nouvelles plateformes médiatiques. À cet égard, l'étendue de la faisabilité de ce lien entre communication politique et diplomatie numérique a été soulevée en fonction de l'indice de fonction et de rôle dans le contexte de l'espace numérique.

En conséquence, notre étude tente de discuter de la question de la communication politique en dehors des cadres classiques, puis de sa capacité à être liée à la variable de la diplomatie numérique, en

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termes d'efficacité et de stratégies de travail téléologique, au sein des systèmes intentionnels pour influencer fonctionnellement le public, encadrés par la méthodologie de la pratique diplomatique en tant qu'acte porteur d'une intention implicite.

Mots clés : Communication, Communication politique, Diplomatie numérique, Espace numérique, Domaine public numérique.

Introduction

Communication practices are the basis for managing institutions in various fields, including the political field. Perhaps political communication has clearly emerged in the societal framework through its broad impact on diverse audiences in all their categories. It is noticeable that the technological developments that have occurred have changed the classical environment in which it was operating and changed many of the concepts associated with it and which work to achieve its goals. Today's digital environment has clearly affected political work and the diplomatic framework and its paths and branches. We find that it has taken on a digital character to produce what is known as digital diplomacy, which has created many dimensions that increase its effectiveness within the good exploitation of this new climate through effective functions and strategies that have changed the previously adopted patterns used in the digital communication framework in a way that serves the political communications of countries, which is mainly manifested in strengthening diplomatic relations between them and reaching a wide public space that increases the ability to influence peoples, society and individuals, by exploiting the characteristics provided by digital media, including social networking sites, in facilitating the political communication process and increasing Its effectiveness and efficiency in achieving its desired goals. Through this study, which seeks to reveal the link between political communications and digital diplomacy in the modern context within the virtual space and what it can produce in terms of roles and functions, it explains the effective approaches in diplomatic practice in a way that serves, from a functional standpoint, what government institutions work on in managing their political communications and what lies within them of goals that they seek to achieve.

1. The conceptual apparatus: Resolving semantic ambiguity

1.1 Political communication:

Political communication as a concept represents one of the parts branching off from the concept of communication in itself, except that its association with what is political created conceptual ambiguity, not in terms of the name but in terms of the meaning due to its association with a different function between the positive and the negative. Accordingly, this concept took on different meanings according to the perceptions of researchers and what political communication could and should be. In this framework, we present a set of concepts that frame this concept with its semantic dimensions as explained:

Schudson views political communication as a process of conveying a message intended to influence the use of power or promote it in society. Gesterle believes that political communication is the sum of the techniques and methods available to

the political actor directed at public opinion with the aim of enticing and controlling it. It is the exchange of information and ideas between the rulers and the ruled ones through formal and informal means, either to gain power or to exercise it. It meets demands and responds in particular to a specific need, which is to secure the link between the rulers and the ruled, because the rulers want to make their decisions acceptable, and every ruled seeks to form and formulate his needs and make others agree to them, and this will not happen except through communication. [1]

The concept of political communication refers to both a set of professional practices and a theoretical and scholarly discipline. As a professional practice, the term "political communication" suggests a series of communication processes that have been given labels as varied as propaganda, electoral marketing, political marketing, political campaigning, and political public relations.[2]

Accordingly, we can present political communication as a set of interactions that occur between two or more parties within political contexts in terms of topics, goals and objectives according to a temporal perspective and another interactive one that may not be defined by spatial frameworks, but is subject to political systems and backgrounds in the nature of the practice of the latter.

1.2 **Digital Diplomacy**

The concept of diplomacy is still an unstable concept in terms of its connotations, considering that it is a concept that transcends disciplines, and therefore it may acquire multiple meanings according to the contexts of use and employment. Accordingly, we can explain these concepts as follows:

One of the branches of public diplomacy, which aims to communicate with broad sectors of society in foreign countries instead of political elites, through the widespread use of information and communications technology, including new media, social networks, blogs, digital platforms, and other media on the Internet.[3]

A form of new public diplomacy that uses the Internet, information and communication technology, and social media as a means of strengthening diplomatic relations. The main differences with classical public diplomacy lie in increased access to information, increased interaction between individuals and organizations with greater transparency. [4]

It is a form of public diplomacy and one of the tools of soft power, transnational in its scope and unconventional in its style and breadth of its topics, through the use of social media and digital media platforms by states to manage diplomatic science and achieve the desired goals, including communication with foreign audiences and contributing to managing the reputation and image of states, in a way that anticipates or confronts any disruption.[5]

1.3 Digital Public Domain

It is clear from the study literature that this description has taken several names such as digital space or virtual space, or interactive symbolic space, but all of these names carry almost one meaning as is clear from the following:

It is the human information space that constitutes a public domain in which people from different countries exchange cultures, information and ideas within a framework of interactive discussion that is somewhat free through multiple and innovative media that were not available to humans before.[6]

It is considered to be the immaterial symbolic space that was built by new media carriers with its various applications, so that it constitutes a field for mediation or a field for communication between a group of individuals, who form virtual groups and audiences. These spaces are open and available to all and guarantee free access to information and its sources, through which the audience of users discusses, in an unrestricted manner and in a clear manner, topics related to the political, social and cultural identity domain.[7]

It is known as a new virtual discursive medium that includes excluded and marginalized individuals who present open speeches and present political issues dominated by the agenda of discussion and dialogue, so that ideas are judged according to their merit and not by the status of the speaker.

It also represents a common field open to all individuals in society, allowing each individual to access it, to participate and interact with others.[8]

We can conclude that it is a symbolic, conceptual space produced by new communication and media technologies within which individuals interact and practice communication and discussion on all topics and issues, where political events constitute a prominent part of it.

2. The Functionality of Political Communication - A Diagnostic Perspective:

Political communication represents as a pivotal variable between the communication process and the political process, the orbit of a group of functional structures that are linked to the existence of a field of work in terms of the political system as a communicative act. Accordingly, the functional datum of political communication is represented in the following:

2-1 The function of providing information and guidance:

This datum is considered a basic variable in political communication in terms of influencing the social system and the political system alike. It is the first function for which the attempt at mass communication began using publishing and broadcasting on a wide scale until it reached the stage of successive developments in the field of communication. It encourages in man his innate need to know what is happening around him in terms of political, economic and social events, and seeks to provide political information, in addition to news, forums, audio-visual materials and messages with the aim of absorbing variables at the local, national, regional and international levels and dealing with them with full knowledge. In addition, the state, public policies and systems with a political dimension derive their practice

from the strength of political communication in terms of the strength of the information that it provides and how to employ it to achieve the interests towards a certain issue, and this appears through controlling and dominating the forms of the political communication process and directing it towards the direction that serves the political forces and is consistent with their characteristics.

Many expert researchers explain that there are two different methods for using this function related to knowledge supply for individuals. The first is related to following the events that occur and being aware of the government's practices, and absorbing what is new at the global level in addition to knowing what leaders are doing. The second is related to using political communication carriers for general knowledge and acquiring individual skills and knowledge.[9]

Within the framework of this functional structure of communication engagement with politics, it draws the public's attention to topics that the political practitioner, regardless of his/her background, wants to arouse interest in and draw attention to their content, with the assistance of media carriers for such political practices by publishing information, knowledge and readings that are consistent with this approach and with the political agenda in general.

2-2 **Political Propaganda**

It appears that there is a correlation between political communication and propaganda before it is molded as a branch of its functional branches, as it represents a political activity par excellence and the most important functions of political communication, especially what is related to politics and political systems of all kinds, whether democratic, bureaucratic or radical, due to the prominent and clear effectiveness of this propaganda practice in establishing the foundations of governance and its stability.

Propaganda is viewed as an attempt to influence the personality of individuals and monitor their behavioral activities in order to achieve unscientific or questionable goals and values in a society and time. Propaganda, as defined in the Political Encyclopedia, is: providing perceptions, viewpoints and positions that others are desired to be convinced of. It uses media and communication means such as newspapers, radio, television, cinema and publications, etc.

It is clear from this definition that propaganda is an effective method through which the communicator can, within the framework of political communication, broadcast news, ideas and trends, disseminate them and attract individuals to them, based on various tools and methods available to achieve this.

2-3 **Influences on public opinion orientations:**

Public opinion represents the functional trend that political communication works on, especially in occasional contexts such as elections and media campaigns that coincide with events that society pays attention to. Public opinion is among the most important points of interest for political formations, given its clear role in

establishing the philosophy of governance for those ruling systems, as through public opinion, any ruling political formation is known at the level of public opinion's acceptance of it and its ideas and interaction with what it produces politically, as public opinion represents a basic and stable axis in the political system, as political formations must pay attention to public opinion orientations as an indicator of the levels of interaction that should be, and thus seek to solve and resolve the problems of public opinion requirements, as well as carry out various programs and projects that are in line with society's aspirations, which proves control over matters and achieves acceptance by public opinion. To achieve this goal, all political institutions rely on the political communication process to control public opinion, control it and influence it according to their inclinations, relying on various media components and their carriers.[10]

Accordingly, the communication media in contemporary gatherings have largely determined the controls for shaping public opinion, through the media system's treatment of various topics and issues. The power of media treatment has a very great effect on the perception of many individuals, as these means take people to battlefields and event sites around the world, thus bringing their viewpoints closer and uniting them around political decisions and movements, and determining what is important and unimportant for the elite and for the rest of society. The images that these means present about reality are more effective and influential, especially if they address topics and aspects of life that people cannot see or experience except through these means, such as: the private lives of politicians, revolutions in neighboring countries, and others.[11]

2-4 **Assistance in political decision-making:**

There is hardly any political communication act that does not have an apparent or implicit association with decision-making, given that every political activity aims to influence the perceptions of others about some form of political perceptions. The function of communication media in shaping political decision-making varies according to the nature of the political system in society.

Communication media in a democratic system are less restricted in the movement of information and response to topics and issues, and therefore their influence on decision-making is strong, while in authoritarian political formations, the movement of information is typically restricted in the form of downward communication without room for interaction, or systems that grant a limited degree of freedom, weakening the role that these media may play.

The rapid change that the world is witnessing at this time has led to raising the value of communication in the political field within society, and has also led to a change in the pattern of psychological integration of the masses of citizens within a specific framework that parallels the perceptions of the political system dominating the government, to be replaced by a new pattern based on the perspective of interaction between political formations in society, as well as the right of each component of society to publicly express its ideas and interests and convey them to the political decision-maker, who must take these opinions into consideration, which represent

conflicting interests when making a political decision, which has led to an increase in the difficulty of the political decision-making process in society, and the decline of the mobilization media pattern in favor of the open media pattern as the main channel for transmitting information through which the political decision-maker learns about the demands of citizens and their positions towards his political decisions. [12]

The existence of different forms of political communication and what the media can provide may tempt the political decision-maker to use it to explain his point of view to citizens regarding certain issues or justify certain decisions and policies, as it is used in some cases for political propaganda and promoting his decisions in order to support public opinion for them, in addition to using it to address large sectors of citizens outside the state's territory. However, with the tremendous progress that has occurred in these means thanks to technology, the density of information, the intertwining of events, and the complexity of human and political relations, the importance of the decision-maker's seeking the help of experts and consultants who provide him with the essence of their knowledge and experiences that undoubtedly assist him in the political decision-making process becomes clear.[13]

3. Political communication and the digital domain… What has changed?

The presence of political practices across digital spaces is considered effective, considering the transfer of all social and other practices to the globalized digital space. However, working remains on the question raised, which has a very strong relationship with the extent of rigidity or flexibility of the political communication mechanism in the event of a difference in the nature of the audience, especially if we say that the social formations present on everything digital differ radically from what exists in reality.

The central goal of forming the media and communication is to try to attract the largest possible number of followers and contain the opinions of the public, which necessarily leads to directing public opinion, which is considered the main driver of state systems, as the latter is an actor in directing political issues. The media and communication seek political change by raising political issues and influencing the directions of public opinion.[14]

Social media is hardly an exception in this regard, as it is a technological product available to everyone, and it has proven exceptionally effective in mobilizing activists on the Internet, especially Twitter and Facebook, to organize demonstrations of both virtual and real types.

If social media has contributed to creating what can be called a documented life, it is necessary to point out that every advance in new means of communication consequently involves a tremendous impact on the way in which the interaction takes place between the public itself on the one hand and between the public and

the authority on the other hand, as the means of communication, especially digital ones, in modern societies have largely determined what constitutes public opinion and provide it with most of the information through which it learns about public affairs and knows political figures, in addition to their role in public discussions and the electoral process as a whole, as it is through them that political truth is built.[15]
The beginning of building this new, unrestricted communication space contributed to the qualitative change that occurred in the use of social networks on the Internet from being a tool for entertainment and communication, to a tool for theorizing, organizing and leading, then to an effective means of transmitting the event, following the field, and a primary source for global media, or mechanisms for changing political systems as a whole.
It is true that the media alone does not make change, and that change is the product of a general will, driven by people's natural drive towards this change, and the media is only a tool among a group of tools, as Michel Foucault sees: "The Iranian revolution spread through cassette tape, and he did not say that the cassette tape was what made the revolution, which was at the time an alternative media, so this will without the new media may not be worth anything, and vice versa, what happened is the product of factors and interactions with each other to produce for us a change in a way that the world has not known before, and changed the patterns of their systems, adding more interaction to them.

4. **Contexts of diplomatic practices according to the data of political communication via digital space towards reading the pattern of formation and effectiveness:**

Delving into the issue of convergence between the parallel trinity of political communication - digital diplomacy - digital space ,leads us to look at media and communication practices with a political dimension via all media carriers such as social media with all its extensions in terms of path and origin, so that the mediator represented in the set of political mechanisms via social media practices a dual mediation that may originate from political forces towards the other party (institutions, organizations, etc.) and may originate from the opposite, and the best example of this is politicians' use of all the possibilities of social networking sites as a part formed from social media, and employing them as a mediator approaching the public in their election campaigns and expressing their opinions about political situations in a communicative format with them[16], and also gaining a kind of support and legitimacy in their general theses on political affairs, and all of this falls within the framework of practicing a kind of new political communication in a space different from what is customary between them and the people's groups and their sectarian representations that have a virtual presence through the spaces of dialogue and debate provided by social media in the digital space.

All this paved the way for the emergence of digital diplomacy, as political communication paved in one way or another through the methods of creating all these political interactions in open fields, and it has gone beyond the normal practice to a renewed practice in the field of diplomacy such as popular diplomacy, which

represents the communication of citizens with other citizens from different countries and carries out activities that are consistent with and serve the interests of their countries and through which many political convergences are achieved[17].

This digital diplomatic activity has a wide space in terms of practice in order to consolidate neighborhood relations and even achieve the integration of convergences and general perceptions of the state, not through political apparatuses but through political and social communication practiced by peoples without individual goals but rather within the public interest.

If this indicates anything, it indicates the expansion of diplomatic practices that were limited to the sum of efforts made by state institutions to the sum of efforts made by social formations as well due to the strength of political communication that it practices and within what these new spaces provide in terms of unlimited digital fields, and through which immersion in political communication can be practiced on the borders of achieving convergences and general interests that affect popular diplomatic efforts in building beneficial changes for countries.

5. Conclusion

It cannot be asserted in any way that the power of digital diplomacy cannot exist without a purely communicative practice, which is the same thing that applies to the idea of political communication with different roles, but it is certain that political communication processes with an effective orientation push for strong digital diplomatic practices in terms of impact and may create interactive fields through which the principles of convergence and divergence between countries and their policies are united, where the main factor in the formation of political systems on the ground is the extent of the ability of political communication and digital diplomacy in the virtual space to build a clear and convergent imagination of the common interests between peoples.

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