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## ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN MODERN POLITICS

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### ABSTRACT

Email, social networking, file transfer, online banking, e-commerce, tours and travel, online food ordering, company marketing, navigation, and real-time news are just few of the key uses of the internet in our everyday lives. The internet is entangled with all aspects of life. Businesses such as astrology, tarot card reading, horoscope, and even prayer and puja services took use of the internet during the Covid pandemic. This new dimension in online education was brought about by the pandemic. In addition to its primary purposes of networking, broadcasting information, and social photo and video sharing, social media has developed as a significant technology because its uses may be combined to build a wide variety of applications. For instance, Facebook and Instagram are both utilised for the promotion of businesses and as online marketplaces. YouTube is also used for educational purposes, and WhatsApp groups are used to facilitate communication between purchasers and vendors. Politics also has a direct or indirect influence over all of the domains of life discussed in the paragraphs above. All of these social media platforms serve as a hub for political discourse. Tik Tok, the social networking application that has recently become a phenomenon, allows users to not only exchange videos but also their opinions on many political topics.

**Keywords:** *social media, politics, political activity*

### INTRODUCTION

Since the birth of the Internet, there has been a massive increase in interest regarding the question of whether or not and how digital platforms, such as Social Media, have any impact on the realm of politics. As a consequence of this, we are now in a position where we can rely on a growing body of research that examines the myriad of connections that exist between social media and politics from a variety of vantage points. The methods that have been suggested to investigate the subject are frequently distinct from one another, and they do not always interact with one another. As a result, the investigation of the topic's causes and consequences must follow separate routes, which might lead to varying findings. When contrasted with the well-established conventional media, the Internet's introduction of brand-new communication avenues has resulted in a significant shift in the way information is disseminated. This is a reality that is well recognised and accepted. The dissemination of news across a variety of multimedia platforms, outside national borders, and into social, cultural, and political enclaves is significantly aided by the use of social media. In this chapter, we will discuss the ways in which having this condition promotes political understanding. This chapter addresses the question of whether or not social media has an influence on politics, as well as how that influence manifests itself. In particular, we discuss the ways in which the interconnected nature of the Internet makes it easier for people to participate in political activities, as well as the ways in which this situation has become even more pronounced since the development of social media. We begin by focusing on the part that the dissemination of information plays in expanding political knowledge and, as a result, boosting political participation. After

that, we discuss how social media further augment this process, thereby elevating the impact of digital platforms on the political sphere. Finally, we provide evidence for the influence of social media on politics by investigating how the circulation of information plays a key role in the political sphere across political landscapes, actors, and political practises. In particular, we pay attention to how social media is utilised for campaigning and for mobilising social movements.

## Internet and Politics

Since the birth of the Internet, there has been a wealth of material contributed to the discussion regarding the ways in which technology influences the political sphere. In the 1990s, academics approached research in this topic with a curiosity in the possibility for interaction offered by the Internet (Bimber, 1998; Gibson & Ward, 1998). The advent of the Internet was welcomed as the medium that would finally allow direct democracy to be realised as an ideal (Slaton, 1992; White, 1997). It was also stated that if the Internet was unable to accomplish this objective, then its influence on political affairs would be negligible. Coleman (2005) pointed out that this scenario did not take into consideration the existing institutional procedures of representative democracy, which have been mistakenly judged outmoded. He said that this was a mistake. However, given the initial limited penetration of digital technologies across political institutions and governing processes, as well as the reduced access to the Internet across geographies, and reduced access to the Internet across socio and cultural backgrounds, the initial debate addressing the impact of the Internet on politics was more theoretically driven than empirically grounded. This is because of the initial limited penetration of digital technologies across political institutions.

The methodology of research in this area has undergone significant change ever since the Internet became widely available to the general audience. (Chadwick & Howard, 2009) There has been a dramatic increase in the amount of discussion regarding the effects that the Internet has on politics. Castells and Sey (2004) made the point that its influence is no longer announced as fate but is instead established by observation. Today, we have access to more empirical evidence on the influence of using the Internet in politics (Hardy & Sheufele, 2005; Howard, 2003), which provides the discussion with a greater degree of substance. Studies investigated the connection between the internet and politics from a wide variety of theoretical and methodological vantage points. Scholars emphasised that the Internet could develop civic engagement by creating connections between affinity groups (Diani, 2001; Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2002). These connections would enable affinity groups to develop knowledge on specific political issues for citizens (Bimber, 2001), as well as increase the ability to compare and contrast multiple points of view (Howard, 2005).

Others have shown interest in the Internet's capacity to enable self-expression and to facilitate the dissemination of personal and local claims because of its potential to facilitate these two things (della Porta & Mosca, 2005). The Internet has also been lauded as an opportunity to establish new kinds of political involvement (Wright, 2004), as an instrument to better link citizens and political institutions, and finally, as a new arena to discuss politics. All of these claims have been made in reference to the internet (Fearon, 1998; Price & Cappella, 2002). All of these new conditions are thought to be beneficial for bolstering democracies by increasing the amount of people who take part in political processes.

For the sake of brevity, the debate can be summed up along two opposing lines of argument: some scholars argue that the Internet is creating a new space of politics that is crucial for strengthening democracies, while other scholars point out that the Internet is a space to practise "politics as usual." In short, the debate can be

summarised along two opposing lines of argument: some scholars argue that the Internet is creating a new space of politics that is crucial for strengthening democracies; others argue that (Margolis & Resnick, 2000). There are numerous conclusions that might be drawn from the middle ground between the two opposing viewpoints. The well-known debate between so-called "cyber-optimists" and "cyber-pessimists" has, in recent years, shifted toward a more moderate kind of optimism. The former have realised that information and communications technologies (ICTs) are not a democratic panacea, but the latter cannot so simply deny the utility of digital technology for enabling political activities. The former have found out that ICTs are not a democratic panacea. Today, we can draw the conclusion that the use of digital connectivity to practise politics has not revolutionised democracy as cyber-optimists predicted it would. In addition, there has not been any significant reorganisation of political institutions caused by the Internet, nor has there been massive political inclusion of citizens caused by the Internet.

## From the Internet to Social Media

Since its inception, the Internet has undergone significant changes, and as a result, its impact on politics has shifted in response to the proliferation of new digital channels. The Internet provides a number of instruments that can be used to influence politics today. These tools range from the very first Bulletin Board System (BBS)<sup>1</sup> to our constant capacity to stay connected through Social Media platforms via mobile phones. This evolution afterwards has a variety of repercussions, for which researchers promptly present fresh assessments. The proliferation of social media platforms has further revolutionised the potential of digital platforms to connect individuals, making possible their ongoing interaction and collaboration, and amplifying the reach of their individual voices to a wider audience. It is a widely held belief that social media play a significant part in the dissemination of information and the assertions made by political groups (Chadwick, 2013). It is an important channel of communication through which political communities or individual citizens as simple members of the public can provide information about their activities, publicise their positions on specific topics, share information coming from multiple sources, as well as report on issues that are surrounding them at a specific time.

Understanding how political communities utilise the internet to form their own communication channels and contribute to the expansion of political knowledge requires an examination of social media; this examination is made useful by the fact that such an examination is useful. The term "Web 2.0" was coined by O'Reilly in 2005 and refers to the expanded interactive capabilities of the internet brought about by the rise of social media platforms. This is centred on seven primary characteristics of the World Wide Web, which are as follows: "the web as platform," "harnessing collective intelligence," "data is the "Intel inside"," "the end of the software release cycle," "light-weight programming models," "software above the level of a single device," and "rich user experiences." When these concepts are analysed via the prism of political science, Chadwick and Howard (2009) identify them as the following:

The increasingly interactive character of the web is what makes the internet (1) useful as a venue for political conversation. People are able to obtain information from it, but they may also contribute information to it if they choose to. The Internet has become more scalable as a result of the fact that individuals are now able to customise the types of information they get and also distribute their own information among the individuals who are a part of their social network. The usage of the internet has the result of facilitating the dissemination of political claims and debate, which in turn facilitates the coordination of individuals. In this regard, examples appeared throughout the primary and general election campaigns for the presidency of the United States of

America, as will be recounted in detail below, with the extensive usage of the Meetup website (Hindman, 2009). John Edwards made history in January 2007 when he became the first presidential contender to ever do so by announcing his candidature through a video broadcast on YouTube. Both Barack Obama and John McCain, who were running for president of the United States in 2008, made use of social media for the first time during that election cycle. The most recent presidential campaigns in the United States have been the ones in which the usage of social media has made the most noticeable impact (Kreiss, 2016).

## **Information, Political Knowledge and Political Engagement**

Before the introduction of social media, there was research done on the relationship between information, political knowledge, and civic involvement. Sociologists have been interested in the relationship between television programming, exposure to other forms of media, and popular culture ever since the first study on the topic was carried out in the 1940s by Lazarsfeld and Merton (1948). The hypothesis that exposure to various forms of media has an effect on popular culture was backed up by data from several empirical studies. Within the context of political science, Lippmann (1947) and Dewey (1954) were interested in investigating how the proliferation of new communication mediums led to new types of political participation.

(Howard, 2006). Today, a growing number of empirical findings in this field of research support the idea that television is an important source of knowledge about politics (Brians & Wattenberg, 1996), and that this especially influences people who have lower levels of information. One example of this is the fact that people with lower levels of education are more likely to be influenced by television coverage of political issues (Freedman, Franz, & Goldstein, 2004). Television news is the primary source through which individuals obtain information regarding the backgrounds of candidates (Weaver, 1996) and their stances on various topics (Chaffee and Kanihan, 1997; Weaver and Drew, 1993).

As a result of the substantial amount of research that has been conducted in this area, there is now a consensus on how exposure to political information is more likely to increase civic engagement by increasing citizens' knowledge about political issues. This is because of the extensive research that has been conducted in this field (Alvarez, 1997; Brians & Wattenberg, 1996; Tan, 1980). But where exactly does the Internet come into play here? What kind of effects does having access to information online have on politics? And what exactly is the function of social media in this context?

The discussion on how this occurs through the Internet is still splintered around conflicting viewpoints, despite the fact that it is generally accepted that the transmission of information promotes political awareness and, as a result, can stimulate political activity. Early studies suggested, in contrast to what one might anticipate, that the use of the Internet as a medium for the dissemination of political communication would not halt the general trend toward a reduction in political participation (Davis & Owen, 1998; Margolis & Resnick, 2000; Putnam, 2000). It was hypothesised that the unequal distribution of political participation online was a reflection of the unequal distribution of civic engagement in the offline world (Mossberger et al., 2008).

Arguments that are more gloomy point out that people may actually have fewer social relationships as a result of the Internet. Putnam (2000) stated that people who primarily use the Internet as a source of information are less likely to invest time with other people and to volunteer for group action. This is because people who use the Internet as a source of information are less likely to have face-to-face interactions. Therefore, he was not of the opinion that using the internet encourages more participation in political processes. Putnam (2000)

backed up his claim with evidence that was derived from a comprehensive study of the society in North America. Some academics believe that the lack of political participation on the Internet can be attributed to the fact that computer-mediated communication reduces the effectiveness of social signs, such as body language and physical contact, and consequently depersonalises the interaction that occurs between different individuals (Nie & Erbring, 2000). According to Putnam (2000), the lack of social cues in computer-mediated conversations reduces the level of trust that exists between individuals.

## OBJECTIVES

1. To study social media in modern politics
2. To study politics.

## Addressing Social Media Across Politics and Political Actors

The idea of politics encompasses a broader sense of political engagement than only the formal political processes and the interaction between public institutions and citizens. This broader sense of political participation goes beyond the conventional political processes (Almond & Verba, 1980). The variety of approaches that might be taken in political practise then serves to bolster the richness of a political system. These could be taken on by a variety of different political actors according on the conditions they operate under and the tools they make use of. As a direct consequence of this, the function of social media in political discourse looks very different depending on the context in which it is applied. This leads us to believe that because there are many distinct types of political practises, we have access to a wide variety of responses to the issues we have concerning the connection between social media and politics.

In this particular instance, in order to bring order among competing perspectives, we should specify the kind of political practise we are talking about before investigating how social media influence politics through enhancing information sharing processes. It is important that we make it clear whether we are discussing the ways in which political parties and candidates utilise social media for their day-to-day political operations or the ways in which they use it for their political campaigns. Should we be concerned about the way governmental institutions use social media to engage citizens in the tasks they are undertaking? It is possible to state that social media create new venues for debate and help to encourage an increase in the public's awareness of political concerns. It is possible to assert that social media platforms have a part in facilitating the mobilisation and coordination of social movements, which may eventually pose a challenge to autocratic regimes, as was the case during the Arab Spring.

We will be able to better systematise the numerous affects that social media have on politics if we address these questions. When we examine how political parties and candidates use Social Media to design communication strategies intended to maximise visibility and obtain voters' support from citizens, we may then refer, for instance, to how Social Media facilitate campaigns. This can be done when we look at how political parties and candidates use Social Media. The decentralised dissemination of alternative information, the creation of antagonistic views, and the coordination of protests are all supported by the usage of social media platforms. Social media platforms are also used to provide backing for protests carried out by social movements. All of these political acts are essential to a robust democracy, and social media make them easier to engage in.



## Social Media for Campaigning

Academics have responded positively and optimistically to the support that political parties and their candidates have received from the Internet and, more recently, from social media (Gibson, 2015). This is due to the fact that the Internet offers more opportunities than traditional media to circulate information among voters, so providing new channels for self-publicity. This is one of the reasons why the Internet is so important. The use of digital communication tactics enables direct communication between the leadership of political parties and the general public, which in turn can motivate more people to exercise their voting rights. It is normal practise to make use of digital platforms not only during elections but also for the "permanent campaign" in the time period following elections when governance is being carried out. The Internet may in fact make it easier to organise capabilities and provide several channels of expression during post-election periods of governance. This would be beneficial for the dissemination of viewpoints among political parties and voters. The concept of the "Virtual Political System" was proposed as a means of summarising the influence that the Internet has had on politics. The focus here is on the role that intermediary groups play in connecting the state and its citizens. According to this model, the effect that the internet has on politics is contingent on the extent to which institutions make use of the opportunities provided by the internet to enhance and deepen these linkages. Other studies investigate the connection between social media and politics from a wide variety of different theoretical and methodological vantage points.

## Social Media for Mobilizing the Streets

If we restrict the idea of democratic politics to just a few key aspects and manifestations, we will be ignoring the significance of a great many other political dynamics, the primary function of which is to maintain democracy. It is common knowledge, for instance, that the idea of democracy refers to more than just the efficient organisation of legislative and executive power. Another essential component of a democratic system is widespread citizen engagement in electioneering and other formally sanctioned aspects of the political system (Norris, 2001). There are a great number of other components that are necessary for democratic functioning. Scholars pay attention to the role that social media play in fostering grassroots forms of political participation within the framework of research on social movements. The Internet is seen as a useful tool in this context for connecting international social movements and protest events and for challenging autocratic regimes. According to Tarrow, the Internet makes it easier for political parties to coordinate with one another, it changes political goals from having a local to having a transnational dimension, and it links fights all over the world.

Academics have taken attention to the ways in which the Internet enables social movements to create autonomous and effective channels of communication (della Porta & Mosca, 2005). The bottom-up flow of communication that is generated by social movements can be categorised under the term 'E-Democracy from below,' which can be facilitated by the use of the internet. "to interact beyond, around, and across institutionally-controlled communication channels" is how the authors describe the different forms of bottom-up collective action that can be carried out with the help of the decentralised communication channels made available by the Internet (Blumler & Coleman, 2009, p. 117). The Internet is utilised to stimulate political behaviours that are classified as "unconventional" within the context of this framework (Barnes & Kaase, 1979; Marsh, 1977).

Even in places with limited access to the Internet, mobile phones, and mobile phone service, social media still

manage to have an effect on politics. An excellent illustration of this point is the part that social media played in encouraging and coordinating protests during the Arab Spring. This phenomenon serves as an excellent example. Because the usage of digital technology is not nearly as widespread as it is in other parts of the world, we might have expected social media platforms in North Africa to have had no impact on the region's political climate. We would predict that, given the limited access to the internet and, by extension, to social media, people did not have the opportunity to use digital platforms to engage in political debates, disseminate information, share political expertise, or participate in the demonstrations. However, given the restricted freedom of expression and the restricted access to impartial and accountable media channels, social media became the primary source of information, and they acquired a major function even if not all members of the population were able to access them. This is due to the fact that, as was mentioned before, information that is disseminated through social media is typically swiftly absorbed by conventional media, which then distributes the news throughout its traditional media channels, thereby reaching people who are not online.

## CONCLUSION

Regardless of the setting, the Internet is frequently cited as an example of a technological advancement that has the capacity to affect human behaviour. On the other hand, despite widespread disappointment, technodeterminism has mainly prevented the Internet from living up to the predictions that it would radically transform political processes. According to Hinman (2009), the research that has been done on the effects of the Internet on politics has made the erroneous assumption that digital platforms will eventually change the conventional organisational structure of politics over time. However, contrary to what these technodeterminist methods would have you believe, new technologies are not nearly as decisive as they are made up to be. Instead, the degree to which they exert an influence on society is directly proportional to the cultural, political, economic, and historical circumstances that are favourable to their growth (Barber, 2003).

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