

NEW MEDIA AND POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION

Author - Shreya Srivastava, Student at University of Allahabad

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ABSTRACT

The present article analyses political modernity, or the transformation of politics under the impact of new media. Observing the change in dynamic concepts of politics and new media helps one to understand the implications of strong governance and new media dominance. This article sheds light on such political and socio-cultural change in the age of new media systems. However, this study is done briefly and primarily focuses on issues due to this change, with a balanced analysis of its beneficial factors too. This transformation of media culture comes up with substantial issues in the political sphere as to how the dominance of new media creates a dilemma in politics, further empowering the potential of participation of the public without being actually in power, and the development of concepts such as "pop politics," "echo chambers," "political polarization," and "political activism in new media." The study further raises the question of how this new media is building a bridge to bring people into real politics, which is actually a double-edged sword. Moreover, the development of internet politics has raised the concern of the transfer of information without any limits, fact-checking, or filtering, and the question of how to know what is true and what is not without any editorial check and standards. The judicial aspect of new media has also been discussed, and to conclude, the future dilemma due to this change has also been put into shadow. The aim of this article is to enlighten readers with the above-mentioned concept and leave it to their discretion to conclude whether the dominance of new media in politics makes the political landscape a better or worse place than before.

KEYWORDS: New media, political modernity, political polarization, social media, media culture, politics

INTRODUCTION

Over the last three decades, we have seen an incredible transformation in media technology, especially in the political sphere. Politics shaped by media would have sagacious results for the goals of the political process, constraints, pressures, and institutions. This change in the dynamics of media culture has not just widened the sphere of the political landscape but has also increased the participatory format of people in politics. In this new media culture, the active participation of people has been encouraged rather than their passive engagement. This new transformation catalyst massive social, political, economic, and institutional change. The ultimate goal of a political approach to media development is to help build domestic political support for the media as an independent pillar of development and governance. The relationship between media and politics is very significant for the development and advancement of a nation. Hence, Understanding the dynamics of this relationship is essential as it has implications for the information public gets and strong democracy.³⁶ Although the term 'media' came into use only in the 1920s to denote the structures of such communication, media history takes account of the period at least from the advent of the hand press in the fifteenth century, and some interpretations include the

³⁶ Yusuf Yuksel, *An analysis of the media and government relationship*, Selçuk İletişim [57] [(2013)], [MEDYA VE H K MET L K LER NE Y NEL K B R ANAL Zj\[1\].pdf](https://iledu.in/medya-ve-h-k-met-l-k-ler-ne-y-nel-k-b-r-anal-zj[1].pdf)

scriptoria, oral traditions, and wall paintings of medieval times, delving occasionally into ancient and prehistory³⁷ as well as after the transformation in media technology brought a massive change in the system of political communication, this technology has both provided capacities as well as constraints on institutional change. But, the unremitting presentism of new digital technologies always runs up against the ruttedness of pre-existing identities and world-views. By the same token, succeeding generations are unlikely to experience new technologies as in any way discommoding because they are woven into the fabric of everyday living³⁸. This dynamic nature of the advancement of new media makes it quite difficult to define. This study aims to define the same and how it has transformed the political system.

A. What do you understand by the term 'New Media'?

New media as computer technology used as a distribution platform – New media are the cultural objects which use digital computer technology for distribution and exhibition. e.g. (at least for now) Internet, Web sites, computer multimedia, Blu-ray disks, etc. The problem with this is that the definition must be revised every few years.³⁹ The term "new media" will not be "new" anymore, as most forms of culture will be distributed through computers.⁴⁰ It is the convergence of all the forms of media in one form, which has widened the domain of this concept. It digitalized the existing arena of media for development. Accordingly, new media has been expected to transform the ways we interact and communicate, and the term pinpoints the epoch-making phenomena, related to a more encompassing landscape of social, technological, and cultural change (Rice 1999, Manovich 2003; Lister et al. 2003). The wide range of characteristics of these new media

technologies can be summarized by the 5 C's: communication, collaboration, community, creativity, and convergence.⁴¹ It has built a community or bridge to bring people into real-world politics. But the question is, Does bringing new people into politics make the political landscape a better place or worsen it even more? To answer this we need to understand the relationship between media and politics and the political nature of the media system.

I. RELATION BETWEEN MEDIA AND POLITICS

The narrative we tell and our told has the potential to create and continue prejudiced beliefs, in this regard, media is said as a powerful instrument to change the algorithm of socio-political culture. According to the American T.V. journalist Katie Couric, she says that "The media can be an instrument of change, it can maintain the status quo and reflect the views of society or it can hopefully awaken people and change minds."⁴² Media is the fourth pillar of estate and its nature with other pillars is dynamic and is influenced by many factors such as social structure and historical aspects of a nation. Other factors such as candidates' political behavior in media, political rhetoric, and politicians' strategies. Even the degree of commercialization, political parallelism, norms of journalists, and professionalism in different media systems influence the degree and nature of this relationship. There are three ways in which media deals with the political institutions of a country. In the first category, media is not biased and not affiliated with any political party, secondly, media creates imbalance by giving preference to one political party and third which reflects on the dark side of political institutions. In either case, the public is majorly influenced by the narrative of media. Though with the development of new media, the domain of

³⁷ Brendan Dooley, *Media and History*, ScienceDirect, (Mar, 27, 2023, 9:30 PM), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/media-history>

³⁸ Barrie Axford and Richard Huggins, *New Media and Politics*, [11], [SAGE Publications, 2001]

³⁹ New Media Meditation - Rownak, <https://rownak.com/NEW-MEDIA2.html>, [mar 22, 2023, 9 : 36 PM]

⁴⁰ Ibid at 4

⁴¹ Linda Weiser Friedman and Hershey H. Friedman, *THE NEW MEDIA TECHNOLOGIES: OVERVIEW AND RESEARCH FRAMEWORK*, [April 2008], [The New Media Technologies: Overview and Research Framework by Linda Weiser Friedman, Hershey H. Friedman :: SSRN](https://www.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1000000)

⁴² D. Al-Bayati, *The Relation between Media and Politics*, pdfcoffee, (mar, 29, 2023, 22:06 PM) <https://pdfcoffee.com/the-relation-between-media-and-politics-pdf-free.html>

active participation of the public in political affairs has widened the echo chambers created by this algorithm, and the propagation of information without any limits, without any editorial check and standard makes filtering of information as what to believe and what not, quite difficult. This symbiosis is crucial to study because it involves idealistic functions, such as informed democracy, deliberative debate, and empowerment of the citizens, but also feared effects such as polarization, echo chambers, propaganda, and 'fake news'.⁴³

II. TRANSFORMATION OF MEDIA CULTURE

A radical shift has been witnessed in the propagation of information and political communication. As much as this modification benefits in building the connection between media and viewers the other side are also not so far to impact politics. The substantial difference between 'old media' and 'new media' brings out attention to an understanding of change in context. Old Media order was based primarily on national systems of broadcasting and national print mediums; a high incidence of state ownership, Funding, and regulation; the limited availability of broadcast spectrums; And the centrality of the public service ethos. By contrast, the new media Order is distinguished by transnational and global communication and also by a good deal of local variation; by privatization and the deregulation of technical and legal barriers on ownership, content, programming, and production; by spectrum abundance; and by the commercialization of both mission and outputs. New media is more of a convergence of all forms of media rather than a change in the entire media system. ⁴⁴As Mainstream journalists have come to rely heavily on new media content as a source of news. ⁴⁵Though the domain of new media is

much wider it is more or less reduced in the form of 'social media'. Social media is the biggest contributor in developing the space for cyber politics as the degree of engagement of candidates and their interaction in the political context is certainly marked up but is this interaction healthy for the political stability of a country? Without any ethical conduct, control over candidates' behavior on social media, fact-checking, and filtering it is providing space to promote fragmented ideologies and beliefs as well as has set up the hierarchy of political culture where interaction between powerful politicians and voters has been lowered. Research indicates that people's access to social media networks has a positive effect on their sense of political efficacy and tendency to participate in politics (Gil de Zuniga, et al., 2010). However, there also has been backlash when social media discourse has become too nasty, and users have blocked content or dropped out of their social media networks (Linder, 2016). Moreover, a key finding is that social media have contributed to an increase in the personalization of politics, also in party-centered political systems (Enli and Skogerbø 2015). In tandem with the personalization of politics, studies of for example US President Donald Trump's Twitter account, has demonstrated that social media is used by politicians to come across as authentic, and perform a role as rebellious (Ott 2017; Enli 2017⁴⁶

III. POLITICAL MODERNITY

Politics they are described as "actions and activities concerned with achieving and using power in a country or society" Collins Dictionary. Politics has been transformed to accommodate new media and forms of communication (Franklin, 1994; Jamieson, 1984; Kavanagh, 1995; Scammell, 1995). The cultural and institutional shift in the nature of politics has come up with extensive use of media and technology, urbanization, and parties can no longer anchor to one interests or identities. This cultural change can be brought in two ways either with

⁴³ Enli, Gunn, *New Media and Politics*, Annals of international Communication Association, (pages 1-8),(2017), https://www.duo.uio.no/bitstream/handle/10852/59107/Enli-NewMedia%26Politics_Revise33.pdf?sequence=2

⁴⁴Bariee Axford , *The world power making of New media* , ebn.pub ,(Mar, 29, 2023, 9:00 AM) , [The World-Making Power of New Media: Mere Connection? 9780415743655, 9781315813554 - EBIN.PUB](https://www.ebn.pub/Article/The-World-Making-Power-of-New-Media-Mere-Connection?9780415743655,9781315813554-EBIN.PUB)

⁴⁵ Diana Owen, *The New Media's Role in politics*, openmind BBBA, (Mar 29, 2023, 11:36 AM), <https://www.bbvaopenmind.com/en/articles/the-new-media-s-role-in-politics/>

⁴⁶ Ibid at 8

an entire change of political structure with new advancement tools or gradual change within the political system, it means creating a new system over an old system. One example of political modernity is an exit poll during elections, an exit poll is a poll of voters taken immediately after they have exited the polling stations also opinions polls through which government gets to know the real will of citizens.⁴⁷Every coin has a flip side, and so does this transformation Tolson (1991: 178) observes, which has an ambivalence inscribed in it: it is designed 'both to inform and to entertain; to appear serious and sincere, but also playful and even flippant'. These ambiguities, and the ironic reaction they evoke, can have negative political consequences – by making serious matters seem trivial – but they may also have positive consequences.

IV. CONCEPTS DEVELOPED DUE TO THIS TRANSFORMATION IN NEW MEDIA AND POLITICS

A. Political activism in new media

The use of active and coercive online initiatives and campaigns to create awareness about political issues and/or promote political reforms is political activism.⁴⁸New media is changing the political correspondence in the entire world. It is changing the expectation of the public regarding the participatory format of governance. Now the public has a more active role in the political domain, credit goes to innovation in media. And the dominance of new media has just reduced to "social media buzz". Social media has brought about more extensive types of social, economic as well as cultural variations which include; a movement from advancement to post advancement; escalating procedures of globalization; a substitution in the West during the industrial period of development by a "postindustrial" information era; the decentering of built up and

incorporated geopolitical commands.⁴⁹It empowers people to contradict the emerging or existing beliefs without actually coming into power or political position. The impact of digital activism on politics is disputed, and some studies point to the strengths and possibilities such as networked mobilization or the evolution of "politics of Visibility" that alters traditional identity dynamics (Milan 2015).⁵⁰As in the case of the Me too movement or the black lives matter campaign. The best can be seen in the "Arab Springs" where social media proves to be an effective tool for a political uprising. The "Arab Spring" is noted for the young protesters who took to the streets, utilizing social media during the uprisings to organize, create awareness around the political issues, and document the experience on the ground. It provides space for documenting violence, dissent opinions exercising the right to speech, and freedom-enhancing engagement. Even in the case of black lives matter, it worked as a space to create an anti-black racial community and led the public to think out of political manipulation of few. But the question always lies in the statement that up to what degree engagement is healthy? For instance, in the case of spreading religious propaganda and try to manipulate people with the same, goes into evil hands of social media. Studies emphasize what they regard as weaknesses and limitations such as digital divide, and the difficulties of Sustaining stable ties between activists (Van Laer and Van Aelst 2010) No doubt, it is creating ambiguous boundaries between political activism and entertainment in the name of 'pop politics'.⁵¹

B. Echo chambers and political polarization

We are consuming media every day and rocking the nods coming to us through the

⁴⁷ Gktoday, <https://www.gktoday.in/question/which-one-of-the-following-statements-regarding-ex>, (Mat, 29, 2023)

⁴⁸ Igi- global, <https://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/online-political-activism-among-young-people-in-sub-saharan-africa/43672>, (last visited: March 29, 2023)

⁴⁹Ayesha Karamat and Ayesha Farooq, *Emerging Role of Social Media in Political Activism: Perceptions and Practices*, vol. 31, A Research Journal of South Asian Studies, (starting page: 381), (page cited: 386), http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/csas/PDF/25%20Ayesha%20Karamat_v3_1_no1_jan-jun2016.pdf

⁵⁰ Ibid at 8

⁵¹ Ibid at 8

screen and this is one of the substantial issues in the country right now. Political polarization refers to the divergence of political attitudes to ideological extremes. Mass polarization or popular polarization occurs when an electorate's attitudes towards political issues, policies, and celebrated figures are neatly divided along party lines.⁵² No doubt, new media has given space to users to go to the extreme extent of achieving something whether good or bad. For instance, as the political divide on the beliefs of consistently liberal and consistently conservative; United Nations has had a fair divide of political disagreement and the current alarming situation on both the side aisle. The reason why we still have political polarization today is dumbroll, people don't talk to the people they disagree with and this kept creating a larger chamber resulting in political polarization. If we compare with media half a century ago it was broadcasting a moderate stance, and showing the facts there were ideologies or political stances being taken, unlike today's media. In contrast to ideological polarization, which mostly considers differences in political views, affective polarization is more of an identity-based comparison between in and out-groups (Iyengar et al., 2012; Mason, 2015; Mason, 2018).⁵³ As supporters of right-wing populist parties strongly oppose partisans of green or left-wing parties and vice versa, both strongly favor their own fellow partisans. Importantly, such animosity is based on strong in-group identification and negative partisanship with out-groups (Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Medeiros and Noël, 2014). Polarization is tearing at the seams of democracies around the world, from Brazil and India to Poland and Turkey. It's a global illness.⁵⁴ A constant similarity has been seen in factors affecting political polarization in countries with different forms of government. You might expect, for

⁵² Wikipedia, https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_polarization, (Mar 30, 2023)

⁵³ Ibid at 8

⁵⁴ THOMAS CAROTHERS, ANDREW O'DONOHUE, *How to Understand the Global Spread of Political Polarization*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, (Mar, 30, 2023, 01:46 AM), <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/10/01/how-to-understand-global-spread-of-political-polarization-pub-79893>

instance, that a growing economy would ease polarization. Yet we found that in some places, such as India, it actually made things worse. Indeed, the growth of India's middle class has led to rising support for polarizing Hindu nationalist narratives. Another factor In Turkey, for instance, the head of the main opposition party stoked tensions by calling on the military to oppose Erdoğan's potential bid for the presidency in 2007. Here, Opposition leaders often fan the flames as well by responding with antidemocratic and confrontational tactics of their own. In the concluding statement, here submits that as professor Helen Milner in his research on **Ecology and Evolutionary Biology**, said that "Polarization is a dynamic process and that is what complexity theory can best help us understand," they wrote. "As environmental and complexity scientists have shown in other contexts, diversity maintenance is critical for many systems to thrive, and often to survive at all.". "The polarization currently being experienced both within and among nations undercuts efforts to deal with critical issues facing societies."⁵⁵ But unfortunately, we are seeing polarization today and a subsequent loss of diversity in the range of positions in society globally moreover communication in the right direction could solve various dissenting opinions and beliefs.

New media and politics is the degree to which the recent user migration to online platforms contributes to political polarization through so-called 'echo chambers' and 'filter bubbles' (Pariser 2011). In news media and social media, an echo chamber is an environment or ecosystem in which participants encounter beliefs that amplify or reinforce their preexisting beliefs by communication and repetition inside a closed system and insulated from rebuttal. The echo chamber effect occurs online when a harmonious group of people amalgamates and develops tunnel vision. Participants in online

⁵⁵ Morgan Kelly, *Political polarization and its echo chambers: Surprising new, cross-disciplinary perspectives from Princeton*, Princeton University, (Mar 30, 2023, 2:13 AM), <https://www.princeton.edu/news/2021/12/09/political-polarization-and-its-echo-chambers-surprising-new-cross-disciplinary>

discussions may find their opinions constantly echoed back to them, which reinforces their individual belief systems due to the declining exposure to others' opinions.⁵⁶

V. JUDICIAL ASPECT OF NEW MEDIA AND POLITICS

Do political polarization and echo chambers created on social media influence the mind of the judiciary? Many are chances that any judge who might be using social media could be hijacked by the polarized beliefs or situations portrayed as real despite being fake. The judiciary needs to be more cautious towards the imbalance created in the political sphere to not mix with the judicial sphere. Judges may want to distance themselves from such publicity, but it can be difficult to avoid being subconsciously influenced by it. Especially since it envelopes us through all mediums, and in cases that have garnered significant media attention, it's even more difficult. 'Media trial' is such a threat to democracy. "Media trials are defined as certain regional or national news 'events' in which the criminal justice system is co-opted by the media as a source of high drama and entertainment." study conducted by Walden University's Dr. VVLN Sastry, theorized that a positive correlation existed between media trials and court verdicts in India, thereby affecting the country's justice system⁵⁷. Not only do these media trials subvert the role of the legal system, but they also have societal impacts that distort public opinion and malign public perception. About 430 of the 450 advocates' strongly agreed' that the public media could influence judges' opinions if the case is under trial. While twelve advocates 'agreed'⁵⁸. The public's and the media's attention amounted to a biased jury and judgement. By refraining from participating in complicated court cases so early on, which call for careful interpretation and in-depth study, the press

should uphold its moral principles, professional standards, sense of social responsibility, and credibility. The importance of uniform, liberal regulations to regulate media cannot be overstated. Courts could make such rules under a liberal hand, such that there's no interference from the legislature.

VI. THE FUTURE DILEMMA

The relationship between media and politics is the question of symbiosis, and to what degree new media changes the power balance between politicians and the media. The fact that media is a medium to ask for accountability of government on the behalf of citizens never goes out of the way but there should be no intermixing of these two. The borderline between media and government is getting blurry. The culture of preference political institutions, pop politics, and biased media getting higher. The dilemma is created on the issue that despite being politically influenced, and the emergence of the age of misinformation and fake news, the statistics of reliability of people on media is getting higher. New media challenges the authority of mainstream media and enables politicians and political activists to use alternative media channels for communication. To what degree will this development, on the one hand, dissolve the symbiosis and provide the politicians with channels for political propaganda, and on the other hand, reduce the citizens' trust in the media as a source of political information, involvement, and empowerment (see, for example, Thorson 2016).

CONCLUSION

Certainly, new media has provided a wider space and community for political communication and has filled the gap between the public and government that earlier was under the monopoly of a few. The aim of discussing the relationship between media and politics is to make the reader understand how this transformation will affect the public and political spheres. The dynamics of the

⁵⁶Wikipedia, [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Echo_chamber_\(media\)](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Echo_chamber_(media)), (Mar, 30, 2023)

⁵⁷ DrVvln Sastry, Media Trials and Criminal Justice in India, Blue Diamond Publishing, (2020)

⁵⁸ S S Kumar, <https://sskumar.com/2020/09/07/the-trial-by-media-sushant-sing-raiputs/>, (Mar, 30, 2023)

relationship between media and politics are empowered by the potential active participation of citizens in political affairs. The internet, or cyberspace for politics, which was created, helps any person across the globe engage in political communication. As much as this seems like a privilege to exercise freedom of speech, it can also contribute to the age of misinformation, fake news, and new manipulation techniques. When reading about such concepts, one should know their dynamic nature and that the factors that affect them will also change, so to create balance, one should keep in mind that what is new today will be old tomorrow, and any such advancement will always come with both sides of the coin: beneficial and harmful. Hence, this study primarily lets the reader decide how this advancement is creating a better political society. Since media systems have a special power in society, the temptation for political and economic elites to seize control of and slant the media to serve their own interests has seen upheaval. Hence, laws and institutions need to be developed to safeguard against the ill effects of this advancement. When we talk about media independence, we actually focus on what is being shown rather than thinking about what could be hidden. Certainly, new media provides independence to the public as well as to politicians, allowing them to raise questions about the accountability of existing governments and present their dissenting opinions, whereas reality might differ sometimes. How do you know that the press is actually doing the public's favour and not acting as politicians' mouthpieces? Whatever one's opinion, we are anyway living in the age of manipulation and misinformation. One should be cautious about what to say in that cyberspace of politics and what to believe. To conclude, I submit that not every advancement is harmful for society, but that doesn't mean it's entirely beneficial for the same.

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