

The Importance of Digital Political Media for Political Institutions- A Critical View

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Abstract

The research dealt with the importance of specialized political media by employing digital platforms, represented by social networking sites, for political institutions. It is a critical vision inspired by the researchers' interests in specialized political media, and after they completed research that addresses the news treatment used by the Iraqi electronic news website on the subject of the Sadrist bloc's withdrawal from Parliament - for the period from 6/1/2022 AD to 9/1/2022 AD, the research starts from a main question: How important is digital political media for Iraqi political institutions? This aims to identify the nature of the interest of Iraqi political institutions in using available social networking sites (Facebook and Twitter), as there is a large trend by the public and political institutions to be present and communicate via digital platforms, and this interest is related to marketing and promoting political projects and decisions, and the research begins to monitor this. The interest coincides with the political movement regarding the formation of the Iraqi government at the beginning of the year 2023 AD, and this topic is of great importance at the scientific level because it is characterized by modernity and no one has studied it before. It also has social importance represented by the public's interest in political topics, and how political institutions deal with political crises through social networking sites.

This research is a descriptive study based on the skills of induction, exploration, and observation. The research has reached some results, the most important of which is that political institutions and party figures tend to greatly prefer interest in digital political media in communicating with their audience and that interest is related to the public's attachment to and preference for digital technologies.

Keywords: *Political media, digital platforms, political institutions.*

Introduction

The media is one of the effective means of implementing the state's foreign policy, which is practiced by everyone from the President to the Ministers of State, each according to his specialization and capabilities. The media achieves the state's foreign policy goals through specialized media institutions, and accredited diplomatic missions also perform intelligence functions in form, directly or indirectly, through the dissemination of information, or what is transmitted through what is published by the international press, or through audio-visual broadcasting. Consequently, newspapers and magazines have become widespread and available to everyone to achieve development and the huge scientific and technological developments that have occurred in the nineties of the last century. The media is particularly important as a means of implementing foreign policy,

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and the relationship between them is proportional to the size of international benefits. The extent of its role and influence in politics in the international arena is determined by the use of advanced media that it owns and directs to achieve the goals of its foreign policy, as well as protecting interests abroad. It is noted that the relationship is what There is an interconnected relationship between the media and foreign policy, as both of them interfere in the work of the other, influencing and being affected by it(1), and in a famous phrase by the political scientist (Gabriel Almond), "Everything in politics is communication," through which he expressed the important role that it plays, the means of communication to serve political systems, until it became difficult for political systems to rise and coexist without relying on communication means, and research was also conducted regarding this extreme importance of the media and communication in their support of political systems, through information and political issues that the media broadcast to individuals to create an impact. It includes these issues, which can cause a change in the behavior and attitude of the individual or the recipient, and from here came the assertions of researchers in the field of politics and communication on the interconnected relationship between the media and politics, as each of them is affected and affected by the other, and this relationship is considered close and cohesive, so it is considered a means of Media and communication are a link between the politician and the public through which he communicates their ideas and programs to the public, and also conveys the voice of the public to the official to meet their popular needs and demands. Politics also affects the media through the ownership of these media and the source of their funding, which directly affects the messages and political direction of the media. Communication, especially in third world countries or developing countries(2)

Research methodology

First: the research problem:

The field of political media is a branch of specialized media and has great importance in the world of politics, as this pattern emerged as a result of the overlap and interdependence of the media with the political system, whether liberal or inclusive, and the flow of information and news is from two sides, the first from decision-makers to the public, and the second is the transfer of suffering and needs the public to decision-makers, officials, and politicians(3)

The problem that the research is concerned with is represented by a major question: (How important is digital political media for Iraqi political institutions? And so, the focus of induction will be a description of that importance according to the data of lived political realities.

Second: the research importance:

The importance of scientific research is represented in the need to provide a specific description of the nature of the digital political media importance, after which it is one of the branches of specialized media, and the nature of the interest of Iraqi political institutions in using the available social networking sites (Facebook and Twitter), which is an unprecedented topic, because most studies are concerned with analysis and interpretation of the contents, Or it is concerned with describing the public's political interests, as well as its societal importance represented in the extent of the public's interest in political issues that constitute the focus of social life and its repercussions cast a shadow over the public.

Third: Research Objectives:

When preparing scientific research, researchers are keen to describe the objectives that it seeks to achieve, and they are related to the sub-research questions. The research aims to identify the nature of the political media importance and the extent of the Iraqi political

institutions' interest in using the available social networking sites (Facebook and Twitter) to perpetuate political action.

Fourth: Type of research and its methodology:

This research is considered descriptive research based on analysis and logical extrapolation of the media reality to provide a realistic description, evaluate, and study the current facts related to the importance of political media. This is the ideal approach for studies that combine communication sciences and political sciences, to achieve an answer to the main research question by relying on scientific observation, skills of analysis, deduction, and reading data.

The emergence of political media, its functions and theories

First: the concept of political media

The concept of political media: It is the political activity carried out by politicians through the media and members of society, which in turn reflect specific political goals related to environmental issues that affect public opinion and the private lives of individuals and people through diverse communication, which is reflected through the activities of politicians inside and outside the government and they use the media as a platform to communicate their voice to the people, or media activities, and individuals who share power in decision-making and political processes can socially participate in the political process through participation in the media and communication in the case of the media as a means of communication between the government and the public to present their various concerns and problems, which engages a wide audience, as political communication increases the political awareness of individuals in developed democratic countries, but in developing countries dictatorship is practiced and aims to control the behavior of individuals and groups through the media(4).

Political media is also known as the use of media that helps to achieve political influence, the interaction between government agencies, and the political behavior of citizens, It is a form of communication, and the concept of political media emerged as a science with theories and fields of study, it is science which specializes in studying the activities practiced by those in charge of the communication process in the media to achieve a political goal(5)

Political media has been known as one of the types of media that provides the masses with all international procedures and actions that serve international benefits and interests. We find that governments want to obtain their political media to serve as an arm for them that works to subject it to their control and policy and subdue it in their favor. Among the types of political media is (International media) which means the media directed outside the borders of the country from which it is broadcast, in a language that the audience of the other country understands to gain its sympathy or political position for the state, for any reason, whether national or religious, so experts described the international media as the primary arm of the state and its political system. outside(6).

Political media can also be defined as “means of communication that are owned, governed, managed or influenced by political entities, aiming primarily to disseminate the positions and viewpoints of the political entity concerned. The marriage between politics and the media has resulted in a new type of media.” This is what is known as the concept of political media, whose definitions have varied according to the various opinions of political and media scientists(7)

Political media emerged in three fields (political studies, media and mass communication, and social psychology). There are two trends, one negative and the other positive, regarding political studies. The negative trend is represented by its support for the authorities and the marginalization of opinions that do not align with the party controlling

the media outlet. As for the positive trend, it is represented by exposing the corruption of authority, finding a solution to societal problems(). In the beginning, the work of politics was monopolized by leaders, decision-makers, authority and influence, kings, and emperors. With the spread of education and the emergence of other groups and classes in society, what is known as (the popular press) appeared. The interest of the masses is in what are events taking place in society and the issues and news that are being raised. There has also been an interest in political media and topics related to politics, which has led to an increase in the number of participants in politics. These numbers have begun to demand their rights without trying to deprive them of their right to claim them. They were met with repression and rejection by the authorities and harsh treatment, which led to the explosion of angry masses and the demand to express their rights and reject any attempt to silence them. The role of the press appeared, as it is a reflective mirror of what is going on in society. So, the press entered a new phase and began to pay broad attention to politics, and this interest in politics was transferred to the public after it had been defined by a category of the public. The elite began spreading misinformation, falsifying facts, and trying to deceive the public by spreading lies through the media. Despite this, political media remains the basis of contemporary media. No media at present does not have among its goals a political goal. Likewise, it is not possible to imagine political action without it to rely on a media that expresses its political program and clarifies its goals and principles for which it exists(8).

Second: An overview of the political media emergence

Media has been associated with politics since the era of philosophy and rhetoric (the age of the sophists), when they used communication and media tools at that time to change public opinion and influence it, by broadcasting political cultures to influence the masses and change their attitudes, and leaders and politicians still support every invention that helps them communicate with the masses However, it can be said that political media is a relatively recent phenomenon. The desire and urgent need to establish a special science for media and communication appeared during the period of World War II, and in the year (1956 AD) the first book entitled (Political Behavior) appeared, and this was the first appearance of the term. The book discusses the impact the politics left between the government and the citizens, and many studies appeared in this field. These studies dealt with (The effects of the media on political elections), (The effects of propaganda and analysis of political language), (Political rhetoric, political debates, political socialization, election campaigns, political movements, the relationship between the government and the media), and then another term appeared in scientific studies (political power) at the American University of Michigan, and after that studies of political power appeared at the University of Michigan by (Campbell) and his colleagues. The concept of political power is defined as “a sense of political action.” Which can have an impact on political processes, and the definition carries the possibility of social and political change, and that the individual citizen can participate in this change”, and this is what is supposed to be present in the intellectuals as they are the thinking mind of the nation, and here the studies have been transferred from a side specialized in persuasion to another specialized in knowledge, the media began with governments and communication with the government and the district, then it developed into an exchange of political dialogue between the ruling authority and the opposition, and at the present political media now includes (media outlets, opinion polls, political marketing, propaganda, especially during electoral periods(9)

Third: Political media functions

There is a close connection between the practice of media by a particular state and the values and traditions of the state. Therefore, political systems allocate shape and size to the values and determinants used by the media. This means that the main content of the media in contemporary life has a different concept according to the affiliation of thought,

culture, profession, and also the economic, social, and political level of the state community (10).

1-News function

The news function is considered one of the first functions performed by the media in various media systems with different philosophies because the news has an important role in influencing public opinion and creating public opinion (11)

2-Political upbringing

It means the practice through which beliefs and trends are acquired and the public's political awareness is achieved. The media can directly influence the political socialization process to support the acquired belief or by focusing the socialization process on human values and acquired beliefs. There is a close interrelation between the political socialization processes and entities. Political systems in systems, so the process does not depend only on one method, but rather varies according to the economic, social, and political conditions that occur in society(12)

3-political marketing

It means attracting the public to the media by influencing them and their behavior for competitive purposes between the media. Individuals specialized in marketing operations are used through analysis and also the ability to manage the campaigns of candidates, political parties, pressure groups, or those who influence public opinion(13)

4-Manipulation or deliberate influence in the political process

Some studies have indicated that there is another function for the media, represented by the attempts of the media to manipulate the political process to achieve a specific purpose or goal. The goal may be to move public opinion and mobilize it regarding new demands or an attempt to arouse political elites(14), and the goal may be based on cooperation between media professionals. Government employees to mobilize public opinion on a certain issue, but if the media is government, it uses its campaigns to achieve the goals of defending international politics(15)

5-Assistance in making decisions

The decision-making process is considered one of the most prominent processes that affect political systems. The media can create a large audience for the decision-maker, and it is also known as a process through which a problem is identified that is the main subject of the decision, after which several alternatives appear and one of them is chosen and put into practice. And application. The political function of the media is to add legitimacy or social acceptance to ideas and concepts and to create new ideas and concepts that are subject to political debate and discussion, so they reflect the reality of politics clearly and accurately and pay attention to the process of political socialization, and also express political interest and achieve social integration between the groups of society to achieve the function of political socialization. media politics (16)

Some communication theories explain the policy influence of communication media:

1. The theory of power

It is considered one of the first media theories and the beginning of its inception in the 16th century, specifically in Europe. This theory is based on the premise that the people can't bear the responsibility of power and are not worthy of it because it belongs to the ruling people only and that the interference of the people in the responsibilities of power leads to chaos. This theory is based on the ruling class interest above the general public interest. (Machiavelli) is considered one of the most prominent discoverers of this theory, and he is one of the first who called for the ruling authority to be the one that controls all aspects of life absolutely, and that the control of the authority over individuals is in the interest of the state, he believes that the end justifies the means, and he means the end

here (the interest of the homeland). Therefore, states must control absolutely all aspects of life. In the early twentieth century, the Nazis used them to subjugate people, and there is also an example of the theory of power in (Hitler's media), which broadcast What the ruling class wants, and it does not convey the truth in its complete form(17).

2. Freedom theory

This theory is based on liberal thought, as it believes that individuals should be free to receive information and know what is going on around them in terms of issues and information, and no one has the right to block or prevent this information from reaching the public, and some believe that the theory of freedom appeared as a result of the conditions in Europe that were described as tragic, Europe was at the time under two types of tyranny, on the one hand, the tyranny of kings and on the other hand the tyranny of religion, where freedom of thought was confiscated, as well as interference in the private lives of individuals and vulgar content based on excitement was presented through the media to reach the largest number of viewers(18), this theory appeared in Britain in 1688 AD.

3. Social responsibility theory

This theory believes that the media should be free, but freedom is restricted and not absolute, so it must take into account the customs and traditions of society. It has become somewhat similar to the theory of power. It opened the name of the interest of individuals and the consolidation of the higher values of society. It became easy to control the media, so the media became a tool controlled by the ruling authority().

4. Democratic participation theory

The advocates of this theory believe that it emerged as a result of a counter-reaction to the previous communication theories (the theory of power, freedom, and social responsibility) since these theories, according to the belief of the advocates of the democratic participation theory, failed to meet the aspirations and desires of individuals, by providing information that conveys events and facts. As it is without shading, the advocates of this theory believe that it can rid the media of the dominant forces interventions to preserve society values. Information is not only from the sender to the receiver but from the receiver to the sender as well. The flow of information is in two directions(19).

5. Theory of socialism (Marxism)

This theory is based on the premise that power must be in the hands of the working class in socialist societies, and for power to be in the hands of the working class, it must control the intellectual media. This theory is based on the assumption that there is no class in socialist societies, and the media here does not express the opposing opinion so that a disagreement does not form and is reflected in society and constitutes a danger to it. These ideas go back to (Karl Marx) and (Angelos) and the setting of rules for their application (Leylin and Stalin), and the theory of communism allows for self-criticism as acknowledging the failure to achieve communist goals((20)

6. Developmental theory

This theory focuses on third-world countries and believes that there are problems that hinder the widespread access to information in developing countries, and the difficulty of applying communication theories in them, due to the lack of an appropriate communication environment such as professional skills and cultural material that raises awareness among the public, and the absence of an available audience, and among the principles of this The theory stands against media dependency and outside hegemony over developing countries. It emphasizes state sovereignty, but with a restricted level of prevailing democracy and imposes cooperation between individuals to achieve

development in various sectors. Therefore, development theory derives acceptance, comprehensive development, and social change from other media theories(21).

The critical vision of the importance of digital political media for political institutions

Digital political media constitutes one of the most important sources of political information in the world in general and in Iraq in particular. This is an important research field as members of society need to obtain their needs of political information that allows them to interact and participate politically, ensures society's interaction with the political process, and can establish that participation leads to great knowledge of political issues and builds specific attitudes towards politically active forces, as well as strengthening support and ideological loyalty and sustaining the diversity and competition necessary to achieve the peaceful transfer of power.

The importance of digital political media is primarily the provision of information, and the formulation of political trends, as a large amount of information is transmitted via digital platforms, given the great importance of the news function achieved by these digital platforms, which have become one of the most prominent faces of political media and that achieve the most basic functions of the media. It satisfies the communication needs of the public, and its importance increases during times of political transitions and elections when the need of members of society for information about political issues, parties, and competing candidates increases, and at the limits of the scientific knowledge of researchers. Analytical and field studies revealed the extent to which political media contributes to achieving political knowledge and shaping the political attitudes of citizens. The results of many of these studies at the level of the Faculty of Information at the Iraqi University revealed that exposure to news and interest in it is positively related to political knowledge. These studies also revealed that there are positive relationships between the public's use of political digital news media and political interests, creating motivation for political participation, and forming political attitudes.

The controversy escalated in two incidents, the first of which was US President Donald Trump's use of his Twitter page, until the platform was his first media outlet, in the face of other media outlets that were hostile to him, and it was an arena for political conflict with his opponents and competitors, communicating with his American audience, as well as communicating with international issues. Twitter was an arena for expressing the president's policies regarding the Middle East, Palestine, and the Arab region, as well as regarding his country's relations with Russia and Europe, as well as NATO decisions. Many media outlets relied on the president's tweets on Twitter to shed light on his way of ruling and managing the state, and his protection of the interests of the United States of America.

On the other hand, the attitudes of Arab youth regarding President Trump's tweets were monitored. Especially those related to the Arab political situation by measuring the knowledge and political trends that have been obtained against the background of young people's interests in the contents of the American President's digital political media and building youth trends and positions on American policies, and in increasing the effectiveness of the role of Arab societies in shaping Arab political relations with America. His tweets revealed his intentions and vision for the nature of relations with the Gulf states, which led to clear Arab proposals to reconsider Arab-American relations, which was evident in the recent trends of the so-called BRICS group, as six new countries have joined the group consisting of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. Then Iran, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Argentina, and Ethiopia will join at the beginning of the year 2024 AD, to get rid of the American blackmail announced through Trump's tweets on Twitter.

According to the local experience, Mr. Muqtada al-Sadr who used his tweets to direct his supporters and respond to his opponents. Mr. Muqtada was keen to use his tweets in dealing with political issues, and he succeeded in achieving interaction with his fans. The extent of progress was shown in the positive results that he obtained. It was defeated by his movement's victory in the elections, but there are obstacles and problems related to the lack of professional experience in building the message of the Sadrist movement's media institutions. In the year (2020 AD), a group of activists on Twitter launched a hashtag calling for Mr., at that time, sparked widespread controversy in the Iraqi street and caused the outbreak of widespread protests, while another group of tweeting activists went with Mr. Al-Sadr's tweets that target saboteurs according to their description, and Mr. Muqtada Al-Sadr, the leader of the Sadrist movement, presents his ideas, opinions, and directives via the Twitter platform, and thus the digital media has contributed to changing the way politicians communicate with the public, and Twitter in particular gained importance for politicians, through which they can influence influencers and opinion leaders. Digital media also contributed to developing political awareness among the public, after political leaders, religious advocates, and opinion leaders began using it. Digital media has flourished remarkably and topped the life of the public interested in local and international political affairs, and dependence on digital media is increasing in times of crisis.

Digital political media plays an important and prominent role in educating public opinion and the movement of political society in developed countries and societies, as well as the role of mediator between society, political parties, and power. Despite the recent democratic experience in Iraq and the recent use of the Internet, there is great interest from the political class in activating the role of digital partisan and political media.

It can be said that relying on digital political media has become a media demand in light of the media transformations, and in light of the liberation, independence, and development of digital media, and its intervention in all fields, including the political field, as we find in developed countries a specialized media in which the political media plays its role in communicating with the social and political environment, and this will only be through a wise media policy that resorts to digital media procedures and technologies and possesses media capabilities. It puts these parties in constant communication with their popular base and all segments and groups of society, as well as with the political community, so the lack of a political party's possession of a media device isolates it from its external environment.

Conclusions

- 1) It appears clear that digital political media is an important tool in supporting current political activity, and the freer this media is, the better its ability to contribute to political awareness and to promote and develop political work in general.
- 2) Political institutions influence on the digital political media system, either by supporting it or obstructing it, and in Iraq, the digital political media reality seems to dominate the clear expression of the nature of the movement of political institutions.
- 3) Digital political media in Iraq is distinguished by its strength. All personalities, institutions, and parties have digital platforms to express their will, or they represent their mouthpiece in front of their audience and the face of other political forces.
- 4) Political digital platforms have given political institutions the ability to present their image to society and public opinion, which affects them positively, creating a state of parity in media coverage of political activity and the continuity of the relationship between media and politics, and containing crises and tensions between political forces that reflect on society in a positive way that serves citizens and political institutions.

Recommendations and suggestions

- 1) Supporting the editorial capabilities of those charged with transmitting political media activity through digital platforms, in a way that ensures its independence and enables citizens to participate in the political media field and benefit from it, whether traditional or new media.
- 2) Paying attention to the parties' orientation towards digital partisan media by political parties and working to develop it to communicate directly with public opinion and citizens.
- 3) Paying attention to raising everyone's awareness of the importance of ensuring the activity of digital political media within society through all media and political actors.

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