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The influence of media and new technologies on politics: platform power, political communication, and governance

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This article examines how digital platforms and new media are reshaping contemporary politics through platform power, transformations in political communication, and evolving forms of platform governance. The shift from traditional mass media to algorithmically driven digital environments has fundamentally altered how public agendas are formed, political visibility is distributed, and collective mobilization occurs. It uses a mechanism-based review and connects classic agenda-setting and framing research with platform studies, specifying indicators for empirical testing so. Recommendation systems, engagement metrics, and moderation practices increasingly determine which political messages gain prominence and which actors gain access to public attention. The analysis focuses on several core mechanisms of this influence, including algorithmic visibility, hybrid agenda and framing processes, networked mobilization, disinformation and synthetic media, and datafied forms of regulation. Together, these dynamics demonstrate that platforms operate not merely as communication channels but as infrastructures of power that reorganize access, control, and political influence within digital societies and across institutional boundaries. The platform-based political environment has a dual character: while it expands opportunities for participation, accelerates collective action, and lowers barriers to entry into the public sphere, it also intensifies risks of manipulation, polarization, declining trust, and weakened democratic accountability. The article therefore emphasizes the need for transparency, oversight, and public-interest-oriented governance of digital platforms as a condition for sustaining balanced, pluralistic, and legitimate political communication in the digital age. The thesis is substantiated that public opinion in modern societies is increasingly shaped not through open public debate, but through technologically mediated processes of selection, personalization, and dissemination of information.
Key words: political communication; platform power; hybrid media systems; algorithms; disinformation; platform governance.

Introduction. Media influence politics not only by transmitting messages but by shaping the infrastructures through which publics are formed, issues become salient, and authority is recognized. In the classical mass-media model, these processes were structured by editorial routines and institutional gatekeepers. In platform-based environments, however, visibility is governed by algorithmic ranking, recommendation systems, and moderation architectures that determine what content is seen, by whom, and under what conditions [11, c. 176–187; 7, c. 45–68].

The shift from broadcasting to digital platforms has therefore transformed agenda-setting and framing. Whereas earlier media systems relied on relatively stable professional norms, platform environments operate through personalization, real-time engagement metrics, and computational gatekeeping, which continuously reorganize the distribution of political attention [6, c. 51–58; 7, c. 45–68]. These mechanisms influence not only which issues enter public debate but also how they are interpreted and emotionally framed.

This article integrates scholarship on media and political influence across three interlinked domains: (a) platform power as control over the conditions of public communication; (b) transformations of political communication and mobilization within hybrid media systems; and (c) platform governance as a de facto regulatory layer alongside states [4, c. 22–49; 18, c. 34–61]. Rather than treating "technology" as an abstract force, the analysis focuses on specific mechanisms through which platforms structure political interaction and redistribute communicative power.

From Mass Media to Platforms: Key Shifts

Two shifts define the contemporary media–politics relationship. First, political communication is hybrid: legacy media remain influential, but content is increasingly produced, circulated, and reinterpreted through platform infrastructures and networked publics [4, c. 22–49]. Second, platforms operationalize politics through data and computation: they measure engagement continuously, personalize distribution, and enforce rules through combined human and automated systems [7, c. 45–68].

Three concepts capture these changes. Platformization describes how public communication is reorganized around commercial platforms and their economic logic [18, c. 34–61]. Datafication refers to translating social action into data that can be analyzed and used to guide interventions [5, c. 17–39]. Algorithmic mediation denotes ranking, recommendation, and automated enforcement that shape visibility and salience. Together, these shifts create new political asymmetries: access to publics depends on infrastructures that are privately governed, often opaque, and monetized via advertising.

Theoretical Foundations
Agenda-Setting and Framing

Agenda-setting explains how media shape issue salience [11, c. 176–187]. Framing explains how media shape interpretation by selecting problem definitions, causal attributions, and remedies [6, c. 51–58]. In platform environments, salience and framing are co-produced by algorithms, users, and cross-platform circulation. The analytical task is to trace how recommender systems and network dynamics amplify some frames while suppressing others.

Mediatization and Hybrid Media Systems

Mediatization theory argues that politics adapts to media logic–formats and incentives favoring speed, personalization, conflict, and spectacle [16, c. 228–246]. Hybrid media systems research adds that older and newer media interact rather than replace one another; power is relational and depends on how actors navigate multiple media logics [4, c. 22–49]. Together, these approaches explain cross-platform campaign strategies, feedback loops between platform events and institutional politics, and the circulation of narratives between social media and journalism.

Platform Power and Attention Economies

Platform studies conceptualize major platforms as infrastructural actors shaping public communication through recommender systems, advertising architectures, and moderation regimes [7, c. 45–68; 18, c. 34–61]. Critical political-economy accounts emphasize asymmetries created through data extraction and behavioral prediction, which affect which actors can reach publics and how rules are enforced [19, c. 92–121; 5, c. 17–39].

Mechanisms of Political Influence in the Platform Era

To connect technological conditions to political outcomes without technological determinism, the review highlights five mechanisms that recur across the literature. These mechanisms operate across levels of analysis (micro, meso, macro) and interact in practice.

Table 1 summarizes the core mechanisms discussed in the review and links each mechanism to key platform functions, typical political effects, and representative sources.

Algorithmic Visibility and Attention Allocation

Platforms govern political attention through ranking and recommendation. This produces a computational form of agenda-setting: issue salience is shaped not only by editorial decisions but also by engagement signals and recommender logics. Personalization can fragment shared agendas and create partially overlapping publics, while advertising systems allow political reach to be purchased. These dynamics can widen inequalities of voice and encourage strategic "optimization" by parties, candidates, and media organizations [7, c. 45–68; 18, c. 34–61].

Agenda and Frame Competition in Hybrid Environments

In hybrid media systems, political meaning is constructed through rapid circulation of fragments–clips, memes, screenshots, and short video. Frames are designed for replication and travel across platforms with different attention structures. Legacy media still provide validation, but platforms shape discoverability and interpretation. As a result, agendas and frames are co-produced by newsrooms, algorithms, and networked publics [4, c. 22–49; 6, c. 51–58].

Networked Mobilization and Connective Action

Digital platforms lower coordination costs and enable rapid mobilization, often via connective action–collective action organized through personalized, shareable content rather than stable membership structures [2, c. 1–36]. However, visibility does not guarantee institutional influence. Movements may face deficits in organizational capacity and are vulnerable to policy changes, harassment, and attention cycles [17, c. 64–98].

Manipulation, Disinformation, and Synthetic Media

New technologies expand manipulation capacities through automation, microtargeting, and disinformation strategies that aim to reshape information environments by producing confusion and distrust. While exposure does not automatically equal persuasion, high-volume circulation can overwhelm cor-

Table 1

Core mechanisms linking platforms to political outcomes

Mechanism	Platform function	Typical political effects	Key sources
Algorithmic visibility	Ranking, recommendations, metrics	Issue salience; selective exposure; unequal reach	[11, c. 176–187; 7, c. 45–68]
Hybrid agenda & framing	Cross-platform circulation and remix	Frame competition; narrative dominance	[6, c. 51–58; 4, c. 22–49]
Networked mobilization	Sharing, groups, hashtags, messaging	Rapid coordination; connective action	[2, c. 1–36; 17, c. 64–98]
Manipulation & disinformation	Virality, automation, targeting	Erosion of trust; legitimacy shocks	[Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; Lazer et al., 2018]
Datafied governance	Moderation, ads, rule enforcement	Distributed regulation; accountability gaps	[1, c. 211–236; 9, c. 1094–1096]

rection mechanisms and erode trust in institutions [1, c. 211–236; 9, c. 1094–1096]. Computational propaganda research documents coordinated campaigns that exploit platform affordances to amplify narratives and harass opponents [10, c. 1–32].

Generative AI intensifies these risks by lowering the cost of producing persuasive, personalized content and synthetic audio-visual materials. Even debunked fabrications can generate a "liar's dividend," where genuine evidence is dismissed as fake. This shifts policy debates toward provenance, labeling, and credible signaling, but also raises censorship concerns.

Datafied Governance and Rule-Making

Platforms influence politics not only through communication but through governance: rule-making, enforcement, and the management of identity and access. Code functions as regulation insofar as it structures participation and constrains behavior [10, c. 1–32]. Moderation systems, advertising infrastructures, and automated enforcement raise risks of opacity, bias, and accountability gaps, especially when decisions are delegated to algorithmic systems [14, c. 1–44; 12, c. 1–38; 13, c. 1–29].

Platform Governance and Democratic Accountability

Platforms operate as quasi-institutional spaces for political participation, yet decision structures remain largely corporate and transnational. This produces governance problems that exceed the classic speech-versus-moderation debate. Three tensions recur. First, transparency versus opacity: rules may be public, while enforcement logic and moderation errors are difficult to audit. Second, efficiency versus accountability: automation scales enforcement but often weakens due process. Third, participation versus control: infrastructures that expand participation can also facilitate surveillance and behavioral prediction [19, c. 92–121].

Policy debates cluster around three models: self-regulation (fast but power-concentrating), co-regulation (public obligations with platform implementation), and stronger public oversight (audits, transparency requirements, and appeal mechanisms). Comparative research is needed to evaluate how these models perform across political regimes and media systems, and how state–platform bargaining shapes rights and legitimacy.

Conclusion and Research Agenda. The analysis shows that public opinion in platform-based societies is increasingly produced through infrastructures that rank, filter, and predict political information. Political influence is exercised less through speeches or media coverage alone and more through the organization of visibility, engagement, and behavioral data within platform ecosystems. This shifts power toward actors who control data, algorithms, and interfaces [7, c. 45–68; 18, c. 34–61].

For dissertation-ready research, priorities include: (a) measuring algorithmic visibility and its distributive consequences; (b) mapping cross-platform agenda flows and frame competition; (c) distinguishing online visibility from organizational capacity and institutional influence; (d) evaluating synthetic media and AI-mediated persuasion; and (e) comparing governance models across regimes. Normatively, democratic politics increasingly depends on infrastructures governed by private actors and algorithmic systems, making accountability and oversight central topics for contemporary political science [10, c. 1–32; 14, c. 1–44].

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Вплив медіа та нових технологій на політику: влада платформи, політична комунікація та управління

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У цій статті розглядається, як цифрові платформи та нові медіа змінюють сучасну політику через владу платформи, трансформації в політичній комунікації та розвиток форм управління платформами. Перехід від традиційних мас-медіа до алгоритмічно керованих цифрових середовищ фундаментально змінив те, як формуються публічні порядки денні, розподіляється політична видимість та відбувається колективна мобілізація. У ній використовується огляд на основі механізмів та поєднуються класичні дослідження встановлення та формулювання порядку денного з дослідженнями платформ, визначаючи показники для емпіричного тестування, таким чином. Системи рекомендацій, показники залученості та практики модерації все частіше визначають, які політичні повідомлення отримують помітне значення, а які актори отримують доступ до громадської уваги. Аналіз зосереджений на кількох основних механізмах цього впливу, включаючи алгоритмічну видимість, гібридний порядок денний та процеси фреймінгу, мережеву мобілізацію, дезінформацію та синтетичні медіа, а також форми регулювання, що базуються на даних. Разом ці динаміки демонструють, що платформи функціонують не просто як канали комунікації, а як інфраструктури влади, що реорганізовують доступ, контроль та політичний вплив у цифрових суспільствах та через інституційні кордони. Політичне середовище, що базується на платформах, має подвійний характер: хоча воно розширює можливості для участі, прискорює колективні дії та знижує бар'єри для входу в публічну сферу, воно також посилює ризики маніпуляцій, поляризації, зниження довіри та послаблення демократичної підзвітності. Тому у статті наголошується на необхідності прозорості, нагляду та управління цифровими платформами, орієнтованого на суспільні інтереси, як умови для підтримки збалансованої, плюралістичної та легітимної політичної комунікації в цифрову епоху. Обґрунтовується теза про те, що громадська думка в сучасних суспільствах все більше формується не через відкриті публічні дебати, а через технологічно опосередковані процеси відбору, персоналізації та поширення інформації.

Ключові слова: *політична комунікація; влада платформи; гібридні медіасистеми; алгоритми; дезінформація; управління платформами.*