The Impact of New Social Media Technologies on the Populist Phenomenon

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ABSTRACT

This research studies how social media has transformed the populist politics. Qualitative research study will be done by means of examining the case of populist politicians use of social media in Turkey in 14 May 2023. At the first sectition of research, the difference between main stream media and social media are clarified. At the second part of the resaerch, the relavence of social media in populist communication is studied. In this section the research attempts to answer why populist politicians prefer social media platforms? The third part of the study, will investigate how new social communicative tools like twitter and instagram contextualisation of new insights in to an old phenomenon of populism? In the Fourth section of the reseach, the case of Turkey's election will be investigated to see how use of social Media has affected populism in turkey? In brief, this research is a case study that looks how social media affected populist politicians in Turkey.

Keywords: Contextualisation of New Insights, Mainstream Media, Populism, Social Media.

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I. INTRODUCTION

During most of the twentieth century, mainstream media gained significant power in various public and private arenas. The mass media industry encompasses eight major mediums: books, the internet, magazines, movies, newspapers, radio, recordings, and television. Moreover, mass media gained legitimacy and entered people's lives through various mediums and mechanisms. In other words, the relationship between mass media and power is intertwined. Furthermore, power relationships control the content of mass media, and sometimes mass media serves as a means for propaganda for different political regimes.

In totalitarian political systems, mass media can be considered a channel that transmits the policies and plans of political decision-makers. For example, in the case of the USSR, TV and newspapers were mere transmitters of the main political ideas. In totalitarian systems and regimes like North Korea, no space is left for the activity of the private sector and individuals who have no power in the political arena of dominant power systems. Also, in the case of Third World countries, many mechanisms such as censorship are imposed to engineer society and the minds of people (van Dijck & Poell, 2013).

In other words, mass media, which is a one-sided channel, transfers information and ideas in one direction. This monologue communication helps in engineering societies with identical types of individuals, and those who think and behave differently are ignored or deleted. Most of the time, they have no voice and are not represented in the society. This can result in societies in which there are like raw materials that can accept every form, as they don't have their own ideas and critical minds. The lack of critical thinking results in a simple-minded mass that changes direction with every wind. For example, when news is broadcasted in the media, it transfers news in one direction to the masses of people, shaping and engineering the minds of people when people are negligent and unaware. Some mass media channels, such as BBC and VOA, while broadcasting, declare that the ideas relevant to their institution and their transfer are rarely in the form of dialogue in which both producers and receivers can declare their ideas. In these cases, the masses of people are receivers who haven't improved their critical thinking skills or understanding of media.

However, social media has a different identity and function. Social media connects users, facilitating community building, collaboration, and participation (Bruns, 2015). Social media enables a non-hierarchical and freely accessible debate among citizens (Loader & Mercea, 2011; Shirky, 2011).

Moreover, it includes an inextricably dense web of highly diverse online and offline communicative practices. The realm of social media is different from the realm of mainstream media. Social media provides a platform for everyone, and this platform provides conditions for interaction at different levels. Social media has broken the monopoly that was dominant in mainstream media and facilitated communication of people at different levels.

In other words, whereas mainstream media adheres to professional norms and news values, social media serves as a direct linkage to the people and allows populists to circumvent journalistic gatekeepers.

II. Relevance of Social Media in Populist Communication

The widespread use of social media has transformed the way people communicate and interact with one another in their daily lives. The rise of platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok has made it easier for people to connect with others, share information and ideas, and build networks. These platforms have also affected the way institutions and professionals operate, as they now have to take into account the impact of social media on their work.

However, social media is not a neutral platform for everyone. The rules and norms of social interaction on social media platforms have changed, and as a result, the ways in which people engage with one another have also changed. For example, social media has given rise to a culture of instant gratification, where people expect immediate responses and feedback from others. It has also given rise to a culture of self-promotion, where people curate their online personas to present themselves in the best possible light.

In addition, social media platforms have their own unique logic and dynamics, which have significant implications for the ways in which people use them. These include the norms, strategies, mechanisms, and economies that underpin social media interactions. For example, social media platforms rely heavily on algorithms to curate content and determine what users see in their feeds. This means that users are often presented with content that has been optimized for engagement, rather than content that is informative or accurate.

Overall, social media has had a profound impact on the mechanics of everyday life, from the way people communicate with one another to the way institutions and professionals operate. Understanding the underlying logic and dynamics of social media is therefore crucial for anyone seeking to navigate this complex and ever-changing landscape.

Bilateral and multilateral interactions and communications occur on social media platforms, which populists use extensively as an ideal opportunity structure for populist communication (Engesser *et al.*, 2017a; Krämer, 2017). For example, politicians express populist ideas on Facebook and Twitter, which directly reach their supporters without any filtering or editing (Ernst *et al.*, 2017; Groshek & Koc-Michalska, 2017).

Social media platforms do not have a godfather or supervisor who dominates the communication procedure, providing an easy way for populists to express themselves. This social media platform provides an opportunity for populists to talk on behalf of "real people," with no obstacles hindering them from expressing their intentions. Ultimately, populists, who represent "the pure people" (general will) of the people, find a microphone to express their will (Mudde, 2004, p. 543). Social media are of utmost relevance when it comes to studying populist communication.

In other words, social media provides an ideal platform for the populist appeal to ordinary people against a liberal establishment by those who feel victimized. Despite being engineered and owned by capitalist corporations based in Silicon Valley, social media provides a social imaginary for "the people's voice" (opinion-building) as well as a superb venue for "the people's rally" (movement-building). Pariser (2011), declares that social media's "filter bubble" effect strengthens people's sense of belonging and commitment to a populist cause.

Social media are not insulated from the rest of the "hybrid media system" (Chadwick, 2017); on the contrary, social and mainstream media feed off one another in recursive loops of "viral reality" (Postill, 2014). For instance, Podemos would not have reached a wide constituency without a hybrid media (or transmedia) strategy; in turn, our hybrid media systems are embedded in even larger communication systems that include transport networks as well as public spaces like mosques, churches, squares, and slums where face-to-face populist communication often thrives.

III. Contextualisation of New Insights into an Old Phenomenon of Populism's Emergence of New Social Communicative Tools (i.e. Twitter and Instagram)

The phenomenon of populism is not new. It has been present in various forms throughout history, from the French Revolution to the rise of fascism in the 20th century. However, the emergence of new social communicative tools like Twitter and Instagram has provided populists with new platforms to disseminate their ideas and connect with supporters. One of the key features of these new social communicative tools is their ability to bypass traditional filters and gatekeepers, such as journalists and mainstream media outlets. This has allowed populists to communicate directly with their supporters and amplify their messages without the need for intermediaries. In addition, social media platforms allow for the rapid spread of information and ideas, making it easier for populists to gain traction and mobilize support.

Moreover, social media platforms have changed the way in which people consume information and engage with politics. Traditional forms of political communication, such as rallies and speeches, are now supplemented by social media posts, tweets, and Instagram stories. Populist politicians are able to communicate with their supporters in real-time, responding to events and issues as they unfold.

However, the emergence of new social communicative tools also raises important questions about the quality and accuracy of information being disseminated. Social media platforms are often criticized for their role in spreading fake news, misinformation, and conspiracy theories. Populist politicians may use social media to promote simplistic or divisive messages, which can lead to the polarization of public opinion and the erosion of democratic values.

In conclusion, the contextualization of new insights into an old phenomenon of populism highlights the ways in which the emergence of new social communicative tools has transformed the political landscape. While these tools have provided populists with new platforms to disseminate their ideas and connect with supporters, they also raise important questions about the quality and accuracy of information being disseminated and the impact on democratic values.

Scholars like Kornhauser (1959), Aalberg and de Vreese (2016) have linked the expansion of populism with the development of communicative Technologies.These scholars discuss that social media are well-suited to meet the communicative preferences of populist actors and that they provide them with a convenient instrument to spread their messages. Populists may turn toward social media in order to circumvent the media institutions and journalistic gatekeepers. In this way, populist messages do not have to follow the news values and are frequently more personal and sensationalistic in nature.

Furthermore, in today's world where there is direct access to mass. Media and new communicative tools have facilitated these procedures as easily as possible. Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram are new tools that facilitate communication between mass and representatives. Social media, such as Facebook or Twitter, may include new modes of social discursive participation. Also, the availability of misinformation, disinformation, and mal-information which distribute without any obstacle can be considered as another reason why populists prefer these social media platforms in which there are no chance for examining the facts and truth. Moreover, sometimes it is possible to use social media as sensors of the real world that can be used to measure the pulse of societies. However, the massive and unfiltered feed of messages posted in social media is a phenomenon that nowadays raises social alarms and messages.

By means of this misinformation, mal-information, and disinformation, social media can manipulate and mobilize mass so easily at different platforms by different actors. Everybody who has access to internet can become famous at least 1 minute. Populist politicians by controversial lectures affcet mass in order to win votes. In other words, It can be claimed that populism is not only an ideology of insurgent politicians, but also a worldview of the voters who support them.

Populist actors are well-suited to use social media to spread their messages and ideas, circumventing traditional Populist media institutions and journalistic gatekeepers.

However, it is important to note that populists do not operate in a vacuum. They share hybridly mediated spaces with other populists and non-populists, and social media is not insulated from the rest of the media system. In fact, social and mainstream media often feed off each other in recursive loops of 'viral reality', as noted by Postill (2014).

IV. Social Media in Turkey's Populism

Social media has become a powerful communication tool for politicians to express their ideas to targeted audiences. According to KhosraviNik (2018), social media, particularly Twitter, has enabled political communicators to bypass journalistic filters and easily connect with the public through attacks on their opposition. This has created an "elective affinity" between populism and social media, as noted by Gerbaudo (2018, p. 745).

In the case of the 14 May 2023 election in Turkey, it is evident that all politicians are using social media, but populist politicians are utilizing this platform more. This is because social media provides direct communication with the masses and allows populist politicians to spread their message more easily.

Furthermore, the emergence of new technologies such as Twitter and Instagram has changed the dimensions and characteristics of populism. In the past, populists would have relied on distributive policies, such as distributing food and supplies to gain votes. While these strategies still exist, social media has allowed for the dissemination of misinformation and disinformation, which has enabled populists to deceive people more easily.

During the Turkey election, many populists attempted to deceive people with the spread of misinformation and a mixture of hate towards others, dividing society into "us" and "them." For example, Prof. Dr. Ali Shahirlioğlu from the Zafer Party claimed that the economic crisis in Turkey would not end until asylum seekers leave the country. This type of misinformation and hate speech is harmful and can

lead to the further marginalization of vulnerable groups. It is important to note that economic crises are complex and multifaceted issues that cannot be explained by a single factor, such as immigrants or refugees. Many factors and elements can contribute to the formation of a economic crisis, and it is essential to analyze these issues from multiple perspectives to gain a comprehensive understanding of the situation.

Moreover, the open nature of social media platforms makes it easier for populists to spread their message, and there are few mechanisms in place to evaluate the validity of claims made on these platforms. It is essential to be cautious when consuming information on social media and to fact-check claims before accepting them as truth.

In conclusion, while social media has provided politicians with a powerful tool to communicate with their audiences, it has also created new challenges, particularly in the spread of misinformation and hate speech. It is crucial for individuals to critically analyze information on social media and for policymakers to consider implementing measures to address the dissemination of harmful content.

Overall, the emergence of social media has transformed populism, providing a platform for individuals and groups to spread their messages and ideas. However, social media is not a panacea for populism, and it is important to consider the socio-psychological underpinnings of populism.

V. Conclusion

The emergence of new social communicative tools such as Twitter and Instagram has undoubtedly changed the way that political communication operates. Populists have been empowered to bypass traditional filters and communicate their messages directly to their supporters, and this has been particularly noticeable in Turkey's 14 May 2023 election. However, in addition to changes in communicative platform and speed of communication, there have also been significant socio-psychological changes that have impacted populist communicative strategies and mechanisms.

One such change is the speed at which hate speech is disseminated through social media. With the click of a button, populist politicians can broadcast their messages to large audiences, and these messages often contain divisive language and derogatory remarks about minority groups. This has resulted in a significant increase in hate speech and has created a more polarized and divided society.

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