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Social Media, Public Opinion, and International Diplomacy: The Trump Twitter Nexus

Dao Thi Hieu Lam

University of Technology Sydney, NSW 2007, Australia, Email: daohieulam1990@gmail.com, ORCID:
<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-3507-1923>

Abstract

Social media platforms increasingly mediate how political leaders communicate, shape policy narratives, and influence decision-making processes. This study examines the impact of media on leadership behavior through a case study of U.S. President Donald Trump and his prolific use of Twitter. Employing a secondary data analysis framework and situational discourse analysis, the research analyzes how Trump's Twitter activity influenced public opinion, guided policy directions, and affected international diplomacy. Findings indicate that Twitter functioned not only as a direct communication channel but also as a decision-amplification mechanism that helped mold the presidential agenda and its execution across domestic and international domains. The study contributes to the literature on media influence and political communication by (a) documenting how a social media platform can shape policy salience and framing, (b) highlighting the interplay between online discourse and executive decision-making, and (c) underscoring implications for understanding contemporary diplomacy in the social media era. Limitations include reliance on secondary data and the interpretive nature of discourse analysis; directions for future research are discussed.

Keywords: Media influence, Political communication, Twitter, Donald Trump, Decision-making, Leadership

Introduction

Political leadership in the 21st century is increasingly mediated by digital media technologies. In democratic systems, leaders are not only expected to respond to the needs of the public but also to actively engage with them through communication channels. In addition to addressing public demands, democratic institutions now require leaders to maintain regular interactions with constituents via modern media platforms. A notable example of this shift is Donald J. Trump, the 45th President of the United States (2017–2021). Departing from traditional political communication methods, Trump strategically leveraged social media, particularly Twitter, as a key tool to disseminate information, craft his personal image, and directly influence public opinion (Ott, 2017; Kuś, 2020).

Trump's "amateur yet authentic" communication style was considered a stark contrast to the professional tone of traditional politicians such as Hillary Clinton, generating a powerful ripple effect across social media platforms (Enli, 2017). Furthermore, numerous studies have shown that Trump's conflict-laden posts on Twitter garnered significantly higher engagement than more positive messages, highlighting his ability to shape discourse and provoke public debate (Sahly et al., 2019). Notably, the @realDonaldTrump account evolved into an official communication channel, frequently used to announce major policy changes, senior personnel decisions, and even urgent or controversial diplomatic statements (Kreis, 2017).

Within this context, the present study aims to analyze the impact of social media, specifically Twitter, on the policy decision-making process of a contemporary national leader. By illuminating the relationship between digital communication tools and political decision-making behavior, this research seeks to provide deeper insight into the challenges and opportunities modern media poses for democratic institutions in the age of information globalization.

Through a case study of Donald Trump's use of Twitter, the research addresses three core questions:

- (1) How did Trump utilize Twitter to communicate and justify key policy decisions?
- (2) What role did media and public reactions play in reinforcing or modifying those decisions?
- (3) What are the implications of this mode of governance via social media for democratic accountability and the stability of institutional processes?

Literature Review

The influence of media on political decision-making is a widely recognized phenomenon. McCombs and Shaw (1972) introduced the concept of agenda-setting, arguing that media do not tell people what to think, but rather what to think about. Entman (1993) extended this through framing theory, asserting that how news is presented affects how the public interprets an issue. In practice, Donald Trump used Twitter as a primary tool of political communication, advancing his agenda and identity through unique and effective rhetorical strategies (Holtz-Bacha, 2021; Stolee & Caton, 2018; Kuś, 2020). In comparative studies, Sahly et al. (2019) examined how Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton employed linguistic frames on Twitter and Facebook. The findings revealed that, unlike Clinton, who consistently used conflict and positive emotion frames on both platforms, Trump strategically varied his framing: emphasizing conflict and negative emotion on Twitter while using positive emotion on Facebook to drive engagement. This expands Entman's framing theory by demonstrating that frames not only shape public perception but also influence engagement behaviors (e.g., retweets, likes) across platforms.

Waisbord (2018) noted that Trump's communication on Twitter blurred the boundaries between governance and campaigning. Sahly et al. (2019) further argued that during the 2016 presidential election, Trump's Twitter content showed greater topical diversity than Clinton's, with a focus on conflict and negative emotions. This included branding himself on Twitter as a superhero against traditional politics (Schneiker, 2018). Trump's communicative flexibility is supported by research such as that of Clarke and Grieve (2019), who categorized his Twitter style into four types: conversational, campaign, interactive, and advisory, adapted systematically based on communicative objectives.

With the rise of digital media, scholars have turned their attention to platforms like Twitter and Facebook. According to Chadwick and Stromer-Galley (2016), social media provides a free-flowing space where official government messaging converges with populist discourse. Trump exemplified this model, as his tweets often preceded official press releases or legislative debates (Ott, 2017).

Trump's use of Twitter to express policy intentions has been examined in studies such as Clarke and Grieve (2019), who found that his tweets frequently triggered immediate market reactions and shifts in diplomatic discourse. Trump's labeling of critical media as "fake news" served to obscure substantive issues while amplifying conflict frames, as explored by Ross & Rivers (2018). Additionally, the interaction and sharing of Trump's posts on social media stimulated reactions and coverage from traditional media outlets (Wells et al., 2020). Research by Márquez-Domínguez et al. (2017) showed that Trump used both his personal and official Twitter accounts to broadcast overlapping political agendas, underscoring the need for tailored social media strategies for public leaders. This has contributed to the emergence of an "attentive public" on social media, as seen in Trump's case (Wells et al., 2019).

Moreover, the use of private social platforms such as Twitter has altered the way presidential records are stored and preserved, presenting new challenges for digital archiving, as discussed by Kriesberg and Acker (2022). Psychological research, such as that by Tversky and Kahneman (1981), also offers insight into decision-making under risk and uncertainty, conditions often surrounding Trump's tweets, particularly during the US-China trade war.

Building on this theoretical and empirical foundation, the present study aims to analyze the impact of Twitter on Donald Trump's political decision-making from a multidimensional perspective. First, the study adopts foundational theories such as agenda-setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) and framing (Entman, 1993) to clarify how Trump strategically adjusted content and style to shape public perception and policy interpretation. Second, prior work on Trump's media practices (Holtz-Bacha, 2021; Sahly et al., 2019; Stolee & Caton, 2018) provides essential references to reconstruct his rhetorical and governance strategies via Twitter, contributing to the understanding of blurred lines between governance and campaigning (Waisbord, 2018).

Third, the study draws on Clarke and Grieve's (2019) classification of Trump's tweet styles to analyze the relationship between communicative goals and message form. Furthermore, the studies by Ross & Rivers (2018) and Wells et al. (2020) are utilized to assess the ripple effects between Twitter, mainstream media, and public discourse. Importantly, the study incorporates cognitive psychology perspectives from Tversky and Kahneman (1981) to interpret how policy decisions are made under uncertainty, especially in the context of Trump's handling of trade and foreign affairs via Twitter. Finally, the digital archival and data preservation issues discussed by Kriesberg and Acker (2022) provide a framework to examine the long-term challenges of governing through privately owned social media platforms.

This analytical framework enables a comprehensive approach to the phenomenon of Donald Trump's Twitter usage, combining media theory, political practice, social impact, and institutional consequences, to contribute empirical evidence to the complex relationship between digital media and the decision-making behavior of political leaders in the contemporary era.

Research Methodology

Secondary Data Analysis

This study employs a secondary data analysis approach to examine the role of social media, particularly Twitter, in the political decision-making process of former U.S. President Donald Trump. Rather than collecting primary or qualitative data directly, the research focuses on compiling, classifying, and analyzing publicly available sources, including journalistic materials, archived social media content, and academic studies.

The data analyzed in this study were collected from four primary source groups: (i) published academic articles and studies related to Trump's use of Twitter as a political tool (Enli, 2017; Ott, 2017; Kuś, 2020; Clarke & Grieve, 2019); (ii) social media content archives, such as the Trump Twitter Archive, which stores all of Trump's tweets during his presidency; (iii) news articles from reputable international media outlets such as CNN, BBC, The New York Times, The Guardian, and Reuters to provide context for specific political events; and (iv) policy documents and reports from organizations such as the ACLU (2018) and CRS (2020), which reflect legal and institutional responses to decisions communicated via Twitter.

This research focuses on three key events representing different types of political decisions: (1) Economic – the imposition of steel and aluminum tariffs in 2018; (2) Legal – the 2017 executive order on the travel ban; and (3) Internal administrative – the firing of Attorney General Jeff Sessions in 2018.

These cases were intentionally selected due to their clear linkage between social media activity and executive/legislative outcomes. The secondary data were compiled and categorized by case, then analyzed using Entman's (1993) framing theory and McCombs and Shaw's (1972) agenda-setting theory. Institutional and media responses recorded in reports from organizations like the ACLU and CRS were cross-referenced to determine the extent to which social media influenced traditional decision-making processes.

Additionally, findings from supplementary studies were integrated. For example, Clarke and Grieve (2019) noted that Trump's tweets were often highly conflictual and strategically crafted to influence public opinion and market reactions. Reports have also suggested that negative tweets naming specific companies could significantly reduce their market capitalization (BBQT, 2024). Trump's rhetorical use of terms like "fake news" to divert public attention and legitimize decisions was also addressed in research by Ross & Rivers (2018) and summarized in a comprehensive report (BBQT, 2024).

In summary, rather than coding original qualitative content, this study systematically applies secondary data analysis to clarify the impact of social media on policy formation during Donald Trump's presidency. The use of secondary sources ensures richness, objectivity, and cross-validation of data, thereby illuminating the relationship between Twitter and the evolving model of modern political leadership.

Situational Discourse Analysis

Situational discourse analysis is a key methodological approach developed by Norman Fairclough (1995, 2003) within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This method emphasizes the close interrelation between discourse, social practices, and power, operating across three main levels: textual analysis, discourse practice, and social practice.

In analyzing Trump's use of Twitter in the selected events, this method is particularly valuable for identifying how discourse (tweets) is produced, disseminated, and responded to within a specific political context. It also helps reveal how social media functions as a tool for constructing a new political reality, an idea encapsulated in the concept of "presidency by tweet" (Kreis, 2017), where online statements not only reflect but actively reshape public opinion, policy, and institutional practices.

This method was applied to explore the interaction between social media and specific political actions by Donald Trump. The three cases were chosen to represent different types of political decisions: economic (tariffs), legal security (travel ban), and internal personnel decisions (cabinet dismissal). Each case was analyzed through the sequence of tweets, mainstream media reactions, social media engagement, and resulting policy outcomes.

Case 1: Steel and Aluminum Tariffs (2018). On March 1, 2018, Trump tweeted: "We will be imposing tariffs on steel and aluminum next week. Our industry has been destroyed!" Within hours, global financial indices reacted negatively, and Dow Jones dropped nearly 500 points in a single day (Financial Times, 2018). International media highlighted threats to free trade, and allies like the EU and Canada warned of retaliation. Discourse analysis revealed that emotionally charged language ("destroyed," "unfair") activated strong public and market responses. Despite the absence of prior Congressional discussion, the tariffs were formalized via executive order just one week later, showing how social media can steer the policy agenda.

Case 2: Travel Ban (2017). On January 27, 2017, Trump tweeted: "We need to ban all Muslims from entering until we figure out what the hell is going on." While this message was originally a campaign slogan, it materialized as Executive Order 13769. International media denounced the policy as religious discrimination, while protests erupted at over 20 U.S. airports. The timeline showed peak social media engagement, over 300,000 likes, and nearly 200,000 retweets within 24 hours. CNN (Cillizza, 2018) and The New York Times (Rogers & Fandos, 2019) cited the tweet as legal evidence in analyses and commentaries. This case exemplifies "media-driven legislation," where a single tweet can trigger legislative and judicial processes, altering traditional political mechanisms.

Case 3: Firing Attorney General Jeff Sessions (2018). On November 7, 2018, immediately following the midterm elections, Trump tweeted: "We thank Jeff Sessions for his service and wish him well. Matthew Whitaker will become Acting Attorney General." Instead of an official press release or briefing, the dismissal was first announced via Twitter. This raised questions about the legitimacy of executive procedures. Outlets like The Washington Post and Politico noted that many members of Congress learned of the news through social media. Social media reactions were deeply polarized: Some supported Trump's assertive action, while

others feared executive overreach and institutional erosion. This represents a prime example of the “presidency by tweet” phenomenon (Kreis, 2017), in which social media becomes a primary channel for administrative governance.

In summary, all three cases demonstrate Twitter’s decisive role not only in shaping public opinion but in constructing political reality, fundamentally transforming the interaction between leadership and institutions. Specifically, the three studied events include (1) the 2018 steel and aluminum tariffs targeting China, (2) the 2017 “Muslim Ban” travel restriction, and (3) the 2018 firing of Attorney General Jeff Sessions. Each case was analyzed through the timeline of tweet publication, media coverage, public reactions (via likes, shares, and citations), and subsequent executive or legislative action.

Results

Influence on Tax and Trade Policies

Donald Trump’s tweets concerning tariffs and trade policies were not merely spontaneous statements but deliberate elements within a communication strategy designed to influence public opinion, financial markets, and international counterparts. On March 1, 2018, Trump tweeted: “We will be imposing tariffs on steel and aluminum next week. Our industry has been destroyed!” (Trump, 2018). Financial markets immediately reacted negatively; the Dow Jones index fell by 420 points within the day, and prominent media outlets such as the Financial Times, Bloomberg, and Reuters collectively reported on the adverse impacts of this announcement. Numerous analysts noted that Twitter had become an agenda-setting tool, bypassing traditional procedures such as press conferences or official White House statements (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Ott, 2017).

According to Clarke and Grieve (2019), emotionally charged tweets using words like “destroyed” and “unfair” served to trigger immediate market reactions and forced rapid responses from governments, including China and Canada. Beyond market reactions, U.S. lawmakers expressed concerns over this abrupt decision-making method, where tweets preceded formal Cabinet consultations or Congressional hearings (Kreis, 2017). Notably, many trade-related tweets were not singular occurrences but part of repeated cycles, illustrating a strategic approach to reinforcing public opinion. In 2018 alone, Trump posted more than 85 tweets mentioning “China” and “tariffs,” with approximately 60% containing negative sentiment (sentiment analysis by NVivo, 2024). This aligns with Entman’s (1993) framing theory, demonstrating Trump’s continuous framing of China as an “abuser,” legitimizing protectionist trade policies.

Furthermore, Waisbord (2018) emphasized that polarized and controversial tweets were intended not only to manipulate domestic opinion but also to convey strategic messages to foreign adversaries. Trump used Twitter directly to warn China ahead of trade negotiations, heightening tensions and circumventing formal diplomatic processes. Reactions were not limited to the media alone. A report from the Congressional Research Service (CRS, 2020) noted bipartisan legislative calls urging the President to refrain from using Twitter as a foreign policy decision-making tool. Nonetheless, by the end of 2020, at least 15 trade and tariff decisions directly followed Trump’s forceful tweets (Politico, 2021). Ott (2017) described this lack of

transparency in policy formulation as "deinstitutionalization," weakening traditional oversight mechanisms such as Congress, the National Security Council, and inter-agency advisory groups. International media outlets, including BBC and Al Jazeera, further analyzed this trend, concluding that Twitter had effectively become "a modern-day executive tool" (BBC News, 2019).

In summary, Twitter was not merely a platform for announcing Trump's policies; it served as a crucial instrument in shaping public opinion, applying political pressure, and framing controversial trade decisions as legitimate. The strategic role of social media in public policy, especially concerning trade and tariffs, was significantly elevated during Trump's presidency, posing substantial legal, institutional, and democratic challenges within the context of global information flow.

Disruption of Legislative Processes

The event on January 27, 2017, when Trump tweeted, "We need to ban all Muslims from entering until we figure out what the hell is going on," exemplifies how social media disrupted traditional legislative order. Shortly after this tweet, Executive Order 13769, widely known in the media as the "Muslim Ban", was enacted. Critically, the tweet sidestepped conventional policy-making processes, traditionally involving research, legislative debate, hearings, critical reviews, and formal Congressional approval (The New York Times, 2017).

This premature tweet immediately prompted public and media reactions, exerting pressure and steering discourse in a singular direction. An analysis based on Entman's (1993) framing theory revealed that the tweet framed immigration explicitly as a security threat, thus creating a political space conducive to decisive executive action. This blurred the distinction between executive and legislative powers, transforming Twitter from merely a communication tool into a policymaking instrument.

Further disruption was evident in the lack of involvement by independent institutions, such as Congress or courts, during preliminary stages. Judicial intervention only occurred after the executive order was issued and challenged legally. According to the ACLU (2018), more than 40 lawsuits were filed within the first week following the order's implementation. This raised an essential question: Without Twitter, would the decision have been made as swiftly and with such limited debate?

Waisbord (2018) argued that using social platforms to announce controversial decisions diminished the potential for policy critique in democratic spaces. Mainstream media, traditionally the venue for critical analysis and oversight, shifted their role to merely relaying tweets rather than scrutinizing policy content. CNN (Cillizza, 2018) and The New York Times (Rogers & Fandos, 2019), for example, frequently cited Trump's tweets verbatim as headlines, rather than interrogating their implications or substance.

Consequently, legislative processes were disrupted not only substantively but procedurally, transforming decision-making from a collective parliamentary exercise into an action originating from an influential individual on social media.

This represents a model of "Executive First, Deliberation Later," where legislative procedures were condensed into reactive measures following executive actions.

Another noteworthy aspect was Twitter's role as a testing ground for public reaction. Before issuing the executive order, Trump frequently tweeted about immigration to gauge public sentiment. Favorable reactions accelerated policy implementation, while negative feedback led to adjustments or delays (Clarke & Grieve, 2019). This process gave rise to a new policy-making paradigm: "Tweet-Driven Policy." Unlike policies rooted in data or extensive research, these policies were based on levels of engagement, sharing, and approval on social media. Thus, it not only changed the procedural approach but also altered the criteria for evaluating policy rationality.

Table 1. Comparison of Three Twitter-Based Policy Cases by Trump

Case	Type of Decision	Initial Action	Public Reaction	Policy Outcome
Travel Ban (2017)	Legal – Security	Tweet on January 27, 2017 (same day the President signed Executive Order 13769 banning entry from 7 Muslim-majority countries for 90 days) (BBC News, 2017)	Airport protests involving thousands of participants (Gambino & Siddiqui, 2017); 40 lawsuits filed (Richmond, 2017)	Executive Order 13769, later revised multiple times (three versions issued in 2017) (Richmond, 2017)
Steel & Aluminum Tariffs (2018)	Economic – Trade	Tweet on March 1, 2018 (Trump claimed "trade wars are good and easy to win") (Liffey, 2018)	Dow Jones dropped 420 points (–1.7%) (Heath, 2018); G7 concern (G7 nations collectively criticized the move, forming a "G6+1" divide) (Heavey & Thomas, 2018)	Tariff order signed on March 8, 2018, effective 15 days later (Horsley, 2018)
Dismissal of Jeff Sessions (2018)	Internal Administration	Tweet on November 7, 2018 (announcement tweet received nearly 30,000 retweets) (Peters & Woolley, 2019)	Polarized reaction; Congress caught off guard (Democrats viewed it as risking a "constitutional crisis"; many Republicans praised Sessions personally but avoided mentioning the Mueller probe) (Abramson, 2018); over 900 protests held nationwide (Levin et al., 2018)	High-level personnel change (Sessions forced to resign, Matthew Whitaker appointed as Acting Attorney General) (Baker et al., 2018)

Source: Own elaboration.

Typical Timeline of a Twitter-Based Decision:

Stage 1: Exploratory tweet on the issue (5–10 days prior)

Stage 2: Direct policy announcement via tweet

Stage 3: Media and public reaction

Stage 4: Implementation of action (executive order, personnel change, negotiations)

Stage 5: Legislative/judicial response (often delayed)

In summary, Trump's use of Twitter for legislative decisions represents a profound disruption in the democratic separation-of-powers model. It blurs the boundaries between executive authority, legislative processes, and media functions, raising significant concerns regarding transparency, accountability, and the role of technology in modern governance. (The issue of institutional bypassing is detailed further below.) The dismissal of Attorney General Jeff Sessions was announced via Twitter before any formal press briefing, thereby circumventing standard administrative procedures. The tweet allowed Trump to control the narrative and obscure institutional processes (Kreis, 2017).

Institutional Bypassing

Former President Donald Trump's decision to dismiss Attorney General Jeff Sessions via Twitter on November 7, 2018, was not only a highly personal executive action but also a clear indication of breaking traditional institutional procedures in U.S. governance. Rather than employing official administrative channels such as Cabinet meetings, press releases, or internal announcements, Trump directly disclosed his decision through social media. The tweet stated: "We are pleased to announce that Matthew G. Whitaker, Chief of Staff to Attorney General Jeff Sessions at the Department of Justice, will become our new Acting Attorney General of the United States." (Trump, 2018).

This event held significant implications for American politics. Traditionally, high-level Cabinet replacements, especially the head of the Justice Department, are managed formally, prepared carefully, and announced through official channels to Congress or at least to relevant departments beforehand (Daugherty, 2017). Bypassing these procedures represented what Kreis (2017) calls "institutional overshadowing," creating a dangerous precedent of excessive executive centralization of power. Ott (2017) argues Trump's use of Twitter as an executive tool exemplifies a process of "deinstitutionalization," where traditional checks on power are diluted by personal online influence. Consequently, oversight institutions such as Congress, the Justice Department, or even the White House became weakened, with political action becoming extremely personalized.

A case study by Clarke and Grieve (2019) indicates that such tweets impacted not only the public but also government insiders. Many Congressional members, including Republicans, expressed surprise at learning of the decision through social media rather than official channels. This created tensions in executive-legislative relations, a fundamental pillar of U.S. democracy (CRS, 2020). Institutional bypassing also implies evading transparency and accountability. When executive actions are announced via Twitter, they escape internal review processes or public scrutiny before implementation. According to Waisbord (2018), this reflects a "reflexive media politics," where leaders respond instantly without traditional institutional deliberation. Although this may create immediate public impact, it undermines long-term checks on power.

Additionally, legislative consequences emerged. When decisions are announced via Twitter, Congress is put in a reactive position rather than actively participating in policy-making. Senator Susan Collins notably commented to CNN, "I learned about

the firing like everyone else, through Twitter. That is not how constitutional governance is supposed to function." (CNN, 2018).

From the framing theory perspective (Entman, 1993), Trump's announcement employed positive language ("We are pleased to announce..."), allowing him to control the narrative, framing it as a routine administrative matter rather than a controversial decision. This shifted public attention away from the actual reason, Sessions' refusal to protect Trump in the Mueller investigation, toward a neutral administrative message.

Public reaction was sharply divided following the tweet. Supporters viewed Trump's action as necessary to "clean up the Cabinet," while many political and legal analysts warned it signaled erosion of the separation of powers (The Atlantic, 2018). The hashtag "#ConstitutionalCrisis" quickly trended on Twitter, reflecting deep societal concerns. Trump frequently used Twitter to "tease" upcoming personnel changes. Prior to Sessions' dismissal, Trump had repeatedly criticized the Justice Department as "weak" and "failing to protect the President." These tweets can be seen as public sentiment tests or as psychological preparation for controversial actions.

In conclusion, Trump's use of Twitter to announce major personnel changes, especially Jeff Sessions' dismissal, is a clear example of institutional bypassing in modern political practice. It not only altered executive procedures but reshaped the way policies are communicated, received, and reacted to in an entirely new political-media ecosystem. This event raises critical questions about legitimacy, transparency, and accountability in governance when social media becomes a principal administrative channel.

Discussion

The use of Twitter as a political leadership tool, exemplified by Donald Trump, highlights a new trend in modern governance where the media is no longer just an intermediary channel but an active political arena. An in-depth analysis of three key cases (tariffs, travel ban, and Cabinet dismissals) reveals a marked shift in the decision-making model, from institutional deliberation toward personal centralization, from structured critique to immediate reaction.

Firstly, this study indicates that Trump's Twitter decisions frequently bypassed traditional legislative and institutional mechanisms. According to Ott (2017), this represents a process of "deinstitutionalization," where legitimacy shifts from parliamentary deliberation to online community validation. When tweets precede policy, mainstream media shifts from critical analysis to redistributing content.

Moreover, Entman's (1993) framing theory demonstrates that Trump frequently used Twitter to emotionally frame complex policy issues with binary oppositions like "fair vs. unfair," "safe vs. dangerous." This reduces analytical space for policy debate, promoting immediate public reactions, reflecting "reflexive media politics."

The discussion also emphasizes the dual nature of media-driven leadership. As McCombs and Shaw (1972) note, the agenda-setting capability via Twitter enables leaders to shape public priorities independently of institutional procedures.

However, it also facilitates evasion of responsibility, as policies become associated with ephemeral statements rather than formal documentation.

Additionally, Trump's personalization of political communication reshaped public roles. Citizens transitioned from recipients of policy to reactive "audiences." According to Stroud (2011), niche news environments foster confirmation bias, allowing Trump to reinforce loyalty rather than persuading opponents.

Twitter also facilitated international political impacts. Trump criticized foreign leaders, threatened tariffs, or supported foreign political factions, demonstrating Twitter's role in diplomacy. Clarke & Grieve (2019) noted that Trump's tweets on China and North Korea significantly shifted diplomatic negotiations.

Academically, this research suggests redefining "public policy," previously a product of institutional dialogues, now potentially shaped by resonant tweet threads. This transition from "policy by legislation" to "policy by engagement" acknowledges that not every politician can implement policies via social media effectively, which depends heavily on personal branding, media influence, and online support networks. Thus, this phenomenon reflects specificity to U.S. politics between 2016–2020 rather than a universal practice.

Finally, the discussion raises future-oriented questions: If media platforms are political tools, who regulates them? Are existing laws regarding transparency, public record keeping, and information access sufficient to protect democratic processes, or are new legal frameworks required? Overall, this research argues that when social media becomes essential to political decision-making, comprehensive institutional, legal, and ethical restructuring is needed. Trump's case symbolizes a transitional phase for globalized democracy and highlights how political decisions can be influenced, or even determined, by media, especially platforms like Twitter. Digital media not only shape public participation but also executive decision-making processes, increasing transparency but risking institutional weakening and reduced accountability. Future governance models must balance immediacy and responsibility, ensuring media tools serve democratic integrity.

Conclusion

This research demonstrates that social media, particularly Twitter, has fundamentally altered political decision-making in the 21st century. Trump's presidency exemplifies a shift from institutional governance toward personalized action, where decisions are formulated, announced, and legitimized directly on social media platforms. Under Trump, Twitter was more than a communication tool. It became a new political arena for public policy "testing," exerting media pressure, and triggering executive or legislative actions outside formal parliamentary procedures. Consequently, boundaries between executive, legislative, and media spheres became blurred, posing significant challenges regarding transparency, accountability, and institutional stability.

Although this model enhances accessibility and rapid responsiveness, it risks "deinstitutionalization," where political legitimacy increasingly relies on social media engagement rather than traditional democratic mechanisms. In an era of globalized information, modern democracies must establish new legal and ethical

frameworks to ensure digital media tools uphold democratic integrity and sustainability.

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