ALGORITHMIC NARRATIVE POWER IN GLOBAL POLITICS AND MEDIA (2010-2025)

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Keywords:

Algorithmic Power,
Political Narratives,
Digital Platforms,
Media Law,
Global Politics

Subject area:

Multidisciplinary
Researchs

Research field:

Journalism

ABSTRACT

Between 2010 and 2025, algorithms stepped into the spotlight, reshaping how political stories spread through global media. Journalism and political communication now lean heavily on digital platforms, where algorithms call the shots on what gets seen, shared, or buried. This article looks at how the rise of algorithmic power crosses paths with media, politics, and the law. It's changed the old model of journalistic gatekeeping, shaped how people talk about democracy, influenced foreign policy messaging, and played a hand in forming public opinion.

The paper digs into how big platforms use algorithmic recommendation systems, ranking tools, and automated moderation, not just for user experience, but in high-stakes arenas like elections, global conflicts, and international diplomacy. It also takes a close look at the patchwork of laws trying to keep up: the EU's Digital Services Act and GDPR, U.S. platform liability rules, and stricter information control in authoritarian states. Through qualitative and comparative analysis, the article shows that these algorithmic systems tend to tip the narrative balance toward political power and business interests, while old-school journalistic values often get sidelined.

The findings are a bit of a mixed bag. Sure, algorithms make things quicker and more personalized. But they also drive polarization, chip away at editorial independence, and run up against current legal standards. In the end, the article calls for tougher oversight, more transparency in how algorithms work, and keeping humans, real journalists, in the loop to protect democracy in our digital world.

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QLOBAL SİYASƏT VƏ MEDİADA ALQORİTMİK NARRATİV GÜC (2010–2025)
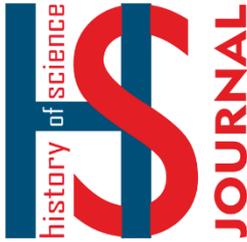
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ANNOTASİYA

2010–2025-ci illər arasında alqoritmlər qlobal mediada siyasi narrativlərin yayılma üsullarını yenidən formalaşdıraraq diqqət mərkəzinə çıxmışdır. Jurnalistika və siyasi kommunikasiya artıq əsasən rəqəmsal platformalara əsaslanır və burada hansı məzmunun görünəcəyini, paylaşılacağını və ya kənarda qalacağını alqoritmlər müəyyən edir. Bu məqalə alqoritmik gücün yüksəlişinin media, siyasət və hüquq sahələri ilə necə kəsişdiyini təhlil edir. Bu proses jurnalist "qapıçı" modelini dəyişdirmiş, demokratiya haqqında ictimai müzakirələrin formasını müəyyənləşdirmiş, xarici siyasət mesajlarına təsir göstərmiş və ictimai rəyin formalaşmasında rol oynamışdır.

Tədqiqat iri platformaların alqoritmik tövsiyə sistemlərindən, reytinqləmə alətlərindən və avtomatlaşdırılmış moderasiya mexanizmlərindən yalnız istifadəçi təcrübəsi üçün deyil, həm də seçkilər, qlobal münaqişələr və beynəlxalq diplomatiya kimi yüksək əhəmiyyətli sahələrdə necə istifadə etdiyini araşdırır. Eyni zamanda, bu sahəni tənzimləməyə çalışan hüquqi çərçivələrin müxtəlifliyinə diqqət yetirilir: Avropa İttifaqının Rəqəmsal Xidmətlər Aktı və GDPR, ABŞ-da platforma məsuliyyəti qaydaları və avtoritar dövlətlərdə daha sərt informasiya nəzarəti. Keyfiyyət və müqayisəli təhlil vasitəsilə məqalə göstərir ki, bu alqoritmik sistemlər narrativ balansı daha çox siyasi hakimiyyət və biznes maraqları istiqamətinə yönəldir, ənənəvi jurnalist dəyərləri isə çox vaxt arxa plana keçir.

Nəticələr mürəkkəb xarakter daşıyır. Alqoritmlər informasiyanın daha sürətli və fərdiləşdirilmiş şəkildə təqdim edilməsini təmin edir. Lakin eyni zamanda qütbləşməni gücləndirir, redaksiya müstəqilliyini zəiflədir və mövcud hüquqi standartlarla ziddiyyət yaradır. Nəticə etibarilə məqalə daha sərt nəzarətin tətbiqini, alqoritmlərin işləmə prinsiplərinin daha şəffaf olmasını və demokratiyanın rəqəmsal mühitdə qorunması üçün insan faktorunun, yəni peşəkar jurnalistlərin prosesdə saxlanılmasını zəruri hesab edir.

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АЛГОРИТМИЧЕСКАЯ НАРРАТИВНАЯ ВЛАСТЬ В ГЛОБАЛЬНОЙ ПОЛИТИКЕ И МЕДИА (2010–2025)

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АННОТАЦИЯ

В период с 2010 по 2025 год алгоритмы вышли на передний план, трансформируя способы распространения политических нарративов в глобальных медиа. Журналистика и политическая коммуникация в настоящее время в значительной степени опираются на цифровые платформы, где именно алгоритмы определяют, какой контент будет видимым, распространяемым или маргинализированным. В статье анализируется, каким образом рост алгоритмической власти пересекается со сферами медиа, политики и права. Этот процесс изменил традиционную модель журналистского «гейткипинга», повлиял на дискуссии о демократии, на формирование внешнеполитических сообщений и на процессы формирования общественного мнения.

В работе исследуется, каким образом крупные платформы используют алгоритмические рекомендательные системы, инструменты ранжирования и автоматизированную модерацию не только для оптимизации пользовательского опыта, но и в высокорисковых сферах, таких как выборы, глобальные конфликты и международная дипломатия. Одновременно рассматривается фрагментарный характер правовых режимов, стремящихся регулировать данную сферу: Закон ЕС о цифровых услугах и GDPR, правила ответственности платформ в США, а также более жёсткий контроль информации в авторитарных государствах. На основе качественного и сравнительного анализа показано, что алгоритмические системы, как правило, смещают нарративный баланс в сторону политической власти и коммерческих интересов, тогда как традиционные журналистские ценности зачастую оказываются на периферии.

Полученные результаты носят неоднозначный характер. С одной стороны, алгоритмы обеспечивают более высокую скорость и персонализацию распространения информации. С другой стороны, они усиливают поляризацию, подрывают редакционную независимость и вступают в противоречие с действующими правовыми стандартами. В заключение подчёркивается необходимость усиления надзора, повышения прозрачности функционирования алгоритмов и сохранения человеческого фактора — участия профессиональных журналистов — для защиты демократии в цифровой среде.

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1.Introduction

Digital media has completely changed the way politics and communication work. Since the early 2010s, algorithms, social media, and content-sharing apps have taken center stage in shaping and spreading political stories, and in how people actually find and talk about them. Back in the day, news editors called the shots. They decided what made it to the public. Now, algorithms do a lot of that work. They decide what pops up, what trends, and what quietly disappears into the background [Carlson, 2018].

Algorithms don't just pass stories along, they shape what stories mean. They highlight some voices and topics, bury others, and create a whole new layer of meaning in the process. That's huge for journalism and even bigger for international politics. Political strategies have shifted, too. Politicians and campaigns now play to the algorithms, aiming for engagement and simple, digestible messages instead of deep dives [Diakopoulos, 2019].

Meanwhile, news organizations depend on digital platforms more than ever to reach people and make money. That dependence has handed a lot of narrative control over to the folks who run those platforms, and their algorithms. Now, it's not just editors or journalists shaping the news you see, it's platform managers and their code deciding what gets attention and what gets lost [Napoli, 2019].

This paper introduces the idea of "algorithmic narrative power." That's the ability to steer political conversations by controlling what gets seen, what feels legitimate, and who gets to have influence, all through algorithms. The main point? Algorithmic narrative power has become a new way to mediate political power and authority, and it's tangled up with law and international relations in ways we're just starting to understand.

2.The Concept of Algorithmic Power in Media and Politics

Let's cut to the chase: when people call something "algorithmic," they're usually talking about a set of rules a computer follows. Basically, it's a bunch of instructions that chew through data and spit out answers. That's how folks saw algorithms for a long time, just tools, nothing flashy, just a way to solve problems in math or logic. But now? In media and politics, "algorithmic" carries a lot more weight.

Algorithms are everywhere online. They don't just hum along quietly in the background. They decide what pops up in your feed, what disappears, what stories explode across the internet, and which ones vanish without a trace. It's not just automation. It's about shaping what matters, what grabs your eye, and what fades into the background.

So, when we say "algorithmic" here, we are talking about more than just technology. It's about how platforms operate, how they make money, and who calls the shots. Companies are always tweaking their algorithms to keep people scrolling, clicking, and bringing in more ad dollars. That changes what kind of political stuff people see. You can't really separate political messages or journalism from the way these systems work anymore.

Here's a key thing: algorithms don't treat everything equally. Some stuff gets pushed front and center, usually whatever fires people up, gets them emotional, or racks up tons of clicks. These systems are the new gatekeepers, deciding what counts as news or which stories dominate, and most of us barely notice how those decisions happen.

That leads to something called "algorithmic narrative power" basically, the way these systems steer political talk by spotlighting certain stories, boosting some voices, and controlling how far messages travel. Unlike old-school editors, algorithms never sleep. They're customizing content for millions of people at the same time, everywhere.

So when we talk about the "algorithmic" side of media today, let's not kid ourselves, it's not just neutral tech. It's a new kind of power, and it's reshaping journalism, changing who gets heard in politics, and even affecting how democracy works. If you want to really

understand how global political stories are shaped and fought over, you must see just how deep this algorithmic influence goes [Gillespie, 2018].

Figure 1. Algorithmic Narrative Power in Global Political Communication
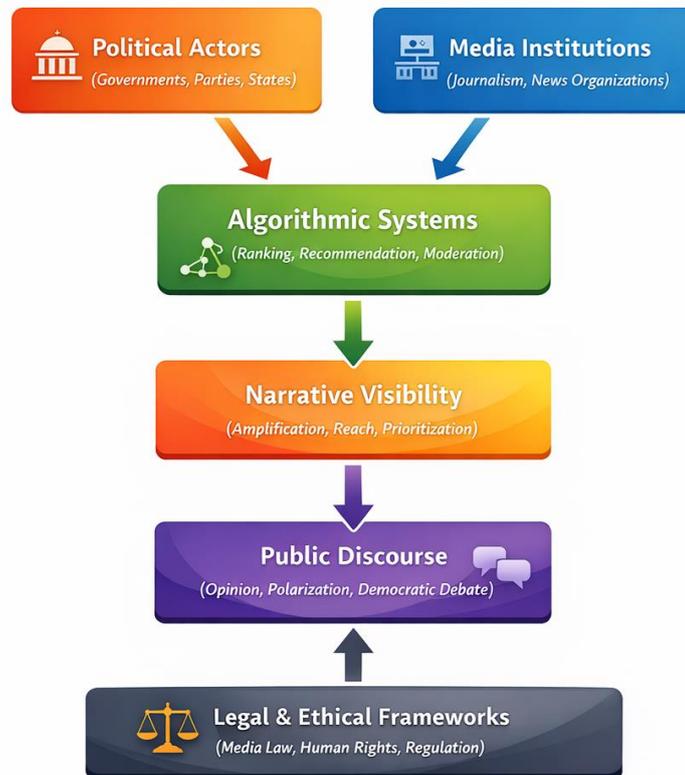
Figure 1. *Illustrates the conceptual structure of algorithmic narrative power, highlighting the role of algorithmic systems in mediating political narratives between media institutions, political actors, and public discourse.*

3.Methodology Note

This study takes a qualitative, descriptive, and comparative look at how algorithms, media, and political power interact. It draws on research in media studies and political communication, pulling together several sources:

• Peer-reviewed academic literature on algorithmic governance, platform power, political communication, and journalism ethics [Carlson, 2018; Gillespie, 2018; Tufekci, 2015]

• Institutional reports from the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, the European Commission, and international human rights organizations

• Laws and regulations on digital platforms in democratic and authoritarian contexts [European Union, 2022; Germany, 2017; Deibert, 2020]

• Case-based examples for elections, international conflicts, and debates on regulating platforms from 2010-2025.

The point isn't to crunch numbers or offer sweeping generalizations. The aim is to untangle what's really changing in the way algorithms, media, and politics connect, and to offer policy insights that matter right now.

4.Algorithmic Systems as Political Gatekeepers

These days, algorithmic systems are doing a lot of the work that used to belong to journalists and editors. Recommendation engines, trending tools, ranking systems, you name it-the reason certain political stories catch fire and take over the news or social media. The logic behind these tools is all about grabbing attention. They push whatever gets clicks or shares, not necessarily what's important or genuinely valuable [Carlson, 2018].

Sure, editorial gatekeeping has always had its secrets, but algorithms take it to another level. Developers usually keep the details of ranking algorithms under wraps, so it's even harder to understand how these decisions get made. Basically, algorithms hold a lot of power, but because they're so hidden, that power feels even more out of reach and less democratic [Gillespie, 2018].

Take elections, for example. When things heat up, these algorithms tend to boost the loudest, most extreme voices, the stuff that's polarizing or packed with emotion. Informed analysis? That often gets buried. We've seen this play out in the US, the UK, and across the EU, among other places [Reuters Institute, 2024].

5.Algorithmic Narratives in Elections and Political Mobilization

Elections really show how much algorithms can shape the stories people hear. Political parties use platform analytics and algorithms to zero in on specific voters when election season rolls around. Microtargeted political ads take people's data and send them tailored messages, often without much transparency [United States, 1996].

In the US, people saw how algorithms could boost misinformation during the 2016 and 2020 presidential campaigns. That sparked a big debate about who's responsible and how platforms should be regulated [Lazer et al., 2018]. Even after platforms put some moderation policies in place, recommendation systems kept pushing political content designed to drive engagement.

Governments responded with new laws. The DSA in the European Union, for instance, forces big platforms to hunt down and address election risks, like when algorithms spread disinformation [European Union, 2022]. Germany's NetzDG law demands that platforms remove illegal political speech fast, putting real pressure on them [Germany, 2017].

All these legal moves show that more people now see algorithms as real political players, and they need to be kept in check.

Country	Algorithmic Amplification	Legal Regulation
EU	Medium	High
USA	High	Low
Germany	Medium	High
China	High	Very High

Table 1. *Algorithmic Political Amplification and Regulatory Response in Selected Political Systems (2015–2025)*

Look at the table, and you'll see how algorithmic amplification plays out differently depending on the political system. In the U.S., political figures get a lot of visibility, and the courts don't step in much. Over in the European Union and Germany, things are a bit more balanced; there's some amplification, but the judicial system keeps a close eye on things. China stands out, though. There, both algorithms and the judicial sector hold tight control.

6. Algorithmic Power in Geopolitical Conflicts and Information Warfare

The significance of algorithmic narratives' power is equally high in the sphere of geopolitical conflicts. International crises serve as great illustrations of how digital media function as narrative battlegrounds. By means of algorithmic escalations, the involved parties try to impose global narratives to the exclusion of the Fourth Estate [Chesney & Citron, 2019].

In another instance, it was noted that during international conflicts, the algorithms of platforms usually promote visually attractive content more than the contents accuracy in context. The result was that misinformation or biased stories were spread rapidly, thus press and diplomats were greatly hindered in their work of communication [Tufekci, 2015].

On the one hand, algorithmic subsystems can be infiltrated in the communication infrastructure that is controlled by the state in authoritarian settings. The laws of such countries as Russias sovereign internet law, and Chinas cyber law, among others, can be utilized for capturing platform algorithms which can then be aligned with state agendas to control narratives [Deibert, 2020].

7. Journalism, Platform Dependence, and Legal Constraints

The use of digital platforms for the purpose of journalism is leading to certain legal and ethical issues.

The platforms have a significant impact on the news distribution market. The exposure of journalistic materials simply depends on algorithms and is not based on their value or the significance of the topic [Napoli, 2019].

As far as the legal side is concerned, it is possible to say that the following issues come up: What impacts do media regulation and competition law changes have? An example of the European Union's Digital Markets Act (DMA) is an initiative that tries to address platform dominance by making them fulfill obligations as gatekeeping platforms, which is related to algorithmic control over the news dissemination channels [European Union, 2022].

On the other hand, platform liability remains limited in many countries. Take the United States, for instance, where Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act shields a platform from liability for content published by the platform's users, thus as a result, it is almost impossible to control the use of algorithms for political narratives [United States, 1996].

Country/Region	Law/Regulation	Year	Main Focus
European Union	Digital Services Act (DSA)	2022	Algorithmic transparency
European Union	GDPR	2018	Data protection
Germany	NetzDG	2017	Illegal content removal
United States	Section 230	1996	Platform liability
China	Cybersecurity Law	2017	Information control

Table 2. *Legal Frameworks Regulating Algorithmic Platforms in Selected Countries*

8. Ethical and Human Rights Dimensions

The narrative power of algorithmic systems is a major ethical challenge at the heart of today's digital media environments. Algorithms decide who gets to be seen and heard effectively, signaling the voices and political messages that in turn gain public legitimacy. Engagement, driven design can make content moderation less effective by favoring user interaction over topic accuracy, and without enough moderation, harmful political misinformation and coordinated manipulation churn unchecked [Gillespie, 2018].

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Seen through a human rights lens, this issue exposes a structural dilemma of whether one should protect freedom of expression or guard the society against harm. The flaw of automated moderation technologies is that they do not have the ability to fathom political contexts, journalistic intents, and cultural nuances, so the risk of producing unjustified content removals or unfair treatment increases. Meanwhile, the lack of proper checks and balances means that misleading or extremist views are given more prominence and democratic participation is compromised.

Existing international human rights standards are a source of inspiration for dealing with this issue. Under Article 19 of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, freedom of expression is recognized as a fundamental human right but there are permitted restrictions that are proportionate and well, defined in law [United Nations, 1966].

It is extremely challenging to interpret these norms in the context of algorithmic governance due to the secretive and borderless nature of platform, based decision, making. In fact, ethical algorithmic governance is a matter of transparency, accountability, and rights, based safeguards that are to be capable of protecting both democratic discourse and the rights of the individuals.

9.Comparative Analysis: Democratic vs. Authoritarian Systems

In democracies, the narrative power of algorithms is exercised mainly through market, driven platforms and a diverse media environment. On such platforms, the issue of political polarization becomes even more complex, as the mechanism of engaging users is based on politically divisive content. That is, the formal freedom of expression still exists, but the algorithmic processing of various options for a user indirectly shapes the political discourse by highlighting some political themes while leaving others unheeded. On the other hand, authoritarian regimes draw up algorithms directly in the government, controlled communication network and employ such tactics to promote the official line and suppress the oppositional voices [Deibert, 2020].

However, the two differ in their ideological apparatuses, but still, both illustrate how algorithms are at the center of political communication today. In fact, the common ground is in the ability of algorithmic systems to effectively regulate the visibility and influence of actors on a considerable scale, no matter the political regime. This common dependence highlights the urgent need for a set of globally recognized principles regulating algorithmic transparency and accountability, which could handle the worldwide consequences of platform, mediated political discourse.

10.Conclusion

This study shows that algorithms aren't just tools for spreading media, they've become core players in shaping global political conversations. They decide what gets seen, who gets heard, and, honestly, they're always working in the background, quietly shaping what counts as political truth. It's not just about speeding up how information moves. Algorithms actually set the stage for which stories gain credibility and which ones fade away.

What stands out here is the power shift. Platform algorithms, not human editors, are calling more of the shots now. Editorial judgment takes a back seat to automated systems, and that's thrown the old rules of journalism into question. Existing laws just can't keep up, they're built for traditional, nation-based media, not these sprawling, global tech platforms with secretive algorithms.

So, if we want to deal with the real power of algorithms over political stories, we need more than just policing bad content after the fact. We need bigger, systemic changes. Laws need to demand transparency and accountability from platforms and protect the independence of journalists. At the same time, newsrooms have to double down on their core values and make sure human judgment doesn't get drowned out. If we don't act,

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algorithms will keep tightening their grip on political debate, and democracy will pay the price.

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