


Chapter 9

The Utilization of Social Media by Far-Right Political Parties: A Study on Victory Party

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to examine the Victory Party's communication strategies on TikTok, thereby contributing to the body of literature concerning the role of TikTok in the political communication processes of far-right political parties. The research encompassed a content analysis of 171 videos published between September 4, 2021, and May 3, 2023. The analysis categorized these videos in terms of their thematic content, linguistic structures, formats, objectives, emotional tones, engagement metrics, lexical choices, and spokespersons. The findings indicated that the Victory Party's TikTok content was primarily shaped by nationalistic motivations, as evidenced by the omission of local languages. Additionally, the lack of accessibility features, such as subtitles, restricted access for individuals with disabilities. The content failed to conform to TikTok's dynamic structure, resulting in suboptimal engagement rates. Furthermore, the analysis identified xenophobic discourse targeting immigrant populations, which had the potential to exacerbate societal polarization.

INTRODUCTION

Social media platforms have emerged as indispensable pillars within the overarching framework of contemporary political communication modalities (Theocharis et al., 2022; González-Bailón & Lelkes, 2023; Çakıcı, 2024; Boulianne et al., 2024). In the socio-technological paradigm defined by the advent of Web 2.0, political parties and their leaders have incorporated a diverse array of social media platforms, including Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and X (formerly known as Twitter) into their communicative arsenals, thereby enhancing the efficacy of their strategic engagements (Abidin, 2021; Munger & Phillips,

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2022; Park et al., 2023; Boulianne et al., 2024). Among these digital platforms, TikTok, a short-form video-sharing application developed in 2016 by the Beijing-based technology conglomerate ByteDance, has gained salience as a dynamic medium, particularly due to its capacity to captivate and engage younger demographic segments (Dias & Duarte, 2022a). An interrogation of extant scholarly literature reveals that political actors and entities globally have adeptly exploited TikTok to fulfill a multifaceted array of strategic imperatives, encompassing the cultivation of direct engagement with electorates, the dissemination of ideological narratives, the mobilization of electoral support, the orchestration of campaign dynamics, and the exertion of influence over public opinion formation processes (Vijay & Gekker, 2021; Mishra et al., 2022; Cervi et al., 2023; McLaughlin et al., 2024). Within the Turkish political milieu, a heterogeneous spectrum of political parties, including the ruling Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi), the Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi), the Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party (Halkların Eşitlik ve Demokrasi Partisi), the Felicity Party (Saadet Partisi), the Democracy and Progress Party (Demokrasi ve Atılım Partisi), and the Workers' Party of Türkiye (Türkiye İşçi Partisi), alongside their leadership figures, have institutionalized their presence on TikTok by establishing official accounts as integral components of their political communication infrastructures. Nonetheless, despite the burgeoning adoption of TikTok within this context, an analysis of the academic corpus underscores a conspicuous dearth of scholarly inquiries examining the communicative strategies deployed by Turkish political actors on this platform (Çetinkaya & Yıldız, 2021; Keskin, 2024; Vona Kurt et al., 2024).

Far-right political parties are predominantly defined by their adherence to an ideological nexus encompassing hyper-nationalism, authoritarianism, ethnocentric exclusion, and anti-immigrant sentiment. These parties frequently articulate their agendas through discourses centered on the preservation of societal order, the perpetuation of national identity, and the reinforcement of traditional sociocultural paradigms (Castelli Gattinara & Froio, 2024; Anduiza & Rico, 2024; Rooduijn et al., 2024; Vasilopoulou & Zur, 2024). Within the historical trajectory of Turkish politics, the transition to a multi-party democratic system in 1946 marked the emergence of right-wing political actors as formidable influences within the political landscape (Karataşlı & Kumral, 2023, p. 25). However, the institutional consolidation of far-right ideologies became conspicuously evident with the establishment of the Victory Party (Zafer Partisi), signifying a paradigmatic shift in the dynamics of Turkish political discourse. Founded in 2021 by Prof. Dr. Ümit Özdağ, the Victory Party has ascended as the principal embodiment of far-right ideological frameworks within contemporary Turkish politics (Lange, 2022, pp. 2–5; Koca & Saç, 2024, p. 337). The party's ideological orientation is firmly entrenched in hyper-nationalist narratives, coupled with a pronounced anti-immigrant rhetoric, positioning it as a significant proponent of exclusionary nationalist policies (Deniz & Kargın, 2023; Semerci et al., 2023; Mazlum, 2024). Central to its political platform is the advocacy for the systematic repatriation of refugee populations residing within Türkiye, a policy agenda that underscores its broader ideological commitments (Özdemir, 2023; Pınarbaşı, 2023). Despite its ideological salience, the Victory Party remains devoid of legislative representation within the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye, thereby lacking institutional mechanisms for direct political influence (Koca & Saç, 2024, p. 327). Nevertheless, the party has adeptly navigated both traditional and digital media channels to disseminate its ideological narratives and mobilize political support. Its communication strategy demonstrates a synergistic utilization of legacy media alongside digital platforms, including Instagram, X, YouTube, and Facebook. Of particular note is the party's strategic incorporation of TikTok into its communication repertoire, a platform characterized by its predominant engagement with younger audiences. The party established an official TikTok presence in 2021 and has

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