



Social Media and Political Polarisation

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Our societies are increasingly polarised in terms of political opinion and subsequent radicalised behaviour. At the same time, social media has become the predominant space of mass communication, with close to 5 billion users in 2022.

Governments, institutions and media conclude that polarisation is the result of the uncontrolled diffusion of opinions and ideologies in the new communication space. However, available evidence from scholarly research indicates that polarisation has deeper roots in the crisis of trust and political legitimacy around the world, itself resulting from the characteristics of media politics and the bureaucratisation and corruption of the political system. Social media enhances the role of the polarised factions in society but are not the cause of their radicalisation. Yet, social media amplifies and reinforces polarisation by exposing extreme positions on a large scale and because of the virality of messages in the internet environment. Therefore, social media should be regulated, but polarisation should be confronted by a re-democratisation of politics and greater transparency in the multimodal media system, both for mass communication and for mass self-communication.