The Impact of Social Media Networks on the Growth and Ideologies of Populist Discourse: Sudan as a Case Study

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Using the descriptive method and an online questionnaire as a tool for data collection from a random sample of Sudanese qualitative public opinion, this study examines and analyses the impact of social media networks on the growth and ideologies of populist discourse in aims of presenting interpretations and the theoretical and applied trends that clarify it. To achieve this, it poses and answers a number of questions, using Sudanese society and the kind of dialogue circulating on these networks as a case study.

The most important findings the study reaches is that populist politicians use various means of communication (like personal means of communication, political party statements, television, the press, etc.), and that social media is the most popular means they use to deliver their messages to the target audience due to its features and functions. The study points out a clear relationship between the growth and escalation of populist discourse and social media networks and their expansion within vast sectors of society. As a matter of fact, it would not be possible for this discourse to grow and advance without social media and its development. Moreover, the findings show that the most prominent elements of the populist discourse broadcasted by social networks in Sudan are the spread of hate and tribalism, ethnic and regional tensions, calls for violence and rebellion against the territorial integrity of the state. In addition, social media networks have taken advantage of the state of institutional void that Sudan experiences to reach vast sectors of the society and spread populist discourse based on animosity. This is linked to the existence of an extremely complex regional and international environment and the framework of international conflict over strategic interests.

The study recommends a group of measures to restrict this discourse and its effects and lessen its dangers in the society. At the forefront of these are the promotion of dialogue and the culture of co-existence among the different components of the society, the spread of education and the improvement of school curricula based on upholding the values of citizenship, the enactment of the necessary laws to regulate social media networks, media education and the spread of awareness of social media content, teaching the public how to deal with the media in light of the existence of echo chambers and algorithms that control the activity of the digital audience.